

COLLABORATION OF THE GOVERNMENT IN HANDLING ASYLUM SEEKERS IN INDONESIA

KOLABORASI PEMERINTAH DALAM PENANGANAN PENCARI SUAKA DI INDONESIA

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Abstract (In English). *Indonesia has long been a transit point for many asylum seekers without refugee status, including those from various countries such as Myanmar, Somalia, and even Afghanistan. Currently, asylum seekers from Myanmar, namely the Rohingya, make up the majority in Indonesia and have started entering the country due to the ongoing civil war in their homeland. Meanwhile, those from Somalia come to Indonesia due to the lack of legal certainty in their country, and Afghanistan has become a battleground between pro- and anti-Taliban factions. This situation calls for collaboration among the government to address the issue. The research method used is bibliometric, utilizing the Taylor and Francis and ScienceDirect databases to search for articles, and employing software like VosViewer and Mendeley to facilitate the analysis of previous research publications. The research findings suggest several steps that need to be taken, including that Indonesia has not signed certain international conventions as part of its efforts to accept asylum seekers. Indonesia only adheres to humanitarian principles, supported by the legality of presidential regulations, which do not impose obligations on many regions. Solutions to the aforementioned issues include reactivating Indonesian islands as transit locations, efforts to ratify the refugee convention since Indonesia is not a signatory, and clarifying the presidential regulations on refugees to ensure clearer implementation.*

Keywords: Bibliometrics, Indonesia, Collaboration, Asylum Seekers.

Abstract (In Bahasa). *Indonesia telah lama menjadi tempat transit banyak pencari suaka yang non status pengungsi, termasuk mereka yang berasal dari berbagai negara baik Myanmar, Somalia, bahkan dari Afganistan. Saat ini, pencari suaka asal Myanmar yaitu Rohingya menjadi mayoritas di Indonesia dan mulai masuk ke Indonesia karena negaranya sedang mengalami konflik perang saudara yang berkepanjangan, sementara untuk Somalia masuk ke Indonesia karena ketiadaan kepastian hukum di negaranya dan Afganistan menjadi perebutan antara pro dan kontra dengan Taliban. Sehingga perlu adanya kolaborasi pemerintah dalam penanganan masalah tersebut. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah bibliometrik dengan menggunakan database Taylor and Francis dan ScienceDirect untuk pencarian artikel dan memanfaatkan software VosViewer dan Mendeley guna mempermudah dalam uraian publikasi penelitian terdahulu. Hasil penelitiannya, ada beberapa langkah yang perlu dilakukan, antara lain Indonesia tidak menandatangani beberapa konvensional internasional sebagai bentuk usaha dalam menerima pencari suaka yang masuk, Indonesia hanya menjalankan asas kemanusiaan dan dengan dukungan asas legalitas berupa peraturan presiden*



yang tentunya tidak menjadi kewajiban banyak daerah. Solusi atas permasalahan diatas beberapa diantaranya adalah dengan mengaktifkan kembali pulau-pulau di Indonesia sebagai lokasi transit, upaya meratifikasi konvensi pengungsi karena Indonesia bukan negara penandatangan, lalu memperjelas peraturan presiden tentang pengungsi agar implementasinya lebih jelas.

Keywords: Bibliometrik, Indonesia, Kolaborasi, Pencari Suaka

1. INTRODUCTIONS

Indonesia is a country with a vast territory that stretches from east to west, passing through the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. This vast territory makes Indonesia a transit point for many refugees before they reach their destination countries. These destination countries include Australia, New Zealand, and even the United States, which are known for their high life expectancy, stable economies, and greater job opportunities. The large number of asylum seekers who transit through Indonesia before reaching their final destination raises concerns about potential problems, including social conflicts with local communities due to differences in ethnicity, culture, and language.

Indonesia has long been a popular transit location for asylum seekers compared to other countries, as Indonesia still maintains high tolerance for asylum seekers. However, many of these asylum seekers lack a clear path to leave for their destination countries, as they do not possess visas or asylum status. One such group of asylum seekers who traveled to Indonesia were from Vietnam, during the Indochina War 2 (1960-1975). According to VOA Indonesia, around 250,000 asylum seekers from Vietnam arrived in Indonesia, along with about 5,000 from Cambodia, between 1970 and 1996 (VOA Indonesia, 2023c). History records that these asylum seekers from Vietnam arrived in Indonesia at Pulau Laut, North Natuna in May 1975, with 22 people, and by 1979, a refugee camp was established at Pulau Galang because it was considered more strategic than nearby islands. The development of Pulau Galang as a refugee camp was also supported by the UNHCR (detik.com, 2023). History notes that at Pulau Galang, asylum seekers coexisted with local communities, working together in solidarity, making it a model for more humane treatment of refugees at the time. The island was abandoned by the end of 1996, as many remaining asylum seekers were repatriated to Vietnam when the country became safer from the conflict.

As of 2023, according to the Directorate General of Immigration, there are about 12,781 asylum seekers in Indonesia, with 6,522 residing in official shelters, while the rest are self-settled. The asylum seekers come from countries including Afghanistan (6,703), Myanmar (1,359), Somalia (1,260), Iraq (614), Sudan (489), and others (VOA Indonesia, 2023a). One notable case in recent times involves asylum seekers from the Rohingya ethnic group, who landed in Aceh due to internal conflict in Myanmar, prompting them to flee their country (Apsarini et al., 2024). Based on data from the Directorate General of Immigration, the largest numbers of asylum seekers in Indonesia come from Afghanistan (55%), Somalia (10%), and Myanmar (6%). Indonesia works together with the UNHCR to address the issues faced by asylum seekers, positioning the country as one of the largest recipients of asylum seekers alongside Malaysia, Thailand, and Australia. The number of asylum seekers in Indonesia declined in the 1990s but increased again

between 2000-2002 (Anwar, 2023).

Australia has also faced issues with asylum seekers. In 2001, it was found that 80% of asylum seekers who had been naturalized as Australian citizens were actually economic migrants (Pujayanti, 2014). The lack of migration options led many illegal migrants, who were not refugees, to falsely claim asylum, as it was the only way to enter another country. Hundreds of economic migrants entered Australia using this method until 2002, when Australia finally took a hard stance on asylum seekers. The influx of asylum seekers, including those abusing the asylum process, became a burden on the country. This issue has turned into a political topic in Australia's election campaigns, with both the ruling party and opposition competing to present the best policies on dealing with asylum seekers.

Although Indonesia has not signed the 1951 Refugee Convention or the 1967 Protocol to determine the status of asylum seekers, the Presidential Regulation No. 125 of 2016 on the Handling of Asylum Seekers from Abroad under the coordination of the Ministry of Political, Legal, and Security Affairs provides a positive outlook for giving special attention to asylum seekers in Indonesia. However, this conflicting legal situation means Indonesia's attention is mainly based on domestic regulations, while cooperating with the UNHCR, an international refugee organization. Asylum seekers lack legal status, making this a major administrative issue.

Given these problems, Indonesia needs to ratify the asylum seeker status for those entering the country. This research is conducted in response to the issues caused by asylum seekers, which have led to internal national problems, and the need for clear collaboration between countries and international organizations. This study will analyze the issue using a qualitative method, including a literature review that will focus on policies and regulations related to asylum seekers, both at the national and international levels. The study will provide insights into how government collaboration can address asylum seeker issues in Indonesia and will highlight important points that can be used as input for stakeholders. The findings of this research will offer a different perspective and valuable conclusions that can serve as a reference for future research analysis.

2. METHOD

The research method will focus on qualitative research using a bibliometric approach. The data sources for the bibliometric analysis will utilize several software tools, namely VosViewer, which will be combined with the reference manager Mendeley in its latest version. This is the procedure for searching valid sources using the keyword "asylum seeker," with the databases used being Taylor and Francis Group and ScienceDirect. Both of these databases serve as alternatives for searching articles that include filters for easier elimination and are recognized by international academics. The publication years for the articles to be reviewed will be from 2014 to 2024 to find relevant scientific articles for this study.

Additionally, several stages of the PRISMA method will be employed. This method is related to answering the research question on how government collaboration in handling asylum seekers in Indonesia can be improved. Valid

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sources will include regulations related to the handling of asylum seekers in Indonesia and other countries experienced in managing asylum seekers, scientific journals both national and international, and other relevant sources. The data analysis used will refer to source data analysis (Cresswell, 2010). Meanwhile, for data analysis in this study, interactive data analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994) will be presented.

3. RESERCH

The results and discussion in this study will be divided into several sub-topics, which are as follows:

3.1. Year of Research Results Using Databases

Based on the data processed using databases, the findings can be described as follows:

Table 1. Mapping Results of Previous Research (2014-2024)

Year	Quantity	Presentage
2014	0	0%
2015	2	4%
2016	0	0%
2017	1	2%
2018	1	2%
2019	3	7%
2020	1	2%
2021	0	0%
2022	12	27%
2023	11	24%
2024	14	31%
total	45	100%

source: taylor and francis Group and ScienceDirect (2024)

Based on the results above, using the keyword **"asylum seeker"**, at least 45 scientific articles were found originating from international journals. The year 2024 recorded the highest number of articles, with 14 publications. Meanwhile, for the years 2014, 2016, and 2021, no publications related to the keyword "asylum seeker" were identified. By applying access restrictions, publication year filters, and the PRISMA method, the research was refined to yield only 45 publications. The year 2023 saw 11 publications, 2022 had 12 publications, while 2017 and 2018 each recorded only 1 publication.

3.2. Origin of Journal Publications

Based on the selected articles, and using several categories to narrow the research focus, the bibliometric analysis from 2014 to 2024 identified multiple journal sources. Below is a synthesis of the findings:

Table 2. Amount of Publication

Journal Publication Name	Total
European Security	1
Nordic Journal of Human Rights	1
European Journal of Social Work	3
Australian Historical Studies	1
Science as Culture	1
Journal of Occupational Science	1
Geopolitics	2
Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies	8
Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies	4
Studies in the Education of Adults	1
Global Environmental Change	1
Journalism Practice	1
International Journal of Human Resource Management	1
Journal of Eastern African Studies	1
Citizenship Studies	1
Journal of Intercultural Studies	1
International Journal of Human Rights	1
Children's Geographies	1
Health Policy	1
European Security	1
Journal of Rural Studies	1
Continuum	1
European Journal of Political Economy	1
The Lancet Regional Health - Europe	1
Global Health Action	1
Social Influence	1
International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being	1
Clinical Psychology Review	1
European Journal of Psychotraumatology	1
SSM - Population Health	1
Children and Youth Services Review	1
Society, Health & Vulnerability	1

Souce: Processed data (2024)

Based on the data above, several journal publications dominate the findings. The Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies stands out as the most frequent publication venue, with 8 publications, followed by the Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies with 4 publications. Other journals each contributed 1 publication.

3.3. Based on Countries

Figure 1. Country Publication



Source: Processed data (2024)

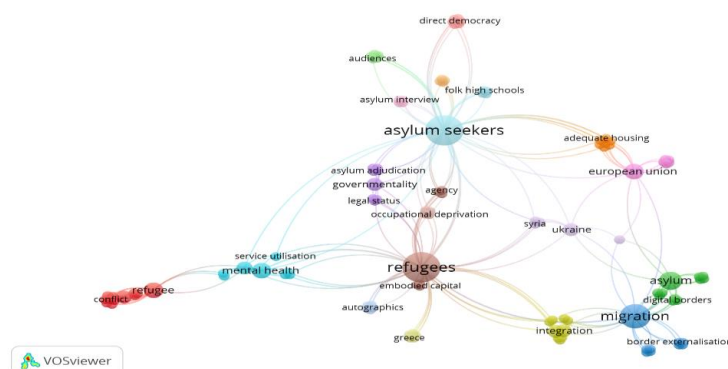
Figure 1 illustrates the country of origin for each published article. The visualization indicates that regions such as Europe, Africa, and Asia are represented. Differences in shading represent publication density: lighter shades indicate a single publication, while darker shades denote five or more publications. For example, Australia and Sweden are highlighted as countries with more than five publications. This data suggests that the bibliometric analysis using the keyword "asylum seeker" identifies countries that actively conduct research and apply findings related to asylum seeker issues.

3.4. Visualization of Publications with VosViewer Applications

Network Visualization

The network visualization data obtained is shown below:

Figure 2: Network Visualization of Bibliometric Analysis on Asylum Seekers (2014–2024).

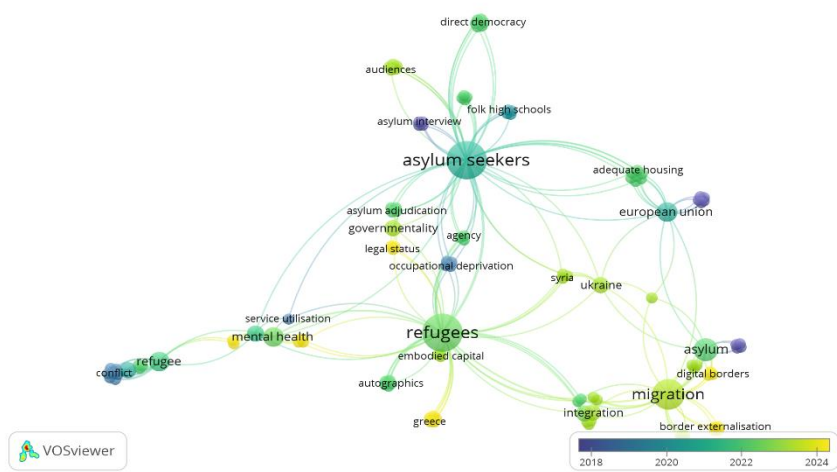


Source: Processed data (2024)

The first data visualization is a network visualization in the application using one keyword. The visualization incorporates 193 relevant keywords identified in this study, with 375 related links and a total link strength of 384. A total of 18 clusters are accommodated in this study, each containing its own items. Cluster 1 contains 12 items, followed by cluster 2 with 11 items, cluster 3 with 9 items, cluster 4 with 9 items, cluster 5 with 8 items, cluster 6 with 8 items, cluster 7 with 7 items, cluster 8 with 7 items, cluster 9 with 6 items, cluster 10 with 6 items, cluster 11 with 5 items, cluster 12 with 5 items, cluster 13 with 5 items, cluster 14 with 5 items, cluster 15 with 5 items, cluster 16 with 4 items, and cluster 17 with 4 items.

Overlay visualization

Figure 3. Overlay Visualization

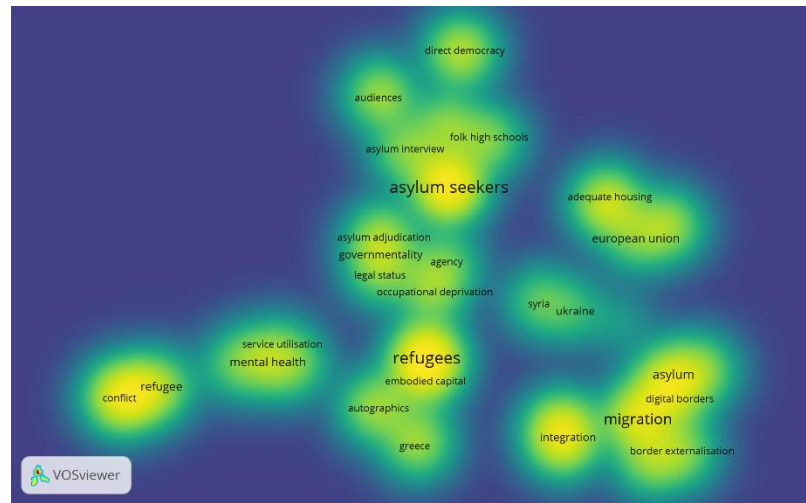


Source: Processed data (2024)

In the overlay visualization, different colors distinguish each link in VOSviewer, with at least 17 clusters and several associated items.

Density Visualization Analysis

Gambar 4. Density Visualization



Source: Processed data (2024)

The density visualization illustrates varying levels of concentration, with brighter colors indicating a higher number of studies conducted using specific keywords such as “asylum seekers,” “migration,” or “refugees.” In contrast, dark blue areas represent regions with less intensity, indicating topics that are less frequently studied, such as “border externalization.” These keywords, along with terms like “citizenship,” are commonly used as research keywords, reflecting their relevance and significance in the academic discourse

3.5. Analysis of Regulations for Asylum Seekers in Indonesia

Indonesia, through the implementation of Presidential Regulation No. 125 of 2016 on the Handling of Refugees from Abroad, welcomes asylum seekers from other countries with open arms and does not reject them. This approach aligns with the preamble of the Indonesian Constitution, which opposes any form of oppression or discrimination against its people. Based on available data, at least 73% of asylum seekers in Indonesia are adults, while the rest are children, many of whom face alarming conditions.

In contrast to many countries that have tightened restrictions on asylum seekers due to conflicts, civil wars, and other crises, Indonesia remains an appealing destination for its relatively lenient regulations compared to the stricter policies of other preferred countries (Sekretariat Negara RI, 2022). However, Indonesia is increasingly overwhelmed as it serves as a transit country for asylum seekers aiming to reach other destinations. Since 2018, Australia has reduced its assistance to asylum seekers in Indonesia, making it harder for them to enter Australian territory.

Presidential Regulation No. 125 of 2016 provides a framework for the funding of asylum seekers through the state budget (APBN). However, clear rules and mechanisms for such funding are still lacking.

On the other hand, Indonesia has not ratified the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees or the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. This lack of ratification means that Indonesia is not legally obligated to accept asylum seekers, as there is no binding enforcement. According to the Directorate of Supervision and Enforcement at the Ministry of Law and Human Rights, asylum seekers entering Indonesia through official channels are placed in Immigration Detention Houses (Rudenim) for initial processing. They are then recorded and housed in government shelters. Asylum seekers who wish to work must obtain a work visa and approval from the local manpower office (Disnaker) (VOA Indonesia, 2023b).

The 1951 Convention was signed by 26 countries in Geneva, Switzerland, including Australia, Austria, Italy, Canada, the United Kingdom, Turkey, Germany, Denmark, Venezuela, the United States, Sweden, the Netherlands, Norway, Egypt, Luxembourg, France, and others. Some Asian countries, such as Iran, Iraq, and Israel, also participated (UNHCR, 1951). In Southeast Asia, Thailand and Malaysia play significant roles in accommodating asylum seekers. In 2022, Thailand recorded approximately 96,401 asylum seekers (VOA Indonesia, 2023d), while Malaysia hosted around 180,440 asylum seekers by December 2021, with nearly 155,400 of them being Rohingya refugees from Myanmar (Susetyo, 2023).

Indonesia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs is expected to hold accountable the countries that have ratified the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol to ensure greater freedom for asylum seekers both domestically and abroad. While Indonesia currently serves only as a transit country, other receiving countries must commit to providing better support. As a transit country, Indonesia accepts asylum seekers based on humanitarian grounds despite resistance and challenges from local communities.

Through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Directorate General of Immigration at the Ministry of Law and Human Rights, supported by UNHCR, Indonesia has consistently taken a leading role in managing asylum seekers. Once Indonesia is adequately prepared, consideration should be given to ratifying the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol. This would enable Indonesia to provide more comprehensive support for asylum seekers, transitioning from being merely a transit country to a more active participant in the global refugee protection system.

3.6. Analysis of Indonesia's Selection as a Transit Country for Foreign Asylum Seekers

Indonesia has long been a primary transit country for asylum seekers before reaching their third-country destination (receiving country). Strategically located, Indonesia serves as a midpoint for asylum seekers, particularly those from Southwest Asia (Middle East) and more recently from Myanmar, predominantly of Islamic faith. Indonesia, alongside Malaysia, is considered a welcoming destination for migrants (Ramon, 2019).

While awaiting final relocation to their intended destination, asylum seekers remain in transit in Indonesia, often without a clear timeline or justification. Their presence is managed by UNHCR in collaboration with the Indonesian government. A study by Chandra (2023) suggests that Indonesia should raise its voice internationally to hold accountable governments that have agreed to accept asylum seekers.

Globally, the number of asylum seekers continues to rise. In 2018, there were 25.9 million asylum seekers; in 2019, the number increased to 79.5 million, and by 2021, it had reached 82.4 million, with 40% being children who require special attention and clear citizenship status to secure their rights (Ngutjinazo, 2021).

According to UNHCR data from August 2021, major cities in Indonesia hosted asylum seekers as follows: Medan (+1,908), Pekanbaru (+908), Jakarta (+7,002), Surabaya (+411), Makassar (+1,744), and other locations (+93) (Ayu Putri & Zulhair Achsin, 2023). Many asylum seekers have been stranded in Indonesia for over a decade without formal or clear citizenship. Diplomatically, Indonesia has urged Australia not to further tighten its policies on foreign asylum seekers.

Between 2009 and 2013, Australia experienced a surge in asylum seekers, rising from 2,726 to 20,587—a 65% increase. The majority were from Sri Lanka, Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan. However, Australia viewed this influx as a threat to its sovereignty, social order, and national security, fearing the erosion of cultural identity and the potential for terrorism (Maing & Kaukab, 2021).

Australia's Operation Sovereign Borders Policy utilized military resources to deter asylum seekers from entering its territory and strictly adhered to accepting only those who arrived through legal channels. This policy significantly curtailed illegal

immigration, perceived as a national security threat (Rianto, 2016).

Over time, Australia adopted more humane measures, such as establishing asylum seeker facilities on Christmas Island, near Indonesia. These facilities served as bases to manage asylum seekers without allowing them into mainland Australia (VOA Indonesia, 2019a). Australian law also permitted medical personnel to visit Christmas Island for humanitarian reasons, with the stipulation that asylum seekers requiring medical treatment could access care but would be returned to the camp once their condition improved (VOA Indonesia, 2019b).

Research by Rahayu (2020) confirmed that asylum seekers pose no significant domestic threat to Indonesia. The government ensures that asylum seekers are housed in monitored and regulated facilities. However, in some cases, such as with Rohingya refugees in Aceh, individuals have left camps in search of more comfortable and private accommodations (Nurhadi, 2023).

Despite these challenges, Indonesia has never expelled asylum seekers from various countries. The nation adheres to robust human rights protection laws, grounded in covenants, conventions, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations (Kompas.com, 2023).

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis of the study above, the researcher divided it into several points that are in line with the formulation of the problem raised in this study. The first is regarding the regulations for asylum seekers in Indonesia. Internationally, there are standard rules that must be obeyed by its participants, namely the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol where Indonesia is not one of the countries that ratified the two rules for international asylum seekers. However, Indonesia has its own rules, namely Presidential Regulation Number 125 of 2016 concerning the Handling of Asylum Seekers from Abroad. However, for the implementation and budgeting of these rules, there are no clear derivatives and do not clearly convey the direction and treatment of asylum seekers. Then the sub-discussion regarding the selection of Indonesia as a transit country is because Indonesia is a strategic country and has never used its military power in history for asylum seekers from abroad. In addition, Indonesia's safe conditions and friendly people make Indonesia a safe transit country for asylum seekers, including those from the Rohingya ethnic group, and do not land in another country (Bangladesh) whose fate is unclear in that country.

Then Indonesia also had experience in helping asylum seekers from Vietnam in 1975-1996 and making Indonesia a humanist country for asylum seekers abroad and currently Indonesia is trying to apply the same thing to the Rohingya ethnic group for relocation but there is still rejection and complexity of Rohingya ethnic asylum seekers who behave badly towards local people and are reluctant to accept them to come to their place. Indonesia is also trying to take diplomatic routes to be able to provide assistance to the country of Myanmar including asylum seekers in the Bangladesh Camp only on the basis of humanity. This research still relies on research based on literature sources found and future research is expected to be able to direct field research in order to produce several systematic field findings.

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