Research Article

A Bibliometric Analysis of Political Science Research on a Global Scale

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Abstract: This research aims to contribute to a macro-level understanding of the intellectual foundations of the field of political science by examining it in depth through bibliometric analysis and discovering the epistemological insights hidden in it, as well as the basic dimensions of studies in the discipline. Thus, it is objectives to provide basic data and guidance to academics working on the methodology of the discipline of political science. Accordingly, the trends, topics, and general themes of academic studies published in universally respected journals with high-impact factors in the field of political science will be identified. The article's original value is the first thorough bibliometric study of the discipline in Turkish national literature and one of the first few thorough bibliometric studies in international literature. This study conducted a brief literature review to examine key scientific texts on political science methodology that reflect general trends. Subsequently, data retrieved from two selected databases (Scopus and WoS) were analyzed and interpreted using text-mining tools (WOSviewer and R Studio). As a result of this analysis, 17 datasets and meaningful patterns emerged. Word clouds, bibliometric maps, heat maps, and word maps were obtained, which include the analysis of studies according to years, fields, types, impact values, factors, themes, trends, and countries with the most studies. The findings are interpreted in the conclusion, and a general trend in the discipline is presented.

Keywords: Political Science, Political Science Methodology, Bibliometric Analysis

1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been a noticeable increase in interest in bibliometric analysis of various disciplines and concept sets. Political science studies, like other disciplines in the social sciences, have existed in a methodologically limited framework until recently. Recently, however, the field has undergone a transformation in which different methodological approaches have been used with increasing diversity. This is evident in current publications in reputable journals in the discipline.

The main contribution of this paper to the literature is that it takes a step towards addressing the need for comprehensive academic research on bibliometric analysis in political science, especially in the local literature in Türkiye. The number of studies on this topic is quite limited. There is only one paper and one thesis on bibliometric analysis in Turkish political science, and neither can offer a sufficient degree of analysis or review in terms of the subject, scope, and methodology. When the literature is examined from a first impression, noteworthy 16 books and 10 articles on political science methodology were identified. With a more in-depth review, studies on methodology in social sciences are abundant in the literature. Nevertheless, more studies are needed to reveal the trends of the studies in political science from a historical and current perspective.

This study focuses on a bibliometric review of political science research produced worldwide and published in reputable academic journals. The study's goal is to get a broad view of the field by evaluating popular subjects, conceptual frameworks, developments in the field, and other comparable scientific indicators. By shedding light on the historical and evolving context of political science research, the analysis presented in the paper can provide essential insights and awareness for academics, researchers, and policymakers.

The study's methodology is to create, analyze, analyze, and interpret a dataset based on the keyword political science through bibliometric analysis. The dataset's sources are Web of Science and Scopus

databases indexing the highest impact publications in the field. The datasets were analyzed and transformed into meaningful patterns through the text-mining applications WOSviewer and R Studio software. This article provides essential and up-to-date data on the main research areas in the discipline, the most studied concepts, popular topics, and publication statistics (by years, document types, countries, etc.). The data and findings are interpreted, and the trends of the studies in the discipline are revealed through their relation.

This study proceeds as follows. The literature review section, which analyses the primary sources (books and articles) on methodology in political science, will provide a general picture of research methods and trends in the discipline. This is followed by the findings section, in which the bibliometric analysis of the data on scientific publications is carried out. In the conclusion, a general evaluation of the study will be made.

2. Literature Review

Traditionally, political science is defined and studied as the study of the state and its organs and institutions. However, the contemporary discipline of political science goes beyond this definition to include the study of all social, cultural, and psychological factors that mutually influence the functioning of government and the political structure (Roskin, 2024).

Political science covers various topics and is divided into various subfields. These subfields include political theory, comparative politics, political methodology, political behavior, public policy, public administration, political psychology, history of political thought, and similar topics.

Some of the basic concepts that the discipline of political science deals with are as follows: State, politics, social classes, power, authority, sovereignty, hegemony, civil society, public sphere, citizenship, democracy, public administration, secularism, culture, identity, constitution, political participation, political parties, pressure groups, globalization and political ideologies (Atılgan & Aytekin, 2014).

Various challenges and limitations are inherent in conducting scientific research in social sciences in general and political sciences in particular. Methodological problems are at the top of the list. Political science has also been shaped by studies conducted within a narrow methodological framework until recently.

In order to identify the main trends and orientations of the discipline, it is of great importance to examine the studies on methodology in the relevant field. A thorough overview of the discipline's content and methodology is provided by prominent 16 books and 10 papers that were discovered in the literature review carried out under this framework.

Most of the books featured in the literature review provide students and researchers with directions as well as a broad, introductory overview of the research methodology. The studies examined here offer a summary of research procedures, including how to carry out research and apply research methods (for further details, see Jones & Olson, 1996; Johnson & Reynolds, 2005; Barakso et al., 2014; Evera, 2016; Becker, 2017; Shively, 2017; Franco, 2020; Johnson et al., 2020; McNabb, 2020). A different category of literature concentrates on specific areas or research techniques. For instance, Roy (2013) attempted to provide a quantitative introduction to political science research using a software tool. Kapiszewski et al. (2015) investigated the methods and technics of field research in political science. Research techniques were presented by Bruter and Lodge (2013), along with a few case studies. Specific works (e.g., Freeman 1977) provided a broad and thorough review of the area by reviewing the historical evolution of political science research, its scope, methods, and future prospects. Books on political theory differ in that they emphasize normative issues and briefly discuss procedures by referring to the philosophical roots of the discipline (e.g., Theodoulou & O'Brien, 1999; Leopold, 2010; Lowndes et al., 2018).

The articles detected in the literature review offer a wide-based analysis of the methodologies used in political science research, from questions about the essential nature and limits of the discipline to detailed examinations of research methods and their implications. Wrangling over the theoretical grounding and methodological approaches of the discipline is commonplace across the articles. Mukerji (1954) attempted to define political science as a discipline by discussing its fundamental nature, scope, and methodological framework. Mackenzie (1971), on the other hand, drew attention to the need to rethink the boundaries of the discipline by arguing that the scope of political science should be expanded to include non-state political relations. Similarly, Macpherson (1954) assessed the international dimensions of the discipline by examining global trends in political science research. In terms of methodological approaches, Aleaz (2012) analyzed the trends of methods used in political science over the last 20 years, popular methodologies and their impact on the discipline. Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2002) discuss how methodological texts have influenced the discipline, while Shapiro (2002) criticizes that method-oriented approaches do not adequately address important problems in political science. Schubert (1988) emphasized the inadequate use of observational methods, while Leech (2002) drew attention to the importance of interview methods in political research. Addressing the balance between theoretical and empirical approaches, Leiserson (1953) argued that scientific research should combine these two approaches, while Schick (1976) criticized the lack of practitioners and non-academic actors in political science research and the disconnect between academic studies and applied politics. The reviewed articles provide a comprehensive overview of methodological approaches in political science. They examine numerous dimensions, including the nature and limits of the discipline, the distinction between normative, empirical, etc. theories, the role of observational methods and interviews, the increased use of mixed methodologies, and the challenges of using qualitative and quantitative approaches. The articles also discuss the importance of practitioners' contributions to methodological innovation, the emphasis on empirical studies, and the need for a general theory.

3. Method

Bibliometric analysis is a quantitative and novel methodology that examines scientific publications to show research activity patterns, trends, and interrelationships. By analyzing different components such as publication frequency, citation counts, authors, journals, and institutions, this methodology provides quantitative data and perspectives on the structure of the discipline under study and its evolution over time.

Nowadays, bibliometric analysis in the social sciences has become a great tool to facilitate the identification of research trends, the most influential contributors and journals, collaboration networks, and interdisciplinary linkages. In addition to these descriptive functions, it has become a strategic resource for exploring under-studied topics in the discipline and identifying research priorities and opportunities for collaboration. Furthermore, bibliometric analyses help to increase scientific knowledge by providing a comprehensive overview of the conceptual, intellectual, and social dynamics of a research field (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017; Zupic & Cater, 2015; Donthu et al., 2021).

Whether it deals with theoretical or practical questions and problems, science is built on a methodology-based structure (Lauer, 2021). In this framework, the existence of criticisms that political science is a 'forced and methodless field' can be seen as a handicap that needs to be answered.

Political science studies in Türkiye seem stuck within a narrow methodological framework. Most studies focus on traditional topics, such as conceptual and theoretical explanations, theorists' views, similarities/differences with other disciplines, periodic or thematic comparisons, surveys, etc., and the lack of methodological diversity draws attention. It is observed that the number of academic studies

focusing on methodology and methodological issues is quite limited[1]. More specifically, in the field of political science, comprehensive and general scientific research using qualified, unique, and modern methodologies originating from Türkiye has not been found. This shows that we need more resources to understand the methodological problems of the discipline. However, compared with international literature, this deficiency becomes even more apparent. Methodological diversity and innovation are prominent in global political science studies published in reputable journals with high-impact values. Such studies strengthen not only the theoretical/methodological richness of the field but also the relationship between empirical methods and theory.

Bibliometric analysis reveals the current state of the discipline more objectively by evaluating different dimensions of publications such as content, methodology and impact level with a quantitative approach. Thus, this study has the potential not only to make a due diligence, but also to create a methodological awareness in the political science literature in Türkiye and to open the door to more comprehensive, method-oriented research.

The fundamental method of this study is bibliometric analysis. Bibliometric analyses were performed using text-mining applications. The analysis of the studies on the keyword "political science," which is the focused concept, was carried out by searching databases selected according to certain criteria[2]. For the analysis of global studies, the full text, abstract and keywords information of all academic publications in the specified date ranges and with the specified keyword in the 'Web of Science' and 'Scopus' databases, which scans the most prestigious academic publications, were extracted in 'CSV' and 'BibTex' formats and analyzed with text mining applications 'R Studio' and 'VOSviewer Bibliometric Mapping Program'.[3] The data obtained from these analyses were evaluated systematically and comparatively, and word clouds, heat maps, and bibliometric maps were created. The findings[4] were interpreted and discussed in the conclusion section.

A literature search using the Web of Science database with the keyword "political science" identified 48,974 relevant documents in all languages and in various genres, including journal articles, conference papers, books, and book chapters published between the period 1975-2024, with no language, year, or field restrictions. To obtain a more specific result, the review was restricted to the Political Science category and in English language through domain narrowing, and 5,479 documents were identified for the period 1977-2024. The identified academic studies were downloaded from the Web of Science database at the "full record" level in BibTex format as six different files on November 24, 2024. Bibliometric data analyzed using 'R Studio' software.

In the literature search using the Scopus database with the keyword political science, 84,602 relevant documents were identified in all languages, including journal articles, review articles, conference

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[1] As a result of the analysis conducted using the Scopus database, 412 publications originating from Türkiye were published. The analysis of the keywords of these publications shows that the terms 'democracy', 'education,' 'media,' 'political philosophy,' 'Islam,' 'nationalism,' 'religion,' 'globalization,' 'populism' and 'identity' are prominent. In the analyses conducted on the Web of Science (WoS) database, 432 publications originating from Türkiye were reached it was determined that the terms 'science', 'democracy,' 'impact,' 'attitude,' 'management,' 'model' and 'technology' were among the frequently recurring keywords.

[2] In the paper "Comparison of PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar: Strengths and Weaknesses," a review is done of the contents' scope and the pros in practice of the PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar databases. This review shows that the Scopus and Web of Science databases prove more valuable in social sciences (Falagas et al., 2008).

[3] There are some technical reasons for this decision regarding the choice of the two programs. To begin with, the program to be used has capabilities that permit the carrying out of analysis in line with the data format downloaded from Scopus and Web of Science databases. This characteristic minimizes errors on the data processing front and ensures proper data processing. Second, having two software programs allows one to compare the data obtained, thus ensuring the analytical results are reliable. The fact that different software produces similar results on the same data set increases the analysis method's robustness and the findings' consistency. In addition to supporting the methodological strength of the research, such an approach also reinforces confidence in the results.

[4] The findings show that the raw data from the databases cover publications for a certain period. Due to the dynamic and interactive nature of the databases, data retrievals made at different times may differ in content.

articles, books, and book chapters published in the period 1877-2024[5], without language, year, and field restrictions. Scopus only analyzed publications with political science in the title, keywords, and abstract. In order to obtain a more specific result, 50,319 documents identified for the period 1891-2024 were analyzed by limiting them to the category of English language and social sciences. The identified academic studies were downloaded from the Scopus database at the "full record[6]" level and in CSV format as three different files on November 20, 2024. Bibliometric data were analyzed using the 'VOSviewer Bibliometric Mapping Program.

4. Findings

4.1. Web of Science (WoS) database

In the selected documents, the titles, keywords, abstracts and full texts of 5,479 publications from the Web of Science database for the period 1977-2024 were analyzed with the R Studio program. According to this analysis, the classification of the studies according to fields, disciplines, research topics, themes, popular concepts, indicators for years/countries, and the word maps obtained are shown below in 11 different figures.

Figure 1

WoS Database Citation Topics Micro Treemap (Search: Political Science)

The WoS database has a hierarchy of 10 broad macro topics, 326 meso topics and 2,444 micro topics. This allows researchers to analyze at all levels, from broad macrotopics to narrow microtopics; from the most relevant themes to interdisciplinary relationships, from the most dominant topics within the discipline to the least studied topics (Potter, 2020). Figure-1 shows a micro-level classification of the term political science in the WoS database, according to citation topics. This classification, showing the top 25 of 384 subcategories, allows for multilayered thematic analysis.

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[5] The differences in the historical starting points of the periods analyzed are also based on technical reasons. In both databases (Scopus and WoS), the available data obtained from searching the relevant keywords contain different start dates. Such determination could be due to how the contents are structurally organized and the nature of their archiving methods. This allows the year of the oldest published material in the two databases as criteria for the analysis, based on which the study area had been delineated. In addition, this was chosen so that the research method would follow good methodological quality and make the information output richer. Thus, the data included in the analysis was systematically limited to reflect the historical depth of both databases.

[6] Including citations, bibliographical information, abstracts and keywords, funding details, and other publication information.

Figure 2

R Studio TreeMap

Treemap is a type of chart used to visualise data in a hierarchical way. Hierarchical data is represented visually by a treemap, which is a configuration of interlocking rectangles. Every group is symbolized by a rectangle whose size corresponds to the value it stands for (R Graph Gallery, n.d.). Figure-2 shows the treemap of political science. The figure includes terms in discipline represented in percentages from 7% to 1% percent.

Figure 3

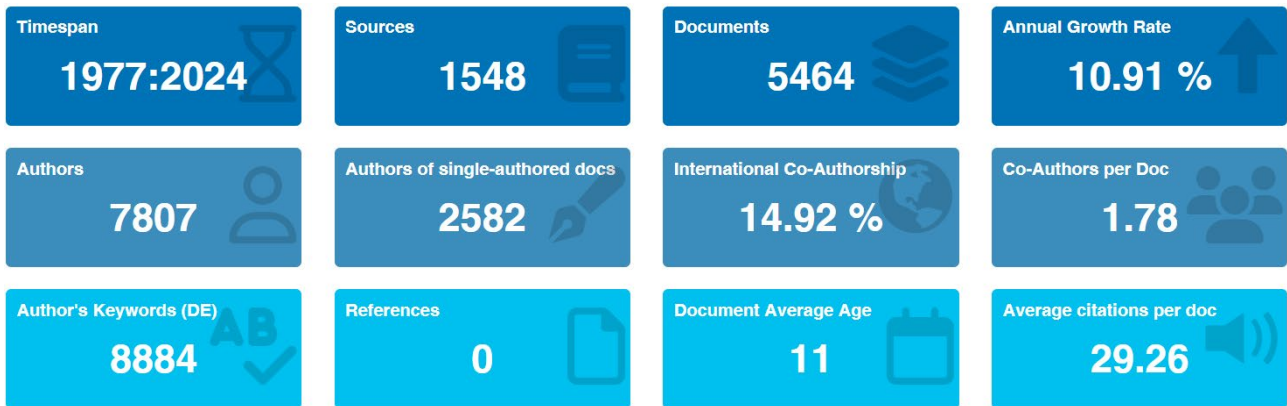*Main Information of R Studio Analyses*

Figure-3 contains the primary statistical information about analyzing the keyword political science conducted with the R Studio program. The date range analyzed, number of documents, average annual increase in the number of studies, number of authors, keywords, average number of citations per publication, and average age of publications are some of the data.

Figure 4

R Studio Factorial Analysis (Political Science)
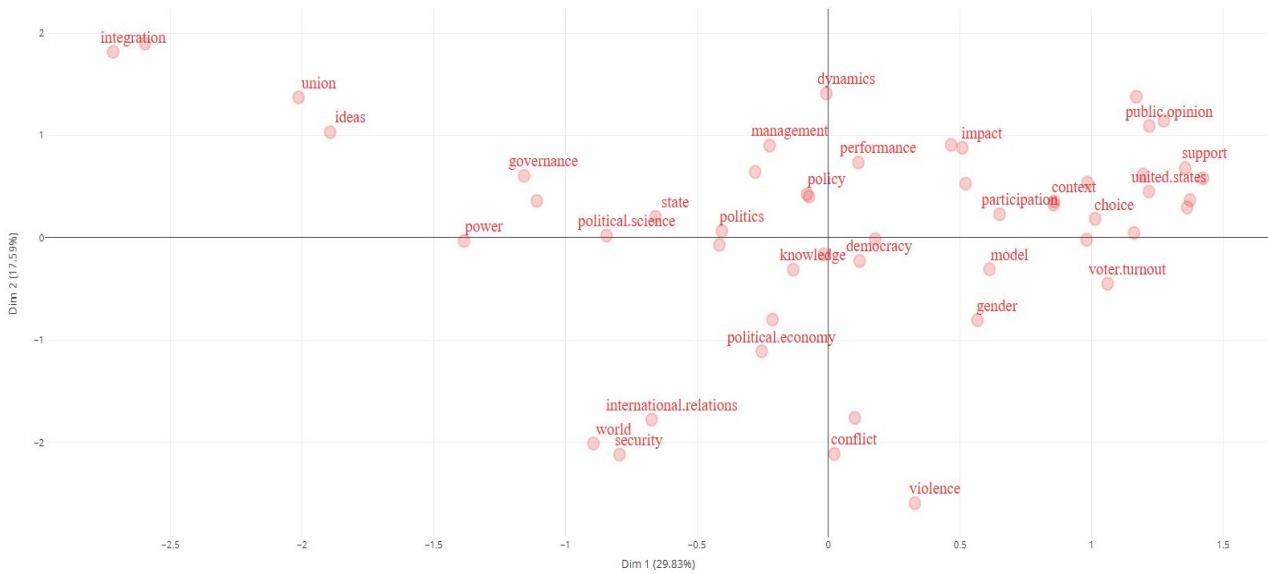
A statistical technique called factor analysis (FA) examines the underlying structure of a set of variables. It is a data reduction technique that aims to describe the relationships between many variables in terms of a smaller number of factors - unobservable, latent variables (GeeksforGeeks, 2023). Figure-4 shows the factor analysis of the topic political science performed in the R Studio program.

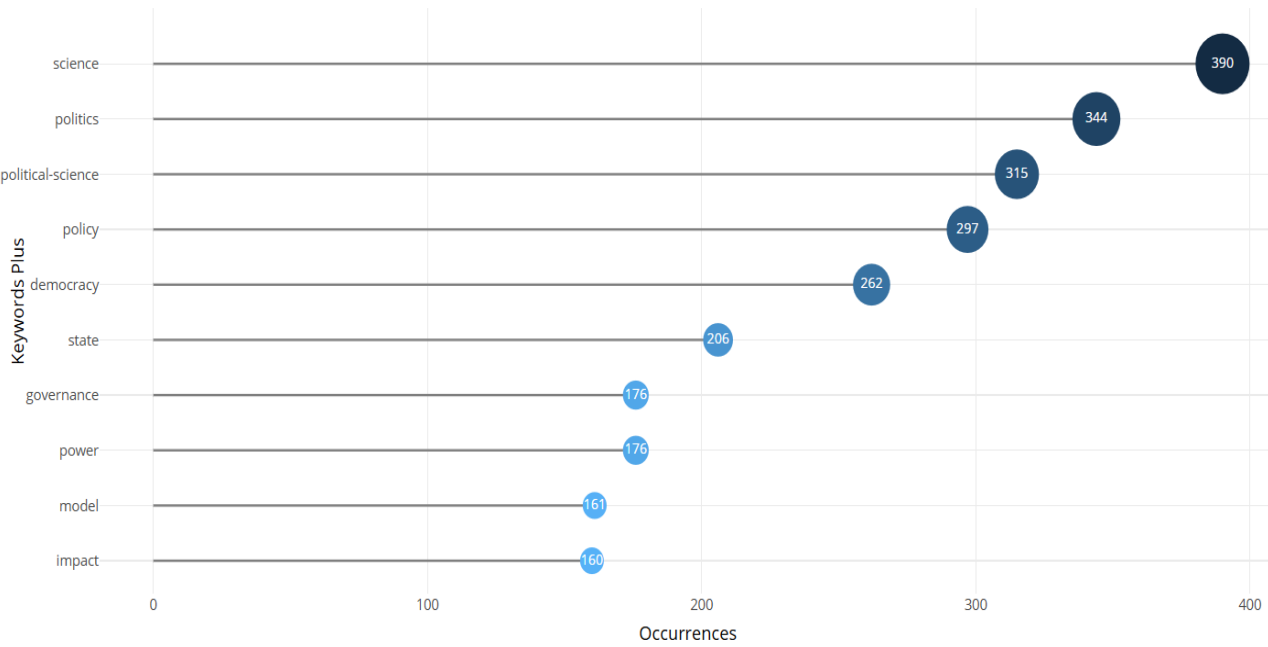**Figure 5**

R Studio Most Frequent Words

Figure-5 shows the most frequent words in the analysis of the term political science conducted with the R Studio program. Accordingly, terms such as science, politics, democracy, state, governance, power, model, impact are the key concepts that attract the most attention in the field.

Figure 6

R Studio Word Cloud

Word cloud is a text visual in which frequently repeated words are displayed in different colors, sizes and styles. Figure-6 shows the word cloud that emerged as a result of the analysis of the political science term conducted with the R Studio program.

Figure 7

R. Studio Annual Scientific Production

Figure-7 shows an annual rising trend in the number of studies. The stability in the number of publications has evolved into an increasing trend since the 1990s.

Figure 8

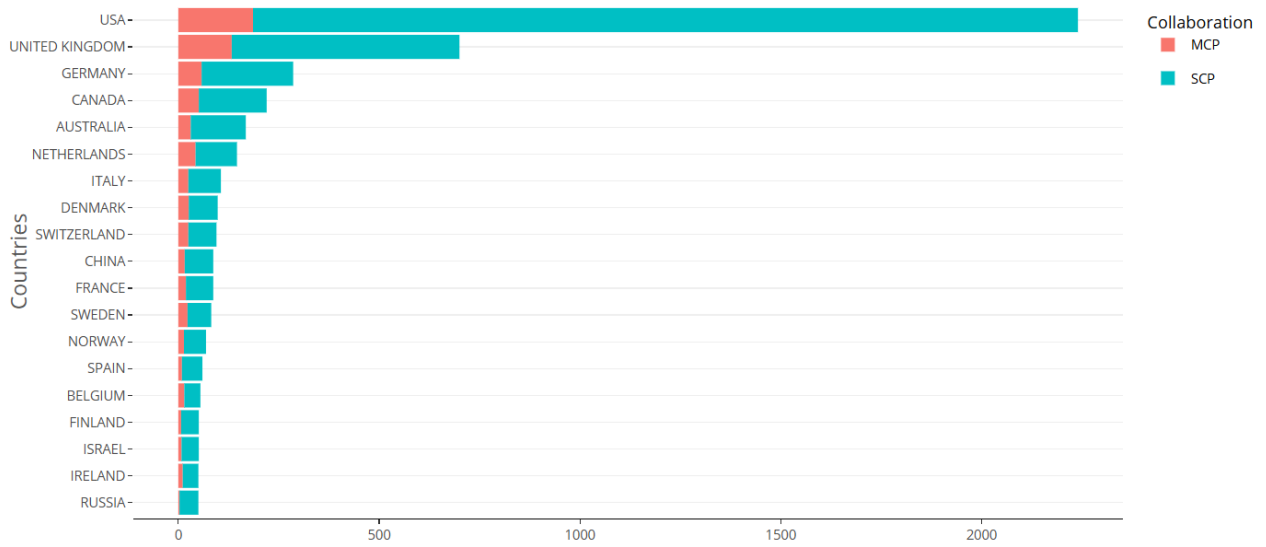*R Studio Most Relevant Countries*

Figure-8 shows the countries with the highest number of studies. According to the graph, studies with high-impact values are primarily conducted in developed Western countries, led by the United States.

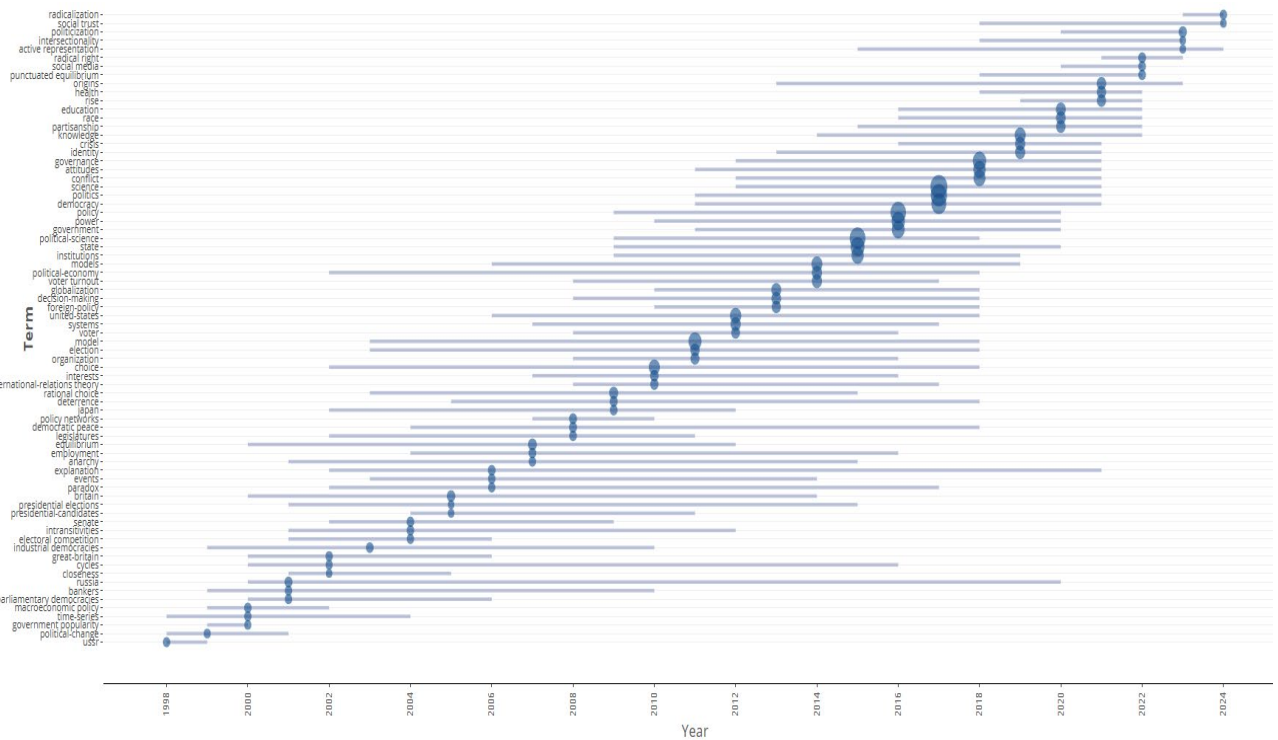**Figure 9**

R Studio Trend Topics

Figure-9 shows the trending topics in the discipline by years. According to this graph, it can be said that the topics of interest change according to the conjuncture and current practices.

Figure 10

Most Global Cited Documents

Globally, most cited documents identify the most influential and most valued publications in a research area or dataset. Figure-10 shows the most cited authors in the field of political science.

Figure 11

R Studio Thematic Map

Figure-11 shows the thematic classification in the discipline. Each color represents a different cluster, and according to the pattern, it is observed that the studies are distributed in 2 different clusters.

4.2. Scopus database

In the selected documents, the titles, keywords, and abstracts of 50,319 studies from the publications belonging to the 1891-2024 date range were analyzed with the VOSviewer bibliometric mapping program. According to this analysis, the distribution of the studies according to years, fields, types, countries with the most studies, and the word clouds, bibliometric maps, heat maps, and word maps obtained are shown below in 6 different figures.

Figure 12

Scopus Documents by Year

Documents by year

Figure 13

Scopus Documents by Country or Territory

Documents by country or territory
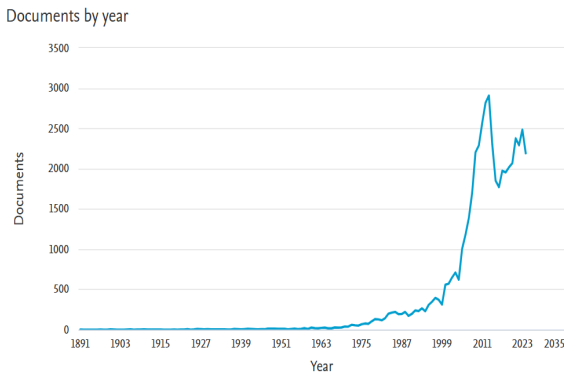Compare the document counts for up to 15 countries/territories.

Figure-12 shows the upward trend of publications over the years. The results are similar to those in Figure-7. There has been a remarkable increase in the number of publications on the chart since the 1990s.
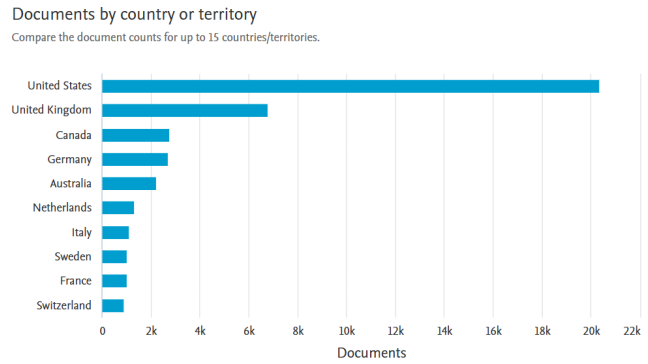
Figure-13 shows their distribution by country. The results are similar to those in Figure-8. All of the countries on the chart are Western countries.

Figure 14

Scopus Documents by Subject Area

Documents by subject area

Figure 15

Scopus Documents by Type
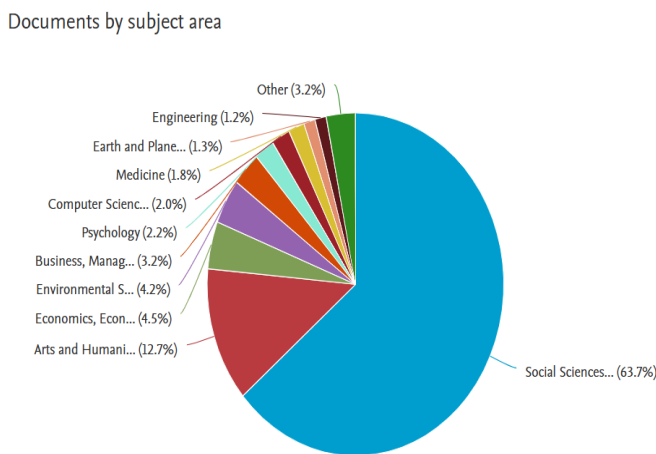
Documents by type

Figure-14 shows the distribution of documents by subject area. The graph reveals the relationship of political science with other disciplines at a more macro level (in a way that supports the micro levels in Figure-1 and Figure-2). According to this, the term political science is studied most intensively in Social Sciences with 63.7%. He is followed by fields such as Art and Humanities, Economics, Environmental Studies, Business, and Psychology.
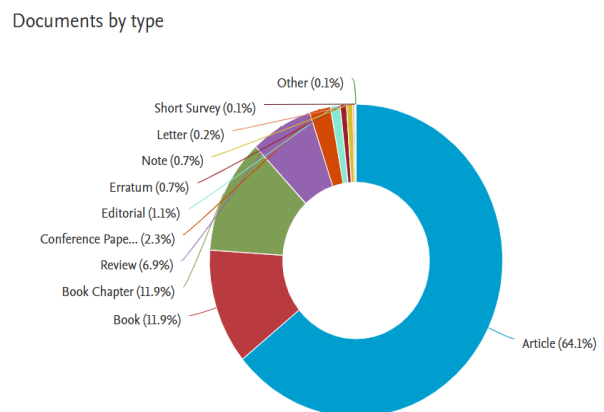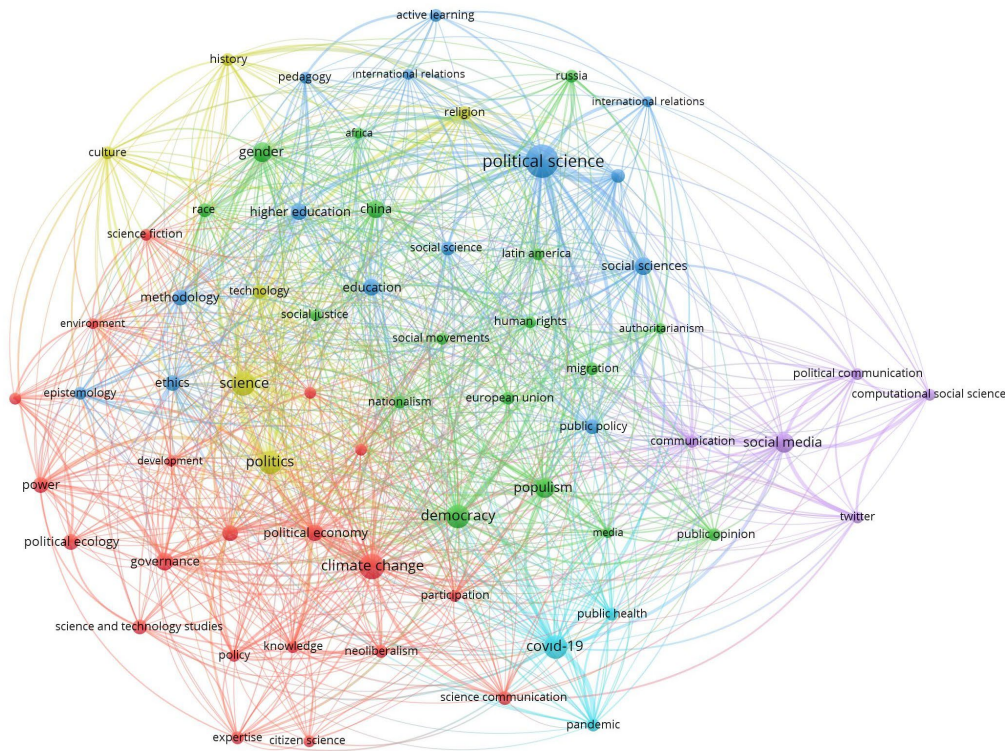
Figure-15 shows the distribution of documents by type. According to the graph, the most popular publication types are (by a wide margin) articles, followed by books, book chapters, book reviews, and conference papers.

Figure 16

WOSviewer Keyword Networks (50 Common Words)

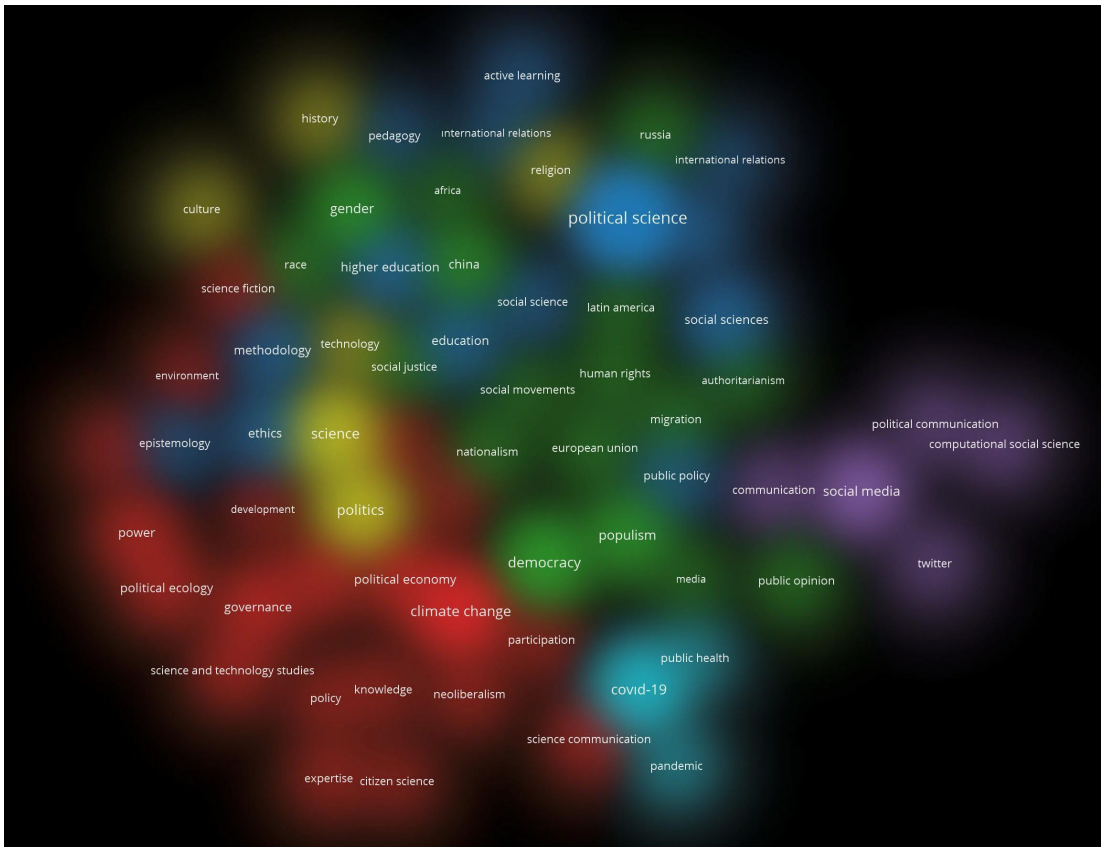**Figure 17**

WOSviewer Heat Map (50 Common Words)

Figure-16 and Figure-17 present the 65 most frequently recurring result terms of 50 repeated keywords as keyword networks and heat maps in the WOSviewer program. According to these graphics,

the results are distributed in 6 different clusters. These can be categorized into methodology, geographic area, historical background, basic concepts, relationship to other disciplines, and current issues.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

Web of Science and Scopus databases' bibliometric analyses have provided essential new information and findings about the discipline. The findings obtained in this research and the evaluation related to them can be listed as follows:

The analyses in Scopus and WoS databases yielded broadly consistent results. The data in both databases analyzed using two different software programs. Similar graphs obtained as a result of this analysis. This confirms that the analysis method is consistent.

Publications focusing on the discipline of political science have grown substantially in the last few years. Related topics such as administrative law, international relations, and public administration continue to dominate academic discourse in this field. This proves the vital role these fields played in the discipline's emergence. As shown in Figure-1, Figure-2, Figure-3, Figure-14, and Figure-15 political science is a significant/valuable social science field with broad relationality and interdisciplinarity between various disciplines. Political science is theoretically rich and diverse in its practical applications. The discipline's content is distributed in various categories, ranging from broad topics to specific terms, from regional studies to studies examining the ideas of theorists and methodological research.

Figure-4 demonstrates the factorial structure of this study. Dimensions Dim 1 (29.83%) and Dim 2 (17.59%) represent varieties such as ideologies, theories, or methodologies (Dim 1) and their relations (concepts) to practical, specific contexts (Dim 2). A high number of correlations between terms such as "governance," "state," and "political science" reflect their theoretical interrelations. The distribution of terms reflects the theoretical (top left) and practical (bottom right) dimensions of political science in separate groups, indicating different fields of study and perspectives.

The most frequently recurring words in the field in Figures-5, Figures-6, and Figures-16 are science, politics, policy, democracy, state, governance, power, mode, impact, political economy, social science, gender, ethics, education, glabolization and climate change. These show that fundamental concepts of political science, ınterdisciplinary connections, global and contemporary ıssues, and social dynamics are topics of interest in the discipline.

Trend analysis (Figure-9) reflects a significant shift in focus towards research priorities. According to graph while in the 2000s, traditional topics such as elections, parliamentary democracy, globalization, and decision-making processes were dominant, in the post-2010 period, modern issues like political polarization, social media, identity politics, and radicalization have come to the fore. Although traditional concepts such as democracy, the state, and governance are still the foundations of the discipline, the increasing presence of contemporary terms shows that there is a sensitivity to current events. On the other hand, the decreasing attention to subjects like globalization and decision-making processes through time demonstrates the ability of the discipline to adapt to changing dynamics.

As shown in Figure-7 and Figure-12, the steady increase in publication volume is evidence of the growing interest in political science worldwide. The graph rise in the volume of publications, which began in the 1990s and picked up pace post-2000, takes as its cue essential developments, both political and technological, and greater access to research materials. Those advances call for more exploration concerning how external factors of academic infrastructure, institutional independence, and meritocratic arrangements play into the academic productivity of the researchers.

Network analysis (Figure-11) shows the thematic clustering of research within the discipline in more detail. For example, one cluster is dominated by national policies and individual political behavior, while another is defined by global governance and international relations. The integration of the theoretical

and practical dimensions can be observed with concepts such as "governance," "institutions," "science," and "democracy" forming central nodes.

The distribution of publications by country highlights the significant contribution of developed Western nations in producing high-impact research. According to the United Nations Human Development Index (2023-2024), the countries that generate the highest volume and quality of academic publications tend to rank within the top 30 regarding human development. However, China, ranked 75th, is an exception to this pattern. Similar patterns are observed in the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) World Economic Outlook Projections. The data, as shown in Figure-8 and Figure-13, calls for further research on the determinants of academic productivity such as academic resources available, quality of academic infrastructure, degree of academic freedom, level of university autonomy, foreign language proficiency, and the meritocratic environment within research institutions.

As with any field, causality in political science research is inherently linked to economic, social, political, and technological factors. These conclusions can help guide future studies. Multidisciplinary collaborations can be facilitated through trends and theme shifts observed. Moreover, the bibliometric mapping of the discipline will offer a valuable tool for academics, researchers, and decision-makers who are trying to navigate through the vast and dynamic field of political science research. Researchers in Türkiye can also benefit from this paper. The study's limitations, such as its emphasis on particular databases and keyword searches, point to potential directions for further research. Subsequent investigations may broaden the range of sources analyzed and utilize more sophisticated search techniques. Continued use of bibliometric analysis in political science should help to clarify the field's changing boundaries and further its development.

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