

Comparative Analysis of Social Policy Studies

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Abstract

While social policy refers to measures taken by society to improve and provide services to meet health and welfare needs, social policy studies are concerned with aspects of public policy, market transactions, personal consumption and interpersonal relationships that contribute to the well-being or wealth of individuals and/or groups. There has been an increase in the number of studies in the field of social policy. The main purpose of this study is to show how the research papers published in this field have undergone an evolutionary change in terms of emphasis. With 4,697 articles from seven different journals over 50 years, the most influential authors in the field, the impact of journals, the most collaborating countries, the evolutionary process of social policy studies in three different periods and the differences in transformations in this process are revealed. The number of studies making a general evaluation in the field of social policy is limited. The originality of the study shows how the studies in the journals, which are seen as a period of approximately 50 years, have transformed in this process. This study is expected to be a road map for researchers on what areas they will focus on according to the social policy transformation.

Keywords

Social Policy
Bibliometric Analysis
Co-citation Analysis
Co-occurrence Analysis

About Article

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Sosyal Politika Çalışmalarının Karşılaştırmalı Analizi

Özet

Sosyal politika, sağlık ve refah ihtiyaçlarının karşılanmasına yönelik hizmetlerin iyileştirilmesi ve sağlanması için toplum tarafından alınan önlemleri ifade ederken, sosyal politika çalışmaları, bireylerin ve/veya grupların refahına veya zenginliğine katkıda bulunan kamu politikası, piyasa işlemleri, kişisel tüketim ve kişiler arası ilişkilerin yönleriyle ilgilenir. Sosyal politika alanında yapılan çalışmaların sayısında son yıllarda bir artış gözlenmektedir. Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, bu alanda yayınlanan araştırma makalelerinin vurgu açısından nasıl evrimsel bir değişim geçirdiğini göstermektir. Yedi farklı dergiden 50 yılı aşkın sürede 4.697 makale ile alandaki en etkili yazarlar, dergilerin etkisi, en çok işbirliği yapılan ülkeler, sosyal politika çalışmalarının üç farklı dönemdeki evrimsel süreci ve bu süreçteki dönüşümlerin farklılıkları ortaya konulmaktadır. Sosyal politika alanında genel bir değerlendirme yapan çalışma sayısı sınırlıdır. Çalışmanın özgünlüğü, yaklaşık 50 yıllık bir dönem olarak görülen dergilerdeki çalışmaların bu süreçte nasıl dönüştüğünü göstermektedir. Bu çalışmanın araştırmacılara sosyal politika dönüşümüne göre hangi alanlara odaklanacakları konusunda bir yol haritası olması beklenmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Sosyal Politika
Bibliyometrik Analiz
Ortak Atıf Analizi
Eşdizimlilik Analizi

Makale Hakkında

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Introduction

Social policy studies generally refer to the research conducted in the name of citizen's common welfare. In this sense, social policy can be viewed both as separate discipline that independently develops, and as an interdisciplinary field that benefits from other disciplines of the same origin. Recently, there is an increasing trend towards collaborative work of those authors working in the field of social policy, economics and statistics, which can be effective in developing and implementing policies (Alcock *et al.*, 2016). From a pragmatic point of view, current study deals with the issue of revealing the comparative structure of social policy studies that covers different fields. With an increasing trend in social policy studies in recent years, a comparative structure is emerging in a global sense. This study aims to present a roadmap to researchers working in the field by showing its comparative structure, which has hardly been mentioned before in the related literature. Bibliometric analysis was used to reveal this structure, as it has the potential to provide a systematic, transparent and repeatable examination process based on statistical measurement of scientists or scientific activities (Diodato, 2013).

Advantages of bibliometric analysis for scientific publications are as follows: (1) to present different studies, (2) to develop new research proposals, (3) to discover the variables of research fields or topics, (4) to identify collaborations between researchers, institutions, journals and countries and (5) to associate ideas and theories with practices. For the bibliometric analysis used in the current study, articles published in the period from 1972 to 2020 in seven journals that have "social policy" in their title and are listed in WoS database were used. R programming language, software for statistical calculations and graphics, was used for the analysis.

As social policy studies continue to develop and mature, research and knowledge are at the center of this process. While the research and knowledge accumulation at the center reflects the past, it also has the potential to direct the present and future of the field. The quality of the studies can be controlled with methods, techniques and analyses proposed in the current study, which will bring a different perspective to future research in the field. With this control mechanism, there is an opportunity to reach more effective research and knowledge that may affect the world politics.

Literature Review

The notion of the social state, commonly referred to as the welfare state, is deeply ingrained in the annals of human history, serving as a testament to the ever-evolving functions and obligations of the state. The emergence of the social state, encompassing a diverse range of policies and measures aimed at fostering social welfare and safeguarding individuals from the uncertainties inherent in life, was not a sudden occurrence but rather a product of a nuanced historical trajectory. Recognizing this historical context is crucial in order to attain a more comprehensive comprehension of its current condition and prospective developments.

The historical antecedents of social policies can be discerned in the annals of ancient civilizations. However, it is the advent of the modern social state paradigm that truly crystallized during the latter part of the 19th century and the early years of the 20th century. This paradigm, characterized by its intricate and interconnected framework of social safeguards, represents a significant departure from its predecessors. Titmuss (1974)'s seminal contribution elucidates the correlation between the expansion of the welfare state and its

emergence as a direct response to the multifaceted ramifications of industrialization, urbanization, and the concomitant social dislocation. The Industrial Revolution, a historical epoch widely lauded for its economic expansion and technological progress, nevertheless, was beset by a plethora of social upheavals. The phenomenon of rapid urbanization has precipitated a confluence of circumstances characterized by densely populated living environments, the emergence of public health challenges, and a notable intensification of socioeconomic disparities, as expounded upon by Flora and Heidenheimer (1981). In light of the prevailing social challenges, the intervention of the state has undergone a transformative process, transitioning from a reactive and ad hoc measure to a more methodical and all-encompassing strategy in the realm of social policy.

In the German context, it is noteworthy to acknowledge the introduction of a pioneering social insurance system by Chancellor Otto von Bismarck during the 1880s. This significant development can be attributed to a dual motivation: firstly, a strategic response to the growing influence of socialist political factions, and secondly, a genuine concern for addressing the socio-economic challenges arising from the rapid industrialization process (Steinmetz, 1993). The aforementioned event served as a pivotal juncture in the emergence of the contemporary welfare state, exerting a profound impact on global social policy. The mid-20th century witnessed a significant and noteworthy occurrence known as the emergence of the Keynesian welfare state. This particular development was marked by the implementation of extensive state intervention in economic matters. The scholarly discourse surrounding this phenomenon has been thoroughly examined by Gough (1979). The Keynesian doctrine, which gained momentum in response to the profound economic consequences of the Great Depression and the Second World War, underscored the significance of state intervention in preserving economic stability and achieving full employment. The economic theory espoused by John Maynard Keynes exerted a profound impact on the formation of welfare states in Western nations, wherein governments assumed augmented roles in the provision of social welfare, encompassing domains such as healthcare, education, and housing.

The Beveridge Report, in British history, emerged in 1942 and is widely regarded as the foundational framework for the post-war welfare state. Its primary objective was to eradicate the state of "want" by implementing an all-encompassing structure of social insurance. Additionally, it proposed the establishment of free healthcare services and an array of supplementary social services (Timmins, 2001). The successful adoption of the recommendations outlined in this report has marked a significant turning point in the realm of social policy, leading to a fundamental reconfiguration of the state's role from that of a minimalistic 'night watchman' state to that of an active 'provider' state.

In the latter half of the 20th century, Esping-Andersen (1990) posited a theoretical framework wherein welfare states ought to be comprehended within the wider purview of 'welfare regimes'. In doing so, he put forth a classification system comprising conservative, liberal, and social-democratic regimes, each exhibiting discernible attributes and developmental trajectories. The aforementioned typology has exerted a substantial influence on subsequent examinations of welfare states and social policy. The contemporary social state has undeniably broadened the purview of state obligations and engendered societal transformations, albeit with contextual discrepancies. The enduring significance of the social state is exemplified by the ongoing discussions surrounding issues such as the demographic shifts associated with

aging populations, transformations in the labor market, and the ramifications of globalization and technological progress (Pierson, 2001; Hemerijck, 2013).

In essence, a comprehensive comprehension of the genesis and progression of the social state affords invaluable perspicacity into the shifting obligations of the state and the overarching societal metamorphoses that have exerted their influence upon these transformations. In the light of these developments, social Policy is generally defined as the study on social services and the welfare state. While social policy was initially referred to as social security, it further developed with the effect of class struggles and new definitions were put forward. Social policy deals with social issues (Rittel & Webber, 1973) and it looks generally at the idea of social welfare and its relation to politics and society. Examined by many disciplines, including economics, politics, sociology and law, it deals with the following topics in more detail: the policy and administration of social services, including health, housing, income maintenance, education and social service policies, needs and problems affecting service users, such as poverty, old age, health, disability and family policy, and, finally, the provision of well-being (Spicker, 2007). According to Esping-Andersen (1990) social policy means "public administration of social risks". Esping-Andersen (1990) made a significant contribution to the field by classifying countries in three basic areas according to their welfare regimes.

By analyzing social policy ideologies and welfare models, a space for the social administration discipline to explore a range of normative and scientific issues is created (Mishra, 1986). The history of social administration discipline largely begins with Titmuss (1986). Mishra (1986) argues that the grounding of social administration in social sciences (i.e., the study of social policy as a positive phenomenon) is an important Titmussian legacy. He states that, although their impact on the social administration discipline was not sufficiently appreciated in these early years, there are studies that associate policy issues with a number of different approaches, such as ideologies, normative concepts, and/or welfare models. However, Mishra (1986) argues that Titmuss's academic summary of social administration has some serious flaws and avoids a sharp dilemma between 'economic' and 'social', recognizing multiple perspectives on the nature and functions of well-being, and exploring the relevant basic normative and explanatory issues. It emphasizes that it must be reformulated in a way that provides a sufficiently broad intellectual space.

The main weakness of social administration in terms of disciplinary development is that it promotes an extremely practical and useful, but often temporary approach that is not concerned with the broader social context in which social services emerge, exist, and sometimes vanish. Development of social administration as a discipline requires a less nationally specific and more universal approach that sees social policy in relation to the economic and political structures of society. According to Mishra (1986), analysis of social services, social problems and concepts (especially dealing with concrete social problems and social services) should be a part of the social administration study.

Social administration in the UK is recognized as the pioneer of the social policy discipline. In 1987, the symbolic shift in discipline's name from social administration to social policy occurred in the UK. Social Administration Association (SAA) wanted to change their name into Social Policy Association, but this decision did not pass. Glennerster (1988) was particularly concerned that this renaming will result in excessive emphasis on peripheral issues by the state and society, rather than how welfare bureaucracies will work locally. While focusing on poverty and other social illnesses in British society in the early stages of the social

administration discipline, studies were conducted on issues such as neglected children, elderly people and extended families in London before and after the Second World War (Page, 2010).

Page (2010) states that the severe challenge to the Traditional Social Administration (TSA) in the 1970s and 80s, did not lead to the most concerned consequences - the disappearance of the applied problem-solving ethics. On the contrary, the social administration perspective was adapted and developed within the broader discipline of social policy. According to Page (2010)'s analysis, TSA grappled with a series of challenges in the late 1960s and 1970s. First, it shows that the failure of the 1964-70 Labor government to secure social progress, using classical 'Fabian' tools, undermines the viability of the reformist strategy underpinning the TSA. Second, the reformist morality of TSA was challenged by those from various social movements, such as neo-Marxist and radical left advocates, neo-liberals, feminists, and others. Third, some scholars felt that the applied, 'reform-oriented' nature of TSA precluded the possibility of enhancing the subject's academic status.

Contemporary social administration (CSA) was broadly adopted by the New Labor Government in 1997 (Walker, 2001). Ideology could no longer be displayed as intellectual research or criticism. The same as TSA, CSA focuses on national issues, but also examines international developments and trends. While adhering to empiricism, it is also interested in developing more complex forms of research tools and methodologies.

Social Policy and Administration is an academic subject related to social services and the welfare state (Vargas-Hernandez *et al.*, 2011). It developed as a complement to social service work in the early 20th century and it is aimed at those who will be professionally involved in welfare management. Over the past four decades, the subject matter has undergone a significant expansion and now encompasses policy and administrative practices in various social services domains, such as health administration, social security, education, employment services, community care, and housing management. Additionally, it covers a wide range of social issues, including but not limited to crime, disability, unemployment, mental health, learning disabilities, and old age. Furthermore, it addresses social disadvantage concerns, such as race, gender, and poverty issues, and collective social responses to these conditions. Alcock (1996) argues that social policy has attained the status of an academic discipline, as evidenced by the institutional recognition of university departments, the availability of undergraduate and graduate degrees in social policy, the presence of academic journals dedicated to the publication of social policy research, and the establishment of a professional association. In contrast, Spicker (1995) points to scientific criteria and argues that social policy "does not claim to be a discipline" because "it does not possess its own view of the world or specific methods or approaches". With the emphasis that social policy is not a discipline but a subject area, Spicker states that it makes use of the other social science disciplines such as sociology, social work, psychology, economics, political science, management, history, philosophy, and law. Similarly, Erskine (1998) sees it as a "multidisciplinary rather than disciplined field of study" because "it does not have a unique method, concept, theory or insight".

It is evident that social policy does not fall under the purview of a more established subfield within the social sciences, such as sociology or economics. Social policy intersects with various established disciplines, sharing common areas of interest and fundamental concepts. In numerous countries where social policy analysis attains a certain degree of acknowledgement and scholarly productivity, there is a dearth of distinct university departments that provide undergraduate degrees in social policy. Typically, there are academics with an interest in social

policy analysis, trained in a range of disciplines, working in sociology, political science or economics departments. One potential recommendation is to offer dedicated academic units or modules at universities that focus on social policy inquiries. These units could be integrated into a research framework that centers around a specific facet of social policy, or alternatively, be affiliated with research centers that specialize in social policy research. (Clasen, 2004). The quantity of individuals engaged in the examination of social policy issues has seemingly augmented in recent times, alongside an apparent rise in the number of said issues. This trend is not limited to domestic contexts, as there is also a growing interest in comparative and international perspectives.

The purpose of this field of study is to produce policies on the role that social policy tools can play in solving socio-economic problems or mitigating the consequences they produce, as well as to contribute to definition and implementation of new tools. Thus, progress can be made in the formation of social capital and the realization of sustainable and equitable development. Although social policy has its place in the economic, social and political direction, ideas about its role in development for the coordination and consistency of policies seem to change over time. This points out to the difficulty of finding clarity on approaches to social investment, poverty reduction and equality (Vargas-Hernandez *et al.*, 2011). Although social policy and its impact on society has been subject to much controversy, often critical, evidence continues to emerge that better formulation, design and implementation of an adequate social policy has a mainly positive impact on social development. In this sense, it can be said that the studies in the field of social policy have a structure that is constantly evolving, multi-layered and interacting with scientific knowledge in different fields.

Since the early 1980s, with the emergence of the literature review, textbooks, and further branching out of the field, current study also shows the evolution of these branches. Although there was not much contact between them in the beginning, nowadays social policy studies continue to be coordinated to some extent. The distance between the different branches seems to have decreased, which could be a good sign for the future of social policy field. In this context, by revealing the 49-year historical development of seven journals that publish in the field of social policy with bibliometric analysis, current study can propose a roadmap for researchers in this field. This study aims to reveal the comparative structure of the research conducted so far in order to advance the research on social policy. In order to do this the following aspects will be evaluated: authors working in the field of social policy, together with their disciplines and research interests, the most contributing countries and authors, the knowledge that emerged through the country's partnerships, how the issues revealed by the thematic analysis change the main areas of activity of social policy field by developing ideas about its future aspects, and contribution of the studies' results to the overall body of knowledge. To sum up, answers to the following questions within the scope of the study are sought:

- a) What is the scientific productivity of authors, countries and academic journals in social policy field?
- b) What are the collaborations between countries in the field of social policy?
- c) What are the breaking points of social policy issues and which one of these issues have mainly influenced the field in recent years?
- d) How will the main areas of social policy change in the future?

Method

While it is getting easier to access scientific knowledge, researchers benefit from various qualitative and quantitative review approaches in order to understand, organize and compare the emerging findings. Bibliometric has the potential to present studies from mainly statistical but interpretative perspective (Aşkun & Çizel, 2020; Gunbayi & Sorm, 2020). In order to follow the rapid transformation of information, emerging with the rapid development of science and technology, necessity for using techniques such as bibliometry is constantly increasing. Despite some of its flaws, bibliometry is important for exploring the field of social policy (Powell, 2018). Bibliometry used in this study, follows the general bibliometric methods procedure described in the study of Cobo *et al.* (2011).

Since concept of social policy has a very broad structure that is hard to be explained in a single study, and due to the problematic determination of the population (Powell, 2018), it requires use of specific research design. In this sense, the main journal list of Clarivate Analytics (CA), which provides analytical-focused services to scientific and academic researches (<http://mjl.clarivate.com/>), was used to search for journals titled with "social policy". After the completion of the scanning process seven journals were found. Afterwards, authors looked at all the publications of these journals in Web of Science (WoS), which provides scientific citation indexing service within CA. Only articles published in English from the first publication in 1972 until the end of 2020 were included in the search (Apr.11, 2021). In nearly 50 years, 4,697 research articles in English were published in these seven journals. Data were handled as PlainText in order to collect the data in a single bibliography database, to display bibliography-related information in the desired place and to conduct qualitative content analysis based on this database.

In order to reveal the conceptual structure of the accessed articles and the field of social policy, a co-occurrence analysis was made using keywords (He, 1999). In addition, thematic analysis with keywords (Cahlik, 2000) that allows a broader measure of "scientific impact" than traditional citation analysis (Hallinger & Kovačević, 2019) were used. On the other hand, in order to determine the main development points of the field, cooperation, source effects and author effects of countries in the field of social policy were discussed and evaluated.

R is an open source programming language that offers researchers with flexible statistical procedures. It has a feature with bibliometric tools, as well as dozens of other statistical methods. In the current study, R and bibliometrix R-Tool, specialized in bibliometry, were used in order to process data, create graphics, present mathematical calculations and perform the aforementioned (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). Moreover, for more in-depth examination of the obtained results, additional quantitative calculations and qualitative content analysis were conducted with comparison.

Results

The distribution of seven journals and 4,697 articles, emerging as a result of the study, is analyzed in Figure 1. This high number suggests that there can be a wide variety of research themes in the field of social policy. As the journal with the most citations and the highest h-index (23.02 article / year), JSP is followed by SPA (35.09 article / year) in terms of citations number. JESP (27.43 article / year) stands out with the most citations per article (26.32). When looking at the number of articles, it can be stated that SPA has a strong contribution to the field of social policy with over 300 articles more than the closest JSP. Four of these seven journals

(SPA, JSP, CSP, JESP) started publishing before 2004, while JASP started in 2008 (27.17 article/year), SRSP in 2009 (39.73 article / year) and SPS in 2015 (49.80 article / year). This can be considered as the temporal limitation of the study. However, the important point to be noted here is that these journals were evaluated based on indexing dates in WoS. In this sense, it is seen that the average annual publication performance of SPS is higher than other journals. It can be said that the journal's most productive years were between 2018 and 2020. This shows that the production of scientific knowledge in this field is increasingly developing (annual growth rate: 6.75%). Finally, while these seven journals cite 84,670 different sources among 4,697 studies, the most cited references from one or more articles have JSP (NP:2,690), SPA (NP:2,204), JESP (NP:1,960) and CSP (NP:1,439), respectively. JSP demonstrates the success of being cited in at least one of every two studies.



Figure 1. Journal Impact (NP: Total number of papers, TC: Total number of citations. SPA: Social Policy & Administration, JSP: Journal of Social Policy, CSP: Critical Social Policy, JESP: Journal of European Social Policy, SRSP: Sexuality Research and Social Policy, JASP: Journal of Aging & Social Policy, SPS: Social Policy and Society)

While examining author's effect, ranked according to the h-index and the number of articles, Table 1 was derived showing the top 20 most productive authors out of 6,205 found in these journals' studies. In addition, the authors' first year of publication in these journals, two of their research interests, and the information about departments with the research discipline are included in the table. In these years, Taylor Gooby, who published the most articles in these journals and worked mainly on risk and welfare state, has the highest h index, He is followed by Lewis, who worked on gender. However, van Oorchot, who works on welfare state and social security, received the most citations, and he is followed by Lewis, Taylor Gooby and Whelan, who mainly worked on poverty and social exclusion. Moreover, van Oorchot stands out with the most citations per article (89.30). Baiocco (2013), who is among those who most recently entered the field with 11 publications on the list in SRSP, mainly works on sexuality, and stands out with its annual average publication (1.57). It can be concluded that in the scope of social policy field, authors mainly worked on poverty and welfare state. While the authors of all examined articles were affiliated with 1,608 different universities, 13 of the 20 most influential authors in this field are in UK universities. All of the top 10 most productive schools are from the UK, with the University of York as the most productive one (in 123 different articles), followed by the University of Birmingham (NP: 118) and the University of Kent (NP: 109).

Table 1. Author Impact

	Author	h Index	TC	NP	TC/ NP	Academic discipline of author	Department / Affiliation - Country	Start Year	Research interest
1	Taylor Gooby, P.	15	806	38	21.21	Prof. of Social Policy	Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research / University of Kent – UK	1976	risk, welfare state
2	Lewis, J.	15	868	27	32.15	Prof. of Social Policy	London School of Economics / University of Oxford - UK	1980	gender, family policy
3	Deeming, C.	11	279	20	13.95	Senior Lecturer in Social Policy	Social Work and Social Policy / University of Strathclyde - UK	2002	welfare regimes, social investment
4	Powell, M.	11	306	19	16.11	Prof. of Health and Social Policy	Health Services Management Centre / University of Birmingham – UK	1992	health policy, welfare state
5	Whelan, C. T.	11	418	11	38.00	Prof. of Sociology	School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice / University College Dublin- Ireland	1993	poverty, social exclusion
6	Glendinning, C.	10	408	14	29.14	Prof. of Social Policy (emeritus)	Social Policy Research Unit / University of York - UK	1989	social services, older people
7	Knapp, M.	9	329	14	23.50	Prof. of Health and Social Care Policy	Department of Health Policy / London School of Economics and Political Science - UK	1982	social care, health policy
8	Daly, M.	9	405	13	31.15	Prof. of Sociology and Social Policy	Social Policy and Intervention / University of Oxford - UK	1997	gender, family
9	Baiocco, R.	9	295	11	26.82	Assoc. Prof. of Developmental Psychology	Social and Developmental Psychology / Sapienza University Rome - Italy	2013	gender, sexuality
10	Saunders, P.	9	195	11	17.73	Prof. of Social Policy (emeritus)	Social Policy Research Centre / University of New South Wales- Australia	1991	poverty, income distribution
11	Nolan, B.	9	348	10	34.80	Prof. of Social Policy	Social Policy and Intervention / University of Oxford - UK	1986	poverty, inequality
12	Bradshaw, J.	8	389	12	32.42	Prof. of Social Policy (emeritus)	Social Policy Research Unit / University of York - UK	1983	poverty, social security
13	Beland, D.	8	433	11	39.36	Prof. of Political Sociology	Department of Political Science / McGill University - Canada	2004	public policy, equalization
14	van Oorschot, W.	8	893	10	89.30	Prof. of Social Policy	Faculty of Social Sciences / Leuven University - Belgium	2002	welfare state, social security
15	Dean, H.	8	319	9	35.44	Prof. of Social Policy (emeritus)	Department of Social Policy / London School of Economics and Political Science - UK	1990	welfare rights, poverty
16	Matsaganis, M.	8	307	9	34.11	Prof. of Public Finance	Department of Architecture and Urban Studies / Polytechnic University of Milan - Italy	2000	public policy, welfare state
17	Millar, J.	8	271	9	30.11	Prof. of Social Psychology	Department of Social & Policy Sciences / University of Bath – UK	1989	gender, family
18	Maitre, B.	8	270	8	33.75	Senior Research Officer	Economic and Social Research Institute - Ireland	2002	poverty, inequality
19	Walker, R.	7	281	14	20.07	Prof. of Social Policy (emeritus)	Social Policy and Intervention / University of Oxford - UK	1987	poverty, welfare
20	Walker, A.	7	359	10	35.90	Prof. of Social Policy and Social Gerontology	Department of Sociological Studies / Sheffield University – UK	1980	ageing, social quality

There are also authors who were not included in this list, but whose cooperation in publishing significant number of “digest” articles in JESP and JSP journals is evident, such as Barbier, C. (1997-2009; NP:44; TC:15), Pochet, P. (1997-2007;NP:32; TC:145), De la Porte, C. (2000-2017; NP:26; TC:154), Ghailani, D. (2002-2009; NP:26; TC:13), Baeten, R. (2002-2009; NP:21; TC:10) and Slack, K. M. (1972-1984; NP:18; TC:4), all having h-index 1. The fact that these authors do not appear to be as effective as others, despite significant number of studies, can be evaluated in terms of the 'consumer' problem, presented by Powell (2018).

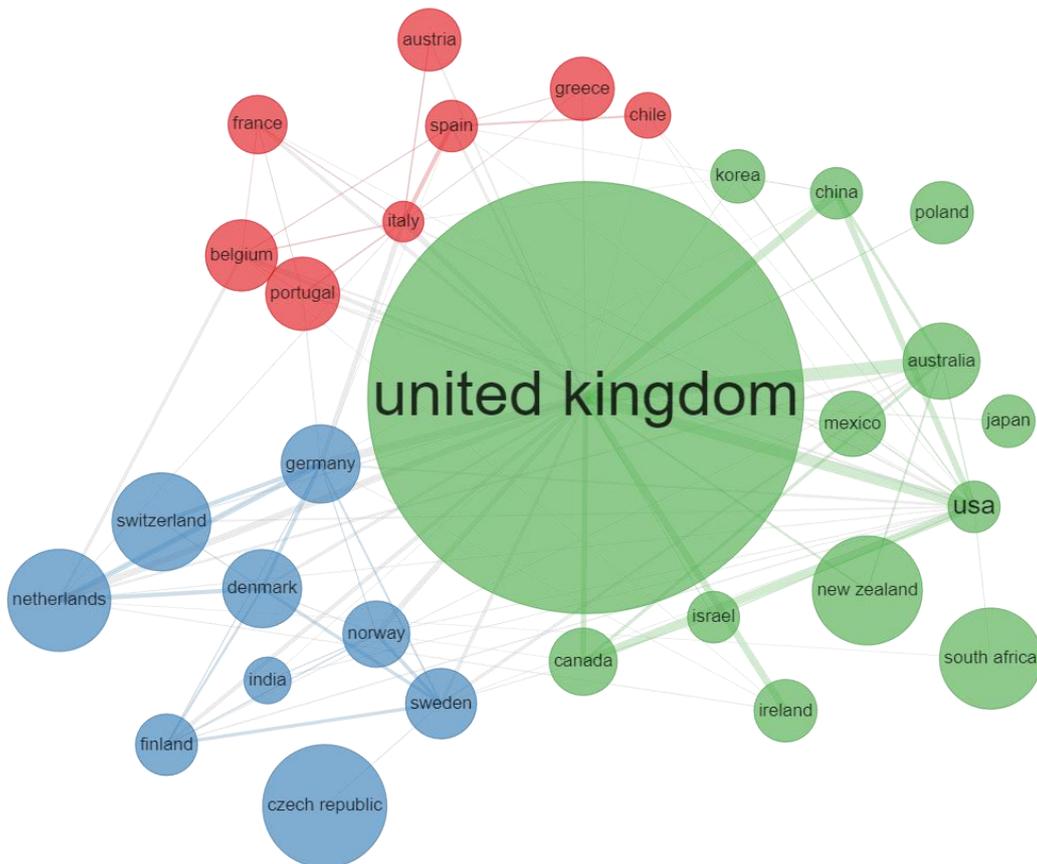


Figure 2 Countries Collaboration Map

When looking at publications in social policy field, there are 243 different collaborations from 80 different countries. The cooperation network analysis between the 30 most cooperative countries is discussed in Figure 2. Size of the figure refers to how many publications that country has, the thickness of the links between the shapes visualizes how much collaboration is made, while distances between figures implies closeness between studies. Differently colored clusters show the areas in which those countries mostly collaborate. Countries in the network have published at least ten publications on the subject. Accordingly, UK showed the strongest cooperation both in general and in the green cluster, while in this cluster USA, Canada, Australia and China, respectively, achieved strong and close cooperation. When observing the blue cluster, firstly Germany, then the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway and Switzerland cooperate strongly, with interesting position of India in this cluster, representing the only country from another continent. Similar situation occurs in the red cluster where, besides strong cooperation between Spain and Italy, Chile stands out as interesting cluster element. High frequency of cooperation between some countries is evident, such as UK -

Australia(f=31); UK - USA(f=26); UK - Germany(f=20); USA - Canada(f=20); UK - China(f=19); UK - Ireland(f=17); UK - Netherlands (f=16); USA - China(f=15); UK - Italy(f=14) and UK - Norway(f=14). Three main clusters can be derived: first one is the one around UK and USA (green cluster), second Germany and the Netherlands (blue cluster) and finally, Italy and Spain (red cluster). While blue and red clusters are predominately representing European countries, the green cluster demonstrates the cooperation with more than one continent. As seen in other scientific research areas (Zheng *et al.*, 2016) collaborative countries tend to correlate geographically and are centered among the most productive countries in terms of publication output.

A thematic evolution is presented in Figure 3, consisting of author keywords divided into three different periods. For this evolutionary representation, the sudden break occurs after 2006, while 2015 was considered as the breaking point for evaluation of the last five years. Looking at the analyzed documents, there were 1,657 documents in the period between 1972-2006, 1,615 studies in 2007-2015 and 1,425 studies in 2016-2020. Accordingly, the concepts in the upper right region are called motor themes, defined with high centrality and density, and being of great importance for the research field. Basic and transversal themes are those concepts in the lower right region, defined with high centrality and low density. The concepts included here mean that they are important for the field and also concern general issues that have a transition to different research areas. The concepts in the lower left region are defined with low centrality and low density, and these are called emerging or declining themes. Such concepts are stated to be poorly developed and marginal. In the upper left area are high developed and isolated terms with low centrality and high density. These concepts are of limited importance to the field in which they are studied (Cahlik, 2000; Kirtil and Aşkun, 2021). In each period, the word that constitutes the theme is presented at the top of the circles and the most used words or sub-categories according to the frequency of use are listed under it.

1. period (1972-2006): Poverty theme (Townsend, 1987) and the related sub-categories under it (Bradshaw & Finch, 2003; Burchardt *et al.*, 1999), as well as welfare theme (Arts & Gelissen, 2002; Pfau-Effinger, 2005) with the related sub-categories (Clarke, 2005; Newman *et al.*, 2004) found in the right upper area are evaluated as important ones. In the right area there are general important topics that express the transition to different research areas, such as social policy theme and related sub-categories (Beland, 2005; Bonoli, 1997; van Oorschot, 2006) and older people theme and others (Francis & Netten, 2004; Lewis, 2001; Percival & Hanson, 2006). While gender (Pascall & Manning, 2000) and new labour (Gillies, 2005) were marginal concepts, childcare (Blomqvist, 2004; Gornick *et al.*, 1997) and pensions (Taylor-Gooby, 2002) were themes of limited importance.

2. period (2007-2015): In the upper right area there are gender theme with sub-categories (Heldman & Wade, 2010; Herek *et al.*, 2010), social policy and sub-categories (Busemeyer *et al.*, 2009; Cantillon, 2011; Taylor-Gooby, 2012), and Germany theme (Eichhorst and Marx, 2011) with sub-categories (Van Berkel, 2010; Schober, 2014). In the lower left area, there are marginal or themes in development such as long-term care (Pavolini & Ranci, 2008), welfare (Clarke & Newman, 2012) and citizenship (Shi, 2012) with the related sub-categories. It is seen that the policy theme completely transitioned to the center with different sub-categories when compare to the 1st period. During this period, there was no distinct separation according to the lower right and upper left sections.

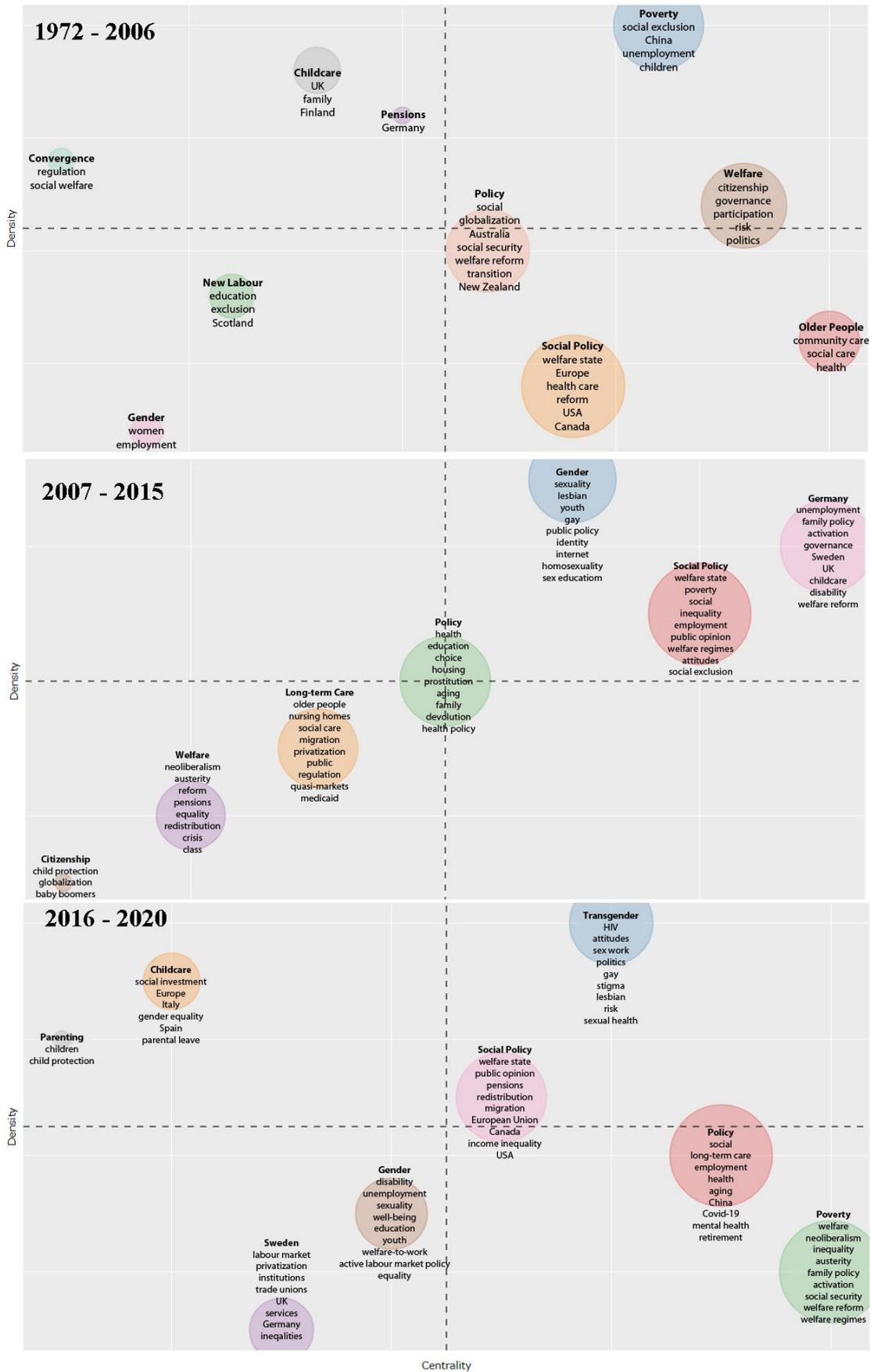


Figure 3. Thematic Evolution Time Slices (1972-2020)

3. period (2016-2020): Considering the upper right area it is seen that the themes such as transgender theme (Puckett *et al.*, 2018) and sub-categories (Salvati *et al.*, 2016; Worthen *et al.*, 2017), and social policy theme and sub-categories (Ayob *et al.*, 2016; Cheung & Phillimore, 2017; Jørgensen and Thomsen, 2016) came at the forefront. In right lower area poverty theme with sub-categories (Mackenzie & Louth, 2020; Middlemiss, 2017), together with policy theme and sub-categories (Chen & Han, 2016; Liu & Sun, 2016; Zaidi *et al.*, 2017) can be considered as important in the near future, leading different studies. It is especially noteworthy that the Covid-19 title is included here (Béland & Marier, 2020; Previtali *et al.*, 2020). In the same period, the gender issue (Kowalewska, 2020) does not receive enough attention as in the first period, while, generally, it remains marginal issue with the Sweden theme and the sub-categories under it (Afonso *et al.*, 2020). On the other hand, as in the 1st period, it is seen that limited attention is given to the childcare theme and sub-categories (West *et al.*, 2020), and parenting theme and sub-categories (Dermott & Pomati, 2016).

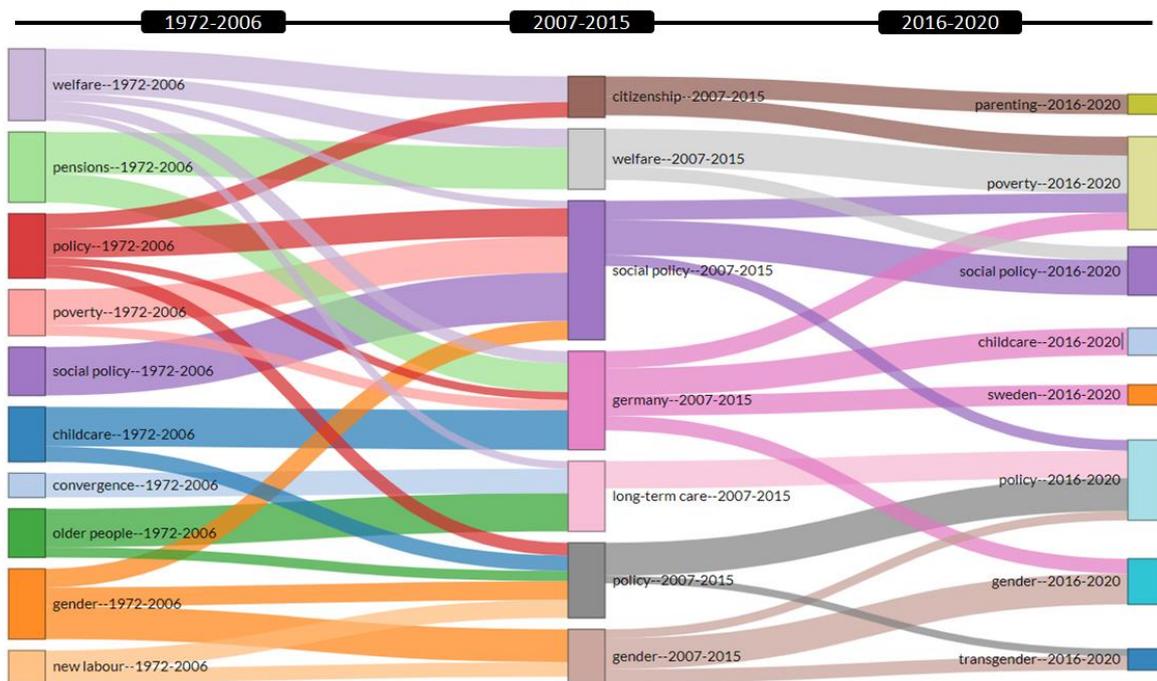


Figure 4. Thematic Evolution on Social Policy through to sub-periods

Figure 4 shows the evolutionary process of social policy research. Here, the sankey diagram, whose thickness is proportional to the flow velocity of the arrows, is used to evaluate the evolutionary process by dividing the arrows into branches of different densities as they pass to the other period. Accordingly, the most striking evolutionary processes can be seen in Figure 3 and Figure 4. In the first period, while the issues related to older people were at the forefront, in the second period, marginalized long-term care was focused on, and in the third period, the policy theme stands out as an important subject that will be in cooperation with other fields. While pension was of limited importance in the first period, it was evaluated as marginal in the second one and, finally, it is included as an important issues under social policy. While childcare was of limited importance in the 1st period, it became an important issue under the German theme in the 2nd period, but entered into limited important themes again in the 3rd period. Next, while the gender theme was marginal in the 1st period, it turned into a very important theme in the 2nd period, but, again, turned into a marginal theme in the

3rd period, with transgender and policy issues being included under it. While the welfare theme was an important theme in the 1st period, it became marginal with neo-liberalism in the 2nd period, but again under the theme of poverty and neo-liberalism in the 3rd period became an important and possible cooperation with other fields. As for the transgender theme, one of the important themes in the 3rd period, it is developed from the policy and gender themes in the 2nd period, while the subjects under it have actually been included in the field as very important issues in the last two periods. Finally, with the direct transfer of social policy from the first to the second period, this theme was strengthened with other different issues under it and started to shift from the important position to the center in the last period. It can be considered that some of the issues it contained turned into policy and poverty.

Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendations

In order to evaluate the global research trends of social policy field, bibliometric analysis of studies published in seven different journals in this field between 1972 and 2020 was conducted. The current study presents the guideline for the future studies, by summarizing and illustrating the impact of seven different journals to the field, the contributions of prominent and most productive authors, the cooperation of countries, and past and present situation by creating evolutionary themes. In other words, the study reveals the conceptual and comparative structure of the field by collecting, analyzing and mapping the literature. It also offers a projection from the past to the future. Since the social policy discipline has been a comprehensive field of research, showing significant growth especially in recent years, this study may provide a different perspective on the field in general.

As addition to the discussion whether the most influential authors in the field of social policy are registered with the number of publications they produce or with thousands of citations from a single publication, authors in the current study tried to put forward an interpretation of the studies derived based on author's highest h index presented in Table 1. Accordingly, we may see that the most effective authors come from social policy field and other disciplines such as sociology, health and social care, developmental psychology, political sociology, public finance, social psychology, and social gerontology. This shows us how intertwined this area is with other ones and give the signals on how this field may become more interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary in the future. On the other hand, the fact that Dean, H. from the social policy department and Knapp, M. from the health policy department of the same university are on the same list, illustrates the intellectual mosaic of the field. Although not included in this table, there is the high number of digest articles of Cécile Barbier, Philippe Pochet, Caroline de la Porte, Dalila Ghailani, and Rita Baeten in cooperation, with over 100 at JESP, and Kathleen M. Slack alone at JSP (NP: 18). However, in terms of references, it can be concluded that these studies have little effect. Not knowing the precise effect of these studies in terms of knowledge, can be considered as the biggest handicap with these types of studies. Another point that drew attention is the lack of digest articles in JSP after 1984 and in JESP after 2009. This raises the question of whether numerical appreciation of information might have an effect.

With the awareness that science can develop in cooperation, Figure 2 sheds light on new researchers in the field of social policy and provides new insights. Having cooperation with more than 44 different countries, UK positions itself as the leader in the field, with specially emphasize on cooperation with Australia. Intensive cooperation of these two countries in social policy research, together with the historical background, can be influenced by closeness

in terms of Hofstede *et al.* (2010)'s proposed countries' power distance, individualism, masculinity, and indulgence. We find it extremely valuable to think that a world working together in an area such as social policy, will serve more towards obtaining more successful results and solutions. Collaboration between authors from different countries will provide evaluation of the related topic from new perspectives or paradigms, which will be beneficial for the development of the whole field, as well as academicians and researchers who work in it.

Thematic evolution analysis results (Figure 3 and 4) illustrated the significant changes in the importance of certain topics over the years. This shows that the field has a structure that allows for continuous change. Especially when focusing on the near future, it can be predicted that different studies dealing with topics, such as Covid-19, employment, long-term care, aging, mental health issues, will contribute to the field. Based on the evolution analysis, issues such as poverty and neo-liberalism, inequality, family policy and social security are likely to contribute to the field by interacting with different areas. At the same time, while sexuality and related issues maintain their importance in the last two periods, authors believe that these studies will have a strong impact on the field in the future, as well. In this sense, we recommend that academicians and researchers, who have a great impact on the field, discuss these periodic changes with different studies in order to contribute to the scientific world.

Finally, some limitations of the bibliometric study should be addressed. First of all, the research was limited to seven journals listed on WoS, excluding studies published in other journals. Although WoS is among the largest global databases, it still does not include all publications in the field of social policy research. Some important studies in the field have been left out of the analysis due to the difference between the publication dates of the journals and their participation in WOS. The most prominent example is that studies such as Lewis (1992) and Ferrera (1996) were excluded from the evaluation, due to the fact that although JESP's first publication was in 1991 it joined WOS in 1997. Other international databases such as PubMed or Scopus could also be used. Another limitation is the inability to make in-depth explanations of the information in each figure and table subject to the analysis, as these would require an evaluation of a topic in the form of a separate article. In this sense, it is considered that its contribution to the field will be of significant importance. Finally, since bibliometric analysis uses quantitative methods, the interpretations on the content and quality of the publication were made qualitatively by the researchers, while the effort was made in order to explain the intellectual mosaic structure of the field from multiple perspectives.

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