



## Thematic Development Trends in Government Bureaucracy Research: A Bibliometric Analysis Based on Global Databases

 M. Rafi<sup>1\*</sup>,  Muchid Albintani<sup>1</sup>,  Ardiansyah<sup>2</sup>,  Al Fauzi Rahmat<sup>3</sup>,  Alam Mahadika<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Government Sciences, Faculty of Social and Political Science, Universitas Riau, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Department of Law Studies, Faculty of Law, Universitas Islam Riau, Indonesia

<sup>3</sup>Doctoral School of Economic and Regional Sciences, Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences (MATE), Hungary

<sup>4</sup>Department of Ethnopolitics, Kazan Federal University, Russia

\*Corresponding Author Email: [rafy060611@lecturer.unri.ac.id](mailto:rafy060611@lecturer.unri.ac.id); Telp; 082384443780

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### Abstract

The gap and limited global references in interpreting government bureaucracy (GB) studies have underpinned the urgency of this study. The purpose of this study is to identify thematic development trends in articles on government bureaucracy (GB). Through bibliometric analysis using the R Studio package Biblioshiny, this literature review examines articles on GB from 2016 to 2025. Using data from 109 journal articles retrieved from the Scopus database and focusing on subject trends, co-occurrence, thematic evolution, and international collaboration networks. The results of the study indicate that the development of government bureaucracy (GB) research themes reflects the changing circumstances that initially were mostly conducted at the national and international government levels, continuing to spread to local governments with the main subject keywords including bureaucracy, corruption, government bureaucracy, international development, and local government as rapidly growing topics in the study of GB. In addition, this study still has limitations because it only examines English-language publications from the last ten years on social science subjects and Scopus databases. The researcher recommends a more comprehensive data coverage, scope, and various other languages to emphasize the need for increased attention to the study of GB.

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**Keywords:** Thematic Analysis, Government Bureaucracy, Research Trends, Scopus, Systematic Literature Review

## Introduction

The study of bureaucracy has received significant attention in the political and public administration sectors in recent decades (Brierley et al., 2023; Santoso & Lionardo, 2024). In the 2000s, the focus of bureaucracy research shifted from a narrow focus on the internal efficiency of organizations (Peeters & Campos, 2022), evolving into broader questions about public service delivery (Brierley et al., 2023; Zacka, 2022), governance, and policy implementation (Peeters & Campos, 2022; Halling & Baekgaard, 2024; Santoso & Lionardo, 2024). The discourse on bureaucracy in the 21st century represents a crucial effort to address the gap between this diminishing discourse and the continued dominance of bureaucracy as an organizational form in the public sector (Monteiro & Adler, 2022). Bureaucratic studies have since developed rapidly, encompassing several research focuses, including the legitimacy of public administration, the gap between good governance standards and public policy, the moral agency of bureaucrats weakened by operational procedures, and the conceptualization of the state in understanding administrative routines (Brierley et al., 2023; Peeters & Campos, 2022; Santoso & Lionardo, 2024; Zacka, 2022).

Conceptually, various disciplines have defined and explored the study of bureaucracy through different approaches. Still, hierarchically, in the perspective of social sciences and humanities, bureaucracy is usually always based on the ideal type of bureaucracy by Max Weber, such as a hierarchical, rule-bound, and impersonal professional organization (Presuel & Sierra, 2024; Sager & Rosser, 2021). Currently, the terminology of government bureaucracy (GB) has been recognized by several reliable and relevant studies, although there is still no specific definition of GB. *First*, according to a study by Christensen & Mandelkeren (2022), GB are government officials who consistently consider themselves "technocratic trustees." This includes: impartial technocrats who emphasize professional and scientific issues (rather than partisan or ideological interests), make decisions on behalf of society as a whole based on behavioral cues from their epistemic community (rather than from politicians or interest groups), and civil servants with specialized knowledge and skills in serving the public interest (rather than as agents of elected leaders). *Second*, GBs have the characteristic of quickly and accurately determining the significance (importance/value) of a public policy before they are inspired or ready to implement it at the local level (Lee et al., 2023). *Third*, GB, as government officials and bureaucracy are biased in an integrated administrative system because they deal with overlapping and diverse administrative architectures, as well as incompatible and non-concrete (Trondal & Haslerud, 2024). So essentially, government bureaucracy (GB) can be interpreted as a professional apparatus that values technocratic expertise, can evaluate public policies, and must function in a complex environment of overlapping administrative institutions.

Research by Brieba et al. (2024) confirms that Chilean bureaucracy is largely well-developed along Neo-Weberian State (NWS) lines, although not uniformly. Furthermore, according to Trondal & Haslerud (2024), organizational variables have consistently moderated and influenced biased bureaucratic perceptions of government officials' behavior in Norway within an integrated administrative system. However, other recent literature on innovation in bureaucracy at the national level in Indonesia, in the context of the integration of the Research and Innovation Agency of the Republic of Indonesia (BRIN) into a single institution, contradicts the characterization of the NWS (Kardoyo et al., 2025). In contrast to the ambiguous notion of bureaucratic legitimacy in public administration and politics, bureaucracy fulfills various functions for both the public sector and government, which is why bureaucracy persists despite being misinterpreted and portrayed unfavorably by politicians, special interest groups, and the media (Turtz, 2025).

Furthermore, studies of bureaucracy, specifically within various perspectives such as political science, public administration, and government, have also shifted toward different narratives. *First*, from a political science perspective, bureaucracy is perceived as the center of power within a state and a crucial political actor in connecting citizens and public policy (Peters et al., 2022; Brierley et al., 2023). *Second*, from a public administration perspective, bureaucracy is articulated as a governmental organizational machine based on Weberian hierarchy, rules, and a professional civil service that continues to evolve through Neo-Weberian and post-NPM reforms (Kardoyo et al., 2025; Sager & Rosser, 2021). *Third*, from a governmental science perspective, bureaucracy is narrated as a government system run by state civil servants and government officials who are paid to carry out state and government duties at the local, national, and global levels in detail based on the legitimacy of government policy decisions (Lee et al., 2023; Trondal & Haslerud, 2024; Shubham et al., 2021). Based on explanations from various existing literature, it is clear that studies on bureaucracy essentially all have Weberian roots but differ in terms of focus and highlighted symptoms, where the review of studies around government bureaucracy (GB) as the main aspect of research is still very limited and needs to be continuously reduced.

According to Santoso & Lionardo (2024), research on bureaucracy must be conducted with a more comprehensive awareness of the varied phenomena in each country, especially in countries such as Latin America, Africa, and Southeast Asia. Furthermore, because the personal nature of local bureaucrats has impacted central government policies implemented in local institutions, the bureaucracy, as one of the oldest institutions in the government system, often faces intergovernmental conflicts (Lee et al., 2023). Furthermore, gaps in apparatus and organizational capacity have also hampered the bureaucracy from evolving into modern government policies and systems (Shubham et al., 2021). Reviewing the details of government bureaucracy, such as ambiguous and overlapping policies and regulations, as well as incompatible governance, is both challenging and interesting to conduct systematically (Trondal & Haslerud, 2024).

This study is based on the reality of the limitations of global references in providing confirmation of the meaning and terminology of government bureaucracy (GB), with a focus on statistical evaluation based on journal articles with the keyword "government bureaucracy". Therefore, this study aims to conduct a systematic bibliometric analysis of the literature on government bureaucracy (GB) by examining the literature from 2016 to 2025 in a global database (Scopus) that can help understand developments and trends in this field. Several important questions remain to be addressed and explored, such as:

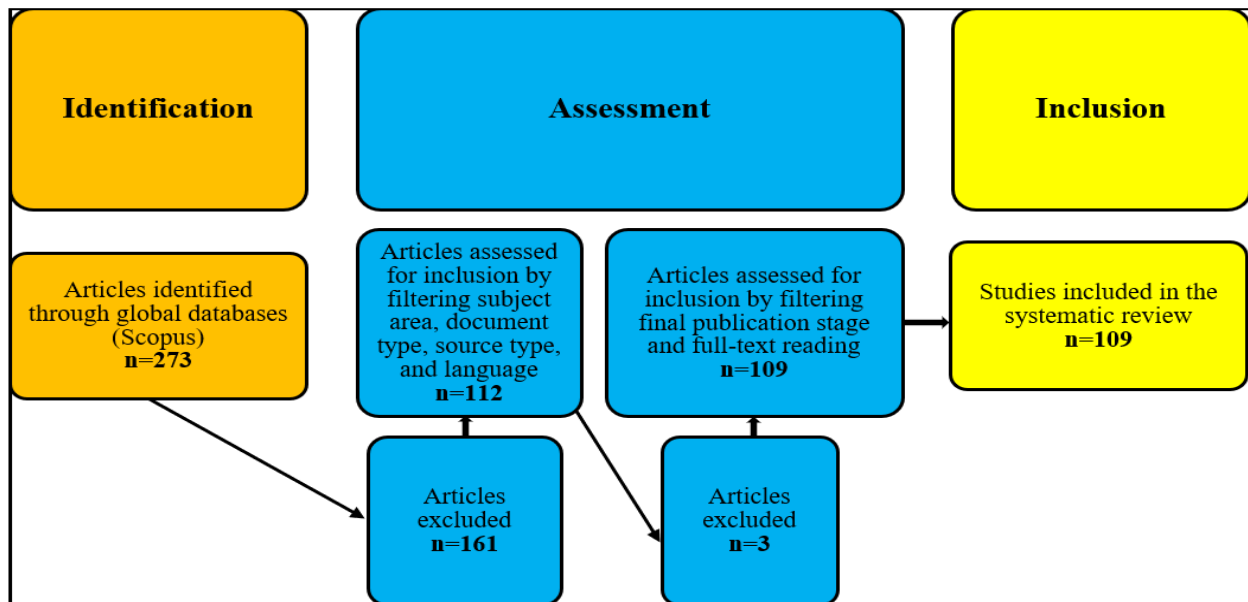
RQ 1: From a governmental study perspective, what opportunities and gaps have emerged in research on government bureaucracy?

RQ 2: Over the past ten years, what have been the developments and discoveries in research on government bureaucracy?

The advancement of global knowledge and literature on government bureaucracy (GB) makes this effort and paper noteworthy. Additionally, this study provides a thorough summary of advancements in the social sciences and humanities that are exclusive to government studies by pointing out areas that need more research. By comprehending developments and trends in the international literature, this study can offer a fuller grasp of the challenges and problems encountered by government bureaucracy.

## **Research Methods**

In this study, the researcher used a bibliometric analysis approach. Bibliometric analysis is an approach to quantitatively analyzing scientific journal articles using references as the basis for analysis. This method creates a statistical model that aims to show the relationship between each study and map important trends and themes in the research (Ardiansyah et al., 2024; Mashur et al., 2023; Öztürk et al., 2024; Santoso & Lionardo, 2024). This study aims to review the literature discussing government bureaucracy (GB). Then, this study followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines for systematic reviews (Figure 1) and began with a targeted search in the Scopus database using specific terms and obtained 273 article documents. The articles were then filtered to 112 and further narrowed down to 109 documents for a comprehensive assessment to determine their eligibility. Therefore, the document analysis focused on 109 articles on "Government Bureaucracy" or "Government Bureaucracies" extracted (filtered) from the Scopus database, a globally significant journal database with a basis for the availability of adequate scientific information (Gromova et al., 2026; Culbert et al., 2025).



**Figure 1.** PRISMA flow and stages. Source: Processed by Researchers, 2026

The detailed stages of each data extraction step used the search terms TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Government Bureaucracy" OR "Government Bureaucracies") AND (PUBBYEAR 2015-2026) AND LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, "SOCI") AND (DOCTYPE, "ar") AND (SRCTYPE, "j") AND (LANGUAGE, "English") AND (PUBSTAGE, "final"). The process and data set were designed to target research articles published between 2015 and 2026, limiting them to the Social Sciences (SOCI) field of study, the article (ar) document type, the journal (j) source type, and the English (publish) language. The study was limited to the final publication stage (publish).

The researcher employed R Studio Biblioshiny, a well-known bibliometric analysis application that is a potent statistical tool for data analysis. Using it, bibliographic data was created into a dataset that provided a logical framework for combining different themes and pinpointing unexplored regions (Pattanapokinsakul et al., 2025). Because R Studio Biblioshiny data is more difficult to alter than Excel, Microsoft Excel was additionally utilized to methodically finish the bibliometric study (Alshater et al., 2022). Data preparation, descriptive analysis, selection of the most relevant sources, local impact of sources, local impact of authors, most relevant affiliations, most cited documents globally, topic trends, keyword co-occurrence, thematic evolution, international collaboration

networks, and data visualization using tables, charts, graphs, and network maps are all part of this process. The extensive Bibliometrix tools in R Studio Biblioshiny were then used to examine and analyze the collected data.

This study followed several important procedures and protocols, namely: *First*, to prepare the data, duplicate data were eliminated, and data entry was standardized. *Second*, a descriptive analysis was conducted, involving the generation of statistics such as the number of annual publications, authors, and publications by journal or country. *Third*, a co-publication analysis was conducted by the researchers, involving the examination of collaboration patterns, where the creation of a network map and a co-publication matrix was part of this procedure. *Fourth*, the frequency of keywords in titles, abstracts, and publications was examined using keyword co-occurrence analysis, necessitating the creation of a network map and a co-occurrence matrix. *Fifth*, a thematic evolution study was conducted to analyze the evolution of research subjects and themes. This included methodologies such as the longitudinal theme approach and dynamic networks (Pattanapokinsakul et al., 2025; Santoso & Lionardo, 2024). In this process and phase, data visualization, involving the creation of graphs, diagrams, and network maps to visually illustrate and explain the findings, was carried out to enhance understanding and communication of the findings and facilitate the understanding of the patterns and trends in the data displayed.

## Results and Discussion

### Result

This section presents the findings of a bibliometric analysis using keywords about government bureaucracy (GB) in 2016-2025 to systematically answer RQ1 and RQ2.

**Table 1.** Main Research Information

Description	Results
Timespan	2016:2025
Sources (Journals, Books, etc)	96
Documents	109
Annual Growth Rate %	10,72
Document Average Age	5,09
Average citations per doc	9,33
References	1004
Keywords Plus (ID)	180
Author's Keywords (DE)	362
Authors	234
Authors of single-authored docs	39
Single-authored docs	39
Co-Authors per Doc	2,18
International co-authorships %	21,1

Source: Data Analysis by Researchers Using R-Studio Biblioshiny, 2026.

Table 1 provides a summary of the data used from 2016 to 2025. During this period, 96 journal articles were used, while 109 documents were generated, with an annual growth rate of 10.72 percent. The average age of the documents was 5.09 years, with 9.33 citations per document. The total number of citations in all documents reached 1,004. There were 180 additional and 362 research keywords in the document content. This study included 234 authors and 39 documents produced by a single author. There were 39 documents with a single author, with an average of 2.18

co-authors per document. Meanwhile, the level of international collaboration was measured at 21.1 percent.

### Most Relevant Sources

The most relevant sources that have published research on GB during the article search are listed in Table 2. The ten academic journal sources shown are the most relevant based on the number of articles published, totaling 26 articles.

**Table 2.** Top Ten Most Relevant Sources

Sources	Publishers	Articles
Governance	Wiley	3
Public Administration and Policy	Emerald Publishing	3
American Review of Public Administration	Sage	2
Asia and the Pacific Policy Studies	Wiley	2
Canadian Public Administration	Wiley	2
Cogent Social Sciences	Taylor & Francis	2
Journal of Financial Crime	Emerald Publishing	2
Journal of the American Planning Association	Taylor & Francis	2
Social Sciences and Humanities Open	Elsevier	2
Sustainability (Switzerland)	Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute (MDPI)	2

Source: Data Analysis by Researchers Using R-Studio Biblioshiny, 2026.

Based on each source (Table 2), the Journals (Governance) and (Public Administration and Policy) top the list with three articles each. This is followed by other journals, including American Review of Public Administration, Asia and the Pacific Policy Studies, Canadian Public Administration, Cogent Social Sciences, Journal of Financial Crime, Journal of the American Planning Association, Social Sciences and Humanities Open, and Sustainability (Switzerland), with two articles each. The Governance journal focuses on research related to decision-making (Kelman et al., 2017), organizational commitment (Resnick & Siame, 2022), and technocratic tendencies in government bureaucracy (Christensen & Mandelkern, 2022). Meanwhile, the Journal of Public Administration and Policy focuses on bureaucratic readiness (Pratama & Imawan, 2019), capabilities and limitations (Acharya & Scott, 2022), and political decentralization and political-administrative relations in local government bureaucracies (Lameck, 2023).

Therefore, this is relevant for the focus on government bureaucracy in the context of government and public administration. Several Editor's Choice articles also represent discussions on GB. For example, the articles titled "Organizational commitment in local government bureaucracies: The case of Zambia" and "A study of the capabilities and limitations of local governments in providing community services in Nepal" strongly indicate that findings sourced from research articles in the Governance and Public Administration and Policy journals have increased the trend of discussions on GB.

### Sources Local Impact

The local impact of the most relevant sources or journals for research on government bureaucracy (GB) is presented in Table 3. There are several journal sources that have the greatest local influence such as: Cogent Social Sciences Journal with h\_index (2), g\_index (2), and m\_index (0.667) which began publication in 2024 and has published 2 articles with a total of 5 citations, followed by Governance Journal with h\_index (2), g\_index (3), and m\_index (0.2) which began publication in 2017 and has published 3 articles with a total of 36 citations, Journal of Financial Crime

Journal with h\_index (2), g\_index (2), and m\_index (0.333) which began publication in 2021 and has published 2 articles with a total of 25 citations, Journal of the American Planning Association Journal with h\_index (2), g\_index (2), and m\_index (0.667) which began publication in 2024 and has published 2 articles with a total of 12 citations, and Public Administration and Policy Journal with h\_index (2), g\_index (3), and m\_index (0.25) which began publication in 2019 and has published 3 articles with a total of 45 citations.

**Table 3. Top Ten Source Local Impact**

Sources	h_index	g_index	m_index	TC	NP	PY_start
Cogent Social Sciences	2	2	0,667	5	2	2024
Governance	2	3	0,2	36	3	2017
Journal of Financial Crime	2	2	0,333	25	2	2021
Journal of the American Planning Association	2	2	0,667	12	2	2024
Public Administration and Policy	2	3	0,25	45	3	2019
American Communication Journal	1	1	0,167	1	1	2021
American Political Science Review	1	1	0,2	6	1	2022
American Review of Public Administration	1	2	0,125	23	2	2019
Archival Science	1	1	0,1	11	1	2017
Asia and the Pacific Policy Studies	1	2	0,1	60	2	2017

Source: Data Analysis by Researchers Using R-Studio Biblioshiny, 2026.

Then, the American Communication Journal with h\_index (1), g\_index (1), and m\_index (0.167) which started publishing in 2021 and has published 1 article with a total of 1 citation, the American Political Science Review Journal with h\_index (1), g\_index (1), and m\_index (0.2) which started publishing in 2022 and has published 1 article with a total of 6 citations, the American Review of Public Administration Journal with h\_index (1), g\_index (2), and m\_index (0.125) which started publishing in 2019 and has published 2 articles with a total of 23 citations, the Archival Science Journal with h\_index (1), g\_index (1), and m\_index (0.1) which started publishing in 2017 and has published 1 article with a total of 11 citations, and the Asia and the Pacific Policy Studies Journal with h\_index (1), g\_index (2), and m\_index (0.1) which started publishing in 2017 and published two articles with a total of 60 citations, also having a local impact on GB research.

### Author Local Impact

Table 4 below then evaluates the local impact of the authors who have made the greatest contributions to the study of government bureaucracy. Bernstein has the highest local impact with h, g, and m indices of 2, 2, and 0.2, respectively, and has published two articles with a total of 36 citations since 2017.

**Table 4. Top Ten Author Local Impact**

Authors	h_index	g_index	m_index	TC	NP	PY_start
Bernstein A	2	2	0,2	36	2	2017
Christensen J	2	2	0,4	27	2	2022
Chwee-MT	2	2	0,333	25	2	2021
Meijer AJ	2	2	0,333	119	2	2021
Abner GB	1	1	0,143	11	1	2020
Acharya KK	1	1	0,2	22	1	2022
Adi PS	1	1	0,333	3	1	2024
Alexander CL	1	1	0,1	11	1	2017

An BY	1	1	0,333	9	1	2024
Anastasopoulou EE	1	1	0,143	50	1	2020

Source: Data Analysis by Researchers Using R-Studio Biblioshiny, 2026.

Christensen, with h, g, and m indices of 2, 2, and 0.4, has published two articles with a total of 27 citations since 2022. Chwee and Meijer, with identical h and g indices of 2, began publishing in the same year, 2021. Both Chwee and Meijer have two articles, but differ in the number of citations, with 25 and 119, respectively. Likewise, Abner, Acharya, Adi, Alexander, An, and Anastasopoulou all have h and g indexes of 1 with an identical total number of articles, namely 1. However, the m index appears to vary on a scale (0.1-0.333) from 2017 to 2024, with a total of between 3 and 50 citations. This shows the contribution to research of "government bureaucracy" during the researcher's defined period over the past decade.

### Most Relevant Affiliations

Based on the most relevant affiliations to research on GB, it is evaluated in Table 5. Based on the total 27 articles, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene had the highest number of published articles (6), followed by Airlangga University (3), Sebelas Maret University (3), University of the Peloponnese (3), Queensland University of Technology (2), Soas University of London (2), The Australian National University (2), Gadjah Mada University (2), Padjadjaran University (2), and Leiden University (2). During the analysis period, these academic institutions have made significant contributions to the production of research on GB, as demonstrated by the results.

**Table 5.** Top Ten Most Relevant Affiliations

Affiliations	Country	Articles
New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene	United States	6
Universitas Airlangga	Indonesia	3
Universitas Sebelas Maret	Indonesia	3
University of the Peloponnese	Greece	3
Queensland University of Technology	Australia	2
Soas University of London	United Kingdom	2
The Australian National University	Australia	2
Universitas Gadjah Mada	Indonesia	2
Universitas Padjadjaran	Indonesia	2
Universiteit Leiden	Netherlands	2

Source: Data Analysis by Researchers Using R-Studio Biblioshiny, 2026.

### Most Globally Cited Documents

The most frequently cited research on government bureaucracy (GB) is presented in Table 6 based on the most cited documents globally (Scopus database). Meijer's 2021 article published in the Public Administration Review Journal topped the list with 116 citations. This article had an annual average of 19.33 and a normalized total citation count of 9.02 (Meijer et al., 2021). It was followed by Sun's 2019 article in the Journal of Business Strategy and the Environment, which received a total of 109 citations, an average of 13.63 per year, and a total of 5.86 normalized citations (Sun et al., 2019). In 2017, Kenderdine received 60 citations in the Journal of Asia & The Pacific Policy Studies, with an average of 6.00 per year and a total of 3.51 normalized citations (Kenderdine, 2017). Sustainability published an article by Apostolopoulos in 2020 with 50 citations, an average of 7.14 per year, and a total of 5.16 normalized citations (Apostolopoulos et al., 2020).

Then, the work by Vel in 2017, published in the Asian Journal of Law and Society, amounted to 31 citations, an average of 3.10 per year, and a total of 1.82 normalized citations (Vel et al., 2017).

Other frequently cited works are Kunnuji et al., (2017) in the Journal of Studies in Family Planning, Diamond (2020) in the Journal of Policy & Politics, Leutert & Eaton (2021) in the Journal of The China Quarterly, Bernstein & Rodríguez (2023) in The Yale Law Journal, and Costa et al., (2019) in the Journal of The American Review of Public Administration with a total and average of 1.82, respectively. This demonstrates the significance of these articles in GB research and their impact on social science disciplines.

**Table 6.** Top Ten Most Global Cited Documents

Article Title and Authors	Total Citations	TC per Year	Normalized TC	DOI/URL
Algorithmization of Bureaucratic Organizations: Using a Practice Lens to Study How Context Shapes Predictive Policing Systems (Meijer et al., 2021)	116	19,33	9,02	10.1111/puar.13391
Monitoring effect of transparency: How does government environmental disclosure facilitate corporate environmentalism? (Sun et al., 2019)	109	13,63	5,86	10.1002/bse.2335
China's Industrial Policy, Strategic Emerging Industries and Space Law (Kenderdine, 2017)	60	6,00	3,51	10.1002/app5.177
Sustaining Rural Areas, Rural Tourism Enterprises and EU Development Policies: A Multi-Layer Conceptualisation of the Obstacles in Greece (Apostolopoulos et al., 2020)	50	7,14	5,16	10.3390/su12187687
Law-Making as a Strategy for Change: Indonesia's New Village Law (Vel et al., 2017)	31	3,10	1,82	10.1017/als.2017.21
Variable Implementation of Sexuality Education in Three Nigerian States (Kunnuji et al., 2017)	30	3,00	1,76	10.1111/sifp.12043
Polycentric governance and policy advice: lessons from Whitehall policy advisory systems (Diamond, 2020)	28	4,00	2,89	10.1332/030557320X15870482509817
Deepening Not Departure: Xi Jinping's Governance of China's State-owned Economy (Leutert & Eaton, 2021)	27	4,50	2,10	10.1017/S0305741021000795
The Accountable Bureaucrat (Bernstein & Rodríguez, 2023)	23	5,75	4,96	yalelawjournal.org/article/the-accountable-bureaucrat
Public Comments' Influence on Science Use in U.S. Rulemaking: The Case of EPA's National Emission Standards (Costa et al., 2019)	23	2,88	1,24	10.1177/0275074018795287

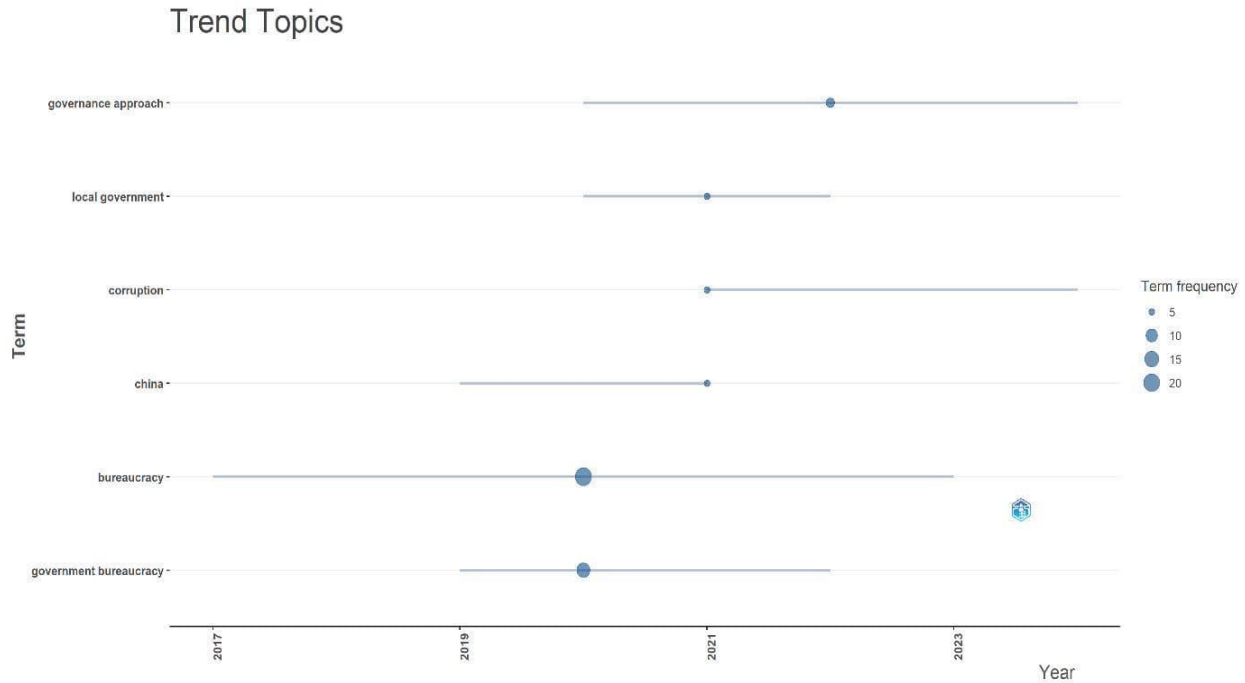
Source: Data Analysis by Researchers Using R-Studio Biblioshiny, 2026.

### Research Topic Trends

Based on the topic trend analysis (Figure 2), it shows a shift in research focus over time. Between 2017 and 2024, research on GB focused on and trended around topics such as

"bureaucracy," "government bureaucracy," "China," "corruption," "local government," and "governance approach."

These topic trends have provided systematic information regarding the transition of studies from the context of bureaucracy and government bureaucracy, which became popular in China, to the subsequent development of issues of corruption and bureaucracy at the local government level using a governance approach.



**Figure 2.** Tren Topics Analysis. Source: Data Analysis by Researchers Using R-Studio Biblioshiny, 2026

Between 2017 and 2024, research on GB focused on and trended around topics such as "bureaucracy," "government bureaucracy," "China," "corruption," "local government," and "governance approach." These topic trends (Figure 2) have provided systematic information regarding the transition of studies from the context of bureaucracy and government bureaucracy, which became popular in China, to the subsequent development of issues of corruption and bureaucracy at the local government level using a governance approach.

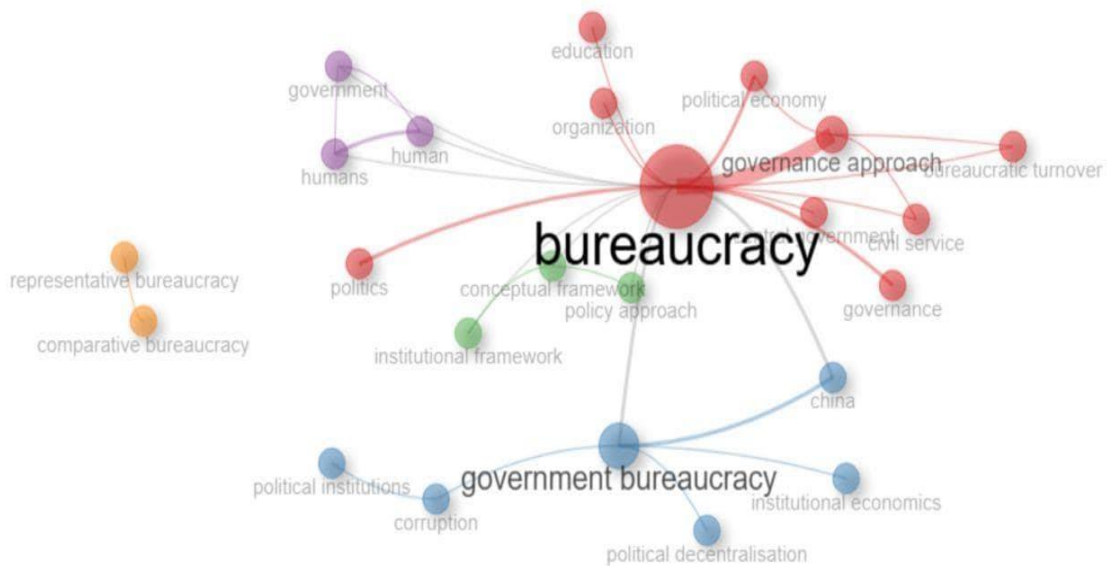
### Co-occurrence Network

Based on co-occurrence network analysis (Figure 3), data on "government bureaucracy" can be divided into five main clusters, as shown in Figure 2. Cluster 1 (blue) includes topics such as "government bureaucracy," "political decentralization," "institutional economics," "corruption," and "political institutions," as well as countries such as "China," among others. This demonstrates the symptoms and issues in the study of government bureaucracy, including the context of political decentralization influencing tensions between bureaucrats and local politicians in Tanzania (Lameck, 2023), China's policy trajectory that places industrial development and technological innovation within institutional economic analysis (Kenderdine, 2017), an investigation of the relationship between corruption and gender diversity in management teams in the small and medium-sized enterprise sector and firm performance in Vietnam (Phan et al., 2025), and the positive relationship

between democratic institutions, government bureaucracy, and the rule of law related to the cost of debt in controlling corruption in countries with low levels of corruption, consistent with the ideas of Transparency International (Tee & Teoh, 2024).

Cluster 2 (green) covers topics such as "conceptual framework," "policy approach," and "institutional framework." This demonstrates the concentration and focus of government bureaucracy studies on conceptual frameworks such as policy approaches and institutional frameworks. In the era of polycentric governance, policy advice is shaped by interconnected actors, but has marginalized government bureaucracies such as civil servants in Whitehall (Diamond, 2020). Furthermore, the tribute system has legitimized corrupt behavior as a dominant social norm, necessitating structural changes to eradicate corruption within the institutional framework of irrigation corruption in Indonesia (Suhardiman & Mollinga, 2017).

Cluster 3 (red) covers topics such as "bureaucracy," "governance approach," "central government," "political economy," "organization," "education," "governance," "civil service," "bureaucratic turnover," and "politics." Cluster 4 (purple) covers topics such as "government," "humans," and "human." Cluster 5 (orange) covers topics such as "representative bureaucracy" and "comparative bureaucracy."



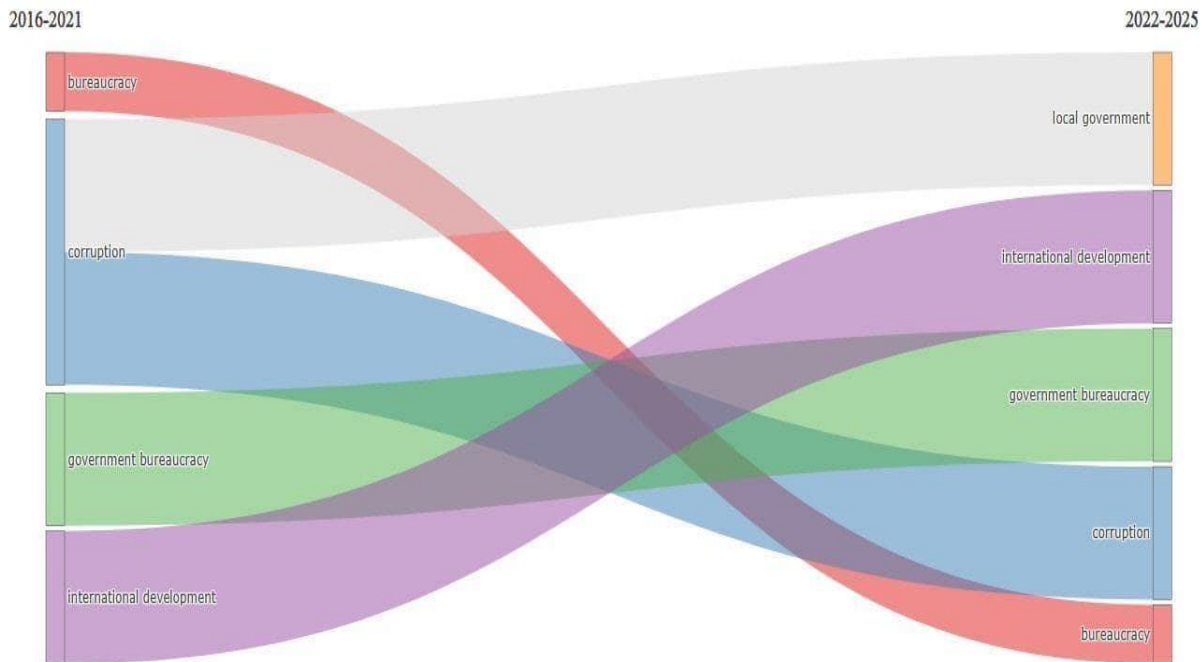
**Figure 3.** Co-occurrence Network Analysis. Source: Data Analysis by Researchers Using R-Studio Biblioshiny, 2026

The first two groups (clusters 1 and 2) represent the symptoms and problems, as well as the framework and focus of government bureaucracy research, while the other groups (clusters 3, 4, and 5) emphasize approaches to bureaucracy, governance, and human resources, as well as comparison and representation of bureaucracy. These two perspectives (Clusters 1-5) complement each other

and provide a more comprehensive explanation of thematic research topics on government bureaucracy (Figure 3).

### Thematic Evolution

The thematic evolution of research on government bureaucracy (GB) over the past ten years is illustrated in Figure 4, which is categorized into two periods: from 2016 to 2021 and from 2022 to 2025.



**Figure 4.** Thematic Evolution of the Research. Source: Data Analysis by Researchers Using R-Studio Biblioshiny, 2026

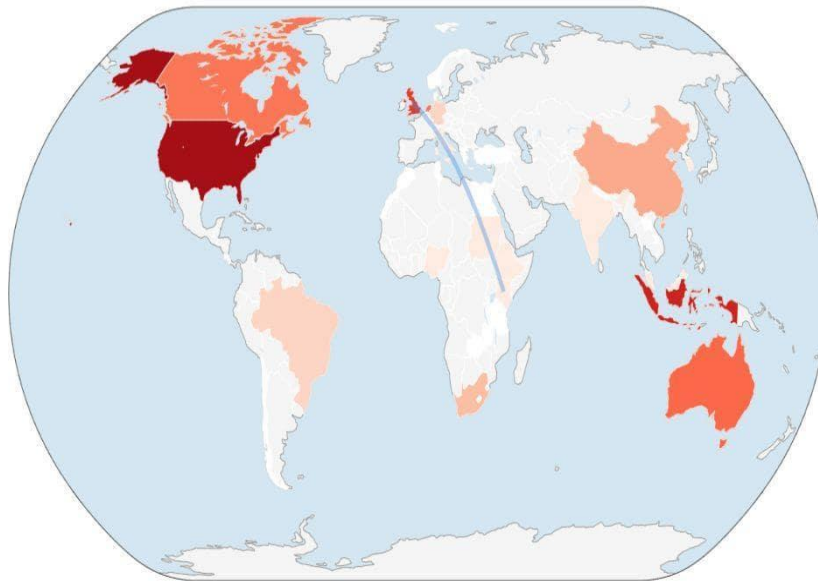
The thematic evolution (Figure 4) of research on government bureaucracy from 2016 to 2021: "bureaucracy," "corruption," "government bureaucracy," and "international development" were the four most frequently analyzed topics. During this period, research primarily focused on the correlation of these concepts to bureaucratic discourse within democratic identity, e-government and corruption reduction in the government bureaucracy sector, and political institutions and corruption control within the government bureaucracy as an effort for international development. Meanwhile, from 2022 to 2025, there was a transition in research focus, with the subjects of "bureaucracy," "international development," "government bureaucracy," and "corruption" remaining significant and important. However, the context of "local government" as a distinct theme began to emerge during this period (2022-2025).

In general, the thematic evolution of research on government bureaucracy reflects the shifting context and the challenges and uniqueness faced over the past decade. Changes in government bureaucracy, initially studied primarily at the national and international levels, have continued to evolve at the local government level. This study shows different results compared to the study by Santoso & Lionardo (2024), which analyzed the shift in street-level bureaucracy (SLB) from specific practices to broader administrative themes such as governance, policy implementation, and public service delivery based on global insights and understanding. However, no study context and issues

in government bureaucracy (GB) were found that fully accommodate the perspectives and phenomena of governance, policy implementation, and digital-based public services at the local, national, and global levels.

### Collaboration WorldMap

Figure 5 shows the international collaboration network in government bureaucracy research, with several countries reporting collaborative relationships in this area, although not particularly strong.



**Figure 5.** Collaboration World Map. Source: Data Analysis by Researchers Using R-Studio Biblioshiny, 2026

Essentially, the international collaboration network (Figure 5) is dominated by the United Kingdom and Kenya, with two collaboration networks. Furthermore, international collaboration between each of the other countries occurs only once: collaboration between Australia and Nepal, Canada and Germany, Ethiopia and Sudan, Greece and Cyprus, India and Morocco, India and China, Indonesia and Sudan, Indonesia and Tunisia, Italy and Egypt, and the Netherlands and China. Visualizing cross-border collaboration is important as a reference point in developing ongoing discussions about government bureaucracy.

### Discussion

The bibliometric analysis in this study highlights various thematic developments and trends in research on government bureaucracy (GB). Research evolution and adaptation are observed through trending topics, co-emergence networks, thematic evolution, and international collaboration networks. The topic trend analysis shows a shift in research focus over time, where the topic of "bureaucracy" started trending in 2017-2023 with a top trend in 2020, followed by a topic trend with the term "government bureaucracy" in the 2019-2022 period which was also a top trend in 2020, the trend of bureaucratic phenomena in "China" in 2019-2021 with a top trend in 2021, the problem of "corruption" in the bureaucratic environment in 2021-2024 with a top trend in 2021, a shift in bureaucratic focus at the "local government" level in 2020-2022 with a top trend in 2021, and

"governance approach" became a conceptual topic trend in 2020-2024 with a top trend in 2022. According to Abner et al. (2020), because government bureaucracy is not the only profession in the public sector, it is crucial to evaluate the impact of positive and negative opinions on all public sector jobs.

Furthermore, although the concept of legal politics and bureaucratic reform in good governance continues to be echoed, the problem of corruption, collusion, and nepotism (CCN) in the government bureaucracy is not caused by a lack of adequate legal protection, but rather because each state civil apparatus (SCA) does not yet have complete and strong characteristics (Asyikin, 2020). Furthermore, a study by Leutert & Eaton (2021) found substantial continuity between the Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping administrations, with Hu's administration relying more heavily on the state bureaucracy to deliver results, while Xi's administration has relied more heavily on party-centered control mechanisms in the governance of China's state-owned economy. Furthermore, corruption issues require policy-based control at a higher level of corruption control supported by stronger democratic institutions, a highly efficient government bureaucracy at the local government level, and the rule of law (Chong et al., 2021). Therefore, to achieve effective local governance, inclusive public engagement, and strong technical and administrative skills, as well as financial resources, local governments have a significant responsibility to consistently develop the capacity and capabilities of government bureaucracy (Acharya & Scott, 2022). Essentially, the transition of these topical trends has offered systematic information on the evolution of studies in the context of bureaucracy and government bureaucracy that are popular in China, and then continue to develop on the issue of corruption and bureaucracy at the local government level using a governance approach.

The co-emergence of research on "government bureaucracy" reveals five main clusters through network analysis. The first cluster covers topics such as "government bureaucracy," "political decentralization," "institutional economics," "corruption," and "political institutions," and countries like China report on political, economic, and institutional issues. Lameck (2023), Kenderdine (2017), and Tee & Teoh (2024) provide empirical confirmation in this research. The second cluster relates to theoretical foundations such as conceptual frameworks, policy approaches, and institutional frameworks within government bureaucracy (Diamond, 2020; Suhardiman & Mollinga, 2017). Meanwhile, the third group includes aspects such as "bureaucracy", "governance approach", "central government", "political economy", "organization", "education", "governance", "civil service", "bureaucratic turnover" and "politics" which emphasizes that the study of government bureaucracy is a study that is always connected to the political sector and public administration (Meijer et al., 2021; Choi, 2018; Brieba et al., 2024; Abner et al., 2020; Christensen & Mortensen, 2024; Shi, 2017; Leutert & Eaton, 2021). The fourth group covers topics such as "government" and "humans," which relate to the significant impact of social capital (SC) and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) on civil servant performance in local government bureaucracies, as well as collaborative issues between local governments, community-based organizations, and clinical service providers to improve human health and well-being in the environmental sector (Pierre et al., 2020; Sutiyoso & Faedlulloh, 2024). Furthermore, the fifth group deals with topics such as "representative bureaucracy" and "comparative bureaucracy," which emphasize the dependence on each citizen's immigrant status, where representative bureaucracy can have varying effects on their level of trust in government (Campbell, 2021). Meanwhile, in countries with gender-representative and impartial public administrations, citizens are more likely to have trust in the bureaucracy (Choi, 2018).

Thematic evolution analysis shows the evolution of research on topics such as "bureaucracy," "corruption," "government bureaucracy," and "international development." These topics remained significant during 2016–2021, but their scope has moved towards "local government" as a distinct theme and evolved in the 2022–2025 period. Fleischer & Reiners (2021), Acharya & Scott (2022),

Resnick & Siame (2022), Lameck (2023), Sutiyoso & Faedlulloh (2024), and Charbonneau & Doberstein (2025) report some of this evolution, where research on “government bureaucracy” has become unique and increasingly inclusive because it accommodates viewpoints and phenomena across multiple perspectives and levels of government. Thus, this can be an important finding related to further potential to be studied in subsequent research on government bureaucracy, along with the visualization of international collaboration networks in government bureaucracy research, which is still minimal and not very strong between countries.

This research on government bureaucracy (GB) identifies several emerging opportunities and gaps, where future research in government bureaucracy should explore several key issues to fill the existing gaps, namely: *First*, it is urgent for local governments to consistently and inclusively develop the capacity and capabilities of government bureaucracy in order to achieve effective local governance (Acharya & Scott, 2022). *Second*, the study of government bureaucracy is a study that is always connected to the political sector and public administration, where "policy approach", "institutional framework", "governance approach", "political economy", "organization", and "education" are crucial concepts, and areas and terms such as "central government", "civil service", "bureaucratic turnover", "government", "humans", "representative bureaucracy" and "comparative bureaucracy" are delegated levels and focus of study that are interesting to further explore in issues about government bureaucracy (Meijer et al., 2021; Choi, 2018; Briebea et al., 2024; Abner et al., 2020; Christensen & Mortensen, 2024; Shi, 2017; Leutert & Eaton, 2021).

Meanwhile, over the past decade, studies on government bureaucracy have been found to have evolved in the context of the evolution of research on topics such as “bureaucracy”, “corruption”, “government bureaucracy” and “international development” whose scope has then moved towards the area of “local government” as a different theme and emphasized the existence of uniqueness with increasingly inclusive studies because they accommodate viewpoints and phenomena in various perspectives and levels of government (Resnick & Siame, 2022; Charbonneau & Doberstein, 2025; Lameck, 2023; Sutiyoso & Faedlulloh, 2024). Thus, this can be an important finding related to the potential for further study in subsequent research on government bureaucracy, along with the visualization of international collaboration networks in government bureaucracy research, which is still minimal and not very strong between countries.

Substantially, the limitations of these various findings and issues are about the potential for inconsistency and lack of uniformity in the terminology of government bureaucracy in each country, which results in many meanings and scopes of bureaucracy. Therefore, the implications of this study are to enhance the literature on government bureaucracy (GB) in governance and public policy studies within a global database, and to encourage proactive governance research on governance such as GB across different perspectives and countries.

## Conclusion

This study concludes that there are opportunities and gaps from a governance studies perspective in research on government bureaucracy. *First*, to achieve successful governance, local governments must continuously and inclusively improve institutional competencies and capabilities in the government sector. *Second*, governance, policy, and institutional approaches are important terms in the fields of politics and public administration that are closely related to the study of government bureaucracy, where interesting keywords and research areas for further investigation are regarding bureaucratic turnover, representative bureaucracy, and comparative bureaucracy at the local, national, and global levels of government.

Meanwhile, research on government bureaucracy has changed over the past ten years within the framework of governance studies, namely on subjects such as bureaucracy, corruption, and international development, with the focus continuously shifting to the local level of government as a distinct theme and highlighting uniqueness to be more inclusive.

The limitations of this study are evident in the Scopus database and the social science coverage used, as it still excludes relevant publications from other databases and coverage. The scope of this study is also limited because it relies on a single database, and the inclusion of research because it only includes English-language publications is still not comprehensive enough in conversations at the local, national, and international levels.

Several potential areas and levels of research are recommended, given the limitations of this study, to gain a deeper understanding of the arguments and disagreements found in the literature on government bureaucracy. Future studies should examine how techniques and subject matter have changed over time, emphasizing the need for broader coverage and databases for greater comprehensiveness, and adapting to the changing environment and challenges of local government bureaucracy.

### **Declaration of Competing Interest**

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

### **Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)-Assisted Technology**

The authors declare that no artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used in the preparation, analysis, or writing of this manuscript. All aspects of the research, including data collection, interpretation, and manuscript preparation, were carried out entirely by the authors without the assistance of AI-based technologies.

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### Authors Bio\*

**M. Rafi, Affiliations:** Department of Government Sciences, Faculty of Social and Political Science, Universitas Riau, Indonesia; Field of Scientific Expertise: Government and Governance; Email: [rafy060611@lecturer.unri.ac.id](mailto:rafy060611@lecturer.unri.ac.id). (<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3775-2014>)

**Muchid Albintani, Affiliations:** Department of Government Sciences, Faculty of Social and Political Science, Universitas Riau, Indonesia; Field of Scientific Expertise: Public Policy and Political Economy; Email: [muchid@lecturer.unri.ac.id](mailto:muchid@lecturer.unri.ac.id). (<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0822-3922>)

**Ardiansyah, Affiliations:** Department of Law Studies, Faculty of Law, Universitas Islam Riau, Indonesia; Field of Scientific Expertise: State Administrative Law; Email: [ardiansyah@law.uir.ac.id](mailto:ardiansyah@law.uir.ac.id). (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1491-3455>)

**Al Fauzi Rahmat, Affiliations:** Doctoral School of Economic and Regional Sciences, Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences (MATE), Hungary; Field of Scientific Expertise: Regional Development and Sustainable Futures; Email: [rahmat.al.fauzi@phd.uni-mate.hu](mailto:rahmat.al.fauzi@phd.uni-mate.hu); (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3114-6884>)

**Alam Mahadika, Affiliations:** Department Ethnopolitics, Kazan Federal University, Russia; Field of Scientific Expertise: Social Movement; Email: [AlRizmi@stud.kpfu.ru](mailto:AlRizmi@stud.kpfu.ru). (<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5206-8769>)