INPLASY PROTOCOL

Corresponding author:
Ana Paula Caetano

paula.caetano.12@gmail.com

Author Affiliation:
Observatory of Citizenship and Social Intervention of Faculty of Psychology and Educational Science of University of Coimbra.

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Welfare Deservingness in the perspective of public opinion and street-level bureaucrats: a scoping review protocol

Caetano, AP[1]; Mónico, L[2]; Santos, C[3].

Review question / Objective: This scoping review aims to systematize the scientific knowledge about the relationship between public opinion concerning the street-level bureaucrats' actions and their perceptions about Welfare Deservingness and social protection measures implemented within the framework of the current Welfare State. In a more concrete way, we intend to demonstrate the following assumptions: (a) if there is a connection between the perception of Welfare Deservingness and the public support given to social policies; (b) if there are more valued dimensions of Welfare Deservingness in public opinion; and (c) if the street-level bureaucrats' perceptions of Welfare Deservingness will have an impact on the implementation of public policies.

INTRODUCTION

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Background: The increase of the public debate about financial sustainability and about Welfare States' confidence reveals that universality as a founding principle of social protection systems (Beveridge model) is failing. This means that general values of formal solidarity which underpinned democratic societies are in crisis.

Regarding the legitimacy of the Welfare State, there are signs of a potential shift from governance based on expertise, multilateralism, and consensual policymaking towards majoritarianism, unilateralism, nationalism, populism, and polarization (EU Commission, 2019, p. 31).

The Welfare States request scientific investment, as new paradigms of social intervention on current economic, political, and social challenges. Aspects of the new social order are complex and volatile. Increasing inequalities, intolerance, conflicts, and xenophobia are documented in international and European reports.

The study of Welfare Deservingness related to State provision and to social protection isn't a new topic. However, until the end of the 20th century, the main discussion focused on its redistributive format and on privatization, and new forms of liberalism. With the increase in inequalities, the vulnerability of the middle class and the COVID-19 pandemic, concepts such as Welfare Chauvinism grow rapidly (Abts et al., 2020).

The Welfare Deservingness theory doesn't defend deservingness as a criterion for accessing the social right and the social guarantee such as Social Protection. On the opposite, it makes public choices transparent in order to reflect on them and understand their contours and causes. Welfare Deservingness helps to understand the character and intensity of solidarity in various groups in society, i.e., it contributes to a critical analysis not only of which principles and norms people perceive as important when they think about a fair distribution of opportunities, but also, how to apply formal solidarity (Appelbaum, 2001; van Oorschot, 2000). The Welfare Deservingness theory also argues that individuals tend to agree with social solidarity measures in favor of those who, according to their perception, are more deserving in detriment of other categories, and may eventually assume positions of indignation or rejection in the face of the less deserving (Larsen, 2008; van Oorschot, 2000). Such attitudes foster beliefs and social positions that purport to identify differentiated groups. The differentiation determines which social support each distinct group deserves to receive, and which group is undeserving of social support. The informal assumption, not formally assumed by both frontline technicians and governance strategies contribute to a polarized status between marginalized citizens and others one (Kallio & Kouvo, 2015).

Rationale: Welfare Deservingness integrates a dual logic of regulation and adjustment which provides a conscious and critical position for policymakers and professionals who as frontline technicians implement social measures and represent public social protection systems. This concept is crucial for explaining the social support of public opinion to social policies and contribute to the improvement of the modern Welfare State theories (Kallio & Kouvo, 2015; Larsen, 2008).

Welfare Deservingness criteria were systematized by van Oorschot (2000) into five dimensions: (1) control: the less control in the need, the greater the degree of deservingness; (2) attitude: the more grateful, docile, and submissive, the greater the degree of deservingness; (3) reciprocity: the greater the prior or subsequent possibility of the citizen having to contribute to the system again, the greater the degree of deservingness; (4) identity: the greater the size of the group to which a given need belongs, the greater the degree of deservingness; and (5) need:

the greater the level of need, the greater the degree of deservingness.

The Welfare Deservingness criteria, according to van Oorschot (2000, 2006), plays an arbitrating role between society's socio-structural characteristics and political preferences. Scientific studies that have used the five criteria of deservingness conclude that public opinion, some frontline technicians, and political leaders tend to consider the following differentiated groups as more deserving of social protection measures: the elderly, the sick, and people with disabilities. In the opposite direction, differentiated groups such as the unemployed, immigrants, and people with addictions have less favorable perceptions (van Oorschot, 2000; van Oorschot & Roosma, 2007).

With the aim to contribute to an expansion of knowledge about Welfare Deservingness, the scoping review will privilege the perspective of street-level bureaucrats in the implementation of public policies.

Street-level bureaucrats are characterized as first-line professionals in customer service (e.g., social workers) who deal with overwork, conflicting roles, and limited resources to perform their tasks. They are professionals who interact directly with citizens, with a substantial level of discretion in carrying out their work, allowing the attribution of benefits or the allocation of public services (Lipsky, 2010).

Welfare State expresses itself partially to individuals through street-level bureaucrats, who are in direct contact with citizens. Different forms of social and economic support are administered by those professionals (Lipsky, 2010), who can independently make decisions and select clients (Kallio & Kouvo, 2015).

Street-level bureaucrats' perceptions of deservingness could have an impact on how services are provided, whom they will most actively support, how they will react to their clients in different situations, and what political programs they will promote (Kallio & Kouvo, 2015). Citizens experience Government's guidelines through these professionals and their actions result from the policies imposed in important domains.

Overall, the literature shows that for different policy fields, what happens at the street-level bureaucracy shapes policy possibilities and the ways in which policies eventually interact with their target groups. This is best demonstrated, for example, in relation to the delivery of street-level activation policies that can be more or less supportive and enabling, or disciplinary and punitive (Nothdurfter & Hermans, 2018).

METHODS

Strategy of data synthesis: The strategy of data synthesis will be carried out through thematic analysis by three authors.

Due to the reduced number of articles relevant to this topic, it will be decided not to filter the search by date. However, the vast majority of articles focused on dates after 2000, from which there is a gradual increase in the scientific literature related to the topic of Welfare Deservingness.

The literature search will be carried out in three databases available online: Web of Science, Scopus, and EBSCO. In addition, the bibliographic reference lists of the selected studies will be analyzed, as well as monographs with a view to broadening the scope of research.

For the search in the mentioned databases, the equation of keywords used is: "Welfare Deservingness" AND "Welfare" OR "Welfare Deservingness" AND "Street-level bureaucrats". In Web of Science, the search criteria for the keywords used will be "All fields", in Scopus "Article title, abstract, keywords" and in EBSCO "subject terms".

The articles will be selected based on the definition of specific areas of interest for this study. The area selected for this research will be carried out in the databases as follows: in Web of Science we selected public administration, political science, social issues, social work and sociology; in Scopus, we will select social sciences; and in EBSCO we will not chose to filter by area.

Eligibility criteria: Based on the PCC (Population, Context and Concept) for scoping reviews, we will consider all studies that:

(1) Population: (a) street-level bureaucrats of social protection systems; and (b) public opinion about Welfare Deservingness;
(2) Context: European countries;
(3) Concepts: (a) Welfare Deservingness; (b) Welfare Deservingness and street-level bureaucrats; (c) Welfare Deservingness and Welfare States.
Studies that deviate from these criteria are not eligible.
The articles had different characteristics, with heterogeneous samples, different objectives, and different methodological procedures. In the process of articles inclusion, we will prioritize research related to Welfare Deservingness theory and its dimensions, studies that are closely related to van Oorschot's concepts (2000, 2006). Van Oorschot (2000) was one of the first theorists to approach the Welfare Deservingness criteria and a core author for the studies developed after that date. In recent years, we can find through a preliminary research that other authors investigated the Welfare Deservingness criteria with new approaches, reformulations, and in countries with different socio-political frameworks.
Most of the studies found in a preliminary research were carried out in Northern Europe. This fact seems to be related to a growing concern with the increase of more selective social policies in countries, historically, with more universalist social protection regimes. However, for this study, the research will focus on analyzing broader studies, in order to understand the state of art in different European countries.

Source of evidence screening and selection: The research data to identify articles for eligibility were extracted by two independent reviewers. Any disagreements will be resolved with a third reviewer.
According to PRISMA 2020 and strategy of data synthesis, we will follow these steps:
Step 1: extract a table of the following data: a) author, year, country; b) objective(s); c) sample (age and professions); d) design/methodology (mixed studies); e) instruments/indicators (several instruments, CARIN scale); f) results; g) other variables.

Step 2: Reading the titles of the studies found and exclusion of those that did not fit any of the inclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria based on PCC and articles published since the year of 2000.
Step 3: Reading the abstracts of the studies selected in step 2 and excluding those that also did not meet the inclusion criteria. Data extraction: authors; year of publication; country of origin; type of study; study objectives; population/sample; concepts relevant to the research question.
Step 4: Full reading of all remaining studies from the previous stages and selection of those that met the inclusion criteria.
The presentation of the research data will consider the relevant points of each article through the help of tables and figures, aiming to facilitate the observation and analysis during the presentation of results and discussion. The research data will be presented in a narrative form, through a flowchart, meeting the aim of this scoping review, through consensus between the two reviewers.

Data management: Following PRISMA (2020) we will take the following steps on data management:
1) Titles and abstracts will be selected by two independent reviewers for evaluation according to the inclusion criteria;
2) Prior to the initial screening, the duplicate documents will be deleted;
3) Then, the author (A) will export the titles and abstracts of the selected articles in a spreadsheet (Excel version 2016, Microsoft Corporation, Redmont, WA) being responsible for data extraction;
4) After removing duplicates, the reviewer (A) will initially select titles and exclude studies that clearly do not meet the inclusion criteria. The second reviewer will do the same; any disagreements that arise between the initial reviewers at each stage of the selection process will be resolved through discussion or with an additional reviewer;
5) Once an article is selected based on eligibility criteria, the full text of the article will be read by author 1. The second author (2) will evaluate the extracted data and also will read a proportion (25%) of the full text to verify the accuracy of the inclusion

process. Any disagreement will be addressed through discussion or consultation with the third author (3);
6) Reasons for excluding full-text evidence sources that do not meet the inclusion criteria will be recorded and reported in the final scope review. Data from the studies that will be included in the review will be presented using: numerical presentation (i.e. number and types of studies); through the scope review flowchart (PRISMA-ScR); and using narrative formats and tables in a summary report that will discuss implications of the findings for future research and practice.

Reporting results / Analysis of the evidence: The analysis of evidence will respect the PRISMA 2020 protocol, using a thematic analysis, that will include: coding, description, and elaboration of analytical themes for discussion of results.
The results will be illustrated through tables or diagrams and described in a narrative way and through demonstrative tables by category in order to indicate the source of evidence.
The use of the Meta-analyses will integrate the final discussion of the data obtained, providing a general interpretation of the results and discussing limitations of the review process used. For further impact and publication, the study will reflect the results obtain for street-level bureaucrats' practices and the future of social protection systems.

Presentation of the results: It is expected that the result of this scoping review provides evidence about how Welfare Deservingness perceptions are important predictors of support for certain social policies, confirming the existence of a connection between public opinion and street-level bureaucrats' perceptions impacting how social support is distributed and which programs will be more actively promoted.
The search in the three databases (Web of Science, Scopus, and EBSCO) already identified will be the research field on the topic under analysis. The extraction and screening of the evidence will be presented by using the scoping review flowchart

(according to PRISMA criteria – Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses). For the other steps and results will be present a table with the systematization of articles that constitute the corpus of the Scoping Review (author/ year; title; methodology; study aims; main results).

Language restriction: The research strategy considered studies published in Portuguese, Spanish and English.

Country(ies) involved: Portugal.

Other relevant information: Not applicable.

Keywords: Welfare State; Welfare Deservingness; Street-level bureaucrats; discretion; CARIN.

Dissemination plans: The results will be submitted to a peer-review journal, and presented in a PhD thesis. The results will also be presented in conferences and in Academic contexts.

Contributions of each author:
Author 1 - Ana Paula Caetano - The author 1 prepares and develops the protocol, will be part of the selection and data extraction process, and will prepare the manuscript for this review.
Email: paula.caetano.12@gmail.com
Author 2 - Clara Cruz Santos - The author 2 has the research idea, helped in the creation of this manuscript, provided research oversight, critically reviewed, and provided full feedback on this protocol. The author will be included in the selection and data extraction process as a secondary reviewer and will also collaborate with a critical review.
Email: claracruzsantos@gmail.com
Author 3 - Lisete Mónico - The author 3 assisted in the creation of this manuscript, critically reviewed it, and provided feedback. The author will be included in the selection and data extraction process as a tertiary reviewer. Provided research oversight, the author will also critically review the manuscript for this review.