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Mapping International Studies in the Philippines: Current State and Future Directions

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Abstract

The field of international studies (IS) is evolving and growing, yet institutions in the Philippines face limited resources and low productivity in scholarly journal publication, which hinders them in advancing studies in the field. Therefore, this study examines IS-related articles in the Philippines through a bibliometric analysis of 978 peer-reviewed articles indexed in Scopus and Web of Science to map out trends, themes, and future direction in this discourse. The findings highlight significant growth in IS scholarship over the past decade, particularly on human-centered issues, including themes such as "human," "international cooperation," and "global health." However, findings also reveal persistent challenges, including reliance on Eurocentric paradigms, limited engagement with underrepresented regions and local institutions, and concentration of research in metropolitan academic institutions. Through co-occurrence and collaboration mapping in *Biblioshiny* through *Bibliometrix* of R Studio, this study indicates research gaps in integrating global governance systems with local community concerns and promoting interdisciplinary approaches. Hence, this study emphasizes the need to adapt localized theoretical frameworks and to enrich international and local collaborations to advance a more inclusive and context-driven IS field in the country. Addressing these gaps can enhance the Philippines' contributions to global academic discourse while tackling pressing challenges in the field of international studies.

Introduction

International studies (IS) have attained a level of status and acknowledgment because of the increasing significance of comprehending globalization, geopolitics, security, and non-security matters in international relations (Friedman, 2005; Baylis, Owens & Smith, 2020). Research on IS offers established theories and explanations to analyze interactions between states and non-state actors (Tickner, 2003; Bajpai & Mallavarapu, 2005). IR is one of the core subfields of international studies, alongside development cooperation and international business. While IR primarily examines the interactions among state and non-state actors, it provides the theoretical and analytical foundation upon which international studies have expanded. In this sense, the evolution and growth of IS have been heavily influenced by IR scholarship, which shapes how global political, economic, and security dynamics are conceptualized and studied. IS thus builds upon the theoretical traditions of IR, such as realism, liberalism, and constructivism, while extending analysis to interdisciplinary concerns including development, migration, governance, and global political economy.

As global interconnectedness deepens, understanding the forces shaping the IS research landscape becomes increasingly important. This is evident among emerging Asia-Pacific countries, where historical legacies,

development priorities, and strategic contexts shape research and education (Ponce & Escuadra, 2024; Alagappa, 2011). For instance, Alagappa (2011) observes that international relations (IR) in Asia has followed distinct trajectories, with some states emphasizing historical and normative perspectives and others adopting policy-focused or positivist approaches, producing a diverse regional IR landscape. Yeoh (2017) adds that while uneven, the growth of IR scholarship in Asia remains dynamic, continually shaped by globalization, power relations in knowledge production, and regional political dynamics that drive its institutional development.

The Philippines serves as a valuable model for IS education due to its strategic location in Southeast Asia, its cultural and historical background, and its active role in both ASEAN and the United Nations (Chong & Hamilton-Hart, 2009). Similar to South Korea, where postcolonial experiences shaped the growth of international relations (IR) as a discipline (Kim, 2009), the Philippines shows how colonial legacies, geopolitical conditions, and external influences produce mixed academic and policy traditions. In both contexts, IR provided the initial disciplinary framework, while IS emerged as a more inclusive field that integrates IR with area studies, development, and policy-oriented research. Kim (2009) notes that South Korea's IR field developed in response to colonialism, Cold War division, and dependence on U.S. academia, a trajectory that parallels the Philippines' efforts to build a distinct identity in international studies while still grappling with historical dependencies. Throughout Southeast Asia, the teaching methods and curriculum design in IR often mirror national legitimizing narratives and objectives of foreign policy (Chong & Hamilton-Hart, 2009; Prasirtsuk, 2009). As a result, IS programs frequently rely on IR theories and methods as core components of their curricula, while broadening training to address transnational, socio-economic, and normative issues. For example, Prasirtsuk (2009) demonstrates how IR in Thailand evolved from a specialized practice for diplomats to a field increasingly shaped by broader social and political issues, which emphasizes the role of national contexts in the progression of IS in the area. Likewise, studies on IR in South Korea and China highlight how countries selectively adopt Western frameworks, incorporating them into their contexts to foster legitimacy and promote intellectual independence (Kim, 2009; McMahon & Zou, 2011).

In addition, the Philippines also exemplifies cases and discussions related to state-building, democratization, development, and regionalism due to its former colonization by Western powers (Cizel, 2008). Its history with Spain and the U.S. has influenced its current political system, state agency, and foreign policy, which reflects the common experience among Southeast Asian nations (Hutchcroft, 2000; Acharya, 2013). The path of Philippine politics from struggles for democracy to current foreign policy issues reflects larger regional trends in responding to globalization and the competition among major powers. For example, De Castro (2012) points out that the Aquino administration encountered challenges in implementing governance reforms and peace initiatives amid U.S.–China rivalry, whereas Hernandez (2016) notes that despite periods of economic hope, issues such as corruption, peace talks in Mindanao, and conflicts in the South China Sea underscored the significance of IS in understanding both domestic and international policy. The Philippine experience ties into wider debates on resilience and adaptation in governance and education, as shown in studies on institutional responses to crises and systemic inequalities (Shibuya *et al.*, 2025).

The Philippines also depends heavily on bilateral and multilateral economic initiatives, as well as its overseas workforce, for national development. The large number of Filipinos employed abroad underscores the relevance of International Studies in analyzing labor migration and its links to globalization (Frueh & Youde, 2020; Cruz & Adiong, 2020). Such issues are analytically grounded in IR, particularly in debates on global governance, power asymmetries, and state–society relations, which continue to inform IS research in the Philippine context. At the same time, external actors shape much of the discourse. Gloria (2021) observes that China has consistently framed Southeast Asia within a Sino-centric narrative, emphasizing regional cohesion and promoting a positive identity through its official rhetoric. This impacts the Philippines, as it is engaged in ASEAN regionalism and shaped by China's normative methods. Additionally, globalization has introduced not just geopolitical but also socio-cultural challenges: recent research indicates that factors like migration, education, and health security influence IS teaching and research, emphasizing the interconnectedness of domestic and international contexts (Barbieri *et al.*, 2025; Bustos *et al.*, 2023).

Despite IR being relatively more established as a discipline, IS remains less systematically examined as a field that synthesizes IR with interdisciplinary perspectives in the Philippine setting. Moreover, even if IS holds significance in a country like the Philippines, it is notable how it remains a largely underexplored area. A recent search found that no systematic map is available in the literature to outline the intellectual landscape of international studies in the country. The Philippines holds significant potential for contributions to international studies as an engaged member of the global community, yet

there is a lack of extensive research on this topic so far. Various nations engaged in global politics have conducted extensive studies in this field (Andrews, 2020; Bajpai & Mallavarapu, 2005). Indeed, researchers observe that local differences in the teaching of IR and IS mirror larger global trends, with the Philippines presenting a unique example in Southeast Asia (Frueh & Youde 2020; Shambaugh, 2011; Prasirtsuk, 2009; Chong & Hamilton-Hart, 2009). Shambaugh (2011) further observes that Chinese IR has diversified significantly, though uneven in quality and resources, a pattern that resonates with Philippine challenges in institutionalizing IS.

The influence of Eurocentric models in international studies has frequently led to the marginalization of perspectives from the Global South, including Southeast Asia (Tickner, 2003; Andrews, 2020; Acharya, 2017). Similarly, global debates on education and curriculum reform emphasize the need for IS to engage with issues of inclusivity, intercultural competence, and civic responsibility, themes that resonate with Philippine higher education reforms (Shibuya *et al*., 2025; Leung, 2025).

Additionally, the Philippines' higher education system, like those of many developing countries in Asia, plays a crucial role in generating and disseminating knowledge, which has been closely tied to the growth and development of international studies in the country (Kapur & Crowley, 2008; Shin & Harman, 2009). Higher education institutions (HEIs) such as the University of the Philippines, De La Salle University, and Ateneo de Manila University have helped shape the field with undergraduate and graduate programs that prepare future leaders, diplomats, and scholars (Eder, 2020). However, the development of the discipline has been hampered by the dispersion of research efforts, limited access to resources, and a lack of collaborative networks, similar to the problems faced by most universities in the Asia-Pacific region (Ponce & Escuadra, 2024).

Comparative evidence from China also shows how reform and opening-up policies shaped IR education, suggesting that localized challenges and uneven institutionalization are common across Asia (McMahon & Zou, 2011; Alagappa, 2011). At the same time, cross-disciplinary approaches in IS highlight the growing intersections between global governance, health, and sustainability (Shibuya *et al.*, 2025; Barbieri *et al*., 2025), which could also serve as promising directions for Philippine scholarship.

Through a bibliometric analysis of published IS-related publications in the Philippines, this study aims to address the gaps presented in the literature. This research also offers a methodical summary of the nation's IS intellectual environment as well as important insights into its present and future direction. Given the rising significance of international studies in tackling today's global issues, such as migration, climate change, geopolitical conflicts, and economic inequality, this study is especially pertinent (Seo & Cho, 2021). To give the nation the intellectual skills it needs to deal with a world that is becoming more complicated, it is not only academically required but also strategically important to increase awareness and knowledge of IS in the Philippine context. Therefore, this paper answers the following inquiries: (1) What is the temporal growth pattern of International Studies research related to the Philippines from 1962 to 2024?; (2) How do geographical and institutional collaboration networks characterize the development of Philippine international studies research?; (3) What are the dominant research themes and topics within Philippine International Studies literature based on keyword co-occurrence analysis?; and (4) What are the significant research gaps in Philippine international studies literature in relation to contemporary global challenges and foreign policy priorities?

Literature Review

How international relations (IR) in Southeast Asia have developed is closely tied to the region's history, especially its colonial and postcolonial periods (Roberts, 2011). According to Acharya (2013), the effects of colonial rule and the challenges of establishing stable governments after independence were key factors in the development of IR in South and Southeast Asia. Initially, the discipline of IR focused on international relations and the security of nations (Chong & Hamilton-Hart, 2009; Acharya, 2008). These were very important for the governments of these countries that had just become independent and wanted to become stronger. According to Acharya (2008), in the early days of IR development in the region, real-world concerns took priority over theoretical advances. This reflected the pressing needs of countries operating within a rapidly changing geopolitical landscape.

Colonial history similarly influenced the framework and subject matter of IR education in Southeast Asia (Acharya, 2008, 2013). According to Chong and Hamilton-Hart (2009), IR curricula often serve to reiterate national narratives closely linked to state objectives. For instance, in various Southeast Asian nations, IR education mirrors decolonization, Cold War politics, and regionalism. Consequently, realist and Marxist viewpoints garner more focus, whereas constructivism and postcolonial concepts attract less (Acharya, 2008). Alagappa (2011) also points out that IR in Asia has been influenced by unique national

trajectories, China focusing on state-driven narratives, India prioritizing normative discussions, and Japan balancing pacifist perspectives, emphasizing that Asia's intellectual growth cannot be simplified to one route. Such a link between local governance and global economic institutions has become an important focus of study. Guzzini (2001) emphasizes that teaching theory in IR is not only an academic exercise but also essential for developing reflexive and critical thinking among students. Contrastingly, Glazier (2017) explicates that intricate regional issues, such as migration, environmental governance, and regional security, should be tackled using both qualitative and quantitative research methods.

The diverse political contexts and educational priorities of Southeast Asia have shaped how IR is taught across the region (Lee, 2015). Scholars recommend strategies that actively engage students and link theory to real-world issues (Frueh & Youde, 2020), with Frueh & Youde (2020) noting that variations in introductory IR courses reflect efforts to meet local needs. This approach helps students connect international and domestic concerns, echoing Glazier's (2017) call to adapt courses to specific contexts. In Thailand, IR education expanded from serving elites to addressing broader social issues (Prasirtsuk, 2009), while in South Korea, colonial legacies and Cold War dynamics produced an American-centered orientation, though more recent efforts seek to establish a "Korean School of IR" as part of wider moves to decolonize knowledge (Seo & Cho, 2021). Long *et al*. (2005) similarly show that teaching often lags behind research, with realism dominating classrooms despite greater theoretical diversity, a pattern also evident in Southeast Asia. More recently, reforms in Asian higher education have emphasized global citizenship, resilience, and interdisciplinary approaches (Shibuya *et al*., 2025), while emerging themes such as global health, sustainability, and equity signal how IR education is beginning to move beyond conventional state-centered concerns (Barbieri *et al*., 2025).

The dominance of Eurocentric frameworks in international relations has long been contested (Acharya, 2016). Tickner (2003) critiques the "dominant discipline" of IR, where Western theories shape global discourse while often sidelining non-Western perspectives. Andrews (2020) extends this critique, arguing that IR's limited engagement with regions such as Southeast Asia stems from the absence of indigenous theory and epistemology. Acharya (2017) similarly stresses that theorizing from Asia is both necessary and feasible but requires moving beyond adapted Western models. While Western theories are frequently modified to local contexts (Acharya, 2004), their application often reflects regional challenges such as national autonomy and cooperation, reinforcing dependence on Western

institutions (Chong & Hamilton-Hart, 2009). These authors further argue that teaching IR in Southeast Asia is not simply about content delivery but about reproducing legitimizing narratives and shared historical memory, with pedagogy itself shaping regional identity. Gloria (2021) illustrates this dynamic by showing how China's official narratives frame ASEAN in a positive Sino-centric light. When such perspectives are integrated into textbooks and curricula, they shape how students view China and position their own countries within the regional order, embedding geopolitical narratives directly into education.

In recent years, initiatives to decolonize and localize IR studies in Asia have expanded rapidly. Seo and Cho (2021) describe South Korean IR as marked by a "distorted postcoloniality," where Japanese colonial influence is downplayed in knowledge production while American paradigms dominate, revealing continued dependence on the West despite localization efforts. Similarly, McMahon and Zou (2011) note China's attempts to adapt Western concepts into a more diverse and regionally relevant IR framework. Shambaugh (2011) adds that Chinese IR has diversified into multiple research areas, though uneven quality and resources persist—paralleling challenges faced in the Philippines. Gloria (2021) further observes that China has positioned itself as a "benevolent" and "unifying" power in Southeast Asia, framing ASEAN as a model of a Sino-centric order. When these narratives are integrated into IR education, they shape how students understand both China and their own countries' positions in the global order. Yeoh (2017) reinforces this point by showing how Southeast Asian responses to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) reflect both opportunity and dependency, linking foreign policy debates to the ways IR is taught and discussed in academic settings. These projects demonstrate how it is possible to develop region-specific theorizing, taking into account historical and cultural contexts. In spite of these initiatives, Chong and Hamilton-Hart (2009) noted that lack of strong institutional support, academic dependency, and resource constraints still hinder localized IR studies in Southeast Asia. Furthermore, researchers from non-English-speaking nations face extra obstacles as a result of English's predominance as the main language of academic discourse (Lee, Hamid & Hardy, 2024). Their contributions to international studies discussions are, therefore, more marginalized.

In the Philippine context, the status of IS curricula, instruction, and academic research remains underexplored. Historically, IR is commonly associated and often claimed to be synonymous with international studies in the Philippines (Kraft, 2024). Recently, however, there has been a growing emphasis on advancing theoretical research and

the teaching of IR as an independent academic field (na Thalang *et al*., 2024). This shift is reflected in the expanding diversity of research interests pursued by IR scholars in the country. Despite this progress, the discipline remains partly rooted in its original purpose of preparing diplomats and foreign policy professionals (Kraft, 2024). De Castro (2012) shows how governance and foreign policy challenges during Aquino's administration underscored the importance of strengthening IS as an academic field, while Hernandez (2016) points out that by 2015, issues of governance, peace processes, and the South China Sea disputes remained central in highlighting the relevance of IS for both domestic and external policy.

At the same time, greater exposure to evolving ontological, epistemological, and methodological perspectives in Social Sciences has created opportunities for more reflexive and theoretical approaches to international studies (na Thalang, 2022). Dotong and Laguador (2015) assert that the government plays a critical role in supporting the development of international studies in the country through faculty and student mobility for international exposure, research initiatives, and quality assurance aligned with ASEAN integration. Moreover, connecting IS research to public policy and development challenges has become increasingly important. The study of Bustos *et al*. (2023) discussed that interdisciplinary approaches that involve social policy, economics, and global cooperation would be beneficial in solving the problems of child malnutrition and food insecurity in the Philippines. In the same note, Leung's (2025) paper also found integration into IR scholarship and teaching of global health concerns, such as maternal and child well-being in Southeast Asia. Based on what has been studied in the field of IS in the Philippines, this paper aims to provide a comprehensive discussion of its growth and current position. By tracing the development of IS from 1962 to 2024, this study contributes to a better understanding of geographical and institutional collaboration networks that are vital in assessing the extent of local and international partnerships, shedding light on the Philippines' integration into the global IS community.

Materials and Methods

This research implemented an extensive bibliometric analysis methodology adhering to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) standards (Page *et al*., 2021). The methodology for the research involved systematic searches of databases, screening, and analysis of pertinent scientific literature concentrating on international studies and related areas within the Philippine context. Indeed, Figure 1 demonstrates the identification screening and inclusion

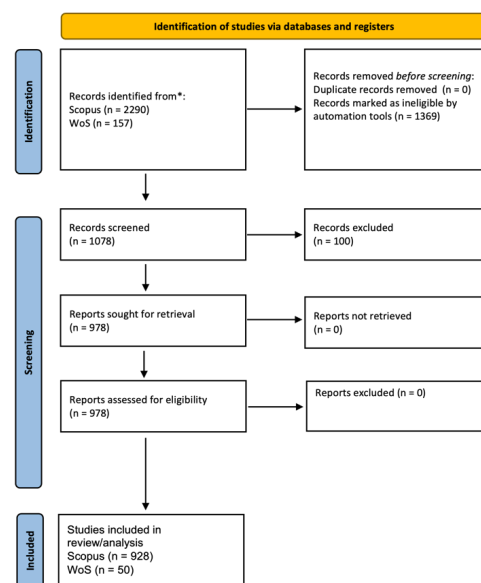framework employed to gather the materials analyzed in this research.

Figure 1. Identification, screening, and inclusion based on the PRISMA framework (Page *et al*., 2021)

Data Collection

The dataset used for this study was collected through systematic searches in two major academic databases: Scopus and Web of Science (WoS). The advanced keywords used to retrieve articles for review include relevant search strings and Boolean operators related to the foci of this study. In Scopus, the following search string in the title, abstract, and keywords fields was utilized: (TITLE-ABS-KEY): ("international studies" OR "global studies" OR "international relations" OR "global politics" OR "foreign policy") AND (Philippines). Similarly, in WoS, the following advanced topic search (TS) with identical keywords was used: ("International studies" OR "Global studies" OR "International relations" OR "Global politics" OR "Foreign policy") AND (Philippines).

The initial search yielded 2,290 documents in Scopus and 157 documents in WoS (see Figure 1). The following specific inclusion criteria were then applied to refine the search results:

Document type: peer-reviewed articles,
Access type: Open access,
Geographic focus: Philippines, and
Language: English.

After applying these filtering criteria, the final merged dataset consisted of 928 articles from Scopus and 50 articles from WoS. In total, 978 documents were included in the analysis for this study (see Figure 1).

Screening Process

Following the PRISMA framework (Page *et al.*, 2021), a systematic screening process in several steps was performed (Figure 1). First, duplicate entries in the two databases were removed (n = 0). Then, title and abstract screening were employed to ensure relevance of the obtained documents for analysis to the research objectives. It should be noted that despite the filtering of articles conducted in this study in the Philippine context, several articles related to the Philippines, although not specifically conducted in the country, were considered to address the minimal number of papers obtained within the geographic focus. Two independent reviewers conducted this screening process to minimize selection bias, and disagreements were resolved by discussion with a third reviewer. Articles that passed initial screening underwent full-text evaluation against our predefined eligibility criteria. The reviewers also assessed whether the articles explicitly addressed international studies, international relations, global politics, or foreign policy in relation to the Philippines.

Data Analysis

The retrieved bibliographic data were processed using R Studio with the *Bibliometrix* package and its web interface, *Biblioshiny* (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). R package (i.e., *Bibliometrix*, *Biblioshiny)* facilitated the merging of datasets from both databases and the systematic removal of duplicate entries. *Biblioshiny* provided an integrated environment for conducting the bibliometric analysis, which included several dimensions (i.e., temporal analysis of publication trends, geographical distribution of authorships, institutional collaboration patterns, citation analysis, thematic analysis using keyword co-occurrence networks, and source journal analysis).

This study also utilized *Biblioshiny* by *Bibliometrix* for data analysis and visualization. *Biblioshiny* was used for a comprehensive bibliometric analysis, which includes performance analysis, science mapping, and trend analysis. The analysis included both performance analysis indicators (e.g., citation counts, h-index, and collaboration metrics) and science mapping approaches to identify intellectual structures and research fronts in the field. *Bibliometrix* packages were particularly useful for analyzing author keywords, generating co-citation networks, and creating collaboration maps (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017).

To ensure data quality and reliability, this study implemented several verification steps throughout the analysis process. These steps included cross-validation of database entries, standardization of author names and institutional affiliations, and verification of bibliographic details. A sensitivity analysis was also undertaken to assess the robustness of our findings across different subsets of the data.

Results and Discussion

This section reports the significant findings and discussion on the relevant patterns of production, institutional collaborations, dominant themes, challenges, and opportunities in IS studies in the Philippines. Visualizations and tables from *Biblioshiny* through *Bibliometrix* in R studio were presented to support the findings of this study. Particularly, the results were discussed in relation to existing literature to provide critical insights of the current state and future direction of IS research in the country.

Growth Pattern and Collaboration Network of IS

Figures 2 to 4 in this section answer the first two research questions of this study. Specifically, Figure 2 shows the annual scholarly production in research output from 1962 to 2024. This visualization reflects the growing trend of academic scholarship in IS in the Philippines and in relation to the Philippines. Initially, the modest output in international studies scholarship reflects the discipline's origins as a subfield of Political Science, primarily serving as preparatory training for law degrees or bureaucratic careers (Kraft, 2024). This practical orientation often took precedence over theoretical innovation, mirroring the immediate needs of a newly sovereign nation. The increasing recognition of academic pursuits as integral to higher education in the Philippines underscores a growing emphasis on theoretical research and the establishment of International Relations (IR) as an independent academic field, moving beyond its traditional focus on producing bureaucrats and technocrats for foreign policy roles (Adiong, 2024). This trend aligns with global patterns and is facilitated by the enhanced accessibility of international academic resources, such as Scopus and Web of Science, which have expanded the reach and impact of scholarly work (McMahon & Zou, 2011).

However, previous periods of stagnation characterized by minimal scholarly output could be attributed to limited institutional support and the dominance of Eurocentric frameworks in IS research that marginalized Global South perspectives (Tickner, 2003; Andrews, 2020). Recent growth suggests a deliberate shift toward decolonizing the field and incorporating multidisciplinary approaches to address regional and transnational concerns such as migration, environmental governance, and security, which are increasingly central to

Southeast Asian scholarship that is also reflected in the Philippines (Chong & Hamilton-Hart, 2009; Kraft, 2024; na Thalang *et al.*, 2024).

This productivity growth demonstrates the expanding role of Philippine institutions in IS. Universities like the University of the Philippines and Ateneo de Manila University, for instance, invest in producing globally competitive research and preparing scholars to tackle complex global challenges (Eder 2020; Kraft, 2024). The findings also indicate the impact of advanced bibliometric tools in identifying research gaps and fostering international collaboration (McMahon & Zou, 2011). Specifically, the annual scholarly output of research in IS peaked in 2022 with 143 articles, followed by 2023 (n = 132), 2024 (n = 120), 2021 (n = 112), 2020 (n = 94), 2019 (n = 60), 2018 (n = 40), 2017 (n = 39), 2016 (n = 34), and 2014 (n = 32), which shows a consistent upward trend in research output over the past decade. However, despite the increase in publications, there was a drop from a high publication rate in 2022 to a lower publication production. Therefore, sustaining this growth requires addressing persistent challenges such as resource constraints, uneven access to opportunities, and the concentration of academic centers in metropolitan areas (Eder, 2020). The upward trend not only underscores the Philippines' increasing contributions to regional and global discussions but also signals a shift toward more localized, context-sensitive scholarship capable of advancing the intellectual capacity of Filipino IS researchers to address pressing geopolitical and societal issues. The results were in conjunction with the existing literature to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state and future potential of IS scholarship in the country (Eder, 2020; Kraft, 2024; McMahon & Zou, 2011).
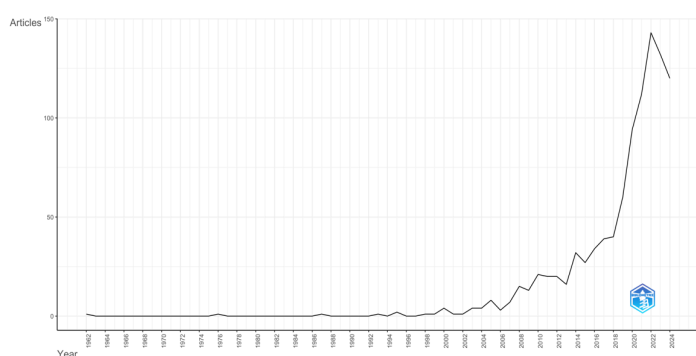

Figure 2. Annual scientific production from 1962 to 2024

The country collaboration map illustrated in Figure 3 presents the position of the Philippines in international research networks. In fact, such a network of collaboration reflects the country's historical ties and contemporary research priorities in IS (Chong & Hamilton-Hart, 2009; Kraft, 2024). Cruz and Adiong (2020) discussed how the Philippines is actively collaborating and engaging with the countries in the Global South to push for a more

non-Western-centric approach to international studies within the region. It is notable that there are only a few, or even none, in the Middle East where a significant presence of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) highlighted important international studies issues such as labor migration, energy security, and economic partnerships (Cruz & Adiong, 2020).

The link with the United States and Australia reflects the country's postcolonial relations and institutional ties, while partnerships with Asian countries, particularly South Korea, demonstrate growing regional academic integration (Seo & Cho, 2021). The limited collaboration with African, European, and South American institutions reflects the broader challenge identified by McMahon and Zou (2011) regarding the dominance of Western-centric research networks in Southeast Asian international studies. This pattern of collaboration reflects both the historical development of IR education in the Philippines and the continued influence of established academic power structures, which Tickner (2003) describes as the "hegemonic discipline" of international relations. However, Cruz and Adiong (2020) suggest that opportunities for collaboration with South American nations can be rooted in historical connections established during the Manila-Acapulco Galleon Trade, complemented by modern initiatives aimed at enhancing political and economic partnerships.
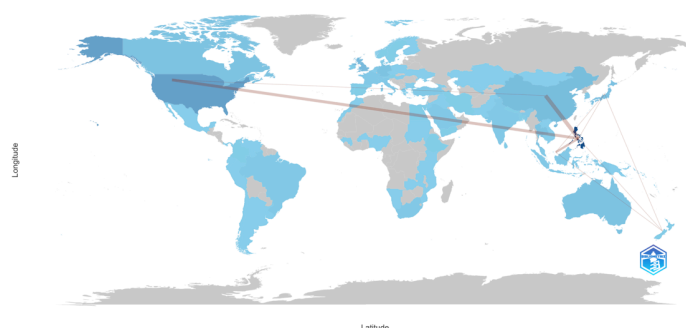
Figure 3. Country collaboration map

The institutional analysis visualization in Figure 4 revealed that the University of the Philippines (UP) system leads in International Studies research output, with UP Manila contributing 123 articles and the overall UP system accounting for 116 articles. This dominance highlights a significant gap, as other institutions across the country are notably underrepresented in this field (Eder, 2020). Such findings reflect the broader challenge of w*idespread distribution of research activities, limited availability of resources, and a lack of collaborative networks.* (Dotong & Laguador, 2015). While the University of the Philippines (UP) exemplifies strong academic leadership in cultivating future leaders, diplomats, and scholars, this institutional dominance highlights a significant disparity (Eder, 2020). Such concentration of academic resources in metropolitan

centers limits the inclusivity of international studies education and research in the Philippines, indicating a pressing need for broader institutional participation and equitable resource allocation across the nation's academic institutions (Kraft, 2024).
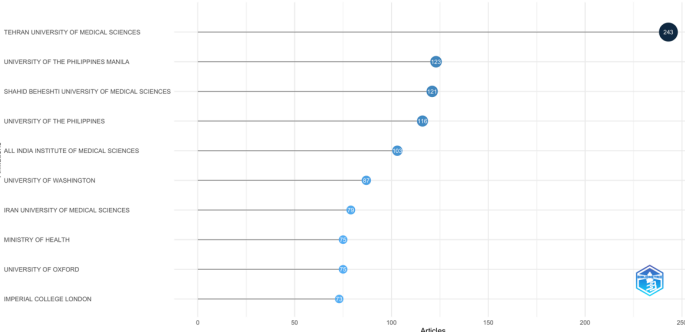

Figure 4. Results of institutional analysis visualization

Dominant Research Themes in IS

Research question three addresses the common research themes based on the dataset analyzed for this study. The co-occurrence network visualization illustrated in Figure 5 reveals four distinct clusters of research themes in IS, with the largest cluster (shown in red) centered on demographic and people-focused research, reflecting what McMahon and Zou (2011) identified as the increasing integration of sociological perspectives in Southeast Asian IR studies. Moreover, it is also aligned with Cruz and Adiong's (2020) discussion of how international studies in the Philippines can be heavily influenced by migration brought upon by the continuing increase of OFWs in many parts of the world. In relation, Adiong (2024) suggested that present curricula of international studies among universities in the country should include a "*Global Filipino*" section that highlights not just the movement of Filipinos but the cultural, economic, and developmental impact of it on both the Philippines as a sending country (brain drain) and on the receiving countries.

The network analysis also showed strong connections between clinical research methods (green cluster), COVID-19-related studies (blue cluster), and cross-sectional research approaches (purple cluster), consistent with Einzenberger & Schaffar (2018) observation of how regional research priorities adapt to emerging global challenges while maintaining methodological rigor. Ponce and Escuadra (2024) also had the same results in terms of promoting interdisciplinary research for sustainable development among HEIs in the Asia-Pacific that translate to a collaboration from the natural and social sciences. Therefore, international studies in the Philippines should not only rest with the typical topics related to security and peace within the realm of international relations but should expand to non-traditional security concerns such as climate change, infectious diseases, trafficking, etc.
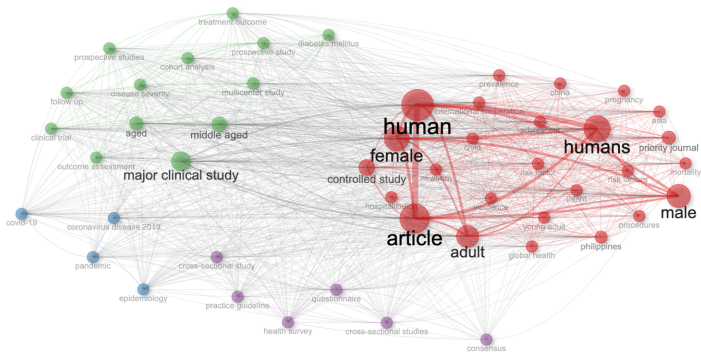

Figure 5. Co-occurrence network

In support of the results of the co-occurrence network (see Figure 5), Table 1 shows that terms related to human issues and demographics dominate the central nodes of the network, with "*huma*n" having the highest betweenness centrality (14.581) and PageRank (0.072). This finding is consistent with Chong and Hamilton-Hart's (2009) emphasis on how Southeast Asian IS research is increasingly focused on human-centered issues rather than purely state-centered frameworks. The presence of terms such as "*international cooperation*" (betweenness = 0.196) and "*global health*" (betweenness = 0.036) in the top 16 and 18 keywords, respectively, suggests an evolution beyond traditional information retrieval (IR) paradigms. These findings support the observation by Seo and Cho (2021) of the field's evolving engagement with transnational issues.

Table 1. Keywords and Demographics related to Human Issues

Keywords	Cluster	Betweenness	Closeness	PageRank
human	1	14.581	0.021	0.072
female	1	5.286	0.021	0.056
article	1	11.906	0.021	0.067
male	1	3.361	0.021	0.052
adult	1	3.360	0.021	0.049
humans	1	10.119	0.021	0.060
Philippines	1	0.678	0.021	0.021
child	1	0.615	0.021	0.019
controlled study	1	1.420	0.021	0.032
adolescent	1	0.406	0.020	0.020
priority journal	1	1.155	0.021	0.026
infant	1	0.244	0.020	0.013
Asia	1	0.318	0.020	0.015
young adult	1	0.100	0.020	0.013
prevalence	1	0.188	0.020	0.013
international cooperation	1	0.196	0.020	0.012
risk factor	1	0.319	0.020	0.017
global health	1	0.036	0.019	0.009
newborn	1	0.106	0.018	0.010
mortality	1	0.177	0.020	0.013

Significant Research Gap and Direction of IS Studies in the Philippines

The bibliometric study underscores critical gaps in Philippine IS research. While there is notable growth in scholarly output and collaboration with Western and regional partners, the limited engagement, particularly within the context of the Philippines and with underrepresented regions such as Africa, South America, and parts of Europe, reveals a significant imbalance in local and global research networks. Thus, this elucidates the broader issue of Western hegemony in IS, where Eurocentric paradigms dominate theoretical frameworks and research agendas (Tickner, 2003; Andrews, 2020). Such paradigms often marginalize perspectives from the Global South, including Southeast Asia, resulting in the exclusion of localized knowledge systems and indigenous theoretical contributions. Such an imbalance calls for a deliberate effort to integrate broader perspectives to enrich the IS discourse (Adiong, 2024; McMahon & Zou, 2011).

In the Philippines, the focus of IS research in a few metropolitan universities, particularly in the University of the Philippines system, further reinforces the exclusivity of IS-related resources. Therefore, such concentration creates barriers to inclusive and equitable distribution of resources across academic institutions (Dotong & Laguador, 2015). Addressing such a concern limits the centralization, increases the potential and contribution of peripheral institutions, and develops diverse and contextually relevant IS resources (Cruz & Adiong, 2020).

Interestingly, the Philippine IS research has increasingly addressed pressing transnational issues such as migration, environmental governance, and regional security, as observed in Southeast Asia (Chong & Hamilton-Hart, 2009). However, there is a lack of studies that explore issues with local geopolitical priorities. For instance, the South China Sea disputes, a pressing issue for the Philippines, are often viewed through a Western realist framework rather than through a lens that incorporates local perspectives (Seo & Cho, 2021). Similarly, studies in migration commonly center on remittances and labor export policies.

There are lack of studies on the social and cultural integration experiences of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), migration experiences of other Filipinos (e.g., students, visiting fellows, short-term residence) oversees and the impact of migration on the Philippines' soft power in international relations (Frueh & Youde, 2020). Thus, a pluralistic approach that incorporates other areas could provide richer insights and outputs of the IS research landscape (Acharya, 2013; Andrews, 2020).

It is critical that the Philippine IS studies must consider cultivating research collaborations in underrepresented regions and institutions in the country. Addressing such gaps, the IS research environment can leverage interdisciplinary approaches and foster a more inclusive approach. Localized theoretical frameworks must also be developed to decolonize the discipline and better capture the distinct socio-political realities of the Philippines and Southeast Asia (Andrews, 2020; Tickner, 2003).

The results of the co-occurrence network indicate potential areas of IS research for scholars to consider in the future. Aside from the obvious findings of the relevance of health and medical concerns, which were probably brought by the pandemic (Strielkowski, 2022), researchers can explore how global trade agreements and climate governance frameworks impact the agricultural practices, food security, rural livelihoods, and innovations in sustainable agriculture in the Philippines, which contribute to global discourse (Brooks & Loevinsohn, 2011). Future studies can also examine the impact of international academic standards on local education reforms, including technology integration in classrooms to bridge the digital divide (Barakabitze *et al.*, 2019; Strielkowski, 2022). In addition, research on the role of global technology policies in shaping digital literacy programs and their alignment with local cultural and socioeconomic contexts can also provide a rich avenue for understanding IS policies and the intersection of technology and education in the Philippines (Darvin, 2018; Curtis *et al.*, 2022; Esteban *et al.*, 2024). To further advance IS in the Philippines, it is imperative to develop a curriculum that addresses both global and local contexts (Adiong, 2024). Therefore, this study also encourages experiential and immersive opportunities, such as internships with international organizations or local NGOs, which can further prepare students to address real-world challenges effectively (Frueh & Youde, 2020; McMahon & Zou, 2011).

Conclusion

This bibliometric study maps the intellectual landscape of IS in the Philippine context. In fact, several studies not specifically conducted in the Philippines but in relation to the IS landscape in the country were considered. The findings revealed a two-fold nature of such landscapes, both progress and persistent challenges in the field. The analysis reveals a significant growth in research output over the past decade, particularly in the period 2020-2022, suggesting an increased engagement with global academic discourse. However, the concentration of research within limited institutional networks and the reliance on Western theoretical frameworks highlight ongoing challenges in

developing a more inclusive and locally grounded academic field. In particular, the institutional analysis reveals that the University of the Philippines is the only university in the country with a significant presence, while much of the remaining output is dominated by foreign HEIs. These findings suggest that while Philippine international studies have made significant progress in contributing to global knowledge production, there remains a critical need to address institutional disparities. Hence, this study posits the expansion of international and local collaborations and the development of localized theoretical frameworks to better reflect regional realities and concerns.

This study also recognizes its limitations. The reliance on bibliometric data from Scopus and Web of Science may exclude valuable contributions from unindexed journals and local publications. The focus on English-language studies also risks overlooking important work in Filipino and other languages that could provide richer insights into local perspectives. In addition, the study is limited to investigating quantitative trends, collaborative networks, and gaps through a bibliometric lens. Such an approach leaves qualitative analyses of the contributions of individual research and their societal impact underexplored. Therefore, this study posits that future research should incorporate qualitative analysis of data sources. Researchers can also include grey literature and unindexed journals and employ qualitative methods to deepen the understanding of IS in the Philippine context.

Furthermore, establishing a curriculum that integrates both global and local perspectives can cultivate a new generation of scholars and practitioners capable of navigating and contributing to the dynamic landscape of international relations. By addressing these limitations and promoting more inclusive, interdisciplinary, and context-sensitive approaches, the Philippines can contribute to global scholarly discourse while also addressing the unique challenges and opportunities of the country's IS landscape.

Ethical Statement

Although no human subjects or confidential data were involved, this study utilized publicly available secondary data from scholarly databases with the highest standards of research integrity.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest related to the conduct and publication of this research. All procedures followed were in accordance with institutional and ethical standards, and there were no financial or personal relationships that could have influenced the outcomes of this study.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies

During the preparation of this work, the authors utilized DeepL Write for faster checking of minor technical errors (e.g., spelling, word choice, punctuation, capitalization). Following the use of this tool/service, the authors conducted a review and made necessary modifications, assuming full responsibility for the content of the publication.

Data Availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Author Contributions

EJAP: Writing - Original Draft and Writing - Review and Editing; **AJE:** Methodology, Writing - Original Draft, and Writing - Review and Editing.

Funding

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