

Review -1

The manuscript addresses an important issue at the intersection of media discourse, child welfare, and social policy. It contributes to understanding how media narratives may reflect and shape public and policy responses to child maltreatment, which is highly relevant for social work research and practice.

The title is generally appropriate and clearly reflects the content and methodology. Media Discourse and Child Maltreatment in Korea: A Semantic Network Analysis of Policy-Driven Narrative Shifts.

The abstract could be more concise and should: · Clearly state the research design (pre-post analysis) · Briefly highlight key findings and their implications more directly. Address minor grammatical errors and typos · Reduce repetition, especially in the introduction and discussion

Introduction: Strong and well-contextualized but somewhat lengthy and repetitive. · Methods: Technically detailed but needs clearer explanation and justification of data selection and procedures. · Results: Relevant, though the interpretation of tables could be clearer. · Conclusion: Appropriate and consistent with the study's aims.

Address minor inconsistencies and duplication in citations. · Ensure formatting aligns with journal guidelines. · Consider including more international literature to strengthen comparative relevance.

Specific Comments: This manuscript presents a valuable and timely contribution at the intersection of media, social work, and

child welfare policy. It effectively illustrates how media discourse can function as a “weathervane” for social work practice and policy development, highlighting the dynamic relationship between media narratives, public perception, behavioral change, and policy reform. The focus on South Korea’s Inclusive-State Child Policy provides a strong contextual anchor and enhances the manuscript’s relevance for international scholarship.

A key strength of the study lies in its methodological rigor and transparency. The use of a large initial dataset (156,125 articles), systematically refined to 2,463 articles through a clear preprocessing and filtering process, demonstrates a robust approach. The application of semantic network analysis to examine shifts in keyword centrality across two time periods (pre- and post-policy) is appropriate and innovative. The findings convincingly show a transition in media discourse from incident-driven, punitive framing toward broader themes of systemic responsibility, welfare, and prevention.

The manuscript also demonstrates strong analytical insight in identifying how media narratives evolved alongside policy developments. The observed increase in terms related to “support,” “welfare,” and “protection” suggests a shift toward recognizing child maltreatment as a public and institutional concern rather than solely a private issue. This reinforces the important role of media in shaping both public understanding and policy discourse.

However, several issues require attention:

- **Causal Interpretation:** The manuscript tends to imply that policy implementation directly caused shifts in media discourse. Given the study design, findings should be framed more cautiously as associations. The potential influence of high-profile abuse cases and event-driven media coverage should be more explicitly acknowledged.

- **Methodological Clarification:** While generally strong, the methods section would benefit from clearer justification of the exclusive use of Naver News and further explanation of filtering criteria and analytical decisions (e.g., TF-IDF thresholds).
- **Theoretical Integration:** The paper would be strengthened by deeper engagement with media framing theory, particularly the distinction between episodic and thematic reporting, to better contextualize the findings.
- **Interpretation of Findings:** Some conclusions based on keyword co-occurrence appear slightly overstated. The authors should acknowledge that semantic network analysis captures patterns in language use but not full contextual meaning.
- **Clarity and Structure:** The manuscript would benefit from reducing repetition, tightening the introduction and discussion, and addressing minor grammatical and formatting issues.

Overall, despite these limitations, the manuscript is methodologically sound, policy-relevant, and conceptually promising. With revisions to strengthen interpretive caution, theoretical grounding, and clarity, it has strong potential to make a meaningful contribution to social work and welfare policy literature.