

Dynamics Of Federalism And Impacts On State Capacity: A Scientometric Analysis

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Abstract:

Background: With the promulgation of the 1988 Constitution, the promotion of municipal state capacities became a central theme associated with federalism. There has been an increase in scientific production in recent decades regarding the federative perspective and its impacts on municipal state capacities in Brazil. The objective of this study was to investigate and analyze the intellectual structure of studies that relate state capacity and federalism, identifying their constitutive elements and the influences they exert on the understanding of the topic during the period from 1999 to 2023.

Materials and Methods: The study has a descriptive and exploratory nature with a quantitative-qualitative approach. For data processing, the scientometric technique was used with the aid of the VOSviewer software. The search was conducted on March 27, 2023, retrieving 279 articles through title, abstract, and keyword searches in the Web of Science. Filters were applied to refine the search, selecting "Article" and "Open Access," resulting in 76 articles. After an initial screening, a final sample of 72 articles was established.

Results: The peak of publications and citations occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, suggesting a growing concern with understanding how federalism can affect governments' capacity to address health issues and the importance of the state's role in this context.

Conclusion: Its importance stands out in the decentralization of responsibilities, the promotion of state capacity, and the response to institutional crises. This concern is not limited to Brazil, the United States, and China; it extends to other countries, highlighting that it is a global issue of great relevance.

Key Word: Institutional Crisis; Governance; Scientometrics; Collaboration Network; Federalism.

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I. Introduction

Federalism is regarded as a mechanism for ensuring democracy and political representation, enabling local and regional communities to exert greater control over their issues and policies while being part of a larger nation. Although often associated with the United States, federalism is a political system adopted by many countries worldwide. It is among the most common forms of political organization, particularly in countries with extensive territorial proportions and regional, cultural, and linguistic diversities [1].

Countries such as Germany, Australia, Brazil, Canada, India, Argentina, Mexico, Russia, Switzerland, and Nigeria also adopt federalism as their political system. Each country implements its model of federalism, varying in the degree of autonomy granted to regional or local governments. Some countries have a more centralized federalism, where the central government holds most of the power, while others, like Brazil, emphasize a decentralized model where regional or local governments enjoy greater autonomy [2].

In the Brazilian context, federalism is characterized as a political union managing relationships at all levels of government within a shared framework among federative entities [3]. However, municipal governments face challenges due to a lack of coordinated actions and limited autonomy, being subject to state and federal oversight. Strengthening municipal state capacities is necessary to reduce inequalities and promote administrative decentralization [4].

Literature underscores that state capacity characteristics are essential for understanding any political system [5-8]. Moreover, achieving governmental objectives requires complementary structures to ensure their realization. In this context, capacity serves as a mechanism to facilitate the government's goals [9]. The importance of capacity stems from the premise that political agents' predisposition is insufficient for achieving objectives, with a negative correlation to federative autonomy [10].

The 1988 Constitution emphasized promoting municipal state capacities as a central theme associated with federalism [11]. Recent decades have seen an increase in scientific output regarding the federative perspective and its impact on municipal state capacities in Brazil [12-14]. However, the current federal pact often generates a perceived lack of autonomy for subnational entities, assigning functions and competencies to municipalities but limiting their ability to exercise autonomy [15].

This study aims to investigate and analyze the intellectual structure of studies linking state capacity and federalism, identifying their constitutive elements and the influences they exert on understanding the topic.

The rapid dissemination and sharing of data, research, and protocols within the scientific community facilitate discoveries and drive research development. Evaluating accumulated knowledge is an urgent necessity in any research field, as it enables identifying new areas of investigation and pathways for scientific advancement [16]. Using scientometric techniques, this study analyzes data from formal scientific and technical sources. Scientometrics evaluates the entirety of accumulated knowledge rather than individual work results, requiring systematic methodologies, approaches, and quantified scientific progress [16]. This paper, therefore, organizes the discussion into four sections beyond this introduction: a brief conceptualization of Brazilian federalism and its relationship with state capacities, results, and concluding remarks.

II. Material And Methods

The methodology employed in this research consisted of using a scientometric study. As scientometrics is a quantitative research approach, its emphasis lies in objectivity [21]. According to Goode and Hatt [22] and Hayashi [23], scientometrics focuses on evaluating scientific production, excluding non-scientific or empirical texts and works, prioritizing the measurement of science.

According to Richardson [24], the method employed is characterized as bibliographic and exploratory, using quantification in both data collection and processing. This process involves statistical techniques to transform data into numbers, facilitating its classification and analysis. Therefore, the approach involves classifying data to categorize, by impact, the most productive institutions, co-authorship networks, and co-citation. For this purpose, the scientometric technique employing bibliometric indicators was used to measure and map intellectual production [25].

For this study, the translated Brazilian Portuguese version of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA Statement) protocol was used [26]. The primary objective of PRISMA is to assist authors in improving the reporting of systematic reviews and meta-analyses.

Data collection followed three phases. In the first phase, the Web of Science database was chosen for its specialization in Social Sciences articles and its vast collection of journals publishing on the topic of interest. Additionally, the journals in this database generally include impact factors indexed by the Journal Citation Report (JCR), an essential metric for evaluating production quality. In the second phase, a combination of keywords and Boolean operators was defined, forming the following search string: topic: “state capacity” and topic: federalism.

The search was conducted on March 27, 2023, retrieving 279 articles by searching titles, abstracts, and keywords across all years in the Web of Science. Furthermore, filters were applied to refine the articles, selecting “Article” and “Open Access” within the 1999-2023 timeframe, resulting in 76 articles. Subsequently, a review of the most recent works on the topic was undertaken; the following terms were frequently identified: federalism; state capacity; governance; decentralization; democracy; accountability; fiscal federalism; legitimacy; state; policy; institutions; autonomy; and reform. Among the most frequent, these were used as keywords in the database search for articles that needed to appear in the title, keywords, or abstract to expand studies related to state capacity and discussions on federalism.

In the third phase, to verify the relevance of the studies to this research’s scope, titles and abstracts of the articles were read. In this phase, studies that did not mention the phenomenon of state capacity or federalism in their abstracts were excluded. After applying this filter, 72 articles remained in the sample, as detailed in Figure 1.

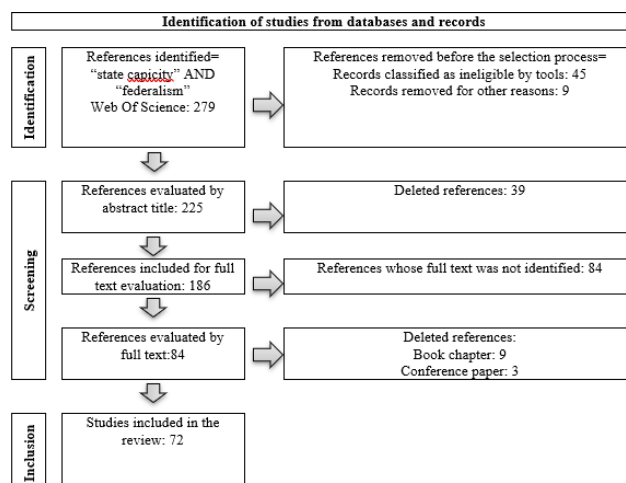


Figure no 1 - Search strategy and process based on the PRISMA flow diagram

Thus, the reading of the remaining 72 articles was conducted. For data processing, bibliometric techniques were used, a quantitative approach that allows for measuring and mapping intellectual production [21]. As a technical procedure, this study employed secondary data collection. A Microsoft Excel spreadsheet was utilized to determine categories of analysis, including authors, country of institutional affiliation, objectives, construct study, research nature, method, data collection instrument, data analysis technique, and year of publication.

Two complementary types of analyses were performed after data collection. First, scientific analysis involved extracting characteristics such as production and the number of citations by countries that publish the most on the subject, enabling the assessment of the impact of these works. The second stage of analysis employed the VOSviewer software. This tool was used to perform scientometric analysis, enabling the mapping of networks, co-authorship, and keyword co-occurrence analysis— aspects essential for expanding knowledge and analyzing data.

It is noteworthy that in reading these maps, the label and circle size define the importance of the item. Additionally, the item's color indicates the group to which it belongs, and proximity between items suggests the intensity of their relationship.

III. Discussion

As a result of this phenomenon, the analysis of results utilized scientometric analysis, an approach that employs statistical and mathematical techniques to evaluate scientific production and the use of scientific knowledge in a given field or research area. This method measures the impact and relevance of scientific works, identifies trends, gaps, and opportunities for new research [22].

According to Sampaio et al. [22], scientometric analysis can evaluate the effectiveness of research incentive policies, identify emerging research areas, assess scientific collaboration among institutions and countries, pinpoint leaders in specific research areas, and support decision-making on research resource allocation.

Temporal View of the Keyword Co-occurrence Network

The conscious and precise selection of keywords is essential for effectively indexing generated material and highlighting the author's work among others. While attractive and convenient words may be used, relevance to the work's content is crucial to ensure longevity and avoid obsolescence—a principle of bibliometrics. Burton and Kebler [23] state that analogical validity can accurately predict the period during which scientific literature remains useful.

Therefore, authors must carefully choose the keywords they employ, even if they are not necessarily attractive or popular. Otherwise, research may fall into obscurity and lose relevance over time. Analyzing keywords and article titles is a valuable technique for comparing results and gaining deeper insights into the behavior of keywords in a co-occurrence relationship. The occurrence of words constructs a framework of ideas and propositions relevant to the research in question.

In network analysis, the proximity of "nodes" can indicate the frequency of keyword occurrences. The closer the nodes, the more frequent the keyword. This approach verifies research themes related to state capacity and federalism. The keyword co-occurrence network, extracted from the Web of Science database, comprises keywords appearing at least twice, totaling 82 nodes and 514 links, with 705 stronger links among them. The network is organized into ten clusters, groups of keywords more closely related to each other than to other keywords in the network. However, only seven clusters with stronger evidence will be discussed.

The cluster analysis reveals diverse themes related to federalism, state capacity, and correlated issues. Each cluster represents a set of studies with specific focus areas, evidencing the breadth and interdisciplinarity of the research field, as demonstrated in Figure 2.

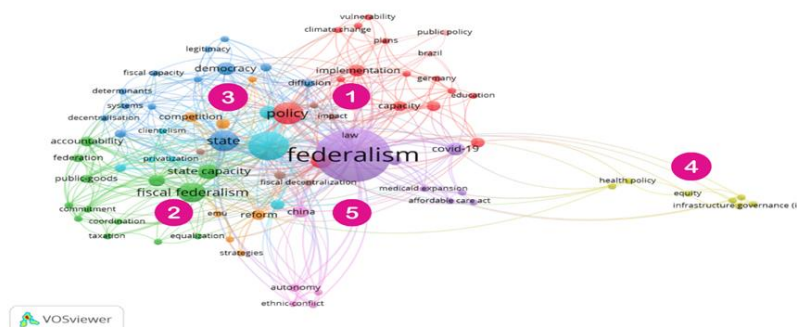


Figure no 2 - Keyword co-occurrence network

Cluster 1 - Policy and State Capacity in Crises: This cluster comprises 15 keywords, including “policy” as the central focus. Other keywords include capacity, climate change, education, Germany, governance, implementation, subnational government, vulnerability, water, intergovernmental, framework, relations, plans, and management. These terms suggest a group of studies focusing on governance and policy-making during crises.

Cluster 2 - Fiscal Federalism and State Capacity: This cluster comprises 13 keywords, with “fiscal federalism” and “state capacity” being the most prominent. Other associated terms include accountability, commitment, coordination, equalization, externalities, federation, income, provision, public goods, competition, and taxation. This indicates a strong connection between fiscal aspects and state capacity in federal systems.

Cluster 3 - State, Democracy, and Decentralization: This cluster includes 13 keywords, with “state” as the most significant. Other terms include decentralization, democracy, fiscal diffusion, capacity, incentives, legitimacy, nation, performance, systems, turnover, and welfare. These words highlight research linking the state to democracy and decentralization issues.

Cluster 4 - Institutional Capacity, Federalism, and Regional Development: Comprising seven keywords, this cluster is led by “institutional capacity.” Additional terms include equity, health, policy, India, infrastructure equity, and government infrastructure. These words underline the relationship between institutional capacity and federalism, focusing on regional and infrastructure challenges in countries like India and Ethiopia.

Cluster 5 - Federalism and Health: Challenges and Reforms: This cluster includes seven keywords, with “federalism,” “decentralization,” and “reform” being the most prominent. Other terms include COVID-19, Medicaid, states, local government, privatization, institutions, expansion, United States, and Affordable Care Act. These keywords reflect studies on federalism’s role in addressing health issues, including the COVID-19 pandemic.

These clusters collectively underscore the growing interest among researchers in understanding state capacity, federalism dynamics, and their implications in various contexts.

Collaboration Network Analysis

Collaboration network analysis provides valuable insights into scientific cooperation dynamics, identifying groups of collaborating authors, understanding how collaborations occur, and detecting cooperation across varying levels of expertise. This is beneficial for researchers seeking collaborations and for institutions and funding agencies aiming to support scientific cooperation [22].

Collaboration network analysis reveals the structuring of scientific production across disciplines, highlighting well-established scientific communities and the influence of specific researchers or institutions. These insights inform science and technology policy planning and the development of strategies to foster collaborations among researchers and institutions [23].

Co-authorship is a critical indicator of scientific collaboration, reflecting the impact of such partnerships. Effective co-authorship can lead to higher-quality research produced in shorter periods by pooling knowledge and resources. However, co-authorship must be allocated fairly and transparently, with clear ethical agreements to ensure research integrity.

By selecting key authors, this methodology identifies relevant and enduring scientific partnerships. Analyzing the network structure reveals the most connected nodes (authors), clusters (interconnected author groups), and each node's centrality within the network. These insights facilitate understanding scientific partnerships' development over time and provide opportunities for new collaborations and research projects.

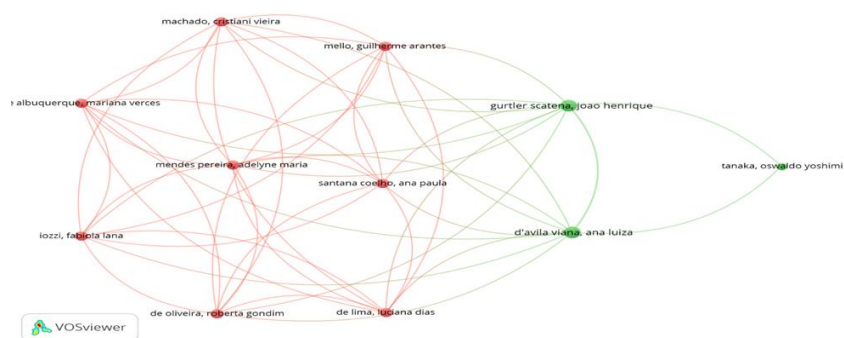


Figure no 3 - Collaboration network between authors

The analysis of co-authorship networks provides valuable insights into how researchers collaborate in developing studies within a specific field. Figure 2 illustrates the formation of two distinct clusters with a minimum of four documents per author. The map highlights two main clusters: the green cluster led by Oswaldo Yoshimi Tanaka, followed by Ana Luiza D'avila Viana and João Henrique Gurtler Scatena. The red cluster includes Cristiani Vieira Machado, Mariana Verces Albuquerque, Adelyne Maria Mendes Pereira, Ana Paula Santana Coelho, Roberta Gondim de Oliveira, Luciana Dias de Lima, Guilherme Arantes Mello, and Fabíola Iana Iozzi.

These clusters may represent different research communities within the field, with researchers working on similar topics collaborating closely. Analyzing these clusters can help identify opportunities for new partnerships and collaborations among researchers, as well as promote knowledge exchange and resource sharing among these research communities.

Additionally, co-authorship network analysis can identify key researchers in a specific field, their connections, and their collaborations with others. This helps pinpoint opinion leaders and influencers within the field, as well as areas with research gaps that need to be addressed.

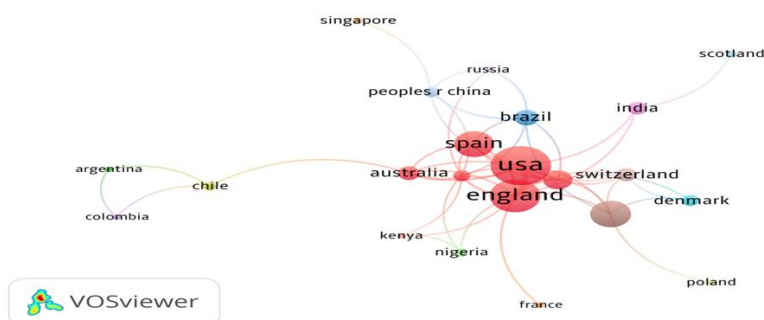


Figure no 4 - Country co-authorship network

For the country co-authorship network, created with the assistance of VOSviewer and presented in Figure 3, a minimum of three publications per country was established. A total of 32 countries met this criterion. The analysis reveals a predominance of publications from countries such as the United States (26 publications), Germany, Brazil, and the United Kingdom (11 publications each), followed by Australia (6 publications), Spain (5 publications), and South Africa (3 publications). Two main clusters were also identified. One cluster consists of countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. The second cluster includes Brazil, Germany, Spain, and Canada.

These clusters suggest that countries in the first group (United States, United Kingdom, Australia) may adopt a broader and more diversified approach to federalism, addressing a wide range of public policy issues. Meanwhile, the second group (Brazil, Germany, Spain, Canada) appears to focus more specifically on aspects of fiscal federalism and state capacity.

These findings highlight the importance of international collaboration in advancing research and development across various fields, including science and technology. Through collaboration, countries can share resources and knowledge while leveraging the skills and expertise of each partner to develop innovative solutions for complex problems. However, it is essential to acknowledge the challenges of international collaboration, such as overcoming cultural, linguistic, and political barriers. Establishing strong partnerships and investing time and resources in communication and relationship-building are crucial for the success of these collaborations.

Frequency Analysis

Between 1999 and 2023, an analysis of scientific production and citation data by country was conducted, revealing a significant number of publications in these databases on the topic.

Table no 1 - Frequency of Scientific Production and Citations by Country (1999-2023). Source: Authors (2024).

Country	Scientific Production	Total Citations	Average Citations per Article per Year
United States	26	556	21.384
United Kingdom	11	384	34.909
Germany	11	245	22.272
Spain	5	233	46.6
Canada	6	128	21.333
Brazil	11	81	7.363
Australia	6	65	10.833
South Africa	3	41	13.666

The data in Table 1 indicate that the United States leads in scientific production, with 26 published articles during this period. Additionally, the United States has the highest total number of citations, totaling 556. However, its average annual citations per article (21.384) are lower than those of countries like the United Kingdom and Germany.

The United Kingdom and Germany occupy second place in terms of scientific production, each with 11 scientific articles. The United Kingdom has the second-highest total citations, with 384, while its average annual citations per article (34.909) are the highest among all listed countries. Meanwhile, Germany records a total of 245 citations, with an average annual citations per article of 22.272.

Spain stands out as the country with the third-highest scientific production, publishing five articles during the period. Despite the smaller number of articles, Spain surpasses Germany in terms of total citations, reaching 233. Additionally, its average annual citations per article (46.6) is the highest among all the countries considered. These results suggest that Spanish scientific production is highly relevant and widely recognized.

On the other hand, Canada, Brazil, Australia, and South Africa show lower scientific production compared to the other listed countries. While Brazil has considerable scientific production, its total number of citations and average annual citations per article are the lowest among all mentioned countries, suggesting less relevance of its scientific output.

Overall, the analysis of scientific production and citation data by country (1999-2023) indicates that these aspects are influenced by factors such as research and development investment, resources available to scientists and academics, and national academic culture. In this context, it is observed that the volume of scientific production is not solely determined by internal factors but also by the predominance of institutions with greater global impact and reach, as evidenced by the scientific production in the United States, where collaboration between authors and institutions achieves a globally high average.

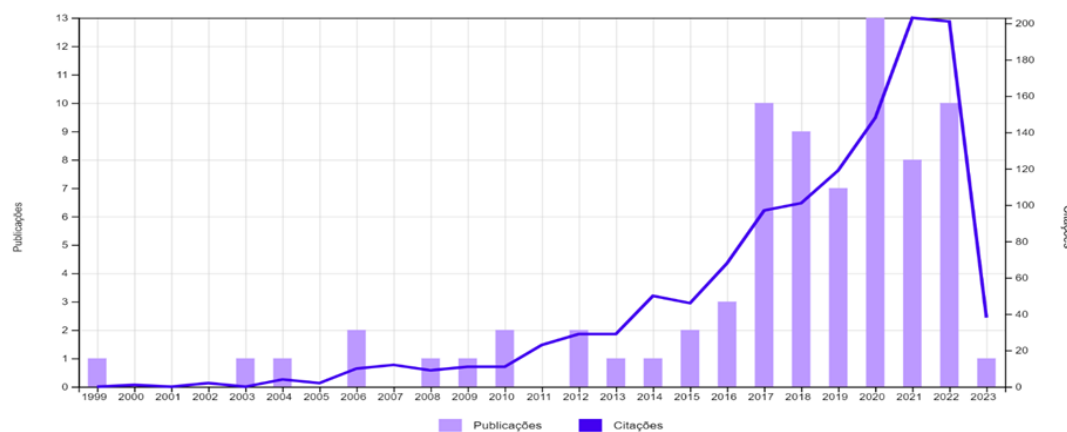


Figure no 5 - Publications and citations graph

In the graph, a low number of publications is observed from 1999 until around 2016. A decline in publication activity is also evident in the years 2019 and 2021. The peak of publications and citations occurred in 2020, suggesting that discussions on federalism and state capacity were intense during the COVID-19 pandemic. Over more than two years of the pandemic, approximately 500,000 studies related to COVID-19 were published, representing nearly 4% of global scientific output between 2020 and April 2022 [22]. This indicates that the COVID-19 pandemic had an impact not only on global health and social aspects but also significantly increased scientific publications aimed at explaining this phenomenon.

It is important to note, however, that even in years when publication activity declined, citations continued to rise, suggesting that existing publications are becoming increasingly referenced and relevant to the scientific community. This trend may indicate ongoing and growing interest in the subject matter and recognition of the importance of studies on federalism and state capacity. In 2023, this decline is more pronounced as the database does not yet cover complete studies from this year.

This analysis reinforces points discussed by Arretche [23] and Rocha and Azevedo [24] in their studies. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted pre-existing problems, such as the model of sectoral public policies aimed at social assistance, education, and health, and brought these issues to public consciousness. However, the pandemic served as a catalyst to reignite debates on the need for institutional transformations, suggesting that this will not be the last time the federal pact is questioned and overburdened.

IV. Conclusion

According to a scientometric approach, the objective of this study was to recognize the intellectual structure related to state capacity and federalism, identifying elements more comprehensively in the global scenario during the period from 1999 to 2023, focusing on the panorama of scientific publication within this interval. Thus, the characteristics and particularities associated with this phenomenon were examined, highlighting the most influential authors and their areas of study. In this context, it was possible to identify five (5) principal clusters that can inform future research on this topic.

To this end, a quantitative-qualitative methodology was adopted, enabling the selection and categorization of data with a descriptive and exploratory approach, allowing for the analysis of studies related to the topic in question. Furthermore, this study can be characterized as scientometric since a survey of scientific articles published in indexed journals on the Web of Science database was conducted.

The database analysis revealed the presence of various document types, with scientific articles being predominant. Among the 185 authors identified, only 36 conducted research individually, indicating a relatively low level of collaboration among them.

Regarding the keyword co-occurrence network, it was found that terminology choice is crucial to ensure research visibility. Thus, it was concluded that using attractive keywords is fundamental for literature discovery and the appreciation of the study as a valuable object. In this sense, the keyword co-occurrence network analysis identified terms frequently used by authors in indexing articles to broaden their reach. The results highlighted "federalism" as the central term in this network, followed by "state" and "decentralization," underscoring their relevance in studies related to public institutional issues.

The data also revealed that "federalism" emerges as the principal term in works involving the state, with more significant results between 2017 and 2022. The collaboration network discussed throughout the study plays a fundamental role in achieving these results, enabling analyses through specific indicators.

The analysis identified two distinct clusters: one led by author Oswaldo Yoshimi Tanaka, affiliated with the University of São Paulo (USP), and another formed by Guilherme Arantes Mello, affiliated with the Federal University of São Paulo (UNIFESP), and Fabíola Iana Iozzi. In both clusters, the results indicate that collaboration among authors is restricted to these groups.

Notably, the peak of publications and citations occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, suggesting a growing concern with understanding how federalism can impact governments' ability to address health issues, as well as the importance of the state's role in this context. Additionally, it is worth noting that this concern extends to countries like the United States, China, and Brazil, highlighting its global nature and significant importance.

Constitutive elements that may influence studies on federalism and state capacity encompass various aspects, such as the political and administrative structure of the state and its interaction with local governments, the central government's ability to coordinate and implement policies at the local level, the distribution of resources and power among different levels of government, and the capacity of local governments to provide basic services and respond to crises. Furthermore, factors like political culture, institutional history, and economic and social context also influence federalism and state capacity in addressing critical issues.

In this context, this study emphasized the relevance of scientometric studies as a tool to measure fundamental data, such as those related to scientific publications, highlighting the importance of keywords, collaboration networks, and co-authorship in this process. Moreover, it underscores the need for more academic works on the same theme, aiming to value and expand such publications both nationally and internationally.

Although five main clusters related to state capacity and federalism were identified, further analysis and comparison of these clusters would be valuable, as would identifying other clusters related to the same theme. Additionally, it is important to delve deeper into the mentioned constitutive elements, such as the political and administrative structure of the state, policy coordination between different levels of government, and crisis response capacity, to better understand their impact on governments' ability to address significant issues.

Federalism plays a crucial role in the distribution of power among various federative entities, allowing for adaptable and efficient governance. Its importance stands out in the decentralization of responsibilities, promotion of state capacity, and response to institutional crises. Furthermore, federalism is central to discussions about the political structure of the state, policy coordination across different levels of government, and resource distribution. Emphasizing collaboration among federative entities highlights the relevance of federalism in building partnerships and joint solutions.

This context also raises the need to broaden studies on federalism to foster new understandings and enhance state capacity to act as moderators of institutional crises. Finally, it is emphasized that investigations on federalism correlated with studies on state capacities should be deepened, as the conceptions presented in this study do not conclude the debate on the topic but, on the contrary, stimulate additional proposals and contributions.

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