

Understanding Poverty through the Capability Approach Lens: A Bibliometric Analysis

Tobias Ndlovu¹, Thabo Ndlovu², Alice Ncube¹

¹Natural and Agricultural Sciences, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa

²Disaster Management Training and Education Centre for Africa (DiMTEC), National University of Science and Technology, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

Email: ndlovutobias@yahoo.com, thabondlovu09@gmail.com, NcubeA@ufs.ac.za

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Abstract

Poverty is one of the world's greatest challenges, hence the conceptualisation of its causes and solutions are critical to policy and academic debate. The emergence of the Capability Approach in the 1980's by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum provided an alternative framework for understating poverty. The study explores trends, gaps and opportunities in scientific literature on understanding poverty through the capability approach lenses. Using bibliometric analysis, 1004 publications from 1995 to 2023 were retrieved from Scopus database and analysed with "Biblioshiny". The findings show substantial growth of the study predominately in developed countries, while Africa only contributed eight per cent of the global output. Existing literature mainly focuses on social justice, gender and education with limited emphasis on poverty reduction and alleviation. The study highlights the need for contextual research in Africa and emphasis on poverty reduction strategies in vulnerable communities. Future studies should incorporate multiple databases to broaden the analysis.

Keywords

Poverty, Wellbeing, Capability Approach, Bibliometrics

1. Introduction

The failure to fulfil the first Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 1) on poverty eradication is a cause for concern for many nations globally as 2030 draws near. The United Nations Development Programme's 2023 Global Sustainable Development Report underscored the derailment of the goal of eradicating poverty by 2030 due to among other issues the current geopolitical tensions, the remnants of covid-19 pandemic and the climate change issues. The SDG1 targets to eradicate

all forms of poverty ever of reducing at least half the proportion of people of all genders and ages living in all poverty in all dimensions according to national definitions (UNDP, 2023). However, the 2013 Global Sustainable Goal report noted that if the present patterns persist, around 575 million people will remain in a state of extreme poverty, and only one-third of countries will be able to reduce their national poverty rate by half by 2030 (UNDP, 2023). The convergence of multiple crises, including disasters such as COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts, and climate change, has resulted in a significant increase in the number of individuals living in extreme poverty. Extreme poverty is defined as surviving on less than US\$2.15 per person per day in 2017 purchasing power parity (World Bank, 2022). In 2022, about 712 million people globally were in extreme poverty an increase of 23 million from 2019 (World Bank, 2024). Globally 1.1 billion people out of 6.1 billion people live in acute multidimensional poverty in 110 countries (UNDP, 2023).

There are indications that in the last 30 years, the world witnessed a dramatic reduction in poverty, with the number of people living in extreme poverty falling from 1.9 billion in 1990 to 729 million in 2015 (Kharas & Dooley, 2022). China and India have been driving this positive trajectory with approximately 1.1 billion people moved from extreme poverty between 1990 and 2022 (Development Initiative, 2023; UNDP, 2023). Generally, East Asia and the Pacific regions have been recording a significant decrease in the proportion of people living in extreme poverty from 53% in 1990 to 4% in 2022 (Development Initiatives, 2023). Although other regions in the world are making significant strides in poverty alleviation, other regions are facing challenges especially the sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia (UNDP, 2023).

Approximately 85% of the world's most multidimensional poor people are in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia region, with 534 million in sub-Saharan Africa and 389 million are in South Asia (UNDP, 2023). Development Initiatives (2023) noted that Sub-Saharan Africa had 13% of the people living in extreme poverty in 1990 and in 2022, the region had reached to 62% (Schoch, 2020; Ochi, 2023). The greatest increase in extreme poverty happened in countries such as Madagascar, Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), outside of Africa the notable increase were witnessed in Syria and Yemen between 1990 and 2022 (Development Initiatives, 2023). Sub-Saharan Africa is home to 19 out of the 22 nations with the highest number of people living in multidimensional poverty (UNDP, 2023). According to the Development Initiatives (2023), Sub-Saharan Africa has 13 out of 15 countries with the highest increase in the number of people in extreme poverty.

From the evidence, poverty is increasingly concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa. Poverty in Africa is attributed to a combination of climate change-related disasters, economic challenges and conflicts, which together create a complex dilemma (Chigudu, 2024; Scheffran et al., 2019) In Africa, poverty is linked to historical legacies, political issues, and social inequality. Colonialism, with its primary focus on resource exploitation, resulted in the creation of fragmented communities and

extractive economic systems that continue to perpetuate poverty in Africa (Marumo, 2020).

The World Bank (2016) reported that the world disaster forces an average of 26 million people into poverty every year globally. Extreme disasters can cause losses of as much as US\$520 billion per year (World Bank, 2016). At the same time economic challenges in sub-Saharan Africa has resulted in sluggish economic growth compared to other regions. According to the World Bank (2023), the projected Africa's economic growth rate for 2023 was 2.5%, which is a decline from the previous year's rate of 3.6% which is lower than other regions such as China which was expected to grow by 5.2%. Recently the COVID-19 pandemic further dampened the hope for achieving the goal of poverty reduction by pushing between 119 - 124 million people into poverty (Chirisa et al., 2021). Conflicts contribute to poverty, and poverty can create conflict (Okunlola & Okafor, 2020). According to UNDP (2023), the Russian war in Ukraine has resulted in increase in food and energy costs, consequently forcing about 71 million people into poverty. Violent conflicts destroy critical infrastructure, assets, production, social networks creating unemployment, reducing human development (Maclin et al., 2022). World bank further noted that by 2050 climate changed induced disasters is likely to force 200 million people to be internally displaced and push 130 million people into poverty (World Bank, 2016). With achieving SDG1 and its targets becoming more elusive, it is important for poverty debate to continue guided by comprehensive conceptualization of this multidimensional phenomenon.

Amartya Sen, the economist who won the Nobel Prize in 2001, is credited with developing the capability approach. The approach conceptualises development as the state of having freedom, while poverty is seen as the state of lacking skills (Sen, 1985). According to the capability approach, an individual is considered poor if they are unable to achieve or possess the things that they value (Sen, 1985). The capability approach argues that assessments based solely on money fail to take into account whether individuals are actually able to utilise their incomes and resources to pursue their desired goals or lifestyles (Lemanski, 2016). The capability approach prioritises individuals' opportunities to utilise resources in order to pursue activities or states of being that they find valuable, rather than focusing on the resources themselves or the pleasure derived from them.

In 1997, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) accepted Sen's method of comprehending poverty, which was then transformed into the Human Poverty Index. Subsequently, it was called the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) (Lemanski, 2016; Osmani, 2016). The MPI is constructed upon the concept of poverty as a state of lacking choices and opportunities to lead a healthy lifestyle. It is assessed through three dimensions: health, education, and living standards. The objective of this article is to assess the trends, gaps and opportunities of using the capability approach in understanding poverty. This is done by analysing existing scientific literature through bibliometrics.

This study answers the following questions

1) What are the global trends in the scientific literature on the capability ap-

proach and poverty?

2) What gaps and opportunities exist in scientific literature on understanding poverty through the capability approach?

2. Literature Review on Conceptualising and Defining of Poverty

Poverty is conceptualised broadly in two ways as lack or shortage of commodities mostly in comparison to the standard of living of others in a particular society (relative poverty) or to a universal measure of adequate provision (absolute poverty) (Lemanski, 2016). Although, shortage of income has been conflated with inability to meet basic needs, research suggest that meeting basic needs also depends on socioeconomic status and other factors. Since 1960's poverty has been conceptualised differently as shown in the **Table 1**.

Table 1. Conceptualisation of poverty since 1960's.

Poverty Approach	Time Frame	Sectoral Emphasis	Institutional Application
Economic Deficiency	1960s to 1970s	Economic	World Bank poverty line MDG indicators
Basic Needs	1970s to 1980s	Physical and Material	International Labour Office Basic ty approach MDG indicators
Multidimensionality	1990s to present	Physical, Material, Social and political	World Bank (2000) World Development Report
Poor as Experts	1990s to present	Participation	World Bank "Voices of the Poor" Initiative
Capability	1990's to present	Institutional	UNDP Human Poverty Index (later Multidimensional Poverty index)

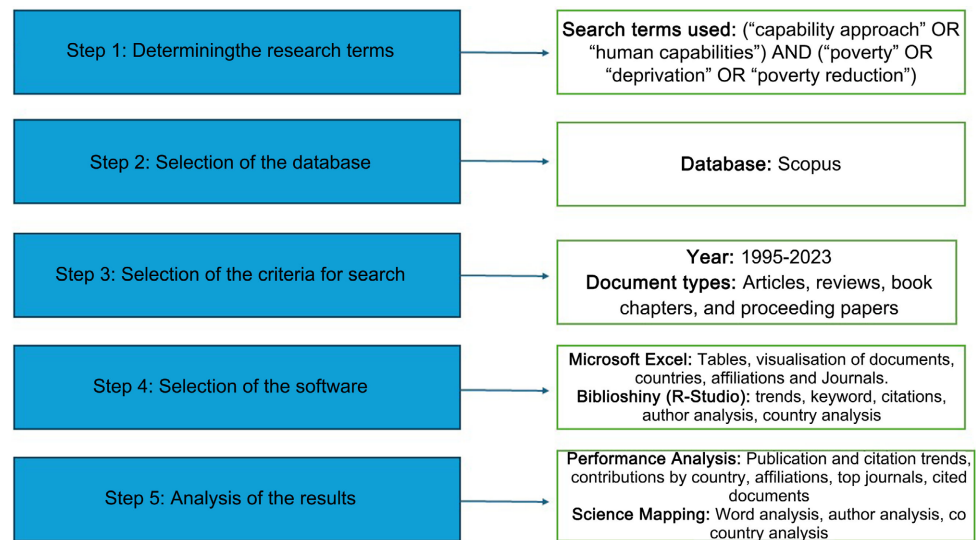
Author, (2024).

Since 1990's, poverty has been increasingly viewed as the lack of capability which is anchored on the Capability Approach. This review seeks to understand the development of literature on poverty through the capability approach since 1995 to 2023.

3. Methods and Materials

This review study used the bibliometric methodology. The bibliometric methodology applies the quantitative techniques on bibliometric data, analyse the connections between different research components by summarising the bibliometric and intellectual structure of the field (Donthu et al., 2021; Block & Fisch, 2020). Bibliometric methodology was chosen as it provides for a performance analysis which includes publication-related metrics, citation-related metrics, citation-and

publication-related metrics and science mapping which included citation analysis, co-citation *analysis*, bibliometric coupling, co-word analysis and co-authorship analysis (Donthu et al., 2021). Scopus database is the source of the data for this study. Scopus is regarded as the largest abstract indexing database as such it helps in minimising exclusion error or overlooking relevant papers (Alsharif et al., 2021; Abbas et al., 2021). Scopus database has an advanced search option which is important for accurate search in a broad topic such as poverty (Abbas et al., 2022). The methodology follows the five steps proposed which involves, determination of the research terms, selection of the databases, criteria for search, selection of data analysis and visualisation software and lastly analysis and results as shown in **Figure 1** below.



Source: (Author 2024).

Figure 1. Methodological scheme of bibliometrics analysis.

3.1. Determining the Search Terms

There are two most popular ways of selecting key words and the first being the use of keyword from a high-level publication and the second being to use the important keywords that indicate the large field of study (Chen & Xiao, 2016). This study uses the second method. Following the Boolean search method the terms ("capability approach" OR "human capabilities") AND ("poverty" OR "deprivation" OR "poverty reduction") represents that large search field that contains a larger number of results in Scopus. The Boolean search method reduces and expands results retrieved, saving time and eliminating inappropriate results (Ugwu & Opah, 2023). Although the study focuses on the use of the capability approach in understanding or researching poverty the words such as inequality, welfare and deprivation are found in the literature studying poverty.

3.2. Selection of Database

This study used Scopus database. This study used the Scopus database as it is con-

sidered to be one of the largest abstract indexing databases (Abbas et al., 2020, 2021; Alsharif et al., 2020, 2021; Hazaea et al., 2021; Khatib et al., 2021). Scopus also covers a wide range of topics, providing advanced search options that help researchers develop search strings with accurate results in broad areas (Abbas et al., 2021). The review is based only on Scopus database instead of Web of Science (WoS) because Scopus is regarded as the largest searchable citation and abstract source and it covers broader journal range than WoS (Chadegani et al., 2013)

3.3. Selection Criteria for Search

The study focused on the knowledge structure of English journal articles from 1995 to 2023. The analysis was able to identify 1004 articles. According to Donthu et al. (2021), if the number of papers is large enough for example considerable hundreds and above e.g. 500 and above the research warrants a bibliometric study. From these articles the study selected the English language articles due to the authors language capabilities, also as Abbas et al. (2020) noted English language is the most common language used in Scopus. The authors limited the document types to articles, book chapters, reviews, books, conference papers and editorial.

3.4. Selection of Data Analysis and Visualisation Software

The 1004 articles were exported in the form “.csv” file from Scopus database. There are many different tools that are available to for analysis and visualisation when performing bibliometric studies. These tools include BibExcel, Biblioshiny, VOSViewer, Biblioshiny and many others (Moral-Muñoz et al., 2020). This review study used Biblioshiny which is part of R-studio package to analyse production trends such as the number of documents between 1995 and 2023, production per country, affiliation and citations. Biblioshiny was also used to do key word analysis. VoSviewer was used to analyse collaborations between countries and affiliations. Microsoft Excel was also used to analyse data downloaded as in Excel format from Biblioshiny to create graphs relevant to this study.

3.5. Data Analysis

The R programme and bibliometrix codes were used to produce descriptive bibliometric study and matrix table at this stage. Two different types of bibliometric methods can typically be used to explore a research field: performance analysis and science mapping analysis (SMA) (Gutiérrez-Salcedo et al., 2018; Donthu et al., 2021). Performance analysis is used to analyse different scientific contributors, such as researchers, affiliations, countries, journals, based on citation and publications data (Bota-Avram, 2023). In this review performance mapping was used to determine productivity of countries, affiliations, journals publications. Science mapping is the analysis of relationships between the elements of the research and helps to determine the productivity of the author (Donthu et al., 2021). Science mapping was done to determine the networks, collaborations, co-citations and keywords used in all the retrieved documents.

4. Results

Between 1995 and 2023, there were 1004 documents that met search criteria outlined above on poverty through the lenses of capability approach. The annual growth of studies on poverty through the capability approach is 17.75. This growth trend reflects the growing discussions and discourse around poverty. Poverty has become a subject of discussion in recent alongside topics such as disasters, climate change, food crisis (Yaşa & Ogur, 2024). The review shows that amongst 1676 authors. About 22% of the documents are single-authored documents have contributed to the studies on capability approach and poverty. This means that in more than 88% of the documents multiple authors are involved. International collaboration rate on the topic of the capability approach and poverty is 18.23%. (Table 2)

Table 2. Statistics about the research data.

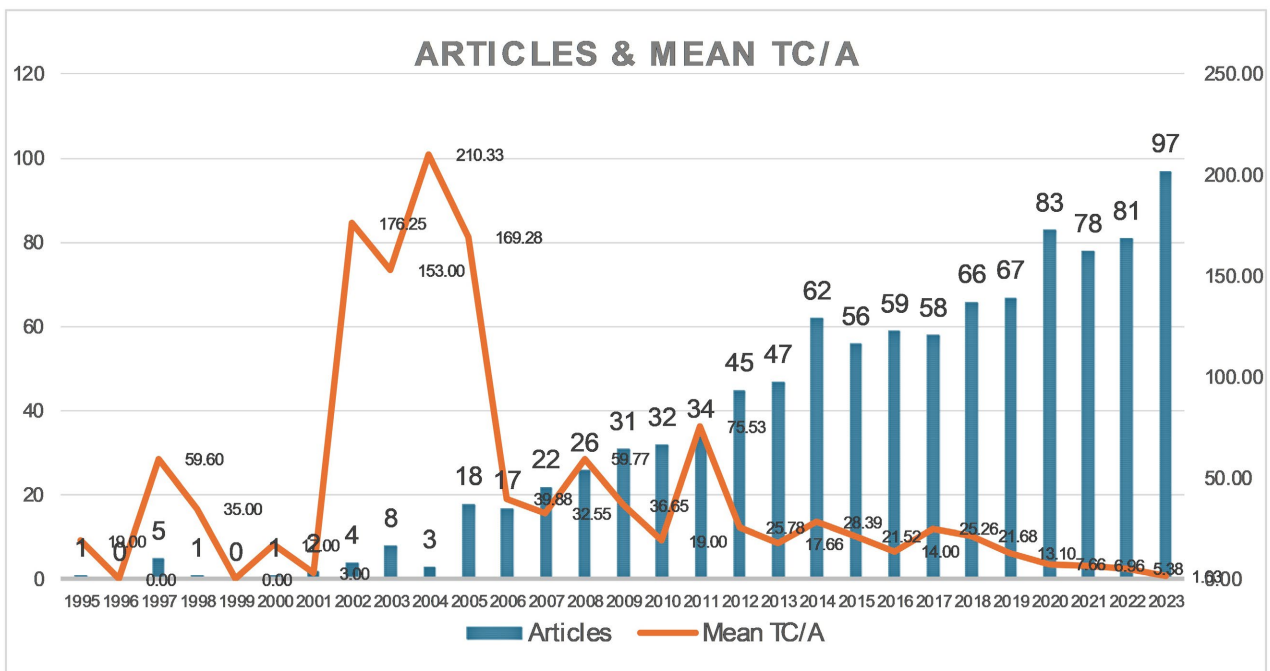
Description	Results
Timespan	1995:2023
Sources (Journals, Books, etc)	592
Documents	1004
Annual Growth Rate %	17.75
Document Average Age	7.95
Average citations per doc	24.47
References	45812
Keywords Plus (ID)	1678
Author's Keywords (DE)	2247
Authors	1676
Authors of single-authored docs	372
Single-authored docs	471
Co-Authors per Doc	2.07
International co-authorships %	18.23

Author, (2024).

4.1. Growth Trends of Publication and Citation

Figure 2 shows the development of research in the area of poverty using the capability approach from 1995 to 2023 based on the Scopus database. As Guo et al. (2019) noted, the development in research area can be seen through the growth trends of publications and the quality of the research work is measured by the citations or the reference made to the sources in other articles. Figure 2 shows that in the period of 10 years between January 1, 1995, and 31 December 2004 there were only there 25 publications, there was a significant rise (n = 18) in pub-

lications on poverty using capability approach in 2005. The bibliometric analysis shows that there between 1995 and 2023 the average growth rate of publications was 17.75. The documents retrieved from Scopus database gained a total citation of 45,812 times with an average cite score of 24.47 per document. According to Justin et al. (2025), citations are proxies of importance of the topic to field of study. The documents published between 2001 and 2006 retrieved from Scopus database had the highest citations ranging from 153 citations to 210.33 citations. It was also noted that even though there were only 33 documents published in the 3 years between 2002 and 2005 has the highest citations. There is a high negative correlation of (-0.5174) between the number of documents published per year and the mean total citation per article.



Author, (2024).

Figure 2. Analysis of annual production and mean total citation per annum.

4.2. Prominent Affiliations on Poverty and Capability Approach Research

Table 3 shows the top 10 countries with the highest publications on capability approach and poverty. United Kingdom (UK) has the highest publications (n = 411) and total number of citations (n = 4492) in the European continent. United states of America (USA) is ranked second in terms of the number of publications (n = 265) and total citations (n = 3537) and has the highest publications in the America continent. South Africa is ranked third in terms of publications (n = 115) and ranked fifth globally in terms of total citations (n = 493). The review also showed that although France is ranked 9th in publication count, it is ranked 23rd in terms of total citation.

Table 3. Analysis of Country production and average article citation.

Country	PC	Rank by PC	TC	AAC	Rank by TC
UK	411	1st	4492	31	1st
USA	265	2nd	3537	42	2nd
South Africa	115	3rd	493	13	5th
Netherlands	108	4th	1341	39	3rd
Australia	97	5th	459	12.8	6th
Germany	90	6th	423	14.1	7th
Italy	90	7th	284	9.2	10th
China	72	8th	285	11.4	9th
France	56	9th	57	5.7	23rd
Sweden	53	10th	174	10.9	14th

Production Count (PC), Total Citations (TC), Average Article Citation (AAC)

Author, (2024).

Figure 3 shows the contribution made by each region on the topic. Europe is the highest 53%, followed by North America 17%, and Asia 11%. Despite the fact that poverty is one of the pressing challenges in Africa, it only contributed 8% on the topic of poverty through a capability lens.

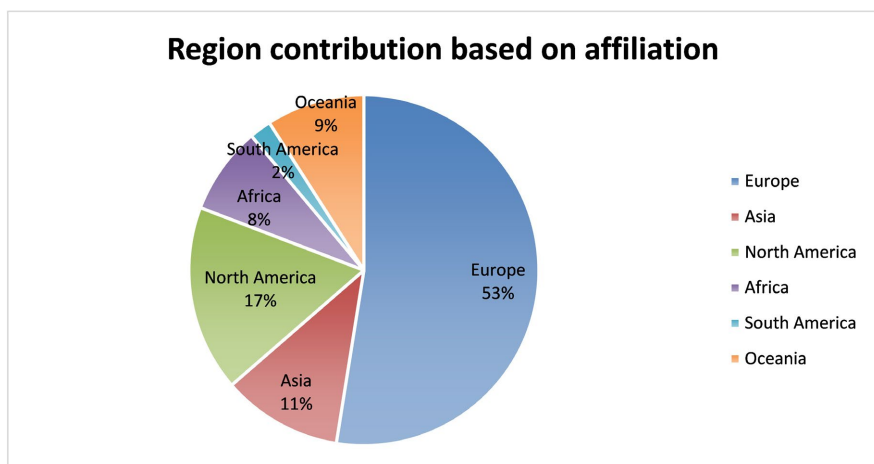
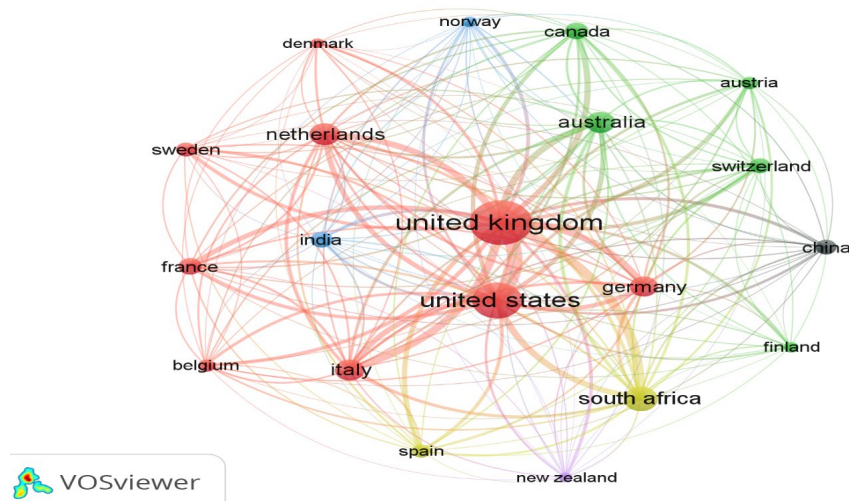


Figure 3. Analysis of the contribution by country.

4.3. Collaboration between Countries about Capability Approach and Poverty

The analysis of the topmost collaborating countries shows that there are continents, collaboration between Africa, Australia, Asia, America and European. The country collaboration map below in **Figure 4** shows the countries who collaborated on this subject from 1995 to 2023.



Source: Author (2024).

Figure 4. Network visualisation map of international research collaborations.

Figure 4: Network visualization map of international research collaboration among the top 20 active countries in Capability Approach and Poverty. The thickness of the connecting line (link strength) is proportional to the extent of research collaboration between the connected countries. The node size of each country represents the percentage of documents with international researchers. Larger node size is indicative of greater international research collaboration for that country. Similar color indicates close research interest. The map was created by VOSviewer

Table 4. Description of collaborations around the world.

Cluster	Lead Nations per Cluster	Remarks
Red	Belgium (19); Denmark (13); France (36); Germany (51); Italy (56); Netherlands (62); Sweden (25); United Kingdom (255); United States (168)	This is the largest cluster with eight out of the twenty top collaborating countries. The cluster has 685 documents with United Kingdom have the largest number of documents. United Kingdom and United States of America are leading in collaborations with other clusters and countries like South Africa and Australia
Green	Australia (75); Austria (21); Canada (35); Finland (14); Switzerland (28)	This cluster has a total of 155 documents with Australia having the largest. Australia has the largest collaborations with United States of America and United Kingdom
Blue	India (32); Norway (15)	India which is the largest country in this cluster has significant collaborations with United Kingdom and United States of America
Yellow	South Africa (78); Spain (23)	South Africa is the largest country in this cluster, and recorded collaborations are with United Kingdom and United States of America. There were some collaborations with Australia and Canada although not to the level of United Kingdom
Purple	New Zealand (13)	New Zealand had collaborations with United Kingdom and United States of America like other clusters. There were some collaborations with Germany and Norway as well.
Black	China (28)	In addition to the United States of America and United Kingdom, China has collaborations with Canada and Austria

Author, (2024).

The review of the ten most productive affiliations, shows that University of Oxford has the highest number of publications ($n = 27$), followed by the University of the Free State ($n = 22$) articles. University of Oxford was the first affiliation to publish an article in 2005, followed by the Uppsala University in 2007. UMEA university in Sweden is the lasted affiliation (2020) to publish articles in the subject of capability approach and poverty as shown in **Table 5** below.

Table 5. Analysis of affiliation production and years of production.

Rank	Affiliation	Articles	FPY	LPY
1 st	University of Oxford	27	2005	2023
2 nd	University of the Free State	22	2012	2023
3 rd	University College London	15	2008	2023
4 th	University of Leeds	15	2019	2023
5 th	Massey University	14	2013	2023
6 th	Umeå University	14	2020	2023
7 th	University of Birmingham	13	2008	2023
8 th	University of Nottingham	13	2009	2023
9 th	Monash University	12	2017	2023
10 th	Uppsala University	12	2007	2023

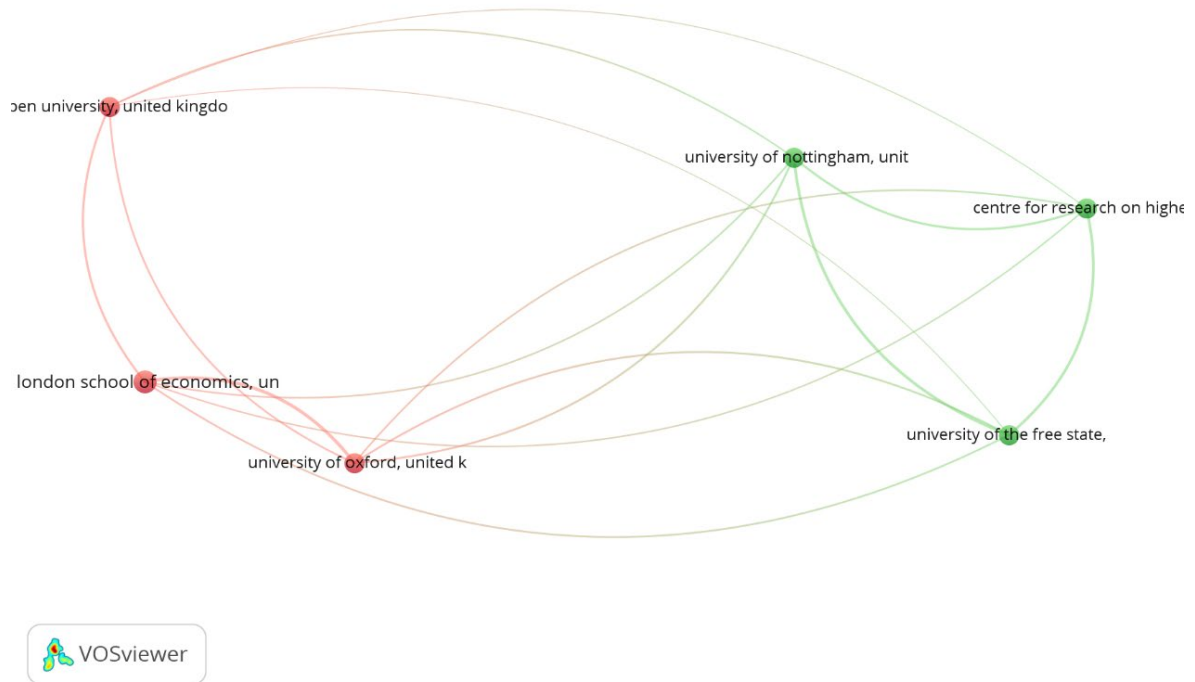
First Publication Year (FPY), Last Publication Year (LPY)

Author, (2024).

4.4. Collaborations between Affiliations

The review showed two clusters being red cluster consisting of the Open University, London School of Economics and University of Oxford. The second cluster is green where University of Nottingham, Centre research on higher education and development and the university of the Free State. There are 15 links amongst these six affiliations with a total strength link of 409. The links attribute measures the number of the links or collaborations that are between the institutions. In this review they were 15 collaborations. On the other had the Total Link strength attribute measures the total strength of collaborations between these six institutions and in this case, it is 409. University of the Free State had collaborations ($n = 5$) with total link strength of 152 and mostly with University of Oxford and London School of Economics in addition to other collaborations within its cluster. University of Oxford has collaborations will all the other institutions with a total link strength of 162 out of the 409.

Figure 5: Network visualization map affiliations in Capability Approach and Poverty related literature. Node size represents frequency of the occurrence of the keyword. Larger node size represents keywords that are most frequent in the retrieved literature. The map was created by VOSviewer.



Author, (2024).

Figure 5. Network visualisation map affiliations in the capability approach and poverty-related research.

4.5. Most Cited Articles

In bibliometric analysis there are two types of citations that are analysed, the Global Citation (GC) which counts all the citations that are in the retrieved documents from publications indexed in the source, while local citation (LC), counts citations a document got from the other documents in the collection based on references cited within the collection (Batista-Canino et al., 2024). The article titled, “the capability approach: a theoretical survey” by Ingrid Robeyns (2005) the other by the same author in 2003 titled “Sens Capability approach and gender inequality”: selecting relevant capabilities are the most cited articles based on the Scopus database. Robeyns (2005) article has 1666 global citations and 145 local citations while, the second article by Robeyns (2003) has 744 global citations and 106 local citations. (Table 6)

4.6. Most Local Cited References

The most local cited references measure the most frequent cited references, in this collection which was cited by other authors. This review shows that Amartya Sen is the frequent referenced in the Scopus collection on capability and poverty. Amartya Sen’s work that is most cited include Sen (1985, 1992, 1999). The other most cited references include Rawls (1971) and Marth Nussbaum work (Nussbaum, 1999, 2000, 2013). This analysis is in line with the fact that Amartya Sen and Marth Nussbaum are credited with development of the capability approach (Robeyns, 2005). (Table 7)

Table 6. Analysis of the most cited articles.

Rank	Document	DOI	Year	LC	GC	LC/GC Ratio (%)
1st	Robeyns (2005), J Hum Develop	10.1080/146498805200034266	2005	145	1666	8.70
2nd	Robeyns (2003), Fem Econ	10.1080/1354570022000078024	2003	106	744	14.25
3rd	Sen (2004), Fem Econ	10.1080/1354570042000315163	2004	54	606	8.91
4th	Alkire and Foster (2011), J Public Econ	10.1016/j.jpubeco.2010.11.006	2011	46	1628	2.83
5th	Alkire (2002), World Dev	10.1016/S0305-750X(01)00109-7	2002	38	523	7.27
6th	Anand et al. (2009), J Hum Dev Capabilities	10.1080/14649880802675366	2009	34	225	15.11
7th	Anand and VanHees (2006), J Socio-Econ-a	10.1016/j.socsec.2005.11.003	2006	23	110	20.91
8th	Alkire and Santos (2014), World Dev	10.1016/j.worlddev.2014.01.026	2014	17	565	3.01
9th	Alkire (2005), J Hum Develop	10.1080/146498805200034275	2005	16	330	4.85
10th	Hick (2012), J Soc Policy	10.1017/S0047279411000845	2012	14	91	15.38

Local Citations (LC), Global Citations (GC)

Author, (2024).

Table 7. Most cited references.

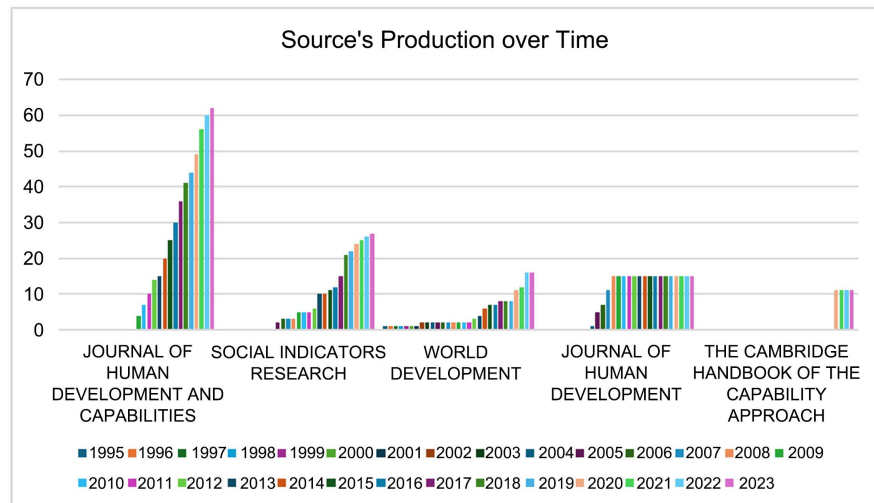
Cited References	Citations
Sen (1999) Development as freedom,	430
Sen (2009) The idea of justice,	175
Sen (1992) Inequality re-examined	137
Sen (1985) Commodities and capabilities	116
Rawls (1971) A Theory of justice	104
Nussbaum (2000) Women and human development: The Capabilities Approach	93
Sen (1992) Inequality re-examined	93
Sen (1999) Development as freedom	92
Robeyns (2005) The capability approach: A theoretical survey, Journal of human development, 6, 1, PP. 93-117	87
Robeyns (2005) The Capability Approach: A Theoretical survey, Journal of human development, 6, 1, PP. 93-114	63

Author, (2024).

4.7. Sources Production over Time

The review showed that there are five (5) main sources of production of articles over the period 1995 to 2023 and these include Journal of Human Development and Capabilities, Social indicator research, World Development, Journal of Human Development and The Cambridge Handbook of the Capability Approach. The highest producing source is the Journal of Human Development and Capabilities (n = 473) from its first article in 2009 to 2023. This result aligns with the bibliometric analysis done by Barreno-Alcalde et al. (2024) which shows that the Journal of Human Development and Capability remain the leading outlet for scholarship on capability approach. The second highest contributor is by the Social Indicators Research (n = 235) from its first production 2005. The review also shows that the source with the list production is the Cambridge Handbook of the

Capability Approach, and it only started in 2020. On the other hand, Human Development has been producing the of articles per year (n = 15) from 2008 to 2023. (Figure 6)



Author (2024).

Figure 6. Analysis of Sources of Production/Journals and of documents (1995-2023).

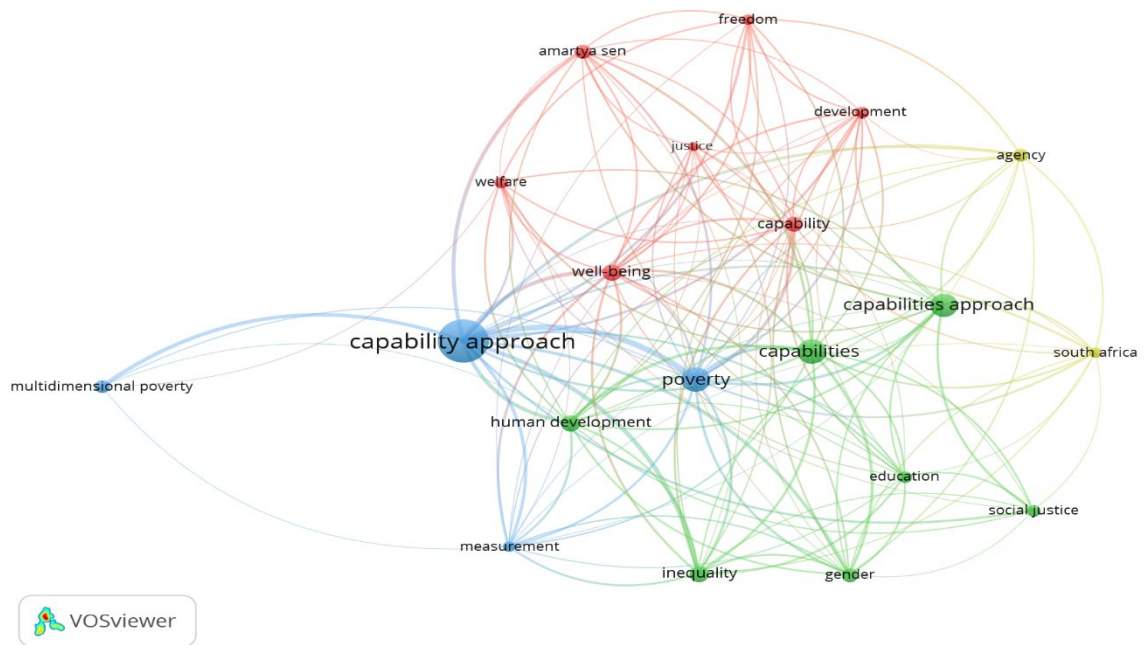
4.8. Keyword Analysis

The keywords clarify the main direction of the research and are regarded as a fine indicator for revealing the literature’s content (Su et al., 2020). Figure 7 shows the lists of top 10 most frequently used keywords and keyword-plus of total documents. Clearly author keywords are often repetitive, with “capability approach,” “poverty,” “capabilities”, and “capability approach” are chosen as keywords by most documents. On the other hand, “poverty”, “human” and “female” dominated the keywords-plus. Under the author’s keywords “Amartya Sen” appears indicating the link between the “capability approach” and the author who contributed to its development. (Table 8)

Table 8. Keywords analysis.

Keywords (DE)	Articles	Keywords-Plus (ID)	Articles
capability approach	340	poverty	110
poverty	110	human	94
capabilities	109	female	74
capabilities approach	106	article	66
well-being	49	humans	64
human development	48	male	64
inequality	48	adult	61
capability	43	quality of life	60
amartya sen	36	social justice	42
gender	35	income	30

Authors Keywords (DE), Keywords-Plus (ID).



Source: Author, (2024).

Figure 7. Network Visualisation map of authors keywords.

Network visualization map of author keywords in documents in Capability Approach and Poverty. Node size represents frequency of occurrence of the keyword. Larger node size represents keywords that are most frequent in the retrieved literature. The map was created by VOSviewer

5. Discussion - Trends, Gaps and Opportunities of Using CA in Understanding Poverty

This study was carried out to show trends, gaps and opportunities in understanding poverty through the capability approach lenses. Various theoretical lenses are used to understand poverty and the approaches have evolved over time. Collins (2020), noted that they theoretical approaches have evolved from a narrow focus on income to a multidimensional concept that encompasses economic, social and cultural considerations. Table 9 gives a brief description of some dominant theories and approaches used to understand poverty.

The capability approach which was developed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum redefines poverty as a capability deprivation rather than only an income issue. It offers a framework for understanding poverty further than conventional economic indicators (Nussbaum, 2013). The capability approach highlights the importance of individual opportunities and freedoms and more important for understanding wellbeing concepts such as poverty (Schweiger, 2021). By focusing on the capabilities and functionings what people can do or be the approach provides a more nuanced way of comprehending poverty (Anand et al., 2020). The approach offers a multi-dimensional perspective that encompasses other wellbeing aspects such as health, education and employment (Anand et al., 2020; Alkire,

2020). Poverty is therefore not viewed as just the lack of resources but some form of unfairness that limit individual's opportunities and freedoms (Sen, 1999; Schweiger, 2021).

Table 9. Lenses used to study poverty.

Poverty Lens	Brief Description
Individual deficiency	Attributes poverty to personal choices, inherent limitations and lack of individual effort to reduce or eradicate poverty (Danaan, 2018). However, the theory fails to explain poverty trends (Dube, 2019). Proposed by Oscar Lewis in 1958, states that some attitudes and baviours that are linked to poverty are learned and passed down
Culture of poverty	through generation (Reed & Adams 2020). The theory is controversial and seen as maintaining racial capitalism (Erhard, 2022). The emphasis is on the macro-level factors as opposed to individual
Structural theories	factors. Poverty is seen within the context of industrial structures, labour market and power dynamics (Brady, 2019).
Basic needs Approach	Focuses on ensuring access to essential goods and services to achieve minimum standard of living.
Welfare regime approach	Focuses on how the different welfare country/states models impact poverty rates and social exclusion. It focuses on how uneven economic development and welfare shape national poverty.
Social investment approach	Focuses on addressing poverty through targeted interventions and data driven decision making (Sakamoto, 2024).
Economic (Classical, neoclassical and Keynesian)	Economic approaches such as classical emphasis elements such as wages, consumption neoclassical view focuses on free markets, while Keynesian looks at the expansion of fiscal policies to enable employment and poverty reduction (Lundahl et al., 2021).

Author (2024).

This study shows growth in number of publications using capability approach to understand poverty since 2005 mostly in developing countries. However, Africa contributed only eight percent of the global output. The growth of CA and poverty studies brought with it the multidimensional perspective. This increase could also be attributed to the general increase access to internet in those years (Xie et al., 2023). The growth could also be attributed to scholars such as Ingrid Robeyns who produced the most cited article (1661 citations), titled *The Capability Approach: a "theoretical survey"* in 2005, published by the *Journal of Human Development*. In the Robeyns (2005) paper, the theoretical survey of capability approach is presented in a multidisciplinary and accessible way. The *Journal of Human Development and Capability* started being the sources of the topic in 2010 it has grown so fast due to the Human Development and Capability Association. Furthermore, work by Alkire and Foster (2011), titled 'Counting and multidimensional poverty measurement popularised the capability approach in understanding poverty. Published in the *Journal of Public economics*, the article proposed a new methodology of measuring multidimensional poverty. The Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) of the University of Oxford work on Multidimensional

Index could have contributed to the increasing use of the Capability approach thinking in poverty related studies. Sabina Alkire is based at the University of Oxford and Ingrid Robeyns is based at the Utrecht University and this could explain the dominance of the UK universities and the European Universities in using the capability approach.

While significant work has been done on the theoretical concepts and unpacking of the original work of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum was the focus in early 2000s. There is growing literature on the application of the capability approach as shown by the work of production over time, number of other keywords plus that are shown in this analysis. Capability approach is not only used to understand poverty, but it is also used in gender, human development, justice, welfare, inequality and education. The emphasis is the interplay between poverty and other social factors such as disability, age, gender and exposure to disaster risks and highlighting how factors exacerbate limits to capabilities (Graham et al., 2012). In the developed world like the United Kingdom, using the capability approach in study poverty helped to reveal different poverty profiles compared to income and resource-based approaches. It also helped to reveal the relationship between capabilities and spatial deprivations (Hartworth et al., 2020; Anand et al., 2020). The capability approach provides important insights for political debate and for policymakers to understand poverty more broadly and address it through holistic and inclusive social protection (Hartworth et al., 2020). Despite this significant growth in literature, keyword analysis shows that application of capability in poverty reduction and alleviation is very low.

In developing continents such as Asia, application of the capability approach has highlighted the possibility that urban poverty may be underestimated if only income-based dimensions are assessed (Sakamoto, 2024). In Africa, South Africa is ranked amongst countries with high productivity in this topic. The studies tend to focus on specific issues such as disability and poverty (Graham et al., 2012). In disability and poverty study in South Africa, Graham et al. (2012) concluded that using the capability approach lens helped to demonstrate the ways in which poverty and disability interact to limit people's capabilities. The studies tend to focus on specific groups of people such as student, youth and women with broad issues such as poverty, social exclusion and social justice. The University of Free State focus has been notably on education for example the article by Ruswa and Gore (2021), which focused on student poverty in South African Universities using the capability approach. The authors argue that conceptualisation of student poverty from a financial perspective is narrow and promoted the use of multidimensionality to understand poverty. Beukes and Beukes (2023), explored issues of social justice to diaconia in South Africa to deal with economically uneven South Africa. While a study in Benin, Senegal and Togo focused on energy justice work for women, to explore energy interventions that could enhance women capabilities and well-being. In Zimbabwe, (Chikoko et al., 2023), looked at the capabilities of young street people in Harare living in poverty and social exclusion. In the devel-

oping world there seem to be more of the application of capability approach in different contexts although there are fewer studies compared to other parts of the world. Although a lot of literature has been produced on understanding poverty through the capability approach lenses there are gaps in more nuanced understanding on specific groups such as urban areas and informal settlements.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This analysis provides a general overview of the global scholarship on understanding poverty through capability lens. It shows that it is not only the original work of philosophers, Amartya Sen and Matha Nussbaum (Sen, 1985, 1992, 1999) and Nussbaum (1999, 2000, 2013) that shaped understanding poverty through capability approach perspective. The original work on capability approach provided the normative framework on which several scholars built on. For example, the theoretical survey by (Robeyns, 2005) work on social justice (Nussbaum, 2006), and development of the Multidimensional Index by (Alkire & Foster, 2011) inspired the use of capability approach in understanding poverty between 1995 to 2023. Understanding poverty as a capability deprivation and need for multidimensionality perspective seem to be gaining some momentum around the world because of the Journals such as the Journal of Human Development and Capabilities.

Mapping publication trends, leading authors, regional contributions shows that although literature is increasing, it is unevenly distributed. Europe and North America dominate the field and Africa's contribution is still limited despite poverty challenges. This research output disparity reflects weak research networks, limited research funding in the global south.

This study recommends the need to strengthen global south's scholarship that will generate knowledge to practitioners how effectively deal with poverty in their contexts. More research initiatives should support Africa, Asia and the South America through collaborative research networks. More research should also focus on poverty reduction and other solutions as current literature is dominated by theoretical aspects of capability approach.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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