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Bibliographic convergences in critical knowledge organization: a comparative bibliometric study

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Abstract

This article examines bibliographic convergences in Critical Knowledge Organization (CKO) through a comparative bibliometric study of two representative documentary groups: the Brazilian community, represented by the volumes Teorias críticas em Organização do Conhecimento (2022) and Estudos críticos em Organização do Conhecimento (2024), and the international community, represented by two 2024 special issues of Knowledge Organization. Based on 1,733 references extracted from 38 works, the study applies domain analysis and coincidence matrices to identify shared authors, works, and thematic alignments. Results reveal a low degree of bibliographic overlap (1.67%), indicating limited referential convergence between the two communities. While the Brazilian corpus is strongly anchored in epistemological and theoretical foundations of KO, the international corpus emphasizes activist, decolonial, Indigenous, and social justice–oriented approaches. The findings suggest the existence of parallel yet distinct trajectories in CKO, raising questions about conceptual autonomy, epistemic plurality, and the challenges of building a transnational critical dialogue in the field.

1.0 Introduction

Critical studies in Knowledge Organization (KO) have consolidated an analytical agenda concerned with the epistemological, ethical, and political dimensions that shape knowledge organization systems (KOS). By interrogating the social conditions under which knowledge structures are produced and maintained, this body of research foregrounds issues such as power, exclusion, cultural bias, and epistemic justice within documentary practices. In recent years, these discussions have gained visibility in both national and international contexts.

This article examines bibliographic convergences in critical studies in Knowledge Organization through a comparative bibliometric study of two representative documentary groups: (1) the Brazilian community, represented by the volumes *Teorias críticas em*

Organização do Conhecimento [Critical Theories in Knowledge Organization] (Saldanha et al. 2022) and *Estudos críticos em Organização do Conhecimento* [Critical Studies in Knowledge Organization] (Almeida et al. 2024); and (2) the international community, represented by two 2024 special issues of the journal Knowledge Organization dedicated to critical KO (CKO I and CKO II).

The decision to work with these two academic communities is motivated by several factors, foremost among them the fact that their production—both theoretical and applied—on this topic has generated not only intellectual institutionalization but also social institutionalization regarding the role that Critical Knowledge Organization should play in their respective contexts.

That said, the choice to analyze bibliographic references rather than the textual or discursive content of the works is grounded in Grácio's (2020, 8) proposition that references within a scientific discursive community "make explicit both the semantic relationships between citing and cited authors and the recognition of theoretical and/or methodological proximities and neighborhoods among those cited by that community, thereby revealing and describing the characteristics of a scientific domain." In this sense, understanding a domain through its references may serve, as Smiraglia (2015) suggests, as an indicator of the epistemological influences that shape it.

By comparing these corpora, the study aims to identify shared references, thematic intersections, and patterns of intellectual alignment that contribute to the consolidation of critical approaches in the field.

2.0 Critical studies in Knowledge Organization

Critical studies in Knowledge Organization (KO) problematize the epistemological, political, and ethical foundations of classification and representation practices. Moving beyond the conception of KO as neutral and technical, this strand emphasizes that knowledge organization systems are historically and culturally situated, shaped by power relations and struggles for legitimacy (Milani et al. 2024).

From this perspective, classification systems embed social values and exclusions, demanding explicit reflection on their ideological dimensions (Ibekwe 2024). García Gutiérrez and Martínez-Ávila (2014) argue that information professionals act as cultural mediators whose classificatory decisions participate in the construction of social memory. The critique of neutrality therefore becomes a structuring axis of critical KO.

The field articulates concerns with social and epistemic justice (Young 1990), addressing themes such as antiracism, anticolonialism, feminisms, epistemicide, and Indigenous knowledge organization (Milani et al. 2024). Rather than merely denouncing bias, critical KO proposes alternative epistemological frameworks capable of expanding representational plurality and fostering inclusive systems.

3.0 Methodological Procedures

This descriptive documentary study applies bibliometric tools under the perspective of domain analysis (Hjørland 2002) to compare two academic communities in Critical Knowledge Organization: the Brazilian and the international.

Two documentary groups were defined: (1) the Brazilian corpus, composed of two edited volumes—Teorias críticas em Organização do Conhecimento (TC) and Estudos críticos em Organização do Conhecimento (EC)—published in 2022 and 2024; and (2) the international corpus, consisting of two 2024 special issues of *Knowledge Organization*. All bibliographic references were manually extracted, normalized, and organized in a database.

References were coded (author, title, year, country, source), and different editions or language versions of the same work were treated as a single reference when content remained substantially unchanged. Introductory materials were excluded.

Shared authors and works were identified through coincidence matrices and visualized using Venn diagrams. Percentages of overlap were calculated to evaluate conceptual proximity and referential autonomy between the domains.

4.0 Results and Discussion

The analysis comprised 1,733 references extracted from 38 works, corresponding to an average of 45.6 references per work. The Brazilian domain accounts for 1,104 references across 26 works, whereas the international domain includes 649 references distributed across 12 works. Although the Brazilian corpus contains a substantially larger number of references, this difference reflects the higher number of works analyzed rather than a structurally denser citation pattern.

Table 1 Total Number of References and Analyzed Corpus

Domain	Corpus	Works	References
Brazil	TC	9	312
	EC	17	792
International	CKO I	6	310
	CKO II	6	339
	Total	38	1733

The central analytical question concerns referential convergence. Despite operating within the same thematic field, the two domains share only 29 references, corresponding to 1.67% of the total corpus. This low overlap challenges the assumption that a specialized thematic field such as Critical Knowledge Organization (CKO) would necessarily exhibit a

consolidated shared referential base. Instead, the data suggest the existence of parallel but relatively autonomous intellectual trajectories.

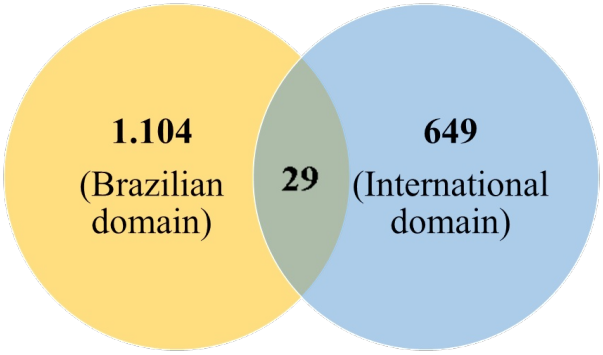

Figure 1. Venn Diagram of Domains Showing Overlapping References

Among the 29 shared works, Hope A. Olson emerges as the most significant point of convergence, with five works cited in both domains. Joseph T. Tennis and Melodie Fox also appear in both corpora, though with lower frequency. Olson's prominence indicates that her critique of subject representation functions as a conceptual bridge between Brazilian and international discussions.

Notably, some shared references include Brazilian authors and regional documents, particularly in works addressing gender violence and feminist epistemologies. However, these citations are primarily introduced by Brazilian authors publishing in the international corpus, which explains their limited circulation beyond that context. Thus, convergence appears less as structural integration and more as punctual cross-referencing.

4.1 Citation Concentration in the Brazilian Domain

The Brazilian corpus demonstrates a relatively clear citation concentration pattern. As demonstrated in Table 2, the eleven most cited authors account for 24.45% of total references, indicating a moderate degree of canonical consolidation.

Table 2 Main Authors Cited in the Brazilian Domain

Authors	Number of references	% of total references
GARCIA GUTIERREZ, A	47	4,25
HJØRLAND, B.	44	3,98
GUIMARÃES, J. A. C.	29	2.62
OLSON, H. A.	29	2.62

Authors	Number of references	% of total references
PINHO, F. A.	21	1.90
DAHLBERG, I	20	1.81
MARTÍNEZ-ÁVILA, D	19	1.72
SALDANHA, G. S.	19	1.72
BARITE, M	14	1.26
BEGHTOL, C	14	1.26
TENNIS, J. T.	14	1.26

In Table 2, two authors stand out: Antonio García Gutiérrez and Birger Hjørland. García Gutiérrez represents a transcultural and decolonial strand rooted in Hispanic critical traditions, while Hjørland provides the epistemological and domain-analytical framework that underpins much of Brazilian theoretical reflection. Alongside them, authors such as Guimarães, Pinho, Barité, Saldanha, Dahlberg, Olson, and Martínez-Ávila compose a structured intellectual constellation combining: a) Brazilian theoretical production; b) Hispanic critical perspectives; and consolidated international epistemological frameworks.

As illustrated in Table 3, the most cited works reinforce this orientation. García Gutiérrez's writings on transcultural ethics and desclassification, Hjørland's domain analysis, Beghtol's ethical warrant, and Olson's *The Power to Name* form a corpus strongly anchored in epistemological and methodological reflection. It indicates a concern with conceptual structuring rather than exclusively activist engagement.

Table 3 Most cited references in the Brazilian domain

References	Citations
GARCIA GUTIERREZ, A. Knowledge organization from a "culture of the border": towards a transcultural ethics of mediation.	7
GARCÍA GUTIÉRREZ, A. Desclassificação na organização do conhecimento: ensaio pós-epistemológico.	7
HJØRLAND, B. Domain analysis in information science: eleven approaches – traditional as well as innovative.	7
BEGHTOL, C. A proposed ethical warrant for global knowledge representation and organization systems.	6

References	Citations
OLSON, H. The power to name: locating the limits of subject representation in libraries.	6
DAHLBERG, I. Knowledge Organization: a new science?	5
HJØRLAND, B.; ALBRECHTSEN, H. Toward a new horizon in Information Science: domain analysis.	5
HJØRLAND, B. What is Knowledge Organization (KO)?	5
MORIN, E. Introdução ao pensamento complexo.	5
BARITÉ, M. Diccionário de organización del conocimiento: clasificación, indización, terminología.	4

This pattern suggests that the Brazilian domain prioritizes theoretical consolidation and epistemological grounding. Criticality is articulated primarily through conceptual refinement and methodological discussion.

4.2 Citation Concentration in the International Domain

The international corpus reveals a more dispersed citation pattern. No single author dominates decisively, and the ten most cited authors represent a relatively small percentage of total references. This dispersion suggests a field still undergoing consolidation, characterized by thematic plurality rather than canonical centralization (see Table 4).

Table 4 Main Authors Cited in the International Domain

Authors	Number of references	% of total references
OLSON, H. A.	17	2.61
BULLARD, JULIA	14	2.15
BERMAN, SANFORD	11	1.69
LITTLETREE, SANDRA	10	1.54
PATIN, BETH	10	1.54
TENNIS, JOSEPH T.	10	1.54
BELARDE-LEWIS, MIRANDA	9	1.38
ADLER, MELISSA	8	1.23
DRABINSKI, EMILY	8	1.23

Authors	Number of references	% of total references
DUARTE, MARISA	8	1.23

Hope Olson remains the most cited author; however, the surrounding constellation differs substantially from the Brazilian domain. Authors such as Bullard, Berman, Littletree, Patin, Belarde-Lewis, Drabinski, and Duarte foreground themes of: a) indigenous knowledge organization; b) antiracist critique; c) queer theory in cataloging; d) misrepresentation in subject headings; and e) structural bias in classificatory systems.

Table 5 Most cited references in the International domain

References	Citations
AMERICAN PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION. Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (multiple versions)	7
OLSON, H. A. The Power to Name: Locating the Limits of Subject Representation in Libraries.	5
BERMAN, S. Prejudices and Antipathies.	4
BULLARD, J.; WATSON, B.; PURDOME, C. Misrepresentation in the Surrogate: Author Critiques of 'Indians of North America' Subject Headings	4
DRABINSKI, E. Queering the Catalog: Queer Theory and the Politics of Correction	4
DUARTE, M. E.; BELARDE-LEWIS, M. Imaging: Creating Spaces for Indigenous Ontologies	4
LITTLETREE, S.; METOYER, C. A. Knowledge Organization from an Indigenous Perspective: The Mashantucket Pequot Thesaurus of American Indian Terminology Project.	4
LITTLETREE, S.; BELARDE-LEWIS, M.; DUARTE, M. Centering Relationality: A Conceptual Model to Advance Indigenous Knowledge Organization Practices.	4
BARON, J. E.; GROSS, T. Sorrow, Fury, Helplessness, and Cynicism: An Account of the Library of Congress Subject Heading 'Illegal Aliens'	3
BOWKER, G. C.; STAR, S. L. Sorting Things Out: Classification and its Consequences	3

The prominence of works such as *Prejudices and Antipathies (Berman 1971)*, *The Power to Name* (Olson 2002), *Queering the Catalog* (Drabinski 2013), and studies on Indigenous knowledge organization (Duarte and Belarde-Lewis 2015; Littletree and Metoyer 2015; Littletree et al. 2020) indicates a shift from epistemological structuring toward political and social intervention. Even the recurrent citation of the DSM (American Psychiatric Association) underscores concern with normative classificatory authority and its ethical implications.

Thus, while the Brazilian domain emphasizes epistemological architecture, the international domain prioritizes activist critique and transformative praxis.

4.3 Divergent Critical Agendas

The contrast between domains does not imply the absence of critical commitment in either case. Rather, it reflects different modalities of critical engagement. The Brazilian corpus articulates critique through epistemology, domain analysis, and theoretical debate; meanwhile, the international corpus articulates critique through social justice, decolonial activism, and representational repair.

Only one highly cited work—Olson's *The Power to Name*—appears prominently in both domains, reinforcing her role as an intellectual hinge between theoretical and activist strands of CKO.

The limited overlap (1.67%) therefore reveals not fragmentation but epistemic differentiation. Each domain appears to mobilize critical discourse according to its local academic traditions, political priorities, and institutional histories.

From a domain-analytical perspective, the findings indicate significant referential autonomy between the Brazilian and international communities. Although both operate under the banner of Critical Knowledge Organization, their bibliographic infrastructures diverge substantially.

This divergence may be interpreted in two ways. On one hand, it demonstrates vitality and contextual adaptation: critical KO is not monolithic but situated. On the other hand, the absence of a stronger shared referential base may hinder the formation of a more integrated transnational critical discourse.

The data suggest that CKO currently develops along partially parallel axes: 1) a theoretically grounded, epistemologically oriented Latin American tradition; 2) a politically interventionist, socially engaged Anglo-American tradition.

Future research could expand this analysis through co-citation networks and longitudinal citation tracking to determine whether these trajectories converge over time or continue to evolve autonomously.

5.0 Conclusion

The present study examined bibliographic convergences between two academic communities dedicated to Critical Knowledge Organization: a Brazilian domain and an international domain. Based on the analysis of 1,733 references extracted from 38 works, the findings demonstrate that, although both communities operate within a shared thematic field, they exhibit markedly distinct referential and conceptual configurations.

The Brazilian corpus reveals a strongly theoretical and epistemological orientation, anchored in authors who contributed to the disciplinary consolidation of Knowledge Organization. Its citation structure reflects sustained engagement with domain analysis, ethical warrant, and transcultural critique, articulating Hispanic, Latin American, and European intellectual traditions. In contrast, the international corpus presents a more dispersed citation pattern and a critical agenda centered on social justice, Indigenous epistemologies, queer theory, antiracism, and representational repair. In this context, CKO is mobilized primarily as a framework for political and social intervention in classificatory systems.

Despite these shared critical commitments, only 1.67% of references are common to both domains. This limited overlap indicates not fragmentation, but significant referential autonomy and epistemic differentiation. Each community appears to appropriate critical discourse according to its institutional histories, theoretical traditions, and political priorities.

Such differentiation may be understood as evidence of the vitality and plurality of CKO. However, the absence of a more consolidated shared referential base raises important questions regarding the construction of a more integrated transnational dialogue. Strengthening theoretical and methodological exchange between domains may contribute to the development of a more articulated and globally interconnected critical knowledge organization agenda.

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