A Scientometric Study: The Trends of Legal Officers and Abuse of Citizens' Rights

Musramaini Mustapha[1*], Suria Fadhillah Md Pauzi[2], Azniza Ahmad Zaini[3],
Mohd Firdaus Habib Mohd[4], Shamsinar Rahman[5]

[1,3]*Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Pahang, Malaysia.*
[2]*Faculty of Law, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Pahang, Malaysia.*
[4]*General Study Unit, Kolej Komuniti Bukit Mertajam, Pulau Pinang, Malaysia.*
[5]*Faculty of Administrative Science and Policy Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Pahang, Malaysia.*

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

This article analyses legal officers' responsibilities and duties in the context of protecting citizens' rights, notably in cases of public abuse and misuse of power. Legal officers, who are entrusted with upholding the rule of law, play an important role in protecting citizens' rights. However, frequent examples of misconduct and abuse of power on the part of these officers raise serious concerns about the impartiality of the legal process and the sufficiency of protection conferred by law to the citizens. Thus, this study highlights some trends related to the issues based on this empirical finding. This article surveys the trends of academic articles on this topic, focusing on the year of publication, country of prolific publishing, productive department affiliations, productive publishers, and productive research areas using Excell for descriptive analysis and Citespace for Scientometric analysis. UiTM's Faculty of Law and Uppsala University's Disciplinary Domain of Constitutional law and business economics are among the research areas that have contributed immensely to this discourse. In addition, the protection of the fundamental rights of citizens is also featured as a significant issue. This study also reflects on various academic outputs captured in the Web of Science (WOS) database. This study contributes to the literature by providing a comprehensive Scientometric analysis of research trends on legal officer misconduct, abuse of power, and citizens' rights. The bibliometric techniques identify key research clusters and offer valuable insights to scholars and policymakers by identifying and discussing gaps from the academic framework.

1. INTRODUCTION

The word "legal" refers to matters pertaining to the law. It signifies anything established by or based on law, whereas the word "officers" denotes a person occupying a position of authority (Hohfeld,1913). A legal officer needs to understand how the public sector operates. In Malaysia, a legal officer can work for the Federal, State, or Local Government. A recent study by McCarthy et al. (2023) stated complaints about

police behaviour and a history of mistreatment, and that communities have likely experienced such misconduct. This is relevant because until recently, communities were less knowledgeable about the aspects of law enforcement (Shjarback & White, 2015).

The relationship between legal officers and the protection of citizens' rights has long been a major concern in legal studies, governance, and human rights. Although the purpose of legal institutions is to safeguard people and maintain the rule of law, there are many cases where the abuse of power by legal officers had resulted in the violation of basic human rights. As legal officers have power or authority, they must carefully observe the law and act neutrally. Simply put, people in authority are tasked to preserve freedom (Samsudin et al., n.d.). In addition, the Federal Constitution of Malaysia safeguards citizens' rights from injustice, especially the abuse of authority by public officials. When public officials abuse their position, they undermine citizens' fundamental rights as outlined in the Constitution. For instance, Article 8 of the Federal Constitution states that all individuals are entitled to the equal protection of the law regardless of their background, status, race, religion, or socioeconomic class (Jayakumar, 1967).

Despite the increasing number of studies addressing this issue from legal, social, and human rights viewpoints, there has been limited scientometric analysis on the topic of abuse by legal officers. Typically, those in positions of power possess the authority to apprehend and detain individuals who have committed offences. However, the evolution of research on police misconduct indicates multifaceted approaches. Bibliometric study in this area is still low (Davila et al.,2023; Cubitt et al., 2020). It is essential to highlight the variability and complexity of these issues across disciplines, for example, using bibliometric studies to show the variations as a higher level of misconduct (Chen et al., 2022). Via a Scientometric study, researchers can map influential authors, countries, and institutions in this domain, and subsequently identify key studies and trends within the academic realm (Putra et al., 2023).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Abuse of Power

Hoeft and Mill (2024) define abuse as a situation in which the punisher, or the party enforcing the rules, fails to adhere to the same standards or rules that they have imposed on others. Meanwhile, Hoeft et al. (2019) delineate abuse of power as a situation whereby those in positions of authority violate the laws they impose on others. Abuse of power also means the exploitation of institutional authority for personal gain (Hoeft & Mill, 2024). Some research addressed certain variations of power abuse, such as the integrity of public officers and the moral obligations of public servants in relation to corruption (Rahayuningsih et al., 2022). According to Drummond and Mills (2020), most of the misconduct that contributed to wrongful convictions involved legal professionals, including prosecutors and law enforcement staffs.

2.2 Bibliometric and Scientometric Study

There is a noticeable absence of bibliometrics in existing studies on legal officer misconduct, abuse of power, and citizens' rights, primarily adopting qualitative and misconduct case studies. As confirmed by Zakaria et al. (2023), there is limited exploration of personality influence on ethics within police forces, emphasising the need for empirical study. In addition, bibliometric studies entail both analysis and science mapping, enabling scholars to visualise across holistic dimensions such as research centres, journals, and geographic regions (Argumedo et al., 2021). This study aims to fill this gap in scientometric analysis on the abuse of citizens' rights by legal officers. The objectives of this study are to analyse the growth of academic publications in this area over the past 10 years, to identify the key authors and research areas, and to assess research on this topic by country. The analysis provides valuable insights for future research, policymaking, and advocacy efforts aimed at addressing citizen rights abuse by legal authorities. This study may provide a qualitative comprehension of the evolution of academic focus on this subject, the geographic distribution of the studies, prominent institutions, and the multidisciplinary characteristics of the research. This article is structured as follows: Section 1 delivers the introduction. Section 2 provides a detailed description of the data sources and scientometric methods employed in this study. Section 3 presents the

results of the analysis, focusing on the trends in publication, via a comprehensive summary of publication records categorised by departmental affiliations and research areas related to this topic. The final section offers the concluding remarks and recommendations for future research.

3. METHODOLOGY

The Clarivate Web of Science (WOS) database was used to identify scholarly articles, specifically on the misuse of power by legal officers and its implications on citizens' rights. The research procedure is structured in the following manner: Phase I entails the selection of the topics and assessment of the articles based on their level of validity. Phase II involves the assessment of the articles to ascertain their suitability. Ultimately, Phase III entails the selection of the final articles from the WOS database. Figure 1 depicts the flowchart of the research procedure. Nik et al. (2023) used the WOS and Scopus databases to analyse the current literature on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on labour difficulties in Asian nations. Overarching trends and conclusions from research in any field or subject can be found using descriptive content analysis, a methodological compilation technique (Minary et al., 2019). Using Microsoft Excel, the researchers used descriptive analysis to manage and interpret data collected from databases such as the Web of Science Core Collection (Wang, 2024). The studies retrieved from the WOS database were analysed and summarised using a structured methodology. Data was retrieved from the database on August 31, 2024, focusing exclusively on articles written in the English language. The scientific analysis of the WOS articles was conducted using the CiteSpace software, while the descriptive dataset was analysed using Microsoft Excel 365. The total number of articles retrieved from the search query ("Legal officers" AND "abuse" OR "citizens' rights") decreased from 584 to 442. CiteSpace utilises many technical principles to produce scientometric analysis, encompassing the progression of research clusters and the sum of most cited articles. Understanding the relationships between different clusters is crucially dependent on the mean status, which is essential for identifying current publication patterns.
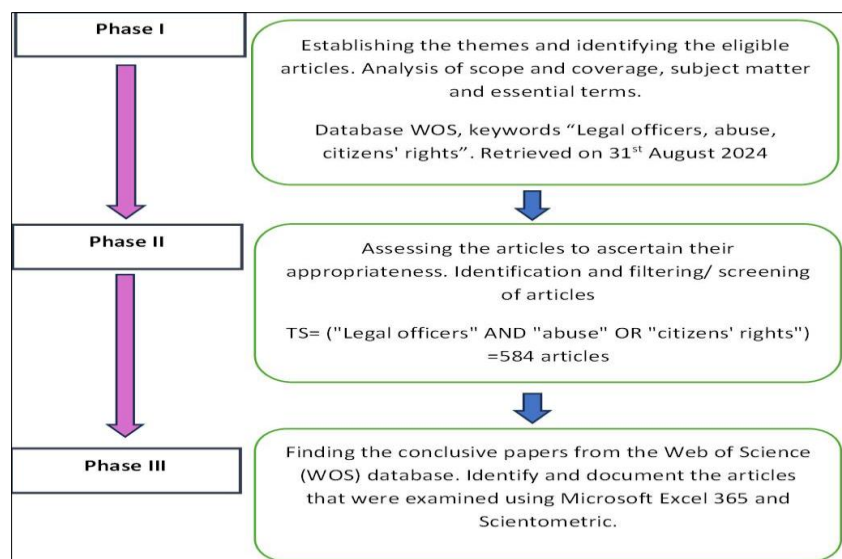

Fig. 1. The research methodological flowchart

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

A total of 442 articles were selected based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. However, only studies published within the last ten years (2014–2024) were included in the analysis as presented in the graph. According to Wang et al. (2018), ten years is often favoured in bibliometric research studies because it

allows substantial temporal observation trends and evolution in scholarly discussion. Thus, Figure 2 illustrates the gradual and substantial increase in publication trends on this topic from 2014 to 2024. It ensures clarity and emphasises the subset of articles (286) analysed within the given period out of a total of 442 articles identified via the WOS database. The highest number of publications was in 2021 with 41 articles, accounting for 9.3 percent out of the total 442 articles. Therefore, it is anticipated that there will be a greater degree of vulnerability in 2024, as the situation has not been resolved. These studies collectively improve our understanding that the balance between state power and citizens' rights is crucial for safeguarding citizens from abuse, as emphasised by the constitutional theory that the state must legislate, administer, and enforce laws to maintain fundamental rights (Zhang, 2014).

Addressing top publishing countries in any field of research is essential, for example, to understand the global landscape and progress in that area of knowledge. Sweileh et al. (2016) mentioned in their study that understanding which countries are leading in publication proves how collaboration in research may be shaped and directed to international cooperation among researchers. This study identified 22 articles from the top 10 publishing countries within ten years (2014-2024). Figure 3 shows that the US publishes the most articles on this topic with 78 (17.6%) publications. England comes in second with 49 (11%) publications, followed by Italy and Russia each with 21 (4.7%) publications. Emphasising affiliation with a particular university in the research area can significantly impact research output (Stranges & Vouri., 2017). In addition, the findings can illuminate various aspects, such as the impact on scholarly output, visibility, and research initiatives (García & Rodríguez., 2020). This study identified a total of 25 articles from the top 10 affiliations within ten years (2014-2024). Figure 4 presents a comprehensive summary of the publication records, categorised by departmental affiliations. It provides valuable insights into the research impact and collaboration patterns of the most prominent institutions in the WOS database. Uppsala University Disciplinary Domain of Humanities and Social Sciences is revealed as the institution with the highest number of publications, i.e., 3 publications. This is followed by other universities with two publications each, including the Faculty of Law at Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) in Malaysia. According to Mahala and Singh (2020), a leading publisher within WOS represents high-quality journals used in peer review standards and is recognised for their credibility in a given field of study. A total of 25 publishers is among the top ten recorded within the last ten years. Figure 5 presents the leading publishers in the WOS database relevant to this topic. The top three journal publishers are Taylor & Francis, Sage, and Wiley, with publications ranging from 30 to 67 (6.7% to 15%).
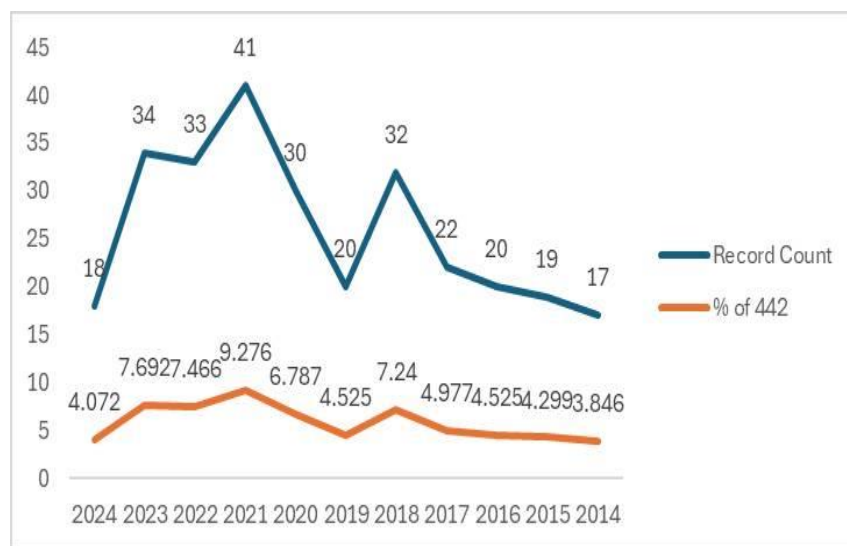

Fig. 2. Publications from 2014 to 2024
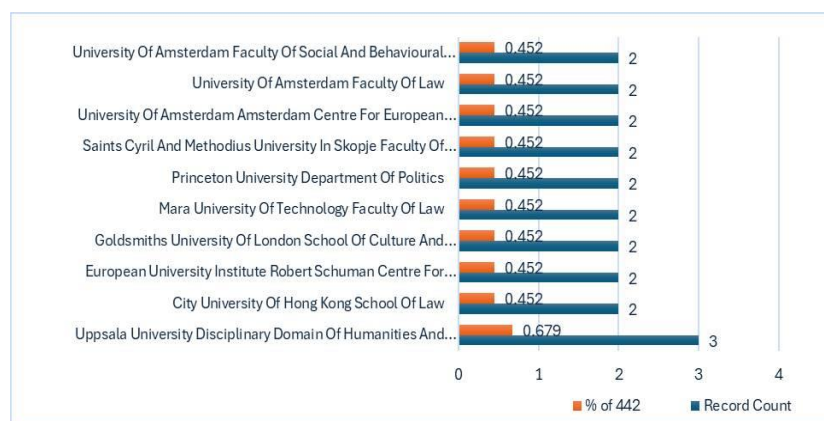
Fig. 3. Top publishing countries

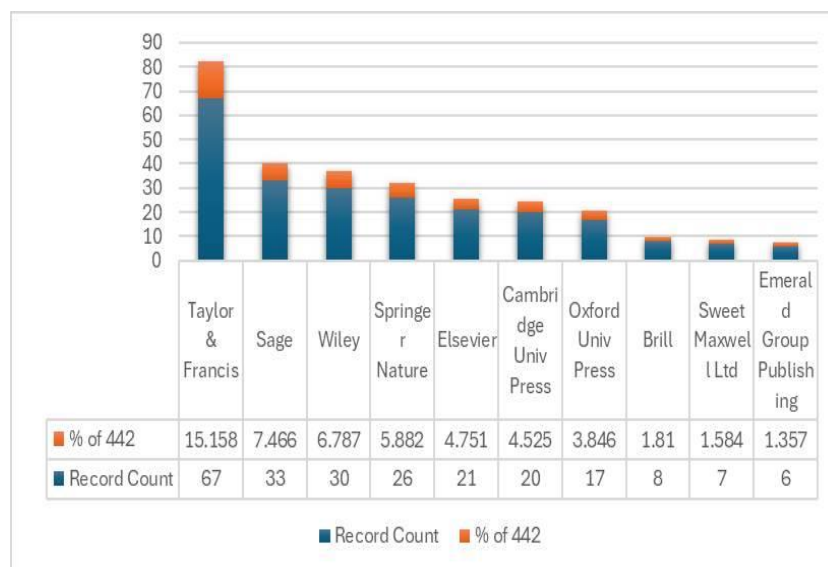**Fig. 4.** Department/affiliations

Fig. 5. Productive publishers

A recent study addresses how research can help identify the strengths and weaknesses within fields by facilitating leading experts and research institution domains (Persad et al., 2024). Figure 6 displays 10 research areas related to this topic. Most of the publications are on government law, i.e., 180 articles (40.7%), followed by social sciences and other topics with 40 articles (9%), and public administration with 34 articles (7.7%). The research areas are critical for advancing knowledge and fostering innovation across various fields.
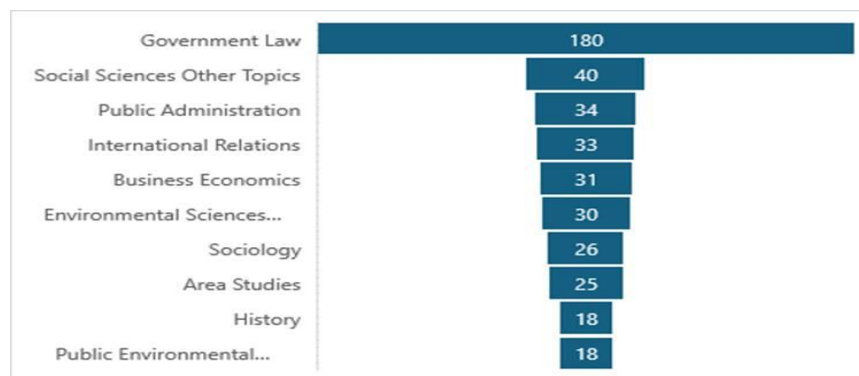

Fig. 6. Top 10 research areas

4.2 Scientometric Analysis

Research clusters are able to identify emerging researchers by established leaders, promote the dissemination of knowledge, and help uncover patterns within academic networks (Wulandari et al., 2024). Figure 7 shows that the research clusters align with the trends from 2014 to 2024. Research Cluster 5 focuses on citizen rights, a trend that primarily involves discussions from the perspectives of officers, administrators, legal prosecutors, and domain information. The current trend in 2024 stems from several research clusters, including Cluster 0 on human rights, Cluster 1 on post-modern legislation, Cluster 2 on news reporting, Cluster 6 on immigrants, and Cluster 9 on contradictions. Several important aspects describe scientometric analysis, showing how well it works in identifying important patterns and trends in the literature on construction management and how these techniques can be used to achieve different research goals (Xu et al., 2022).
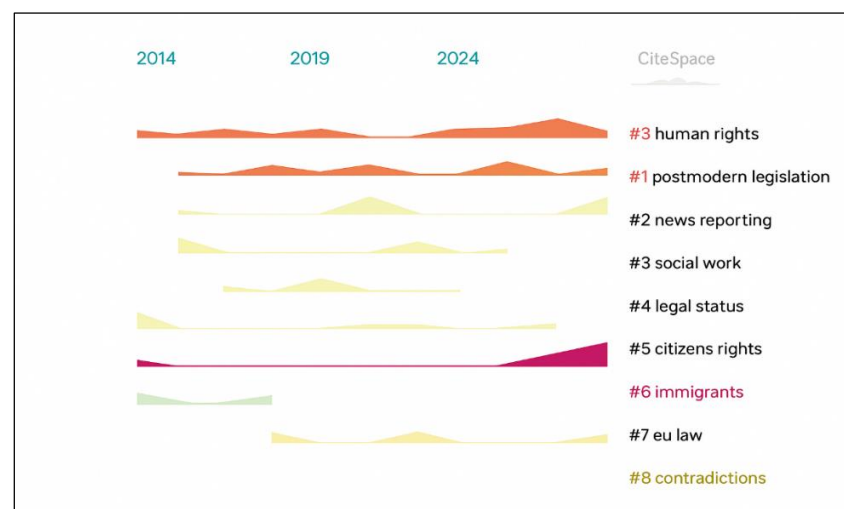

Fig. 7. Research clusters

5. CONCLUSION

This study provides mapping research using scientometric analysis on misconduct and power abuse by legal officers and citizens' rights, extracting secondary data from Web of Science (WOS) and analysing it using CiteScape AI. The results highlight research trends and influential works such as affiliations and countries in this area. Web of Science offers high-quality indexed literature (Mo et al., 2024). Due to Citespace AI's compatibility with WOS, this analysis did not include other databases such as Scopus, Google Scholar, and Directory of Open Access Journals (DOA). However, despite the abovementioned limitations, this study's finding contributes to applying scientometric methods to law studies where traditional literature dominates.

A Scientometric review provides the necessary basis for understanding prevailing trends and gaps in research on the abuse of citizens' rights by legal officers. Key patterns are identified in the geographic distribution of the literature, institutional contributions, and thematic focus of the research. The fact that the number of publications has significantly grown over the last decade, with a notable contribution from the United States and the United Kingdom, already indicates increased international awareness of the problem. Two significant spheres of research touch upon government law and business economics, making a high overall contribution to the debate on the abuse of authority in law. This shows that the subject matter under discussion can be interdisciplinary, combining public administration, law, and social sciences.

The findings are significant in assisting policymakers and other stakeholders in reforming legal institutions. The clustering of the studies under the subjects of citizen rights, human rights, and post-modern legislation indicates the need to address the power imbalance between the state and its citizens. The notable research productivity of the institutions, such as UiTM's Faculty of Law and Uppsala University's Disciplinary Domain of Humanities and Social Sciences, demonstrates the critical contribution of academia to the scrutiny of legal abuse.

Yet, despite these contributions, significant research gaps remain. Foremost among these gaps is an empirical thrust into what would amount to a comprehensive study of the current mechanisms of accountability for legal officers. Other areas that may require further research include the effect of oversight reforms on the behaviour of law enforcement authorities to come up with tangible proof that such measures may bring about changes. Thus, the knowledge can help shape a better legal governance to address misconduct and ensure accountability in the legal profession.

6. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEACH

Future research could be enriched by greater methodological diversity, including more in-depth qualitative analyses into the lived experiences of victims of legal authority abuse. This would complement the existing quantitative analyses and provide a more holistic understanding of the systemic issues involved. Furthermore, the geographic skew of research outputs indicates a need for greater focus on developing nations where legal abuses may be underreported but are potentially more prevalent. Conclusively, while this scientometric analysis lays the bedrock towards understanding the academic landscape of legal authority abuse, it also reveals the urgent need for further research to directly assist policy and legal reforms. It will be important to respond to these gaps so as to strengthen the protection of citizens' rights worldwide.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors agree that this research was conducted in the absence of any self-benefits, commercial or financial conflicts and declare the absence of conflicting interests.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

The authors confirmed that there is no conflict of interest in this article. Azniza Ahmad Zaini, Mohd Firdaus Habib Mohd and Shamsinar Rahman carried out the fieldwork and prepared the literature review. Musramaini Mustapha and Suria Fadhillah Md Pauzi wrote the research methodology and performed the statistical analysis and interpretation of the results.

REFERENCES

Argumedo-García, M., Salas-Navarro, K., Acevedo-Chedid, J., & Ospina-Mateus, H. (2021). Bibliometric analysis of the potential of technologies in the humanitarian supply chain. Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity, 7(4), 232. https://doi.org/10.3390/joitmc7040232

Chen, P., Li, X., Su, Z., Tang, Y., Ma, Y., Ng, C. H., … & Xiang, Y. (2022). Characteristics of global retractions of schizophrenia-related publications: a bibliometric analysis. Frontiers in Psychiatry, 13. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyt.2022.937330

Cubitt, T., Wooden, K., Kruger, E., & Kennedy, M. (2020). A predictive model for serious police misconduct by variation of the theory of planned behaviour. The Journal of Forensic Practice, 22(4), 251-263. https://doi.org/10.1108/jfp-08-2020-0033

Davila et al. "Public perceptions of the police and violence: an examination of both sides of the issue" Policing an international journal (2023) doi:10.1108/pijpsm-03-2023-0041

Drummond, C. B. and Mills, M. N. (2020). Addressing official misconduct. The Wrongful Conviction Law Review, 1(3), 270-290. https://doi.org/10.29173/wclawr34

García-García, L. A. and Rodríguez-Salvador, M. (2020). Disclosing main authors and organisations collaborations in bioprinting through network maps analysis. Journal of Biomedical Semantics, 11(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/s13326-020-0219-z

Hoeft, L., & Mill, W. (2024). Abuse of power: An experimental investigation of the effects of power and transparency on centralized punishment. *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, *220*(November 2023), 305–324. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2024.02.003

Hoeft, L., Mill, W., & Vostroknutov, A. (2019). Normative Perception of Power Abuse. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3350484

Hohfeld, W.N. (1913). "Some Fundamental Legal Conceptions as Applied in Judicial Reasoning." *Yale Law Journal*, 23(1), 16–30

Jayakumar, S. (1967). Constitutional Limitations on Legislative Power in Malaysia. Malaya L. Rev., 9(1), 96.

Mahala, A. and Singh, R. (2021). Research output of indian universities in sciences (2015–2019): a scientometric analysis. Library Hi Tech, 39(4), 984-1000. https://doi.org/10.1108/lht-09-2020-0224

McCarthy, B., Hagan, J., Herda, D., & Skogan, W. G. (2023). The past as prologue: police stops and legacies of complaints about neighborhood police misconduct. Race and Justice, 14(4), 518-542. https://doi.org/10.1177/21533687221140553

Minary, L., Trompette, J., Kivits, J., Cambon, L., Tarquinio, C., & Alla, F. (2019). Which design to evaluate complex interventions? toward a methodological framework through a systematic review. BMC Medical Research Methodology, 19(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12874-019-0736-6

Mo, L., Sia, C., Lin, W., Zheng, X., & Peng, K. (2024). Describing and mapping the research trend of scientific publications on arrhythmogenic right ventricular cardiomyopathy across four decades: a bibliometric analysis. Clinical Cardiology, 47(12). https://doi.org/10.1002/clc.70051

Nik Farzana N.N.S & Suriyani M. (2023). A Systematic Literature Review on the Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Labour Issues in Asian Countries. *Gading Journal for Social Sciences, Volume 26, Number1, 2023, 65-80*

Putra, A., Juansih, J., & Mudzakkir, M. F. (2023). 20 years of performance in police organization: a bibliometric analysis. RSF Conference Series: Business, Management and Social Sciences, 3(3), 216-226. https://doi.org/10.31098/bmss.v3i3.666

Rahayuningsih, I., Suryanto, S., Suhariadi, F., & Hadi, C. (2022). The meaning of integrity among public officers: a phenomenology study. Journal of Educational, Health and Community Psychology, 11(4), 855. https://doi.org/10.12928/jehcp.v11i4.24505

Samsudin, I. S., Rajamanickam, R., & Nordin, R. (n.d.). Specific Legal Provision on Pre-Charge Detention for Further Offences: A Viewpoint of Police Enforcement in Malaysia. *Number 1 Salus Journal*, *10*(1), 20–44.

Shjarback, J. A. and White, M. D. (2015). Departmental professionalism and its impact on indicators of violence in police–citizen encounters. Police Quarterly, 19(1), 32-62. https://doi.org/10.1177/1098611115604449

Stranges, P. M. and Vouri, S. M. (2017). Impact of co-investigators on pharmacy resident research publication. Pharmacy Practice, 15(2), 928-928. https://doi.org/10.18549/pharmpract.2017.02.928

Wang, J. (2024). Comparison of r and excel in the field of data analysis. Journal of Electronic Research and Application, 8(3), 178-184. https://doi.org/10.26689/jera.v8i3.7226

Wang, L., Xue, X., Zhang, Y., & Luo, X. (2018). Exploring the emerging evolution trends of urban resilience research by scientometric analysis. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 15(10), 2181. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph15102181

Wulandari, W., Judijanto, L., & Pardede, M. (2024). Network analysis of research collaboration in the study of social conflict and peace in society. West Science Social and Humanities Studies, 2(02), 332-338. https://doi.org/10.58812/wsshs.v2i02.686

Xu, H., Chang, R., Pan, M., Li, H., Liu, S., Webber, R., … & Dong, N. (2022). Application of artificial neural networks in construction management: a scientometric review. Buildings, 12(7), 952. https://doi.org/10.3390/buildings12070952

Zakaria, N. Z., Osman, I., & Noranee, S. (2023). The influence of personality traits on ethical behavior of police: the mediating effect of ethical leadership. Information Management and Business Review, 15(4(SI)I), 138-145. https://doi.org/10.22610/imbr.v15i4(si)i.3585

Zhang, D. Y. (2014). Study on the behavioral logic of personal information protection in the view of constitution. Advanced Materials Research, 971-973, 1768-1771. https://doi.org/10.4028/www.scientific.net/amr.971-973.1768

About the Authors

Musramaini Mustapha is a Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Jengka Campus, Malaysia. She holds an MBA from Universiti Teknologi MARA and has over 15 years of teaching experience in business management and entrepreneurship. Her research interests include digital adoption intention, operations management, and entrepreneurship. She can be reached at musra_08@uitm.edu.my.

Suria Fadhillah Md Pauzi is a senior lecturer at the Faculty of Laws, Universiti Teknologi MARA Pahang, Raub Campus. With career dedicated to the complexities of Public Laws,Suria's expertise spans from the concept of natural justice, criminal law to human rights.She leads various innovation project specifically designed to safeguard and promote the rights of citizens in an evolving legal landscape, addressing the legal and social dimensions of among others , rights of citizens against abuse of power of public officers and

bullying, following the landmark enactment of the Anti-Bullying Act 2026. She can be reached at suriapauzi@uitm.edu.my.

Azniza Ahmad Zaini is a senior lecturer in Economics at the Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA (Raub Campus). She holds a Master of Applied Economics (International) from the University of Adelaide, Australia, and Bachelor of Business Administration (Hons.) in Finance from Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM). Her research areas are in economics, economics education, and entrepreneurship. She can be reached at nizazaini@uitm.edu.my.

Mohd Firdaus Habib Mohd, PhD is a senior lecturer at Kolej Komuniti Bukit Mertajam with expertise in regional and urban planning, TVET studies, and English language education (TESOL). His professional experience encompasses teaching, research, curriculum alignment, and student affairs management within the polytechnic and community college system. His research interests focus on TVET institute industry collaboration, regional development, sustainability, governance, and civic legal literacy, supported by active involvement in national and international research, policy-oriented studies, and innovation initiatives. He currently serves as Chief Editor of the Polytechnic & Community College Journal of Lifelong Learning (PKKJLLL) and contributes as a researcher, reviewer, and committee member. He can be reached at firdaus5502@gmail.com.

Shamsinar Rahman is a senior lecturer at the Faculty of Administrative Science and Policy Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Pahang, Raub Campus. She specialises in Public Administration with a focus on Public Finance, Human Resources and Industrial Relations. She is actively engaged in teaching, research, and community projects related to bullying among school children. She can be reached at shamsinar512@uitm.edu.my.