

Bibliometric Insights into Global Efforts in Protecting Children's Rights

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ABSTRACT

This bibliometric study provides an in-depth analysis of the research landscape in children's rights over the past three decades, utilizing a variety of visualization tools to map out author collaborations, thematic clusters, research trends, and potential areas for future exploration. Through the analysis of key publication databases, this paper identifies robust networks of collaboration among authors and highlights predominant thematic areas such as child protection, legal frameworks, and the impacts of global health policies on children. The temporal analysis reveals a noticeable shift in research focus, from traditional protection measures to more contemporary issues such as digital safety and global policy initiatives. Furthermore, areas with less research concentration, including the integration of sports in rights promotion and the implications of digital advancements on children, are identified as potential opportunities for future studies. This study underscores the dynamic nature of children's rights research and its evolution in response to both enduring and emerging challenges affecting children globally.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Children's rights, enshrined within the framework of international human rights law, have been a focal point of global advocacy and legislative action for decades. The issue encompasses a broad range of rights including the right to education, health care, protection from abuse, and the right to a family environment. The adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1989 marked a universal agreement to advance children's rights globally. Despite these efforts, challenges such as poverty, conflict, and

cultural practices continue to impede the effective realization of these rights for millions of children worldwide, highlighting the need for ongoing research and policy development [1]–[5].

In the scholarly world, the investigation of children's rights has evolved through various lenses, including legal, social, educational, and health perspectives. The academic interest has mirrored global policy shifts and responded to emerging issues affecting children, such as digital rights and the impact of global crises. Bibliometric analysis in this field offers a unique opportunity to visualize the landscape of

research and the evolution of discourse over time. Through such analysis, it is possible to identify key contributors, influential regions, and the interconnectedness of research topics, which can inform both current and future initiatives aimed at safeguarding children's rights [6]–[10].

However, despite extensive legislative frameworks and scholarly attention, the implementation and enforcement of children's rights remain inconsistent across different regions. The disparities in how children's rights are upheld in various socio-economic and political contexts suggest that there is much to be explored and understood through rigorous academic scrutiny. Bibliometric methods can help uncover patterns of research emphasis and gaps, providing a meta-analysis of the global efforts in this field. This approach not only highlights prevalent themes and methodologies but also pinpoints under-researched areas that could significantly benefit from increased academic and policy-making attention [5], [11], [12].

While there is extensive literature on children's rights, the global response to protecting these rights is uneven, and the impact of these efforts is not always clear. Previous studies have often focused on regional analyses or specific aspects of children's rights, such as education or health, without a comprehensive, quantitative global overview. There remains a need for a bibliometric analysis that synthesizes global research efforts to protect children's rights, identifying how these efforts are distributed across various dimensions such as geographical, temporal, and thematic lines. Such an analysis is crucial for understanding the evolution of the discourse on children's rights and for highlighting areas where research and policy interventions have been either concentrated or neglected.

The primary objective of this research is to employ bibliometric methods to map and evaluate the global research landscape on the protection of children's rights over the past three decades. This study aims to uncover the most influential authors, journals, and countries in the field, analyze co-citation and

co-authorship networks, and identify the main themes and emerging trends in the literature. By doing so, the research will provide a comprehensive overview of the academic and policy-making efforts aimed at protecting children's rights worldwide.

This research holds significant value for multiple stakeholders engaged in the field of children's rights, including policymakers, educators, and non-governmental organizations. By providing a detailed bibliometric analysis, this study will highlight successful strategies and significant gaps in the current research landscape, offering a foundation for future studies and policy formulations. Additionally, the insights gained from this research will assist in optimizing resource allocation, prioritizing research areas, and fostering international collaborations to enhance the effectiveness of global efforts in protecting children's rights.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 *Evolution of Children's Rights*

The literature on children's rights has evolved significantly over the past few decades, reflecting broader shifts in societal attitudes and legal frameworks. Key works by [13] and [14] have provided comprehensive overviews of the philosophical and legal underpinnings of children's rights, discussing both the moral and practical implications of various international conventions. The UNCRC stands as a cornerstone in this field, extensively analyzed in academic literature for its impact on national legislation and policy implementation across countries [15]. Studies have noted that while the UNCRC has prompted numerous countries to reform their child protection laws, the actual impact on child welfare varies significantly due to differences in enforcement and local adaptation [16].

2.2 Bibliometric Analyses in Human Rights Research

Bibliometric methods have increasingly been applied to human rights research to map the scholarly landscape and assess the impact and evolution of the field. Recent studies by [17] and [18] have utilized citation analysis and content analysis to identify the most influential works and authors in human rights journals. These studies highlight a trend towards interdisciplinary research involving economics, psychology, and health sciences, reflecting the complex and multifaceted nature of human rights issues. Specifically, in children's rights research, bibliometric studies have been instrumental in uncovering dominant themes such as child labor, education rights, and health care, offering a quantitative basis for identifying research gaps and emerging trends [19].

2.3 Regional Studies and Comparative Analyses

Comparative studies have been pivotal in understanding the variability in the implementation of children's rights across different geopolitical regions. Research by [20] provided a comparative analysis of child protection policies in South Asia, highlighting the role of cultural and economic factors in shaping policy effectiveness. Similarly, studies focused on Western contexts, like those by [21], discuss the influence of political and legal frameworks on the protection of children's rights, emphasizing the need for policies that are both culturally sensitive and universally principled. These comparative analyses are crucial for identifying successful strategies that can be adapted and implemented in different contexts to improve the global state of children's rights.

3. METHODS

This research employs a bibliometric analysis to explore global academic contributions to the field of children's rights. We will extract data from Google Scholar, focusing on publications from the 1939 - 2024. The selection criteria include articles, reviews, and conference papers written in English that discuss various aspects of children's rights. Using VOSviewer, we will perform citation analysis to identify the most cited works and authors, and co-citation analysis to explore the relationships between different research areas. Co-authorship networks will be mapped to examine collaboration patterns across countries and institutions. Additionally, keyword occurrence analysis will be utilized to discern prevalent themes and emerging trends within the literature. This comprehensive bibliometric approach will allow us to quantify the impact and scope of research on children's rights globally, providing a detailed overview of the field's developmental trajectory and current state.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Research Data Metrics

Metrics Data	Information
Publication years	1939-2024
Citation years	85
Papers	980
Citations	163211
Cites/year	1920.13
Cites/paper	166.54
Cites/author	135205.11
Papers/author	703.63
Authors/paper	1.87
h-index	159
g-index	388
hI,norm	133
hI,annual	1.56
hA, index	49
Paper with ACC >=	1,2,5,10,20:798,644,405,231,125

Source: Output Publish or Perish, 2024

Table 1 presents a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of research data concerning publications on children's rights from 1939 to 2024. Over these 85 years, a total of 980 papers have been published, amassing

an impressive 163,211 citations. This results in an average of 1920.13 citations per year and 166.54 citations per paper, indicating significant scholarly impact and engagement with the research. The data also shows high productivity and influence with an h-index of 159 and a g-index of 388, suggesting that a substantial number of papers have been widely cited within the field. The normalized individual h-index (hI,norm) stands at 133 and an annualized rate (hI,annual) of 1.56, reflecting the durable relevance and continuous influence of the authors in this

area over time. Moreover, the analysis reveals that each paper involves an average of 1.87 authors, and a significant proportion of papers have achieved at least one citation, with varying levels of higher citation counts (ACC) demonstrating broad dissemination and acknowledgment in the academic community. This table, sourced from the 2024 output of Publish or Perish, underscores the depth and engagement of global scholarly efforts in advancing the discourse on children's rights.

Table 2. Most Cited Article

Citations	Author and Year	Title
8136	[22]	Children's participation: The theory and practice of involving young citizens in community development and environmental care
5332	[23]	Closing the gap in a generation: health equity through action on the social determinants of health: final report of the commission on social determinants of ...
4513	[24]	Global action plan for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases 2013-2020
4477	[25]	Global status report on road safety 2015
4477	[25]	Global status report on road safety 2015
3771	[26]	Global strategy for infant and young child feeding
3725	[27]	Global action plan on physical activity 2018-2030: more active people for a healthier world
3142	[28]	WHO report on the global tobacco epidemic, 2008: the MPOWER package
3096	[29]	Human rights and gender violence: Translating international law into local justice
2651	[30]	World report on child injury prevention

Source: Output Publish or Perish, 2024

Table 2 outlines the most cited articles within the domain of children's rights and related public health issues, highlighting significant scholarly impact and relevance in these fields. The table is led by RA Hart's seminal work on children's participation in community development, accumulating 8,136 citations, which underscores its pivotal role in shaping discussions around young citizens' engagement in societal activities. Following this, the Commission on Social Determinants of Health's report, advocating for health equity, has garnered 5,332 citations, reflecting its influence on global health policy. The World Health Organization (WHO) features prominently with several key reports

addressing noncommunicable diseases, road safety, infant and young child feeding, physical activity, and tobacco control, each contributing significantly to global health initiatives and policies, as evidenced by their high citation counts ranging from 2,651 to 4,513. The repeated listing of the road safety report underscores its critical importance in global safety initiatives. Additionally, SE Merry's work on translating international law into local justice for gender violence, cited 3,096 times, highlights the intersection of human rights with gender issues. These publications collectively demonstrate a strong academic and practical impact, shaping both policy and community practices globally.

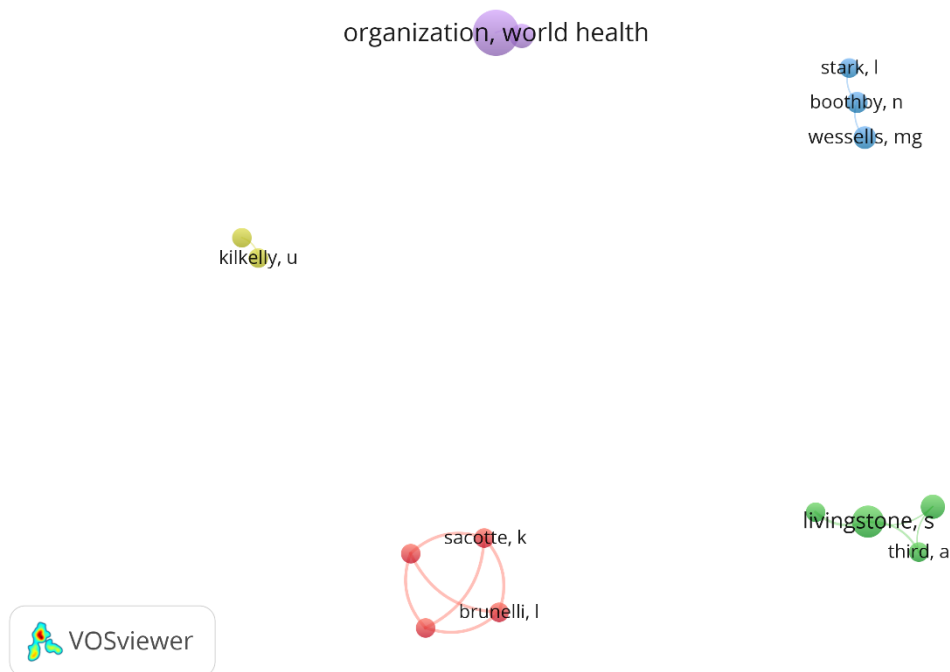


Figure 1. Co-Authorship
Source: Data Analysis, 2024

The figure illustrates a network of author collaborations in the research area related to children's rights, as analyzed through bibliometric methods. This network is segmented into distinct clusters of collaboration, each indicated by different colors, showing how authors are interconnected through their scholarly work.

1. Yellow cluster, represents collaborations centered around the author "Kilkelly, U", suggesting focused research possibly on legal or European perspectives on children's rights, as Kilkelly is known for these areas.
2. Red cluster, includes authors "Sacotte, K" and "Brunelli, I", highlighting a tightly knit group possibly exploring specific themes such as child protection or social work practices. The close connections indicate frequent co-authorship among these researchers.
3. Purple cluster, dominated by "World Health Organization" which implies publications produced by or in collaboration with WHO. This suggests research focusing on global health issues impacting children, like nutrition or disease prevention, reflecting the organization's broad reach and impact in children's health rights.
4. Green cluster, features "Livingstone, S" and "Third, A", who are potentially exploring areas like children's digital rights or media influence, given Livingstone's expertise in these topics.
5. Blue cluster, contains authors "Stark, L", "Boothby, N", and "Wessells, MG", likely focusing on psychological and rehabilitation aspects of children's rights, areas these authors frequently explore.

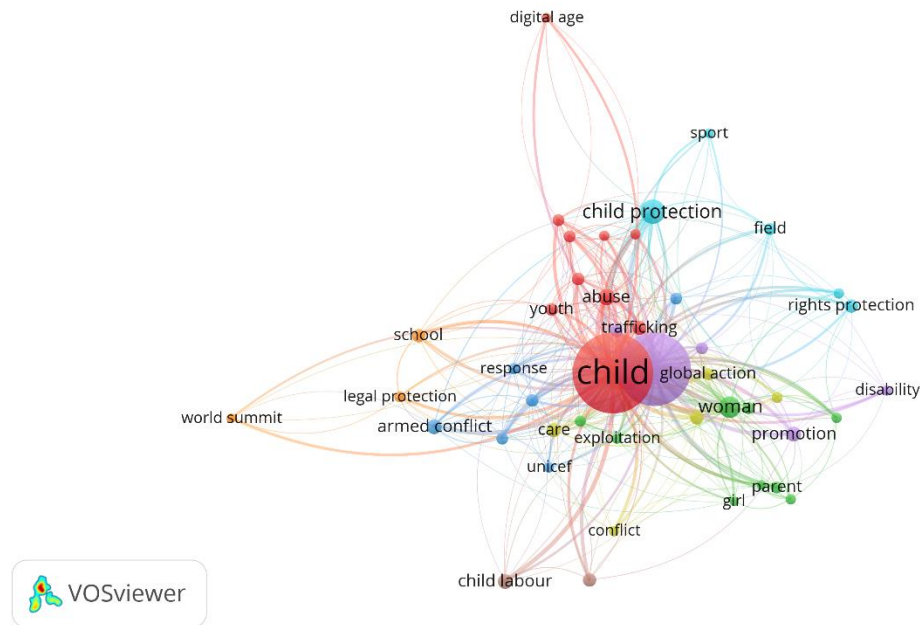


Figure 2. Network Visualization

Source: Data Analysis, 2024

The figure presented is a visual representation of a keyword co-occurrence network from a bibliometric analysis focusing on the field of children's rights. This type of visualization highlights the thematic clusters and the relationships between different keywords within the research area. Each node (or dot) represents a keyword, and the lines between them indicate co-occurrences in various publications, suggesting thematic relatedness.

1. Red Cluster

Centered around "child," "abuse," and "trafficking." This cluster appears to focus on issues related to the protection of children from various forms of abuse, including trafficking. The strong connections between these keywords suggest a significant body of research focused on preventative measures, legal frameworks, and rehabilitation related to child abuse and exploitation.

2. Light Blue Cluster

Involves keywords like "rights protection," "field," "disability," and "sport." This cluster seems to be addressing broader rights issues and may include research on the inclusion

of children with disabilities, the role of sports in development and rights, and field-based studies on children's rights implementation.

3. Green Cluster

Encompasses "woman," "parent," "girl," and "promotion." This grouping likely relates to gender-specific issues and the role of family in promoting and protecting rights, with a particular focus on the rights of girls and women, possibly in relation to education, empowerment, and health.

4. Orange Cluster

Contains "school," "legal protection," "response," and "world summit." This suggests a focus on educational rights, legal advocacy, and global responses to children's rights issues, possibly including discussions at international summits and conventions.

5. Blue Cluster

This cluster appears to focus on responses to armed conflicts and the role of organizations like UNICEF in these scenarios. It likely involves research on the protection and

support of children in conflict zones, including emergency response, rehabilitation, and advocacy efforts by international bodies. The presence of "UNICEF" as a central keyword indicates a significant emphasis on the policies and actions undertaken by this specific organization in addressing the needs of children affected by armed conflicts. This cluster highlights the intersection of humanitarian aid, child rights, and conflict resolution.

6. Yellow Cluster

The yellow cluster brings together the concepts of globalization, conflict, and care. This suggests a thematic focus on how global forces and conflicts impact child care practices and policies. The research might explore how globalization affects the dissemination of child care standards, the impact of global conflicts on child welfare, and the international efforts to ensure care continuity in unstable

environments. This cluster could also delve into the socio-economic factors that influence child care in the face of global and local conflicts, providing insights into cross-border issues and their effects on children.

7. Purple Cluster

The purple cluster centers on disability and promotion, pointing towards a thematic concern with the rights, inclusion, and empowerment of children with disabilities. This cluster might examine strategies for promoting greater inclusivity and accessibility in various spheres such as education, public spaces, and policy-making. The research could be geared towards identifying effective methods for raising awareness and improving conditions for children with disabilities, advocating for enhanced societal and institutional support to promote their well-being and rights.

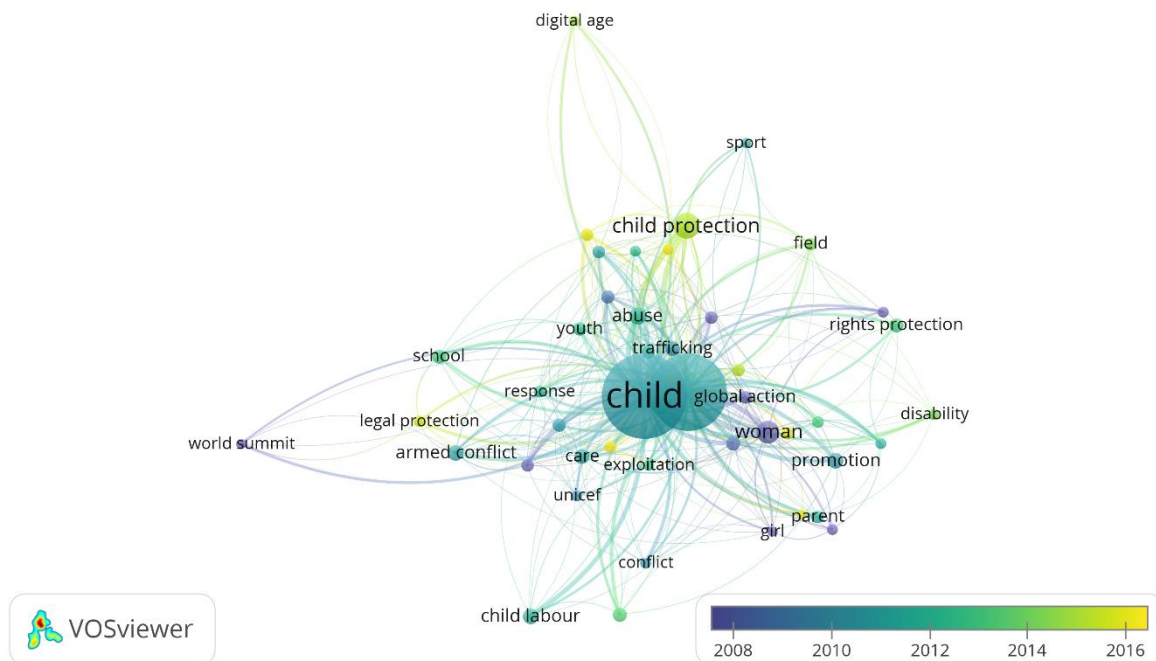


Figure 3. Overlay Visualization
Source: Data Analysis, 2024

The figure above shows a temporal bibliometric visualization of keywords related

to children's rights research from 2008 to 2016. This visualization employs a color gradient to

represent the evolution of research focus over time, with earlier years indicated in blue and later years shown in yellow. The keyword "child" is prominently placed at the center of the network, considerably larger and more connected than other terms, indicating that it is the core focus of the research throughout the entire period. It has strong connections with a range of other keywords, showing the interdisciplinary and multifaceted nature of child-related research.

Early years in the visual (around 2008) emphasize terms like "school," "legal protection," and "armed conflict." This suggests that earlier research predominantly focused on the legal aspects of protecting children in conflict situations and their rights within educational settings. As the visualization progresses towards green hues (around 2010 to 2012), keywords such as "child protection," "abuse," and "trafficking" become more prominent. This shift indicates a

growing academic interest in specific abuses against children, including trafficking, which points to an increased global awareness and academic response to these critical issues. In the later years (2014 to 2016), the terms "digital age," "disability," and "global action" appear more prominently. This suggests a shift towards topics that address the impacts of technology on children, the rights of children with disabilities, and a more globalized approach to advocacy and policy-making in children's rights.

The movement from legal and educational concerns to issues of abuse, trafficking, and then to technology and global actions suggests a dynamic field responsive to global trends and emerging threats to children. The increase in the size and centrality of keywords related to technology and global approaches in the later years highlights these as emerging research fronts.

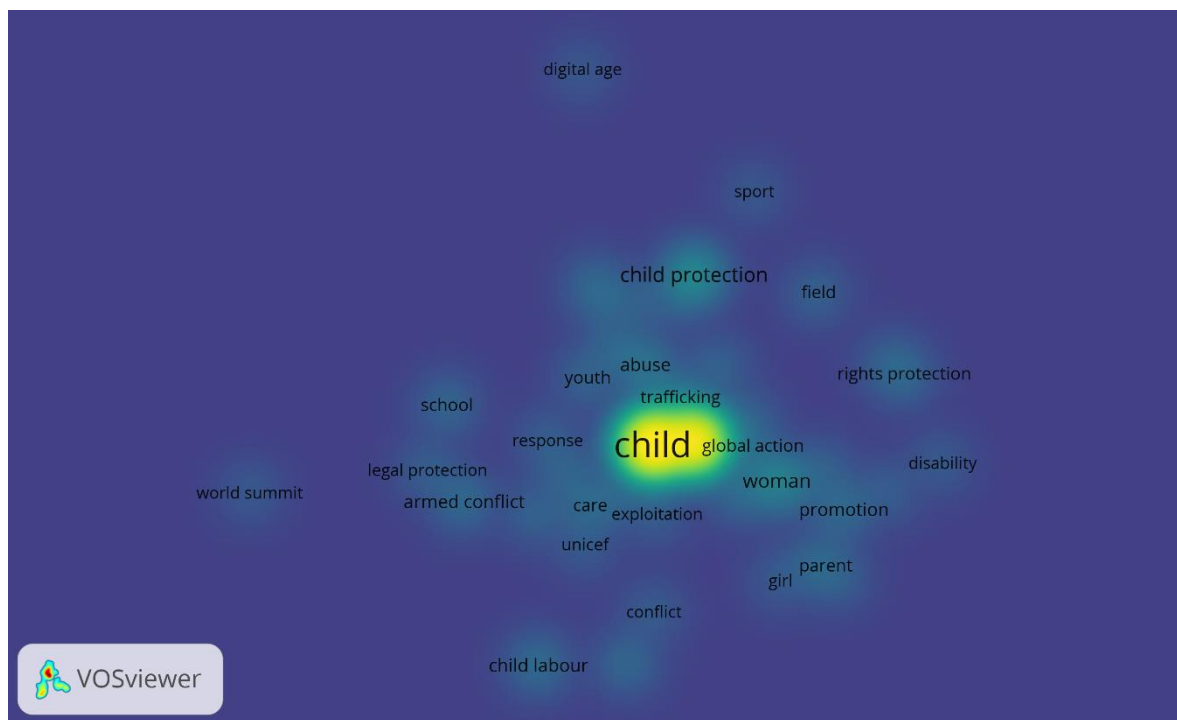


Figure 4. Density Visualization
Source: Data Analysis, 2024

The last figure highlighting areas of high and low research activity based on keyword occurrences within the field of children's rights. The brightness and color intensity indicate the concentration of

research, with brighter areas showing higher activity and darker areas indicating less research focus.

1. "World Summit" and "Legal Protection", these terms are in less

bright areas, suggesting that while there is some research, there is potential for more in-depth studies focusing on the outcomes of global summits or legal frameworks.

2. "Sport" and "Field", these keywords are in darker blue regions, indicating that they are less frequently associated with child rights in existing literature. Research could explore how sports programs can be used as a tool for social development and rights promotion for children, or field-specific studies in different areas like education or healthcare.
3. "Digital Age", while somewhat connected, this term appears in a darker shade, pointing towards emerging opportunities to explore how digital advancements affect children's rights and safety online, an increasingly relevant area given the rise of digital media consumption among younger populations.

Given the visualization, there are a few strategic areas that could benefit from increased research attention:

1. Integrative and Interdisciplinary Approaches
Areas like "sport" and "digital age" suggest the need for interdisciplinary research that integrates these broader societal elements with children's rights, examining both the positive and negative impacts.
2. Global and Legal Frameworks
The lesser brightness around "world summit" and "legal protection" suggests a gap in studies focused on international legal agreements and their practical implementation. More detailed studies could assess the effectiveness of international summits and legal structures in improving child welfare globally.
3. Field-Specific Studies
Research could be expanded in specific fields of children's rights application, such as through

educational programs, health services, and child labor policies, to identify best practices and areas for policy enhancement.

5. CONCLUSION

The bibliometric analysis presented across the four inquiries offers a comprehensive overview of the current landscape and dynamics within the field of children's rights research. Through the visualization of author collaborations, it is evident that the research community is robust and interconnected, with notable clusters focusing on specific areas such as child protection, legal issues, and global health interventions by organizations like UNICEF. The thematic cluster analysis further delineates the focal points of research, revealing strong scholarly attention on issues like child abuse, trafficking, and the rights of children with disabilities. This thematic segmentation underscores the multidisciplinary nature of the field, linking diverse areas from legal frameworks to health and digital engagement.

The temporal analysis of research trends highlighted a shift in focus over time— from legal and protective measures in early years to emerging issues in the digital age and global action plans in recent years. This shift indicates a responsive research field that evolves with global trends and the changing landscapes of risks and opportunities facing children worldwide. Finally, the identification of less bright areas in the keyword density visualization provides a strategic direction for future research. It pinpoints the need for further exploration into the effectiveness of global summits, the integration of children's rights within sports and digital platforms, and detailed field-specific studies. Collectively, these insights not only reflect the current state of children's rights research but also guide future scholarly endeavors to address less explored areas, ensuring a comprehensive approach to advancing children's rights globally.

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