

A Bibliometric Analysis of Global Research Trends in Alternative Dispute Resolution for Business SME's

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Abstract: — This paper analyzes trends in Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) for business small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Additionally, it aims to highlight the important contributions of authors, journals, nations, and institutions or organizations in the field. This paper uses bibliometric methods to analyze relevant literature metrics, such as research trends, influential contributions, and emerging themes, from 1905 to the current year based on the Scopus database. Additionally, the authors use VOSviewer to conduct analyses to identify the core literature and research hotspots in this field. The findings from the bibliometric review shows the growing trends in publications. Besides that, the authors and institution from US and UK be dominance in this research field. The themes of alternative dispute resolutions were found related with business and technology. There is lower number of publications discussing about alternative dispute resolution (ADR) in the context of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). This study relies solely on a single database (Scopus), which may limit the scope of the findings. However, these findings enhance understanding of alternative dispute resolution trends in small and medium enterprises and provide evidence-based recommendations for legal and institutional reform.

Keywords: — Alternative dispute resolutions, ADR, Bibliometric analysis, Business, Small and medium enterprise, SMEs.

1. Introduction

One of the elements that plays an important role in a country's economic development is the SME sector. Significantly, SMEs contribute to employment generation, innovation, and economic growth in both developed and developing economies. SME have become a dominant component of many social economies due to the flexibility and relatively low barriers to entry. According to news reports from Department of Statistics Malaysia [8], Malaysia's micro, small, and medium-scale enterprises (MSMEs) contribute 39.5 percent to the country's GDP in year 2024. The SME is defined by the SME Corp. Malaysia [18] as the business firms covers all sectors (services, manufacturing, agriculture, construction and mining & quarrying) that fulfill criteria of sales turnover and number of full-time employees provided by the authorities. The category of micro, small and medium for (i) manufacturing and (ii) services and other sectors are as provide in Fig 1.



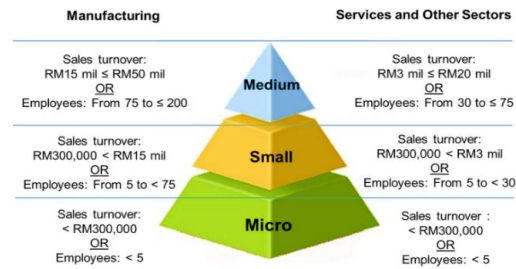


Fig 1 Detailed definition of category, namely micro, small and medium for manufacturing and services and other sectors. (Sources: SME Corp Malaysia, 2020)

In building their economies, SMEs often face challenges in running their operations such as financial constraints, limited legal resources, and vulnerabilities in commercial disputes. Among the disputes that can arise are contractual disputes, payment problems, partnership disputes or supply chain disruptions which are an inevitable aspect of commercial activities. In the normal situations, SMEs resolve disputes through litigation in formal court systems. Usually, this action will incur high costs, lengthy procedures, and complex legal requirements. These challenges affected SMEs, and as a result, many SMEs seek more efficient and cost-effective mechanisms to resolve disputes, or else they will take no further action.

Theoretically, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) is one of the mechanisms that can be used to resolving business conflicts outside the formal court system. This method encompasses several dispute resolution methods, including negotiation, mediation, arbitration, and conciliation. Abubakar & Handayani [4] reported that ADR is a mechanism for resolving disputes outside the court system, aiming to achieve flexibility, efficiency, and substantive justice. Meanwhile, Windiantina et. al. [22] had found that dispute resolution is not solely oriented towards procedural legal certainty but also towards the satisfaction of the parties and the sustainability of legal relationships. In addition, the use of ADR will offer reduced cost, faster resolution, confidentiality, and greater flexibility in the dispute resolution process compared with the traditional litigation. These characteristics make ADR particularly attractive for SMEs, which require practical and efficient approaches to maintain business continuity and preserve commercial relationships.

Gundumi, A. [10] states there have a large number of inefficiency litigation with overcrowded courts and delayed judgements worldwide. It is support by the report provide by the Office of the Chief Registrar Federal Court of Malaysia [15] that shows the high numbers of civil cases and criminal cases carry forward as at February 2026 for all courts. It was reported the total of 89,218cases (Civil) and 307,718cases (Criminal) for all courts is still not settled yet. This shows the huge number of cases and will lead to a long queue for people waiting for a case to be settled by court. Due to these facts, it will be one of the reason people doesn't want to settled the dispute at court.

Over the past few decades, scholarly interest in ADR has expanded significantly across various disciplines and many of the scholars had explored different aspects of ADR. The effectiveness, legal frameworks, and its role in improving to justice was previously explored by scholars [11], [2]. However, despite this growing trend, the development and intellectual structure of research specifically focusing on ADR in the SME context is very limited. Understanding how this research field has developed is important to identify key research themes, influential publications and potential gaps that require further investigation.

This study uses the BiblioMagika and VOSviewer software to conduct this analysis. To curate a rich bibliometric overview of Alternative Dispute Resolutions (ADR) for Small and Medium Enterprises (SME), this study explores three research questions (RQ) as follows:

RQ1: What is the trend of publication and citations on Alternative Dispute Resolutions for business SMEs over time?

RQ2: Who are the most prolific contributors (authors, institutions, and countries) in Alternative Dispute Resolutions research related to business SMEs?

RQ3: What are the main research themes and emerging topics in Alternative Dispute Resolutions studies related to business SMEs?

These questions were structured to assist this study in conducting a comprehensive bibliometric analysis that specifically examines the major contributors to ADR research in the business SME context. By shedding light on

underexplored areas and emerging trends in the ADR literature, this study seeks to identify potential directions for future research.

2. METHODOLOGY

Bibliometric analysis has become an increasingly popular method to examine the development of academic literature. It is a methodical strategy that uses the outputs of the academic literature database to comprehend the worldwide research trends in a certain field. Khatib, S. F., et al. [13] had defined bibliometrics as quantitative research method that examine and analyse bibliographic data to identify the characteristics, patterns and trends in selected field. Besides that, Passas, I. [17] said the bibliometric was apart a review paper that talk about the issues, advancements and future prospects of a certain topics. The increasing accessibility of comprehensive bibliographic databases (i.e:Scopus and Web of Science (WoS)) has enhanced scholars' ability to retrieve large volume of publication data. Furthermore, the development of advanced analytical tools like VOSviewer and Bibliomagika may help scholars to conduct a systematic and visual analysis and contribute to the increasing trend of preparing bibliometric analysis.

This study was using the quantitative analysis to assesses scholarly publications using the Scopus database related to Alternative Dispute Resolutions (ADR) and small and medium enterprises (SME) as the primary sources. Scopus was selected due to its stringent indexing criteria ensures the inclusion of high-quality and relevant documents. Besides that, Ab Hamid, N. A, et. al. [2] also states the Scopus coverage of the social sciences and educational research domains surpassed the Web of Science leads to the results are more reliable. Therefore, it is believed that this database can provide extensive scientific research from all over the world and would help this study in reaching the objective at the end.

In order to compile the dataset, an advance search query was conducted in Scopus using the following strings: TITLE-ABS-KEY ("alternative dispute resolution* (ADR)" OR "alternative dispute resolution*" AND "business*" OR "SME*" OR "small medium enterprise*" OR "Small and medium enterprise" OR "entrepreneur*" with no other restrictions. The search was performed on 5th March 2026. The results show that 220 records were identified and screened. There is only one data were removed due to unrelated with this topic and the scholars use the remaining data in this study's analysis. To be clearer, the process will be shown in the flow diagram in Fig 2.

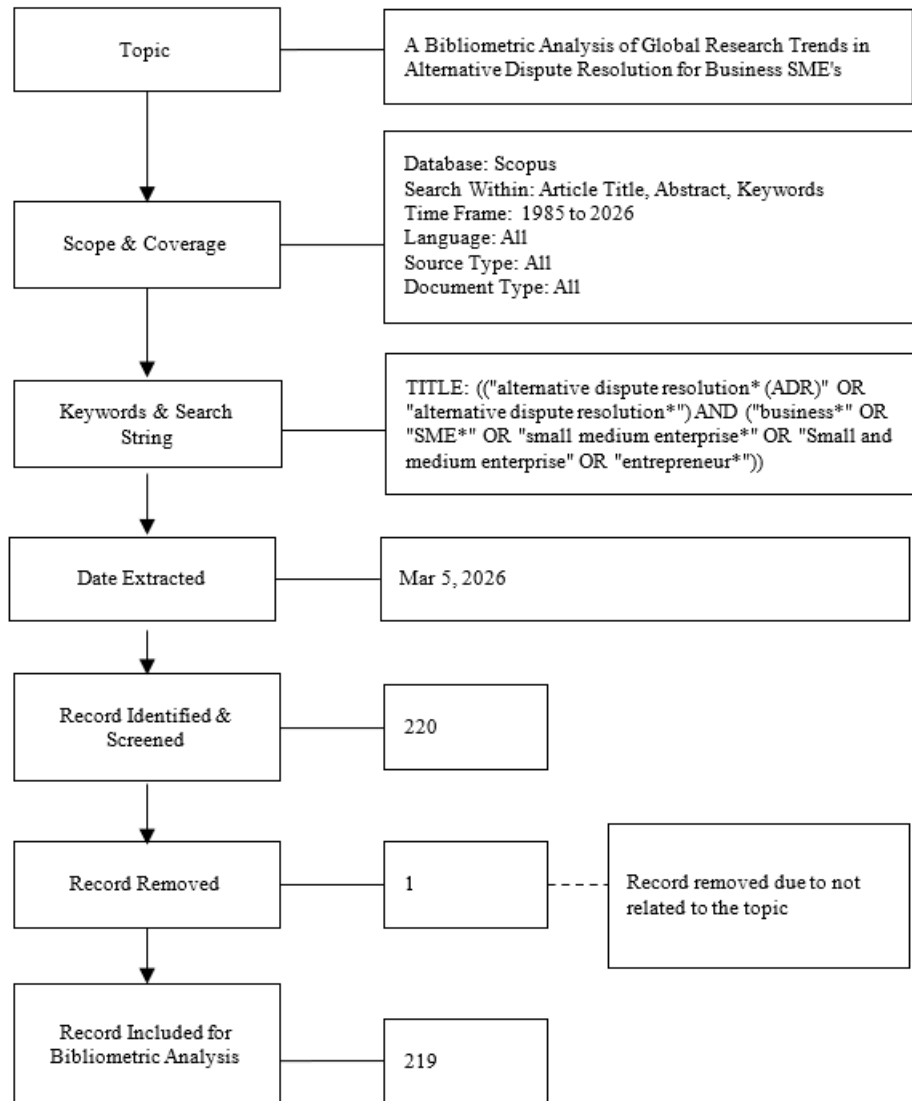


Fig 2 Flow diagram of the search string. Source: Zakaria et al. (2021), Page, M. J., et al. (2021)

3. FINDINGS AND RESULTS

The following results obtained by using the tools of biblioMagika [5]. This tool assists in the selection of articles in online databases based on their article quality. Total 219 documents were gathered for this study from the Scopus database. In order to address most influential publications on ADR in the context SME, citation metrics were analyzed to identify key works driving academic discourse in the field.

TABLE I CITATION METRICS

Main information	Data
Publication years	1985 - 2026
Total publications	219
Citable year	42
Number of contributing authors	415

Number of cited papers	178
Total citations	1,556
Citation per paper	7.11
Citation per cited paper	8.74
Citation per year	37.95
Citation per author	3.75
Author per paper	1.89
Citation sum within h-core	1,454
H-index	18
G-index	34
M-index	0.429
Source: Generated by the author(s) using biblioMagika® (Ahmi, 2024)	

According to Table 1, the Scopus database contains the earliest research on the alternative dispute resolution and small and medium enterprise, dating back to 1985. There have been 219 publications since that year, and 1,556 citations make them deemed influential. It is supported by the high citation per paper score of 7.11 and citation per author score of 3.75. There are 415 authors who contributed towards the topics, 178 papers have been cited and average author per paper is 1.89. With a high degree of citation and influence, the research has had a substantial impact on the academic community, as indicated by the h-index and g-index counts.

TABLE 2.
DOCUMENT TYPE

Document Type	Total Publications
Article	132
Book Chapter	28
Book	21
Conference Paper	21
Conference Review	15
Report	1
Short Survey	1
Total	219

Source: Generated by the author(s) using biblioMagika® (Ahmi, 2024)

The document type published in the Scopus database is displayed in Table 2. The document published for the time range was led by the articles which is 132 publications, followed by book chapter (28), book (21), conference paper (21), and conference review (15). The balance was contributed by report and short survey (2).

A. Publication Trends

This section discusses the global trends in publications of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) and business SMEs. In Fig 3, the chart shows the total publications and citations by year. The total publications show an increasing trend each year. It can be identified that an increasing number of scholars have been interested in discussing this topic year after year. The publication is published across various field. Besides that, the total citations also show fluctuating trends over the years. The highest number of citations was in 2009. According to Jones, D [12], this increasing trend is some of impact of the financial crisis in that year. Most countries have changed their policies to avoid further losses from the financial crisis. So, they are becoming aware about this solution and practicing it accordingly. Meanwhile, Fig 4 shows an increasing number of total publications, indicating that the topic remains relevant to discuss to this day. Every discussion gives a new idea in improving the alternative dispute resolution management across various field.

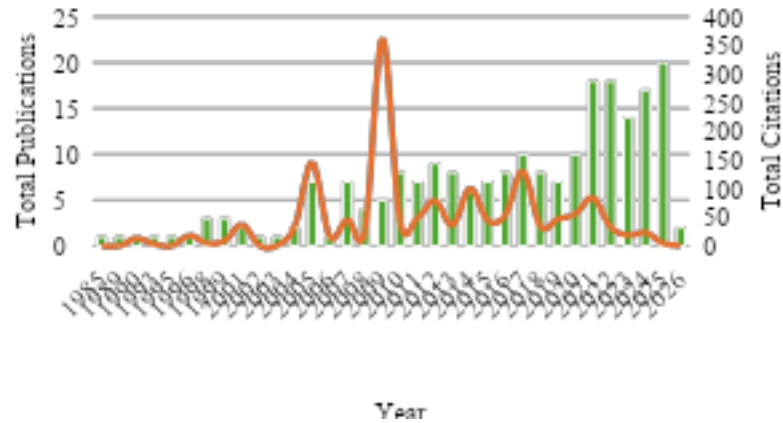


Fig 3 Total Publications and Citations by Year

Source: Generated by the author(s) using biblioMagika® (Ahmi, 2024)

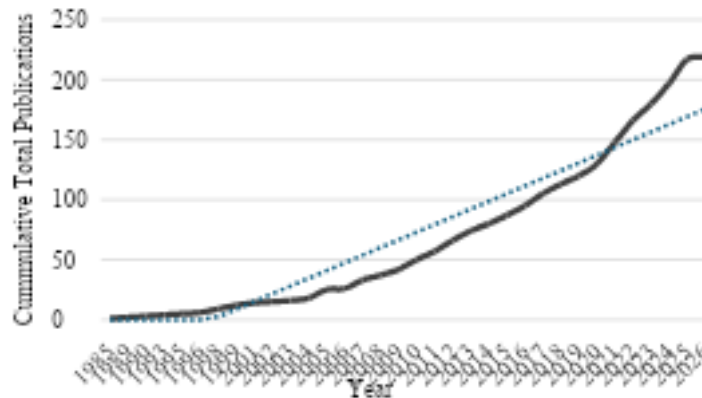


Fig 4 Publication Growth

Source: Generated by the author(s) using biblioMagika® (Ahmi, 2024)

B. Publication by Authors & Institutions

This study identified the top ten authors and top ten articles by institutions in the "Alternative dispute resolution and small and medium enterprises" research. The most author publish was Jansen, Bart from New York University amounted four (4) publications. Meanwhile the other nine authors contributed two (2) publications each. As for the data publication by institution, Universiti of California located in United States leads the field for most productive institutions by publishing six (6) publications. The publishing was followed by New York University which have five (5) publications and National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy four (4) publications. Meanwhile the rest

university was published total of three publications along the time. The detail data for the most productive author and institution was as presented in Table 3 and Table 4 below.

TABLE 3 TOP 10 PRODUCTIVE AUTHORS

Full Name	Current Affiliation	Country	TP	NCP	TC	C/P	C/CP	h	g	m
Jansen, Bart	New York University	United States	4	4	12	3.00	3.00	2	3	0.333
Izmailov, Robert Rinatovich	Kazan Federal University	Russian Federation	2	1	2	1.00	2.00	1	1	0.125
Sirena, Pietro	Università Bocconi	Italy	2	1	4	2.00	4.00	1	2	0.100
Palanissamy, Ayyappan	Modern College of Business and Science	Oman	2	0	0	0.00	0.00	0	0	0.000
Andrade, Francisco A.C.P.	Victoria University	Australia	2	2	70	35.00	35.00	2	2	0.118
Frolova, Evgenia E.	RUDN University	Russian Federation	2	2	4	2.00	2.00	1	2	0.200
Neves, José Carlos Ferreira Maia	Universidade do Minho	Portugal	2	2	70	35.00	35.00	2	2	0.118
Maye, Carmen	University of South Carolina	United States	2	0	0	0.00	0.00	0	0	0.000
Cortés, Pablo	College of Social Sciences	United Kingdom	2	2	59	29.50	29.50	2	2	0.125
Novais, P.	Universidade do Minho	Portugal	2	2	70	35.00	35.00	2	2	0.118

Notes: TP=total number of publications; NCA=Number of contributing authors; NCP=number of cited publications; TC=total citations; C/P=average citations per publication; C/CP=average citations per cited publication; h=h-index; g=g-index; m=m-index.

Source: Generated by the author(s) using biblioMagika® (Ahmi, 2024)

TABLE 4.

TOP 10 PRODUCTIVE INSTITUTIONS

Institution Name	Country	TP	NCA	NCP	TC	C/P	C/CP	h	g	m
University of California	United States	6	7	4	114	19.00	28.50	3	6	0.158
New York University	United States	5	5	4	12	2.40	3.00	2	3	0.333
National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy	Ukraine	4	5	2	17	4.25	8.50	2	4	0.100
Universitas Airlangga	Indonesia	3	12	1	1	0.33	1.00	1	1	0.167
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia	Malaysia	3	6	3	16	5.33	5.33	2	3	0.250
Oxford University	United Kingdom	3	3	1	5	1.67	5.00	1	2	0.056
Counsel, Houston	United States	3	4	2	4	1.33	2.00	1	2	0.045
University of Leicester	United Kingdom	3	3	2	33	11.00	16.50	1	3	0.063
University of South Carolina	United States	3	6	1	15	5.00	15.00	1	3	0.053

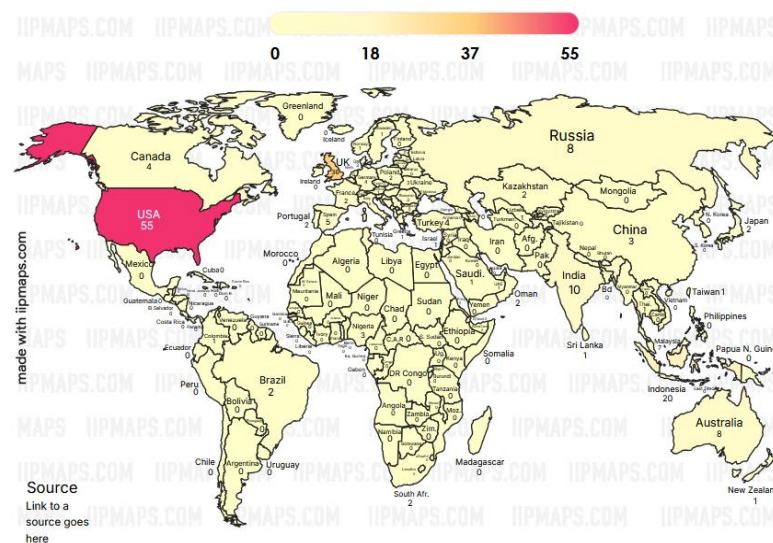
Kazan Federal University	Russian Federation	3	7	1	2	0.67	2.00	1	1	0.125
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Notes: TP=total number of publications; NCA=number of contributing authors; NCP=number of cited publications; TC=total citations; C/P=average citations per publication; C/CP=average citations per cited publication; h=h-index; g=g-index; m=m-index.

Source: Generated by the author(s) using biblioMagika® (Ahmi, 2024)

C. Publication by Countries

The analysis of publication by countries indicates that United States (US) produce the highest number of publications with total of fifty five (55) publications related to ADR in the context SMEs. The United Kingdom (UK) ranked second, contributing total of thirty six (36) publications. Indonesia followed with 20 publications, while India and Italy recorded 10 and 9 publications respectively. These five countries constitute the leading contributors to the global body literature on ADR and SMEs. For the other country contributed between two until 8 publications each as presented in the Fig 5.



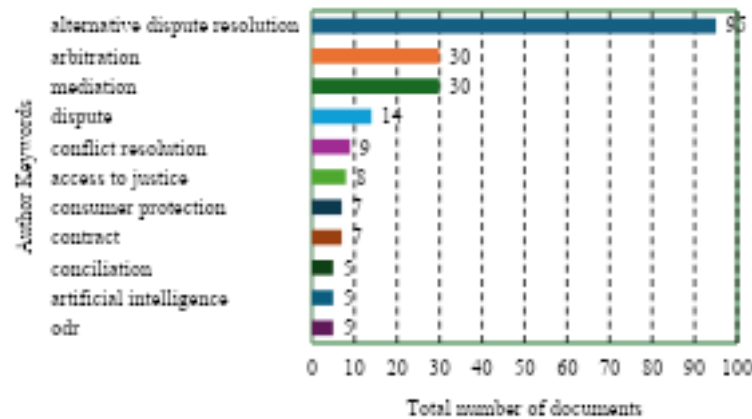


Fig 6 Frequency Distribution of Top 11 Author Keywords

Source: Generated by the author(s) using biblioMagika® (Ahmi, 2024)

A. Co-authorship analysis

In bibliometric studies, co-authorship is used to identify collaboration patterns and the social structure of scientific research. The co-authorship analysis was conducted to examine the patterns of collaboration among scholars in the field of ADR in the context of SMEs. Fig 7 shows the co-authorship analysis generated by the VOSviewer version 1.6.20 (2023). The data is generated by setting it using fractional counting method with minimum one document of an author. As illustrated in the heatmap visualization, there are seven authors appears as the most visible nodes in the network. This author was identified relatively higher research contributions within the dataset. The presence of multiple individual nodes with limited overlapping connections in the map suggests that research on ADR in the context SMEs is still relatively fragmented. Due to small number of research groups rather than extensive international networks.

Furthermore, the dispersion of authors across different nodes indicates that the research field remains geographically and institutionally distributed. The patterns may reflect due to the interdisciplinary nature of ADR research. For example, spans legal studies, business management, and dispute resolution practices across different jurisdictions. This finding reveals that although several authors contribute actively to ADR research, the collaboration structure remains relatively decentralized. There is still considerable potential for stronger collaborative networks to be developed in future research through international partnership and interdisciplinary research initiatives.

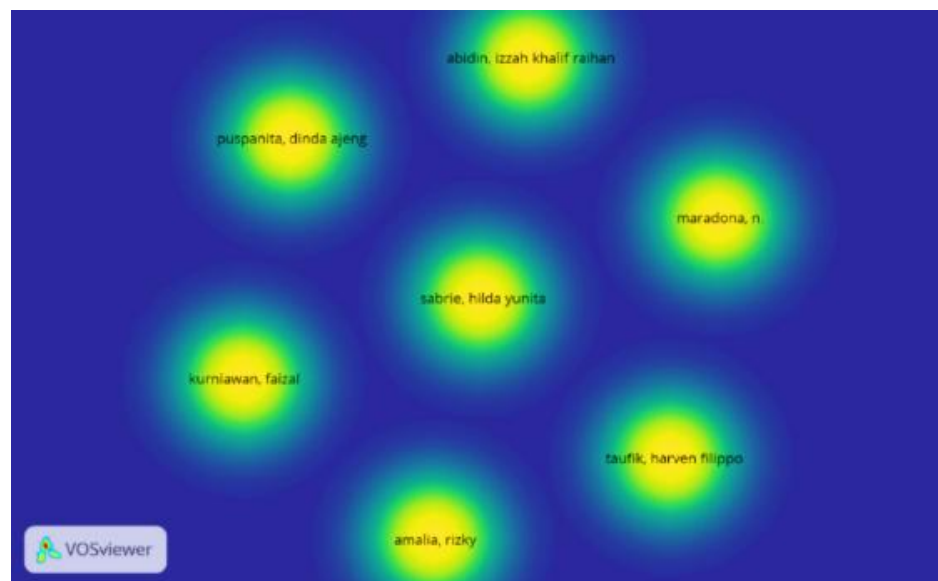


Fig. 7 Co-authorship of authors Map (all item)

Source: Generated by the author(s) using VOSviewer (Van Eck & Waltman, 2023)

B. Co-occurrence analysis

The co-occurrence keyword generally represents closely related research topic in bibliometric studies and can helps the scholars to reveal the intellectual structure of a research domain. To identify the thematic structure of the research field on alternative dispute resolution (ADR) and small and medium enterprise (SME), the keyword co-occurrence analysis was conducted. Fig 8 shows the visualization generated by using VOSviewer, and its reveal that “alternative dispute resolutions” appears as the most dominant and central keyword. This keyword indicates its function as the main conceptual node connecting multiple research themes. These results align with the finding in the author keyword which alternative dispute resolution (ADR) is the most popular keyword used by the scholars.

The network map further demonstrates several thematic clusters associated with ADR. One prominent cluster relates to access to justice, conflicts and business ethics. This suggesting that a significant portion of the literature examines ADR as a mechanism (arbitration and mediation) to enhance fairness and accessibility in dispute resolution systems. As highlight by Younas [24], the ADR plays an important role in reducing court congestion and enabling more efficient dispute settlement mechanism within modern justice systems.

The next emerging cluster involves technology related keyword such as artificial intelligence (AI), Industry 4.0, and social media. This cluster indicates the growing integration of digital technologies within dispute resolution practices. Recently, the literature shows increasing scholarly interest in the application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) platforms to support mediation and arbitration processes [3], [23], [16]. The integration of AI technologies and ADR can increase the potential to enhance efficiency, reduce costs, and facilitate dispute resolution in digital environments.

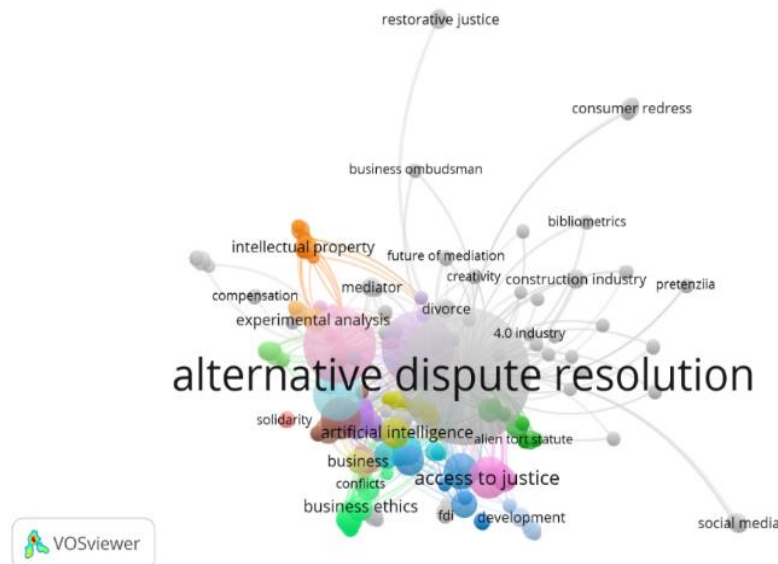


Fig 8 Co-occurrence of author keyword Map (all item)

Source: Generated by the author(s) using VOSviewer (Van Eck & Waltman, 2023)

4. Discussion

The results of the bibliometric analysis by examining publication patterns, author collaborations, and keyword co-occurrences, provide several important insights into the development of research on Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) within the SMEs context. The study reveals the intellectual structure and emerging directions of this research domain.

Firstly, the analysis indicates that research on ADR was gradually expanded over the years. This finding suggests an increasing academic interest in alternative mechanism for resolving commercial disputes. In modern business environments, SMEs often face significant challenge when relying on traditional litigation due to cost, procedure complexity and time. This mechanism of ADR had gained their attention as more efficient and flexible for dispute settlement.

Secondly, it was found that United States and United Kingdom has dominate this research field in current situation. The dominance by United States and United Kingdom was attributed to the early development and institutionalization of ADR in their commercial systems. According to Riya, R., et al [19], the arbitration practice was established as early 1768 in US and 1889 in UK. The publication from United States related with this study starts in the year 1985 by Nielsen Kris R. and Galloway Patricia D. [14] with title “Avoiding lengthy and costly litigation by negotiating alternative dispute resolution methods”. In the year 1997 the U.S corporations had widely use alternative dispute resolutions over litigation to solve disputes [9]. This explained why US and UK can be the leading country in research about ADR.

Next is the keyword co-occurrence had been revealing several important thematic areas within the literature. The emergence of keywords such as artificial intelligence, Industry 4.0, and social media indicates a grows in scholars’ interest in the role of digital technologies in dispute resolution processes. Overall, the findings highlight that alternative dispute resolution research is evolving toward a more interdisciplinary field and it is good to explore more on business especially in SMEs.

5. Conclusions

This article presents the bibliometric analysis of alternative dispute resolution related with small and medium enterprise. The data collection of the study is from the Scopus database and 219 number of documents was analyzed since year 1985 until March 2026. Bibliometric analysis done by this study provides a comprehensive review of the research output in this field.

Based on the results found in this study, it shows that the alternative dispute resolution is one of the interesting topics that may be explore by future researchers. The findings discussed above indicates the research on alternative dispute resolution (ADR) has gradually expanded over the past decade. The most popular keyword use by the scholar was “alternative dispute resolution”. Additionally, the dominance of the United States and United Kingdom in ADR publications may be attributed to their well-established legal framework and strong institutional support for mediation and arbitration practices. Other than that, this study also found the emergence of technology related keyword such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Industry 4.0. This trend reflects the growing interest of scholars to discuss in online dispute resolution and AI assisted mediation systems in modern legal and business environment. Furthermore, this study also identified the country that emerging the themes. This may give a direction towards future research to help improve the research for the surrounding area that may give the benefit towards the key industry player and the government of the mentioned countries.

A. Limitation of the study

However, a number of limitations emerged in this study. This study focused exclusively on the publications indexed in the Scopus database. As a results, it might not encompass the full breadth of relevant research domain. In addition, the bibliometric analysis primarily provides datasets on publication volume and trends. Nevertheless, it still necessitates the insights and evaluations of domain experts to offer a comprehensive intellectual appraisal informed by their expertise. Overall, this article highlights the gaps in current research and suggest potential ideas to future researchers.

B. Future research

Future research may further explore the practical implementation of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) in business SMEs. The proposed research may identify the awareness of business owner about this mechanism and how deep they understand about it.

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