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SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH IN INDIA: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a systematic review of bibliometric studies in the field of social science published between 1999 to 2025, with special attention to research contribution from India. A total of 56 relevant studies were selected from major academic sources such as Web of Science, Scopus, Google Scholar and publisher websites. The review focuses on important areas of bibliometric research, including publication output, authorship pattern, practices in collaboration, impact of citation, visibility in Open Access, various bibliometric assessment tools and techniques have been applied. Finding revelled social science publications have been raised with the consistency in collaborative research and publication trends. The paper also highlights that to evaluate academic influence and research quality researchers applied indicators such as citation analysis, H-Index, Collaboration index. Overall bibliometric assessment is very essential to understand the trends of research and publication which can also help system to understand decision and policy making.

Keywords

Bibliometric,Social Science Research; Citation Analysis; Research Productivity; Collaboration Patterns; Open Access Publishing; Indian Social Scientists; Scientometrics; Research Visibility; Systematic Literature Review

INTRODUCTION

A Literature review crucially examines existing theories, concept, methods and practical findings in order to found the conceptual and theoretical basis of a research study (Creswell & Creswell,2018).In recent eras, bibliometric analysis has appeared as a vital quantifiable method for evaluating scholarly communication, measuring research output, recognizing collaboration networks and mapping intellectual structures across disciplines (Donthu et al,2021).Bibliometric methods are gradually applied in the social sciences to know publication trends, citation impact, authorship pattern and institutional research performance.

The swift progress of digital databases, citation indexing systems and open access publishing has meaningfully extended the scope and application of bibliometric research. Studies such as Glanzel and Schoepflin (1999) highlighted disciplinary differences in citation behaviour access sciences and social sciences, while Mayo and Yang (2007) compared citation variations among Web of Science, Scopus and Google Scholar. Donthu et al.(2021) additional provided methodological guiding principle for conducting bibliometric studies using tools such as VOSviewer, Bliblioshiny and Bibliometrix for systematic mapping and performance analysis. Bibliometric studies have revealed a noteworthy growth in social science research in India. According to Gupta, Kumbar and Gupta (2013) there has been a rise in social science articles from India indexed in Scopus with an emphasis on universal collaboration, predominantly with the United States and the United Kingdom. Cumulative multi-authorship trends in social science and humanities research were distinguished by Tripathi, Kumar and

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Babbar (2018) who connected collaboration to greater citation impact. Likewise, Mohapatra and Sahoo (2021) realized moderate progress and growing open access visibility in their analysis of Scopus-indexed publications from Indian central institutions. Though inequalities in institutional output, inadequate interdisciplinary integration and irregular collaboration patterns remain to hinder this growth (Parabhoi et al.,2022)

Additionally imperative subject in the literature is authorship and collaboration patterns. By linking numerous author co-occurrence networks, Qiu, Dong and Yu (2014) presented how bibliographic linkages, co-authorship and co-citation replicate exclusive intellectual architectures. Anuradha and Urs (2027) used communication analysis to map Indian foreign research associations and find significant partner countries and corrective groups. All these studies display that collaborative networks have a key influence on research visibility and citation performance.

Moreover, the literature highlights how Open Access (OA) publishing can advance research visibility and contextual effect. According to Ramesh (2024) and Orsu (2019) OA journals and repositories expand accessibility and worldwide reach, yet matters such as inadequate set-up and awareness still occur. The status of bibliometric software tools in scientific mapping and impact assessment is additional exemplified by context-based assessment (Tomazewski,2023).

Objectives

1. To review the growth and trends of bibliometric research in social science literature, mainly in the Indian context.
1. To identify the bibliometric tools, techniques, and databases generally used in social science research analysis.
2. To understand the significance of bibliometric analysis in research evaluation, policy design, and strategic progress of social science research in India.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Inclusion Criteria

The following inclusion criteria were applied during the selection of studies:

Research articles published between 1999 and 2025

English-language publications only

Peer-reviewed journal articles

Studies related to bibliometric analysis, scientometrics, citation analysis, collaboration patterns, research productivity, and open access publishing in social sciences

Articles indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar

Exclusion Criteria

The following studies were excluded from the review:

Duplicate records

Non-English publications

Conference papers, dissertations, editorials, and book reviews

Articles unrelated to bibliometric or social science research

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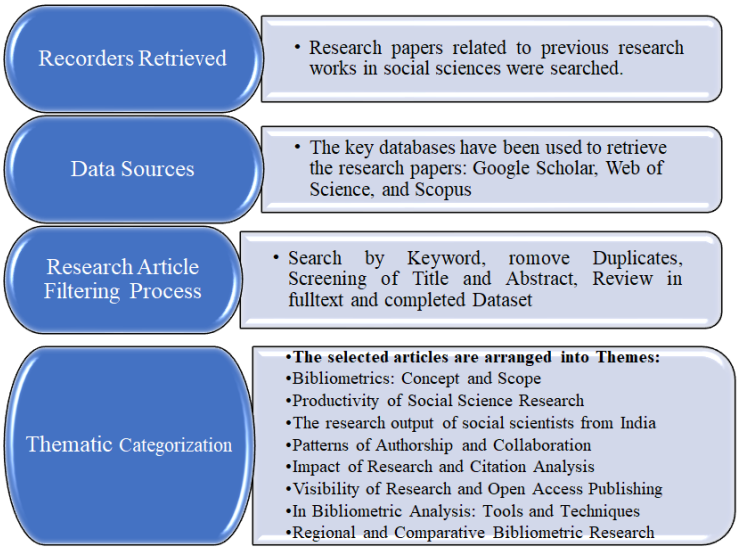
Studies without accessible full text

This focuses on bibliographic analysis, research productivity, collaboration patterns, contextual impact and open access visibility in the social sciences, particularly in the Indian context, and is thus primarily thematic and descriptive. It integrates conceptual, methodological and empirical research to provide a theoretical and methodological basis for current inquiries. The review includes important works such as Donthu et al. (2021) on bibliographic guidelines and Creswell and Creswell (2018) on research design, as well as empirical bibliographic studies (Gupta et al., 2013; Tripathi et al., 2018) that look at authorship, citation patterns and institutional productivity. The way in which Literature Review is organized around subject sub-sections (productivity, collaboration, tools, regional studies, etc.) suggests a descriptive and analytical review methodology rather than a fully systematic review. This systematic literature review's primary goals are to examine and evaluate the key facets of bibliometric research in the social sciences. The specific goal of this study is to list the different approaches and resources frequently employed in bibliometric research. Additionally, it looks at changes in collaboration and research productivity in social science research. Finally, it follows to understand about global collaboration and open access publication might growth the dissemination of research and academic impact.

The Systematic Literature Review method is followed in this paper to analyze the form of existing scholarly literature in a systematized, transparent, and reproducible way. Outcome, preference, and critically evaluating studies relating to bibliometric research in the social sciences is the foremost goal of the study design. Deciding search strategies, applying inclusion and exclusion measures, identifying relevant research, and combining results to produce insightful conclusions are phases in the review process. In bibliographic research, Systematic Literature Review has been widely recognized as an effective technique for relating various research findings, emerging themes, and exposure research gaps (Donthu et al., 2021). As an outcome, this method is considered most appropriate for exploring productivity trends, methodological trends, and context-based assessments in social scientific research.

Time Frame for Paper Selection

Figure: 1 A Systematic Literature Review Paper Selection Strategy



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1999–2025 is the review period taken into consideration in this study. The year 1999 was chosen as the beginning border because it marks a turning point in the development of bibliometric research and quantitative assessment of social scientific scholarship, which was aided by the growth of significant indexing databases and digital citation monitoring systems. Since then, the social sciences' research output has been more and more quantifiable using defined metrics including productivity metrics, collaboration indices, and citation counts.

Sources of Data

The paper is entirely based on secondary data collected from widely acceptable academic sources, relevant literature was from major indexing and citation databases and scholarly Literature search engine such as Web of Science, Scopus and Google Scholar. These databases and scholarly Literature search engine have been selected because of their broad subject coverage, dependable citation tracking system and strong reputation in academic research. To assurance validity and correctness, full-text articles were retrieved via the authorized publisher websites. Furthermore, confident research publications that were not readily accessible through subscription-based sources were attained through academic networking sites like ResearchGate. The systematic review's reliability was improved and thorough literature coverage was checked by using a variety of data sources.

Methodological Limitations

The current study has some limitations despite its thorough methodology. Database-related selection may result from the limitation of the analysis to specific databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. Only English-language journal articles from 1999 to 2025 are included in the review; regional language publications and other document categories such as books and conference proceedings are not included. Furthermore, due to cumulative context effects, citation-based indicators may favour older publications because of cumulative citation advantage. This study does not use empirical statistical validation and is largely descriptive and conceptual in nature. Consequently, these methodological and data-related limitations should be considered when interpreting the results.

Study Selection Methodology

A well planned and systematic search approaches was used to collect relevant scholarly literature of the study. Major major indexing and citation databases and scholarly Literature search engine such as Web of Science, Scopus and Google Scholar were consulted as they provide extensive coverage of research publications along with reliable citation tracking features. To obtain suitable study, different keyword combination applied using boolean operators like ANS an OR. The search mainly included term such as bibliometric analysis, Social Science Research, research Productivity, citation analysis, authorship pattern, research collaboration and Open access publishing.

Subsequently the primary retrieval of records, duplicate studies were removed. The remaining articles had been screened through title and abstract review to determine their significance to the objectives of the study. Afterward, full-text evaluation was conducted by applying predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Only relevant and accessible studies were included in the final dataset for thematic synthesis and analysis.

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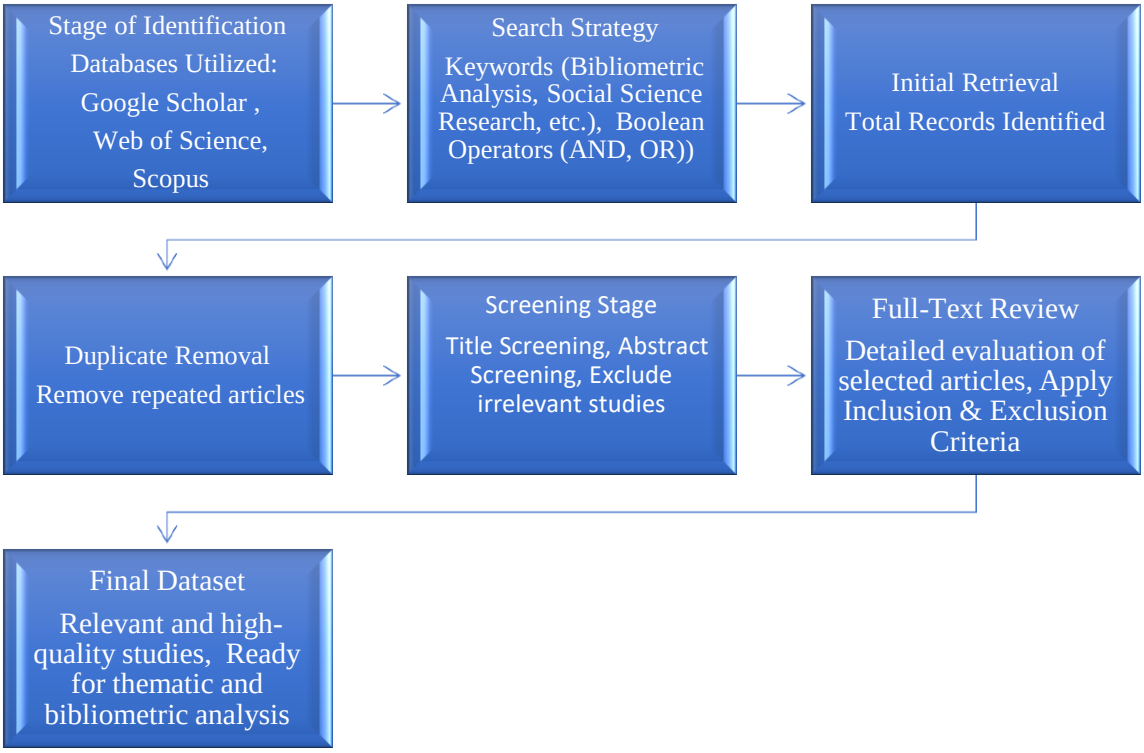
Figure: 2 Study Selection Methodology



A full database search was performed to find appropriate literature on bibliographic and social science research topics published between 1999 and 2025. 12 records were found using the keywords “bibliography” and “social science research” (1999–2025). 8 publications were generated by "research productivity" and "social sciences" (2013–2024), while 6 records were generated by "author patterns" and "collaborations" (2008–2023). Equally, 6 studies were found using "reference analysis" and "impact assessment" (2001–2024), and 6 more studies were found using "open access" and "research visibility" (2013–2024). 5 papers were found when searching for "bibliometric tools" and "science mapping" (2006–2018). 6 records were also provided by "regional bibliometric analysis" or "comparative research productivity" (2006–2021). Finally, 7 relevant publications were contributed by “Indian Social Science Research Output” (2013–2024). Through systematic database searches, a total of 56 records were retrieved, forming the basic dataset for further screening and analysis of the study.

Table: 1 Results of the Systematic Keyword Search

Search Keywords	Publication Years Covered	Number of Results
“Bibliometrics” AND “Social Science Research”	1999-2025	12
“Research Productivity” AND “Social Sciences”	2013-2024	8
“Authorship Pattern” AND “Collaboration”	2008-2023	6
“Citation Analysis” AND “Impact Assessment”	2001-2024	6
“Open Access” AND “Research Visibility”	2013-2024	6
“Bibliometric Tools” AND “Science Mapping”	2006-2018	5

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"Regional Bibliometric Analysis" OR "Comparative Research Productivity"	2006-2021	6
"Indian Social Science Research Output"	2013-2024	7
Total records identified through database searching	1999-2025	56

Categorization of Reviewed Articles

One of the significant components of a systematic literature review is article classification. It groups and categorizes precise research papers into related categories to enable systematic examination, comparison, and synthesis of existing information such as Bibliometrics, Social Science Research Productivity, Social Scientists from India, Authorship and Collaboration, Citation Analysis, as well as Open Access Publishing. In systematic literature review research, proper classification improves analytical depth, repeatability, and transparency.

Table: 2 Identified Themes, Sub-Categories, Detailed Codes, and Source Citations

Identified Theme	Sub-Categories	Detailed Codes	Source Citations
Bibliometrics: Concept and Scope	Definition and Evolution	Quantitative analysis of literature, Statistical evaluation of publications, Historical development of bibliometrics	Pritchard (1969); Broadus (1987)
	Objectives of Bibliometrics	Measuring research output, identifying research trends, Evaluating scientific impact	Hood & Wilson (2001)
	Scope in Social Sciences	Application in humanities, Policy research analysis, Interdisciplinary mapping	Sengupta (1992)
	Key Indicators	Publication count, Citation count, h-index, Impact factor	Hirsch (2005)
Productivity of Social Science Research	Growth of Publications	Annual publication trends, Decadal growth rate, Increase in journal articles	Price (1963)
	Subject-wise Distribution	Economics publications, Sociology research output, Political Science studies	National Research Reports
	Institutional Productivity	University-wise output, Research institute contributions	UGC Reports
	Funding and Productivity	Government-funded projects, Sponsored research output	ICSSR Reports
Research Output of Social Scientists from India	National Contribution	Total publications from India, Share in global output	Scopus/Web of Science Data

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	Leading Institutions	Top universities, Research councils	Annual Institutional Reports
	International Publications	Publications in foreign journals, Indexed journals	Global Citation Databases
	Growth Trends	Year-wise increase, Post-policy growth	Government Education Reports
Patterns of Authorship and Collaboration	Authorship Pattern	Single authorship, Multiple authorship, Mega-authorship	Subramanyam (1983)
	Degree of Collaboration	Collaboration index, Co-authorship ratio	Lawani (1980)
	Institutional Collaboration	Inter-university research, Research networks	Collaboration Studies
	International Collaboration	Cross-country co-authorship, Joint funding projects	OECD Reports
Impact of Research and Citation Analysis	Citation Count	Total citations, Average citations per paper	Garfield (1972)
	h-index and Impact Metrics	Author h-index, Journal impact factor	Hirsch (2005)
	Highly Cited Papers	Top cited articles, Landmark studies	Web of Science Data
	Self-citation Patterns	Author self-citation, Institutional self-citation	Citation Studies
Visibility of Research and Open Access Publishing	Open Access Trends	Gold OA, Green OA, Hybrid journals	Budapest Open Access Initiative
	Citation Advantage of OA	Higher citation rates, Global accessibility	OA Impact Studies
	Digital Repositories	Institutional repositories, Subject repositories	SHERPA/RoMEO
	Indexing and Visibility	Inclusion in Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar	Indexing Databases
Bibliometric Analysis: Tools and Techniques	Data Sources	Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar	Database Manuals
	Software Tools	VOSviewer, Biblioshiny, CiteSpace, R-package Bibliometrix	Van Eck & Waltman (2010)
	Mapping Techniques	Co-authorship network, Co-citation analysis, Keyword co-occurrence	Scientometric Studies
	Statistical Methods	Lotka's Law, Bradford's	Bibliometric

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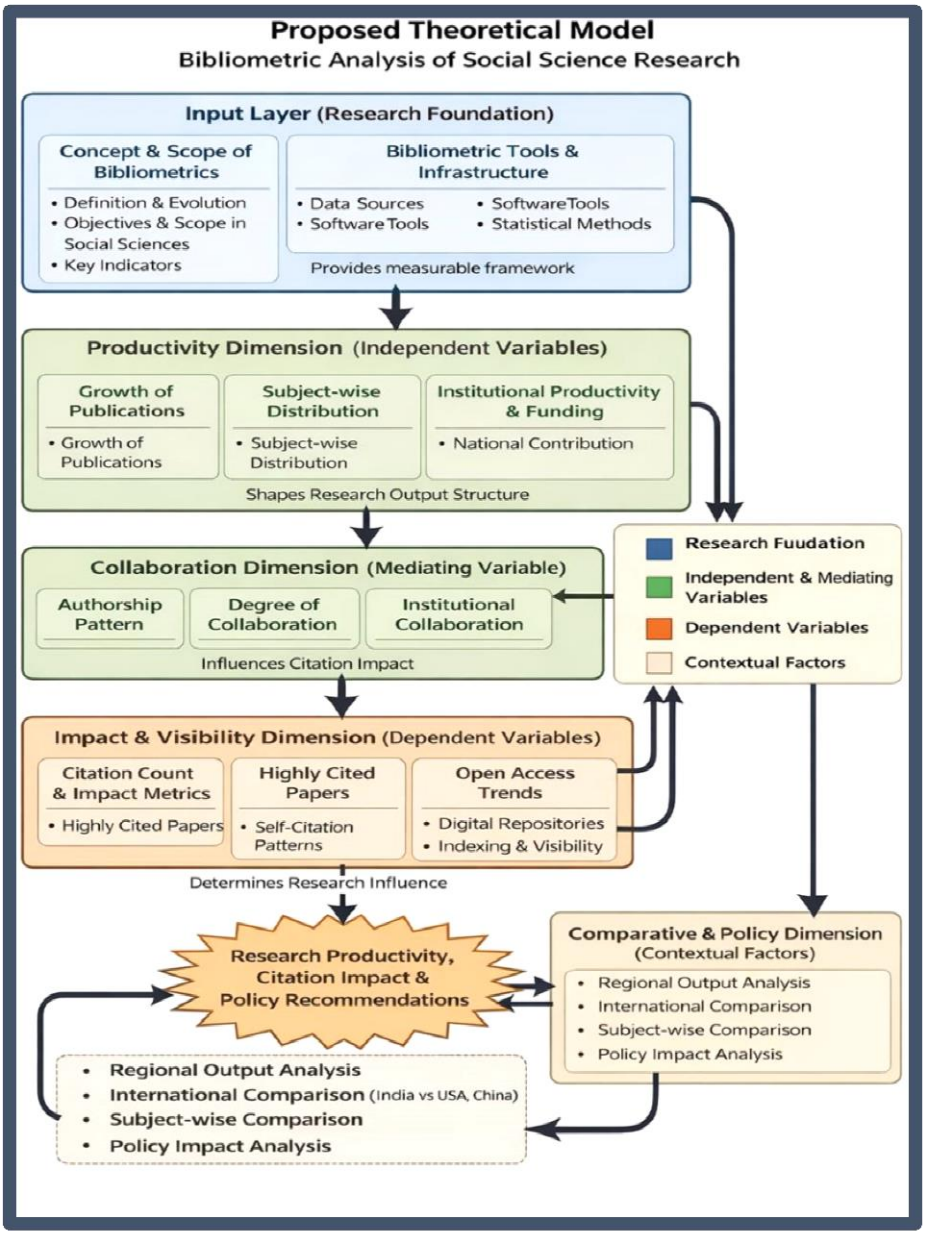
		Law, Zipf's Law	Theories
Regional and Comparative Bibliometric Research	Regional Output Analysis	State-wise research output, Regional disparities	State Research Reports
	International Comparison	India vs USA output, India vs China comparison	Global Research Reports
	Subject-wise Comparison	Social sciences vs natural sciences output	Comparative Studies
	Policy Impact Analysis	Effect of NEP policies, Funding impact	Government Policy Documents



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Theme 1 Bibliometrics: Concept and Scope:

By outlining the ideas, dimensions, and analytical tools used in the research, the foundation of the bibliographic model lays the theoretical and methodological foundation. The quantitative study of academic literature is known as bibliography, and it has evolved from basic publication counts to proper citation-based metrics such as citation count and h-index. It supports measure the impact, productivity, and collaboration patterns of research in the social sciences. Tools such as R Programming, VOSviewer, Biblioshiny, and SPSS use statistical methods to understand trends, authentic data sources such as Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar help with analysis.

Theme 2 Productivity of Social Science Research

Growth pattern of publication output is calculated using year to year growth rate. It indicates whether a field is growing at a consistent rate or not. Measuring and evaluating research output examines the growth or diminution in publication over a period provide understanding for development of research activities, this study helps in recognizing emerging area, level of progress, trends in research of specific disciplines in Social Science.

Theme 3 Research Output of Social Scientists from India

Evaluation of research output is necessary and important for any academic discipline. It reveals the impact of academic research. In the age of knowledge economy, research evaluation is of particular importance because knowledge leads to economic development and knowledge generating research plays a decisive role in national development. Research evaluation reveals the progress of the national research achievements, offers evidence-based indications for policy making and serve as a clue and an incentive for scholar to improve the quality of their research.

Theme 4 Patterns of Authorship and Collaboration

Collaboration takes place not only in the immediate work environment of researcher but also extends beyond institutional and national boundaries. Government in different countries have taken initiatives to enhance contacts among scientists in science through collaborative research programs both at the national and international levels. Collaboration in research can take a variety of paths. Based upon the type of participants and on the location etc. Collaboration can be categorised into three broad categories. These are local collaboration, domestic collaboration and international collaboration. According to Whitlow and Narin "internationally co-authored articles represent a more important segment of the world science.

Theme 5 Impact of Research and Citation Analysis

In research evaluation, citations have become a widely used measure of the impact of research publications. Counting of the number of citations to a particular paper for a period of years after its publications is known as citation analysis. The motive behind citation analysis is the evaluation of the performance of individual scientists, institutions and countries. The starting points according to Wade "All citation analysis studies are to count the number of times an article or author is cited in the scientific literature…on the general assumption that the number of citations reflects an article's influence and therefore quality". Citation analysis helps in judging the relative merit of paper.

Theme 6 Visibility of Research and Open Access Publishing

Open access publishing has become an important factor in improving the visibility, accessibility, and citation impact of social science research. Open access is a set of principles and range of practices through which research output are distributed online, free of access charges. Open access extends the reach of research beyond its immediate academic circle. Different models of open access publishing,

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including Gold OA, Green OA, and Hybrid OA, enable wider dissemination of scholarly literature beyond subscription barriers.

Theme 7 Bibliometric Analysis: Tools and Techniques

There are a number of science mapping and visualization software tools specifically used in bibliometrics. These are available free of cost on the Internet. Most of these software tools are based on modern mathematical algorithms, statistical methods, graph theory, sophisticated networks theory and visualization techniques, etc. These are R Programming, Bibexcel, Biblioshiny, CiteSpace, SciMAT, Sci2 Tool and VOSviewer. These are mainly works with WoS, Scopus and Dimensions data. The menu incorporates analytics and graphs for three-level metrics (source, author and document) and three structures of knowledge (conceptual, intellectual and social).Along with statistical and analytical methods like citation analysis, co-authorship analysis, co-citation analysis, and network mapping, it also integrates important data sources like Scopus and Web of Science. This approach also includes bibliometric metrics such as the cooperation index, impact factor, and h-index. As a result, this theme serves as the analytical and technical basis for carrying out methodical bibliometric research.

Theme 8 Regional and Comparative Bibliometric Research

To aid in assessment and policy-making, regional and comparative bibliometric research looks at research performance in various disciplinary and geographic contexts. In order to evaluate productivity trends within certain states, regions, or nations, this dimension incorporates regional output analysis. In order to comprehend global positioning, competitiveness, and research strengths, it also incorporates international comparisons, such as India vs the USA or China. Comparing subjects further reveals differences in productivity and impact across disciplines. Policy impact analysis also assesses the effects of national strategies, institutional policies, and research funding on academic productivity. When combined, these elements offer evidence-based insights that back well-informed policy recommendations as well as calculated choices for academic and research advancement.

FINDINGS

The systematic literature review reveals several significant trends in bibliometric research within the social sciences. The findings indicate a continuous increase in social science research productivity, particularly in India, during the review period from 1999 to 2025. Multi-authorship and collaborative research practices have increased considerably, leading to stronger national and international research networks. Citation-based indicators such as publication count, citation analysis, h-index, and impact factor remain the most widely used measures for evaluating scholarly influence and research performance.

The review further shows that open access publishing and digital repositories have substantially improved research visibility, accessibility, and global dissemination. Bibliometric software tools such as VOSviewer, Biblioshiny, CiteSpace, and Bibliometrix are increasingly used for scientific mapping, co-authorship analysis, keyword analysis, and citation visualization. Despite this progress, regional disparities, uneven institutional productivity, database limitations, and lack of interdisciplinary integration continue to remain major challenges in Indian social science research.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The discussion of this paper emphasizes how important bibliometric research is for understanding the development, collaboration, and impact of social science research, particularly in India. Accordingly, multi-author trends, international collaboration, and research productivity show a continued increase. Enhanced research visibility, particularly with the development of open access publishing, is demonstrated through citation analysis and impact metrics such as the h-index. However, regional

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output and institutional productivity gaps still exist. The use of bibliographic techniques and systematic review methodologies improves analytical transparency and accuracy, as well as providing insightful information for policymakers, research directors, and administrators often use this information for strategic planning and keeping the general public informed about state-of-the-art research.

This systematic literature review highlights the growing importance of bibliometric analysis in understanding the structure, productivity, collaboration patterns, citation impact, and research visibility of social science scholarship, particularly in India. Research impact tracks the development of a research field and is helpful in identifying influential and highly cited papers, researchers, or research groups. The review demonstrates a significant rise in publication output, increasing collaborative research practices, and expanding international partnerships that positively contribute to scholarly visibility and citation performance. Open access publishing and digital repositories have further strengthened global accessibility and dissemination of research. Overall, bibliometric analysis serves as an evidence-based framework for research assessment, strategic planning, funding allocation, and enhancing the global standing of Indian social science research.

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