

Exploring the Academic Landscape of Merdeka Belajar in Higher Education: A Bibliometric Analysis

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Abstract: The Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy is a strategic initiative of the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology to revolutionize the higher education system through increasing student learning flexibility and freedom. The purpose of this study is to explore the academic landscape related to the MBKM policy through a bibliometric approach to identify research trends, publication patterns, academic collaboration, and dominant themes that appear in the scientific literature. The method used is bibliometric analysis by utilizing Biblioshiny, VOSviewer, and Microsoft Excel software on 210 documents obtained from the Dimensions database with the keywords “independent learning” and “higher education”. The results showed a significant increase in publications since 2020 with an annual growth rate of 92.56%, indicating high academic interest in MBKM. The top ten most cited articles raised issues of MBKM curriculum implementation, institutional adaptation challenges, and technology integration in learning. The analysis also revealed extensive collaboration between authors and institutions, as well as a diversity of keywords such as “flexible curriculum”, “project-based learning”, and “industry cooperation”. The discussion in this study highlights that while MBKM offers great potential in enhancing student skills, challenges such as faculty readiness, digital infrastructure, and institutional support still need to be addressed. Therefore, the results of this study provide important insights for higher education policy makers in designing more effective and sustainable MBKM implementation strategies.

Keywords: Bibliometric; Biblioshiny; Higher education; Merdeka belajar

Introduction

Higher education in Indonesia is undergoing a major transformation through the Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy introduced by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology. This policy aims to provide flexibility and freedom for students in designing their learning experiences, both inside and outside the university (Hidayat, 2024; Sunarya et al., 2024; Windiana et al., 2024). MBKM is expected to create graduates who are better prepared to face the challenges of the world of work with more relevant competencies and broader

learning experiences (Rodin et al., 2024; Simanjuntak et al., 2024).

Since its launch, MBKM has attracted the attention of various academics and educational practitioners. Many studies have been conducted to evaluate the impact and implementation of this policy in higher education. These studies focus on various aspects, such as the effectiveness of the program, challenges in implementation, and its impact on student learning outcomes (Familoni & Onyebuchi, 2024; Milwan et al., 2024; Usman & Hartati, 2024). One method that can be used to understand the academic landscape of this policy is bibliometric analysis.

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Bibliometric analysis is a quantitative approach used to identify research trends, publication patterns, and relationships between researchers in a field of study (Barrot, 2024; Fadillah et al., 2024; Luthfi et al., 2024). By using this technique, a comprehensive picture of how MBKM policies have been studied by academics in various disciplines can be obtained. Bibliometric analysis can also help in assessing the relevance and contribution of research to higher education policy development in Indonesia.

In recent years, the number of academic publications discussing MBKM has increased significantly. This shows the high interest of the academic community to understand and evaluate this policy. The publications are spread across journals, conference proceedings, and repositories of educational institutions, reflecting the broad scope of studies related to the implementation and impact of MBKM. One important aspect of the bibliometric analysis of MBKM is the identification of keywords that frequently appear in the research. These keywords reflect the main themes discussed in related studies, such as curriculum flexibility, project-based learning, industry cooperation, and student skills enhancement. By understanding this pattern, it is possible to identify which aspects have been widely researched and which still require further exploration.

In addition, bibliometric analysis also allows us to identify academic collaboration in MBKM research. By looking at the patterns of collaboration between researchers and institutions, it can be seen how research networks develop and who are the main actors in this study. This information is important for strengthening research collaboration and directing further study development. The diversity of methodological approaches in MBKM research is also a focus of bibliometric analysis. Various studies use quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods to explore the implementation and impact of this policy. The bibliometric analysis can help in understanding the most frequently used methods as well as the research gaps that need to be filled by future studies (Donthu et al., 2021; Goyal et al., 2021; Zaharuddin et al., 2024).

Bibliometric analysis can provide insight into the geographical distribution of MBKM-related research. By looking at the origin of institutions and countries that contribute to publications, it can be seen to what extent this policy has attracted the attention of academics both within and outside Indonesia. It can also provide an overview of how the MBKM policy compares to similar higher education policies in other countries. By exploring various information through bibliometric analysis, more evidence-based recommendations can be made for higher education policy makers in Indonesia.

These recommendations can be used to improve the implementation of MBKM, increase the effectiveness of the program, and overcome the challenges faced in its implementation in various higher education institutions.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the academic landscape of the Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka policy in higher education through a bibliometric analysis approach. By understanding existing research trends, publication patterns, and academic collaborations, it is hoped that this study can provide deeper insights into the development of MBKM studies as well as its implications for the future of higher education in Indonesia. The following list outlines the Research Questions (RQ) that define the main objectives of this investigation:

RQ1. What are the key information outcomes produced by descriptive bibliometric analysis?

RQ2. How many publications are published each year?

RQ3. Which research documents are most frequently cited by other researchers?

RQ4. What are the most relevant and active publication sources for generating research articles?

RQ5. Who are the authors of the most published and cited research articles?

RQ6. What are the most co-occurring keywords and visualization of co-occurrence analysis of the authors' keywords on this topic?

Method

The research method used is bibliometric analysis (Ahmad et al., 2023; Samala et al., 2023; Watrionthos et al., 2023), which provides a statistical approach to analyzing scientific data related to research developments in the field of Merdeka Belajar in higher education. This approach is used to measure the impact of research, identify academic trends, and discover key themes in the evolving literature. This research presents a structured description of publication metadata that is statistically analyzed, and reveals the research patterns that develop in the implementation of Merdeka Belajar policy. Figure 1 shows the four main stages in carrying out bibliometric analysis.

The process began at the identification stage, where an article search was conducted in the Dimensions Database, using the keyword "independent learning," yielding 3,563 documents. The Dimensions Database was chosen due to its comprehensive coverage of academic publications, including journal articles, conference proceedings, and policy documents, and its open access nature which allows broader visibility of research trends compared to more restricted databases like Scopus or Web of Science. Then, at the filtering stage, irrelevant documents were eliminated by filtering

the search results using the additional keyword “higher education” and limiting the results to English-language publications. The decision to include only English-language publications was based on the objective to capture globally accessible academic discussions and ensure consistency in bibliometric analysis tools, which often have limitations in processing multilingual metadata. Additional inclusion criteria were also applied, such as limiting the document types to peer-reviewed journal articles and conference proceedings to ensure academic rigor, and restricting the publication year range to 2020–2024 to reflect the period since the launch of the MBKM policy. After the filtering process, the number of documents analyzed was reduced to 210 documents, showing a focus on academic research related to Merdeka Belajar policies in the context of higher education globally.

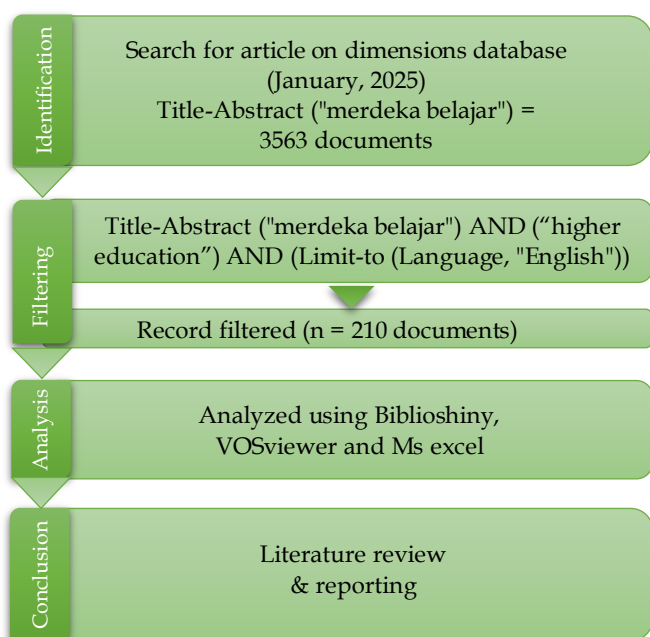


Figure 1. Stages of the bibliometric analysis method

Next, the analysis phase was conducted using various bibliometric tools, including Biblioshiny, VOSviewer, and Microsoft Excel, which enabled the exploration of research trends, author collaboration, and keyword networks that frequently appear in this study. Biblioshiny, an interface of the Bibliometrix R package, was primarily used to perform descriptive analyses such as annual scientific production, most relevant sources, most productive authors, and citation analysis. VOSviewer was employed to conduct and visualize co-authorship networks, co-occurrence of keywords, and thematic clustering to identify conceptual structures and collaboration patterns. Biblioshiny and VOSviewer are software that can visualize and analyze descriptive and conceptual data (Muskhir et al., 2024; Watrianthos et al.,

2023). Meanwhile, Microsoft Excel was used to assist in data cleaning and organization prior to importing the dataset into the analysis tools, ensuring consistency and accuracy in the visualization outputs.

The results of this analysis are then summarized in the conclusion stage, which includes a literature review and reporting of key findings. This methodology is highly relevant to the topic Exploring the Academic Landscape of Merdeka Belajar in Higher Education: A Bibliometric Analysis, as it enables the identification of research patterns, reveals key trends in Merdeka Belajar studies, and provides insights into how this policy is studied and implemented in various higher education institutions.

Result and Discussion

Descriptive Bibliometric Analysis

To answer RQ1, this descriptive bibliometric analysis provides an overview of the development of research related to Merdeka Belajar in higher education. This analysis helps in understanding the evolution of research topics that have been conducted and published by other researchers in this field. Table 1 presents key information from the metadata search results in the dimensions database, including publication timespan, number of sources, number of documents analyzed, the annual growth rate of publications, and number of authors contributing to the research. This data provides insight into publication trends and research distribution related to Merdeka Belajar policy in the academic environment.

Table 1. The main information on bibliometric analysis

Description	Results
Timespan	2020-2024
Sources (Journals, Books, etc)	181
Documents	210
Annual Growth Rate %	92.56
Authors	670

Table 1 presents key information from the bibliometric analysis related to research on Merdeka Belajar in higher education during the period 2020-2024. In this timespan, 210 documents have been analyzed, which come from 181 sources such as journals and books. The high annual growth rate of 92.56% shows a significant increase in the number of publications related to Merdeka Belajar, reflecting the increasing academic attention to this policy. In addition, the involvement of 670 authors shows that many academics are actively researching this topic, both from the perspective of policy, implementation and its impact on higher education. This data is very relevant to this topic because it illustrates the dynamics of research development in

this field and confirms that MBKM has become a strategic issue in global academic studies.

Annual Production

In RQ2, researchers conduct an annual analysis of publications that discuss the implementation of Merdeka Belajar in higher education. The results of this analysis show that the number of publications and citations fluctuates from year to year, reflecting the dynamics of research development on this topic. Figure 2 displays the annual trend of publications, with certain years standing out as periods with the highest number of publications, which may indicate increased academic interest in Merdeka Belajar policies in various higher education institutions.

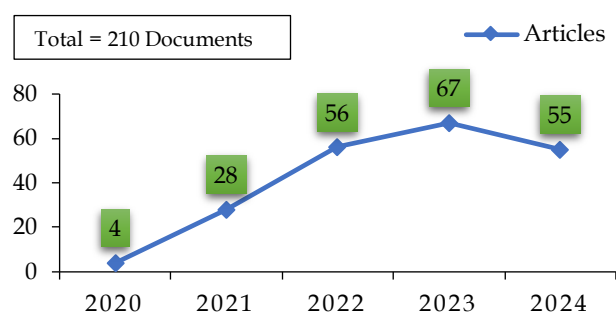


Figure 2. Evolution of publication (2020-2024)

This graph shows the evolution of the number of publications related to Merdeka Belajar in higher education over the period 2020-2024, with a total of 210 documents analyzed. In 2020, there were only 4 publications, signaling a limited start in academic exploration of this policy. The first article published by Siregar et al. (2020) discusses the concept of an Independent Learning Campus in the Era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0. The concept of Merdeka Belajar, which was initiated by the Minister of Education and Culture, Nadiem Makarim, is widely discussed as an effort to face changing times in the world of education. In facing the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0, the concept of Merdeka Campus aims to equip students with more relevant skills, such as creativity, collaboration, and work readiness. With the rapid development of technology, students are expected to adapt and face the challenges of the digital era through a more flexible and innovative higher education system.

There was a significant increase in the following years, with 28 publications in 2021, 56 publications in 2022, and reached its peak in 2023 with 67 publications. This trend reflects the increasing academic attention to the concept of Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) along with its implementation in various higher education institutions. Although publications experienced rapid growth until 2023, the graph also

shows a slight decline in 2024, with the number of publications dropping to 55 documents. This may indicate that after the initial exploration phase, research on MBKM began to experience a shift from policy exploration towards evaluating implementation and long-term impact. This decline could also indicate that research is starting to focus more on specific aspects of the MBKM policy, such as the effectiveness of internship programs, student skills, and institutional readiness in implementing this policy.

This publication evolution trend is very relevant to the topic Exploring the Academic Landscape of Merdeka Belajar in Higher Education: A Bibliometric Analysis, because it illustrates how research on MBKM has developed since its introduction, reached its peak when implementation became more widespread and began to undergo adjustments along with the needs of policy evaluation and optimization. Bibliometric analysis of this publication can provide deeper insights into the direction of future research and how Merdeka Belajar policy continues to transform in higher education.

Top 10 Most Cited Article

To answer RQ3, the documents with the highest number of citations worldwide can be seen and identified in Table 2. The table lists 10 articles out of 210 total articles related to the use of mobile learning in education, which detail the title of the article, DOI (Digital Object Identifiers)/Link, the number of citations received, and a column labeled TC (Total Cited) per year or average total citations per year.

The Table 2 shows the ten most cited articles that discuss various aspects of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy in higher education. The article with the highest citation, titled Concept and Implementation of the MBKM Curriculum (Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka), has 106 citations with a TC (Total Citations) of 21.20. This shows that the concept and implementation of MBKM has become a highly considered issue in academia, both in policy design and implementation in higher education (Sopiansyah et al., 2022). The articles in this table reflect how MBKM has become an important part of academic discussions in recent years.

The second most cited article, The Concept of an Independent Learning Campus in the Era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0, with 102 citations and a TC of 17.00, highlights the relationship between MBKM and technological developments in the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0. This shows that higher education academics and practitioners are increasingly aware of the need for curriculum innovation in accordance with the demands of the digital world and technology-based economy (Siregar et al., 2020). A bibliometric study of

this literature can reveal how the concept of Merdeka Belajar adapts to technological developments and global challenges. Hunaepi & Suharta (2024) research shows that Merdeka Belajar curriculum has had a positive impact on student engagement and learning outcomes by promoting autonomy and integrating 21st century skills, but challenges such as logistical issues, teacher readiness, and digital resource gaps still exist. To overcome these challenges, further efforts are needed, including enhancing teacher training, improving digital learning infrastructure, and strengthening collaboration among education stakeholders.

Articles such as Preparing the Implementation of Merdeka Belajar - Kampus Merdeka Policy in Higher Education Institutions and The Development Structure of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum in the Industrial Revolution Era show that the implementation of this policy in higher education institutions is one of the most

researched topics. With 44 and 29 citations respectively, these two articles discuss how higher education institutions adapt MBKM policies into their academic structures (Maipita et al., 2021; Purwanti, 2021). This indicates that although MBKM aims to provide more flexibility for students, there are still challenges in its implementation that require further study. Research by Pongsapan et al. (2024) which states that the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program faces several challenges, including lack of program socialization, limited funding, difficulty accessing locations, administrative constraints, and lack of student motivation and readiness to face academic challenges. In addition, adaptation to a new environment, limited supporting facilities, and obstacles in the integration of digital technology are also obstacles that need to be evaluated to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of this program.

Table 2. Top ten most cited article

Title	DOI/Link	Cited	TC
Konsep dan Implementasi Kurikulum MBKM (Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka) (Sopiansyah et al., 2022)	10.47467/RESLAJ.V4I1.458	106	21.20
Konsep Kampus Merdeka Belajar di Era Revolusi Industri 4.0 (Siregar et al., 2020)	10.53802/FITRAH.V1I1.13	102	17.00
Preparing the Implementation of Merdeka Belajar – Kampus Merdeka Policy in Higher Education Institutions (Purwanti, 2021)	10.2991/ASSEHR.K.210120.149	44	8.80
The Development Structure of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum in the Industrial Revolution Era (Maipita et al., 2021)	10.2991/AEBMR.K.210220.026	29	5.80
COVID-19 ambassadors: Recognizing Kampus Mengajar at the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka program humanitarian projects in the tertiary education curriculum (Suyadi et al., 2022)	10.3389/FEDUC.2022.902343	20	5.00
Implementation Framework for Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) in Higher Education Academic Activities (Supriati et al., 2022)	10.34306/ITSDI.V3I2.555	17	4.25
Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka: Application in Education Faculty (Fuadi & Irdalisa, 2021)	10.35445/ALISHLAH.V13I3.1125	16	4.00
Implementation of MBKM and the Relationship of Curriculum Policy based on a Case of EFL Education in Japan (Rohiyatussakinah, 2021)	10.47080/JELTL.V4I2.1434	16	3.20
Dukungan Perpustakaan Dalam Implementasi “Kampus Merdeka dan Merdeka Belajar” (Fatmawati, 2020)	10.20961/JPI.V6I2.46682	14	2.80
New Technologies for Project-Based Empathy Learning in Merdeka Belajar (Freedom to Learn): The Use of inaRISK Application and Biopore Technology (Khusna et al., 2022)	10.3991/IJIM.V16I22.36153	14	3.50

The article COVID-19 Ambassadors: Recognizing Kampus Mengajar at the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka Program Humanitarian Projects in the Tertiary Education Curriculum with a total of 20 citations highlights the Kampus Mengajar program, one of the flagship programs in MBKM. This program aims to provide teaching experience to students in various schools as part of a more flexible and real experience-oriented education system (Suyadi et al., 2022). This shows that MBKM focuses not only on classroom-based education, but also on the development of practical skills that match the needs of the community (Rodin et al., 2024).

Articles such as Implementation Framework for Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) in Higher Education Academic Activities with a total of 17 citations and Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka: Application in Education Faculty with 16 citations highlighted the academic approach in the implementation of MBKM (Fuadi & Irdalisa, 2021; Supriati et al., 2022). This indicates that higher education institutions are looking for effective models to implement this policy in their academic activities. One important aspect in bibliometric studies is to understand publication patterns related to how this policy is adopted by various universities and faculties. Research

by Rusman et al. (2024) which states that the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) Policy includes curriculum flexibility, recognition of credits for off-campus activities, improving the quality of project-based learning, and collaboration with industry and the private sector to prepare graduates who are more adaptive to labor market needs.

Some articles in the table discuss case studies of MBKM implementation, such as Implementation of MBKM and the Relationship of Curriculum Policy based on a Case of EFL Education in Japan with a total of 16 citations. This study shows that MBKM is not only a national topic but also attracts attention in an international context, especially related to foreign language education and students' global skills (Fuadi & Irdalisa, 2021). This case study analysis can provide further insights into how this policy is implemented in various contexts and its impact on teaching and learning.

Articles such as New Technologies for Project-Based Empathy Learning in Freedom to Learn: The Use of inARISK Application and Biopore Technology shows that MBKM also involves technology integration in project-based learning methods (Khusna et al., 2022). This is in line with global trends that increasingly emphasize the importance of technology-based learning and practical experience for students. Bibliometric studies can reveal research patterns on how technology is used in supporting MBKM policies and how this technology affects the effectiveness of student learning. One such study by Muflihin & Warsito (2024) found that demographic factors affect the digital divide, with rural communities having lower ICT scores than urban areas, making it more difficult for them to access and utilize technology. As MBKM focuses on improving students' ICT skills, it becomes an important strategy to improve

graduates' competencies, preparing them to compete globally in the digital era.

Based on the table analysis, it can be concluded that Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka has become an important topic in the academic literature. With the increasing number of citations and variety of research topics, MBKM has attracted widespread attention from academics, policymakers, and higher education practitioners. Bibliometric analysis of these publications can help identify key trends in MBKM research, uncover research gaps, as well as provide insights into how this policy is evolving and being adopted by various educational institutions in Indonesia and the world. This makes this research an important step in understanding the evolution of higher education policies based on flexibility and student learning experience.

The Most Relevant and Productive Sources

In RQ4, the main sources of journals and proceedings that are most relevant and productive in producing publications related to Merdeka Belajar topics in higher education have been identified. Figure 3 displays a diagram summarizing the five most productive sources in publishing research that addresses the latest trends and impacts of Merdeka Belajar implementation in the academic world. This analysis is very important to assist researchers in determining the right journal for the publication of their research results in the future. If a study focuses on aspects that are often discussed in these journals, then these journals can be considered as the top choice for paper submission. From this bibliometric analysis, a total of 181 publication sources were obtained, which were then filtered to produce the five most productive journals in publishing research related to Merdeka Belajar in the context of higher education.

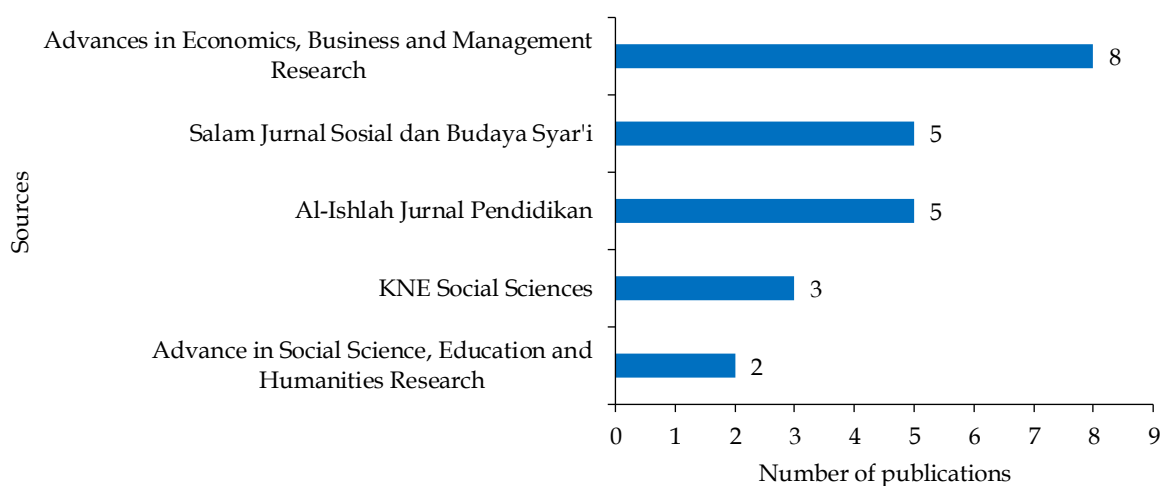


Figure 3. Top five most productive sources

Figure 3 shows the five most productive publication sources in research related to Merdeka Belajar in higher education. "Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research" is the source with the highest number of publications, namely 8 articles, indicating that Merdeka Belajar studies are widely explored in the fields of social science and education. "KNE Social Sciences" and 'Al-Ishlah Journal of Education' have 5 publications each, indicating that this research has also received attention in journals focused on education and academic policy. The existence of journals such as "Salam Syar'I Social and Cultural Journal" and "Advances in Economics, Business and Management Research" indicates that the concept of Merdeka Belajar is also studied in the social, cultural, economic, and educational management contexts.

From the perspective of bibliometric analysis, this data reflects that academic studies related to Merdeka Belajar are not only limited to one discipline, but have developed in various fields. The main focus appears to be on education and social sciences, which are the main areas of implementation of this policy. However, the emergence of research in journals that discuss economics and business also shows an exploration of the impact of Merdeka Belajar in developing student skills for the world of work. Thus, this research is increasingly relevant to understanding how this policy affects the higher education system at large, not only in academic aspects but also in the readiness of students to face industry challenges.

In the context of Exploring the Academic Landscape of Merdeka Belajar in Higher Education: A Bibliometric Analysis, this graph provides insights into the main sources of research and how the distribution of MBKM-related publications is evolving across different journals. By identifying the most prolific journals, researchers can more easily find relevant resources and understand the main directions of research in this field. In addition, these findings can be the basis for further studies to explore whether research in economics and business will increase along with further implementation of Merdeka Belajar policy in Indonesia's higher education system.

The Most Productive Authors

To answer RQ5, which focuses on the most relevant and prolific authors in Merdeka Belajar-related research in higher education, Table 3 highlights three authors who have made significant contributions through the highest number of publications in this area. This analysis provides guidance for other researchers in identifying academics who can be used as key references, given their role in exploring the trends and impacts of Merdeka Belajar implementation in the academic environment. From the results of the bibliometric analysis, 670 authors

were identified, and Table 3 filters three of them as the most productive authors who are active in conducting and publishing research on Merdeka Belajar policies in higher education.

Table 3. Top three most productive authors

Authors	Doc	TC	Affiliation
Feni Marnilin	2	2	Universitas Nusa Bangsa
Ahmad Zaid Mahfudi	2	2	Universitas Nusa Bangsa
Hamsu Abdul Gani	2	1	Universitas Negeri Makassar

This table displays the three most productive authors in research related to Merdeka Belajar in higher education, based on the number of documents they produce. Feni Marnilin and Ahmad Zaid Mahfudi, both from Nusa Bangsa University, each have 2 publications with a total of 2 citations), showing their significant contribution to academic studies related to Merdeka Belajar policy. Hamsu Abdul Gani from Makassar State University also has 2 publications, but with a total of 1 citation. This data reflects that research on Merdeka Belajar is starting to develop and receive attention from various academics, especially from universities in Indonesia. In the context of Exploring the Academic Landscape of Merdeka Belajar in Higher Education: A Bibliometric Analysis, the identification of the most productive authors provides insight into individuals and institutions that play an active role in producing research in this field. This can also be a reference for other researchers to build academic collaborations or access the latest publications related to the implementation of Merdeka Belajar policies in higher education.

Keyword Analysis

To answer RQ6 related to the most co-occurring keywords and visualization of co-occurrence analysis of authors' keywords on this topic. Keyword analysis is a widely used method in bibliometric research to identify trends and patterns in related scientific literature. This strategy allows researchers to evaluate the use of certain keywords or phrases in a group of publications by calculating the frequency of occurrence and comparing it with other keywords. This approach helps identify dominant keywords, providing important insights into the focus and direction of research in a particular field. This analysis is also useful for directing future research and identifying gaps in the literature that have not been widely explored. Figure 4 represents the most keywords published in the article.

Figure 4 shows the most frequently used keywords in research on Merdeka Belajar in higher education, with "Kampus Merdeka" as the most dominant term with 139 occurrences, followed by "Learning" with 67

occurrences, “Study Program” and “Analysis” obtained the same occurrences of 53. Keywords such as “Challenge” with 53 occurrences, “Merdeka Belajar” and “MBKM Program” obtained the same occurrence of 52, indicating that research focuses a lot on policy implementation, challenges, and its impact on the higher education system. In addition, the keywords “Knowledge” and “Change” obtained the same occurrence of 38 while “Opportunity” obtained an occurrence of 37. This highlights the opportunities offered by MBKM in improving student competencies. This keyword analysis helps identify key trends, research gaps, and future policy development directions, confirming that Merdeka Belajar has become an increasingly growing topic in academic studies.

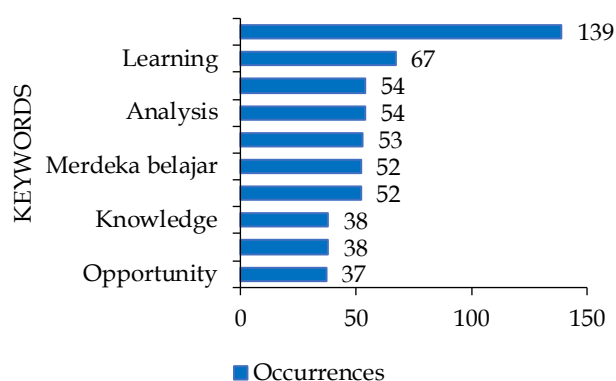


Figure 4. Most keywords published in the article

In addition to keyword analysis, there is also a keyword co-occurrence analysis, which is visualized through network and overlay visualization of co-occurrence. This analysis uses keywords provided by authors in related academic publications, enabling the identification of key trends and patterns in Merdeka Belajar research. With this method, research trends can be mapped, relationships between concepts can be analyzed, and projections of future research directions can be made. Through this network visualization, the development of topics that often appear in academic studies can be seen, helping to understand how Merdeka Belajar policies have been explored by academics in various fields of study.

In this context, the co-occurrence analysis method is used as a bibliometric technique to identify the relationship between various concepts that appear in academic literature related to Merdeka Belajar. This technique is based on the assumption that keywords or terms that often appear together have stronger thematic linkages compared to random occurrences. Network and overlay visualization of co-occurrence is used to map the relationship between keywords in the form of a network, which allows the identification of emerging

topics, changes in research focus over time, and integration between higher education policy and implementation in the field. In addition, this analysis can be an important reference for researchers who want to identify research gaps in Merdeka Belajar studies, especially in the aspects of implementation, policy evaluation, and the impact on students and higher education institutions. Figure 5 is an analyst Network and overlay visualization of co-occurrence of author keywords.

Figure 5 displays a network visualization and co-occurrence overlay of the keywords used by the authors in the research on Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM). The keyword “independent campus” is central in this network, indicating that the term is the main focus of the research. Other keywords closely related to “independent campus” include “mbkm program”, “graduate”, “higher education institution”, and “learning”, indicating that this research is closely related to higher education policy and learning strategies.

Recent research shows that the implementation of MBKM policies in higher education focuses on increasing the flexibility of learning and preparing students to face the challenges of the world of work. The study by Walef et al. (2023) found that students responded positively to the MBKM program, especially in the student exchange scheme and teaching in schools, which shows the relevance of this program in shaping more adaptive and competitive graduates. In addition, research by Defrizal et al. (2022) revealed that MBKM is effective in preparing graduates who are ready to face the world of work, with students who participated in this program showing a higher level of readiness than those who did not participate in MBKM. Thus, the MBKM policy has become an integral part of the learning strategy in higher education institutions, providing students with access to a broader and more contextualized learning experience.

The color scale in the visualization shows the temporal progression in research, with blue representing earlier keywords used in the 2020-2022 range while yellow indicates more recent keywords used in the 2023-2024 range. This reflects how the research focus in MBKM has evolved from its inception to the present. For example, terms such as “soft skills”, “work”, and “MBKM program” appear later, indicating that research now focuses more on the long-term impact of MBKM on students and the world of work. For example, research by Pangga et al. (2023) examined the effectiveness of ethnoscience learning in improving students' understanding of physics concepts under the MBKM scheme. This focus shows a shift from short-term responses to the pandemic towards improving students' critical thinking skills and scientific understanding.

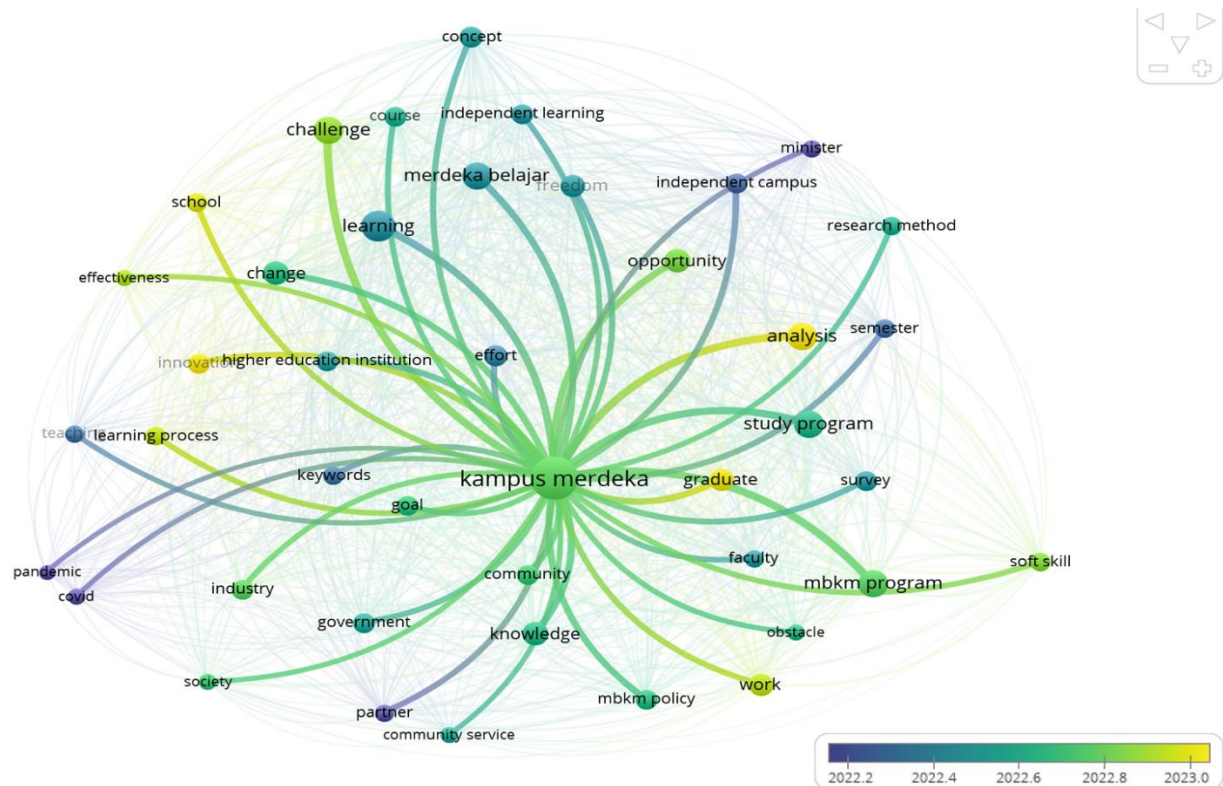


Figure 5. Network and overlay visualization of co-occurrence of author keywords

Keywords such as “graduate”, “soft skills”, and “work” indicate that there is a growing concern for how MBKM prepares students to enter the workforce. This is relevant to the MBKM policy that aims to provide flexibility for students to gain work experience through internships, independent projects, and other forms of learning outside the traditional classroom (Rodin et al., 2024). The MBKM program plays an important role in preparing students for the world of work through internship experiences, strengthening learning independence, and developing entrepreneurial skills (Junarti et al., 2023; Nurliani et al., 2022). Research by Zaenab et al. (2022) also found that MBKM-based industrial internships provide students with direct experience in the world of work, increasing their understanding of industry dynamics.

Keywords such as “higher education institution”, “MBKM policy”, and “faculty” indicate that research on MBKM focuses not only on students but also on how higher education institutions adopt this policy. Universities play a key role in the implementation of MBKM, as they have to adjust their curriculum, administrative system, and evaluation methods to fit this new policy (Supriati et al., 2022). In addition, research by Syahrudin & Tambaip (2023) revealed that MBKM changes the teaching and mentoring approach taken by lecturers, so they must be more flexible in

adjusting teaching methods to suit student needs and independent campus policies.

Keywords such as “innovation”, “learning process”, and “independent learning” indicate that MBKM has driven changes in learning methods and curriculum design. One of the main objectives of MBKM is to provide opportunities for students to learn more independently and project-based, which can increase their creativity and competitiveness in the professional world (Heryati, 2024; Pasyah et al., 2024). Research by Utami et al. (2022) also highlighted that MBKM provides both challenges and opportunities in developing student innovation and creativity, as well as increasing collaborative competencies and independent learning abilities. Thus, MBKM not only provides flexibility in the learning process but also encourages the transformation of higher education towards a model that is more adaptive, innovative, and relevant to the needs of the professional world.

Keywords such as “challenge” and “obstacle” indicate that although MBKM has a lot of potential, there are still various challenges in its implementation. These challenges include administrative issues, readiness of lecturers and students, and lack of supporting infrastructure in some institutions. Research by Dewirahmadanirwati & Agustina (2024) revealed that the main obstacles in implementing MBKM include difficulties in adjusting the curriculum (59% of

respondents), lack of funding (32%), and limited industry partners (52%). In addition, research by Tobondo (2024) also found that inadequate infrastructure and limited policy understanding were also major obstacles in the implementation of MBKM, indicating the need for training for lecturers as well as the development of educational infrastructure. Thus, while MBKM has the potential to increase learning flexibility, administrative challenges and institutional readiness still need to be addressed to ensure the success of this program.

From the analysis of this visualization, it can be concluded that research on MBKM covers various aspects ranging from education policy, student skills, learning innovation, industry involvement, to challenges in implementation. Bibliometric studies allow us to understand how these trends have evolved and provide a basis for future research. By continuously analyzing academic publications in this field, we can identify research gaps and propose strategies to improve the effectiveness of MBKM policies in higher education in Indonesia.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy has emerged as a prominent focus within higher education research in Indonesia. Through a bibliometric analysis of academic publications from 2020 to 2024, this study reveals a significant and consistent increase in scholarly interest, as evidenced by the growing number of publications, the emergence of key authors, institutions, and collaborative networks, as well as frequently appearing keywords such as independent learning, curriculum transformation, and student competency. The bibliometric findings underscore that research on MBKM is largely concentrated on themes related to curriculum innovation, industry-academic collaboration, and student-centered learning. The analysis also identifies gaps, particularly in studies evaluating the long-term impact of MBKM on graduate outcomes and institutional transformation, highlighting areas for future exploration. Although MBKM is widely acknowledged for promoting experiential learning and enhancing student employability, its implementation remains challenged by disparities in institutional readiness, limited infrastructure, administrative burdens, and the varying capacity of educators and students to adapt to flexible learning ecosystems. Based on these findings, this study recommends further bibliometric tracking of MBKM-related research to monitor shifts in scholarly focus and identify emerging trends. Policymakers and higher education institutions

are also encouraged to strengthen institutional support systems and prioritize evidence-based strategies that address implementation gaps, thereby ensuring that MBKM can achieve its intended role in building a more adaptive and globally competitive higher education system.

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Author Contributions

Writing—original draft preparation, methodology, and analysis, I.N.H.; Conceptualization, review, and editing, formal analysis, R.M.; Review and editing, formal analysis, H.E. and R.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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