

Transforming Lives: A Review of the Impact of Literacy on Vulnerable Youth and Adults in Peru

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Reviewing the impact of literacy on youth and vulnerable adults in Peru reveals fluctuations in scientific production between 2020 and 2024, with a peak in 2022-2023 and a drop in 2024. The United States leads the production with more than 400 papers, followed by Spain and Brazil. Peru contributes less than 5 papers. Most of the research is concentrated in the Social Sciences (65.8%), followed by Arts and Humanities (20.5%) and Psychology (12.8%), with an emerging interest in Neuroscience (0.9%). 76.5% of the publications are academic articles, followed by book chapters (15.3%) and reviews (3.1%). This diversity reflects a multidisciplinary approach that encompasses social, cultural, psychological and neurological aspects. The research highlights the need to continue and expand studies to effectively address the needs of vulnerable populations.

Keywords: Literacy, vulnerable, social sciences, production.

1. Introduction

Empowering people through education is a crucial aspect of improving the lives of youth and vulnerable adults in Peru (Vicente, 2024). By improving literacy skills and providing access to education, people can experience greater confidence, independence and a sense of empowerment. Literacy programs play a critical role in equipping people with the tools they need to navigate various aspects of life, including Making informed decisions, advocating for their rights, participating meaningfully in their communities, Accessing essential services Furthermore, by promoting education among youth and vulnerable adults, Peru can work to break the cycle of poverty and inequality that often traps people in marginalized communities.

Breaking the cycle of poverty is closely linked to promoting literacy and education among

youth and vulnerable adults in Peru (Melesky et al., 2024). Illiteracy, especially among rural women, continues to pose a major challenge to achieving gender equality and social development (Austin et al., 2024). By investing in literacy programs and educational opportunities, Peru can empower people to break free from the constraints of poverty and build a better future for themselves and their families. Education serves as a powerful tool for social mobility, allowing people to access better opportunities and improve their quality of life.

Increased opportunities for employment and economic growth are another key benefit of promoting literacy among youth and vulnerable adults in Peru (Aran-Ramspott et al., 2024). Illiterate adults often face limitations in their employability due to lack of knowledge and skills (Ghani et al., 2024). By investing in education, health and infrastructure programs, Peru can create an environment that fosters economic growth and development. Literate people are better equipped to enter the labor force, contribute to the economy, and participate in the country's overall growth trajectory. Through targeted efforts to improve literacy rates and access to education, Peru can unlock the potential of its youth and vulnerable adult population, paving the way for a more prosperous and equitable society.

Challenges in the promotion of literacy among youth and vulnerable adults in Peru

One of the main challenges in promoting literacy among youth and vulnerable adults in Peru is accessibility to quality education (Meilsmidth et al., 2024). Peru faces significant disparities in the quality of education compared to other countries, which may hinder efforts to improve literacy rates among the population (Pulido et al., 2024). This disparity is particularly pronounced in rural areas, where access to quality educational resources and trained educators may be limited. Furthermore, in 2003, statistics showed that illiteracy affected a significant portion of the population, highlighting the magnitude of the problem, especially among young adults and the elderly (Edelen et al., 2024). Ensuring equitable access to quality education is crucial to address the literacy challenges faced by youth and vulnerable adults in Peru.

Overcoming barriers such as language and cultural differences is another obstacle to promoting literacy among Peru's population (Boehm and Bean, 2024). Peru's cultural and linguistic diversity presents a unique challenge in developing effective literacy programs that address the needs of diverse communities. Language barriers can impede the learning process for people who speak indigenous languages or dialects, further exacerbating literacy rates among marginalized groups. In addition, unrecognized cultural differences can create challenges in implementing literacy initiatives that resonate with Peru's diverse population. Addressing these barriers is essential to creating inclusive and effective literacy programs tailored to the specific needs of vulnerable youth and adults.

Addressing socioeconomic factors that hinder literacy is crucial to transforming the lives of youth and vulnerable adults in Peru (Borges et al., 2024). Socioeconomic disparities, including poverty, lack of access to resources, and limited opportunities for education and skills development, contribute to low literacy rates among disadvantaged populations. Female illiteracy in rural areas remains a major challenge in the pursuit of gender equality and social development (Lilly, 2024). By addressing these socioeconomic factors through targeted interventions, such as providing educational resources, vocational training, and promoting economic empowerment, Peru can make significant strides in improving literacy rates and the

overall well-being of vulnerable youth and adults.

Successful literacy initiatives and programs in Peru

Government-led literacy programs in Peru play a crucial role in addressing the challenge of illiteracy, particularly among vulnerable populations (Banack et al., 2023). Female illiteracy in rural areas remains a major obstacle to achieving gender equality and social development in the country (Lazcano-Peña et al., 2023). The government has implemented initiatives such as the Literacy and Educational Continuity Program for Older Adults, with the objective of providing educational services tailored to the specific needs of youth and adults facing educational lag or illiteracy (Ferreira and Duarte, 2023; Forrester and Covington, 2023). These programs focus not only on basic literacy skills but also on personal development and human needs, emphasizing the importance of education to transform lives and promote social integration (Contreras-Villalobos et al., 2023).

In addition to government-led efforts, nonprofit organizations and community initiatives play a vital role in promoting literacy and education in Peru (Silva and Scott, 2023). Organizations such as the Regional Center for Cooperation on Adult Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (CREFAL) are dedicated to supporting educational initiatives aimed at youth and adults, particularly in rural areas (Buenestado-Fernandez et al., 2023). These initiatives focus on providing educational opportunities that address the cultural, generational, and social communication gaps identified among different age groups in Peru (Marciano et al., 2023). By leveraging community education and life histories, these programs aim to empower people, improve social integration, and foster human development (Cano and Arya, 2023; Shammas, 2023).

The impact of literacy on personal development and social integration cannot be underestimated in the context of Peru (Méndez-Domínguez et al., 2023). Literacy programs not only equip people with essential reading and writing skills, but also empower them to actively participate in their communities, solve problems collectively, and contribute to social development (Smith et al., 2023). By addressing issues such as digital illiteracy and providing access to educational resources, literacy initiatives create opportunities for youth and vulnerable adults to engage in lifelong learning and skills development, ultimately transforming their lives and fostering a more inclusive and equitable society (Kohan et al., 2022; Rodríguez-Ríos and Lázaro, 2022).

2. METHODOLOGY

This article uses a mixed method approach those resorts to quantitative and qualitative research techniques (Hernandez et al., 2019). On the one hand, a quantitative analysis of information selected from Scopus is carried out using a bibliometric approach of the Review of the impact of literacy in youth and vulnerable adults in Peru: perspectives of its application in Latin American alternative education institutions (Arias, 2020).

On the other hand, some examples of research papers published in the aforementioned area of study are qualitatively analyzed, based on a bibliographic approach that allows characterizing the position of various authors on the topic in question (Valderrama, 2019). It should be noted that the entire search was conducted through Scopus, which made it possible to establish the

Nanotechnology Perceptions Vol. 20 No.7 (2024)

referencing parameters mentioned in Figure 1.

2.1 Methodological design

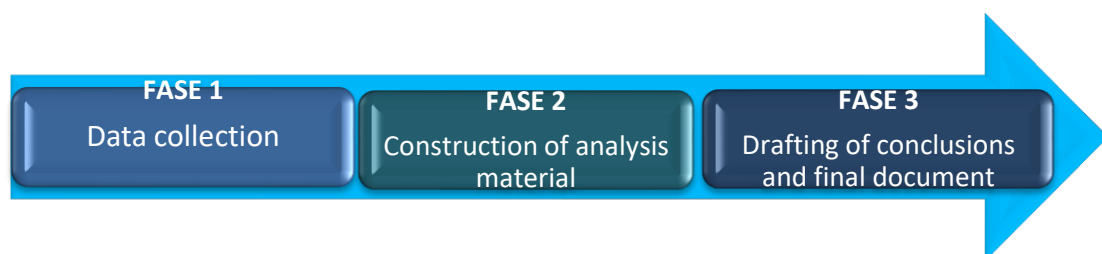


Figure 1: Methodological design

Source: Own elaboration

2.1.1 Phase 1: Data collection

Data collection was carried out using the search tool on the Scopus website, obtaining 490 publications by applying the following filters:

(TITLE-ABS-KEY (youth AND literacy) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (literacy AND for AND vulnerable AND adults) AND (EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 1970) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 1973) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 1976) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 1977) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 1978) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 1979) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 1980) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 1982) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 1983) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 1984) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 1985) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 1986) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 1987) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 1988) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 1988) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 1989) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 1990) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 1991) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 1992) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 1993) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 1994) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 1994) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 1995) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 1996) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 1997) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 1998) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 1999) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 2000) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 2001) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 2002) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 2003) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 2004) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 2005) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 2006) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 2007) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 2008) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 2009) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 2010) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 2011) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 2012) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 2013) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 2014) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 2015) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 2016) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 2017) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 2018) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 2019)) AND (EXCLUDE (AFFILCOUNTRY , “Canada”) OR EXCLUDE (AFFILCOUNTRY , “Australia”)

- Published papers whose study variables are related to literacy in youth and vulnerable adults in Peru and the prospects for its application in educational settings.
- Papers published in journals indexed in Scopus during the period 2020-2024.

- Limited to Spanish and English-speaking countries.
- No distinction in areas of knowledge.
- No distinction in type of publication.

2.1.2 Phase 2: Construction of analysis material

The information collected in Scopus during the previous phase was organized and subsequently classified by means of graphs, figures and tables as follows:

- Word Cooccurrence.
- Year of publication.
- Country of origin of the publication.
- Area of knowledge.
- Type of publication.

2.1.3 Phase 3: Drafting of the conclusions and final document

In this phase, we proceed with the analysis of the results obtained previously, which allows the determination of conclusions and, consequently, the preparation of the final document.

3. RESULTS

3.1.1 Cooccurrence of words: Figure 2 shows the Cooccurrence of keywords found in the publications identified in the Scopus database:

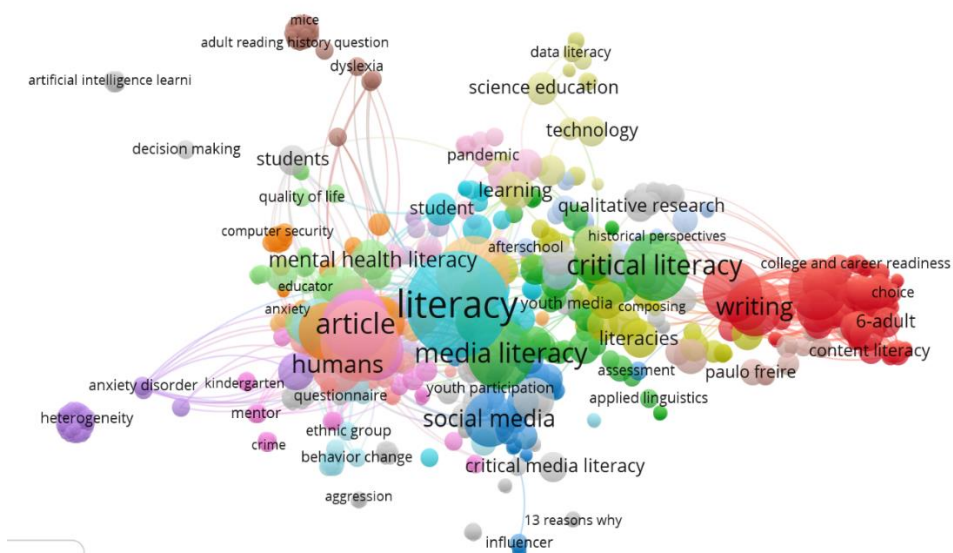


Figure 2. Cooccurrence of words

Source: Own elaboration (2024); based on data exported from Scopus.

In the research on the impact of literacy programs on youth and vulnerable adults in Peru, it is observed that the central key word is “literacy”. This term stands out for its relevance and centrality in the study, which is consistent with the main theme of the research. In addition, terms such as “media literacy” and “critical literacy” also emerge as significant keywords, reflecting the importance of these concepts in the context of literacy.

The production of texts and articles is highlighted through terms such as “article” and “writing,” underscoring the relevance of these activities in the literacy process. The research focus groups, which include both people in general and students specifically, are evidenced in terms such as “humans” and “students.”

A notable connection is found between literacy and mental health, highlighted by the term “mental health literacy.” This indicates that literacy not only has an impact on basic knowledge, but also on important aspects of mental health. In addition, the role of social networks is highlighted by the appearance of the term “social networks,” indicating their influence on literacy programs.

The research also shows the relationship of literacy to technology and science education, evidenced by terms such as “technology” and “science education.” These terms suggest that literacy is linked to the ability to handle modern technologies and understand scientific concepts.

In methodological terms, “qualitative research” is mentioned, indicating the type of methodology used in some literacy-related studies. Youth participation” is also a prominent theme, underlining the importance of involving young people in these programs. The influence of Paulo Freire's theories on critical literacy is evidenced by the appearance of his name in the analysis.

Other relevant terms include “quality of life,” suggesting that literacy can improve people's quality of life, and “behavior change,” indicating how literacy can influence individuals' behavior. Finally, “evaluation” is mentioned, highlighting the importance of evaluating the effectiveness of literacy programs.

This co-occurrence analysis reveals how literacy connects to a number of important issues, including mental health, technology, youth participation, and science education, among others.

3.1.2 Distribution of scientific production by year of publication.

Figure 3: shows the distribution of scientific production by year of publication.

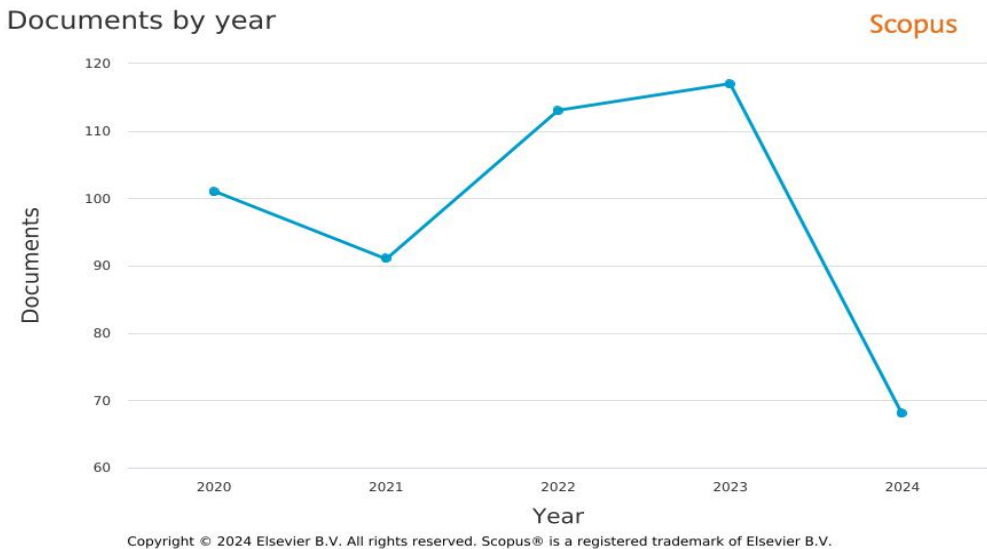


Figure 3: Distribution of scientific production by year of publication.

Source: Own elaboration (2024); based on data exported from Scopus.

In the analysis of scientific production related to the impact of literacy on youth and vulnerable adults in Peru, a variation in the number of papers published annually between 2020 and 2024 is observed. In 2020, approximately 100 papers were published. However, in 2021, there was a significant decrease, with production dropping to around 90 documents. This decline could be due to a number of factors, including possible impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on academic research and publication.

In 2022, the trend reverses, showing a notable increase in scientific output, with more than 110 papers published. This increase could reflect a renewed interest and effort in literacy research, possibly motivated by adaptation and response to the educational challenges posed by the pandemic. The year 2023 maintains a high and stable number of publications, again reaching around 110 papers. This suggests a continuity in the research effort and a consolidation of academic interest in the topic of literacy in vulnerable populations.

However, in 2024, a sharp drop in the number of papers is observed, with output dropping sharply to approximately 70 publications. This decline may be influenced by a variety of factors, including changes in research priorities, funding, or even the termination of projects initiated in previous years.

In summary, scientific output on the impact of literacy on youth and vulnerable adults in Peru shows significant fluctuations over the period 2020-2024, with a notable peak in 2022-2023 and a sharp decline in 2024. These patterns reflect the dynamics and challenges of the research field during these years.

3.1.3. Distribution of scientific production by country of origin.

Figure 4: shows the distribution of scientific production according to the nationality of the authors.

Documents by country or territory

Scopus

Compare the document counts for up to 15 countries/territories.

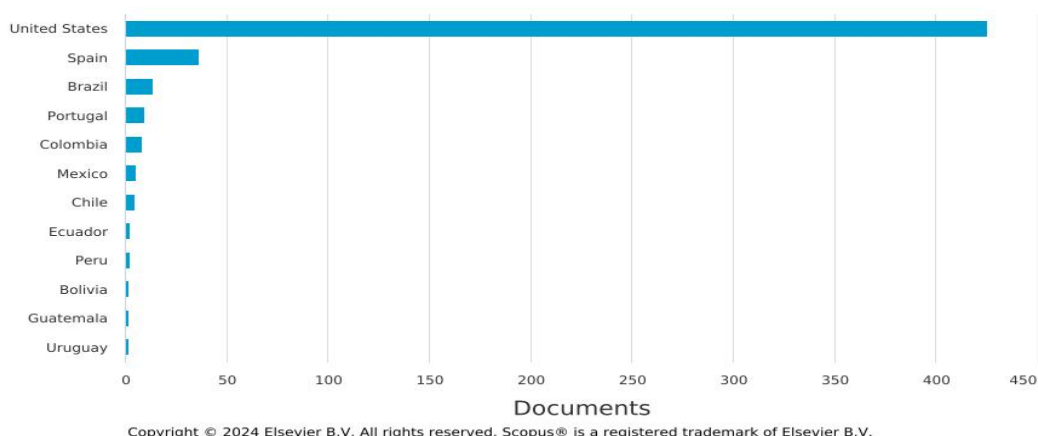


Figure 4. Distribution of scientific production by country of origin.

Source: Prepared by authors (2024); based on data provided by Scopus.

In the analysis of scientific production related to the impact of literacy on youth and vulnerable adults in Peru, there is a clear unequal distribution among different countries. The data provided by Scopus show that the United States leads overwhelmingly in terms of the number of papers published, with a total of over 400 papers. This number is significantly higher compared to other countries, indicating a strong focus and resources dedicated to literacy research from this country. In second place is Spain, albeit with a considerably smaller number of publications, at around 50 papers. This suggests a notable but less dominant presence compared to the United States in the field of literacy research. Brazil is in third place, with a scientific output of about 20 papers. Portugal, Colombia, Mexico, and Chile follow, each with a more modest contribution in terms of number of publications, all of them around or below 10 papers.

Finally, other countries such as Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Guatemala and Uruguay have a smaller scientific production, each with less than 5 published papers. This indicates a limited but existing participation in literacy research in these countries. The distribution of scientific production by country of origin shows a significant concentration of publications in the United States, followed by a moderate contribution from Spain and Brazil, and a lower participation of other countries, including Peru. This distribution reflects the differences in resources, focus and research capacity among the different countries on the topic of literacy.

3.1.4 Distribution of scientific production by area of knowledge

Figure 5 shows the distribution of the production of scientific publications according to the area of knowledge through which the different research methodologies are implemented.

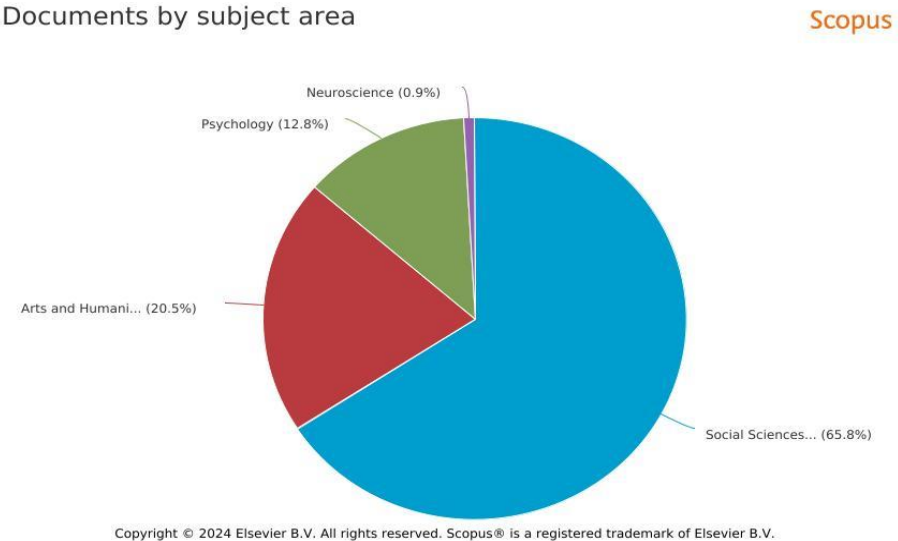


Figure 5. Distribution of scientific production by country of origin.

Source: Prepared by authors (2024); based on data provided by Scopus.

The distribution of scientific production related to the impact of literacy on youth and vulnerable adults in Peru is broken down into several areas of knowledge, according to data provided by Scopus. Most of the papers are concentrated in the area of Social Sciences, which represents 65.8% of the total production. This prevalence suggests that literacy research is deeply rooted in the study of social, political and economic structures that affect vulnerable populations.

The Arts and Humanities area ranks second, with 20.5% of the papers. This indicates a significant focus on the cultural, historical and philosophical aspects of literacy, exploring how reading and writing practices are embedded in the broader context of culture and human identity. Psychology also has considerable representation, with 12.8% of the papers. This figure highlights the importance of understanding the psychological and cognitive factors involved in literacy, as well as the effects of literacy on the mental health and well-being of individuals.

Neuroscience, although with a much smaller presence, accounts for 0.9% of the papers. This indicates an emerging interest in exploring the neurological basis of literacy and how literacy skills may influence brain development and functioning. Scientific production on the impact of literacy on youth and vulnerable adults in Peru is dominated by research in the Social Sciences, followed by Arts and Humanities, Psychology and, to a lesser extent, Neuroscience. This distribution reflects a multidisciplinary approach ranging from social and cultural structures to individual and biological aspects of literacy.

3.1.5. Type of publication

The following graph shows the distribution of the bibliographic findings according to the type of publication made by each of the authors found in Scopus:

Documents by type

Scopus

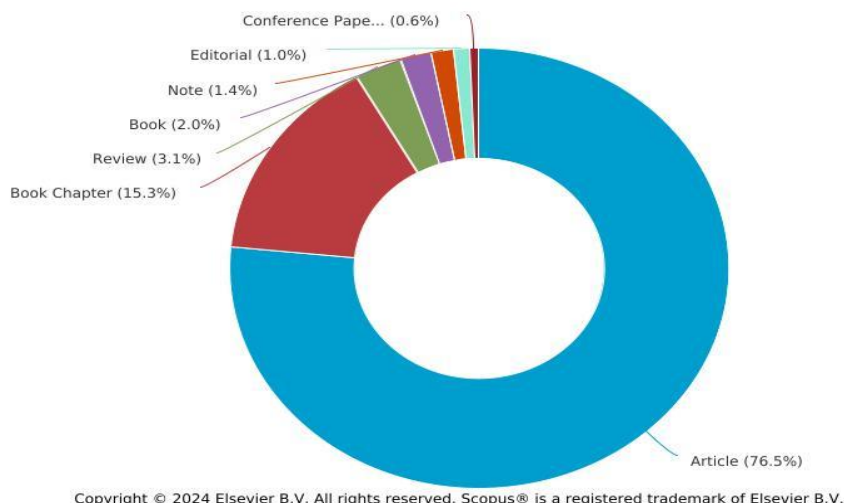


Figure 6. Type of publication.

Source: Prepared by authors (2024); based on data provided by Scopus.

In the review of the impact of literacy on youth and vulnerable adults in Peru, scientific papers are presented in various formats, according to Scopus data.

Most publications are in the form of articles, representing 76.5% of the total. This suggests that researchers prefer to disseminate their findings through academic articles, which are accessible and widely used in the scientific community. Book chapters constitute 15.3% of the publications. This indicates a significant trend towards contributing to collective volumes, where researchers can explore broader and more detailed topics within the context of a book.

Reviews account for 3.1% of the papers. Reviews are essential for summarizing and critically analyzing the existing literature, providing an overview of the current state of literacy research. Full-length books constitute 2.0% of the publications. These papers allow for an in-depth and extensive exploration of specific topics, providing a comprehensive perspective on literacy.

Notes and editorials have a smaller presence, with 1.4% and 1.0% respectively. Notes generally present preliminary findings or brief observations, while editorials offer opinions and discussions on current issues in the field of literacy.

Finally, conference papers account for 0.6% of publications. These papers reflect research presented at academic conferences, where new approaches and preliminary results are discussed and evaluated prior to publication in peer-reviewed journals. The distribution of scientific production on literacy among youth and vulnerable adults in Peru shows a clear preference for academic articles, followed by book chapters and reviews, with a lower representation of full-length books, notes, editorials and conference papers. This diversity in publication types reflects the different approaches and formats used by researchers to disseminate their findings.

4. Discussion and conclusions

The review of the impact of literacy on youth and vulnerable adults in Peru reveals several important trends and patterns across the different dimensions analyzed.

First, scientific production has shown significant variations over the years. In 2020, approximately 100 papers were published. In 2021, there was a decrease to about 90 papers, possibly due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The trend reversed in 2022, with a notable increase to over 110 papers, a figure that remained stable in 2023. However, 2024 saw a dramatic drop to approximately 70 publications. These changes indicate fluctuations in the focus and resources devoted to literacy research.

In terms of geographical distribution, the United States leads the scientific production with more than 400 papers, followed by Spain with around 50 papers, and Brazil with approximately 20 papers. Other countries such as Portugal, Colombia, Mexico and Chile also contribute, but to a lesser extent. Peru, the focus country, has a limited participation with less than 5 papers. This distribution reflects a greater capacity and focus on literacy research in certain countries.

The distribution by areas of knowledge shows that 65.8% of the papers are concentrated in the Social Sciences, indicating that literacy is studied mainly from social, political and economic perspectives. 20.5% of the papers belong to Arts and Humanities, exploring cultural and historical aspects. Psychology accounts for 12.8%, underlining the importance of psychological factors in literacy, while Neuroscience, with 0.9%, suggests an emerging interest in neurological aspects.

In terms of publication type, 76.5% of the papers are scholarly articles, reflecting a preference for this format to disseminate research findings. Book chapters constitute 15.3%, and reviews 3.1%, indicating a significant contribution in collective volumes and critical analysis of existing literature. Full-length books, notes, editorials and conference papers have a lower representation, with 2.0%, 1.4%, 1.0% and 0.6% respectively.

Finally, research on literacy among youth and vulnerable adults in Peru is dominated by academic articles and is mainly focused on the Social Sciences. Scientific production varies significantly by year and by country, with a strong concentration in the United States. Although Peru has limited participation, the diversity of publication types and areas of knowledge reflects a multidisciplinary approach that encompasses social, cultural, psychological and neurological aspects of literacy. This review highlights the importance of continuing and expanding research in this field to effectively address the needs of vulnerable populations.

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