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Positive Discipline in Contemporary Education: A Bibliometric Mapping of Classroom Management, School Climate, and Social-Emotional Learning

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ABSTRACT

This study conducts a methodological audit supported by a preliminary bibliometric mapping of research on positive discipline in contemporary education. It examines publication trends, conceptual relationships, and the thematic validity of a Scopus-derived dataset covering positive discipline, classroom management, school climate, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), restorative practices, and social-emotional learning. Data were retrieved from Scopus in April 2026 using a structured TITLE-ABS-KEY search strategy and filtered by publication year (2016–2026), subject area, document type, language, and access status. The selection process reduced 1,586 initial records to a corpus of 259 documents. Performance analysis and science mapping were conducted using Bibliometrix/Biblioshiny and VOSviewer. The preliminary results indicate increased publication activity after 2019. However, the keyword analysis, thematic map, co-occurrence network, and three-field plot revealed residual topic drift, reflected in the presence of terms associated with recycling, waste management, machine learning, sustainability, and the circular economy. The corpus was therefore classified as preliminary because metadata-based filtering had not completely removed documents outside the intended educational domain. These findings demonstrate that automated database retrieval and bibliometric visualization alone are insufficient to establish the substantive validity of a research corpus. Additional title–abstract–keyword screening, metadata verification, and keyword harmonization are required before definitive conclusions can be drawn about the conceptual structure of positive discipline research. The study primarily contributes a methodological framework for improving dataset precision and interpretive validity in educational bibliometric research.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Positive discipline has become a strategic issue in contemporary education because schools are not only institutions for transmitting knowledge but also social environments that shape character, responsibility, self-regulation, empathy, and student well-being. In this perspective, discipline should not be reduced to compliance, punishment, or behavioral control. It should be understood as a pedagogical process through which students learn to recognize the consequences of their actions, participate in shared norms, repair social relationships, and develop responsible decision-making.

The need for such a paradigm is reinforced by critiques of exclusionary and punitive disciplinary approaches, including suspension, removal from class, and zero-tolerance policies. These approaches have been criticized for weakening school attachment, intensifying disciplinary disparities, and failing to address the social and emotional roots of student behavior [1], [3]. As a result, international educational research has increasingly moved toward supportive, restorative, and social-emotional approaches to discipline.

Positive discipline intersects with several established domains of educational research. At the classroom level, it relates to classroom management, positive reinforcement, clear routines, participatory rules, and constructive feedback [4], [5]. At the school level, it is closely connected with school climate, perceived safety, relational trust, fairness, and student engagement [6], [8], [9]. It is also related to Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), restorative practices, and social-emotional learning (SEL), which respectively emphasize tiered behavioral support, relationship repair, accountability, emotion regulation, empathy, and responsible decision-making [4], [5], [7], [10], [13].

Although these bodies of literature are conceptually related, they are often discussed under different terminologies and disciplinary traditions. Research on PBIS, restorative practices, classroom management, school climate, and SEL may address similar educational concerns without always using the specific term positive discipline. This terminological fragmentation makes it difficult to understand how the field has developed, which themes dominate the literature, and whether positive discipline has emerged as an integrative construct in contemporary education.

Bibliometric analysis is suitable for addressing this issue because it enables researchers to examine publication trends, citation patterns, scientific collaboration, keyword co-occurrence, and thematic structures across a large document corpus [14], [15]. Tools such as Bibliometrix/Biblioshiny and VOSviewer support performance analysis and science mapping, allowing researchers to visualize the development and structure of a research field [14], [16]. However, bibliometric analysis is also vulnerable to methodological error when search strings are too broad, metadata are not cleaned, or conceptually adjacent terms capture documents outside the intended field. In the case of positive discipline, terms such as positive, behavior, support, discipline, and learning may also appear in environmental, technological, or management domains, thereby producing topic drift.

Against this background, the present study is designed not only to map the recent development of research on positive discipline in education but also to assess whether the retrieved bibliometric dataset substantively represents that field. The article contributes in two related ways. First, it offers a preliminary conceptual mapping of positive discipline in relation to classroom management, school climate, PBIS, restorative practices, and social-emotional learning. Second, and more centrally, it demonstrates the methodological importance of post-retrieval validation in educational bibliometrics when conceptually adjacent terms may also circulate in non-educational domains.

The study addresses the following research questions:

How has research on positive discipline in contemporary education developed in terms of publication and citation trends? What conceptual structure emerges from the literature on positive discipline in relation to classroom management, school climate, PBIS, restorative practices, and social-emotional learning? To what extent does the Scopus-derived dataset validly represent the substantive field of positive discipline in education, and what additional validation steps are required?

2. METHOD

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a bibliometric approach with a descriptive-quantitative design and science mapping. Bibliometric analysis was used to identify the development of research on positive discipline in contemporary education, particularly its relationship with classroom management, school climate, PBIS, restorative practices, and SEL. The design combined performance analysis, which examined publication productivity and citation dynamics, with science mapping, which examined collaboration patterns, keyword relationships, thematic structures, and dataset validity [14], [15].

2.2. Data Source and Search Strategy

The data were obtained from the Scopus database because it provides structured bibliographic metadata, including titles, abstracts, keywords, authors, affiliations, source titles, publication years, and citation counts. The search was conducted in April 2026. The unit of analysis consisted of documents related to schools, classrooms, teachers, students, disciplinary practices, behavior management, restorative approaches, PBIS, school climate, and social-emotional learning.

The identification stage used the following structured Scopus TITLE-ABS-KEY search string rather than a single-topic label:

TITLE-ABS-KEY(("positive discipline" OR "positive school discipline" OR "positive classroom discipline" OR "positive behavior* support" OR "positive behavioural support" OR PBIS OR "positive behavioral interventions and supports" OR "restorative discipline" OR "restorative practice*" OR "restorative justice") AND (educat* OR school* OR classroom* OR teacher* OR student* OR pupil* OR "K-12" OR "primary education" OR "secondary education" OR "higher education") AND ("classroom management" OR "school climate" OR "social emotional learning" OR "social-emotional learning" OR SEL OR "student behavior" OR "student behaviour" OR "behavior management" OR

"behaviour management" OR "schoolwide positive behavior support")) AND NOT TITLE-ABS-KEY("waste management" OR recycling OR "circular economy" OR "plastic waste" OR "thermal comfort" OR "energy conservation")

The search string was structured into three keyword blocks: positive discipline and related approaches; educational context; and conceptual indicators such as classroom management, school climate, SEL, student behavior, and schoolwide behavior support. The NOT operator was applied to reduce topic drift toward environmental, waste, energy, and unrelated technology domains. Computer Science documents were considered only when their titles, abstracts, or keywords explicitly addressed education, learning, student behavior, or school management.

2.3. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The inclusion and exclusion criteria were established to maintain consistency between the research objectives, the Scopus search strategy, and the bibliometric corpus.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Component	Inclusion	Exclusion
Database	Scopus	Databases other than Scopus
Publication year	2016–2026	Publications prior to 2016 or outside the stated period
Subject area	Social Sciences, Psychology, Arts and Humanities; Computer Science only when explicitly educational	Technology, environment, energy, or management domains without educational relevance
Document type	Article and conference paper	Book chapter, editorial, note, erratum, and other non-research documents
Language	English	Languages other than English
Access status	All Open Access to support content verification	Non-open access documents were excluded and treated as a limitation
Study focus	Positive discipline, PBIS, restorative practices, classroom management, school climate, SEL, student behavior, and behavior management in education	Waste, recycling, energy, sustainability, circular economy, or general technology topics without school, class, teacher, or student relevance

2.4. Document Selection Procedure

The document selection process adapted the PRISMA 2020 (Figure 1) reporting logic for database searches [17]. The initial Scopus search identified 1,586 records. The screening procedure was conducted sequentially by applying the publication-year filter, subject-area filter, document-type filter, language filter, and open-access filter. This process produced 259 documents. Because residual topic drift was still detected after metadata-based filtering, the resulting set of 259 documents is treated in this study as a

preliminary bibliographic corpus for mapping and validation, not yet as a definitive substantive corpus of positive discipline research in education.

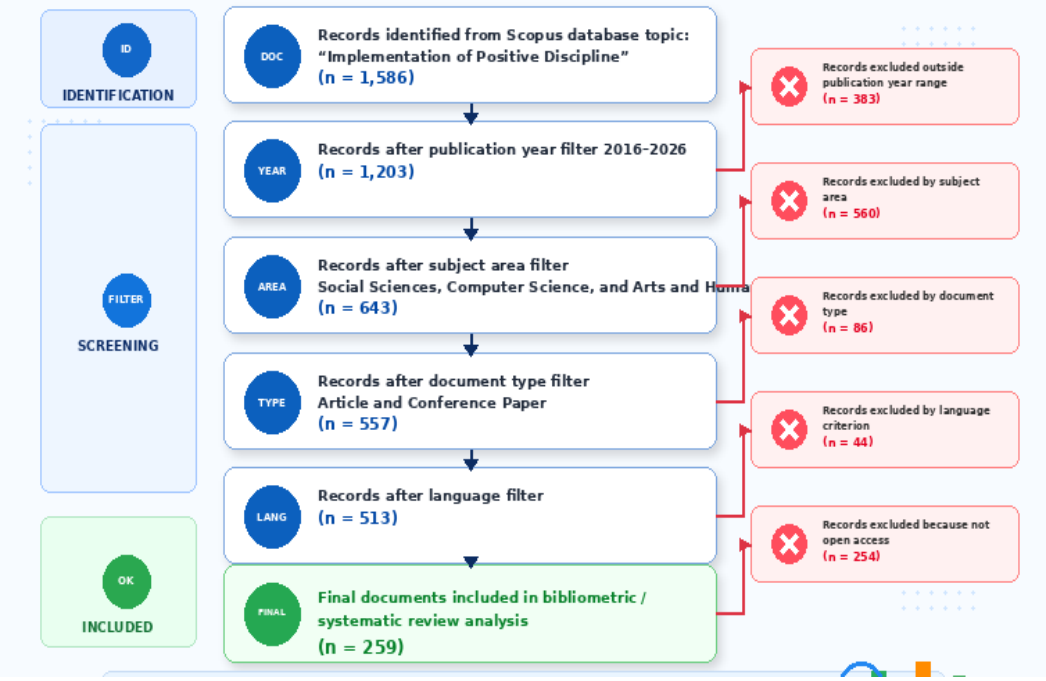

Figure 1. PRISMA 2020-Based Flow of Scopus Document Selection

2.5. Data Cleaning and Validation

Data cleaning was conducted in two stages. The first stage involved automated bibliographic cleaning, including duplicate removal, standardization of author and affiliation names, and keyword synonym harmonization. The second stage involved preliminary thematic validation through inspection of titles, abstracts, and author keywords to identify documents that remained weakly aligned with the educational focus of the study. Because non-educational themes were still visible in the preliminary visualizations, this validation stage should be regarded as partial rather than exhaustive. Consequently, the present article reports a preliminary mapped corpus and uses the detected topic drift as evidence for the need for further manual screening before a final substantive bibliometric map can be claimed.

Table 2. Keyword Harmonization in Data Cleaning

Keyword variations	Unified term or decision
positive behavior support; PBIS; positive behavioral intervention	positive behavior support
social emotional learning; SEL; socio-emotional learning	social-emotional learning
classroom discipline; school discipline; student discipline	school discipline
restorative practice; restorative discipline; restorative justice in schools	restorative practices
classroom control; classroom management strategy	classroom management
positive discipline; positive school discipline; positive classroom discipline	positive discipline
behavior management; behaviour management; student behavior; student behaviour	student behavior management
waste management; recycling; circular economy; energy conservation	Excluded if unrelated to education, school, classroom, teacher, or student context

2.6. Data Analysis Techniques and Indicators

The analysis was conducted through performance analysis and science mapping. Bibliometrix/Biblioshiny in the R environment was used to process the bibliographic dataset, while VOSviewer was used to support network visualization. The analysis focused on annual scientific production, average citations per year, country contribution, collaboration patterns, keyword structure, thematic positioning, and the alignment of retrieved documents with the educational focus of the study [14], [16].

Table 3. Dimensions and Indicators of Bibliometric Analysis

Analysis dimension	Indicators
Publication and citation trends	Annual scientific production, average citations per year, and citation window
Country contribution	Most productive countries, percentage contribution, and collaboration distribution
Scientific collaboration	Author collaboration network, country collaboration network, clusters, and strongest links
Conceptual structure	Word cloud, treemap, co-occurrence network, and thematic map
Intellectual relations and validation	Three-field plot, topic drift assessment, and alignment of keywords with educational focus
Research agenda	Emerging themes, thematic gaps, and implications for positive discipline research

2.7. Validity, Reliability, and Limitations

The validity of the analysis was supported through an explicit search string, transparent selection criteria, PRISMA-based reporting logic, keyword harmonization, and preliminary title–abstract–keyword validation. Reliability was strengthened through cross-checking across multiple visualizations. Nevertheless, the study has several limitations. First, the dataset was obtained only from Scopus, excluding publications indexed in Web

of Science or other databases. Second, the All Open Access filter may introduce selection bias. Third, the 259 documents are treated as a preliminary corpus because residual topic drift remains visible. Fourth, the visualizations should be interpreted as tools for both mapping and dataset auditing rather than as a final bias-free representation of the field.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Dataset Profile and Selection Flow

The structured Scopus search initially retrieved 1,586 records. After sequential filtering by publication year, subject area, document type, language, and access status, the dataset was reduced to 259 documents. This corpus provides an initial basis for bibliometric mapping, but it should not be interpreted as a fully validated substantive corpus. The presence of residual non-educational terms in later visualizations indicates that metadata filtering alone is insufficient for educational bibliometric studies involving broad or cross-domain terms.

The selection flow in Figure 1 should therefore be read as a documentation of the preliminary corpus formation process. The figure must be aligned with the search string in Section 2.2 and should not describe the initial identification stage as a single-topic search such as “Implementation of Positive Discipline.” This correction is essential because methodological consistency depends on the alignment among the search string, PRISMA flow, and narrative explanation.

3.2. Publication and Citation Trends

The annual scientific production trend (Figure 2) shows growing attention to positive discipline and related educational approaches after 2019. This trend reflects the increasing importance of supportive, restorative, and student well-being-oriented disciplinary approaches in contemporary education. However, the interpretation of annual production must be restricted to the stated inclusion period of 2016–2026. Any visualization containing years outside this range should be rerun before submission.

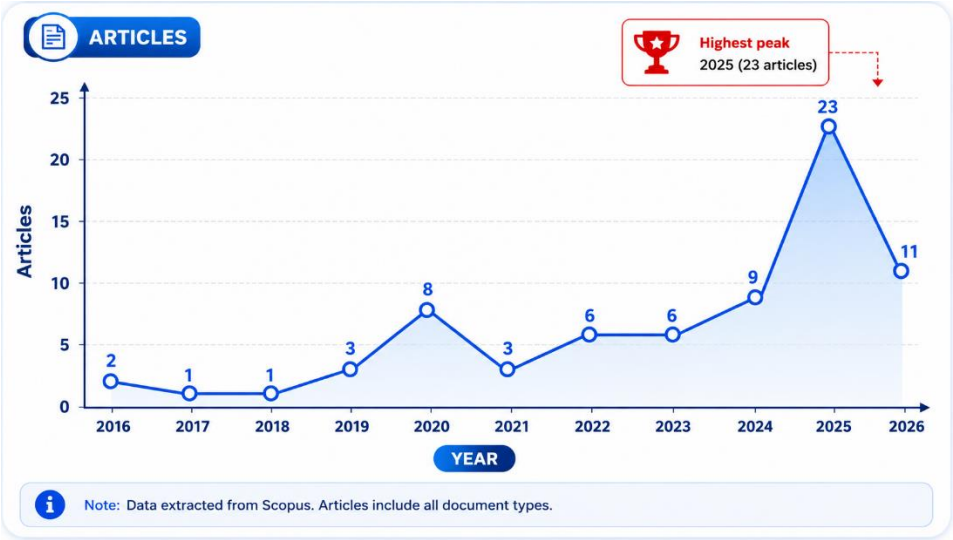

Figure 2. Annual Scientific Production Trend, 2016–2026
Source: Scopus; processed using Bibliometrix/Biblioshiny, 2026.

Citation dynamics should also be interpreted cautiously because newer publications naturally have shorter citation windows than older publications. In this field, citation impact may develop gradually because positive discipline, PBIS, restorative practices, school climate, and SEL are closely related to school program implementation, policy evaluation, and long-term culture change. Therefore, average citations per year (Figure 3) should not be interpreted solely as an indicator of article quality but should be considered in relation to publication age and indexing completeness.

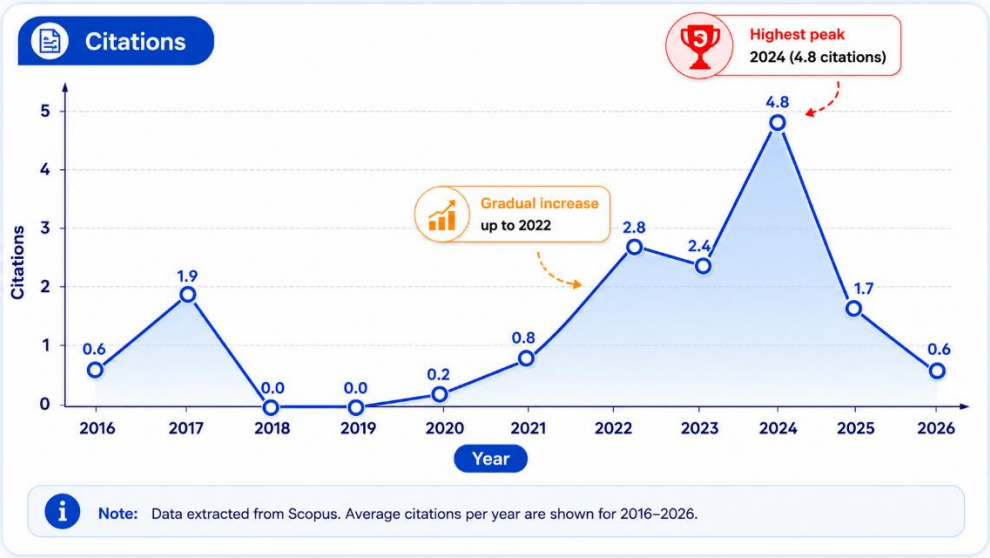

Figure 3. Average Citations per Year
Source: Scopus; processed using Bibliometrix/Biblioshiny, 2026

3.3. Country Contribution and Collaboration Distribution

The preliminary country collaboration map (Figure 4) indicates that research related to positive discipline is distributed across several national contexts, including countries in Asia, North America, Europe, and Australia. However, a map alone is insufficient to support quantitative claims. The country visualization should be accompanied by a table containing country name, number of documents, and percentage contribution to the refined corpus. This table is necessary to prevent overreliance on visual color intensity and to provide a transparent basis for interpreting geographic distribution.

Table 4. Top Contributing Countries Based on Scopus Publication Data, 2016–2026

Rank	Country	Publications	Contribution
1	Indonesia	15	21.13%
2	China	10	14.08%
3	United States	7	9.86%
4	India	6	8.45%
5	Germany	5	7.04%
6	Italy	5	7.04%

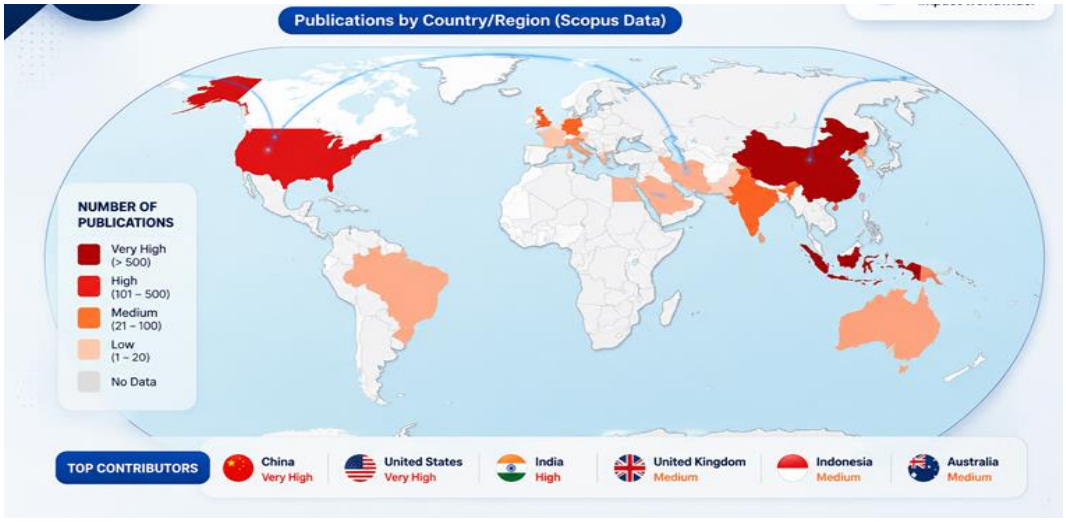

Figure 4. Country Collaboration Map
Source: Scopus; processed using Bibliometrix/Biblioshiny, 2026.

3.4. Author Collaboration Network

The preliminary author collaboration network (Figure 5)suggests that research on positive discipline and related educational approaches remains fragmented. Several small clusters appear, but the field does not yet show a single cohesive collaboration structure. This fragmentation may reflect the fact that positive discipline is studied through multiple traditions, including educational psychology, classroom management, school discipline policy, PBIS, restorative practices, SEL, and school climate research.

A revised version of the author collaboration analysis should report the number of clusters, the strongest collaboration links, and the key authors or institutions that function as bridges between clusters. Without these indicators, the network remains descriptive and cannot adequately support claims about the structure of scientific collaboration.

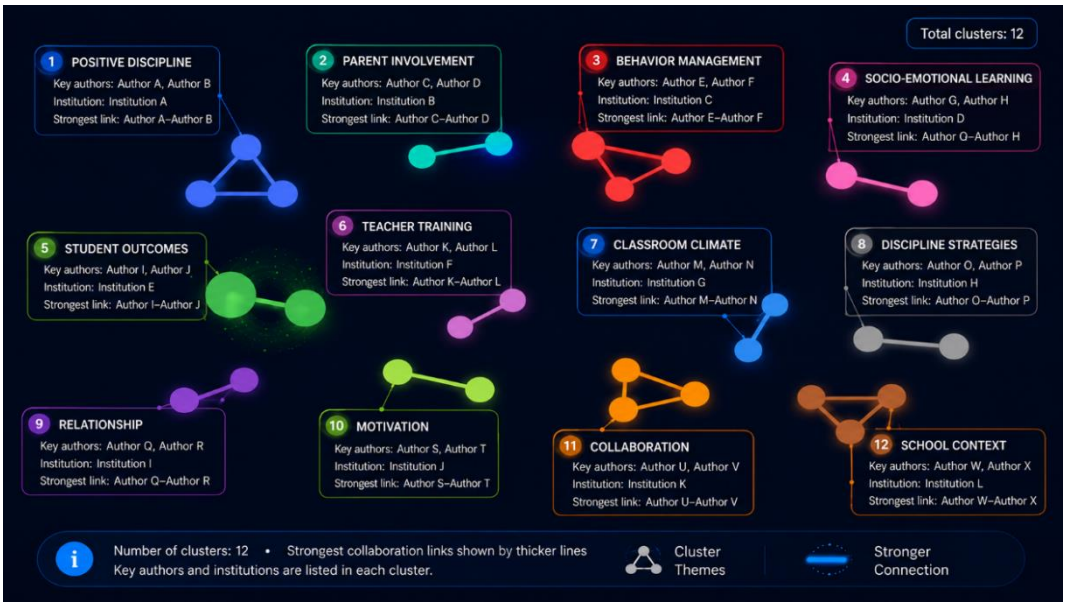

Figure 5. Author Collaboration Network
Source: Scopus; processed using Bibliometrix/Biblioshiny, 2026.

3.5. Keyword Audit and Topic Drift

The word cloud (Figure 6) and treemap (Figure 7) functioned not only as keyword visualizations but also as dataset quality-control tools. In the preliminary analysis, several dominant terms did not fully represent the educational focus of positive discipline. The appearance of non-educational keywords such as recycling, waste management, machine learning, sustainability, and circular economy indicates residual topic drift. This finding is methodologically important because bibliometric outputs may appear visually persuasive even when the underlying dataset contains documents that are substantively misaligned with the research focus.



Figure 6. Keyword Word Cloud
Source: Scopus; processed using Bibliometrix/Biblioshiny, 2026.

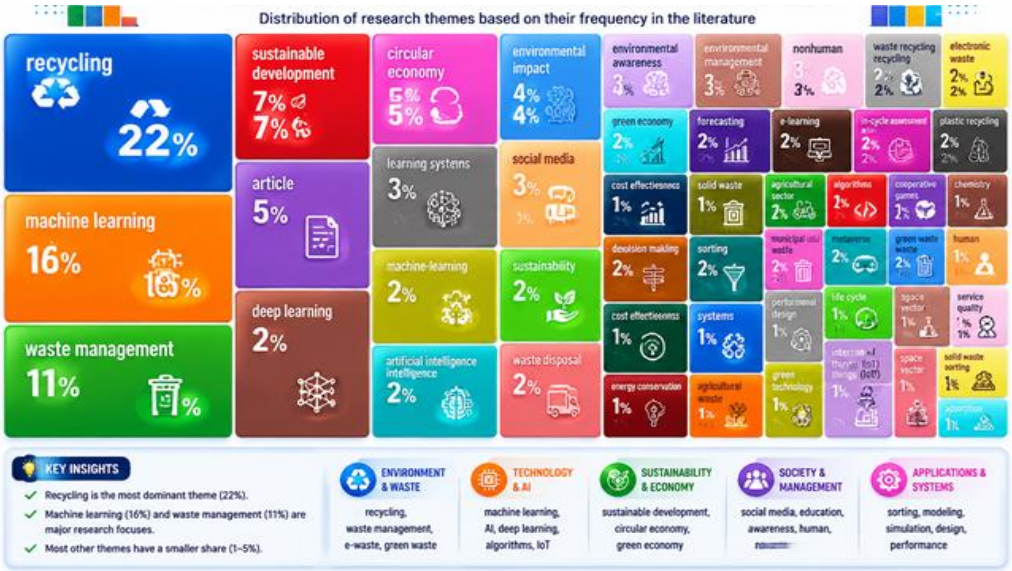

Figure 7. Keyword Tree Map

The detection of topic drift does not invalidate the entire study; rather, it strengthens the article's methodological contribution. It shows that educational bibliometric analysis should not rely only on automated retrieval and filtering. Manual inspection of titles, abstracts, and author keywords is necessary, particularly when the search terms are semantically broad or shared across multiple disciplines.

3.6. Co-Occurrence Network and Thematic Structure

The co-occurrence network (Figure 8) was expected to reveal relationships among positive discipline, classroom management, school climate, PBIS, restorative practices, and social-emotional learning. However, the preliminary network indicates that these core educational terms have not yet become the dominant central nodes in the dataset. This may be interpreted in two ways. First, the field may still be conceptually fragmented across multiple terminologies. Second, the dataset may still include documents from unrelated fields, which weakens the validity of substantive interpretation.

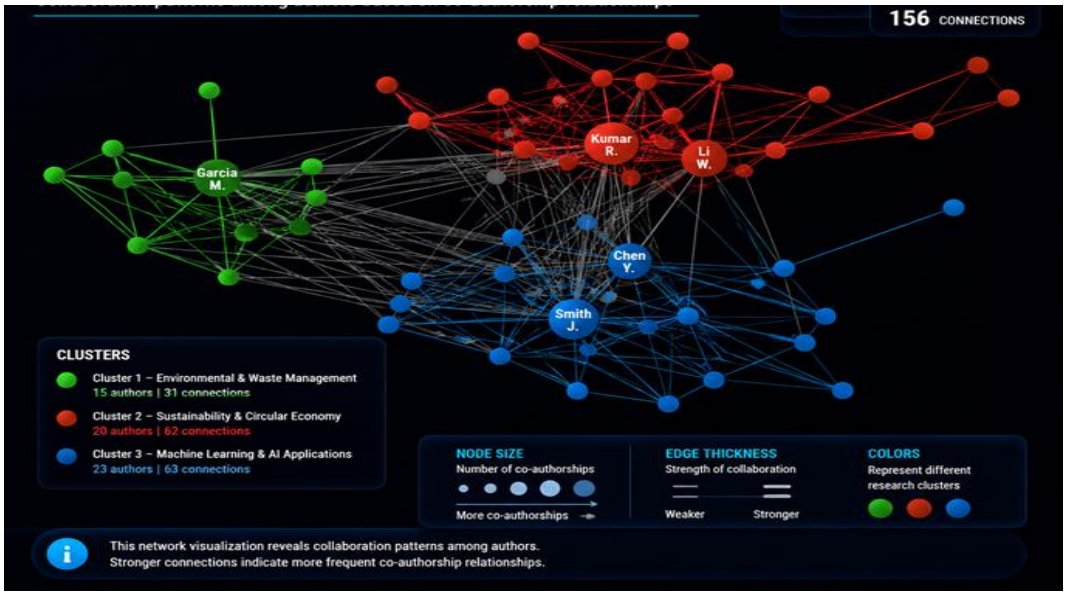

Figure 8. Keyword Co-occurrence Network

The thematic map (Figure 9) similarly provides evidence of the need for stronger dataset validation. In a validated educational corpus, themes such as classroom management, school climate, PBIS, restorative practices, SEL, student behavior, teacher–student relationships, and school discipline would be expected to occupy meaningful positions across the motor, basic, niche, or emerging quadrants. If non-educational themes appear prominently, the map should be interpreted as an audit signal rather than as a final representation of the field.

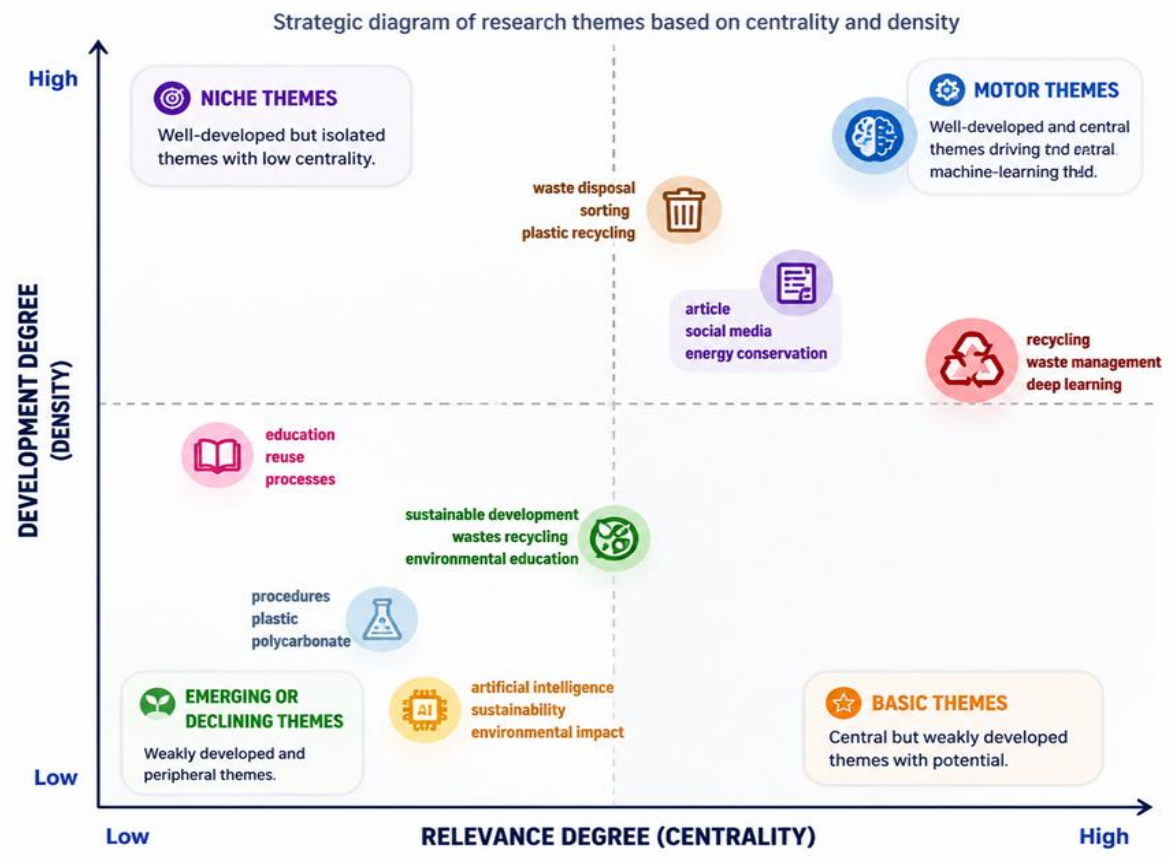

Figure 9. Thematic Map of Research Themes

3.7. Three-Field Plot: Intellectual Base, Authors, and Keywords

The three-field plot (Figure 10) was used to connect cited references, authors, and keywords. In a substantively valid dataset, the strongest relationships should connect references on classroom management, PBIS, restorative practices, school climate, SEL, and positive discipline with authors and keywords in the educational domain. Preliminary evidence of technical or environmental terms in the three-field plot confirms that the dataset still requires additional validation. Thus, the plot functions as a cross-validation instrument for assessing whether the intellectual base of the corpus is genuinely educational.

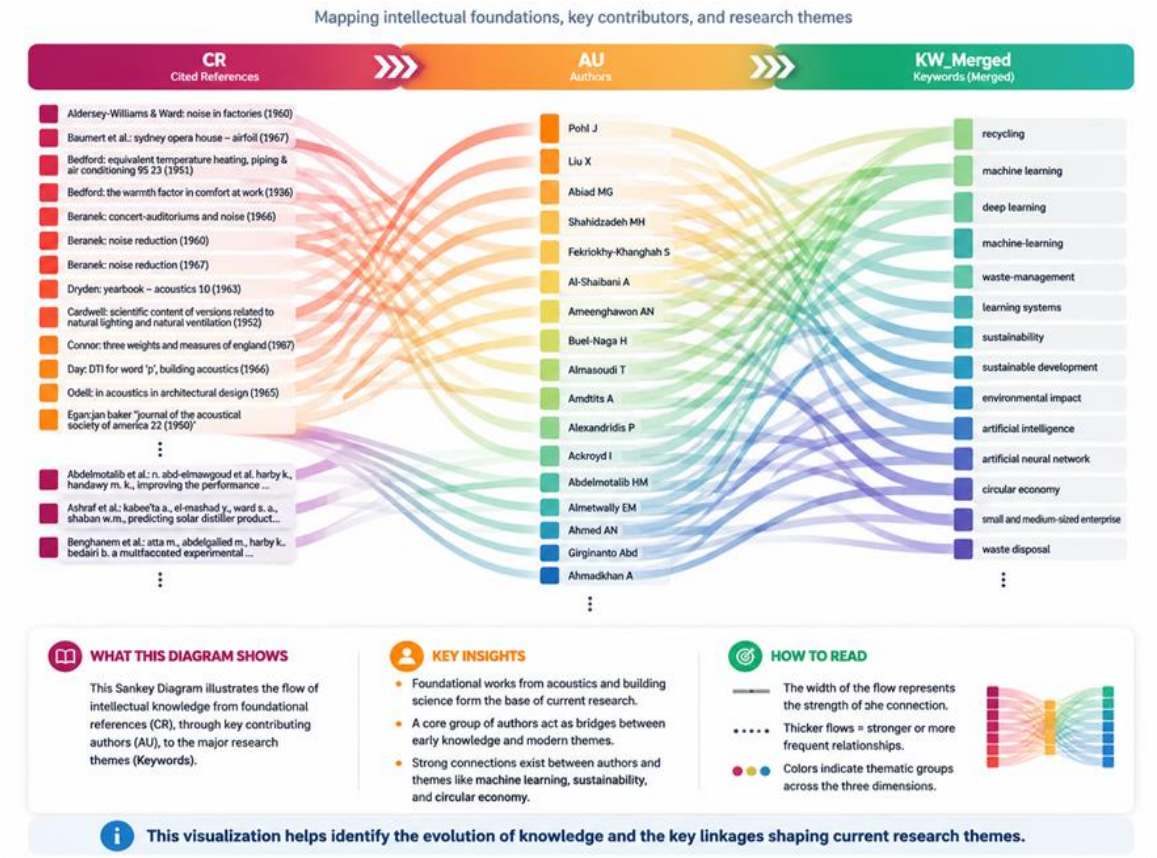

Figure 10. Three-Field Plot Linking References, Authors, and Keywords

3.8. DISCUSSION

3.9. Positive Discipline as an Emerging Integrative Construct

The findings should be interpreted at two levels. At the substantive level, the literature suggests that positive discipline occupies an important intersection with classroom management, school climate, PBIS, restorative practices, and social-emotional learning. At the methodological level, however, the current bibliometric dataset cannot yet be treated as fully definitive because residual topic drift remains visible across multiple visualizations. Therefore, the main contribution of this study lies not only in identifying an emerging conceptual linkage but also in demonstrating that educational bibliometric analysis requires careful post-retrieval validation before strong structural claims are made.

Theoretically, positive discipline can be understood as a multidimensional educational approach that balances structure, care, accountability, and student participation. It extends beyond behavioral control by emphasizing guidance, relationship building, emotional regulation, and moral responsibility. In this sense, it is compatible with classroom management research, which stresses clear rules, routines, and evidence-based practices [10], [18], [25]; school climate research, which emphasizes safety, fairness, belonging, and supportive relationships [6], [8], [9], [19]; PBIS research, which focuses on tiered behavioral support and systems change [4], [5], [20], [26], [32]; restorative practices, which prioritize dialogue, accountability, and relationship repair [11], [12], [21], [27]–[29]; and SEL research, which supports self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making [7], [13], [22]–[24].

Nevertheless, these theoretical connections should be presented as a conceptual synthesis rather than as definitive evidence from the current bibliometric map. Because the preliminary dataset still contains non-educational themes, the article should avoid overstating that positive discipline has already become a strong bibliometric nexus. A more cautious interpretation is that the concept has the potential to integrate these educational domains, but stronger claims require a refined dataset and rerun visualizations.

3.10. Topic Drift and the Validity of Educational Bibliometrics

One of the most important findings of this study is the visibility of topic drift in the preliminary corpus. The presence of non-educational terms demonstrates that bibliometric search strategies cannot rely solely on keyword proximity. In educational research, terms such as positive, discipline, behavior, support, and learning may appear across different fields. Without strong educational constraints and manual validation, a search query may retrieve documents from environmental management, sustainability, circular economy, machine learning, or other unrelated domains.

This issue has broader implications for bibliometric methodology. A large dataset is not necessarily a valid dataset. Bibliometric visualizations may appear technically sophisticated, but their interpretation depends on the substantive alignment of the documents included in the corpus [14], [15]. Therefore, data cleaning, keyword harmonization, and title–abstract–keyword validation should be treated as central methodological procedures, not as optional technical steps. In this study, the detected topic drift is not merely a limitation; it is also the basis for the methodological contribution of the article.

3.11. Collaboration Fragmentation and Research Agenda

The preliminary collaboration patterns suggest that positive discipline research has not yet consolidated into a highly integrated global research community. Fragmentation may occur because relevant studies are distributed across educational psychology, behavior support, classroom management, school discipline policy, restorative justice, and SEL. This disciplinary diversity is valuable, but it also creates challenges for conceptual consolidation and cumulative knowledge building.

Future research should strengthen cross-country and interdisciplinary collaboration. Comparative studies are particularly important because positive discipline is shaped by educational policy, school culture, social norms, family participation, and teacher professional capacity. A stronger collaboration agenda can also support the development of more context-sensitive models for implementing positive discipline across educational levels and national systems.

3.12. Contextual Relevance for Education in Indonesia

In the Indonesian context, positive discipline is relevant to character education, child-friendly schools, the Kurikulum Merdeka, differentiated instruction, and the strengthening of the Pancasila student profile. These policy and pedagogical directions emphasize student agency, respectful interaction, holistic development, and school

environments that support well-being. Positive discipline can therefore offer an alternative to punishment-oriented approaches by encouraging dialogue, restorative communication, classroom agreements, teacher guidance, and collaborative responsibility.

However, implementation in Indonesia requires systemic support. Teachers need training in positive classroom management, restorative communication, and SEL-based pedagogical practice. Schools need consistent internal policies, leadership support, counseling services, monitoring mechanisms, and parent involvement. Without institutional support, positive discipline may remain an individual classroom practice rather than becoming a school-wide culture.

3.13. Mind Map as Conceptual Synthesis

The mind map (Figure 11) should be positioned explicitly as an author-generated conceptual synthesis derived from the reviewed literature and preliminary bibliometric findings, rather than as a direct output of Bibliometrix/Biblioshiny or VOSviewer. This clarification is necessary to avoid methodological ambiguity. The map can still be useful as a visual summary of implementation challenges and strategies, but it should not be presented as empirical bibliometric evidence.



Figure 11. Mind Mapping of Challenges and Strategies for Implementing Positive Discipline in Contemporary Education

4. CONCLUSION

This study shows that positive discipline is increasingly discussed in relation to classroom management, school climate, PBIS, restorative practices, and social-emotional learning in contemporary education. However, the current Scopus-based analysis should be interpreted as preliminary because residual topic drift remains visible in the dataset, including the presence of non-educational themes. Accordingly, the main contribution of this article is methodological as well as substantive: it provides an initial map of the field while demonstrating that bibliometric interpretation in education depends on precise search strings, metadata cleaning, keyword harmonization, and manual validation of titles, abstracts, and keywords.

Future studies should refine the search strategy, conduct stricter thematic screening, rerun all visualizations after removing non-educational documents, compare Scopus with Web of Science, and develop more context-sensitive studies on positive discipline in Indonesian education. Only after the dataset has been fully validated can stronger substantive conclusions be drawn about the conceptual structure and intellectual development of positive discipline research.

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