Trends and trajectories in "Global South" research: a comparative study of CNKI and WOS database publications

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Objectives: This study analyzes the development of research on the "Global South" through bibliometric analysis with CiteSpace software, drawing on literature from both Chinese scholars using the CNKI database and international scholars from the Web of Science (WOS) database.

Methods: The study employs bibliometric analysis with CiteSpace software and content analysis to compare the research focuses, perspectives, and ideas on the "Global South" between Chinese and international scholars.

Results: The study finds that both Chinese and international scholars view the "Global South" as a complex and evolving concept. However, Chinese scholars focus on understanding and applying the concept in the context of China's evolving role in international politics, while international scholars explore the concept across various fields through case studies.

Conclusion: The study calls for an integrated interdisciplinary discussion combining political science, economics, sociology, and cultural studies to better understand the complexity and diversity of the "Global South." It also highlights the importance of academic collaboration between Chinese and international scholars to achieve a global consensus and suggests expanding case studies for policy implementation.

KEYWORDS

Global South, bibliometric analysis, content analysis, interdisciplinary discussion, collaboration

1 Introduction

The term "Global South" was first introduced by American political activist Carl Oglesby in 1969 in a special issue on the Vietnam War of America's oldest Catholic magazine, Commonweal (Li L. 2023; Li Y. 2023). A decade later, the 1980 Brandt Report, led by German politician Willy Brandt, further shaped global discussions on economic inequality. It introduced the Brandt Line, a visual divide between the wealthy North and the poorer Global South. Even in the 21st century, the Brandt Line remains a relevant depiction of global disparities (Lees, 2021). In 2003, the United Nations Development Programme launched an initiative called "Forging a 'Global South'" initiative which brought broader attention to this concept in the international community (Zhao, 2024). By 2023, the concept of the "Global South" continued to gain traction. It frequently triggered attention in international discussions, as evidenced by reports from the Munich Security Conference, which repeatedly mentioned the "Global South." India hosted an online summit titled "Voice of the 'Global South'" and during the G7 Hiroshima Summit, Japan invited representatives from several "Southern

countries," incorporating the strengthening of relations with "Global South "countries into the summit agenda. The "Global South" has rapidly risen as an emerging force in global politics, a development attributed to its growing strength and political awakening. Additionally, emerging economies and developing countries have become important engines of international economic growth and key participants in global governance. Meanwhile, the diversification of the international power structure has prompted Western countries to attempt to maintain their hegemonic positions by courting "Global South" countries and supporting their leading or advantageous positions in the international order (Niu, 2023). Additionally, the evolving status and roles of the "Global South" have endowed it with unique theoretical value. Beyond its traditional economic status, it has become a broader concept in international politics (Xu et al, 2024). In this context, analyzing the development of the topic is crucial for understanding the critical role of the "Global South" in constructing the world order and influencing various areas of global governance. What is the state of research on the "Global South "and its related issues? What are its hotspots and frontiers? What are the interests of Chinese scholars and international scholars on the "Global South?" Are their interests similar or different and why? This study attempts to answer these questions from the perspective of literature analysis.

2 Research design

2.1 Data collection

This study selected the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) and the Web of Science (WOS) databases as sources for literature searches. In CNKI, "Global South" was used as a keyword, subject, and title for retrieval. After manually removing duplicates, 99 articles written by Chinese scholars were selected. SSCI is one of the three core citation index databases of Web of Science and is a globally renowned core database for social science research. Therefore, in WOS, "Global South" was used as the title for retrieval, limited to articles and review articles, with data sourced from SSCI. After removing duplicate entries and articles written by Chinese scholars, 1,045 relevant papers were selected. As of May 21, 2024, a total of 1,144 documents from both databases were used as the data source for this study.

2.2 Research methods

This study employed two analytical methods. Firstly, the bibliometric method was used to statistically analyze the literature on the "Global South," including publication dates, discipline distribution of publication, and publication volumes. This method objectively evaluates the current state of research on this topic. Visualization software, CiteSpace v.6.2.R7 was used to generate keyword co-occurrence maps of the research literature on the "Global South," allowing for the exploration of research hotspots and the prediction of future development trends. Secondly, content analysis was conducted to examine the thematic focus, interpretative frameworks, and conceptual differences in key academic documents. This approach aims to explore the differences in perspectives between Chinese scholars and international scholars on "Global South "research, providing important references for future collaboration and extension on this topic for both two groups.

3 Analysis of research results

3.1 Overview of the literature analysis

From Figure 1, it is evident that there is a significant difference in the publication trends on the topic of the "Global South" between CNKI databases and WOS databases. The blue curve represents the publication trends the WOS database. From 1995 to 2014, the number of publications on the "Global South" was relatively low and grew slowly. However, starting in 2015, the number of publications rapidly increased, peaking in 2022 and 2023 with nearly 160 articles. The earliest publication was by Paul SS and Paul JA titled The World Bank, Pensions, and Income (In) Security in the "Global South" (Paul and Paul, 1995). This article discussed the reduction and restructuring of public pension plans in Latin America and indicated that this trend would become more widespread in Southern countries. It also mentioned the role of the World Bank and the changes in China's pension system, as well as their impacts. However, it wasn't until 2004 that in Patel and Michael's Third Worldism and the Lineages of Global Fascism: The Regrouping of the "Global South" in the Neoliberal Era

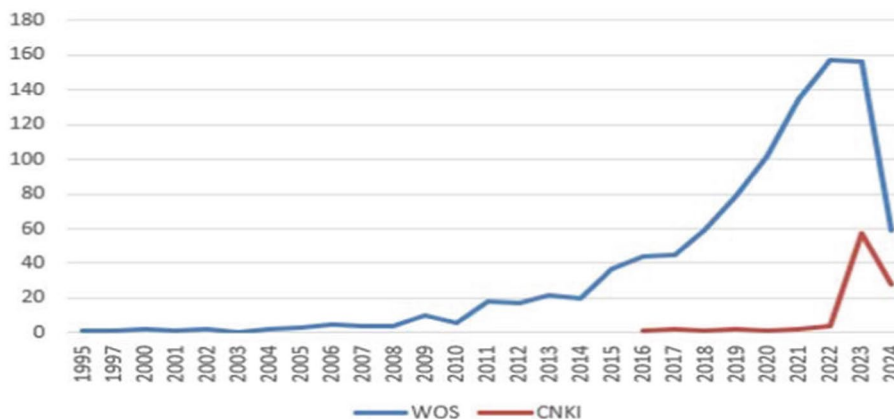

FIGURE 1
Annual publication volume.

(Patel and McMichael, 2004) and Morphet's Multilateralism and the Non-Aligned Movement: What is the "Global South" Doing and Where is it Going? (Morphet, 2004), the group of "Global South" countries was firstly addressed. These two works explored the importance of "Global South" countries in global politics and governance, analyzed their development paths and modern challenges in historical contexts, and highlighted the complex roles and multiple challenges of the "Global South" in relation to global order, world politics, and global governance.

The orange curve represents the publication trends of Chinese scholars in the CNKI database. From 1995 to 2022, the number of publications by Chinese scholars on this topic was low. However, starting in 2023, the number of publications began to rise significantly, reaching 57 articles. The earliest article was written by Liu (1997), titled World Trade and Development Conference Report: Slow Progress in Global Trade and Economy Amidst North's Wealth and South's Poverty. This article pointed out the phenomenon of wealth in the North and poverty in the South in global trade and economy,

reflecting the imbalance in the process of globalization. It argued that the healthy operation and development of the world economy require achieving a balance between the North and the South.

3.2 Analysis of research fields

The disciplinary distribution of published articles reflects key issues such as the hotspots of academic research, the degree of interdisciplinary collaboration, and academic imbalances. Based on the disciplinary classification of articles published in CNKI and WOS, the author, by integrating some classifications, has compiled the categories of articles published on the topic of the "Global South" in these two databases, as shown in Figures 2, 3. Figure 2 displays the disciplinary distribution of "Global South" in CNKI, while Figure 3 shows the distribution in WOS (Web of Science). Both figures reveal that research on the "Global South" theme spans multiple disciplines, reflecting its interdisciplinary nature.

FIGURE 2
Disciplinary distribution in CNKI.

FIGURE 3
Disciplinary distribution in WOS (Web of Science).
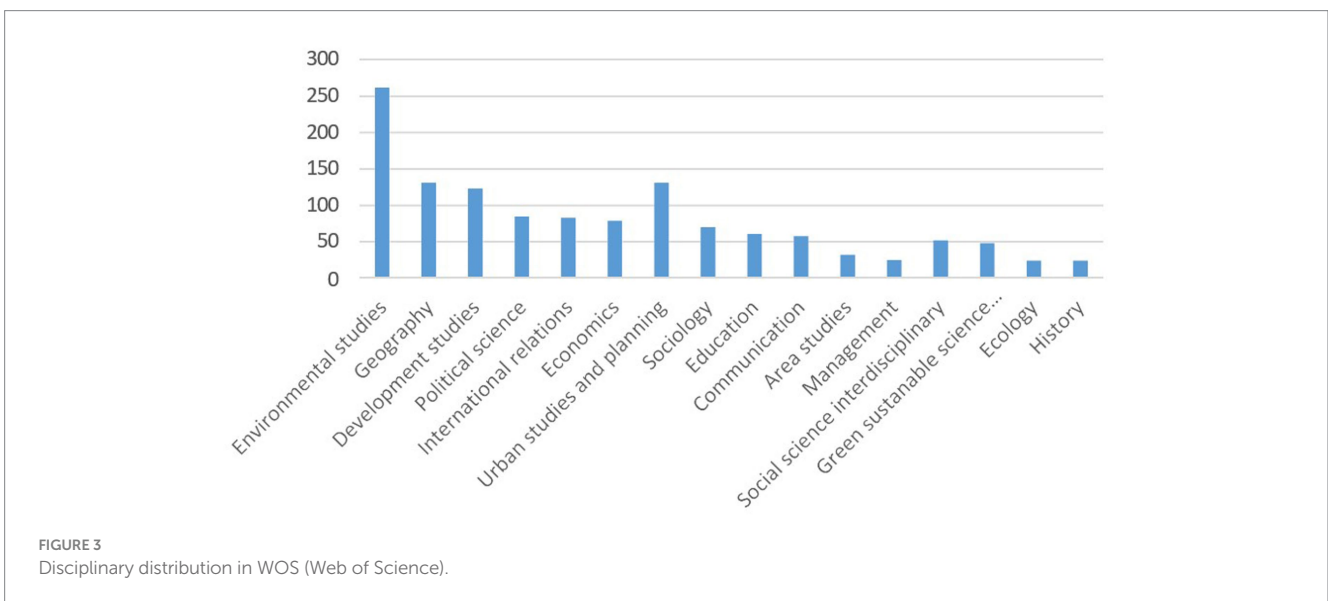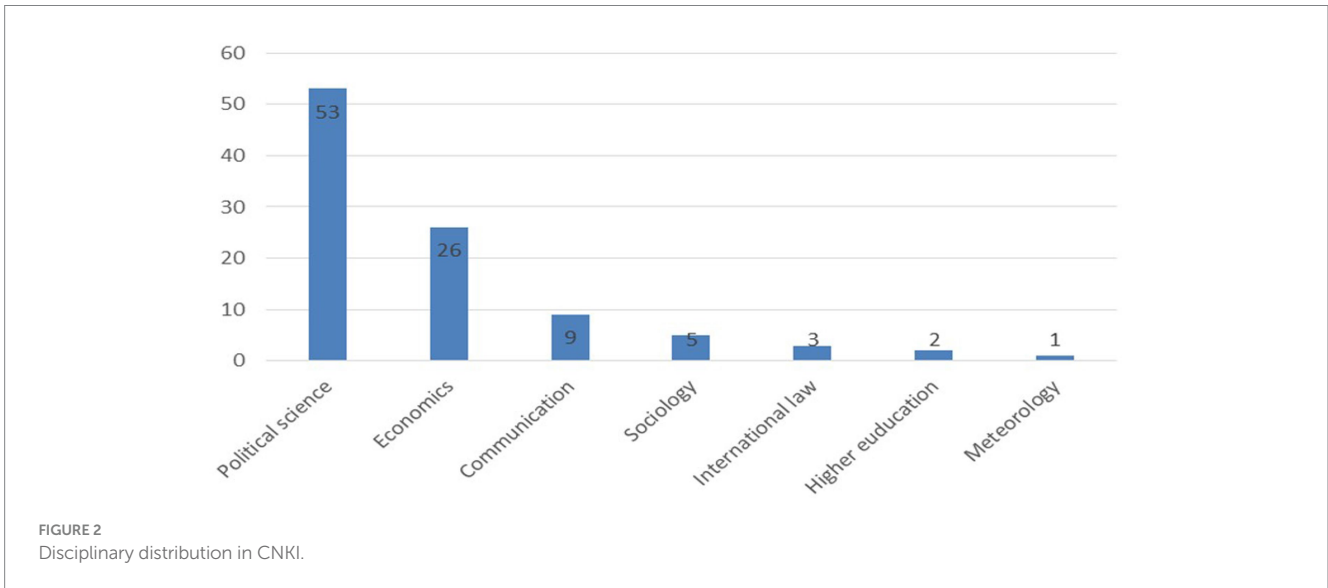
Political science, international relations, and economics feature prominently in both databases, indicating that the political and economic issues of the "Global South" are key research areas. However, literature in CNKI mainly concentrate on "Political Science" and "Economics," indicating a strong focus by Chinese scholars on the influence of "Global South" countries on international politics, international relations, and the global economy, particularly their important position in geopolitical competition. On the other hand, WOS mainly covers fields such as "Environmental Studies," "Geography," "Urban Development," "Political Science," and "International Relations," reflecting a broader and more specific range of research interests by international scholars on the "Global South" topic. This difference highlights the varied academic traditions, research resources, and differing understandings and focal points regarding "Global South" issues.

3.3 Analysis of research hotspots

Keywords summarize the core content of an entire document and the frequency of keyword can serve as an important indicator for determining whether a particular research direction is a hotspot in the field. Centrality is another important metric for measuring research popularity; it assesses the significance of a node within a system and reflects the bridging role of keyword nodes between different clusters. These two metrics provide critical references for identifying research hotspots. By analysing their consistency and differences one can effectively explore the coupling relationships between different research directions on the "Global South" thereby offering valuable insights and evidence for an in-depth analysis of research hotspots and the current state of the "Global South." In this study CiteSpace v.6.2.R7

was used to perform a co-occurrence analysis of keywords from relevant literature resulting in a keyword co-occurrence map for "Global South" research. In Figures 4, 5 each node represents a keyword with the node size indicating the frequency of the keyword's occurrence while centrality measures the relative importance and significance of the node. This shows the bridging role of keyword nodes between different clusters or layers. By comparing the consistency and differences in keyword centrality and frequency one can effectively explore the coupling relationships between different research directions on the "Global South." Using CiteSpace software this study identified the top 10 most frequent keywords in CNKI and WOS as shown in Table 1

Figures 4, 5 respectively show the keyword co-occurrence for research on the "Global South" topic by Chinese and international scholars. By comparing the differences in high-frequency keywords and keyword co-occurrence between Chinese and international literature in the two databases, it is evident that Chinese scholars focus heavily on the core theme of the "Global South," with its frequency and centrality significantly higher than other keywords, indicating a strong emphasis on this topic. Additionally, Chinese scholars also concentrate on keywords such as "international order," "South–South cooperation," "developing countries," "global governance," and "globalization," reflecting their attention to the role of the "Global South" in the international political and economic systems and the importance of South–South cooperation. These focus points are closely related to China's position and foreign policy among "Global South" countries.

In contrast, international scholars exhibit a more diverse range of interests when researching the "Global South." The lower centrality of "Global South "indicates that its bridging role within the entire research network is not as significant as perceived by domestic
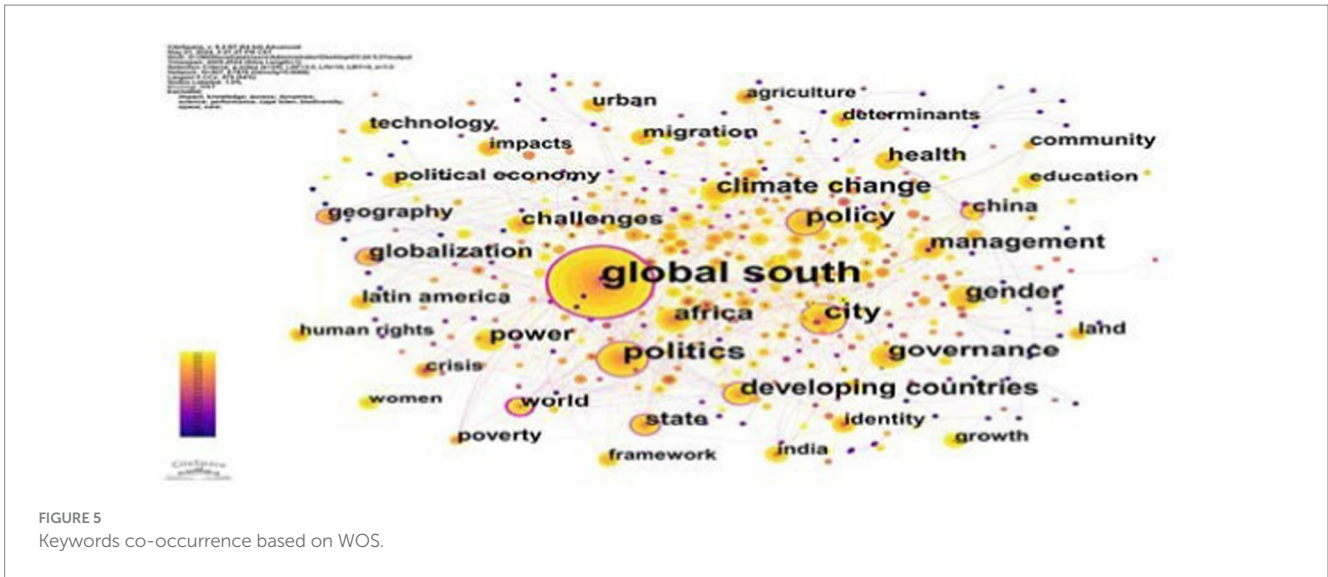

FIGURE 4
Keywords co-occurrence based on CNKI.

FIGURE 5
Keywords co-occurrence based on WOS.
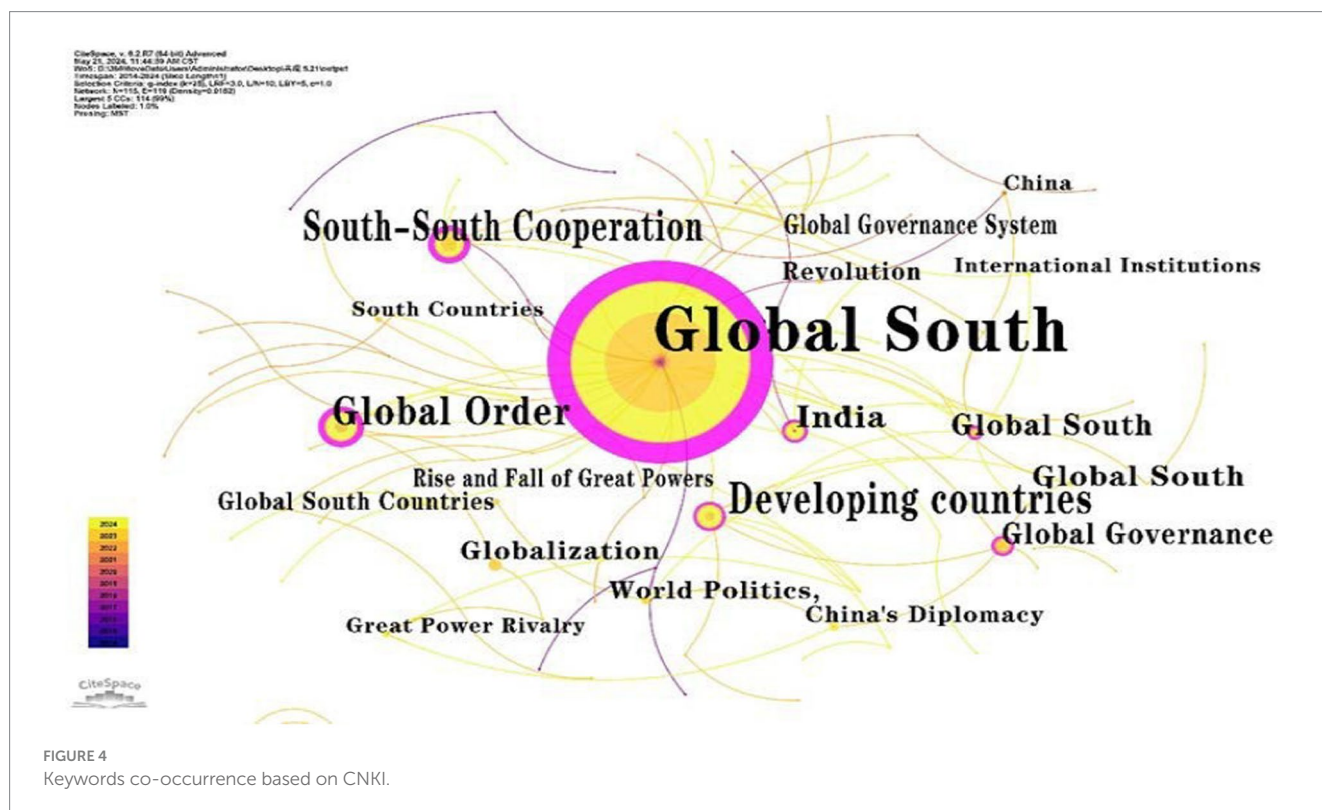
TABLE 1 Ranking of high-frequency keywords in CNKI and WOS.

	CNKI	Frequency	Centrality	WOS	Frequency	Centrality
1	"Global South"	55	1.38	"Global South"	340	0.27
2	International order	10	0.27	Politics	93	0.14
3	South–south cooperation	9	0.23	City	77	0.11
4	Developing countries	8	0.16	Policy	52	0.13
5	India	6	0.15	Governance	49	0.06
6	Global governance	5	0.13	Developing countries	44	0.14
7	Globalization	4	0.06	Africa	43	0.08
8	Global north	3	0.19	Climate change	42	0.09
9	China's diplomacy	3	0.05	Gender	39	0.04
10	World politics	3	0.06	Power	35	0.06

scholars. International scholars tend to focus on specific fields such as "politics," "cities," "policy," "governance," "climate change," and "gender." These keywords suggest that international scholars prefer to explore the development and governance issues of the "Global South" from specific problems and areas. This difference may stem from the duration of attention, research resources, and academic traditions between the two groups.

Additionally, both figures mention the keyword "India," indicating that despite differences in node size and centrality, both Chinese and international scholars recognize the importance of studying India's strategic goals, motivations, and measures in the context of the increasing prominence of the "Global South."

4 Content analysis of CNKI and WOS in the context of international politics

According to previous analyses of discipline classification and research hotspots based on keyword co-occurrence, it was found that most articles from CNKI on the topic of the "Global South" fall under international politics. Consequently, the content analysis between the two databases was conducted within the context of international

politics. Therefore, for the WOS database, the selected articles for content analysis were restricted to the discipline categories of political science and international relations.

4.1 The concept and connotation of the "Global South"

From the perspective of Chinese scholars, it is emphasize that clarifying the concept and connotation of the "Global South" is crucial for understanding the strategies of different countries and regions towards the "Global South." They point out that there is still some debate within the academic community about the connotation of this concept and the entities it comprises, as well as the differences and similarities with similar concepts that have not been clarified. Chinese scholars stress that the "Global South" is an evolving concept that encompasses a wide range of political, economic, and cultural connotations, and its application scope far exceeds fixed geographical boundaries. Li L. (2023) pointed out that there is still some debate within the academic community about the concept's connotation and the entities that comprise the "Global South," as well as the differences and similarities with similar concepts that have not been clarified. The

"Global south" is a concept that encompasses a wide range of political, economic, and cultural connotations that are constantly changing. The "Global south" is not a fixed concept but a comprehensive one, covering a scope far beyond any fixed spatial boundaries (Liu and Li, 2023). The "Global South" can be understood from two dimensions: in one dimension, the "Global South" is an entity, such as a country, or a practice, such as a political consciousness; in the second dimension, the "Global South" is viewed as a process, a process of making history (Li J. 2024; Li X. 2024). Additionally, Li J. (2024) and Li X. (2024) believes that clarifying the normative value and limitations of the term "Global South" can better distinguish it from similar concepts in academic theory and view its rise from a normative perspective; in reality, this helps China respond to the West's attempts to exclude China from the "Global South."

As a collective force with unique political and economic attributes, the "Global South" is driving the international order towards multipolarity and fairness. The post-war international order has failed to fully reflect the interests and demands of "Global South" countries, whose importance and influence in global affairs are growing, challenging the Western-dominated international order. With the intensification of great power politics, the "Global South" has surpassed traditional concepts of emerging markets and developing countries and has also driven innovation in international relations theory (Wang et al., 2023; Wang, 2023; Xu and Shen, 2023). The collective rise of developing countries has greatly changed the face of the "Global South," making it more willing and capable of participating in international security and development affairs, and urging global governance mechanisms to pay more attention to the core concerns of developing countries. The "Global South" has unique advantages in resolving international conflicts, promoting international development, addressing climate change, and advancing dialogue among civilizations, making it an important constructive force in the evolution of the international order (Niu, 2023). Xu and Shen (2023) pointed out that the "Global South" tends to build a multipolar world, opposes Western sanctions against countries like Russia, and seeks to establish flexible and equal partnerships among major powers. However, despite the significant achievements of "Global South" countries in promoting international order reform, these achievements are still partial and localized, and the power relations between the "Global South" and the Global North remain asymmetrical (Zhou, 2024).

International scholars generally believe that the concept of the "Global South" has emerged in United Nations discourse since the 1970s and is closely linked to North–South dialogues and South–South cooperation, becoming a synonym for the collective identity of former Third World nations. However, the connotation of this concept goes far beyond, delving into the depths of economic disparity and encompassing the political, cultural, and ideological struggles and solidarities that define a broad socio-political phenomenon. Since the 1970s, the term "Global South" has emerged in United Nations discourse, intricately linked to North–South dialogues and South–South collaborations, and has come to denote a collective identity for erstwhile Third World nations (Braveboy-Wagner, 2018). The concept's connotations, however, extend beyond mere geographical or economic classifications, delving into the depths of economic disparity and encompassing the political, cultural, and ideological struggles and solidarities that define a broad socio-political phenomenon (Mahler, 2017). The "Global South," as a concept, encapsulates a simplified

representation of reality, acting as a political instrument that aids countries in Africa, Latin America, and Asia in forging a unified identity and criteria, while simultaneously obscuring the disparities that exist between and within these countries (Wolvers et al., 2015). Despite the nebulous nature of its definition, advocates for the "Global South" widely embrace this *ad hoc* meta-geographical application, underscoring that it should be construed as a metaphorical representation of global and international inequalities, rather than being tethered to a fixed geographical location or an economic and political hierarchy (Levander and Mignolo, 2011). In the contemporary epoch, the ascendancy of the "Global South" and its burgeoning powers, notably Brazil, China, and India, has garnered the scrutiny of policymakers and scholars. These nations are seen as the "locomotives of the South," augmenting their influence within the spheres of global governance (Haug et al., 2021). Yet, their ascendancy is interlaced with asymmetries of power, both domestically and internationally, despite their professed roles as representatives and advocates for developing countries and South–South collaborations (Wolvers et al., 2015).The construct of the "Global South" is predominantly articulated and delineated within the "Global North," fostering a unidirectional transference of definitions from the North to the South (Tripathi, 2021). This reality necessitates an amplified research endeavor focused on the utilization of the "Global South" concept within the South itself, particularly in academic spheres, to discern the interconnections or fractures among varying interpretations of the term and to assess its applicability across diverse geographical contexts. Furthermore, the "Global South" transcends the geographical label to symbolize the unity of former colonial entities engaged in decolonization political projects and the pursuit of a post-colonial international order (Grovogui, 2011). It represents an agenda that is both contingent and in flux, striving for the establishment of novel social, cultural, and economic paradigms that challenge prevailing ideologies and seek to forge new consensus on universality, international morality, law, and ethical norms divergent from those of the colonial epoch. The concept of the "Global South" continues to underscore the chasm in power and influence between affluent and impoverished nations within the international system, even amidst the tide of globalization and the rise of certain developing countries. Scholars of the "Global South" ought to cultivate theories that contend with mainstream narratives, grounded in trans-regional entities such as the "Global South," to advance broader theoretical and research endeavors, thereby bridging the chasms in our collective understanding (Braveboy-Wagner, 2018). As China and other nations enhance their sway in global politics, the traditional dichotomy of "South" and "North" is being eroded, signaling a potential waning of the North–South divide and its attendant binary constraints (Kohlenberg and Godehardt, 2021).

4.2 "Global South" and China

China's active participation and leadership in South–South cooperation underscore the critical importance of studying its relationship with the "Global South." According to the content analysis of selected articles from both two databases, researchers have extensively studied the relationship between China and the "Global South."

As for Chinese scholars, the content often focuses on China's policies, positions, and their impact on international affairs,

analyzing the cooperation with the "Global South" and international politics primarily from a Chinese perspective. In July 2023, Wang Yi, Director of the Central Foreign Affairs Office, stated at the inaugural high-level meeting of the Global Shared Development Action Forum that China is the world's largest developing country and a natural member of the "Global South" group (Xinhua, 2024). Li Xi, a special representative of Chinese President Xi Jinping and a member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, mentioned at the 2023 "Group of 77 and China" summit that regardless of China's level of development, it will always be a member of the developing country family and the "Global South" (MOF, 2024). Jiang (2024) and Yang (2024) emphasized China's clear positioning in the "Global South" and its leading role in promoting South- South cooperation. Zhao (2023) and Wang et al. (2023) highlighted the alignment of China's historical, developmental, and governance aspirations with those of "Global South" countries, considering them as natural allies. China's status in international governance and development is widely acknowledged, and its active participation in reforming the global governance system and promoting international development cooperation has garnered broad recognition. Additionally, scholars have discussed China's cooperation concept with "Global South" countries. Zhao (2023) advocated for the establishment of a new type of international relationship that is non-aligned, non-confrontational, and not directed against third countries, while Wang (2023) placed more emphasis on China respecting the independent development consciousness of "Global South" countries and exploring the concept of shared governance through consultation and collaboration. In specific practices, Zhang (2023) emphasized China's role in promoting cooperation among "Global South" countries, while Peng (2023) focused more on comprehensive cooperation between China and "Global South" countries in the economic, cultural, and political domains.

In contrast, the international scholars offer more diverse research perspectives. It includes views and analyses from scholars of various countries and regions on the relationship between China and the "Global South" on different fields. Vadell et al. (2014) suggested that the relationship between China and the "Global South" countries is defined as a new type of core-periphery global network power based on trade and investment, referred to as the "Asian Consensus." They emphasized that China's growing economic influence in Latin America and Africa brings new commercial and financial options to these regions. Schoeman (2011) pointed out that the increasing relationships between Africa and Southern countries seem to indicate a relative decrease in Africa's connections with Northern countries. This shift in trade relations from North to South has led to trade creation rather than trade diversion. Southern partners also provide much-needed infrastructure development assistance to the African continent. Regarding BRICS countries, particularly China, the view that its involvement in Africa is driven solely by self-interest to acquire natural resources is overly simplistic and misrepresents the scope and nature of this relationship. Alves and Lee (2022) studied China's special economic zones in Ethiopia and Cambodia, finding that these zones play an important role in attracting foreign investment and promoting the transfer of knowledge and technology, although their impact may be limited. Garlick and Qin (2023) believed that China's approach to relationships in the "Global South" can be seen as normative diplomacy, aiming to normalize China's ideas about the operation of international affairs.

4.3 Strategies and roles toward "Global South" of other countries and regions

With the increasing impact of "Global South," north countries like Unite States of America, Japan and supranational unit like EU have been altering their strategies towards "Global South." In addition, the big states and regions in the south including India, Brazil, Latin America, and African Area have also taken specific measures to fully engage in the cooperation and interaction with "Global South."

4.3.1 Countries that emphasized by both two groups of scholars

After the content analysis of both two databases, it can be explored that both Japan and India's motivation and measures towards "Global South" are of significant concern of researchers both from China and other countries. However, when interpreting the motivation and impact of Japan and India's strategies toward "Global South," there is no doubt that these researchers hold different angles. Japan: According to Chinese scholars, Africa is considered an important component of the "Global South" by Japan, key to realizing its aspirations of becoming a political powerhouse. Therefore, Japan strengthens its ties with African countries through a series of strategies. Specific measures include attracting African countries through its "Indo-Pacific Concept" to expand its strategic influence; closely cooperating with Africa to promote UN reform and ensure African interests are represented; promoting its development and cooperation concepts in Africa to enhance its influence. Faced with the rise of the "Global South" and changes in the international order, Japan adjusts its policies towards Africa, demonstrating its attention to Africa and the expansion of its diplomatic vision. Additionally, Japan collaborates with India to limit cooperation between China and Africa, proposing a development model with Japanese characteristics to structure Sino-African cooperation concepts and enhance its influence in Africa (Ma, 2023).

International scholars hold the view that Japan's strategic intentions in the "Global South" encompass geopolitical, economic interests, international influence, and aid policies, aiming to enhance its position in the emerging global order through multi-layered efforts. In terms of geopolitical and economic interests, through the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)" initiative, Japan ensures freedom and safety of navigation, counters China's influence in the South and East China Seas, and secures energy supply routes (Shinichi, 2023; Yuichi, 2023). In the realm of international influence, Japan actively participates in multilateral platforms like the G7 and G20, particularly showcasing its desire to play a larger leadership role in "Global South" affairs during the 2023 summit (Yuichi, 2023). Regarding aid policies, Japan integrates OECD-DAC norms with South–South cooperation principles, establishing long-term cooperative relationships through aid, thereby enhancing its influence in the "Global South" (Insebayeva, 2023).

India: According to the analysis, articles from both databases highlighted the strategic importance of the "Global South" to India's international status and influence and acknowledged India's efforts to enhance its global position through its engagements with the "Global South."

As for Chinese scholars, in recent years, India has actively reshaped its "Global South" strategy to enhance its international status and influence, counter China's influence, and strengthen its

ties with the United States, deepening Indo-U.S. relations (Zhu, 2024; Zhang and Chen, 2024). However, India faces challenges such as the legitimacy of its leadership position, contradictions with Western countries, and competition from external factors in practice (Zhu, 2024). India encounters pragmatic and comprehensive challenges in utilizing the "Global South" to achieve its strategic goals, as most "Global South" countries are unwilling to take sides between China, the U.S., and India, making it difficult for India to achieve its objectives (Zhang and Chen, 2024). India's "Global South" strategy also faces criticism for its hegemonic and realistic behavior towards neighboring countries and constraints on its own development (Zhang and Xin, 2024). Moreover, with the increasing voice in the international community of "competition between China and India for 'Global South' leadership," India has had to readjust its strategic position regarding the "Global South," attempting to integrate it into existing Western structures (Lu and Nie, 2024).

As for the studies from international scholars, in recent years, India has demonstrated its significance and complexity in various issues within the "Global South," including climate change response, international human rights, relations with Africa, international peacekeeping, foreign policy, digital politics, and 5G technology. Doyle and Chaturvedi (2010) pointed out that India's official discourse on climate change is framed by and driven by its economic growth needs. Schoeman (2011) discussed the increasingly close relationship between India and Africa, where India enhances its influence in Africa by providing infrastructure assistance. Blarel and Van Willigen (2017) argued that scholars should not directly apply Western European foreign policy models to the "Global South," emphasizing the uniqueness of India's collective foreign policy experience. Kumral (2023) analyzed the rise of right-wing populism in India, highlighting its connection to the global hegemony crisis. Sinha et al. (2023) focused on the influence of India's digital politics, examining India's role in the development of 5G technology while also pointing out its limitations within the "Global South." It can be summarized that the former one shifts more attention on India's strategy to counter against China's impact over "Global South" as well as the complexities and challenges it faces when implementing specific measures. For the latter one, it presents a much broader scale, focusing more specifically on India's involvement in particular areas like climate change, Africa relations, and digital politics. Subsequently, the former one offers a macro-level view of India's strategic intentions and challenges, while the latter one provides micro-level details on India's engagement in specific areas and the unique aspects of its policies.

4.3.2 Countries and regions that concerned differently by both two groups of scholars

As mentioned above, the interest of Chinese scholars on "Global South" grew in past 2 years, due to the growing impact of "Global South" toward the world order, therefore, more attention have been given to states and supranational unit that influence China's strategies. As a result, United States and EU have turned to be the big interest of Chinese scholars. For international scholars, many researches fall on Brazil and Latin America.

Europe: The "Global South" is seen as an important partner in achieving "strategic autonomy."

Europe proposes to strengthen defense, energy supply, and economic autonomy to reduce dependence on Russian energy, non-EU supply chains, and U.S. security, and accelerate the transformation of "Global South" countries into key partners. This includes enhancing connections with Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America in energy, politics, security, climate and environment, and cultural exchanges, to increase its influence in international affairs and ensure a favorable position in the global multi-polarization process (Sandbrook, 2011).

United States: Intervention in the "Global South" is viewed as a key direction in foreign policy and as a focal point for addressing challenges to the world order. To maintain broad influence in the region, the U.S. proposed the initiative to build an "inclusive camp" in its October 2022 "National Security Strategy" report, intensifying contacts with regions and countries such as the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America, considering the "Global South" as a key direction in advancing its strategic competition with China (Xinhua, 2024). Through initiatives such as the "Build Back Better World" and the "Global Infrastructure and Investment Partnership," the U.S. aims to support infrastructure development in developing countries, offering an alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative. The Western countries deeply recognize that in order to continue leading the post-war international order, besides alliance strategies among Western powers, they must actively seek the support of the "Global South" as an intermediate force (Gabriel et al., 2019). Meanwhile, the Western countries are also attempting to decouple the "Global South" from China, thus weakening China's international influence and shaping power. In March and June 2023, the U.S. House and Senate Foreign Affairs Committees, respectively, passed bills calling for the termination of China's status as a developing country.

Brazil: In the context of the "Global South," Brazil actively promotes its international status and influence through various fields such as multilateral organizations, peacekeeping operations, environmental regulation, health governance, norm shaping, and technological development. Brazil has played a key role in emerging power alliances such as BRICS, BASIC, and IBSA, which are becoming increasingly significant on the international stage and challenging traditional multilateral advocates like the EU. Studies indicate that while these alliances individually have limited influence, collectively they can significantly impact global multilateralism, particularly in shaping international relations and global systems (Keukeleire and Hooijmaaijers, 2014). Sánchez Nieto (2012) pointed out Brazil's notable leadership role in international peacekeeping operations, especially in Haiti and East Timor, which has enhanced its international standing. These operations not only increased Brazil's peacekeeping credibility but also highlighted its unique position in the context of the "Global South." Stuenkel (2016) challenged the view that R2P (Responsibility to Protect) is solely a Western concept, emphasizing Brazil's leadership in this normative discussion, despite its actions sometimes being seen as obstructionist. Brazil's role in promoting the R2P norm demonstrates its influence as a "Global South" country in international norm-setting. Agostinis and Parthenay (2021) analyzed Brazil's leadership in promoting regional health governance based on South–South cooperation by comparing regional health governance models in Central and South America. Despite challenges from intergovernmental

conflicts, Brazil's regional leadership has played a crucial role in capacity building among neighboring countries.

Latin America: Actively engages in shaping the "Global South" agenda, promoting Southern perspectives and interests, and challenging the traditional Northern-dominated international order. Levaggi and Donelli (2021) emphasized Latin America's strategic position and role in the "Global South," highlighting its strategic intentions as an emerging power. Deciancio and Quiliconi (2020) called for strengthening research on "Global South" perspectives and methods, emphasizing Latin America's position in the field of international political economy. Lastly, Rodriguez and Thornton (2022) examined the liberal international order from the perspective of Latin America, further highlighting the region's critical role in the "Global South," particularly in challenging international norms and safeguarding its own interests. Additionally, Moncada (2013) and Coe (2015) analyzed Latin America's influence on state development and its role in international relations, particularly regarding urban violence and sovereignty norms.

4.4 Specific topics engaging international scholars

4.4.1 Multidimensional attention to the "Global South" issue

4.4.1.1 Climate issues in the "Global South": trends and challenges in climate litigation

Peel and Lin (2019), Setzer and Benjamin (2020), and Osofsky (2020) explored the contributions, trends, and opportunities of the "Global South" in transnational climate litigation, analyzing the influence of judicial traditions, legal system differences, and political-economic backgrounds on the development of climate cases in these countries. Despite facing many challenges, these countries have made significant efforts in mitigating climate change (Marquardt et al., 2023). However, power and narratives often suppress voices from Southern countries (Sacramento, 2023), and at the same time, climate engineering technologies also pose significant risks to the South (Biermann and Möller, 2019). To address these issues, Singh and Bajwa (2023) called on Northern countries to provide financial support and implement effective mitigation policies.

4.4.1.2 Gender issues in the "Global South": intersection of power inequality and political economy

Medie and Kang (2018) pointed out that Western feminist literature has failed to fully analyze the impact of global political-economic factors on the lives of Southern women, neglecting global inequalities in rights, and emphasizing that Southern scholars account for less than 5% of publications in Northern journals. Roy (2016) discussed the political and ethical scale of the "Global South" women's movement, highlighting how internationalism has failed to serve feminist activists in the "Third World" adequately. Suarez Estrada (2022) discussed the issue of digital violence faced by feminist activists in Mexico, emphasizing the importance of incorporating gender into public policy.

Bastiaens et al. (2023) explored the impact of "Global South" trade on women's rights, suggesting that labor clauses in preferential trade agreements can promote the improvement of women's rights. Whetstone and Luna (2023) argued that despite being marginalized, women in the "Global South" are participants in global gender norms.

4.4.1.3 Migration issues in the "Global South": prejudice and policies

"Global South" countries face unique challenges in migration. Understanding the determinants of bias in South–South migration and the differences between South–South and North–South migration can enrich theoretical discussions on prejudice and social exclusion in the context of the "Global South" (Harris et al., 2018). Most forced migrants worldwide are displaced within the "Global South." Recent evidence from the Global North suggests that migrants tend to aggregate in environments with liberal policies. However, in developing countries, due to perceived low policy enforcement and inadequate policy knowledge, formal policies have little impact (Blair et al., 2022).

4.4.1.4 Economic development in the "Global South": issues and development

At a macro level, although the field of International Political Economy (IPE) is considered a product of Northern countries, countries and scholars from the "Global South," especially regions such as Africa, Asia, and Latin America, provide unique perspectives and theoretical frameworks in the field of IPE (Deciancio and Quiliconi, 2020). In developing countries, there is a lower degree of regional economic interdependence and a higher reliance on external economic relations. Therefore, regional integration in developing countries aims to enhance the region's competitiveness in the global market, rather than solely focusing on liberalizing and regulating intra-regional trade (Krapohl, 2020). At the practical level, wealth drainage in the "Global South" remains significant in the post-colonial era, with developed economies promoting economic growth and maintaining high consumption levels through unequal exchanges (Hickel et al., 2021). Conditional cash transfer programs (CCTs) are an innovative approach to addressing long-term poverty in developing countries. However, especially in the context of weak administrative capacity in developing countries, CCTs are costly and have heavy institutional requirements (Brooks, 2015). In the face of the current credit-driven capital accumulation, the "Global South" is undergoing a crisis-driven process of producing a new state space. These perspectives imply that "Global South" countries, in addressing financial and economic challenges, are seeking greater sovereignty and autonomy in the global economic system through multi-level policy measures (Alami, 2018). Of course, some situations also indicate progress. In the "Global South," especially in developing countries, the re-embedding of the market economy faces many dilemmas and challenges. In addressing these issues, Polanyi proposes two main solutions: socialism and social democracy (Sandbrook, 2011). Gabriel et al. (2019) discussed successful examples of renewable energy enterprises (REEs) in the "Global South" without prioritizing traditional economic growth. Additionally, Alves and Lee (2022) mentioned the critical role of China's Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in attracting large-scale

foreign investment and promoting knowledge and technology transfer to local businesses.

4.4.2 "Global south" and international organizations

The relationship between "Global South" countries and international organizations exhibits different characteristics and influences across various types of organizations. Firstly, in the multilateral trade system, the participation of "Global South" countries is not only to pursue direct material interests but also to establish international norms and enhance their position in world politics. Vieira (2016) pointed out that even if these countries do not immediately gain material benefits in institutions like the WTO, through symbolizing themselves and socializing with other countries and organizations, they can enhance their power and influence on the international stage. By participating in multilateral negotiations within the WTO, "Global South" countries not only demonstrate their commitment to international rules and institutions but also strive to play a greater leadership role in global trade governance. Secondly, in the international monetary system, the relationship between "Global South" countries and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is more complex. Research by Soener (2024) revealed that IMF loan conditions, especially structural conditions, may lead to increased greenhouse gas emissions in "Global South" countries, thereby negatively impacting their development and climate goals. This reflects the reality of "Global South" countries' external financial dependence and their passive position in the international monetary system. To effectively address climate change and achieve sustainable development, "Global South" countries need to move beyond traditional structural adjustment policies and seek deeper reflection and reform of the international financial order and global capitalism. Additionally, the behavior of "Global South" countries in regional organizations also reflects their unique role and influence in the international system. Trondal et al. (2023), by studying the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Commission, revealed the autonomy of these International Public Administration (IPA) institutions. Even under the constraints of intergovernmental environments, "Global South" IPAs still possess a certain degree of autonomy and can, to some extent, transcend national interests to promote the development of regional and international agendas.

5 Conclusion

This study systematically reviews 1,144 literature pieces from two databases related to the "Global South," summarizing the research interests and trends of scholars both domestically and abroad on this issue. Through analysis, it's found that Chinese scholars and international scholars have different research interests and trends regarding the "Global South," especially in the fields of international relations, international politics, and sociology. Scholars' diverse viewpoints reflect different research orientations and positions.

As for Chinese scholars, the strong interest on the topic of "Global South" issue began from recent years. The research

content focuses on the development and implications of the "Global South," particularly its challenges to the international order and its role in promoting multi-polarity. Additionally, special attention to China's crucial role in promoting the development of Southern countries has been paid, as well as the strategies of India, Japan, the United States, and the European Union towards the "Global South" in the new era. However, these studies are mainly theoretical oriented discussions, lacking empirical research and specific case analyses, with less focus on the problems faced by individual countries or regions within the "Global South" in different fields. Comparing to Chinese scholars, studies from the international scholars have demonstrated much broader interest concerning the "Global South" issue. These studies cover various specific case studies with different historical and geopolitical perspectives, involving fields like climate litigation, gender issues, immigration policies, economic development, etc. The target of the research has become more concentrated, including countries such as Brazil, Mexico, Turkey, and South Africa, as well as regions like Latin America and Africa region. Scholars have engaged in in-depth discussions on the concept of the "Global South," generally recognizing its positive role in promoting international cooperation and challenging mainstream narratives. However, they also acknowledge that the concept has issues such as vague definition and the neglect of internal differences. Despite covering several regions and countries, there is uneven attention, which may lead to the neglect of important geopolitical and economic factors. Many studies rely on Western theoretical frameworks, potentially misinterpreting these experiences as universal patterns and overlooking the specific social, economic, and environmental conditions of "Global South" countries, as well as their unique understandings and needs for development.

With the increasing attention given to the "Global South," further and deeper researches concerning this topic are required both theoretically and practically. Firstly, it is essential to view the concept of the "Global South" through a dynamic perspective, defining it in accordance with the evolution of global politics and the roles these countries play, thus providing an accurate concept and proper scope at different periods. This approach helps us to more easily identify and understand the position and role of these countries in the process of globalization, as well as the challenges and opportunities they face, facilitating the formulation of corresponding policies. Secondly, researchers need to transcend a singular theoretical perspective, which may overemphasize Western angles and experiences. The adoption of a multiple perspective helps to reveal the historical complexity, cultural diversity, and agency of the "Global South" countries in global development, ensuring that research results are more objective and comprehensive, better reflecting the actual situations and needs of these countries and regions. Furthermore, researches should be expanded to include in-depth analysis of countries in Africa, Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East. This expansion shall not only focus on individual countries but also encompass the interactive relationships and mutual influences between regional, intergovernmental, non-governmental, and international organizations and the countries of the "Global South." Lastly, researches should place greater emphasis on interdisciplinary

comprehensive analysis, combining the interconnections between different fields to provide a more comprehensive understanding and solutions.

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