

Research Article

Global Trends of Decolonial Governance in Indigenous Peoples Recognition Policy

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Abstract.

Interest in the recognition and protection of the rights of indigenous people has grown rapidly in the last decade. This study analyzes the development of the concept of decolonial governance in indigenous peoples' recognition policies through a systematic literature review (SLR) and bibliometric analysis of global publications for the 2019–2024 period. The aim of the study is to identify publication trends, dominant actors, and institutional design principles that support the decolonial paradigm. The SLR method follows the PRISMA protocol with searches in Scopus and Web of Science databases, complemented by quantitative analysis using Bibliometrix and VOSviewer. The results show an exponential increase in publications (150% since 2019), dominated by researchers from North America, Europe, and South Africa. Key themes include structural decolonization, indigenous peoples' rights, and institutional reform. The Indigenous Peoples Commission's case study revealed implementation challenges, such as reliance on authority and resources. The geographical gap is characterized by minimal contributions from Southeast Asia and Latin America, as well as a lack of empirical evaluation of critical findings. This article recommends strengthening participatory methodologies and evaluative research to support inclusive institutional design. The findings provide a conceptual basis for the development of inclusive and equitable decolonial policies.

Keywords: decolonial governance, indigenous peoples recognition, indigenous peoples commission

1. Introduction

Colonial legacy continues to be a latent foundation in the governance system and legal framework in many postcolonial countries, especially in the state's relationship with indigenous communities. In many cases, the legal system, bureaucracy, and administrative procedures established during the colonial period were not fundamentally dismantled post-independence, but rather replicated or adapted with slight modifications. This caused the colonial power structure to persist in a new form, which often still maintained relational inequalities between the state and indigenous peoples [1].

This inequality is not only structural, but also epistemological, where indigenous peoples' knowledge, norms, and social practices are often marginalized in the process

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of policy-making and legal recognition. In Indonesia, for example, of the 30.1 million hectares of customary territories that have been mapped, only 4.8 million hectares have been legally recognized. This triggered 121 agrarian conflicts involving 141 indigenous communities [2]. Although there have been international frameworks such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) that affirm indigenous peoples' collective rights to land, culture, and political participation, their implementation has often been hampered by derivative rules at the national level that reproduce the colonial logic in a new form. It is in this context that the paradigm of decolonial governance emerges, which offers a radical approach to state governance.

This concept does not stop at the formal representation of indigenous peoples within state institutions, but rather encourages the systematic dismantling of the colonial heritage structures that govern the state's relationship with indigenous communities [3]. The decolonial approach requires a change in the way the state understands and recognizes the existence of indigenous peoples, as well as opening up space for indigenous epistemology to help determine the direction of development and public policy [4]. In other words, decolonial governance is an effort to shift the center of power and knowledge from the state towards a plural system that recognizes and facilitates the diversity of forms of governance, including customary-based ones.

The implementation of this paradigm requires comprehensive institutional reform. This includes overhauling basic principles in decision-making, the creation of participation mechanisms that are inclusive [5] and reflective of local cultures, and the redistribution of authority from the central government to indigenous communities that have been marginalized [6]. In practice, one of the manifestations of the spirit of decolonial governance is the establishment of independent institutions such as the Indigenous Peoples Commission, which is tasked with verifying indigenous territories, resolving agrarian conflicts, and advocating for the rights of indigenous communities. Nevertheless, comparative studies show that the success of these institutions depends largely on the extent to which they are given legal authority and adequate resources to carry out their mandates independently. Without this, such commissions often only serve as a symbol of the state's legitimacy on customary issues, and instead risk reproducing the colonial power structure in a new framework [7].

The decolonial and postcolonial paradigms both depart from criticism of colonialism, but have fundamental differences in their epistemological origins, focus, and goals. Postcolonialism developed from the study of literature and cultural theory, especially in the context of former British colonies, and focused more on the analysis of colonial

representations in discourse, literature, and cultural identity after the formal colonial period ended. Meanwhile, decolonialism was born out of the experience of colonialism in Latin America, Africa, and other parts of the Global South, with an emphasis on colonial power structures that still live on in global systems of knowledge, economics, and governance, even though formal colonialism has ended. Decolonialism demands a complete dismantling of the modern/colonial epistemic system and emphasizes epistemic disobedience—that is, defiance of the dominance of Western knowledge and the recognition of cosmology and local knowledge. Therefore, if postcolonialism is more often reflective of colonial legacies, then decolonialism is transformative, demanding an overhaul of colonial structures and logics that are still ongoing today.

Overall, the urgency of decolonization in state governance is not only about the correction of colonial history, but concerns social justice, recognition of the plurality of legal systems and knowledge, and the establishment of more equal power relations between the state and indigenous communities. Several previous studies have touched on decolonial theory, the historical context of colonialism, and institutional examples in various parts of the world, but there has been no systematic bibliometric review that combines quantitative and qualitative data related to decolonial governance in the recognition of indigenous peoples. Therefore, this article formulates two main questions, namely: What are the trends in academic publications on decolonial governance and recognition of indigenous peoples during the period 2019-2024?, and What institutional design principles are identified as decolonial practices in institutions such as the Indigenous Peoples Commission?

With a combined quantitative and qualitative approach, this study is expected to provide a complete picture of the decolonial governance research landscape and decolonial institutional principles that can be adapted in various contexts, supporting efforts to create inclusive, equitable, and sustainable governance for indigenous peoples.

2. Methods

Literature search was conducted on the Scopus database for publication in 2019-2024. The keywords used include the terms decolonial governance and indigenous peoples such as decolonial, decolonization, Indigenous peoples, governance, recognition. The search results were selected based on the relevance of the topic, namely the policy of recognition of indigenous peoples in a decolonial perspective. Bibliographic data

from the selected articles were extracted, including titles, abstracts, keywords, authors, affiliations, sources, journals, and citation metrics. Furthermore, quantitative analysis is carried out with bibliometric software (Biblioshiny from R-package bibliometrix and VOSviewer) to generate various indicators: annual publication trends, most productive authors and institutions, countries of origin of publications, most frequently appearing keywords, and co-occurrence networks, as well as author collaboration networks. These quantitative results are then complemented by a qualitative analysis of the content of the publication to understand the main themes and context of the application of the decolonial concept in indigenous peoples' institutions.

A systematic approach was also applied with reference to the PRISMA protocol starting from the identification of publications through keywords on Scopus, abstract screening to ensure relevance to decolonial & indigenous peoples' topics, to the inclusion of final articles. In total, there are around 1000 global documents related to decolonization identified in the 2010-2023 time frame [8], but after focusing on the context of governance and indigenous peoples in the 2019-2024 time frame, the number of articles found is more limited. From the results of the screening, dozens of articles were obtained that specifically discussed decoloniality in policies or institutions related to indigenous peoples.

To enhance the validity and transparency of the findings, it is important to explicitly state the inclusion and exclusion criteria, as well as to clearly document the number of articles retained at each phase of the screening process. This systematic literature review applied the PRISMA protocol to ensure methodological rigor, beginning with the identification of relevant publications from the Scopus database using targeted keywords such as decolonial, decolonization, Indigenous peoples, governance, and recognition. From an initial pool of approximately 1000 documents related to decolonization (2010–2023), the scope was narrowed to focus specifically on articles from 2019 to 2024 that examined governance and indigenous peoples. Screening was conducted at the abstract level to determine relevance to decolonial policy frameworks, particularly those addressing indigenous recognition. The final selection consisted of several dozen articles that directly addressed decoloniality within institutional or policy contexts concerning indigenous peoples. By systematically documenting the selection criteria and article counts per stage, the study strengthens the reliability and reproducibility of its bibliometric and thematic analysis.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Result

This systematic literature review with a bibliometric approach shows that the study of decolonial governance related to indigenous peoples recognition policies has developed rapidly in the last five years. The literature underscores the importance of structural and epistemological changes in governance to truly support the sovereignty of indigenous peoples who have long been marginalized by colonial legacies. Quantitatively, there has been a significant increase in the number of publications since 2019 with the largest contributions from researchers in North America, Europe, and South Africa.

Key themes include the dismantling of colonial structures, the affirmation of indigenous rights, and the creation of alternative institutions such as indigenous peoples commissions. Case studies such as the Indigenous Peoples Commission in Indonesia's plan reflect efforts to translate decolonial concepts into concrete policies. An important lesson from various studies is that the success of decolonization governance depends on political and institutional seriousness in making room for indigenous peoples' perspectives. Decolonial governance is not just about incorporating indigenous representations into the old structure, but redesigning the structure itself so that indigenous values, knowledge, and leadership are recognized as equal. This requires a commitment to reforms that might challenge the status quo, such as revising colonial law, returning control of land/resources to their original owners, and creating new accountability mechanisms.

Future research on decolonial governance must emphasize inclusive, cross-regional collaboration that actively involves indigenous scholars and communities to avoid reproducing colonial biases and ensure grounded, context-relevant findings. Empirical evaluation of initiatives like customary commissions and courts is essential to identify what enables or hinders their effectiveness, making research both theoretically meaningful and practically applicable. As a long-term transformation process, decolonial governance requires dismantling colonial structures and embedding indigenous values, knowledge, and leadership into governance systems. The goal is to foster truly inclusive, just governance where indigenous peoples are full and equal actors in shaping their own futures.

3.2. Discussion

1. Annual publication trend analysis

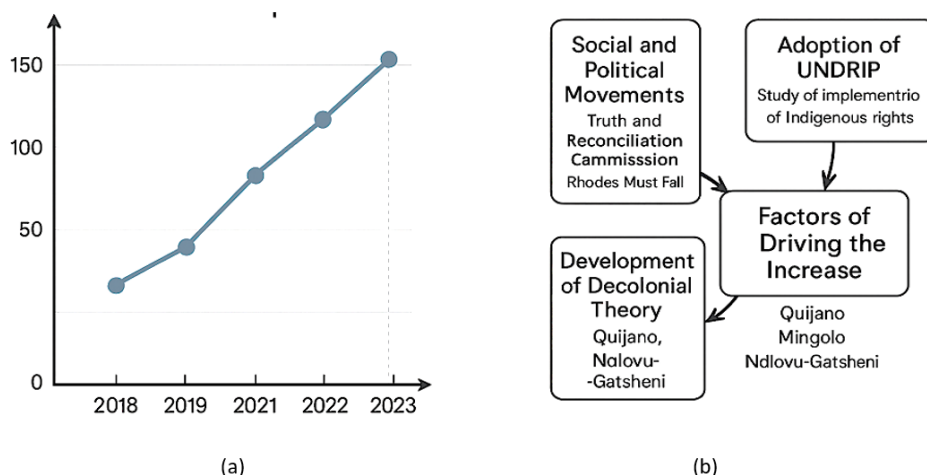


Figure 1: (a) Tren publications on decolonial governance and indigenous peoples: (b) Factors driving this trend topic.

Research trends on the topic of decolonial governance in the context of indigenous peoples show a significant increase per year. Before 2019, studies on decolonization had begun to develop gradually, but the 2019-2020 period marked a marked real escalation. In 2019 there were more than 100 related publications which means there was a double increase compared to the previous few years. In 2020, the number of related publications has more than doubled to around 121 publications. This increase is in line with increasing academic attention to the issue of decolonization in various disciplines in the early 2020's. In 2021, publication output increased to 126 articles, followed by another surge in 2022 which reached more than 140 articles per year. The figure for 2023 is estimated to exceed 150 publications based on trends until the end of 2022. This increase reflects the increasingly central issue of decolonial issues in global academic discourse, including its relation to the rights of indigenous peoples.

Factors driving this trend include: (a) the strengthening of social and political decolonization movements such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Canada and the Rhodes Must Fall movement, which encouraged critical research into colonial legacies; (b) the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) by many countries, triggering studies on its implementation; and (c) the development of the decolonial theoretical framework pioneered by thinkers such as Quijano, Mignolo, Ndlovu-Gatsheni which began to be applied to the field of public policy. Overall, the 2019–2024 trend shows exponential growth in the literature:

scientific production in 2020 and beyond far exceeded the previous decade. This emphasizes the topic of decolonialism and indigenous peoples as an increasingly important emerging scholarly focus.

2. Most influential writers and institutions

Between 2019 and 2024, the publication landscape on decolonial governance has been shaped by a mix of one-time contributors and a few prolific scholars, with Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni standing out as the most influential figure. Affiliated with the University of South Africa and the University of Bayreuth, Ndlovu-Gatsheni’s extensive work on decoloniality, epistemic colonialism, and African liberation places him at the forefront of global decolonial discourse, reflecting the pivotal role of African perspectives in this field. Other notable contributors include Linda Tuhiwai Smith, known for her foundational work *Decolonizing Methodologies*, as well as Eve Tuck and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, whose work intersects with education and indigenous thought. From an institutional perspective, publication trends are concentrated in universities located in regions historically linked to colonialism, both as colonizers and the colonized, with five institutions emerging as the most productive in advancing decolonial scholarship (Table 1).

TABLE 1: The most institutions publications.

No	Institution	State	Articles
1	University of Exeter	England	15
2	Imperial College London	England	14
3	University of Johannesburg	South Africa	10
4	Stellenbosch University	South Africa	10
5	Western University	Canada	9

In addition to the five leading institutions, the University of Toronto and Mount Royal University also show notable publication output on decolonial governance. The prominence of Exeter and Imperial College in the UK highlights their historical strength in colonial and post-colonial studies, with most of their work published in historical journals. Similarly, the University of Johannesburg and Stellenbosch reflect South Africa’s unique position as a hub of decolonial thought, shaped by its legacy of colonialism and apartheid. Institutions in North America, particularly in Canada and the United States, also contribute significantly, aligning with their academic focus on internal colonialism and indigenous rights. Overall, publication productivity is concentrated in Western and

formerly colonized Southern institutions, suggesting that historical experience influences research focus. However, the relatively low output from Asia and Latin America indicates a geographic imbalance and points to the need for broader global inclusion in decolonial knowledge production.

3. Country of Origin of Most Publications

The top five countries (the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand) dominate global publications related to decolonial studies, along with the size of the academic community and the relevance of each country's colonial context. The United States and the United Kingdom have made significant contributions due to strong interest in the evaluation of colonial heritage, while Canada, Australia, and New Zealand are active in indigenous issues in the context of settler colonialism. South Africa was also an important centre due to the colonial and Apartheid experiences that encouraged the development of decolonial thought. Other countries such as India are starting to show progress albeit limited, with about 38 articles that are mostly reflective of the impact of British colonialism. Meanwhile, several European countries such as the Netherlands and Germany contributed through about 20 publications, reflecting the connection with their colonial past. Indonesia has begun to show its existence in international publications on indigenous peoples, but the number of publications from Indonesian researchers is still very small in the period 2019–2024 (Table 2).

TABLE 2: The most state publications.

No	State	Articles
1	United States	303
2	England	236
3	Canada	163
4	South Africa	151
5	Australia	107

Interestingly, most of the articles analyzed were the result of individual writings from one country, or single country publications. For example, of the 149 articles published in the United States, 141 of them were written by authors who were entirely based in that country. A similar trend is seen in the UK, with 93 out of 102 articles written by domestic authors. Collaboration between countries (multiple country publications) does exist, but it is still very limited-for example, only about 8 articles in the United States involve colleagues from abroad. This indicates that the decolonial research network is still geographical and not completely transnational. Collaboration tends to

be established in regional blocs such as between the United States and Canada, or between commonwealth countries. Going forward, increased cross-border and cross-continental collaboration will be a strategic opportunity to enrich perspectives and encourage a more inclusive production of decolonial knowledge globally.

4. Most Frequently Appearing Keywords

Bibliometric studies of keywords used in publications on decolonial governance reveal several dominant themes that highlight the scholarly focus on the processes of decolonization and critiques of colonial legacies. The most frequently cited terms are “decolonization”/“decolonialism” and “colonialism,” underscoring the centrality of these concepts in the literature. Keywords also frequently reflect the populations affected by colonialism, with “indigenous peoples” appearing around 16 times, indicating a strong emphasis on indigenous communities as key subjects of study. The term “humans” appears approximately 30 times, reflecting broader analyses of colonialism’s impact on human communities and human rights. The concept of “post-colonialism” appears around 15 times, marking the influence of postcolonial theory despite its conceptual distinctions from decolonial thought. Other recurrent keywords include “historical perspective” and “political history” (each appearing about 16 times), indicating a trend of examining decolonization through historical analysis. “Nationalism” also emerges frequently, though to a lesser degree, as many decolonization movements have been historically tied to anti-colonial nationalist struggles. Finally, while not quantitatively specified, “self-determination” is a recurring theme, particularly in studies focused on indigenous rights and political autonomy.

From the keyword patterns identified, two major thematic spectrums emerge within the decolonial literature. The first spectrum centers on historical-structural themes, such as *colonialism*, *nationalism*, *political history*, and *post-colonialism*, which emphasize macro-level analyses involving the state, imperialism, and systemic legacies. The second spectrum highlights community-centered or victim-oriented themes, including *indigenous peoples*, *human communities*, *population*, and the principle of *self-determination*, which focus on the lived experiences and resistance of communities affected by colonialism. The frequent appearance of terms like *indigenous* and *black* reflects the literature’s attention to historically marginalized groups. Meanwhile, the persistent use of keywords like *colonialism* and *post-colonialism* underscores the conceptual frameworks that authors use to interrogate the enduring impacts of empire and domination.

Keyword co-occurrence analysis further reveals interconnected thematic clusters that demonstrate how various issues are interwoven. The term *decolonization*, for instance, frequently appears alongside *colonialism* and *post-colonialism*, forming a core theoretical cluster. In contrast, *indigenous peoples* is often linked with keywords such as *rights*, *recognition*, and *governance*, forming clusters that focus on indigenous policy advocacy. Specific sub-clusters have also emerged in newer literature, such as the intersection of *climate change* and *indigenous knowledge*, particularly in studies of environmental governance. Visualization through VOSviewer confirms these linkages, showing dominant nodes like *colonialism*, *decolonization*, and *Indigenous* connected to concepts like *law*, *education*, *knowledge*, *governance*, and *self-determination*. This network illustrates that decolonial studies related to indigenous peoples are not isolated but intersect with broader fields such as environmental justice, education, human rights, and legal reform-representing a collective struggle for self-governance and epistemic justice.

5. The Most Popular Journals Accommodating Topics

Decolonial research related to indigenous peoples is published across a wide array of academic journals, reflecting its inherently cross-disciplinary nature that spans history, anthropology, law, development studies, and environmental sciences. An analysis of publication patterns from 2010 to 2023 reveals that journals focused on history and regional studies dominate the discourse, underscoring the continued relevance of historical colonial analysis in framing decolonial perspectives.

The *Journal of Interventions* stands out due to its grounding in postcolonial critical theory, while journals such as *Third World Quarterly* and *Antipode* highlight the intersection of decolonial themes with global development and social geography. In addition to these widely recognized outlets, a number of specialized journals-although not in the top tier by volume-play a crucial role in shaping the field, such as *The International Indigenous Policy Journal*, *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, and *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, which focus on indigenous knowledge, rights, and education.

Thematic analysis of publications in these journals indicates a strong focus on strategies for the recognition of customary rights, indigenous education systems, and the broader decolonization of knowledge structures. A significant increase in publication volume has occurred since 2019, driven by growing academic interest and the active

TABLE 3: The most popular journals accomodating.

No	Journal	Articles
1	International History Review	16
2	Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History	14
3	HTS Teologiese Studies	8
4	Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial	8
5	Journal of Global History	8
6	Third World Quarterly	7
7	Antipode	7
8	Journal of Contemporary History	7
9	Social Dynamics	7
10	International Journal of African Historical Studies	6

contributions of indigenous scholars and activists producing their own critical literature. Notably, environmental journals such as *Climate Policy* and *Ecology and Society* have begun integrating decolonial perspectives, particularly in discussions surrounding indigenous participation in resource governance and biodiversity conservation. This trend demonstrates that decolonial discourse has moved beyond the humanities and social sciences into environmental studies, giving rise to concepts like *decolonizing conservation* and *Indigenous-led conservation*. As a result, decolonial thinking is becoming increasingly mainstream and recognized as relevant across diverse academic and policy-oriented fields.

6. Writers and Institutional Collaboration Networks

The analysis of the co-authorship network reveals a generally low rate of international collaboration in decolonial research, with less than 10% of publications involving cross-border authorship. Network visualizations indicate that collaboration patterns tend to cluster geographically and disciplinarily. For instance, scholars from Canada and the United States often form research networks centered on indigenous rights in North America, while European collaborations-such as those between the UK, the Netherlands, and Germany-are more focused on postcolonial theory. South African institutions form distinct clusters on topics like decolonial education, and while there are instances of Global North–South cooperation-such as Australian scholars working with researchers from the Pacific or Southeast Asia-these efforts remain sporadic.

These patterns underscore the regionalized nature of current research collaboration in decolonial studies.

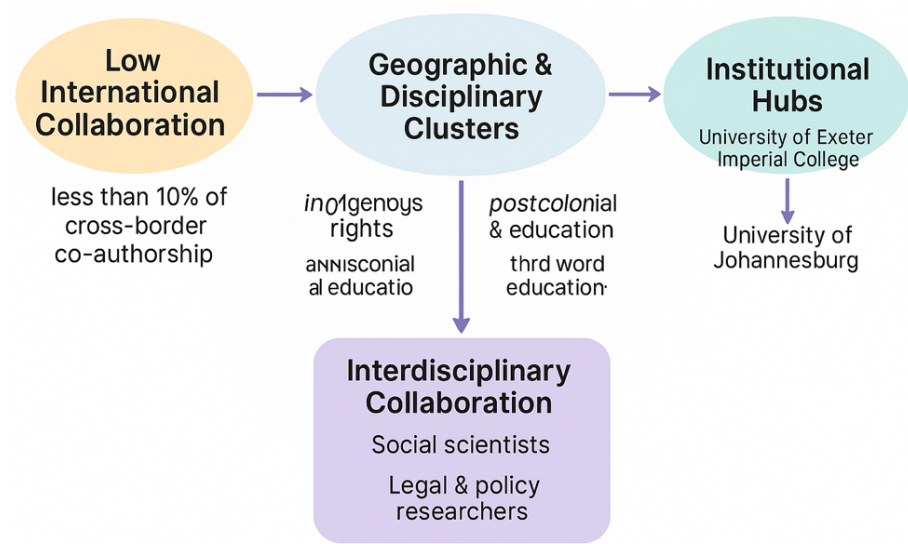


Figure 2: Co-authorship and collaboration patterns in decolonial research.

This Figure 2 visualizes key dynamics in the co-authorship network of decolonial research, highlighting the low rate of international collaboration (less than 10% cross-border co-authorship), the emergence of geographic and disciplinary clusters (e.g., indigenous rights in North America, postcolonial education in Europe and South Africa), and the role of key institutional hubs such as the University of Exeter, Imperial College, and the University of Johannesburg. It also illustrates the growing trend of interdisciplinary collaboration involving social scientists, legal scholars, and policy researchers bridging distinct research domains.

From a disciplinary perspective, the analysis indicates a growing trend in interdisciplinary collaboration. Social scientists such as anthropologists and sociologists are increasingly working alongside legal scholars and policy researchers, particularly in studies examining the recognition of customary law and indigenous rights. For example, research on decolonizing legal systems often involves historians (who provide colonial context), anthropologists (who explore cultural dimensions), and legal experts (who navigate policy implications). This form of cross-disciplinary collaboration serves as a bridge between academic silos and highlights the inherently multifaceted nature of decolonial governance. It reflects a shift toward more integrated research approaches that acknowledge the complexity of decolonial issues.

Institutionally, the co-authorship network highlights a number of core universities that act as strategic hubs in decolonial scholarship. The University of Exeter and Imperial College in the UK are central in networks focused on colonial history, while the University of Johannesburg is a key node in Africa, particularly in the field of decolonial education. In North America, institutions such as the University of Toronto, Western University, and the University of British Columbia show strong collaborative networks in research on indigenous and environmental rights. These patterns reflect how historical colonial ties and geographic proximity influence collaboration. Despite this growing activity, institutions in Asia and Latin America remain underrepresented, pointing to an ongoing geographic imbalance in global decolonial knowledge production—a gap that future collaborative efforts should aim to address.

7. Application of Decolonial Concepts in Institutional Design

One of the focuses of this review is how decolonial principles are applied in institutional/institutional designs that support the recognition of indigenous peoples. The literature shows that efforts to decolonize governance demand structural changes in institutions, not just the addition of symbolic customary representations [10]. The Indigenous Peoples Commission is a special body or commission to take care of the rights and interests of indigenous peoples which can be a concrete example of the institutional design in question.

As a case study, Indonesia is initiating the establishment of the Indigenous Peoples Commission through the proposed Indigenous Peoples Bill. This idea arose from the need for an independent institution that could bridge the interests of indigenous peoples with the state. According to the Alliance of Indigenous Peoples of the Archipelago, such a commission is expected to guarantee customary rights, resolve agrarian conflicts, advance indigenous culture, and verify and register customary territories [11]. In other words, its role is cross-sectoral, not only formal legal, but also includes empowerment and problem solving that has been marginalized in ordinary government structures. The concept of the Indigenous Peoples Commission can be seen as an effort at decolonial governance, because: (a) it provides a special space for indigenous peoples' voices in decision-making (overcoming colonial marginalization), (b) recognizes indigenous knowledge systems and laws (as a counterpart to colonial epistemology), and (c) is independent of conventional bureaucracy (potentially independent of colonial hierarchies in government).

The challenge in designing a decolonial institution like the commission is to ensure that it can really shift the old colonial power relations, not just ornamental institutions. The experience of other countries can be a lesson, for example, in the Philippines the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) was formed in 1997 to implement the Indigenous Peoples Rights Law (IPRA). However, the NCIP is considered ambiguous by inheriting history and is the successor to the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribal Affairs established in the American colonial era. This raises criticism that NCIP is vulnerable to a paternalistic approach, namely the state's treatment of customs that are still colonial in nature and have not yet fully decolonial perspective [12]. A number of reports say that NCIP is often a tool for legitimizing government projects, for example, granting permits on behalf of indigenous peoples without the pure consent of the community through the FPIC mechanism [13]. This shows the implementation challenge faced is that an institution may be designed to recognize indigenous rights, but in practice whether it strengthens the sovereignty of indigenous peoples or still reproduces power imbalances.

The decolonial literature emphasizes that in order for an institution to be truly decolonial, there needs to be a paradigm shift in its procedures and working principles. Decolonial institutions must be run with epistemic humility by recognizing and respecting local/customary knowledge, and being willing to overhaul the rules of the game that are biased by colonialism. A positive example can be seen in innovations such as Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCA) in Canada. IPCA is essentially a protected area that is managed directly by indigenous communities with their customary legal framework, and recognized by the state. A study by Townsend & Roth (2023) shows that for initiatives such as IPCA to be successful, settler governments must be willing to remove structural barriers to colonial legacies, such as rigid regulations, state claims to land, top-down conservation models that hinder indigenous leadership over their territories and resources [14]. Colonial institutional dismantling is needed so that the collaboration of customary states runs on an equal footing and decolonial goals, such as sustainability based on customary perspectives, can be achieved. When those barriers are removed, there is an opportunity for a decolonial futurity, a vision of a future in which indigenous and non-indigenous peoples can coexist fairly and sustainably.

Reflecting on this, the design of the Indigenous Peoples Commission in Indonesia or similar institutions in other countries must ensure real independence and authority. Ideally, the commission consists of customary representatives elected by the community, given binding authority, for example to ratify the recognition of customary territories

without the need for other bureaucratic approvals, and supported by adequate funding. Without this, it is feared that the formation of the commission will only be advisory and less effective in changing the status quo. The literature notes that changes in legal and policy structures often lag behind rhetoric. Kuokkanen (2017) underlined that many governments interpret indigenous peoples' self-determination as limited to political representation, not as a substantial thing, namely structural change [15]. Thus, the decolonial approach essentially encourages more fundamental institutional reforms, such as integrating customary law into the national legal system, involving indigenous peoples as determinants rather than just consultants, and overhauling exploitative development models.

Applications of decolonial governance in the Global North generally focus on the recognition and integration of indigenous peoples' rights within established legal frameworks, such as through customary law recognition, participation in resource management, and indigenous knowledge-based education—examples can be seen in the Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCA) model in Canada or the legal recognition of Māori customary law in New Zealand. Meanwhile, in Southeast Asia, the decolonial approach is more complex and often hampered by centralistic state structures, lack of legal recognition of indigenous peoples, and dominance of state development over customary territories. In the region, decolonization is more often realized through grassroots movements and civil society advocacy than formal policy initiatives, as in the case of the struggle for the recognition of indigenous territories in Indonesia or the protection of indigenous communities in the Philippines. Thus, the main difference lies in the level of institutionalization and state support: the Global North tends to integrate decolonial principles into formal legal systems, while in Southeast Asia it still relies on community struggles and non-state initiatives.

8. Key Findings and Research Gaps

This literature review reveals four major findings regarding decolonial governance and its relationship with indigenous peoples. First, there has been a rapid increase in scholarly publications from 2019 to 2024, showing growing global academic attention across disciplines such as law, environmental studies, and political science. Decolonization is no longer treated solely as a historical concern but is increasingly addressed as a present and urgent issue. Second, the research landscape is dominated by institutions from Western countries—including the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia—as well as South Africa, with influential scholars such as S.J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni playing a central role in shaping decolonial discourse. These centers of knowledge

production exist in both the Global North and South, reflecting asymmetries but also emerging bridges in global scholarly networks.

Third, keyword and content analysis of the literature reveals two interrelated thematic currents: one that focuses on colonial structures and histories (e.g., nationalism, postcolonialism, imperialism) and another that emphasizes indigenous resistance, self-determination, customary rights, and local knowledge. Both are essential in understanding and implementing decolonial governance. Fourth, these concepts are increasingly applied in real-world contexts, as shown in case studies on indigenous-led forest governance, conservation efforts like Canada's IPCA, incorporation of indigenous knowledge in education, and legal recognition of customary law. However, findings also indicate that mere representation of indigenous actors in formal politics is insufficient; substantive institutional reforms are required to dismantle entrenched colonial legal structures and make space for genuine self-governance.

This study identifies four major gaps in current decolonial governance literature, ranging from geographic to epistemological limitations. First, there is a significant geographical gap, where research remains concentrated in Anglophone countries and former colonial centers, while perspectives from Southeast Asia, the Pacific, and Latin America are notably underrepresented. This imbalance may stem from limited access to global publication platforms or weak research networks in these regions. It highlights the urgent need to empower local and indigenous scholars, ensuring that decolonial narratives are more diverse and inclusive. Second, a practice-theory gap is evident—while theoretical discussions on decolonial governance have progressed, empirical studies evaluating the real-world implementation and effectiveness of such policies are still scarce. For instance, the actual impact of customary commissions or indigenous participation in governance structures remains unclear without long-term, field-based evaluations.

Third, the review reveals thematic gaps. Dominant discussions have largely focused on politics, law, and history, while important issues such as indigenous economic models, welfare systems, and the roles of indigenous women remain underexplored. Similarly, micro-level concerns like the preservation of indigenous languages and cultures—often described as “silent struggles”—receive far less attention compared to macro-political narratives. Lastly, there is a pressing need for decolonial methodologies. While scholars such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith have emphasized the importance of participatory, community-based approaches, much existing research still adopts top-down perspectives, treating indigenous communities as research subjects rather than co-creators

of knowledge. Expanding the use of ethical, decolonial research frameworks such as Participatory Action Research is critical to ensure that research outcomes align with the lived realities and priorities of indigenous communities.

4. Conclusion

This systematic literature review, using a bibliometric approach, reveals that studies on decolonial governance—particularly in relation to indigenous peoples' recognition policies—have grown significantly over the past five years. Since 2019, there has been a marked increase in publications, with major contributions from researchers based in North America, Europe, and South Africa. The literature emphasizes that decolonial governance must go beyond symbolic inclusion and instead pursue structural and epistemological reforms that affirm the sovereignty, knowledge systems, and leadership of indigenous communities. Key themes include dismantling colonial institutions, affirming indigenous rights, and establishing alternative governance bodies such as indigenous peoples' commissions. Case studies like Indonesia's Indigenous Peoples Commission proposal demonstrate efforts to translate decolonial theory into actionable policy. However, successful decolonization governance depends on serious political will and institutional reform—requiring shifts such as revising colonial-era laws, restoring indigenous control over land and resources, and building new accountability frameworks.

Looking ahead, future research should prioritize inclusive, cross-disciplinary, and cross-regional collaboration, with active involvement of indigenous scholars and communities as co-researchers. This approach ensures that findings are grounded in lived realities and not confined by new forms of colonial bias. Moreover, empirical evaluations of decolonial initiatives—such as customary commissions and courts—must be expanded to assess their actual impact, uncover challenges, and identify enabling conditions. The goal is to produce knowledge that is not only conceptually robust but also practically relevant to policy-making and indigenous empowerment. Ultimately, decolonial governance should be understood as a long-term transformation, not a one-time intervention. It requires continuous efforts to dismantle embedded colonial power structures and to foster inclusive, just, and sustainable governance systems where indigenous peoples are recognized as equal and active agents in shaping their own futures.

The practical implications of decolonial governance for governments and academic institutions in the Global South are significant, especially in driving structural reforms that recognize the sovereignty of local knowledge and the rights of indigenous peoples. For the government, this approach demands a paradigm shift in policy formulation that is no longer top-down and colonial-heritage-oriented, but opens up space for substantive participation for indigenous communities in resource governance, law, and development. Meanwhile, for academic institutions, decolonial governance is a call to review curricula, research methods, and institutional structures that have so far reproduced the dominance of Western epistemology. Academics in the Global South are encouraged to produce knowledge that is grounded in local experiences, engages indigenous peoples as active subjects, and fosters transformative collaborations based on epistemic justice. Thus, decolonial governance is not only a critical framework, but also a concrete strategy to build a more equitable and contextual system of governance and education in the postcolonial region.

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