



A Bibliometric Analysis of Career Aspiration of South Asian Youth

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Abstract

Background: Career transitions of youth in Nepal and India happen amidst increasing educational aspirations, joblessness, labor market mismatch, and considerable international mobility. Even though increased focus is being laid on the issue by policymakers, there have been very few systematic bibliometric studies in this research area.

Objectives: This study aimed to (1) perform a bibliometric analysis of career choices of youth in Nepal and India (2021–2025), (2) study the citation analysis, (3) study the author collaboration network, (4) perform bibliographic coupling analysis of these two countries, and (5) undertake the co-citation analysis of journals.

Methodology: A systematic search was performed using the keyword search strategy of Boolean logic: ("career choice" OR "career aspiration" OR "job selection") AND ("youth" OR "adolescent" OR "young adult") AND ("Nepal" OR "India"). Based on PRISMA principles, out of 26,756 results, a total of 676 gold open-access journal articles from 2021 to 2025 were included. Analysis was done using VOSViewer.

Results: The number of publications grew by 116% from 94 (2021) to 203 (2025), experiencing a significant 52.3% increase in 2024. Citation levels were consistently high between 2021 and 2022 (>88%), although citation rates fell to 43.84% for 2025 owing to the citation lag phenomenon. In the co-authorship analysis, a tight-knit, Bangladesh-centred research cluster emerged, with only a few Nepalese and Indian authors involved. Bibliographic



coupling produced a core-periphery framework, with the USA, India, China, and UK serving as central nodes. Three thematic clusters were found in co-citation analysis: psychology/behavioural, sustainability/entrepreneurship, and education.

Conclusion: The study reveals a surge in research on youth career options in Nepal and India; however, there is spatial concentration and minimal involvement of regional authors, underscoring the importance of regional research collaborations.

Novelty: This is the first bibliometric review of youth career studies specifically focusing on Nepal and India using VOSviewer and PRISMA-based open-access screening.

Keywords: Career aspiration; Co-authorship network; Nepal and India; Open access; Youth employment

Introduction

One of the largest groups of youth lives in South Asia, with nations such as Nepal and India having witnessed an exceptional rise in their young adult population numbers. With increasing access to secondary and tertiary education in the area, there has also been a rise in the number of youth dreaming of something beyond mere survival or traditional means of making a living (Gurung, 2024). In the wake of education, the horizon widens as youths are exposed to new ideas and possibilities that can constitute the good life (Delahunty & Hellwig, 2024). However, this trend has not necessarily been accompanied by access to decent jobs or social mobility opportunities for youths in South Asia. The restructuring of labour markets in the region, alongside the uneven growth of the formal sector, has created the expectations-opportunities gap among many youths: education increases aspirations without providing job opportunities to meet those aspirations (Bohle et al., 2025).

The decision-making processes regarding careers among Nepalese and Indian youths reflect a complex dynamic involving societal values, economic pressures, and personal hopes. The old-school choice of pursuing careers in fields like medicine, engineering, law, and banking have long been the "safe" bets that guarantee security and social status (Thue, 2023). However, there has arisen a disconnect between the safe path and the increasing demand among youths for meaningful employment and alternative careers. From a sociological perspective, aspirations can be seen as relational and not purely individual. Through the theories of Pierre Bourdieu about the concept of habitus and cultural capital, studies have found that young individuals make their future plans based on their family background, connections, symbolic capital, and social norms (Pham et al., 2024).

Indeed, the youth career transition problem in Nepal is even more complex and challenging (Sharma, 2024; Sharma & Paudel, 2023; Basnet et al., 2021). For example, there seems to be a contradiction in the labor market in Nepal: despite problems with finding enough skilled employees, hundreds of thousands of youth from this country travel overseas in search of employment opportunities. Many workers from India find employment in Nepal; these people are employed where skilled workers are lacking because of their mismatch with the education received by locals (Sharma, 2024). For instance, an entrepreneur who runs the business in



Ghorahi Auto Village claimed that out of the total number of workers – 560, 40 percent of employees were Indians, earning 50 percent more than the Nepali workers due to having highly developed skills unavailable to their local counterparts (CESLAM, 2023). The reason for the mismatch is seen in the education system's inability to provide graduates with job-related skills and competencies. Instead, Nepal's education system is still based on traditional approaches and ideas emphasizing cognitive abilities (Sharma, 2024).

Migration has become a primary career strategy for many educated youth in Nepal. Qualitative research has documented the experiences of young rural–urban migrants transitioning from education to work in Kathmandu, revealing that parents' choices in education, migration to urban centres, going abroad for studies and work, and financial resources are the main factors influencing their trajectories (Basnet et al., 2021). Gender differences in opportunities and barriers are also significant: traditional gendered divisions of labour continue to limit women to reproductive roles while men are viewed as the main breadwinners, deeply rooted in the cultural and social practices of Nepal (Basnet et al., 2021). Beyond internal migration, Nepali youth are increasingly seeking employment in India. Reports indicate that over 3,000 Nepalese youth have arrived in Jharsuguda, Odisha, seeking jobs in industrial and manufacturing sectors, driven by high unemployment and limited career opportunities at home (BW People, 2025). Many of these young migrants hold university degrees but end up working in modest, informal jobs as waiters, security guards, or maintenance workers (The Hindu, 2025).

India is not different from other nations in terms of the problems facing the harmonization of aspirations and expectations of young people and what they can realistically get from the labour market. As the biggest economy in the region, India has experienced significant growth in its technology and service industries (Adhikari et al., 2026). However, there has been continued concern regarding the problem of unemployment and underemployment among young Indians. Vocational skills training is considered one of the most crucial interventions aimed at enhancing employment among youth in South Asia. Based on the results of systematic reviews conducted, entrepreneurship training has been found to affect four of five employment-related parameters including employment initiation, sustenance, growth, and self-employment (Ilavarasan, Kar, & Aswani, 2017). On the other hand, professional development training affects only employment sustenance and self-employment whereas vocational skills training enhances employment inclination, sustenance, and growth (Ilavarasan et al., 2017). Moreover, the impacts on labour market and business are significantly higher when it comes to youth compared to adults (Mahat et al., 2024; Ilavarasan et al., 2017).

While youth career choice research continues to attract increased scholarly attention in South Asia, systematic bibliometric analysis of the current state of the scholarly literature in this area is yet to be adequately performed. In fact, according to a recent World Bank report, there have been few systematic empirical studies with policy implications carried out in Nepal concerning issues related to labor and livelihood. More specifically, there have been fewer studies focused on the issues surrounding the labor market, behaviors, and outcomes of young people within Nepal (Sharma & Paudel, 2023). It is noteworthy that the Nepalese government views resolving



the socio-economic problems facing youth and maximizing their social and economic potentials as important drivers of the nation's economic growth and development (Sharma & Paudel, 2023).

To fill this gap, the present study conducts a bibliometric study of the peer-reviewed literature focusing on career choices of young individuals from Nepal and India. This study is expected to: (i) establish trends in the publication process in the concerned area for the period 2021–2025, (ii) explore citation patterns in order to evaluate the impact of scholarly work in the relevant literature, (iii) analyze co-authorship relations among researchers, (iv) perform bibliographic coupling analysis between the selected countries to establish geography-based patterns in scientific knowledge creation, and (v) conduct co-citation analysis of journals in order to identify the roots of research under discussion.

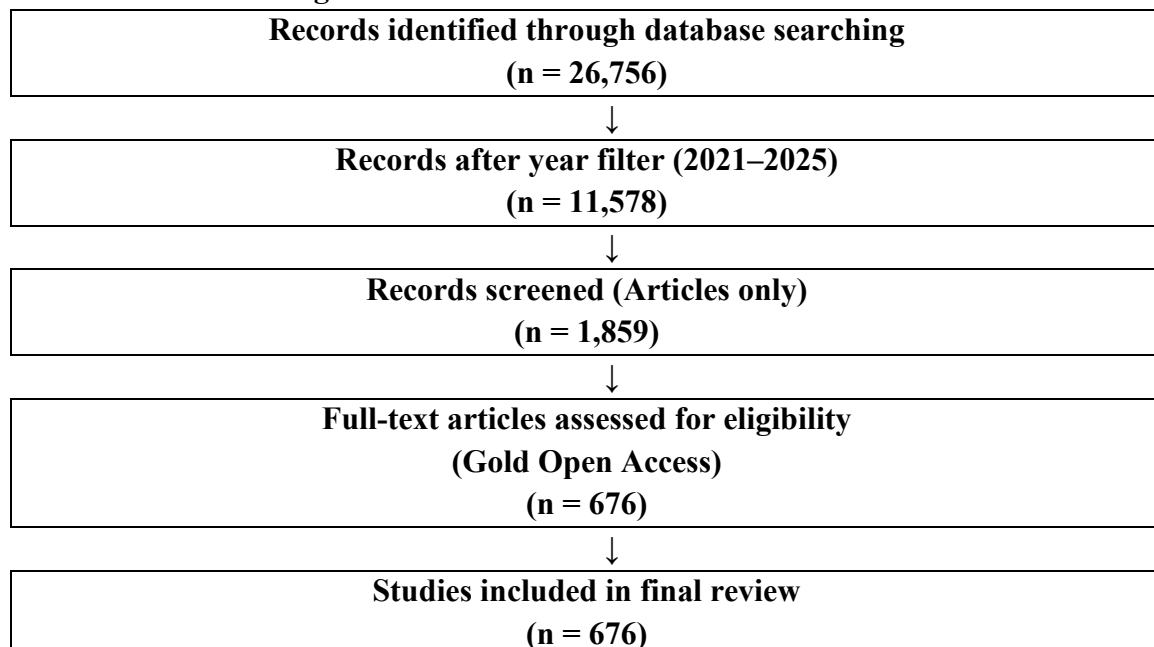
Methodology

Search String and Boolean Operators

Bibliometrics were used to analyze articles related to career choices among youth in Nepal and India. The searches were carried out through Dimensions.ai – an academic database that covers peer-reviewed journals, books, book chapters, conferences, and other research-related articles. Using Boolean operators, a search string was constructed based on search terms concerning career decisions and youth in both Nepal and India. The final search string was: ("career choice" OR "career aspiration" OR "job selection") AND ("youth" OR "adolescent" OR "young adult") AND ("Nepal" OR "India"). The final search string was run against the title, abstract, and keywords of all articles within Dimensions.ai, without specifying the dates and the types of publications at first. The number of records obtained from the search performed on 5th January 2026 was 26,756.

Screening Process and PRISMA Flow Diagram

PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram





In order to make sure that the included studies met the required criteria and were of high quality, a three-stage screening procedure was adopted according to the PRISMA flow diagram. Firstly, a filtering stage based on the dates was carried out to narrow down the number of sources to recent scientific literature ranging from 2021 to 2025. Consequently, the number of sources was cut down to 11,578. Secondly, the document type was narrowed down to peer-reviewed journal articles, thereby excluding book chapters, conference papers, preprints, and other forms of scientific communication. After this procedure, there remained 1,859 documents. Thirdly, the filter based on the Open Access policy was used to include only Gold Open Access sources to ensure that all articles used in the research could be accessed online without any limitations. As a result, the final dataset contained 676 Gold Open Access journal articles, which underwent the full-text analysis.

Trends in Publication and Citations

After selecting the final set of 676 articles, a chronological analysis was undertaken to evaluate the publication trends and citation impact within the five years of the study period (2021-2025). The number of publications was determined per year, showing an increasing trend from 94 articles in 2021 to 203 articles in 2025. Moreover, the number of articles with at least one citation was computed per year, based on the citations acquired through Dimensions.ai. This percentage of citation was used as an indicator of academic impact and visibility. The trend was analyzed while considering the increase in publications and citation impact, bearing in mind that it is already established that there is a delay in citation (Davis, 2011), especially with regard to the latest publications from 2024 and 2025.

Co-Authorship Network Analysis with VOSviewer

For the visualization and analysis of the structure of the scholarly collaboration network among researchers publishing studies on career choices of youths in Nepal and India, co-authorship network analysis was conducted using VOSviewer (version 1.6.20). The 676 articles with the open access policy of Gold Open Access status were extracted from Dimensions.ai in the form of a tab-delimited file that included the metadata of all articles, i.e., author names, affiliations, article title, abstract, and references. These datasets were used in VOSviewer software for the construction of a co-authorship network at an author level. Authors were taken as units of analysis, while the counting method used for constructing a co-authorship network was full counting, meaning that every co-authorship counted equally, regardless of how many other authors contributed to an article. There was one document per author as the minimum threshold applied to the dataset.

Bibliographic Coupling and Co-Citation Analysis

Apart from co-authorship, two other bibliometric methods were utilized for analyzing the research literature on social justice using the software tool known as VOSviewer: bibliographic coupling of countries and co-citation of journals. Bibliographic coupling entailed clustering the papers according to the country associated with the corresponding author; the coupling index for each pair of countries is the sum total of the number of references that the two share. The cut-off value for the number of papers in each country was set to five. The map generated from



the bibliographic coupling data was analyzed based on a core-periphery approach, whereby the dominant research countries were identified as well as emerging research countries, which included Nepal, Bangladesh, and Ghana, among others, along with the United States, India, China, and the United Kingdom. In the case of the co-citation analysis, the journals were used as the units of analysis. Two journals would be linked together in case they had been cited by one paper. The cut-off value was 20 citations per journal.

1. ("career choice" OR "career aspiration" OR "job selection") AND ("youth OR adolescent" OR "young adult") AND ("Nepal" OR "India")
2. 26756
3. 11,578 (2021-2025)
4. Publication Type: only Articles 1859
5. Open Access : Gold = 676

The first search conducted with Boolean operators resulted in 26,756 articles. The second stage where the date range was limited to 2021–2025 left 11,578 articles. The next filtering criterion – limitation of the document type to journal articles – left only 1,859 articles. The last filtering criterion – selection of the studies according to the Gold Open Access filter – left 676 articles. All these studies were reviewed further.

Table 1: Publication Trends

Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Publications (total)	94	109	107	163	203

On a temporal perspective, the pattern of publishing 676 Gold Open Access papers shows that there has been a gradual rise in their numbers since 2021 through 2025. There has been an almost constant number of articles within the range of 94 to 109 per year until 2023, signaling a steady but small research interest within the post-COVID era. A sharp turn in terms of increasing numbers was observed in 2024 when the count reached 163, a 52.3% increase from previous years; and the trend continues to the maximum of 203 in 2025. The total 116% increase within five years demonstrates that the topic on youth career selection in Nepal and India is now getting more attention due to employment-related issues.

Table 2: Publications with citations

Years	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Publications with citations (% ≥ 1 citations)	89.36	88.99	78.5	81.6	43.84

The analysis shows an impressive foundational influence for scientific literature published in the years 2021-2022, with more than 88% of such publications being cited at least once. Such an outcome was anticipated since these papers were published earlier and thus had more opportunities to be known, studied, and analyzed by other scholars while preparing their systematic review or meta-analysis. It can be said that a small decrease in 2023 down to 78.5%, followed by the return to the former level in 2024 (81.6%), is characteristic of scholarly

journals. This means that the body of literature on the topic of adolescents' choice of careers in Nepal and India is becoming more mature, and new papers refer to a solid foundation of existing works and do not quote every recently published article. The fact that the indicator for 2024 is still relatively high (81.6%) is another proof of the significance of recent research in the field.

The most striking observation, however, is the sudden decline in 2025 to merely 43.84%. Although it initially seems like an indication of declining quality or relevance of the research, this can be attributed to what can be considered the normal citation time lag. Since the 2025 studies have at most only been available for one year, they do not have enough time to accrue citations. In several social science journals, it usually takes 18 to 24 months from publication before any of the papers get cited (Davis, 2011) because of the process of peer review by other journals and the subsequent reading of the journal by the academic community.

Co-authorship visualization

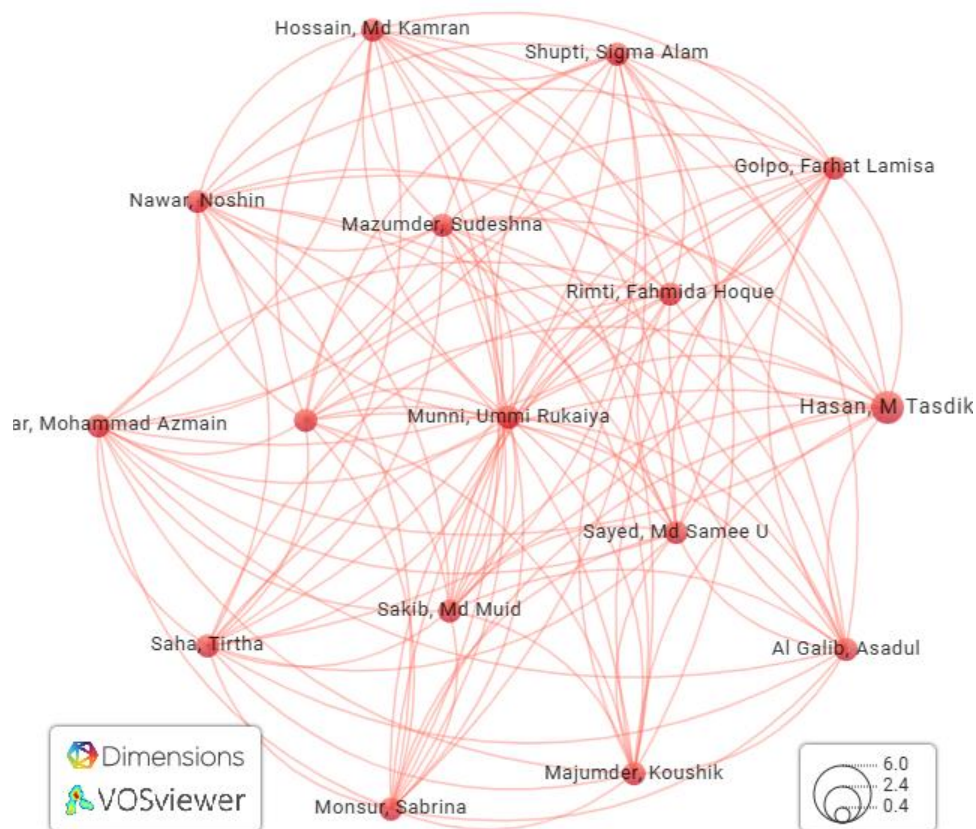


Figure 1

Based on the output obtained from VOSviewer, there is a very close-knit cluster of co-authorship that seems to be dominated by authors from Bangladesh. There are repeated mentions of author names like Hossain, Md Kamran, Shupti, Sigma Alam, Golpo, Farhat Lamisa, Nawar Noshin, Mazumder Sudeshna, Rimti, Fahmida Hoque, and Hasan, M Tasdik. This implies that there is a highly productive research team in Bangladesh, or possibly more

than one research team working on youth career development in Bangladesh. This is surprising considering the fact that you have set your search parameters on Nepal and India.

The presence of recurring names of authors in what seem to be separate nodes or lines signifies that there is a well-established core of research that works together very often. Names such as Majumder Koushik and Monsur Sabrina have been identified as somewhat apart from others, implying that there might be another sub-group that is still connected. According to the VOSviewer manual, the magnitude of nodes corresponds to publication numbers or link strength. Though no information has been provided concerning the size of the nodes in the image below, it is evident that the connections are very close, implying that they work together often. Co-authorship is common among teams conducting funded research, surveys involving several authors, or longitudinal studies of populations.

The most noticeable thing about this VOSviewer output is the absence of any authors who have an evident affiliation to Nepal or India. Considering the fact that we are searching for literature on the careers of young people in Nepal and India, we should have been seeing at least some authors who had affiliations to the Universities of Kathmandu, Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Patna. The reason behind their absence can be one of these: (1) Nepalese and Indian authors publish their papers in closed access journals (as per our criteria, the filter excluded 1,183 papers from our output), (2) Nepalese and Indian researchers prefer single authorship or two authorship which does not get displayed by VOSviewer, or (3) Researchers from other countries, especially Bangladesh, have shown more interest than others to Nepal and India as a research topic.

Bibliographic Coupling (Countries)

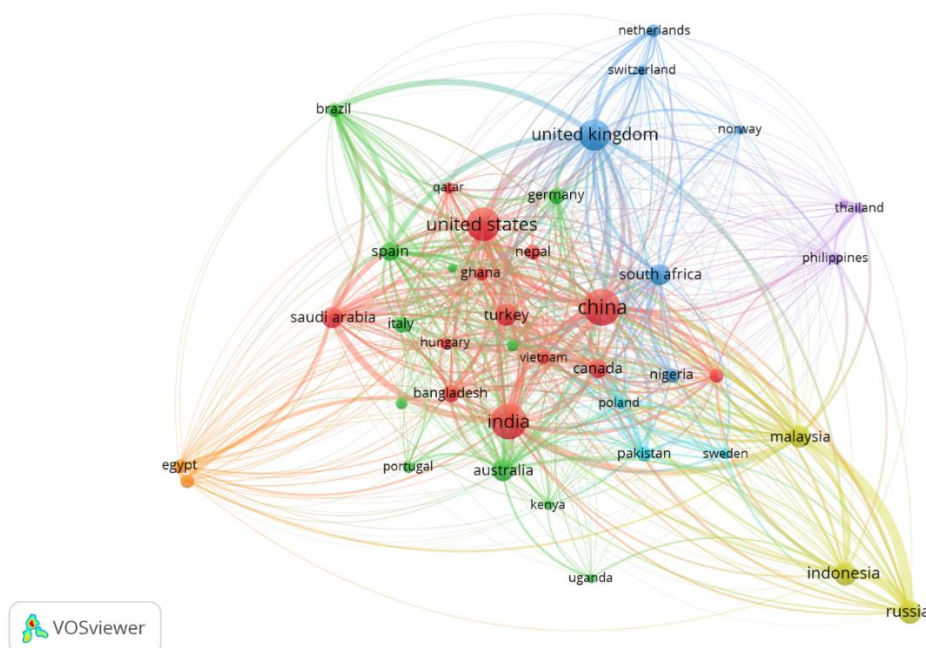


Figure 2



The co-citation map created using VOSviewer is indicative of the structure of career choice, youth, and other interdisciplinary research. Journals which have prominent influence, such as PLOS ONE and Frontiers in Psychology, feature prominently due to their large nodes and multiple connections to other journals. These two factors indicate the prominence of these journals and how they can act as platforms to publish research from multiple disciplines including psychology, education, and the social sciences.

A clear pattern emerges based on the different clusters. The cluster with a red color, for example, is centered around the prominent journals PLOS ONE and Frontiers in Psychology. This cluster is focused on themes that include topics related to psychological issues, behavioral issues, career choice, and the development of youth. Other journals associated with this cluster include BMC Women's Health and Frontiers in Sociology.

A third important group of clusters (blue) focuses on the theme of sustainability and journals dealing mainly with business, including Sustainability, Cogent Business & Management, and Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship. This implies that career choice research is getting connected with topics such as entrepreneurship, employability, and sustainable development. The fact that journals such as Discover Sustainability are among those selected reveals the trend of considering career ambitions against the backdrop of global issues such as sustainability and socio-economic development.

Green and purple groups focus on education and multidisciplinary issues, involving journals such as Integration of Education and Frontiers in Education and emphasizing the importance of educational institutions in developing career ambitions of individuals. The appearance of geographically oriented journals such as Asian Journal of Education and Development shows a growing interest in contextual influences on career choices, particularly in developing nations.

Conclusion

The bibliometric analysis conducted in this work has revealed the boundaries of a rapidly growing but geographically clustered area of research. The sharp rise in the number of papers starting from 2021 indicates that academics have already realized the need for research on youth career transition in Nepal and India. At the same time, it is evident that there remain inequalities in knowledge creation as seen from the low percentage of papers authored by locals in Gold Open Access databases and the marginalized role of Nepal in international scientific cooperation. The problem at hand can be solved only by targeted measures taken by journals, funding organizations, and scientific centers to facilitate the participation of the countries in question in the research.

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Conflict of Interest: The authors declare there are no conflicts of interest.



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