Bibliometric Analysis of Public Administration Research

Loso Judijanto

IPOSS Jakarta

Article Info	ABSTRACT
	This study presents a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of public administration research using data retrieved from the Scopus database and visualized through VOSviewer. The objective is to map the intellectual structure, thematic evolution, and global collaboration patterns in the field from 2000 to 2024. The analysis includes co-authorship, keyword co-occurrence, temporal overlay, and density visualizations to identify the most influential authors, institutions, countries, and research topics. The findings reveal that while traditional themes such as bureaucracy, public policy, and administrative reform remain central, there has been a notable shift toward contemporary topics such as e-government, digital transformation, artificial intelligence, and sustainability. The United States emerges as the leading contributor in terms of publication volume and collaborative influence. The study offers practical insights for researchers, policymakers, and academic institutions, while also contributing theoretically by highlighting the evolution and diversification of public administration as a multidisciplinary field. Despite limitations related to database scope and keyword standardization, this research provides a valuable foundation for guiding future studies and strengthening strategic collaboration in the discipline.

Corresponding Author:

Name: Loso Judijanto
Institution: IPOSS Jakarta
e-mail: losojudijantobumn@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

Public administration as an academic field and professional practice has undergone significant transformations over the past century. Initially centered around classical models of bureaucracy inspired by Max Weber, the discipline evolved to embrace more dynamic and participatory governance paradigms such as New Public Management (NPM), Public Value Management, and Digital Era Governance. These conceptual shifts have paralleled broader socio-political changes, including democratization, globalization, and technological advancement [1], [2]. As the scope of public sector responsibilities expands, the importance of scholarly engagement with public administration has grown substantially.

The increasing complexity of administrative functions and governance systems has stimulated a surge of research in public administration. Scholars have examined a variety of themes, including performance management, e-governance, citizen engagement, accountability, transparency, and inter-organizational

collaboration [3]. The field has become increasingly interdisciplinary, drawing from political science, economics, sociology, and management to address public sector challenges. The proliferation of research outputs, especially in the last two decades, reflects the growing demand for evidence-based policymaking and adaptive governance models.

Despite this rapid growth, public administration research often faces critique for its fragmented nature and lack of cumulative theory building. Numerous studies emerge from diverse contexts with varying methodological approaches, making it difficult to consolidate findings or identify prevailing trends [4]. Additionally, the rise of open access publishing and global research collaborations has further diversified the landscape, introducing new voices and regional perspectives. As such, mapping the intellectual structure of the field is essential to understanding its trajectory and informing future research agendas.

In this context, bibliometric analysis offers a systematic approach to review and quantify the evolution of scholarly discourse in public administration. Bibliometrics allows researchers to identify influential authors, institutions, journals, keywords, and citation networks that define the knowledge base of a discipline [5]. Through co-citation analysis, keyword co-occurrence, and temporal mapping, bibliometric studies can illuminate both the historical foundations and emerging frontiers of research domains. In public administration, such mapping is particularly useful to uncover thematic patterns, detect underexplored areas, and highlight the global distribution of research contributions.

Furthermore, the Scopus database, with its extensive coverage of peer-reviewed literature, provides a valuable resource for bibliometric inquiry. Scopus encompasses a wide range of journals across countries and disciplines, enabling a comprehensive examination of public administration publications. By leveraging bibliometric techniques on Scopus-indexed literature, this study aims to provide a data-driven overview of how the field of public administration has evolved, particularly in terms of its dominant themes, influential publications, collaborative networks, and regional foci.

While the volume of public administration research has expanded significantly, there is a lack of systematic efforts to map its intellectual structure and development. Existing literature reviews often focus on narrow subfields or lack methodological rigor in identifying overarching trends and research clusters. Consequently, scholars and practitioners face difficulties in navigating the breadth of research, understanding historical shifts in focus, and identifying areas for future investigation. A bibliometric analysis is needed to provide a consolidated, empirical view of the landscape of public administration scholarship. The objective of this study is to conduct a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of public administration research using data extracted from the Scopus database.

2. METHODS

This study employed a bibliometric analysis approach to systematically explore the development and structure of public administration research. Bibliometric analysis is widely recognized for its ability to map scientific knowledge, identify influential publications, and detect thematic trends within a body of literature. For this study, VOSviewer was exclusively used as the primary analytical tool due to its powerful capabilities in visualizing bibliometric networks such as co-authorship, co-citation, and keyword co-occurrence [6]. The software enables intuitive and detailed exploration of large bibliographic datasets, allowing researchers to detect patterns and clusters within a field.

The bibliographic data were sourced from the **Scopus** database, chosen for its broad coverage of peer-reviewed journals in the social sciences. The search query was formulated using the keyword "public administration" within the title, abstract, and keyword fields, restricted to journal articles published from **2000 to 2024**. Only English-

language articles were considered to maintain analytical consistency. After refining and screening the results to eliminate irrelevant or duplicate entries, the metadata were exported in **CSV and RIS formats** compatible with VOSviewer. No pre-processing or external data cleaning software was used beyond the Scopus filters.

Using VOSviewer, several types of bibliometric visualizations were created: (1) **co-authorship analysis** to identify collaboration networks among authors, institutions, and countries; (2) **co-occurrence analysis of keywords** to map major research themes and their relationships; and (3) **co-citation analysis** to uncover foundational works and scholarly influence within the field. The mapping parameters, such as minimum thresholds for citations or keyword occurrences, were set based on the density and quality of the dataset to ensure clarity in visualization.
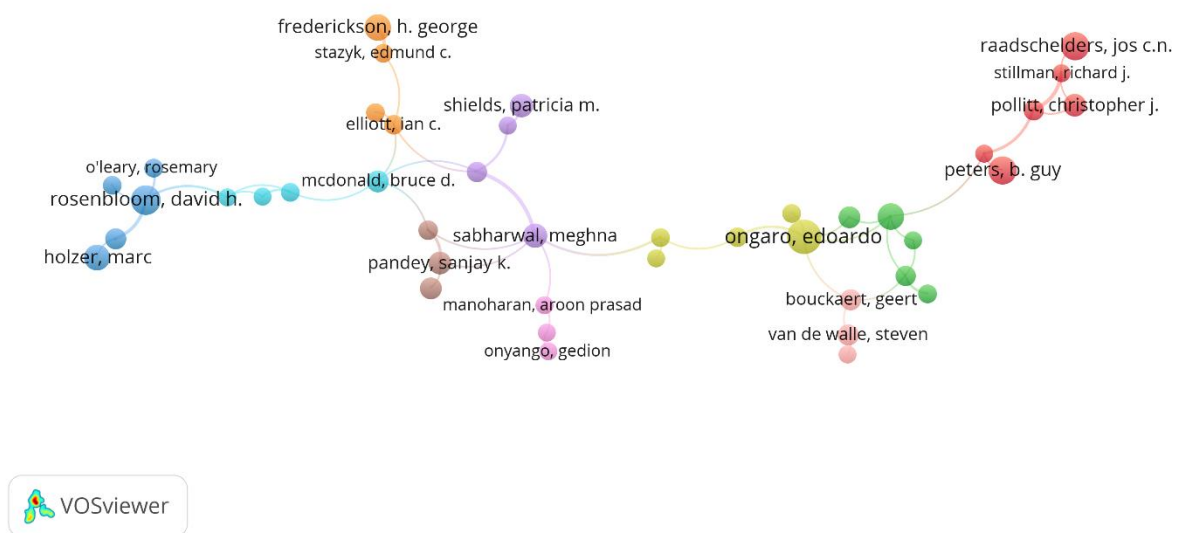
3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Co-Authorship Analysis

Figure 1. Author Visualization
Source: Data Analysis

Figure 1 reveals a co-authorship network of leading scholars in public administration scholarship, revealing obvious clusters of intellectual influence and collaboration. Every color-coded cluster reflects a group of authors frequently cited or co-publishing, suggesting institutional affiliation or shared thematic interest. For example, the red cluster led by Raadschelders, Jos C.N., Pollitt, Christopher J., and Peters, B. Guy reflects a strong European tradition of governance and institutional theory. Ongaro, Edoardo, Bouckaert, Geert, and Van de Walle, Steven's green cluster is a stream focused on European public sector reform and performance management. The purple and brown clusters of Meghna Sabharwal, Sanjay K. Pandey, and Patricia M. Shields, however, reflect an American research tradition emphasizing human resource management, representative bureaucracy, and administrative ethics. Meanwhile, David H. Rosenbloom, Rosemary O'Leary, and Marc Holzer's blue cluster is highly likely to represent public law and democratic governance. The cluster pattern shows that while there are clusters of co-authorship, intellectual synthesis between themes is facilitated by some authors like Bruce D. McDonald, who act as bridges between the clusters.

Figure 2. Affiliation Analysis
Source: Data Analysis

Figure 2 illustrates a co-authorship or institutional collaboration network of universities producing public administration studies. The map shows a dense core group of institutions such as Indiana University Bloomington, Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam, Cleveland State University, Tallinna Tehnikaülikool, and Universidade de Brasília, suggesting intense inter-institutional collaboration in North America, Europe, and Latin America. These institutions are strongly connected with each other, suggesting a shared research agenda or shared co-publications in leading journals. An isolated and distinct cluster on the far right shows the Interregional Academy of Personnel Management, reflecting internal collaboration but poor linkages with the core world scholarly network—implying poor integration with the mainstream research community. Florida International University is an imperfect conduit between the core and periphery nodes, although the link is comparatively poor.
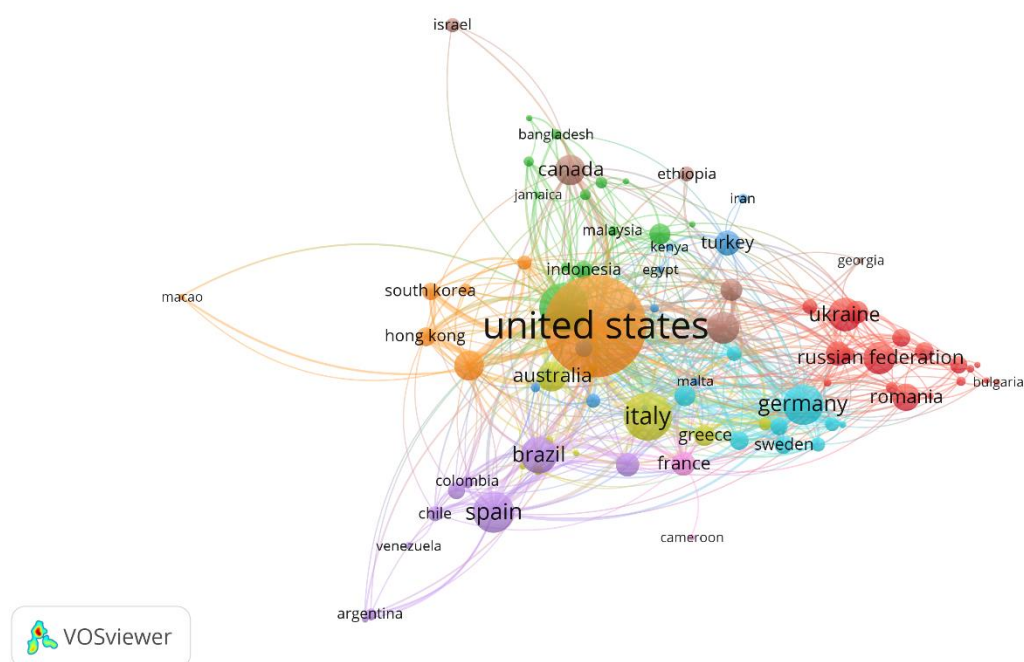

Figure 3. Country Analysis
Source: Data Analysis

Figure 3 is a public administration study at the country level of co-authorship network demonstrating international collaboration patterns. The network is dominated by the largest node, which is the United States, indicating that it occupies a central location as the most productive and cooperative country in this area. Other principal contributors are those surrounding the U.S., such as Canada, Australia, Italy,

Germany, Spain, and Brazil, all of which have strong international connection shown by the heavy network of connecting lines. Particularly salient in the world network are the Asian countries of South Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, and India, which reflect the rising influence of the Global South. Another cluster but closely tied to the first is composed of the Eastern European countries of Ukraine, **Co-Occurrence Analysis of Keyword**

Romania, and the Russian Federation, which reflect extensive amounts of intranetwork cooperation but relatively weak extranetwork ties. The visualization also highlights colorful multilateral collaboration, as countries unite in regional and cross-regional configurations, pointing towards a pluralized and networked research space.
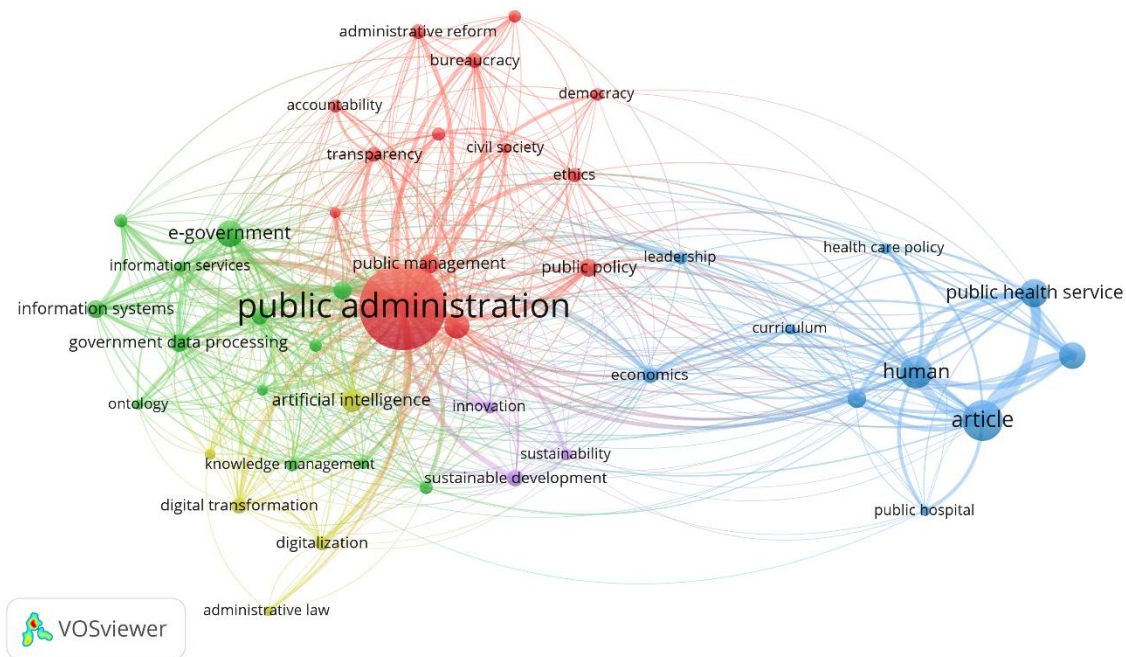

Figure 4. Network Visualization
Source: Data Analysis

Figure 4 presents a keyword co-occurrence network in public administration research, showcasing thematic clusters and relations in the scholarly debate. The keyword "public administration" is at the center of the network as the largest node, indicating its place at the intersection and high frequency across the literature reviewed. A number of diverging clusters radiate from this central node, each representing a distinct field or new research focus. The colored groups separate traditional subjects such as bureaucracy and government, and more contemporary themes such as artificial intelligence and digital transformation.

The red cluster towards the top of the map represents governance and democratic values and is comprised of words such as

bureaucracy, ethics, transparency, accountability, civil society, public management, democracy, and public policy. These are terms that are at the heart of classical public administration theories and reflect normative interests in how governments function, how public servants are held accountable, and how administrative reform is addressed. The strong interconnections among these words attest to a continued scholarly interest in reinforcing governance institutions, advancing standards of ethics, and building institutional integrity. On the left side, the green cluster revolves around information systems and e-government, with words such as e-government, information services, government data processing, ontology, and

information systems. This cluster signifies the expanding contribution of digital infrastructure to public service delivery. As governments are adopting technology to improve efficiency and transparency, this domain has sped up in research and practice. The proximity to public administration shows that digital governance is not a peripheral topic but within the mainstream discourse. The yellow and purple clusters towards the bottom center show technological innovation and sustainability as research frontiers.

Artificial intelligence, digital transformation, digitalization, innovation, knowledge management, sustainability, and sustainable development are the keywords that indicate the alignment of public administration with global digital and sustainability agendas. These clusters illustrate a future trajectory of the discipline whereby scholars are now more interested in investigating how innovation and responsible technology can be integrated into administration systems in order to attain long-term societal goals. The blue cluster on the right is centered on health policy and human services, including such terms as public health service, public hospital, health care policy, curriculum, economics, and human. Although somewhat peripheral to the core interests of governance, this cluster reflects the cross-disciplinary nature of public administration, especially where public sector reform intersects with healthcare delivery and human resource development. The "article" node as a large node may represent general use in tagging or metadata rather than thematic content.
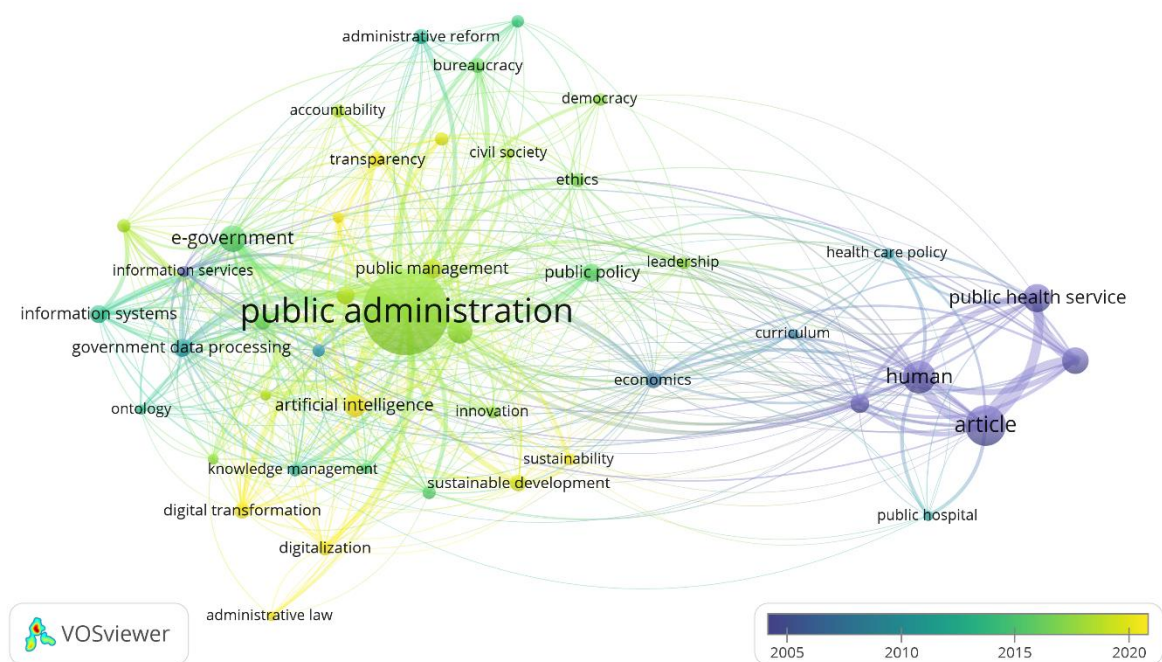

Figure 5. Overlay Visualization
Source: Data Analysis

Figure 5 visualizes the temporal trend of co-occurrence of keywords in public administration research between 2005 and 2020. The gradient from purple (earlier) to yellow (later) is used to represent the average date of publication assigned to each keyword. The central term "public administration" is shown in green, indicating that it has been consistently prominent throughout the mid-to-late 2010s. They are surrounded by clusters of associated concepts whose color indicates clear temporal paths, which enable us to see how academic concerns evolved over time. The keywords "e-government," "information systems," "public management," and "bureaucracy" are colored in green and yellow, indicating increased prominence in later years (2015–2020). In particular, "digital

transformation," "artificial intelligence," and "sustainability" all appear in bold yellow, indicating their rise as cutting-edge concerns over the last five years. These are the expanding scope of technology and sustainable governance models in driving the research agenda of public administration. The rise of these topics indicates a shift in academic emphasis toward modernization, digital innovation, and global policy issues.

Opposite to this, the dark color nodes, i.e., "public health service," "curriculum," and "human," are positioned towards the right and are mostly shown in blue and purple, representing earlier time periods (2005–2010). This shows that the intersection of public administration and health/public service themes was more emphasized in earlier research.
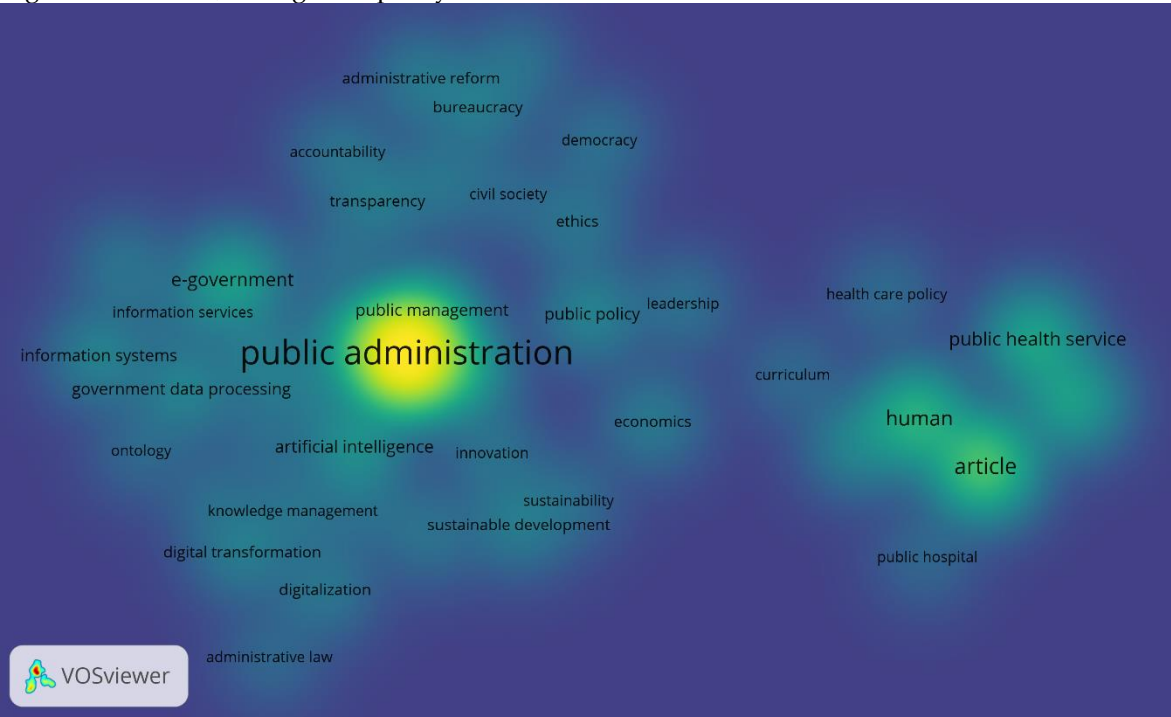

Figure 6. Density Visualization
Source: Data Analysis

Figure 6 displays the salience and frequency of public administration keywords in literature.

The wide strip of bright yellow surrounding the center term "public administration" indicates that it is the most frequent and highly co-occurring term in the data set. The surrounding terms like "public management," "e-government," "artificial intelligence," and "public policy" in greenish areas indicate that they are also highly mentioned but a little less than the center term. These issues are the conceptual center of the discipline and mark where the majority of

intellectual focus has been directed in the last few decades. On the other hand, the peripheral regions of blue or low-density marking represent areas of comparatively less common discussion, such as "public hospital," "administrative law," "digital transformation," and "curriculum." Although these terms are still associated with the central discourse, their lower density signal more specialized or nascent subareas of public administration. Notably, health-related keywords like "human," "article," and "public health service" form a single cluster on the right, indicating a single stream of research in the overall field.

Citation Analysis

Table 1. Top Cited Literature

Citations	Author	Title
963	[7]	Public value governance: Moving beyond traditional public administration and the new public management

496	[8]	It takes two to tango? Understanding the co-production of public services by integrating the services management and public administration perspectives
496	[9]	Toward a public administration theory of public service motivation: An institutional approach
424	[10]	Behavioral Public Administration: Combining Insights from Public Administration and Psychology
391	[11]	The COVID-19 pandemic as a game changer for public administration and leadership? The need for robust governance responses to turbulent problems
382	[12]	Reputation and Public Administration
355	[13]	Public–private partnership in Public Administration discipline: a literature review
355	[14]	Networks in public administration scholarship: Understanding where we are and where we need to go
348	[15]	We Know the Yin—But Where Is the Yang? Toward a Balanced Approach on Common Source Bias in Public Administration Scholarship
335	[16]	Complexity and Hybrid Public Administration-Theoretical and Empirical Challenges

Source: Scopus Database

Practical Implication

This study provides a comprehensive overview of the intellectual structure, emerging trends, and collaboration patterns in public administration research, which holds several practical implications. For policymakers and public managers, the findings can guide evidence-based decision-making by identifying which thematic areas such as e-government, digital transformation, and sustainability are receiving increasing scholarly attention and may be aligned with current policy challenges. For academic institutions and research funders, the mapping of influential authors, institutions, and countries supports strategic investment in research collaborations, academic partnerships, and curriculum development. Additionally, for practitioners and consultants in the public sector, the insights from this bibliometric analysis offer a roadmap to cutting-edge topics that can enhance administrative reform, technological innovation, and citizen engagement.

Theoretical Contribution

Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature by systematically unveiling the evolutionary trajectory and thematic landscape of public administration as a scholarly domain. By employing VOSviewer to conduct co-authorship, co-occurrence, and temporal analysis, this research identifies the foundational literature, emerging subfields (e.g., AI and public sector innovation), and ongoing debates around governance, accountability, and digitalization. It strengthens the conceptual understanding of how traditional public administration concepts (such as bureaucracy and public policy) are integrating with new paradigms like artificial intelligence, sustainability, and e-governance. Furthermore, the study helps bridge theory and practice by demonstrating how scholarly discourse aligns with or anticipates shifts in public administration practice.

Limitation

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the analysis is based solely on data retrieved from the Scopus database, which, although comprehensive, may exclude relevant literature from non-indexed or regional journals, especially from the Global South. Second, the use of VOSviewer, while effective for visualizing bibliometric networks, limits the ability to perform qualitative content analysis or assess the contextual depth of publications. Third, the keyword-based analysis may oversimplify complex concepts

or overlook nuanced themes due to inconsistencies in author-defined terminology. Lastly, the study captures research trends up to 2024, and therefore may not reflect the very latest scholarly developments or post-pandemic administrative innovations. Future research could incorporate more diverse databases, longitudinal citation analysis, and deeper content review to address these gaps.

4. CONCLUSION

This bibliometric analysis of public administration research offers a comprehensive and data-driven overview of the field's intellectual development, thematic diversification, and global collaboration patterns. By utilizing VOSviewer to analyze publications from the Scopus database, the study identifies key authors, institutions, countries, and keywords that have shaped the discipline from 2000 to 2024. The findings reveal a dynamic evolution from traditional topics like bureaucracy and public policy toward contemporary themes such as digital transformation, artificial intelligence, and sustainability. Additionally, the visualized networks highlight both well-established research clusters and emerging areas that warrant further exploration. This study not only maps the current landscape of public administration scholarship but also provides valuable insights for academics, practitioners, and policymakers to navigate the future trajectory of the field with greater strategic clarity.

REFERENCES

[1]   J. M. Shafritz, E. W. Russell, C. P. Borick, and A. C. Hyde, *Introducing public administration*. Routledge, 2022.

[2]   A. Farazmand, "Globalization and public administration," *Public Adm. Rev.*, pp. 509–522, 1999.

[3]   D. F. Kettl, "Public administration at the millennium: The state of the field," *J. public Adm. Res. theory*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 7–34, 2000.

[4]   N. Henry, *Public administration and public affairs*. Routledge, 2015.

[5]   M. Aria and C. Cuccurullo, "bibliometrix: An R-tool for comprehensive science mapping analysis," *J. Informetr.*, vol. 11, no. 4, pp. 959–975, 2017.

[6]   N. Van Eck and L. Waltman, "Software survey: VOSviewer, a computer program for bibliometric mapping," *Scientometrics*, vol. 84, no. 2, pp. 523–538, 2010.

[7]   J. M. Bryson, B. C. Crosby, and L. Bloomberg, "Public value governance: Moving beyond traditional public administration and the new public management," 2014, *Wiley Online Library*.

[8]   S. P. Osborne and K. Strokosch, "It takes Two to Tango? Understanding the Co-production of public services by integrating the services management and public administration perspectives," *Br. J. Manag.*, vol. 24, pp. S31–S47, 2013.

[9]   W. Vandenabeele, "Toward a public administration theory of public service motivation: An institutional approach," *Public Manag. Rev.*, vol. 9, no. 4, pp. 545–556, 2007.

[10]   S. Grimmelikhuijsen, S. Jilke, A. L. Olsen, and L. Tummers, "Behavioral public administration: Combining insights from public administration and psychology," *Public Adm. Rev.*, vol. 77, no. 1, pp. 45–56, 2017.

[11]   C. Ansell, E. Sørensen, and J. Torfing, "The COVID-19 pandemic as a game changer for public administration and leadership? The need for robust governance responses to turbulent problems," *Public Manag. Rev.*, vol. 23, no. 7, pp. 949–960, 2021.

[12]   D. P. Carpenter and G. A. Krause, "Reputation and public administration," *Public Adm. Rev.*, vol. 72, no. 1, pp. 26–32, 2012.

[13]   H. Wang, W. Xiong, G. Wu, and D. Zhu, "Public–private partnership in Public Administration discipline: a literature review," *Public Manag. Rev.*, vol. 20, no. 2, pp. 293–316, 2018.

[14]   K. R. Isett, I. A. Mergel, K. LeRoux, P. A. Mischen, and R. K. Rethemeyer, "Networks in public administration scholarship: Understanding where we are and where we need to go," *J. public Adm. Res. theory*, vol. 21, no. suppl_1, pp. i157–i173, 2011.

[15]   B. George and S. K. Pandey, "We know the Yin—But where is the Yang? Toward a balanced approach on common source bias in public administration scholarship," *Rev. public Pers. Adm.*, vol. 37, no. 2, pp. 245–270, 2017.

[16]   T. Christensen and P. Lægreid, "Complexity and hybrid public administration—theoretical and empirical challenges," *Public Organ. Rev.*, vol. 11, no. 4, pp. 407–423, 2011.