



MAPPING THE POLYCRISIS NEXUS: A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS OF THEMES, TRENDS AND RESEARCH AGENDA

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Abstract:

This bibliometric analysis aims to map the evolution of polycrisis literature by analysing its themes, trends, and emerging research agenda. Despite the growing usage of the term polycrisis in both academic and popular discourse to describe contemporary global challenges, the academic discipline is still fragmented. The research follows the Preferred Reporting Items of Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 and uses bibliometric analysis through Biblioshiny in R-Studio to review the publications between 2006 and March 2026. The findings indicate that there is a massive growth in the number of publications, especially after 2020, which demonstrates an increased academic interest in interconnected global crises. Thematic analysis identifies governance, resilience, and polycrisis as central pillars, while emerging areas highlight ongoing conceptual

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development. This analysis suggests that polycrisis research is changing into a multidisciplinary and policy-relevant domain, despite being conceptually disjointed. Future research ought to be concerned with empirical validation, wider data sources and the formulation of integrated theoretical frameworks. Policy makers need to implement cross-sector approaches and build institutional resiliency. This bibliometric review contributes by providing a systematic and dynamic mapping of the polycrisis research landscape, offering new insights into its intellectual structure and evolution.

Keywords: polycrisis, polycrisis nexus, global crisis, research agenda, bibliometric analysis

1. Introduction

Polycrisis has become a concept of growing interest among politicians, academics, journalists, and other intellectual members of society as it describes the interdependence of global issues like climate change, pandemics, armed conflicts, and economic instability (Rakowski *et al.*, 2025; Delannoy *et al.*, 2025b; King & Jones, 2025; Monson, 2026). Humanity is today stumbling across a rough terrain characterised by the climate crisis, the long-term consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the escalation of geopolitical tensions, including the invasion of Ukraine and the horrific violence against Palestinians (Bieler, 2026). These are not isolated incidents; they are a series of social, environmental, economic, and political shocks that are mutually reinforcing. Polycrisis is a situation in which multiple crises overlap, resulting in complex issues related to economic, social, environmental, political, and health aspects (Homer, 2024). Contrary to single crises, a polycrisis occurs when crises in various spheres exacerbate each other. This compounding increases complexity, instability and unpredictability. Thus, the causal entanglement of numerous crises and their emergent outcomes is the nature of polycrisis (Xue & Eraranta, 2026). It is not only an academic undertaking to understand the interaction of these crises. It is an urgent requirement of policymakers, organisations and communities who are attempting to manoeuvre in an increasingly delicate world. This paper addresses that gap by providing a systematic review of the polycrisis literature. We review the development of research on polycrisis, the themes that prevail in the literature, and the direction in which future research is moving using a bibliometric method. It is aimed at giving a clear and easy-to-understand overview of this emerging field of study.

Although the term polycrisis is increasingly used in academic and popular discourse, the scholarly field of research is disjointed. Recently, polycrisis has become a means to characterise complex human challenges. Other studies have attributed its causes to structural factors like economic growth (King & Jones, 2025). Nevertheless, scholars have discussed polycrisis in different directions, and these points of view are not always compatible. As an illustration, systematic reviews of literature on polycrises have been performed (Rakowski *et al.*, 2025). Others have focused on human behavioural traits in relation to polycrisis (King & Jones, 2025). Some bibliometric studies have examined

post-pandemic polycrises in particular national settings, including post-pandemic polycrises in Malaysia (Homer, 2024), and others have applied Q-methodology to understand the meaning of the word as perceived by different individuals (Delannoy *et al.*, 2025b). There has also been research mapping the application of artificial intelligence in polycrisis studies (Monson, 2026), and statistical analyses tracking national shocks and their co-occurrence (Delannoy *et al.*, 2025a). Despite these valuable contributions, a comprehensive bibliometric analysis that systematically identifies overarching themes, trends, and research agendas within the broader polycrisis literature is still lacking. The field remains fragmented, with no consensus on what constitutes a polycrisis (Bieler, 2026). To address this gap, this paper applies the PRISMA 2020 guidelines to the Web of Science Core Collection (2006–2026) to create a clear, data-driven map of the research field.

The main goal of the current study is to offer a review of the global literature on the subject of the polycrisis by applying bibliometric analysis. To do so, the paper begins by tracing the development and impact of the subject by following the publication trends and citation of the topic between 2006 and 2026. Second, it also assesses the performance of the most effective contributors, such as individual journals, academic institutions, and countries. Third, the study examines the organisation of the field in terms of the key themes and the way the topics have evolved in the past twenty years. Lastly, the paper employs science mapping methods to graphically present the relationship and association of the available literature and provide a clear guide on the way forward in this highly critical area of research.

In line with the objectives, the study addresses the following questions:

RQ1: Which are the general tendencies in the amount and citation patterns of polycrisis research between 2006 and 2026?

RQ2: What journals, authors, institutions, and countries have become the most impactful contributors to the literature on polycrisis?

RQ3: What are the main research themes and important trends that have influenced the study of the polycrisis between 2006 and 2026?

RQ4: What can be visually mapped to demonstrate the evolution of the field of the polycrisis literature between 2006 and 2026?

This bibliometric study contributes to the literature of polycrisis in a number of ways. First, it gives a systematic review of the literature, including the trends of publications, the most influential authors, and the most referenced research, which enables researchers to comprehend the development of the field throughout the years. Second, the mapping of thematic clusters and their evolution helps the study to elucidate the various aspects of polycrisis, such as economic, social, environmental, political, and health-related dimensions. Third, the findings have practical value. Evidence-based advice is required to help policymakers and organisational leaders to manoeuvre between risks that are interconnected across the globe. This paper offers such advice by identifying new research horizons and under-researched regions. Finally, the study establishes a baseline for future research. This analysis can enable scholars to frame their

own work in the larger context, find new areas of collaboration, and monitor the further development of the concept of the polycrisis.

The rationale behind this bibliometric analysis is the pressing necessity to learn about the complexity of polycrisis in our world. The various crises, such as pandemics and climate change, geopolitical conflicts, and others, overlap and compound each other, making them hard to predict or control. Although the topic has attracted more attention, current literature on polycrisis is incomplete, and there is no consensus regarding its main elements and interdependences (Bieler, 2026). This research is driven by the need to map the literature systematically, determine thematic trends and find gaps that can be used to inform future studies. Through offering a systematic overview, the analysis aims to assist scholars, policymakers, and practitioners in comprehending the interrelatedness of crises and developing effective strategies to deal with them.

2. Methodology

The study employed bibliometric analysis to examine polycrisis by analysis themes, trends and providing a research agenda between 2006 and 2026. The analysis focuses on 2006 to 2026 to capture the emergence of global financial crisis to cover foundational studies as well as contemporary trends that have shaped policy and practice in the field (Delannoy *et al.*, 2025a). Bibliometric reviews have become more prominent, which allow analysing large volumes of scientific information by assessing the effectiveness of research facilitated by accessible tools such as R and VOS viewer, along with extensive databases like Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science (Passas, 2024). The PRISMA 2020 guidelines were adopted in this bibliometric analysis to ensure transparent, systematic, reproducibility and standardised approach to literature selection and reporting (Nezameslami *et al.*, 2025; Page *et al.*, 2021).

2.1 Selection of Analysis Tool

The study explored the application of Biblioshiny, a flexible web-based interface, through R-studio to perform bibliometric analysis on polycrisis literature for generating publication trends, performance plots and maps of articles' thematic analysis and thematic evolution plots (Chandran & Chandran, 2026). R-studio operates in the R programming language; existing research emphasizes that it is useful in conducting publication trends, performance analysis of articles and science mapping analysis (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). This software provides descriptive statistics with data visualisation that can support quality numerical analysis and scientific calculations of existing literature (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017).

2.2 Data Search

The 541 bibliographic data used for this bibliometric analysis were obtained from the Web of Science Core Collection (WoSCC), maintained by Clarivate Analytics, which has been utilised by recent studies examining different subjects (Monson *et al.*, 2025; Mani *et*

al., 2025; Liang & Liu, 2018). Specifically, indexes includes Science Citation Index Expanded (SCI-EXPANDED), Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), Conference Proceedings Citation Index – Science (CPCI-S), Conference Proceedings Citation Index – Social Science & Humanities (CPCI-SSH). The Web of Science was accessed via the electronic library of Capital University of Economics and Business, Beijing, China, on 26th March, 2026. The study employed a pre-defined search string on keywords by using Boolean operators (“AND/OR”) as suggested in existing literature (Monson, 2026; Atkinson & Cipriani, 2018). The keywords used in the search string include: polycrisis, multiple crisis, interconnected crisis and compounded crisis. These keywords formed the search string, which is presented in Appendix 1. This initial search yielded 714 documents.

2.3 Data Screening

The retrieved 714 bibliographic records were carefully screened based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Eligible documents included articles and conference papers published between 2006 and 2026, and written in English. Publications were excluded if they were non-English, fell outside the study period or were categorised as early access, editorial materials, book reviews, meeting abstracts, letters, corrections, news items or other materials not directly relevant to the study's aims. After applying these criteria, a total of 541 records were deemed suitable for full bibliometric analysis.

2.4 Data Analysis and Reporting

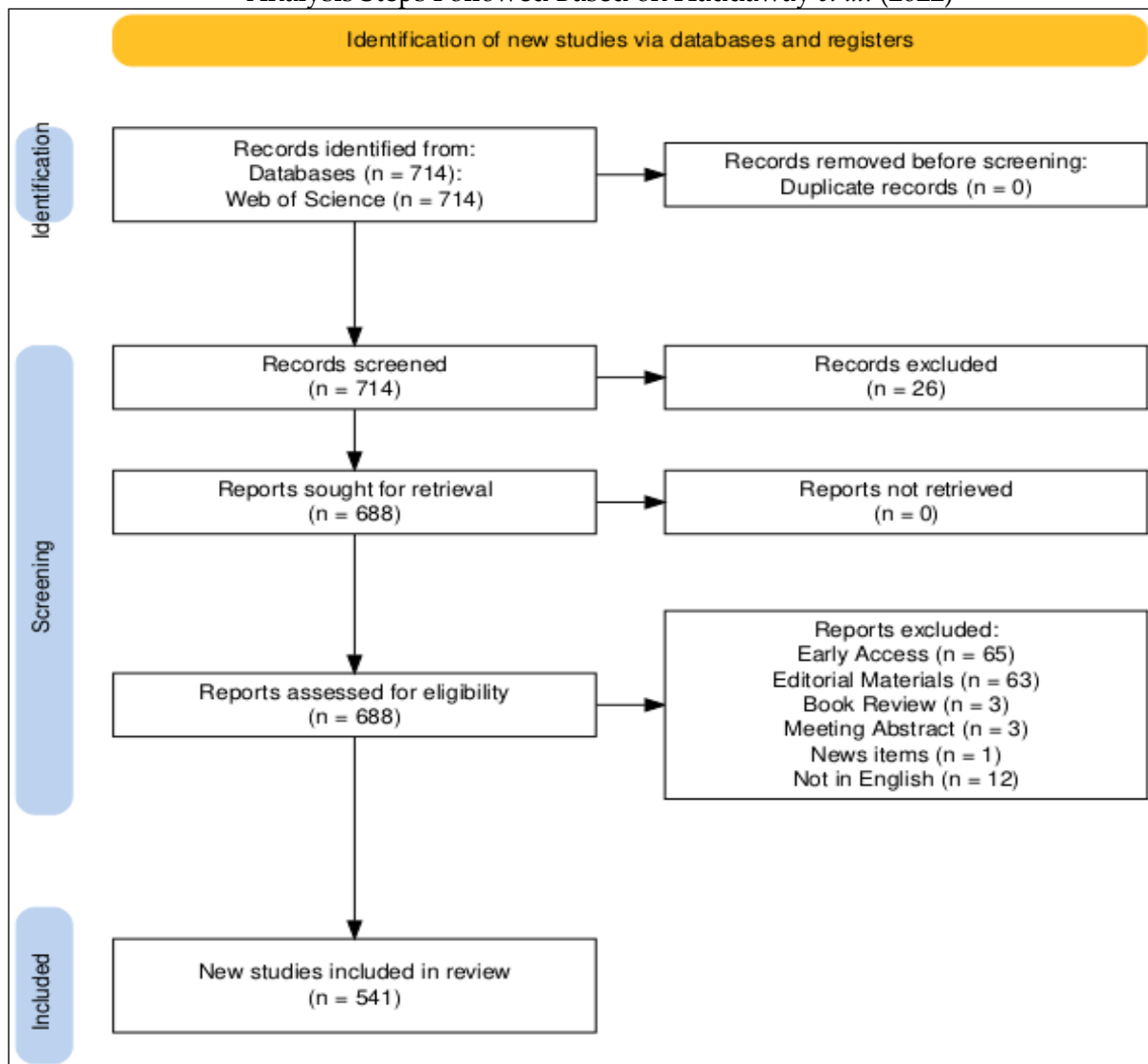
The 541 bibliographic data were exported in plain text format and imported to RStudio, where bibliometrix tool was used for analysis. The analysis presented descriptive statistics, multiple bibliometric networks and visual representations of the publication patterns, co-authorship and co-country graphs, the co-citation influences, as well as the evolution of topics. This analysis adopted the minimum thresholds for network visualisations based on existing studies (Chandran & Chandran, 2026; Monson *et al.*, 2025; Passas, 2024). All results have been categorised in a systematic order and presented in both tabular and graphical forms so that there is clarity and also such that results are easy to interpret. Figure 1 presents the evidence flowchart outlining the main steps followed to retrieve data for this analysis based on existing literature (Haddaway *et al.*, 2022).

2.5 Reporting Bias

It is important to point out any biases in bibliometric analysis so that the patterns and trends we see truly reflect the research landscape, rather than being skewed by the inclusion and exclusion criteria used in this analysis. The risk of bias assessment during a bibliometric review involves determining the instruments that will be applied in assessing the possibility of limitations during the study. In the current bibliometric analysis, an important part of the methodology was the description of the tool that was used to analyse information, which supports the reporting of bias and the transparency as required by PRISMA 2020 guidelines (Nezameslami *et al.*, 2025). The study utilised R-

Bibliometrix package in R-Studio as the main automation tool for the data analysis. The R-Bibliometrix package was used to reduce the bias and minimise human error and provide accurate analysis, as widely applied in research for similar functions (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). From the above, we have clearly explained how automation was used, making sure that the steps taken were transparent as applied in existing literature (Monson, 2026; Nezameslami *et al.*, 2025). Another potential source of bias was incomplete data for 2026, as the data were extracted up to March 2026, and the focus was on documents published in English. The period of the study has been indicated in both the abstract and methodology steps above, while the focus on English Language publications has been acknowledged in the study's limitations.

Figure 1: PRISMA Flow Diagram for Bibliometric Analysis Steps Followed Based on Haddaway *et al.* (2022)



Source: Generated by Researchers (2026).

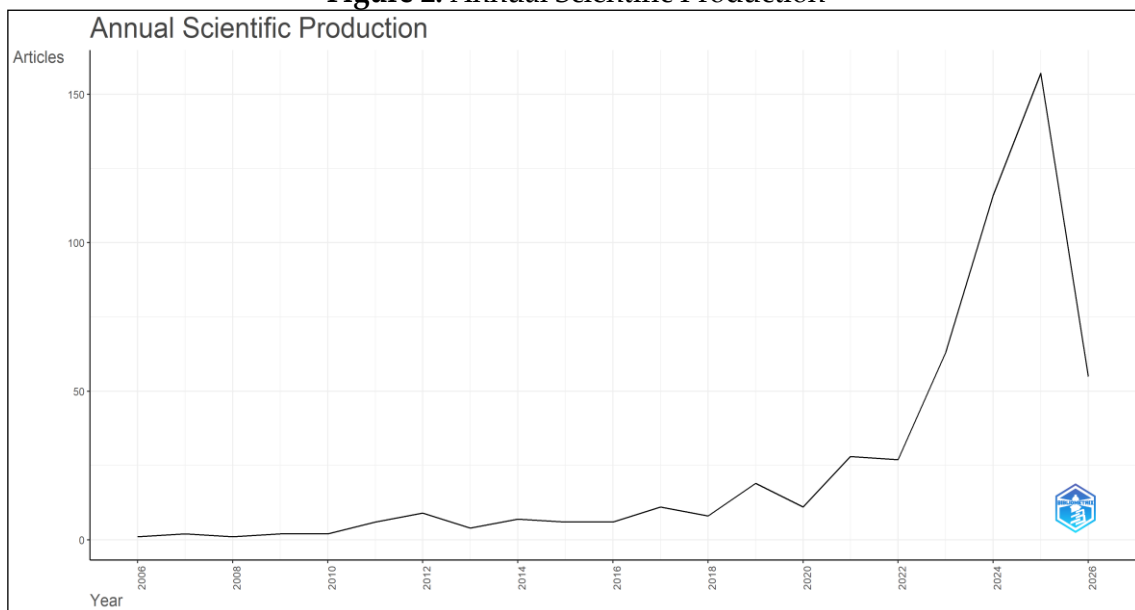
3. Results

3.1 Publication Trend

3.1.1 Annual Scientific Production

Figure 2 presents the annual scientific output of polycrisis-related literature, indicating a slow yet steady rise in the number of studies on the topic between 2006 and 2025, which suggests a growing academic interest in studying the concept. The level of publication output in the initial years (2006-2012) was low, which is evidence that the concept was still novel and not popular in the academic world. This slight increase was maintained until approximately 2019, when a stronger rise can be seen. It is interesting to note that starting in 2020, the number of publications grows significantly up to 2025. This upsurge coincides with the assertion by Delannoy *et al.* (2025b) that the adoption of the polycrisis concept has increased more rapidly in the early 2020s because of the combination of significant global shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical crises, and climate-related disasters. On the same note, Rakowski *et al.* (2025) point out that overlapping crises like pandemics, extreme weather conditions, and global political instability have added to the scholarly focus, hence leading to the accelerated growth in research on the topic. This trend underpins the overall objective of this research, which is to trace the changing themes and research fronts in the polycrisis nexus. The decrease in 2026 must be viewed with some skepticism since the information was collected only until March of 2026, and thus, does not reflect the output of the entire year. On the whole, the trend shows a dynamic and fast-growing research field with growing importance in different fields.

Figure 2: Annual Scientific Production

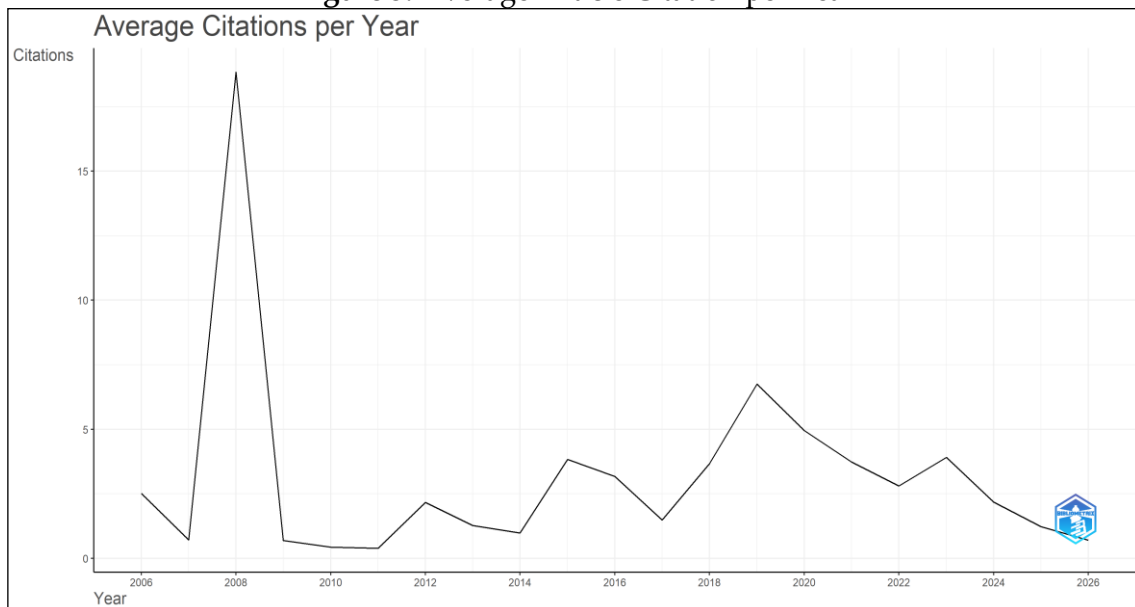


Source: Generated by Researchers (2026)

3.1.2 Average citation per year

Figure 3 shows the average number of citations per article per year and shows an informative and varying trend in the academic relevance of polycrisis research over the years. At the beginning (2006-2012), the levels of citation were low and uneven, with a significant peak in 2008, possibly because of a few influential early publications and not because of active research work. Citation patterns stabilise in 2013, and then slowly grow between 2015 and 2020, reflecting the increase in the academic awareness of interconnected crises. This growing prominence corresponds with the finding of Delannoy *et al.* (2025b) that the idea of polycrisis gained momentum in the early 2020s as major global disruptions, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical conflicts, and climate disruptions, were compounded, which brought about increased academic interest and citation. Nevertheless, although the level of publication output has risen dramatically in the last several years (as illustrated in *Figure 2*), the mean number of citations per article tends to decrease slightly after 2021. This is attributable to the recency effect, where newer publications have not had enough time to gain citations. Even the apparent decline in 2026 needs to be viewed with some caution, because these data were only accessed until March 2026 and thus, the accumulation of citations in that year has not been complete. On the whole, the results indicate that polycrisis research is growing, but its referencing influence is still developing, which is normal given a developing and dynamic research area.

Figure 3: Average Article Citation per Year



Source: Generated by Researchers (2026)

3.2 Performance Analysis

3.2.1 Most Relevant Sources

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics of the 10 most relevant sources to the polycrisis literature and indicates the interdisciplinary nature of the research field. The *Journal of*

European Public Policy (n = 16) is the most prolific, then *the Journal of European Integration* (n = 13) and *Sustainability* (n = 13), which demonstrates a high level of concentration of publications in the European policy and sustainability-oriented journals. This tendency indicates that the study of the polycrisis is closely connected with the field of governance, policy coordination, and regional integration, which is supported by the idea that polycrisis includes trans-boundary and interconnected challenges that need to be addressed through coordinated efforts (Brosig, 2025). Some other interesting sources are *Politics and Governance* (n = 8) and the *Journal of Common Market Studies* (n = 7), which again further support the significance of governance and institutional views in comprehending overlapping crises. Additionally, journals like *Health Policy* (n = 6) and *Sustainability Science* (n = 6) indicate the increased interest in the health systems and environmental aspects, particularly in the wake of the recent crises in the world. As emphasised in existing literature, the occurrence of different events like the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical conflicts has increased the necessity to study crises in various sectors, and this is reflected in the variety of sources that have been identified (Delannoy *et al.*, 2025a). Moreover, the availability of such journals as *Globalizations* (n = 5) implies that polycrisis is becoming more adequately structured in the context of global forces. On the whole, these results confirm the main thesis of this paper that the polycrisis nexus is multidisciplinary by nature, with governance, sustainability, and global systems as its components.

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis: Top 10–Most Relevant Sources

No	Sources	Articles
1	Journal of European Public Policy	16
2	Journal of European Integration	13
3	Sustainability	13
4	Politics and Governance	8
5	Journal of Common Market Studies	7
6	Health Policy	6
7	Sustainability Science	6
8	Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems	5
9	Globalizations	5
10	Journal of Contemporary European Studies	5

Source: Generated by Researchers (2026)

3.2.2 Most Relevant Affiliations

Table 2 shows descriptive statistics of the top 10 most relevant affiliations contributing to the polycrisis literature, which illustrates the global and institutional distribution of research in this field. The most prolific affiliate is the American University of Beirut (n = 31), then the University of London (n = 23), and the University of Helsinki (n = 19), which shows more contributions from institutions in areas that have been directly affected by complex and overlapping crises. This trend aligned with the argument in existing literature that polycrisis is by nature trans-boundary and context-specific; with research often emerging from places where interconnected crises are most visible (Brosig, 2025).

Other top affiliations are the University of Michigan (n = 12), University of Michigan System (n = 12), and the University of Vienna (n = 12), which shows that major research institutions are actively engaged in the knowledge development of global crises. Moreover, the University of Alberta (n = 11), University of Ottawa (n = 11), and Radboud University Nijmegen (n = 10) are other examples of the international interest in this field of research. The significance of research that is policy-oriented and governance-oriented is also supported by the existence of the European University Institute (n = 9). The recent events in the world (as pointed out by Delannoy *et al.* (2025a), the COVID-19 pandemic, and geopolitical conflicts have increased the necessity of cross-institutional and interdisciplinary collaboration. On the whole, these results prove the main assumption of the given work that the polycrisis nexus is a universally relevant issue that needs different academic input in different parts of the globe and across different fields.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics: Top 10–Most Relevant Affiliations

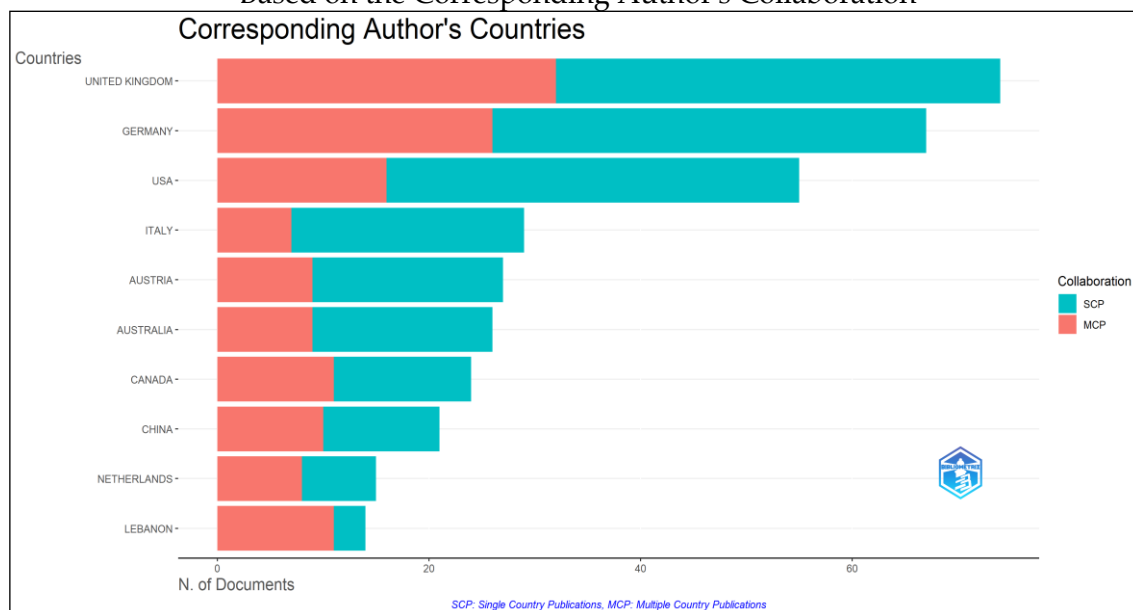
No	Affiliation	Articles
1	American University of Beirut	31
2	University of London	23
3	University of Helsinki	19
4	University of Michigan	12
5	University of Michigan System	12
6	University of Vienna	12
7	University of Alberta	11
8	University of Ottawa	11
9	Radboud University Nijmegen	10
10	European University Institute	9

Source: Generated by Researchers (2026).

3.2.3 Most Relevant Countries Based on Corresponding Author Collaboration

Figure 4 shows the relevant countries based on the corresponding author collaboration. Remarkably, the chart also draws the line between Single Country Publications (SCP) and Multiple Country Publications (MCP), with the United Kingdom and Germany showing the most frequent rates of international collaboration. Such a high level of cross-border cooperation is necessary since polycrisis, by its very definition, is a complex of many overlapping ecological, social and political crises, which cross national borders (Xue & Eraranta, 2026). Figure 4 shows that the United Kingdom has the highest total publication output, and Germany and the USA follow closely, which means that Western academic institutions are now dominating the discussion of this human dilemma. The prominent involvement of countries such as Italy, Austria, and Australia also indicates the centralisation of different political actors to solve these systemic threats (Hoeffler *et al.*, 2024). Interestingly, the fact that China and Lebanon are among the top ten indicates that the current research agenda is dominated by the Global North, but the polycrisis issues are also being considered in different geographical perspectives. This distribution implies that global issues are interrelated, and thus, a concerted, international scientific action is necessary (Xue & Eraranta, 2026).

Figure 4: Top 10-Most Relevant Countries
 Based on the Corresponding Author's Collaboration



Source: Generated by Researchers (2026).

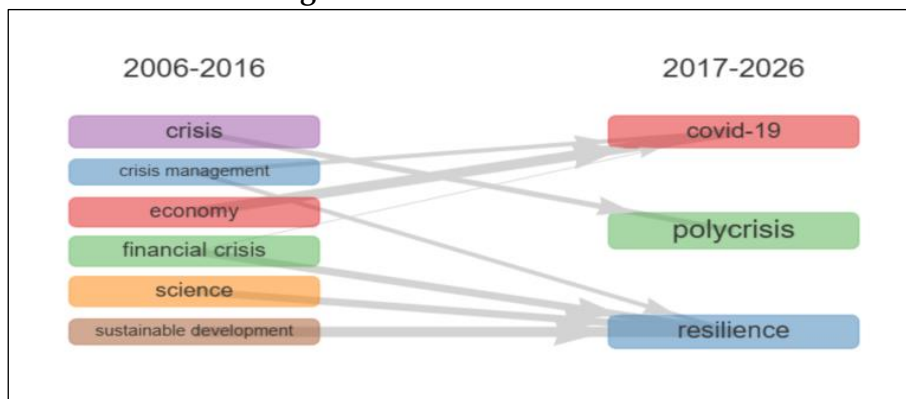
3.3 Thematic Analysis

3.3.1 Thematic Evolution

Figure 5 shows the thematic development of the research field during two different timeframes, 2006 - 2016 and 2017 - 2026, and reveals that there is a substantial change in the way researchers define global instability. During the first time (2006 - 2016), the discussion was rather fragmented and controlled by such general themes: Crisis, crisis management, economy, science, sustainable development and financial crisis. This initial emphasis is indicative of academic interest in isolated crisis events, especially that of the global financial crisis of 2007/2008, which had devastating effects on social and economic systems due to its rapid and extensive diffusion (Delannoy *et al.*, 2025a). Nevertheless, the second era (2017- 2026) demonstrates that these individual threads are coming together to form three pillars, which have become dominant and interconnected, namely COVID-19, resilience, and the overall theme of the polycrisis. This shift is indicative of an academic trend which argues that contemporary issues can no longer be examined in an isolated manner. Rather, the development of the so-called polycrisis as an overarching theme is used to present the intricacy of these complex societal challenges, in which drivers such as unstoppable economic growth contribute to numerous systemic failures (King & Jones, 2025). Since 2020, the world has witnessed the COVID-19 pandemic, severe weather events associated with climate change, continued wars, disruptions in global food markets with the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and a rapid pace of changes in democratic regimes (Rakowski *et al.*, 2025). It is probable that these overlapping shocks prompted the use of polycrisis as a unifying concept. The existence of resilience and polycrisis implies that scholars not only describe the interconnecting crises but also aim to comprehend how systems may survive and adapt to them. Generally, Figure 5 reveals a definite shift in the focus of studying single crises to the complexity and

interdependence of modern issues of the world, which is the primary issue of the polycrisis nexus.

Figure 5: Thematic Evolution

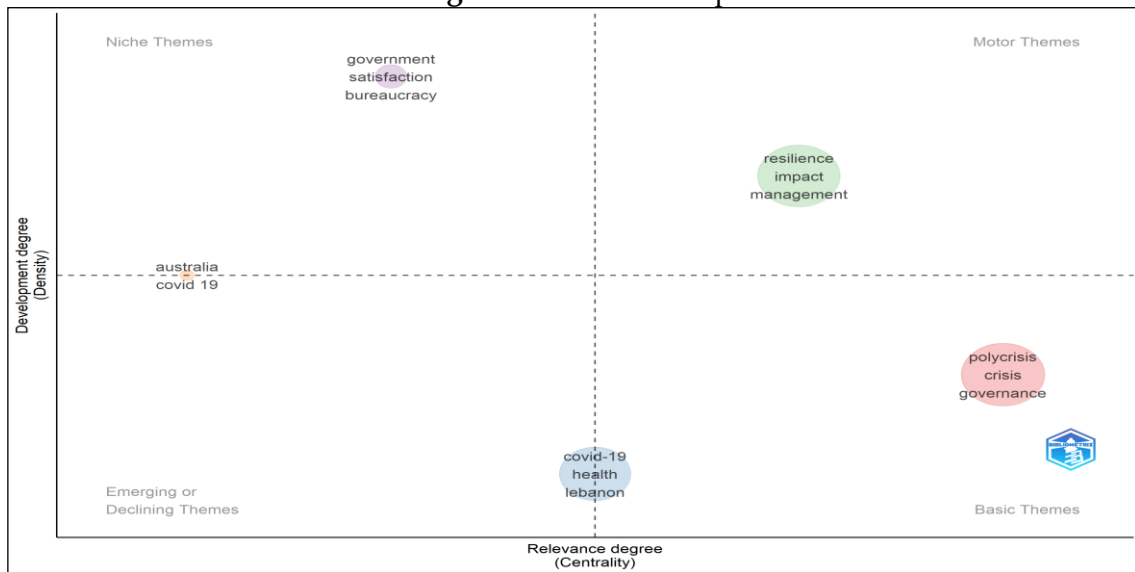


Source: Generated by Researchers (2026)

3.3.2 Thematic Map

Figure 6 represents a thematic map that classifies the research landscape into four quadrants according to density and centrality, which gives a strategic perspective of how the "polycrisis nexus" is organised. The cluster of the Basic Themes quadrant, which includes such terms as polycrisis, crisis, and governance, is the basic building block of the discipline. This centrality confirms that polycrisis is well established as a trans-boundary phenomenon where crises are not singular but are instead simultaneously and interrelated in a manner that increases their effects (Brosig, 2025). The Motor Themes are "resilience," "impact," and "management", which are well-developed and critical to the present research agenda. This is in line with the thematic development experienced in Figure 5, where the concept of resilience has taken a central pillar that is applied in a variety of spheres, such as sociology to engineering, to explain how systems can respond to shocks with far-reaching consequences (Silva Santos & Adilson, 2022). By contrast, other themes, such as the government and the bureaucracy, are categorised as Niche Themes, implying specialised topics of research that, even though they are being pursued, are on the outskirts of the main polycrisis discourse. The Emerging or Declining Themes quadrant covers such themes as COVID-19 and health, which can be interpreted as the fact that, although the pandemic was a major catalyst of the shift towards polycrisis thinking (Delannoy *et al.*, 2025a), academic interests are now moving beyond the health crisis of 2020 itself towards more long-term, systemic approaches to governance and adaptation. In the end, the map demonstrates that as the crises continue to permeate social and economic frameworks, the study is now focusing on the transmission of crisis and how global problems are interconnected (Brosig, 2025).

Figure 6: Thematic Map

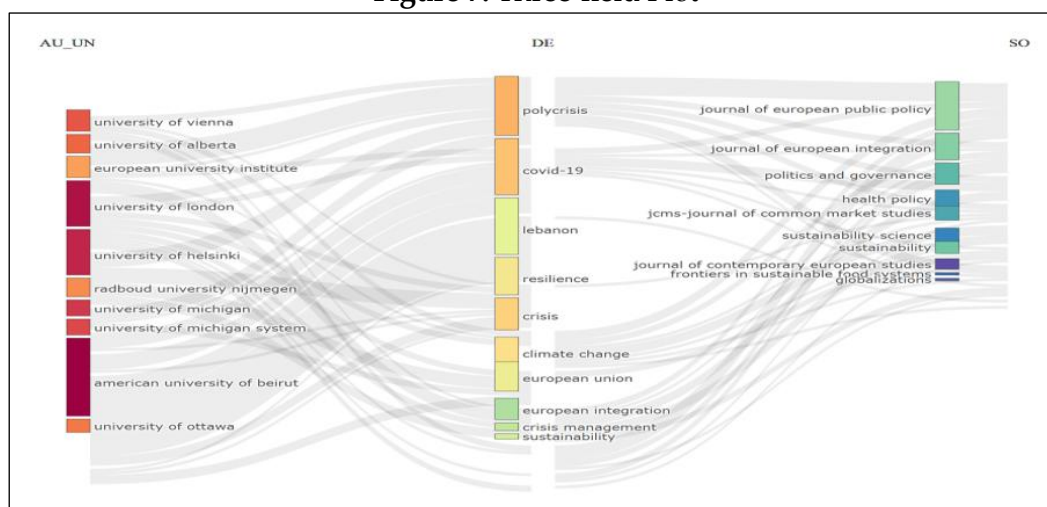


Source: Generated by Researchers (2026).

3.3.3 Three-field Plot

Figure 7 shows a three-field plot where the visual mapping of the interconnections of the main academic institutions, the main research themes, and the journals in which the various studies were published. The Sankey diagram below is used to show how the construction of the polycrisis nexus is built in various academic communities. The leading institutions, including the University of London, American University of Beirut, University of Helsinki and the European University Institute, are the main sources of research focused on the main topics, including polycrisis, covid-19 and resilience. The close associations of these institutions with the theme of resilience emphasise the fact that the concept has been transformed into a flexible instrument to be applied to management, sociology, and political science to explain how a system responds to shocks (Silva Santos & Adilson, 2022). Moreover, the outflow of these themes to such journals as the Journal of European Public Policy and Politics and Governance highlights that the polycrisis is trans-boundary in nature and implies that these crises are not independent of each other but rather simultaneous and interconnected (Brosig, 2025). It is evident based on the diagramme that these systemic challenges are being tackled through a multidisciplinary lens as global events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the invasion of Ukraine, are examined as the factors influencing both the social and energy systems at the same time (Delannoy *et al.*, 2025a; King & Jones, 2025). Finally, the plot illustrates that the scholarly reaction to the polycrisis is extremely collaborative, which is how to bridge the disjuncture between the crisis particular to the region, including the crisis in Lebanon, and the larger framework of sustainability and European integration.

Figure 7: Three-field Plot



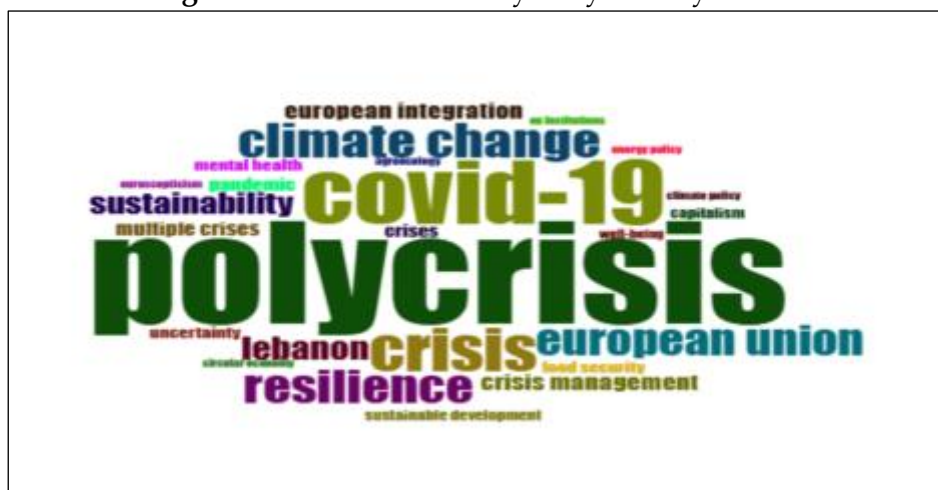
Source: Generated by Researchers (2026).

3.4 Science Mapping

3.4.1 World Cloud Analysis Showing the Most Dominant Terms

The word cloud in Figure 8 is a visualisation of all the keywords that were obtained in the literature concerning polycrisis. Each word can be as big as its frequency of occurrence, and the bigger the word, the more academic focus. Central to this discussion is the strong emphasis on terms such as polycrisis, COVID-19, and climate change, which shows that academic research is increasingly focusing on how global challenges are deeply interconnected and influence one another. This visual evidence proves that the polycrisis has become one of the main prisms which allow theorists to frame the contemporary human dilemma in a way that tends to attribute such systemic failures to a set of driving forces like economic growth (King & Jones, 2025). The prevalence of COVID-19 implies that the pandemic acted as a potent trigger, making the idea of polycrisis even more specific in the academic discussion. The other prominent keywords are resilience, sustainability, climate change, uncertainties and mental health. This is the multi-dimensional nature of this instability, which reflects the actual turmoil in global food markets and democratic governments since 2020 (Rakowski *et al.*, 2025). A mention of Lebanon, European integration and the European Union as geographic markers implies that the study of polycrisis covers both national case studies and regional governance perspectives. On the whole, Figure 8 shows that the study of polycrisis is empirically based on the recent global shocks, and it interacts with the general theme of governance, resilience, and systemic risk in the context of various geographical settings.

Figure 8: Word Cloud Analysis by All Key Words



Source: Generated by researchers (2026).

4. Discussion

This bibliometric analysis offers a well-organised and transparent insight into the way the polycrisis literature has developed over time and across different fields. The publication trend shows that at first, there was a slow development of the concept between 2006 and 2012, and then it gradually increased and sharply rose after 2020. The trend is tied to the increased academic appreciation of global disruptions, especially regarding major global events (such as the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical conflicts, and climate-related crises) (Delannoy *et al.*, 2025b; Rakowski *et al.*, 2025). In parallel, citation patterns indicate that while early studies had uneven influence, more recent work is gaining traction, although citation accumulation remains affected by recency. The analysis of the performance reveals that the key drivers of this discourse are the United Kingdom, Germany, and the USA, with the Journal of European Public Policy and Sustainability being the most influential vehicles. Interestingly, MCP within these leading nations is the highest, which indicates that the academic community has acknowledged the trans-boundary aspect of the polycrisis, and therefore, requires international scientific cooperation to resolve crises that no longer respect the national boundaries (Xue & Eräranta, 2026; Brosig, 2025). Moreover, the fact that the American University of Beirut is one of the leading affiliations underlines that intellectual leadership is also being produced in those areas that have been directly subjected to acute, overlapping shocks. This institutional and geographical heterogeneity reiterates the point that the polycrisis is no longer a niche word of academia but a globally common approach to comprehending systemic risk. These findings are supported by the thematic development and mapping outcomes, which reveal a tendency to move away from fragmented crisis-specific literature and towards a more integrated perspective focused on resilience, governance, and polycrisis. Generally speaking, the findings indicate that the polycrisis nexus does not just grow exponentially, but is increasingly organised,

interdisciplinary and policy-relevant, which is consistent with the purpose of this bibliometric analysis, which is to map themes, trends, and research fronts.

These findings are more comprehensible when structured around three major themes: the shift in the focus of research, the nature of collaboration networks, and the problem of theoretical fragmentation. First, the development of research interest can be well traced in the shift of research interest towards examining the interrelationship between world risks, as opposed to examining isolated crises (such as financial crises). This change serves as a larger intellectual trend in comprehending the concept of causal entanglement, in which crises are reciprocal and reinforcing, becoming more complicated and challenging to control (Brosig, 2025). Second, the results on affiliations and country contributions indicate that the network of collaboration is becoming more international, but it is still controlled by institutions in the Global North. Such an emphasis can influence how polycrisis is framed to emphasise some regional approaches to the problem, despite the fact that the phenomenon is an international one, dependent on context. Third, the thematic map shows some level of theoretical fragmentation, with the main concepts of polycrisis and governance being quite well-developed, whereas other aspects of the topic, such as bureaucracy and government, seem to be niche, and COVID-19 seems to be a growing or fading theme. This division indicates that the discipline still lacks an integrative theoretical base. The prevalence of resilience as a motor theme shows that there is an emerging agreement on adaptive capacity as an important response mechanism across fields (Silva Santos & Adilson, 2022). Collectively, these observations suggest that though the discipline is expanding at a very fast rate, it remains in the conceptual crystallization phase during which various branches of research are slowly coming together in a more consistent way of comprehending the complex global risks.

The results of this analysis are largely in line with other studies on polycrisis, especially in the aspect of identifying the systemic interconnectedness of global issues. To illustrate, Rakowski *et al.* (2025) define the polycrisis as a complex of causally intertwined crises with ripple effects, which resonate with this study, where polycrisis, governance, and resilience were identified as the key themes. In the same vein, King and Jones (2025) highlight the behavioural and structural causal factors of global crises, including overexploitation of natural resources and the inherent weaknesses of the systems. This view is consistent with the current results that indicate an increase in attention to systemic risks and long-term adaptation planning. Moreover, according to Homer (2024), cross-sector cooperation in the process of polycrisis management is necessary, which is also observed in the framework of the present study in the form of robust institutional and international research networks. The findings also confirm the study of Delannoy *et al.* (2025a), who emphasize the growing interaction of shocks like climate change and conflict and the importance of understanding crises as a phenomenon. Moreover, Delannoy *et al.* (2025b) theorise polycrisis as a transformational design of sustainability science, which is in line with the change of focus to resilience and interdisciplinary in this paper. On the whole, these studies, along with the current analysis, enhance the validity of the results and support the fact that the polycrisis is

becoming more and more conceptualized as a complex, systemic, and multidimensional phenomenon that demands integrated analytical approaches.

The current study also provides a number of points of divergence with the current literature. Although Rakowski *et al.* (2025) and King and Jones (2025) put more emphasis on conceptual definitions and underlying impetuses, this paper offers a systematic mapping of how these concepts have changed over time in the scholarly literature. Opposite to Homer (2024), who is geographically oriented to the Global South, the current analysis is oriented to a broad global scope, showing the prevalence of the institutions of the Global North in the construction of the research agenda. Moreover, whereas Delannoy *et al.* (2025a) consider the empirical patterns of co-occurrence of shocks, this paper takes the focus on the intellectual formulation of the discipline, emphasizing the fact that such topics as resilience and governance are becoming prevalent. Moreover, Delannoy *et al.* (2025b) underline the conceptual uncertainties of polycrisis, but this paper shows that the discipline is slowly becoming more organized, with more distinct thematic clusters and research focus. The other critical distinction is the identification of the emerging and decreasing themes, including the repositioning of COVID-19 as a central driver, to a more transitional issue. Such a temporal insight is mostly missing in previous reviews. On the whole, this research can be considered an extension of the current literature since it offers a dynamic and thorough mapping of the polycrisis research environment to shed new light on the way this field is changing, and where future research activities could be focused.

4. Conclusion, Implications, Limitations and Future Research Agenda

5.1 Conclusion

The paper gives a detailed bibliometric mapping of the polycrisis nexus between 2006 and 2026, and provides a one-of-a-kind bird's-eye view of an academic discipline that is fast developing. Although the components and drivers of the polycrisis are defined by previous systematic reviews, this study is an original contribution as it records the structural and thematic change of the world research landscape. We offer a fresh insight into the way the scholarly community has moved beyond the study of individual shocks to the creation of an integrated, multidisciplinary framework focusing on the concept of resilience and governance. By identifying the key institutions, journals, and international collaboration networks, this study moves beyond a simple restatement of facts; it reveals the intellectual infrastructure that now supports our global response to systemic risk.

The results indicate that the polycrisis is no longer a peripheral buzzword but forms the basis of modern scholarship, and was triggered by the concurrent disruptions of the early 2020s. The mapping shows that although the discourse is currently dominated by Western institutions, the input of regions that are directly affected by the complex shocks is increasing. This underscores the critical need to have a more inclusive global research agenda that would bridge the divide between the Global North and the South. Finally, this research is an eye-opener to researchers and practitioners because

complex global challenges cannot be addressed using a unilateral approach but instead a trans-boundary methodology. The strength of this bibliometric analysis lies in its ability to pinpoint precisely where our knowledge is strong and where fragmented research still leaves us vulnerable, and offers a clear roadmap on how to proceed in the next decade of global resilience.

5.2 Implications for Policy

To begin with, policymakers need to focus on integrated and cross-sector solutions to multifaceted issues in the world. The results indicate that there is a growing interdependence between crises, and this implies that policy measures taken in isolation would not be effective. Governments are advised to set up coordination at sectoral levels (e.g. health, environment and economic planning) in order to make responses coherent. As an example, national crisis management platforms must have collaborative task forces that incorporate various ministries, departments and agencies. This will empower quicker and more efficient decision-making in times of system disruption. Secondly, there is a need to strengthen institutional resilience by investing in adaptive capacity and long-term planning. The prominence of resilience as a key theme indicates that systems should be capable of absorbing shocks and regaining fast. Policymakers are thus encouraged to invest in flexibility institutions, bettering data systems and enhancing early warning systems. Measures that are applicable in practice can be considered the investment in digital infrastructure, supporting the tools of risk assessment, and the creation of contingency plans in the face of various crisis situations. Thirdly, there should be increased international cooperation to deal with the trans-boundary aspect of polycrisis. Nations need to collaborate with regional and global organizations since most crises have international dimensions. The policymakers are encouraged to facilitate knowledge dissemination, collaborative research efforts, and coordinated responses to the policy. This may involve strengthening partnerships with international organisations and supporting collaborative funding mechanisms to address shared risks.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

To begin with, the main limitation of this work is associated with the source of data since only articles were accessed in the Web of Science Core Collection with the specific attention paid to the SCI-EXPANDED, SSCI, and CPCI indices. Although they are prestigious databases, this set of choices might have left out useful grey literature, policy reports or regional journal articles not included in the Core Collection. This will result in a lack of representation of views on the Global South, where significant polycrisis studies are published in local languages or non-indexed sources. Second, the research has a limitation in the form of its linguistic nature since the articles in English only were considered in the study. This can introduce a potential bias against Western academic viewpoints and could exclude important input of non-English speaking areas, including Latin America, East Asia or the Francophone world, which also face complex polycrises. Thirdly, the timeframe of the study presents a technical limitation regarding the 2026

data. Since the extraction of the data was done in March 2026, measures of this last year are not completely done, which means the number of publications is only an effect up to the date mentioned above. This biased window could also impact the citation analysis of the latest years, where new publications inherently experience a citation lag, whereby publications are not yet old enough to be cited by others. Lastly, bibliometric analysis is always restricted to the extent that it is based on quantitative metadata as opposed to a qualitative synthesis of the content of each article. Although the use of both keyword and thematic mapping offers a rather effective overview of the trends, it is not able to capture the specifics of the theoretical arguments or even the particular soundness of the solutions offered to the specific problem in each study. This implies that we can observe what is being discussed most often, but the quality or effectiveness of the research is something to be discussed in subsequent systematic qualitative reviews.

5.4 Future Research Direction

First, there is a pressing necessity for further empirical research, which goes beyond the theoretical definition of the polycrisis, and experiments with particular causal pathways in practice. Future research should focus on precisely shock in the energy sector is relayed into the health or political sector within a specific geographical sector. Secondly, future bibliometric studies need to widen their scope to incorporate additional databases like Scopus, Dimensions or Google Scholar and also non-English literature. This would enable a more balanced comparison of Global North and Global South views and contribute to the elimination of the knowledge gap that has been found in this research. Thirdly, the studies must be specifically designed to address the Niche Themes identified in this research, like the role of bureaucracy and government satisfaction in crisis management. Although the concept of resilience is a mature motor theme, we have yet to understand the inner mechanics of how internal administrative structures impair or enhance the management of polycrisis. Research into the humanistic and the behavioural causes of systemic collapse would assist in determining the psychological leverage points that would be required to effect the transformational change required to stabilise the planet. Additionally, bibliometric analysis should be employed in future studies to connect polycrisis to technology, science and business. Surveying fields like artificial intelligence, climate science, and supply chains may demonstrate interdisciplinary relationships, new themes, and justify integrated approaches to handling complicated global issues. Lastly, longitudinal studies on the resilience of particular regions over a number of decades would be useful to the field. Through the integration of the bibliometric trends with historical socio-ecological data, researchers would be able to develop predictive models on shock co-occurrences. This would change the polycrisis research agenda to be a proactive science, rather than reactive, i.e. recording past shocks, but able to shape the metamorphic change of global systems in a more unpredictable future.

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Eric Komba Foyoh Mani: Introduction, Data analysis, Discussion, Reviewing & editing Conclusion. Mohamed Sao Kawa: Methodology, Discussion, Reviewing & editing. Michael Nicol Samai: Reviewing & editing, introduction, Discussion and Proofreading. Fred Konneh Songa Monson: Introduction, Methodology, Data analysis, Discussion, Implications, Reviewing & editing, Ibrahim Massaquoi: Introduction, Review & editing, Future research directions.

Appendix 1

Search string for bibliometric analysis - TS = ("polycrisis" OR "poly-crisis" OR "multiple crises" OR "interconnected crises" OR "compound crises")

Data Availability

Data is provided within the manuscript; however, additional data will be available upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no competing or conflict of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript.

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