

## The Development of Sports and Politics Publications Over Time

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### Abstract

This study was conducted to examine the development of publications titled Sport and Politics over time. In the advanced search section of the Web of Science database, The bibliometric analysis of 1,529 publications was analyzed with various parameters such as “country”, “annual scientific production”, “average citation”, “frequency of words over time”. The data obtained were processed through Bibliometrix R and VOSviewer software program. The thematic evolution map shows that the words sport, foreign, government, policy from. The year 1972 was chosen as the starting point of the study, as it corresponds to the earliest publications on sport and politics indexed in the Web of Science database. 1972-2015 are related to the words policy, sport, international, leisure, sporting, football, events from 2016-2024. This shows that sport has become much broader and multifaceted in the fields of politics, culture, economy, social life and international relations. In this field, it has been suggested to examine in more depth elements such as sport policy, international sport events, economic effects of sport, social equality, cultural role of sport, commercial dimensions of the sport industry.

**Keywords:** Bibliometric, Policy, Sport.

## Introduction

Sport is one of the important factors affecting the health, moral structure, labor force and production continuity of individuals and thus society in a country; it also provides a great economy in health expenditures by functioning as preventive medicine and therefore it is emphasized that it should be among the basic policies of the state. A classification is used that examines three levels: individual athletes and their immediate environment, sports policies and politics, and the social and cultural environment people live in. These levels are closely related to each other, interact with each other, and cannot be separated from the social and cultural dimensions; therefore, they are affected by the social and cultural structure in the country (De Bosscher et al., 2006; Sunay, 2024). Sport is one of the important factors affecting the health, moral structure, labor force and production continuity of individuals and thus society in a country; it also provides a great economy in health expenditures by functioning as preventive medicine and therefore it is emphasized that it should be among the basic policies of the state (Bilgin, 1990). Sports and regular exercise are becoming increasingly important today in order to maintain a healthy life and expand the living space (Ahraz et al., 2021). Sport is recognized as one of the influential factors in the world in terms of health, culture, and bringing individuals together on a social level. The spread of modern sport has made it a phenomenon that attracts the attention of people worldwide (Tezcan, 1992, as cited in Alaeddinoğlu, 2024). Therefore, sport is an activity that involves physical and mental competition within the framework of rules, is a competitive activity by branch, and enables individuals to reach a high level of performance by ensuring the progress of technical and tactical development as well as physical, physiological, mental and psychological elements (Yılmaz, 2023a; Yılmaz, 2023b). Policy is a set of principles that guide managers in decision-making processes, a long-term plan, and a specific path or course of action chosen from among various alternatives in order to shape current and future decisions (Şentuna, 2009). When it comes to sports policy, what comes to mind is “the handling of sports, its principles and goals, the ways and methods to achieve these goals, infrastructure, facilities, tools and equipment, education and training approach, the perspective on sports at national and international levels, the philosophy of organization and implementation of sports” (Ekici, 2002). The goals of sports policies can be defined as raising individual elite athletes who sometimes achieve sensational successes, ensuring that certain clubs in the sports system maintain their current hegemonic position through privileged practices such as tax amnesty and land allocation, and creating a “hygienic” viewing environment for those who can afford to pay by ensuring the security of the “sports market” (Akın, 2005). At this point, the aims of sports policies in Turkey can be determined as the organization and strengthening of national sports and directing the development of athletes (Gök and Sunay, 2010). The relationship between sport and politics is a topical and important area that has gained more and more importance in recent years both in the academic field and in practice. It is understood that sport is not only a means of entertainment but also has a significant impact on social, economic and political spheres. The aim of this study is to analyze the interaction between sport and politics and to examine the development of this field in the literature. At a time when the role of sport in global politics is increasing and has become central to shaping social policies, this study aims to identify the most important research dynamics and trends in the field. Moreover, the keywords, co-authorship networks and citation data in the study emphasize the need to examine the relationship between sport and politics from a much broader perspective. In this context, the main problem of the research is to reveal how the interaction between sport and politics is shaped at the global level and how this relationship evolves in social, economic and cultural contexts. Filling this gap in the literature provides an important reference point for future research. Although the relationship between sport and

politics has attracted more attention, especially in recent years, academic studies in this field are still limited. Most of the existing research offers only a superficial perspective without examining the political implications of sport in depth. This study aims to fill the gap in the literature in this field. Most of the existing research offers only a superficial perspective without examining the political implications of sport in depth. This study aims to fill the gap in the literature in this field. Compared to the study of Cansun and Arık (2019) and Moradi et al., (2023) the originality of this study stands out in that it addresses the global relationship between sports policy and politics from a broader perspective. While Cansun and Arık (2019)'s bibliometric review of political science publications with a focus on Turkey deals only with Turkish political science literature, this study offers a different perspective by examining the global literature in the field of sports policy and politics. Moreover, while Cansun and Arık (2019) did not conduct an analysis based on the Web of Science (WoS) database, this study was conducted with data obtained from the Web of Science (WoS) database. This is another important factor that increases the originality and scope of our study. In addition, the study by Moradi et al., (2023) presents a bibliometric analysis of 458 articles published in IJSP. The study was conducted using the Scopus database and focused only on articles published in the journal. In contrast, this paper conducts a broader analysis using the WoS database to provide a more comprehensive coverage of different aspects and global trends in sports policy and politics. In addition, while conducting important analyses such as keywords, inter-author collaboration, citation dynamics, this study increased the depth of these analyses by considering a larger number of data. Compared to the related literature, this study makes a unique contribution. While previous studies have provided some important data on general trends in the field of sport and politics, such as those by Cansun and Arık (2019), which analyzed political science publications in Turkey, and Moradi et al. (2023), who focused on the International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics (IJSP), the originality of this study is that it examines the development of sport and politics in depth through bibliometric analysis over a wide time period. Moreover, while studies in the literature concentrate on specific geographical regions (e.g., Cansun and Arık, 2019; Moradi et al., 2023), this study provides a global perspective, highlighting the increasing production in different countries and the growing attention that sport is receiving at the political level.

## **Material and Method**

### **Ethics Committee Permission**

The data obtained within the scope of the study titled "The Development of Sports and Politics Publications Over Time" were taken from the Web of Science (WoS) database and since the data within this scope does not require ethics committee approval, ethics committee approval was not obtained. "During the current research, the "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive" was followed. All rules specified to be followed within the scope of the "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive" were complied with. None of the actions specified under the second section of the directive, "Actions Contrary to Scientific Research and Publication Ethics", were carried out. The implementation of the research does not require ethics committee approval."

### **Research Model**

In this study, a bibliometric analysis method based on quantitative research and scientific mapping techniques was used. Bibliometric analysis is a method that examines and evaluates the existing literature in a particular research field and explores relationships between publications using algebraic and statistical methods through written and visual tools.

According to Pritchard (1969), bibliometric analysis is a subfield of library and information science that quantitatively summarizes bibliographic content (as cited in Çaylak and Özbey, 2023). Merigó and Yang (2017) define bibliometric research as a tool that presents an overall picture of the literature. Similarly, Okuba (1997) emphasized the importance of bibliometrics in identifying the current status of a field and tracking its evolution over time.

### Data Collection

A total of 1,529 publications related to the field of *sport and politics* were identified using an advanced title search in the Web of Science (WoS) database with the query: (TI=(Sport\*) AND TI=(Politics\* or policy\*))

- Inclusion Criteria: Publications explicitly containing “sport” and “politics/policy” in the title. The first relevant study was published in 1972.
- Time Interval: 1972–2024
- Database Used: Web of Science Core Collection
- Inclusion Criteria: Publications explicitly containing “sport” and “politics/policy” in the title
- Exclusion Criteria: Non-English publications and those not focused on sport-policy intersections were excluded.

**Data Analysis Tools:** The collected data were analyzed using the following tools:

- Bibliometrix R package,
- VOSviewer
- Sankey Diagram (for visualizing thematic evolution and country collaboration)

**Analysis Parameters:** The bibliometric analysis focused on the following parameters:

- Annual scientific Production
- Average citation per year
- Keyword frequency over time
- Country-level collaboration
- Co-authorship networks
- Thematic evolution of Keywords
- Source and reference analysis
- WoS index and category distribution
- Language of publications
- Citation analysis

### Research Questions (Grouped by Focus Area)

- The study sought to answer the following guiding questions to uncover the profile of sport and politics research:

### General Output and Impact

- What is the annual distribution of publications?

- What are the average annual citation counts?

### Collaboration and Authorship

- Which countries are the most active in co-authorship?
- Who are the leading corresponding authors?
- What are the collaboration patterns between countries?

### Content and Trends

- What are the trending topics and keywords?
- How has the thematic structure evolved over time?
- How has keyword frequency changed across decades?

### Source and Reference Analysis

How are publications distributed by:

- Source production over time?
- Reference spectroscopy?
- WoS indexes?
- WoS categories?
- Language of publication?

### Citation Analysis

- Author citations
- Document citations
- Countries citations
- Organizations citations
- Sources citations

### Findings

In this section, the findings obtained regarding the publications titled sports and politics are presented.

### Findings regarding main information

Figure 1 presents the findings obtained regarding the main information.

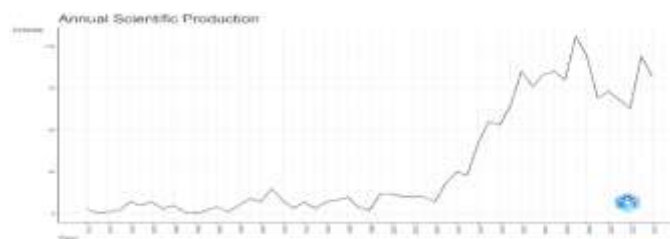


**Figure 1.** Main information

In Figure 1, it was found that the publications on sports and politics were published between 1972 and 2024 with 660 sources, 1529 documents, 2098 authors, 1864 author keywords and 42970 references.

## Findings regarding annual scientific production

Figure 2 presents the findings on annual scientific production.



**Figure 2.** Annual scientific production

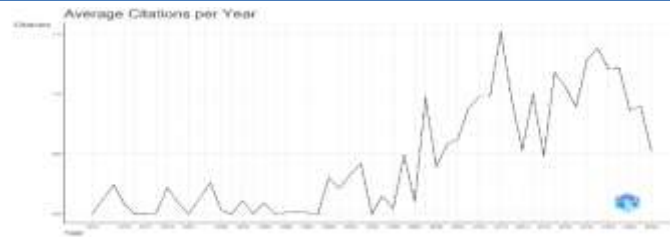
Figure 2 shows that the highest number of publications on sports and politics were published in 2017 (n: 106), 2018 (n: 94), 2023 (n: 94), 2012 (n: 85), 2015 (n: 85), 2014 (n: 83), 2024 (n: 82), 2016 (n: 80), 2013 (n: 76), 2020 (n: 73).

The data clearly shows a gradual increase in the number of publications related to sport and politics from 1972 to 2024, reflecting the growing academic interest in the intersection of these two fields. In the initial years (1972-1980), the number of publications was quite low, with some years having no publications at all (1973, 1982). This limited production can be attributed to the fact that the academic field of sport and politics was still in its early stages and had not yet gained widespread attention. However, starting from the mid-1980s and into the 1990s, there was a noticeable increase in the number of articles. Years such as 1990, 1995, and 1999 saw a rise in the number of publications, indicating that the research community was beginning to explore the relationship between sport and politics more actively. By the early 2000s, there was a more consistent increase, with yearly production rising to 10-12 articles per year, suggesting a growing recognition of the importance of sport in political and social contexts. The most significant surge in publications began in the 2010s, with a substantial rise from 53 articles in 2010 to 106 articles in 2017. This increase highlights a period of rapid growth in interest, particularly in how sport interacts with social, political, and economic policies. The consistent high numbers in the 2010s and 2020s, even reaching 94 publications in 2023, demonstrate the increasing academic focus on sports as a multifaceted phenomenon that influences, and is influenced by, political environments. This surge in publications, especially from 2010 onwards, likely correlates with the broader globalization of sport and its increasing role in international politics, economics, and cultural exchange. Events like the Olympic Games, FIFA World Cup, and political movements surrounding sport may have contributed to this growing body of literature. Additionally, the rise of social media and digital platforms has likely sparked new debates about sport's political influence, further expanding the scope of research. In summary, the steady increase in scientific production since 2000 reflects the growing importance of sport in political discourse and the recognition of its complex relationship with political, social, and economic issues worldwide. The spike in publications in the last two decades shows that sport is not just viewed as a form of entertainment but as an important field of study with political implications.

## Findings regarding average citations per year

Figure 3 presents the findings on average citations per year.



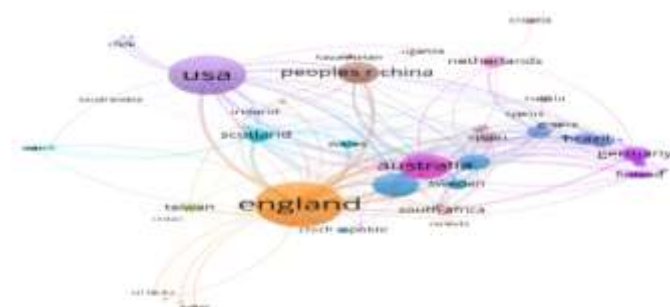


**Figure 3.** Average citations per year

In Figure 3, it was found that the annual average citations of publications titled sports and politics were received the most in 2010 (MeanTCperYear: 1.52), 2019 (MeanTCperYear: 1.38), 2018 (MeanTCperYear: 1.28), 2021 (MeanTCperYear: 1.22), 2020 (MeanTCperYear: 1.21), 2015 (MeanTCperYear: 1.18), 2016 (MeanTCperYear: 1.06), 2013 (MeanTCperYear: 1.00), 2008 (MeanTCperYear: 0.98), 2009 (MeanTCperYear: 0.98). These years, especially 2010, 2019, and 2018, stand out for their high citation rates, indicating a peak in academic interest and recognition for research at the intersection of sports and politics. However, it is important to note that the absence of high citation rates in earlier years, particularly from 1972 to 2009, could be attributed to the fact that publications on sport and politics were scarce during these years. In fact, many years within this period show minimal or no citations at all. This is likely due to the relatively nascent state of research in this area and the limited availability of studies exploring the relationship between sport and politics during these years. From the data, it is also observed that a significant portion of research in this field started to emerge more prominently starting in the early 2000s, leading to a gradual increase in citations in the subsequent years. The lack of publications during the early years of the study (1972-2009) might be linked to the growing global interest in interdisciplinary research starting from the late 1990s and the expansion of the understanding of sport as a social and political phenomenon. As there were no relevant publications available for inclusion in the Web of Science index between 1972 and 2009, this gap may indicate a relatively slower development of the field during this period. This is consistent with the general academic development trends where interdisciplinary fields, particularly the study of the relationship between sport and politics, gain momentum as societal and global contexts evolve.

### Findings regarding the countries of co-authors

Figure 4 presents the findings for the countries of the co-authors.

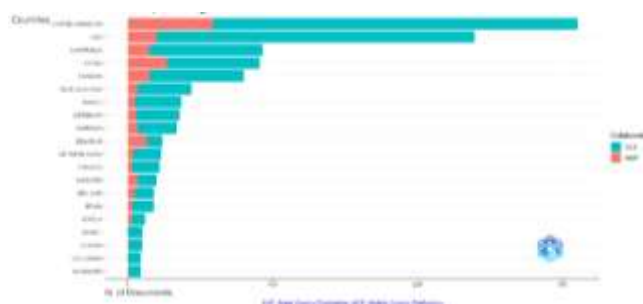


**Figure 4.** Co-Authors' countries

When Figure 4 is analyzed, it can be seen that the publications titled sport and politics are found in items: 65, cluster: 14, links: 219, total link strength: 457. Therefore, it was found that the countries of the co-authors were mostly England (n: 313), USA (n: 248), Australia (n: 118), Canada (n: 99), Peoples R China (n: 86), New Zealand (n: 52), Norway (n: 51), Germany (n: 46), Scotland (n: 39), Brazil (n: 38).

### Corresponding author's countries

Figure 5 presents the findings for the countries of the corresponding authors.



**Figure 5.** Corresponding author's countries

When Figure 5 is analyzed, it is seen that the countries of the responsible authors who published the most on the topic of sport and politics are United Kingdom (n: 310), USA (n: 239), Australia (n: 93), China (n: 91), Canada (n: 80), New Zealand (n: 44), Brazil (n: 37), Germany (n: 36), Norway (n: 34), Belgium (n: 24).

### Countries' collaboration world map

Figure 6 presents the findings regarding the cooperation of countries.



**Figure 6.** Countries collaboration world map

When Figure 6 is analyzed, it is seen that United Kingdom-China (n: 20), United Kingdom-Australia (n: 17), United Kingdom-Canada (n: 15), United Kingdom-Norway (n: 15), United Kingdom-Usa (n: 15). Canada-Australia (n: 12), Usa-Canada (n: 10), United Kingdom-Belgium (n: 8), Usa-Australia (n: 8), Usa-China (n: 8).

### Common words

Figure 7 presents the findings regarding common words.





## Trend topics

Figure 1 is a bubble chart illustrating the number of publications per year (1980-2015) for various topics. The Y-axis lists the topics, and the X-axis represents the year. The size of the bubbles indicates the number of publications per year, with a legend showing sizes for 25, 50, 75, and 100 publications. The chart shows a general upward trend in publication volume over time, with a significant increase in the number of publications per year for many topics starting around 2000. The topics listed on the Y-axis are: public health, soft power, social life, sport management, consumer, sport organization, policy implementation, school sports, nation-building, sport policy, physical activity, sports policy, governance, physical education, health, sport, politics, sports, policy, football, new stadium, public policy, class, gender, policy change, history, development, olympic games, sports industry, elite sport policy, paper, history of sport, sustainable development, nationhood, culture, and ethnicity.

When Figure 8 is examined, it is seen that the publications titled sport and politics consist of trending topics such as “sport”, “sport policy”, “politics”, “politics”, “public policy”, “physical activity”, “management”, “sport policy”, “policy implementation”, “football”,

“physical education”, “Olympic Games”, “sport industry”, “sport management”, “sustainable development”, “elite sport policy”, “policy change”, “sport organization”.

### Thematic Evolution

Figure 9 presents the findings regarding the thematic evolution map of keywords plus.



**Figure 9.** The thematic evolution map of keywords plus

When Figure 9 is examined, it is found that words such as “city”, “power”, “education”, “football”, “management”, “health”, “physical activity”, “participation”, “game”, “prevention” are related to each other in the keyword search of the publications titled sports and politics.

Figure 10 presents the findings regarding the thematic evolution map of author keywords.



**Figure 10.** The thematic evolution map of author's keywords

When Figure 10 is examined, it was found that words such as “Olympic games”, “physical activity”, “sports”, “public policy”, “sports policy” were related to each other in the author keywords of the publications titled sports and politics.

Figure 11 presents the findings regarding the thematic evolution map of titles.



**Figure 11.** The thematic evolution map of titles

When Figure 11 is examined, it is found that words such as “sports”, “state”, “politics”, “international”, “leisure”, “football” are related to each other in the titles of sports and politics publications.

Figure 12 presents the findings regarding the thematic evolution map of Abstracts.

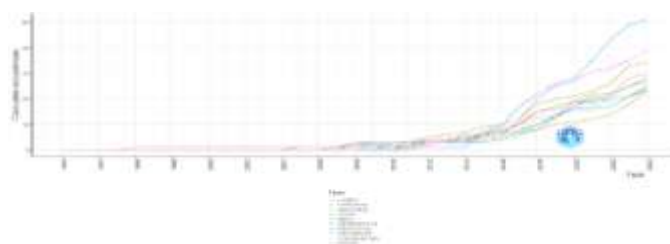


**Figure 7.** The thematic evolution map of titles

When Figure 12 is examined, it was found that words such as “international”, “politics”, “sports”, “physical” are related to each other in the summaries of publications titled sports and politics.

## Words frequency over time

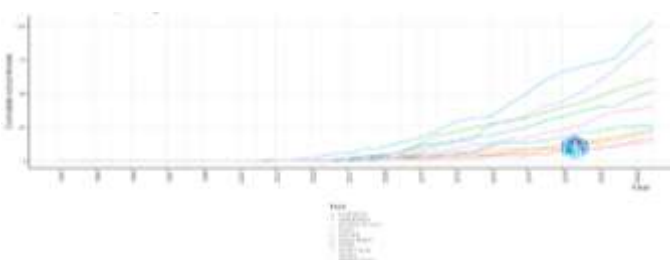
Figure 13 presents the findings regarding the frequency of keywords plus over time.



**Figure 8.** Keyword plus frequency over time

When Figure 13 is analyzed, it is seen that the frequency of use of words such as “politics”, “physical activity”, “participation”, “management”, “health”, “performance”, “policy” has increased after 2006.

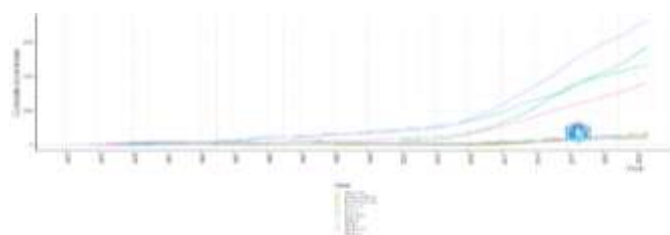
Figure 14 presents the findings regarding the frequency of author’s keywords over time.



**Figure 9.** Author’s keywords frequency over time

Figure 14 shows that the frequency of use of words such as “sport”, “sport policy”, “politics” “public policy”, “physical activity”, “management” increased after 2003 in the author keywords of publications on sport and politics.

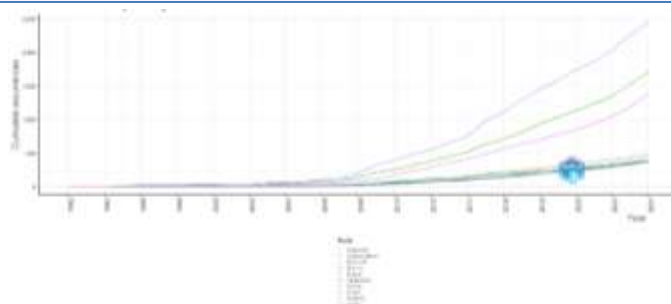
Figure 15 presents the findings regarding the frequency of titles over time.



**Figure 10.** Titles frequency over time

Figure 15 shows that the frequency of the use of words such as “sport”, “politics” “policy”, “development”, “analysis”, “international”, “physical” in the titles of sports and politics publications increased after 1987.

Figure 16 presents the findings regarding the frequency of Abstracts over time.

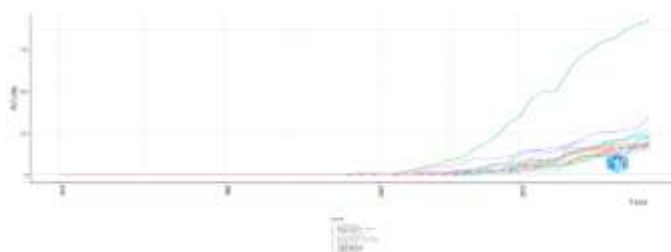


**Figure 11.** Abstracts frequency over time

Figure 16 shows that the frequency of words such as “sport”, “politics”, “policy”, “international” and “physical” in the titles of sports and politics publications increased after 2008.

### Affiliations production over time

Figure 17 shows the findings on the frequency of affiliates over time.

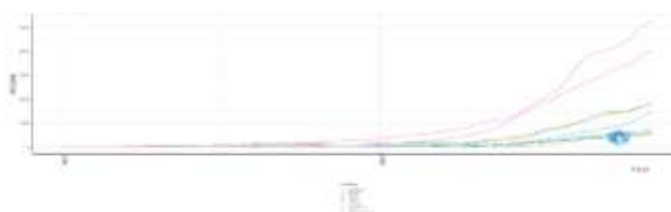


**Figure 12.** Affiliations production over time

When Figure 17 is analyzed, it is seen that the number of publications on sport and politics by institutions such as “German Sport University Cologne”, “Norwegian School of Sport Sciences”, “La Trobe University”, “Leeds Beckett University” increased after 2001.

### Countries production over time

Figure 18 shows the findings regarding the production frequency of countries over time.

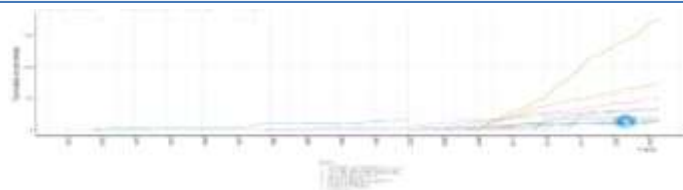


**Figure 13.** Countries production over time

Figure 18 shows that the production values of countries such as “Germany”, “United Kingdom”, “Canada”, “Australia”, “New Zealand”, “USA” and “China”, which publish sports and politics titles, increased after 2000.

### Sources production over time

Figure 19 shows the findings regarding the production frequencies of resources over time.

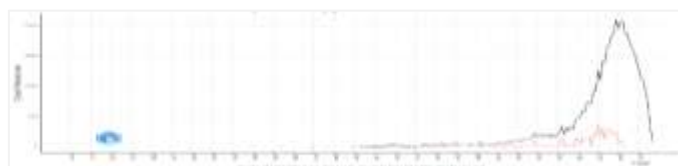


**Figure 14.** Sources production over time

Figure 19 shows that the production values of countries publishing sport and policy titles such as “International Journal of Sport Policy And Politics”, “Routledge Handbook of Sport Policy”, “International Journal of The History of Sport”, “Sport in Society”, “International Review for The Sociology of Sport” increased after 2002.

### Reference spectroscopy

Figure 20 shows the findings of Reference Spectroscopy.



**Figure 20.** Reference spectroscopy

Figure 20 shows that the reference spectroscopy values of the publications on sports and politics are highest in 2008 (n: 2088), 2011 (n: 2069), 2010 (n: 2050), 2009 (n: 1941), 2007 (n: 1877), 2013 (n: 1868), 2012 (n: 1844), 2006 (n: 1843), 2014 (n: 1702), 2005 (n: 1682).

### Web of Science index

Figure 21 shows the findings for the Web of Science Index.

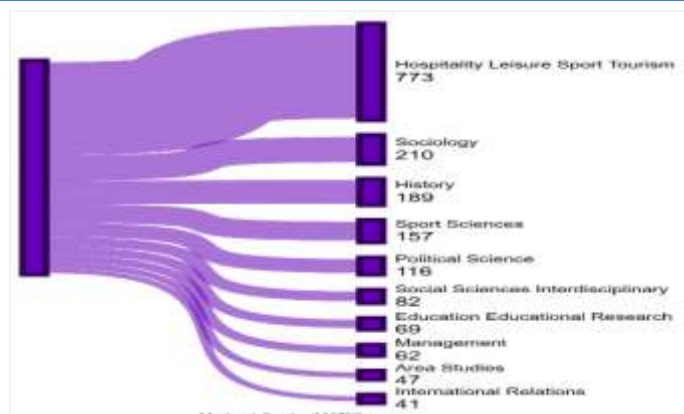


**Figure 21.** Web of science index

In Figure 21, publications titled sports and politics are shown in Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) (n: 624), Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI) (n: 467), Book Citation Index - Social Sciences & Humanities (BKCI-SSH) (n. : 237), Arts & Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI) (n: 234), Science Citation Index Expanded (SCI-EXPANDED) (n: 179), Conference Proceedings Citation Index - Social Science & Humanities (CPCI-SSH) (n: 42), Conference Proceedings Citation Index - Science (CPCI-S) (n: 29), Book Citation Index - Science (BKCI-S) It was determined that it was published in (n: 9) indexes.

### Web of Science categories

Figure 22 shows the findings regarding examples from Web of Science Categories.

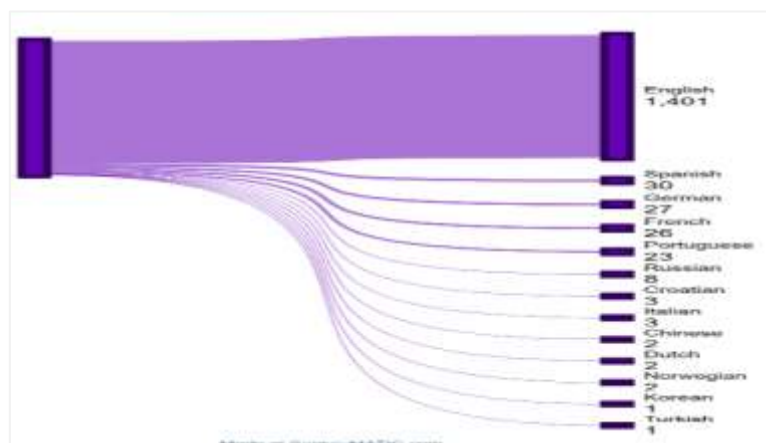


**Figure 15.** Web of science categories

Figure 22 shows that most of the publications on sports and politics were published in Hospitality Leisure Sport Tourism (n: 773), Sociology (n: 210), History (n: 189), Sport Sciences (n: 157), Political Science (n: 116), Social Sciences Interdisciplinary (n: 82), Education Educational Research (n: 69), Management (n: 62), Area Studies (n: 47), International Relations (n: 41) Web of Science categories.

### Languages

Figure 23 shows the findings regarding the language of publication.



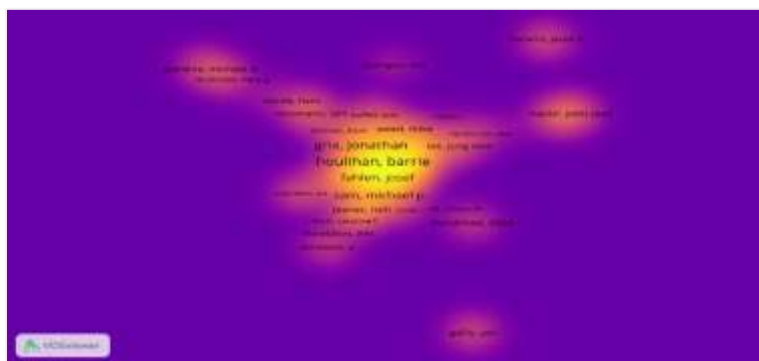
**Figure 16.** Languages

Figure 23 shows that publications on sports and politics were published in English (n: 1,401), Spanish (n: 30), German (n: 27), French (n: 26), Portuguese (n: 23), Russian (n: 8), Croatian (n: 3), Italian (n: 3), Chinese (n: 2), Dutch (n: 2), Norwegian (n: 2), Korean (n: 1), Turkish (n: 1).

### Citation analysis

Figure 24 shows the density map of author citations.





**Figure 17.** Author citations

Figure 24 shows that the most cited publications on sports and politics are by Grix, Jonathan (citations: 572); Coalter, Fred (citations: 428); Wheaton, Belinda (citations: 325); Houlihan, Barrie (citations: 315); Darnell, Simon C. (citations: 276); Fahlen, Josef (citations: 266); Skille, Eivind A. (citations: 242); Stenling, Cecilia (citations: 221); Weed, Mike (citations: 205); Mansfield, Louise (citations: 200).

Figure 25 shows the density map of document citations.



**Figure 18.** Document citations

In Figure 25, it was found that the most frequently cited publications on sports and politics are: Coalter (2010) (citations: 355); Weed (2015) (citations: 174); Darnell (2010b) (citations: 167); Grix (2013a) (citations: 165); Gilchrist (2011a) (citations: 132); Hayhurst (2009) (citations: 124); Skille (2008) (citations: 120); Dudley (2017) (citations: 112); Black (2007) (citations: 111); and Houlihan (2006) (citations: 109).

Figure 26 shows the density map of sources citations.

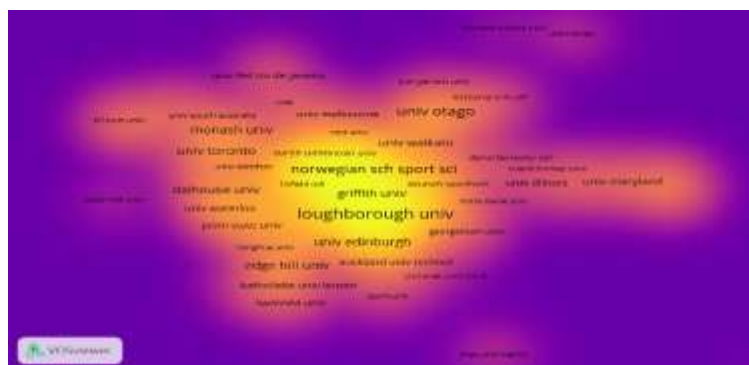


**Figure 19.** Sources citations

In Figure 26, it has been found that the publications most cited in the fields of sport and politics are as follows: International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics (citations: 2758); International Review for the Sociology of Sport (citations: 1041); Sociology of Sport Journal

(citations: 594); Sport in Society (citations: 537); International Journal of the History of Sport (citations: 441); European Sport Management Quarterly (citations: 440); Sport, Education and Society (citations: 345); Journal of Sport & Social Issues (citations: 272); Sport Management Review (citations: 199); Journal of Sport Management (citations: 166). These publications have been cited by various sources.

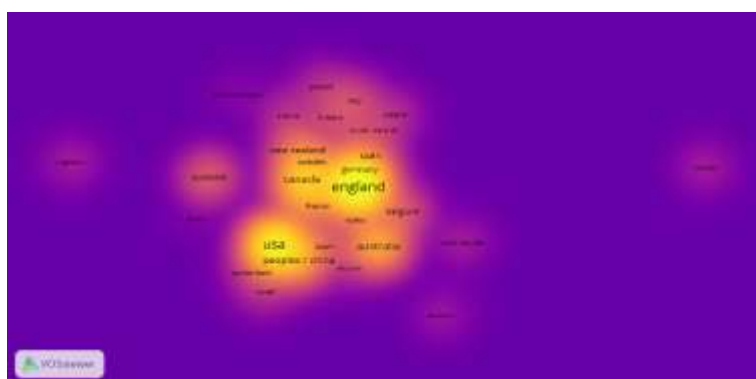
Figure 27 shows the density map of organizations citations.



**Figure 20.** Organizations citations

In Figure 27, it has been found that the highest citations in the field of sports and politics publications are from the following institutions: Univ Birmingham (citations: 707), Univ Loughborough (citations: 532), Univ Otago (citations: 525), Loughborough Univ (citations: 454), Dalhousie Univ (citations: 454), Univ Brighton (citations: 429), Norwegian School of Sport Sciences (citations: 409), Univ Stirling (citations: 379), Univ Durham (citations: 363), and Hedmark Univ College (citations: 341).

Figure 28 shows the density map of countries citations.



**Figure 21.** Countries citations

In Figure 28, it has been found that publications on sports and politics have received the highest number of citations from the following countries: England (citations: 4,177), USA (citations: 1,749), Australia (citations: 1,558), Canada (citations: 1,431), Norway (citations: 1,047), New Zealand (citations: 794), Scotland (citations: 602), Sweden (citations: 540), Belgium (citations: 340), and Germany (citations: 328).

## Discussion and Conclusion

This study presents a bibliometric analysis of publications in the field of sports and politics, revealing key trends and research dynamics. Data obtained from 1,529 publications and 660 sources between 1972 and 2024 indicate that the relationship between sports and politics has rapidly increased, especially gaining significant momentum in recent years. This marks a

period in which sports have begun to attract more attention within social and political contexts. The main reason for choosing 1972 as the beginning of the review period is that this is the first academic publication in the databases in which sports and politics are discussed together. Therefore, the study aims to comprehensively evaluate the development of the field from the chronological starting point of the literature. This methodological choice ensures the historical continuity of the analysis and provides the opportunity to reveal the changes and transformations over time.

The high number of publications in the 2010s and early 2020s suggests that sports are no longer merely a form of entertainment, but are increasingly playing a central role in shaping social and economic policies. Furthermore, the years 2010, 2019, and 2018 stand out in terms of average annual citations, indicating the high academic impact of studies published during this period. For example, publications from 2010 received an average of 1.52 citations, reflecting growing interest and recognition in the field. These findings demonstrate that research on sports and politics is rapidly developing both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Another important finding is the concentration of co-authorship networks in countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, Canada, and China. These countries are the main centers of sports policy research, reflecting the global organization of scientific collaborations in sports and politics and the strong academic interactions across different geographical regions. In line with the literature, these findings suggest that scientific collaborations in the fields of sports and politics are organized within a global network, and that the scope of sports has become broader and more multidimensional in social, cultural, economic, political, and international contexts.

The variables analyzed for the first time in this study play an important role in addressing gaps in the literature. Keywords such as sustainable development and elite sports policy, which have been examined in a limited number of studies, aim to fill these gaps. These variables significantly contribute to understanding the relationship between sports and broader societal goals and offer a new perspective in the field. It has been observed that the number of studies focusing on these variables in the literature is insufficient; therefore, the findings of this study provide an important foundation that may guide future research.

The research periods are divided into two main categories by the Bibliometrix R program: 1972 and 2015 and 2016-2024. This distinction is based on thematic transformations, keyword differentiation and increase in publication density. The study found that the keywords “sport”, “foreign”, “government”, “policy” used between 1972 and 2015 are associated with the terms “policy”, “sport”, “international”, “leisure”, “sportive”, “football”, “events” in the 2016–2024 period. These results show that sport has become significantly broader and more multifaceted in areas such as politics, culture, economy, social life, and international relations. This shift demonstrates that sports are no longer viewed merely as physical activities, but have transformed into a social, economic, and political phenomenon filling important gaps in the literature. The emergence of keywords such as sustainable development and elite sports policy since the 2000s indicates a growing focus on understanding the relationship between sports and broader social objectives. This development represents a crucial step in understanding the impact of sports on politics and society.

The findings obtained in this study significantly align with the existing literature and reflect the theoretical, methodological, and thematic diversity of the field. Coalter (2010) points out that there are theoretical shortcomings in how sport is addressed within development-oriented policy frameworks and emphasizes that local contexts are often overlooked. He highlights

that overly optimistic assessments of sport's capacity to generate social capital carry various risks at both the political and practical levels. Darnell (2010) argues that sport has become a tool integrated into neoliberal development discourses and stresses the importance of acknowledging the ideological dimensions of sport policies within this context. Hayhurst (2009), examining the formation of development policies within postcolonial power relations, critically analyzes how sport is positioned within development narratives.

In relation to large-scale events aimed at increasing sport participation, a systematic review conducted by Weed et al. (2015) demonstrates that the 2012 London Olympics failed to achieve this goal. The study finds no strong empirical evidence supporting the direct and lasting impact of the so-called "demonstration effect." Grix and Lee (2013) reveal that emerging countries use international sports mega-events as part of their soft power strategies, suggesting that such events play a functional role in enhancing national reputation, visibility, and diplomatic influence on the global stage. Evaluating the role of sport mega-events in the context of symbolic politics, Black (2007) argues that these events serve important functions in nation-building, generating societal legitimacy, and enabling repositioning strategies at the global level. The study by Gilchrist and Wheaton (2011) analyzes how lifestyle sports such as parkour are associated with youth policies and demonstrates their potential as alternative participation models that go beyond traditional sport structures. Focusing on the local implementers of sport policies, Skille (2008) proposes a new theoretical framework to explain how voluntary sport clubs interpret and restructure central policies within local contexts. Dudley et al. (2017), on the other hand, approach the concept of physical literacy from a multidimensional perspective within public health, education, sport, and recreation policies, discussing how the right to lifelong physical activity can be secured at the policy level.

This study makes a significant contribution to existing bibliometric analyses. Compared to the study by Cansun and Arık (2019) focusing on political science publications in Turkey and the bibliometric analysis of the International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics by Moradi et al. (2023), this study contributes to the broader international literature by examining the global relationship between sports and politics. This distinction emphasizes the originality of this study within the literature on sports and politics. Future research can benefit from examining these two fields from a broader perspective to enable more in-depth analysis.

Unlike Cansun and Arık (2019) and Moradi et al. (2023), which focused on Turkey or specific journals, this study highlights the interdisciplinary approach and increasing international collaboration in sports and politics research. Additionally, unlike earlier Turkish studies, which were mostly published in English and in limited outlets, this study shows that global research on sports and politics receives more citations and has a more prominent place in the international literature. This demonstrates that research in this field has a wider academic impact and is attracting increasing global interest.

Future studies will provide deeper insights into the relationship between sports and politics. This study also serves as an important reference point for future research examining the political and social impacts of sports. Filling gaps in the literature will help to better understand the connections between sports and critical social issues such as social justice, equality, and gender.

In conclusion, the findings of this study show that the relationship between sports and politics has become an increasingly prominent research area with global impact. The analysis demonstrates that sports are not only a form of entertainment but also a significant phenomenon in social, cultural, economic, and political contexts. These findings play an

important role in generating new research questions and directions for future studies in the field.

### Suggestions

In order to examine the relationship between sport and politics in depth in the future, studies can be conducted on the social effects of sport, its relationship with regional politics, and the effects of media and social media use. Furthermore, the role of sport in global politics can be put into a broader perspective through multi-method empirical research and international comparative analysis. The role of sport in diplomacy, social policy and economic relations are also important areas of research. These studies will contribute to our understanding of the integration of sport with politics and its impact on social changes. However, it is seen that Metaverse technology has not yet been sufficiently addressed in the literature examining the relationship between sports and politics. In this context, an original study examining the interactions between sports and politics through digital platforms and virtual environments would make a significant contribution to understanding both the effects of Metaverse technology on the sports industry and the potential reflections of digitalization on politics. In the future, the role of Metaverse technology on sport organizations, politics and social interactions should be explored in more depth. Finally, it is suggested that national and international thesis studies should be examined through bibliometric analysis to further explore the relationship between sport and politics.

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