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A bibliometric analysis of thematic developments in street-level bureaucracy research

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Abstract

Purpose – Street-level bureaucracy (SLB) has been essential to public administration in executing government policies and shaping public service quality. This paper aims to uncover the knowledge gaps and ongoing challenges to inform future analysis on SLB.

Design/methodology/approach – This literature review analyzes the publications on SLB between 1971 and 2023 by using various bibliometric methods, including trend analysis, network co-occurrence, and thematic evolution from 994 journal articles extracted from the Scopus database.

Findings – Research on SLB has shifted focus from specific issues such as work efficiency in the early 2000s to broader themes like governance methods, policy implementation, social policy, and public service delivery. This change reflects the adaptation of the field to global challenges and policy evolutions. International collaborations have contributed to the evolution, enriching SLB discourse with cross-cultural insights and comparative analyses. The partnerships have led to innovative strategies and models to address the challenges faced by SLB, enhancing public service delivery and policy implementation.

Originality/value – This paper shows the need to integrate the shift in SLB from specific practices to broader administrative themes with the global insights from international collaborations. In underrepresented regions, such as Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia, research is suggested to enrich the global understanding of SLB.

Keywords Street-level bureaucracy, Bibliometric analysis, Public administration, Public policy, Thematic evolution, Network co-occurrence

Paper type Literature review

Introduction

Bureaucracy has been a focal point in public administration and politics. In recent decades, different research has been conducted on bureaucracy at the local level (Mike, 2012). Lipsky (1971) coined the term street-level bureaucracy (SLB) to characterize educators, police officers, and social workers at the forefront of public service. These individuals interact directly with the public and are the 'face' of the government for many citizens (Lipsky, 1971; Lipsky and Lounds, 1976). Research has shown the significance of decision-making at the street level, emphasizing their important role in influencing the effectiveness of SLB and the respective bureaucracies, such as schools, welfare agencies, and police (van Berkel *et al.*, 2022). However, the examination of SLB as a main aspect of research has been scarce (Lambert, 2022).

Street-level administrators are unique and frequently in positions of making decisions for the citizens (Hong, 2021). Their tasks include efforts to comply with expansive and abstract regulations, translating the guidelines into specific scenarios (Marienfeldt, 2024). During the decision-making process and exercise of professional judgment, overarching rules and distinctive circumstances of individual cases must be considered (Ramani *et al.*, 2021). In

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other terms, policymakers are formed due to the discretion in enforcing rules and policies (Arnold, 2021). This raises several intriguing issues and difficulties examined in the literature (Breek *et al.*, 2021; Eriksson and Johansson, 2022). The variables influencing the decisions and behavior of administrators pose a challenge to the research of bureaucracy at the local level. These range from the characteristics of individuals and the work environment to the institution's structures and norms. Investigating this complexity is difficult but fascinating endeavor (Davidovitz and Cohen, 2022).

The purpose of the research is to conduct a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of the literature pertaining to SLB. Developments and trends in the topic are understood by examining the existing literature. According to Marienfeldt (2024), SLB analysis is very important, but the research only focuses on the digital use of SLB. The latest research mainly focuses on a small part of SLB, affecting the use of data or literature. There are also several unanswered questions such as: How has research on SLB evolved over the past few decades? What topics are dominating the conversation, and what is the evolution level over time? Who are the key players, and what are the interrelationships?

The significance resides in the contribution to the understanding of SLB. In addition, a comprehensive image of the evolution of discipline is provided in identifying areas that require further research. By comprehending the developments and trends in the literature, this research obtains a deeper understanding of the challenges and problems faced by bureaucrats. It also shows the effects of collaboration and interaction on the research in the field.

Research method

The research design uses bibliometric analysis, a technique for quantitatively analysing scientific journal articles (Donthu *et al.*, 2021). The method uses references as analysis material and produces a statistical model showing the relationship between each study and maps trends (Cuccurullo *et al.*, 2016). The stages and the details of every step are explained. This research aims to review the literature discussing SLB. The analysis concentrates on 994 articles on "street-level bureaucracy" or "street-level bureaucrats" extracted from the Scopus database.

The research adhered to the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines for systematic review (Figure 1) and was initiated with a targeted search in the Scopus database using specific terms to obtain 994 articles. The articles were screened and narrowed down to 842, assessing 732 in full-text for eligibility. Finally, 697 papers were analysed. The bibliometric analysis was conducted using the Bibliometrix package in RStudio, including data preparation, descriptive analysis, co-publication, keyword co-occurrence, thematic evolution, and data visualization through graphs, diagrams, and network maps.

This research used TITLE-ABS-KEY ("street-level bureaucracy" OR "street-level bureaucrat" OR "street-level bureaucracy" OR "street-level bureaucrat") AND (EXCLUDING (PUBYEAR, 2023)) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "ar") AND (LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE, "j")) search terms to gather data. The string was designed to target articles containing relevant keywords in the title, abstract, or keywords while excluding publications from 2023 and restricting research to document types "ar" (articles) and sources "j" (journals). Subsequently, the obtained data were analyzed using Bibliometrix package in RStudio, a popular and robust statistical environment for data analysis (Aria and Cuccurullo, 2017). Bibliometrix is a comprehensive instrument for analysis and data visualization in the sciences (Aria and Cuccurullo, 2017).

This research follows several essential procedures. First, the data were prepared by eliminating duplicates and standardizing data entry (Aria and Cuccurullo, 2017). Second, a descriptive analysis was carried out, which includes producing statistics such as the number of publications per year, authors, and publications by journal or country. Third, this research performed co-publication analysis, which comprised analyzing patterns of collaboration. The

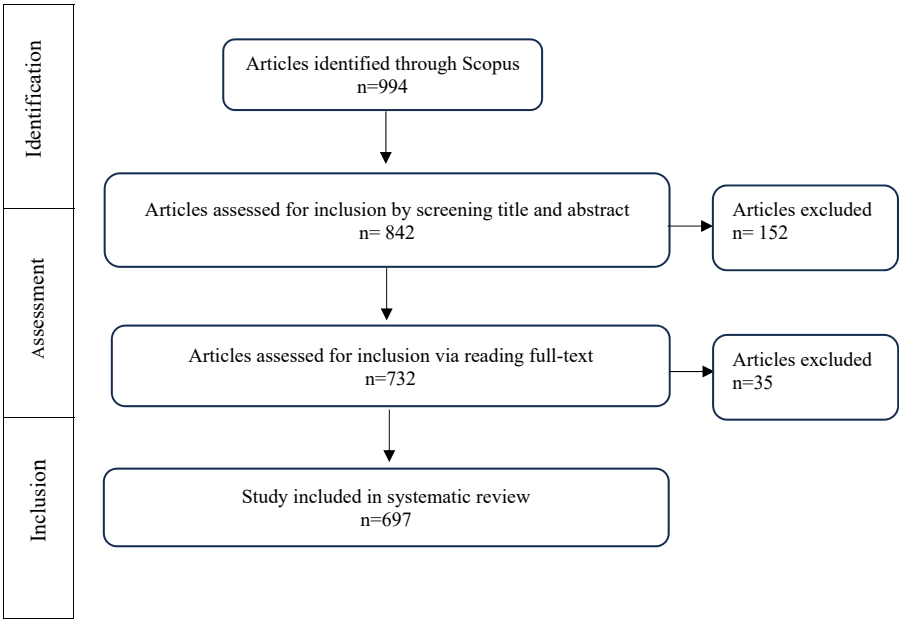

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Figure 1.
PRISMA

process includes producing a co-published matrix and network map (Aria and Cuccurullo, 2017). Fourth, a keyword co-occurrence analysis was performed to analyze the frequency of the keywords in the title, abstract, or publication. Creating a co-occurrence matrix and network map is required. Fifth, a thematic evolution analysis was carried out to examine the evolution of research topics and themes. This includes techniques such as dynamic networks or a longitudinal thematic method. The process was followed by data visualization, comprising the creation of graphs, diagrams, and network maps to graphically represent and explain the results. These visualizations facilitated the comprehension of data patterns and trends as well as enhanced the interpretation and communication of results.

Findings

Main information

Table 1 provides a summary of the data used from 1971 to 2023. Within the time frame, 454 journals were used, while 697 documents were produced with an annual growth rate of 10.73 percent. The average document age was 6.63 years, with 18.68 citations per document.

The total number of citations in all documents reaches 49,718. There are 1,360 additional and 2,405 research keywords in the documents' content. This research comprises 1,658 authors and 369 produced single-authored documents. There are 412 single-authored documents with an average of 2.04 co-authors per document. Meanwhile, the international collaboration rate is measured at 15.59 percent.

Most relevant sources

The primary sources that have published research on SLB over the course of the investigation are listed in Table 2. The ten sources of academic journals are the most pertinent, according to the number of articles published.

Description	Results
Timespan	1971:2023
Sources (Journals, Books, etc)	454
Documents	697
Annual Growth Rate %	10.73
Document Average Age	6.63
Average citations per doc	18.68
References	49718
Keywords Plus (ID)	1360
Author's Keywords (DE)	2405
Authors	1658
Authors of single-authored docs	369
Single-authored docs	412
Co-Authors per Doc	2.04
International co-authorships %	15.59

Table 1. Main Information

Source: By authors

Sources	Publishers	Articles
Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory	Oxford University Press	30
Administration and Society	SAGE	29
Public Administration	Wiley	29
Social Policy and Administration	Wiley-Blackwell	25
Public *Management Review*	Taylor & Francis	23
Public Administration Review	Wiley-Blackwell	20
American Review of Public Administration	SAGE	14
Social Science and Medicine	Elsevier	13
International Public Management Journal	Taylor & Francis	12
Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies	Taylor & Francis	12

Table 2. 10 Most Relevant Sources

Sources: By authors

The *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* is at the top of the list with 30 articles. In this study, both *Public Administration* and *Administration and Society* have 29 articles. *Public Management Review* and *Social Policy and Administration* published 23 and 25 articles, respectively. Subsequently, 20 articles from *Public Administration Review* were added to the research corpus. *Social Science and Medicine* and *American Review of Public Administration* published 13 and 14 articles, respectively. Both *International Public Management Journal* and the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* have published 12 articles.

Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory focuses on research related to organizational, administrative, and managerial concepts in the public sector. SLB is suitable for this focus as the main actor for administrative or managerial concepts especially at the street level. Several articles that became Editor Choices also represent discussion about SLB. For example, articles entitled "Who is in Charge? and the Provision of Informal Personal Resources at the Street Level". It is possible that the opportunities that have been given by the *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* increase SLB discussion trends.

Source local impact

The local impact of the most relevant sources or journals for research on SLB is presented in Table 3. With h, g, and m index of 22, 30, and 0.710, *Journal of Public Administration Research*

Element	h_index	g_index	m_index	TC	NP	PY_start
Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory	22	30	0.710	2179	30	1993
Public Administration	16	29	0.889	1121	29	2006
Public *Administration Review*	15	20	0.682	995	20	2002
Administration and Society	13	24	0.591	600	29	2002
Social Policy and Administration	13	25	0.520	652	25	1999
Public Management Review	12	23	0.857	991	23	2010
Social Science and Medicine	9	13	0.450	478	13	2004
British Journal of Social Work	8	10	0.400	955	10	2004
American Review of Public Administration	7	13	1.000	192	14	2017
European Journal of Social Work	7	11	0.636	131	11	2013

Source: By authors

Table 3.
Source Local Impact

and Theory has the greatest local influence. This journal appeared in 1993 and has published 30 articles with a total of 2,179 citations. For *Public Administration*, the h, g, and m index are 16, 29, and 0.889, respectively. This journal has published 29 articles with a total of 1,121 citations since its inception in 2006. The h, g, and m index for *Public Administration Review* is 15, 20, and 0.682, respectively. Since 2002, this journal has published 20 articles with a total of 995 citations.

Administration and Society as well as *Social Policy and Administration* have an h index of 13. *Administration and Society* has g and m indices of 24 and 0.591, while *Social Policy and Administration* has g and m indices of 25 and 0.520. The two journals have published 29 and 25 articles, with 600 and 652 citations, respectively. *Public Management Review* started publication in 2010 and has published 23 articles with an h index of 12, a g index of 23, and an m index of 0.857. Since 2004, *Social Science and Medicine* has published 13 articles with h, g, and m indices of 9, 13, and 0.450, respectively. *British Journal of Social Work*, *American Review of Public Administration*, and *European Journal of Social Work* also had a local impact on SLB research, with 10, 14, and 11 published articles as well as 955, 192, and 131 citations, respectively.

Author local impact

Table 4 evaluates the local impact of the authors who made the greatest contributions to bureaucrats. This shows the contributions to the research of "street-level bureaucrats" over the period covered.

Element	h_index	g_index	m_index	TC	NP	PY_start
Cohen N	9	16	1.125	267	18	2016
Raaphorst N	6	6	1.000	176	6	2018
Borrelli LM	5	7	1.000	53	9	2019
Brunetto Y	5	7	1.250	56	8	2020
Henderson AC	5	5	0.455	85	5	2013
Keiser LR	5	5	0.200	380	5	1999
Lotta G	5	11	0.833	123	12	2018
Møller M	5	5	0.500	155	5	2014
Nisar MA	5	5	0.714	71	5	2017
Tummers L	5	5	0.500	486	5	2014

Source: By authors

Table 4.
Author Local Impact

Cohen has the greatest local impact with an h, g, and m index of 9, 16, and 1.125. Since 2016, 18 articles have been published with a total of 267 citations. The h, g, and m indices of Raaphorst are 6, 6, and 1, respectively. Raaphorst has published six articles with a total of 176 citations since 2018. Meanwhile, Borrelli and Brunetto have identical h and g indices of 5. Borrelli and Brunetto started publication in 2019 and 2020 and have 9 and 8 articles containing 53 and 56 citations, respectively. Henderson, Keiser, Lotta, Müller, Nisar, and Tummers have h indices of 5, with varied g and m indices, as well as the number of articles and citations. From 1999 to 2020, 5 and 12 articles were published, totaling between 71 and 486 citations.

Most relevant affiliations

The most pertinent affiliations to research on SLB are evaluated in Table 5. The University of Haifa has the most published articles, with 23. This is followed closely by Aarhus and California Universities, each with 19 published articles. In addition, Erasmus and Utrecht Universities have also made significant contributions by publishing 18 and 17 articles.

Gothenburg, Lund, Linköping, and Copenhagen universities have also made significant contributions with 16, 13, 12, and 12 articles, respectively. The University of Glasgow has added 11 articles to the corpus of research. During the period of analysis, several academic institutions have made significant contributions to the production of research on SLB, as indicated by the results.

Most globally cited documents

The most frequently cited research on SLB is presented in Table 6.

A 2004 article by Evans published in the *British Journal of Social Work* tops the list with 478 citations. This article has an annual average of 23.90 and a total normalized citation count of 2.36. In addition, it is closely followed by Hupe's 2007 *Public Administration* article, which has received a total of 468 citations, an average of 27.53 per year, and a total of 6.69 normalized citations. In 2002, Bovens received 430 citations in the *Public Administration Review*, with an average of 19.55 per year and a total of 5.41 normalized citations. *Government Information Quarterly* published an article by Reddick in 2005 with 388 citations, an average of 20.42 per year, and a total of 5.28 normalized citations. Other frequently cited works were by May and Winter (2009), Evans (2011), Lipsky (1971), Tummers and Bekkers (2014), Walker and Gilson (2004), and Meier (1993), with respective totals and averages. This shows the significance of the articles in the research of SLB and the impact on the discipline.

Co-occurrence network

Based on the co-occurrence network analysis in Figure 2, the data on "street-level bureaucrats" can be divided into two main subgroups. Cluster 1 (the bottom one) includes topics such as

Table 5. Most Relevant Affiliations

Affiliation	Country	Articles
University of Haifa	Israel	23
Aarhus University	Denmark	19
University of California	United States	19
Erasmus University Rotterdam	Netherlands	18
Utrecht University	Netherlands	17
University of Gothenburg	Sweden	16
Lund University	Sweden	13
Linköping University	Sweden	12
University of Copenhagen	Denmark	12
University of Glasgow	United Kingdom	11

Source: By authors

Paper	Total Citations	TC per Year	Normalized TC
Street-level bureaucracy, social work, and the (exaggerated) death of discretion (Evans and Harris, 2004)	478	23.90	2.36
Street-level bureaucracy and public accountability (Hupe and Hill, 2007)	468	27.53	6.69
From street-level to system-level bureaucracies: How information and communication technology is transforming administrative discretion and constitutional control (Bovens and Zouridis, 2002)	430	19.55	5.41
Citizen interaction with e-government: From the streets to servers? (Reddick, 2005)	388	20.42	5.28
Politicians, managers, and street-level bureaucrats: Influences on policy implementation (May and Winter, 2009)	322	21.47	6.43
Professionals, managers, and discretion: Critiquing street-level bureaucracy (Evans, 2011)	251	19.31	5.32
Street-level Bureaucracy and the Analysis of Urban Reform (Lipsky, 1971)	241	4.55	1.00
Policy Implementation, Street-level Bureaucracy, and the Importance of Discretion (Tummers and Bekkers, 2014)	240	24.00	4.95
'We are bitter but we are satisfied': Nurses as street-level bureaucrats in South Africa (Walker and Gilson, 2004)	231	11.55	1.14
Latinos and representative bureaucracy testing the Thompson and Henderson hypotheses (Meier, 1993)	229	7.39	2.60

Source: By authors

Table 6.
Most Global Cited Documents

Source: By authors

Figure 2.
Co-occurrence Network

"bureaucracy", "policy implementation", "governance approach", "social policy", "public administration", and "public services", as well as countries such as "Sweden", "Brazil", and "Germany". This appears to concentrate on structural and institutional concerns in street-level bureaucratic research, such as policy implementation and governance methods. The cluster also contains research related to specific geographic contexts, indicating the existence of international comparisons and analyses within the literature.

Cluster 2 (the upper one in Figure 2) appears to be more concerned with the individual and subjective aspects of low-level bureaucratic labour. This includes topics such as "human", "article", "adult", "qualitative research", "health care policy", "health policy", "decision-making", "male", and "primary health care". The cluster also incorporates research on "United States", "United Kingdom", "England", "South Africa", and "Ghana". The desire to comprehend individual experiences and perspectives is shown in relation to healthcare policy and practice.

The two clusters represent structures and institutions in street-level bureaucracy research, while the other emphasizes individual experiences and perspectives. These two viewpoints complement one another and provide a fuller explanation of the research topic.

Thematic evolution

Figure 3 illustrates the thematic development of SLB research over the past few decades. From 1971 to 2010, "bureaucracy", "comparative research", and "policy implementation" were the three most analyzed topics. During this period, research primarily focused on the effects of the concept on work efficiency, the use of comparative analysis to comprehend variations across geographic and institutional contexts, and specific aspects of policy implementation at the local level. From 2011 to 2021, there was a transition in the focus of the research. The subjects of "bureaucracy" and "policy implementation" remained important, and their significance has increased. Currently, "bureaucracy" is examined in relation to "Brazil", "public service", and "social policy", while "policy implementation" is explored in the context of "Norway" and "Sweden". During this period, functions of "female", and "organization and management" in health policy increased in popularity. In addition, the research has focused on the efficacy of health care, health care systems, and the role of workers.

From 2022 to 2023, there was an increased emphasis on "human" and "bureaucracy". The developed research topics include "social work", "Sweden", and "theoretical analysis". "Bureaucracy" continues to be an important field, with particular emphasis on "policy

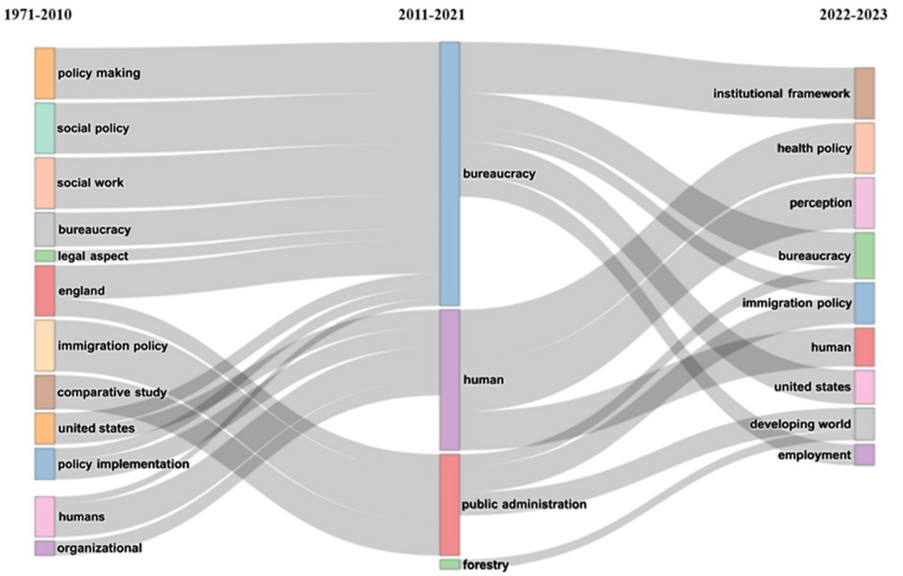


Figure 3.
Thematic Evolution

Source: By authors

implementation", "Brazil", and "public services". Recent research shows a growing interest in topics such as "employment", "health policy", and "perception". For instance, "employment" has expanded to include research on "the United Kingdom" and "welfare reform", while "health policy" includes "Ghana" and "controlled". In general, the thematic evolution of SLB research mirrors the shifting contexts and challenges encountered over the past few decades. Changes in bureaucracy, the role of humans in public services, and related issues such as employment and health policy are included.

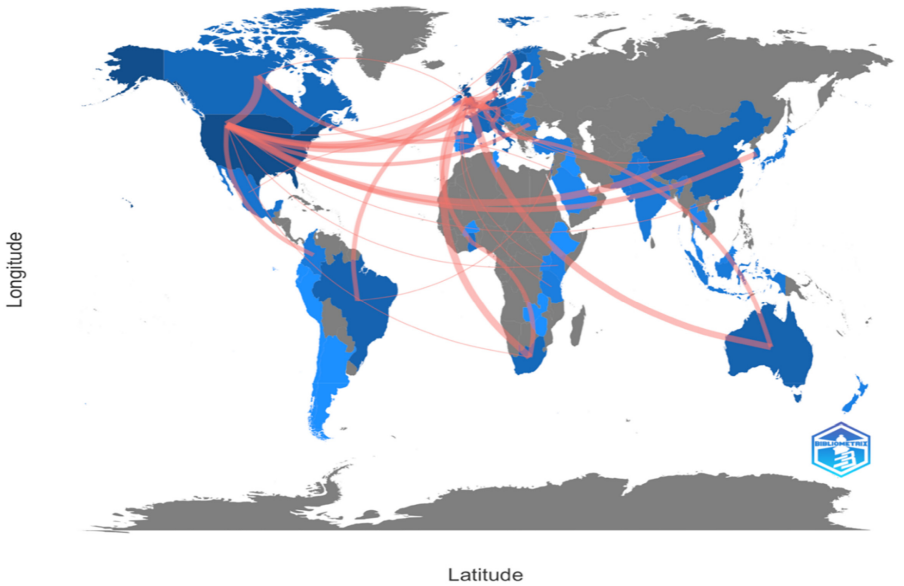
This research shows a dominance of different results compared to Marienfeldt (2024), which analyses the digital ability of SLB. Several themes, such as welfare reform, health policy, and employment, are discussed more than digital ability. In the three periods, digitalization or its impact on public servants (SLB) is not related.

Collaboration WorldMap

Figure 4 shows a robust network of international collaboration in street-level bureaucracy research, with several countries reporting unique and strong cooperative relationships. There are numerous significant international collaborations in this research field.

The collaboration between the Netherlands and Belgium is the most frequent, occurring eight times. Additionally, research collaboration occurs seven times between the United Kingdom and Netherlands. United Kingdom collaborates frequently with Australia and South Africa, with a frequency of 5. A total of 6 instances of collaboration between the United States and Canada show an active exchange of ideas and research between the countries. The United States has collaborated with China on research 6 times, reflecting a cooperative relationship in international research.

The relations between the United States and the Netherlands as well as United States and United Kingdom were recorded five times each. This suggests a robust research connection between the United States and these European countries. The four-time collaboration of Sweden



Source: By authors

Figure 4.
Collaboration WorldMap

and Norway as well as United Kingdom and Denmark shows a positive working relationship in the discipline. Cross-country collaboration is important to develop the discussion of SLB. Gershgoren and Cohen (2023) provide a good representation of the discussion, which comprised research from Israel, Germany, and the United States. The research came from different institutions and focused on Germany and Israel. Different types of welfare markets impact the practices of SLB towards clients. This research has comprehensive results, where the same input gives different outcomes in each country. The recommendation provides an implementation model for addressing several obstacles, offering a comprehensive analysis.

Discussion

This bibliometric analysis highlights numerous thematic developments and trends in research on street-level bureaucrats. The evolution and adaptation of the research are observed through trending topics, co-occurrence networks, and thematic evolution. Trend topic analysis demonstrates the shifting focus of research over time. In the early 2000s, research on SLBs centred on topics such as "case management", "state medicine", and the "United Kingdom". During this period, crucial insights were provided into the interactions between street-level administrators and state management policies (Dale, 1994; Eräsaari, 1994; Fineman, 1998; Kelly, 1994; Maupin, 1993; Peterson and Brofcak, 1997). In the following decades, the focus of research shifted to topics such as "social welfare", "resource allocation", and "housing". According to Tummers and Bekkers (2014), a growing interest in international contexts is evident, as shown by research focused on "Tanzania". Meanwhile, several studies provide insights into the implementation of social welfare policies and resource allocation (Crewett, 2015; Feltham-King and Macleod, 2020; Lavee, 2022).

Co-occurrence Research on "street-level bureaucrats" shows two major clusters through network analysis. The first cluster, which includes topics such as "bureaucracy", "policy implementation", and "governance approaches", reports on the structural and institutional issues. Lipsky (1971) and Palumbo *et al.* (1984) provided a theoretical and empirical foundation for this research. In contrast, the second cluster is related to aspects of front-line bureaucrats and analyzes the navigation of street-level bureaucrats (Cooper *et al.*, 2014; Fletcher, 2011; O'Sullivan *et al.*, 2019; van Parys and Struyven, 2018; Redman, 2023). A thematic evolutionary analysis shows the evolution of research on topics such as "bureaucracy", "comparative study", and "policy implementation". This topic has remained significant over the past few decades, but the scope has expanded to include "people" and "women". Sossin (2007) and Nguyen and Velayutham (2018) reported some of these changes, where research on "street-level bureaucrats" has become comprehensive and inclusive in the coverage of multiple perspectives and issues.

This research on SLB identifies two primary models, namely as "agents of the state" and "embedded in society". The "agent of the state" model emphasizes the role of SLBs as implementers of government policies and enforcers of regulations (Loyens, 2015; Nielsen, 2015; Winter and May, 2015). This model shows the methods by which street-level bureaucrats reflect the context of society (Hupe *et al.*, 2015). In this capacity, SLBs are expected to follow directives and guidelines set by higher authorities, ensuring that the state's objectives are met efficiently and uniformly. This model reports the bureaucratic and hierarchical nature of public administration. In addition, SLB act as the extension of the state's machinery, responsible for maintaining order and consistency in the application of laws and policies. The "agent of the state" model is exemplified by the implementation of immigration policies in the United States. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers are tasked with enforcing federal immigration laws (Winter and May, 2015). Strict protocols and guidelines are followed to ensure national security and compliance with immigration laws. Meanwhile, ICE officers conduct raids, detain individuals suspected of

being in the country illegally, and oversee deportations. The rigid adherence to federal guidelines ensures consistency in enforcement but results in criticism for lack of compassion and consideration of individual circumstances. For instance, the zero-tolerance policy implemented in 2018 led to family separations at the U.S.-Mexico border, drawing widespread condemnation for the harsh treatment of asylum seekers and undocumented immigrants. However, a drawback of the model is the potential to stifle the discretion and creativity of SLB and lead to rigid and impersonal service delivery.

The "embedded society" model shows SLB as integral members of the communities (Ellis, 2015; Musheno and Maeynard-Moody, 2015; Wilkins and Wenger, 2015). This perspective recognizes that SLBs operate within a social context, interacting directly with citizens and understanding their unique needs and circumstances. In this role, SLB also serve as mediators and the personal values of street-level bureaucrats influence their interaction with clients. Discretion is often used to adapt policies to fit local conditions and address cases more effectively. This model shows the importance of social relationships and local knowledge in the execution of public services, reporting the adaptive and responsive nature of SLB work. A case illustrating the model is the role of social workers in the UK's child welfare services (Križ and Skivenes, 2014). Social workers are deeply embedded in the communities, building relationships with families and understanding unique circumstances. They use discretion to make decisions about child placement, family support, and intervention strategies based on the specific needs and dynamics of each family. However, a limitation of the model is the potential for inconsistency and lack of uniformity in service delivery. This is because individual discretion may lead to variations in the application of policies, resulting in unequal treatment of citizens.

Conclusion

In conclusion, international collaborations, co-occurrence networks, and thematic evolution were among the aspects of research on street-level bureaucrats that have been examined from a variety of angles. This research showed that the field evolved substantially over the past several decades, with significant shifts in topics, methods, and geographic emphasis. The discussion about SLB has developed and shifted its focus over three major periods. First, from 1971 to 2010, the research primarily focused on bureaucracy, comparative research, and policy implementation. Second, from 2011 to 2021, the focus shifted to four main themes: bureaucracy, human, public administration, and forestry, with forestry emerging as a new topic due to climate issues. Third, from 2022 to 2023, the research continued to emphasize bureaucracy and human, while expanding to include social work, employment, and health policy. Bureaucracy remained a consistent topic throughout all three periods, providing a comprehensive image of the research conducted by SLB. As only the Scopus database was used, it may have excluded relevant publications from other databases. The reliance on a single database could limit the scope of the research. Moreover, this research comprised English-language publications, limiting the inclusion of international research and discourse. Several prospective research directions were recommended based on the results. First, further investigation into the operation of international collaborations is needed in this field. Second, future research could explore the evolution of topics and methods, with an emphasis on adapting to shifting contexts and challenges. Third, the interaction of co-occurrence network clusters should be analyzed. Finally, full-text analysis of publications should be conducted to gain a deeper comprehension of the discussions and arguments in SLB literature.

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