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Homosexuality and adoption of children: A Bibliometric Analysis

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Abstract

This study is based on the bibliometric analysis of research publications that focus on highlighting the impact of homosexuality on the process of adoption of children. The primary objective of this study is to analyze the frequency of publications focusing on the impact of parental sexual orientation on the process of adoption in different countries. The data required for this study was collected from the Scopus database and was analyzed using VOSviewer software. Literature published from 2000 to January 2021 were extracted and analyzed. A total of 284 documents which are classified into articles, letters, editorials, conference papers, and reviews are included in this study. Tables, charts, maps and graphs have been used for analyzing and presenting the collected data. The study exposed that the impact of homosexuality on the adoption process, particularly its impact on parental capacity and child development, is an under-researched area in many countries. Better funding and enhanced research in this area is therefore recommended.

Keywords- Adoption, bibliometric, children, homosexuality, sexual orientation, parenting.

I. Introduction

Bibliometrics can be understood as a set of methods employed to study or quantify text and information. Alan Pritchard coined the term ‘bibliometrics’ in 1969. He described it as the application of mathematical and statistical tools on bibliographic information of books and media in order to analyze it (Pritchard, 1969). Bibliometrics is considered to be a subset of ‘scientometrics’. Citation analysis is one of the most frequently used bibliometric methods.

Bibliometrics is extremely useful in identifying the most active field in terms of research. It will also aid policy makers in determining priority areas of research in any particular domain. Lately the use of bibliometrics in research has rocketed, primarily because it enables a researcher to identify the grey areas and gaps in knowledge. It also helps in ascertaining the productivity of publishers, authors, research organizations and countries. Bibliometric studies

also play an important role in appraising the past research and also helps in determining the future of research.

A bibliometric analysis is preferred in the present study, in order to identify the grey areas in research related to homosexuality and its impact on adoption of children. For the purpose of this study, literature from 2000-2021 has been extracted. A total of 284 documents were analyzed for this study. The data retrieved is represented using graphs, charts, maps and tables. The documents are examined from different perspectives like citations, keywords, research field, subject area, countries, authorship, affiliation etc.

II. Statement of Problem

After an initial perusal of existing literature, it is observed that there is no authoritative research that has established the negative implications of adoption by homosexuals. Plethora of research has established that children raised by homosexual parents develop in ways that are similar to the children raised by heterosexual parents. Yet the right to family of such couples remain controversial. There are many children awaiting adoption. Recognition of adoption by homosexuals will help in placing these children in permanent families. The efficacy of homosexual parents has always been challenged. The legal proceedings and custody battles fought by homosexual parents over the years in different countries is indicative of this. Many countries are still reluctant to grant marriage and adoption rights to homosexual couples. On the flip side, adoptions by lesbian and gay couples are permitted by law in many countries like Canada, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, UK, Malta etc. (Farr et.al., 2010) The rejection or discrimination faced is predominantly on the basis of religion, political agendas or cultural practices.

Arguments against adoption by homosexuals is generally three pronged. Firstly, children of homosexual parents will grow up to be homosexuals (Farr et al, 2010). Secondly, children raised by homosexuals will not attain sufficient personal development (Farr et al, 2010). Thirdly, children are more likely to be sexually abused by their parents (Farr et al, 2010). In many countries, there is still an explicit assumption that homosexuality is undesirable and sinful (King and Pattison, 1991). These arguments are primarily based on the 'best interest of children' or 'welfare of children' principle. All these arguments presuppose that being homosexual is a mental illness that would cause some type of harm to the children (Pennings, 2011). So far there are no authoritative studies which indicates that the sexual orientation of a person has any influence on parental capacity.

Several earlier studies have authoritatively refuted these arguments by establishing the “no difference” argument (Stacey and Biblarz, 2001). For example, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry asserted that “there is no basis on which to assume that homosexual orientation of parents will increase the likelihood of or induce homosexual orientation in the child” (AACAP,2005). Studies like the Wainwright study (Wainwright, Russell and Patterson, 2004) and Golombok study (Golombok, Perry and Burston, 2003) also confirmed the “no difference” conclusion.

A study conducted by the National Survey of Children’s Health (USA) established that despite higher levels of parenting stress for homosexual parents, kids raised by them did not differ in general health, emotional difficulties, coping behaviour, or learning behaviour when compared to the offspring of different-sex parents (Bos et al., 2016). These findings are relevant to clinicians, public policy analysts, litigators, and legislators who are consulted on matters pertaining to homosexual parent families. This research can be seen as a reflection of the state-of-the-art studies that are as comprehensive as research might be expected to be today.

Majority of the earlier research established that sexual orientation of parents has no significant impact on child outcomes. Rather, research recommended that parenting quality, attachment, income etc. are more important predictors of child development. But the impact of these variables on child development have not yet been explicitly studied. The focus was always laid on the sexual orientation of parents. This is a result of the persistent homophobic tendencies of the society.

The existing research is valuable, but it has been criticized on several grounds. Thus, the suitability of lesbian and gay adopters continues to be challenged. The pivotal question about the impact of sexual orientation in parenting also remains unsettled. The existing studies on homosexual adoptions and child welfare cannot be considered conclusive evidences because several sampling and methodological issues have been identified by critics. The pre-dominant handicaps of current studies include the fact that most of the studies are often restricted to homosexual couples in US, Europe or other developed countries. The existing research is potentially limited as it has not explored the experiences of homosexual people from working class background, racial minorities or those from a non-urban setting. Thus, the researchers should expand their spectrum by analysing unexplored areas related to this subject matter. A bibliometric analysis is conducted to highlight the research gap that currently exists in relation

to homosexuality and its influence on adoption of children. The need of enhancing the research in this field will also be perused.

III. Objectives of the study

The core objectives of this study can be listed as follows:

- To evaluate the pattern of distribution of documents
- To study the frequency of citation by year
- To identify the country affiliation of contributing authors
- To map the extensively used keywords in the documents relating to homosexuality and adoption
- To assess the growth of publications and typology of documents
- To analyse the citation of documents

IV. Literature Review

Antell (2012) has conducted a citation analysis of the literature on LGBT studies covering the time period 1974-2010. The author used EBSCO LGBT Life database to gather 4,321 citations in the field. The author concluded that there was an increase in cross-disciplinary citation over the time period, particularly from the fields of medicine.

Graziano (2018) conducted a citation analysis of 28 master theses on LGBT studies. A total of 3,243 citations were analyzed by the author. The study was restricted to the universities in Canada. The author concluded that there is immense interdisciplinarity in this field. But according to the author the study is restricted to a few journals only.

Herek (2014) in his study has primarily focused on the methodological flaws in earlier studies that established that same-sex parenting would have a negative impact on children. The author has concluded that a better empirical design has to be adopted in studies related to child development and parental sexual orientation.

Farr, Forsell & Patterson (2010) conducted an empirical study in order to verify the impact of sexual orientation of an individual on parental capacity. Their study analysed development of adopted children in 106 families headed by 27 lesbian, 29 gay, and 50 heterosexual couples. Their study has strongly challenged the argument that a child requires one male and one female parent to attain proper development. The authors through this analysis established that there is no association between sexual orientation of parents and child development. The study also established that parents from the same gender can be excellent parents. One of the significant

limitations of this study is in the fact the study is geographically limited to USA and particularly white households. The authors have not ventured into the diverse experiences in non-white households outside USA.

Bautista et al (2015) conducted an empirical study on how equal rights can be granted to homosexuals. The study is centered in Singapore. The authors provided both theoretical and practical information which might be useful for policy makers.

V. Research Methodology

V.1. Source of Information

The data presented in this study is collected from Scopus. Scopus is an abstract and citation database launched by Elsevier in 2004. Scopus is a database that provides publications under different disciplines like social sciences, arts & humanities, life sciences etc. Publications in about 40 languages are available in this database. Scopus also aids in visual representation and analysis of data. Metrics like h-index, CiteScore, SNIP etc. are used for the purpose of data analysis. Data related to the source, year of publication, authors, affiliation etc. can be retrieved from Scopus.

V.2. Study Design

For the purpose of this study, the bibliometric method is adopted. The study focuses on the period from 2000-2021. Reports stating that homosexual individuals are denied basic civil rights like the right to marry and right to adopt, are coming in from different parts of the world (BBC News, 2020). In this context, the impact of a person's sexual orientation on child adoption needs to be thoroughly researched. Therefore, this study is conducted to ascertain the frequency of such studies from 2000-2021.

V.3. Search Strategy

In the present study, keywords and title words including few constraints were used to reduce the occurrence of false-positive results. The keywords and title words used are shown in Table 1. The limitations set during the study were about the source type and language. Only documents published in English language have been retrieved.

The search result in Scopus showed a total of 284 publications. All documents from 2000-2021(English), related to homosexuality and adoption were retrieved. Scopus analysis data

were extracted and the VOSviewer software was used for the analysis and visualization of maps.

VI. Presentation and Analysis of Data

Table 1: Research strategies and keywords used to retrieve documents related to homosexuality and its influence on adoption of children

Search Method	Keywords	Constraints	Exclusion
Title Words	Homosexuality and adoption	None	--
Limit	1. Source type: Journal 2. Time interval: 2000-2021	--	--

VI.1. Typology of documents and growth of publication

In total, 284 documents were retrieved from Scopus. Out of these 284 documents there were nine different types of documents: Articles (73.9%), Reviews (12.0%), Notes (3.9%), Book Chapter (3.2%), Letters (2.8%), Editorials (1.8%), Books (1.1%), Conference Papers (1.1%) and Undefined (0.4%). [Figure 1]. The actual number of these documents are illustrated in Table 2.

Figure 1- Types of documents

Source: visited scopus.com/ on 24th May 2021

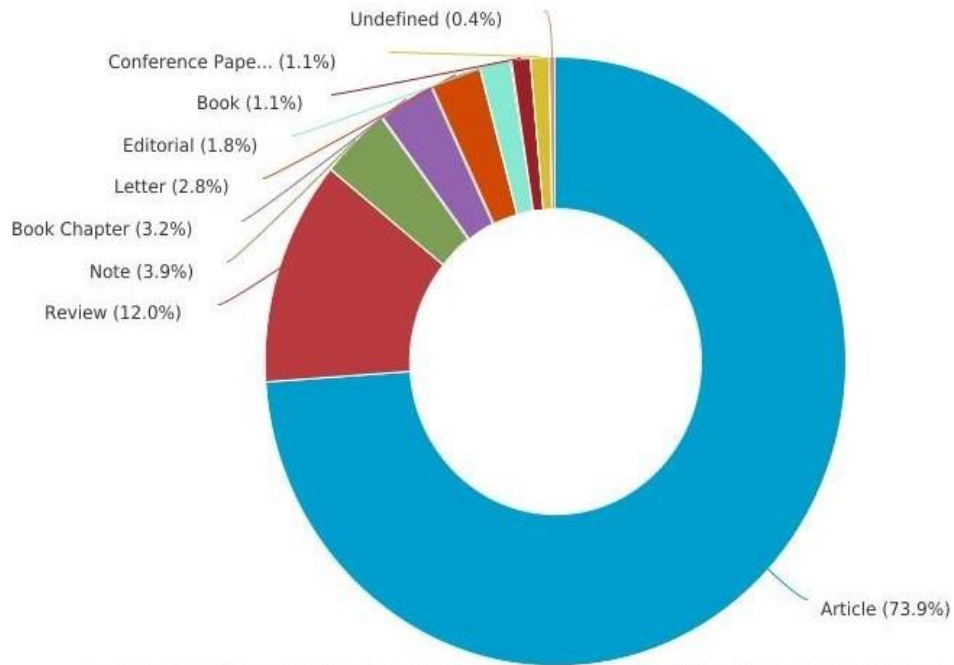


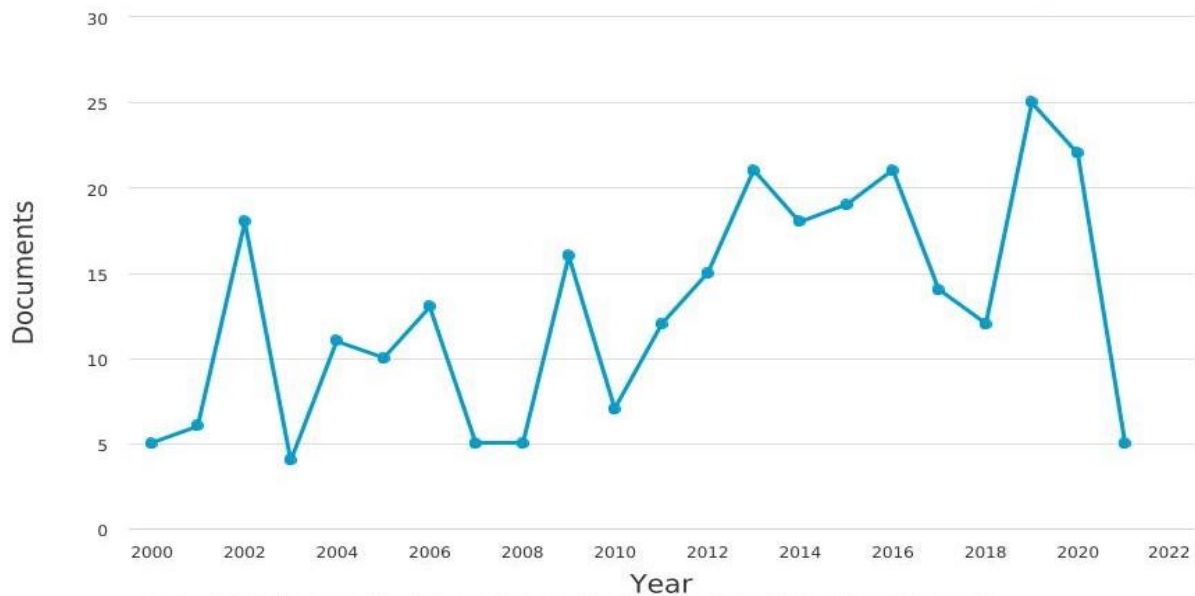
Table 2: Types of documents and no. of documents

Type of document	No. of Documents
Articles	210
Review	34
Note	11
Book chapter	9
Letter	8
Editorial	5
Book	3
Conference Paper	3
Undefined (Press article)	1
Total	284

During the period of study, the number of retrieved documents has been fluctuating (as illustrated in Figure 2). There was a peak in publication in 2019, but it was followed by a gradual decrease in subsequent years. Figure 2 illustrates that the research on homosexuality and adoption saw a peak only in 2019 and until then research in this field was rather low.

Figure 2- Growth of publication of documents

Source: visited scopus.com/ on 24th May 2021



VI.2. Mapping the most frequently occurring keywords

The most common keywords that were visualized are in Figure 3. The map visualized 5 clusters. Cluster (1) Homosexuality male, article, lgbt people, sexuality, social stigma. Cluster (2) adoption, child care, child development, family, discrimination, gender identity, homosexuality, law, parenthood, sexual orientation. Cluster (3) adoptive parent, family relation, male, female, parenting. Cluster (4) history, history, 20th century. Cluster (5) aged. The below is the table (Table 3) that shows the occurrence of keywords and Figure 3 shows the most common keywords retrieved from the documents.

Table 3: Keywords and Occurrence

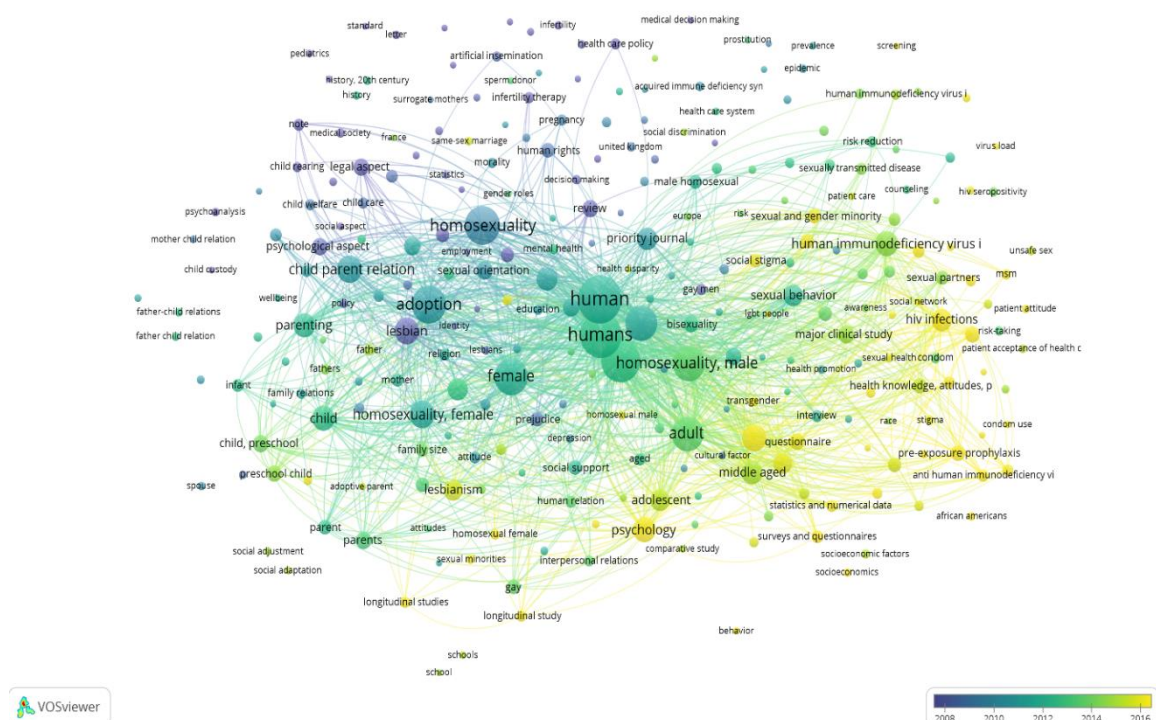
Source: VOSviewer

Selected	Keyword	Occurrences
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	humans	194
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	male	175
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	female	133
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	homosexuality, male	118
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	adoption	139
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	adult	113
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	article	117
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	homosexuality	145
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	male homosexuality	70
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	homosexuality, female	73
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	child parent relation	73
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	psychology	59
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	human immunodeficiency virus infection	59
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	child	61
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	lesbian	68
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	middle aged	52
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	hiv infections	48
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	united states	53
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	parenting	54

The keywords “human”, “homosexuality” and “child” occur more than the keywords “adoption” and “parenting”. Also, it was only after 2010 that the keywords homosexuality and adoption started to appear together more frequently.

Figure 3- Mapping the most frequent keywords

Source: visited scopus.com/ on 24th May 2021

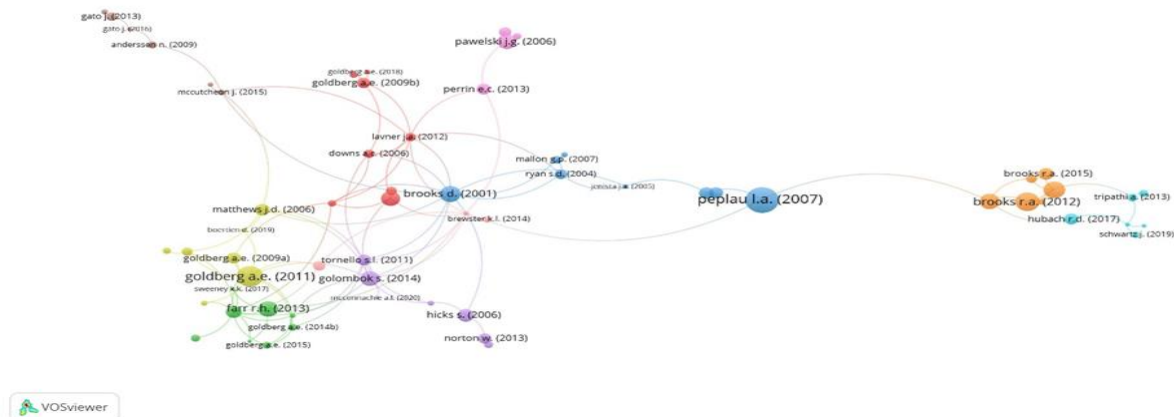


VI.3. Citation Analysis

284 documents were retrieved from the Scopus database. Only 63 documents met the threshold when a minimum of 5 citations per document was selected. These documents are classified into 10 clusters.

Figure 4-Citation analysis

Source: visited scopus.com/ on 24th May 2021



VI.4. Subject area of research

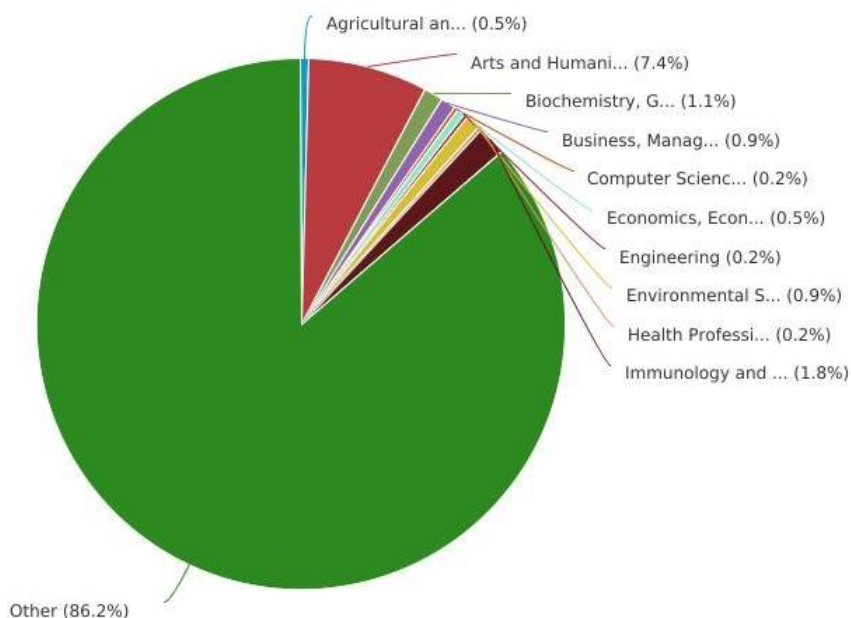
As illustrated in Figure 5, a whopping 86.2% of the documents retrieved are classified into the ‘Others’ category. As represented in Table 4, out of the 284 documents retrieved, 227 have been categorized as others. Documents from the field of Social Science, Medicine and Psychology constitute a major chunk of the documents in the aforementioned category. Arts and humanities constitute 7.4% of the documents retrieved. Immunology and microbiology have contributed 1.8%. 1.1% of the documents belong to biochemistry. Business management and environmental studies have contributed 0.9% each. Agricultural and biological studies have made a contribution of 0.5%. 0.2% of contribution has been made in the field of health profession and computer science. The data indicates that no significant contribution has been made in the field of law. The potential research trail in the field remains highly untraversed.

Table 4: Subject area and no. of documents

Subject area	No. of Documents
Arts & Humanities	32
Immunology & Microbiology	08
Biochemistry	05
Business & Management	04
Environmental Science	04
Economics, Econometrics & Finance	02
Computer Science	01
Engineering	01
Others	227
Total	284

Figure 5-Documents by subject area

Sources: visited scopus.com/ on 1st October 2020

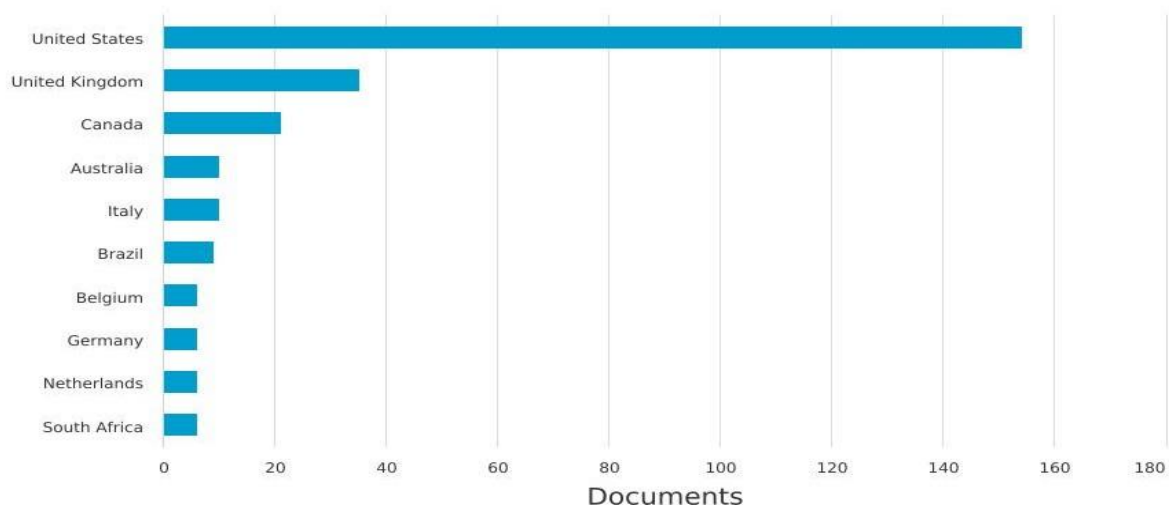


VI.5. Top 10 active countries

Authors from different countries have contributed the documents retrieved. 10 countries have actively contributed documents. Out of these 10 countries, the greatest number of contributions have been made by United States, 154 documents [Figure 6]. Other active contributions are from United Kingdom (35), Canada (21), Australia (10), Italy (10), Brazil (9), Belgium (6), Germany (6), Netherlands (6) and South Africa (6).

Figure 6- Top 10 active countries

Source: visited scopus.com/ on 24th May 2021



VI.6. Analysis of authorship and affiliation

In total, 10 authors were identified on the basis of the documents retrieved. As represented in Figure 6, the maximum number of documents contributed by a single author is 12. The average number of documents per author is 5.5.

Figure 7- Authorship analysis

Source: visited scopus.com/on 24th May 2021

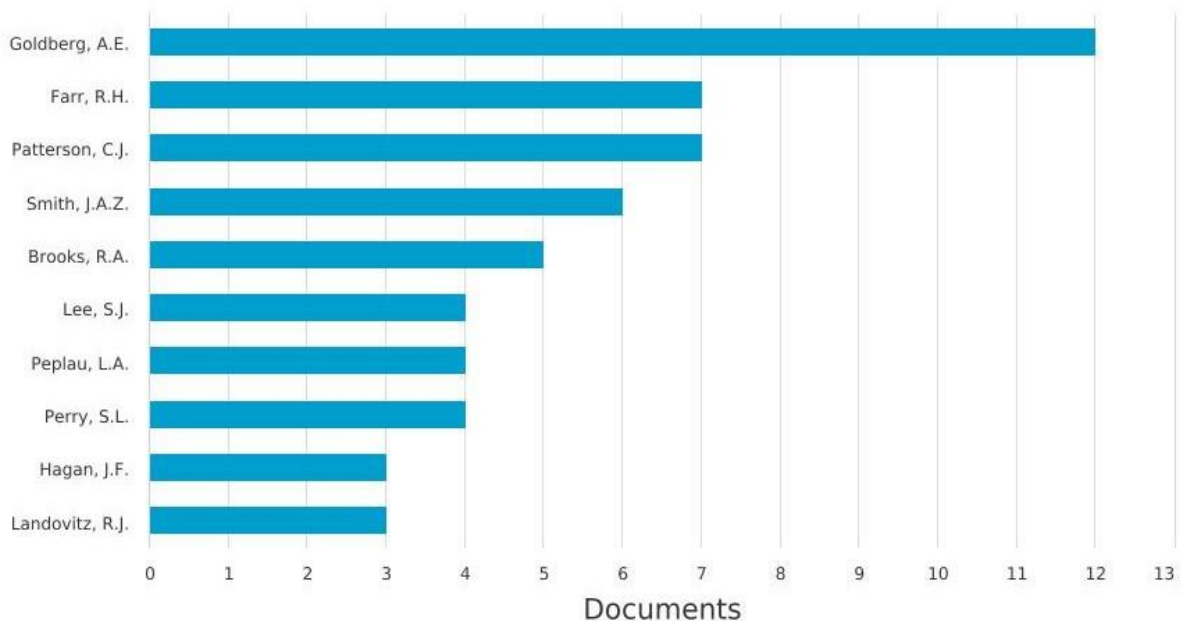
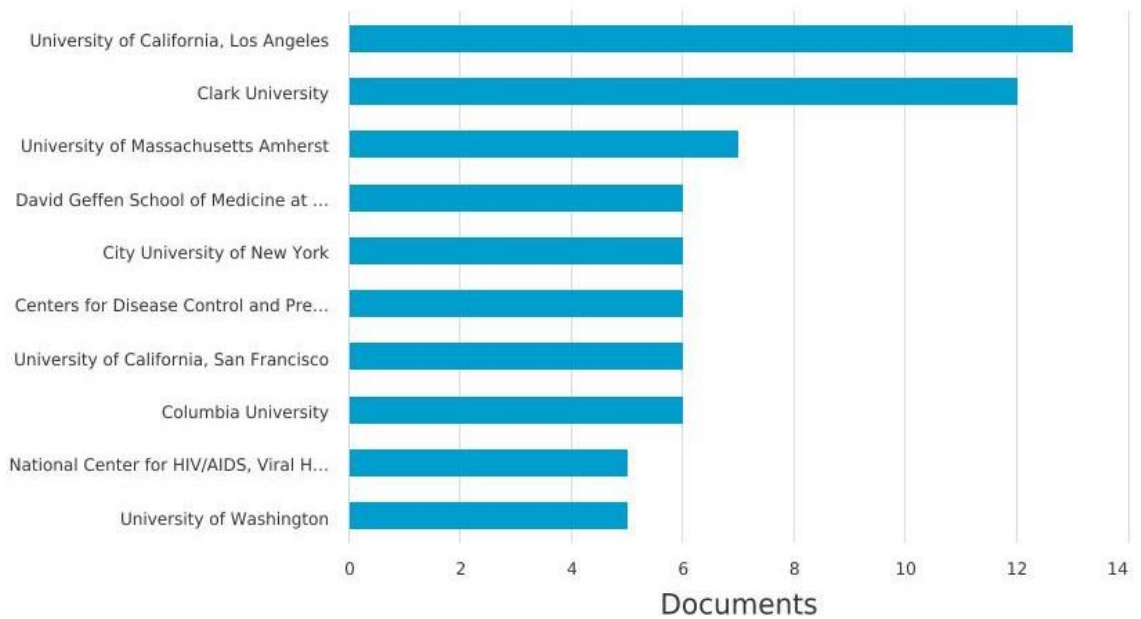


Figure 7 shows that a major chunk of the contributions is affiliated to the University of California, Los Angeles. It is interesting to note that the top 10 affiliations belong to USA. This indicates more funding and enhance research in this field should be initiated in other countries.

Figure 8- Affiliation analysis

Source: visited scopus.com/on 24th May 2021

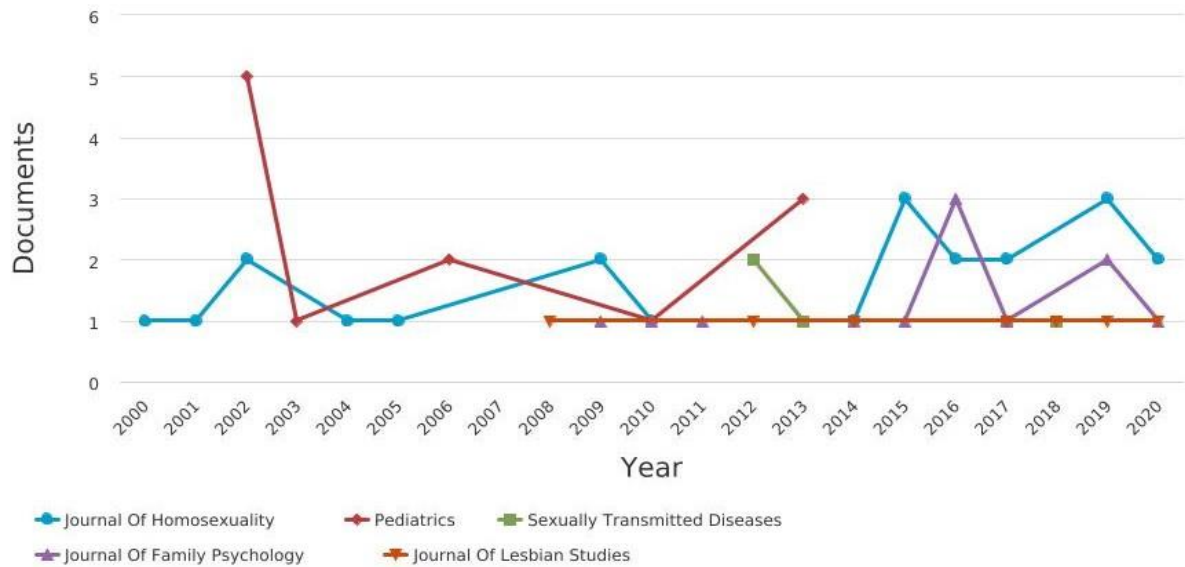


VI.7. Journals publishing the documents

The documents retrieved for this study were published in 160 journals. Out of these 160 journals, the top 5 contributing journals can be seen in Figure 9. As shown in the figure, the Journal of Homosexuality has made the highest number of contributions.

Figure 9- Number of documents published per years in Journals

Source: visited scopus.com/ on 24th May 2021



VII. Discussion

This study was conducted to analyse the gaps in research related to homosexuality and adoption. Several articles were published over the years on homosexuality and adoption separately. Post 2010, there was an increase in the number of publications focusing on the impact of an individual's sexual orientation on their right to adopt a child. Many country specific publications discussing this issue increased. But majority of these publications focused on the social science aspects or the medical and psychological issues related to adoption by homosexuals.

Even in documents discussing the challenges to homosexual adoption, the focus is placed on issues like the school progress of the adopted child, attachment of the child with such parents etc. Specific discussions on the legal aspect and the need to adequately address the discrimination faced by homosexuals who intend to adopt were not available.

It is also interesting to note that there are very few publications from countries without specific laws related to homosexual adoption. For example, India is a country where homosexuality is decriminalized, but the civil rights of the LGBT+ community has not been addressed. There are no laws addressing same sex marriages or adoption rights. It was surprising to see that there was only one paper from India that even remotely mentioned the term homosexuality.

Thus, it is observed that individual research on homosexuality and adoption has increased from 2000-2021. But literature that jointly addresses the impact of homosexuality on adoption are limited in number, both at the national and international level. Also, documents focusing on the legal challenges faced by homosexuals preferring to adopt are also less. There are no research collaborations addressing this research gap.

VIII. Conclusion

It is established using this bibliometric analysis that there is an inadequacy of research on the impact of homosexuality on adoption of children. There are very few studies that jointly address these keywords. In countries like India, the civil rights of homosexuals are still undefined. Future research must be properly directed to circumvent this ambiguity. Better incentives for research are therefore the need of the hour.

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