

Poverty and Political Instability: A Bibliometric Analysis

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Abstract: Poverty and political instability are two fundamental issues that continue to shape governance and public policy in many countries, particularly in the Global South. Despite the rapid growth of the literature on these issues, studies that systematically map conceptual relationships, research trends, and global knowledge structures remain limited. Existing research often treats poverty and political instability as separate or loosely connected phenomena, thereby overlooking the institutional and political mechanisms that link them. This article addresses this gap by examining how global research has constructed the relationship between poverty and political instability, with particular attention to the Global South. The study employs a bibliometric approach, analysing 706 Scopus-indexed publications from 2016 to 2025 using VOSviewer. The findings indicate a significant increase in academic attention since 2019 and reveal that poverty is predominantly framed in relation to governance, public policy, and health, while its direct linkage to political instability remains comparatively underexplored. The analysis also highlights persistent geographic disparities in knowledge production, with the Global North dominating publication networks despite increasing contributions from the Global South. These findings contribute to the literature by clarifying the structural positioning of poverty within contemporary governance debates and by identifying gaps in the empirical examination of political instability. However, this study is limited by its reliance on a single database (Scopus) and the constraints of bibliometric analysis in capturing contextual and causal dynamics. Overall, the study underscores the need for more integrative and context-sensitive approaches to understanding the relationship between poverty and political instability in the Global South.

Keywords: Poverty; Political Instability; Bibliometric Analysis; Global South; Governance; Public Policy.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Poverty remains a central concern in political studies, governance, and public policy, particularly in the Global South. Countries in this region face structural challenges, including persistent economic inequality, limited access to basic services, and weak state capacity to ensure citizens' welfare. In this context, poverty cannot be understood solely as income deprivation but as a multidimensional phenomenon encompassing limited access to education, health, decent work, and social and political participation (Alkire, 2020; Balasubramanian et al., 2023; Rejeki & Andari, 2024). This condition has direct implications for power relations and the quality of democracy, as people experiencing poverty are often marginalised in public decision-making processes.

Meanwhile, political instability is a serious challenge that often accompanies poverty in many countries of the Global South (Alhassan et al., 2021; Dalyop, 2019; Khan & Farooq, 2019; Rashid & Rashid, 2024). It can manifest in various forms, ranging from social conflict and mass protests to irregular regime changes and the erosion of state institutions' legitimacy.

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Unstable political situations tend to impede the formulation and implementation of public policies, undermine investor confidence, and erode the state's capacity to deliver sustainable poverty-alleviation programmes (Alamoudi, 2025; Mayoral & Mueller, 2025; Smith, 2024). Furthermore, political instability often exacerbates the economic vulnerability of people living in poverty, creating a negative feedback loop between political instability and poverty. Therefore, poverty and political instability cannot be understood separately but rather as two intertwined phenomena within a complex governance ecosystem.

Research into the relationship between poverty and political instability has attracted sustained academic attention in recent decades. Studies have shown that inequality and inadequate welfare security can heighten the risk of social conflict, political protests, and even government instability (Çemen & Yörük, 2022; Mayoral & Mueller, 2025; Rashid & Rashid, 2024). Furthermore, prolonged political instability can undermine a state's capacity to deliver public services, create jobs, and implement effective poverty alleviation programmes (Alamoudi, 2025; Kou & Yasin, 2024; Smith, 2024). However, although there is increasing literature, a comprehensive mapping of how global research trends on these two issues have developed remains limited or nonexistent.

Previous research has mainly focused on case analyses or empirical studies in specific countries, thereby failing to provide a comprehensive picture of the knowledge structure, relationships among major themes, and intellectual networks within the field. In the era of big data on scientific publications, bibliometric analysis provides a systematic approach to identifying research developments, thematic distributions, and the contributions of scientific scholars globally (Yan & Zhiping, 2023). Although bibliometric approaches have been used across various social science fields, their application to mapping the relationship between poverty and political instability has remained rare, particularly over the past 10 years.

This article aims to fill this gap by utilising Scopus publication data and the VOSviewer analysis tool to map research trends, thematic clusters, and conceptual relationships between poverty and political instability. Specifically, this study is designed to answer the following research questions: (1) what are the development trends of publications on poverty and political instability in the period 2016–2025; (2) what are the main thematic clusters that shape the knowledge structure in this field; (3) which countries and actors dominate knowledge production; and (4) how are poverty and political instability positioned and conceptually linked in the global literature, particularly in the context of the Global South.

This study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research landscape on poverty and political instability between 2016 and 2025. This period was chosen because it represents the most recent phase of literary development. This research not only contributes to the academic literature but also provides policymakers in the Global South with an analytical foundation for formulating more inclusive and politically stable development strategies. The bibliometric approach in this study is expected to open new avenues for emerging research by informing future research directions, particularly for countries striving to achieve sustainable social and political resilience.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on poverty and political instability often develops along two opposing paths. Poverty studies typically focus on welfare, distribution, and social rights, while political instability studies more often highlight conflict, regimes, and coercive institutions. This separation makes the relationship between social deprivation and political vulnerability appear as if they are external to each other. In many Global South contexts, the two are intertwined through public policy, institutional quality, and patterns of state-society relations. Therefore,

in this context, poverty can be read as a political-distributive issue, while simultaneously treating political stability as an institutional achievement dependent on state capacity.

Poverty is not understood solely as a lack of income or market failure, but rather as the result of political decisions, institutional arrangements, and power relations that govern the distribution of resources. This approach emphasises that access to education, health, decent work, and social protection is shaped by policy processes and power configurations, not simply by neutral economic mechanisms (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2013; Sen, 2001). Here, persistent poverty often arises from patterns of adverse incorporation and social exclusion, namely conditions where poor groups are not entirely outside the system but are instead integrated into it in disadvantaged and subordinate positions (Hickey & Du Toit, 2013; Mosse, 2010). This approach also helps explain why economic growth does not automatically reduce poverty if the institutions that support it remain extractive or elite-biased. Thus, poverty levels can be treated as an indicator of how the state mediates rights, opportunities, and distribution. The implication is that poverty analysis must always be read in conjunction with the policy and power structures that produce it.

This perspective becomes even more important when poverty is situated alongside governance and political instability. When public policies fail to reduce inequality or instead reproduce intergroup exclusion, poverty can become a source of collective grievances, delegitimisation of the state, and intensified political mobilisation. The literature on horizontal inequality shows that inequalities linked to social, ethnic, or territorial identities have greater political impact than purely vertical individual inequalities (Østby, 2008; Stewart, 2008). From this perspective, political instability is not simply explained by elite conflict or electoral competition, but also by a symptom of failures in social distribution and recognition. Classical political economy findings also suggest that inequality can increase sociopolitical instability and depress investment, thus opening a pathway linking social exclusion to development stagnation (Alesina & Perotti, 1996). In conflict-prone societies, this relationship tends to be circular, as violence and insecurity, in turn, deepen household and community poverty.

Besley & Persson (2010) emphasise that a state's legal and fiscal capacity constitutes a long-term institutional investment that significantly determines both development trajectories and conflict susceptibility. Fukuyama (2013) further clarifies that state quality must be distinguished from mere policy outcomes, as the issue concerns the quality of the executive branch, the bureaucracy, and the implementation machinery. In other words, a state capable of credibly collecting taxes, coordinating the bureaucracy, and providing basic services will be more likely to reduce the risk of chronic poverty while maintaining political stability. In contrast, weak states tend to result in unequal implementation, clientelism, and fragile legitimacy, especially in the poorest social areas.

In countries of the Global South, state capacity is often unevenly distributed, both historically and territorially. The literature on Africa suggests that the state's weak ability to project authority to regions far from the centre has long been a root cause of institutional fragility and inequality in service delivery (Herbst, 2014). In a study of Latin America, Soifer (2012) suggests that state capacity is best measured as a combination of extraction, security, and the administration of basic services, while also accounting for the state's uneven reach across regions. Vom Hau (2012) refines this argument by emphasising that state capacity is multidimensional and shaped by organisational competencies, embeddedness with non-state actors, and historically produced territorial reach. Meanwhile, Centeno et al. (2017) note that developing countries face simultaneous demands to establish order, promote development, and expand inclusion, but do not always have the same capacity to achieve these simultaneously. Therefore, in the context of the Global South, poverty and political instability need to be read

not only as national-level problems, but also as the effects of unequal state capacity across regions, groups, and policy areas.

The relationship between poverty and political instability can be understood as a recursive feedback loop. Persistent poverty weakens state legitimacy, narrows the fiscal base, and increases the likelihood of social demands that formal institutions cannot absorb. At the same time, political instability reduces states' incentives and ability to invest in the legal, fiscal, and administrative capacities necessary to improve welfare distribution (Besley & Persson, 2010; Fukuyama, 2013). In institutional terms, states with more inclusive institutions are more likely to manage distributional conflicts peacefully. In contrast, those with more extractive institutions tend to shift the costs of adjustment onto the poor and vulnerable (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2013). The literature on poverty and war also emphasises that violence is not only a consequence of poverty but also a mechanism that reproduces long-term deprivation at the household and community levels (Justino, 2012). Therefore, within this approach, political stability is best understood as a result of the state's capacity to manage distribution, rather than simply the regime's ability to maintain control.

In this bibliometric study, these two perspectives are not tested causally, but rather serve as interpretive lenses for reading the knowledge structures generated by global literature. Bibliometrics is a tool for systematically mapping the structure, evolution, and gaps of a research field (Donthu et al., 2021). Thus, this theoretical framework provides a conceptual basis for bibliometric data mapping that goes beyond network descriptions and can also explain the theoretical tendencies that underpin the development of poverty and political instability studies in the Global South.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative bibliometric approach to map the development, knowledge structure, and dynamics of research on poverty and political instability from 2016 to 2025. The bibliometric approach systematically describes the scientific landscape by analysing publication metadata, including keywords, authors, affiliations, citations, and the network of relationships between documents (Yan & Zhiping, 2023). The primary database used is Scopus, given its multidisciplinary coverage and high indexing standards (Baas et al., 2020). Although using a single database can limit the scope of the literature, particularly local or regional publications that are not indexed.

The extracted metadata includes article titles, abstracts, keywords, author names, institutional affiliations, publication year, journal titles, and bibliographic references. All data are retrieved in CSV format and then processed using VOSviewer. The search strategy was conducted in the Title, Abstract, and Keywords (TITLE-ABS-KEY) columns of Scopus using the query: (poverty OR "poverty alleviation" OR "poverty reduction") AND (politics OR "political stability" OR "political instability"). This query was designed to ensure that all publications linking poverty issues to political dynamics were comprehensively captured. There were no geographic restrictions in the search, as this study aimed to examine global research trends.

Inclusion criteria included: (1) Scopus-indexed scientific articles; (2) publications within the 2016–2025 period; (3) documents that substantively discuss the link between poverty and political issues, governance, or public policy; and (4) availability of complete metadata. Meanwhile, exclusion criteria included: (1) studies that focused solely on microeconomic aspects without any link to the political dimension; (2) publications that were irrelevant based on title and abstract; and (3) documents with incomplete or duplicate metadata. This process

was carried out in stages, including identification, initial screening, and feasibility assessment, before producing the final dataset for analysis.

Document selection was conducted using the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework to ensure transparency and accuracy in screening. The PRISMA process comprises three main stages: identification, screening, and final inclusion. In the identification stage, all articles resulting from the query were collected. Subsequently, during the screening stage, articles deemed irrelevant based on their titles and abstracts were excluded. Then, in the eligibility assessment stage, documents were examined in more depth to confirm their relevance to the research topic, particularly the direct link between poverty and political instability. Only articles that met all relevance criteria and had complete metadata were included in the bibliometric analysis. Please refer to Figure 1 for more details.

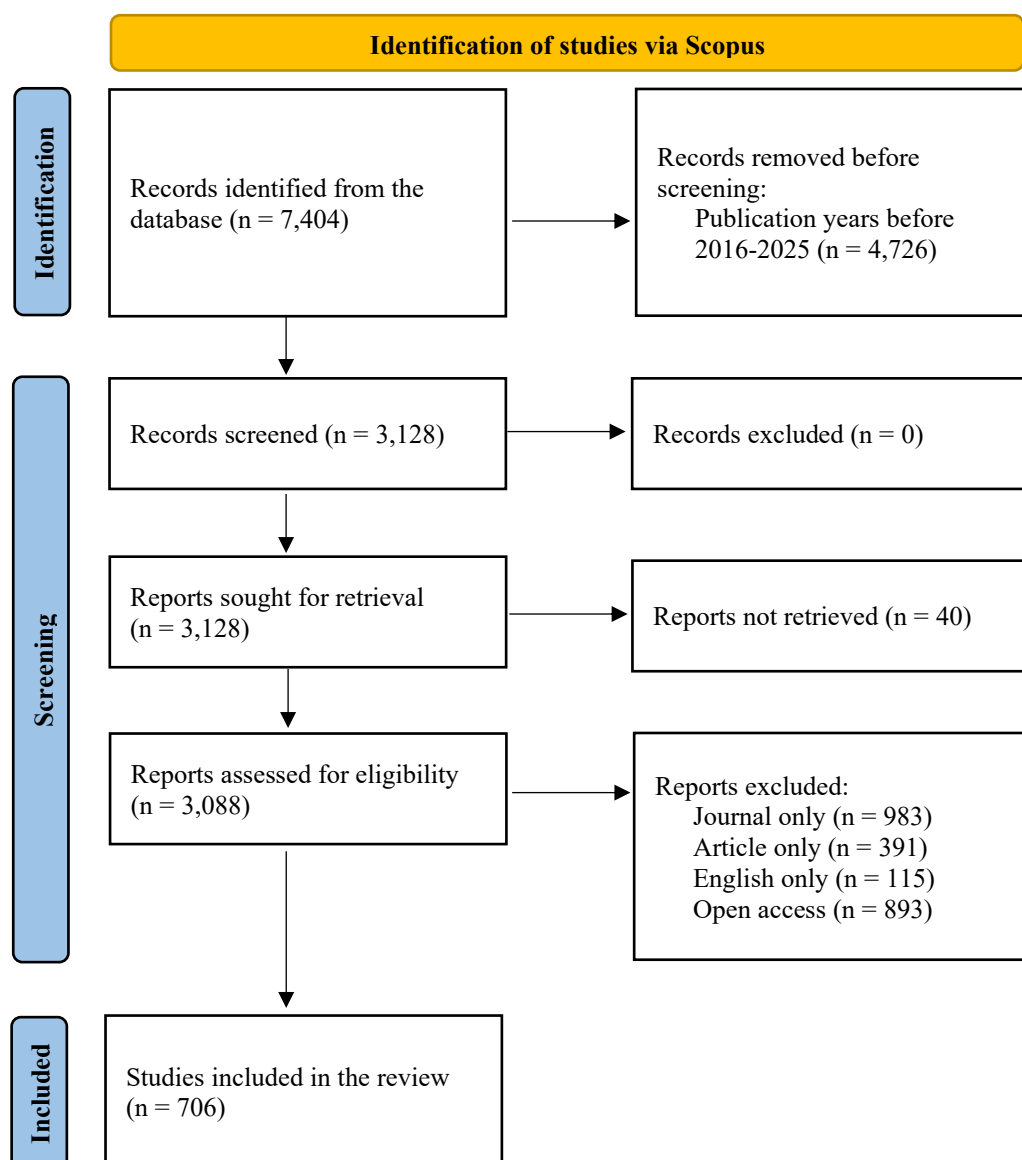


Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram for bibliometric analysis in this study

Source: Created by the authors (2026)

After the selection process was complete, the remaining 706 articles were analysed using VOSviewer. The VOSviewer software produces rich, detailed visualisations of scientific networks, including maps of relationships among keywords, authors, countries, and documents

(van Eck & Waltman, 2018). Additionally, VOSviewer was used to present network visualisations that illustrate the structure of knowledge networks, overlay visualisations to show the temporal development of specific topics, and density visualisations to assess the density of research focus in a specific area.

All analysis steps were carried out sequentially, beginning with raw data collection, metadata cleaning, VOSviewer processing, and interpretation of the resulting visualisations. The results were then discussed narratively to identify thematic clusters, uncover conceptual links between poverty and political instability, and assess the contributions of dominant authors and countries in this field. This approach provides a comprehensive picture of trends and directions in the development of the global literature, particularly in the Global South, and an analytical foundation for future research and policy development. While this approach is effective in mapping knowledge structures, it should be noted that bibliometric analysis has limitations in capturing causal dynamics and socio-political contexts in depth.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Annual Publication Trends

Analysis of the annual distribution shows that publications on poverty and political instability increased fairly consistently over the observation period (Figure 2). In the initial phase, the number of publications was relatively moderate, with 41 in 2016, 49 in 2017, and 42 in 2018. Although it fluctuated, this period reflected the early consolidation of the still-fragmented literature on the intersection of poverty and political studies. Significant changes emerged in 2019, with a surge to 71 publications, signalling increased academic attention to the link between poverty and political dynamics. This trend continued during the COVID-19 pandemic and the post-pandemic period, with 70 publications in 2020, 73 in 2021, and again 73 in 2022. The stability of the figures during this period indicates that the global crisis reinforced the centrality of poverty and political instability in governance and public policy discourse.

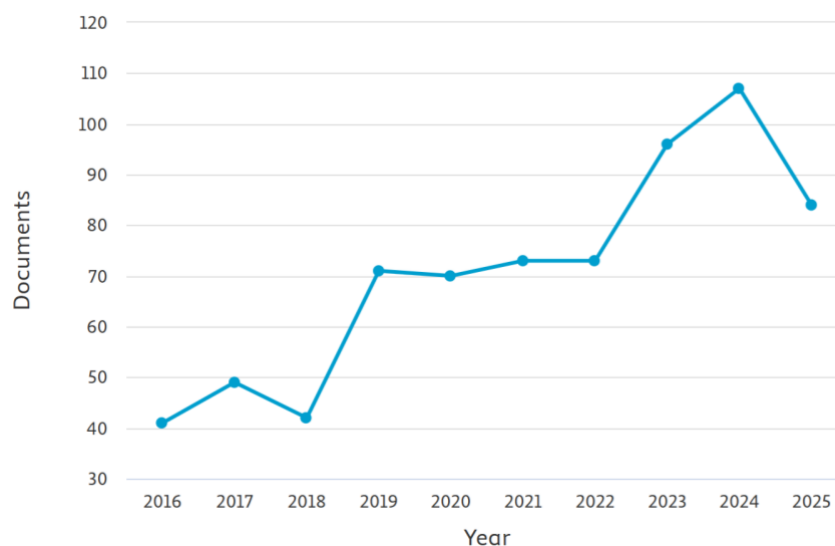


Figure 2. Publication trends between 2016 and 2025

Source: Data from Scopus (2026)

Academic attention peaked in 2023 and 2024, with 96 and 107 publications, respectively, making 2024 the year with the most publications in the decade. This surge reflects a growing research focus on social inequality, political crises, domestic conflicts, and the capacity of states to respond to economic and political pressures simultaneously. In 2025, the number of publications reached 84, a slight decrease from the previous year, likely due to the limitations of the full-year data available at the time of extraction (conducted early in the year). Overall,

this pattern indicates a clear shift from fragmented studies towards a more integrated approach to the study of poverty and political instability, particularly since 2019. These findings indicate that the global literature increasingly views these two issues as interconnected and crucial for understanding the challenges of global development and political stability.

4.2. Keyword Co-occurrence Analysis

The results of the keyword co-occurrence analysis using VOSviewer indicate that the knowledge structure in the study of poverty and political instability forms a complex, multidimensional conceptual network. In the network visualisation, the keywords “poverty” and “human” emerge as the most central nodes, with the highest connectivity, indicating that the literature in this field is strongly oriented towards a human-centred approach. The centrality of these two keywords links various cross-disciplinary themes, ranging from health and public policy to governance and development. This suggests that poverty is understood not narrowly as an economic issue but rather as a social and political phenomenon inherent in human life and in the state’s institutional structure.

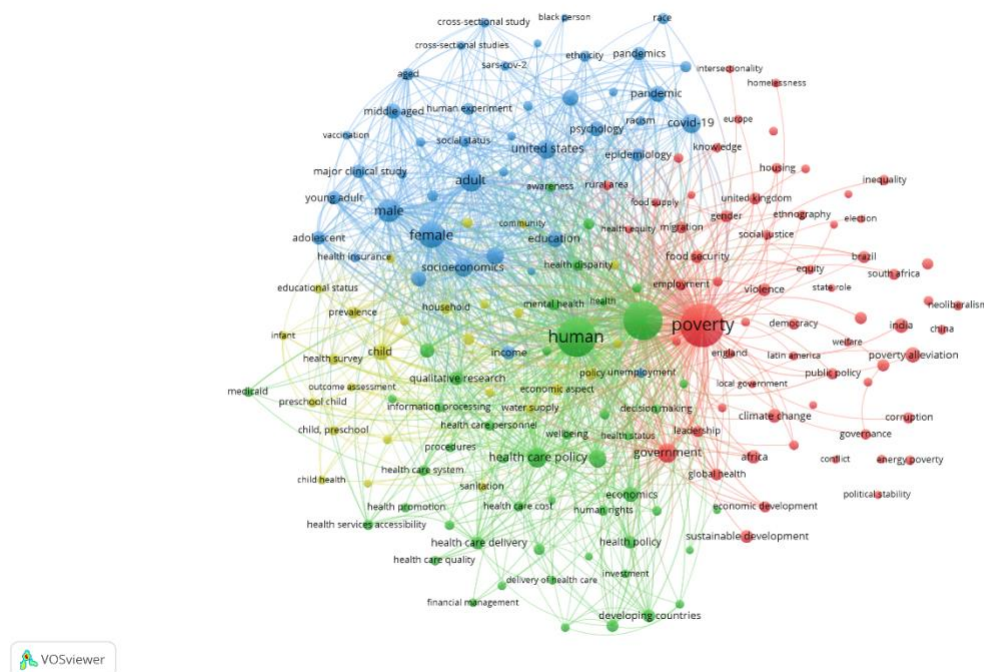


Figure 3. Network visualisation in this study
 Source: Data from VOSviewer (2026)

The network visualisation, as illustrated in Figure 3, also reveals several key thematic clusters. The first cluster is closely related to health and well-being, characterised by keywords such as health policy, health care delivery, mental health, health inequality, and sanitation. This cluster shows that poverty is often analysed in terms of its impact on access to health services and quality of life, particularly in developing countries. The second cluster focuses on the political and governance dimension, encompassing keywords such as government, governance, public policy, democracy, political stability, and corruption. This cluster emphasises the close relationship between poverty and the state’s capacity to maintain political stability and formulate effective public policies. Meanwhile, the third cluster highlights social issues and inequality, including inequality, gender, race, ethnicity, social justice, and violence, reinforcing the argument that poverty directly intersects with social dynamics and political conflict.

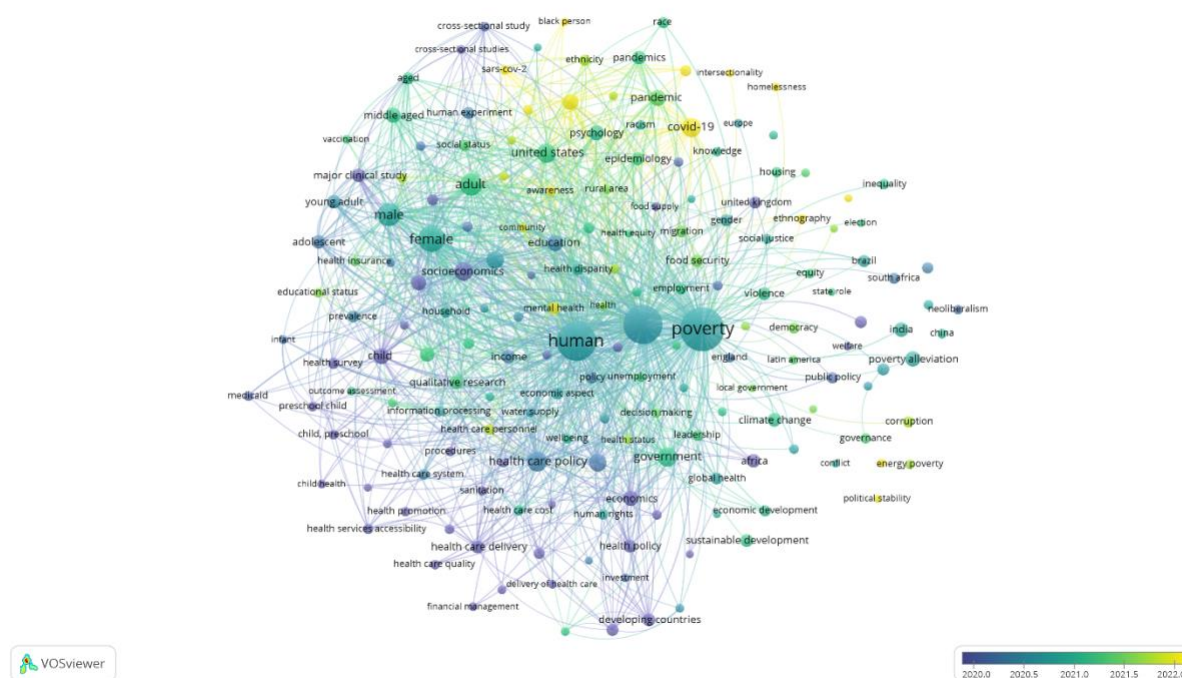


Figure 4. Overlay visualisation in this study
 Source: Data from VOSviewer (2026)

The overlay visualisation in Figure 4 provides a temporal overview of the evolution of research topics. Darker colours (blue to green) indicate topics that develop earlier, such as health care systems, child health, and socioeconomics. Conversely, lighter colours (yellow) reflect more recent research foci, particularly since 2020. Within this category, keywords such as COVID-19, pandemic, food security, housing, intersectionality, and inequality have become increasingly dominant. This shift suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic has catalysed the broadening and deepening of studies of poverty and political instability, highlighting structural vulnerabilities, social inequality, and the state’s limited capacity to respond to multidimensional crises.

Meanwhile, the density visualisation in Figure 5 highlights areas of research concentration in the literature. The highest density is observed around the keywords “poverty”, “human”, “government” and “health policy”, indicating that the most intensive research focuses on the relationship between poverty, public policy, and the role of the state. Medium-density areas include employment, food security, inequality, and climate change, indicating an expanding academic focus on structural factors that contribute to social and political instability. Conversely, issues such as political stability, energy poverty, and neoliberalism are more prevalent in lower-density areas, suggesting that these topics remain relatively underexplored in the literature on the link between poverty and political instability.

Overall, this co-occurrence analysis shows that the global literature has shifted towards a more integrated approach across economic, social, and political dimensions. Poverty is no longer treated as a single variable but as a central node in a network of issues that includes health, inequality, governance, and political stability. In the Global South, these findings emphasise that poverty and political instability are structural and mutually reinforcing, thereby demanding a holistic policy approach. In the Indonesian context, this pattern creates space for further research that more explicitly links poverty alleviation policies to strengthening political stability and the country’s institutional capacity.

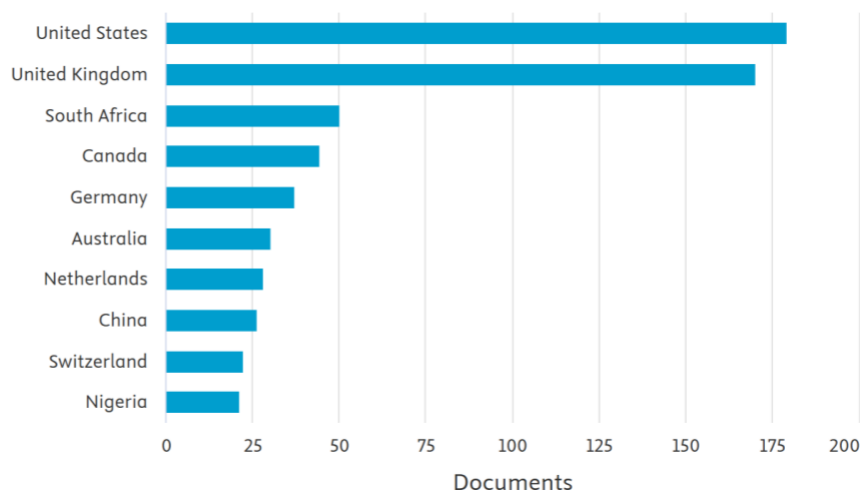


Figure 6. Top 10 countries contributing to the study

Source: Data from Scopus (2026)

Overall, the distribution of country contributions, as shown in Figure 6, reveals two key findings. First, knowledge production on poverty and political instability remains heavily concentrated in countries of the Global North. Second, certain countries of the Global South (particularly South Africa, China, and Nigeria) are increasingly shaping the substance of research through their rich empirical contexts. These findings underscore the importance of encouraging geographic diversification in knowledge production, so that understandings of poverty and political instability become more contextualised and relevant for countries of the Global South, including Indonesia.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study have significant theoretical implications for research on poverty and political instability, particularly within the frameworks of political science and development studies. The dominance of keywords such as poverty, human, government, and health policy in the co-occurrence analysis indicates that poverty in contemporary literature is no longer treated as a residual economic phenomenon but as a structural condition rooted in power relations, public policy design, and state institutional capacity. This pattern shows that poverty is a product of political decisions, resource distribution, and the configuration of interests between state and non-state actors. Thus, poverty is understood not merely as a failure of individuals or markets but as a reflection of unequal governance structures and state capacity.

Furthermore, the close link between poverty and the state, as reflected in the keyword network, supports the relevance of state capacity theory, which holds that the state's ability to design, implement, and enforce policies is a key determinant of social and political stability (Andersen et al., 2025; Mijiyawa & Oloufade, 2019). States with weak fiscal, administrative, and political capacity often fail to provide basic services, including social protection and health care, thereby increasing the vulnerability of people experiencing poverty (Abbas et al., 2023; Murshed et al., 2022; Ogilvie, 2022). This failure, as the literature shows, not only affects social welfare but also undermines the state's political legitimacy. Thus, these findings broaden the theoretical understanding that political instability is not simply a result of elite conflict or power struggles, but also a manifestation of the state's failure to manage poverty systematically.

Furthermore, growing attention to inequality, public health, and multidimensional crises (notably the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change) underscores the need for closer integration between relative deprivation theory and social risk theory. The literature indicates

that social dissatisfaction and political instability are often triggered not by absolute poverty alone but by perceptions of injustice, relative inequality, and unequal risk distribution (Bartusevičius & Van Leeuwen, 2022; Power, 2018). In this context, groups with reduced access to basic services or the loss of social protection tend to develop a sense of injustice that can lead to political protest, social conflict, or the delegitimisation of state institutions.

The integration of deprivation theory and social risk theory emphasises that poverty and political instability must be understood as part of the dynamics of social risks that states manage (or fail to manage) on their own. Health crises, food crises, and global economic shocks serve as stress tests of state capacity, revealing previously hidden structural vulnerabilities. When states fail to mitigate these risks through inclusive and responsive policies, poverty not only persists but also becomes a source of ongoing political instability (Mueller, 2020; Neaime & Gaysset, 2018). Therefore, the findings of this study encourage the development of an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that integrates political economy, social risk theory, and governance studies to explain the relationship between poverty and political stability comprehensively.

Overall, the theoretical implications of this study confirm a significant shift in the global literature: from a narrow economic approach to an understanding that treats poverty and political instability as interconnected political-institutional phenomena. For studies of the Global South, this shift is particularly relevant because it underscores that development challenges cannot be resolved by economic growth alone; they require strengthening state capacity, political legitimacy, and equitable governance. Thus, this study contributes to efforts to reconceptualise the relationship between poverty and political instability within a more contextually oriented theoretical framework, grounded in the realities of developing countries.

5.2. Implications for Public Policy

From a public policy perspective, this research's findings confirm that poverty and political instability must be understood as interdependent dimensions in the formulation and implementation of state policy. The predominance of health, food security, and social protection policies in the literature demonstrates that social policy functions not only as a welfare instrument but also as a mechanism for political stabilisation. In the Global South, social policy plays a crucial role in maintaining state legitimacy, mitigating social tensions, and preventing the escalation of political conflict rooted in economic discontent (Forrester-Jones et al., 2025; Jawad et al., 2025). In other words, poverty alleviation policies are not politically neutral but are part of a state's strategy to maintain social stability and cohesion.

Our findings also critique the sectoral, technocratic, and fragmented approach to poverty alleviation policies. Programs that focus solely on income generation or short-term social assistance, without integration with governance reform and institutional capacity building, risk failing to address multidimensional crises. The COVID-19 pandemic provides a powerful empirical illustration, with many countries experiencing policy failures not due to the absence of social programmes but rather to weak inter-agency coordination, limited administrative capacity, and low public trust in the state (McKee & Stuckler, 2020; Nugroho & Syarief, 2021). This demonstrates that the effectiveness of poverty alleviation policies is determined mainly by the quality of the political institutions that support them.

Furthermore, this research confirms that effective social policies in the Global South must be designed through a whole-of-government approach, in which economic, social, and political policies are not artificially separated. Food security, access to health care, and social protection must be viewed as integral to the architecture of long-term political stability, rather than as emergency responses to poverty (Haile & Singh, 2024). Within this framework, state failure to provide an adequate social safety net not only increases the economic vulnerability

of people experiencing poverty but also undermines political legitimacy and heightens the risk of social instability.

For developing countries such as Indonesia, the policy implications of these findings are significant. Poverty alleviation efforts should be placed explicitly on the agenda to strengthen national governance and political stability (Agussalim et al., 2024; Ardiansyah et al., 2023). The social protection system must be expanded in coverage and strengthened in institutionalisation, accountability, and fiscal sustainability (McCarthy et al., 2024; Rasanjani et al., 2019). Transparency in policy formulation and implementation is essential to building public trust, particularly amid growing demands for social justice and political participation (Moon, 2020; Saner et al., 2020). Without improved governance, poverty alleviation policies risk being perceived as short-term political instruments that deepen polarisation and erode trust in the state.

Furthermore, our study emphasises the importance of evidence-based policy, which relies not only on macroeconomic indicators but also on social and political dynamics at the grassroots level. Drawing on academic research, evidence-based policy can help policymakers identify patterns of vulnerability, potential conflicts, and policy impacts more comprehensively (Dorren & Wolf, 2023; Hwang et al., 2021). In this context, the relationship between the academic community and policymakers needs to be strengthened so that poverty alleviation policies are not only responsive to short-term pressures but also adaptive to long-term social and political risks.

Overall, the policy implications of this research confirm that poverty alleviation and political stability are inseparable agendas. Social policies designed without consideration of their political implications risk being unsustainable, whereas political stability built without a foundation of social justice tends to be fragile. Therefore, for countries in the Global South, including Indonesia, the primary challenge is not only to design technically effective poverty alleviation policies but also to build political institutions capable of managing poverty as a strategic issue to maintain state stability and legitimacy.

5.3. Finding Research Gaps

Although the literature on poverty and political instability has grown rapidly over the past decade, the bibliometric analysis in this study reveals several structural gaps that remain inadequately addressed. One of the most prominent gaps is the geographic imbalance in knowledge production, with countries in the Global North consistently dominating publication counts, citation networks, and central positions within the global knowledge structure. This dominance not only reflects differences in research capacity but also shapes how issues of poverty and political instability are defined, conceptualised, and analysed. As a result, the empirical experiences of countries in the Global South are often treated as objects of study rather than as primary sources for theory formation. This results in limited representation of the social, political, and institutional contexts of developing countries within dominant theoretical frameworks, thereby reproducing an epistemic bias in the global discourse that is less sensitive to the realities of the Global South, including Indonesia.

The second gap concerns the literature's tendency to separate the analysis of poverty and political instability, or to link them only descriptively, without an integrative analytical framework. Many studies treat poverty as a background economic variable (Azunu & Mensah, 2019; Balasubramanian et al., 2023), while political instability is analysed as a stand-alone political phenomenon (Alhassan et al., 2021; Gbemudia & Akachukwu, 2025). This approach often overlooks the causal mechanisms linking the two, including the roles of public policy, institutional capacity, and perceptions of social injustice. As a result, the reciprocal relationship between poverty and political instability is often reduced to statistical correlations or normative

narratives, without in-depth exploration of how and under what conditions poverty can trigger political instability, or vice versa. This gap highlights the need for more comprehensive, interdisciplinary analytical models, including mixed-methods approaches that combine macro-level quantitative analysis with in-depth qualitative studies to capture structural dynamics and the experiences of actors at the micro level.

The third gap concerns the limited exploration of long-term and structural issues, including sustainable political stability (Cui et al., 2025), energy poverty (Amin et al., 2025), and the impact of neoliberal policies on social vulnerability (Pinheiro-Machado & Scalco, 2023). Co-occurrence and density analyses indicate that these themes remain at low density, underscoring a lack of systematic academic attention. Nevertheless, these issues have significant implications for the relationship between poverty and political instability, particularly in countries in the Global South facing pressures from economic liberalisation, energy crises, and dependence on global markets. The limited literature in this area risks producing a partial and reactive understanding, focusing more on short-term responses to crises than on long-term structural analyses of social and political vulnerability.

Overall, these research gaps indicate that the literature on poverty and political instability continues to face conceptual, methodological, and epistemic challenges. Therefore, future research needs not only to increase the number of empirical studies but also to re-examine the theoretical and methodological positions employed. For the Global South, including Indonesia, this gap offers an important space for more contextually grounded, critical, and locally experienced research, while contributing to the decolonisation of knowledge production in the study of poverty and political instability.

6. CONCLUSION

This study maps the evolution of research on poverty and political instability through a bibliometric analysis of 706 Scopus-indexed publications from 2016 to 2025. Key findings show a significant rise in academic attention since 2019, reflecting growing recognition of the interconnections between poverty and political instability within a multidimensional crisis. Co-occurrence analysis indicates that contemporary literature increasingly frames poverty as a political and institutional issue, with strong links to governance, public policy, health, and social inequality.

Theoretically, this study confirms the relevance of political economy and state capacity approaches in explaining the reciprocal relationship between poverty and political instability. Empirically, mapping trends, thematic clusters, and the geographic distribution of publications reveals an epistemic imbalance still dominated by Global North countries, while also opening up space for strengthening research contributions from the Global South, including Indonesia. Implications for public policy include the importance of integrating social protection programs with governance reforms (such as improving targeting accuracy based on integrated data and transparency in aid distribution) to prevent the escalation of social discontent into political instability.

This study is limited by the use of a single database and a bibliometric approach that fails to capture the causal dynamics and local context in depth. These limitations indicate the need for further research that combines bibliometric mapping with empirical studies, such as mixed-methods, cross-country comparative studies in the Global South, or in-depth case study analysis in countries like Indonesia, Nigeria, or South Africa, to examine the mechanisms underlying the relationship between poverty and political stability in context. Furthermore, while these findings have broader conceptual relevance, their generalisations are particularly

applicable to the Global South, which is characterised by diverse institutional capacities and greater structural vulnerabilities than those of developed countries.

Ultimately, this research confirms that poverty is not simply a welfare issue but a fundamental political issue that shapes state stability and legitimacy. Understanding and managing poverty equitably and institutionally is not only a prerequisite for development but also the foundation for political resilience and the future of governance in the Global South.

Author Contribution

Conceptualisation, S.R.; Research Design & Methodology, S.R.; Data Curation, S.R.; Formal Analysis, S.R.; Software (VOSviewer analysis), S.R.; Investigation, S.R., D.; Visualisation, S.R.; Writing – Original Draft, S.R.; Writing – Review & Editing: S.R., D., I.R.; Theoretical Framework & Interpretation, D., I.R.; Supervision / Critical Review, D., I.R.

Data Availability Statement

The data used in this study were obtained from the Scopus database via subscription and cannot be shared publicly due to licensing restrictions imposed by the database provider. However, the search strategy, selection criteria, and analysis procedures are described in detail in this article, enabling replication by researchers with access to Scopus.

Conflict of Interest Declaration

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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