Women and Political Power: Gender Studies Based on Bibliometric Analysis 2004-2024

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Abstract

This study aims to examine and analyse studies that address women's issues in political power across Southeast Asia, based on publications indexed in the Scopus database over the past two decades (2004–2024). In addition to employing bibliometric analysis, this study utilizes VOSviewer and Biblioshiny software to map and interpret the trends, patterns, and developments in the existing body of research. The findings reveal that studies concerning women in political power remain limited in scope and have yet to be explored comprehensively. This exploration and evaluation provide a foundation for recommending future research that focuses on analysing how contemporary political systems are adapting and transforming to support the welfare of vulnerable groups. As a result, a more comprehensive understanding of the concepts and practices of inclusive political systems can be developed, facilitating more effective and efficient responses to women's issues in contemporary political discourse, grounded in future empirical evidence.

Keywords: Women, Power, Politics, Gender, Scopus, Bibliometrics, Southeast Asia

Abstrak

Studi ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan dan menganalisis studi-studi yang membahas isu-isu perempuan dalam kekuasaan politik di Asia Tenggara, berbasis pada dokumen publikasi database Scopus dalam dua dekade terakhir 2004-2024. Selain menggunakan metode analisis berbasis bibliometrik, studi ini juga menggunakan perangkat lunak berbasis aplikasi VOSviewers dalam menjelaskan dan menganalisis tren, pola, dan perkembangan dari studi-studi yang pernah dilakukan berbasis dokumen publikasi database Scopus dua dekade terakhir 2004-2024. Temuan dalam studi ini memperlihatkan bahwa tren, pola, dan perkembangan studi-studi yang membahas isu-isu perempuan dalam kekuasaan politik belum dilakukan secara komprehensif. Hasil eksplorasi dan evaluasi tersebut menjadi dasar studi ini untuk merekomendasikan pentingnya studi-studi di masa depan yang fokus menganalisis adaptasi dan transformasi sistem politik kontemporer dalam mengadopsi kesejahteraan kelompok rentan. Dengan demikian, pengetahuan mengenai konsepsi dan praksis dari sistem politik yang akomodatif terhadap kelompok rentan dapat dieksplorasi dan dievaluasi secara komprehensif, sehingga persoalan-persoalan perempuan dalam isu-isu politik kontemporer dapat diatasi secara efektif dan efisien berbasis temuan dari studi-studi di masa depan.

***Kata kunci**: Perempuan, Kekuasaan, Politik, Gender, Scopus, Bibliometrik, Asia Tenggara*

Introduction

Women and political power in Southeast Asia constitute a critical yet underexplored issue in academic discourse. This gap is evident in the trends and developments of studies focusing on women in positions of political authority, as reflected in publications indexed in the Scopus database over the past two decades (2004–2024). As Wijayati et al. (2021) argues, exploring the intersection of gender and power is essential for evaluating the progression of academic dialogues that center on the challenges faced by women as a vulnerable group within political systems. There is a pressing need for research in this area to move in new directions, particularly in responding to the contemporary political challenges encountered by women in Southeast Asia (Fernando & Larasati, 2024).

In the past five years, studies on women in political power have predominantly concentrated on three main themes. First, research has addressed structural issues surrounding gender identity (Liang, 2024; Lorenz, 2024; Smilan-Goldstein, 2024). Second, some studies have explored the accommodation of women's welfare through regulatory frameworks, emphasizing women as a vulnerable group (Hughes & McArthur, 2023; Painter, 2024; Shire, 2023). Third, a body of work has examined the normalization of discrimination against women in democratic systems (Bankert, 2020; Matfess et al., 2023; Schneider & Carroll, 2020).

Overall, these studies have been largely limited to discussions of gender identity, regulatory accommodation, and institutionalized discrimination. In other words, previous research has not adequately addressed the political challenges faced by women within the evolving landscape of Southeast Asian politics over the last two decades. In response to these gaps, the present study aims to explore and evaluate the body of literature on women in political power based on publications indexed in Scopus from 2004 to 2024. According to Fernando et al. (2024), such exploration and evaluation of research trends are crucial for addressing contemporary issues that shape empirical, methodological, and theoretical dynamics in the field.

The studies reviewed reveal a complex interplay of social transformations, such as shifts in gender identity, regulatory accommodations, and the persistence of discrimination affecting women as a vulnerable group. The selection of Southeast Asia as the focus of this study is grounded in the region's rich political, cultural, and religious diversity, all of which significantly influence women's roles and positions within structures of political power. Galuh et al. (2023) argues that the importance of a comprehensive evaluation by both scholars and practitioners to address the multifaceted challenges that women face in political leadership across Southeast Asia.

This study is based on the argument that the literature on women and political power in Southeast Asia remains fragmented and lacks systematic

integration. As such, this research seeks to fill the existing gap by providing a bibliometric mapping of relevant scholarly publications from the past two decades. This mapping is expected to serve as a foundation for the development of a more targeted future research agenda. Furthermore, the study contributes to strengthening academic discourse on the representation of women in political systems that are inclusive, equitable, and just both now and in the future.

Literature review
Gender representation in politics

The discourse surrounding the relationship between gender and politics has been ongoing since the late socialist era (Donert, 2022). During the socialist period, the intersection of gender and politics focused on two primary aspects. First, it addressed women's emancipation in connection with broader social and political inequalities; second, it concerned the positioning and placement of women within governmental systems (Sherman, 2021; Sutlović, 2019). These discussions were rooted in the lack of support for women, both in terms of access and participation, resulting in underrepresentation of women in the political economy (Pramesti & Vandito, 2024). This context arose from the belief that women could only succeed if their activities demonstrated alignment with broader goals (Abdillah et al., 2023; Ruzycki et al., 2019). Consequently, a gender gap emerged between men and women in the political sphere, driven by subjective perspectives that led to differences in how men and women perceived their objective skills and their desire to compete (Liang, 2024; Ryan, 2015; Turner, 2018).

The dominance of one gender in the political sphere leads to barriers for other gendered political activities. Research by Sutlović (2019) shows that women's political engagement is often limited by domestic issues, which tend to restrict their active participation in political decision-making processes. This occurs because women are frequently represented only in traditional roles, such as household management, which are seen as incompatible with involvement in politics and leadership (Rustagi et al., 2024). As a result, women's participation in political decision-making remains low, sometimes even resulting in neglect (Hidayat, 2024; Lindgren et al., 2024; Pate & Fox, 2018). One such example is found in China, where women's political participation has historically been low due to unequal access. Yao dan You (2018) explains that before 1911, women in China were nearly absent from politics. However, since 1911 and the rise of the Qing Dynasty, women's political participation gradually increased, especially with the ascension of a communist party that emphasized women's involvement, a policy that was even implemented as a mandatory directive during certain periods (Yao & You, 2018).

Empowerment

Women are often regarded as secondary personalities, objectified and subordinated by patriarchal culture (Larasati & Fernando, 2023; Ryan, 2015). Their position is consistently linked to domestic spaces that are isolated from the public sphere, where they frequently face discriminatory treatment compared to men, who are seen as the primary audience (Nas, 2021). This inequitable depiction of women is rooted in cultural constructions that marginalize and restrict women's access (Thelwell; et al, 2019; Widyayuningsih, 2019; Panjaitan & Purba, 2020; Hasmawati, Dahri D., 2020). However, women play a central role, not only as household managers but also as a valuable human resource contributing to economic growth and development (Indarti, 2019). In fact, Karwati (2021) argues that women are crucial to breaking the cycle of poverty. Thus, it is vital to raise awareness about women and empower them, particularly to equalize their status and opportunities (Siscawati et al., 2020).

Empowerment itself derives from the root word "power," which, according to Abrar-Ul-Haq et al (2018), represents a shift towards improvement, from a state of powerlessness to one of empowerment. The empowerment process has dimensions that must be fulfilled, such as personal control, identity, decision-making, and engagement with others (Acuña Mora et al., 2019), all of which can be impactful if there is a top-down transfer of power involving both those who empower and those being empowered (Chomba et al., 2015). In the context of women, empowerment must actively involve women as both actors and agents of change (Ghanghas, 2018). This aligns with Sudarmanti et al. (2015), who states that for women to achieve gender-just empowerment, they require broader access to public economic spaces. Additionally, when measuring women's empowerment, key indicators such as self-esteem, awareness, self-confidence, decision-making, and employment status must be considered (Soharwardi & Ahmad, 2020). Other aspects, such as minimizing marginalization and promoting equitable economic development, are also important considerations (Ghanghas, 2018). With the synergy of all these aspects and the active involvement of all parties, particularly women, empowerment can be realized.

Women leadership

Women's leadership is a concept emphasizing the role of women in leadership positions across various sectors, particularly in government, business, education, and social organizations (Kubu, 2018; Sharr, 2024). In general, the concept of women's leadership is defined as the ability of women to lead, make decisions, and influence organizations or groups to achieve specific objectives (Komariah et al., 2020). Various studies on leadership have shown that women tend to exhibit different leadership styles compared to men

(Erceg et al., 2023; Gipson et al., 2017; Yue & King, 2021). For instance, Post (2015) notes that women often adopt leadership styles that emphasize collaboration, empathy, and relationship-building, whereas men tend to focus on more direct, structured approaches. However, this also leads to the phenomenon of the "glass ceiling," an invisible barrier that often prevents women from reaching leadership positions, even when they possess qualifications and experience equal to that of men (Budi Hendrarti et al., 2024; Hamidi et al., 2024; Wardatun et al., 2023).

Despite progress in political participation, women still face complex barriers in attaining leadership positions. First, there are cultural obstacles, as society still perceives leadership as a trait more suitable for men, requiring women to work harder to have their competence recognized (Aaldering & Pas, 2020; Blackman & Jackson, 2021; Hajad et al., 2024). Additionally, women are often expected to prioritize family responsibilities, which adds to their burden when pursuing political careers. Second, infrastructural barriers exist, as political party access and networks are dominated by men (Aspinall et al., 2021; Choi, 2023; Prihatini, 2020). Third, structural barriers arise from political programs and policies that fail to accommodate the specific needs of women. These three barriers create a dilemma, limiting women's capacity to contribute fully in the political realm (Clayton et al., 2019; Fine et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2021). Consequently, there exists an invisible limit that hinders women from entering politics as leaders.

Method

This study was conducted in response to the growing prominence of issues concerning women in political power across Southeast Asia. Specifically, it aims to explore and evaluate the development of scholarly studies addressing these issues through an analysis of scientific publications indexed in the Scopus database over the past two decades (2004–2024). Scopus was selected as the primary data source due to its broad coverage of reputable international journals, high data validity and accuracy, and its capacity to provide consistent metadata necessary for systematic bibliometric analysis. The 2004–2024 time frame was chosen because it captures a significant post-reform and democratization era in several Southeast Asian countries, marked by increasing women's political participation and a growing body of research reflecting this dynamic.

This study employs a qualitative-descriptive approach, utilizing bibliometric analysis. Bibliometric analysis is a method used to explore and evaluate extensive bodies of literature, facilitating the identification and interpretation of trends, concepts, and developments within a specific field (Fernando et al., 2024). As noted by Donthu et al. (2022), bibliometric analysis enables the systematic deconstruction and mapping of scientific knowledge,

thereby allowing for a cumulative assessment of the patterns, trajectories, and evolution of research in a given domain. In this context, bibliometric studies offer a robust foundation for evaluating established areas of knowledge, identifying research gaps, generating novel insights, and enhancing the productivity of future research related to gender and political power. These considerations justify the use of bibliometric analysis in this study to examine the trajectory and scholarly output concerning women and political power in Southeast Asia over the past two decades.

The data collection process involved querying the Scopus database using the keywords "gender" and "political power," yielding 22,020 publication records. This initial dataset was then refined using TITLE-ABS-KEY (gender AND politic) AND PUBYEAR > 2003 AND PUBYEAR < 2025 AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBSTAGE, "final")) AND (LIMIT-TO (AFFILCOUNTRY, "Indonesia") OR LIMIT-TO (AFFILCOUNTRY, "Singapore") OR LIMIT-TO (AFFILCOUNTRY, "Malaysia") OR LIMIT-TO (AFFILCOUNTRY, "Thailand") OR LIMIT-TO (AFFILCOUNTRY, "Philippines") OR LIMIT-TO (AFFILCOUNTRY, "Viet Nam") OR LIMIT-TO (AFFILCOUNTRY, "Cambodia") OR LIMIT-TO (AFFILCOUNTRY, "Myanmar") OR LIMIT-TO (AFFILCOUNTRY, "Laos") OR LIMIT-TO (AFFILCOUNTRY, "Brunei Darussalam")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, "English")). The full process of data identification and refinement is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Identification, limitation, and inclusion process from Scopus database.

A1: Scopus database
A2: Keywords [Gender and politic]
(N1= 22.020)

B1: Year [2004-2024]
(N2= 19.758)
B2: Document type [Articles]
(N3 = 11.272)
B3: Publication stage [Final]
(N4 = 10.992)
B4: Country [Southeast Asia]
(N5 = 216)

C1: Language [English]
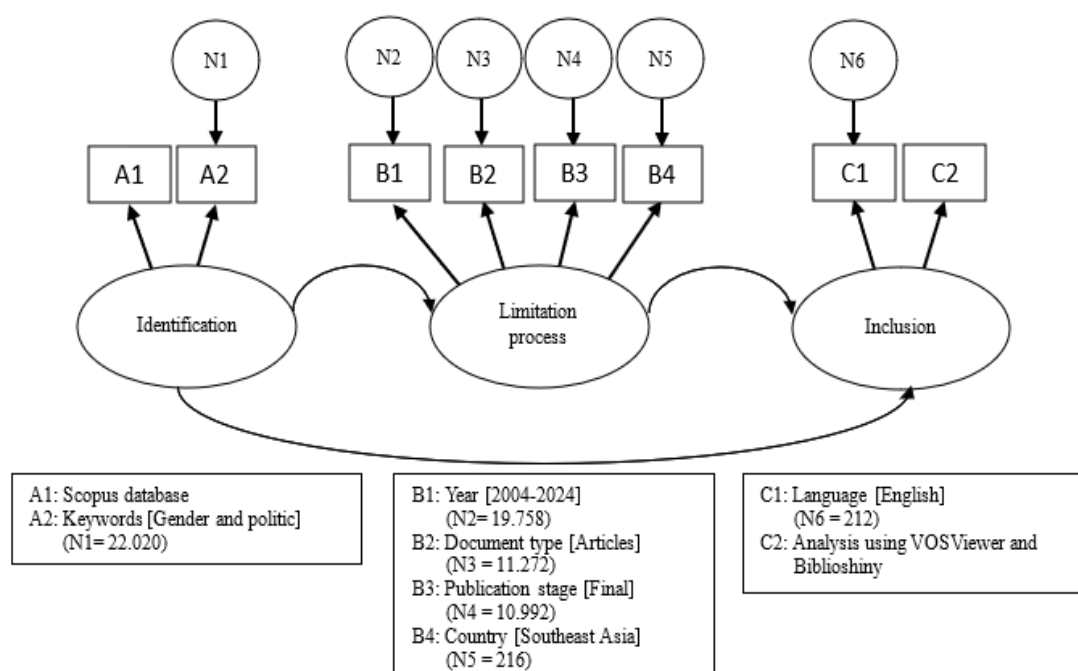(N6 = 212)
C2: Analysis using VOSViewer and Biblioshiny

Figure 1 outlines the steps undertaken to identify, narrow down, and analyze data derived from Scopus-indexed article publications over the 2004–2024 period. The final dataset was exported in RIS (Research Information System), CSV (Comma-Separated Values), and BibTeX (Bibliography LaTeX) formats. These files were then subjected to analysis using VOSviewer and Biblioshiny-R software tools, allowing for a random and visual exploration of the dataset. As such, the results presented in this study include visual representations and the most frequently occurring keywords associated with issues surrounding women in political power across Southeast Asia over the past two decades. This analytic process enables the study to draw meaningful conclusions regarding the trends, patterns, and scholarly productivity in this field, as reflected in Scopus-indexed publications from 2004 to 2024.
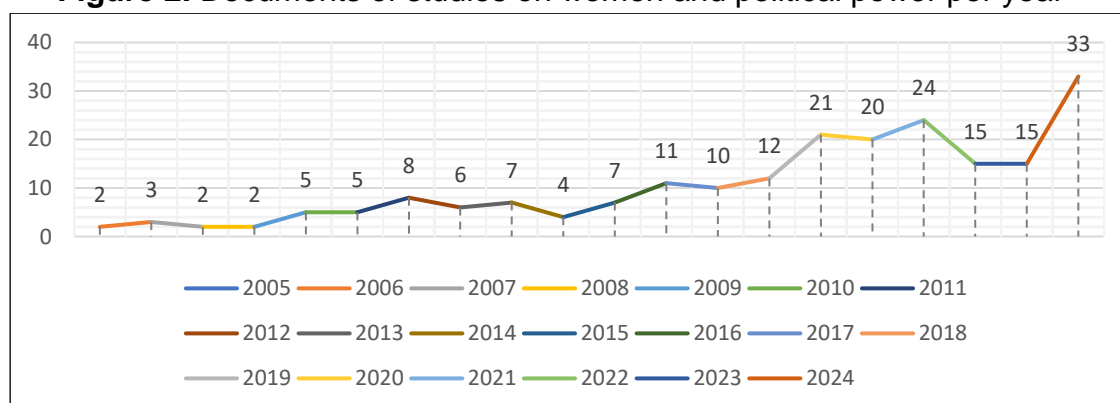
Result

The discussion on women's issues and political power in Southeast Asia, based on Scopus-indexed publications from the past two decades (2004–2024), is vital to explore and evaluate to identify new directions for gender and power studies amid the rapid transformation of political, social, and cultural systems in the era of globalization. The trends and developments in scholarship on women and political power in Southeast Asia, as documented in Scopus-indexed sources over this period, are reflected in the key findings of this study.

Trends on women and political power studies in Southeast Asia (2004–2024)

Research focusing on women and political power in Southeast Asia over the past two decades (2004–2024) reveals a highly complex and evolving trend. This development can be analyzed through annual Scopus publication records, which serve as a consistent source of data. Additionally, patterns in subject areas most frequently associated with these studies help illustrate the thematic and disciplinary focus of gender and political power research in the region during this period (see Figure 2, Figure 3, and Figure 4).

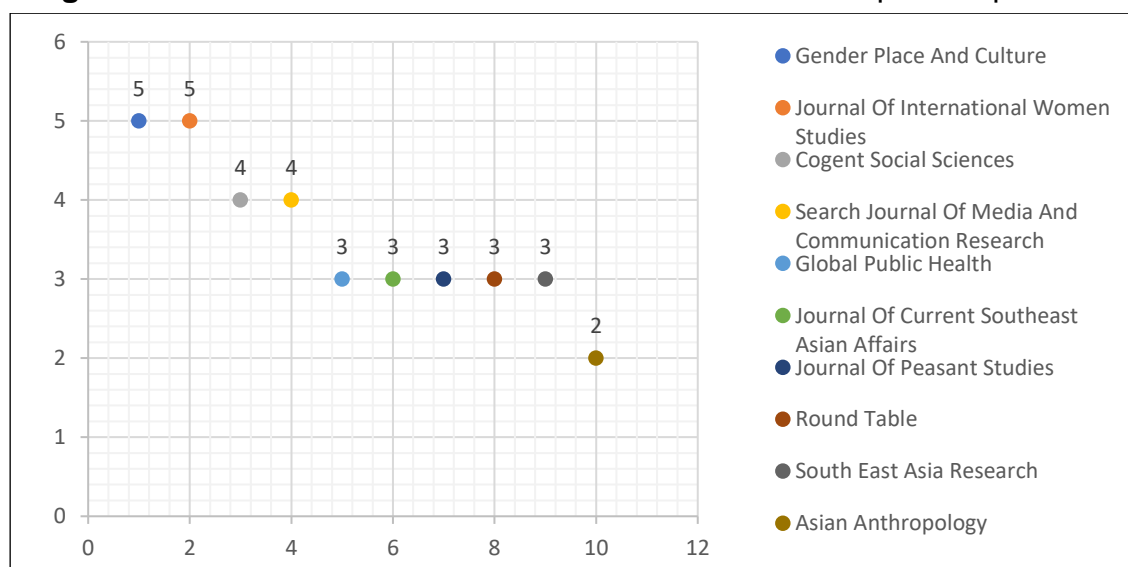**Figure 2.** Documents of studies on women and political power per year

Source: Scopus database (2024).

Figure 2 illustrates the annual distribution of publications focusing on women and political power in Southeast Asia based on Scopus-indexed documents from 2004 to 2024, totaling 212 publications. The yearly breakdown is as follows: 3 publications in 2006, 2 publications in 2007, 2 publications in 2008, 5 publications in 2009, 5 publications in 2010, 8 publications in 2011, 6 publications in 2012, 7 publications in 2013, 4 publications in 2014, 7 publications in 2015, 11 publications in 2016, 10 publications in 2017, 12 publications in 2018, 21 publications in 2019, 20 publications in 2020, 24 publications in 2021, 15 publications in 2022, 15 publications in 2023, and 33 publications in 2024.

From this trend, three significant patterns can be identified in the development of research on women and political power in Southeast Asia over the past two decades. First, the years 2019 to 2024 mark the most productive period, with annual publication numbers ranging from 15 to 33. Second, the years 2016 to 2018 show moderate growth, with 10 to 12 publications each year. Third, the years 2005 to 2015 represent the least productive period, with only 1 to 7 publications annually. This increase in research output may be linked to several factors, such as growing global awareness of gender equality, particularly following the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, which encouraged gender-related political research. Moreover, advances in information technology and greater access to academic publications have accelerated the dissemination of knowledge across the region. These developments have contributed to a more dynamic and interdisciplinary academic landscape, strengthening the position of gender issues in both local and global political discourse. They have also promoted broader engagement among scholars in examining women's representation in political power structures in a more sustained and in-depth manner.

Figure 3. The consistent sources of studies on women and political power.
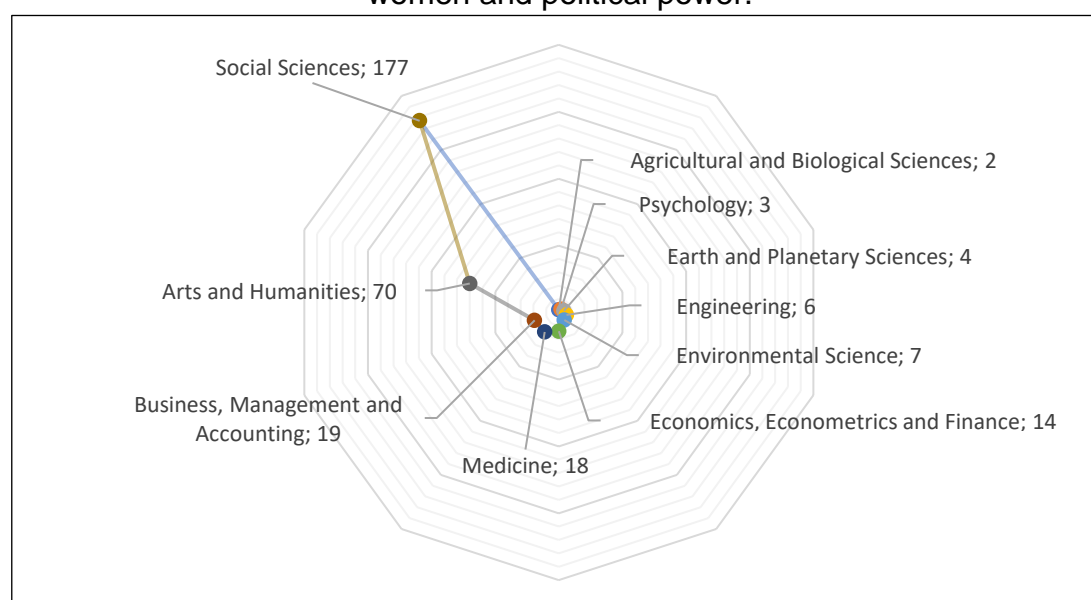
Source: Scopus database (2024).

Figure 3 presents a diagram showing the ten most consistent sources that have published studies on women and political power in Southeast Asia between 2004 and 2024, based on results from the Scopus database, with a total of 35 documents. Gender, Place and Culture published 5 documents, Journal of International Women's Studies published 5, Cogent Social Sciences published 4, Search: Journal of Media and Communication Research published 4, Global Public Health published 3, Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs published 3, Journal of Peasant Studies published 3, The Round Table published 3, South East Asia Research published 3, and Asian Anthropology published 2.

From this data, three key tendencies can be identified. First, Gender, Place and Culture and the Journal of International Women's Studies emerged as the most consistent sources for publishing research on women and political power in Southeast Asia over the past two decades. Second, Cogent Social Sciences and Search: Journal of Media and Communication Research demonstrated a moderate level of consistency in publishing relevant studies. Third, South East Asia Research and Asian Anthropology appeared less consistent in their engagement with this area of scholarship.

Figure 4. The subject areas most commonly associated with studies on women and political power.

Source: Scopus database (2024).

Figure 4 presents a radar chart illustrating the ten subject areas most frequently used in publications related to women and political power in Southeast Asia from 2004 to 2024, based on data from the Scopus database, which includes a total of 320 documents. The subject area Social Sciences
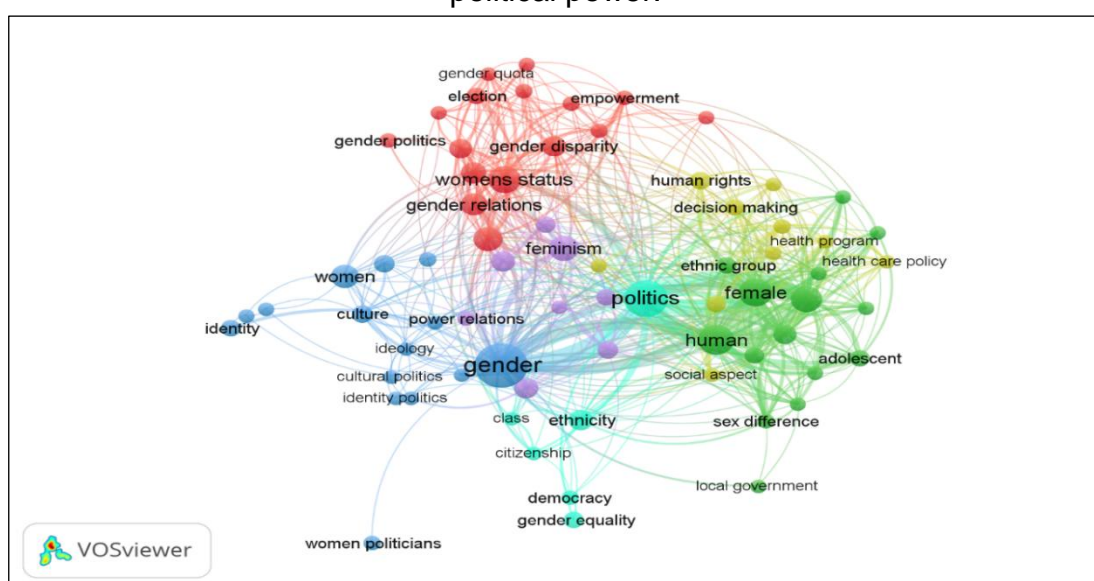
accounted for 177 publications, Arts and Humanities for 70 publications, Business, Management and Accounting for 19 publications, Medicine for 18 publications, Economics, Econometrics and Finance for 14 publications, Environmental Science for 7 publications, Engineering for 6 publications, Earth and Planetary Sciences for 4 publications, Psychology for 3 publications, and Agricultural and Biological Sciences for 2 publications.

From these ten most frequently used subject areas, three important trends emerge. First, Social Sciences and Arts and Humanities are the most commonly used subject areas in studies of women and political power in Southeast Asia over the past two decades. Second, Business, Management and Accounting, Medicine, and Economics, Econometrics and Finance have been relatively frequently used in these studies. Third, Environmental Science, Engineering, Earth and Planetary Sciences, Psychology, and Agricultural and Biological Sciences have been the least frequently used subject areas in the research on women and political power in Southeast Asia.

The development of studies on women and political power over the last two decades (2004-2024)

The development of studies on women and political power over the last two decades (2004-2024) reveals a complex trend year by year. This trend can be explored and evaluated through keyword-based network visualization, the most frequently used themes, and the most cited studies in research on women and political power in Southeast Asia over the past two decades (see Figures 5, 6, and Table 1).
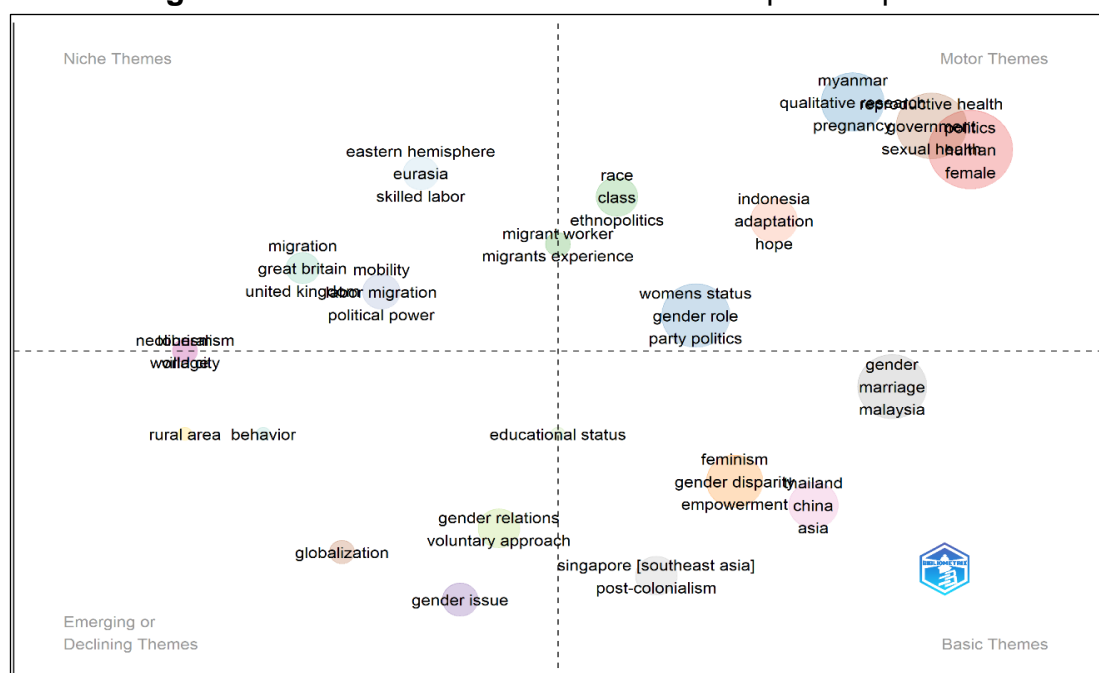
Figure 5. Network Visualization based on the keywords women and political power.

Source: Scopus database (2024).

Figure 5 presents a keyword-based network visualization of entities in studies focusing on women and political power in Southeast Asia over the last two decades (2004-2024), based on a search of the Scopus database with 70 items. This figure also illustrates six dominant clusters identified as key terms in the research on women and political power during this period. The first cluster, in red, includes 16 items: Election, elections, empowerment, gender discrimination, gender disparity, gender diversity, gender politics, gender quota, gender relations, gender role, parliament, party politics, political participation, sustainable development, women in politics, and women's status. The second cluster, in green, contains 15 items: Adolescent, ethnic group, female, gender-based violence, government, human, human experiment, investment, local government, male, psychology, risk factor, sex difference, social support, and violence. The third cluster, in blue, includes 15 items: Attitude, cultural politics, culture, gender, gender studies, identity, identity politics, ideology, mobility, patriarchy, political system, power, resistance, women, and women politicians. The fourth cluster, in yellow, contains 10 items: Decision-making, gender identity, health care policy, health program, human rights, masculinity, reproductive rights, social aspects, social justice, and women's rights. The fifth cluster, in purple, includes 8 items: Climate change, environmental politics, feminism, feminist political ecology, gender issues, leadership, migration, and power relations. The sixth and final cluster, in light blue, contains 6 items: Citizenship, class, democracy, ethnicity, gender equality, and politics.

Figure 6. Themes in studies on women and political power.

Source: Scopus database (2024).

Figure 6 illustrates the thematic patterns in the development of studies on women and political power in Southeast Asia over the years, based on a search of publications in the Scopus database, showcasing a complex thematic trend over the last two decades (2004-2024). From Figure 6, four dominant thematic patterns can be identified. First, the Niche Themes encompass 11 potential themes for future research development, including Eurasia, skilled labor, mobility, political power, migration, and neoliberalism. Second, the Motor Themes consist of 20 themes that frequently appear in the literature but have not been deeply explored in existing studies, such as pregnancy, government, politics, adaptation, women's status, and class. Third, the Emerging or Declining Themes feature 6 themes that were once dominant in past studies but have since declined in prominence, including gender relations, voluntary approach, gender issues, globalization, behavior, and rural areas. Lastly, the Basic Themes include 12 foundational themes that have been central to previous studies, such as gender, feminism, empowerment, Asia, post-colonialism, and educational status.

Table 1. Most Cited Studies on Women and Political Power.

Authors	Title	Source	Focus	Findings	Cite
Resurrección (2013)	Persistent women and environment linkages in climate change and sustainable development agendas	Women's Studies International Forum	Gender identity	The importance of women's identity in politics.	146
Elmhirst et al. (2017)	Gender and generation in engagements with oil palm in East Kalimantan, Indonesia: insights from feminist political ecology	Journal of Peasant Studies	Gender participation	Neglect of women's involvement in (ecological) politics.	90
Bandyopadhyay & Patil (2017)	'The white woman's burden'–the racialized, gendered politics of volunteer tourism	Tourism Geographies	Gender neglect	Political practices and policies that still ignore women's perspectives.	80
Yeoh & Ramdas (2014)	Gender, migration, mobility and transnationalism	Gender, Place and Culture	Gender work	The relationship between mobility, migration and transnationalism with gender and politics.	78

Giudice et al. (2021)	Climate change, women's health, and the role of obstetricians and gynecologists in leadership	International Journal of Gynecology and Obstetrics	Gender engagement	The need for government policies to address women's welfare.	69
Lamb et al. (2017)	Gendered eviction, protest and recovery: a feminist political ecology engagement with land grabbing in rural Cambodia	Journal of Peasant Studies	Gender participation	Rebuilding gender-based relationships in rural areas.	55
Ge et al. (2011)	Return migration and the reiteration of gender norms in water management politics: Insights from a Chinese village	Geoforum	Gender accommodation	The role of immigrants in shaping accommodative leadership.	46
Beta (2019)	Commerce, piety and politics: Indonesian young Muslim women's groups as religious influencers	New Media and Society	Gender role	The role of female Muslim influencers in equitable political change.	41
Sunanta & Angeles (2013)	From rural life to transnational wife: Agrarian transition, gender mobility, and intimate globalization in transnational marriages in northeast Thailand	Gender, Place, and Culture	Gender neglect	Transnational marriage among rural women is increasingly complex.	41
Sriwimon & Zilli (2017)	Applying Critical Discourse Analysis as a conceptual framework for investigating gender stereotypes in political media discourse	Kasetsat Journal of Social Science	Gender stereotypes	Important in shaping gender streotypes in politics that are often overlooked.	31

Source: Scopus database (2024).

Table 1 presents the most frequently cited studies on women and political power published in the Scopus database over the last two decades (2004-2024). The table also highlights the ten most cited focal areas within the field of women and political power during this period. First, studies focusing on gender identity (Resurrección, 2013). Second, studies addressing gender participation (Elmhirst et al., 2017). Third, studies examining gender neglect

(Bandyopadhyay & Patil, 2017). Fourth, studies concentrating on gender and work (Yeoh & Ramdas, 2014). Fifth, studies focusing on gender engagement (Giudice et al., 2021). Sixth, studies exploring gender participation (Lamb et al., 2017). Seventh, studies investigating gender accommodation (Ge et al., 2011). Eighth, studies centered on gender roles (Beta, 2019). Ninth, studies discussing gender neglect (Sunanta & Angeles, 2013). Tenth, studies focusing on gender stereotypes (Sriwimon & Zilli., 2017).

Discussion

Findings of this study reveal that scholarly attention to women's issues in political power, as reflected in Scopus-indexed publications from 2004 to 2024, has experienced noticeable fluctuations. From an exploration of 22,020 documents sourced from the Scopus database, Gender, Place & Culture and the Journal of International Women's Studies emerged as the most consistent outlets publishing research on women and political power in Southeast Asia over the past two decades (see Figure 3 and Figure 4). The fluctuating trend of studies on women in political power over this period carries significant implications and challenges for the broader discourse on gender and power. According to Fernando et al. (2024), this fluctuation can be reflected through the recurrent patterns of keyword usage in relevant studies, which show thematic and conceptual stagnation over time. Moving forward, research on women and political power must identify new directions to more adequately address the evolving challenges faced by women within contemporary political systems.

Over the 2004–2024 period, studies focused on women's political empowerment have not demonstrated substantial development in terms of thematic scope or conceptual frameworks. This is evidenced through three critical domains of bibliometric productivity. First, network visualization of keyword entities reveals a narrow focus, with only 70 keywords grouped into six dominant clusters across two decades of research in Southeast Asia (see Figure 5). Second, thematic analysis indicates the prevalence of only four recurring dominant themes in literature on women and political power (see Figure 6). Third, the most frequently cited studies continue to focus on gender identity, gender participation, and gender marginalization (see Table 1). Taken together, these patterns highlight that research on gender and power remains underexplored in terms of both breadth and depth, particularly in relation to the pressing political issues women face today.

The challenges faced by women in political spaces are often rooted in experiences of oppression, harassment, and intimidation as they attempt to enter the political sphere (Alam, 2021; Johnson-Myers, 2023; Sanín, 2022). These challenges are shaped by patriarchal norms that systematically exclude women from the public domain and erode their social rights, thereby positioning

them as a vulnerable group. As Takhar (2014) argues, cultural constructions, racism, structural pressures, and unequal access to political networks create substantial barriers to women's political participation. For instance, a case study by Tomen (2016) illustrates how female politicians in Turkey advocate for "equality politics," promoting women's right to political inclusion. In this context, Aprimayanti & Erwianti (2023) also emphasizes the necessity of collective movements supporting women's political participation as a vital mechanism for advancing women's rights.

Despite two decades of scholarly engagement, research on women and political power has yet to make significant conceptual or practical advancements. This lack of progress presents both a challenge and an opportunity for future inquiry. According to Fernández & Valiente (2021), such studies tend to be descriptive and normative, lacking the innovative approaches necessary to confront the complex, empirical realities of gender and power dynamics today. As Galuh et al. (2023) further argues, future studies must move beyond normative analysis to provide actionable solutions and frameworks that respond meaningfully to women's lived experiences in political contexts. Consequently, scholarship in this area must aim to contribute not only to academic discourse but also to practical strategies that support women as a politically marginalized group.

In addition to revealing the complex nature of gender and political power scholarship in Southeast Asia, the literature from 2004 to 2024 also presents significant potential for advancing inclusive and transformative dialogues. Research that examines how contemporary political systems adapt to and support the well-being of vulnerable populations, such as women, holds promise for addressing long-standing gaps in the literature. As Aprimayanti & Erwianti (2023) suggests, future studies on women and political power must go beyond identifying normative problems; they must also critically assess the systemic factors that perpetuate the exclusion of women and propose institutional models that promote justice and inclusivity.

Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight that research focusing on women and political power in Southeast Asia over the past two decades (2004–2024) demonstrates a highly complex yet insufficiently comprehensive character. Based on an analysis of 22,020 documents from the Scopus database, keyword-based entity patterns in network visualizations show a concentration around only 70 keywords, grouped into six dominant clusters. Second, thematic patterns commonly appearing in these studies are limited to four major recurring themes throughout the two-decade period. Third, the most frequently cited studies remain centered on gender identity, gender participation, and gender marginalization. These observations provide a foundation for recommending

the need for future research to more critically examine the adaptation and transformation of contemporary political systems in promoting the welfare of vulnerable groups.

The commitment of scholars and practitioners to realizing the principles and orientation of an inclusive political system can significantly enhance the governance of political institutions through more effective and responsive policymaking. For policymakers, research that addresses the political challenges faced by women can serve as a valuable reference in designing progressive policies that promote more inclusive political systems. For academics, the advancement of studies on women in contemporary politics offers an opportunity to empirically, methodologically, and theoretically engage with gender and power issues. In this way, knowledge about the conception and praxis of political systems that accommodate vulnerable groups can be comprehensively explored and evaluated. Consequently, the challenges faced by women in political contexts can be addressed more effectively and efficiently, grounded in the empirical findings of future research.

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Author Contribution Statement

Contributions of the authors in this article: Yuniar Galuh Larasati contributed as concepts and drafters of the article; Henky Fernando contributed as data analysers and critically revising the article. All authors agree to take responsibility for all aspects of this work.

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