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## A Decade of Debate: A Bibliometric Analysis of Minimum Wage Research in Economics (2015–2025)

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### Abstract

This paper provides a full-scale bibliometric analysis of the academic research output on the topic of minimum wage policies in economics from 2015 to 2025. Leveraging a rigorously constructed data sample of 4,195 WoS CC-indexed records, the research delves into the intellectual structure, thematic progression, and authorship patterns in the field. Visual network analysis through VOSviewer and statistical summarization with Microsoft Excel are used to map co-authorship networks, keyword co-occurrence, and citation networks, while identifying emerging trends and knowledge gaps.

The results show a significant surge in scholarly interest in minimum wage studies after 2020, which reflects the economic uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Key themes among these papers are gender wage gaps, informal labor markets, the role of education and family patterns in wage mechanisms, and the links between wage policy, health equity, and social protection.

Methodologically, the most successful work is based on panel data, natural experiments, and decomposition methods. Yet substantial gaps remain in interdisciplinary connections, particularly with respect to the relationship between wage policy, automation, climate change, caregiving, and public health. This review not only presents the current status of minimum wage literature, but also provides strategic directions for theoretical development in the future.

By focusing on underexplored areas and suggesting more comprehensive and interdisciplinary solutions, the research is relevant to larger debates on wage justice, economic justice, and labor policy formation with the aim of contributing to international development objectives.

**Keywords:** minimum wage; wage policy; labor market inequality; income distribution; bibliometric analysis; VOSviewer; wage gap; co-authorship; economic policy; gender disparity.

The minimum wage has become increasingly prominent in the global economic and policy discussions, especially with the growing inequality, labor market dislocation, and the attempt to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic (ILO, 2022; OECD, 2020). As technological change, platform work, and globalization shape the labor market, issues of adequacy of wages, quality of jobs, and redistribution of income have steadily risen in importance (Card & Krueger, 1995; Neumark & Wascher, 2008). To fight poverty, reduce inequality, and prop up the wages of low-skilled workers, governments in rich and poor countries alike have passed or overhauled minimum wage regulations. However, the “on-the-ground” effects of these interventions are still fiercely debated academically.

Minimum-wage advocates claim that it decreases income inequality and improves the standard of living for low-salaried workers without excessive unemployment (Blau & Kahn, 2017; Reich, Jacobs, & Bernhardt, 2014). On the other hand, opponents are concerned that wage floors could lead to disemployment effects, especially among young or low-skilled workers, and that stringent wage floors may reduce job creation or formalization (Neumark & Wascher, 2008). This dichotomy in the literature shows the difficulty in understanding wage-setting mechanisms and the importance of localized empirical analysis. The picture becomes even more complicated when formal sector and gender income inequalities and demographic wage differentials—often overlooked in orthodox economic analysis—are taken into account (World Bank, 2019).

Despite the rich empirical literature, there has been little in the way of metalevel synthesis: in particular, there have been no analyses of how the field as a whole has transformed over time. The current reviews are usually narrative in nature or oriented to a specific policy area, and there is no mapping of broader trends in

authorship, institutional influence, and thematic focus. Bibliometric analysis provides a methodological approach to visualize the architecture of scholarly discourse: who is publishing, what themes are dominant, where collaborations occur, and which research streams have policy influence.

This study contributes toward filling this gap in the literature by providing a decade-long bibliometric snapshot of minimum wage research in economics, based on 4,195 Web of Science records. By citation mapping, keyword clustering, and co-authorship analysis, the article serves as a snapshot of intellectual movement, geographic distribution, and research fiefdoms constructing academic discourse, from 2015 through 2025. The paper points out important lacunae that still remain—such as wage policy and care work, automation, and sustainable development—and advocates a more comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach in wage research.

Bibliometric analyses have been increasingly recognized over the past fifty years as strong techniques in the mapping of the intellectual terrain of academic disciplines. Such analyses enable researchers to search not only the content, but also the dynamics and boundaries, of scholarly fields by mapping citation patterns, co-authorship networks, and thematic clusters (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010; Aguinis, Ramani, & Alabduljader, 2018). In the area of labor economics, bibliometric research has been extensively used for issues ranging from income inequality and gender differences to automation and job volatility (Blau & Kahn, 2017).

Although a few studies provided bibliometric analysis of employment-related subjects, relatively few have concentrated on the minimum wage. Other reviews trace the growth in research on job insecurity, labor polarization, and AI-based changes in employment (Bastian, Heymann, & Jacomy, 2009). These studies illustrate that labor economics is growing more interdisciplinary—combining sociology, political science, and public health—but they treat wage policy as something of an afterthought rather than a central focus.

Empirical research on the effectiveness of the minimum wage is inconclusive. After Card and Krueger's (1995) watershed empirical study, which reported little or no decrease in hiring following minimum wage hikes, the prevailing economic paradigms were suddenly thrown into question. On the other hand, Neumark and Wascher (2008) contend minimum wage increases decrease the employment of low-skill and young workers, particularly in competitive markets. This discussion is complicated when work includes informal labor markets, as well as the gender wage gap—factors that are of special relevance in middle-income countries (ILO, 2022; World Bank, 2019).

While minimum wage laws are of obvious policy interest, little bibliometric scrutiny has been devoted to the development of the field over time. Reich, Jacobs, and Bernhardt (2014) consider local wage ordinances but do not map the larger academic discussion and its intellectual neighborhoods. Current reviews are written as narratives, are country-specific or are single policy-focused. Nor do they provide the macro-level view necessary to explain why race- and gender-related wage considerations are heavily represented in the literature, or where gaps remain, for example in relation to wage policy, caregiving, public health, and climate sensitivity.

This paper fills the gap, providing the first specific bibliometric analysis of minimum wage studies in economics. It breaks down the most cited sources, influential authors, and institutional affiliations in a systematic fashion, and it probes into how the field of inquiry-rooted in discussions of, for example, gender wage gaps, informal work, and quantile wage modeling has evolved over time. In so doing, it adds to the wage policy literature, and to the broader methodological debate about how knowledge in labor economics is produced and received.

### ***Materials and Methods***

This bibliometric analysis was made using data retrieved from the Web of Science Core Collection, which is a multidisciplinary citation index provided by Clarivate Analytics, referred to as a key source for scientometric studies. A Boolean search was structured to locate academic articles dealing with minimum wage and labor market inequality. The search was conducted on the fields of title, abstract, and author keywords on the database and had a semantic structure which considered terms for minimum wages legislation and economic inequality.

The last search was a combination of two thematic blocks—minimum wage language and terms related to inequality—and the documents published between 2015 and 2025 were selected. The search was limited to English-language literature in the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI) and various principal databases. A total of 4,195 records were retrieved.

The dataset was screened and filtered at different steps to guarantee the relevance and analytical soundness. Titles and abstracts were reviewed for thematic relevance in order to exclude records that referred to minimum wage only tangentially or in a non-economic context. Duplicates were detected and discarded, and metadata discrepancies (author name, author affiliation, journal title, etc.) were corrected manually. The final dataset retained Web of Science document-type information, including journal articles, review articles, book chapters, editorial material, book reviews, early access records, books, letters, notes, news items, and other indexed document types.

The generated dataset was exported in various formats amenable to both statistical and visual investigation. Bibliographical data, including publication year, country of origin, document type, institutional address, and citation counting, were managed and summarized with Microsoft Excel.

**Network analysis:** For network analysis, a Research Information File (.RIS) was extracted from Web of Science and then imported to VOSviewer ([www.vosviewer.com](http://www.vosviewer.com)), a bibliometric visualization tool that allows the construction of co-authorship, co-occurrence, and citation networks. A thesaurus file—also called a custom dictionary—created for VOSviewer (to harmonize synonyms or semantically equivalent words) was used. For instance, discrepancies like “minimum wage”, “legal wage”, as well as “statutory wage”, were brought together under inclusive labels.

The keyword co-occurrence analysis was conducted based on full counting with a threshold of at least five keyword occurrences in order to identify dominant thematic clusters in the papers. The co-authorship analysis was utilized for assessing the structure of collaboration at the individual and organizational levels, and the intensity of connection among researchers and research centers. Additionally, the citation analysis showed which were the most cited journals and publications. The software’s modularity-based clustering algorithm was used to produce a thematic grouping based on term similarity, which was manually interpreted and coded around core themes such as income inequality, gender wage gaps, informal labor, and wage dynamics associated with education. Further descriptive analyses by author country, source journal category and Web of Science category were also carried out.

The integrated method of statistical and network analysis successfully provided a full picture of the intellectual structure in the field and the process of its evolution. We recognize the limitations of bibliometric analyses. Although such approaches do offer a strong macro perspective on research landscapes, they do not consider the quality of argument or theory, nor the adequacy of empirical support, in particular specific research reports. Also, focusing solely on English and ISI indexed documents could exclude studies published in non-English-speaking countries and low and middle-income economies, in particular those where wage policy is a key socioeconomic problem, and there are issues surrounding the visibility of research.

### **Results**

This section provides a detailed analysis of the dataset, which contains 4,195 academic records published between 2015 and 2025 that address minimum wage developments. The analysis thoroughly examines changes in publication output of the dataset, the various types of documents, the productivity of authors, the affiliations of the institutions they work for, the themes of their research, and the ways they cite and are cited by others. A combination of Excel-based statistics and VOSviewer brings minimum wage scholarship to life in economics and related fields.

By and large, the data shows a consistent upward trend in academic output over the decade, with a discernible spike following the COVID-19 pandemic (Fig. 1). The dataset is dominated by peer-reviewed journal articles, while book chapters, reviews, and other document types are represented to a lesser extent, thus marking a high level of academic scrutiny and publication consistency. The top literature is authored by people in high-income countries, top institutions are concentrated in high-income countries, and high-income countries dominate the top types of institutions. In sum, authors, institutions, and countries with the utmost significance in setting the agenda for this kind of research here tend—by both force of numbers and power—to be located within high-income economies, especially the USA, UK, and Australia. Looking at thematic and citation analysis, a cross-sectional field emerges. Co-occurrence and keyword density mapping identify centers of strength around gender inequality, informal labor markets, education, and post-pandemic economic recovery. Co-authorship networks and citations also reveal a growing, yet still somewhat disjointed, international cooperation structure. The findings as a whole show how minimum wage research has grown into multiple facets of academic inquiry. It links national macroeconomic policies and international development chances with social, gender, and other fields that are based on welfare.

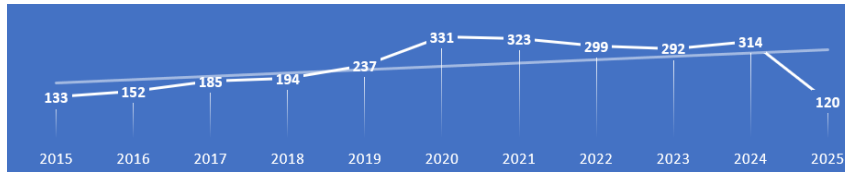


Figure 1. Annual Number of Publications on Minimum Wage Research in Economics (2015–2025)

The pie chart below reveals that within the field of minimum wage research during 2015 to 2025, journal articles constitute 87 % of the dataset (Fig. 2). Among the 4,195 records, 3,661 are articles from academic journals. Such a high rate of articles clearly indicates that the field is strongly based on scholarly standards and empirical methods. The preponderance of articles also guarantees methodological comparability and makes it suitable for bibliometric techniques such as co-citation and co-authorship network analysis. Greater numbers of review articles, while still relatively few, indicate an incipient attempt to fuse existing literature in wage studies. Entries for book chapters (120) and for book reviews (82) are present in more modest amounts. Book chapters often result from contributions to edited volumes on such subjects as wage policy and welfare economics, or work regulation. While they do not dominate the field, they play interactive roles widening interdisciplinary debates by linking wage themes with broader social frameworks in areas like public policy, sociology, and development studies. Review articles are a reflection of efforts to summarize conceptual advances and to draw policy conclusions for the various subfields of wages.

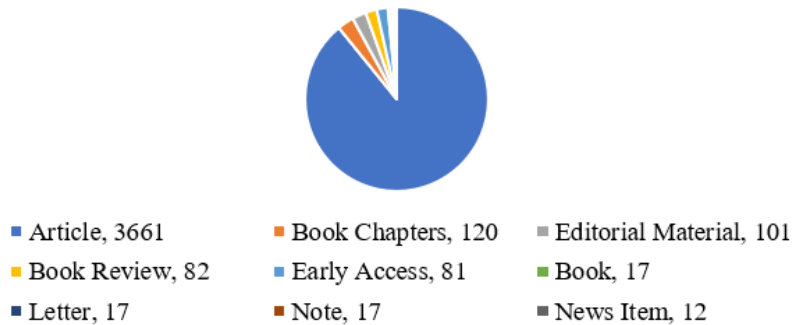


Figure 2. Distribution of Document Types in Minimum Wage Research (2015–2025)

Other document types, such as conference papers, commentaries, and corrections, show up very irregularly in the database. Their weak representation is indicative of the field’s maturity and strong preference evinced for peer-reviewed, formal channels of publication. A relative shortage of research articles recently released online (or formally withdrawn) indicates that minimum wage research is a settled, regulated academic discipline within which quality is of significant concern. On the whole, the distribution of each type of document is further evidence for the data set’s methodological reliability. It also confirms that on the subject of minimum wages, dialogue among scholars is still held primarily in formal publications rather than being spread lightly through ephemeral and grey literature sources.

The top contributing authors based on the number of publications are presented in Figure 3. David Neumark is the most prolific author in the dataset, with 34 publications. Neumark’s research has consistently impacted the direction of empirical debate on wage floors, employment elasticity, and labor market segmentation.

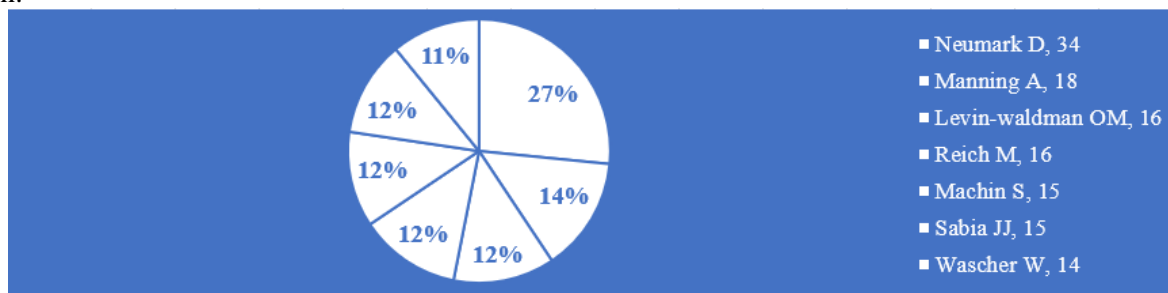


Figure 3. Most Prolific Authors in Minimum Wage Literature (2015–2025)

Neumark’s position in the author productivity ranking indicates his central role in empirical research on minimum wage policy. Alan Manning (18 publications), M. Reich (16), and O.M. Levin-Waldman (16) are three key voices in policy-oriented wage discussions. Their academic contributions frequently take on the precepts of the minimum wage from both the perspective of econometrics and that focusing on the welfare state.

The skew in author productivity shows a dominant center of intellectual energy. A tiny number of researchers contribute a disproportionately large share of papers, indicating the presence of thought leaders whose findings and theoretical contributions have deeply influenced subsequent work. These authors are closely associated with leading institutions in the United States and United Kingdom, and their articles appear in prestigious publications such as the *American Economic Review* and *Journal of Labor Economics*. They also continue to collaborate frequently later on, as we can see from VOSviewer network graphs.

Significantly, the second highest-ranked “Anonymous” category is made up of 20 records. This may well be representational authorship, such as joint agency reports, or just fields where the original data did not record the proper author name. Although it is not analytically useful in the traditional sense of authorship, the fact that it occurred so frequently indicates a form of non-individualized academic production often associated with policy bodies or publicly funded research centers. Its presence as an alternative to scholarships authored by individuals shows that the field has a dual structure—mixing traditional scholarly achievement with institutional knowledge generation.

By dint of broad academic backgrounds, the publication patterns in this dataset make it clear how many different environments for minimum wage research there are (Fig. 4). Though the field is grounded in economics, the top Web of Science categories show that substantial contributions have come from Public, Environmental, and Occupational Health (354 records), Political Science (198), Sociology (183), as well as Business (136). This shows that minimum wage is increasingly regarded not only as an economic mechanism that performs vital tasks but also as a policy instrument with wide-sweeping social, political, and public health implications.

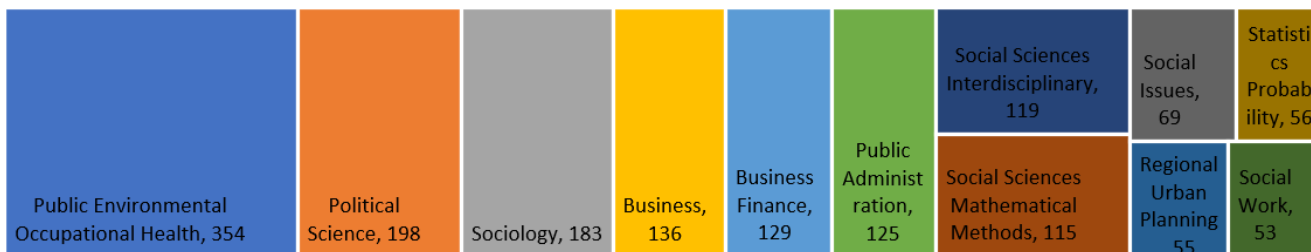


Figure 4. Top Web of Science Subject Categories in Minimum Wage Research

The prominence of these categories suggests a growing interdisciplinary engagement with wage policy. For example, studies classified under public health frequently bring up questions of the relationship between low-wage workers’ health, such as access to treatment, food security, or illness due to stress. The presence of political science and sociology, meanwhile, means concentration on the institutional framework, law, industrial relations, and income distribution. Another perspective on labor reality comes into play here, as does potential for more widespread labor unrest.

The diverse array of categories in the dataset demonstrates how scholarly discourse on minimum wage has expanded at least beyond narrow technical wage-setting models to comprehensive explorations of justice as well as well-being and humanitarianism.

Figure 5 provides a mid-range thematic overview by clustering cited publications into meso-level research topics based on shared citation behavior. The leading cluster is Healthcare Policy with 122 records, followed by Autism & Developmental Disorders (38) and Palliative Care (33). At first glance, these categories may appear peripheral to wage-focused economics. However, their prominence reflects the interdisciplinary convergence between wage policy and public health outcomes—particularly for workers in caregiving roles, informal labor sectors, and under-resourced communities. The presence of these topics suggests that minimum wage research is often situated within broader social protection frameworks that deal with health equity, long-term care, and service labor markets.

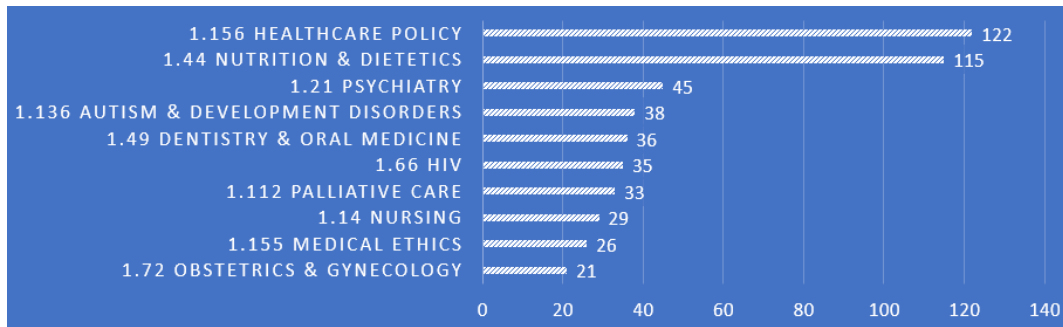


Figure 5. Most Frequent Meso-Level Citation Topics

Figure 6 presents the micro-level citation clusters, which represent more narrowly defined sub-areas or clusters of articles within the general literature on the minimum wage. The most common themes are Health Inequities (50 documents), Vulnerable Health Systems (35), Disabilities (31), and Maternal Health Equity (24).

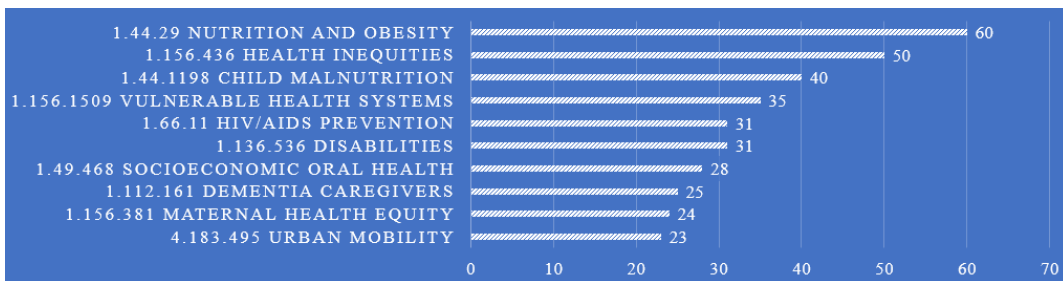


Figure 6. Micro-Level Citation Topics in Wage-Related Research

These themes illustrate that so much of the literature examines minimum wage not as an economic variable, but also as a factor in the health and well-being of low-income populations. Notably, disability- and maternal-health-related topics feature the intersections of income from labor, caregiving demands, and access to essential services. Where micro-level analysis breaks new ground is at the level of granularity—it unearths the niche clusters of research that hone in on the lived consequences of wage structures for marginalized groups. This includes studies examining wage constraints among voluntary informal care workers, intra-household dynamics in low-income settings and spillover effects of stagnating wages on health systems.

The emphasis on disparities and delivery of care indicates the emergence of a scholarship literature that questions the reductive economic portrayal of wage discourse, linking it to issues of care as framed by considerations of social inclusion, access, and structural vulnerability. The results indicate potential for future studies to more directly engage the labor-health nexus, particularly in comparisons across income gradients and policy contexts.

Figure 7 maps the sample to specific United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), demonstrating a strong relationship between wage policy research and global development targets. The SDG classification is based on Web of Science metadata. The strongest linkage is to SDG 1 (No Poverty) with 1,753 papers. This serves to corroborate that, at least in policy and academic exchange, minimum wage is widely perceived as a poverty instrument. SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being, 988 records) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality, 324 records) are also common, reflecting high interest on the part of the field on issues of health equity and gender pay inequities.

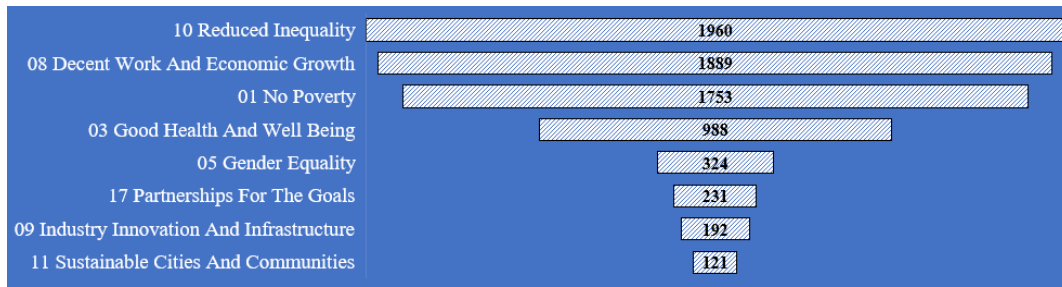


Figure 7. Alignment of Minimum Wage Research with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Concentration on these goals demonstrates that minimum wage is multidimensional beyond labor economics. Less frequent associations with SDGs such as Quality Education or Decent Work and Economic Growth may indicate avoidance of pain points or literature gaps. The patterns also capture where researchers observe policy levers—such as income security, social health outcomes, discrimination based on gender—and suggest new opportunities for broadening the base from which wage policy studies can claim to be linked to the SDGs.

Figure 8 presents the distribution of publications across Web of Science indexes, showing where minimum wage research has appeared within the Web of Science database. The majority of publications are indexed in the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), followed by the Science Citation Index Expanded (SCI-EXPANDED), the Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI), and other indexes, including the Book Citation Index–Social Sciences & Humanities. This distribution reflects that MW research is quite widely disseminated across both higher and lower-ranked academic outlets.



Figure 8. Web of Science Index Coverage of Publications

The distribution of articles across different index types shows that the field has become increasingly interdisciplinary. Coverage in ESCI and SSCI guarantees visibility in standardized economic and social science journals, whereas contributions to book and humanities indexes signal wider policy significance and narrative framing. Taken together, evidence supports the fact that minimum wage research is known to a variety of academic outlets and helps to confirm its status as a cross-cutting topic across economics, policy, and development studies.

Figure 9 lists the leading institutional affiliations that contributed to the literature on the minimum wage between 2015 and 2025. The top affiliations are IZA Institute of Labor Economics with 112 records, followed by the National Bureau of Economic Research with 84 records, Universidade de São Paulo with 73 records, and the London School of Economics and Political Science with 69 records. Other productive institutions include the Leibniz Association, Cornell University, the University of California Berkeley, Harvard University, the Federal Reserve System USA, and Fundação Oswaldo Cruz. Analysis shows that a small group of academic and policy institutions produce a significant share of scholarly work in this field.

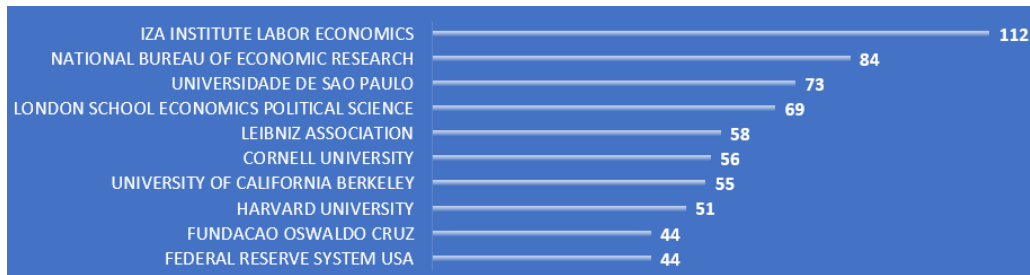


Figure 9. Most Productive Institutional Affiliations in Minimum Wage Research

Although the largest share has been maintained in elite American universities, the presence of non-Western centers such as Fundação Oswaldo Cruz (Brazil) indicates a progressive diversification of research places. Yet the broad picture is one of geographic clustering of academic production in high-income countries, especially in Anglo-American academic circuits. This asymmetry draws attention to aspects of the debate over the design of labor market institutions: on the visibility of and participation in this debate of actors from low- and middle-income countries, where, in contrast to high-income countries, wage policy is equally, if not more, important to labor market reform.

Figure 10 shows the top publication outlets of the minimum wage studies in our sample. The leading outlets include *Cadernos de Saúde Pública* with 42 publications, *British Journal of Industrial Relations* with 41 publications, *ILR Review* with 40 publications, *Industrial Labor Relations Review* with 39 publications, *Ciência & Saúde Coletiva* with 33 publications, *Economics Letters* with 32 publications, and *Applied Economics* with 29 publications. These sources include both mainstream economic journals and interdisciplinary journals that connect economic analysis with public health and policy studies.



Figure 10. Leading Journals Publishing Minimum Wage Research

The distribution of the journals simply mirrors the fact that it has begun to transcend its focus on the kind of economic modeling that was the norm with traditional economics. The appearance of public health journals may reflect an increasing focus on the social determinants of labor market outcomes, and the inclusion of applied economic journals may imply ongoing interest in empirical wage policy evaluation. This mix underscores the field's Janus-faced nature: it is rooted in quantitative analysis, yet increasingly sensitive to issues of equity, access and well-being.

Figure 11 details the distribution of output at the country level, and in this way, identifies the national contexts that dominate authorship in minimum wage research. Australia takes the top spot with 185 publications, followed by the US, UK, and Germany. The high-income countries are shown to be central contributors to the global scholarly debate on wage policy, which results from their research capabilities as well as their historical institutional orientation towards labor economics.

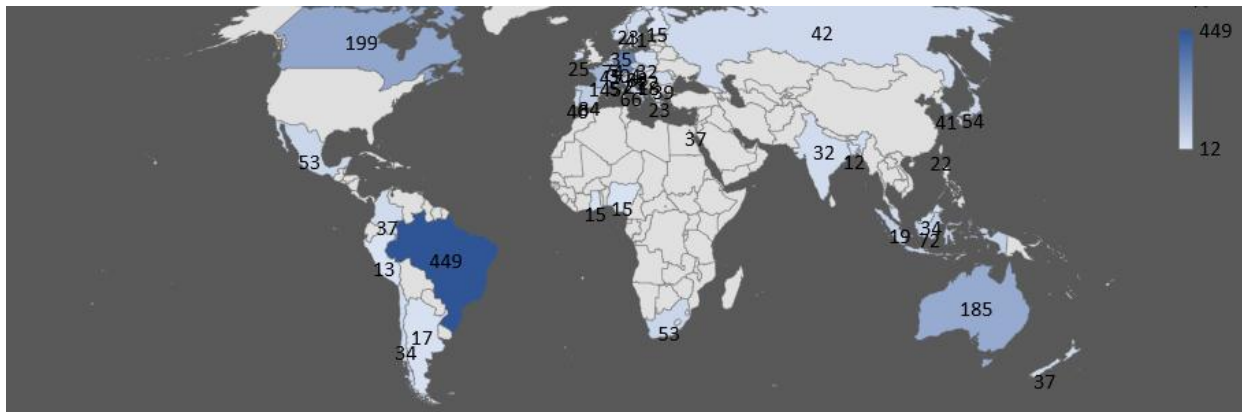


Figure 11. Geographic Distribution of Minimum Wage Research by Country

Low- and middle-income countries, however, continue to be poorly represented. There were fewer than 15 publications from countries like Bangladesh, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan. If nothing else, this geographical imbalance serves as a reminder that although minimum wage is a global problem, academic authorship remains focused in the Global North. That the studies from the Global South are underrepresented speaks to an enduring absence in context-specific, locally-driven studies of wage policy and to the need for greater scholarly inclusion from the regions where wage regulation is most pressing.

Based on VOSviewer keyword co-occurrence analysis, twelve clusters of thematically related terms were identified. The clusters identify the semantic landscape of minimum wage literature over the past decade, indicating the major research themes and the degree of topical fragmentation (Fig. 12):

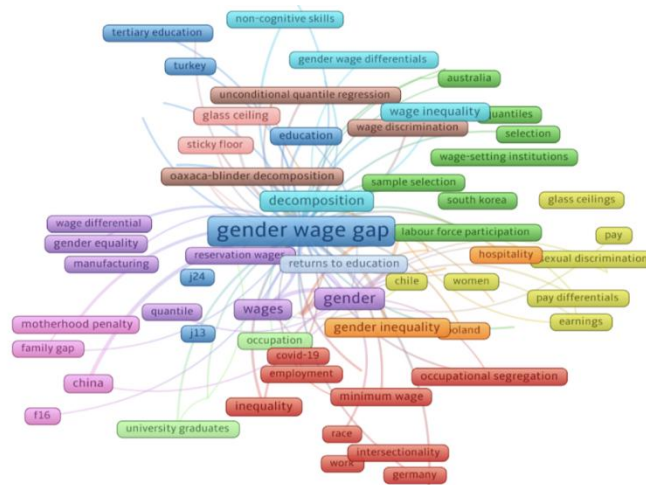


Figure 12. Thematic Clusters Map in Minimum Wage Research

1. Cluster 1 (Red): Labor Inequality and Diversity in Crisis. This is the largest and most central cluster, with high-frequency terms including “covid-19”, “employment”, “diversity”, “inequality”, “minimum wage” and “race”. It is an informed scholarship that connects pandemic-historical labor turmoil to inequality, frequently cast in terms of intersectionality, the occupational segregation of work, and racialized wage structures. The presence of country-specific terms such as Germany suggests that some of these studies are empirically based on European labor markets.

2. Cluster 2 (Green): Labor Participation, Cohorts, and Demographic Shifts. This cluster contains the words birth cohorts, labor force participation, quantiles, hazard function. These keywords indicate that these studies employ econometric models to follow life-cycle and age cohort dynamics in the labor market. Countries such as Australia and South Korea are also well-represented, indicating their comparative research on OECD labor markets.

3. Cluster 3 (Blue): Gender Gaps and the Role of Education and Human Capital. The third block features words such as education, gender pay gap, female LFP, tertiary education, and home production. These



The blue clusters in the bottom-left quadrant are fundamental works on labor economics and the elasticity of the wage—many of the works were written by economists like Neumark, Card, Manning, among others. These early papers are the empirical and theoretical foundation of a large part of the field. Their tight connections and high centrality suggest that they are still frequently referred to and function as anchors of knowledge.

By contrast, the yellowish nodes indicate more recent publications in foregrounded areas of research, such as digital labor platforms, post-pandemic labor inequality, gender wage gaps, and informal work. These more recent clusters may lie on the edge of the map, indicating they are underrepresented and that they have not yet become a central area of the field. The emergent structure of isolation with rising lines also documents a transition in the focus of scholarly activity—from conventional econometric analysis to more socially embedded and policy-oriented themes.

The overlay visualization provides a vivid description of the temporal dynamics of scholarly communication, indicating the changes from structural labor theory to intersectional and global policy concerns in the field (Fig. 14). The visual transition from blue to yellow is more than chronological; it also mirrors the field's response to real-world economic shocks and changing public debates around income inequality and labor protections.

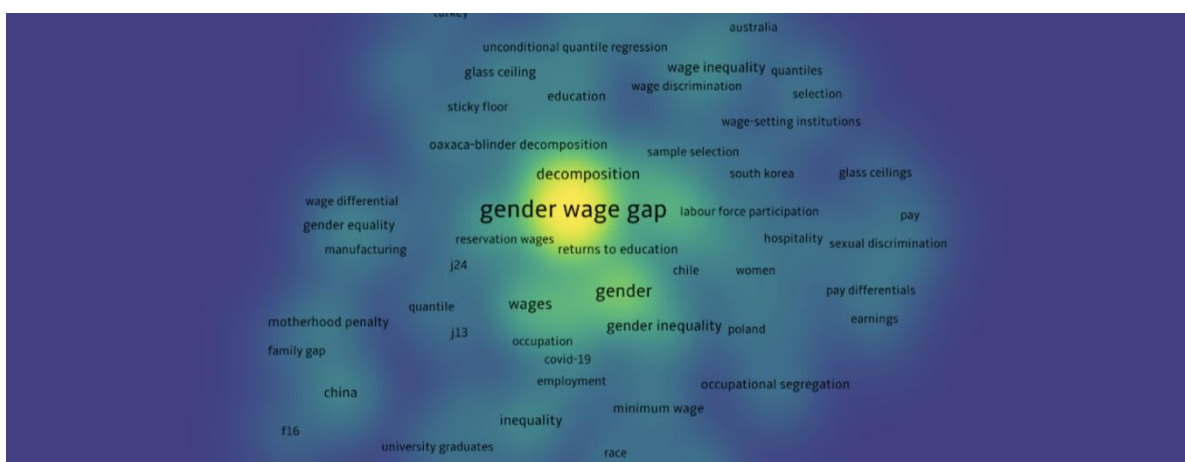


Figure 14. Citation Overlay Visualization of Minimum Wage Research

### Discussion

The results of this bibliometric assessment indicate a substantial increase in the size, thematic range, and interdisciplinary appeal of research related to the minimum wage over the last ten years. This increase in the number of publications after 2020 also occurs while the world witnesses heightened labor market instability and policy adjustment in hopes of managing the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. This rise reflects a notable rise in academic attention to wage regulation as a strategy of economic recovery, social protection, and distributive justice. Assessment of document type and sources validates the level of scientific maturity of the discipline. The preponderance of peer-reviewed journal articles and print publication in reputable economics and policy journals indicate a sound theoretical and empirical base and high methodological rigor. But that so little comes from books or edited volumes could suggest a lack of involvement with deeper theoretical synthesis or long-form interdisciplinary research. The co-authorship network points to a strong, dense, and rather closed scientific community. There exists a small group of highly prolific authors, mainly from the U.S. and U.K., with relatively high in-degree centrality. They have a wide reach among their nations and institutions, but rarely among the Global South or emerging economies. This geographical imbalance is reflected in the relatively low representation of countries such as Bangladesh, Mexico, and Vietnam. The geographical asymmetry implies that, while income inequality is a worldwide issue, academic authorship and visibility are still unbalanced towards high-income areas. Thematic mapping using the keyword co-occurrence method indicates that research on the minimum wage has evolved into multifaceted strands. Clusters represent established topics in the literature, including gender wage gaps, labor force participation, and quantile wage modeling, as well as emerging issues such as informal labor, motherhood penalties, and digital employment. Although this is evidence of the richness of the field as a conceptual whole, it also shows themes forming clusters and fragmentation. Most clusters are strongly connected and exhibit little interconnectedness, suggesting disciplinary silos that may have inherent limitations when it comes to thematic inte-

gration or comparative policy analysis. The citation overlay visualization illustrates this thematic shift. The classic literature of labor economics retains a prominent space in the field, but new work is increasingly in the policy contexts, in structural inequality, or in previously understudied demographic groups. This transformation mirrors the increasing correlation between minimum wage studies and SDGs, especially with SDG 1 (End of Poverty) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality). However, the uneven representation of some SDGs, such as Decent Work, Quality Education, and Reduced Inequalities, indicates that future research could incorporate wage policy into more comprehensive development frameworks. Despite the methodological sophistication of the field reflected in the extensive use of decomposition procedures, hazard models, and cross-national comparisons, there are clear shortcomings. Most notably, few qualitative or mixed-method studies are present that could provide a context for wage policy effects. Moreover, the emphasis on formal sector employment in high-income countries restricts how far many findings can be generalized to informal or precarious labor markets where wage regulation is most needed.

Over the past decade, the minimum wage has been recast from a narrowly economic tool to a more expansive symbol of justice, dignity, and survival, in the United States and around the world. As the bibliometric analysis demonstrates, research in the field has increased in volume and complexity—yet it is replete with silences, blind spots, and missed connections. The recommendations that follow do not just come from citation patterns and network graphs, but from the stories embedded in these—of workers, of institutions, and of systems in flux.

1. Bring the margins to the center: rise up south voices. The world talks too much about poverty and hears too little of it. Research on minimum wage remains overly concentrated in the Global North and in the world's most unaffordable places to live. It is imperative to prioritize the research conducted by scholars from Latin America, and from South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and beyond, not just as subjects but as the makers of knowledge. The voices that people hear when it comes to wages must also change in these policy forums and funding streams so they are shaping rather than just informing the global wage debate.

2. Broaden the frame: link wages to health, gender, and care. Wages do not rise and fall on their own—they reverberate through bodies, households, and futures. The prominence of keywords such as health inequities, disability, and motherhood penalty is indicative of the fact that wage policies intersect closely with considerations of wellbeing and gender justice. Policymakers should expand their analysis beyond the cost of living and view minimum wages as a mechanism for redistributing unpaid care work, protecting workers who are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, and promoting long-term health. A living wage is not a luxury; it is policy with moral clarity.

3. Cross the aisles: invest in and incentivize interdisciplinary research. The thematic clusters unveil a field which is rich but also divided. Economists, sociologists, and public health researchers frequently pose similar questions without speaking the same language. Research-funding institutions must incentivize these interdisciplinary bridges, where, for example, econometrics meets ethnography, where labor models are enriched by lived experience. The wage question is too complicated to be resolved inside disciplinary walls—it needs collaborative insight that is as complex and wide-ranging as the world itself.

4. Design wage systems that learn and adapt to future changes. The map of reference overlays mirrors a displacement: toward not only past wage trends, but toward an area of automation, platform economies, and effects of climate on changing labor conditions. Wage policy should become an adaptive system driven by real-time information, responsive to crisis, and able to self-correct. Governments and institutions also need to establish digital infrastructure and longitudinal datasets, which enable wage policies to evolve alongside the economies that they serve.

5. Co-produce change: research as a common ground. The low level of co-authorship across the borders of countries and types of institution is indeed more than a technical detail—it is indicative of a lost collaboration. It's wage research that needs to become a common ground: between policy and academia, between think tanks and trade unions, between North and South. Long-term partnerships must be cultivated that nurture ideas, translate evidence, and resonate in the places that matter—people's lives.

### *Conclusion*

This article is a bibliometric journey through a decade of scholarly interaction with minimum wage research, revealing not just the quantity of academic response but the direction, themes, and silences of that response. The results reveal a growing body of publications, especially as of 2020—combined with the development of substantive thematic clusters in terms of gender inequality, informal labor, education, health, as well as demographic wage gaps in general. Keyword co-occurrence and citation overlay showed a field that

had expanded conceptually and geographically but remained rooted in a central group of economic models and authors. The field remains fragmented, despite its growth. Authorship networks reveal a narrow footprint of cooperation that primarily exists in the Global North. The thematic clusters are diverse but often locked inside silos-deep but unconnected knowledge. The findings also indicate limited participation from the Global South and limited attention to informal work. Citation patterns suggest the field is increasingly moving toward more recent concerns, such as platform work and post-pandemic labor recovery, but a large proportion of scholarship remains situated in theoretical frameworks that pre-date the pandemic. What we have, after all, is a field in motion-growing, diversifying, and starting to cut across disciplines, but still haunted by old divisions: between North and South, theory and practice, economics and society. This reading demands more than just additional research, however; it demands more mindful research, research that hears across borders, works across sectors, and analyzes minimum wage not just as an economic quantity, but also as a lever for equity, resilience, and justice.

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### Онжылдық пікірталас: Экономикадағы ең төменгі жалақыны зерттеудің библиометриялық талдауы (2015–2025)

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### Аңдатпа

Мақалада 2015 жылдан 2025 жылға дейінгі экономикадағы ең төменгі жалақы саясаты тақырыбындағы академиялық зерттеу нәтижелерінің толық көлемді библиометриялық талдауы берілген. WoS CC жүйесінде индекстелген, яғни рецензияланған 4195 мақаланың мұқият таңдалған

үлгісін пайдалана отырып, зерттеу интеллектуалдық құрылымды, тақырыптық үйлесімділікті және саладағы авторлық үлгілерді зерттейді. VOSviewer арқылы визуалды желілік талдау және Microsoft Excel көмегімен статистикалық қорытындылар бірлескен авторлық желілерді, кілт сөздердің бірлескен пайда болуын және дәйексөздік желілерді құру үшін пайдаланылады, бұл қазіргі білімдегі жаңа үрдістер мен кейбір олқылықтарды анықтайды.

Нәтижелер 2020 жылдан кейін ең төменгі жалақыны зерттеуге ғылыми қызығушылықтың айтарлықтай артқанын көрсетеді, бұл COVID-19 пандемиясынан туындаған экономикалық белгісіздікті көрсетеді. Бұл мақалалардың негізгі тақырыптары — жынысқа негізделген жалақы айырмашылықтары, бейресми еңбек нарықтары, жалақы механизмдеріндегі білім беру мен отбасылық үлгілердің орны, сондай-ақ жалақы саясаты, денсаулық сақтау теңдігі және әлеуметтік қорғау арасындағы байланыстар.

Әдістемелік тұрғыдан алғанда, ең сәтті жұмыс жинақтамалық деректерге, табиғи эксперименттерге және ыдырау әдістеріне негізделген. Дегенмен, пәнаралық байланыста, әсіресе жалақы төлеу саясаты, автоматтандыру, климаттың өзгеруі, ауруларға күтім жасау және қоғамдық денсаулық сақтау арасындағы байланысқа қатысты үлкен олқылықтар сақталуда. Бұл шолу қазіргі әдебиеттегі ең төменгі жалақы туралы ғана емес, сонымен қатар болашақта теориялық дамудың стратегиялық бағыттарын ұсынады.

Аз зерттелген кеңістіктерге назар аударып, жан-жақты және пәнаралық шешімдерді ұсыну арқылы зерттеу халықаралық даму мақсаттарына жету үмітімен жалақы әділдігі, экономикалық әділеттілік және еңбек саясатын қалыптастыру бойынша кең ауқымды пікірталастарға қатысты.

**Кілт сөздер:** ең төменгі жалақы; жалақы саясаты; еңбек нарығындағы теңсіздік; табыстың бөлінуі; библиометриялық талдау; VOSviewer; жалақы алшақтығы; бірлескен авторлық; экономикалық саясат; гендерлік теңсіздік.

### Десятилетие дискуссий: библиометрический анализ исследований минимальной заработной платы в экономике (2015–2025 гг.)

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#### Аннотация

В данной статье представлен полномасштабный библиометрический анализ академических исследований по теме политики минимальной заработной платы в экономике за период с 2015 по 2025 год. Используя тщательно сформированную выборку из 4195 рецензируемых статей, индексируемых в WoS CC, исследование углубляется в интеллектуальную структуру, тематическую последовательность и модели авторства в этой области. Для построения сетей соавторства, совместной встречаемости ключевых слов и сетей цитирования используются визуальный сетевой анализ с помощью VOSviewer и статистическое обобщение с помощью Microsoft Excel, что позволяет выявить новые тенденции и некоторые пробелы в современных знаниях.

Результаты показывают значительный всплеск научного интереса к исследованиям минимальной заработной платы после 2020 года, что отражает экономическую неопределенность, вызванную пандемией COVID-19. Ключевые темы этих работ включают гендерные различия в заработной плате, неформальные рынки труда, роль образования и семейных моделей в механизмах оплаты труда, а также связи между политикой заработной платы, равенством в здравоохранении и социальной защитой.

С методологической точки зрения, наиболее успешные работы основаны на панельных данных, естественных экспериментах и методах декомпозиции. Однако остаются огромные пробелы в междисциплинарных связях, особенно в отношении взаимосвязи между политикой оплаты труда, автоматизацией, изменением климата, уходом за больными и общественным здравоохранением. Этот обзор

не только представляет текущее состояние литературы по минимальной заработной плате, но и указывает стратегические направления для теоретического развития в будущем.

Сосредоточившись на менее изученных областях и предлагая более комплексные и междисциплинарные решения, исследование становится актуальным для более широких дискуссий о справедливости оплаты труда, экономической справедливости и формировании трудовой политики в надежде на достижение целей международного развития.

**Ключевые слова:** минимальная заработная плата, политика оплаты труда, неравенство на рынке труда, распределение доходов, библиометрический анализ, VOSviewer, разрыв в оплате труда, соавторство, экономическая политика, гендерное неравенство.

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#### *Conflict of Interest*

The authors declare no conflict of interest.