

Evolution of migration and sustainable development studies in Southeast Asia: a bibliometric analysis from 2004 to 2024

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Abstract

Purpose – This research offers an all-rounded bibliometric overview of migration and sustainable development studies in Southeast Asia from 2004 to 2024 through publication performance, citation performance, authorship patterns, institutional contributions and theme evolution.

Design/methodology/approach – The study uses a bibliometric approach with examination of 378 documents from 301 sources, consisting of journals, books and conference proceedings during 2004–2024. This examines trends in annual publication, citation counts, geographic and institutional distribution, patterns of collaboration and the themes of the majority of the articles.

Findings – The average number of citations per paper was 16.2 and the annual growth was 9.06%. Its authors are from Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and include partnerships with the USA, UK and Australia. Top institutions were Mahidol University, the University of Washington and Kasetsart University. There was a shift of thematic emphasis from economic growth toward sustainability and migration.

Research limitations/implications – The paper identifies limitations around world geography and the strength of research in the field of migration and development studies. Additional work is needed in underrepresented areas and methodological progress is needed.

Practical implications – This perspective has important implications for researchers, institutions and policies in migration and sustainable development in Southeast Asia and for the need to collaborate internationally.

Social implications – This is illustrative of the increasing interdisciplinarity of migration and sustainability research, with policy and social change implications in Southeast Asia and beyond.

Originality/value – This paper is a bibliometric analysis of migration and sustainable development in Southeast Asia, focusing on the trends and gaps in such literature and the implications thereof for future research and policy.

Keywords Migration, Sustainable development, Southeast Asia, Citation analysis, Thematic mapping

Paper type Literature review

1. Introduction

The complex relationship between migration and sustainable development has received considerable attention globally, particularly in the dynamic context of Southeast Asia.

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The diverse economies, socio-political contexts and environmental contexts in Southeast Asia provide an informative example of how different forms of human mobility and the Sustainable Development Goals interact (Ushakov & Auliandri, 2020; Mahmud & Jabin, 2022). Southeast Asia is undergoing dynamic changes in migration and employment patterns, alongside the emergence of a middle-class population exceeding 625 million people (Teng, Caballero-Anthony, & Montesclaros, 2021; Rahman, Yong, & Ullah, 2014).

Migration, both internal and international, plays a major role in the geographical composition, labor markets and socio-economic development pathways of the region (Fong & Shibuya, 2020; Lami, Tarasenko, Shyshova, Voropayeva, & Verhun, 2022). The factors influencing migration decisions also shape developmental outcomes in origin countries (De Haas, 2010). In Southeast Asia, migration flows are shaped by an array of complex influences, including economic disparities, political instability, environmental degradation, as well as socio-cultural networks (Triandafyllidou, Ghio, Veronis, & McLeman, 2023). Migration flows range from low-skilled labor to high-skilled professional mobility, each exerting varying impacts on sustainable development (Azizuddin, 2025). The scale of migration in Asia, particularly labor migration, has led to various forms of both state and non-state cooperation, making the region uniquely positioned in global migration governance (Shivakoti, 2020; Chatteraj, 2020). Understanding these patterns is further compounded by the complex relationships between internal migration and international migration, although they tend to be separately analyzed, even if conceptually and theoretically they are similar (Hugo, 2016). While global skill mobility has been widely studied, localized analyses of skill deficits and brain drain in Southeast Asia remain limited (Ullah, Mohamad, Hassan, & Chatteraj, 2019). This is especially relevant in Southeast Asian countries where shortages in qualified skilled occupations are a large barrier for moving from middle-income to high-income status, except for the Philippines (Pajaron and Vasquez, 2020), the only country whose skill supply exceeds its domestic demand (Nidhiprabha, 2014). The idea of migration as a potential development strategy is garnering momentum, especially in South Asian countries (Ullah, Akram Hossain, & Huque, 2022), where it has traditionally operated as a “safety valve” against domestic labor market pressures and a source for crucial foreign currency earnings (Wickramasekara, 2016; Hossain *et al.*, 2025). This growing interest is also supported by the decreasing awareness that the free movement of people can improve the efficient allocation of labor and human capital, can promote the transfer of knowledge and skill and, in turn, provide the dynamic efficiencies that are essential for regional development (Kikkawa, Gaspar, & Park, 2019).

Bibliometric synthesis enables the mapping of publication patterns, thematic priorities and collaborative networks, offering a structured lens on academic development in this domain (Kumar, 2025; Rojas-Sánchez, Palos-Sánchez, & Folgado-Fernández, 2023). Such an analysis is crucial for understanding the historical trajectory and future directions of research at the intersection of migration and sustainable development within the Southeast Asian context. By identifying key authors, institutions and research clusters, it becomes possible to discern intellectual frontiers and areas requiring further investigation. This bibliometric approach also facilitates the identification of emerging trends and knowledge gaps, thereby informing policy and research agendas for sustainable development in the region. Furthermore, it allows for a comprehensive assessment of interdisciplinary linkages and the evolution of conceptual frameworks within the field. Analyzing the academic literature is crucial to understand how research on migration and sustainable development has evolved as an emerging and increasingly significant theme in Southeast Asia over the past two decades (2004–2024). Many migration-related studies have focused on themes such as education in East Asia, women’s health, rural livelihoods, environmental sustainability, agrotourism and ecological resilience, such as Sheikh, Hamid, Lone, Muzaffar, and Hussain (2025), Cipollina, De Benedictis, and Scibè, (2024), Verduga (2024), Kang, Wang, Lin, and Li (2022), Khanom *et al.* (2024), Jayaseelan and Speece (2024), Hasan *et al.* (2025), Rigg and Salamanca (2017) and many more. Moreover, there is still no extensive knowledge-based overview regarding migration and sustainable studies in Southeast Asia.

This study addresses this gap by conducting a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of migration and sustainable development literature in Southeast Asia, covering the period from 2004 to 2024. Drawing on 378 documents sourced from the Scopus database, the paper aims to (1) trace publication and citation trends, (2) identify key authors, institutions and countries involved, (3) examine collaboration patterns and (4) map thematic shifts over time. In doing so, this research not only highlights the development of the field but also provides insights into the gaps, challenges and opportunities for advancing migration and sustainable development scholarship in one of the world's most dynamic regions.

2. Methodology

This research conducts a bibliometric analysis of research patterns, collaboration networks and thematic changes in the field of migration and sustainable development in Southeast Asia from 2004 to 2024. The data were extracted from the Scopus database, using a combination of keywords including “migration,” “sustainable development,” and “Southeast Asia,” with the addition of Boolean operators to yield relevant information. The original paper search documented 378 outputs consisting of journal articles, conference articles, book chapters and reviews. After duplicate outputs and irrelevant documents were removed, the final dataset was responsible for classifying publication type, author affiliation and the publishing country of origin.

Trends in annual publications and citation indices were examined to assess research growth and productivity over time. Collaboration was measured through co-authorship patterns and institutional affiliations, while international collaboration was measured using Single Country Publications (SCP), Multiple Country Publications (MCP). Co-occurrence and network analysis of keywords provide insights into the themes of research studies and their evolution, while centrality measures such as betweenness centrality and closeness centrality identify influential ideas or topics. Visualizations – such as line graphs, bar charts and network diagrams – were used to present trends, productivity metrics and thematic structures in a clear and interpretable format. A methodological graph of this study is given in below [Figure 1](#).

3. Result

3.1 Overview of the bibliometric information

[Table 1](#) gives a complete bibliometric overview of the migration-sustainable development literature in Southeast Asia from 2004 to 2024. We obtained 378 documents from 301 different sources, illustrating a broad and diverse range of publication sources. An annual growth rate of 9.06% indicates growing scholarly interest. The average document age of 7.39 signifies a long-standing legacy in the literature topic but also that most documents are relatively new and cited, as seen in an average of 16.2 citations per document, the scientific relevance and influence of the field. The total of 17,429 references also affirms a significant accumulation of knowledge and referencing to other documents in the overall field. The variety of 1,846 Keywords Plus (ID) and 1,187 Author Keywords (DE) also implies that the literature consists of varied themes and conceptualizations, signaling a variety of intellectual spaces. The authorship pattern shows a collaborative scholarly culture, where 103 of 1,128 authors wrote single-authored, thus suggesting a very strong preference for co-authorship. The authors also presented an average of 3.16 co-author(s) per document and, considerably, 24.34% of authors demonstrated international collaboration. This suggests not just interest in the transnational and interdisciplinary research processes, but also further reflects a field that is quantitatively expanding, as well as qualitatively expanding, which signifies a level of academic maturity in people's understandings of issues associated with migration and sustainable development in Southeast Asia. Additionally, journal articles (270) constitute the bulk of the corpus, suggesting peer-reviewed journals as a medium of scholarly communication more than any other and that books (14), book chapters (46) and conference papers (48) suggest an expansion

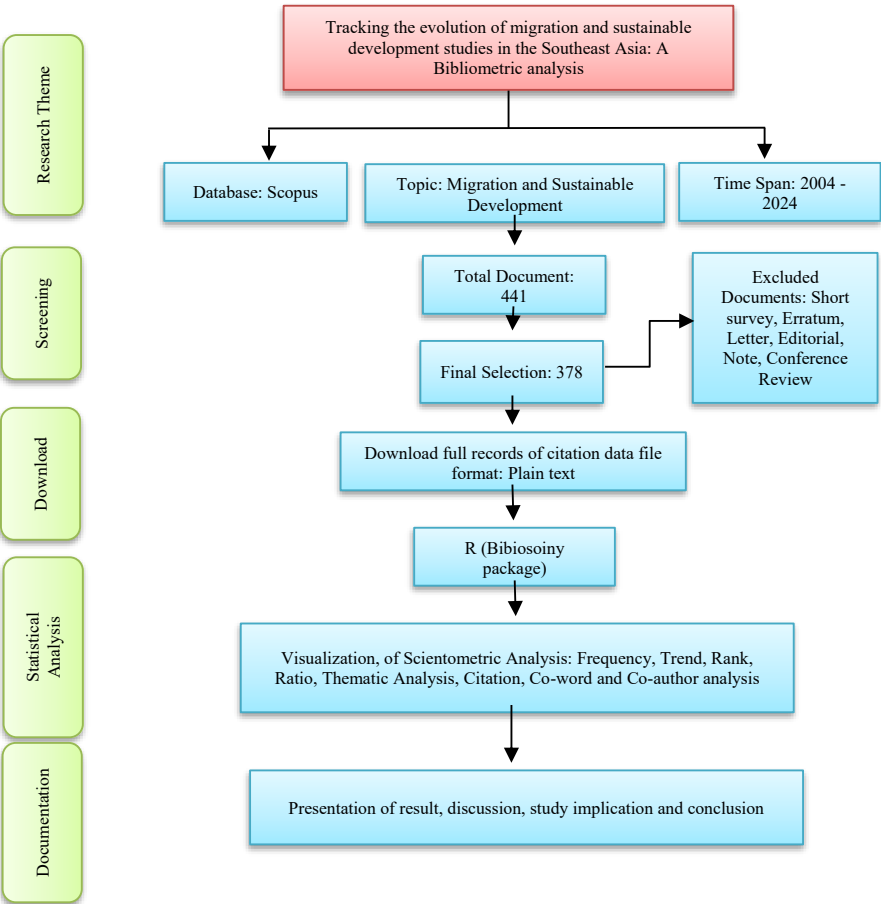


Figure 1. Flow chart of bibliometric analysis

of knowledge transfer processes beyond journal articles. Thus, the findings demonstrate that it is qualitatively expanding in terms of international collaborative work, thematically and qualitatively, formalizing the suitability and application of concepts related to migration and sustainable development in the region.

3.2 Geographic distribution of research and collaboration

Figure 2 shows a geographical representation of the countries of corresponding authors across the field of migration and sustainable development studies in Southeast Asia from 2004 to 2024, demonstrating interesting patterns of research leadership and international collaboration. Overall, three countries emerge as the most studied and the most engaged in the regional research agenda: Australia, Indonesia and Thailand. Australia is at the top in total publications and has a more balanced ratio of single-country (SCP) publications to multiple-country (MCP) publications, signaling strong regional engagement and high reporting capacity in research (the USA, UK and China) showed a higher proportion of MCPs than SCPs and, therefore, may have a greater interest in research collaboration in the Southeast Asian

Table 1. Summary of the data

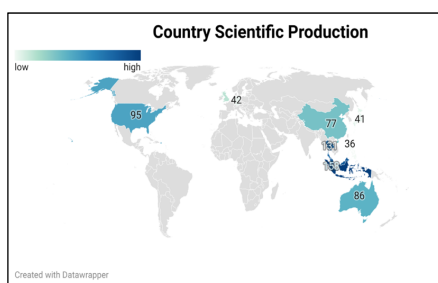
Description	Results
<i>Main information about data</i>	
Timespan	2004–2024
Sources (Journals, Books, etc)	301
Documents	378
Annual Growth Rate %	9.06
Document Average Age	7.39
Average citations per doc	16.2
References	17,429
<i>Document contents</i>	
Keywords Plus (ID)	1,846
Author's Keywords (DE)	1,187
<i>Authors</i>	
Authors	1,128
Authors of single-authored docs	103
<i>Authors collaboration</i>	
Single-authored docs	113
Co-Authors per Doc	3.16
International co-authorships %	24.34
<i>Document types</i>	
article	270
book	14
book chapter	46
conference paper	48

region, while Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia have a large SCP footprint suggesting an increased regional interest in research but had less collaboration in terms of international co-authorship. The presence of research work from countries like Germany, Japan or Singapore provides a further illustration of global leadership interest in and engagement with the migration and sustainability issues facing Southeast Asia. Emerging contributors like Bangladesh, Vietnam and Myanmar also represent an emergent research platform, but to a lesser degree of collaborative linkages. This distribution illustrates the continuing need for more regional and international collaboration to support ongoing knowledge exchange and relevant policy agendas in the field.

Table 2 presents contributions by country, ranked in frequency as contributions; contributors and contributions denote research leadership and involvement in the area of

Table 2. Geographic distribution of research output and collaboration

Country	Freq
Indonesia	158
Malaysia	139
Thailand	131
USA	95
Australia	86
China	77
Uk	54
Germany	42
Japan	41
Philippines	36



disciplinary studies. Indonesia leads the countries, with 158 contributions and Malaysia (139) and Thailand (131) also demonstrate strong contributions in regional academic output. Non-Southeast Asian countries such as the USA (95), Australia (86) and China (77) also have a prominent presence in international research collaboration in the area of migration and sustainable development in Southeast Asia. The inclusion of countries such as Germany, Japan and the UK reinforces that engagement with Southeast Asian migration and sustainability issues is a globally engaged scholarship space. This table provides information that is in direct contrast to the visual representation of data in [Figure 1](#); not shown in the visual images ([Figure 1](#)) are specific numeric values. The detail provided in [Table 2](#) regarding intensity and distribution of contributions academically at the country level is complemented by this table. This table shows the relationship of countries, both regionally and globally, to additional research interconnectivity in these areas of study (see [Figure 2](#)).

3.3 Annual publication of the articles from 2004 to 2024

[Table 3](#) shows the year-by-year breakdown of published articles on migration and sustainable development in Southeast Asia from 2004 to 2024 on migration and sustainable development, collected through a bibliometric analysis using indexed academic databases such as Scopus and focusing on the relevant keywords and disciplinary areas. This table shows the temporal development of publications in the field, showing important trends over the previous 20 years. Publications were modest from 2004 to 2014, with an average of fewer than 10 per year. In 2015 and continuing, it should be noted that there is a strong increase, whereby the number of publications grows much quickly. There is a peak of 40 publications in 2020. This increase in output suggests a marked increase in academic interest, likely in part influenced by global issues concerning the SDGs; migration-specific policies less transnationally; and regional socio-economic change. The continued increase in the number between 2021 and 2024 indicates that they remain relevant for Southeast Asian academic opportunities. Overall, the table provides empirical evidence of an expanding and lively interdisciplinary area of research and demonstrates how academic output has developed as priorities have shifted regionally and globally.

3.4 Mean citation and citable years

[Figure 3](#) draws a picture of the average citations per year to research articles on migration and sustainable development in Southeast Asia for the years 2004 to 2024. This chart provides a dynamic rendition of the trends reflected in [Table 4](#) concerning the scholarly influence of these

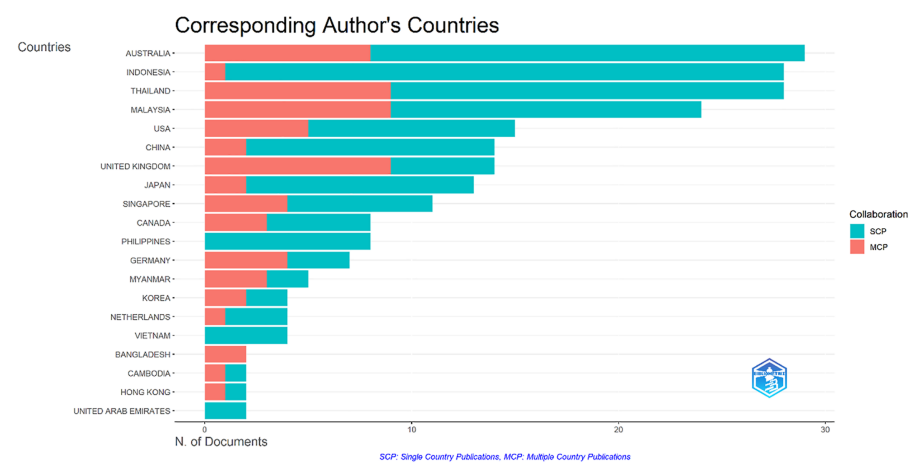
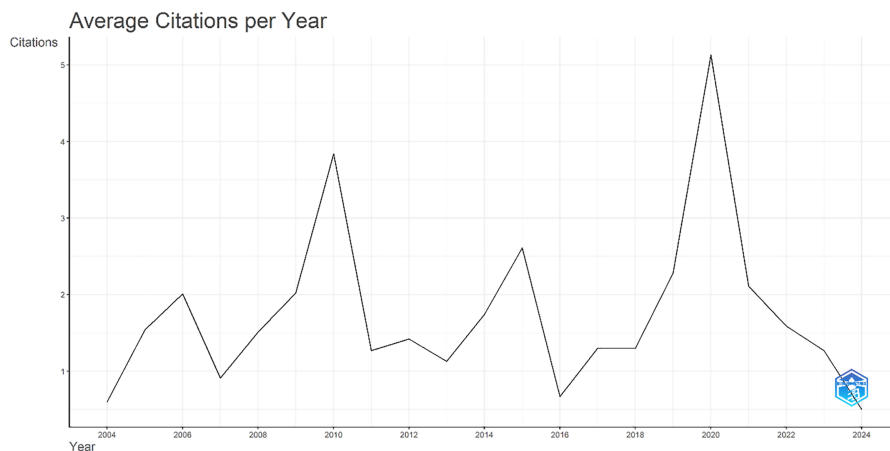


Figure 2. Countries of corresponding author

Table 3. Annual publication of the articles from 2004 to 2024

Year	Articles	Year	Articles
2004	6	2016	14
2005	7	2017	21
2006	5	2018	26
2007	6	2019	26
2008	5	2020	40
2009	11	2021	37
2010	10	2022	37
2011	11	2023	31
2012	8	2024	34
2013	12		
2014	13		
2015	15		


Figure 3. Mean citation and citable years

articles over time. The tallest peaks in 2010 and 2020 symbolize times when research from these years was cited at phenomenal rates annually and thus must have wielded a great academic influence, either through budding research themes or monumental breakthroughs during those years. The valleys in average citation rates, for instance, 2016 or 2024, imply either the paucity of influence of research produced in those years or an inadequate temporal window for citations to accumulate least for the very recent years. The cyclical behavior evidenced in the figure shows that interest and sustenance in this area fluctuate with outside happenings like policy changes in the area, migration crisis or development priorities. In sum, this figure is a powerful portrayal of how the citation performance keeps evolving and placing more and more emphasis on time and thematic resonance as factors in scholarly dissemination.

Table 4 details the top 10 most frequently cited journals over the period from 2004 to 2024, presenting one of the many significant dimensions of migration and sustainable development studies in Southeast Asia. Sustainability (Switzerland) and Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies lead by h-index values of 7 (195 TC) and 6 (240 TC) respectively. Certain journals show strong publication values (NP), reflecting both quantity and quality. A promising trend can be observed, wherein the relatively new journals International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health (since 2020) and Agriculture (Switzerland) (since 2023) have recently gained

Table 4. Top 10 cited impact journals

Source	h_index	g_index	m_index	TC	NP	PY_start
Sustainability (Switzerland)	7	9	0.583	195	9	2014
Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies	6	6	0.75	240	6	2018
International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health	4	4	0.667	85	4	2020
World Development	4	4	0.364	88	4	2015
Critical Asian Studies	3	3	0.176	99	3	2009
IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science	3	4	0.375	37	19	2018
Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography	3	4	0.167	132	4	2008
Advance in Global Change Research	2	2	0.133	23	2	2011
Agriculture (Switzerland)	2	2	0.667	7	2	2023
Asia Pacific Viewpoint	2	2	0.111	26	2	2008

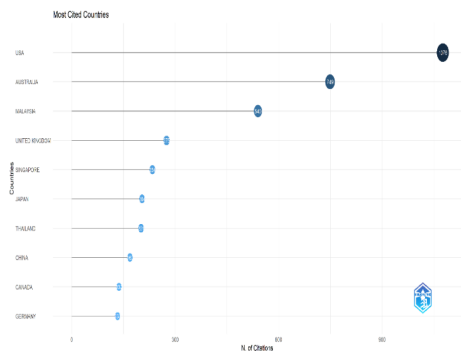
interest. The somewhat older journals, such as World Development and Critical Asian Studies, with older years of first issue (in 2015 and 2009), hold moderate citation levels, continuing their relevance. The IOP Conference Series presents the highest number of publications (NP = 19), albeit with fewer citations. A wide range of h-, g- and m-index values across the journals reveals different levels of long-term impacts and consistency in publications. Overall, this table indicates an excellent blend of long-standing and new journals reshaping the ever-changing research domain of migration and sustainability in Southeast Asia.

3.5 Top cited countries in migration and sustainable development research

Table 5 lists the highly cited countries in global research relating to migration and sustainable development, under total citations and average article citations. The USA greatly leads with 1,076 total citations and the highest average of 71.70 citations per article, indicating both productivity and impact. Following Australia with 749 TCs, there is also a strong average of 25.80 citations per article. Malaysia comes third with 540 total citations and an average citation per article of 22.80, giving weight to its increasing importance in regional research. The United Kingdom, Singapore and Japan also appear quite high with moderate citation counts and averages varying between 15.70 and 21.30. Southeast Asian countries like Thailand and Singapore have good contributions, although Thailand’s average citations per article (7.20) are low, indicating the necessity to increase the impact. China, bizarrely misspelled as “China” in the table, has 169 citations, with the average being 12.10, showing moderate research influence.

Table 5. Top cited countries in migration and sustainable development research

Country	TC	Average Article Citations
USA	1076	71.70
Australia	749	25.80
Malaysia	540	22.80
United Kingdom	275	19.60
Singapore	234	21.30
Japan	204	15.70
Thailand	201	7.20
China	169	12.10
Canada	137	17.10
Germany	133	19.00



And then there are Canada and Germany with fewer total citations, but rather good averages themselves. In essence, the data attest to worldwide scholarly influences, with the West gaining impact and Asian countries, especially those in Southeast Asia, being among the emerging contributors in the new field of migration and sustainable development.

3.6 Institutional contributions to Southeast Asia migration and sustainable development studies

From 2004 to 2024, the most pertinent institutional affiliations supporting research on migration and sustainable development in Southeast Asia are listed in [Table 6](#). With 27 articles published, Mahidol University comes in first, demonstrating its strong academic leadership in this area. The University of Washington (with 24 articles) and Kasetsart University (with 22 articles) trail it closely, suggesting both a strong regional research foundation and active international collaboration. Migration studies are interdisciplinary and transnational, as evidenced by the existence of both regional and international organizations. Universiti Sains Malaysia, the National University of Singapore and Diponegoro University are all at the top of the list. This shows how important Southeast Asia is in dealing with local migration and sustainability issues. The International Health Policy Program and Health Poverty Action are two groups that show how migration is linked to health and poverty. Adding Kyoto University and Khon Kaen University shows that the project is reaching out to more regions than just Southeast Asia. Overall, the table shows a wide range of academic and policy-driven institutions that are actively shaping the scholarly landscape. Thailand and Malaysia are well represented, which are important points in regional migration networks.

[Table 7](#) shows the 10 most prominent countries with author affiliations in migration and sustainable development research in Southeast Asia from 2004 to 2024, indicating levels of

Table 6. Institutional contributions to Southeast Asia migration studies

Affiliation	Articles
Mahidol University	27
University Of Washington	24
Kasetsart University	22
International Health Policy Program	12
National University of Singapore	12
Universiti Sains Malaysia	12
Diponegoro University	11
Health Poverty Action	9
Kyoto University	8
Khon Kaen University	7

Table 7. Top 10 most relevant affiliations (countries)

Country	Articles	Articles %	SCP	MCP	MCP %
Australia	29	7.7	21	8	27.6
Indonesia	28	7.4	27	1	3.6
Thailand	28	7.4	19	9	32.1
Malaysia	24	6.3	15	9	37.5
USA	15	4	10	5	33.3
China	14	3.7	12	2	14.3
United Kingdom	14	3.7	5	9	64.3
Japan	13	3.4	11	2	15.4
Singapore	11	2.9	7	4	36.4
Canada	8	2.1	5	3	37.5

The law's principle that many other journals contribute fewer publications individually is demonstrated by the sharp decline in the number of articles per source as the curve moves forward. Even though they are significant as a whole, the peripheral sources represented by this long tail only generate a small number of pertinent articles. The graphic directs future researchers to the most significant works in the field by highlighting the concentration of significant work in a small number of journals. Additionally, it highlights how the research is interdisciplinary, drawing from sources in environmental science, policy studies and regional development.



3.7 International collaboration in Southeast Asian migration studies

From 2004 to 2024, the top 10 international research collaborations in the field of migration and sustainable development are highlighted in Table 8. According to the data, Southeast Asian and Western countries have a robust network of collaboration. Thailand is a significant player, especially in its alliances with the USA (5), Australia (4) and the United Kingdom (11 partnerships). The USA also exhibits strong ties with Singapore (5) and the United Kingdom (8). By regularly collaborating with the USA (3), Thailand (4) and the UK (7), Malaysia also exhibits a significant collaborative role. These trends suggest that the UK is a major hub for international research cooperation, especially with Southeast Asia, which promotes knowledge sharing and builds the international scholarly conversation on migration and sustainability.

3.8 Most frequently used keywords

Table 9 presents the most prevalent keywords in Southeast Asian migration and sustainable development research from 2004 to 2024. Findings reflect a strong focus on issues at the forefront of the region's development agenda and "Sustainable development" (61) and "Economic development" (56) top the list. "Migration" (53) is also highly ranked, underscoring the core issue being examined. The geographic location keywords "Indonesia" (39), "Vietnam" (35) and "Thailand" (34) reflect the geographic focus of academic interest. Furthermore, keywords "Human" (40), "Humans" (33) and "Female" (31) reveal a strong interest in the human element of migration. The frequency of generic scholarly terms like "Article" (34) reflects methodological conformity in keyword tagging within the literature. In total, the keyword analysis offers a good balance of thematic, demographic and geographic elements in the regional research field.

Table 8. International collaboration in Southeast Asian migration studies

From	To	Frequency
Thailand	United Kingdom	11
USA	United Kingdom	8
Malaysia	United Kingdom	7
Thailand	USA	5
USA	Singapore	5
Thailand	Australia	4
Malaysia	Thailand	4
Indonesia	Australia	4
Australia	Philippines	4
Malaysia	USA	3

Country Collaboration Map

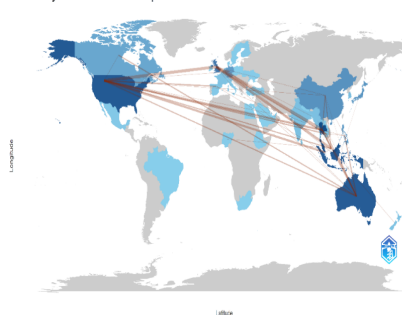


Table 9. Most commonly used keywords

Keywords	Frequency
Sustainable development	61
Economic development	56
Migration	53
Human	40
Indonesia	39
Vietnam	35
Article	34
Thailand	34
Humans	33
Female	31

3.9 Thematic evaluation of keywords

Figure 5 is a thematic map of the discipline’s keywords in three time periods (2004–2014, 2015–2023, 2024), showing how research themes cluster and change. Clusters in the earlier period (2004–2014) are characterized by general development and demographic terms – e.g. “economic development,” “population statistics” – and mentions of world regions (Europe, Australia) and individual countries (Thailand, Indonesia). By 2015–2023, “economic development” is still central but now overlaps with new concerns of “sustainable development” and “migration,” suggesting that sustainability and mobility concerns were freshly linked to the economic agenda. New nodes in 2024 include “developing world” and country names such as “Myanmar” and “Philippines,” all linked back to “economic development,” reflective of a shift into those geographical areas. Arrows indicate how ideas evolve: for example, arrows from “economic development (2004–2014)” into “economic development (2015–2023)” and then into “economic development (2024)” indicate continuity of that underlying theme; an arrow from “Thailand (2004–2014)” to “sustainable development (2015–2023)” indicates that early Thailand work led into subsequent sustainability discussion; and arrows from “sustainable development (2015–2023)” and “migration (2015–2023)” into “economic development (2024)” and “developing world (2024)” indicate that those subjects have merged into contemporary economic-development research. In total, the map reveals a neat thematic evolution: early emphasis on general development and population concerns yields to sustainable development and migration, prior to concentrating once more on particular Southeast Asian areas – precisely the sort of “shifts in research emphasis over time” that occurs in bibliometric analysis.

A thematically oriented bibliometric analysis covering the period from 2004 to 2013, as presented in Figure 6 (Thematic Evaluation of Annual Publications), was conducted to identify major research clusters. These clusters were defined using term frequency and centrality measures, reflecting the prominence and interconnectedness of key research areas and conceptual themes within the literature. Terms are organized in a series of thematic parts of theses, such as “economic and social implications,” “economic development,” “fishery,” “human studies,” “case studies.” Each of the rows in the table represent a term/phrase while three important metrics were recorded: how many times it appears (Occurrences), to which cluster it refers to (Cluster) and its centrality measures (Betweenness Centrality, Closeness Centrality and PageRank Centrality). The Occurrences column refers to the occurrences of a term within the explored dataset, thus also acting as a rough measure of its frequency within the literature. The Cluster part displays the thematic allocation of each term and terms matching with each other are within the same cluster. For example, “economic development,” “migration” and “sustainable development” are in the cluster of economic development because they are all broadly related to the wider economic development theme. The centrality measures will help you see how important a term is in its cluster. Betweenness centrality indicates the degree to which a term is a mediator between other terms, so whether it is a connector among diverse fields of study. Closeness centrality, which identifies the rate by

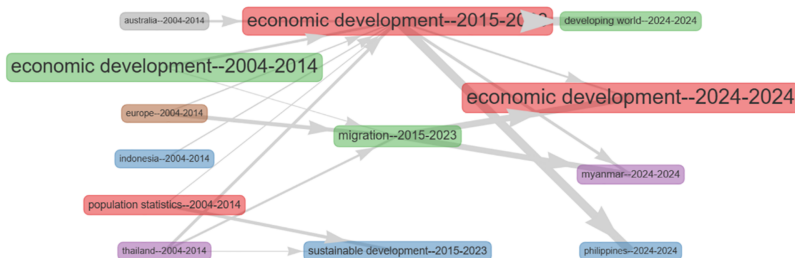


Figure 5. Thematic evaluation of keywords (1994–2024)

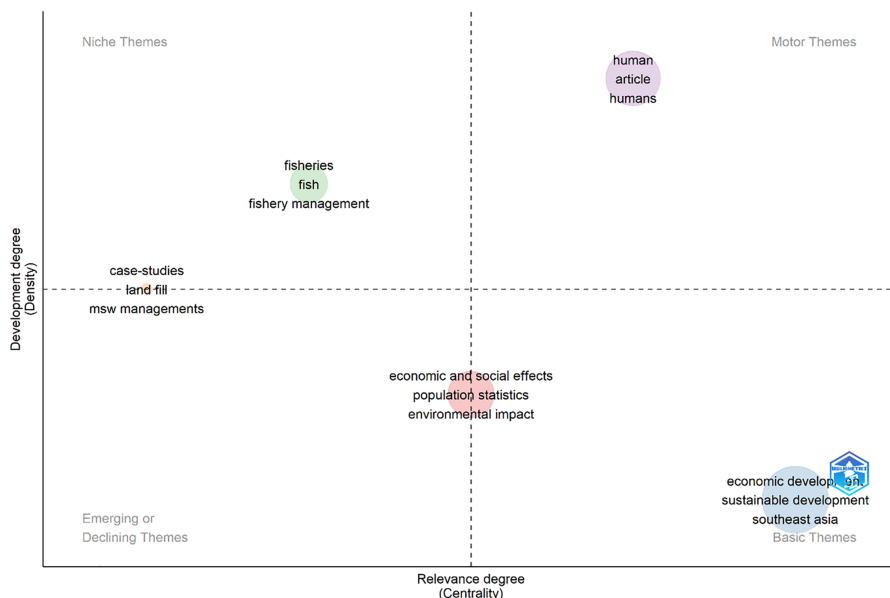


Figure 6. Thematic evaluation (from 2004 to 2013 years)

which a term can reach other terms in the network, is an influential feature. PageRank centrality calculates the degree of centrality of the term within the cluster, similar to how a web page is ranked in terms of its links. The high centrality values of terms, for example, “migration” and “sustainable development” reveal that these terms play a critical role in shaping the academic literature and that they are shaping influences on other topic areas. Through examining these statistics, the table indicates that dominant research subjects include migration, economic growth and human health, as well as emerging and niche themes such as “shifting cultivation” or “land use change.” This dynamic provides a more in-depth view of the key research areas and their mutual influence, thus providing a snapshot of actively evolving research trends.

Figure 7 depicts a close thematic analysis (from 2014 to 2024 years) of a few linked “clusters,” the most prominent among them focusing on sustainable development, migration, immigration policy, water quality and offshore oil well production. The investigation of the centrality of terms in each cluster demonstrates how different concepts and regions are contributing to the ongoing development of the research in these areas. In the Sustainable Development cluster, the node “sustainable development” is the central topic, posting the highest betweenness centrality as a bridge for connecting a number of themes (e.g. decision-making and sustainability). The lower centrality of terms such as “climate change” and “biodiversity” suggests that they are important, but not central to the dominating discourse. See, for example, the use of geographic terms such as “southeast asia” (See [Von Braun, 2012](#)) or “philippines”, which evidence the regional specificity of much work within sustainable development, particularly when it comes to environmental concerns within developing countries. When it comes to the migration cluster, “migration” is the most central node, suggesting that it is a central field of study for the cluster and related terms such as human and economic development broaden that focus to include the human and socioeconomic aspects of migration.

The recurrent presence of countries like Viet Nam and Thailand indicates that certain areas, especially in South-East Asia, must be taken into consideration to grasp migration trends.

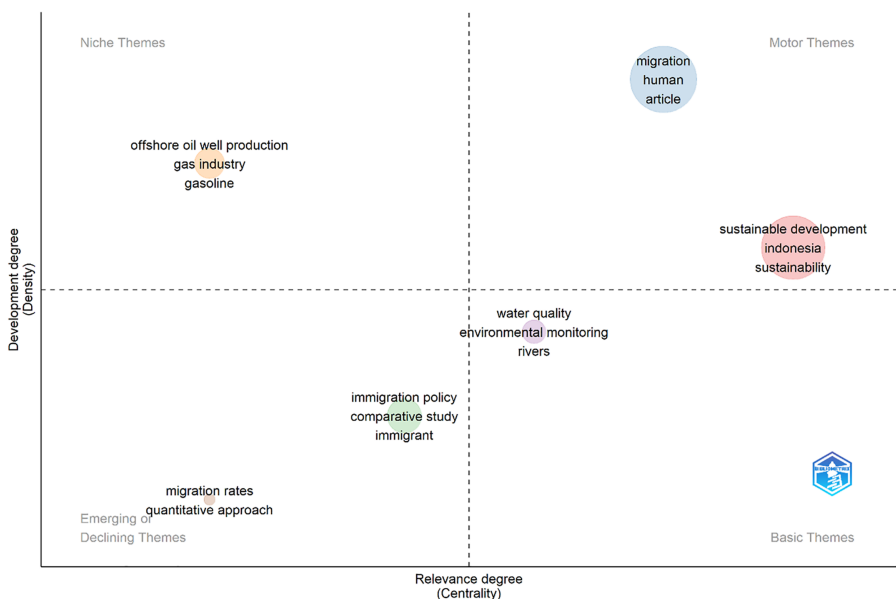


Figure 7. Thematic evaluation (from 2014 to 2024 years)

The presence of gender-specific words (female, male) furthermore shows that it has become increasingly necessary to analyze migration through a gendered perspective and to take into account the dimension of gender, notably but not exclusively in the field of labor migration. Second, regarding the Immigration Policy cluster, both comparative study and labor policy suggest that expressions of cross-national policy and dimensions of economic immigration governance are central research foci. Although technical jargon such as satellite imagery (5.305) is included in the cluster, these jargons seem secondary and reflect a more specialized focus on policy analysis via technical means. In this latter case, the Water Quality cluster, which includes water quality and simulation as terms, suggests a growing emphasis on scientific approaches for evaluating and controlling water resources. The significance of “trace elements” is a reflection of concerns about pollution and environmental decay. Finally, the Offshore Oil Well Production cluster has a stronger attention on the environmental and technological issues of oil exploitation. The terms offshore oil wells and gasoline have a low centrality, which indicates that they are important issues; however, they are not as widespread in comparison with other environmental or migration matters. Finally and in summary, the network analysis uncovers a complex landscape in which some terms are central hubs through which numerous domains of research are connected, and others serve as niche but important lines of inquiry. At the center are pervasive themes like sustainable development and migration; wrapped in and around them are more focused subfields like water quality and immigration policy that help to provide a comprehensive understanding of these worldwide challenges.

4. Discussion

This bibliometric analysis provides a comprehensive overview of the academic landscape pertaining to migration and sustainable development in Southeast Asia in the period from 2004 to 2024. Evidence of a growing research field is demonstrated through a 9.06% annual growth in the number of publications and a total of 378 documents drawn from 301 different sources. This increase can also be correlated to the ongoing academic and policy dialogue generated by

migration as both a tool of development and a challenge, particularly to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which address migration with Canadian foreign policy approach in the region, specifically with SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities and SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth (Adger *et al.*, 2019; Holliday, Hennebry, & Gammage, 2018; Zreik, 2024).

The average citation rate of 16.2 per document indicates strong academic engagement, with citation peaks in 2010 and 2020 corresponding to significant thematic or policy developments. The diverse and interdisciplinary breadth of the author keywords and Keywords Plus indicates an emerging research domain that involves environmental science, public health, gender and development across regions (Sheikh *et al.*, 2025; Cipollina *et al.*, 2024; Ullah, 2016). Most importantly, the evolution of keywords between cohorts shows a trajectory from general demographic and socioeconomic development to more nuanced views of sustainability, human mobility and region-specific issues. The findings suggest that regional actors – Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand – produce outputs in this field. However, their publications are in general single-country studies as a result of a more domestic-facing agenda. In contrast, the USA, United Kingdom and Australia display greater collaboration internationality (in terms of MCPs) and citation impact, which is in line with patterns for migration scholarship globally (Rojas-Sánchez *et al.*, 2023; Ha and Chuah, 2023). The UK, for instance, co-authored 64.3% of their publications together with Southeast Asian scholars (meaning their role in transnational academic exchange is central). The evidence indicates that Southeast Asia contributes to scientific knowledge and scholarship globally, but visibility and impact are maximized through collaborations with resourced institutions in the Global North (Ullah *et al.*, 2019). The examination of international collaboration patterns identified that Southeast Asian countries have relationships with both regional and global partners. For example, there is relatively high international co-authorship from Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore, presented often with the USA, UK and Australia. These collaboration co-authorships, as founded in bibliometric literature (Kumar, 2025), play a role in citation rates and drive methodological diverse (Kumar, 2025). On the other hand, there are clear disparities revealed in the data. Cambodia, Laos and Timor-Leste had particularly low representation in both authorship and collaboration networks, which raises a number of questions about equity in knowledge production and access to research infrastructure across the region (Kikkawa *et al.*, 2019; Rahman, Ferdous, & Prodhon, 2025; Sen *et al.*, 2025).

The most commonly cited countries were again dominantly Global North, with the USA having the highest total citations (1,076) and average citations per article (71.70), followed by Australia (25.80) and Malaysia (22.80) for averages. This indicates research excellence and some unjustified biases in scholarly influence, as seen in the averages of Southeast Asian countries like Thailand and the Philippines, which play a significant role in the migration patterns of the region, but were only cited an average of 5.00 and 5.67 times, respectively. The data suggest an even greater need for investment in dissemination, open-access publishing and collaborative capacity enhancement. Thematic mapping and Bradford's Law further confirm that the field is both interdisciplinary and concentrated around a core set of journals. A small number of journals – especially Sustainability (Switzerland) and the Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies – have core importance, but there are many peripheral sources within a long tail, creating a varied cross-sector knowledge ecosystem. Thematic clusters over time indicate that integrated discussions of sustainability, environmental resilience, gender and social equity are trends that need to be explored in future research and corresponding engagement through policy.

However, it is important to note some limitations. Using Scopus may exclude non-indexed publications or any publications that are not in English and regionally focused publications, so there may be undercounting of local voices and grey literature. Citation metrics are common measures, but may not capture the full extent of qualitative contributions or impact on the community. Co-authorship may be seen as a proxy for collaboration; however, it does not represent the depth or equality of collaboration. Future research should focus on closing the geographic and epistemic gaps identified here. Mixed-method studies utilizing bibliometrics

supported by qualitative content analysis could better expose the conceptual shift and sense of policy connectedness. Policymakers and funders should also be encouraged to support opportunities for enhanced South–South collaboration, inclusion in publication and mainstreaming migration into sustainable development strategies at national and regional levels.

In conclusion, the trends demonstrate that migration is no longer simply seen as a demographic or economic problem, but rather as an integral piece of sustainable development. Southeast Asia, with its varied migration experiences, has emerged as a focal point for such engagement. However, to make research impactful, inclusive and policy-relevant, it is essential to continue efforts to foster collaboration among scholars, address regional inequities and amplify the visibility of underrepresented scholars and contexts.

5. Conclusion

This bibliometric study offers a panoramic view of the research landscape on migration and sustainable development in Southeast Asia for the past 20 years. The review uncovers an emergent research scene – characterized by the increasing production of publications, a rise in foreign cooperation and a trend of thematic specialization. Key contributors include both regional players (Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand) and global actors (the USA, the United Kingdom and Australia), underscoring the topic’s significance at both regional and international levels. However, the results also suggest clear disparities not only in the strength of research influence or collaboration intensity, but also in geographic representation, especially regarding under-represented Southeast Asian countries. The shift in theme from discussing more general development issues to the broader themes of sustainability and migration is an indication of the profession’s maturity. Keywords, institutional affiliations and core journals reveal an expanding interdisciplinary network that involves scholars in public health, environmental science, policy studies and regional development. Additionally, the analysis of collaboration patterns indicates a developing but unbalanced collaborative global network, with stronger international collaboration patterns usually associated with higher impact. This work not only visualizes the intellectual structure and collaborators network of the subject field but also highlights the prospective directions for exploration, including: the study of marginalized geographies, policy-driven research and methodological innovations. Characterized by intricate migration dynamics amidst development and environmental pressures, South East Asia will require ongoing and inclusive scholastic engagement. Altogether, this study provides a strong empirical basis for further academic research or policy debate, advancing a more profound and connected understanding of migration and sustainability in one of the world’s most dynamic regions.

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Data availability

Data will be available on request to the corresponding author.

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