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Global research trends in logistics performance and trade facilitation: a bibliometric analysis of logistics flows and trade

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Abstract: Logistics performance plays a critical role in enabling efficient material, information, and financial flows across international trade networks. Despite extensive empirical research examining the relationship between logistics performance and trade outcomes, the literature remains fragmented, with no comprehensive bibliometric synthesis mapping its intellectual structure and thematic evolution. This study addresses this gap by conducting a bibliometric analysis of 265 peer-reviewed journal articles indexed in the Scopus database between 2008 and 2025. Using Biblioshiny and VOSviewer, the study analyzes annual scientific production, influential authors and journals, institutional and country-level collaboration patterns, citation structures, and thematic clusters. The findings reveal a steady growth in logistics–trade research following the introduction of the World Bank's Logistics Performance Index, with dominant themes centered on logistics efficiency, trade facilitation, transport infrastructure, and supply chain management. Emerging research directions emphasize sustainability, green logistics, digitalization, and supply chain resilience. By systematically mapping logistics-related knowledge flows, this study provides a consolidated overview of the field and identifies research gaps that are relevant for logistics scholars, policymakers, and practitioners. The study contributes to logistics science by clarifying how logistics performance is conceptualized within international trade research and by offering future research directions aligned with contemporary logistics challenges.

1 Introduction

Logistics are critical to international trade, as they encompass planning, storage, transportation, and distribution of goods between production centres and end consumers. Even small logistical disruptions can raise costs, reduce product quality, and undermine competitiveness. In recent years, as geopolitical tensions have increased, resources have become more constrained, and global shocks such as the coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19) have exposed the vulnerabilities of global supply chains, the need for resilient supply chains has become apparent in our logistics systems [1,2]. Reliable and interconnected logistics networks reduce transaction costs and make trade more competitive. Positive investments in logistics infrastructure have significantly improved the trade performance of many countries as measured by the Logistics Performance Index (LPI).

The World Bank has developed the Logistics Performance Index (LPI) to measure logistics effectiveness of a nation in six areas, focusing on customs, infrastructure, international shipments, logistics competence, tracking and tracing, and timeliness [3], and has used it as a benchmark to assess logistics capacity and trade facilitation in the world. For example, evidence shows that logistics performance is one of the main determinants of international trade, and advances in infrastructure, customs, and supply chain management have a greater effect on export competitiveness in an economy than tariff reductions, especially in emerging markets [4]. Studies on logistics show that the lack of cold chain infrastructure can jeopardize competitiveness in trade, especially for agricultural goods [5,6].

Accordingly, this study analyses 265 peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2008 and 2025 using the Scopus database and bibliometric tools (Biblioshiny and VOSviewer). It addresses five guiding questions: How has annual scientific production and citation evolved in logistics performance and trade research? Who are the most influential authors, journals, and institutions in this field? What are the dominant and emerging themes revealed through keyword and thematic analysis? How do citation networks, co-citation, and bibliographic coupling shape the intellectual structure of the field? What insights can be drawn to advance theory, policy, and practice? The study contributes to the field by

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offering a bibliometric mapping of research in logistics performance and international trade as well as providing directions for future researchers to develop scholarly publications in logistics and international trade.

Although numerous empirical studies confirm that logistics performance significantly influences international trade, existing research is largely dispersed across econometric, sectoral, and regional analyses, limiting cumulative theoretical development in logistics science. The central problem addressed in this study is the absence of a structured overview that explains how logistics performance research has evolved, which themes dominate the field, and how logistics-related knowledge flows across authors, institutions, and countries. The primary objective of this study is to systematically map global research trends in logistics performance and international trade using bibliometric techniques. The novelty of this work lies in its comprehensive visualization of the intellectual structure, collaboration networks, and thematic evolution of logistics-focused trade research. By positioning logistics performance as a core analytical construct rather than a peripheral explanatory variable, this study advances logistics research and provides evidence-based directions for future logistics policy and supply chain strategy development.

2 Literature review

2.1 Theoretical background

Logistics is a key factor of trade that minimizes transaction costs, increases reliability and competitiveness [7]. Poor logistics performance, characterized by delays, high costs, and inefficiencies act as a trade barrier [8]. The gravity model of trade, which explains trade flows based on economic size and distance, has been extended to include logistics performance, which demonstrates that logistics reduces the negative impact of distance and reinforces the influence of trade [9]. On this theoretical foundation, empirical studies and research are carried out on logistics as a tool for reducing trade costs and improving international competitiveness.

2.2 Empirical evidence on logistics performance and trade

The evidence from the experimental literature consistently shows that logistics improves trade. Strengthening logistics reduces trade costs and enhances competitiveness, which was found in middle-income economies [10,11]. The sectoral studies have highlighted some of the weaknesses. For example, in agriculture, infrastructure of both exporters and importers, competence and quality, and tracking and tracing of the importers positively and significantly affect trade [12]. Research based on surveys of container terminals, seaports, and multimodal transport has found that logistics infrastructure is a critical enabler for timely exports [13,14]. At the regional level (e.g., Africa, South America, Asia), stronger logistics, measured by an increase in LPI, would benefit exporting countries more than importing countries [15,16].

2.3 Trade facilitation and institutional dimensions

There is a common belief that the provision of trade facilitation measures, such as customs modernisation, the use of ICT, and infrastructure development, contributes to higher export performance [17,18]. Institutional quality is also seen as an enabler, as a higher LPI score is also connected to better governance and integration into global value chains. Logistics, thus, is both a technical and an institutional challenge that calls for coordinated sectoral reforms.

2.4 Disruptions and emerging themes

The vulnerability of global supply chains has been a new concern because of COVID-19 and geopolitical tensions, and recent studies have suggested that green logistics, blockchain supplying chain, and resilient trade systems capable of withstanding shocks are necessary [19], that is, a conceptual change from models focusing on the efficiency aspects of logistics to multidimensional models that incorporate technology, sustainability, and resilience. For example, a study on Ukraine's grain exports using resilient supply chain of rail and road network amid periodic port blockades, emphasizing the need to adapt effective logistics management under geopolitical tensions [20].

2.5 Research gaps

Despite rich empirical evidence, three major gaps remain:

1. Lack of bibliometric synthesis: Most existing research consists of econometric analyses or sector-specific case studies, but no study systematically maps the intellectual structure, thematic evolution, and collaboration patterns in logistics–trade research.
2. Underrepresentation of cross-cutting themes: While digitalisation, sustainability, and resilience are increasingly studied, they remain fragmented across different strands of literature.
3. Limited integration of theory and practice: Although logistics is shown to influence trade outcomes, it is rarely conceptualised as a central theoretical construct within trade models.

This study addresses these gaps through a bibliometric analysis of 265 peer-reviewed articles (2008-2025), providing a comprehensive view of research trends and advancing trade theory through conceptual additions.

3 Methodology

3.1 Data source and database selection

The study is based on the Scopus database because it was chosen to cover as much of the peer-reviewed publications in the field of logistics, international trade, and economics as possible [21]. Publications are analyzed from 2008 to January 2025 to match the timeframe of the first publication of the Logistics Performance Index (LPI) by the World Bank in 2007-2008 it established new focus in the field.

3.2 Bibliometric tools and analytical techniques

We created a Boolean search string to identify studies at the intersection of logistics performance and international trade: (Logistics performance index OR LPI) AND (international trade OR global trade OR trade flows OR export performance OR agricultural trade). This resulted in 673 documents, and the following filters were applied to ensure relevancy and quality:

- Document type: Journal articles (excluding conference papers, reviews, book chapters).
- Language: English only.
- Subject area: Economics, econometrics, finance, social sciences, and related fields.
- Publication stage: Final published.

3.3 Screening procedure and reporting standards

Screening followed a two-step process:

1. Automated filtering using Scopus' subject and document-type restrictions.
2. Manual review of abstracts to ensure direct relevance to logistics performance and trade.

After filtering, 350 articles remained. Following manual review, 85 were excluded as irrelevant (e.g., studies focused solely on domestic logistics or unrelated supply chain topics). The final dataset comprised 265 peer-reviewed journal articles, as shown in Figure 1.

3.4 Analytical tools

Two bibliometric software packages were employed:

- Biblioshiny (R package bibliometrix) – for descriptive statistics, annual scientific production, citation analysis, and visualisation of collaboration networks.
- VOSviewer (v1.6.20) – for mapping co-authorship, co-citation, bibliographic coupling, and thematic keyword clusters.

These tools were chosen for their reproducibility, open access, and widespread adoption in bibliometric research.

3.5 Bibliometric indicators

The following indicators were used to capture scientific production and intellectual structure:

- Scientific output: Number of publications per year, growth rate.
- Citation analysis: Average citations per article, highly cited works.
- Authorship analysis: Most productive and influential authors.
- Source analysis: Most relevant journals and their citation impact.
- Institutional and geographic output: Contributions by universities and countries.
- Collaboration patterns: Threefold plots linking authors, sources, and institutions.
- Thematic evolution: Keyword co-occurrence, cluster analysis, and longitudinal theme mapping.
- Intellectual structure: Co-citation and bibliographic coupling analyses.

3.6 Limitations

There are a few limitations of this methodology: It may be based on Scopus and thus biased toward regional journals or non-indexed materials; the language restriction to English may exclude relevant research in other languages; and the settings of the algorithms in VOSviewer may result in thematic clustering (cluster formation).

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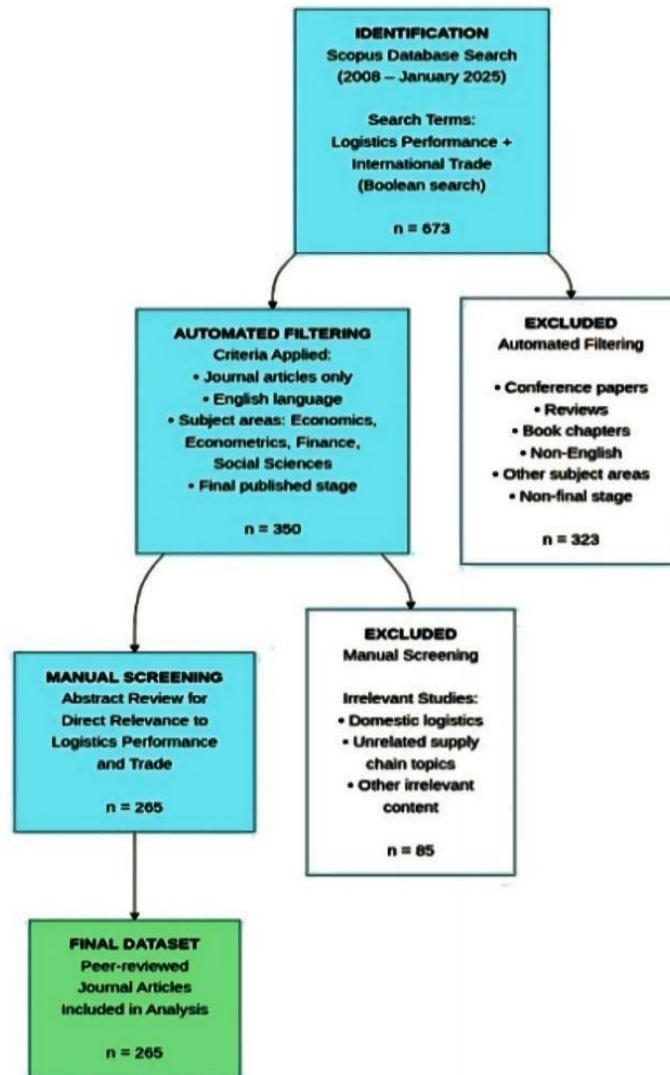


Figure 1 PRISMA flow diagram for article selection [22]

4 Results

4.1 Annual scientific production and citation trends

The 265 selected documents were published in 136 sources with an average of 14.81 citations per document, written by 682 authors with 48 single-authored papers and 28.2% of the authors are international authors collaborating at a rate of 2.92 co-authors per document, showing increasing collaborative efforts. The literature on logistics performance and international trade has expanded since 2008 (the year after the introduction of LPI) at an annual growth rate of 4.16% and peaked at 48 documents in 2024 (Figure 2).

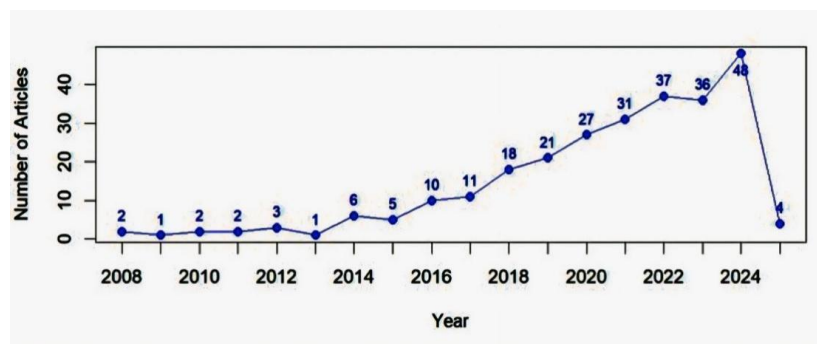


Figure 2 Number of articles published per year

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Mean Citations/Article is the average number of citations per article, and Mean Citations/Year is the average number of citations per year (i.e., the average annual citation rate). The two articles published in 2008 had a mean of 28.5 citations per article and a mean of 1.58 citations per year (Table 1).

Table 1 Average Citations Per Year

Year	Documents Published	Mean Citations /Article	Mean Citations / Year
2008	2	28.5	1.58
2014	6	61.3	5.11
2017	11	31.27	3.47
2019	21	30.38	4.34
2025	4	0	0

In 2014, the higher citation rates make the means inflate, then 2017 to 2019 has an average of 30 per article, 2022 to 2024 is lower because they are newer and have not had time to be cited, and 2025 will have no citations.

4.2 Authors' productivity and impact

The most relevant authors are those who have published the most articles in a specific discipline, or area of study as shown in Table 2. The core and significant authors in the field are: Bugarcic F., Grainger A., Puertas R., Raimbekov Z., Zaninovic P.A., with four articles each, which indicates that the authors have published consistently in the same field, and Dong Q.L., Garcia L., Havenga J.H., Marti L., Syzdykbayeva B., and Turkcan K., with three publications each.

Table 2 Most relevant authors'

Authors	Articles
Bugarcic F.	4
Grainger A	4
Puertas R	4
Raimbekov Z	4
Zaninovic P.A	4
Dong Q.L	3
García L	3
Havenga J.H.	3
Martí L	3
Syzdykbayeva B	3

In Figure 3, shows the author's productivity over time. Dots represent how many papers an author has published (small: one paper; medium: two; large: three plus). Authors with the highest number of citations include Puertas R, Garcia L, Marti L., Grainger A., has been active from 2011 to 2019 and has published four articles. Puertas R., published three articles in 2014 and one in 2017. Raimbekov Z., has been active from 2016 to 2023 and has published four articles. Zaninovic P.A., published multiple articles from 2019 to 2023. Syzdykbayeva B., published three articles from 2016 to 2023. Havenga J. H., published two papers in 2018 and one in 2022. Marti L, published two papers in 2014, which got high citations and published one in 2017.

4.3 Analysis of sources, affiliations, and their collaboration

The most relevant sources are the journals that published the most articles; as noted in Table 3, the top journals include Sustainability (Switzerland) (14 articles), Transport Policy (12 articles), and the Asian Journal of Shipping and Policy (11 articles).

Table 3 Top journals by number of publications

Journal	Publications
Sustainability (Switzerland)	14
Transport Policy	12
Asian Journal of Shipping & Policy	11
Journal of Infrastructure Policy & Development	7
World Customs Journals	7

Relevant affiliation refers to all the universities that have published the most articles, and Chang'an University leads with 14 publications, indicating its active and operating institution that contributes the most articles, followed by IPB

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University with 13 publications, and Beijing Normal University with 11 publications, showing that Indonesian and Chinese universities continue to produce scholarly works. The Dolishniy Institute of Regional Research of the National Academy of Ukraine has nine publications, showing a good number from Eastern Europe. L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University from Central Asia, RMIT University from Australia, and Universiti Sains Malaysia each have eight publications, and Leshan Normal University and the University of East Sarajevo each have seven publications, indicating their evolving contributions. Incheon National University has six publications, indicating South Korea's involvement (Table 4).

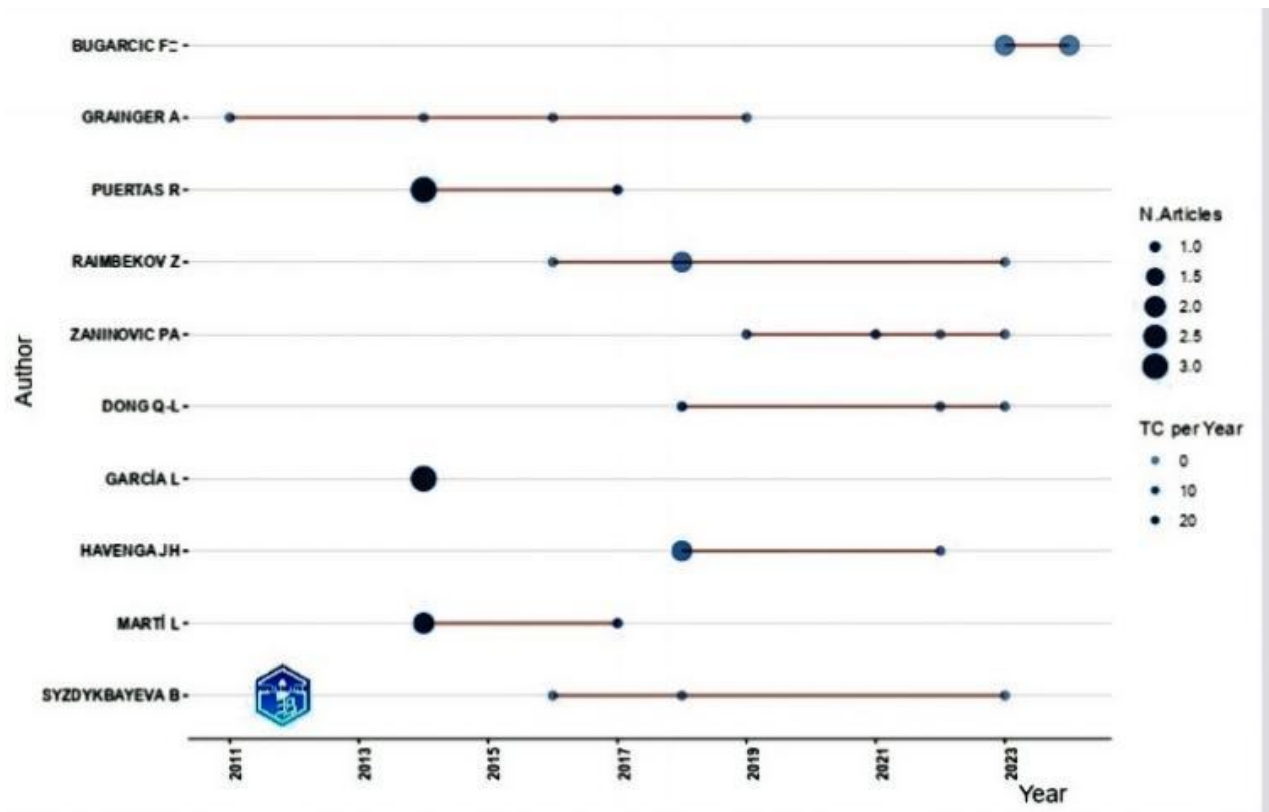


Figure 3 Authors' productivity over time

Table 4 Most productive institutions

Institution	Publications
Chang'an University	14
IPB University	13
Beijing Normal University	11
Dolishniy Institute, Ukraine	9
L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University	8

4.4 Collaboration patterns

The threefold plot visualization shows strong connections among high-impact journals (such as Sustainability), key authors (Dong Q.L., Puertas R., and Garcia L.), and top-ranked institutions (Chang'an University and Universidad Politécnica de Valencia). The institutional collaboration clusters revealed that the institutional collaboration core was observed in the regional research centres and universities (Figure 4).

4.5 Thematic and keyword analysis

There are 1128 Keywords associated with bibliometric research, and 128 items were visualised based on a co-occurrence threshold of 3. It is the overall thematic structure in logistics and international trade. Figure 5 explains that the larger the circle, the more frequency the keywords have, and the closer the keywords are to each other, the more closely they are placed in the distance. These keywords include, for example, economic growth, logistics performance index (LPI), the gravity model, trade performance, and trade flows, all of which are closely related and frequently observed in this context. Seven clusters are presented as follows: Cluster 1 (red): Competitiveness, economic development,

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transportation, freight transport, empirical analysis, the World Bank, and trade policy. Cluster 2 (Green): Logistics performance, economic growth, LPI, competition and regression analysis. Cluster 3 (Blue): Export, global trade, commerce, supply chain management, bilateral trade and comparative advantage.

This study involves export-based trade and supply chain management, and how a country engages in trade to enable trade and internalize comparative advantage. Cluster 4 (yellow): Logistics, shipping, port, maritime and cluster analysis: This cluster is about sea logistics and shipping infrastructure in trade facilitation. Cluster 5 (purple): International trade, Trade Facilitation, Gravity model, LPI, trade flow: This cluster is about promoting trade through trade gravity models based on trade facilitation and LPI. Cluster 6 (light blue): performance evaluation, connectivity, trade and decision making: This cluster is about appraising trade by making informed decisions. Cluster 7 (orange): Sustainability, environmental economics, innovation, green logistics and FDI: It is expected that more research will align trade logistics with environmental sustainability.

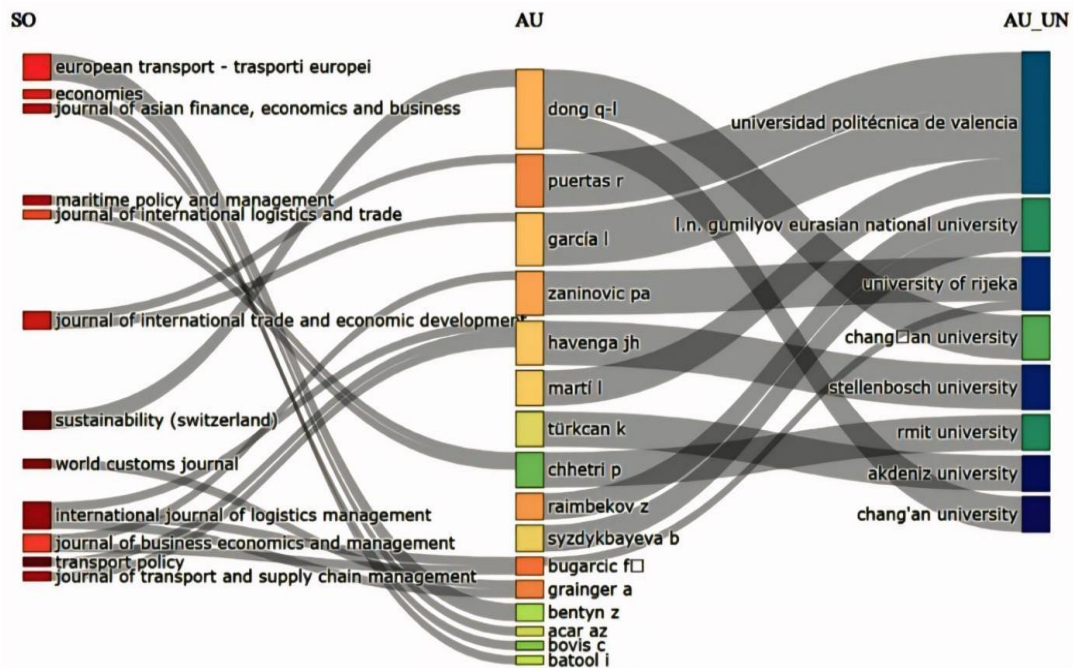


Figure 4 Threefold plot: journal, author and affiliation

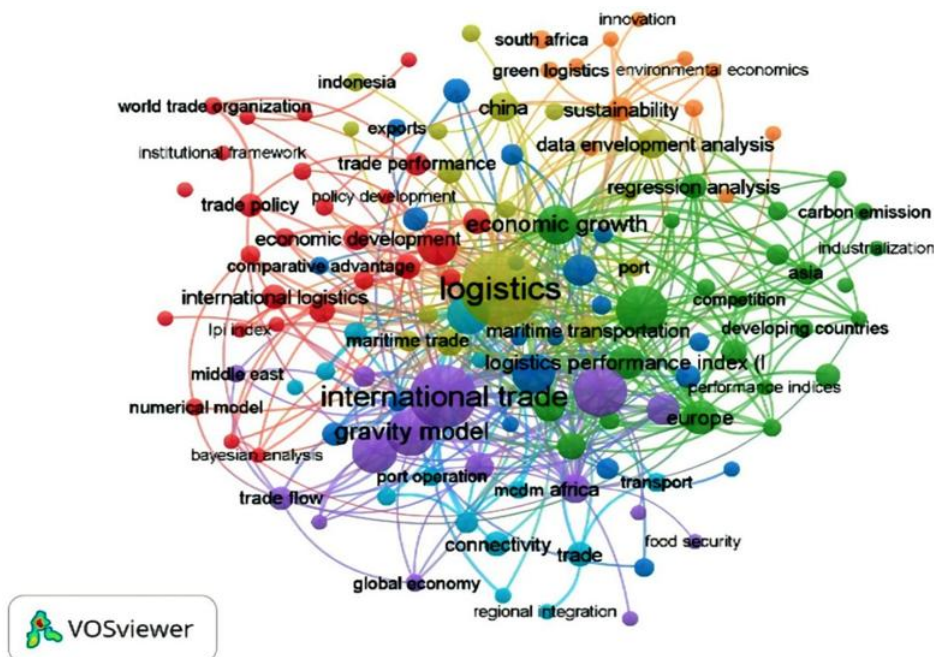


Figure 5 Co-occurrence by all keywords

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4.6 Citation networks, co-citation, and bibliographic coupling

Highly cited journals include Sustainability (Switzerland), Transport Policy, and Asian Journal of Shipping and Logistics, while high-impact institutions comprise Chang'an University (School of Economics and Management) and Nottingham University Business School. The leading contributing countries are China, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States, and South Korea. Co-citation analysis reveals four major clusters of co-cited authors, with Shepard, Puertas, Wilson, and Ojala acting as anchors for the clusters (Figure 6).

Bibliographic Coupling indicates the most strongly coupled papers are related to topics. It shows how two authors are linked based on the references they shared in the research paper. When two authors cite the same references, they are considered bibliometrically coupled. In Figure 7, Node represents an author, and its size represents the link strength or the degree of centrality. The degree of centrality measures the intensity of bibliographic coupling. The colour represents the cluster of authors based on the related shared references. The link between the authors shows shared references; the more links, the more references they share in their research paper. The papers with the highest degree of centrality are as follows:

- Logistics performance and export variety: Evidence from Turkey. Central Bank Review (DC=480) [23]
- Does the WTO trade facilitation agreement actually promote international trade? A Structural Gravity Model. International trade journal (DC=433) [24].
- The role of logistics performance index on trade openness in Europe. International Journal of Economics and Business Research (DC=377) [25].

The review shows that the field is very dynamic and participatory, logistics performance (as measured by the LPI) contributes to the development of international trade, and certain journals, institutions, countries, and authors have become the intellectual and collaboration network centers of the field. The themes have changed to reflect issues of sustainability, digitalization, and resilience in supply chain, which may be considered both scholarly and real-world issues in the logistics field.

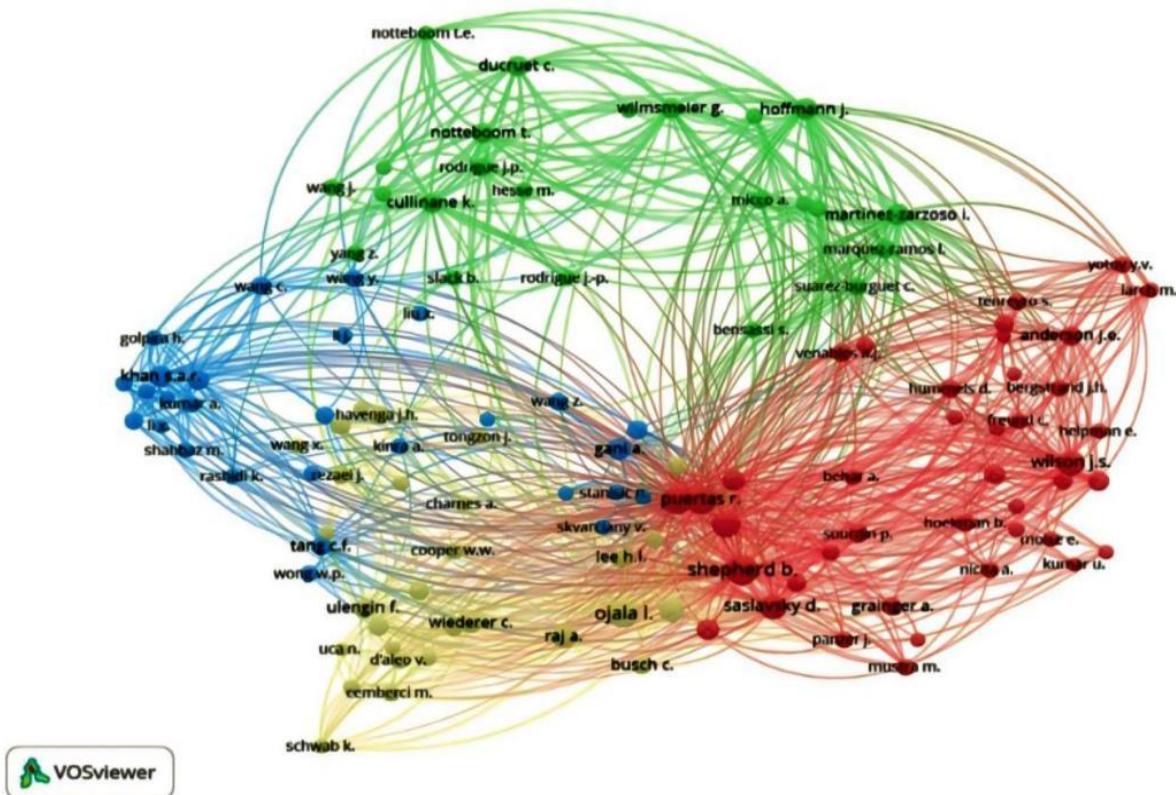


Figure 6 Co-citation network

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the language scope to include non-English literature to capture perspectives from emerging economies and reduce language bias. Linking logistics research to policy and practice, with future studies focusing on policy-relevant mapping to identify research clusters that are most influential in shaping trade facilitation and logistics policy, guiding evidence-based interventions. Conducting in-depth sectoral, regional analyses on sector-specific logistics challenges (e.g., agriculture, which has specific logistics challenges in handling perishable and sensitive goods) to gain insights on trade facilitation in specific commodities.

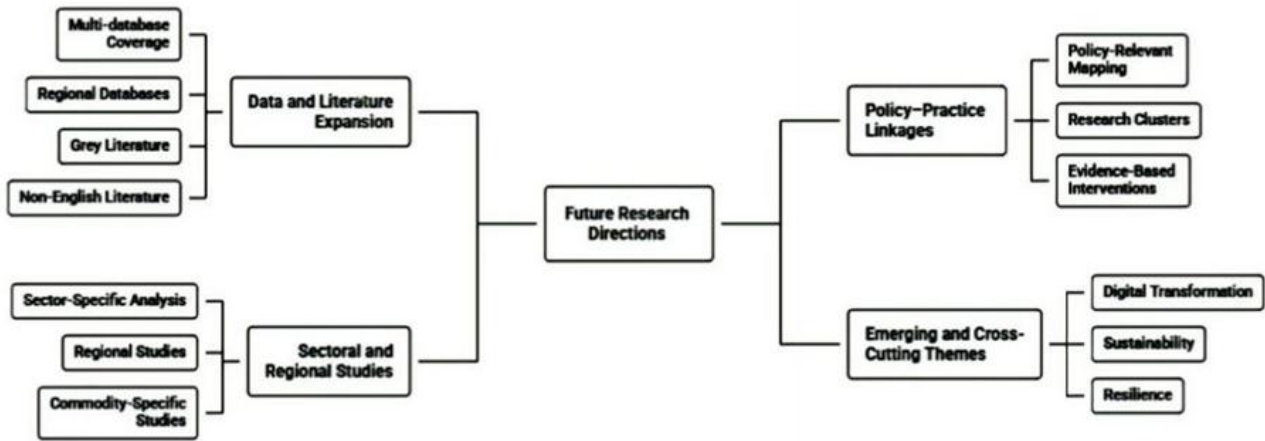


Figure 8 Future research directions in logistics and trade

Finally, emerging and cross-cutting themes provide significant scope for growth, including research on the impact of digital transformation, artificial intelligence, and disruptive technologies on logistics efficiency and trade facilitation. The progress and knowledge gaps in research connecting logistics to sustainability goals, climate action, and environmental policy; and studies of resilience and risk management, including how recent shocks (such as pandemics and geopolitical conflicts) have spurred research on supply chain resilience and proposed integrative frameworks for future disruptions.

5.2 Policy and practical recommendations

Effective policy interventions must focus on optimizing material flows, information flows, and financial flows across national and cross-border logistics systems. This study offers a range of policy and practical recommendations for governments, industry, academia, and international organizations on how they can improve the efficiency of their logistics chains in order to make trade more competitive (Figure 9). Policymakers should invest with data-driven evidence in upgrading hard infrastructure (transportation, ports, warehousing) and soft infrastructure (customs, digital systems, regulatory frameworks, and logistics), removing bottlenecks; sector-specific logistics such as cold chain logistics for agriculture; streamlining regulation reform and simplifying trade processes (regulatory reforms that address customs and border procedures); the digitisation of documentation related to trade (harmonization of standards, transparency, and predictability through digital systems) while strengthening regional and international cooperation (government fostering cross-border collaboration on infrastructure projects, technology adoption and capacity building within regional blocs or along trade corridors such as Belt and Road Initiative, ASEAN, APEC); sustainability and resilience: policies that advance green logistics reducing carbon emissions; energy efficiency; innovation to develop contingency plans and strategies for minimising disruptions caused by pandemics, conflicts, climate-related events.

Digital transformation should be used to invest in technology solutions for the logistics industry and the private sector to improve supply chain efficiency, traceability, and responsiveness; to pilot and scale innovative logistics solutions via public-private partnerships; to continuously upgrade skills by providing workforce training in digital and green logistics, supply chain risk management, and emerging trade facilitation standards; to align research agendas with policy and market needs; to focus more on areas underrepresented in the literature, such as agricultural logistics, sustainability in trade, and regional comparative studies; to disseminate research findings in accessible formats for non-academic stakeholders to support evidence-based decision-making; to foster multidisciplinary and cross-sector collaboration, including interdisciplinary teams that integrate logistics, economics, environmental science, and technology; and to engage in international collaboration to widen perspectives and promote global research equity.

Finally, international and multilateral organisations can help by directing funding and technical support to countries wishing to modernize logistics infrastructure and regulatory environments, with a special focus on the least developed and landlocked countries. If implemented, these recommendations can help stakeholders develop more efficient, resilient, and sustainable logistics systems, which would support international trade and broader economic development.

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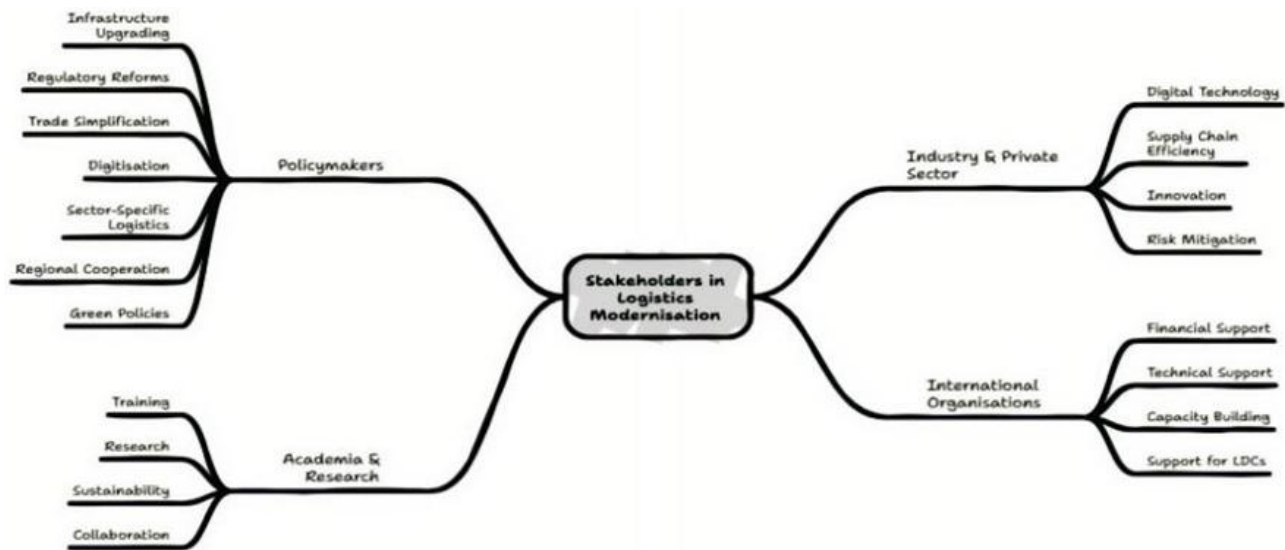


Figure 9 Policy and practical recommendations for logistics and trade

6 Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive bibliometric mapping of global research on logistics performance and international trade based on 265 peer-reviewed Scopus-indexed articles published between 2008 and 2025. The findings reveal a sustained growth in scholarly attention following the introduction of the Logistics Performance Index and highlight logistics efficiency, trade facilitation, transport infrastructure, and supply chain management as core research themes. The study identifies emerging directions related to sustainability, green logistics, digitalization, and supply chain resilience, reflecting the increasing complexity of global logistics systems. From a scientific perspective, the study contributes to logistics research by consolidating fragmented knowledge and clarifying the intellectual structure of logistics-focused trade studies. From a practical and policy standpoint, the findings emphasize the importance of investing in both hard and soft logistics infrastructures to enhance trade competitiveness, increase the ease of doing of business by simplifying regulations, digitisation, and directing international funding to logistically not strong countries of the world. Despite limitations related to database coverage and language restrictions, the study offers a robust foundation for future logistics research that integrates policy relevance, technological change, and sustainability considerations.

The bibliometric evidence generated in this study offers practical value for policymakers and logistics practitioners by identifying dominant research streams and emerging priorities in logistics performance and trade facilitation. These insights can support evidence-based infrastructure investment, regulatory reform digitisation, and supply chain strategy development in both developed and developing economies.

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Review process

Single-blind peer review process.

