



Mapping Science of Internationalization in Higher Education: A Bibliometric Analysis of Research Trends in BRICS Countries (2001–2024)

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to conduct a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of research on the internationalization of higher education in BRICS countries, based on 800 journal articles published between 2001 and 2024 and indexed in the Scopus database. The study aims to measure publication volume, identify the most influential countries, journals, authors, and documents, and to map thematic trends and the intellectual structure of the field. The findings reveal a consistent increase in publication output, particularly during the period 2018–2023. China emerged as the most productive and influential country, followed by South Africa and Brazil. Key contributors shaping the discourse include P.G. Altbach, J. Knight, S. Marginson, and K.H. Mok, with a focus on academic mobility, internationalization policy, and institutional transformation. Keyword analysis reveals six major thematic clusters: international policy and mobility; curriculum and pedagogy; international student experience; higher education system transformation; critical approaches such as decolonization; and language policy. Temporal visualization also indicates increasing scholarly attention to emerging topics such as sustainability, soft power, and COVID-19. This study provides a valuable foundation for future research on internationalization strategies in higher education, particularly within developing countries that are seeking to strengthen their presence in the global academic landscape.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions are not merely academic spaces but also complex organizations that respond to global dynamics, national policies, and internal reforms. As social entities, universities interact with external environments while navigating institutional norms, academic cultures, and governance structures (Bartell, 2003; Bleiklie & Kogan, 2007). In the 21st century, the ability of universities to adapt, evolve, and strategically reposition themselves has become increasingly critical, particularly in the context of globalization. One of the most visible manifestations of this global engagement is the internationalization of higher education, which has transformed the mission, structure, and practices of universities worldwide (Robson, 2011; Tadaki & Tremewan, 2013).

The concept of internationalization has been widely discussed in higher education since the early 1980s (Jokila, 2015). Knight (2007) defines internationalization as the policies and practices undertaken by academic institutions to integrate international, intercultural, or global dimensions into the purpose, functions, and delivery of education. This process is not uniform; it varies across countries depending on national priorities, institutional capacities, and geopolitical contexts (Hong et al., 2015; Shahjahan, 2016).

Furthermore, universities play a strategic role in producing skilled labor and contributing significantly to research initiatives and development projects. These two aspects are essential strengths that must be globally competitive, regardless of institutional type or country of origin (Bloom, 2005). Previous studies have demonstrated that the field of higher education internationalization has seen significant progress in both quantity and quality (Kehm & Teichler, 2007). Findings also indicate that internationalization enhances academic quality, expands funding sources, and produces graduates and academic staff with cross-cultural awareness and a global orientation (Kraja et al., 2024).

Institutional transformation in higher education today can no longer be merely symbolic; it demands substantive changes in administrative functions and internal organizational dynamics. In recent years, the management and governance of higher education institutions have received increasing attention, particularly with the shift from traditional bureaucratic models toward hybrid managerial approaches that are more adaptive and responsive to global challenges (Bruckmann & Carvalho, 2018). In this context, internationalization should not be understood merely as student mobility or cross-border collaboration but as an institutional strategy that directly impacts internal structures, leadership, and policy directions.

The growing importance of internationalization is especially evident in the increasingly competitive global landscape. In many countries, including BRICS members (Brazil, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iran, the Russian Federation, South Africa, and the United Arab Emirates), both governments and universities have strategically embraced internationalization as a means to strengthen reputation, attract global talent, and enhance national innovation capacities (Fan et al., 2022; Khomyakov et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2023). As De Wit and Altbach (2021) have noted, internationalization has now become a central pillar in global higher education reform, no longer a mere policy alternative. For BRICS countries, which are consolidating their positions as emerging global economic and geopolitical powers, internationalization also serves as an instrument of educational diplomacy and sustainable development.

In light of this urgency, this study aims to systematically examine how the theme of higher education internationalization has been addressed in the literature, particularly within the context of BRICS countries. Employing a bibliometric approach, the study maps the

intellectual structure, the most influential authors and journals, and the key thematic focuses that have emerged between 2001 and 2024. Accordingly, this research seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of the knowledge dynamics and developmental trajectories of internationalization studies in the context of higher education organization and governance in the BRICS region.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study employs a bibliometric analysis, a quantitative approach aimed at examining the structure and development of knowledge within a particular academic discipline (Rullyana et al., 2024; Majidah & Rullyana, 2024). As the complexity and volume of scholarly literature continue to increase, this method has gained widespread attention for its ability to systematically map trends, relationships, and intellectual dynamics within a field. Unlike conventional literature reviews, which tend to be narrative and selective, bibliometric analysis offers a more comprehensive, data-driven perspective (Ertem & Aypay, 2021). This approach provides an alternative framework for understanding the diversity of concepts and the conceptual structure within a research area. Thus, bibliometric methods are particularly useful for tracing the intellectual trajectory and identifying future research directions within a scholarly community.

2.2 Document Selection Phase

The initial step of this study involved identifying relevant documents based on the focus of the research questions. To track the development of studies on the internationalization of higher education in BRICS countries, the researchers selected Scopus as the primary data source. This choice is grounded in Scopus's reputation as the most comprehensive bibliographic database and its widespread use in systematic reviews by previous researchers (Rullyana & Triandari 2024). The scope of the search was limited to peer-reviewed documents, including journal articles, conference papers, and review articles. Other publication types such as books, book chapters, and editorials were excluded, as they generally do not undergo a standardized peer-review process or are not readily accessible in full, making them less suitable for a systematic and verifiable bibliometric synthesis.

2.3 Identification Phase

The identification procedure followed the PRISMA 2020 framework, which serves as a standard guideline for systematic reviews (Page et al., 2021), comprising the following stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. In the initial identification stage, a combination of keywords was applied using the following search string:

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( TITLE-ABS-KEY ( "higher education" AND "internationalization" ) AND AFFILCOUNTRY ( "Brazil" OR "China" OR "Egypt" OR "Ethiopia" OR "India" OR "Indonesia" OR "Iran" OR "Russian Federation" OR "South Africa" OR "United Arab Emirates" ) )
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The publication range was limited to the period 2001 to 2024, as this timeframe captures the rapid development of internationalization issues in the global context and reflects a significant increase in Scopus-indexed publications. During the screening process, a rigorous selection was conducted to ensure that only documents relevant to the internationalization of higher education in BRICS countries (Brazil, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iran,

the Russian Federation, South Africa, and the United Arab Emirates) were included. Irrelevant documents—particularly those focused on clinical sciences, engineering, or highly specific topics outside the context of higher education—were excluded during this stage. After applying these criteria, a refined set of relevant articles was selected for further analysis.

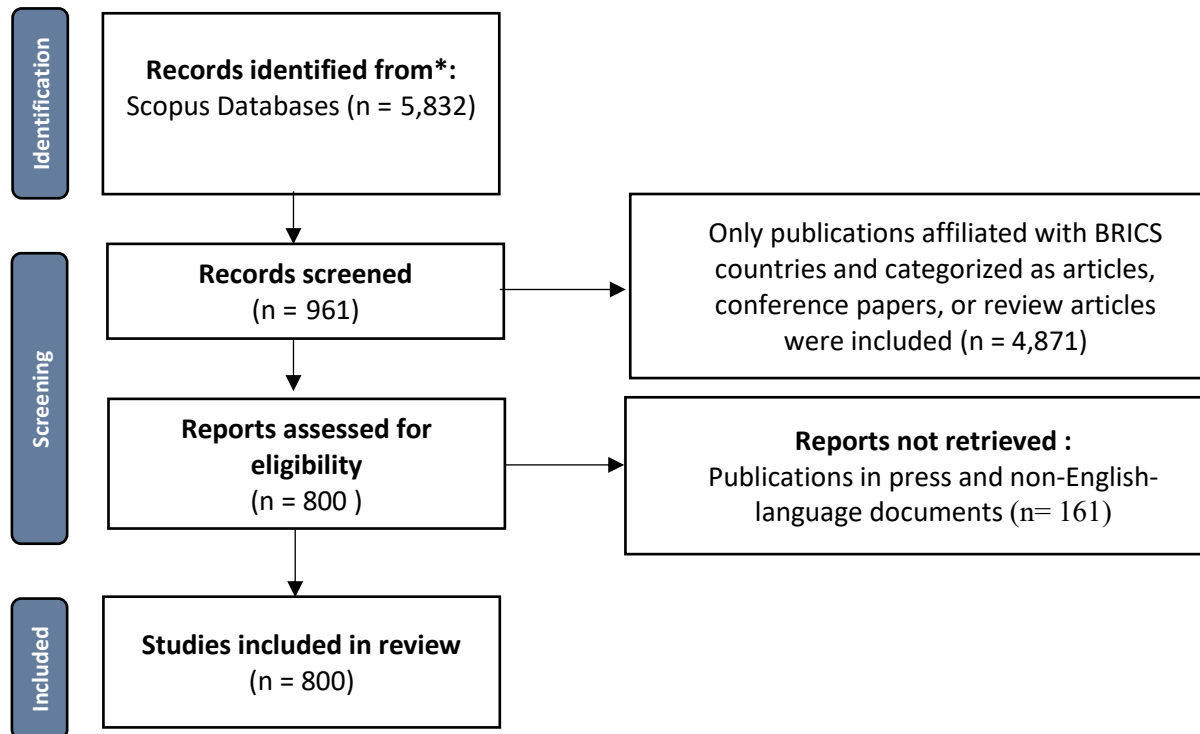


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram

2.4 Data Extraction and Analysis

All metadata from the selected articles retrieved from Scopus were extracted and stored in CSV format using Microsoft Excel. The metadata included information such as authors and their affiliations, document titles, document types, abstracts, keywords, references, citation counts, as well as descriptive data including publication year frequency, country of origin, and source titles. To support visualization and network mapping, several tools were employed. Scopus Analytical Tools and Microsoft Excel were used to present descriptive analyses, including annual publication growth and the most productive countries and institutions. Additionally, data analysis was enhanced through network visualization, overlay visualization, and density visualization using the VOSviewer software, which enables clearer and more accessible graphical representations (Johan et al., 2025).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Result

Figure 2 presents the publication growth curve on the internationalization of higher education in BRICS countries from 2001 to 2024. Overall, the number of publications showed a clear upward trend, particularly over the last decade. The trajectory can be divided into three developmental phases. In the first phase (2001–2010), publication output remained very low, averaging fewer than 10 articles per year. Only one publication was recorded in 2001, and the trend remained stagnant until 2007, followed by a slight increase in 2008 and 2009.

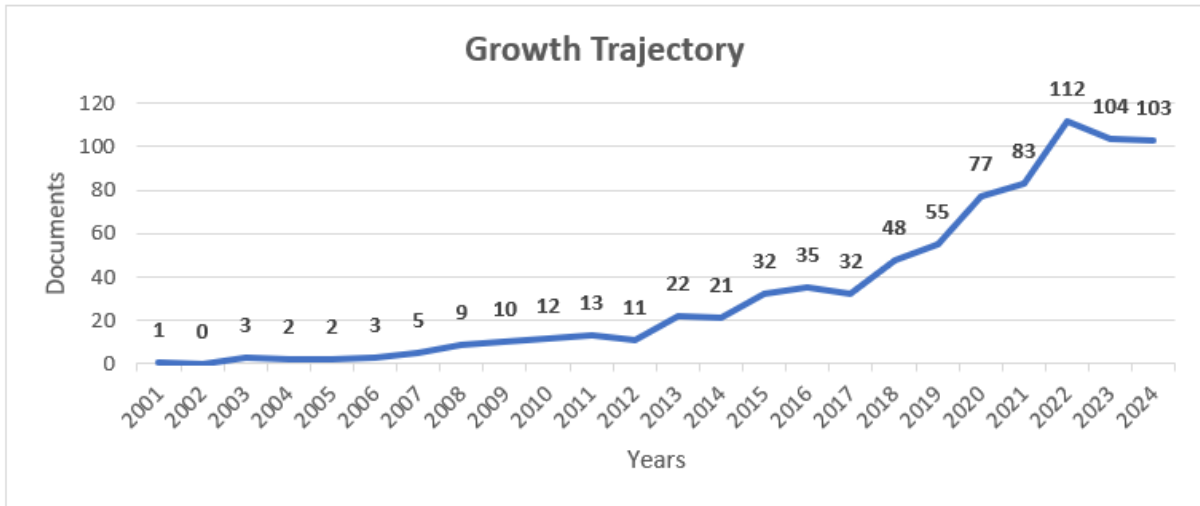


Figure 2. Graph of Growth Trajectory

The second phase (2011–2018) marked a period of moderate growth. Publication output gradually increased, especially after 2013, and reached 48 documents by 2018. The third phase (2019–2024) showed the sharpest increase in output. Publication counts rose substantially in 2021 and reached their peak in 2022. Although a slight decline occurred in 2023 and 2024, the number of publications remained considerably higher than in previous periods.

Table 1 shows the most influential countries in the literature on the internationalization of higher education, measured by citation counts and total link strength. China ranked first with 4,059 citations and a total link strength of 25,286, followed by South Africa with 1,261 citations and the Russian Federation with 724 citations. Brazil and India occupied the next positions among BRICS members. Several non-BRICS countries also appeared in the ranking, including the United Arab Emirates, Iran, Indonesia, Egypt, and Ethiopia.

Table 1. Most Influential BRICS Countries in Publications on Internationalization in Higher Education

Rank	Country	Citations	Total Link Strength
1	China	4059	25286
2	South Africa	1261	9149
3	Russian Federation	724	4823
4	Brazil	709	8507
5	India	449	3662
6	United Arab Emirates	300	3092
7	Iran	172	3028
8	Indonesia	170	2309
9	Egypt	92	952
10	Ethiopia	61	2236

Figure 3 displays the bibliographic coupling map at the country level. Using a minimum threshold of five documents and twenty citations per country, 25 countries out of 85 met the inclusion criteria. China appeared as the most dominant node in the network, showing strong

Rank	Sources	Document	Citation	Total Link Strength
8	Globalisation, Societies and Education	10	140	7
9	International Journal of Educational Development	7	259	7
10	Chinese Education and Society	8	128	6

Table 3 lists the most influential authors in this field based on citation counts. Wu, Hantian ranked first with 240 citations, followed by Mok, Ka Ho with 156 citations and Heleta, Savo with 128 citations. Other highly cited authors included Song, Yang; Li, Jiani; Xue, Eryong; Finardi, Kyria Rebeca; Guimarães, Felipe Furtado; Romani-Dias, Marcello; and Li, Shengbing.

Table 3. Top Ten Most Influential Authors in the Literature on the Internationalization of Higher Education

Rank	Authors	Document	Citation	Total Link Strength
1	Wu, Hantian	7	240	8
2	Mok, Ka Ho	5	156	0
3	Heleta, Savo	7	128	0
4	Song, Yang	6	126	2
5	Li, Jiani	9	119	16
6	Xue, Eryong	8	109	16
7	Finardi, Kyria Rebeca	7	85	1
8	Guimarães, Felipe Furtado	7	80	1
9	Romani-Dias, Marcello	5	56	0
10	Li, Shengbing	5	29	0

Table 4 identifies the most cited documents in the literature, using a minimum threshold of 100 citations. The most cited article was Yang and Welch (2022), followed by Wen et al. (2018) and Ding (2016). Other highly cited documents included works by Maringe and Sing (2014), Bao et al. (2018), Annamdevula and Bellamkonda (2016), Zhang (2018), and Wu (2019). These documents addressed a range of themes related to university quality, international student experience, doctoral education reform, service quality, and internationalization policy.

Table 4. Most Cited Documents in the Literature on the Internationalization of Higher Education

Rank	Authors	Title	Citation
1	Yang & Welch, 2022	A world-class university in China? The case of Tsinghua	149
2	Wen et al., 2018	International students' experiences in China: Does the planned reverse mobility work?	134
3	Ding, 2016	Exploring the Experiences of International Students in China	124

Rank	Authors	Title	Citation
4	Maringe & Sing, 2014	Teaching large classes in an increasingly internationalising higher education environment: Pedagogical, quality and equity issues	113
5	Bao et al., 2018	From product to process. The reform of doctoral education in Europe and China	106
6	Annamdevula & Bellamkonda, 2016	The effects of service quality on student loyalty: the mediating role of student satisfaction	104
7	Zhang, 2018	English-medium instruction policies in China: internationalisation of higher education	103
8	Wu, 2019	Three dimensions of China's "outward-oriented" higher education internationalization	102

Figure 4 presents the author co-citation map, which illustrates the intellectual structure of the literature on the internationalization of higher education in BRICS countries. Using a minimum threshold of 30 citations, 78 frequently co-cited authors were identified. The map revealed five major clusters.

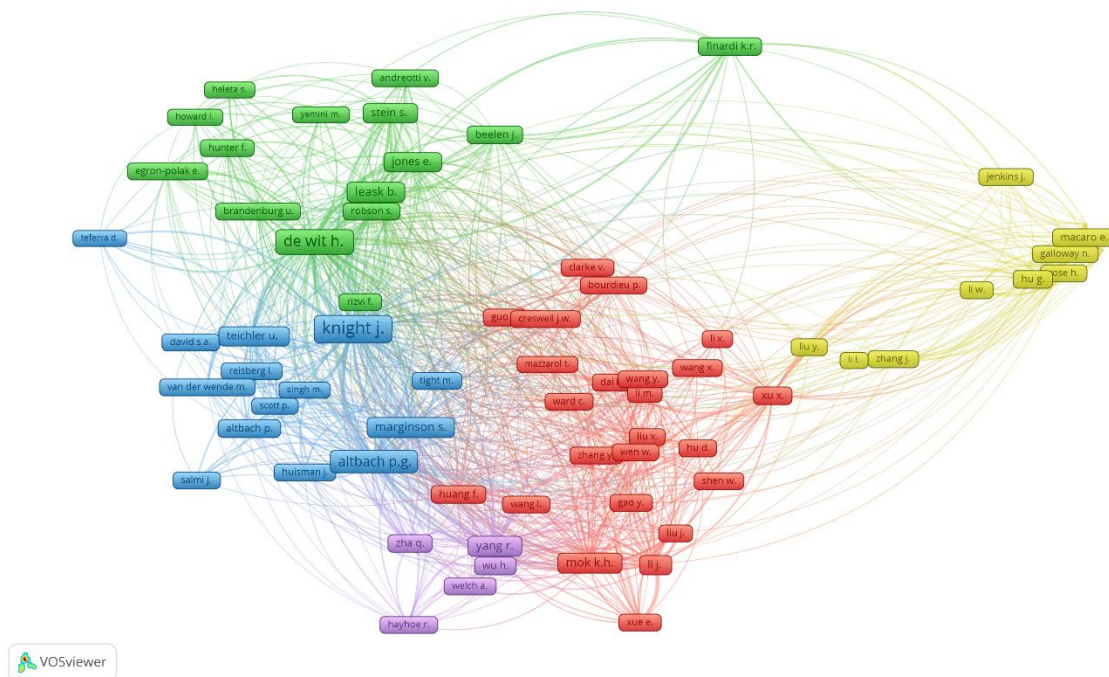


Figure 4. Intellectual Structure of Knowledge Base

The red cluster included scholars such as Mok, Li, Xue, Wen, and Wu, whose work focused largely on institutional transformation and sustainability in BRICS contexts. The blue cluster consisted of foundational scholars such as Altbach, Marginson, Knight, and Teichler, whose work addressed global education policy, academic mobility, and structural inequality in higher education. The green cluster included scholars such as De Wit, Beelen, Leask, Andreotti, and Brandenburg, whose work emphasized ethical, curricular, and sustainability perspectives in internationalization. The yellow cluster, represented by Macaro, Galloway, and Hu, focused

on English-medium instruction, transnational education, and language-related issues in international higher education. The purple cluster included Yang, Hayhoe, and Welch, whose work examined the responses of BRICS countries to globalization while maintaining local cultural and historical grounding.

Figure 5 presents the keyword co-occurrence map based on a minimum threshold of eight occurrences. Out of 2,841 keywords, 70 met the inclusion criteria. The most frequent and highly connected terms included higher education, internationalization, and students, indicating their central role in the literature. The analysis grouped the keywords into six thematic clusters.

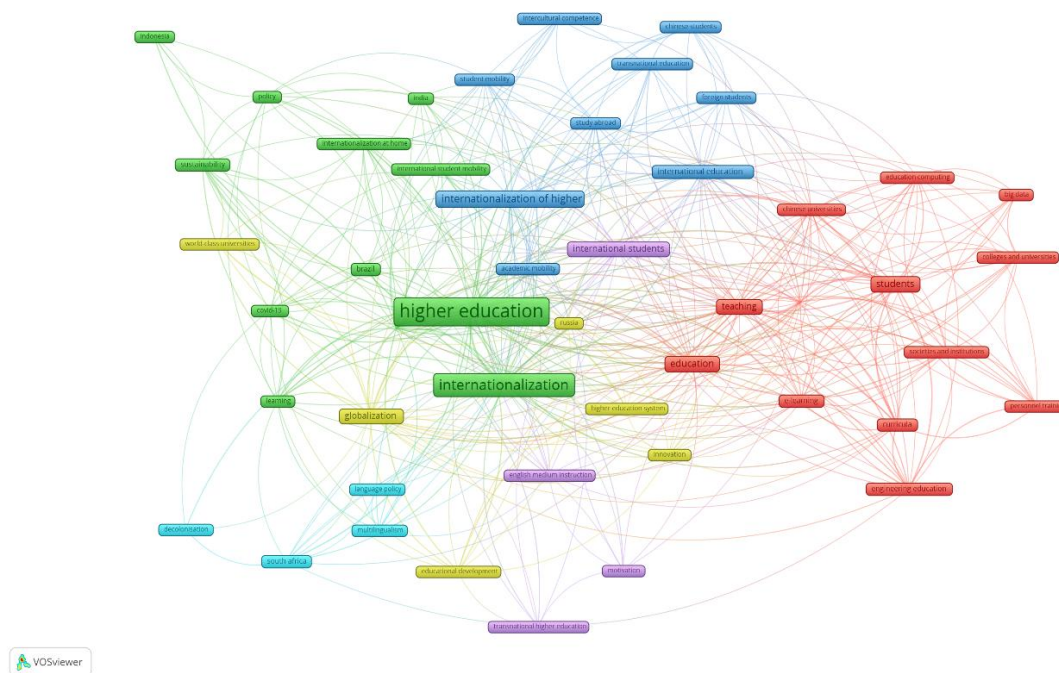


Figure 5. Keyword Co-Occurrence Map

The first cluster centered on terms such as internationalization, student mobility, policy, and country names such as China, India, and Brazil. The second cluster included pedagogical and technological terms such as curricula, teaching, students, e-learning, and engineering education. The third cluster focused on international student experience and mobility, with terms such as academic mobility, study abroad, foreign students, and intercultural competence. The fourth cluster emphasized globalization, higher education system, innovation, and world-class universities. The fifth and sixth clusters reflected more critical themes, including decolonisation, language policy, multilingualism, and South Africa.

Figure 6 provides an overlay visualization of keyword occurrence over time. Newer topics, shown in bright yellow, included COVID-19, sustainability, policy, international student mobility, and soft power. Older and more established terms, shown in bluish-green, included higher education, teaching, students, and education. Keywords such as curricula, e-learning, and academic mobility appeared in intermediate colors, indicating their emergence during the middle phase of the observation period.

Figure 7 presents the density visualization of keyword relationships. The terms higher education and internationalization occupied the densest and most central positions in the

The country-level findings indicate that China occupies the most influential position in the literature on the internationalization of higher education within the BRICS context. Its prominence in citation-based influence suggests that Chinese scholarship has become highly visible and authoritative in shaping discussions within this field. This dominance is not merely a reflection of publication volume, but also of the extent to which Chinese research has become referential for other scholars working on higher education internationalization. Such a pattern is consistent with the broader rise of China as a central actor in global higher education policy, institutional transformation, and research production.

At the same time, the bibliographic coupling map reveals that BRICS scholarship continues to be deeply connected to literature produced in the Global North. China's strong bibliographic ties with the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, Australia, and France indicate that BRICS-related research still operates within an international knowledge system shaped by established epistemic centers. Although BRICS countries are increasingly active in building their own research agendas, their scholarly networks remain structurally linked to Western academic reference points. This suggests a dual condition: BRICS countries are simultaneously emerging as influential producers of knowledge while remaining embedded in a global landscape marked by epistemic asymmetries.

The intermediary roles played by India, Russia, South Africa, and Brazil further reinforce the idea that knowledge production in this field is unevenly distributed but increasingly interconnected. South Africa's role in linking BRICS countries with other Global South contexts is particularly notable because it points to a pattern of South-South scholarly exchange that may gradually diversify the geography of higher education knowledge production. Brazil's links with Latin America and Southern Europe also suggest that BRICS scholarship is not confined to a single geopolitical axis, but is shaped by multiple regional and transregional affiliations. Taken together, these patterns indicate that BRICS countries are not only participating in the global knowledge economy but are also gradually redefining the networks through which higher education internationalization is studied and understood.

The identification of a core group of influential journals suggests that the field has reached a relatively mature stage of consolidation. Journals such as *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *Higher Education*, and *Sustainability* appear to function as major venues through which scholarship on BRICS higher education internationalization is circulated and legitimized. Their prominence reflects the fact that internationalization is increasingly discussed not only within specialized journals on global education, but also in broader outlets concerned with institutional change, policy, and sustainability. This suggests that the field is becoming more interdisciplinary while still maintaining a recognizable scholarly center.

The concentration of influence among a relatively limited number of authors further supports the argument that this research area has developed a visible intellectual leadership structure. Scholars such as Wu, Mok, and Heleta appear to have shaped key conversations within the field, particularly in relation to institutional strategy, global positioning, equity, and the experiences of international students. The prominence of these authors indicates that the field has generated recognizable reference points that help structure subsequent research. In this sense, citation concentration is not merely a measure of popularity, but also an indication of whose conceptual frameworks and empirical contributions have become foundational to the development of this literature.

A similar pattern can be observed in the most cited documents, many of which focus on issues such as world-class universities, international student experiences, English-medium instruction, doctoral reform, service quality, and outward-oriented internationalization. The

prominence of these documents suggests that the field has been shaped by a combination of institutional, pedagogical, and policy-related concerns. It also indicates that the discourse on BRICS higher education internationalization has been strongly influenced by questions of quality, competitiveness, and organizational adaptation, which continue to frame how internationalization is conceptualized and evaluated in both national and cross-national contexts.

The author co-citation network reveals that the field is intellectually diverse rather than conceptually unified. The coexistence of multiple clusters indicates that the internationalization of higher education in BRICS countries has been approached through several overlapping but distinct schools of thought. One major cluster is concerned with institutional transformation and sustainability, especially in the Asian and Chinese context, where internationalization is framed as a strategic pathway toward competitiveness and development in the Global South (Mok, 2014; Li & Xue, 2022, Li & Xue, 2024). Another cluster is anchored in foundational scholarship on global higher education systems, mobility, and structural inequality, represented by authors whose work has shaped the field more broadly (Altbach, 2013; Altbach & Teichler, 2001; Knight, 2007; Marginson, 2019).

The presence of an ethical and curricular cluster suggests that the field has moved beyond narrow quantitative understandings of internationalization. Scholars in this cluster advocate more reflexive and inclusive approaches that emphasize curriculum, values, and the social purposes of internationalization rather than only mobility indicators or global rankings (Beelen & Jones, 2015; Brandenburg & De Wit, 2011; Leask, 2013). This indicates an important normative shift in the field, from measuring internationalization to critically examining what kinds of internationalization are desirable and for whom.

The existence of a language-centered cluster further demonstrates that internationalization is not only institutional or policy driven, but also deeply linguistic and pedagogical. Research on English-medium instruction, transnational education, and multilingual learning highlights how language policy has become central to the internationalization process, particularly in contexts where English operates as both an instrument of access and a site of inequality (Macaro et al., 2018; Galloway et al., 2020; Hu et al., 2014; Macaro & Han, 2020). Meanwhile, the cluster associated with Yang, Hayhoe, and Welch underscores the enduring importance of historical and cultural interpretation in understanding how BRICS countries negotiate globalization without simply reproducing external models of development (Hayhoe, 2021; Welch, 2012, Welch 2018; Yang, 2003). Overall, the co-citation structure suggests that the field is sustained by multiple epistemic communities whose dialogue helps shape its evolution.

The keyword analysis shows that the literature on BRICS higher education internationalization has expanded well beyond a narrow preoccupation with mobility. Although student mobility and policy remain central, the thematic clustering indicates that the field now encompasses pedagogy, educational technology, institutional innovation, global competitiveness, decolonisation, and language policy. This broader thematic range suggests that internationalization is increasingly understood as a multidimensional process that affects institutions, curricula, students, and knowledge systems simultaneously. The emphasis on mobility and policy within the BRICS framework also confirms that internationalization continues to be linked to geopolitical positioning and knowledge diplomacy among these countries (Rensburg et al., 2015).

The strong presence of pedagogical and technological themes indicates that internationalization is becoming more closely tied to curriculum reform and digitally

mediated learning. This is significant because it reflects a shift away from viewing internationalization purely as cross-border movement toward understanding it as a transformation of teaching, learning, and academic experience. Likewise, the cluster focused on international student experiences points to the continued relevance of individual-level adaptation, intercultural competence, and the quality of academic exchange in shaping the meaning of internationalization (Altbach & Bassett, 2014).

The presence of themes such as world-class universities, innovation, and globalization further suggests that BRICS countries are using internationalization as a mechanism for structural repositioning within the global higher education order. In this context, internationalization is not simply reactive, but is increasingly strategic, tied to efforts to build institutional prestige, research capacity, and policy influence (Schwartzman et al., 2015). At the same time, the appearance of critical themes such as decolonisation, multilingualism, and language policy indicates a growing willingness within the field to question dominant assumptions and to advocate more inclusive and epistemically just forms of internationalization (Adeyemo et al., 2020; de Villiers & de Villiers, 2022).

The temporal overlay analysis points to a clear shift in the research agenda over time. Earlier work was structured around foundational themes such as higher education, students, teaching, and education, which continue to serve as the conceptual base of the field. Over time, however, the literature began to incorporate more specialized concerns such as e-learning, curricula, and academic mobility, reflecting the growing importance of digitally enabled and cross-institutional forms of internationalization (Beelen & Jones, 2015; Brandenburg & De Wit, 2011).

More recently, the emergence of terms such as COVID-19, sustainability, policy, soft power, and international student mobility indicates that the field has become increasingly responsive to global crises and changing geopolitical realities. The appearance of COVID-19 reflects the extent to which the pandemic disrupted traditional internationalization practices and forced institutions to rethink mobility, online learning, and institutional resilience (Rababah et al., 2021). Similarly, the growing presence of sustainability and policy suggests that internationalization is now being integrated with broader developmental and strategic concerns, including sustainable development agendas and governance reform (Fan et al., 2022; Khomyakov et al., 2020).

The growing visibility of concepts such as internationalization at home, intercultural competence, and language policy further indicates a shift from mobility-centered internationalization toward more inclusive, curriculum-based, and domestically embedded approaches. This reorientation suggests that the field is moving toward forms of internationalization that do not depend exclusively on physical movement, but instead emphasize globally oriented learning experiences within local institutional settings (Beelen & Jones, 2015; Galloway et al., 2020; Hu et al., 2014). The temporal analysis therefore points to a field that is not static, but highly adaptive, capable of absorbing new priorities and reframing older ones in response to emerging challenges.

The density visualization confirms that higher education and internationalization remain the core organizing concepts of the literature. Their dense and central positioning suggests that the field continues to be institutionally anchored, with universities and higher education systems functioning as the primary units through which internationalization is conceptualized and analyzed. This centrality reinforces the idea that internationalization is still largely framed in relation to institutional change, policy agendas, and academic restructuring.

At the same time, the moderate density of terms such as students, education, and

international students indicates that student experience and academic mobility remain highly visible, though somewhat secondary to the institutional core. Meanwhile, lower-density themes such as soft power, decolonisation, policy, and COVID-19 point to areas of growing but still emerging scholarly attention. Their position in the network suggests that the field is in the process of incorporating more strategic, critical, and geopolitically aware perspectives into what was once a more mobility-centered discourse.

The relatively dense positioning of country-specific terms such as China, India, Brazil, and Russia further demonstrates that the literature is not abstractly thematic, but geopolitically grounded. Research on internationalization in BRICS is clearly shaped by regional priorities, national trajectories, and the political meanings attached to higher education development. Overall, the density map suggests that the field is organized around a strong institutional core, but is increasingly expanding toward issues of policy, justice, crisis response, and global influence. This reflects a mature and evolving body of scholarship that is gradually moving from descriptive concerns toward more strategic and critical interpretations of higher education internationalization in the BRICS context.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the bibliometric analysis, the literature on the internationalization of higher education in BRICS countries showed a clear and sustained upward trajectory from 2001 to 2024, with a particularly sharp increase in productivity between 2018 and 2023. China emerged as the most dominant contributor in terms of both publication output and citation impact, confirming its role as a major intellectual center in this field, followed by South Africa and Brazil, while India and Russia demonstrated substantial productivity with comparatively lower citation influence. The co-citation and bibliographic coupling analyses further highlighted the central roles of scholars such as Wu, Hantian, Mok, Ka Ho, and Heleta, Savo in shaping the research agenda, particularly around themes of academic mobility, internationalization policy, and institutional capacity building. In addition, the keyword analysis revealed that the field is characterized by multiple interconnected themes, including international mobility, curriculum and pedagogical reform, international student experiences, systemic transformation, decolonization, and language policy, while newer topics such as sustainability, COVID-19, and soft power indicate a recent shift toward institutional resilience, strategic policy, and global influence.

Despite providing a comprehensive overview of the intellectual landscape of higher education internationalization in BRICS countries, this study was limited by its reliance on a single database, Scopus, and by its exclusive focus on the BRICS context. Nevertheless, the findings offer an important contribution by mapping the intellectual structure, influential actors, and conceptual evolution of the field in a systematic manner. Overall, this study demonstrates that research on higher education internationalization in BRICS countries is increasingly dynamic, multidimensional, and strategically relevant, providing a useful foundation for future scholarship and for broader discussions on global higher education policy.

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