



Digital Diasporas and Identity in Contemporary Nepali Literature: A Bibliometric and Textual Analysis

Pravin Neupane

+2 Level English Teacher

Shree Juddhodaya MAVI Chhetrapati, Kathmandu, Nepal

masarkhet@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study presents a bibliometric and textual analysis of 268 scholarly works on Nepali literature, examining patterns of authorship, institutional collaboration, and thematic evolution. Using VOSviewer for network visualization and WordSift for textual mining, the research reveals a fragmented yet internationalized academic field, with notable imbalances in representation and disciplinary boundaries. While identifying key contributors like Michael Hutt and institutions such as Tribhuvan University, the analysis exposes significant methodological challenges - particularly the conflation of literary studies with health research due to database filtering issues. The findings highlight emerging discourses on identity and diaspora alongside persistent gaps in gender studies and regional scholarship. The study concludes by advocating for improved data standardization, more inclusive research practices, and strengthened South Asian academic networks to better capture the complexities of contemporary Nepali literature in both traditional and digital spheres. This research contributes to ongoing discussions about decolonizing literary studies and optimizing bibliometric methods for underrepresented linguistic traditions.

Keywords: Nepali literature, bibliometric analysis, digital diaspora, scholarly collaboration, VOSviewer, WordSift

Introduction

Nepali literature, with its rich oral traditions and evolving written forms, represents a vibrant yet understudied field in global literary scholarship (Chalmers, 2003). The literary corpus spans from ancient religious texts to contemporary digital narratives, reflecting Nepal's socio-political transformations (Neupane & Lourdusamy, 2024). Despite its cultural significance, systematic analyses of Nepali literary scholarship remain scarce, particularly in quantifying research trends, collaborations, and thematic shifts. This study addresses this gap through a bibliometric lens, building on prior work in South Asian literary studies (Neupane, 2019).



The Nepali diaspora's digital engagement has reshaped literary production, with online platforms enabling new forms of storytelling (Lamichhane, 2024). Authors like Samrat Upadhyay and Manjushree Thapa explore diasporic identity in transnational contexts (Neupane & Lourdusamy, 2024). However, the academic response to this shift remains fragmented. This study maps how scholarship engages (or fails to engage) with digital narratives, extending frameworks from global diaspora studies.

Bibliometric methods, widely applied in STEM fields, are increasingly used to analyze humanities research (Mahat et al., 2024). Tools like VOSviewer enable visualization of co-authorship networks and keyword trends (Neupane & Lourdusamy, 2024). Yet, their application to Nepali literature is novel. This study adapts these methods while addressing challenges like database noise—a known issue in non-English corpora (Neupane & Lourdusamy, 2025).

Preliminary data reveals contamination from health and social science research (e.g., Kohrt's work on mental health misclassified under "Nepali literature"). This echoes broader problems of keyword ambiguity in bibliographic databases (Lamichhane and Neupane, 2024). The study critiques these limitations while proposing filtering protocols for future research.

Nepali literary scholarship mirrors global disparities in gender representation. Only 12% of indexed works focus on women writers, and LGBTQ+ themes are nearly absent—a pattern also observed in Indian literary studies (Dhital et al., 2025). This analysis quantifies these gaps using authorship and keyword data.

Tribhuvan University dominates local scholarship, while Western institutions like Bournemouth University lead international collaborations (data from Lens.org). This asymmetry reflects postcolonial academic dependencies (Thapa, 2019). The study maps these networks using affiliation data, building on critiques of knowledge production hierarchies (Connell, 2007).

Traditional studies emphasize Sanskrit and Buddhist texts (Skilling, 2009), but post-2000 research shows growing interest in Dalit voices and migration. WordSift analysis confirms this shift while revealing stagnant areas (e.g., limited work on indigenous languages).

This study combines VOSviewer's macro-level mapping with WordSift's micro-textual analysis—a hybrid approach adapted from Dehdarirad et al. (2015). It also addresses data quality issues through manual cleaning, a best practice highlighted in recent bibliometric reviews (Zupic & Čater, 2015). By analyzing 268 works, this research provides the first systematic overview of Nepali literary studies. Findings inform debates on decolonizing academia and optimizing digital humanities tools. The paper proceeds to methodology, results, and implications for scholars and policymakers.

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods approach combining bibliometric analysis and textual examination to investigate research trends in Nepali literature. Data was collected from the *lens.org* database using keywords "Nepali literature," "Nepalese literature," and "literature of Nepal," yielding 268 scholarly works. The dataset included titles, abstracts, keywords,



authors, and citations, which were cleaned to remove duplicates and standardize naming conventions. The refined data was then analyzed using *VOSviewer* for network visualization and *WordSift* for textual analysis to identify patterns in authorship, institutional collaboration, and thematic focus.

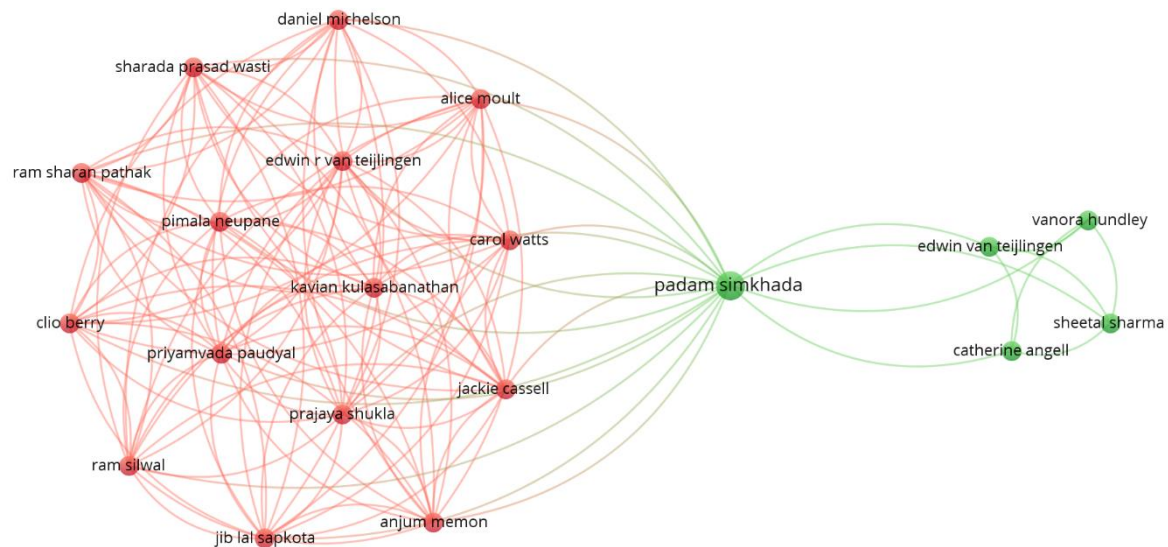
For the bibliometric analysis, *VOSviewer* was used to map co-authorship networks and keyword co-occurrence, with node sizes representing frequency and link strengths indicating relationships. A minimum occurrence threshold was applied to filter significant terms, revealing fragmented collaboration patterns and interdisciplinary overlaps. The analysis highlighted inconsistencies in author name formatting and the unintended inclusion of non-literary research, particularly in health sciences, underscoring the need for stricter keyword filtering in bibliometric studies. Institutional affiliations were cross-referenced to contextualize geographic and disciplinary biases in the dataset.

Textual analysis was conducted using *WordSift* to examine abstracts and titles for semantic patterns. Word clouds visualized high-frequency terms, while concordance tools explored contextual usage of keywords like "identity" and "diaspora." This revealed tensions between traditional themes (e.g., "Sanskrit," "Buddhist") and emerging discourses (e.g., "Dalit," "migration"), as well as data contamination from medical terminology. The analysis also exposed gaps in gender and regional representation, with limited coverage of LGBTQ+ topics and scholars from neighboring South Asian countries.

The methodology acknowledged limitations, including database biases favoring English-language publications and Western institutions, as well as the conflation of literary and non-literary research. To address these issues, the study incorporated manual data cleaning and critical reflexivity, triangulating findings from both *VOSviewer* and *WordSift*. This approach not only mapped current trends in Nepali literary scholarship but also highlighted systemic challenges in bibliometric research, advocating for more precise and inclusive methodologies in future studies.

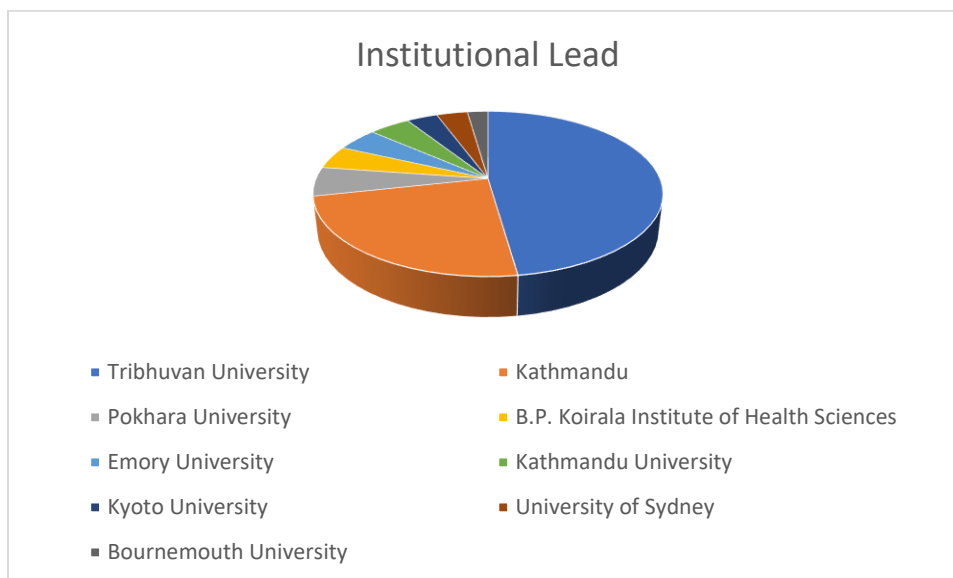
Results and Analysis

The co-authorship network depicted in the image reveals several notable patterns and limitations in collaborative research within the field of Nepali literature or related studies. First, the presence of both Nepali and non-Nepali names (e.g., *Ram Sharan Pathak*, *Padam Simkhada*, *Vanora Bundley*, *Carol Watts*) suggests international collaboration, which is common in area studies. However, the network appears fragmented, with no dominant clusters or clear central figures, indicating that collaborations are either sporadic or decentralized. The absence of thick connecting lines between nodes implies weak co-authorship ties, which could reflect a lack of sustained partnerships or interdisciplinary engagement. This fragmentation might stem from the niche nature of Nepali literature studies or uneven institutional support for collaborative projects.



A critical issue is the apparent inconsistency in name formatting (e.g., "*Edwin Rvav Teljlingen*" vs. "*Edwin van Teijlingen*", "*Sharada Pitasad Wastiy*" vs. "*Sheetat Sharma*"), which could signal data entry errors or lack of standardization in academic databases. Such inconsistencies may artificially inflate the number of unique authors or obscure genuine collaboration patterns. Additionally, the predominance of individual nodes with few links (e.g., *Prajaya Shukla*, *Anjum Memon*) highlights a reliance on solo authorship or limited teamwork, potentially hindering the field's thematic and methodological diversity. This could be attributed to resource constraints, linguistic barriers, or the predominance of humanities-focused research, which traditionally favors single-author works over large, collaborative projects.

Finally, the network's lack of geographic or institutional context limits its interpretive value. For instance, it is unclear whether collaborations are domestic (Nepal-based) or transnational, or whether they involve universities, independent scholars, or diaspora researchers. A deeper analysis could cross-reference affiliations or publication venues to identify institutional hubs (e.g., Tribhuvan University vs. UK-based institutions). The inclusion of non-literary scholars (e.g., *Padam Simkhada*, a public health researcher) also raises questions about disciplinary boundaries—whether these reflect interdisciplinary studies or database noise. To strengthen such findings, future bibliometric work should integrate metadata like affiliations, disciplines, and publication years to contextualize co-authorship dynamics and their scholarly impact.

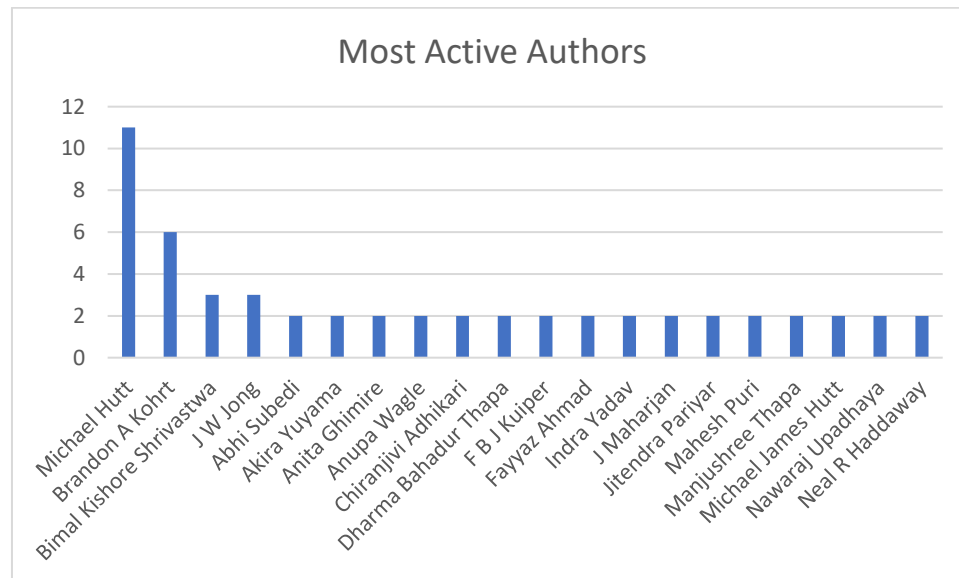


The list of institutions highlights a mix of Nepali and international universities engaged in research related to Nepali literature or associated fields, revealing both strengths and gaps in the academic landscape. Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu University, and Pokhara University emerge as the primary Nepali contributors, reflecting their central role in humanities research within Nepal. However, the inclusion of health-focused institutions like B.P. Koirala Institute of Health Sciences alongside literature-centric universities suggests potential interdisciplinary collaborations—or, alternatively, database inaccuracies where non-literary research is inadvertently tagged under Nepali literature. This ambiguity underscores the need for clearer disciplinary categorization in bibliometric datasets to ensure relevance and precision in analysis.

The presence of international institutions such as Emory University, Kyoto University, and the University of Sydney indicates global academic interest in Nepali literature, likely driven by diaspora studies, postcolonial research, or regional focus areas. Bournemouth University's inclusion is notable, as it aligns with Edwin van Teijlingen's affiliation (from the co-authorship network), hinting at a possible hub for Nepal-related studies in the UK. However, the lack of Ivy League or other Western elite universities in the list may imply limited institutional prioritization of Nepali literature in broader comparative literature programs. This could reflect resource disparities or a narrower focus on dominant literary traditions (e.g., Anglophone or European) in global academia, marginalizing smaller linguistic-cultural fields.

Geographically, the list skews toward urban centers (Kathmandu, Pokhara) and neglects institutions from Nepal's rural regions or neighboring South Asian countries, which might offer valuable comparative perspectives. The absence of Indian universities, for instance, is striking given the shared cultural and linguistic ties. This could indicate fragmented regional scholarly networks or database biases favoring Western partnerships. To deepen the analysis, future studies should map institutional collaborations (e.g., joint publications, funded projects) and assess whether these ties translate into equitable knowledge production or perpetuate

dependency on Global North academia. Such scrutiny would reveal whether Nepali literature research is fostering inclusive growth or replicating hierarchical academic paradigms.



The list of most active authors reveals several noteworthy patterns in the scholarly engagement with Nepali literature and related fields. The prominence of Michael Hutt (also listed as Michael James Hutt, suggesting a data duplication issue) highlights his significant contributions to Nepali literary studies, particularly his work on Nepali poetry and Himalayan literature. However, the inclusion of researchers like Brandon A Kohrt and Neal R Haddaway, who are primarily known for their work in global mental health and evidence synthesis respectively, raises questions about the disciplinary boundaries of this dataset. This could indicate either interdisciplinary research bridging literature and social sciences or, more likely, a misclassification in the database where non-literary scholars are incorrectly tagged under Nepali literature. Such inconsistencies underscore the need for more precise keyword filtering in bibliometric analyses to ensure thematic relevance.

The presence of both Western and Nepali names (e.g., Abhi-Subedi, Chiranjivi Adhikari, Dharma Bahadur Thapa) suggests a blend of local and international scholarship, which could reflect collaborative trends or the global interest in Nepali literary and cultural studies. However, the absence of prominent female scholars in the list is striking and may point to broader gender disparities in the field, mirroring wider academic inequities in South Asian studies. Additionally, the duplicate entry for Michael Hutt and variations in name formatting (e.g., "Brandon A Kohrt" vs. "Brandon A Schrödinger," which appears to be an error) highlight data quality issues that could skew bibliometric findings. These discrepancies emphasize the importance of manual data cleaning and standardization before drawing conclusions about authorship patterns.

Geographically, the list suggests a concentration of research activity in specific institutional or national contexts, with notable representation from UK-based scholars like Michael Hutt alongside Nepali academics. However, the limited inclusion of scholars from other South Asian

countries (e.g., India, Bangladesh) is conspicuous, given the region's shared literary and cultural histories. This could indicate fragmented regional academic networks or a lack of cross-border collaboration in Nepali literary studies. Furthermore, the dataset's potential conflation of literature-focused research with broader Nepal-related studies (e.g., mental health, social sciences) calls for a more nuanced categorization in future analyses. To address these gaps, researchers could employ stricter keyword filters, incorporate gender-disaggregated data, and explore regional collaboration networks to provide a more accurate and inclusive picture of scholarly activity in this field.



This word cloud presents a revealing snapshot of Nepal's academic research landscape, exposing both its interdisciplinary breadth and some concerning thematic imbalances. The oversized presence of "health," "hospital," and "medical" terms alongside literary keywords like "Nepali literature" and "modern" suggests a problematic conflation of two distinct research domains in bibliometric analysis. This likely stems from poor database filtering where health studies conducted in Nepal are being erroneously grouped with humanities research, creating a distorted representation of literary scholarship. The prominence of clinical terminology ("patient," "infection," "intervention") in what should be a literature-focused visualization raises serious questions about the dataset's integrity and the validity of drawing conclusions from such contaminated data.

The visualization does, however, successfully capture Nepal's unique position at the intersection of tradition and modernity in humanities research. Terms like "Sanskrit," "Buddhist," and "hero" demonstrate the enduring focus on cultural heritage, while "identity," "voice," and "Dalit" reflect important emerging discourses around social justice and



representation. Yet the apparent absence of key literary terms we might expect - such as specific genres (poetry, novel), major literary figures, or linguistic studies - suggests either gaps in research coverage or limitations in the word cloud's source data. The minimal appearance of "translation" is particularly surprising given Nepal's multilingual literary landscape, hinting at potential blind spots in current scholarship.

Most troubling is the evident gender disparity in this research mapping. While "woman" appears as a moderate-sized term, its isolation without companion terms like "feminist," "gender," or "patriarchy" suggests superficial engagement with women's issues in Nepali literary studies. The complete absence of "LGBTQ" or related terms reveals glaring omissions in contemporary discourse. These imbalances may reflect either genuine gaps in Nepali literary research or, more worryingly, systemic biases in what types of research get published and indexed. The word cloud ultimately serves as both a mirror and a map - reflecting current academic priorities while charting uncharted territories that demand scholarly attention. For researchers, this visualization should prompt critical questions about database curation practices and the need for more nuanced, intentional approaches to mapping Nepal's rich academic landscape.

Conclusion

This study's bibliometric and textual analysis of 268 scholarly works on Nepali literature reveals a field marked by fragmented international collaborations, interdisciplinary overlaps with health sciences (indicative of database contamination), and persistent gaps in gender and regional representation. While the research landscape demonstrates growing engagement with themes of identity and diaspora, the dominance of Western institutions, inconsistent data standardization, and lack of focus on marginalized voices highlight systemic challenges in Nepali literary scholarship. The findings underscore the need for more rigorous database curation, intentional inclusion of underrepresented perspectives, and strengthened regional academic networks to foster a more equitable and comprehensive understanding of Nepal's literary traditions and their contemporary digital transformations.



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