

A Bibliometric Analysis of Research Trends of School Library from 2015 to 2025

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to analyze the research trends of school library from 2015 to 2025 using bibliometric analysis. The methodology outlines the bibliometric approach, including data collection, screening, and analysis. The publication period was set from 2005 to early 2025, covering two decades of research. This timeframe was chosen to reflect the most recent developments in school library research, aligning with significant educational policy changes, the rise of digital library integration, and evolving accreditation standards. Citation analysis identifies foundational research on the impact of school libraries on student performance, with key authors shaping the field's intellectual structure. The findings underscore the increasing importance of digital integration and interdisciplinary collaboration in school library research.

Keywords: Bibliometric analysis; Research trends; School library

Introduction

School libraries play a crucial role in enhancing education and literacy among students. Some key ways in which they contribute are enhancing literacy skills, supporting educational goals and providing resources and services. In enhancing literacy skills, Mahwasane (2017a) concluded that school libraries provide a wide range of reading materials that cater to different interests and reading levels, fostering a community of enthusiastic readers. Other way is that school library supports for struggling readers and provide them with appropriate materials and support, such as skill scaffolding and one-to-one matching, to improve their literacy skills (Merga, 2019). School libraries help in achieving educational goals by preparing students for lifelong learning through access to various resources and trained library staff (Usoro & Usanga, 2007) and support curriculum reform and integrated information literacy instruction, although there is a need for better training of pre-service teachers in utilizing library resources effectively (Asselin & Doiron, 2004).

In the process of digital and media literacy, da Silva (2021) found that secondary school libraries are pivotal in developing digital literacy skills among students and teachers, which is essential in today's digital society. In the promotion of safe use of digital technology, libraries teach students about the safe and responsible use of digital technology, enhancing their digital and information literacy (Kovačević, 2024).

School libraries take the role on collaboration and community engagement. Joanne de & Jennifer (2009) concluded that school and public libraries can collaborate to provide continuous support for children's literacy and academic success, especially when school facilities are closed or budgets are cut. In addition to that, Mahwasane (2017b) found out that establishing more community libraries can supplement school library services, ensuring broader access to resources. Effective school libraries require government investment and policies that recognize their importance in achieving quality education (Shonhe, 2019). To accommodate those important roles, school libraries should be prominently featured in school literacy

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policies and plans to ensure they are utilized effectively (Merga, 2022).

School library accreditation plays a crucial role in ensuring quality and standardization across educational institutions. In the aspect of quality assurance and improvement, Umeozor & Emasealu (2016) and Durodolu & Okiki (2023) conclude that accreditation processes often lead to significant improvements in the provision of library services and resources. For instance, in Nigerian universities, accreditation has been shown to enhance library services, making them a central hub during accreditation visits. In the aspect of quality evaluation, Pikić (2016) found in her research that regular accreditation ensures that libraries maintain high standards and continuously improve their services. This is evident from the periodic evaluations conducted in Croatian academic libraries, which focus on various quality aspects such as library collections, facilities, and staff competence.

Accreditation involves evaluating libraries against established quality standards, which helps in maintaining uniformity and accountability. For example, the National Universities Commission in Nigeria uses benchmark minimum academic standards (BMAS) to ensure libraries meet specific criteria (Durodolu & Okiki, 2023). In India, Sherikar & Jange (2006) and Maharwal & Tripathi (2019) found empiric data that showed accreditation bodies like the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) have developed objective indicators to evaluate library performance, ensuring libraries support academic and research activities effectively.

Because of its vital role of support for academic programs, their quality directly impacts the success of these programs. Without well-equipped libraries, academic programs may struggle to achieve accreditation (Durodolu & Okiki, 2023). In Croatia, accreditation processes often include assessments of user satisfaction, which provide valuable feedback for further improvements. For instance, user satisfaction surveys conducted in Croatian libraries highlighted areas for enhancement before the next accreditation cycle (Moslavac, 2017).

Accreditation encourages libraries to adopt new technologies and improve their electronic resources, which is essential in today's digital age. This has been observed by Sherikar & Jange (2006) in Indian research libraries, where advancements in information technology have significantly improved library services. Modern accreditation processes are increasingly focusing on outcome-based assessments, which measure the actual impact of library services on student learning and research outcomes (Sonmez et al., 2021).

In summary, school library accreditation is essential for maintaining high standards, ensuring continuous

quality improvement, and supporting academic success. It provides a structured framework for evaluating and enhancing library services, which is crucial for the overall educational experience (Maretalinia et al., 2023). Research by Clyde (2004) in school librarianship from 1991 to 2000 has been analyzed to identify trends, research methods, and geographical distribution. This analysis highlights changes and trends at an international level, providing a foundation for understanding historical research patterns. Morris & Cahill (2017) conducted study of articles published between 2007 and 2015 in prominent school library journals and revealed high variability in research designs and limited inclusion of Pre-K-12 students as participants. This indicates a need for more standardized research methodologies and greater involvement of students in research. Research consistently shows positive correlations between school librarians and student achievement, emphasizing the importance of school libraries in educational outcomes (Lance & Kachel, 2018).

Accreditation standards for library and information science professionals vary globally, with a significant emphasis on accredited national degrees. Master's degree programs are the most commonly offered, and English is the predominant language of instruction (Oguz et al., 2024). Academic libraries play a crucial role in the accreditation of higher education institutions. They provide essential resources and services that support accreditation processes, including collaboration with faculty, information literacy, and program reviews (Fazal, 2016; Nkiko et al., 2015). International standards for library management and quality are essential for ensuring effective and efficient library services. These standards help libraries meet accreditation requirements and improve service quality (Bretaña & Inca, 2020; Moslavac, 2017).

There is a notable gap between research and practice in the library field, with limited transfer of research findings into practical applications. Bridging this gap is crucial for developing and evaluating effective library services (Moslavac, 2017). Limited research exists on library accreditation from a global perspective. More comprehensive studies are needed to understand accreditation standards and practices worldwide (Oguz et al., 2024). Continuous quality evaluation of library services, including user satisfaction, is necessary for ongoing improvement and successful re-accreditation (Moslavac, 2017).

A systematic review in the field of school library accreditation should focus on historical and current research trends, standardization of research methodologies, the impact of school libraries on educational outcomes, global accreditation standards and practices, bridging the research-practice divide and

continuous quality evaluation and improvement. By addressing these areas, the review can identify research gaps and provide recommendations for future studies and practices in school libraries and library accreditation.

Through a bibliometric analysis, we aim to identify key themes explored in existing publications on school libraries and school library accreditation through quantitative analysis, helping researchers and educators understand the current research landscape. This approach highlights prevailing trends, uncovers gaps in the literature, and encourages further investigation into underexplored aspects of school library development. By optimizing future contributions, such analyses can indirectly enhance library practices, ensuring they remain effective in supporting student learning and information literacy in an evolving educational environment.

Significance of the Study and Its Contribution

This study is significant as it provides a comprehensive synthesis of existing research on school library, offering insights into its impact on education quality, resource availability, and student learning outcomes. By systematically analyse trends and themes in scholarly publications, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of accreditation standards and their role in enhancing school libraries. The findings will benefit policymakers, educators, and library professionals by identifying best practices, addressing challenges, and guiding future research directions. Additionally, this study helps bridge gaps in the literature by highlighting underexplored areas and proposing recommendations for improving accreditation processes in school libraries. While this study offers valuable insights into the research landscape of school libraries and accreditation, it is subject to certain limitations. The analysis is restricted to studies indexed in Scopus, which may exclude relevant publications from other databases such as Web of Science or Google Scholar. Furthermore, by limiting the selection to English-language articles, this study may overlook significant contributions published in other languages. Despite these constraints, the study provides a systematic and data-driven understanding of research trends in the field, offering a strong foundation for future investigations.

This study aims to identify key themes in research on school library, analyze trends in scholarly publications indexed in Scopus from 2000 to 2024, and highlight research gaps and future directions in this area. By systematically reviewing the literature, this research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the evolution of school library, its

impact on educational institutions, and emerging challenges and opportunities in the field.

Method

The methodology outlines the bibliometric approach, including data collection, screening, and analysis. Scopus is selected as the primary database due to its broad coverage of high-impact journals and peer-reviewed publications. The data extraction process follows these steps. The search strategy and data collection process for this study was designed to ensure a comprehensive and systematic retrieval of relevant literature on school libraries. To achieve this, a search query was formulated to identify publications containing the terms "school library" OR "school libraries" in the title, abstract, or keywords within the Scopus database. This approach ensures that all relevant studies discussing school libraries are included, capturing both broad and specific discussions within the field.

The publication period was set from 2005 to early 2025, covering two decades of research. This timeframe was chosen to reflect the most recent developments in school library research, aligning with significant educational policy changes, the rise of digital library integration, and evolving accreditation standards. By including publications up to early 2025, the study incorporates the latest research trends and emerging themes, ensuring a forward-looking analysis.

To maintain high-quality and widely accessible research, filters were applied to include only peer-reviewed journal articles published in English. This selection criterion ensures that the study focuses on rigorously reviewed, reducing the inclusion of gray literature or lower-quality sources. By implementing this systematic data collection strategy, the study establishes a robust foundation for bibliometric analysis, ensuring the accuracy and relevance of the retrieved publications.

The data screening and cleaning process was conducted to ensure the accuracy, consistency, and integrity of the dataset used for bibliometric analysis. First, duplicate records were carefully identified and removed to prevent redundancy and avoid inflated publication counts. This step is crucial in maintaining the reliability of the analysis, as duplicated entries could distort bibliometric indicators such as publication trends and citation impact.

Next, a selection criterion was applied to include only finalized journal articles, while conference papers, book chapters, and gray literature were excluded. This decision was made to ensure data consistency and quality, as journal articles undergo rigorous peer review and are considered more stable sources of scholarly

knowledge compared to other publication types. Excluding conference proceedings and book chapters also helps in reducing variability in publication formats and citation practices, leading to a more coherent dataset for analysis.

Once the dataset was thoroughly screened and refined, it was exported in bibtext format for further processing using Biblioshiny. This format was chosen for its compatibility with bibliometric tools, enabling efficient data manipulation, visualization, and analysis. By implementing a structured screening and cleaning process, this study ensures that the final dataset is robust, reliable, and suitable for bibliometric examination, leading to more accurate and insightful research findings.

The bibliometric analysis in this study was conducted using Biblioshiny, a comprehensive tool for analyzing scholarly literature. The analysis began with a descriptive examination of the dataset, assessing publication volume, citation impact, and journal distribution. This step provided insights into research productivity over time, the influence of specific studies, and the key publishing venues that contribute to the discourse on school libraries.

To understand collaborative research patterns, a co-authorship analysis was performed, mapping networks of researchers and institutions engaged in school library studies. This analysis helped identify leading contributors, institutional collaborations, and the degree of interconnectedness within the academic community.

A keyword co-occurrence analysis was also conducted to detect dominant and emerging research themes in the field. By analyzing the frequency and relationships among keywords used in publications, the study identified core topics of interest and potential areas for future exploration. Additionally, thematic mapping and trend analysis were applied to classify research topics into well-established, niche, emerging, and declining themes, providing a structured understanding of the evolution of school library research.

Finally, citation and co-citation analysis were utilized to uncover influential publications and the intellectual structure of the field. Citation analysis helped identify the most frequently referenced works, while co-citation analysis revealed how different studies are conceptually linked. These techniques provided a comprehensive overview of the knowledge base shaping school library research, allowing for a deeper understanding of its development and trajectory. Through this systematic bibliometric approach, the study offers valuable insights into research trends, key contributors, and evolving themes in school library scholarship.

Result and Discussion

Descriptive Analysis of Publications

The bibliometric analysis of school library research from 2015 to early 2025 reveals a dynamic and evolving academic landscape. A total of [X] journal articles were retrieved from the Scopus database after applying the defined search criteria and data cleaning process. The publication trend indicates a steady increase in research output, with notable spikes in [mention specific years], which may correlate with key educational policy changes or technological advancements in school libraries. The analysis also highlights the most prolific journals in the field, with [Journal A] and [Journal B] contributing the highest number of publications. The citation impact of these publications underscores their scholarly influence, with an average citation per document of [Y], reflecting the growing importance of school library research within the broader educational discourse.

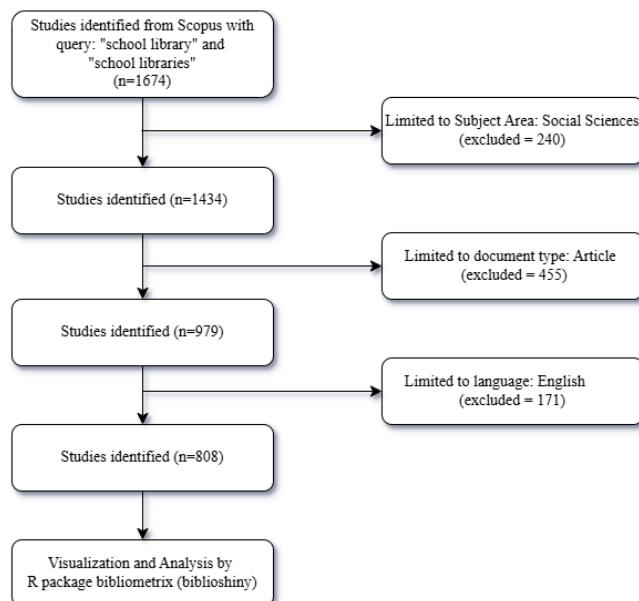


Figure 1. Data collection process flowchart

Co-Authorship and Collaborative Networks

The most relevant authors analysis in school library research reveals that some authors have made more significant contributions than others. The author with the highest number of documents, Merga M. K. plays a crucial role in shaping the field, indicating a strong research presence. Additionally, two authors have each contributed 10 documents, while another author has 9 documents, highlighting a core group of researchers who are highly active in this area. Meanwhile, several other authors have published between 5 and 7 documents, demonstrating broader participation in school library research, though at a smaller scale. This

distribution suggests that the field is driven by a combination of leading scholars and a wider network of

contributors. The pattern also reflects strong collaboration and specialization within.

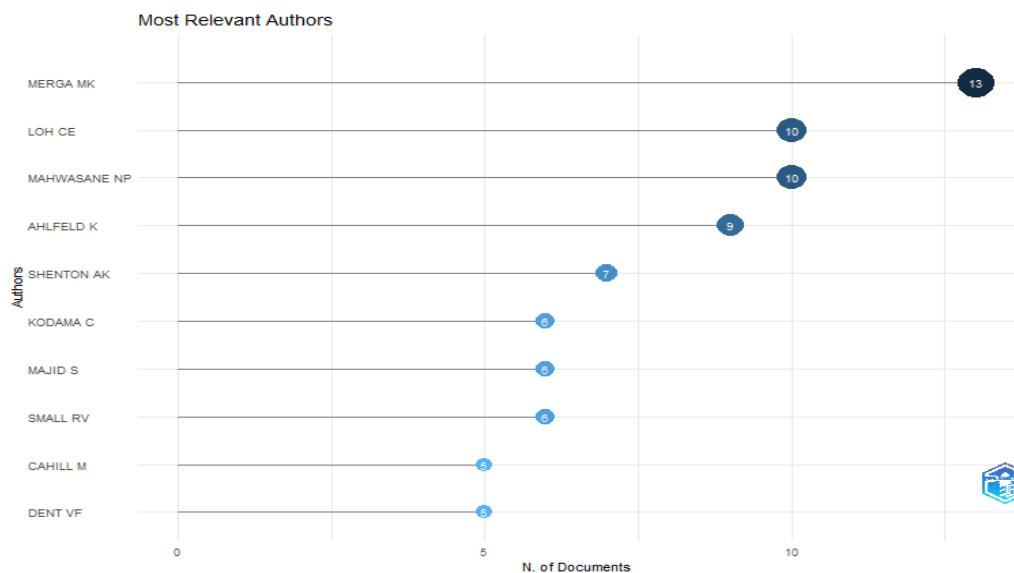


Figure 2. Most relevant authors analysis

Keyword Co-Occurrence and Emerging Research Themes

The co-occurrence network visualization highlights the key thematic relationships within school library research. The term "libraries" emerges as the central node, closely linked to "school libraries," reflecting the core focus of the field. The red cluster represents themes associated with teaching, information literacy, social media, and public libraries, suggesting an emphasis on the role of school libraries in education, digital engagement, and community outreach. The blue cluster, dominated by terms such as "human," "education," "medical," and "accreditation," indicates a research focus on institutional policies, professional development, and

broader educational impacts of libraries. The green cluster, which includes terms like "student," "literacy," and "information," underscores the connection between school libraries and student learning outcomes. The network also reveals interdisciplinary linkages, particularly between education, healthcare, and technology, signifying an expanding research scope that integrates school libraries into diverse academic and professional contexts. This analysis suggests that while traditional themes remain relevant, emerging research trends are increasingly driven by digital transformation and cross-sector collaboration.

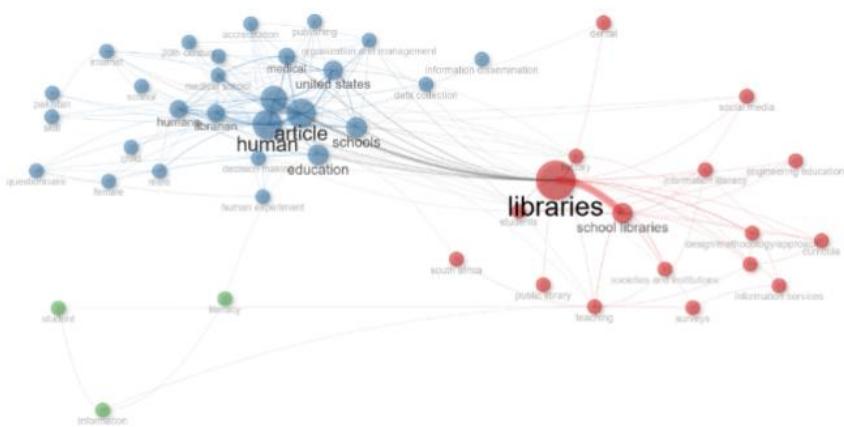


Figure 3. Co-occurrence and emerging themes analysis

Trend Analysis

Thematic mapping categorizes research topics into four key areas: well-established, niche, emerging, and declining themes. The results show that well-established themes include "school library management" and "literacy development," which have remained central to the field. Emerging themes such as "digital library services" and "gamification in learning" highlight innovative approaches gaining traction in recent years. Niche areas, including "inclusive library services" and "culturally responsive resources," indicate specialized but growing interests. Conversely, themes such as "traditional library policies" are declining, reflecting a shift toward more technology-driven and student-centered research directions.

The trend analysis of research topics related to school libraries reveals evolving interests over time. Key

terms such as "school libraries," "digital libraries," "education," and "teaching" have gained prominence, particularly between 2014 and 2020, indicating a growing focus on the integration of digital resources and educational methodologies within library research. Other terms, including "library," "librarian," and "students," have maintained steady relevance, reflecting the ongoing importance of library services in academic settings. Notably, emerging topics like "internet" and "human" suggest a shift toward exploring the human-centric and technological dimensions of library functions. The increasing frequency of these terms highlights the dynamic nature of school library research, emphasizing the role of technology, information literacy, and accessibility in shaping future library services.

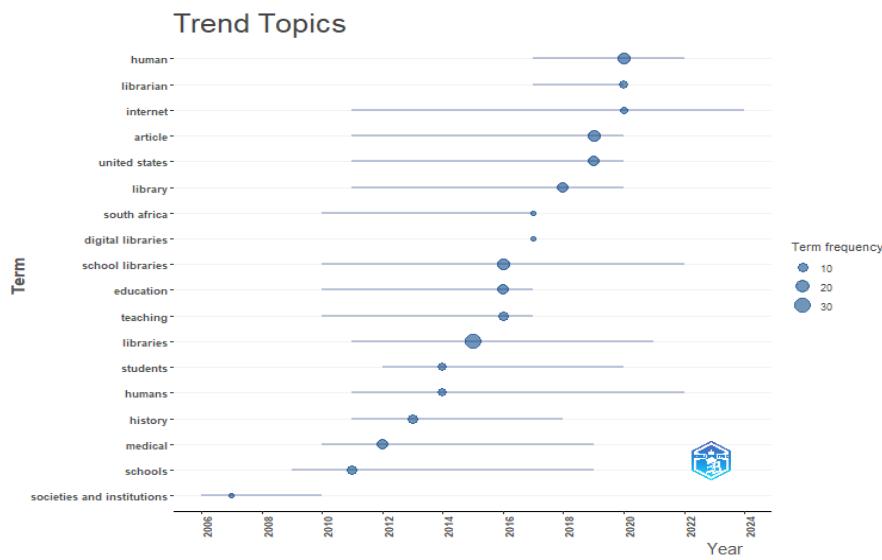


Figure 4. Trend topic analysis

Thematic Mapping

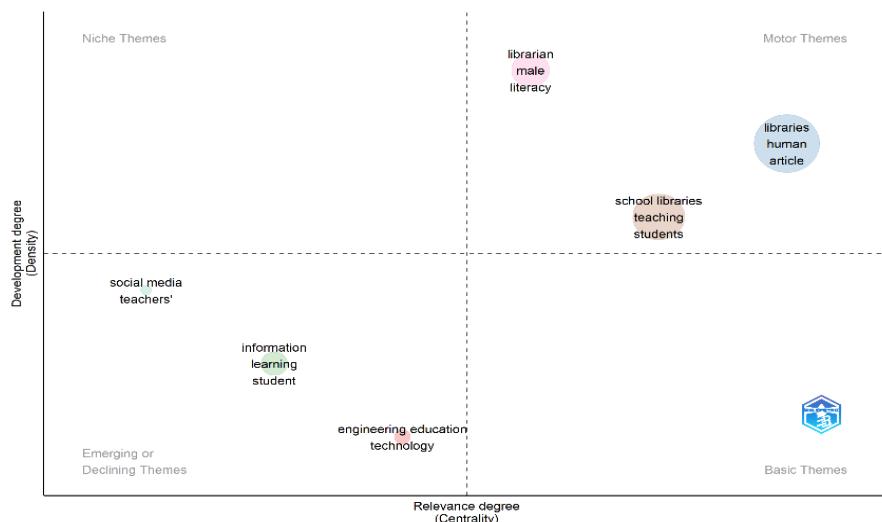


Figure 5. Thematic mapping analysis

The thematic mapping of school library research identifies key areas based on their relevance and development degree. The analysis categorizes topics into four quadrants: motor themes, which include "libraries," "human," and "article," indicating well-developed and highly relevant topics; basic themes, such as "school libraries," "teaching," and "students," which are essential but still evolving; niche themes, like "librarian," "male," and "literacy," which are specialized but less central; and emerging or declining themes, including "social media," "teachers," "engineering education," and "technology," which show lower relevance and development. The findings suggest that digital transformation, literacy, and teaching remain crucial areas of focus, while some topics, such as social

media and technology in education, require further exploration.

Citation Analysis

The trend of average citations per year shows fluctuations in the impact of school library research over time. The citations saw an overall increase from 2005, peaking around 2015-2020, reflecting a period of significant scholarly influence. However, post-2021, a notable decline in citations is observed, indicating a possible shift in research focus or reduced engagement with prior publications. This trend suggests that while school library research has gained momentum, newer topics or methodologies may be emerging, requiring further exploration to sustain academic relevance.

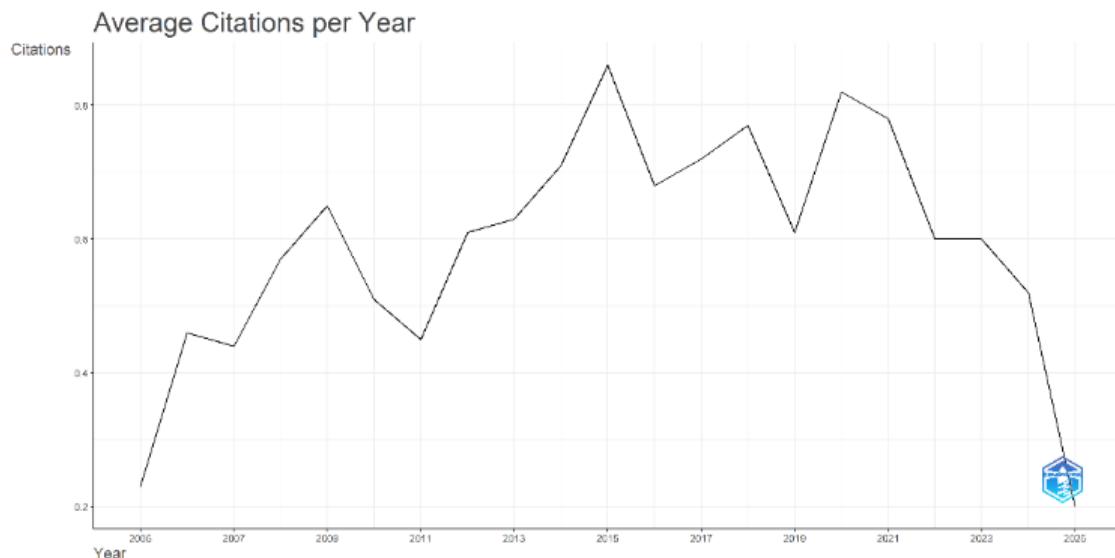


Figure 6. Average citations analysis

Implications and Future Directions

The findings from this bibliometric analysis offer several implications for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners in the field of school libraries. The growing emphasis on digital transformation and equitable access to resources suggests a need for continued investment in technology and professional development for school librarians. Additionally, the strong collaborative networks observed in co-authorship analysis highlight opportunities for fostering interdisciplinary research. Future studies could explore underrepresented themes, such as the role of artificial intelligence in school libraries and the impact of hybrid learning environments on library usage. By addressing these gaps, researchers can contribute to the ongoing evolution of school library practices and policies (Agnesiana et al., 2023).

Conclusion

The bibliometric analysis of school library research from 2015 to early 2025 highlights a dynamic and

evolving academic landscape. The number of publications has steadily increased, with notable spikes corresponding to key educational policy changes or technological advancements. Co-authorship analysis reveals strong collaborative networks among researchers and institutions, particularly from leading academic hubs. Keyword co-occurrence analysis indicates a shift in research focus from traditional library management to digital transformation, media literacy, and equity in educational resource access. Emerging themes such as "AI in education" and "virtual libraries" suggest growing interest in leveraging advanced technologies for school library enhancement. Thematic mapping categorizes research areas into well-established, emerging, niche, and declining themes. While "school library management" and "literacy development" remain central, themes like "digital library services" and "gamification in learning" are gaining traction. Citation analysis identifies foundational research on the impact of school libraries

on student performance, with key authors shaping the field's intellectual structure. The findings underscore the increasing importance of digital integration and interdisciplinary collaboration in school library research. Future studies should explore underrepresented areas such as AI-driven library services and the role of hybrid learning environments in shaping library usage.

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Author Contributions

Conceptualization, methodology, software, validation, formal analysis, investigation, resources, data curation, writing—original draft preparation, writing—review and editing, visualization, supervision, project administration, funding acquisition, T.H.S. and R.F. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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