



Review

The evolution of smoke-free spaces policy literature: A bibliometric analysis

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: This paper describes patterns in the international published literature regarding smoke-free spaces policy through a bibliometric analysis of journals, articles and authors from 1990 to 2009.

Methods: Secondary data from a recent systematic literature review were analyzed. Bibliometric techniques included statistical analysis of publication counts and co-citation analysis. Findings were generated through calculations of frequencies of journals, authors, and articles published per year. Analysis was conducted for five policy-relevant domains: public place, schools, private space, workplace, and tobacco industry tactics.

Results: Of the 5656 total articles examined, scientific articles written for the public place and workplace domains far outweighed those for schools, private spaces, and tobacco industry. This bibliometric analysis indicated that publication patterns aligned with patterns of policy activity and increasing sophistication in the evolution of smoke-free spaces policy development. This finding held for analyses by article, journal, and author over all years. The analysis also revealed relatively high numbers of unique authors publishing on smoke-free spaces policy each year.

Conclusions: This study identified patterns regarding the publication of scientific articles, by varying journals and authors, and illustrated sub-field priorities both recently and for the entire 20-year period examined.

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1. Introduction

One of the most compelling successes contributing to the impact of recent comprehensive tobacco control efforts has been the propagation of smoke-free spaces policy as an environmental-level population health intervention. Public health policies such as these contribute to creation of environments that support health for all. Smoke-free spaces policies can be implemented in a range of settings (such as schools and workplaces) and jurisdictional levels (organizational, municipal, provincial/state). Ever-growing policy activity around the world suggests a co-incident increase in the scientific literature providing evidence, whether descriptive or evaluative, in support of the smoke-free spaces approach. A parallel, if not consequential, growth is expected in the breadth of researchers working in the area as well as in publication venues. Here, we report on a bibliometric examination of the evolution of smoke-free spaces policy representation in the scientific literature.

This work constituted a sub-study of a larger systematic review of the scientific and practice-based evidence concerning smoke-free spaces policy development and implementation processes in four settings: homes, schools, workplaces, and public places [1]. For the purposes of this review, the term *policy* was operationalized to include those instruments referred to in the literature as: policy, bylaw, ordinance, regulation, or legislation. This knowledge synthesis review was conducted using the *better practices* approach developed by the Canadian Tobacco Control Research Initiative (CTCRI) in collaboration with individuals and organizations from the Canadian tobacco control community [2]. This approach emphasizes the parallel influences of science and practice in contributing to the world of evidence. The review identified those smoke-free spaces policy elements that were setting-specific, those that translated across settings and gaps that remain unaddressed. Results led to a series of recommendations for research and action, which were then discussed and contextualized by Canadian smoke-free spaces policy experts representing the domains of research, practice and policy. These discussions confirmed the results of the review and suggested that there were distinct patterns in the evolution of the smoke-free spaces policy in both practice and the scientific literature.

The following is based on a sub-study of the systematic review search results in the form of a bibliometric analysis through which we examined patterns in publication through an examination of journal titles, article counts, and authors reporting on smoke-free spaces policy from the years 1990 to 2009. Bibliometric analyses are familiar to the realm of health research and have been described as efficient methods by which to track the progression of a given area of study [3,4]. The purpose of this paper is to contribute to the continued development of this mode of investigation and to a more comprehensive understanding of smoke-free spaces policy as a distinct field of inquiry within the broader scope of tobacco control policy and public health.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Procedure—systematic literature search of scientific evidence

The systematic review for the primary knowledge synthesis project examined three sources of evidence: (1) peer-reviewed scientific literature; (2) unpublished applied (grey) literature, typically generated by practitioners, advocacy coalitions, think tanks, or government bodies; and, (3) knowledge obtained from a series of expert consultations representing policy, practice and research in each of the smoke-free spaces settings. For the purposes of this sub-study, only the scientific literature review of smoke-free spaces policy development in the settings and jurisdictions of interest was used. The literature search began with the generation of a master list of search terms originating from keywords: generated by field experts, research team members, and seminal articles in the area. This initial list was expanded and refined prior to grouping the terms into three central concepts, 'second-hand smoke', 'policy', and 'settings where smoke-free spaces policies might be implemented' from which a search strategy was generated (Table 1).

The scientific literature search employed several research databases. Medline (PubMed), CINAHL, PAIS International, Sociological Abstracts, and Web of Science. Medline (PubMed), CINAHL, and Web of Science were included as databases commonly used for health research, while PAIS and Sociological Abstracts were also searched in an effort to include political science and policy research that may not have otherwise been captured in the health and science databases. The master list of terms was refined to include various terms and keywords specific to each of the various search engines and databases (e.g., controlled vocabulary terms such as Medical Subject Headings) so as to best delimit the search.

Table 1
Scientific literature search strategy and master list of search terms.

Literature search stage	Search terms
1	Tobacco OR tobacco control OR smok* OR second*hand smoke OR environmental tobacco smoke OR ETS OR passive smoke OR involuntary smok* OR clean indoor air
2	1+ Polic* OR rule* OR smoke*free OR enforce* OR legislat* OR ban OR bylaw OR ordinance OR prevent* OR protect* OR regulat* OR restrict*
3a	1+2+ Work*
3b	1+2+ Bars OR restaurants OR bingo OR casinos OR designated smoking room OR DSR OR separately*ventilated smoking rooms OR public OR patios
3c	1+2+ Home OR long*term care OR residen* OR apartment* OR multi*unit dwelling OR car* OR vehicle*
3d	1+2+ School* OR educ* OR campus* OR college* OR universit*

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