

## Article

# Twitter, Social Services and Covid-19: Analysis of Interactions between Political Parties and Citizens

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**Abstract:** The state of alarm caused by Covid-19 has mobilised the population's digital social participation in social networks. Likewise, the relevance acquired by Social Services as a support for the social and health crisis has generated an unprecedented social debate on Twitter about the reality of these services in Spain. The analysis of this phenomenon is the focus of the present article, in which the tweets on Social Services and Covid-19 published during the confinement have been analysed using the qualitative analysis software Atlas.Ti. The results show the precariousness of social services and that a change in the management and financing model of these services is required to guarantee benefits and satisfy fundamental social rights.

**Keywords:** Covid-19; Twitter; Social Services; citizen interactions; political discourse; network analysis



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## 1. Introduction

Covid-19 mobilises digital transformations and is proving to be a “total social fact”, a concept of the French sociologist and anthropologist Marcel Mauss, to refer to those phenomena that bring into play all the dimensions of the social, as is the case with this pandemic that has become a social fact that has filled and affected all of society by changing our daily lives [1]. The philosopher Adela Cortina, affirms that our current society is going to change radically after the health crisis becomes a social crisis and to get out of this crisis, all of the moral capacity and all the ethical capital of each society is going to be needed [2].

In view of the above, social networks, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), and especially Twitter, which is the social network we are analysing, are connected with this social fact, as is Covid-19. In the first month of 2020, there have been more than 15 million tweets with Covid-19 as the theme on the social network Twitter and on the day that the WHO called the virus a pandemic, nearly 10 million pieces of content were published on this social network, according to data provided by the social media analysis blog Tweet Binder [3]. Social networks have appeared during this health crisis, as well as in our lives and in the way we communicate and relate, with the social network Twitter playing a fundamental role, as we have pointed out. The discourse on Twitter transcends the screen with great visibility and notoriety, including through fake news, and can be a source of disinformation like the rest of the digital platforms [4]. In the words of [5], this may represent certain negative conspiracies that relate to disinformation and fake news. It is important to assess when such disinformation and fake news that are received or

broadcast on social networks deal with information related to people's health, as is the case with Covid-19 [6].

This investigation focuses on the months of March and April 2021, during the application of the state of alert and the toughest months of confinement in Spain. By mid-April, there were already more than 417 million tweets about Covid-19. In Spain at that time, there were 558 tweets on the topic of Social Services.

As they point out [7], "the public health crisis of the coronavirus is also a crisis of political communication and health" (p. 1). In this article, we analyse the perception of Social Services on Twitter through the citizen interactions of politicians, public institutions, political parties, associations, etc. of the impact of Covid-19 and the state of alarm on the living conditions of citizens in general and the measures that have been taken to limit impact of Covid-19. We present results related to the generalised discourse on Twitter with messages of complaints, diffusions, improvements, information, etc.

### *1.1. Twitter as a Reflection of That Total Social Fact: The Uses of the Social Network*

A change in personal relationships was imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, in which interpersonal communication has been replaced by social distancing. Social networks play a fundamental role and are the perfect alternative for staying connected to the world; these social networks continue to be present in the new situation that we are facing at a global level and which has repercussions on the social fabric [8].

Social work professionals as well as other key groups during this health crisis have used social networks to embrace this shift from face-to-face work to teleworking to serve vulnerable groups. The social network Twitter is very useful for expressing messages of complaints, dissemination, demands, and information by any social stratum (citizens, politicians, trade unions, institutions, associations, etc.).

In order to share messages on social networks, these networks share a series of similar functions and utilities, including facilitating social interaction and information sharing [9]. Their use is established in three main areas: social use, information use, and professional use.

### *1.2. Social Use of Twitter*

In terms of social use, there is a preference for Facebook and Twitter, although there are distinctive features in terms of preference in their use. In the studies by [10], which studied the preferences in the use of these two social networks from the point of view of personality dimensions (extraversion, neuroticism, openness, friendliness, responsibility, sociability, and cognition), it was found that there was a positive correlation between the use of Facebook and the people who scored highest in neuroticism, extraversion, openness, and sociability. The use of Twitter had a higher correlation with cognition, responsibility, openness, and sociability.

Twitter is mainly used as a means of social interaction and information [11]. Another differentiating feature of Twitter is its use as a second screen, being the channel used in television programmes to interact, especially in issues related to political content [12]. Facebook, on the other hand, is a social network more focused on interaction and interpersonal communication with other users [13].

### *1.3. Information Use*

Studies by [14] indicate that Twitter is the social network used to obtain sources of information and that it is less commonly used to meet the needs of social interaction. Studies by [10] also show that the most important personality traits correlated to Twitter use are a sense of responsibility and the need for cognition. With regard to Facebook, while it is also used to obtain and exchange information by users, Twitter is the predominant channel of institutional information.

#### 1.4. Professional Use

The professional use of Twitter has been studied by several researchers, we highlight the study by [11] in which they conclude that there is a reason for its professional development combined with its informative uses. In line with these studies, [15] highlighted the importance of Twitter in the interactions of politicians with organisations and companies, and noted that Facebook is also used to interact with companies, but on a personal level. This is because Facebook allows for private messaging, which facilitates professional contact [16].

As far as social work is concerned, Facebook is used more by social work professionals, as this social network provides more presence and better connectivity [17]. It should be noted that Facebook is mainly used to maintain or strengthen existing offline relationships, rather than to meet new people [18], so the contacts established on this social network mostly correspond to contacts established in a person's personal network, unlike the ones found on Twitter [18].

Focusing on the informative use of social networks, as indicated above, Twitter is the most effective social network for this task, both for information attainment and for reporting [19]. Although it is not the most widely used social network, it is preferred for its immediacy and massive dissemination ability, as well as for interaction and the exchange of information and open ideas [20]. For this reason, it is widely used by public and private institutions, as well as by the media to inform citizens, and people use it to make their opinions known, or to make complaints about services.

In recent years, messages on social networks have achieved a personalisation of politics in the eyes of the public for the leaders of the main political parties in Spain, "either by giving them more weight compared to media attention to their parties; or by paying more attention to the personal lives of politicians" [21] (p. 18).

#### 1.5. Social Services, Covid-19 and Twitter

Social Services professionals at the beginning of this health crisis were not considered as essential personnel in the same way as people working: in the livestock, agriculture, and fishing industries; in supply and sale in supermarkets; doing home delivery of food; in health, elderly, and dependent care centres; as domestic and care workers; as emergency services and state security forces; on the manufacturing of work clothes and pharmaceutical products; in kiosks and the media; as state security forces; in the armed forces; in customs; in banking, in insurance and management services; in funeral services; and in urban cleaning. Following the situation in which these Social Services professionals found themselves, social intervention projects were suspended and home help for the elderly and dependents was restricted. For this reason, it was necessary to implement a comprehensive plan for the care of this group during the Covid-19 pandemic [22]. It has also provided the consequence of no longer providing benefits that gave a minimum of welfare support to the most vulnerable families, although the Spanish government has recently approved the Minimum Living Income that benefits these groups. After the authorities saw the effect that the limitation of Social Services professionals had, they declared them to be essential services on 26 March 2020 [23]. Social Services professionals continued to provide their services under the limitations of the state of alarm.

With the framework described above, the Social Services have been able to continue their activities under exceptional conditions and under the safety and hygiene measures that were adopted by the professionals. One of the first measures carried out was to guarantee the provision of home help, reconfiguring established services to the new situation such as tele-assistance, home help in some cases, etc. All of the administrative management and companies providing services to teleworking were adapted, all with the aim of complying with social distancing measures and taking care of the health of professionals and users. These measures have also affected vulnerable groups, as mentioned above. All this was set in motion to try to alleviate the incidence of Covid-19 and the state of alarm in segregated settlements and highly vulnerable neighbourhoods. The measures and recommendations

adopted by the Social Services have been extended to programmes for the protection of children and adolescents, voluntary work, and intervention in primary care social services.

During the months of confinement and the duration of the health crisis, many parishes, associations, communities, NGOs, etc., mobilised their material and human resources to help the most vulnerable families (homeless, irregular immigrants, abused women, single-parent families, those affected by unemployment, the elderly, etc.) who were in a situation of social exclusion. Thanks to this aid, many families could access basic necessities [24]. With the current situation at the end of the confinement, a very complicated economic situation is expected, during which a study should be conducted on the situation experienced by Spanish citizens during the confinement. On a political level, the state of alert decree approved by the Congress of Deputies needed to be applied, although it has brought social consequences for the Spanish economy with the closure of many companies and with economic containment to avoid the closure of as many others with the implementation of employment policies such as the Employment Regulation Schemes (ERTEs) [25]. The ERTEs covered temporary workers in sectors such as the hotel and catering industry, gambling and betting activities, accommodation services and the self-employed. This measure has had political consequences due to the late payment of benefits where people who were in this situation had to be assisted by Social Services, while the third sector (social organisations and entities) struggled to survive in these hard months of confinement after the Spanish government approved a Royal Decree-Law which allowed the state of alarm in Spain to be declared from 15 March 2020.

As mentioned at the beginning of the article, since the beginning of the epidemic, the use of ICT and social networks such as Twitter has increased to express opinions, search for information, and share information related to Covid-19 through messages, and in this research, these messages also refer to Social Services [26,27]. Twitter is a relevant social network for the study because it is widely used by people and a large portion of its 152 million daily users [28] consider this social network to be an important source of information where they can be present and be informed about scientific content and health-related news [29,30]. As Twitter is one of the main social networks where a person can become informed, it is important that its information is carefully analysed to make it as accurate and reliable as possible. As a result of the large amount of information received on the subject of Covid-19 and the social, economic, and health consequences of the epidemic, the WHO has revealed that there is an “infodemic” about the epidemic. For this reason, with the large generation of content around the theme of Covid-19, it is difficult to identify and distinguish true and reliable content from false and propagandistic content.

Everything previously mentioned about Social Services and the actions taken by them during the pandemic have been reflected in the messages and ideological, political, and social discourses broadcast on Twitter. Debates have arisen about the fundamental role that social work professionals are playing during the social and health crisis.

In this context, the objectives of this work have consisted of: 1. Determining perceptions about Social Services of the different social agents participating on Twitter during the Covid-19 crisis. 2. Analysing the messages on Twitter in order to define the priority themes that cover the ideas on Social Services of the profiles that actively participate in this social network. This has involved focusing especially on political discourses and their use of social networks to approach the reality of Social Services at the national level.

## 2. Materials and Methods

To carry out the proposed objective, the methodological process followed was based on a qualitative analysis of the data collected, complemented by a descriptive analysis of frequencies [31].

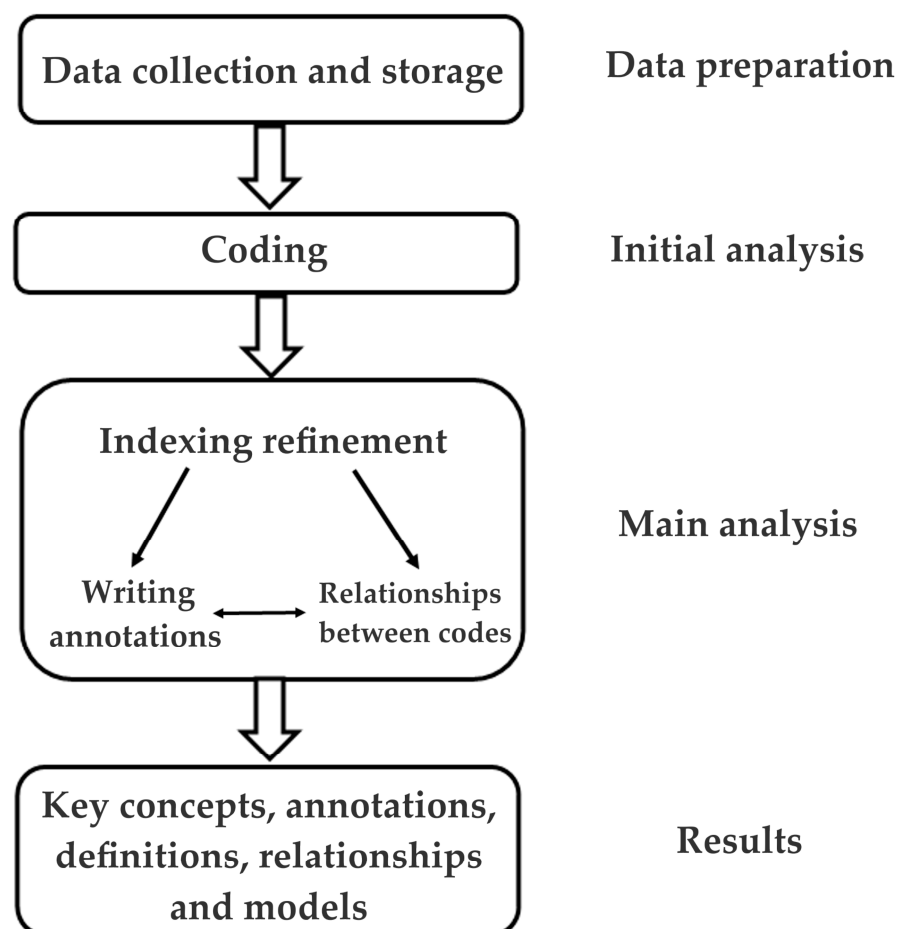
The first methodological phase, aimed at collecting data, was to capture tweets through the advanced search tool of Twitter of the terms “Social Services” and “Covid-19” in the territorial context of Spain. The time period chosen was March and April 2020. A state of alarm was applied during these two months and they were the hardest months of

confinement in Spain, reaching total confinement at the beginning of April. In order to curb the growth of the virus, the state approved a Royal Decree-Law [32] that allowed a state of national alarm to be declared in 15 March.

The second phase was defined by the qualitative analysis of the tweets extracted from the first phase of the methodological process. The method of qualitative analysis that was followed is the Grounded Theory [33], which bases its analysis on qualitative research and the treatment of qualitative data, in our case the tweets, from the Constant Comparative Method (CPM) approached through a Computer-Assisted/Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) [34], in our case the software Atlas.Ti 8. The CQM consists of the collection, codification, and analysis of data in a systematic way, carrying out a constant comparison of the similarities and differences of elements identified in the data with the aim of discovering communities between different relationships that are repeated throughout the analysis of the data.

Codification is the process by which the information obtained during the research is analysed and grouped into categories or codes that are the minimum units of meaning, and are used as the nodes of the semantic networks in the method.

Figure 1, shows in a schematic way the qualitative analytical process involved in a CAQDAS software followed in this study.



**Figure 1.** Analytical process in Atlas.Ti 8.

The result of the search has given rise to the configuration of the database that is the subject of analysis in this article, with a total sample of 845 tweets collected. They gave us an approximate view of Social Services in political discourses and their use of social networks.

The study of the sample provided an overview of the Twitter discourse during these two months of confinement. These speeches by politicians, political parties, citizens, and organisations are about the dissemination of information in different aspects, with complaints and positive assessments always being from the perspective of improving and valuing the work carried out by Social Services professionals, as they have been essential services during this pandemic.

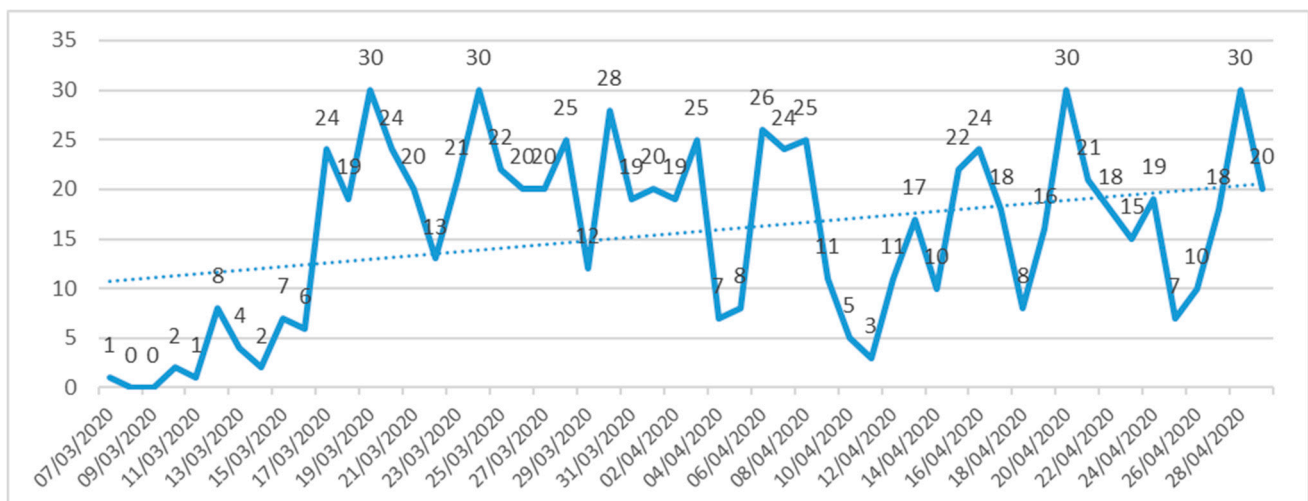
The analysis strategy followed in Atlas.Ti 8 to code each answer with open coding was used to consider each detail, while some provisional categories have been developed (types of information sources, functions of the tweets, subjects of the tweets, etc.) which are examined according to specific properties to then establish subcategories. The information was coded and categorised by identifying one or more messages from users who tweet about a topic and relating it to a code. All the codes were assigned names that were as close as possible to the concept they were describing.

### 3. Results

As a result of the application of the methodological model described above, a total of 845 tweets were extracted, which form the basis of the analysis carried out in Atlas.Ti 8. Of these, 292 were published in March and 553 in April 2020, coinciding with the national quarantine period.

The analysis process described with Atlas.Ti has resulted in a total of 97 codes or minimum units of information connected through 3566 direct relations, through which the discourse of the tweets analysed was structured.

As can be seen in Figure 2, although there are differences in volume over the days with continuous ups and downs, the publication of tweets on Social Services and Covid-19 followed an upward trend, reaching 30 on the central days of the confinement. A periodicity was also observed, with Fridays and Thursdays, respectively, found to be the days with the lowest number of Twitter posts on the subject under study, while Mondays and Tuesdays were the days with the highest volume of tweets.



**Figure 2.** Evolution of the volume of tweets during confinement in Spain.

In addition to the positive trend in the volume of tweets, it is important to highlight the diversity of sources that have published them. According to profiles, a total of 16 types of sources were distinguished that have published tweets about Social Services and Covid-19 on Twitter. As detailed in the following table, the most active source on the social network is individuals, with a total of 193 tweets, followed by town councils and local governments with 131 tweets (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Types of sources by volume of tweets.

Source Type	N° of Tweets
Source: private	193
Source: Local government/municipality	131
Source: media	97
Source: political party	69
Source: Trade and information platform	55
Source: Regional Government	41
Source: Citizens' platform	23
Source: Law enforcement and security forces	14
Source: trade union organisation	13
Source: Professional Associations/Colleges	8
Source: Third Sector Entities	8
Source: National Government	8
Source: Social Services Documentation Centres	6
Source: Provincial Council	5
Source: Neighbourhood association	4
Source: others	42

These data show an important mobilisation of citizens for discussing information on, denunciations of, and demand for Social Services, highlighting their importance in the pandemic.

At the territorial level, a total of 230 tweets on “Social Services” and “Covid-19” were registered in the Community of Madrid, the region which, together with Catalonia, was the epicentre of the pandemic in Spain during the national confinement, accounting for 33% of the total number of tweets analysed. A more in-depth analysis by region shows a direct relationship between the number of tweets and the number of infections, with the most highly interactive regions in the social network being those that have had a higher level of coronavirus infections, with the exception of Andalusia, which was in second position with 111 tweets and which, nevertheless, has had a relatively low incidence of infections compared to the rest of the regions, which may be due to the fact that Andalusia is the region with the largest population in the country, with 8.476,718 inhabitants, according to the 2020 Register, which represents 17.91% of the total Spanish population (see Table 2).

**Table 2.** Territorial distribution of the volume of tweets.

Region/Autonomous Community	N° of Tweets
Comunidad de Madrid	230
Andalucía	111
País Vasco	77
Comunidad Valenciana	56
Castilla y León	38
Cataluña	34
Castilla-La Mancha	26
Aragón	25
Gran Canaria	25
Asturias	16
Murcia	14
La Rioja	11
Navarra	11
Cantabria	8
Galicia	5
Islas Baleares	4
Ceuta	3
Extremadura	3

In terms of the objective pursued in the publication of the tweets, a distinction was made between the dissemination of services or measures implemented during the confinement, complaints to public institutions about the lack of resources, and demands for an increase in resources or services.

The codes extracted from the tweets analysed are shown in the following table, which shows the main use of the social network to disseminate the measures that have been activated. Thus, the dissemination of increased economic, material, and human resources in Social Services for the care of the most socially vulnerable groups was the most reiterated information with a total of 179 tweets, followed at a distance by the dissemination of the care provided by Social Services during the national quarantine period, as well as the improvements and benefits carried out and the information, recommendations, and guidelines for action in the face of the pandemic, which have also been highly reiterated on the social network.

The demands and complaints have had a lesser impact, the most important being the need for coordination and reinforcement of Social Services in the face of a pandemic that has shown the lack of economic and human resources to attend to the emergencies that have arisen as a result of the pandemic (see Table 3).

**Table 3.** Main themes of tweets published on Social Services and Covid-19.

	Code	N° Tweets
1	Dissemination of increased economic/material/human resources on Social Services vs. Covid-19: vulnerable groups	179
2	Dissemination of Social Services Attention vs. Covid-19	94
3	Dissemination of Benefits/Improvements of Social Services vs. Covid-19	86
4	Dissemination of Social Services: information/recommendations/guidance for Covid-19	83
5	Dissemination increased funding of Social Services vs. Covid-19	47
6	Dissemination of the work carried out by Social Services professionals against Covid-19	44
7	Dissemination of financial aid from Social Services against Covid-19	34
8	Demand to Government: coordination/strengthening/management of Social Services against Covid-19	31
9	Demand towards a City Council: reinforcing Social Services against Covid-19	28
10	Complaint to a City Council: management/protective measures vis-à-vis Covid-19	19
11	Complaint to a Government of Spain: cuts/underfunding of social services	19
12	Complaint to a City Council: coordination/deficiencies in Social Services vis-à-vis Covid-19	15

Based on the descriptive analysis of the tweets published, we can affirm that Twitter has been the main digital communication tool during the period of confinement, being used by individuals, private organisations, and public entities to publicise news, changes, and improvements and to disseminate the activities carried out throughout the period analysed. With regard to “Social Services” and “Covid-19”, the network has been used predominantly by services, political parties, and public bodies to disseminate the increase in investment in human, material, and service resources, reaching 179 tweets at the national level in just under two months. The care provided by the Social Services has also been central to the dissemination campaigns through the social network, publicising the increase in funding for these Services and recognising the work of the professionals who have responded from the Social Services to the increase in demands arising from the social and health crisis generated by the SARS-COV-2 coronavirus.

However, despite the dissemination carried out and the increase in resources in the Social Services, the discontent in the attention and the visibility of the fragility of the budget and resources in the Social Services has been evident in the social network. The denunciation of the situation of saturation of the Social Services has come from practically



all of the sources identified, the increase in the demand for services, together with an under-funding of services, has led to the collapse of the services. The urgency of the new realities of social vulnerability that have emerged during the confinement have meant a delay in the response to the most basic needs, having to resort to private donations, voluntary work, and non-formal support structures for Social Services to try to respond to the avalanche of requests for attention.

“Social services are completely overwhelmed and food aid is dependent on donations.” (To avoid bias, the tweets quoted have been anonymised, eliminating references to territories, people or entities to which they are addressed, as well as the source that publishes them.) Private source. 28 April 2020.

“... denounces that the council’s Social Services ... are saturated”. Media. 21 April 2020.

“... are looking for Social Services students to work in the residences. The number of people affected among the staff, confirmed or in isolation, already exceeds 400”. Media. 3 April 2020.

The difficulties encountered by the Social Services in meeting social demands have been clearly exposed and repeatedly denounced by different sources in all of the country’s territories, highlighting the lack of resources and funding of the social resources network, which is clearly insufficient to meet the volume of demands.

“Now the shortcomings in health and social services are coming to light”. Media. 24 March 2020.

“Detection of neglect of social functions of both the City Council and the (Autonomous) Community of Social Services”. Trade union organisation. 26 April 2020.

“Lack of staff in Social Services to provide service in an emergency situation like this”. Individual. 23 April 2020.

In addition to the lack of human resources and underfunding, the ineffectiveness of coordination protocols, which in many cases was non-existent, has been highlighted, which has resulted in a delay in responding to social needs and the abandonment of certain groups whose vulnerability has been multiplied as a result of the crisis.

“If you work for us, why have the Social Services of the City Council and the soup kitchens been closed and the ground of the Plaza Mayor is full of homeless people who have not eaten and who may also be sick?” Particular. 13 March 2020.

“We call on the city councils and the ... (regional government) ... to establish a coordinated effort to urgently implement the document of recommendations for action by the Social Services in the face of the Covid-19 crisis in highly vulnerable settlements and neighbourhoods”. Citizens’ platform. 29 March 2020.

“The demand for food due to the coronavirus crisis pushes social services to the limit: People are hungry in all cities”. Citizens’ Platform. 25 April 2020.

Another issue that obtained the interest of the participants in the social network is the denouncement of the absence of prevention protocols and protective equipment which, as in the health system, has led to a high incidence of infections among Social Services professionals, which further aggravates the crisis in care, as it means a decrease in the number of professionals in the already meagre staff of Social Services in Spanish municipalities.

“(regional government) requests more protection material for professionals of the Social Services system and vulnerable groups. The Regional Minister ... asks that the distribution of the extraordinary social fund takes into account the weight of the potential population at risk”. Regional Government. 20 March 2020.

“(trade union organisation) asks the Social Services Management to guarantee the health and safety of all its workers, to unify criteria and to provide individual protection equipment”. Trade union organisation. 17 March 2020.

“There is a lack of adequate #Covid-19 protection measures, and at the same time, conditions in an already precarious sector are worsening. “They are legalising slavery for social service workers”. Media. 15 April 2020.

However, despite the urgency of this situation, the dramatic circumstances that the most socially vulnerable population has had to suffer, and the collapse of basic services for the population, most political parties have taken advantage of the social network to denounce the measures implemented by their political opponents and demand improvements in services for the groups that have suffered the most from the crisis, contributing to the socio-political tension that has been generated during the months of confinement.

“Tomorrow PSOE and Cs will approve: Aid for Covid-19 misleading and insufficient, Rise in salaries of councilors, Cuts in Aid for books, youth or environment, Freezing in Employment, Equality, Housing, and Social Services”. Political Party. 29 April 2020.

“... PP policies generate poverty. More than 100 entities demand #PlanChoque-Infancia to eradicate child poverty and guarantee school support, decent food, guaranteed Social Services, economic security during the #Covid-19 pandemic and beyond”. Political Party. 16 April 2020.

Faced with the evidence of the dire situation of Social Services, which were unable to absorb the demand for their assistance, there have been frequent tweets aimed at understanding this situation as an opportunity to make the reality of the services visible, and to demand their reorganisation and improvement, declaring Social Services as essential services and, therefore, a priority for public funding and for obtaining sufficient resources.

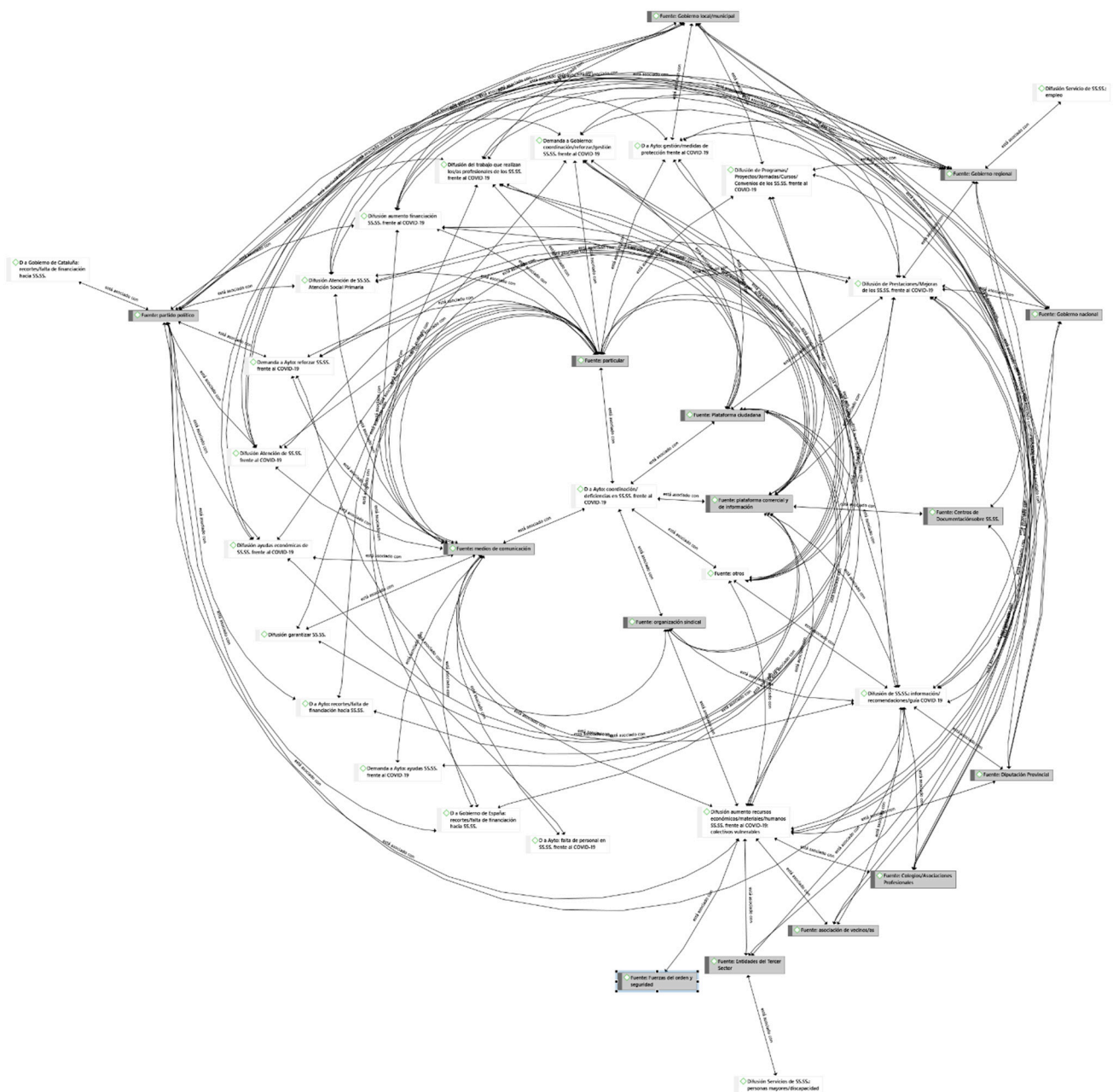
The ... (Social Services Association) ... calls for a reconfiguration of Social Services as essential services, and thus avoid a breakdown of the #socialcohesion #wearetogetherthis #Covid-19”. Media. 20 April 2020.

“The impact of Covid-19 in the different Autonomous Communities. We have to learn from what has happened and strengthen Public Health and Social Services of quality, public management and universal access”. Professional organisation. 20 April 2020.

### *Network Analysis*

After the descriptive treatment of the data analysed, the analysis in Atlas.ti allowed us to analyse the relationship between the citations and the codes, which made it possible to extract results based on first, second, or subsequent degree relationships, thus attending to the complexity of the phenomenon under study. For this reason, a relational study of the types of sources described above has been carried out by the typology of publications made by them, with the aim of finding out the positioning adopted by the different sources in their publications on the Twitter social network.

Figure 3 details the result of this analysis of code networks represented in a circular style. This circular arrangement distributes the nodes in a circle according to a well-formed circumference reducing overlaps. At the same time, closeness between contiguous nodes is allowed. This circular style emphasises group and tree structures within the network. Clusters of nodes are generated by analysing the connectivity structure of the network and positioning these clusters as circles separated from each other. The circles are positioned in a radial tree style, which is particularly interesting in the analysis of social networks or, as in our case, the analysis of social phenomena where it is of interest to know the connection between participants and the type of information that they provide [35].

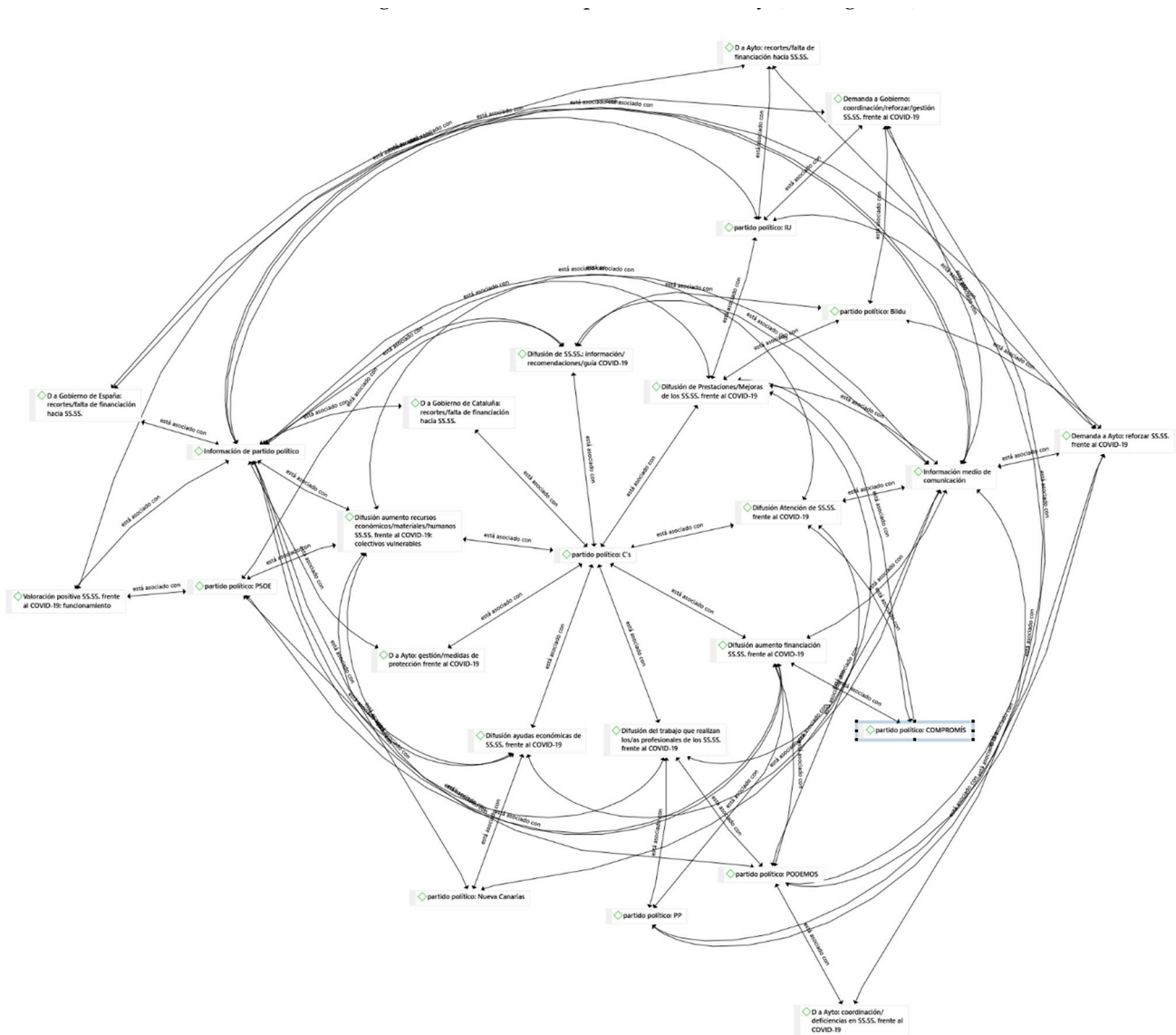


**Figure 3.** Relationships between source and tweet typology.

The result of this network identifies the centre of the radial tree as the code “Complaint to the city council about the lack of coordination and the deficiencies of the Social Services in relation to Covid-19”. This element, despite not being among the most reiterated elements in the discourse (only 15 tweets out of the 845 analysed were coded with this code) is highly relevant, as it is capable of structuring the network based on its centrality. Centrality is a frequently used element of analysis in social networks [36–38], as it allows us to understand the elements with greater efficiency, i.e., their capacity to influence the rest of the network.

In terms of political discourse and the communication strategies followed by political parties through Twitter, we found that the political party that has had the most complete dissemination was Ciudadanos, a party that is situated in the centre-right ideological arc, with a total of 24 tweets on Covid-19 and Social Services, diversifying its publications on Twitter, with representation on the social network from practically all regions, combin-

ing denunciation and demands to both local, regional, and national governments, and disseminating issues with an important centrality (see Figure 4).



**Figure 4.** Positioning of political parties according to the type of tweets.

The Socialist Party (PSOE), which, together with the Podemos political party, holds the national government, approaches nodes related to the dissemination of the increase in resources and funding for Social Services and the positive assessment of the public management of Covid-19. However, the left-wing Podemos political party prefers to make the work of Social Services professionals visible and denounces the deficiencies and lack of coordination in the provision of services by town councils and local governments.

#### 4. Discussion

The lack of coordination and deficiencies in the Social Services that have become evident during the period of national quarantine are of vital importance in the functioning of the mechanisms responsible for guaranteeing the social welfare of the populations with the highest level of affectation.

The lack of investment in the Social Services system, widely denounced and criticised by both academia and public and private organisations [39,40], has shown the impossibility of an adequate response by these services to the increase in demand since the decree of

the state of alarm was declared in Spain. Continuing with the graph, the sources that have denounced this are individuals, citizen platforms, media and information platforms, trade unions, and commercial platforms. However, other sources, with greater weight in the decision-making process, remain far from the centre of the network. Thus, political parties have focused on disseminating information on the reinforcement of primary social assistance and financial aid and on demanding an increase in Social Services resources when the corresponding government is of a different political persuasion.

For their part, town councils and local governments have focused on publicising the reinforcements undertaken in Social Services and on demanding more resources from the regional and national governments to combat the virus. In the case of the regional governments responsible for Social Services and the national government that has the main jurisdictional control over health, which was transferred to it by the regions during the state of alarm, graph 3 shows that they are close to nodes whose themes deal with the dissemination of the programmes, management, and services that they have strengthened or initiated during the pandemic and in purging the responsibilities of other governments with authority on these matters.

## 5. Conclusions

The scientific literature frequently analyses the role of society on Twitter to confirm social interest in certain issues or social realities that arise [41–43], since the social network brings together all kinds of profiles, from individual profiles to those of organisations and even decision-makers. Predictably, the analysis of Twitter in the pandemic has been widely used by researchers around the world to understand the public's perception of the barrage of cuts, measures, and regulations that have needed to be undertaken to curb the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Social Services system has been one of the most neglected in recent years as far as public services are concerned, both in terms of investment and in terms of social and public attention. The pandemic has highlighted the lack of adequate Covid-19 protection measures and, at the same time, the worsening of conditions in an already precarious sector. This health crisis has made the importance of its services visible, especially in the most socially vulnerable groups and as a guarantor of basic needs at a time when a large part of the population has been taken by surprise by this pandemic, which has imposed serious effects on employment and on families' ability to save.

The increased visibility of Social Services during the national confinement has led to a considerable and unprecedented increase in the attention paid to these services on Twitter, with messages of information and dissemination but also complaints and demands about the lack of coordination and the scarcity of resources coming mainly from the population itself and the media, while political leaders have preferred to use the social network to highlight the reinforcements in the services they have put in place and the steps taken to try to tackle the social and health crisis.

This crisis has highlighted the underfunding of Social Services in terms of budget, human resources, and protocols for prevention and coordination of the different social and health care services. This has led to delays in attending to the basic needs of the population in a situation of maximum social vulnerability and the saturation of services unable to absorb the increase in demands generated by the situation of socio-economic paralysis and confinement that the country suffered during the months of March and April 2020.

The continuous denunciation, the mobilisation of broad sectors of society in social networks such as Twitter, the involvement of professionals in their respective services, attending to the population even in a situation of lack of protection against the virus, and the collapse of services in a pandemic situation such as the one experienced, together with the potential possibility of future socio-health crises, make it necessary to change the model of financing and management of public social services, which would make it possible to guarantee basic social benefits to the entire population, preventing situations of dissatisfaction with fundamental rights and the worsening of situations of dissatisfaction with

fundamental rights, make a change necessary in the model of financing and management of public social services, which would guarantee basic social benefits to the entire population, and preventing situations of dissatisfaction of fundamental rights and the worsening of the social vulnerability of groups at greater social risk.

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