

Global Trends and Collaboration in Community-Based Learning and Civic Engagement Research in Higher Education: A Bibliometric Analysis of 2015-2025

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates global trends and collaboration patterns in Community-Based Learning (CBL) and Civic Engagement (CE) research in higher education between 2015 and 2025, focusing on fragmented civic engagement practices, limited student participation, and weak university–community partnerships as the central rationale. Employing a bibliometric approach, 110 Scopus-indexed publications were examined using VOSviewer and Publish or Perish to identify publication trajectories, influential authors, productive institutions, and emerging thematic clusters. Results indicate steady growth in research outputs, with peaks in 2023–2024, and journal articles as the primary dissemination medium. The United States emerges as the largest contributor, followed by India, South Africa, and the United Kingdom. Keyword analysis highlights five thematic clusters: civic engagement, interdisciplinarity, health, sustainability, and community capacity building. These findings reveal regional disparities and emphasize the importance of digital integration and stronger collaboration among universities, communities, and students to advance inclusive and transformative civic learning.

Keywords:

CBL; Civic Engagement; Higher Education; Bibliometric; Partnership.

ABSTRAK

Studi ini meneliti tren global dan pola kolaborasi dalam penelitian Pembelajaran Berbasis Komunitas (Community-Based Learning/CBL) dan Keterlibatan Sipil (Civic Engagement/CE) di pendidikan tinggi antara tahun

2015 dan 2025, dengan fokus pada praktik keterlibatan sipil yang terfragmentasi, partisipasi mahasiswa yang terbatas, dan kemitraan universitas-komunitas yang lemah sebagai alasan utama. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan bibliometrik, 110 publikasi yang terindeks Scopus diperiksa menggunakan VOSviewer dan Publish or Perish untuk mengidentifikasi lintasan publikasi, penulis berpengaruh, institusi produktif, dan kluster tematik yang muncul. Hasil menunjukkan pertumbuhan yang stabil dalam keluaran penelitian, dengan puncaknya pada tahun 2023–2024, dan artikel jurnal sebagai media penyebaran utama. Amerika Serikat muncul sebagai kontributor terbesar, diikuti oleh India, Afrika Selatan, dan Inggris Raya. Analisis kata kunci menyoroti lima kluster tematik: keterlibatan sipil, interdisipliner, kesehatan, keberlanjutan, dan pembangunan kapasitas komunitas. Temuan ini mengungkap kesenjangan regional dan menekankan pentingnya integrasi digital serta kolaborasi yang lebih kuat antara universitas, komunitas, dan mahasiswa untuk memajukan pembelajaran kewarganegaraan yang inklusif dan transformatif.

Kata kunci:

CBL; Keterlibatan Warga Negara; Pendidikan Tinggi; Bibliometrik; Kemitraan.

1. Introduction

Civic engagement in higher education has long been regarded as a fundamental element in shaping students as active, critical, and responsible citizens toward social issues. Universities are not only tasked with producing knowledge through education and research, but also hold a strategic role in strengthening democratic values, social justice, and community welfare through student involvement in community development (Hartley & Saltmarsh, 2023). Civic engagement encompasses various forms of experiential learning, such as community service, community empowerment, policy advocacy, participation in social organizations, and research oriented toward solving real societal problems (Eyler & Giles, 1999).

Nevertheless, international findings indicate that civic engagement implementation remains suboptimal. Reports from OECD and IEA emphasize that student involvement in social activities is often sporadic, unsustainable, and not systematically integrated into higher education curricula. This condition results in learning experiences that fail to provide transformative impacts on students' civic competencies (Borhan, 2025; Schulz et al., 2023). Barriers such as limited access to programs, poorly participatory activity design, and unequal opportunities for participation remain major challenges in civic engagement (Chittum, Enke, & Finley, 2022; Crabtree, 2023). These problems are generally influenced by top-down implementation approaches that prioritize institutional perspectives over community needs. Many universities design community service programs without involving communities equally in planning, implementation, and evaluation (Xuan & Isa, 2025). Consequently,

programs often lack relevance and sustainability and fail to provide deep learning experiences for students as future democratic, reflective, and socially responsible citizens.

To address these challenges, Community-Based Learning (CBL) has emerged as an alternative pedagogical approach that emphasizes direct student involvement in community life through collaborative, experiential learning. CBL integrates theory and practice contextually, enabling students not only to apply knowledge directly but also to develop democratic values such as cooperation, social empathy, and participatory leadership (Chittum et al., 2022). CBL also fosters more equal, mutually beneficial, and sustainable campus–community partnerships.

With growing attention to civic engagement, the integration of CBL and civic engagement has become a global trend in higher education. Universities worldwide are increasingly strengthening institutional missions oriented toward community service, community collaboration, and socially grounded research (Hartley & Saltmarsh, 2023). This transformation aligns with the paradigm of Global Citizenship Education (GCE), which emphasizes the importance of cultivating global citizens with social concern, cross-cultural collaboration, and ethical leadership to address global challenges such as sustainability, democracy, and social justice (Massaro, 2022).

However, research development on CBL and civic engagement has yet to demonstrate equal global representation. Preliminary searches of Scopus-indexed publications from 2015–2025 reveal that more than 65% of publications originate from Global North countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada, while contributions from Asia, Africa, and Latin America remain below 20%. This epistemic dominance of the Global North shows that the contexts of developed countries with strong resources largely shape knowledge development in CBL and civic engagement. Conversely, developing countries with more complex social challenges are underrepresented in international literature. Beyond representation gaps, systematic reviews of CBL and civic engagement research remain scarce. The existing literature largely focuses on local case studies, program evaluations, or perception-based analyses with limited scope (Hawes et al., 2021). The lack of comprehensive scientific mapping hampers understanding of the global knowledge landscape, the dominant contributing actors, potential international collaborations, and neglected research areas that require deeper exploration.

Digital technology development also plays a crucial role in transforming civic engagement and CBL practices (Choi, Glassman, & Cristol, 2017). Digitalized learning enables community-based programs to be conducted in hybrid or online formats through collaborative platforms, social documentation media, and digital project management tools (Donthu, Kumar, Mukherjee, Pandey, & Lim, 2021). This transformation expands access for students previously unable to participate in community-based activities (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009). Yet, digitalization also introduces new gaps, particularly in technology access, digital skills, and community readiness (Godsk & Møller, 2025; Mellado-Moreno & Burgos, 2025). Thus, the dimension of digital civic engagement requires a more comprehensive study to balance opportunities and risks.

In the Indonesian context, the urgency of CBL–CE research and implementation is growing. Although Indonesia has long experience through *Kuliah Kerja Nyata* (KKN) and various forms of community service, studies show that such programs remain administratively oriented, short, and lack equal community empowerment approaches. Moreover, Indonesian academics' contributions to international publications on CBL–CE remain limited and uncharted in the global landscape. As a result, universities struggle to determine strategic directions for strengthening international research collaboration, developing community-based curricula, and enhancing students' capacity for civic engagement relevant to local contexts.

These conditions raise critical questions that have not yet been addressed in the global literature, such as: to what extent does CBL–CE research reflect diverse social contexts worldwide? How do Global South contributions compare to the Global North? What patterns of international collaboration exist? Which thematic issues dominate discourse, and which research areas remain neglected? Such questions underscore the need for bibliometric studies to provide comprehensive, data-driven insights.

Based on this overview, the urgency of this research rests on three foundations. First, academically, systematic mapping of global CBL–CE research trends is needed, as it remains scarce. Second, practically, this research can support the development of more relevant community-based civic engagement programs, especially in developing countries. Third, strategically, this research is crucial to understanding Indonesia's academic contribution within the global landscape, thereby strengthening international collaboration and curriculum development in higher education. Thus, the main problem in this study is the absence of a comprehensive mapping of CBL and civic engagement research in higher education globally during 2015–2025, covering publication trends, international collaboration patterns, Global North–Global South representation, thematic dynamics, and knowledge gaps requiring further study.

This research aims to map global trends and collaboration patterns in Community-Based Learning and civic engagement in higher education during 2015–2025 through a bibliometric analysis of Scopus-indexed publications to uncover knowledge development, influential academic actors, and future research directions and gaps. The findings are expected to contribute significantly to academic policy and higher education strategies, including curriculum planning grounded in social experience, strengthening more equitable campus–community partnerships, and enhancing research capacity and civic engagement in developing countries, particularly Indonesia. With a more comprehensive understanding of the global CBL–CE landscape, higher education can develop more inclusive, relevant, and impactful learning practices for society.

2. Methods

2.1 Research Design

This study utilizes a bibliometric analysis method assisted by VOSviewer. Bibliometric analysis is widely used to examine the evolution, trends, and current status of scientific publications, as well as to study large data sets across disciplines and topics (Brika, Algamdi, Chergui, Musa, &

Zouaghi, 2021; Kirby, 2023; Sajovic & Podgornik, 2022; Xue & Liu, 2025). This study focuses on scientific publications related to community-based learning, civic education, citizenship education, higher education, and universities indexed in the Scopus database for the period 2015–2025. The Scopus database was chosen for its comprehensive coverage of international journals and research sources, as well as its robust internal metrics and visualization system (Hoang, 2025).

2.2 Data Collection

Data collection was conducted on 13 October 2025 using the Scopus database. To ensure completeness and inclusivity, a Boolean search strategy was used to combine several key concepts. The search query targeted publications containing the terms community-based learning or community-based education, combined with civic education or citizenship education, and limited to the higher education or university context. To clarify the scope, the search was limited to documents published between 2015 and 2025. In Boolean form, the query can be written as: TITLE-ABS-KEY (community-based AND learning) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (community-based AND education) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (civic AND engagement) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (citizenship AND engagement) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (higher AND education) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (universities) AND PUBYEAR > 2015 AND PUBYEAR < 2025. This strategy yielded 110 indexed documents, and all identified publications were included in the analysis without exception (Sulkipani, Komalasari, Sapriya, Fitriyasari, & Blegur, 2025).

2.3 Data Analysis

Bibliometric analysis was conducted using VOSviewer and Publish or Perish (Version 8.15.4710.9036). VOSviewer was used to generate co-occurrence keyword maps, co-authorship networks, and visualizations of publication distribution by country and journal (Xue & Liu, 2025; Yu & Yu, 2023). The results of the analysis are displayed in the form of network and cluster visualizations, enabling interpretation of thematic structures and collaboration patterns (Tao, Hanif, Ahmed, & Ebrahim, 2021). For general bibliographic metrics, such as publication year, number of documents, and citations, Publish or Perish is used to extract citation-based indicators and publication performance measures (Croitoru, Dragan, Ignat, & Jumanca, 2025; Kirby, 2023).

Table 1. General Bibliographic Data from Selected Publications, 2015 until October 2025

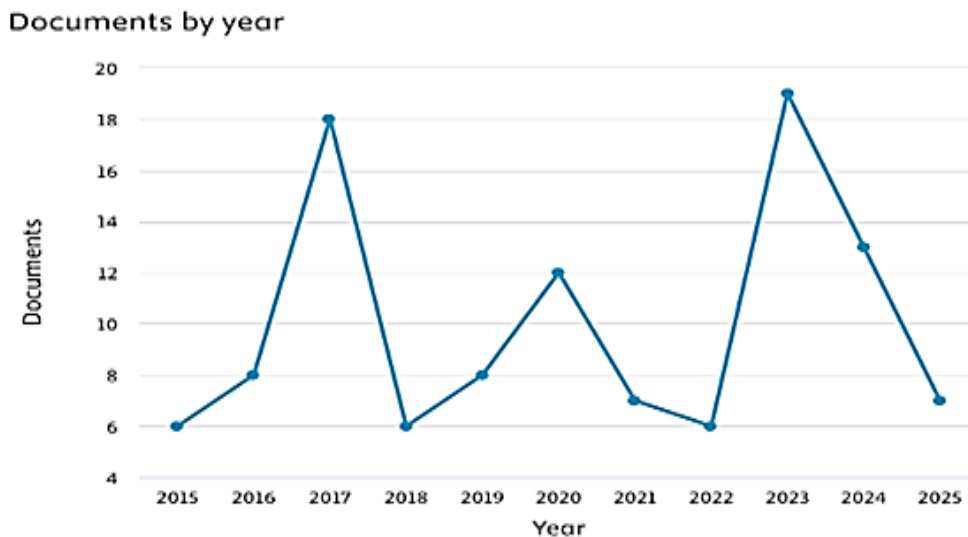
Data category	<i>n</i>
Citation years	9
Papers	110
Citations	499
Cites/year	55.44
Cites/paper	5.14
Cites/author	197.78
Papers/author	50.07
Authors/Paper	2.95
h-index	13
g-index	18

hI, norm	7
hI, annual	0.78
hA-index	5

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Documents by Year

A search of publications in the Scopus database from 2015 to October 2025 found 110 documents, including articles, books, and other publications, distributed by year as shown in Picture 1. The distribution of publications fluctuated, gradually increasing after 2016. The highest number of publications occurred in 2023. From 2015 to 2018, the number of publications per year was relatively low. In the period from 2019 to 2025, there were two important peaks to note: 2023 and 2024. The surge in 2023–2024 likely occurred due to increased organizational activity, new projects or policies, and the digitalization of documentation processes, which led to a sharp rise in the number of documents.

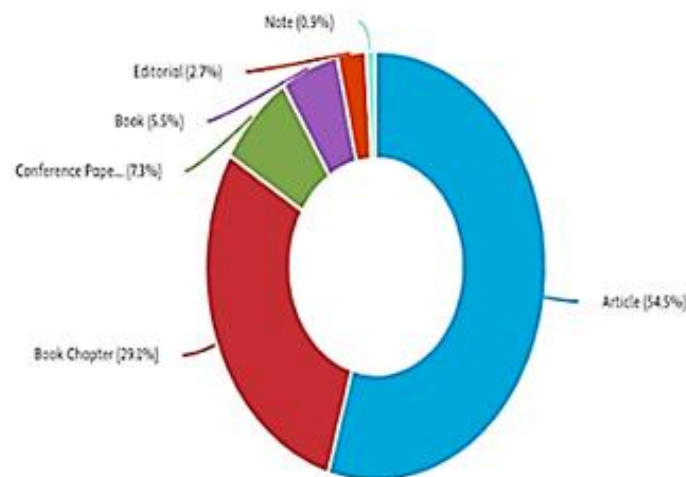


Picture 1. Number of Documents Analyzed in the CBL-CE Study by Year

The dominance of articles as a form of publication, at 54.5%, indicates that they are the primary medium for disseminating scientific knowledge due to their concise nature, rapid publication process, and accessibility to the academic community. This reinforces the position of articles as the highest-ranking standard of scientific communication compared to other forms, such as book chapters (29.1%) or conference proceedings (7.3%), which, although important, serve more as in-depth explorations or preliminary stages before being developed into formal articles. Meanwhile, the distribution of scientific fields shows that the social sciences occupy a dominant position at 55.1%, far surpassing medicine (9.5%) and engineering (7%). This dominance reflects the fact that social, cultural, political, and economic issues have become the main focus of research during the 2015–2025 period, in line with global dynamics that demand quick, relevant responses. Thus, the combination of the high

proportion of articles and the dominance of the social sciences demonstrates a pattern in which social knowledge is more frequently published as articles, due to its dynamic nature and the need for rapid dissemination to address ever-changing societal phenomena.

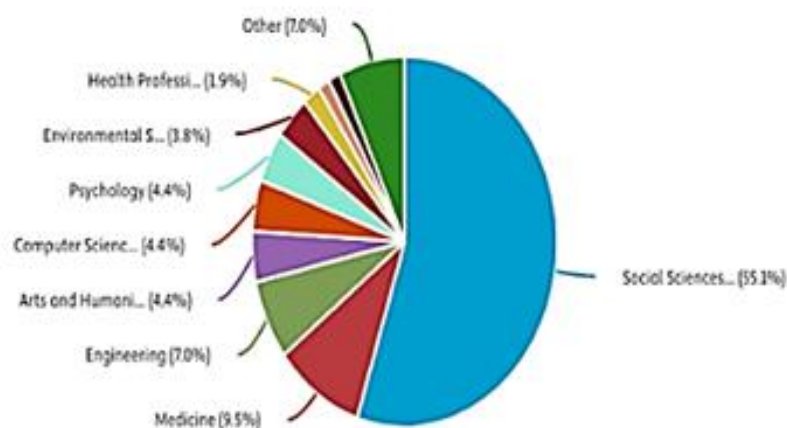
Documents by type



* Note. N = 110; Article = article; Book Chapter = book chapter; CP = conference paper; Book = book; Editorial = editorial

Picture 2. Documents in the CBL-CE Study Classified by Type and Subject Area

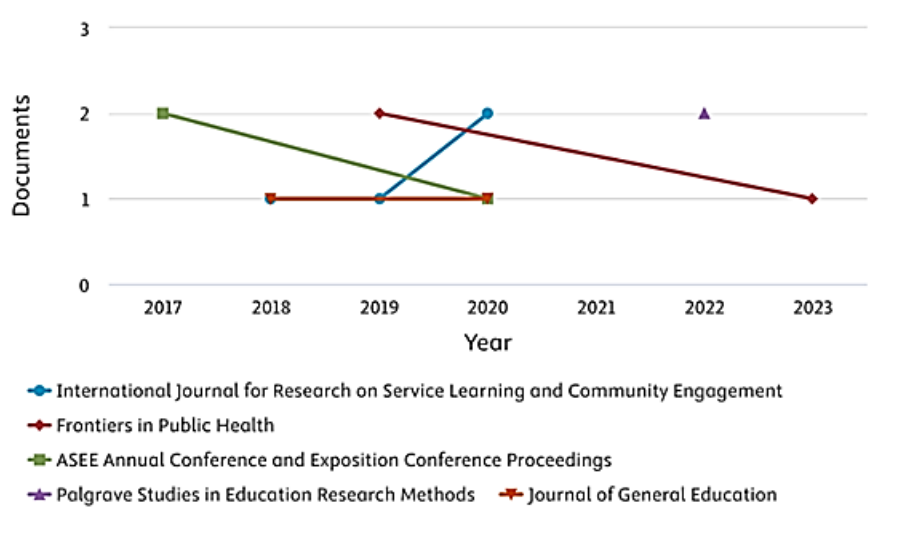
Documents by subject area



Picture 3. Documents in the CBL-CE Study Classified by Type and Subject Area

Between 2015 and 2025, publications on Community-Based Learning and Civic Engagement (CBL-CE) appeared in leading journals and conference proceedings. The Picture 4. below shows the top publication sources ranked by the number of documents per year, including the International Journal for Research on Service Learning and Community Engagement, Frontiers in Public Health, the ASEE Annual Conference and Exposition Conference Proceedings, Palgrave Studies in Education Research Methods, and the Journal of General Education. Each source has a different document distribution pattern: some publish consistently every year, some have experienced a decline in the number of documents, and others show stable or limited trends.

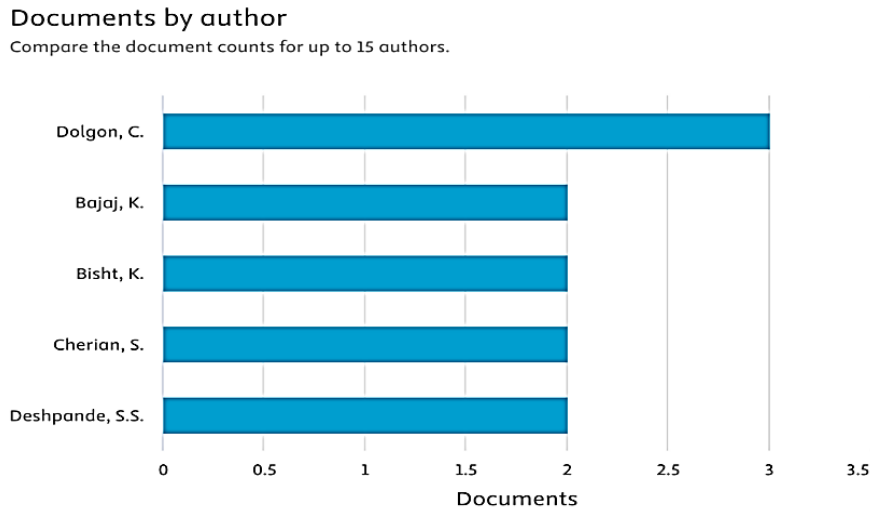
This distribution reveals the dynamics and trends in CBL-CE research productivity across various journals and proceedings over the past decade, while also indicating the diverse sources that serve as important references in the development of community-based learning and civic education studies internationally.



Picture 4. Top Five Document Sources Analyzed in the CBL-CE Study

Note. IJRSLCE = International Journal for Research on Service Learning and Community Engagement; FPH = Frontiers in Public Health; ASEE AC = ASEE Annual Conference and Exposition Conference Proceedings; PSEMRM = Palgrave Studies in Education Research Methods; JGE = Journal of General Education.

From other sources, the International Journal for Research on Service Learning and Community Engagement shows an upward trend in publications in 2019–2020, while Frontiers in Public Health tends to experience a decline in the number of documents from year to year. Palgrave Studies in Education Research Methods and the Journal of General Education each address specific years, revealing fluctuating yet still relevant trends in community development and civic education. This pattern of document distribution confirms the important role of various scientific publication sources in supporting the development of CBL-CE research over the past decade, both in terms of quantity and academic impact.



Picture 5. Distribution of the Most Productive and Cited Authors in Publications

In addition to prolific authors, the data also shows five documents with the highest number of citations as key references in this field. The article with the most citations was written by A.J. Perrin and A. Gillis, discussing the importance of higher education experience in shaping political engagement. Meanwhile, various other works on service learning and community-based learning have also become important references in the development of CBL-CE studies at the global level.

Table 2. Data on the Five Most Productive Authors

No	Author	Number of Documents
1	Dolgon, C.	3
2	Bajaj, K.	2
3	Bisht, K.	2
4	Cherian, S.	2
5	Deshpande, S.S.	2

Table 3. Five Data Authors Cited in Publications

No	Author	Title	Year	Journal	Cite
1	A.J. Perrin, A. Gillis	How College Makes Citizens: Higher Education Experiences and Political Engagement	2019	Socius	41

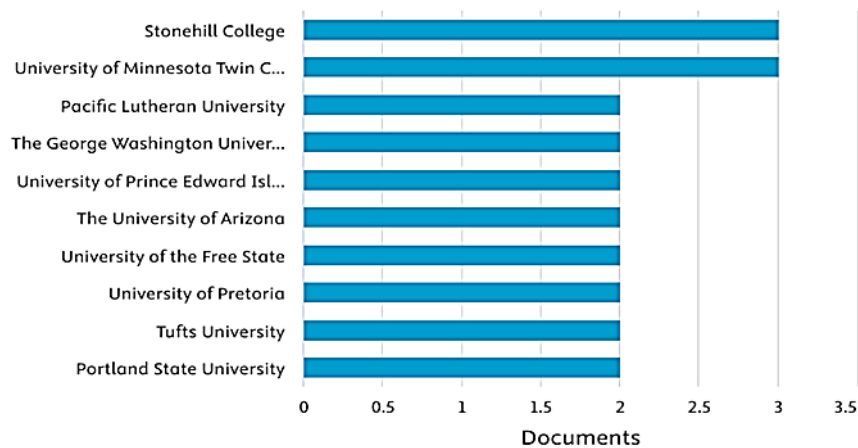
No	Author	Title	Year	Journal	Cite
2	L. Baker	Community-based service-learning in language education: A review of the literature	2019	International Journal for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement	19
3	M.R. Mason, E. Dunens	Service-learning as a practical introduction to undergraduate public health: Benefits for student outcomes and accreditation	2019	Frontiers in Public Health	25
4	S.L.C. Mackenzie, D.M. Hinchey, K.P. Cornforth	A public health service-learning capstone: Ideal for students, academia, and community	2019	Frontiers in Public Health	34
5	A. Rock	Bringing geography to the community: community-based learning and the geography classroom	2022	GeoJournal	9

Based on the bibliometric analysis of CBL-CE for the period 2015–2025, the most productive author is Dolgon, C. (3 documents), followed by Bajaj, K.; Bisht, K.; Cherian, S.; and Deshpande, S.S. (2 documents each). Meanwhile, the five papers with the highest number of citations are those by A.J. Perrin and A. Gillis (41 citations), L. Baker (19 citations), M.R. Mason and E. Dunens (25 citations), S.L.C. Mackenzie et al. (34 citations), and A. Rock (9 citations). These data indicate the authors and works that have contributed the most and are the most influential in international CBL-CE literature. The significance of these authors in CBL-CE lies in their role as key contributors who not only develop theoretical frameworks but also provide practical insights that shape the discourse and application of community-based learning and civic engagement across diverse contexts.

3.2 Documents by Affiliation

10 author affiliations have recorded the highest number of publications, with a relatively stable trend. The ten affiliations with the most publications are shown in Picture 6, where Stonehill College and the University of Minnesota Twin Cities are the institutions with the highest number of publications (n = 3 each), followed by Pacific Lutheran University, The George Washington University, University of Prince Edward Island, The University of Arizona, University of the Free State, University of Pretoria, Tufts University, and Portland State University (n = 2 each). The average number of publications from these 10 affiliates is 2.7, indicating that, over the past decade, all affiliates have contributed steadily. It is important to note that institutions with comprehensive civic education programs at various levels tend to serve as centers of study, making community-based learning and civic education key research topics for researchers at these institutions, given the

widespread use of digital tools and activities. Based on the article, Stonehill demonstrates a strong institutional commitment to CBL through the establishment of the Office of Community-Based Learning (OCBL), more flexible coordination among stakeholders, and the full integration of CBL into its curriculum. The smaller campus structure allows for a more focused, faster, and more consistent implementation of CBL, making its practices appear more prominent than at larger institutions with more diverse and complex academic priorities.



Picture 6. Number of Documents Published by Affiliation

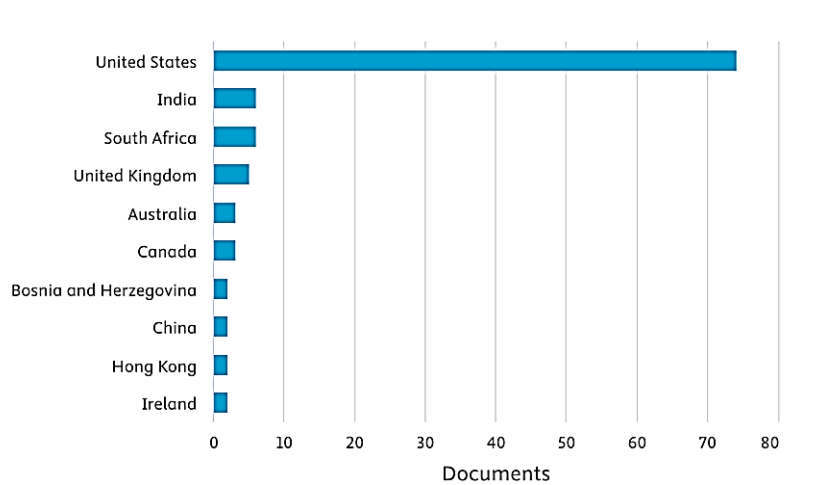
3.3 Documents by Country

Distribution of scientific documents discussing the topics of community-based learning, civic education, and higher education by country or region of publication. This data reflects the global contribution to community-based civic education in higher education. The United States occupies a dominant position with a very high number of documents, namely around 78 publications, indicating the intensity and consistency of research in this field. A significant gap is evident compared to other countries, indicating that the United States is the primary center for the production of scientific literature on civic engagement and community-based education in higher education.

India ranks second, with around 10 documents, followed by South Africa (8) and the United Kingdom (7). These countries demonstrate active involvement in the development of civic education discourse, although on a much smaller scale than the United States. Australia (6 documents) and Canada (5 documents) also contribute consistently, reflecting a policy-based approach and inclusive higher education practices. Bosnia and Herzegovina (4 documents) represents participation from South-Eastern Europe, which is becoming increasingly active in global education literature. China (3 documents) and Hong Kong (2 documents) represent contributions from East Asia, while Ireland (1 document) completes the list with limited but still relevant participation (Antoninis et al., 2023).

This distribution shows that, despite participation from various countries, the literature remains

dominated by the Global North, particularly the United States and Western Europe. This may reflect access to academic resources, international collaboration networks, and national research policies that support publication in reputable journals.



Picture 7. Documents by Country

Table 4. Distribution of Citations by Country (Highest to Lowest)

No.	Country	Number of Citations	Number of Documents	Example Author	Publisher
1	United States	42	1	R. Perry, A. Roy	SAGE Publications
2	United Kingdom	78	3	K. Cole, M. Thomas, D. Bender	Springer, Multilingual Matters

Based on the analyzed citation data, the United States ranks highest in citations per document, with 42 citations from a single publication by R. Perry and A. Roy, published by SAGE Publications. This shows that publications from the United States have a strong academic impact and are an important reference in CBL-CE studies.

Meanwhile, the United Kingdom makes a broader contribution in quantitative terms, with a total of 78 citations across three documents by authors such as K. Cole, M. Thomas, and D. Bender. These publications were published by Springer Publishing and Multilingual Matters, two publishers known for their work in multicultural education and citizenship. Although the citations per document are lower than those of the United States, the United Kingdom shows significant diversity in its contributions and depth of study. The combined data from the United Kingdom shows that this country has a more dispersed research landscape, with several authors and publishers actively supporting community-based education literature. This reflects the collaborative and multicultural approach that characterizes citizenship education in the United Kingdom.

3.4 Co-Occurrence (Keywords) Trends

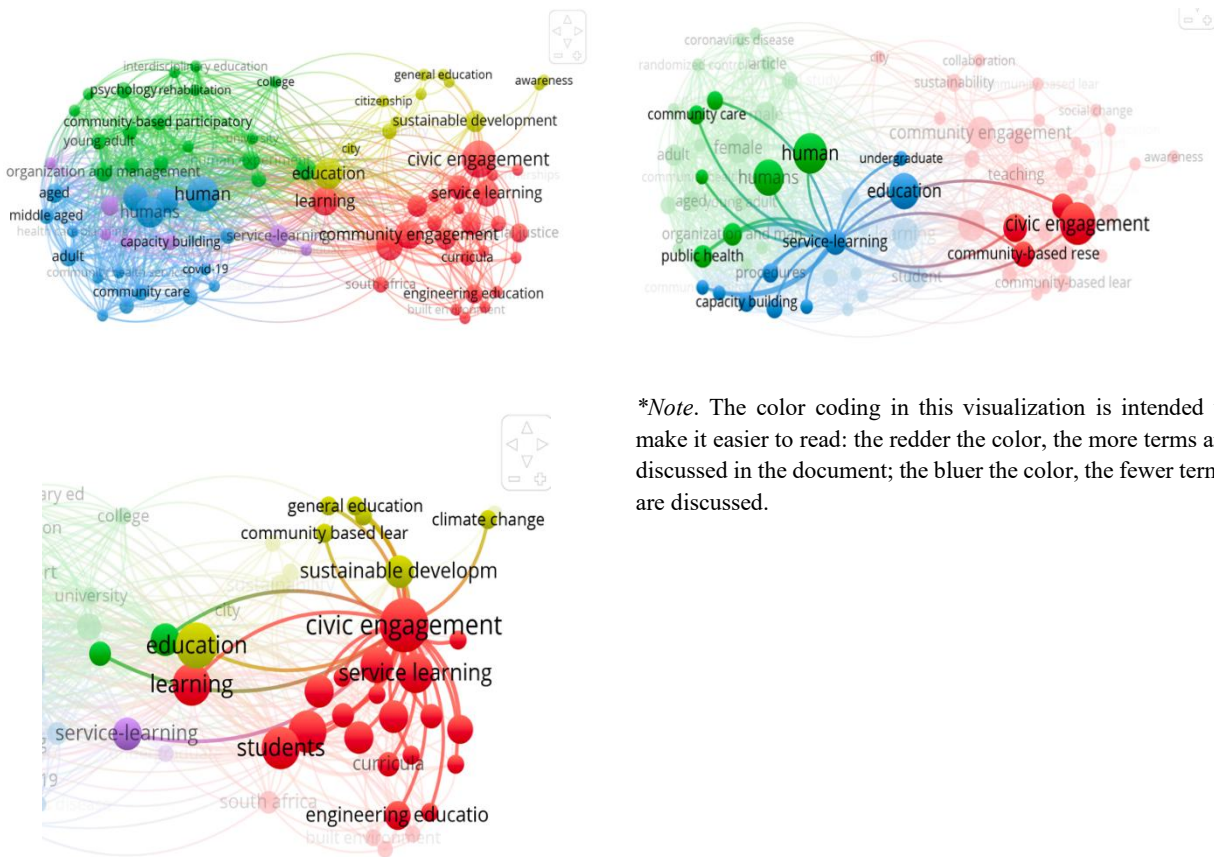
This network visualization analyzes 582 keywords, of which 79 meet the minimum criterion of 2 occurrences. These keywords are divided into five thematic clusters: red (25) highlights civic and community engagement, green (18) focuses on education and interdisciplinary studies, blue (17) relates to humans and health services, yellow (12) emphasizes sustainable development and citizenship, and purple (7) discusses community services, social justice, and community-based education models. These clusters reflect the main themes that have developed in CBL-CE research over the past decade.

Table 5. Keyword Groups Based on Co-Occurrence in CBL-CE Documents

Cluster Color	Sample Keywords	Items, n
Red	civil engagement, community engagement, service learning, social justice, learning, curriculum, higher education, technical education	25
Green	interdisciplinary education, psychology, young adults, community-based participatory, university, demography, organisation and management	18
Blue	human, human, health education, community care, epidemiology, adult, age, COVID-19, randomized controlled trial	17
Yellow	awareness, citizenship, city, climate change, collaboration, community-based learning, education, sustainability, social change, voting	12
Purple	Community services, social justice, and community-based education models	7

Note: Red represents a group of closely related keywords, indicating the main thematic area with a high frequency of co-occurrence; Green represents different but related thematic groups, often indicating secondary or emerging research focuses; Blue indicates other key groups, often reflecting complementary or alternative lines of research within broader topics; Yellow represents smaller or more specific thematic groupings, often connected to interdisciplinary or specialised topics; Purple indicates small but relevant clusters, usually related to specific case studies, current trends, or exploratory research directions.

The dominant main themes, significant supporting themes, and several specific sub-themes shown in Table 5 form a map of research trends in CBL-CE. This reflects the complexity and depth of this field of study and shows that the topic is broad and rich with various perspectives and approaches.



*Note. The color coding in this visualization is intended to make it easier to read: the redder the color, the more terms are discussed in the document; the bluer the color, the fewer terms are discussed.

Picture 8. Co-occurrence Analysis Visualization (Keywords)

Our analysis identified ten keywords that appeared most frequently in research documents related to Community-Based Learning (CBL) and Civic Engagement (CE) between 2015 and 2025, namely: civic engagement, community engagement, service learning, social justice, learning, curriculum, higher education, interdisciplinary education, psychology, young adults, community-based participatory research, university, demography, organisation and management, human beings, health education, community care, epidemiology, adults, age, Covid-19, randomised controlled trials, awareness, citizenship, cities, climate change, collaboration, community-based learning, education, sustainability, social =change, voting, capacity building, community institutions, programme development, public health, public relations, service learning, and undergraduate education. These keywords were grouped into colour clusters representing the main themes of CBL-CE research, namely: the Red Cluster, which highlights citizen engagement and learning; the Green Cluster, which focuses on interdisciplinary education and community participation; the Blue Cluster, which examines health and controlled research aspects; the Yellow Cluster, which highlights social awareness, sustainability, and citizenship education; and the Purple Cluster, which is related to capacity building and community service programmes. The overlay visualization also shows that during this period, yellow keywords such as college and university, learning algorithms, behavioral research, learning behavior, ideological and political education, big data, k-means clustering,

learning, and higher education were frequently used in CBL-CE studies, indicating emerging research trends within the academic community.

3.5 Title and Abstract Trends

The initial stage of mapping terms using VOSviewer. Here, researchers must determine the threshold, which is the minimum number of occurrences of a term for that term to be included in the network analysis. In the example image, the minimum number of occurrences is set to 10. Of the total 3,312 terms detected in the data, only 77 terms meet the threshold and will be analyzed further.

After the occurrence threshold is set, VOSviewer allows you to select the most relevant terms to visualize from the total set that meet the threshold. In this image, from the 77 terms that pass the threshold, the suggested default value is to display 60% of the most relevant terms, or 46 terms that are truly significant based on VOSviewer's automatic relevance score.

These two images show the process of adjusting parameters in the co-occurrence term analysis in VOSviewer: starting with selection based on minimum occurrence frequency (threshold), then selecting terms based on relevance level for keyword network visualization in your research data source. These steps are important for obtaining mapping results that focus on the most impactful terms and trends in the analyzed research corpus.

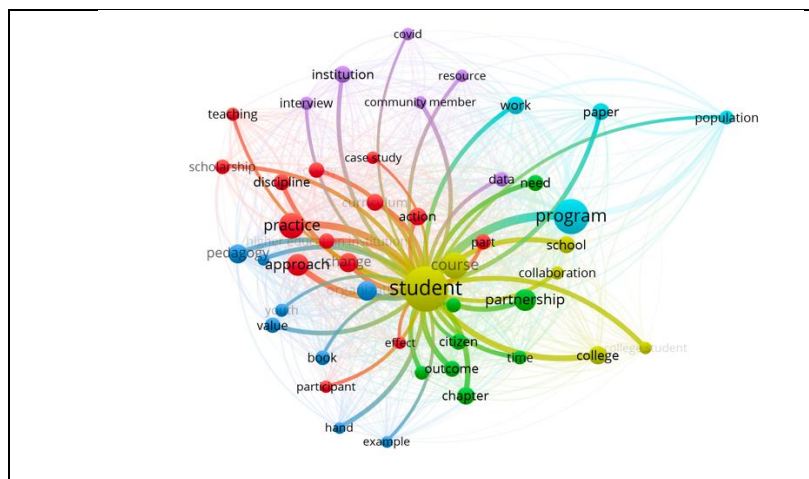
Table 6. Keyword Groups based on Titles and Abstracts in CBL-CE Documents

Cluster	Colour	Term Example	Number of Items
1	Red	action, approach, case study, change, curriculum, discipline, effect, higher education institution, department, participant, practice, scholarship, society, teaching	14
2	Green	article, chapter, citizen, needs, results, partnership, time, method	8
3	Blue	books, examples, hands, organizations, pedagogy, social justice, values, youth	8
4	Yellow	community members, COVID, data, institutions, interviews, resources	6
5	Purple	Institutions, interviews, resources, and community members, community involvement, Community Partnership	6
6	Tuscan	papers, population, programs, work	4

The network visualization shows that the term 'student' occupies a central position in the co-occurrence structure, indicating the dominant role of students in the analyzed corpus. This position reflects the main thematic focus on student experiences, engagement, and representation in higher

education. Using the applied clustering algorithm (possibly VOSviewer), words are grouped into four thematic clusters, each distinguished by color. The red cluster includes terms such as Practice, Approach, Teaching, and Discipline, indicating a focus on pedagogical strategies and learning practices. The green cluster comprises words such as “program”, “school”, “collaboration”, and “college”, representing institutional structures and collaborative dynamics among educational institutions. The blue cluster includes words such as “book”, “example”, “value”, and “participant”, suggesting themes of learning resources and educational values. Meanwhile, the purple cluster includes institutions, interviews, resources, and community members, indicating community involvement and the utilization of institutional resources. The relationships between words are shown through connecting lines, where the thickness of the line reflects the strength of the association or frequency of co-occurrence. For example, the strong connection between students and learning suggests that students are often engaged in active learning processes.

These findings not only identify key themes in Community-Based Learning (CBL) and Civic Engagement (CE), but also have important theoretical and practical implications. From a theoretical perspective, the centrality of the term student affirms that student agency and representation are foundational to higher education research, reinforcing frameworks that place learners at the core of civic engagement models. The clustering of pedagogical, institutional, resource-based, and community-related terms also validates interdisciplinary approaches that integrate education, social justice, and sustainability into CBL-CE theory. From a practical perspective, the strong associations between students, learning, and community involvement highlight the need for institutions to design programs that encourage active student participation in real-world contexts, leverage institutional resources, and strengthen collaboration across schools and communities. This suggests that universities can improve both learning outcomes and civic responsibility by embedding CBL-CE principles into curricula and institutional strategies.



Note: VOSviewer (<https://www.vosviewer.com/>).

Picture 9. Title of Visualization and Abstract Analysis

In the visual analysis of the word network, the ten terms with the highest frequency are student,

course, program, school, college, university, practice, teaching, community member, and paper. The term 'student' occupies a central position in the network, indicating that students are the main focus of the analyzed corpus. Words such as 'course,' 'program,' 'school,' 'college,' and 'university' form an institutional cluster that represents the formal education structure and academic levels. Meanwhile, "practice" and 'teaching' refer to pedagogical approaches and learning strategies applied in the context of higher education. The term 'community members' reinforces the relevance of a community-based approach, in line with the principles of Community-Based Learning (CBL), which emphasizes social engagement and local collaboration. The paper shows that this corpus also covers academic dimensions and scientific publications, which are important in the development of knowledge and documentation of educational practices. Overall, these findings reflect the integration of institutional structures, pedagogical approaches, and community participation in contemporary educational discourse.

3.6 Discussion

The bibliometric results from 110 publications on Community-Based Learning (CBL) and civic engagement from 2015 to October 2025 indicate a highly significant increase in the number of studies on CBL and civic engagement over the past decade. This increase confirms that the topic has evolved not only as an instructional innovation but also as an integral part of higher education's global mission to shape citizens who are critical and responsive to social challenges. The shifting orientation of higher education from merely producing knowledgeable graduates toward fostering active citizenship has become increasingly evident in the academic literature. Recent publications demonstrate a more deliberate focus on issues such as social justice, sustainability, community collaboration, and responses to crises, including the global pandemic. Thus, the growing publication landscape illustrates how CBL and civic engagement have gained greater academic legitimacy as foundational components of modern civic pedagogy.

The findings on publication trends show a sharp increase in 2023–2024. This surge can be understood as a response from educational institutions to the post-pandemic transformation of learning, which demands inclusive innovation and stronger connections to the real world. The COVID-19 pandemic became a catalyst, accelerating pedagogical transformation, pushing universities to integrate community-based learning with digital and hybrid approaches. This aligns with Nguyen, Vu, Nguyen, & Vu (2024) who reported that CBL-related publications have nearly tripled since 2014, reinforcing CBL as a transformative learning strategy for addressing contemporary social challenges. Salam, Iskandar, Ibrahim, & Farooq (2019) also emphasized the urgency of CBL in addressing the complexity of societal problems, aligning with the global trends observed in this dataset.

Thus, the increasing number of publications serves as a key indicator of the accelerated flow of knowledge and academic attention toward civic engagement as an essential citizenship competency in the 21st century. In terms of publication types, journal articles dominate (54.5%), indicating that CBL–CE knowledge is primarily developed through the most competitive scholarly channel. This

dominance reflects the strengthening of theoretical and methodological foundations in community-based pedagogy, supporting Felten & Clayton (2011) argument that journals function as the primary platform for scientific validation of pedagogical approaches. Meanwhile, contributions from book chapters (29.1%) and conference proceedings (7.3%) demonstrate the continued importance of collaborative knowledge sharing and the dissemination of innovative practices within the CBL academic ecosystem.

This is consistent with Butin (2015), who argues that diverse publication formats are needed to bridge theoretical perspectives and community-based practices in service-learning and civic engagement research. In other words, the CBL–CE publication ecosystem not only focuses on theoretical reinforcement but also on disseminating innovative practices that can be replicated across contexts. Disciplinary analysis further shows that social sciences dominate the publications (55.1%), reinforcing the epistemological roots of CBL grounded in democracy, social justice, and civic participation as articulated by Cunningham & Smith (2020). However, the findings also highlight increased participation from public health, psychology, and engineering in the last six years. This expansion signifies that CBL–CE has extended beyond primary and higher education settings into broader social interventions in public health, social infrastructure, and community governance, as noted by Goggins & Hajdukiewicz (2022); Lampoltshammer, Albrecht, & Raith (2021). It indicates a knowledge spillover that enriches the diversity of methods and implementation contexts globally.

The keyword analysis identifies five major thematic clusters that reflect the field's evolving directions. The clusters focusing on civic engagement, service-learning, and social justice confirm that socially transformative pedagogical orientations remain central to the development of CBL, consistent with the critical perspectives of Mitchell (2008) and Saavedra, Ruiz, & Alcalá (2022) on justice-oriented civic education. The second cluster emphasizes the relationship between institutional organization, psychological motivation, and program sustainability. The institutional environment becomes a fundamental determinant of long-term community partnerships, as demonstrated by Kuh & O'Donnell (2013) and Mellado-Moreno & Burgos (2025). The third cluster marks the prominence of public health issues, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. CBL research during this period illustrates how students, communities, and institutions created collaborative responses to public health emergencies, supporting the findings of Ryan, Johnston, Taylor, & McAndrew (2020) On the role of higher education in strengthening community preparedness.

The sustainability and climate change cluster highlights CBL's involvement in the global development agenda (UNESCO, 2023), signifying the expanding role of higher education in advancing global goals. The final cluster centers on models of community-based pedagogy, indicating ongoing research to enhance critical reflection, collaborative practice, and assessment strategies (Chowdhury & Alzarrad, 2025; Kniffin et al., 2023).

Authorship network analysis reveals that students occupy a central position in various approaches and assessments within CBL. Their role reinforces empirical evidence regarding the impacts of CBL on academic abilities, social empathy, and civic competencies, as reported in meta-

analyses by Celio, Durlak, & Dymnicki (2011). This demonstrates that the growing body of research reflects not just theoretical developments but concrete transformations in learning processes and the strengthening of youth civic capacities (Gagliardi, Pérez-Raynaud, & Robinson, 2024).

Meanwhile, institutional and country-affiliation mapping shows strong dominance by Global North countries, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada, which serve as major scientific hubs in this field. This reflects not only established research capacities but also persistent inequalities in global knowledge production between the Global North and Global South. Such epistemic bias has been widely critiqued by Koole, Smith, Traxler, Adam, & Footring (2024), who emphasize the need to decolonize research by including non-Western perspectives and localized social realities. These findings highlight strategic opportunities for Global South countries, including Indonesia, to strengthen their academic contributions by foregrounding local cultural values, participation practices, and contextual community wisdom.

Moreover, the results indicate that the integration of digital technology, online platforms, and artificial intelligence into CBL–CE remains rare, despite digitalization transforming how people think, interact, and participate in public issues. Early evidence from Gleason & Gillern (2018) shows that digital tools can expand community access even during social restrictions. However, the limited research on this topic suggests an emerging frontier that requires stronger theoretical development and implementation frameworks to support digital-era civic participation.

The findings further reinforce the importance of institutional policy support to ensure CBL–CE sustainability. As emphasized in studies by Bringle & Hatcher (2007) and Cunningham & Smith (2020) community partnerships can only endure when supported by robust campus governance, long-term funding, and collaborative evaluation. Therefore, higher education leaders must adopt strategic policy models that embed CBL into both curriculum design and community engagement systems.

Taken together, the results indicate that the development of CBL and civic engagement publications over the past decade reflects a strong and strategic trajectory of scholarly transformation. CBL is no longer viewed as an optional philanthropic activity but has evolved into a primary learning approach designed to foster democratic citizenship capable of addressing global challenges. The increasing publication trends signify academic consolidation in the field, while thematic diversification demonstrates the broadened impact of higher education on social justice, health, and environmental sustainability. Nevertheless, geographic disparities and limited attention to digital technology remain significant gaps requiring attention to ensure the production of knowledge that is more inclusive and globally relevant.

Consequently, this study provides important insights for directing future research agendas—particularly through expanding Global South representation, strengthening interdisciplinary collaboration, integrating technology into community pedagogy, and clarifying the role of institutions in sustaining civic engagement within higher education. These findings confirm that CBL and civic engagement serve as transformative strategies for achieving the goals of 21st-century education:

cultivating active, critically engaged citizens committed to advancing community well-being.

4. Conclusion

A bibliometric analysis of publications on Community-Based Learning (CBL) and civic engagement (CE) from 2015 to 2025 reveals a consistent increase in publication volume, with a significant surge in the last three years. Journal articles are the dominant publication type, indicating a strengthened scientific contribution grounded in empirical research. The social sciences remain the primary disciplinary contributors, accompanied by a growing presence of studies in health, engineering, and psychology, reflecting ongoing interdisciplinary development. The keyword analysis identifies five major thematic clusters that continue to expand, demonstrating diversified research focus and increased relevance of CBL–CE in addressing public health issues, sustainability, and student capacity building. Additionally, network mapping shows that international academic collaboration is beginning to strengthen, although it remains predominantly led by Global North institutions.

This study has several limitations, particularly its reliance solely on Scopus-indexed publications, which means contributions from the Global South, published in non-indexed journals, are not yet fully represented. Furthermore, the quantitative nature of the analysis does not capture the methodological quality or depth of CBL implementation across diverse local contexts. Future studies are recommended to broaden the publication dataset, incorporate a combination of bibliometric and qualitative approaches, and include a more extensive collaboration network analysis to ensure that the mapping of CBL–CE research becomes more comprehensive and representative.

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