

Professional Action of the Center for Social Intervention and Attention (CIAS) of the Social Work Career of the Adventist University of Chile from the Perspective of Institutional and Community Actors

Valeria Andrea Villegas-Alarcón  

Master in Public Health. Social Worker
Universidad Adventista de Chile. Chillán, Chile
valeriavillegas@unach.cl

Simi Jiménez-Carrasco 

Master in Social Research and Development. Social Worker
Universidad Adventista de Chile. Chillán, Chile
simijimenez@unach.cl

Massiel Carolina Venegas-Hernández 

Master in Social Work and Social Policies. Social Worker
Universidad Adventista de Chile. Chillán, Chile
massielvenegas@unach.cl

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 **Correspondence:** Valeria Andrea Villegas-Alarcón. Universidad Adventista de Chile, Path Las Mariposas 11771, 3780000, Chillán, Chile. Email: valeriavillegas@unach.cl

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Abstract

The study describes the professional action of CIAS from the perspective of institutional and community stakeholders involved. Using a qualitative approach with an exploratory-descriptive scope, it addresses the positioning of the CIAS in the community, the approaches and intervention models employed, and a reflection regarding the theoretical-methodological orientation of its actions. The experience of managers, academics, students, ex-alumni, and community leaders was collected through documentary review techniques, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and eco-maps. Regarding the findings, the CIAS has established a significant connection with six neighborhood councils, achieving recognition and collaboration with community leaders. The low population density and face-to-face relations have favored the CIAS's engagement. The Seventh-day Adventist religion plays an important role in helping to shape the community identity, strengthening the CIAS mission of promoting a Christian-biblical worldview.

The CIAS works with intervention levels of individual-family, group, and community, but the adequacy of these levels to the characteristics of each locality is questioned. There is a trend towards welfare assistance and a lack of medium—and long-term strategy. The documentary review reveals a deficiency of detailed records, making it challenging to analyze the use of models and theories. However, a declarative use of models was identified, particularly in the diagnosis stage, establishing a challenge to the methodological theoretical underpinning of professional action.

Keywords: Community action; Social Work; Internship student.

Acción profesional del Centro de Intervención y Atención Social (CIAS) de la Carrera de Trabajo Social de la Universidad Adventista de Chile desde la Perspectiva de Actores Institucionales y Comunitarios

Resumen

El estudio describe la acción profesional del CIAS desde la perspectiva de actores institucionales y comunitarios. Empleando un enfoque cualitativo, con alcance exploratorio-descriptivo, aborda el posicionamiento del CIAS en la comunidad, los enfoques y modelos de intervención utilizados y una reflexión respecto a la orientación teórico-metodológica de sus acciones. Mediante técnicas de revisión documental, entrevistas semiestructuradas, grupos focales y ecomapas, se recoge la experiencia de directivos, académicos, estudiantes, exalumnos y líderes comunitarios. Respecto de los hallazgos, el CIAS ha establecido una conexión significativa con seis unidades vecinales, logrando reconocimiento y colaboración con líderes comunitarios. La baja densidad de población y las relaciones cara a cara han favorecido la vinculación del CIAS. La religión adventista juega un papel importante en la identidad comunitaria, fortaleciendo la misión del CIAS de promover una cosmovisión bíblico-cristiana.

Los niveles de intervención con los cuales el CIAS trabaja son el individual-familiar, grupal y comunitario, pero se cuestiona la adecuación de estos niveles a las características de cada localidad. Se observa una tendencia asistencialista y una falta de estrategia a mediano y largo plazo. La revisión documental revela una escasez de registros detallados, dificultando el análisis del uso de modelos y teorías. No obstante, se identificó una utilización declarativa de modelos en particular en la etapa de diagnóstico, estableciéndose un desafío en el sustento teórico metodológico de la acción profesional.

Palabras clave: Acción comunitaria; Trabajo Social; Estudiante de prácticas.

Summary: 1. Introduction, 2. Methodology, 3. Findings, 3.1 Assessment of CIAS in the Community, 3.2 Use of Intervention Approaches and Models, 3.3 Theoretical-methodological dimensions of the center's professional action, 4. Conclusions, 5. Bibliographic references.



1. Introduction

This research aims to describe the professional action of the Center for Intervention and Social Care (CIAS) of the Social Work Career of the Adventist University of Chile from the Perspective of Institutional and Community Actors. To this end, the following specific objectives were set:

1. Examine the appreciation of the center within the local community.
2. Explore the use of intervention approaches and models in existing professional actions in the Center for Intervention and Social Care.
3. Discuss the theoretical-methodological dimension of the center's professional action based on the research findings.

The study aims to produce a practical and reflective contribution that guides future interventions or projects of the CIAS or similar academic bodies. For this, a qualitative method is adopted, focused on understanding the actors' perspectives, that is, the conceptions and experiences of the subjects involved in the Social Intervention and Care Center, from a phenomenological approach. A case study design is used to explore and describe the professional action of the center, involving various participants, such as managers, academics, students, alumni, and community leaders. Information collection techniques include documentary reviews, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and eco-maps. Non-probabilistic sampling selection criteria were applied for convenience to capture relevant voices and experiences. Content analysis was used to examine the evidence collected, and ethical measures were taken under the supervision of the Scientific Ethics Committee of the Adventist University of Chile.

In theoretical and conceptual terms, this research is framed in Social Work, emphasizing the challenge of self-reflection within the discipline. Lorente-Molina and Luxardo (2018) highlight the importance of valuing the knowledge produced by the profession, emphasizing the importance of understanding social reality in a complex way (Ortega, 2015) and reflecting the need to integrate social research (Linardelli & Pessolano, 2019) and systematization (Castañeda-Meneses, 2014) as part of the praxis of Social Work, including a reflective and fruitful dimension in professional work.

Regarding the above, it is important to reflect on how the profession is reproduced through academic training. Castañeda-Meneses (2014) warns that, since the dictatorship in Chile, technocratic practices have been consolidated in using the Social Work intervention method, influencing and permeating professional training.

The study is expected to discuss the depth of the theoretical-methodological reflection present in the professional action of the center, analyzing the use of theories and models, the intervention process developed by the CIAS, and, about this, the participation that the subjects



served. The existence of different approaches regarding the role of individuals in social intervention is considered, from traditional positions to critical positions that advocate active and transformative participation (Del Prado and Rivero n.d., cited by Paño-Yáñez *et al.*, 2019) since this can vary in levels, from the symbolic to citizen control (Di Virgilio, 2021).

On the other hand, to understand how the community has valued the CIAS, it is essential to consider the space and the characteristics of its inhabitants. As Saravia-Cortes and Panez-Pinto (2022) point out, understanding social and spatial relationships continues to challenge the discipline. In line with this, Bryant and Williams (2020) warn that focusing solely on the local can lead to ignoring broader structural determinants.

In this way, the article is structured into sections that allow a comprehensive analysis of the CIAS's professional action, considering its theoretical-methodological aspects and the community's assessment. Finally, conclusions and recommendations are offered based on the research findings.

2. Methodology

Methodological Approach

The study corresponds to a qualitative approach since it is interested in accessing the conceptions of the subject (Donoso *et al.*, 2016), who, from an analytical and reflective perspective, sought to produce and contribute to knowledge from the description of the professional action of the Intervention Center and Social Care, with an exploratory-descriptive nature from a phenomenological approach. The research was supported by a case study, which allowed a holistic, systematic, and in-depth process to be carried out in the categories of analysis, collecting, and comparing the realities of the problem (Sánchez-Flores, 2019).

Participants and sources of information

Ten participants were considered with the following profile:

1. Three academics who performed some function related to the management of the center from its beginnings to the present,
2. Four students and graduates from the Adventist University of Chile completed intermediate or professional internships at the center.
3. Thirteen community leaders and social leaders, men and women, were linked to the center through community work.

Data collection techniques

Four data collection techniques were used for the study:

1. Document Review: Search and processing strategies for the information in the documents were used for a systematic, coherent, and sufficiently argued presentation of evidence (Tancara, 1993). A document analysis and selection process was carried out considering the inclusion criteria: Center creation project, student intervention projects in practice, attendance record, intervention record, and interview guidelines.
2. Semi-structured Interview: It allowed the generation of interpersonal communication between the researchers and study subjects in order to obtain verbal answers to the questions posed (Díaz-Bravo *et al.*, 2013) and allowed to know and understand the meanings of the informants about their participation in the CIAS project. We worked with a priori categories developed from the study's specific objectives and emerging categories. The a priori categories of the first objective: Examine the evaluation of the center in the local community, pay tribute to the category: (1) Evaluation of the Center that distinguishes the perspective of the community, community leaders, and CIAS students in practice. The second specific objective, namely exploring the use of approaches and models in the intervention, gave rise to the following category: (2) Use of intervention approaches and models. Finally, the objective is to discuss the theoretical-methodological action of the center and respond to category (3), the theoretical-methodological dimension of the center's action. The emerging categories resulted from the documentary analysis and interviews with key informants.
3. Focus Group: It was generated as a space for opinion to capture the feelings, thoughts, and lives of individuals, provoking self-explanations (Hamui-Sutton & Varela Ruiz, 2013) and was carried out in two instances, one of them with the community leaders from the sector and another with CIAS professionals and alums. The topics addressed corresponded to the same categories of the in-depth interview structure previously applied.
4. Ecomap: To identify the nature of the underlying connections between the community and institutions (Fernández-Moya *et al.*, 2011), the ecomap made it possible to represent the relationships that the center has established with the community groups of the different sectors and with the institutions.

The selection criteria for documentary material correspond to all the documents generated from the center's foundation until 2023. A total of 149 printed and 181 in digital format were collected, including different types of reports and records, prepared mainly by students completing their internships, classified into 24 types.

Regarding the semi-structured interview and focus group, it is necessary to state that the selection of the sample of participants was carried out through non-probabilistic convenience sampling (Hernández-Sampieri *et al.*, 2014), understanding that the aim was to present

information from the voices and experiences of those who took part in some of the stages of the center since their notions were considered to define the study categories.

The evidence collected in the fieldwork was analyzed from the perspective of content analysis (Silveira-Donaduzzi et al., 2015). Regarding ethical safeguards, the study has been submitted to the judgment of the Scientific Ethics Committee of the Adventist University of Chile.

3. Findings

3.1 Assessment of the CIAS in the community

Regarding the assessment of the CIAS within the local community, the findings of this research are presented; where although the objectives of the study did not aim to situate the professional action of the CIAS in the local space, as progress was made in the Understanding the results, several features of the environment began to gain value. For example, the conditions of isolation and difficulties of access to the sector where the localities served are located have contributed to generating a certain independence and autonomy of its inhabitants concerning the commune of Chillán; a sense of identity can even be recognized among the people of these localities, as will be shown later.

Community organizations and their leaders are critical in the sectors served by the CIAS. The center, by directly working on local issues, has the recognition of community leaders.

7

The CIAS has been linked to six neighborhood units: La Victoria, El Emboque, Los Montes, Las Mariposas, Los Barriales, and Los Guindos. In addition to the members of its board, he has worked with different leaders of community organizations.

Community leaders mostly have continuity in their careers as leaders, which gives them a base of experience over time and gives them a perspective on the history of this sector and the changes it has experienced.

The link between the CIAS and the community is favored because they are small towns with low population density, where social relations can occur face to face.

The leaders, aware of local processes, realize the importance of community life in these localities, commenting, for example, on the impact of the 2010 earthquake and the recent pandemic. In this regard, they state that while the traumatic experience of the earthquake united neighbors in their efforts to organize, protect themselves, and meet their needs, the Covid 19 pandemic generated individualism and apathy.

Before (we were defined by) participation, now horror and fear. (Community leader 2, personal communication, July 14, 2022)



Another element that arises when situating the professional action of the CIAS, perhaps the most relevant, is the importance of spiritual values for the community. The Adventist religion emerged as a pillar that has supported community identity and cohesion over the years; even currently, many people and families living in these localities belong to the Adventist Church.

By highlighting this element, we become aware again of the particularity of the professional intervention experience that is analyzed and the unique context in which it is situated.

The presence of Adventist institutions with a nursery, school, high school, university, and its temples, for several decades, has marked the identity and way of life in these sectors, becoming an actual pole of population attraction, a source of employment, and, without doubt, of evangelization. In 2018, 81.4% of workers hired by the university (approximately 700) declared themselves to belong to the Adventist Church (Morales-Ojeda *et al.*, 2018).

For its part, CIAS, as part of the Adventist University and responding to the institutional mission, promotes values based on a biblical-Christian worldview in its interventions, contributing to the strengthening of the Adventist philosophy in the sectors served. This fact is key to understanding the value CIAS acquires for the leaders, families, and communities served, especially those who share the Adventist religion.

8

Community activities and celebrations reveal the value of family and civic and religious traditions, with a syncretism of popular manifestations, traditional Catholicism, deeply rooted in rural areas, and the new Adventist faith.

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... Christmas is celebrated for the children in the area (Community Leader 2, personal communication, July 14, 2022).

Playing secret friend, the anniversary we celebrate, Christmas (Community leader 1, personal communication, July 14, 2022).

We are all one (Community Leader 2, personal communication, July 14, 2022).

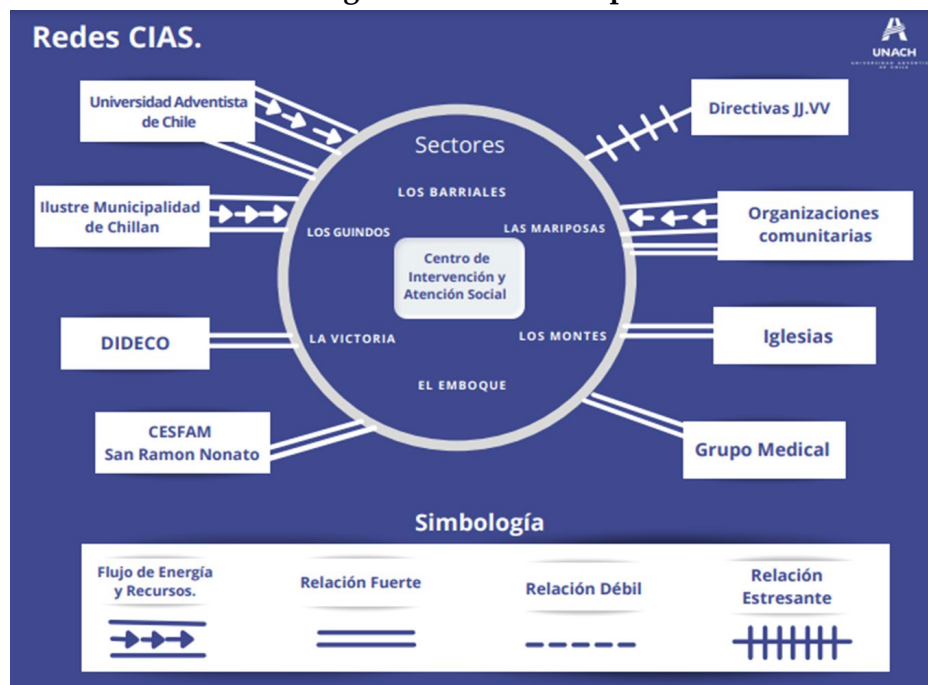
Returning to the positioning of the CIAS, in the Ecomap developed by Social Work students and thesis students who collaborated with this project, one can observe the relationships that the center has established with community organizations and with some public and private institutions, highlighting some strong relationships and in some cases with a flow of resources to the CIAS, which illustrates how the center deploys its actions towards the sector.

On the other hand, the most significant community organizations in the work of the CIAS are the groups of senior citizens and the neighborhood councils. Regarding the latter, it is striking that the students, based on their experience of working at the CIAS, have evaluated the relationship with the center as "stressful," which may be associated with the demanding attitude of these leaders towards the CIAS, partly associated with the high expectations that are placed on the center, considering it as a direct representative of the university, and not just as the action of a career.

I do not see a commitment from the university to work with the community; they have enough health courses to make operations possible. Social Work students commit, but they do not have the other resources. (Community leader 3, personal communication, August 3, 2022)

Regarding the Centre's link with its surroundings, the following eco-map represented in Figure 1 reveals various dynamics of collaboration, with the strongest and most stable links being those related to the institutions closest from a territorial point of view. This favors a daily and direct link between the communities, the services the center provides, and the networks it can establish with the most distant institutions, constituting a bridge of union and intermediation between the parties.

Figure 1. CIAS Ecomap.



Source: own elaboration.

As for the center's contribution to the sectors it works with, teachers and alums value the possibility of managing networks and resources to solve different problems or contribute to

issues of interest to the community. The difficulties of access to services and the isolation of the sector have already been mentioned.

I think it has been positive because it has been possible to work, for example, with other institutions, with different courses and those interventions such as field operations; it has encouraged the participation of the neighbors, it has also linked the communities, it has linked the neighbors with the center, so I think it has been more of a positive impact than a negative one because many times it has also been possible to apply for projects that have contributed to the development of both the groups of the community itself or in particular cases of some families. (Graduate 3, personal communication, August 4, 2022)

When looking deeper into the perspective of community leaders regarding the center's professional action, the activities that seem to be most significant to them or that they remember most clearly are the training sessions and workshops, different types of celebrations or commemorations, and some cultural and recreational activities. Also, the carrying out of surveys and applying for competitive funds are remembered most clearly. What is remembered most clearly are the projects that leave a mark on the landscape, something concrete like painting a headquarters or fixing benches in a plaza, among others.

On the other hand, the attention and kindness in the treatment of the leaders in the different activities by the students is highlighted.

10

The CIAS has played a significant role in promoting autonomy and developing capacities within the organizations with which it works. Through the training and empowerment of local leaders and facilitating access to resources and networks, the CIAS strengthens the community.

Yes, it has helped us a lot in terms of support in the organization and in the development of projects for the community (Community Leader 2, personal communication, August 4, 2022).

You learn a lot; you learn to organize activities, communicate and listen to neighbors, and propose solutions. Sometimes, conflicts arise between neighbors over site issues, and intervention must be made (Community Leader 3, personal communication, August 5, 2022).

As for the weaknesses of the process, the CIAS's difficulties in reaching all localities with its work and the discontinuity observed in the summer months when the university is on recess are mentioned.

Partly, yes, because the main objective is to contribute to community development, but I think it has been challenging to work with specific sectors such as Los Guindos and La Victoria, perhaps because they are further away from the center, and that has made it challenging to work with them. (Graduate 2, personal communication, August 4, 2022)

In January and February, we were abandoned by the center because no one was in charge. If a report is needed, there is no one to go to in those months. (Community leader 2, personal communication, August 4, 2022)

The actions developed address immediate problems. In the stories analyzed, it is impossible to identify long-term objectives in the work with localities or organizations, nor an articulation between the activities carried out. However, the center's contribution to the leaders is clearly recognized. As Pastor-Seller (2021) points out, it should be noted that the feeling of belonging to a specific community is directly related to the objective and subjective resources and support received and/or perceived by the subjects.

3.2 Using intervention approaches and models

Regarding the category of approaches and intervention models used by the center, it should be noted that the CIAS does not have a definition of the concept of Social Work, so it is inferred that it adopts what is understood by the degree program, which states the following on its official website:

The Social Work career trains Social Workers with holistic knowledge derived from the social sciences and mastery of practical skills in the various areas of professional performance. Their training is comprehensive and consistent with the institutional mission. It has a high sense of service to people, which understands man as a being created by God, unique and indivisible in his bio-psycho-social context. Likewise, it has the tools to analyze, make technical judgments, and propose solutions in the different scenarios in which it is required to intervene. (Universidad Adventista de Chile, n.d., par. 1)

This career description includes a holistic approach based on social sciences and a bio-psycho-social perspective focused on the human being as God's creation. This permeates the intervention of the CIAS, reflected in the integration of spiritual values. Although it does not have its definition of Social Work, its action is aligned with the Adventist worldview, seeking a balance between the needs of the groups and communities served, which includes social and spiritual needs.

On the other hand, to describe the intervention carried out by the CIAS, the defined levels and the stages of the process it develops will be analyzed.

Intervention levels

By a historical tradition in the training of Social Workers in Chile (Castañeda-Meneses, 2014), the Adventist University of Chile organizes the teaching and learning processes of the degree around individual-family professional intervention, with groups and communities, thus



structuring the intermediate and professional practices of the students and by extension the work of CIAS.

Although the three levels of intervention appear naturalized in the language of both former students and teachers who have been part of CIAS, and there are no significant questions regarding these formative divisions and reality, it is interesting that several of the actors comment on the relevance of some levels of intervention over others about the characteristics of the families and communities that are constituted in the different localities, giving an account of flexibility and sensitivity regarding the particularities of the environment.

I also remember that we had a suggestion before the accreditation process; an external peer questioned us about the fact that we work with the classic method and why we do not move to an integrated methodology. It was interesting to think and reflect on which models are more appropriate. (Academic 2, personal communication, August 11, 2022)

The lines of work are varied. One has to do with casework casuistry, another has to do with training leaders and community work in general; another area of intervention has to do with group work, and another strong line of intervention is the development of social projects and the linking of resources, in this case from different institutions that support the work of the CIAS. (Academic 1, personal communication, August 18, 2022)

... it will depend on who is there or the needs we, as social workers, can see in the community or the sector where we are inserted. For example, I can be in Las Mariposas. For me, the most important thing in that sector will be the elderly, so I do group work, but not in another sector, and it will be case family because they are more vulnerable. I see more needs, so it depends on the Social Worker's criteria. (Graduate 1, personal communication, August 4, 2022)

On the other hand, intervention at the individual-family level is seen as an action of a more assistance-based nature, which leaves room for questions about how each of the levels of intervention in the CIAS is defined and whether there is a medium- or long-term plan or strategy that integrates the actions carried out.

Intervention process

During the annual academic cycle, the CIAS structures its intervention following the interrelated sequence of stages corresponding to the phases of the traditional Social Work intervention model (Fallas-Jiménez, 2009), which are clearly identified by the different actors forming part of the CIAS.

...we, as CIAS, work on the methodological process of social work, which is reflected in the project... the initial diagnostic phase, an annual program...and after that, an individual program is also made for each student. There is a general program, such as CIAS, for everything that will be carried out and developed during the year, and there is also an individual program for each sector for each student. Well, then comes the execution process,

where the intervention methodology is validated, carrying out each action and activity... Then, there is also a final evaluation process and an ex during the evaluation process... (Academic 3, personal communication, August 18, 2022)

First, in the diagnostic phase, where the students in practice have to diagnose through the interviews that are done with the leaders, then an intervention to be executed has to be planned, and finally, it is evaluated and systematized, although the systematization phase is not so reflected in the center, eh I think that at the end of each semester or year, feedback is made on each of the interventions made in each community. (Graduate 1, personal communication, August 4, 2022)

When analyzing the point of view of community leaders regarding community participation in the different stages of the CIAS intervention, a difference can be seen with respect to the opinion of the academics and alums of the center. The leaders maintain that they have not participated in the needs assessment, do not remember this type of action having been carried out, or have not had feedback on any activity of this type.

There have been no consultations, and no results have been made. The diagnoses have not been shown either (Community Leader 2, personal communication, August 4, 2022).

The leaders of the El Emboque sector express a feeling of exclusion, realizing that activities do not reach their sector.

In January and February, we were abandoned by the Centre because no one was in charge. If a report is needed, there is no one to turn to in those months. I do not see a commitment from the university to work with the community, and they have enough health courses to carry out operations. Social Work students commit but do not have the other resources (Community Leader 3, personal communication, August 3, 2022).

On the other hand, the responses of those who claim to have participated in diagnostic instances do not detail how or when they were carried out. Regarding the participation of the leaders in the evaluation stage or discussion of the results of the intervention, most of them claim that these types of actions are not developed or that they have not participated in them. Some acknowledge informal conversations or activities aimed at evaluation but without further depth.

CIAS lacks a lot of community work. They do work with the leaders but not with the community. (Community leader 1, personal communication, July 14, 2022)

One of the interviewees, however, recalls that an activity is held annually in which the community is invited to learn about the results of the work carried out by the CIAS.

They have asked us questions about our needs and helped us work on those needs. (Community Leader 2, personal communication, July 14, 2022)

As stated at the beginning of the article, participation must be understood as a process that can vary in levels, from the symbolic to citizen control; according to what Vázquez *et al.* (2003, cited by Di Virgilio, 2021) state, these authors recognize two basic levels of participation:

The first level is called symbolic participation, in which participation is assimilated into the use of public services and includes information and consultation activities. A second level, called citizen control, involves a process that begins with collaboration and includes the delegation of power. Citizen control expresses the possibility of an exercise of decision-making, support, and shared power by society. (p 17)

At the CIAS, the subjects have a symbolic level of participation, being summoned only for information or consultation purposes. The neighbors or leaders do not exercise leadership within the center's projects; they are recipients of its actions.

Models, theories, and approaches

Identifying authors, models, and approaches in the CIAS's actions was carried out, especially from the review of the written material available at the center. However, it was also addressed in the interviews and focus groups.

14 Regarding the documentary material, the highest frequencies correspond to dissemination materials, projects aimed at working with localities in the sector, informed consent forms for the application of interviews, and records of the same. The selection criteria consider nine types of documents from an analysis matrix that considers the type of document, description of the material, date of preparation, identification of the level of intervention in which it was used, stage within the intervention process, dimensions or variables recorded in the document, references to authors and models or theories used. One of the advantages of the documentary review developed by the students was that it became a tool that evidenced the first investigative processes developed at the center, where the development and traceability were reflected, a characteristic of both formative and applied research (Gómez-Rodríguez *et al.*, 2017).

Based on the documentary review, it was possible to establish a shortage of records and a lack of depth in them, which became an obstacle to monitoring the actions carried out at the different levels of intervention since the documents were discontinued or incomplete. On the other hand, the absence of detailed reports, especially in the stages of execution and evaluation of the work, practically prevented the analysis regarding the use of models and theories. However, statements regarding applying various models could be observed: Crisis Intervention Model, Task-Centered Model, Clinical Model, Biopsychosocial Model, and Participatory Action Research, among others. In particular, it was possible to infer the use of theoretical elements in the diagnosis stage of the interventions, using them to contextualize and understand the intervention problem. Bronfenbrenner's ecological and motivational theories were especially

cited in the general systems theory. Also, in the planning stage, the use of ex-ante, ex-dure, and ex-post evaluation models was confirmed as part of the interventions' methodological process. However, due to the scarcity of information, it was challenging to have a more in-depth discussion about the relevance or scope of using these reference frameworks.

During these years, a responsible intervention has been carried out within the ethical parameters, supported by the methodology of our profession and the theoretical backings, which makes us validate and support our intervention, a product of the reflective interventions and also of the teamwork that is supported by the theoretical and methodological aspects. According to my experience as a teacher of the workshop of students who also intervened in the CIAS, models and theories were worked on. They were tested in practice, which was valuable in generating changes and processes of change in the communities. (Academic 3, personal communication, August 18, 2022)

On the other hand, oblique approaches in social policies at the national level, such as the gender and intercultural perspective, were not evident in the CIAS projects.

As a central element, it was established that the ethical-Christian foundation is the basis of the CIAS project, which is indicated in several of the center's working documents. The presence of Adventist institutions in the sector has dramatically impacted the formation of the surrounding populations and their way of life, which imprints some characteristics on the community identity, strongly marked by Adventist religious beliefs. Therefore, the relationship between the CIAS and the community has this seal.

I believe that there is a natural validation, according to the institutional philosophy, which is also sought to be reflected in the exercise of the CIAS, in the principles, the Christian philosophy, in the sense of the principles, of the concept of biblical-Christian in the sense of helping others, the principles of validation of the person, of human resources, validation of the subject as a person, of the potential of the human being, eh, of recognizing the other as a neighbor, and with all their resources and potentials, from the Christian point of view, not merely confessional, but also from the point of view of the breadth that allows a look, from the gospel and the principles that it preaches and that seeks, of course, to favor this type of philosophy, for which it is a seal and is validated by the community. (Academic 1, personal communication, August 18, 2022)

At this point, the reflection raised by Morales-Alejandro (2022) is interesting. He argues that spiritual and religious beliefs and practices play an important role in the lives of the populations we serve. However, the social work profession has distanced itself from its implications for human behavior, giving preeminence to professionalization and secularization. (Hutchinson, 2008, cited in Morales-Alejandro, 2022, p. 211)

This bias, which leads to an invisibility of the spiritual dimensions of the subject, is also shared by other academic disciplines due to the weight of the scientific, positivist, and materialist discourse. However, the religious or the spiritual, in a broader sense, appears even "as part of the interpretative framework from which the agents define and construct the stories around what for them is a problematic situation... a sin..." (Sánchez, 2018, p. 93) and Christian institutions and their referents appear as social actors when we analyze the community and neighborhood space. ... they constitute instances of construction of knowledge – both individual and collective – for daily life and the theo(ideo)logical reading of social reality (Sánchez, 2018).

In particular, in the context of this professional action, it is relevant to reflect on the position that the CIAS assumes regarding the spiritual dimension of the life of the people served.

3.3 Theoretical-methodological dimension of the professional action of the center

The results obtained in the study made it possible to identify a series of theoretical-conceptual and practical limitations that the teams face in their professional action at the center.

Regarding the theoretical-conceptual limitations, it is noted that the professional training of the Social Worker in this area of performance, as has been observed, is affected by a superficial practice methodology, as pointed out by Burbano-Cerón *et al.* (2021).

16

The reports show that:

There are many challenges to critically and deeply reflecting on the type of work that CIAS does in the community. It is currently difficult to measure aspects such as integrating theory and practice due to the lack of a rigorous record of the work carried out... (Academic 1, personal communication, August 18, 2022).

The theoretical-conceptual foundations of professional intervention in the center show deficiencies in the capacity to situate the subject, object epistemologically, and methodological referents per the demands, institutional origin, and associated normative procedures. This gap is attributed to professionals' perceptions, who point out the weakness of a specific theoretical development or precedent in this domain that enables the definition and classification of such elements for intervention. In addition, it is recognized that intervention in this area is superficial, influenced by a conventional perspective, and conditioned by the recurrent practices of the chair, which establishes mechanized practices.

In this regard, the following concrete actions are proposed:

- The development of a specific theoretical-methodological framework that supports the option of working based on the three traditional levels of intervention or with an integrated perspective, combined with the theoretical principles of Social Work and the institutional mission of the center.
- The training and specialization of professionals and students, promoting programs or instances of continuing education that integrate interdisciplinary approaches and innovative methodologies for social intervention. This could include incorporating contemporary community development theories, participatory methodologies, and action-research techniques.

As regards practical or operational limitations, there is a need to consolidate more stable work teams that allow for more excellent continuity of work in the area since the work of the CIAS is limited by the university's summer break and by the discontinuity of teams made up mainly of students on semester internships, as well as by the lack of professionals with more extraordinary dedication of working hours to the center. This demand also arises from the needs of community leaders, who have high expectations of the presence of the University and the Center as an ally of the communities.

The following concrete actions are proposed to contribute to strengthening the professional action of the center:

- Consolidation of stable and permanent professional team. A continuous multidisciplinary team is considered necessary, even during academic recess. It is recommended that disciplines such as psychology and education be incorporated to address community challenges comprehensively.
- Implement a system of registration, monitoring, and evaluation of the interventions carried out by the CIAS to maintain qualitative and quantitative data that allow measuring the impact, efficiency, and sustainability of the actions developed. A systematization process would strengthen the center's reflective analysis process.
- Strengthening strategic alliances with public and private institutions and NGOs to ensure the mobilization of resources and the creation and maintenance of support networks. This favors the coverage and sustainability of CIAS interventions.
- The promotion of active community participation by encouraging and supporting the co-creation of projects with leaders and members of the communities served, ensuring that their needs, values, and knowledge are the central axis of the interventions. This will allow the projects developed to be more relevant and strengthen the participating communities' empowerment and sense of belonging.

The need to promote the creation of self-sustaining local development structures and the operation of community development centers is recognized as a strategy to offer comprehensive

services to the population and implement actions of social benefit by the condition and needs of the localities, with the co-responsible participation of state and municipal governments in collaboration with the beneficiary population (Graizbord and González-Alva, 2012).

4. Conclusions

The findings suggest a comprehensive description of the Center for Social Intervention and Care (CIAS) 's professional work, focused on the local community's perception to understand its assessment and legitimacy. By exploring the approaches and intervention models applied in its professional actions, it is easier to assess its relevance and effectiveness in addressing social problems from a specific context, opening a discussion on the theoretical-methodological dimension of said work, providing an opportunity to critically reflect on the implementation of the theories and methods used, which contributes to the continuous improvement of professional praxis.

The professional action of the center is developed from a simple operation, structured throughout an annual academic cycle, under the direction of a coordinating academic and the direct execution by students in Social Work practice. Understanding the relationship between social and spatial dimensions is challenging for social work (Saravia-Cortes & Panez-Pinto, 2022). However, according to the results, it was found that the CIAS, through its work, is integrated and recognizes the culture and spirituality of the localities it serves, which, from their characteristics of isolation, semi-rurality, and sense of belonging to the place, show a high appreciation of the center.

This result is primarily due to the influence of the Adventist institution to which the CIAS belongs, which is relevant since most residents share the Christian faith. This way of working has allowed the CIAS to achieve a position and gain the trust and respect of the community, which in turn strengthens its interventions and activities.

On the other hand, the CIAS also faces challenges related to the perception of its impact and continuity. Collaboration with neighborhood councils and community leaders is sometimes perceived as stressful, reflecting the high expectations placed on the CIAS as a university representative. In addition, discontinuing its work during the university summer breaks poses challenges to maintaining a constant and effective intervention.

As Pastor-Seller (2021) argues, different and conflicting interests, objectives, conflicts, and feelings coexist in the community. These aspects highlight the importance of continuous management and long-term commitment to communities to promote a positive positioning of the CIAS.

On the other hand, the philosophical position of the CIAS, of a confessional nature, is based on a Christian ethical approach that declares principles based on Adventist education, founded on service, equity, diversity, and inclusion, on which the center's actions are based. This dimension aims to strengthen the coherence between the principles and practices implemented at the CIAS, thus consolidating its contribution to a more just and inclusive society.

The use of theoretical approaches and models in community work is a fundamental aspect that deserves priority attention in the center's interventions, although it is currently incipient. Payne (1995) underlines the importance of adopting a sociological theoretical approach in community social work, which would involve thoroughly understanding social contexts, power structures, and community dynamics to achieve a significant impact on the well-being and quality of life of community members. In this sense, Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn (2000) have highlighted the importance of the local community of residence in the levels of perceived community support because resources are not distributed equally among the members of a community since there are vast spatial differences in the levels of income, education, housing quality, residential stability and employment in the communities.

The CIAS must incorporate these principles in current and future interventions since this will maximize the effectiveness and relevance of the actions in the community environment to which it provides services, thus promoting the development and well-being of the communities.

The theoretical-methodological dimension is the conceptual foundation that supports the center's interventions based on the practices developed. In this context, the theoretical foundation of the center's actions is carried out from a declarative perspective; however, it requires a critical articulation that recognizes the tensions and dialogues between the different theories, reflectively applying them to the social reality in which the center intervenes. In this regard, the actions and the intervention take center stage in the methodological process. According to Quinteros-Velásquez (2014), the intervention itself can be seen as a theoretical-methodological axis of social work, considering that the intervention influences all the profession's processes, which gives social work its characteristics.

Regarding the methodological approach in the professional action of the center, a structure is observed from the traditional method, integrating approaches that respond to the levels of individual-family, group, and community intervention. The choice and application of specific methodologies consider the goals set, the available resources, and the nature of the problems addressed. However, there has not been a critical-reflective process around the methodological approach. However, this dimension is relevant since it must represent a conceptual pillar supporting its practices and interventions. Its construction and evolution require careful and critical attention, ensuring the coherence, relevance, and effectiveness of the actions undertaken to benefit social transformation and the well-being of the communities served.

Regarding the theoretical-methodological referents of the professional action of the center, gaps are identified to epistemologically locate the subject and object linked to the spontaneous demands for attention as well as its basic operational process. This supports the need to address challenges surrounding intervention and systematization of interventions, recognizing the need for a paradigmatic change that requires going beyond the scope of daily action, promoting structural transformations from the identity base of the models to which the center subscribes, adherence to theoretical and methodological approaches that address the plurality and diversity present in contemporary society.

This methodological exercise and approach to the action of the CIAS through the different voices of academics, students, and community representatives has allowed the identification of challenges and recognition of learning that will improve the management and positioning of the center. In addition, it encourages a reflection on the professional praxis developed from this academic space based on the interventions of Social Work students in the community, contributing to a dialogue regarding the development and teaching of the discipline that needs to be further deepened.

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Authors' contributions

Valeria Andrea Villegas-Alarcón: conceptualization, data curation, formal analysis, resource acquisition, investigation, methodology, project administration, resources, software, supervision, validation, visualization, writing (original draft), writing (review of draft and review/correction); Simi Jiménez-Carrasco: conceptualization, data curation, formal analysis, resource acquisition, investigation, methodology, project administration, resources, software, supervision, validation, visualization, writing (original draft), writing (review of draft and review/correction); Massiel Carolina Venegas-Hernández: conceptualization, data curation, formal analysis, resource acquisition, investigation, methodology, project administration, resources, software, supervision, validation, visualization, writing (original draft), writing (review of draft and review/correction).

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest in the writing or publication of this article.



Ethical implications

The authors have no ethical implications to declare in the writing and publication of this article.

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