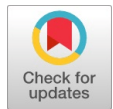


A 65-Year Retrospective on Social Sciences Research in Sri Lanka: An Analysis of Scopus-Indexed Publications

J.G. Chandani, H.D.M. Nishanthi



Abstract: This article analyzes 65 years (1952-2024) of research conducted by Sri Lankan scholars in the field of Social Sciences. The study's objective was to assess the research contributions of authors in Social Sciences (SS) affiliated with the 17 public universities overseen by the University Grants Commission (UGC) of Sri Lanka. The bibliometric method was employed to evaluate the research performance of authors linked to Sri Lankan universities. The Elsevier Scopus database was chosen for extracting data, using the search term "Sri Lanka" for affiliations. Data was gathered from 17 universities categorized under "Social Sciences." A total of 3,953 research articles (6.1%) were retrieved from the database about SS. Each entry was verified twice, leading to the removal of 29 duplicate records. This study presents a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of 65 years of social science research in Sri Lanka, focusing on scholarly publications from 17 public universities in the country. Utilizing the Elsevier Scopus database provides insights into the research output, development trends, and growth patterns among Sri Lankan scholars in the Social Sciences. The results indicate a rising trajectory, with a significant increase in publications following the COVID-19 pandemic. This research will aid future scholars in pinpointing less-explored areas and support policymakers in determining research funding priorities. It represents the first comprehensive analysis of the social science research landscape in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Social Sciences Research, Trends and Development, Universities, Bibliometrics, Sri Lanka

I. INTRODUCTION

The advancement of any profession is dependent mainly on research. It enables scholars to publish their results and disseminate them to wider professional circles. In Sri Lanka, a developing nation in South Asia, there is a rich history of education and research in the social sciences. Assessing and improving the research output and visibility of university publications is vital for enhancing the higher education system in Sri Lanka. Researchers in Sri Lanka's social sciences have generated a considerable number of publications. Nevertheless,

There have only been a limited number of bibliometric studies focused on social sciences research, and those available usually have a specific focus, often examining a single journal, a designated time frame, or being confined to a particular region or institution. Furthermore, they may be constrained by the databases utilized. In contrast, the present study uses a prominent global abstract and citation database, covering all social sciences research conducted by Sri Lankan scholars from 1952 to 2022. Thus, this research seeks to fill these existing gaps.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholars from various fields are showing a growing interest in bibliometrics, which evaluates the output of scientific publications by analyzing their citation counts. Bibliometrics is referred to as "a science of science," focusing on four key areas: productivity, collaboration, research topics, and citation impact. It has earned recognition as a methodology aimed at quantifying research outputs, examining collaborative patterns, and assessing the influence of scholarly work [2].

Bibliometric analysis enables systematic comparisons between institutions, nations, and regions, providing significant insights [17]. Bibliometrics assesses not only the research output or productivity of specific authors, organizations, and countries but also the degree of collaboration between them [18]. Numerous researchers within the field have offered diverse definitions for bibliometrics, scientometrics, and informetrics [16].

Bibliometric techniques have been utilized to address numerous issues related to all aspects of library management. Researchers in Library and Information Science (LIS) globally have conducted bibliometric studies to investigate the output, collaborative behaviors, areas of focus, and citation impact of their research [7].

The review of the current literature indicates that authors from Sri Lanka have conducted a limited number of research papers. In the Scopus database, there are only 14 research publications on bibliometric studies authored by individuals associated with Sri Lanka across all academic disciplines.

Dissanayake H. and colleagues performed a bibliometric analysis focused on entrepreneurial education within university settings [5]. Ranasinghe P. carried out a bibliometric examination of the most cited works regarding insulin resistance in the Science Citation Index Expanded [15]. Baminawatta A. completed a bibliometric analysis exploring global trends in machine learning applications in psychiatric research over three decades [1]. Dahanayake, S., Wanninayake, B., and Ranasinghe, R. conducted

Manuscript received on 25 November 2024 | First Revised Manuscript received on 20 December 2024 | Second Revised Manuscript received on 22 February 2025 | Manuscript Accepted on 15 March 2025 | Manuscript published on 30 March 2025.

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both a systematic review and a bibliometric analysis about memorable experiences in wellness tourism [4]. Priyanga Ranasinghe and others executed a bibliometric study examining half a century of research in Sri Lanka, including topics, researchers, institutions, journals, and their impact from 1973 to 2019 [15].

Baminiwatta A. and Solangaarachchi I. performed a bibliometric analysis examining trends and advancements in mindfulness research over 55 years, utilizing publications indexed in Web of Science [1]. Mallawaarachchi H., Sandanayake Y., Karunasena, and Liu C. carried out a bibliometric investigation to reveal the conceptual evolution of industrial symbiosis [11]. Kawshalya L.W.G., Weerasinghe U.G.D., and Chandrasekara D.P. executed a bibliometric mapping of the literature addressing fear of crime in urban settings [8]. Ranagalage M. et al. conducted a bibliometric analysis focused on highly cited articles related to ecosystem services [22].

An examination of the existing literature reveals that bibliometric studies conducted by librarians and information scientists (LIS professionals) in Sri Lanka are relatively few. Out of the 14 research studies, only three were conducted by LIS professionals. Wijewickrema M. performed a bibliometric analysis of the literature on library and information science as well as information systems from 2010 to 2019 [20]. This study explored a research area that integrates library and information science with information systems. The primary research areas identified within this domain included information systems and management, information theory, communication, information retrieval, geographic-based information systems, and bioinformatics.

Majeed Mashroofa, Mohamed, Jusoh, Mazuki, and Chinna, Karuthan performed a bibliometric analysis of worldwide e-learning literature using the Web of Science database, particularly focusing on the context of Sri Lanka [9]. The primary aim of the study was to identify the complete spectrum of scientific literature published since the concept of e-learning was first introduced. Following a basic search in the Web of Science, the study yielded 6,934 results related to e-learning, encompassing 5,9784 citations. Although there was literature in multiple languages, 6,617 items (95.43%) were published in English. Navaneethakrishnan S. conducted a bibliometric study examining authorship trends and the level of collaboration among Sri Lankan scientific publications in the Social Sciences and Humanities, utilising Scopus data. This study highlighted trends in the research output of Sri Lankan scholars by analyzing scientific journals from 1980 to 2009 included in the SciVerse Scopus database [12]. He examined 1,795 publication records attributed to 3,521 authors from 1960 to 2012. The analysis revealed that multiple authors contributed to most publications, and the degree of collaboration steadily increased over the study period. The notable collaborative contributors were primarily from the United States, accounting for 15.93%.

Moreover, there are limited research studies by Sri Lankan scholars published in local journals, though they are not indexed in Scopus. Navaneethakrishnan, S. and Kupesan, R. performed a bibliometric analysis on the Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities [13]. Their study specifically examined articles published in the “Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities” by the University of Peradeniya, analyzing a

total of 319 articles authored by 147 individuals over the period from 1975 to 2009. Dambawinna carried out a citation analysis of the Ceylon Journal of Science, also published by the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka [3].

Perera carried out a bibliometric analysis on WHO Publications found in the Medical Library at the University of Peradeniya to inform both readers and library personnel about the resources available in the collection [14]. Gunasekera performed a bibliometric study examining LIS research literature in Sri Lanka, analyzing 141 articles from two LIS journals covering the years 1997 to 2007 [6]. Wickremasinghe undertook research to assess the research productivity of rice scientists in both India and Sri Lanka through their publications and other scholarly outputs [19].

Maheswaran assessed the value of bibliometric applications for examining Sri Lankan Tamil publications in 2005 [10]. Yapa, De Silva, and De Silva performed a bibliometric evaluation of the research productivity at nine Sri Lankan laboratories focusing on natural products chemistry [21]. Weerasooriya W.A. carried out a study regarding the incorporation of mathematics and statistics into library and information science curricula, highlighting their importance, applications, and insights into Bibliometrics [12]. The research investigated the mathematical and statistical significance and potential of LIS to understand the application of mathematics and statistics in LIS. It defined bibliometrics and scientometrics, reviewed their historical backgrounds, and evaluated how these concepts are utilised in LIS and other disciplines.

Despite a few local and international bibliometric studies identified in this literature review, they were constrained to particular journals, disciplines, periods, and source databases. Likewise, there have been very few investigations into LIS research in Sri Lanka, and those conducted have been limited in terms of the databases involved, time frames, and subject areas covered. An examination of all the research articles reveals that no bibliometric studies have been conducted on social science research; specifically, there is a lack of information regarding the journals most favoured by Sri Lankan social science professionals, their collaboration patterns, types of publications, and commonly used keywords. In light of this, this research aims to address these gaps.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To conduct this research, Scopus was utilised to achieve extensive coverage of scholarly publications by Sri Lankan social science professionals, whether based in Sri Lanka or abroad. A search was conducted in Scopus for social sciences documents linked to Sri Lankan universities recognised by the University Grants Commission (UGC), covering the period from 1952 to October 31, 2024. As a result, 3,953 records (6.1%) were retrieved from the database related to the social sciences. Each record was reviewed twice to pinpoint the relevant documents, and 29 duplicate entries were removed.



IV. DATA ANALYSIS

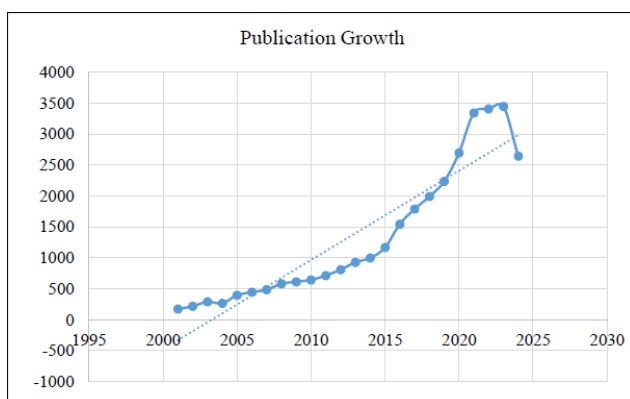
A. Research Indexed in Scopus by Sri Lankan Researchers

A total of 35239 research articles were published in Scopus by researchers from Sri Lanka between 1952 and October 31, 2024. Of these, 13.5% are in the field of medicine, 12.06% in engineering, 9.78% in computer science, 7.92% in agricultural and biological sciences, 6.48% in environmental sciences, and 6.11% in social sciences.

All publications were compared to 23425 articles, with a total of 6,998 conference papers, 1,845 reviews, 1,758 book chapters, 447 articles, 252 editorials, and 514 other types of publications. The most prolific source was the Journal of the National Science Foundation of Sri Lanka, which published 681 research papers. The Ceylon Medical Journal had 578 papers, followed by 338 in High Energy Physics, 276 in Civil Engineering lecture notes, 273 in PlosOne, 262 in the Moratuwa Engineering Research Conference (Mercon), and 227 in the Ceylon Journal of Science.

The most frequently used keyword was "human," followed by terms such as Sri Lanka, article, people, female, male, and adult. In general, the leading universities include the University of Peradeniya, the University of Colombo, the University of Moratuwa, the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, the University of Ruhuna, and the University of Kelaniya. The total number of research publications for these institutions is 9,156, 8,083, 5,786, 3,474, 3,355, and 3,350, respectively.

Based on Figure 01, there has been a steady rise in the number of research papers published since the year 2000. The year 2023 stands out as the most prolific year, with a total of 3,445 papers published. All information was obtained from Scopus by searching through all affiliation IDs associated with Sri Lankan universities under the UGC.



[Fig.1: Publication Growth of Research in Scopus]

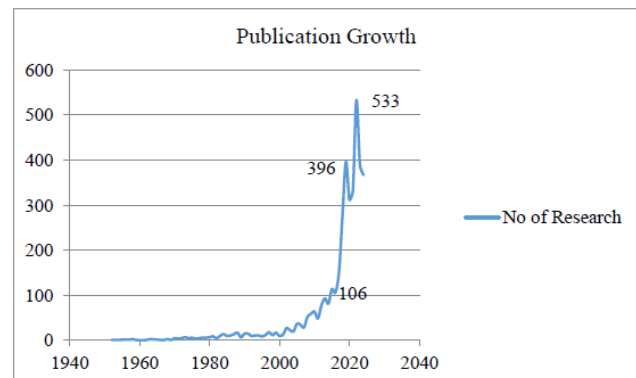
B. Social Sciences Research is Indexed in Scopus by Sri Lankan Researchers

Between 1952 and October 2024, a total of 3953 research papers were published in the field of Social Sciences that are indexed in the Scopus database. This includes 2375 articles, 842 conference papers, 418 book chapters, 172 reviews, 36 books, 35 notes, 30 editorials, 19 letters, 14 errata, 6 data papers, and six short surveys, respectively.

While it exhibited steady growth from the outset, there was a significant surge from 2016 to 2019. The years 2020 and 2021 experienced a decline in publications due to COVID-

19; however, a notable increase is observed in 2022, with 533 research papers published, as illustrated in Figure 02.

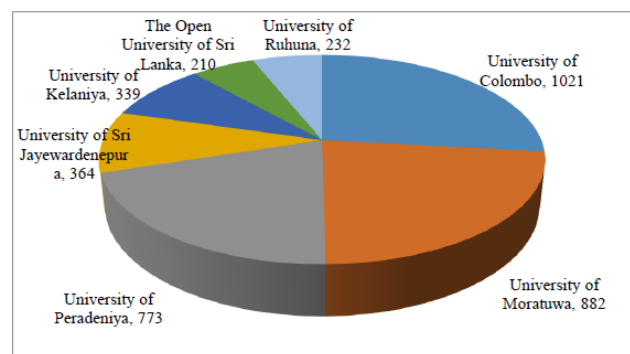
The initial publication, "Caste, Ethos, and Social Equilibrium," was released in 1952 by Pieris R., who was affiliated with the University of Colombo (previously referred to as the University of Ceylon), in the Oxford journal Social Forces.



[Fig.2: Publication Growth of Social Sciences Research in Scopus]

C. Most Productive Universities

Figure 3 illustrates the seven universities that excel in social science research productivity. Colombo University leads with an impressive total of 1,021 published research papers in the field, trailed by the University of Moratuwa with 882 papers, and the University of Peradeniya with 773 papers.



[Fig.3: Most Productive Universities of SS Research in Sri Lanka]

D. Most Cited Publications

The three most frequently cited articles on SS had a total of 368, 264, and 216 citations, respectively, as highlighted in Table 01. The article with the highest citations offered a critical review discussing COVID-19 and enhancing well-being in urban informal settlements (Corburn J. et al., 2020). The second most cited article examined how experiences of domination and oppositional tendencies in classroom life should be observed closely rather than being viewed in an abstract manner (Canagarajah A.S., 1993). The third article analysed various strategies employed by universities to conduct remote teaching and laboratory practices, considering the COVID-19 pandemic and its potential effects on the student learning experience (Gamage K.A.A. et al., 2020). Additionally, there were



Seven more research articles that received over 150 citations.

Table 1: Top Most Cited Articles on Social Sciences

Title	Authors/Year	Journal	Citations
Slum Health: Arresting COVID-19 and Improving Well-Being in Urban Informal Settlements	Corburn J. et al. (2020)	Journal of Urban Health	368
Critical Ethnography of a Sri Lankan Classroom: Ambiguities in Student Opposition to Reproduction Through ESOL	Canagarajah A.S. (1993)	TESOL Quarterly	264
Online delivery of teaching and laboratory practices: Continuity of university programmes during the COVID-19 pandemic	Gamage K.A.A. et al. (2020)	Education Sciences	216
Measuring microenterprise profits: Do we need to know how the sausage is made?	De Mel S., McKenzie D.J., Woodruff C. 2009	Journal of Development Economics	179
Graduates', university lecturers' and employers' perceptions towards employability skills	Wickramasinghe V. & Perera L. (2010)	Education and Training	172
Learning styles and approaches to learning among medical undergraduates and postgraduates	Samarakoon L., Fernando T., Rodrigo C. (2013)	BMC Medical Education	167
Online delivery and assessment during COVID-19: Safeguarding academic integrity	Gamage K.A.A., de Silva E.K., Gunawardhana N. (2020)	Education Sciences	163
Sources of ethnic inequality in Vietnam	Van De Walle D., Gunewardena D. (2021)	Journal of Development Economics	162
Sustainability of SMEs in the competition: A systemic review on technological challenges and SME performance	Prasanna R.P.I.R. et al. (2019)	Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity	156
The Participatory Intervention Model: A Framework for Conceptualizing and Promoting Intervention Acceptability	Nastasi B.K. et al. 2019	School Psychology Quarterly	150

E. Most Productive Source Titles

According to Scopus, 160 journals have published at least one article in the field of social sciences by researchers from Sri Lanka, as illustrated in Table 02. Eleven of these journals have 20 or more publications, which represent 17.17% of the total publications across all journals. The Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute (MDPI) has the highest number of social sciences publications. The National Science Foundation, a publisher based in Sri Lanka, holds the second position in terms of publication numbers. The leading publishers in this area are Elsevier, MDPI, Springer Nature, and Emerald Publishing.

Table 2: Most Productive Journals Publishing in SS Research

Name of the Journal	No of Papers	CiteScore
Sustainability Switzerland	101	6.8
Sri Lanka Journal of Social Sciences	64	0.5
Water Switzerland	36	5.8
Asian Survey	34	1.8
Asian Association of Open Universities Journal	31	5.6
BMC Medical Education	30	4.9
International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction	27	8.7 E
International Journal of Scientific and Technology Research	25	0.2
Journal of Forensic and Legal Medicine	20	2.7
Groundwater for Sustainable Development	20	11.5
Social Science and Medicine	20	9.1

Table 3 displays the six conference proceedings that feature the highest volume of publications in the social sciences. Among these, two conference proceedings stand out as the most prominent: the International Multidisciplinary Moratuwa Engineering Research Conference proceeding, which accounts for 31.6% of the

Publications are issued by the University of Moratuwa and the International Conference on Advances in ICT for Emerging Regions (ICTer – Proceedings), which constitutes 21.3% of the publications and is published by the University of Colombo.

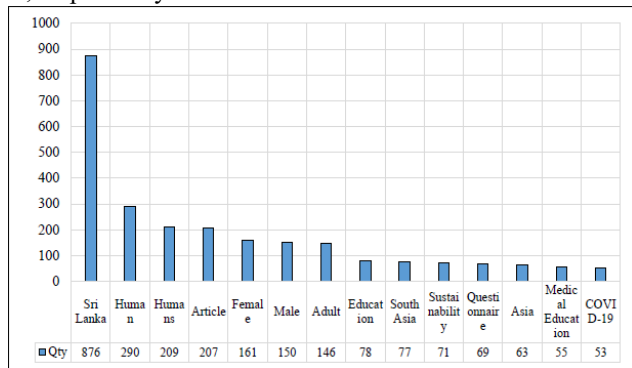
Table 3: Most Productive Conference Proceedings Publishing SS Research

Name of the Proceedings	Total Publications
Mercon International Multidisciplinary Moratuwa Engineering Research Conference	262
International Conference on Advances in ICT For Emerging Regions ICTER 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022 Proceedings	180
Proceedings International Research Conference on Smart Computing and Systems Engineering, Scse 2024	64
IEEE Region 10 Humanitarian Technology Conference R10 HTC	19
ICAC 2023 5th International Conference on Advancements in Computing Technological Innovation for A Sustainable Economy Proceedings	18
Proceedings of the 8th International Conference on Computer Science and Education, Iccse 2013	18

F. Frequently used Keywords

Over 300 keywords were utilized for social science research in Sri Lanka. The most frequently used keywords among them were “Sri Lanka”, “human”, “humans”, “article”, “female”, “male”, “adult”, and “education”. Figure 4 illustrates the frequency of their

usage, which includes 876, 290, 209, 207, 161, 150, 146, and 78, respectively.



[Fig.4: Frequently used Keywords]

Table 4: Most Productive Authors in SS Research

Author Name	Total Publications	Social Sciences Publications	Total Citations	University
Perera, I.	174	40	1392	University of Moratuwa
Perera, B.A.K.S.	110	28	737	University of Moratuwa
Ranathunga, S.	90	26	551	University of Moratuwa
Thayasivam, U.	64	26	244	University of Moratuwa
Wickramasinghe, V.	76	25	1359	University of Moratuwa
Ranagalage, M.	55	21	2097	Rajarata University
Amaratunga, D.	221	20	3228	University of Moratuwa
Jayasinghe, Saroj A.	178	20	2293	University of Colombo
Uyangoda, J.	94	19	198	University of Colombo
Weerasinghe, R.	72	19	372	University of Colombo
Fernando, N.	26	17	774	University of Colombo
Karunanayaka, S.P.	29	17	128	Open University of Sri Lanka
Samararatne, D.	21	17	52	University of Colombo
Dissanayake, C.B.	145	16	3072	University of Peradeniya
Kulatunga, U.	81	16	761	University of Moratuwa
Ranathunga, L.	79	16	191	University of Moratuwa

H. Collaboration Pattern

Sri Lanka has engaged in social sciences research with 116 countries and has established the most connections with Australia (with a total of 319 collaborative publications), followed by the United Kingdom (with a total of 286) and the United States (with a total of 229). In partnership with Sri Lanka, Japan, India, Canada, Malaysia, and China have contributed 131, 123, 92, 88, and 82 SS research papers, respectively. Furthermore, the Netherlands, Sweden, Pakistan, Germany, Bangladesh, and Singapore are other nations that have significant collaborations with Sri Lanka.

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The literature review identified several bibliometric studies in the area of Library Science research in Sri Lanka. Still, these studies had a narrow focus in terms of the source databases, timeframes, and specific domains. There has not yet been a thorough bibliometric analysis within the social sciences field. This research examines the publication trends among Sri Lankan social science researchers, highlighting the most prolific authors, universities, and journals, and

G. Most Productive Authors in Social Sciences Research

156 authors have published at least five works on social sciences as indexed in Scopus. Those with more than 16 publications in social sciences are detailed in Table 4. The author with the most publications in the social sciences is Perera, I., who has 40 out of his 174 total publications listed in Scopus, with a focus on this field. Perera, B.A.K.S., has a total of 110 publications in Scopus, with 28 falling under the category of social sciences. In terms of total citations, the most prolific author was Amaratunga, D, affiliated with the University of Moratuwa, accumulating a total of 3228 citations.

analysing authorship and collaboration patterns, as well as the distribution of subjects within social science research in Sri Lanka. In recent years, there has been a notable increase in social science research activity. The social sciences account for approximately 6.2% of all research articles produced by Sri Lankan scholars. By 2013, the yearly publication rate had surpassed 100 papers, with two-thirds of the overall literature generated in the past five years.

The University of Colombo, the University of Peradeniya, and the University of Moratuwa have been at the forefront of producing social science literature in Sri Lanka. The research also notes a shift in authorship trends from individual authors to collaborative efforts. Perera, I., Thayasivam, U., Ranathunga, S., and Wickramasinghe, V. are the leading contributors, boasting 39, 26, 23, and 23 publications, respectively. Over three-quarters of their works have been published in reputable international journals. Among the top 10 most cited articles, three had a single author, while the rest resulted from collaborative research involving multiple authors. All publications included Sri Lanka as a "keyword."

The authors quantify the growth and trends in SS research from 1952 to 2022 in this paper, and the findings contribute to our understanding of SS research trends as a means to enhance our research initiatives. Despite the positive progress observed in recent years, there remains a necessity to hasten research activities, reevaluate research policies, and foster a stronger research culture in Sri Lanka.

DECLARATION STATEMENT

After aggregating input from all authors, I must verify the accuracy of the following information as the article's author.

- **Conflicts of Interest/ Competing Interests:** Based on my understanding, this article has no conflicts of interest.
- **Funding Support:** This article has not been sponsored or funded by any organization or agency. The independence of this research is a crucial factor in affirming its impartiality, as it was conducted without any external influence.
- **Ethical Approval and Consent to Participate:** The data provided in this article is exempt from the requirement for ethical approval or participant consent.
- **Data Access Statement and Material Availability:** The adequate resources of this article are publicly accessible.
- **Author's Contributions:** The authorship of this article is contributed equally to all participating individuals.

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AUTHOR'S PROFILE



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