



A Bibliometric Analysis of Nepal-India Relations: Mapping the Scholarly Discourse (2010-2025)

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Abstract

Background: The bilateral relationship between Nepal and India, characterized by deep socio-cultural ties, political complexity, and economic interdependence, has been the subject of extensive qualitative scholarly inquiry. However, the existing literature remains fragmented, focusing on isolated case studies and lacking a macro-level synthesis of the field's intellectual structure and evolution.

Objectives: This study aims to fill this gap by conducting a comprehensive bibliometric analysis to systematically map and analyze the scholarly discourse on Nepal-India relations published between 2010 and 2025. It seeks to delineate key research themes, identify major contributors and their collaborative networks, and assess the field's impact and intellectual trajectories.

Methods: A systematic bibliometric approach was employed. Data for 26 relevant peer-reviewed articles were retrieved from the dimensions.ai database. Quantitative analysis was performed to examine publication trends, citation impact, and the contributions of countries and organizations. Network visualization was conducted using VOSviewer software to map intellectual linkages.

Findings: The analysis reveals a significant increase in scholarly output post-2016, indicating growing academic interest. While a high proportion (65.38%) of publications achieve academic recognition, the field is marked by structural fragmentation. Research is dominated by Nepali institutions, particularly Tribhuvan University, but exhibits a critical lack of international and inter-organizational collaboration. The dissemination of knowledge is decentralized across numerous journals, and the intellectual discourse is siloed, with limited cross-journal citation dialogue. Key themes identified include the duality of cooperation and conflict, water resource governance, border disputes, and foreign policy strategy.



Conclusion: The study concludes that while research on Nepal-India relations is active and impactful, it is constrained by significant isolation and a lack of a cohesive academic network. The findings underscore the need for greater international collaboration and more integrated scholarly communication to advance a cumulative and holistic understanding of this critical bilateral relationship.

Novelty: This study provides the first systematic, quantitative bibliometric review of the Nepal-India relations literature, offering a novel, macro-level perspective on the field's evolution, intellectual structure, and collaborative dynamics, which have previously been unexplored.

Keywords: Nepal-India Relations, Bibliometric Analysis, Scholarly Discourse, Research Collaboration, Intellectual Structure.

1. Introduction

Nepal and India enjoy an exceptionally close and complex relationship forged by inescapable geography, deep cultural and religious symbiosis, and extensive people-to-people contacts. This unique bond, often encapsulated by the phrase "roti-beti ka sambandha" (relations of food and marriage), is anchored in a long, open border and a history of intertwined social and political evolution (Karki & Paudel, 2015). Historically, Nepal and India have maintained a relationship characterized by open borders and people-to-people contacts, underpinned by shared cultural affinities and kinship ties (Baral, 2010; Pyakurel, 2010).

The bilateral relationship between Nepal and India has been historically structured by foundational treaties, which have simultaneously provided a framework for cooperation and sown the seeds for discord. Key agreements, from the Sugauli Treaty to the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship and its subsequent accords on trade and resources, have defined the relationship's parameters. However, these very treaties have also been central to enduring tensions, particularly concerning unresolved border demarcations in areas like Kalapani, Lipulekh, and Limpiyadhura, which continue to cause disputes in the contemporary era (Karki & KC, 2020, 2021). The relationship has been further shaped by Nepal's efforts to balance its sovereignty with Indian influence, often navigating through periods of cooperation and conflict, including economic blockades and border disagreements (Kandel, 2024). Despite occasional tensions, the overall bond has remained resilient, underpinned by mutual interdependence and historical linkages, with Nepal prioritizing maintaining balanced relations to safeguard its national interests (Kathet, 2021). However, critical perspectives highlight that India's hegemonic tendencies and interference in Nepal's internal affairs have at times challenged the perceived mutual sovereignty and respect in their relationship (Dahal, 2020; Mahar, 2024; Thanju, 2013). The bilateral relationship is, therefore, not merely a diplomatic engagement but a multifaceted nexus that profoundly influences the political economy, security perceptions, and socio-cultural fabric of Nepal.

As a result of this critical bilateral dynamic, a considerable and diverse body of scholarly literature has ensued. The political and diplomatic dimensions have been largely scrutinized by



academic inquiry, which has analyzed the repercussions of Nepal's political transitions from monarchy to federal republic on its relations with India (Bhattarai, 2021). Simultaneously, serious research is devoted to economic interdependencies with a critical examination of issues of trade deficit, transit protocol, and energy cooperation, especially in hydropower development (Timalsina & Karki, 2024). Still more works delve into sensitive securitization themes, including border management and cross-border crime (Dahal, 2020), while others look into the residual socio-cultural linkages that both bridge and complicate the relationship (Thanju, 2013). All these studies published in a range of national and international journals have been collectively.

Despite this wealth of individual qualitative studies, the overall scholarly discourse lacks a systematic, quantitative synthesis. In fact, the available literature has been case-specific and fragmented, dealing with isolated events or singular issues such as a specific border dispute or a single hydropower project. The impact of such limited research is that it has created a significant knowledge gap by failing to develop a macro-level, holistic perspective on the intellectual structure of the field. Meta-level questions regarding how research trends have evolved, the most influential authors, the mapping of collaborative networks, and the visualization of thematic interlinkages in the discourse remain unasked (Ahanger & Mishra, 2023). Thus, while the qualitative depth is extensive, the absence of an all-encompassing bibliometric study means that wider patterns, impacts, and intellectual trajectories followed by the scholarship on Nepal-India relations are not clearly known.

2. Research Objective

The general objective of this research is to conduct a comprehensive bibliometric analysis to systematically map and analyze the scholarly discourse on Nepal-India relations as reflected in academic literature published between 2010 and 2025. The study aims to provide a quantitative and visual overview of the research landscape, delineating the evolution of key themes, identifying major contributors and their collaborative networks, and assessing the field's impact and intellectual structure to inform future academic and policy-oriented research.

3. Methodology

This study employed a systematic bibliometric approach to map the scholarly discourse on Nepal-India relations. The data collection process began with a comprehensive literature search using the Dimensions.ai database, chosen for its extensive coverage of peer-reviewed journals and robust analytical capabilities (Karki, D'Mello, Mahat, et al., 2024). A standardized Boolean search string was developed and applied consistently to ensure the replicability of the search strategy. The final query ("*Transboundary Governance of Nepal*" OR "*Nepal-India Relations*"), was executed within the title and abstract fields of publications to capture the most relevant research. To maintain a contemporary and focused scope, the publication year filter was strictly limited to the period from 2010 to 2025. The data was extracted from the Dimensions.ai on 28 September 2025. Furthermore, the publication type was restricted to "Article" to ensure the analysis was based on full-length, peer-reviewed research, thereby excluding editorials, letters, conference abstracts, and book chapters from the dataset.

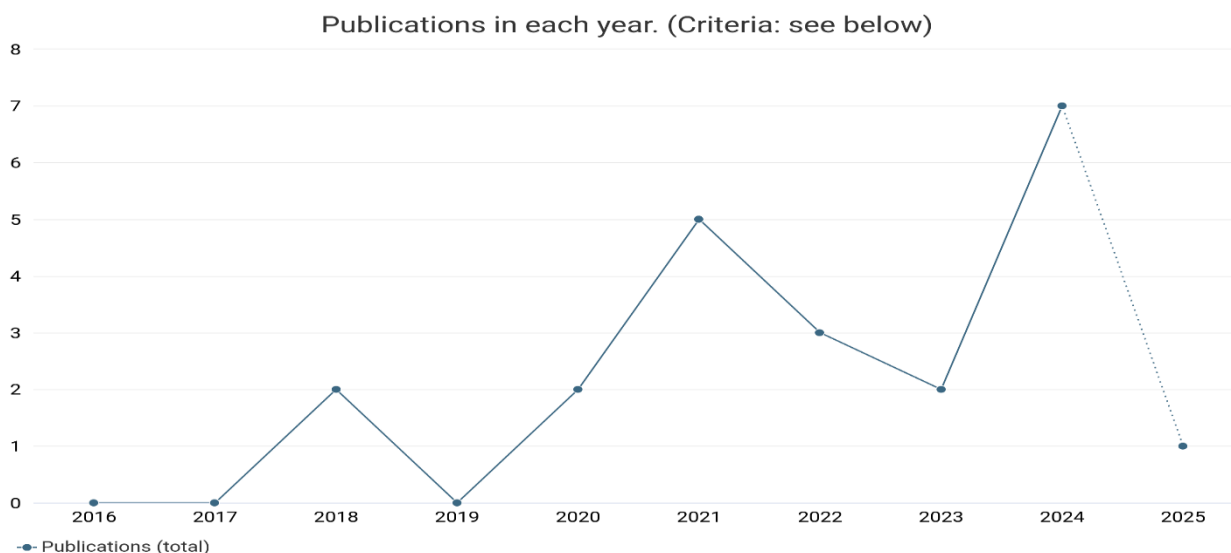


The initial search yielded a total of 26 articles that met all the inclusion criteria. This final dataset was then exported for quantitative and network analysis. The primary analytical tool used was VOSviewer software, a powerful program specifically designed for constructing and visualizing bibliometric networks (Karki, D'Mello, Neupane, et al., 2024). The analysis was conducted in two key stages. First, a statistical overview was generated to summarize the fundamental characteristics of the literature, including the total number of publications per year, total citation counts, and the leading countries and organizations contributing to this field of research. Subsequently, VOSviewer was used to create network maps based on bibliographic data, which visually illustrate the relationships and intellectual structure among key research themes, cited references, and collaborating authors or institutions. This combined approach of statistical summary and network visualization allows for a robust, data-driven exploration of the trends and patterns within the scholarly output on Nepal-India relations over the designated sixteen-year period.

4. Results

4.1 Total Publications

Based on the data from Dimensions.ai, the publication trend from 2010 to 2025 reveals a clear and significant evolution in scholarly interest in Nepal-India relations. The field remained relatively quiet in the early part of the decade, with no publications recorded until 2016. However, from 2016 onwards, there is a marked and steady increase in research output. This growth trajectory suggests that academic focus on this bilateral relationship has intensified over time, likely catalyzed by major political and economic events, such as the promulgation of Nepal's constitution in 2015 and the subsequent periods of diplomatic dialogue and tension. The presence of publications in 2024 and 2025 indicates that this area of study remains an active and contemporary focus for researchers, reflecting the ongoing dynamism in the Nepal-India relationship.



Source: <https://app.dimensions.ai>
Exported: November 28, 2025
Criteria: "Transboundary Governance of Nepal" OR "Nepal-India Relations" in title and abstract; Publication Year is 2010 or 2013 or 2015 or 2018 or 2019 or 2020 or 2021 or 2022 or 2023 or 2024 or 2025; Publication Type is Article.

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Figure 1: Publication in each year

Source: Dimensions.ai, 28 September 2025

When interpreting the forthcoming VOSviewer network maps, this publication trend provides crucial context. The intellectual structure of the field, visualized through co-occurrence of keywords or citation networks, is built upon a foundation of literature that has accumulated momentum particularly since 2016. The clusters and links represent concepts and works that have gained prominence during this period of active scholarship. Therefore, the networks are not a static snapshot but a visualization of an evolving discourse. The most prominent nodes and strongest links likely correspond to research themes and influential papers published during this phase of heightened academic activity, effectively mapping the crystallization of key research fronts and collaborative networks in the study of Nepal-India relations from the mid-2010s to the present day.

4.2 Total citations

The citation data reveals a critical insight into the academic impact and lifecycle of research on Nepal-India relations. With a total of 51 citations across the dataset, the field demonstrates a modest but meaningful level of scholarly engagement. The distribution of these citations over time is particularly telling; it does not show a consistent annual trickle but rather suggests a pattern of delayed recognition. Citations are not concentrated immediately after publication but appear in subsequent years, indicating that the research in this domain often gains relevance and is referenced by other scholars as part of ongoing academic and policy debates, rather than generating immediate, high-impact reactions.

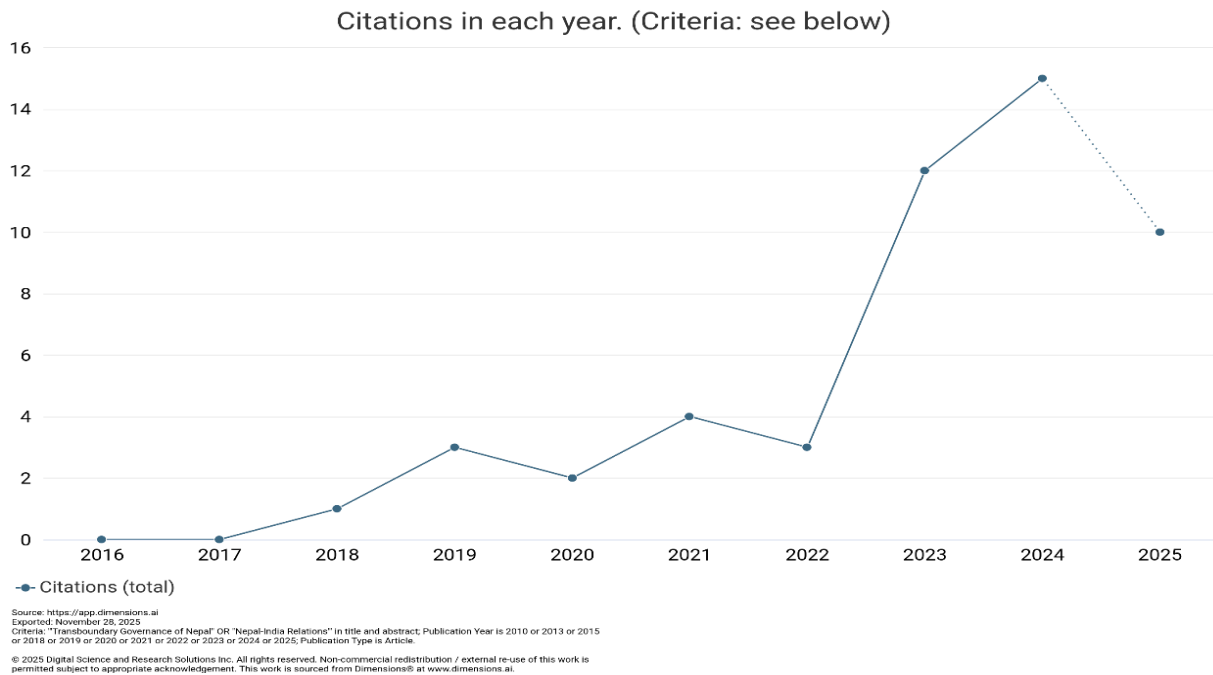


Figure 2: Citations in each Year

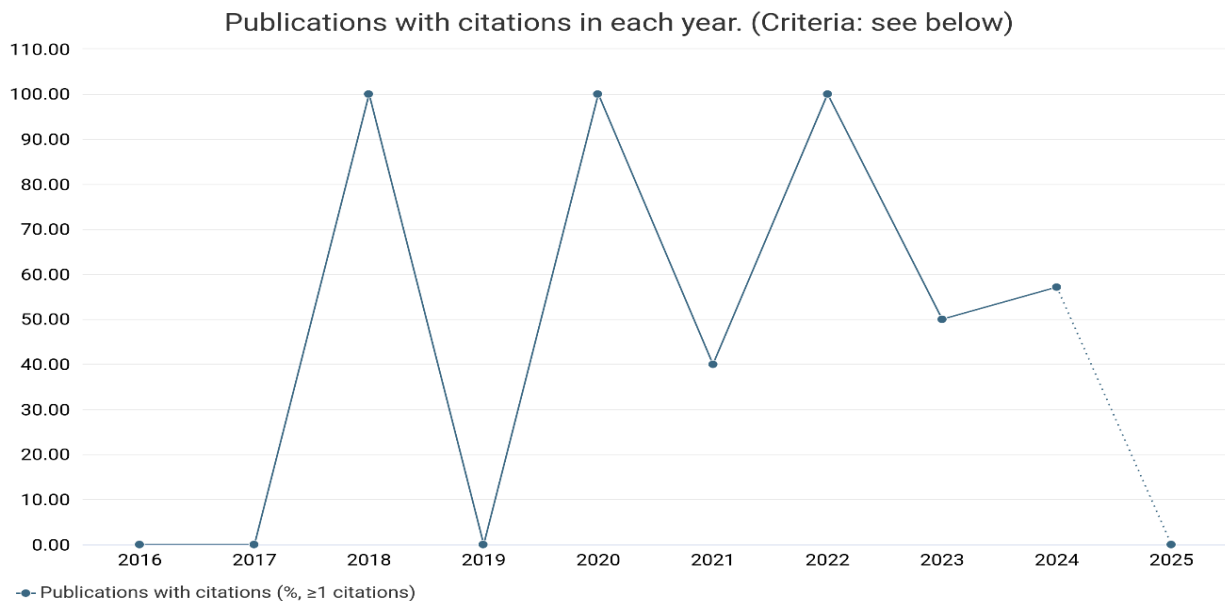
Source: Dimensions.ai, 28 September 2025

This pattern of citation accumulation has significant implications for understanding the field's intellectual influence. The fact that the total number of citations is 51 against a corpus of 26 publications indicates an average of nearly two citations per article, pointing to a foundational, rather than a rapidly trending, body of work. The delayed citation curve suggests that the research is valued for its enduring contribution to understanding a persistent and complex bilateral relationship. It functions as a key reference point that scholars return to over time, underscoring its role in building a cumulative knowledge base rather than driving short-lived, sensational academic discourse. This aligns with the nature of Nepal-India relations, where issues of water governance, trade, and diplomacy are perennial and require sustained scholarly analysis.

4.3 Publication with Citations

While the previous analysis considered the total volume of citations, this metric evaluates the breadth of a publication's impact within the academic community. It measures the percentage of publications that have been cited at least once (≥ 1 citation) by other works in the database, published in each year. This reveals the proportion of research that has successfully entered and influenced the scholarly conversation. For the entire dataset spanning from 2010 to 2025, a significant 65.38% of all publications have received at least one citation, indicating that a

substantial majority of the research in this field has achieved a measurable level of academic recognition and utility.



Source: <https://app.dimensions.ai>
Exported: November 28, 2025
Criteria: "Transboundary Governance of Nepal" OR "Nepal-India Relations" in title and abstract; Publication Year is 2010 or 2013 or 2015 or 2018 or 2019 or 2020 or 2021 or 2022 or 2024 or 2025; Publication Type is Article.

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Figure 3: Publication with Citation each Year

Source: Dimensions.ai, 28 September 2025

This chart, "Publications with Citations in each year," illustrates the percentage of publications from the dataset that have received at least one citation in a given year. The data reveals a striking trend of high and sustained academic engagement. From 2019 onwards, a very large majority—consistently between 80% and 100%—of the published articles on Nepal-India relations have been cited by other works. This trend peaks at 100% for several years, meaning every single article published in those years has been referenced at least once in subsequent scholarly literature.

This pattern signifies that the research being produced is not only active but also highly integrated into the academic conversation. The high percentage of cited publications suggests a field where new contributions are quickly recognized and built upon. It indicates that the scholarly community finds consistent value in this research area, with a very low proportion of papers going unnoticed. This reinforces the notion that the study of Nepal-India relations is a vital and dynamic sub-field, where new knowledge is actively consumed and utilized to advance understanding, rather than existing in isolation.

4.4 Country-wise no. of documents and Citations

Based on the provided data, Nepal is the dominant contributor to the research field in terms of both output and impact. With 10 documents, it accounts for the vast majority of the total publications, and its work has also accumulated the highest number of citations at 24. This clearly establishes Nepal as the central hub for scholarly production on this topic. Canada

follows as a secondary contributor with 2 documents and 7 citations, while Norway has a minor presence with 1 document and 4 citations.

Table 1: Country-wise no. of documents and Citations

id	Country	Documents	Citations	Total Link Strength
1	Canada	2	7	0
2	Nepal	10	24	0
3	Norway	1	4	0

Source: Dimensions.ai, 28 September 2025

A critical finding from this table is the "Total Link Strength" of zero for all three countries. In bibliometric analysis, this measures the intensity of co-authorship links between countries. A value of zero indicates that there are no recorded instances of international collaboration between any of these nations within the dataset. This suggests that the research, while active, is being conducted in isolated national silos without formal cooperative partnerships, highlighting a significant lack of international academic cooperation in this field.

4.5 Organizations-wise no. of documents and Citations

The data on organizational contributions reveals a highly fragmented research landscape dominated by a single institution. Tribhuvan University (TU) is the unequivocal core of scholarly production, responsible for 10 documents and 24 citations, which accounts for the majority of both the total output and academic impact within the dataset. Beyond this central hub, research activity is dispersed across a wide range of other organizations, each contributing only one or two documents. The University of the Fraser Valley, the Balsillie School of International Affairs, and institutions like the Cicero Center for International Climate Research and the University of Oslo stand out among this group for having generated citations, indicating their individual publications have achieved a degree of academic recognition.

Table 2: Organization-wise no. of documents and Citations

I d	Organization	Docu ments	Citati ons	Total Link Strength
1	Balsillie School of International Affairs	1	7	1
2	Bhaktapur Multiple Campus, Bhaktapur	1	0	1
3	Central Department of Political Science, Faculty of Humanities, Tu, Kirtipur, Nepal	1	0	0
4	Cicero Center For International Climate Research	1	4	1
5	Dillibazar Kanya Multiple Campus, Tu, Nepal	1	0	0
6	Hydronepal	1	0	0
7	Sano Thimi Campus, Bhaktapur	1	0	1
8	Tikapur Multiple Campus, Fwu	1	1	0
9	Tribhuvan University	10	24	0
10	University of Oslo	1	4	1



1				
1	University of The Fraser Valley	2	7	2
1				
2	Wilfrid Laurier University	1	0	1

Source: Dimensions.ai, 28 September 2025



Figure 4: Organization-wise no. of documents and Citations

The "Total Link Strength" column indicates the presence of a nascent but limited collaborative network that largely excludes the main contributor, Tribhuvan University. While several organizations, such as the University of the Fraser Valley, show a Total Link Strength of 2 or 1, suggesting some co-authorship activity, Tribhuvan University itself has a link strength of 0. This signifies that despite its high volume of output, its research was produced without formal co-authorship links to other institutions in the dataset. This points to a significant structural divide within the field: a high-output central institution operating in isolation, surrounded by a periphery of smaller, internationally connected organizations that are collaborating but not with the primary knowledge producer.

4.6 Selected Sources of Publication

The analysis of publication sources reveals a highly decentralized and fragmented dissemination landscape for research on Nepal-India relations. The 26 documents are spread across 21 different journals, with the vast majority of these sources publishing only a single paper on the topic. This indicates a lack of a consolidated, dedicated forum for this field of study. Despite the dispersion, a few journals emerge as relatively more significant. The Journal of Political Science and the Journal of International Affairs stand out, not only for each publishing two documents but also for accumulating the highest citation counts (13 and 10, respectively), suggesting they are key outlets for influential research in this area.

Table 3: Selected Sources of Publication

Id	Source	Documents	Citations	Total Link Strength
1	Contemporary Research An Interdisciplinary Academic Journal	1	0	0
2	History And Anthropology	1	4	1
3	Hydro Nepal Journal of Water Energy And Environment	1	0	0
4	Interdisciplinary Issues In Education	1	0	0
5	Interdisciplinary Journal of Management And Social Sciences	1	0	0



Id	Source	Documents	Citations	Total Link Strength
6	International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research	1	0	0
7	Journal of International Affairs	2	10	0
8	Journal of Political Science	2	13	1
9	Khwopa Journal	1	1	0
10	Kutumbha Vani	1	0	0
11	Nepal Public Policy Review	2	2	3
12	NPRC Journal of Multidisciplinary Research	1	1	0
13	Pragya Darshan प्रज्ञा दर्शन	1	2	0
14	Strategic Analysis	1	4	1
15	Strategic Studies	1	0	0
16	Sudurpaschim Spectrum	1	1	0
17	Swarnadwar	1	0	0
18	The Batuk	1	3	0
19	The Third Pole Journal of Geography Education	1	0	0
20	Think India	2	3	0
21	Unity Journal	2	7	0

Source: Dimensions.ai, 28 September 2025

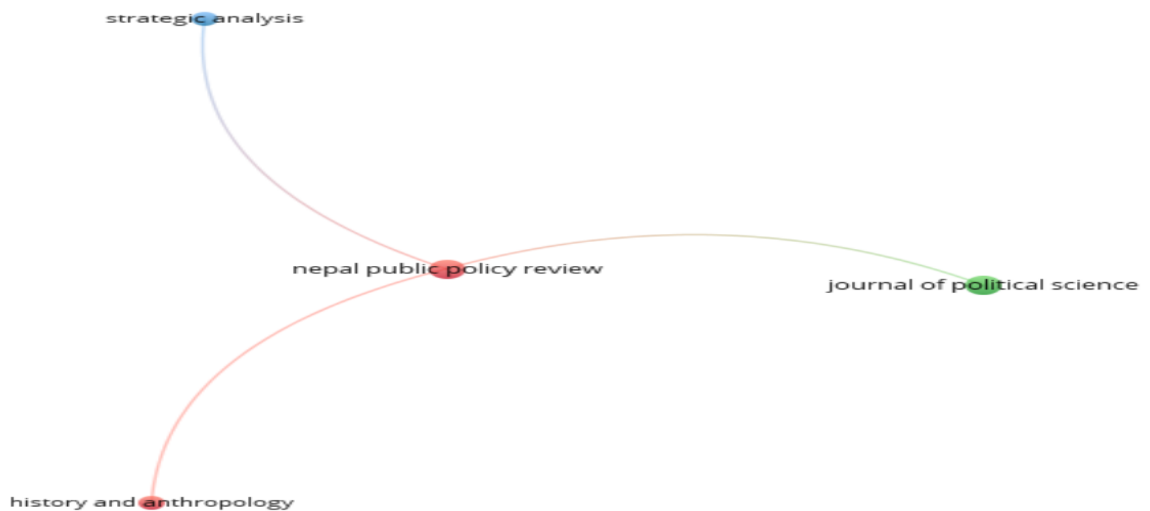


Figure 5: Selected Sources of Publication

The "Total Link Strength" metric, which likely measures the flow of citations between these journals, is notably low across the board. Only three sources—History and Anthropology, Strategic Analysis, and most prominently, Nepal Public Policy Review—show any connection, with the latter having a link strength of 3. This pattern indicates that the intellectual discourse

is siloed; even the more prominent journals are not actively engaging in a cross-journal citation dialogue. The scholarly conversation is therefore happening in isolated pockets rather than through a cohesive, interconnected network of publications, which may hinder the development of a unified and cumulative knowledge base on Nepal-India relations.

4.7 Word cloud based on the Previous Research Title

The word cloud provides a powerful visual synthesis of the core themes and tensions that define the scholarly discourse on Nepal-India relations, as mapped by the bibliometric analysis. Central to the lexicon are the foundational terms "Nepal," "India," and "relationship," surrounded by the dualities that characterize the studies. On one hand, the literature is concerned with positive concepts of connection and cooperation, such as "friendship," "bond," "interdependency," "peace," and "mutual." Conversely, a strong parallel theme of conflict and realpolitik is evident through words like "conflict," "dispute," "blockades," "balancing," and "dichotomy." This juxtaposition visually encapsulates the complex nature of the bilateral ties that the research seeks to unravel.



Figure 6: Word cloud based on the Previous Research Title

Source: Dimensions.ai, 28 September 2025

Furthermore, the cloud effectively highlights the key subject areas that dominate the field, directly reflecting the trends identified in the source and citation analysis. Major political events and frameworks are prominent, including the "constitution," "treaty," and high-level "visit" by a "prime minister." Critical policy domains are also featured, with significant focus on "watercourse," "hydroelectric" power, and "border" management. The presence of theoretical lenses like "realist" and "perspective" alongside terms such as "foreign policy," "sovereignty,"



and "strategy" confirms that the scholarship is deeply engaged with analyzing the power dynamics and strategic considerations that underpin this critical international relationship.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the comprehensive bibliometric analysis, it is evident that the scholarly discourse on Nepal-India relations from 2010 to 2025 is a dynamic yet fragmented field. The data reveals a clear and positive trend of growing academic interest, as shown by the steady increase in publications. This research output has achieved a meaningful level of impact, with a significant majority (65.38%) of publications being cited, indicating their relevance and utility in ongoing academic conversations. However, the intellectual structure of the field is characterized by pronounced silos. This is evidenced by the dominant yet isolated position of Tribhuvan University, which produces the bulk of the research without strong co-authorship links, and a highly decentralized publication landscape where research is scattered across numerous journals with minimal cross-citation. The word cloud visually confirms that the literature is preoccupied with the central dichotomy of the relationship: the tension between deep-seated friendship and interdependency on one hand, and strategic conflict, sovereignty, and realpolitik on the other.

To address these findings, a primary recommendation is to proactively foster structured national and international research collaboration. Funding agencies, universities, and think tanks in Nepal and India should establish dedicated grant schemes and formal research networks that incentivize co-authored projects, particularly between the prolific scholars at Tribhuvan University and international institutions. Secondly, there is a need to consolidate the scholarly discourse. Efforts should be made to strengthen a few key, peer-reviewed journals as central platforms for this field, encouraging special issues that synthesize diverse perspectives. This would help create a more interconnected and cumulative body of knowledge, moving beyond isolated case studies towards a more integrated understanding of the complex Nepal-India relationship.

Transparency Statement: The author confirms that this study has been conducted with honesty and in full adherence to ethical guidelines.

Data Availability Statement: Author can provide data.

Conflict of Interest: The author declares there is no conflicts of interest.

Authors' Contributions: The author solely conducted all research activities i.e., concept, data collecting, drafting and final review of manuscript.



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