

Corruption in Village Governments: A Bibliometric Review and Future Research Agenda

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Research aims: This study aims to review the village over forty-two years of village corruption spanning 1980 to 2022 to provide a broad overview of the literature and propose a future research agenda.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The study analyzed 155 articles from the Scopus database utilizing VOSviewer software.

Research findings: The findings exhibited that the studies in this area have increased significantly in the last two decades, with the United States of America emerging as the predominant contributor in this area of study. The other interesting finding is that the research focus has evolved from economics to non-economics. This study, hence, proposes that technology implementation in village government is a crucial topic to be analyzed to enhance the village corruption literature and to decrease and detect corruption at the village level.

Theoretical contribution/Originality: This study contributes to synthesizing current and upcoming research trends and offers recommendations for future research direction in the village corruption study.

Keywords: Bibliometric Review; Local Government; Technology; Village Corruption; Village Government; VOSviewer

Classification

Bibliometric

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Introduction

The setting of a village as an autonomous government has not been applied in many countries, even though its existence is crucial in creating community welfare, especially in developing countries. A study about villages has been conducted since 1950 by Kurt Steiner, who researched villages in Japan. It stated that in the past, when the village was centralized to the central government, its function was merely social (Steiner, 1956). Such functions included assisting neighbors in emergencies and burial cases, cooperation in fields or housebuilding, and planning religious and cultural festivals. The government at that moment was mainly focused on recording the administration of those activities and social functions. Then, the village community depended only on agricultural and farm products, resulting in poverty and an undeveloped society. Besides that, the village was also disadvantaged by many limitations in village government, such as digital illiteracy and lack of infrastructure (Wang et al., 2022).

Along with efforts to improve the village economy and development, the government began to establish a decentralized village that led the villages to self-government, which allowed them to manage the village under the township or regency regulation so that it was easier for the village to meet its needs. However, decentralization led to corruption, which can limit village governance. In general, corruption in developing

countries has been increasing and has become a concern for decades (Moran et al., 1999). Meanwhile, corruption at the village government level particularly has become a problem in most countries where village self-government was implemented, and it endangers the village community's welfare. At the village level, corruption usually entails using public funds for personal gains, such as entertainment, favorable treatment for cadres, using assets such as motorcycles and cell phones for personal activities, and bribery for some services provided to the community. Like corruption in general, village corruption, whose impact directly affects the village community welfare where the majority have already lived in poverty, exacerbates current issues such as unemployment and crime. Following the implementation of decentralization, some countries, such as China, established anticorruption elements (Levy, 2003).

Nevertheless, many studies in developing countries lack focus on the village government sector. Furthermore, despite the problem's importance, eradicating corruption has proven difficult in all but a few developing nations (Olken, 2007), and only a few research studies address local government corruption (Beeri & Navot, 2013). For that reason, the authors consider that the unresolved problem of village corruption in many developing countries must be followed by a review of the existing literature to provide future research directions.

Synthesizing previous research findings is one of the most important matters for moving a specific research cluster forward. The scientific mapping method based on a quantitative approach, the bibliometric method, is becoming more widely known for mapping the structure and evolution of disciplines and fields (Zupic & Čater, 2015). Bibliometric analysis is a common and comprehensive technique for investigating and analyzing data from various scientific works. Thus, it can explore the evolutionary nuances of a field while highlighting emerging areas in that field. On the other hand, the application of this method in business research is relatively new and, in several cases, underdeveloped (Donthu et al., 2021). Using a bibliometric approach, this study examines academic research on corruption in the village. This method offers a systematic comprehension of research trends, developments in research fields, and impactful publications in this scope. Thus, this bibliometric analysis focused on the following research questions (RQ) to guide the analysis.

RQ₁: *How does the village corruption research trends, and how has it evolved?*

RQ₂: *Which are the most influential publications and frequently cited journals?*

RQ₃: *Which are the significant authors and countries?*

RQ₄: *What are the future research directions?*

Literature Review

Definition of the Village Government and Corruption Concept

As per Steiner's investigation into the Japanese Village Government in 1956, the smallest administrative unit is the village, according to Law Number 67 of 1947, also known as the Local Autonomy Law. This legislation outlines that the village government's national control level is contingent on its dual nature. Primarily, functioning as an independent entity, the village requires approval from higher authorities only in specific instances, such as alterations in nomenclature or incurring substantial debts. Secondly, the higher tier exercises non-authoritative controls, including collecting certain reports, conducting audits, providing technical assistance, and other similar measures. On the other hand, the formalized establishment of villages in China commenced comprehensively with the amendment of the Organic Law on Village Committees (Alpermann, 2009).

In contrast to Japan, China, Africa, and India, where the implementation of village government concepts occurred much earlier, certain nations, including Indonesia, only established a new village government in 2014 with the enactment of the Village Law. According to Indonesia's Village Law Number 6 of 2014, the village is formally recognized as the smallest legal community unit of government, as a legal community unit

with territory authorized to regulate and manage public affairs. This authority is exercised based on community initiatives, ancestral rights, and/or traditional privileges acknowledged and recognized in Indonesia's government system. However, the implementation of village government in Indonesia also still faces many weaknesses, such as weak internal control implementation, the absence of accounting standards, conflict among regulations, and poor internal control (Putri et al., 2023a)

Upon Indonesia's implementation of a new Village Law in 2014, the Chinese government had previously directed its attention towards rural governance to eradicate corruption within villages. This effort was prompted by the detrimental impact of escalating village corruption (Wu & Christensen, 2021). Subsequently, their investigation shifted its emphasis towards the corruption prevalent among village and township cadres in China, a phenomenon that has recently gained increased attention. As many developing nations transform, transitioning their villages from mere social entities to self-governing units responsible for financial management, the pervasiveness of corruption has become evident. This is substantiated by the escalating trajectory of research dedicated to examining corrupt practices. Zheng and Liao's (2018) study identified a growing incidence of corruption within village governments, attributing this trend to the predisposition of village officers to engage in corrupt practices. This inclination is further shaped by three key factors: the perception held by village officials, the prevailing official culture, and the effectiveness of the corruption prevention system.

According to Wu and Christensen (2021), corruption within villages and townships is predominantly carried out at the individual level rather than collectively, with embezzlement of funds emerging as the prevailing form of corruption. This prevalence can be attributed to the lower associated costs of individual corruption, specifically concerning embezzlement, compared to the economic gains obtained. Individual-level corruption encompasses instances where elected personnel or officials, individuals in authoritative positions, or any other vested party misuse governmental authority to secure personal benefits for themselves or specific groups, contrary to the best interests of the residents. Simultaneously, institutional corruption pertains to the procedures, decisions, and actions of public officials and institutions that permit these officials to control resources in a manner that endangers the interests of large community segments (Beeri & Navot, 2013). In a broader context, corruption is characterized as the violation of institutional regulations governing the allocation of public assets by officials seeking financial gain or political influence (Ntemi & Mbamba, 2016). Building upon prior research, (UNDP, 2004) defines corruption as "the misuse of public power, office, or authority for private benefit through bribery, extortion, influence peddling, nepotism, fraud, speed money, or embezzlement."

Methodology

Bibliometric Method

The application of quantitative statistical methods to visualize a scientific field's structures and development is called bibliometric (Zupic & Čater, 2015). Bibliometric analysis is a methodology for conducting a literature review that entails quantitative and statistical analysis of published papers (Brodus, 1987) and is considered more reliable and objective than other literature review methods (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). A bibliometric analysis also examines published research using quantitative tools to provide researchers with knowledge of a specific research area. Nowadays, through co-citation analysis, co-occurrence, keyword, bibliographic coupling, and other methods, bibliometrics can map a scientific topic (Zupic & Čater, 2015).

The authors used bibliometric co-occurrence analysis and bibliographic coupling to analyze the data of 155 research articles from the Scopus database. First, the authors conducted co-occurrence analyses of the actual content of a document by linking the keywords when they appeared in the same title, abstract, or keywords list. The methodology employed utilized the words in the document to establish connections and form clusters within the conceptual framework of the subject area. This analysis's output was a network of topics

and their relationships representing a field's scope (Zupic & Čater, 2015). Second, citation analysis observed the number of times an author, article, or source had been cited by other works to determine the relative importance and impact of that author or the research publication. In this regard, citations were used to measure the impact of an article, considered vital if it is heavily cited (Zupic & Čater, 2015). Third, co-authorship analysis provided evidence of author collaboration and the examining field's social structure (Burki et al., 2022)

Bibliometric provides mapping and visualization software for quantitative analysis. In this study, VOSviewer, or visualization of similarity viewer, was utilized as bibliometric software. It generated valuable maps and performed a network analysis of the scope of the examined construct. The network connection visualizes the keywords that appear more frequently in the same article, resulting in greater precision and less subjectivity (Zupic & Čater, 2015).

The Design and Data Collection

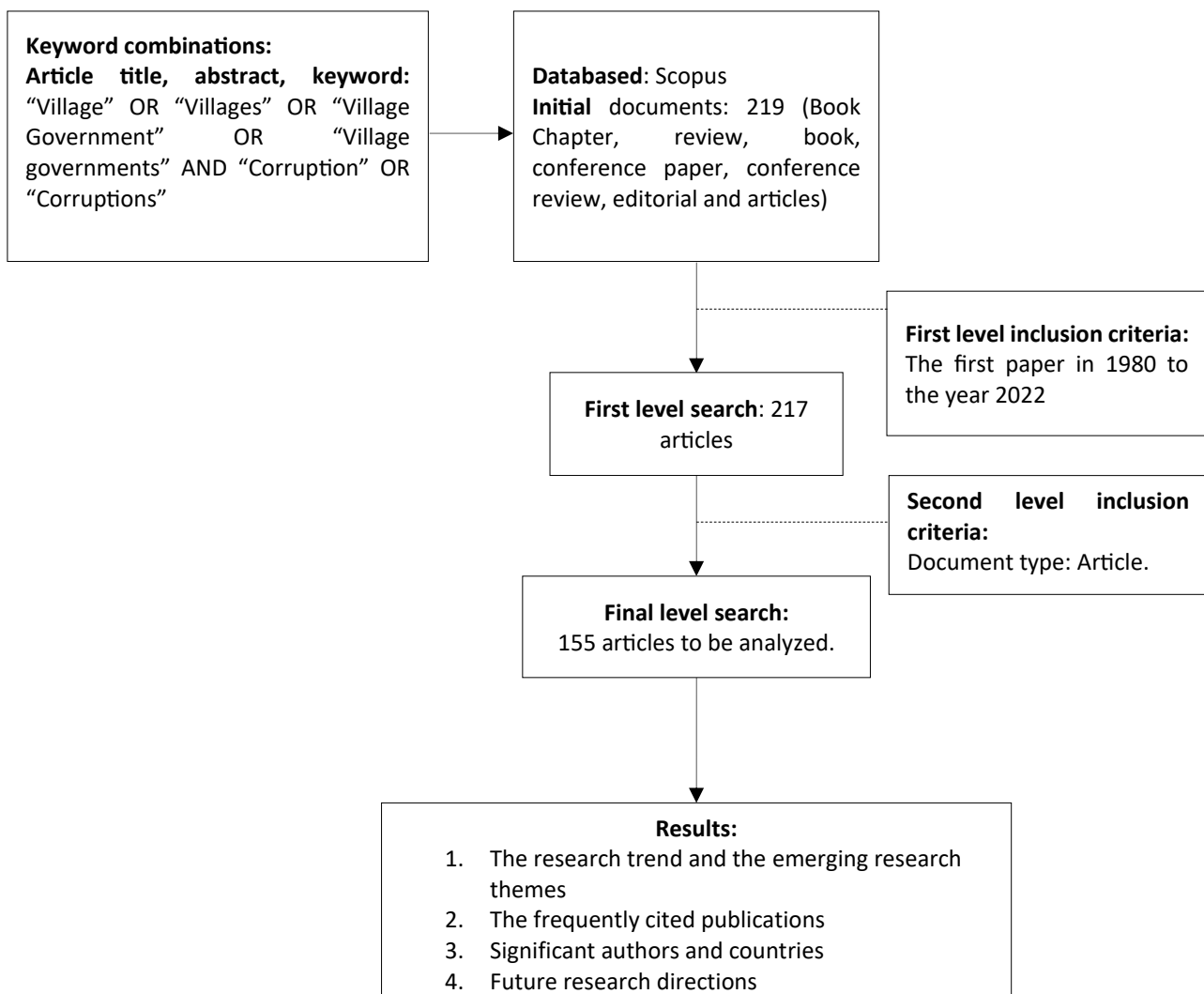


Figure 1 Methodological Approach

This study's dataset was constructed through an exploration of literature within the Scopus database, recognized as one of the extensively utilized databases (Ali & Gölgeci, 2019), and its scope is more extensive than WoS (Web of Science) databases (Antwi et al., 2022). In addition, since there has been a substantial

increase in village government studies in developing countries in recent years, the authors are compelled to conduct a bibliometric review for further investigation.

Figure 1 depicts the process of data collection to locate relevant research articles about corruption in the village. Thus, this study aims to categorize the study on corruption in villages and village governments. First, the authors searched articles by applying two keywords in the search field: “village” or “villages” or “village government” or “village governments” and “corruption” or “corruptions.” Second, the authors excluded the year 2023. Third, the authors limited the document type to the article. Lastly, the authors selected multiple subject areas for a more comprehensive analysis. This restrictive selection procedure garnered 155 articles since the first paper on village corruption was published in 1980, and a substantial body of work has accumulated over the past 42 years. The literature was dispersed across numerous areas and types of corruption in the village and should be analyzed systematically, in-depth, qualitatively, and quantitatively.

Results and Discussions

Publication Trend Analysis

The data highlighted the trend of published literature relating to village corruption over about 42 years, and the purpose was to analyze the development of research interest in village corruption. In Figure 2, the authors illustrate the trajectory of publications on village corruption and segment the timeframe into four distinct periods. The first period was between 1980 and 1990. In 1980, the first research on village corruption was published; however, there was no further publication until 1990. The second period was between 1991 and 2001. In this period, the publications still fluctuated, with zero publications in 1992, 1994, 1997, and 2000, and the highest number of publications was only three in 1998. The third period was between 2002 and 2012, with more publications, with six articles in the most. The last period was between 2013 and 2022, which started with seven publications in 2013 and peaked in 2022 with sixteen publications.

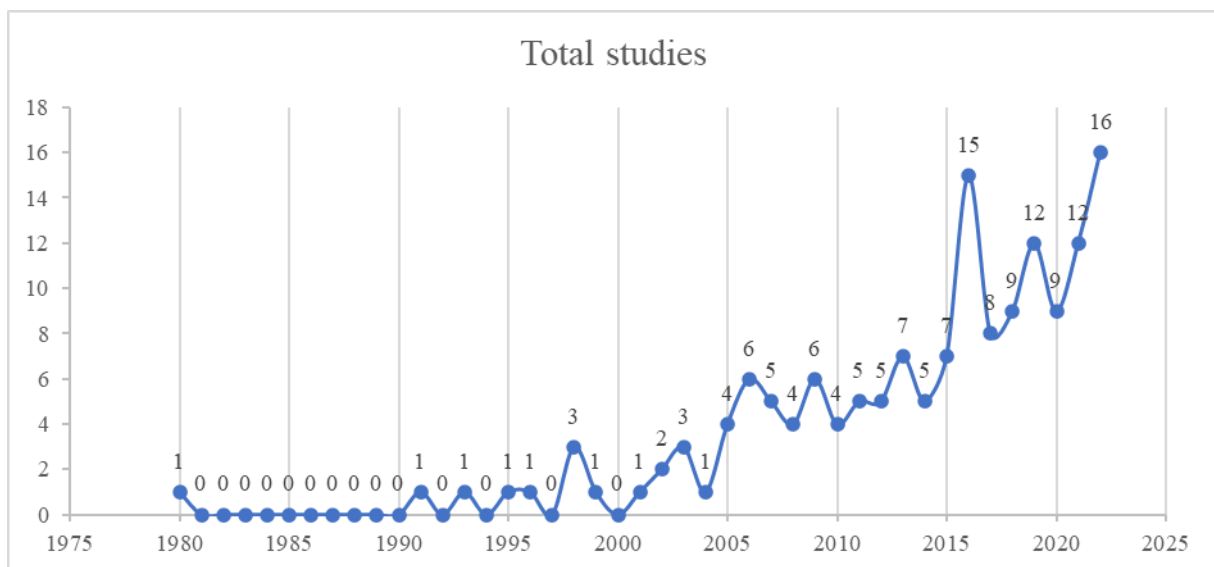


Figure 2 Number of Publications per Year

Keyword Networks Analysis: Identifying Research and Topic Trends

The authors conducted a co-occurrence analysis using index keywords in the VOSviewer to delineate the thematic areas and research orientations about village corruption. Indexed keywords, in contrast to author keywords, encompass synonyms, alternative spellings, and plurals, as determined by Scopus. In selecting and standardizing keywords, Scopus draws from vocabularies sourced from thesaurus, either owned or licensed by Elsevier. Consequently, the authors regarded index keywords as more indicative of an article's content,

given their comprehensive nature compared to author keywords, which may be occasionally insufficient and presented in varied forms, including both plural and singular forms (Yi and Choi, 2012). The minimum co-occurrence of a keyword was set at two (2), and out of 561 keywords, 138 met the threshold.

Five clusters emerged from this analysis, as shown in Table 1. However, these clusters resulted in some overlapping constructs. The overlapping keywords across the clusters made it difficult to be categorized based on the theme. The authors could analyze that Cluster 1 focuses on Asia countries and Cluster 4 underscores on African countries; meanwhile, cluster 3 is a mix of Asia and Africa. Then, Figure 3 portrays a network visualization of keyword co-occurrence and identifies keyword connectivity with corruption. By default, significant keywords (also known as items) are represented by the circle and its label. The circle's size reflects the keyword's frequency. The larger the circle, the higher the frequency of the keyword. In addition, the lines between the items represent the link between them. The line's thickness is proportional to the close connection between the two keywords. The thicker the line between two keywords, the closer the connection (Chen et al., 2016). Also, the color of a circle of the item indicates which cluster it belongs to. As a result, the authors can see in Figure 3 that six countries, from largest to smallest circle, i.e., *India, Bangladesh, Africa, South Africa, South Asia, China, Pakistan, Thailand, east Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, and Tanzania*, emerged on the VOSviewer result, in which *India* was the most frequent keyword. Conversely, the authors also found smaller circles, such as *accountability, local participation, Thailand, and poverty alleviation*. Moreover, local participation circles were far from corruption circles and unrelated to the governance approach.

Table 1 Keyword Clusters

Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4	Cluster 5
Accountability	Adolescent	Awareness	Africa	Attitude to health
Andhra Pradesh	Adult	Bangladesh	Africa South of the Sahara	Childbirth
Asia	Aged	Climate change	Article	Education
Bureaucracy	Aged 80 and over	Content analysis	Community development	Ethnology
China	Child	Culture	Conservation of natural	Female
Civil Society	Child, preschool	Disaster management	Developing countries	Health knowledge, attitude
Conservation	Community-based participation	East Africa	Developing country	Human
Corruption	Controlled study	Flood	Disease	Human Experiment
Crime	Daily life activity	Forest management	Economic factors	Obstetrics
Decentralization	Epidemiology	Forest resource	Economics	Parental care
Democracy	Health care access	Government	English speaking Africa	Poverty
Eastern Hemisphere	Health care cost	Interview	Environmental protection	Pregnancy
Election	health care facility	Interview as topic	General aspect of disease	Prenatal care
Ethnography	Health service accessibility	Non-governmental organization	Health care delivery	Priority journal
Eurasia	Health survey	Pakistan	Health service	
Far East	Household survey	Perception	Human right	
Food supply	Humans	Social network	Natural rights	

Table 1 Keyword Clusters (Cont.)

Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4	Cluster 5
Government approach	Infant	State role	Natural resources	
Housing	Major child study	Strategic approach	Organization and Management	
India	Male	Sub-Saharan Africa	Public participation	
Indonesia	Middle aged	Tanzania	South Africa	
Local government	Newborn	Uttar Pradesh	Water supply	
Local participation	Participatory research	Violence		
Low-income population	Preschool child	Vulnerability		
Mortality	Prevalence			
Natural resource	Qualitative research			
Party politics	Rural area			
Political Participation	Rural population			
Political Power	Very elderly			
Political reform				
Political relations				
Public sector				
Resource allocation				
resource management				
Rural areas				
Rural development				
Rural society				
Service provision				
Southeast Asia				
State-local relations				
Thailand				
Village				
Water management				
World				

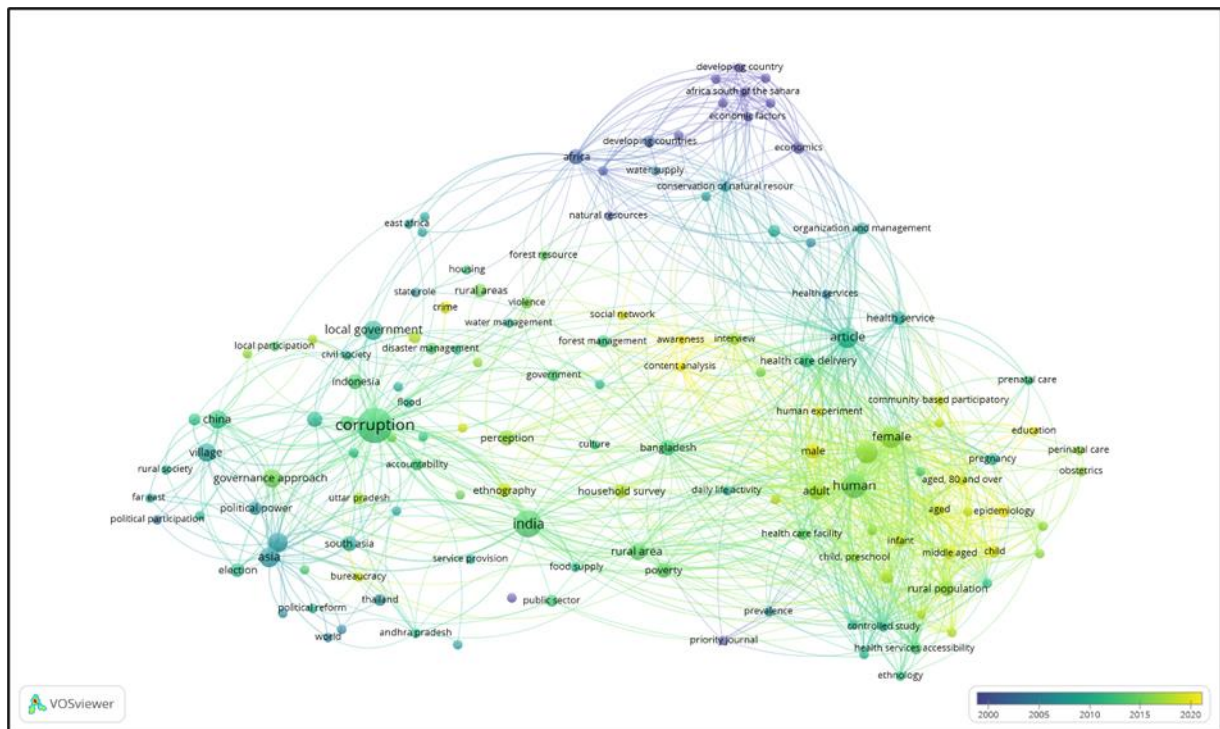


Figure 4 The Timewise Visualization

Table 2 Timewise Publication Cluster

2000-2005	2005-2010	2010-2015	2015-2022
Economics	South Africa	India	Human (s)
Developing country (s)	Natural resources	China	Female
Africa, the South Sahara	Conservation	Governance approach	Adult
Africa	Health service	Bangladesh	Male
English speaking Africa	Asia	Indonesia	Rural population
Disease (s)	Eurasia	Accountability	Crime
Mortality	Political power	Local participation	Awareness
The general aspect of diseases	Local government	Resource management	Education
Community development	Thailand	Decentralization	Community-based Participation
Political participation			Epidemiology
English speaking Africa			Human experiment
Public participation			Perception
Developing countries			Ethnography
Political power			Interview
			Content analysis
			Qualitative Research

Citation Analysis: Influential Articles and Journals

To get information about the influential and frequently cited publication, the authors conducted a bibliographic coupling analysis using the documents as a unit of analysis. The minimum number of citations per article was 50; out of 155, 16 met the threshold. In Table 3, the authors can see that *“Monitoring Corruption: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Indonesia”* (Olken, 2007) is the top publication with 658 citations. The second article is *“Do Television and Radio Destroy Social Capital? Evidence from Indonesian Villages”* (Olken, 2009a), with 347 citations. The third is *“Impact and sustainability of e-government services*

in developing countries: Lessons learned from Tamil Nadu, India" (Kumar & Best, 2006), cited 196 times. It is followed by the articles "The seismic future of cities" (Bilham, 2009) and "Corruption perceptions vs. corruption reality" (Olken, 2009b).

Table 3 Top 10 Most Cited Articles

Rank	Publication articles	Authors	Journal	Citations
1	Monitoring Corruption: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Indonesia	(Olken, 2007)	Journal of Political Economy	658
2	Do television and radio destroy social capital? Evidence from Indonesian villages	(Olken, 2009a)	American Economic Journal: Applied Economics	347
3	Impact and sustainability of E-government services in developing countries: Lessons learned from Tamil Nadu, India	(Kumar & Best, 2006)	Information Society	196
4	The seismic future of cities	(Bilham, 2009)	Bulletin of Earthquake Engineering	153
5	Corruption perceptions vs. corruption reality	(Olken, 2009b)	Journal of Public Economics	126
6	Pro-poor targeting and accountability of local governments in West Bengal	(Bardhan, 2006)	Journal of Development Economics	122
7	The Importance of Ecosystem Services for Rural Inhabitants in a Changing Cultural Landscape in Romania	(Hartel et al., 2014)	Ecology and Society	101
8	Democracy, community, trust: The impact of elections in rural China	(Manion, 2006)	Comparative Political Studies	94
9	Decentralization and Veiled Corruption under China's "Rule of Mandates"	(Birney, 2014)	World Development	88
10	The Kilosa killings: Political ecology of a farmer-herder conflict in Tanzania	(Benjaminsen et al., 2009)	Development and Change	84

Besides that, the authors also classified the top ten most cited journals in the village corruption studies in Table 4. The minimum number of documents per journal was set to two (2); of 133 journals, 15 met the threshold. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* has been cited 144 times, with an average citation of 72 citations. *Journal of Development Economics* and *World Development* followed it with 138 and 134 citations, respectively. *Economic and Political Weekly*, however, published the highest number of articles, five articles during these periods.

From the explanations above, the authors could answer RQ2. From 1980 until 2022, the most influential publication was "Monitoring Corruption: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Indonesia" (Olken, 2007), with 658 citations, and the most frequently cited journal was *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, with 144 citations and average citations of 72.

Table 4 Top 10 Most Cited Journal

Journal	Articles	TC	Avg. citations	TLS
American economic journal: applied economics	2.00	144.00	72.00	4.00
Journal of Development Economics	3.00	138.00	46.00	10.00
World development	4.00	134.00	33.50	11.00
Ecology and society	2.00	107.00	53.50	0.00
Society and natural resources	2.00	104.00	52.00	2.00
Economic and political weekly	5.00	84.00	16.80	7.00
Asian survey	3.00	51.00	17.00	14.00
Africa	2.00	25.00	12.50	0.00
Social science and medicine	2.00	21.00	10.50	0.00
Global health action	2.00	20.00	10.00	0.00

Note: TC= Total Citations; TLS= Total Link Strength. It represents the total strength of a given journal's links with other journals.

Author Analysis: Impactful Authors and Countries

The number of articles published by the author and the total number of citations indicate the most impactful authors. The authors set the minimum number of authors to be one (1) and found 307. The top ten authors with high citations are presented in Table 5. It can be seen that among the authors, Olken, B.A. has been cited 1.131 times, with a total link strength of 75. It was followed by Best, M.L. in second place with 196 citations and a total link strength of 15. In addition, Kumar, R. has been cited 196 times with a link strength of 15.

Table 5 Top 10 Most Cited Authors

Authors	Articles	TC	TLS
Olken, B.A.	3.00	1131.00	75.00
Best, M.L.	1.00	196.00	15.00
Kumar, R	1.00	196.00	15.00
Bilham, R	1.00	153.00	0.00
Bardhan, P	1.00	122.00	34.00
Mookherjee, D	1.00	122.00	34.00
Câmpeanu, C.	1.00	101.00	190.00
Fazey, I.	1.00	101.00	190.00
Fischer, J.	1.00	101.00	190.00
Hanspach, J.	1.00	101.00	190.00

Note: TC= Total Citations; TLS= Total Link Strength. It represents the total strength of a given researcher's co-authorship links with other researchers.

Then, the authors performed a co-authorship network analysis to know which country the author mostly came from, using countries as a unit of analysis. This study shortlisted ten countries by selecting five (5) publications per country as a threshold, and this study chose 11 countries. In Table 6, the authors could see that the United States was the most impactful country in the village corruption study with 2047 citations of 24 publications, followed by the United Kingdom with 505 citations of 25 publications, Australia with 175 citations, Germany with 164 citations, and Bangladesh with 163 citations.

Therefore, RQ3 could be answered that Olken, B.A. became the most significant author, with 1,131 citations from three publications. Meanwhile, the United States was the most impactful country, with 2,047 citations of 24 publications.

Answering RQ4, referring to the clustering analysis, the authors found that topic-related technology implementation in the village has not been found among the five clusters that emerged from bibliometric analysis (Table 1). Related to that, as many villages in the world shifted a new organizational structure from centralization to decentralization, the need for technology implementation to support governance is deemed essential for preventing and detecting corruption. The technology affordance theory emphasizes the potential of behavior linked to attaining a specific outcome arising from the interaction between the technology and a goal-oriented actor/human (Strong et al., 2014). In the case of village government, the need to achieve specific goals, such as village welfare and free from corruption in the governance, implementing technology such as smart village (Putri et al., 2023b) is one of the efforts to prevent and detect corruption. The topic of technology implementation and technology support in village governance will become a crucial topic in the future. It is also related to e-government implementation in the village, which contributes to the village's sustainability (Kumar & Best, 2006).

Table 6 Top Ten Cited Countries

Countries	Articles	TC	Avg. citations	TLS
United States	24.00	2047.00	85.30	254.00
United Kingdom	25.00	505.00	20.20	640.00
Australia	11.00	175.00	15.90	336.00
Germany	8.00	164.00	20.50	225.00
Bangladesh	5.00	163.00	32.60	259.00
Norway	6.00	159.00	26.50	111.00
Canada	7.00	125.00	17.90	31.00
India	14.00	91.00	6.50	267.00
China	10.00	41.00	4.10	376.00
Indonesia	17.00	25.00	1.50	128.00

Note: TC= Total Citations; TLS= Total Link Strength. It indicates the strength of the co-authorship link of a given country with others.

Conclusion

This paper presents a bibliometric review of village corruption research through the Scopus database from 1980 to 2022. This study reviewed the publication years, number of publications, research areas, number of cited articles, number of cited journals, most significant authors, and countries. The analysis revealed that research about village corruption has grown since its first publication in 1980 and peaked in 2022. The growth of village corruption studies indicates that this area of research has become a concern for researchers. Olkan, B.A. was the most productive author, and the article *"Monitoring Corruption: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Indonesia"* (Olken, 2007) was the most influential article with the highest citation number. Then, *"The American Economic Journal: Applied Economics"* had the highest number of citations, while *"Economic and Political Weekly"* had the highest number of publications. In addition, most authors came from America and made this country top of the list, followed by the United Kingdom and India.

Moreover, the research fields grew from economics and politics to others, such as accounting and management. Hence, it can be concluded that most previous research on village corruption focused mainly on the effect of corruption on community development. In contrast, recent researchers are starting to accentuate more on the determinants of corruption and how to eradicate it. This finding is consistent with previous research that has expanded village corruption research beyond economics and political fields (Putri et al., 2023b). Their finding proposed the perspective of future research in village studies, particularly in the domains of accounting and technology, focusing on ensuring the sustainability of villages.

This study's novel evidence concerning corruption in villages contributes to the current research literature and future research direction in village government, predominantly village corruption. It guides the next bibliometric analysis studies by offering a comprehensive review of existing literature and its network on bibliometric studies in various topics and disciplines. Also, this research contributes to future research on village corruption, which must be focused on the specific area of study, such as technology implementation in the village government. Unfortunately, this research has not been able to categorize the research clusters into thematic clusters and theoretical clusters because the village's corruption study in the Scopus database was still limited and spread to many areas, making it difficult to coherent research theme clusters.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest. The funders had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript, or in the decision to publish the results.