

## **A bibliometric analysis of research trends towards the objectives, opportunities and challenges for a Sustainable Blue Economy**

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This paper assesses the contribution of local conference/symposia publications towards achieving a sustainable blue economy in Sri Lanka. The principles, opportunities and challenges of “Blue Economy” were recognized by reviewing current publications (from 2015-2017) such as policy briefs, reports and articles (n=25). Abstracts published in conferences/symposia proceedings by three main national institutes with the themes related to blue economy/economic development/blue-green economy (n=289, published from 2015-2017) were evaluated. The keywords or objectives of each article were matched with the identified objectives, opportunities and challenges of blue economy. The terms of “poverty alleviation”, “food security”, “sustainable livelihoods” and “environmental conservation” were the core objectives of blue economy, while “governance”, “science based” and “holistic” approaches further complimenting the concept. Focused research areas were identified as categories of commercial fisheries (10%), aquaculture (7%), marine and freshwater ecology (13%), ports and shipping (1%), safety (3%), toxicology (2), anthropogenic impacts (2%), innovation (5%), livelihoods (5%), conservation (2%), ocean prediction and monitoring (5%), mineral resources (0.02%) and other (2%). According to those results, it is evident that researches were mostly interested on topics related to marine and freshwater ecological research, followed by topics on commercial fisheries and aquaculture. Most blue economic researches tend to address the trending opportunities such as commercial fisheries and aquaculture with little emphasis on other opportunities such as shipping, marine tourism, mineral, oil and gas exploration. Plenty of researches have been done in terms of understanding the ecology while little work has been done in order to understand the anthropogenic impacts and conservation measures. The concept of blue economy has to be identified in a broad way through research rather than confining in to few common areas of interests. The holistic anticipations of blue economy have to be interpreted through research and shall be brought in to policy level in order to achieve the expected long-term sustainable development.

Keywords: Blue Economy, research trends, bibliometric study

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