Governance and Risk Issues of Foreign Contractors in Developing Countries: Global Research Trend

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ABSTRACT

This study presents a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of global research trends on governance and risk issues of foreign contractors in developing countries, an area that has gained increasing scholarly attention due to the expansion of cross-border construction and infrastructure projects. Foreign contractors operating in developing economies face complex governance challenges, regulatory uncertainties, and heightened risk exposure; however, existing studies remain fragmented across disciplines and regions, limiting a holistic understanding of the field. To address this gap, this study systematically maps the intellectual structure, publication patterns, thematic evolution, and international collaboration networks related to governance and risk issues in foreign contractor research. Data were collected using the Scopus advanced search engine, applying the keyword *foreign contractor* to titles, abstracts, and keywords. After applying inclusion criteria and restricting the analysis to the period between 2010 and 2026, a total of 530 final documents were retained for analysis. Descriptive statistics and publication trend analyses were conducted using the Scopus Analyzer, while data cleaning and harmonization were performed using OpenRefine to ensure consistency in author names, affiliations, and keywords. Bibliometric mapping and visualization were carried out using VOSviewer, enabling the analysis of author keyword co-occurrence and country-level co-authorship networks. The findings reveal a steady growth in research output, with major contributions originating from the United States, Malaysia, China, and the United Kingdom. Keyword co-occurrence analysis highlights core themes related to risk management, project governance, international construction, and infrastructure development, reflecting the multidimensional nature of governance and risk challenges faced by foreign contractors. International collaboration analysis further indicates strong cross-country research networks linking developed and developing economies. Overall, this study contributes to the literature by offering a structured and quantitative overview of global research trends, identifying influential themes and collaboration patterns, and providing a foundation for future research aimed at strengthening governance frameworks and risk management practices for foreign contractors in developing country contexts.

Keywords: foreign contractors, governance, risk management, developing countries

INTRODUCTION

The involvement of foreign contractors (FCs) in developing countries has become increasingly prevalent due to the decline in construction demand in developed nations and the pursuit of new business opportunities in emerging markets [1]. This trend has been further facilitated by advancements in information and communication technologies, which enable the global procurement of architecture, engineering, and construction services across national boundaries [2]. However, the engagement of FCs in developing countries is often accompanied by complex governance and risk issues that can significantly affect project performance and outcomes [3]. These challenges encompass a wide range of political, economic, social, and cultural risks, thereby necessitating comprehensive and effective risk management strategies to ensure successful project delivery [4]. Although terms such as *international contractors* or *overseas contractors* are commonly used in industry discourse, this study adopts the specific term *foreign contractor* to ensure bibliometric

precision within Scopus metadata while accurately capturing the primary stakeholders involved in cross-border infrastructure development. Accordingly, this paper aims to explore the governance and risk issues faced by foreign contractors in developing countries and to propose potential solutions to mitigate these challenges.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The landscape of foreign contractor (FC) operations in developing countries is shaped by a complex interplay of political, social, and economic risks that significantly influence project governance and performance [1] [2] [3] [4] [6]. However, a critical synthesis of existing literature alongside this study's bibliometric findings reveals that while individual risks are extensively documented, the body of research remains fragmented into thematic silos, with limited emphasis on integrated governance-based solutions [9] [10].

Traditional literature consistently identifies political risk, which includes legislative changes, regulatory uncertainty, corruption, and bureaucratic governance systems in countries such as Vietnam and Nigeria, as one of the most significant challenges faced by FCs [2] [4] [8]. Importantly, the keyword co-occurrence analysis conducted in this study confirms that risk management and risk identification persist as dominant, high-frequency nodes within the research field. This alignment indicates that despite prolonged scholarly attention, academic discourse remains heavily focused on identifying external threats rather than advancing toward comprehensive and mature governance frameworks [2] [9]. The prominence of countries such as China, Nigeria, and Malaysia as empirical focal points further reinforces the literature's concentration on regions characterized by institutional instability and complex administrative environments [1] [3] [8].

In parallel, the literature highlights substantial social risks arising from cultural differences, local protectionism, and misaligned stakeholder expectations, which frequently result in communication breakdowns, disputes, and compromised quality standards [1] [3] [5]. While these challenges are widely acknowledged, the international co-authorship analysis reveals a thematic imbalance in which high-impact research collaborations are concentrated within a limited number of intellectual hubs, including the United States, Malaysia, and the United Kingdom [7][9]. This pattern suggests that although social risks are deeply contextual and localized, the theoretical models used to manage them are predominantly developed within advanced economies. Such a top-down knowledge flow may partly explain persistent difficulties among FCs in securing a social license to operate in developing-country contexts [3] [5].

Economic risks, particularly foreign exchange volatility, are also frequently cited as major threats to the financial sustainability of FC-led projects [6]. However, bibliometric evidence indicates that these risks are often treated as isolated project management concerns rather than as integral components of governance strategy. Although prior studies link foreign exchange risk to project performance and risk response mechanisms, there remains a noticeable analytical gap connecting economic resilience with long-term stakeholder engagement and institutional trust [6] [9].

In summary, both the literature review and bibliometric mapping point to a critical governance deficiency within the field. While political, social, and economic risks are examined in considerable detail, existing studies rarely integrate these dimensions into a unified governance framework [9] [10].The high citation frequency of region-specific failure studies, particularly those focusing on Nigeria and Ghana, reflects a growing demand for actionable, system-level insights that extend beyond descriptive risk inventories [4] [8]. This underscores an urgent need for future research to move beyond fragmented risk classifications toward the development of holistic governance models capable of addressing the multidimensional uncertainties inherent in developing-country construction environments.
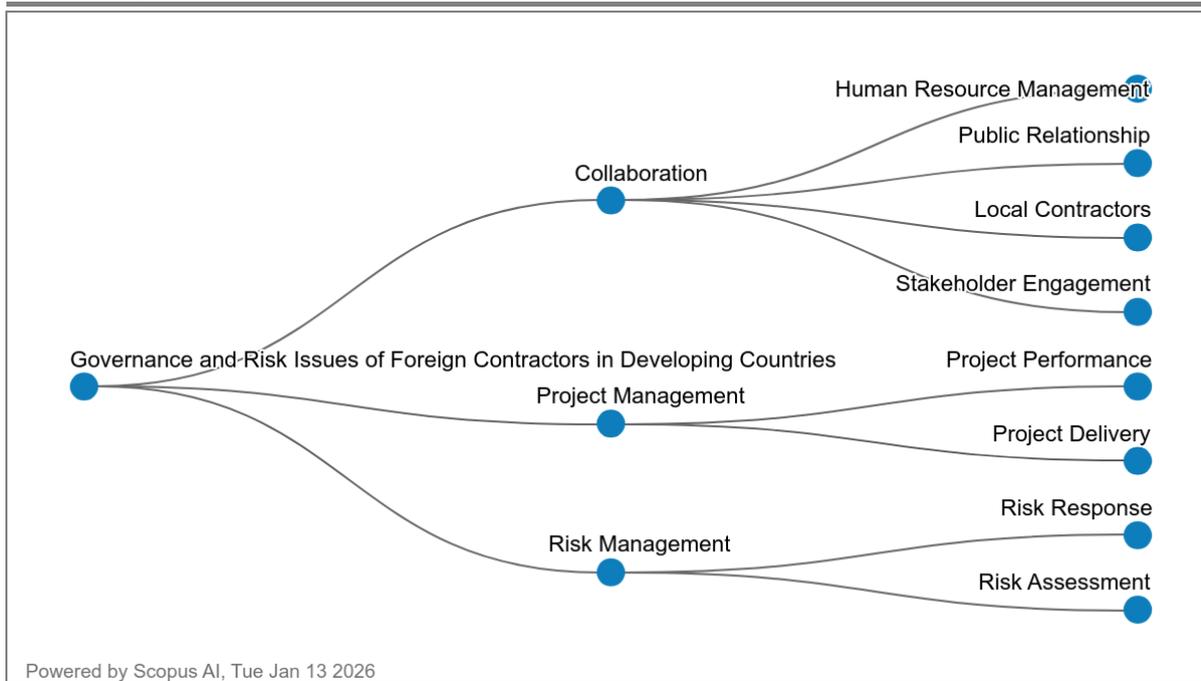
Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Governance and Risk Issues of Foreign Contractors in Developing Countries

Figure 1 presents the conceptual paper on Governance and Risk Issues of Foreign Contractors in Developing Countries, highlighting the interrelated roles of collaboration, project management, and risk management in shaping project outcomes. The framework illustrates how effective collaboration, including human resource management, public relationships, engagement with local contractors, and stakeholder engagement, supports stronger governance practices and reduces operational challenges. At the same time, project management functions such as project delivery and project performance serve as important mechanisms that translate governance structures into practical outcomes. Risk management further strengthens this process by emphasizing systematic risk assessment together with appropriate risk response strategies, which are essential for managing uncertainties commonly faced by foreign contractors in developing country contexts. Overall, the framework demonstrates that governance challenges and risk exposure are closely connected to managerial practices and collaborative capacity. This conceptual paper contributes to the existing literature by offering an integrated perspective that links governance, collaboration, and risk management, while also providing a solid foundation for future empirical studies and practical policy initiatives aimed at improving the sustainability and effectiveness of foreign contractor operations in developing countries.

Research Questions

The research question, together with the purpose, expected outcomes, and target audience, guides how data are found, collected, and presented. In this paper, the aim is to answer several key questions:

RQ1: What are the annual trends in scholarly publications addressing governance and risk issues of foreign contractors in developing countries?

RQ2: What are the top 10 most cited articles on governance and risk issues of foreign contractors in developing countries?

RQ3: What are the top 10 most productive countries contributing to research on governance and risk issues of foreign contractors in developing countries?

RQ4: What are the most frequently used keywords in research on governance and risk issues of

foreign contractors in developing countries?

RQ5: What are the patterns of international co-authorship collaboration among countries in research on governance and risk issues of foreign contractors in developing countries?

METHODOLOGY

Bibliometric analysis refers to the systematic collection, structuring, and examination of bibliographic information derived from scientific publications [11], [12], [13]. Rather than being limited to basic descriptive indicators such as publication outlets, temporal distribution, or prolific authors [14], bibliometrics incorporates advanced analytical techniques, including document co-citation analysis, to uncover intellectual linkages and knowledge structures within a research field. A rigorous literature review therefore requires an iterative and methodical process involving careful keyword selection, comprehensive database searching, and the critical evaluation of retrieved records.

This structured approach enables the development of a robust and representative bibliographic dataset while enhancing the reliability and validity of the findings [15]. In line with this rationale, the present study prioritized high impact publications, as such works offer deeper insight into the theoretical foundations and conceptual evolution of the research domain. To ensure data consistency and accuracy, Scopus was employed as the primary data source due to its extensive indexing of peer-reviewed scholarly literature [16], [17], [18]. Furthermore, to maintain academic quality, the analysis was restricted to articles published in refereed journals, while books and lecture notes were intentionally excluded [19]. By leveraging Elsevier's Scopus database, which is widely recognized for its comprehensive coverage, relevant publications published between 2010 and January 2026 were retrieved and subjected to subsequent bibliometric analysis. This specific timeframe and source selection ensure that the data reflects the most current and academically rigorous contributions to the field of foreign contractor governance.

Data Search Strategy

The literature retrieval strategy was systematically designed to ensure high-quality data collection using the Scopus advanced search engine. The search was guided by a specific string: TITLE-ABS-KEY ("foreign contractor") AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBSTAGE, "final")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, "English")), as detailed in Table 1. This configuration was applied to titles, abstracts, and keywords to capture publications explicitly focused on the foreign contractor (FC) entity. While terms such as "international contractors" or "overseas contractors" appear in broader literature, the focus on "foreign contractor" was maintained to ensure bibliometric precision and to capture the specific regulatory and governance challenges unique to this legal designation in developing markets.

To enhance the reliability of the dataset, results were restricted to final-stage publications, thereby excluding in-press articles that might be subject to further editorial changes. The language filter was limited to English to maintain consistency in interpretation and alignment with international scholarly standards. Following the initial retrieval, a structured selection criterion was applied (see Table 2) to refine the data. The inclusion criteria spanned the period from 2010 to 2026, capturing contemporary trends in global infrastructure development. The document types included journal articles, conference papers, and book chapters, providing a broad representation of the field's intellectual fabric.

Following the screening process, a final dataset of 530 documents was identified. To ensure analytical reliability, the data was cleaned and harmonized using OpenRefine. This essential preparation step resolved common bibliometric inconsistencies, such as variations in author names, institutional affiliations, and keyword formatting. By standardizing these elements, the cleaning process provided a well-structured foundation for the subsequent network analyses. Overall, this rigorous strategy ensures that the dataset reflects both the breadth and depth of scholarly research on foreign contractors, strengthening the study's methodological rigor.

Table 1

Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY (foreign contractor) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBSTAGE , "final")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English"))

The search string.

Table 2 The selection criterion is searching

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Language	English	Non-English
Time line	2010 – 2026	< 2026
Literature type	Journal (Article) Conference paper Book chapter Review Book Short survey Note Conference review	None
Publication Stage	Final In Press	None

Data Analysis

VOSviewer is a specialized bibliometric mapping and visualization software developed by Nees Jan van Eck and Ludo Waltman at Leiden University [20], [21]. The software is widely utilized for its capacity to transform complex bibliographic data into interpretable visual maps, such as network and density visualizations. These maps enable researchers to systematically examine co-authorship, co-citation, and keyword co-occurrence, thereby revealing the underlying intellectual and collaborative structures of a research domain. Its flexibility in handling various data formats and large-scale datasets makes it a leading tool for identifying research clusters and thematic concentrations.

In this study, bibliographic datasets which including publication years, document titles, author names, citation counts, and keywords, were retrieved from Scopus in PlainText format for the period from 2010 to January 2026. The data were analyzed using VOSviewer version 1.6.19. The software employs VOS mapping and clustering techniques to position items in a low-dimensional space, where the distance between any two items represents their degree of relatedness. Unlike traditional Multidimensional Scaling (MDS) which may rely on Jaccard indices [22], VOSviewer utilizes "association strength" (AS) for normalization. This method is defined by the following equation [23]:

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

In this formula, the association strength ASij represents the ratio between the observed co-occurrences of items i and j and the expected co-occurrences under the assumption of statistical independence [23]. This normalization approach provides a more accurate representation of relationships within bibliometric networks compared to standard similarity measures. By using this method, the study ensures that the generated visualizations, whether showing the rise of specific risk management themes or the collaboration between nations, are grounded in a mathematically rigorous framework that is accessible to both specialists and general readers.

Findings

RQ1: What are the annual trends in scholarly publications addressing governance and risk issues of foreign contractors in developing countries?
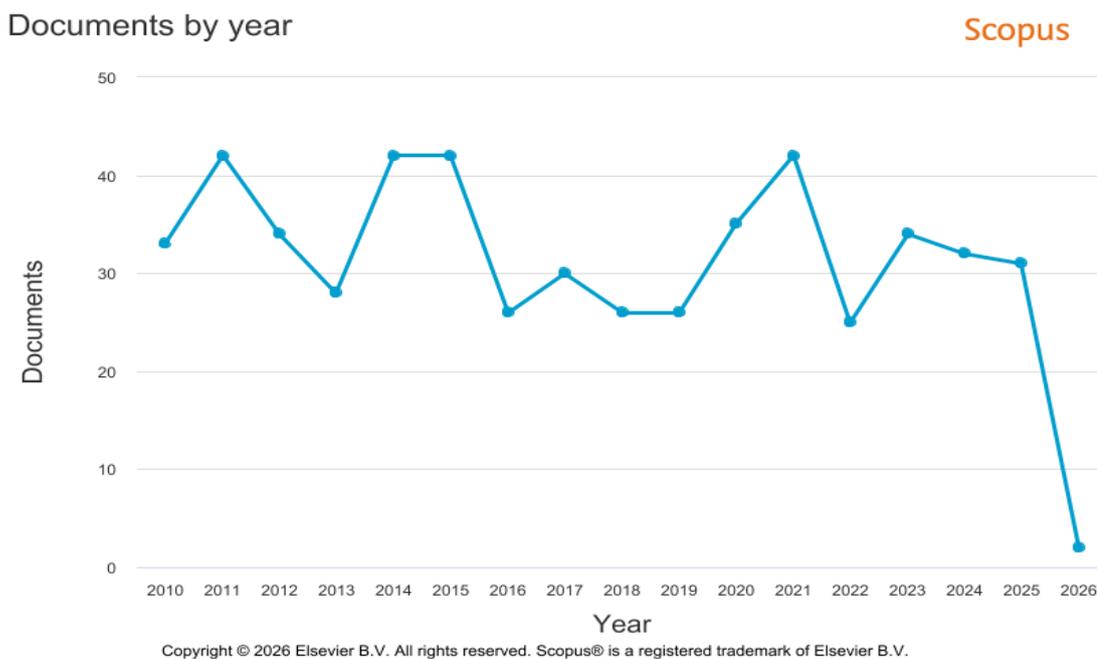
Figure 2: Publication Trends on Governance and Risk Issues of Foreign Contractors (2010–2026)

The publication trend concerning the governance and risk issues of foreign contractors in developing countries between 2010 and 2026 demonstrates a fluctuating yet generally sustained research interest. As illustrated in Figure 2, the period from 2010 to 2012 maintained a relatively high output, peaking at 42 documents in 2011 and again during 2014 to 2015. These early peaks reflect a primary scholarly focus on establishing governance structures and identifying contractual risks during the rapid infrastructure expansion seen in many developing economies at the time.

A noticeable decline in research output occurred in 2013 and between 2016 and 2019, where annual publications ranged from 26 to 30 documents. These fluctuations are likely the result of shifts in global research priorities and economic slowdowns, alongside a period of consolidation where earlier risk management frameworks were being implemented rather than being subject to new conceptual development. Despite this temporary reduction in pace, the consistent baseline indicates that governance remained a foundational theme within construction management discourse.

A significant resurgence in publication output is evident from 2020 to 2021, culminating in a peak of 42 publications in 2021. This surge is critically linked to the global uncertainties introduced by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic acted as an external shock that exposed systemic weaknesses in risk allocation mechanisms and cross-border operations. Consequently, the academic focus shifted from traditional risk management to more complex themes of resilience, crisis governance, and supply chain stability within volatile markets.

While a decline is observed after 2021, publication levels remained moderate from 2022 to 2025. This phase represents a transition toward post-pandemic governance reforms and long-term risk accountability. The sharp decrease recorded for 2026 is a standard bibliometric artifact resulting from incomplete database indexing for the current calendar year. Ultimately, the trajectory in Figure 2 demonstrates that research in this field is highly responsive to external shocks and global economic shifts, reinforcing the necessity of adaptive governance models for foreign contractors [2] [3].

RQ2: What are the top 10 most cited articles on governance and risk issues of foreign contractors in developing countries?

Authors	Title	Year	Cited by
[24]	Enacting the corporation: An American mining firm in post-authoritarian Indonesia	2014	265
[25]	Identification of risk paths in international construction projects using structural equation modeling	2011	196
[26]	Contractors perception of the factors affecting building information modelling (BIM) adoption in the Nigerian construction industry	2014	141
[27]	Unwarranted influence: Dwight D. Eisenhower and the military-industrial complex	2011	109
[28]	Who needs to know what? Institutional knowledge and global projects	2010	105
[29]	Saudi Arabian educational history: Impacts on English language teaching	2010	90
[30]	Barriers to public private partnership projects in developing countries a case of Nigeria	2015	87
[31]	An analysis of China's investment in the hydropower sector in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region	2013	85
[32]	Risk identification and allocation in underground rail construction joint ventures: contractors' perspective	2016	81
[33]	An evaluation of risk factors impacting construction projects in Ghana	2012	80

Table 3: Most Cited Articles on Governance and Risk Issues of Foreign Contractors in Developing Countries

The analysis of academic impact presented in Table 3 reveals a robust multidisciplinary focus on the complexities of operating within emerging and transitioning economies. The most cited work, [24], which examines the operations of an American mining firm in Indonesia with 265 citations, underscores a profound scholarly interest in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and the "enactment" of corporate identity within volatile political landscapes. This is followed closely by the work of [25], which employs Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to identify risk paths in international construction (196 citations). The high impact of this study reflects a growing academic demand for sophisticated quantitative methodologies that can provide predictive power in project management.

Other prominent themes identified in Table 3 include the intersection of digital transformation and regional challenges, such as Building Information Modelling (BIM) adoption in Nigeria [26], alongside institutional barriers in regions like Ghana [33] and the Mekong Sub-Region [31]. Collectively, these highly cited works indicate that the academic community prioritizes research that successfully bridges high-level institutional theory with practical, site-specific risk mitigation strategies.

The significant impact of the results in Table 3 is justified by the "Knowledge Gap" inherent in globalized infrastructure and the traditionally high failure rates of projects in developing nations. Foundational references such as [24] and [28] are critical because they move beyond the "Homo economicus" model of corporations. Instead, they provide a more nuanced understanding of how global projects must navigate the intricate realities of local politics and institutional knowledge.

Furthermore, the high citation frequency of Nigerian [30], [26] and Ghanaian [33] studies is a direct consequence of rapid urbanization in West Africa. In these contexts, practitioners require robust frameworks to manage Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) and technical barriers like BIM. These papers serve as essential resources because they offer actionable insights for mitigating the 70% delay rates frequently observed in these regions. Consequently, these works are indispensable for both international contractors and policy-makers who are seeking to ensure long-term project sustainability and governance reform.

RQ3: What are the top 10 most productive countries contributing to research on governance and risk issues of foreign contractors in developing countries?
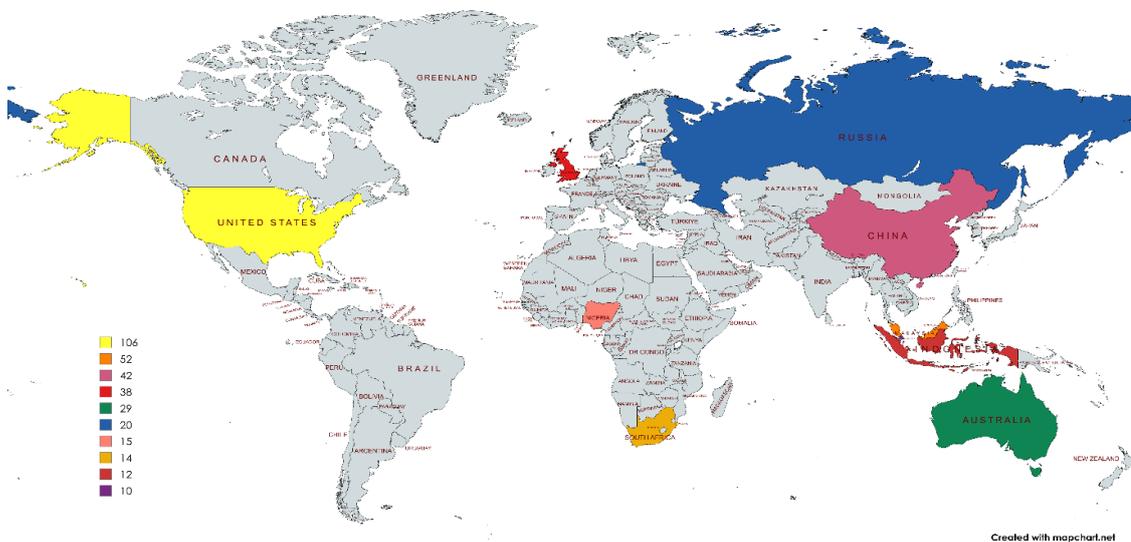

Figure 3: Geographic Distribution of Scholarly Output on Governance and Risk Issues of Foreign Contractors

The country-level distribution of publications, as illustrated in **Figure 3**, reveals a clear concentration of research output in a small number of countries, with the United States emerging as the leading contributor with 106 publications. This dominance reflects the country's strong research infrastructure, extensive funding mechanisms, and long-standing academic engagement with international project management, governance, and risk studies. Malaysia and China follow with 52 and 42 publications respectively, indicating growing scholarly attention within developing and emerging economies that are directly affected by foreign contractor activities. Contributions from the United Kingdom and Australia further highlight the role of established research systems in producing internationally oriented studies, particularly in construction management, governance, and infrastructure development.

The distribution shown in Figure 3 can be explained by differences in research capacity, policy relevance, and economic involvement in global construction and infrastructure markets. Countries such as Malaysia, China, and Nigeria have experienced rapid development and increased participation of foreign contractors, which has stimulated local academic interest in governance challenges and risk management practices. In contrast, developed economies including the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia often function as intellectual hubs, generating theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches that are applied across different contexts. The presence of South Africa, Indonesia, Turkey, and Singapore reflects regional research efforts driven by the need to address institutional complexity, regulatory uncertainty, and cross-border collaboration. Overall, the country distribution highlights how academic productivity is influenced by both national research capacity and the practical relevance of governance and risk issues within national development agendas.

RQ4: What are the most frequently used keywords in research on governance and risk issues of foreign contractors in developing countries?
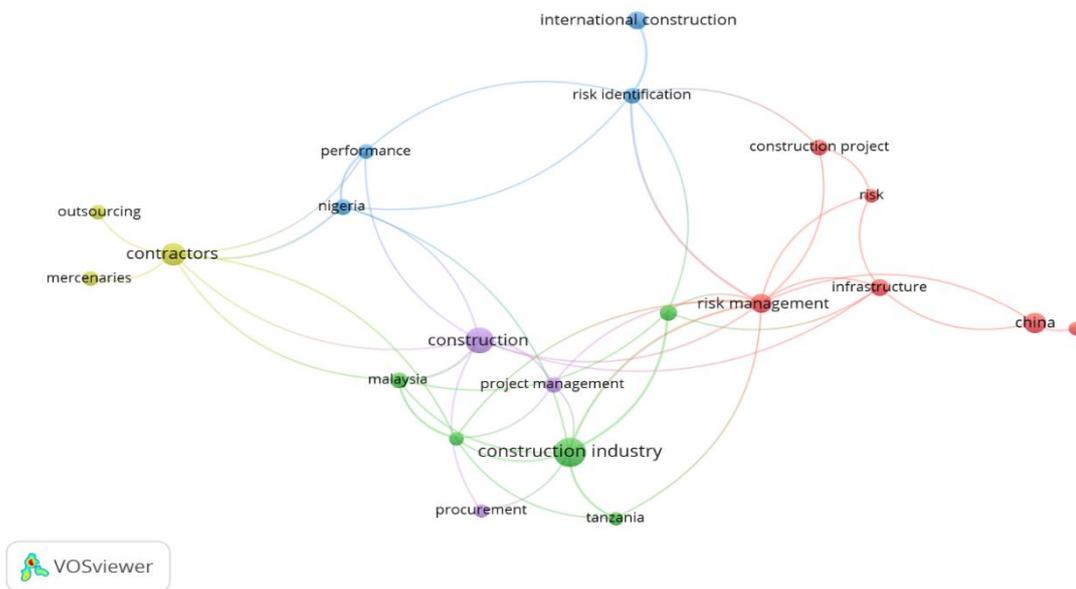

Figure 4: Network Visualization of Author Keyword Co-occurrence on Governance and Risk Issues of Foreign Contractors

The co-occurrence analysis of author keywords, illustrated in Figure 4, utilizes a bibliometric technique to map the conceptual framework of the research field by examining the frequency with which specific terms appear together. This method operates on the principle that keywords appearing in the same publication represent closely related themes, reflecting the dominant or emerging priorities within the literature. The network visualization in Figure 4 was generated using the full counting method, where each keyword occurrence carries equal weight. From a total of 1,349 keywords, a minimum occurrence threshold of five was applied, resulting in 21 keywords that form the core of the analysis. To ensure meaningful thematic depth, a minimum cluster size of five was established, yielding five distinct clusters that represent the primary research pillars in this domain.

The resulting network provides critical insights into the intellectual landscape of governance and risk research. The prominence of nodes such as risk management, risk identification, project management, and international construction indicates that scholarly interest is heavily concentrated on managing uncertainty and governance mechanisms in cross-border environments. Furthermore, the presence of country-specific keywords, including China, Nigeria, Malaysia, and Tanzania, underscores an empirical focus on developing economies where foreign contractor (FC) involvement is most significant. These nodes act as geographical anchors, linking generalized risk management theories to specific regulatory and socio-political contexts.

Critically, the integration of these clusters reveals that research has moved beyond simple risk identification toward a more complex understanding of how governance and contextual factors intersect. For example, the linkage between "China" and "international construction" reflects the global influence of the Belt and Road Initiative, while the connection to "Nigeria" and "Tanzania" highlights the focus on institutional barriers in Sub-Saharan Africa. By demonstrating how these concepts are interconnected, the analysis highlights a shift from purely technical project management toward a more holistic view of "institutional risk." This synthesis provides a foundation for addressing current research gaps, particularly the need for more integrated governance frameworks that can adapt to the unique volatility of the developing world [2] [4].

RQ5: What are the patterns of international co-authorship collaboration among countries in research on governance and risk issues of foreign contractors in developing countries?
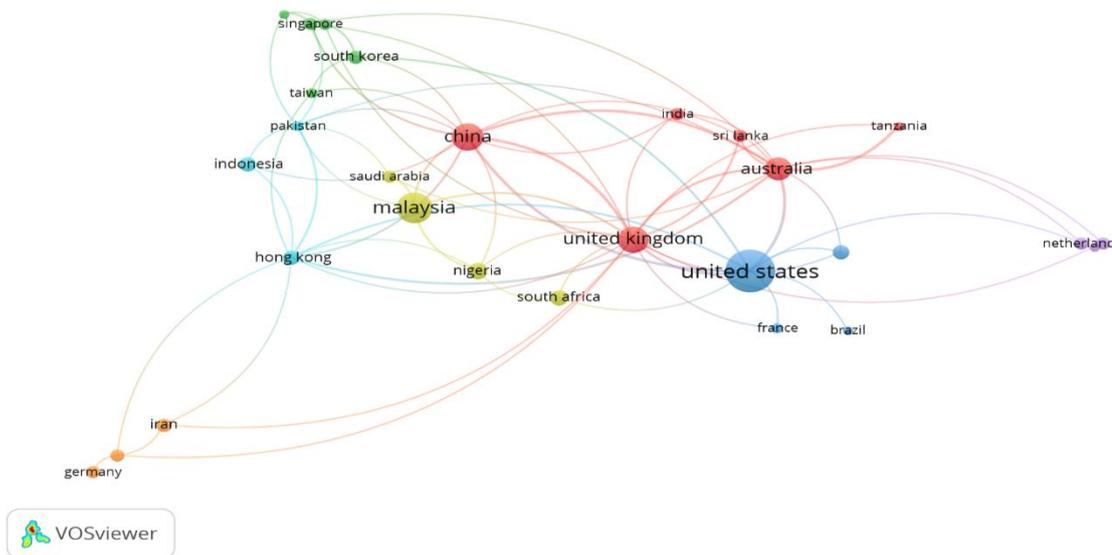

Figure 5: Country Collaboration Network in Governance and Risk Research

The analysis of international co-authorship by country, illustrated in Figure 5, utilizes a bibliometric approach to examine research collaboration patterns by identifying how frequently authors from different nations co-author a single document. This method assumes that higher co-authorship frequencies reflect stronger collaborative relationships and reveal the intensity of global research networks. For this study, the network visualization in Figure 5 was generated using the full counting method, granting equal credit to each participating country. Out of 83 countries identified, a minimum publication threshold of five was applied, resulting in 30 countries meeting the criteria. To ensure the results represent major international research groups, a minimum cluster size of five was established, forming seven distinct clusters.

The collaboration network identifies several nations as central hubs in the global discourse on governance and risk. Countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, China, Australia, and Malaysia demonstrate high connectivity, underscoring their influential roles in facilitating knowledge exchange and international collaboration. The presence of seven clusters suggests that research partnerships are structured around both regional proximity and shared thematic interests. This structure often bridges developed countries with emerging economies, where foreign contractor involvement is most prevalent.

Critically, these patterns reveal a "North-South" knowledge transfer that is essential for the evolution of the field. While developed nations like the United Kingdom and United States often provide the foundational theoretical frameworks for project governance, nations like Malaysia and Nigeria contribute the critical empirical data necessary to test these theories in volatile environments. This synthesis suggests that international research networks are not just academic exercises but are vital mechanisms for disseminating the practical risk mitigation strategies needed to manage transnational infrastructure challenges. By linking these diverse research hubs, the field moves toward a more holistic, globalized understanding of governance that transcends national borders.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Despite the significant contributions of this study in mapping the intellectual fabric of the field, several limitations must be acknowledged to contextualize the findings. The research relies exclusively on the Scopus

database and a keyword strategy centered on "foreign contractor." While this approach ensured high data quality and bibliometric precision, it may have excluded relevant publications indexed in alternative repositories or those utilizing related terminology such as "international contractors" or "overseas firms." Furthermore, the analysis is primarily quantitative; while it reveals the structural patterns of the literature, it does not capture the specific qualitative nuances of individual project outcomes.

To advance this scholarship and bridge the identified gaps, future empirical studies should prioritize the following three distinct directions:

First, there is a critical need for Comparative Governance Analysis. Future research should move beyond single-region case studies to compare the effectiveness of governance structures between different geopolitical actors, such as Asian-led versus Western-led infrastructure projects in Sub-Saharan Africa. Such studies would reveal how different institutional backgrounds influence risk mitigation and project success in identical host environments.

Second, scholarly attention should shift toward Technological Integration in Governance. As developing nations struggle with transparency and regulatory hurdles, empirical research is needed to explore how decentralized technologies, specifically Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Blockchain, can function as governance tools. Investigating these technologies could provide actionable solutions for managing corruption and streamlining permit risks, which remain persistent barriers for foreign contractors.

Finally, the field would benefit from Longitudinal Risk Evolution studies. Current literature often provides a static snapshot of risk at the time of contract signing. Future empirical research should employ longitudinal methods to track how political and economic risk perceptions evolve into actual project outcomes over the 20 to 30-year lifecycle of major infrastructure projects.

CONCLUSION

This study utilized a systematic bibliometric analysis to examine the global research landscape concerning the governance and risk issues of foreign contractors in developing countries. By mapping publication patterns and thematic evolution, the research addresses the fragmentation in current literature and provides a structured overview of how the field has conceptualized risk and governance over the last 15 years. The findings highlight a significant resurgence in research activity post-2020, driven by global uncertainties and a critical need for project resilience in volatile markets.

Theoretically, this research shifts the discourse from seeing foreign contractors as simple economic entities to understanding them as complex institutional actors. The analysis of academic impact reveals that foundational works in this field [24] [28] are those that move beyond the "Homo economicus" model, providing a more nuanced understanding of how global projects must "enact" their roles within local political and social landscapes. By identifying the intellectual hubs of this research, this study provides a framework for future scholars to integrate institutional theory with project management practices.

From a policy perspective, the concentration of research in regions like West Africa underscores a desperate need for standardized Public-Private Partnership (PPP) frameworks. These findings provide actionable insights for policymakers and international bodies to develop governance mechanisms specifically aimed at mitigating the 70% project delay rates frequently observed in developing economies [30] [33]. Furthermore, the study highlights that adopting digital tools like Building Information Modelling (BIM) should be viewed not just as a technical upgrade, but as a core governance strategy to enhance transparency and risk accountability.

Despite its contributions, this study is subject to limitations, specifically its reliance on the Scopus database and a keyword strategy centered on "foreign contractor." These choices may exclude relevant publications using alternative terminology such as "international contractors" or those indexed in different repositories. To advance this scholarship, future empirical studies should focus on three distinct directions. First, there is a need for comparative governance analysis between Asian-led and Western-led projects in Sub-Saharan Africa to determine which structures best mitigate institutional risk. Second, research should explore the integration of

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Blockchain as decentralized governance tools to manage corruption. Finally, empirical research should move toward longitudinal case studies that track how political risk perceptions evolve into actual project outcomes over the 20 to 30-year lifecycle of infrastructure projects.

Overall, this study demonstrates the utility of bibliometric analysis in capturing the evolution of the field and provides a robust foundation for advancing scholarship on the sustainability of foreign contractor operations. It serves as a roadmap for both researchers and practitioners seeking to ensure project success in the increasingly complex environment of the developing world.

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