

CORRUPTION IN ECONOMICS: BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS OF GLOBAL RESEARCH

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the global research landscape on corruption in economics using bibliometric techniques. A dataset of 710 documents was extracted from Scopus database, covering publications from 1964 to 2025. The analysis was conducted using VOSviewer to identify key research themes, influential publications, and emerging trends. The publication trends suggest an increasing recognition of corruption as a critical economic issue, while citation network analysis shows that seminal works on corruption's impact on economic growth remain central to the discourse. Four major thematic clusters identified: (1) Corruption and Its Impact on Economic Growth, (2) Institutional Governance and Corruption Management, (3) Democracy and Regulation in Emerging Economies, and (4) Informal Economy and Culture in Developing Countries. These findings provide a structured overview of the field, highlighting dominant research areas and potential directions for future studies. This study contributes to the literature by offering a systematic mapping of corruption-related research in economics, guiding scholars and policymakers in addressing corruption more effectively.

Keywords: Strengthening Strategy, Supply and Demand, Circulation Dark Narcotics.

1. INTRODUCTION

Corruption remains a critical area of focus in the field of economics, influencing various dimensions of economic performance and governance (Koeswayo et al., 2024). The existing literature has revealed several prominent research streams related to corruption, such as the economic framework for understanding crime and corruption, the role of legal institutions, the effects of corruption on national economies, methods for combating corruption, the determinants leading to corrupt behavior, political institutions' interactions with corruption, and the specific impacts of corruption on firms (Acemoglu & Verdier, 2000). Despite the substantial body of literature, there are significant gaps that warrant further exploration. Notably, the interaction between political institutions and corruption, as well as their combined effects on firm performance, lacks sufficient empirical scrutiny (Rajwani & Liedong, 2015; Thompson, 2018). Furthermore, while various methodologies and theoretical frameworks have been applied, empirical findings remain inconclusive in several aspects, such as the nuanced impacts of different types of corruption on economic welfare and growth, particularly in developing and emerging economies. There is a pressing need to examine these relationships more deeply and to explore how contemporary challenges, such as digitalization and globalization, influence corruption dynamics (Tan & Tusha, 2023). The bibliometric study serves a dual purpose: it synthesizes decades of research, thus offering a comprehensive overview for scholars and practitioners, and it identifies critical areas for future inquiry that

can drive the literature forward (Napitupulu & Yakub, 2021; Sarpong et al., 2023). By addressing the gaps related to political institutions, firm performance, and contextual factors affecting corruption, the findings of this research could contribute to policy-making processes aimed at combating corruption. Furthermore, this study aims to stimulate scholarly discourse and shape future research agendas in the economics of corruption, amplifying the understanding of its multifaceted impacts on societies and economies. Several relevant bibliometric studies have reviewed corruption, highlighting its evolution and application across distinct fields. Bahoo et al. (2021) conducted a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of the literature on corruption in the field of economics, focusing on understanding research trends and future research directions. This study analyzed 4,488 articles from the Web of Science (WoS) database published between 1968 and 2019 in the context of corruption and economics. Another study by Zhai et al. (2021) performed a bibliometric analysis of global research on corruption in construction projects (CICP).

This research aimed to identify trends, gaps, and emerging directions in the CICP literature. A dataset of 542 scholarly articles published between 2000 and 2020 from the WoS Core Collection database was analyzed quantitatively. Salahudin et al. (2025) explored the complex relationship between corruption and religion through a bibliometric analysis. This study aimed to identify trends, patterns, and academic contributions related to corruption and religion, particularly how religious values can influence ethical behavior and potentially combat corruption. The dataset analyzed in this study consisted of 32 documents retrieved from the Scopus database, with no restrictions on the year of publication, subject, affiliation, or document type. These studies illustrate corruption in various areas; however, bibliometric studies that have comprehensively examined corruption in economics, especially using the Scopus database, remain limited. This study also updates the previous bibliometric analysis by Bahoo et al. (2021), which analyzed corruption in economics up to 2019. Thus, our bibliometric analysis provides valuable insights into the scientific evolution of corruption research in economics. This study aims to: (1) analyze trends in corruption-related publications in economics based on authors, papers, source titles, and countries; (2) identify the main research topics on corruption in economics explored by scholars; and (3) examine future research directions related to corruption in economics.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research applies bibliometric and content analysis to give an in-depth view of global publication patterns related to corruption in economics and to pinpoint areas where further investigation is needed. The bibliometric approach is particularly useful as it offers a quantitative assessment of research performance, serving as an objective indicator of academic interest and influence of corruption in economics studies. Methods like citation analysis and co-occurrence mapping were utilized to systematically map out publication networks and reveal trends. Citation analysis reveals the significance of particular articles, authors, and journals, while co-occurrence mapping highlights emerging topics and potential future research paths based on authors' keywords. Together, these techniques reduce researcher bias and provide a clear overview of the research landscape (Napitupulu & Yakub, 2021).

2.1. Data Collection

The bibliometric analysis was conducted as of February, 2025. We used the Scopus database due to its extensive range of citations and abstracts across fields like STEM (Zakaria et al., 2021). This database offers a broad overview of global scientific research output and is widely recognized in the scientific community as a core source of research data. Scopus is highly regarded for its rigorous indexing standards, ensuring that only high-quality, peer-reviewed journals are included, which adds credibility to our research. Scopus has frequently been utilized in bibliometric studies (Napitupulu & Yakub, 2021). Due to its reliability, scope, and frequent use in bibliometric studies, Scopus is widely considered a cornerstone resource by the international scientific community, reinforcing our decision to use it as the sole database for this analysis. We employed a keyword-based search strategy rooted in our research questions to locate relevant documents on corruption in economic. The TITLE field in Scopus was specifically used because it allows for a more focused retrieval of documents directly addressing our topic, reducing the inclusion of unrelated studies that might appear if broader fields were used. Thus, we performed a comprehensive search by using the following query: (TITLE (corruption) AND TITLE (economy OR economic OR economics)). The initial search yielded 1008 documents. To ensure the quality and relevance of our sources, we applied several strict criteria: we selected only documents published in English for consistency and accessibility, limiting the search to peer-reviewed journal articles. Thus, we excluded other form beside journal articles such as conference proceedings, book, book chapter, review and other types of publications. Through this rigorous filtering process, 298 articles were excluded, leaving 710 articles for in-depth analysis. Figure 1 illustrates each step of the search and filtering workflow visually, following the structure depicted in the diagram.

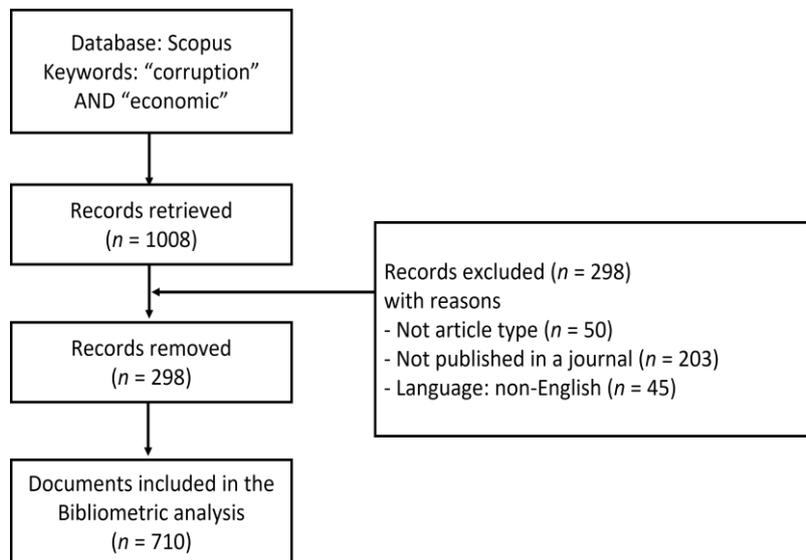


Figure 1: The Stages of Data Collection & Filtering

Before beginning our analysis, we undertook data cleaning and harmonization, crucial steps in bibliometric analysis to ensure data accuracy and reliability (Punj et al., 2023), with particular

focus on keywords. Utilizing the Thesaurus function in VOSviewer, we refined keywords to address inconsistencies within the dataset, an essential step for accurate co-occurrence analysis. The process began by downloading the Scopus data in .csv format, selecting the relevant files, and carefully editing key columns using clustering functions to group similar terms. The Thesaurus function proved especially useful for standardizing keywords, enabling us to maintain consistency and accuracy across a wide range of research outputs, thereby ensuring a solid foundation for analyzing co-occurrence patterns and trends in subsequent stages

2.2. Data Analysis

This study employs bibliometric methods, integrating citation and co-occurrence analysis, to comprehensively address the research question. Citation analysis evaluates the impact of documents, sources, authors, and affiliations through citation counts, which helps to identify influential contributions and emerging trends, as discussed by Ellegaard and Wallin (2015). Concurrently, co-occurrence analysis was conducted to map key topics, trends, and future research directions based on author keywords, revealing interrelationships among various research components. Following the framework proposed by Ellegaard and Wallin (2015), we used MS Excel and Publish or Perish to calculate frequencies, percentages, and measures of publication impact and performance based on selected metrics. For co-occurrence analysis, VOSviewer was essential in visualizing bibliometric networks, allowing for an in-depth exploration of structural connections within the research field (Van Eck & Waltman, 2014). Combined, these approaches offer a nuanced understanding of the intellectual landscape within this area of study.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Publication Trends

The graph illustrates the trend of publications and citations related to corruption in economic from 1964 to 2025. The number of publications has significantly increased over the past two decades, with the highest surge occurring in 2024. Meanwhile, the citation count exhibits a fluctuating pattern, peaking in specific years such as 2001, 2013, and 2018, indicating the presence of highly influential publications during those periods. Although the number of publications has risen, citation trends do not always follow the same pattern, suggesting that the academic impact of certain publications may unfold over a longer period.

Table 1: Publication and Citation by Year

Year	TP	TC
2025	16	0
2024	79	177
2023	61	411
2022	47	435
2021	59	962
2020	53	939
2019	38	1167
2018	48	1525

2017	26	599
2016	28	957
2015	24	492
2014	21	747
2013	38	1277
2012	24	1105
2011	14	468
2010	14	1021
2009	18	1078
2008	16	605
2007	9	254
2006	8	939
2005	4	104
2004	2	60
2003	6	1081
2002	8	755
2001	8	1409
2000	7	378
1999	4	700
1998	7	253
1997	4	310
1996	3	55
1995	2	51
1994	1	4
1991	1	10
1990	3	88
1989	4	122
1982	1	113
1980	1	25
1978	1	7
1975	1	444
1964	1	1287
Total	710	22414

Note: TP=total number of publications; TC=total citations

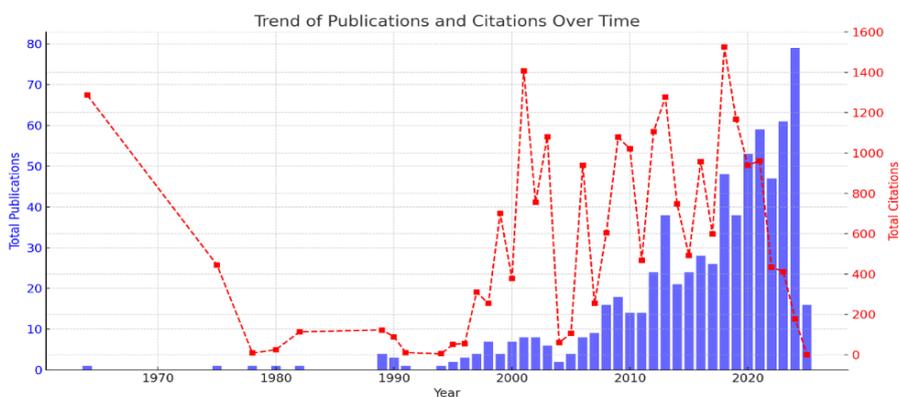


Figure 2: Total Publications and Citations by Year

3.2. Most Productive Authors

The bibliometric analysis reveals a significant focus on the topic of corruption in economics, with prominent contributions from researchers across different countries and institutions. Notably, the United States stands out with the highest number of publications, particularly by Goel and Saunoris.

The United Kingdom also features prominently, with researchers such as Saha and Blackburn adding notable contributions. Other countries such as India, Nigeria, and Jordan are also represented, indicating the global nature of this research. While a few authors, like Goel, have multiple publications on the subject, many others have contributed with fewer works, reflecting a diverse range of research outputs.

The institutions involved range from prestigious universities like the University of Cambridge and the University of Manchester, to those in emerging economies, demonstrating the widespread academic interest in understanding corruption's impact on economics.

Table 2: Top 10 Productive Authors with at least 3 Publications

Authors	Current Affiliation	Country	TP
Goel, R.K.	Illinois State University	United States	12
Saunoris, J.W.	Eastern Michigan University	United States	8
Saha, S.	Lincoln International Business School	United Kingdom	6
Blackburn, K.	The University of Manchester	United Kingdom	5
Schneider, F.	Johannes Kepler University Linz	Austria	4
Sharma, C.	Indian Institute of Management Lucknow	India	4
Abu, N.	Umaru Musa YarAdua University	Nigeria	3
Achim, M.V.	Universitatea Babeş-Bolyai	Cluj Napoca	3
Aidt, T.S.	University of Cambridge	United Kingdom	3
Al Qudah, A.	Yarmouk University	Jordan	3

Note: TP=total number of publications

3.3. Most Productive and Influential Countries

The bibliometric analysis highlights the global distribution of research on corruption in economics, with the United States leading both in the number of publications (146) and citations (5634), indicating its dominant role in this field.

The United Kingdom follows closely with 80 publications and 3759 citations, reflecting strong research output. China, with 57 publications and 1638 citations, also contributes significantly, though with fewer citations per publication compared to the U.S. and U.K. Other countries from Asia, such as Pakistan, Vietnam, India, and Nigeria, also appear on the list, with varying levels of publication and citation counts, suggesting growing interest in the topic in these regions.

European countries like Germany and Italy have notable contributions as well, while Australia stands out in Oceania with a relatively high citation count given its fewer publications. This diverse global involvement shows that corruption in economics is a widely researched issue across different continents, with particular emphasis in North America and Europe.

Table 3: Top 10 Productive and Influential Countries

Country	Continent	TP	TC
United States	North America	146	5634
United Kingdom	Europe	80	3759
China	Asia	57	1638
Pakistan	Asia	32	665
Australia	Oceania	31	643
Germany	Europe	27	1996
Viet Nam	Asia	26	463
India	Asia	25	588
Nigeria	Africa	25	249
Italy	Europe	24	806

Note: TP=total number of publications; TC=total citations

3.4. Most Active Source Titles

A bibliometric study of publications on corruption in economics has underlined different sources, some of which have a higher impact and visibility than others (Table 4). The Journal of Financial Crime has the highest number of articles and 170 citations and is the one published in the first Q1 quartile, manifesting its influence in the academic community. Crime Law and Social Change, Sustainability, and Economic Modelling are also some other journals that are quite impactful, and besides that, they have a large number of citations (which varies from 270 to 521) and are placed in Q1 or Q2 quartiles, which shows their strong authority in the field. People, wants to know, for example, what do the European Journal of Political Economy and the Journal of Business Ethics make differently than the others, that they have such a huge citation number (1069 and 588 correspondingly), that means they have a large influence in the academic community. By contrast, other magazines such as Applied Economics Letters and Journal of Money Laundering Control are quoted by fewer persons and are placed in the bottom quartiles, thus indicating a more niche audience or less total impact. So, we can observe that the data provided by the author reflects integral academic involvement consistent with the topic of corruption in economics, which is published in both mainstream and non-mainstream publishers. The findings of this study are partially in line with what has been found by the previous studies.

Table 4: Top 10 Active Source Titles

Source Title	Publisher	TP	TC	Quartile
Journal of Financial Crime	Emerald	18	170	Q1
Crime Law and Social Change	Springer	11	287	Q2
Sustainability	MDPI	11	270	Q1
Economic Modelling	Elsevier	10	521	Q1
Applied Economics Letters	Routledge	8	96	Q3
European Journal of Political Economy	Elsevier	8	1069	Q1
Heliyon	Elsevier	8	212	Q1
Journal of Business Ethics	Springer	8	588	Q1
Journal of Money Laundering Control	Emerald	8	111	Q2
Resources Policy	Elsevier	8	240	Q1

Note: TP=total number of publications; TC=total citations

3.5. Highly Cited Documents

The bibliometric analysis of highly cited documents on corruption in economics highlights several influential works that have shaped the field (Table 5). Leff's 1964 paper "Economic Development Through Bureaucratic Corruption" leads with an impressive 1,287 total citations and an extraordinarily high citation rate of 2,110 per year, underscoring its enduring relevance.

Mo's 2001 study on "Corruption and Economic Growth" also stands out with 804 citations and a substantial citation rate of 3,350 per year, reflecting its significant influence in the academic discourse. Other key works by Aidt (2003, 2009), Olivier De Sardan'1999, and Rose-Ackerman'1975 studies demonstrate the foundational role of these studies in shaping the understanding of corruption's impact on economic development, with citations ranging from 360 to over 700.

Additionally, papers by Tonoyan '2010, Uhlenbruck'2006, and Dreher & Schneider'2010 further emphasize the multifaceted nature of corruption, including its effects on entrepreneurship, institutional dynamics, and the shadow economy. The high citation rates for these papers highlight their continued academic significance and impact on the field.

Table 5: Top 10 highly cited papers

No.	Author(s)	Title	TC	C/Y
1.	N.H. Leff (1964)	Economic Development Through Bureaucratic Corruption	1287	2110
2.	P.H. Mo (2001)	Corruption and Economic Growth	804	3350
3.	T.S. Aidt (2003)	Economic analysis of corruption: A survey	721	3277
4.	J.P. Olivier De Sardan (1999)	A moral economy of corruption in Africa?	623	2396
5.	T.S. Aidt (2009)	Corruption, institutions, and economic development	466	2913
6.	S. Rose-Ackerman (1975)	The economics of corruption	444	888
7.	M. Paldam (2002)	The cross-country pattern of corruption: Economics, culture and the seesaw dynamics	374	1626
8.	V. Tonoyan, R. Strohmeier, M. Habib, M. Perlitz (2010)	Corruption and entrepreneurship: How formal and informal institutions shape small firm behavior in transition and mature market economies	363	2420
9.	K. Uhlenbruck, P. Rodriguez, J. Doh, L. Eden (2006)	The impact of corruption on entry strategy: Evidence from telecommunication projects in emerging economies	360	1895
10.	A. Dreher, F. Schneider (2010)	Corruption and the shadow economy: An empirical analysis	339	2260

Note: TC=total citations; C/Y = total citations per year

3.6. Thematic Analysis

Keywords serve as a representation of an article's primary topic, central theme, or key area within a specific research field (Ranjbari et al., 2021). In order to identify the main topics related to corruption in economics, we performed a co-occurrence analysis to delineate the thematic areas within this domain.

Utilizing VOSviewer, we visualized the key topics, emerging trends, and potential future research directions based on author-provided keywords, thus uncovering the interconnections between various research components. A total of 1,389 keywords were considered, from which we selected those that occurred a minimum of five times. Consequently, 56 keywords were mapped, as illustrated in Figures 3 and 4.

In the network visualization, the circles (nodes) represent individual keywords or topics, with the size of each circle corresponding to the frequency of co-occurrences. Additionally, the thickness of the links between nodes reflects the strength of the connections, indicating the number of related research networks.

Based on Figure 3 Network visualization, there are some keywords that have high number of occurrence or most frequent keywords on corruption in economic publications such as corruption (440), economic growth (124), economic development (39), shadow economy (36), economic freedom (24), developing countries (19), democracy (17), transition economies (16), bribery (12) and governance (11). These keywords are grouped into specific themes, or clusters based on their relatedness. Figure 3 shows four clusters each marked by red, green, yellow, and blue, dotted circles, representing different thematic areas within the research.

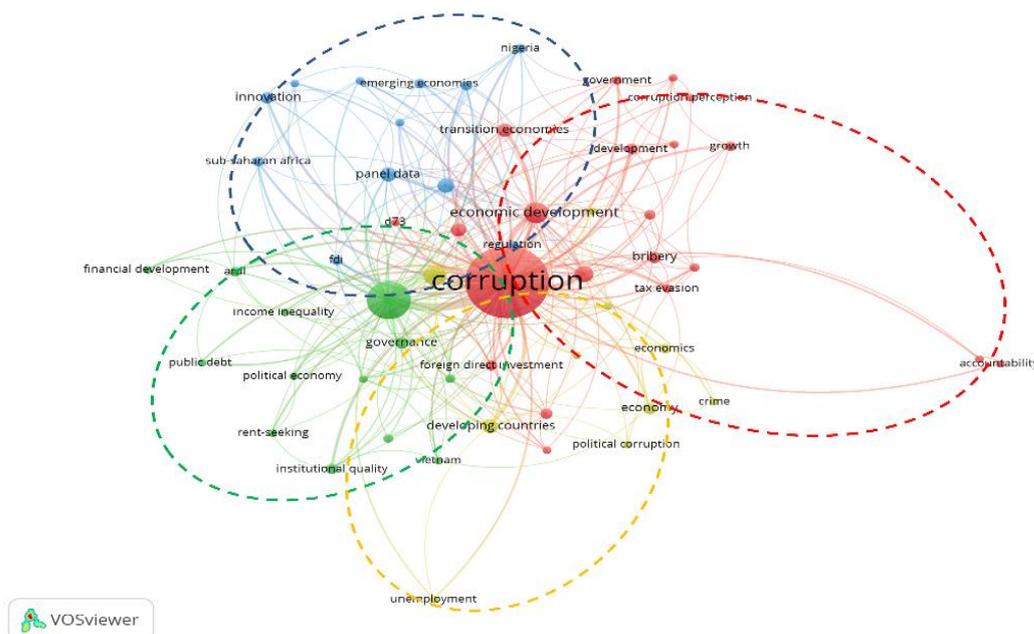


Figure 3: Network visualization

The visualization overlay on the VOSviewer mapping results (Figure 4) shows the publication trend of keywords based on the year of appearance. The lighter the color of the link and circle, the more recent the publication. Keywords from recent publications, such as anti-corruption, control of corruption, natural resources, unemployment, human capital, and innovation are particularly notable.

Overall, this cluster emphasizes the need for robust institutions, effective governance, and sound political policies to mitigate corruption and foster sustainable economic development. Cluster 3 is about Democracy and Regulation in Emerging Economies. This cluster examines the interplay between democracy, regulation, and human development in emerging economies, focusing on how these factors influence economic performance and corruption (Oueghlissi & Derbali, 2024). It explores how democratic systems can enhance regulatory frameworks, leading to more transparent and accountable institutions. The cluster also highlights the importance of effective regulation in fostering fair economic practices, ensuring the equitable distribution of resources, and promoting sustainable human development (Nurmal, 2023). By analyzing the challenges and opportunities in emerging economies, this cluster underscores the crucial role of democratic governance and regulatory reforms in driving long-term economic stability and reducing corruption.

Cluster 4 is labeled as Informal Economy and Culture in Developing Countries. This cluster explores the relationship between the shadow economy, crime, and culture within the context of developing countries, focusing on how these factors contribute to the persistence of corruption. It examines how informal economic activities, often outside the bounds of legal regulations, can foster corrupt practices and criminal behavior (Wong, 2023). The cluster also delves into the cultural factors that influence economic behavior, including attitudes toward corruption and the acceptance of informal markets (Goel & Saunoris, 2020). Additionally, it looks at the role of crime in sustaining and expanding the shadow economy, highlighting the challenges developing countries face in addressing these interconnected issues. The cluster emphasizes the need for comprehensive policy approaches that address the root causes of corruption in the informal economy while considering the cultural and social dynamics at play.

4.1. Theoretical & Practical Implications

The bibliometric analysis highlights four major research directions on corruption in economics, each offering distinct theoretical and practical implications. The findings reinforce that corruption is a multidimensional issue influenced by economic structures, institutional governance, political systems, and cultural factors. The first two clusters emphasize the role of economic freedom and strong institutions in mitigating corruption, suggesting that economic development theories should integrate institutional quality and governance as key variables. Additionally, the interplay between political decision-making and corruption control highlights the need for political economy theories to further explore how governance structures shape anti-corruption efforts and resource management. The latter two clusters underscore the impact of democracy, regulation, and informal economies on corruption, suggesting that theories of democracy and regulation should consider their effects on corruption control, particularly in emerging economies.

Furthermore, the influence of cultural norms and informal economic activities on corruption highlights the necessity of incorporating sociocultural perspectives into economic models of corruption. These insights also have practical implications for policymakers, regulatory bodies, and development organizations. Strengthening institutional governance and promoting economic freedom through transparent policies can help reduce corruption and foster

sustainable economic growth. Governments should prioritize regulatory reforms that enhance democratic accountability and ensure fair economic practices, particularly in emerging economies where weak institutions often enable corruption. Additionally, anti-corruption strategies must address the informal economy by integrating cultural and social factors, recognizing that corruption is deeply embedded in societal norms. Tailored policy interventions that combine legal enforcement with educational campaigns can shift cultural attitudes and reduce the acceptability of corrupt practices. Ultimately, a multi-pronged approach that considers economic, political, and cultural dimensions is essential for effectively mitigating corruption and promoting long-term development.

5. DISCUSSION

This study provides a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of global research on corruption in economics, addressing the gap in systematically mapping the thematic evolution of this field. By analyzing 710 publications from Scopus database, the results indicate a growing scholarly interest in understanding the economic consequences of corruption, with a notable rise in publications over the past decade.

The publication trends suggest an increasing recognition of corruption as a critical economic issue, with research expanding into new areas such as financial crime, regulatory policies, and the role of digital transformation in governance. Citation network analysis shows that seminal works on corruption's impact on economic growth, institutional efficiency, and financial transparency remain central to the discourse. This study also identifies four dominant research clusters: (1) Corruption and Its Impact on Economic Growth, (2) Institutional Governance and Corruption Management, (3) Democracy and Regulation in Emerging Economies, and (4) Informal Economy and Culture in Developing Countries. These findings highlight the multidimensional nature of corruption research, demonstrating its intersections with economic policies, governance frameworks, regulatory mechanisms, and socio-cultural factors.

The study contributes to the literature by offering a structured overview of existing research trends and influential works, assisting scholars in identifying key areas for further exploration. Furthermore, policymakers can leverage these insights to develop more effective anti-corruption strategies tailored to different economic and institutional contexts. Despite its contributions, this study is limited by its reliance on Scopus database, which may not encompass all relevant publications on the subject.

Future research should incorporate additional databases and employ qualitative analyses to deepen the understanding of emerging corruption-related themes in economics. Additionally, bibliometric methods, while effective in identifying research patterns, do not assess the qualitative depth of studies. The citation-based approach prioritizes frequently cited works, potentially overlooking emerging yet impactful studies that have not yet gained widespread recognition. Future research should incorporate qualitative content analysis and mixed-method approaches to complement bibliometric findings, enabling a more holistic understanding of corruption's economic impact.

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