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BIBLIOMETRIC MAPPING OF RESEARCH ON GAZA (2020-2026): A THEMATIC SHIFT TOWARD HUMANITARIAN CRISES

Ahmad Syahmi Ahmad Fadzil^{1*}, Muhammad Zulqarnain Hakim Abd Jalal², Noor Insyirah Mohsin³, Nor Zubaidah Nor Albashri⁴, Ainol Mardhiyah Rahmat⁵

¹Faculty of Business and Management, UiTM Johor Branch, Segamat Campus

 syahmifadzil@uitm.edu.my

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9911-2309>

² Faculty of Computer and Mathematical Sciences, UiTM Johor Branch, Segamat Campus

 zulqarnainhakim@uitm.edu.my

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-7549-05610>

³Faculty of Business and Management, UiTM Johor Branch, Segamat Campus

 noorinsyirah@uitm.edu.my

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-8613-4806>

⁴Faculty of Business and Management, UiTM Johor Branch, Segamat Campus

 zubaidahalbashri@uitm.edu.my

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-7953-2987>

⁵Faculty of Business and Management, UiTM Johor Branch, Segamat Campus

 dhiyarahmat@uitm.edu.my

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2095-5846>

*Corresponding Author

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Abstract:

The Gaza Strip remains a focal point of global geopolitical and humanitarian discourse, yet a systematic mapping of its academic landscape is needed to understand evolving research trajectories. This study provides a bibliometric analysis of Gaza-related research in the Social Sciences and Arts and Humanities from 2020 to early 2026. Findings reveal a sharp escalation in research output from mid-2023 onwards. Geographically, the United States (447 documents) and the United Kingdom (330 documents) lead in volume, while regional institutions, particularly the Islamic University of Gaza (n=65) and An-Najah National University (n=55), are the most productive affiliations. Peer-reviewed articles constitute the majority of the output (70.9%). VOSviewer identified three thematic clusters: geopolitical and conflict-oriented themes (e.g., “Israel” and “Hamas”), humanitarian and sociological themes (e.g., “violence” and “genocide”), and methodological frameworks. Temporal analysis indicates a shift from foundational methodological studies in early 2023 toward urgent humanitarian critique and political event analysis from 2024 to 2026. The study contributes by showing how academic

discourse on Gaza has rapidly pivoted from structural social science frameworks to responsive, event-driven humanitarian analysis, highlighting the need for more transparent, interdisciplinary, and context-sensitive research methodologies.

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Keyword:

Bibliometric Analysis, Gaza, Global Geopolitical Discourse, Humanitarian Crisis, VOS Viewer



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Introduction

This study aims to conduct a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of scholarly articles concerning Gaza published between 2020 and 2026, exclusively utilizing data from the Scopus research article database. The rationale for selecting Scopus stems from its globally recognized reputation as a comprehensive and reliable database for scholarly research, offering extensive coverage of academic journals and conference proceedings (Purwanto et al., 2024). Additionally, the Scopus database is particularly well-suited for this analysis due to its extensive collection of scientific literature, broad disciplinary coverage, and robust search functionalities, ensuring a thorough and consistent methodological approach (Anokye et al., 2025; Zyoud & Zyoud, 2025). This temporal scope and database selection are critically important for discerning contemporary research trajectories and emergent scholarly discourse surrounding the Gaza region within, a systematically indexed and globally accessible scientific repository (Rasyad & Yumitro, 2023). The focus on the 2020-2026 period is particularly pertinent given the significant geopolitical developments and humanitarian challenges that have characterized the Gaza Strip in recent years, which have invariably influenced academic inquiry (Ennouri et al., 2025).

This bibliometric approach will systematically map the intellectual landscape of Gaza-related research, identifying key publication trends, prominent authors, influential institutions, and thematic clusters (Yıldırım, 2025). Such an analysis will provide insights into the evolving research fronts and potential gaps in the existing literature, thereby informing future research directions and interdisciplinary collaborations (Kavakcı, 2025). The methodology will involve a systematic keyword search within the Scopus database, utilizing a single term which is “Gaza,” to ensure comprehensive data retrieval. This targeted approach facilitates an in-depth examination of publication patterns, including citation analysis, co-authorship networks, and thematic evolution, allowing for a nuanced understanding of scholarly engagement with the

region (Yıldırım, 2025). This systematic approach allows for the identification of research foci such as humanitarian crises, reconstruction efforts, and health-related challenges, which are frequently explored in the academic discourse concerning Gaza. This methodology is crucial for understanding how academic discourse reflects the multifarious challenges, such as infrastructural damage and famine, that have impacted Gaza, particularly since late 2023.

Methodology

The methodology of this study is outlined on the following subheadings.

Research Objectives

This study examines Gaza-related scholarly publications through bibliometric analysis. Specifically, the review addresses the following research objectives:

1. The trends of publications regarding Gaza from 2020 to 2026.
2. The documents per year by source.
3. The documents by types.
4. The documents by affiliations.
5. The documents by funding sponsor.
6. Top themes and clusters on Gaza.

Method Analysis

The bibliometric analysis implemented in this study is summarized in Table 1. It specifies the study focus, database source, timeframe, analytical approach, and software tools used to retrieve, process, and visualize the dataset.

Table 1: Method Analysis

Method of Analysis	Sources
Focus of the Study	Gaza
Database Source	Scopus
Timeframe	2020 to 2026 (*as of 20th April 2026)
Methodology Analysis	Bibliometric analysis
Tool implements in Analysis	1. VOS Viewer to develop and visualize bibliometric networks. 2. Scopus AI to analyze research trends on Gaza.

This methodology aligns with established practices for comprehensive bibliometric studies, facilitating a rigor examination of scholarly output (Fahamsyah et al., 2023). The selection of VOS Viewer and Scopus AI as analytical tools is strategic, enabling both visual mapping of intellectual structures and AI-driven identification of research trends, respectively.

Data Analysis

The search strategy was conducted in Scopus using the keyword “Gaza” in the article title, abstract, and keywords, with records limited to the publication years 2020 to 2026 and extracted on 20 April 2026. The search was then refined to the subject areas of Social Sciences

and Arts and Humanities to ensure alignment with the study's focus on socio-political, humanitarian, cultural, and historical dimensions of Gaza-related scholarship. Only records indexed in Scopus were included, and the final dataset comprised 2,537 documents. This procedure provides a transparent basis for replication while acknowledging that the findings represent the Scopus-indexed literature rather than the entire body of Gaza-related scholarship. Bibliometric analysis can be defined as a quantitative research method used to examine academic literature, identify publication patterns, and visualize the structure of scientific fields through the statistical evaluation of publications, citations, and co-authorship networks (Widaryanti & Abdullah, 2024). This systematic approach enables the assessment of scholarly productivity and impact, offering insights into the evolution of research topics and collaborative structures over time.

In this research, the search in the Scopus database began with a single keyword, "Gaza". This initial broad search aims to capture the entire spectrum of research related to the region, which will subsequently be refined to identify thematic clusters and research fronts. This approach permits an initial, unbiased capture of all relevant scholarly output, which can then be subjected to more granular analysis through content analysis and visual analysis. The database utilized, Scopus, is recognized for its comprehensive coverage across diverse academic disciplines, making it an optimal choice for a wide-ranging bibliometric investigation (Supriani et al., 2022). The date extracted is as of April 20th, 2026, ensuring that the most current scholarly discourse within the specified timeframe is incorporated into the analysis. The time span of 2020-2026 was chosen to capture recent developments and emerging research trends following significant geopolitical shifts impacting the Gaza Strip. This specific timeframe allows for an examination of how research foci have shifted in response to contemporary events, offering more complex perspective on academic engagement with the region. (Petrushenko et al., 2023) The subsequent stage of the analysis limited the subject areas to (i) Social Sciences and (ii) Arts and Humanities. This disciplinary scope was selected because these fields are most relevant to the socio-cultural, political, historical, and humanitarian dimensions of Gaza-related scholarship. Combining Social Sciences with Arts and Humanities allows the study to map both institutional systems and human experience, thereby reducing disciplinary silos and providing a broader representation of how knowledge on Gaza evolves across human-centred academic fields. This focused scope also strengthens the relevance of the findings for policymakers, scholars, and humanitarian research initiatives (Tawil & Nada, 2024).

A total of 2,537 documents were retrieved from the Scopus search after applying the selected timeframe and subject-area filters. This large dataset required systematic bibliometric mapping to identify publication trends, document types, country or territory contributions, institutional affiliations, funding sponsors, and keyword co-occurrence clusters. The results of these analyses are discussed in the following section.

Discussion

Publication Trend

Figure 1 shows a raw data visualization of the yearly publication count from Scopus, indicating a notable escalation in research output with a total number of 2,537 documents. The examination of publication trends reveals a significant increase in scholarly output concerning Gaza within the specified timeframe, mirroring heightened global attention and evolving

regional dynamics. From 2020 to 2026, the number of publications demonstrates an upward trajectory, particularly evident from mid-2023 onwards, which correlates with periods of intensified geopolitical developments in the region. This surge highlights the academic community's responsive engagement with unfolding events, aiming to address the complex humanitarian, political, and socio-economic ramifications in Gaza.

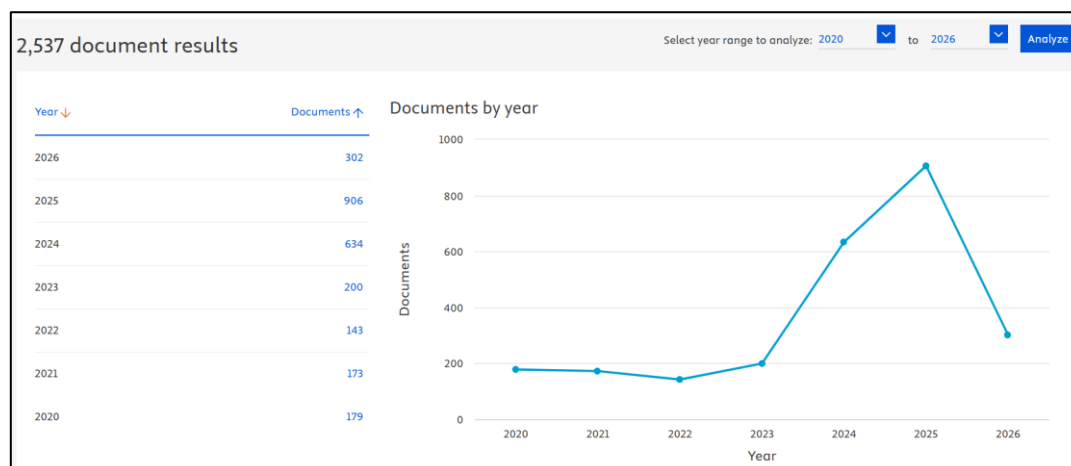


Figure 1: Yearly Publications on Gaza (2020-2026).

Source: Scopus Database - as of April 20th, 2026.

This trend has two important implications. First, the sharp growth in publications suggests that Gaza-related scholarship has become increasingly responsive to current geopolitical and humanitarian developments, rather than remaining confined to long-standing historical or political debates. Second, the concentration of output after 2023 indicates that future bibliometric studies should treat Gaza as a rapidly evolving research field, where keyword patterns, dominant journals, and thematic clusters may change quickly in response to major regional events.

Documents per Year by Source

Figure 2 shows documents per year by source. An in-depth analysis of the documents per year by source reveals the primary journals and conferences contributing to the discourse on Gaza, offering insights into the most influential publication venues within the specified academic disciplines. The longitudinal distribution of scholarly output across the leading identified sources is illustrated in the figure above, spanning the period from 2020 to 2026. The data reveals a significant upward trajectory in publication volume starting in 2023, with the Journal of Palestine Studies and Middle East Policy demonstrating peak activity in 2024, followed by a sharp rise in output from the Journal of Genocide Research reaching its maximum in 2026. This fluctuation in document counts across these high-impact sources ranging from political science to humanities-focused journals showing a growing academic interest in the subject matter, reflecting how both social scientific data and humanitarian critiques have increasingly converged in recent literature to address evolving regional and global crises.

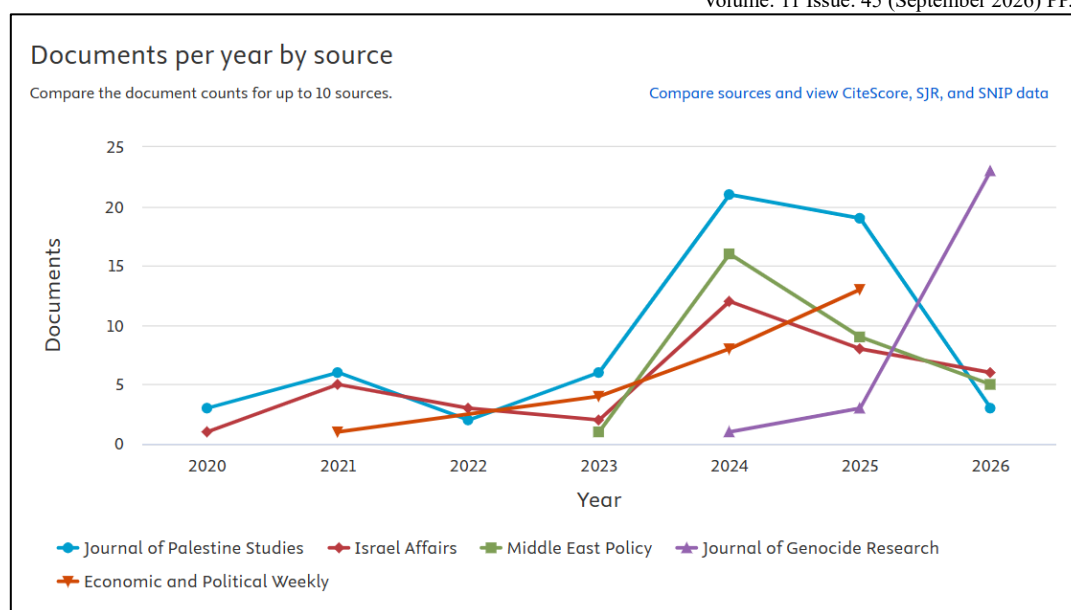


Figure 2: Documents per year by source (2020-2026).

Source: Scopus Database - as of April 20th, 2026.

Documents by Country or Territory

Figure 3 shows the geographical analysis of scholarly contributions. The figure highlights a dominant concentration of research output within the United States (447 documents) and the United Kingdom (330 documents), depicting the central role of Western Anglophone academia in shaping the discourse. Notably, Israel and Palestine follow as the third and fourth most productive territories, respectively, indicating a local academic engagement with the subject matter despite geopolitical challenges. The significant presence of "Undefined" affiliations (235 documents) suggests potential metadata gaps or a high volume of independent scholarship, while a secondary cluster of contributions from Italy, Canada, Australia, Qatar, and Spain reflects a diversified, albeit less concentrated, international interest. This distribution confirms that while the core research remains rooted in the primary geographic areas of conflict, the intellectual debate is largely moderated through influential global North academic networks. This dominance also raises questions about potential biases in academic framing and thematic prioritization, reflecting a need for greater inclusivity of diverse geopolitical perspectives in scholarly discourse (Santoso et al., 2025).

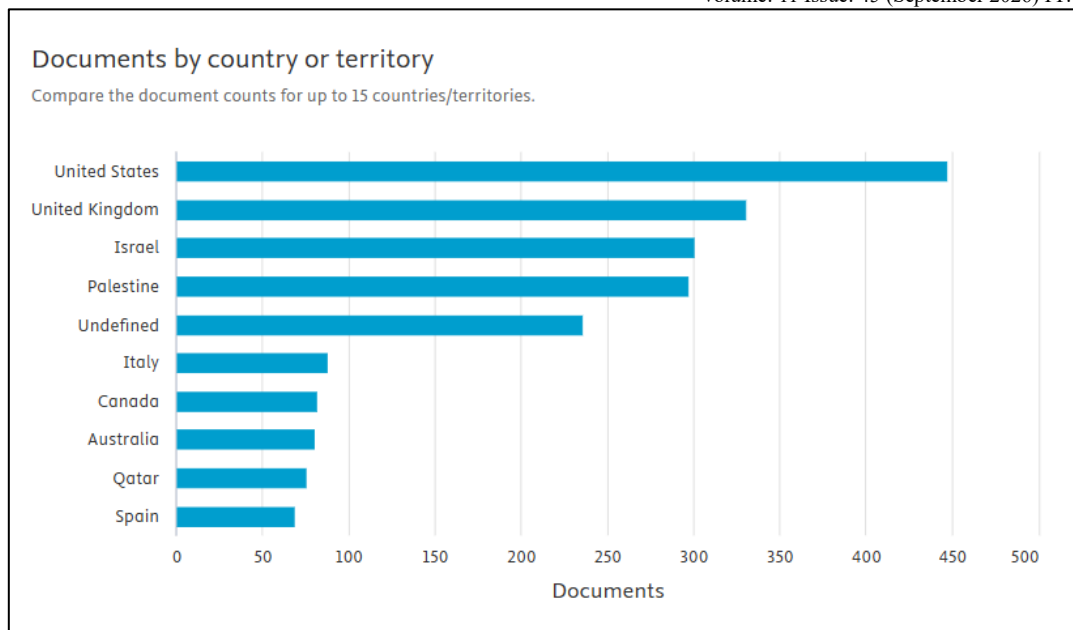


Figure 3: Documents by country or territory (2020-2026).

Source: Scopus Database - as of April 20th, 2026.

Documents by Types

Figure 4 shows classification of scholarly output by document type reveals a clear preference for empirical and theoretical peer-reviewed research, with Articles accounting for the vast majority of the dataset at 70.9% (n=1,799). Beyond standard articles, a substantial portion of the literature is comprised of Book Chapters (12.9%) and Books (4.5%), which together represent nearly one-fifth of the total output. This distribution is highly characteristic of the Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, where long-form synthesis and monographic contributions are essential for nuanced cultural and historical analysis. The remaining output is distributed across Notes (4.7%), Reviews (2.7%), and Editorials (1.8%), indicating a secondary but active layer of academic commentary, critical debate, and rapid scholarly communication within the field. This diverse document typology underscores a comprehensive academic engagement, moving beyond mere empirical reporting to include extensive theoretical frameworks and interpretive analyses crucial for understanding complex geopolitical contexts.

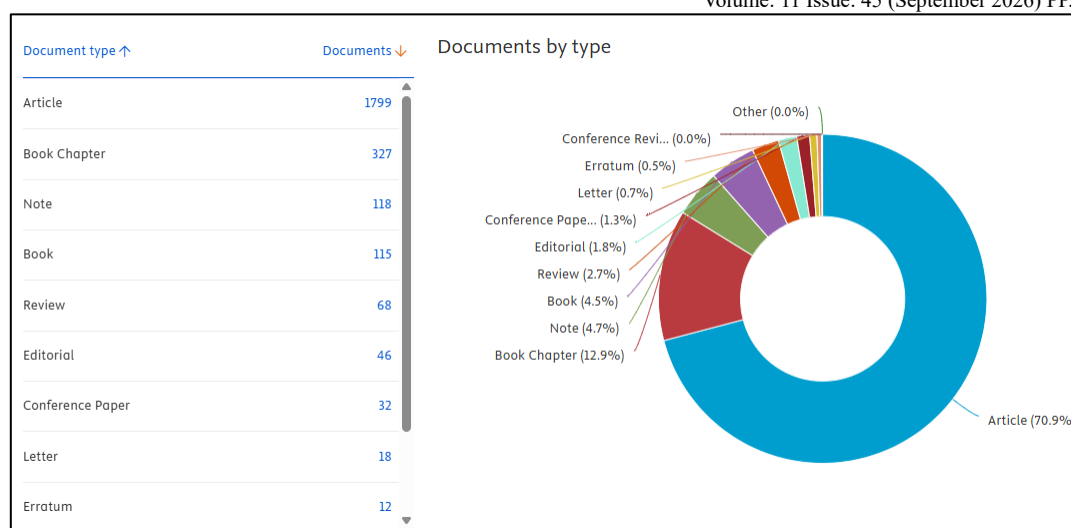


Figure 4: Documents by Types (2020-2026).

Source: Scopus Database - as of April 20th, 2026.

This pattern also has implications for knowledge production. The strong presence of Western institutions and publication venues may shape how Gaza is framed, interpreted, and prioritized in the academic literature. At the same time, the contribution of Palestinian and regional institutions demonstrates the importance of locally grounded scholarship. Future research should therefore compare how themes differ between local, regional, and global North contributors to assess whether bibliometric dominance corresponds with differences in research framing, terminology, and policy emphasis.

Documents by Affiliations

The analysis of institutional productivity, illustrated in figure 5, identifies the most active research hubs contributing to the discourse. Leading the dataset is the Islamic University of Gaza ($n = 65$), followed closely by An-Najah National University ($n = 55$), demonstrating a significant output from Palestinian academic institutions. A strong presence is also observed from Israeli institutions, notably the University of Haifa ($n = 50$), Hebrew University of Jerusalem ($n = 50$), and Tel Aviv University ($n = 46$). While the previous geographic analysis indicated high aggregate volumes from the United States and the United Kingdom, this institutional breakdown reveals that the primary engines of specific, high-volume scholarship are located within the regional proximity of the study area. International contribution is further represented by leading global research centers such as King's College London, indicating a blend of localized expertise and international scholarly interest.

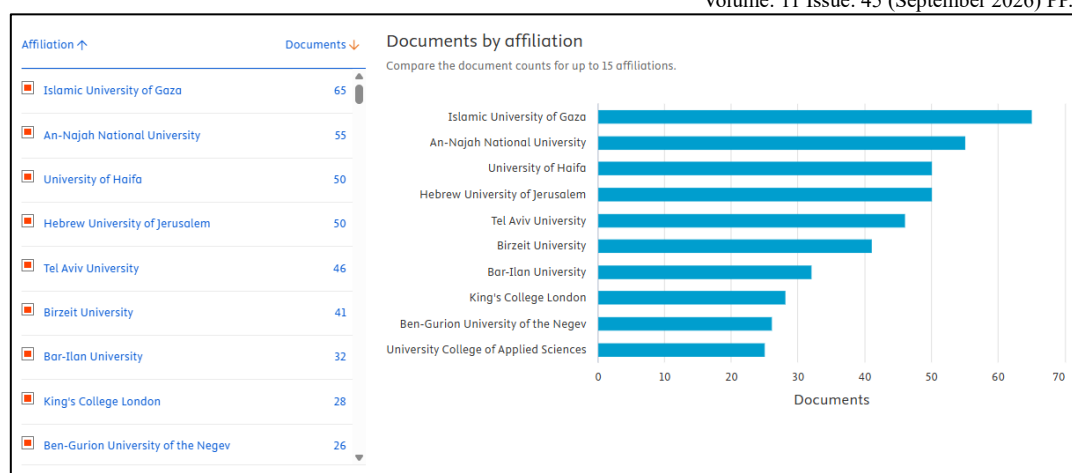


Figure 5: Documents by Affiliations (2020-2026).

Source: Scopus Database - as of April 20th, 2026.

Documents by Funding Sponsor

The distribution of research funding, as visualized in the figure 6, illustrates a multi-regional financial support underpinning scholarship in this field. The Israel Science Foundation emerges as the leading sponsor, followed by the Qatar National Library and the European Union's Horizon 2020 Framework Programme. A critical observation is the prominent role played by discipline-specific national councils, including the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). The involvement of these diverse entities ranging from European Commission bodies to Russian and UK-based foundations suggests that while the research is often focused on specific regional dynamics, the financial impetus is global, reflecting the high strategic and cultural importance of interdisciplinary human-centric research on an international scale. This globalized funding landscape highlights the geopolitical significance and humanitarian urgency driving scholarly inquiry into the conflict and its broader implications (El-Ouahi, 2024; Suer et al., 2026).

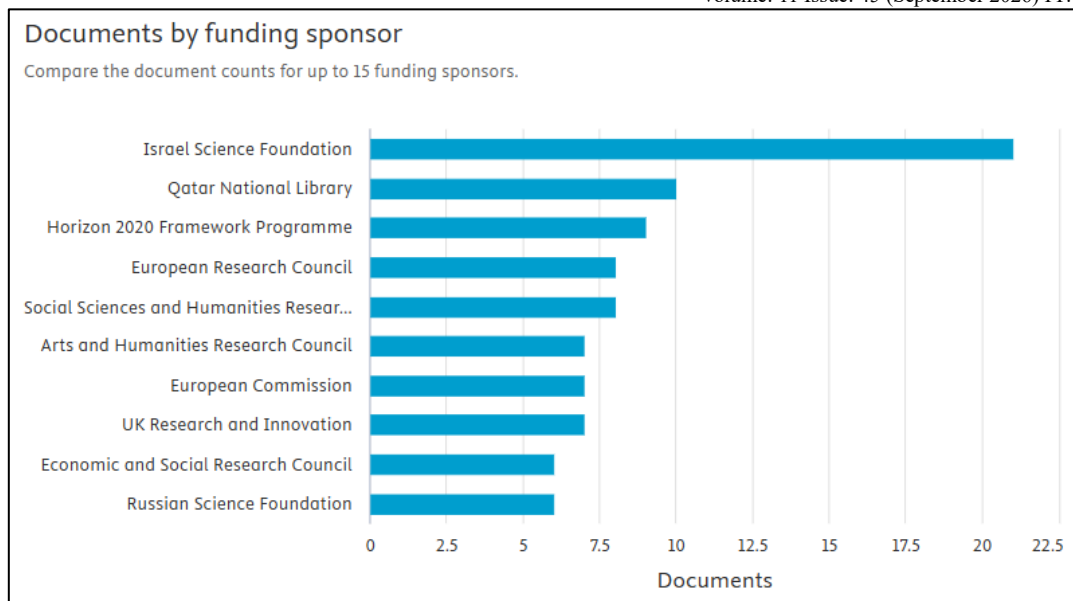


Figure 6: Documents by Funding Sponsor (2020-2026).

Source: Scopus Database - as of April 20th, 2026.

Top Themes and Clusters

The VOS Viewer analysis, depicted in Figure 7, delineates the primary thematic clusters and their interconnections within the dataset, providing a robust visualization of the intellectual landscape. This analysis reveals a complex interplay of research foci, categorized into distinct, yet often overlapping, clusters that reflect the complex nature of the conflict and its wider implications.

Based on the $n=2,537$ documents, 79 themes were extracted within 3 clusters. These clusters are not merely aggregations of keywords but represent distinct intellectual currents. The VOSviewer network visualization of keyword co-occurrences reveals the thematic structure of the research landscape, organized into three distinct but interconnected clusters. The Red Cluster represents the geopolitical and conflict-oriented dimension, centered on nodes such as "Israel," "state," "hamas," and "October," reflecting a focus on political relations, security policy, and regional influence. The Blue Cluster captures the humanitarian and sociological narrative, with prominent terms like "palestinian," "violence," "genocide," and "experience," emphasizing qualitative aspects of trauma, resistance, and human rights. Finally, the Green Cluster highlights the academic and methodological framework of the field, dominated by "study," "research," "gaza strip," and "data," indicating the empirical basis of literature. The dense density of links between the clusters particularly the central positioning of "history" and "world" points out the high level of interdisciplinary synergy, where political events are consistently analyzed through the dual lenses of social scientific research and humanitarian critique.

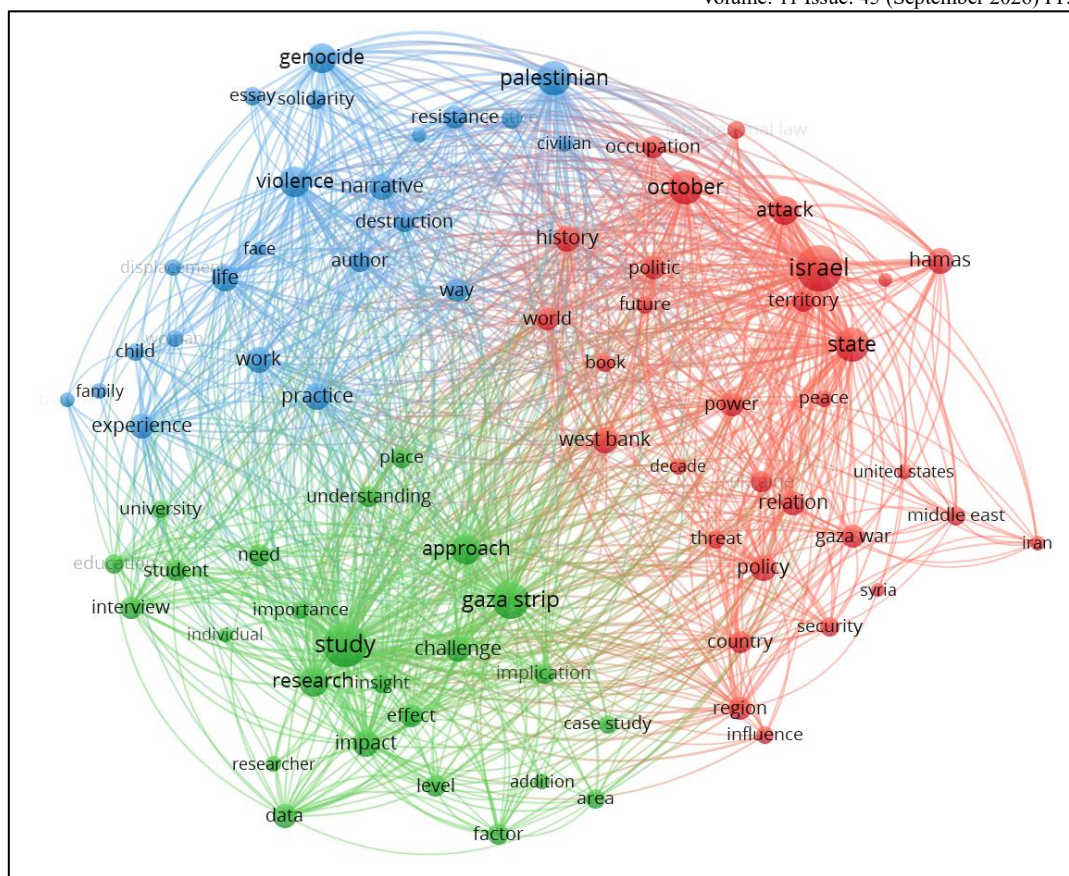


Figure 7: Top Themes and Clusters - Network Visualization (2020-2026).

Source: Scopus Database - as of April 20th, 2026.

The thematic clustering suggests that Gaza-related research is no longer concentrated only on conflict description or political analysis. Instead, the field is increasingly shaped by overlapping humanitarian, sociological, historical, and methodological concerns. This finding implies that future studies should adopt interdisciplinary designs that connect bibliometric mapping with qualitative content analysis, policy analysis, or discourse analysis. Such approaches would allow researchers to examine not only which themes are prominent, but also how Gaza is represented, whose perspectives are amplified, and which humanitarian concerns remain under-examined.

Next, the overlay visualization, illustrated in Figure 8, further explains the temporal evolution of these thematic clusters. The temporal evolution of the research field is presented through an overlay visualization, where node colors transition from purple (early 2023) to yellow (mid-2024 and beyond) based on the average publication year of the keywords. The map indicates a clear shift in scholarly focus: foundational terms such as "data," "factor," and "impact" appear in darker hues, representing the established methodological groundwork laid in the earlier stages of the study period. In contrast, the emergence of bright yellow nodes including "October," "genocide," "solidarity," "violence," and "attack" signifies a recent and rapid intensification of academic discourse surrounding the contemporary escalations. This temporal progression suggests that while the field initially prioritized structural and methodological frameworks (Social Science focus), the most recent literature has pivoted toward urgent

humanitarian critique and political event analysis (Arts & Humanities focus), reflecting a real-time academic response to global crises.

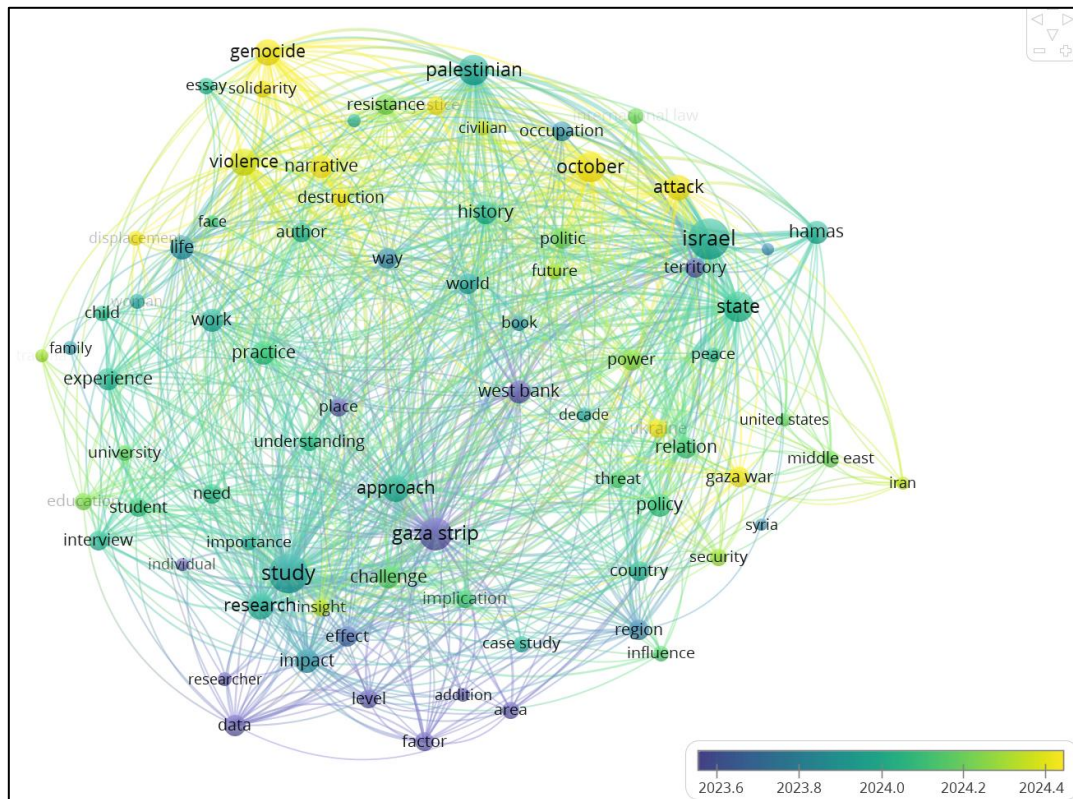


Figure 8: Top Themes and Clusters - Overlay Visualization (2020-2026).

Source: Scopus Database - as of April 20th, 2026.

Lastly, the density visualization, presented in Figure 9, provides a granular view of keyword prominence within the identified clusters, highlighting areas of high research concentration and thematic saturation. The density visualization map provides a clear representation of the "thematic heat" within the research corpus, where the brightness and intensity of the color indicate a higher concentration of co-occurring terms. The visualization reveals three primary epicenters of scholarly saturation. The Red Density Zone is the most expansive, centered heavily on "Israel," "October," and "state," signifying that geopolitical conflict and state-level policy form the core gravity of the current literature. The Green Density Zone focused around "study," "research," and "Gaza Strip," shows a high saturation of empirical and methodological work. Finally, the Blue Density Zone highlights concentrated pockets of research regarding "Palestinian" identity and the "genocide" narrative. The substantial brightness in the transition areas between these zones suggests a deeply integrated discourse, where the "heat" of the political debate (Red) is directly fueled by and connected to the "heat" of humanitarian and sociological critique (Blue).

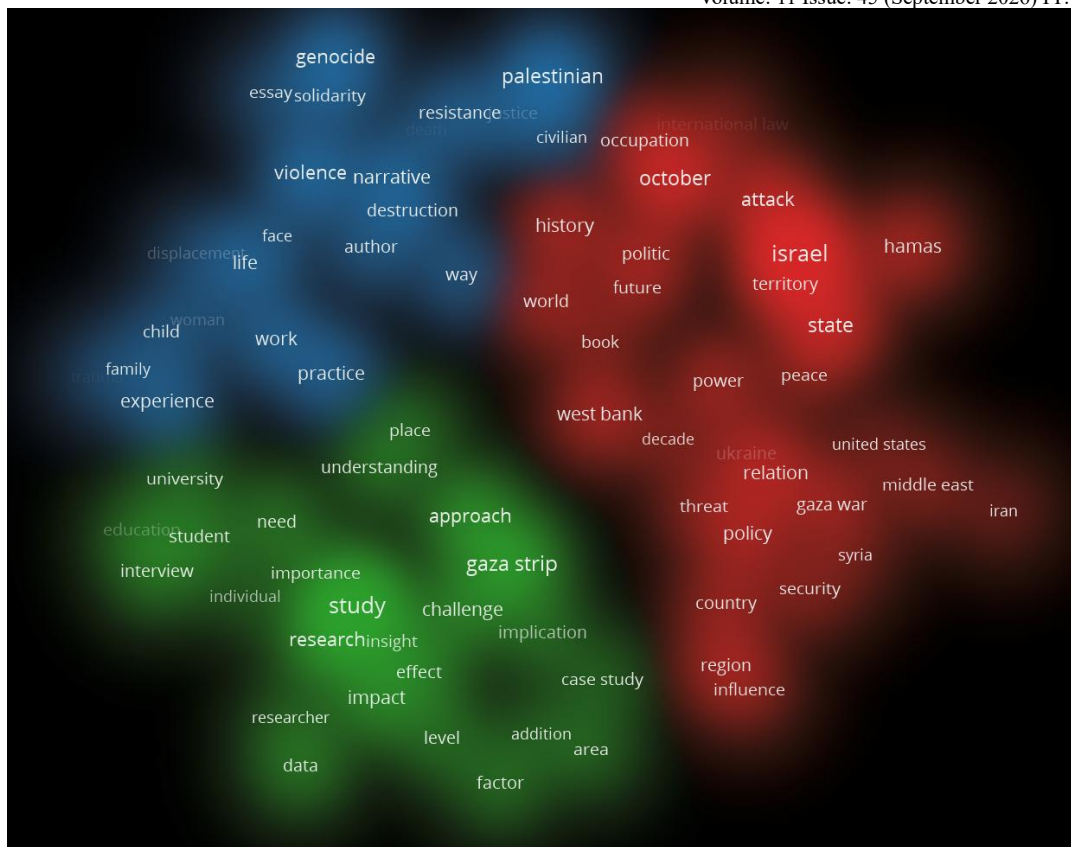


Figure 9: Top Themes and Clusters - Density Visualization (2020-2026).

Source: Scopus Database - as at April 20th 2026.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Gaza-related scholarship has gained significant momentum since 2023, with recent publications increasingly shifting from methodological and structural approaches toward humanitarian critique and event-driven analysis. Within the selected Social Sciences and Arts and Humanities scope, the findings show a rapidly evolving academic landscape shaped by geopolitical urgency, humanitarian concern, and interdisciplinary engagement. The thematic clusters demonstrate that Gaza is being studied not only as a site of conflict, but also as a field of social, cultural, historical, and ethical inquiry. These findings strengthen the contribution of the study by showing how bibliometric evidence can reveal changes in scholarly attention, research framing, and knowledge production during periods of crisis.

Future research could explore deeper into specific sub-themes, such as the efficacy of mental health interventions in conflict zones or the long-term socioeconomic impacts of regional instability, using advanced econometric models. Furthermore, an examination of liberatory psychological practices could offer valuable insights into empowering individuals and communities amidst chronic adversity (Veronese & Kagee, 2024). Additionally, exploring the application of decolonized research methodologies could provide more culturally resonant and ethically sound approaches to studying and supporting affected populations (Veronese & Kagee, 2024). Moreover, cross-cultural comparative studies focusing on indigenous coping mechanisms within conflict-affected populations could enrich the understanding of resilience

beyond Western-centric frameworks (Artyukhov et al., 2024). However, such research needs to be neutral and free from political bias to maintain academic integrity and ensure objectivity in its findings, especially given the highly politicized nature of the region.

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Author Contribution Statement: All authors contributed significantly to the development of this manuscript. All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript prior to submission.

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