

# SCHOLARLY LITERATURE IN SOCIAL SCIENCES: A DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE

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**Abstract** Purpose: The present study explores the growth and development of Social Science literature and presents an overall look on the scholarly literature and its various facets.

Design/ Methodology/ Approach: Data for the study were harvested from SCOPUS. Scopus being one of the largest bibliographic indexing and abstracting database provides coverage on various subjects like Health Sciences, Life Sciences, Physical Sciences, Social Sciences and many more. Categorization and sub-categorization of the research publication were done on the basis of subjects covered and it was found that certain number of research contributions presents themselves in more than one subject area so the calculation done exceeded the actual number of publications.

Findings: The findings clearly show that maximum number of publications (6351) in the field of Social Sciences are published together with other sciences be it Physical, Life or Health Sciences. A small proportion (2322) showed individual identity. In sub-categorization of Social Science majority of literature was published in Arts and Humanities (2701) followed by Business, Management and Accounting(1320) and Psychology (1202). Most of the literature was published from European Continent with 4761 (54.75%) publication, followed by North America with 3125 (36%) publications in total. Country-wise United States ranked 1st with 2921(33.67%) publications, United Kingdom ranked 2nd and Netherland ranked 3rd with 2123(24.47%) and 687(7.92%) publications simultaneously. The open access assessment showed that a very less portion of literature 598,(6.90%) was published in open access medium out of which 566 publications was made available through DOAJ (Directory of Open Access journals), rest 8075(93.1%) was subscription based. Out of the total number of publications, 7447 (85.86%) were active till date, while 1226 (14.14%) publications showed inactive status. Academic Journals once again acted as the main medium of scholarly communication and accounted for 94% (8153) of the total followed by trade Journals 245 (2.82%), book series 238 (2.76%) and Conference proceedings 37 (0.42%). The results also revealed that the literature published in this discipline showed a slow start but the publications started doubling in the latter part of 19th century. In terms of SJR (Scientific Journal Ranking) the results achieved were not much satisfactory; however improvement can be seen from 2011 to 2012, but there is much needed to be done in terms of quality of publications.

Research limitations/implications: The study was carried over the data harvested from SCOPUS only and it did not explore the whole World Wide Web.

**Keywords:** Social Sciences, Scopus, Scholarly Literature, SJR, Scholarly Metrics

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The growth of scholarly publishing is as old as the humanity itself right from the time when the first man made his appearance on this earth. Man, supreme among all the earthly species is acquainted with an intelligent brain structure. Times have witnessed the supremacy of human over other species and scholarly publishing industry has also been affected

by the reflections of this highly organized brain. Since the inception of the first journal in 1665 (*Journal des Scavans*) in the world, scholarly publishing has become a ceaseless affair. With the advent of the Gutenberg revolution, it got an explosive push. However, the invent of the information technology (IT) proved a blessing for the scholarly world as it helped to eradicate all the barriers that hindered the scholarly communication process and this brought a

tremendous change in the nature, boundaries and structure of information (Singh, 2009). Supporting the argument, Branin and Case (1998); Wani and Gul (2008) opined that there has been an explosion of scholarly literature publishing from all over the world, including both developed and developing nations. This can be mainly attributed to the confluence of two trends: the growth of scholarly literature and the growth of information technologies. Price (1975) studied the growth in the number of scientists, scientific journals, and papers over the past two centuries, and he came to conclusion that the numbers doubled every 15 years.

In order to overcome the difficulty to keep a track of growth of literature many online indexing and abstracting databases acted as helms men in order to map the information at a précised location and to help the research community not only to seek information but the best of it. Many such services like SCOPUS, Google Scholar, ISI Web of Science etc. are working continuously in this direction. SCOPUS one of the leading indexing and abstracting database of peer-reviewed literature. It is providing its services and sources to the users in the fields of Scientific, Technical, Medical and Social Sciences (including arts and humanities) in the form of journals, book series, trade journals, conference proceedings etc.

## 2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The growth and development in the scholarly literature in the field of Social Science have been on increase since middle of 20th century. This growth has been on hype due to the advent of information technology as it is providing new avenues for research in almost all the endeavors of human research activity. This has been taken place mostly due to the usage of e-datasets mostly in the form of e-journals, e-books, e-zines etc. which are receiving continuous attention on the hands of teaching and research communities; this indeed was the conclusion of the research carried out by O'Brien and Maynard (2010). Robbin (1995) opined that collaboration in research enhance production and eminence of research and it represents "centre without walls" in which research is performed without regard to physical or geographical location.

In order to map growth and development in any field of research bibliometric techniques are being employed. The bibliometrics and its indicators have been developed in response to the need to adopt quantitative techniques to study scientific literature (Nwagwu and Egbon, 2011). According to a report published by Archambault and Gagne (2004), the identification of emerging themes in research and mapping its growth is vital for policy making and this is needed to be don't on three levels - publication count; Citation and impact factor and co-citation and co-word analysis. This indeed helps to set priorities for any organisation, or region or any

country to stay at the cutting edge of the research. According to Budd and Seavey (1996) productivity and prestige in any field of research go hand in hand, as they both complement each other. One of the current means of accessing the quality of any work is analyzing citation and impact factor using SJR (Scientific Journal Ranking) which takes not only impact factor of the journals into consideration but also considers the importance and the prestige of the journals from which citations are received. According to Meadows (2005) the interest in such quantitative studies of literature grew substantially after Second World War when a researcher Price published articles -*Little science, Big science* were he put an attempt to examine the structure of science in quantitative terms. Huang and Chang (2008) opined that the prime use of such studies is to promote fair and just research and to reveal the achievement and progress of research carried out in any discipline. Wani and Gul (2008) outlined the growth and development in the scholarly literature on global level and concluded that out of 25,482 publications major contribution was made in the field of Physical Sciences followed by Health Sciences, Social Science and Life Sciences respectively. Europe emerges as a leading contributor with academic journals as the main channel for transmission of knowledge. According to Bhattacharje (2012) Social Science is the science of people or collections of people, such as groups, firms, societies, or economies, and their individual or collective behaviours. So when we talk about Social Science according to Senn (2000), it is in itself multidisciplinary science covering disciplines of Arts and Humanities, anthropology, economics, geography, history, political science, psychology, sociology, and their applications in – education, planning, public administration and social work. According to Eugeni, Lourenco and Morais (2010) and Smith (1998), research in Social Sciences has been increased due to the fact that it mostly relates itself with human conditions and last few years have witnessed a growth in interest in social and environmental questions. Thus, the research in this sector is intended to provide substantial benefits to individuals and to local, regional, national, and international communities. According to Harzing (2005) the use of bibliometrics in the field of Social Sciences is not receiving proper attention as most of the research published in this field of knowledge come up in the form of books and other analog resources rather than articles in research journal and the usage of such resources still holds its roots firm when it comes to research in Social Sciences and allied fields. Davarpanah (2010), in his research, tried to analyze the research output in the field of social sciences and its disciplines in Iran and Malaysia, came to conclusion psychology, and public, environmental and occupational health are more productive than the other fields; contributing 47.35% of the total.

Thus we can say that Social Science unlike other Sciences is an amalgamation of variety of disciplines like Psychology,

Anthropology, Economics, Public administration, Sociology, Social work, Political science and has more implication on human life than any field of knowledge. Taking into consideration human-human relationships; human environment relationships; and human-society relationships.

### 3. OBJECTIVES

- To trace the intensification of literature chronologically.
- To access the account of multidisciplinary research in social sciences.
- To determine the source type, quantity of Open access and active publications in Social sciences.
- To map the geographical distribution (Country –wise and Continent-wise) of literature.
- To determine the idiosyncratic nature of publications in Social sciences.
- To rate the publications on the basis of SJR-Scientific Journal Rankings.

### 4. FINDINGS

#### 1. Social Science- An Interdisciplinary Approach

Out of 8673 titles , 2322 (26.77%) titles belong to those publications which covered only the discipline of Social Science while majority of the items 6351 (73.33%) show interdisciplinary approach providing coverage to many subjects like Physical Sciences, Health Sciences, Life Sciences as well as Social Science.

2. **Subjects Covered:** Majority of the research publications are published in the domain of Arts and Humanities (2701), followed by Business, Management and Accounting (1320). Psychology ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> with 1202 publications in its account. Rank 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> went to the fields of Economics, Econometrics and Finance (859), Medicine (670), Engineering (433) and Computer Sciences (361) simultaneously. Table 1 gives a comprehensive account of the same.

**Table 1: Subject Coverage in Social Sciences**

Subject areas	Count
Arts and Humanities	2701
Business, Management and Accounting	1320
Psychology	1202
Economics, Econometrics and Finance	859
Medicine	670
Engineering	433
Computer Science	361
Environmental Science	351

Decision Sciences	292
Mathematics	196
Earth and Planetary Sciences	172
Agricultural and Biological Sciences	163
Neuroscience	112
Materials Science	111
Health Professions	95
Nursing	92
Chemical Engineering	56
Energy	52
Biochemistry, Genetics and Molecular Biology	42
Chemistry	31
Pharmacology, Toxicology and Pharmaceutics	24
Physics and Astronomy	20
General	13
Veterinary	6
Immunology and Microbiology	3
Dentistry	1

#### 3. Geographical Distribution of Social Science Literature

The distribution of publication channels intensely reveal that developed nations are leading in production of Social Science literature. A total of 81 countries have contributed towards Social Science scholarly literature. The nations represented are classified into continents and results are shown in Table 2. It is evident that out of all countries United State ranked first with 2,921 (93.41%) publications in North America and 33.67% publications globally. United States is followed by United Kingdom with 2123 publications which amount 44.59% in European continent 24.47% globally. Netherlands holds 3<sup>rd</sup> rank globally with 687, (7.92%) publications and 2<sup>nd</sup> continent-wise its total contribution in Europe continent being 14.42%. The 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>, ranks are attained by Germany 580 (6.68%), France 285 (3.28%), Spain 227 (2.61%), Italy 169(01.94%), Canada 154 (01.77%), Australia 153 (1.76%) and Brazil 106 (1.22%). India ranks 14<sup>th</sup> with 66 titles in its store amounting to 0.76% globally. However continent-wise India contributes 17.09 % and holds 1<sup>st</sup> rank in Asia. Countries like Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Lebanon, Fiji etc. are showing meek output with 1 publication from each. However apart from many developed nations the contributions from other developing nations are also making their presence felt.

#### 4. Source Type Distribution

The literary output in the field of social sciences is published in different source formats like Academic journals, trade journals, book series and conference proceedings. Academic

Table 2: Geographic Output of Social Science Literature. (n=8673)

Continent	Country	Output(n)	%age in continental contribution	%age in global contribution
North America	United States of America	2921	93.47	33.67
	Canada	154	4.92	1.77
	Mexico	43	1.37	0.49
	Jamaica	3	0.09	0.03
	Cuba	2	0.06	0.02
	Costa Rica and Puerto Rico (1 each)	2	0.06	0.02
	<b>Total(North America)</b>	<b>3125</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>36%</b>
South America	Brazil	106	49.07	1.22
	Chile	46	21.3	0.53
	Colombia	30	13.88	0.42
	Venezuela	17	7.87	0.19
	Argentina	14	6.48	0.16
	Peru	2	0.92	0.02
	Ecuador	1	0.46	0.01
	<b>Total(South America)</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2.55</b>
Europe	United Kingdom	2123	44.59	24.47
	Netherlands	687	14.42	7.92
	Germany	580	12.18	6.68
	France	285	5.98	3.28
	Spain	227	4.76	2.61
	Italy	169	3.54	1.94
	Switzerland	91	1.91	1.04
	Belgium	81	1.7	0.93
	Poland	64	1.34	0.73
	Croatia	61	1.28	0.7
	Czech Republic	43	0.9	0.49
	Hungary	37	0.77	0.42
	Sweden	36	0.75	0.41
	Denmark	30	0.63	0.34
	Turkey	30	0.63	0.34
	Slovenia	27	0.56	0.31
	Austria	25	0.52	0.28
	Ireland	22	0.46	0.25
	Portugal, Finland, Slovalia and Lithuania (18each)	72	1.51	0.83
	Norway	17	0.35	0.19
	Serbia	15	0.31	0.17
	Estonia	14	0.29	0.16
	Greece	10	0.21	0.11
	Bulgaria	6	0.12	0.06
	Ukraine	3	0.06	0.03
	Cyprus	2	0.04	0.02
	Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Macedonia and Azerbaijan (1 each)	4	0.08	0.04
<b>Total(Europe)</b>	<b>4761</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>54.75</b>	

Continent	Country	Output(n)	%age in continental contribution	%age in global contribution
Asia	India	66	17.09	0.76
	Japan	45	11.65	0.51
	China	43	11.13	0.5
	Taiwan	25	6.47	0.3
	Russian Federation	25	6.47	0.3
	Malaysia	21	5.44	0.24
	Philippines	14	3.62	0.17
	Pakistan	11	2.84	0.12
	Iraq, Islamic republic of Iran	10	2.59	0.11
	Bangladesh	1	0.25	0.01
	South Korea	35	9.06	0.4
	South Africa	47	12.17	0.54
	Israel	11	2.84	0.12
	Hong Kong	8	2.07	0.2
	Egypt	5	1.29	0.05
	Indonesia, Thailand, United Arab, Kenya (3 each)	12	3.1	12.29
	Senegal	2	0.51	0.02
	Jordan and Srilanka (1 each)	2	0.51	0.02
	<b>Total(Asia)</b>	<b>386</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>4.54</b>
Africa	Zimbabwe	3	38%	0.03
	Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Lebanon and Nigeria (1 each)	5	62%	0.05
	<b>Total(Africa)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>0.05</b>
Australia/ Oceania	Australia	153	85	1.8
	New Zealand	26	14.44	0.3
	Fiji	1	0.55	0.01
	<b>Total (Australia/Oceania)</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2.11</b>
	Grand total		8673	100

Journals remain key tool for Social Science scholarship, ranking 1<sup>st</sup> with an output of 8153 (94%) titles. Academic Journals are followed by trade publications, book series, with a total of 245 (2.82%) and 238 (2.76%) titles respectively. Conference proceeding contributing least with only 37 (0.42%) titles in its account.

##### 5. Open Access-Status

It was found that out of 8,673 titles sources, most of the titles were available through commercial publishers amounting for 8075 (93.1%) of the total. While 598 titles were available through open access mode, out of which 566 (6.53%) titles were registered in DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals) while 32 (.37%) were open access but not DOAJ registered.

##### 6. Active and Non-Active Publications

The lists studied are supposed to openly include active titles,

i.e. titles that are currently being indexed for the data base, but the databases also cover titles that are no longer published e.g., ceased publication, changed title, merged with another journal, or because the database producer decides not to cover it any more came to be known as inactive titles. The results clearly reveals that out of 8,673 title sources 7,447 (85.86%) are active titles, while 1226 (14.14%) of the titles in an inactive form.

##### 7. Title History Indication

The present study shows that all the publications have not maintained their continuity since their advent. 7747 (89.32%) publications are running with same titles, while 850 (8.80%) publications have witnessed title change. 19 (0.21%) titles witnessed bifurcation as they were formerly part of some other research title. Table 3 gives more lucid view over the idiosyncratic nature of publications.

**Table 3: Idiosyncratic Nature of Publications (n=8673)**

Title status	n	%age
Continued with same title	7756	89.42
Title changed/ Continued as	850	8.80
Incorporating/ incorporated in	48	0.55
Formerly part of/ included in	19	0.21

### 8. Chronological Development Over Consecutive Two Decades.

Discipline of Social Science grew considerably since the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century. From 1840-1920 the growth of Social Science literature was not satisfactory enough. However since 1921 its growth showed tremendous increase. For the sake of clarity the data has been divided in consecutive two decade periods. During 1840-1860 only one publication made in presence, same was the case during 1861-1880 and 1881-1900. Since the advent of 20<sup>th</sup> century the literature in Social Sciences started blooming with 6 publications from 1921-1940, and 60 from 1941-1960 and after that the literature started sprouting tremendously. From 2001 to 2012 a total of 5268 items were published. Table 4 gives a comprehensive outlook of the growth of literature.

**Table 4: Chronological Growth of Literature (n=8673)**

Consecutive 20 decades	started	Increase
1840-1860	1	-
1861-1880	1	2
1881-1900	1	3
1901-1920	5	8
1921-1940	6	14
1941-1960	60	74
1961-1980	643	717
1981-2000	2688	3405
2001-till 2012	5268	8673

### 9. SJR- Scientific Journal Ranking.

According to the data harvested form SCOPUS regarding ranking of publications for consecutive two years it was found that in year 2011, 2317 publications showed zero (0) SJR (Scientific Journal Ranking) count. While majority of the publications 5576 received SJR count from 0.001-1, 561 publications received SJR rank from 1.001-2. Only one publication received SJ Rank between 14.001-15 and 15.001-16 (each).

For the year 2012 continuous improvement was seen in terms of rank received by publications. From 2317 publications in 2011 to 1869 publications received 0 (zero) count on SJ

Rank. 5995 publications fell between 0.001-1, while 581 fell in the range of 1.001-2. 3 journals fell in the range of 14.001-15 and 2 publications in the range of 15.001-16. Table 5 gives the more lucid view of the data analyzed.

**Table 5: Scientific Journal Ranking of Journals in Social Sciences (n=8673)**

Scientific Journal Ranking range	SJR-2011	SJR-2012
0	2317	1869
0.001-1	5576	5995
1.001-2	561	581
2.001-3	121	119
3.001-4	48	54
4.001-5	24	22
5.001-6	11	12
6.001-7	3	5
7.001-8	2	3
8.001-9	2	3
9.001-10	2	3
10.001-11	2	1
11.001-12	1	0
12.001-13	1	0
13.110-14	0	1
14.001-15	1	3
15.001-16	1	2
Total	8673	8673

## 5. CONCLUSION

Though the growth of Social Science literature is showing considerable growth over time, Social Sciences are also interacting with other science for R&D (Research and Developmental) purpose. Publications come out mainly in the form of academic journals followed by trade publications, books series and conference proceedings. The literature published in Social Science has multiplied several times since latter part of 20<sup>th</sup> century and this can be mainly attributed to the advent of Internet and related technologies. Major scholarly literature in this field is published by developed nations and with a sizeable contribution form United States and United Kingdom. Taking about the Asian continent in general and India in particular, though India is leading the Asian continent in terms of research productivity in Social Science, still a lot is needed to be done so that both Asian continent and India can make up its mark globally. Some of the publication showed idiosyncratic nature and a very less amount of literature was made available through

open access mode. Quality of the content however is of prime concern, but the results achieved in terms of quality do not altogether produce a good picture, but the fact cannot be denied that there is considerable change from 2011 to 2012. However the fact cannot be denied that 21<sup>st</sup> century turned to be revolutionary period for Social sciences as is evident from the findings.

Concluding, Social Sciences have to evolve up as a promising sphere to compete with the other growing disciplines because it's direct effect on human lives. The research in this field needs considerable attentions on the hand of research communities in order to enhance its growth both qualitatively as well as quantitatively. Research at a promising pace needs to be conducted in order to understand how human behaviour and society go together hand in hand to make lives worth living.

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