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TRENDS OF POSTCOLONIAL HISTORY RESEARCH THROUGH THE LENS OF BIBLIOMETRIC

*(Trend Penyelidikan Sejarah Pascakolonial Melalui
Lensa Bibliometrik)*

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ABSTRACT

Postcolonial history has developed as a critical field of historical inquiry that investigates the continuing legacies of colonialism and their influence on political structures, cultural identities, social relations and systems of knowledge. By challenging Eurocentric interpretations of the past, postcolonial historiography has expanded historical analysis towards questions of agency, representation, memory and the experiences of formerly colonised societies. This study aims to examine the evolution, intellectual structure and development of postcolonial history research through a bibliometric analysis. Based on Scopus-indexed publications from 1947 to 2025, this study evaluates publication trends, citation patterns, geographical contributions, keyword development and international research collaboration. A structured search strategy was applied to identify relevant publications within the Arts and Social Sciences, while VOSviewer was utilised to analyse citation networks, keyword co-occurrence and collaboration patterns. The findings indicate a sustained growth in postcolonial history scholarship, particularly from the early twenty-first century, demonstrating the increasing institutional significance of the field. Citation analysis highlights the

influence of key studies addressing imperial governance, colonial economies, knowledge systems and cultural domination. The country-level analysis shows that research production remains concentrated in the United Kingdom and the United States, although contributions from other regions indicate a gradual expansion of global scholarly participation. Thematic analysis reveals continuity in core concepts such as colonialism, imperialism, and decolonisation, while identifying emerging areas of inquiry related to identity, race, memory, nationalism, and settler colonialism. This study demonstrates that postcolonial history has transformed from a critique of imperial narratives into a diverse and interdisciplinary field that continues to redefine approaches to historical knowledge production. The findings provide a systematic understanding of the field's development while highlighting the ongoing need for more inclusive and geographically balanced global scholarship.

Keywords: Postcolonial history, bibliometric analysis, historiography, decolonisation, global knowledge production.

INTRODUCTION

Postcolonial history research has emerged as a critical field for interrogating the enduring legacies of empire, colonial discourse and the ongoing struggles for identity, sovereignty and cultural memory. Since the 1970s, the rise of postcolonial theory marked a decisive break from Eurocentric historical narratives, introducing new perspectives on difference, hybridity and resistance. Foundational thinkers such as Edward Said, Frantz Fanon and Gayatri Spivak have been instrumental in transforming the study of colonial histories into a vibrant, interdisciplinary discourse that continues to shape contemporary debates on culture, politics, and global interdependence. As societies grapple with the rearticulation of collective memory and identity in the aftermath of imperialism, postcolonial history research has continually evolved to interrogate the dynamics of power, difference, and counter-hegemonic practices, challenging established canons and fostering new forms of critical engagement with the past and present (Hiddleston, 2010, 2014; Kalua, 2019).

In recent years, the field has expanded beyond classical theoretical formulations to embrace innovative methodologies and interdisciplinary approaches, including critical spatial analysis, cultural theory, and participatory research practices. The incorporation of digital humanities, urban counter-mappings, and decolonial critiques has further broadened the analytical scope of postcolonial inquiry, revealing both convergences and divergences in scholarly debates about indigenous agency, the complexities of modern state formation, and the politics of memory. Through a systematic review of literature, this study situates the historical development of postcolonial research within a broader global context, highlighting contested terrains and unresolved questions that continue to resonate within current intellectual and political debates (Alqaryouti, 2025; Heehs, 2021; Kwok Lai Yin, 2025; Ramone, 2017). The ongoing evolution of postcolonial history research underscores its significance in understanding not only the past but also the persistent structures of power and resistance that shape the contemporary world.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on postcolonial history is marked by a dynamic interplay of theoretical innovation and critical reassessment of colonial legacies. Early contributions, notably Edward Said's *Orientalism* and the Subaltern Studies collective, laid the groundwork by challenging the authority of Western narratives and exposing the constructed nature of colonial representations (Chandra, 2013; Hiddleston, 2014; Kalua, 2019). These foundational texts foregrounded the voices of the marginalized and rearticulated the semantics of representation, providing new conceptual tools for interrogating identity, difference, and the politics of resistance. Over time, postcolonial theory has been enriched by philosophical currents such as Marxism, poststructuralism, feminism, and indigenous epistemologies, reflecting a complex relationship between politics, ethics, and knowledge production (Gandhi, 2019, 2020; Hiddleston, 2010, 2014). The field's interdisciplinary nature is evident in its engagement with literature, anthropology, geography, and international relations, each contributing unique perspectives on the enduring impact of colonialism and the formation of postcolonial societies (Kilibarda, 2016; Krishna, 2018).

A significant strand of recent scholarship emphasizes methodological diversification and innovation. Techniques such as critical-participatory mapping and the 'country as method' praxis have been employed to decode urban landscapes, deconstruct colonial geographies, and illuminate hidden narratives within public spaces (Alqaryouti, 2025; Kwok Lai Yin, 2025). These approaches bridge traditional archival research with creative interpretive practices, enabling the visualization of sites of violence, resistance, and memory, and empowering marginalized communities to reclaim agency in the production of historical knowledge (Asoni, 2025; Okoye, 2024). Case studies from Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe demonstrate the localized impact of colonial rule and the global implications of decolonial struggles, highlighting the importance of methodological pluralism in capturing the complexity of postcolonial experiences (Kwok Lai Yin, 2025; Lee, 2019; Park, 2008). The integration of digital humanities and participatory research further signals a paradigm shift in how postcolonial histories are articulated and contested.

Central themes and debates in the literature revolve around the construction of collective identities, the politics of representation, and the intersections of race, gender, and hybridity (Ashcroft et al., 2024; Bartels et al., 2019; Vives & Mohabir, 2019). Scholars have increasingly interrogated how overlapping categories of race, gender, class, and sexuality contribute to the reimagining of national narratives and the contestation of essentialist identities in the wake of independence (de Souza, 2022; Shevchenko & Nesmelova, 2015; Strazzeri, 2024). The concept of hybridity, while central to postcolonial theory, remains contested that viewed both as a site of resistance and as a source of identity conflict or psychosis when cultural integration fails (Acheraïou, 2011; Hyland, 2013; Loomba, 2013). Intersectionality and performativity have become crucial analytical tools, enabling more nuanced understandings of how identities are negotiated and performed in postcolonial contexts. These debates underscore the need for approaches that reconcile broad theoretical frameworks with the specificity of regional histories and internal national dynamics (Achankeng, 2015).

Despite the field's vibrancy, notable research gaps persist. There is a pressing need for studies that more comprehensively integrate postcolonial identities with internal national contradictions, particularly in post-independence contexts where diverse cultural, racial, and gender dynamics remain underexplored (Boehmer, 2023; Heehs, 2021; Nair, 2025). The literature calls for greater attention to the nuanced roles of gender, sexuality, and transnationalism, as well as the integration of indigenous and regional perspectives that challenge the dominance of Western epistemologies (Hamimed, 2024; Odhiambo, 2007; Sherif, 2013). Emerging topics such as ecocriticism, refugeeism, and the digital humanities offer promising

avenues for future research, while the ongoing interrogation of colonial and postcolonial power dynamics within specific regional literatures such as Arabic fiction and African postcolonial states that remains an area ripe for further exploration (Helgesson, 2014; Poddar & Johnson, 2019; Ramone, 2017; Singh & Kim, 2016; Wang, 2011). In sum, the literature on postcolonial history research is characterized by its theoretical richness, methodological innovation, and ongoing engagement with the complexities of identity, power, and resistance in a globalized world.

RESEARCH QUESTION

RQ1.

How has the volume of scholarly publications in postcolonial history research evolved over time, and what patterns of continuity and transformation can be identified across different periods?

RQ2.

Which publications constitute the most influential works in postcolonial history research, as indicated by citation impact, and how do they reflect enduring and emerging research themes?

RQ3.

Which countries are the leading contributors to postcolonial history research in terms of publication output, and how has their contribution shaped the global development of the field?

RQ4.

What are the dominant and emerging keywords in postcolonial history research, and how do they illustrate thematic continuity and conceptual transformation within the literature?

RQ5.

What patterns of international co-authorship collaboration exist among countries in postcolonial history research, and how do these collaborations reflect shifts in global knowledge production?

METHODOLOGY

Bibliometric analysis entails the systematic collection, organization, and examination of bibliographic data derived from scholarly publications (Alves et al., 2021; Assyakur & Rosa, 2022; Verbeek et al., 2002). Beyond basic statistics, such as identifying publishing journals, publication years, and leading authors (Wu & Wu, 2017), bibliometrics includes more sophisticated techniques like document co-citation analysis. Conducting a successful literature review requires a careful, iterative process to select suitable keywords, search the literature, and perform an in-depth analysis. This approach helps to compile a comprehensive bibliography and achieve reliable results (Fahimnia et al., 2015). With this in mind, the study focused on high-impact publications, as they provide meaningful insights into the theoretical frameworks that shape the research field. To ensure data accuracy, SCOPUS served as the primary source for data collection (Al-Khoury et al., 2022; di Stefano et al., 2010; Khiste & Paithankar, 2017). Furthermore, to maintain scholarly quality, only articles published in peer-reviewed academic journals were included, while books and lecture notes were intentionally excluded (Gu et al., 2019). Using Elsevier's Scopus, known for its broad coverage, publications were collected from 2020 through December 2023 for further analysis.

DATA SEARCH STRATEGY

For this bibliometric study on Postcolonial History Research, data were retrieved from the Scopus database using an advanced search strategy designed to ensure both thematic relevance and scholarly quality. Table 1 showed the search string applied to the article title field combined key terms related to postcolonial inquiry namely “*postcolonial history*,” “*postcolonial studies*,” *colonialism decolonisation*, and *imperialism* with the keyword *British* to capture literature explicitly connected to the British colonial and postcolonial context. Restricting the search to the TITLE field enhanced the precision of retrieval by ensuring that the core focus of each publication directly aligned with postcolonial historical discourse, thereby reducing the inclusion of peripheral or tangential studies.

To further refine the dataset, additional filters were applied within Scopus. Only publications indexed under the Arts and Humanities (ARTS) and Social Sciences (SOC) subject areas were included, as these disciplines constitute the primary intellectual domains of postcolonial historical scholarship. The search was limited to English-language publications to ensure consistency in textual analysis and international accessibility. Furthermore, records dated 2026 were excluded to avoid incomplete indexing and citation instability associated with future-dated entries. Collectively, this systematic search strategy ensured a focused, high-quality corpus of publications suitable for robust bibliometric mapping and analysis of research trends, thematic evolution, and intellectual structures within postcolonial history studies on table 2.

Table 1

The Search Strings

Scopus	TITLE ((“postcolonial history” OR “postcolonial studies” OR colonialism OR decolonisation OR imperialism) AND British) AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , “ARTS”) OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , “SOC”)) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , “English”)) AND (EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 2026))
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Table 2

The Selection Criterion Is Searching

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Year	Start 1947-2025	2026 onwards
Subject Area	Arts and Humanities Social Sciences	Others
Language	English	Non-English

DATA ANALYSIS

VOSviewer is a prominent bibliometric analysis and visualization software developed by Nees Jan van Eck and Ludo Waltman at Leiden University, the Netherlands (van Eck & Waltman, 2010a, 2017). The software is extensively employed for the visualization and analysis of scientific literature, with particular strengths in constructing network-based visualizations, clustering interconnected elements, and producing density maps. Its analytical flexibility enables the examination of co-authorship, co-citation, and keyword co-occurrence networks, thereby offering researchers a comprehensive overview of research structures and thematic relationships. Supported by an interactive interface and regular updates, VOSviewer facilitates efficient and dynamic exploration of large bibliometric datasets. Furthermore, its capacity for metric computation, customizable visualization options, and compatibility with multiple bibliographic data sources enhance its value as a robust analytical tool for investigating complex research domains.

A defining feature of VOSviewer is its ability to convert complex bibliometric data into clear and interpretable visual representations. The software demonstrates particular effectiveness in identifying clusters of related items, analysing keyword co-occurrence patterns, and generating density-based visualizations that reveal thematic concentration and research intensity. Its intuitive design supports both novice and experienced users in navigating bibliometric networks with ease. Continuous software development ensures that VOSviewer remains aligned with advances in bibliometric methodologies, providing sophisticated analytical capabilities and flexible visualization functions. Its adaptability across various bibliometric structures, including co-authorship and citation networks, further establishes VOSviewer as a versatile and indispensable resource for scholarly inquiry.

For this study, bibliometric data were retrieved from the Scopus database in PlainText format, encompassing publications from 2004 to December 2024. The dataset included information on publication year, article titles, author names, journal sources, citation counts, and keywords. Data analysis was conducted using VOSviewer version 1.6.19. The software's clustering and mapping techniques were applied to generate visual representations of bibliometric relationships. As an alternative to the Multidimensional Scaling (MDS) approach, VOSviewer emphasizes the placement of items in low-dimensional spaces such that the distance between any two items accurately reflects their degree of similarity or relatedness (van Eck & Waltman, 2010b). In this respect, VOSviewer shares conceptual similarities with MDS-based visualization methods (Appio et al., 2014). Unlike traditional MDS approaches, which typically rely on similarity measures such as cosine similarity and the Jaccard index, VOSviewer employs a more appropriate normalization technique for co-occurrence data, known as association strength (AS). This measure is calculated as:

$$AS_{ij} = \frac{C_{ij}}{w_i w_j}$$

where C_{ij} denotes the observed number of co-occurrences between items i and j , and w_i and w_j represent the total occurrences of items i and j , respectively. The association strength reflects the ratio between the observed and expected co-occurrence frequencies, assuming that the occurrences of items i and j are statistically independent and j and on the other hand the expected number of co-occurrences of i and j under the assumption that co-occurrences of i and j are statistically independent (Van Eck & Waltman, 2007). This normalization method allows for a more accurate representation of relational strength within bibliometric networks

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RQ1. How has the volume of scholarly publications in postcolonial history research evolved over time and what patterns of continuity and transformation can be identified across different periods?

Figure 1

Trend of Research In Postcolonial History Research By Years

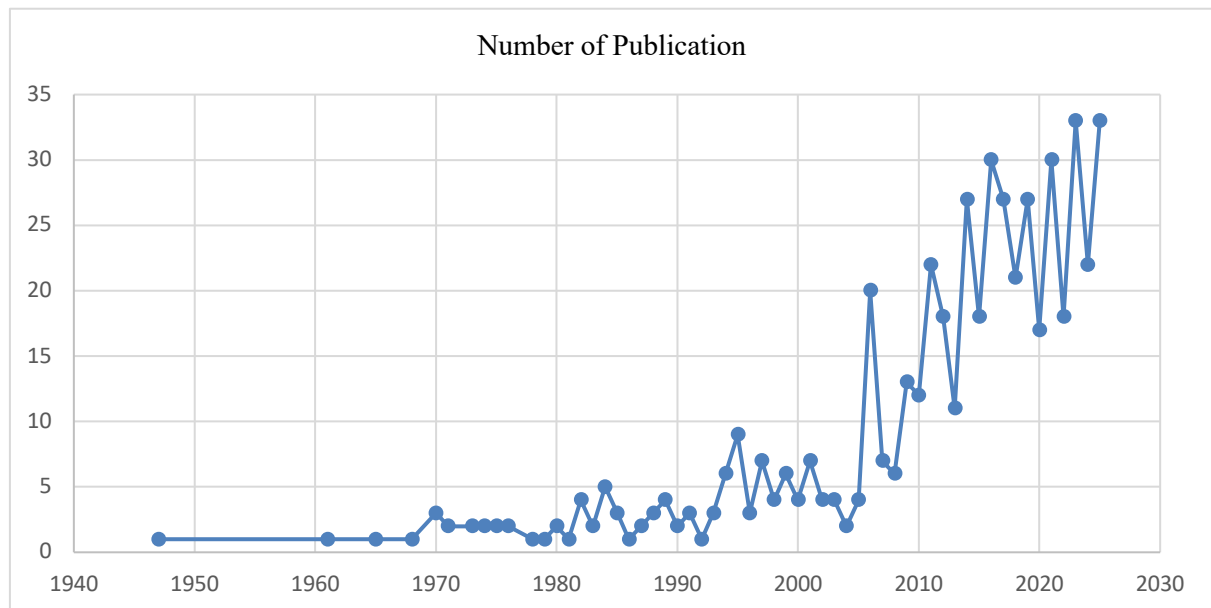


Table 3

Number of Publication in Scopus Database Postcolonial History Research

Year	Number of Publication
2025	35
2024	22
2023	33
2022	18
2021	30
2020	17
2019	27
2018	21
2017	27
2016	30
2015	18
2014	27
2013	11
2012	18
2011	22
2010	12

2009	13
2008	6
2007	7
2006	20
2005	4
2004	2
2003	4
2002	4
2001	7
2000	4
1999	6
1998	4
1997	7
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1995	9
1994	6
1993	3
1992	1
1991	3
1990	2
1989	4
1988	3
1987	2
1986	1
1985	3
1984	5
1983	2
1982	4
1981	1
1980	2
1979	1
1978	1
1976	2
1975	2
1974	2
1973	2
1971	2
1970	3
1968	1
1965	1
1961	1
1947	1

The publication trend from 1947 to 2025 demonstrates the gradual transformation of postcolonial history research from a limited and fragmented area of inquiry into an established and expanding field within historical scholarship. The temporal distribution of publications reveals three major phases characterised by different levels of scholarly engagement, theoretical development, and disciplinary consolidation.

During the period 1947–1970s, scholarly output remained relatively low and irregular. This early phase corresponds with the global process of political decolonisation following the Second World War, particularly the emergence of independent states from former British colonial territories. Research during this period was largely centred on nationalist histories, independence movements, and descriptive accounts of colonial experiences. Although these studies established important historical foundations, postcolonial history had not yet developed into a distinct analytical framework for examining colonial power structures, representation, and knowledge production.

A significant transformation occurred during the 1980s and 1990s, when publication activity began to increase alongside the consolidation of postcolonial theory within the humanities and social sciences. This period represents a shift from primarily descriptive historical narratives toward more critical interpretations of empire, colonial discourse, identity formation, and relations of power. The emergence of influential theoretical approaches encouraged historians to reassess colonial histories not only as political events but also as systems of cultural representation and social organisation.

The most substantial growth occurred during the 2000–2025 period, particularly after 2010, when postcolonial history research experienced accelerated publication growth and greater institutional recognition. The highest publication outputs were recorded in 2016 (30 publications), 2021 (30 publications), 2023 (33 publications) and 2025 (33 publications), indicating sustained scholarly attention rather than temporary interest. This expansion reflects the increasing relevance of postcolonial perspectives in contemporary historical debates, particularly concerning decolonisation, imperial legacies, global inequalities, memory politics, and the inclusion of previously marginalised historical experiences.

Despite these transformations, the bibliometric pattern also reveals important continuities across the entire period. Colonialism, imperialism, British Empire, and decolonisation remain central themes connecting different generations of scholarship. These persistent concepts demonstrate that although postcolonial history has expanded toward broader questions of identity, race, memory, and indigenous experiences, the historical examination of colonial power relations continues to provide the intellectual foundation of the field.

Overall, the longitudinal publication pattern indicates a clear trajectory from initial emergence (1947–1970s), theoretical consolidation (1980s–1990s), to institutional maturity and diversification (2000–2025). The findings suggest that postcolonial history research has undergone both continuity and transformation: continuity through its sustained engagement with colonialism and imperial legacies, and transformation through the expansion of analytical perspectives, geographical coverage, and interdisciplinary approaches.

RQ 2: Which publications constitute the most influential works in postcolonial history research, as indicated by citation impact, and how do they reflect enduring and emerging research themes?

Table 4

Most Cited Author

No.	Authors	Title	Year	Source title	Cited by
1.	(Hodge, 2007)	Triumph of the expert: Agrarian doctrines of development and the legacies of British Colonialism	2007	Ohio University Press	402
2.	(Lange et al., 2006)	Colonialism and development: A comparative analysis of Spanish and British colonies	2006	American Journal of Sociology	210
3.	(Cain & Hopkins, 1987)	Gentlemanly capitalism and British expansion overseas II: new imperialism, 1850-1945	1987	Economic History Review	207
4.	(CAREY, 2011)	God's Empire: Religion and colonialism in the British world, c. 1801-1908	2011	Cambridge University Press	173
5.	(Gardner, 2013)	Taxing Colonial Africa: The Political Economy of British Imperialism	2013	Oxford University Press	161
6.	(Hutchins, 2015)	The illusion of permanence: British imperialism in India	2015	Princeton University Press	158
7.	(Stoddart, 1988)	Sport, Cultural Imperialism, and Colonial Response in the British Empire	1988	Comparative Studies in Society and History	152
8.	(Arnold, 1986)	Cholera and colonialism in British India	1986	Past and Present	152
9.	(O'Brien, 1988)	The costs and benefits of British imperialism 1846-1914	1988	Past and Present	114
10.	(Sramek, 2006)	Face him like a Briton: Tiger hunting, imperialism, and British masculinity in colonial India, 1800-1875	2006	Victorian Studies	100

The analysis of citation impact reveals the intellectual foundations that have shaped the development of postcolonial history research over several decades. Rather than simply indicating academic popularity, citation frequency reflects the extent to which particular works have influenced research agendas, theoretical orientations, and methodological approaches within the field. The most highly cited publications demonstrate that postcolonial history has evolved through a continuous engagement with questions of imperial power, colonial governance, knowledge production, and the long-term consequences of colonial rule.

Among the most influential contributions, Hodge's *Triumph of the Expert* (2007) emerges as a significant intellectual reference point, highlighting the role of expertise, development discourse, and technocratic governance in the functioning of British colonial rule. Its prominence reflects a major historiographical transition from viewing colonialism primarily as a system of territorial domination toward understanding

empire as a complex structure sustained through scientific knowledge, administrative practices, and developmental ideologies. By examining how expertise became embedded within colonial governance, Hodge's work contributes to broader postcolonial debates concerning the relationship between knowledge and power.

Similarly, the continued influence of Cain and Hopkins (1987) and Lange et al. (2006) demonstrates the importance of structural and comparative approaches in postcolonial historiography. Cain and Hopkins' concept of "gentlemanly capitalism" remains influential because it challenged interpretations of British imperialism that emphasised ideology or political expansion alone. Instead, it located imperial development within wider economic networks involving finance, commerce and elite interests. Lange et al. further expanded this analytical framework through comparative examination of colonial institutions, reinforcing the argument that imperial systems must be understood through their administrative, economic, and social structures rather than through isolated national narratives.

However, the citation landscape also illustrates that postcolonial history has expanded beyond structural interpretations of empire. Influential works from different disciplinary traditions demonstrate the increasing importance of interdisciplinary approaches in explaining colonial experiences. Gardner's *Taxing Colonial Africa* (2013) highlights taxation as a mechanism of colonial governance and social transformation, showing how fiscal systems shaped relationships between colonial states and local communities. Arnold's (1986) study of cholera and colonial India represents the development of medical and environmental historiography, revealing how public health policies operated simultaneously as humanitarian interventions and instruments of colonial regulation. Meanwhile, works such as Carey's *God's Empire* (2011) demonstrate the significance of religion, missionary activity and cultural encounters in shaping imperial identities and colonial relationships.

These highly cited publications collectively indicate two interconnected trajectories within postcolonial history research. The first is the continuity of foundational concerns, particularly the study of colonialism, imperialism, governance, and the structures through which colonial authority was established and maintained. Despite significant theoretical developments, these themes remain central because they provide the historical foundation for understanding the formation and persistence of imperial power.

The second trajectory is the transformation and diversification of research priorities. Contemporary postcolonial scholarship increasingly extends beyond institutional and economic analyses toward questions of identity, race, memory, nationalism, indigenous experiences, and settler colonialism. This transformation reflects broader historiographical debates that seek to understand not only how colonial systems operated but also how colonial categories, narratives, and inequalities continued to influence postcolonial societies. The growing attention to these themes demonstrates a movement from studying colonialism as a historical period toward examining coloniality as an ongoing social, cultural and epistemological condition.

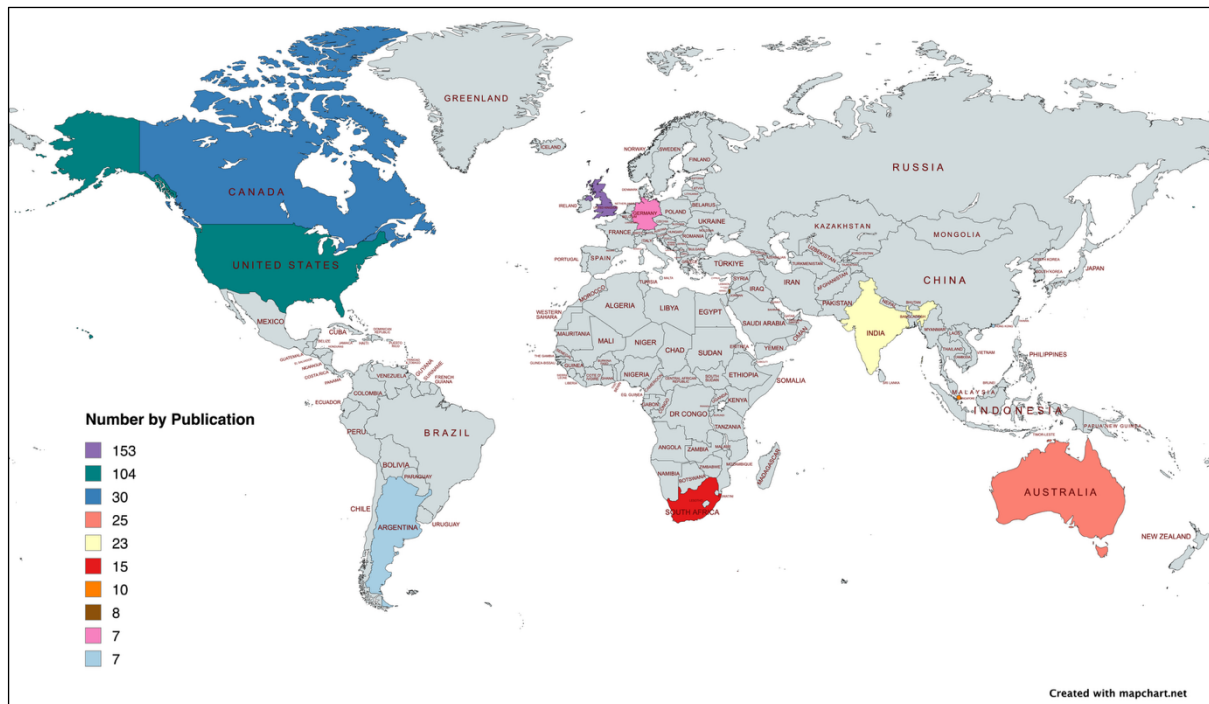
From a historiographical perspective, the citation patterns provide important evidence that postcolonial history has developed as a multidimensional field rather than a single theoretical approach. The influential works identified in this study demonstrate the progression of the discipline from political-economic interpretations of empire toward more complex analyses incorporating culture, identity, memory and knowledge production. Therefore, citation impact does not merely identify the most referenced publications. It reveals the intellectual pathways through which postcolonial history has expanded, adapted, and remained relevant within contemporary historical scholarship.

The findings contribute to postcolonial historiographical debates by demonstrating that the evolution of the field is characterised by both persistence and transformation: persistence through the continued examination of imperial structures and colonial power relations and transformation through the incorporation of new perspectives that challenge Eurocentric narratives and broaden the understanding of colonial legacies in the modern world.

RQ 3: Which countries are the leading contributors to postcolonial history research in terms of publication output, and how has their contribution shaped the global development of the field?

Map 1

Most Leading Country in-terms of Publications



The country-level distribution of publications reveals that postcolonial history research has developed within a complex geography of knowledge production, characterised by both institutional concentration and gradual diversification. The findings indicate that the United Kingdom and the United States are the leading contributors in terms of publication output, reflecting their central roles in shaping the theoretical foundations, research agendas and institutional development of postcolonial historical scholarship.

The prominence of the United Kingdom is historically significant due to its position as the former centre of the British Empire and its extensive archival, institutional, and intellectual resources related to imperial history. The strong contribution of UK-based scholarship reflects a sustained historiographical engagement with Britain's imperial past, particularly through reassessments of colonial governance, economic structures, and the production of imperial knowledge. Research traditions emerging from British institutions have contributed significantly to debates surrounding the mechanisms of empire, including how administrative systems, economic networks and expert knowledge functioned as instruments of colonial authority. In this sense, the UK's contribution represents an important transformation within imperial historiography, where the history of empire is increasingly examined through critical perspectives rather than celebratory national narratives.

The United States represents another major centre of postcolonial history research despite not being a primary actor within the British imperial system. Its influence is closely associated with the development of interdisciplinary approaches linking history with cultural studies, sociology, anthropology, and critical theory. American academic institutions have played a significant role in expanding postcolonial debates beyond conventional colonial histories toward broader questions of representation, race, identity, discourse and knowledge production. The strong position of the United States therefore reflects not only publication capacity but also its role in shaping conceptual frameworks that have influenced global interpretations of colonial and postcolonial experiences.

However, the dominance of the United Kingdom and United States also reveals a significant historiographical tension within postcolonial studies. Although the field seeks to challenge Eurocentric interpretations of history, the production and circulation of influential scholarship remain concentrated within powerful Western academic institutions. This suggests that global knowledge production continues to be shaped by unequal access to publishing networks, research resources, and international academic visibility. Consequently, postcolonial history exists within a paradox: a field developed to critique colonial power structures is still significantly influenced by established centres of knowledge production.

Beyond these dominant contributors, the increasing participation of countries such as Canada, Australia, India, and South Africa demonstrates the gradual diversification of postcolonial historical scholarship. Canada and Australia contribute significantly through research on settler colonialism, Indigenous histories, national identity, and the continuing consequences of colonial structures within contemporary societies. Their scholarship has expanded postcolonial debates by shifting attention from colonial administration toward questions of land, displacement, memory, and reconciliation.

Meanwhile, contributions from India and South Africa represent important Global South perspectives that connect historical scholarship with experiences of anti-colonial struggle, political transformation, and post-independence state formation. Research from these contexts has been central to challenging universal interpretations of colonialism by emphasising local experiences, subaltern voices, and alternative historical memories. These contributions strengthen postcolonial historiography by demonstrating that colonial legacies cannot be understood solely through imperial institutions but must also be examined through the perspectives of societies that experienced colonial rule directly.

The presence of additional contributors such as Singapore, Hong Kong, Germany, and Israel indicates the expanding geographical reach of postcolonial history research beyond traditional Anglophone centres. Although their publication output may be comparatively smaller, these contributions demonstrate the diffusion of postcolonial approaches into diverse regional contexts. Such scholarship often applies postcolonial perspectives to specific historical experiences, including urban colonial landscapes, cultural identity formation, and the negotiation of national memories.

Overall, the geographical distribution of postcolonial history research demonstrates a dual pattern of continuity and transformation. The continuity lies in the persistent influence of Western academic centres, particularly the United Kingdom and United States, in establishing theoretical frameworks and research directions. The transformation is reflected in the growing participation of postcolonial societies and regions that introduce alternative perspectives grounded in local histories and lived experiences of colonialism.

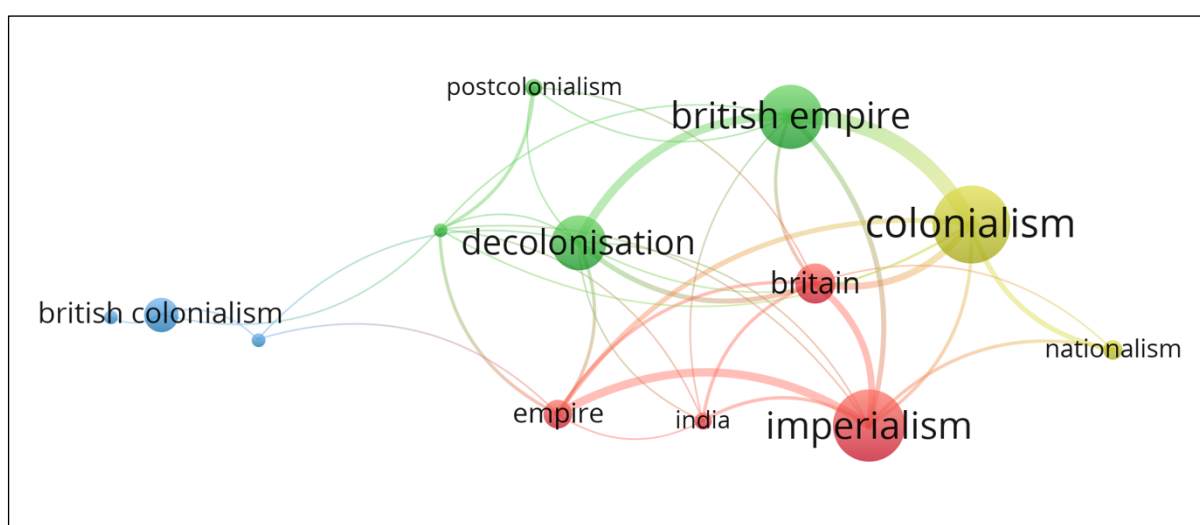
From a historiographical perspective, these findings contribute to debates on the global development of postcolonial history by showing that the field is neither exclusively Western nor fully decentralised.

Instead, it represents a contested intellectual space where established academic powers and emerging research communities continuously negotiate authority, representation, and historical interpretation. The future development of postcolonial history therefore depends on strengthening global scholarly collaboration and ensuring that knowledge production incorporates a wider range of historical experiences beyond traditional centres of academic influence.

RQ 4: What are the dominant and emerging keywords in postcolonial history research, and how do they illustrate thematic continuity and conceptual transformation within the literature?

Figure 2

Keyword Dynamics in Postcolonial History Research: Dominant Themes, Emerging Trends, and Conceptual Shifts



The keyword co-occurrence analysis reveals the conceptual structure and intellectual trajectory of postcolonial history research by identifying the dominant themes that have consistently shaped the field and the emerging concepts that signify its transformation. The findings demonstrate that postcolonial history is characterised by a dynamic interaction between continuity and change, whereby foundational concerns surrounding colonialism, imperialism, and the British Empire remain central, while contemporary scholarship increasingly expands toward issues of identity, race, memory, nationalism, and settler colonialism. This pattern indicates that although the field continues to engage with the historical structures of empire, its analytical scope has progressively shifted toward examining the broader social, cultural, and epistemological consequences of colonial rule.

The dominance of keywords such as “colonialism,” “imperialism,” and “British Empire” reflects the enduring significance of imperial structures as the primary analytical foundation of postcolonial historical inquiry. These concepts represent the continued scholarly effort to understand the formation, operation, and consequences of colonial power through political institutions, economic systems, and cultural practices. However, the persistence of these themes does not indicate a continuation of traditional imperial history alone. Instead, postcolonial historiography has transformed these concepts by critically examining how colonial authority was produced and sustained through systems of knowledge, representation, and social classification. Thus, the contemporary study of colonialism has moved beyond narratives of territorial expansion and political domination toward more complex interpretations of power relations and historical meaning-making.

Within this conceptual framework, the keyword “decolonisation” occupies a significant position as a connecting theme between historical processes and contemporary debates on colonial legacies. Earlier historical interpretations often associated decolonisation primarily with political independence and the dissolution of formal imperial rule after the Second World War. However, postcolonial scholarship has expanded this understanding by viewing decolonisation as an ongoing intellectual and social process involving the reassessment of historical narratives, knowledge systems, and structures of inequality inherited from colonialism. The prominence of this keyword therefore reflects the transformation of postcolonial history from the study of colonial withdrawal toward a broader investigation of how colonial relations continue to influence societies, institutions, and collective memories.

The emergence of keywords such as “identity,” “race,” “nationalism,” and “memory” demonstrates a significant conceptual shift within the field from structural analyses of empire toward investigations of lived experiences and cultural consequences of colonial encounters. These themes reflect the influence of interdisciplinary approaches, particularly cultural history, critical race studies, and memory studies, which have expanded postcolonial inquiry beyond institutions and state structures. Research on identity and race examines how colonial categories of difference shaped social hierarchies and continue to influence contemporary understandings of belonging and citizenship. Similarly, studies of nationalism and memory highlight how postcolonial societies negotiate their relationships with contested colonial pasts, including processes of remembrance, historical reconstruction, and the redefinition of national identities.

The increasing visibility of “settler colonialism” represents one of the most important developments in contemporary postcolonial historical research. Unlike conventional approaches that primarily focus on colonial administration, economic extraction, or political domination, settler colonial studies examine colonialism as a continuing structure characterised by territorial occupation, Indigenous displacement, and struggles over historical recognition. The emergence of this theme indicates a broader transformation in postcolonial historiography, where colonialism is increasingly understood not merely as a historical period but as an enduring system that continues to shape social, political and cultural relations in the present.

These thematic developments correspond with broader historiographical transformations influenced by postcolonial theory, subaltern studies, Indigenous scholarship, and interdisciplinary methodologies. Early postcolonial approaches challenged Eurocentric historical narratives by questioning the authority of colonial archives and highlighting the marginalisation of colonised voices. Contemporary scholarship extends these debates by incorporating perspectives related to gender, race, environment, memory, and Indigenous epistemologies, thereby broadening the field’s analytical boundaries. Consequently, the evolution of keyword patterns reflects not only changes in research interests but also deeper shifts in how historians conceptualise power, agency and historical representation.

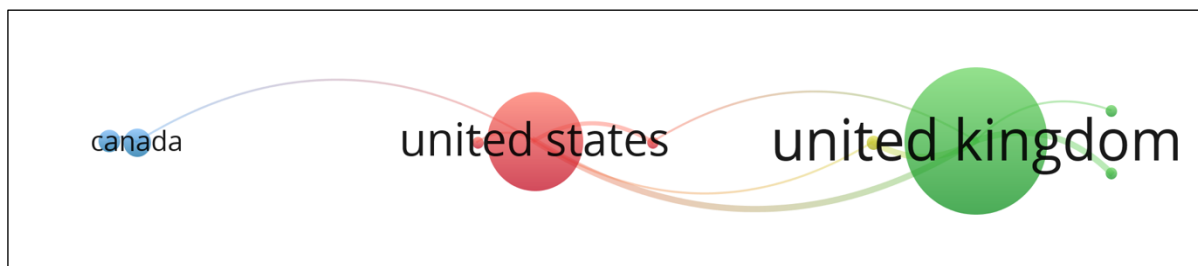
From a historiographical perspective, the findings reveal two interconnected trajectories within postcolonial history research. The first is thematic continuity, demonstrated by the persistent centrality of colonialism, imperialism, and empire as essential frameworks for understanding modern global inequalities and historical power relations. The second is conceptual transformation, reflected in the growing emphasis on identity, memory, race, and settler colonialism, which indicates a movement from analysing colonial structures toward examining the social and cultural processes through which colonial legacies are reproduced and contested. This dual trajectory demonstrates that postcolonial history has developed into a mature and adaptive field that maintains its foundational critique of imperial power while continuously expanding its engagement with new historical questions.

Therefore, the keyword analysis contributes to postcolonial historiography by empirically demonstrating how the intellectual focus of the field has evolved from a primary concern with colonial domination toward a more comprehensive examination of coloniality, historical memory, and identity formation. The coexistence of established and emerging themes illustrates that postcolonial history is not a fixed analytical framework but an evolving field that responds to changing global debates surrounding power, representation, and historical justice. These findings further suggest that future developments in postcolonial historical research will depend on greater integration of diverse regional experiences, Indigenous perspectives, and transnational approaches to produce a more inclusive and multidimensional understanding of colonial pasts and their continuing effects.

RQ5: What patterns of international co-authorship collaboration exist among countries in postcolonial history research, and how do these collaborations reflect shifts in global knowledge production?

Figure 3

An Analysis of International Co-Authorship Collaboration in Postcolonial History Research: Evidence of Evolving Global Knowledge Production



The analysis of international co-authorship patterns highlights the geographical structure and collaborative dynamics underlying global knowledge production in postcolonial history research. The findings indicate that scholarly collaboration remains concentrated within established academic centres, particularly the United Kingdom and the United States, while simultaneously demonstrating gradual participation from diverse regional and postcolonial contexts.

The United Kingdom occupies a central position within the collaboration network due to its historical significance as the former imperial centre of the British Empire and its longstanding institutional engagement with imperial and postcolonial scholarship. Research communities in the UK have contributed substantially to shaping interpretations of colonial governance, imperial structures, and the enduring consequences of British colonial rule. The United States, meanwhile, has emerged as a major intellectual hub through its influential role in advancing interdisciplinary approaches that connect postcolonial history with cultural studies, critical theory, race and identity studies.

Nevertheless, the dominance of these Anglophone centres reflects persistent asymmetries within global knowledge production. Although postcolonial scholarship seeks to challenge Eurocentric historical narratives, the production, circulation, and recognition of academic knowledge remain significantly influenced by established Western institutions, publishing systems and research networks.

At the same time, the growing participation of countries such as Canada, Australia, South Africa, and India reflects the expanding geographical scope of postcolonial historical research. Contributions from Canada and Australia have strengthened debates on settler colonialism, Indigenous histories, and colonial memory, whereas scholarship from South Africa and India has provided critical perspectives grounded in

experiences of colonialism, resistance, and decolonisation. The involvement of countries such as Singapore, Hong Kong, and Germany further demonstrates the diffusion of postcolonial approaches beyond traditional academic centres.

However, differences in collaboration intensity reveal that greater research output does not necessarily correspond to equal integration within global scholarly networks. Variations in connectivity may reflect differences in academic infrastructure, research traditions, and the extent to which local historical perspectives engage with internationally dominant frameworks. This pattern highlights the continuing negotiation between global scholarly integration and the preservation of context-specific historical interpretations.

Overall, the co-authorship network demonstrates that postcolonial history research has developed from a predominantly Anglophone-centred field into a more geographically diverse and interconnected area of historical inquiry. The findings contribute to postcolonial historiographical debates by illustrating that patterns of scholarly collaboration are not merely indicators of academic interaction but also reflect broader structures of authority, visibility and knowledge production within the global historical discipline.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the continuity and transformation of postcolonial history research through a systematic bibliometric analysis. The primary objective was to map the longitudinal development of the field, identify influential publications, determine leading contributing countries, uncover dominant and emerging thematic trends, and analyse patterns of international scholarly collaboration. By addressing these research questions, the study sought to provide a structured overview of how postcolonial history research has evolved intellectually, thematically, and geographically over time.

The bibliometric findings reveal a clear long-term expansion of postcolonial history research, with early publications appearing sporadically in the post-Second World War period, followed by sustained growth from the late twentieth century onward. A marked acceleration in publication output from the early 2000s indicates the consolidation of postcolonial history as a mature academic field. Citation analysis highlights a relatively concentrated group of highly influential works that continue to shape theoretical and methodological debates, particularly in areas related to political economy, governance, ideology, and cultural power. Country-level analysis demonstrates the dominant role of Anglophone academic centres, especially the United Kingdom and the United States, while also revealing increasing contributions from former colonial regions and Global South contexts. Keyword co-occurrence analysis further illustrates a stable conceptual core centred on colonialism, imperialism, and decolonisation, alongside the gradual emergence of themes such as identity, race, memory, and nationalism.

These findings contribute to the field by offering an empirical and systematic account of how postcolonial history research maintains foundational theoretical concerns while simultaneously adapting to new intellectual and socio-political contexts. The results provide useful insights for scholars by clarifying the field's structural patterns, thematic priorities, and collaborative networks. From a practical perspective, the study supports informed decision-making in research design, curriculum development, and interdisciplinary engagement by highlighting areas of concentration and underexplored themes. Nevertheless, certain limitations remain, including reliance on a single bibliographic database, language restrictions, and the exclusion of monographs and non-journal outputs. Future research could expand database coverage, incorporate multilingual sources, and apply longitudinal network analysis to deepen understanding of intellectual change. Overall, this bibliometric analysis demonstrates the value of

quantitative mapping in capturing the evolving dynamics of postcolonial history research and provides a foundation for further scholarly investigation into its ongoing transformation.

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The authors reported no conflicts of interest for this work and declare no potential conflict of interest concerning the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

All data supported are available in this article.

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