

Bibliometric analysis of global research findings on refugee mental health (1992–2022)

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ABSTRACT

OBJECTIVE: In this study, we aimed to examine the thirty-year effectiveness and trend of research on refugee mental health.

METHODS: A bibliometric analysis methodology was used. Web of Science (WOS) database was used to obtain the necessary data. In particular, a review and analysis encompassed the quantity of publications featuring articles on refugee mental health, the most prolific countries and institutions, the highly cited articles, citation patterns, international collaboration, and the relevant journals. The study's timeframe was defined from 1992 to 2022.

RESULTS: The number of documents obtained is 3912. The majority of the documents obtained were in the field of psychiatry. The quantity of publications and citations experienced a notable upsurge, particularly following the year 2016. The United States emerged as the leading country in terms of both the highest number of publications and citations on this subject. The institutions with the highest publication rates are, in order, the University of New South Wales in Australia, the University of Melbourne in Australia, and McGill University in Canada. This bibliometric study shows that publications on refugee mental health have been observed since 1992 and are gaining momentum, especially after 2016. In addition to the terms "refugees" and "mental health," the keywords "depression," "Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)," and "children" were most commonly used.

CONCLUSION: Refugee communities also appear to have similar mental illnesses and experiences regardless of where and when they settled in the world. Research collaboration and networks should be encouraged to prioritize research in refugee mental health.

Keywords: Depression; bibliometric analysis; mental health; refugees.

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In recent years, the displacement of people due to political and religious conflicts, climate change, human rights violations, pandemics, and economic factors has

become increasingly common. In 2021, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) documented an unprecedented number of 84 million people being forced

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bly displaced, marking the highest figure in history. The majority of cross-border refugees originated from Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Myanmar. Notably, Türkiye, Jordan, Uganda, Pakistan, and Lebanon were among the countries that hosted the largest numbers of refugees [1].

The rising number of displaced individuals can exert considerable strain on mental health services within the host countries. Primarily, the influx of such a substantial population in a brief timeframe necessitates a prompt and adequate response to ensure the fulfillment of their right to basic healthcare. Furthermore, individuals undergoing migration are susceptible to mental health risk factors before, during, and after the process, often encountering obstacles in accessing suitable care post-resettlement [2]. Consequently, mental health issues are disproportionately prevalent among refugee populations when compared to non-refugee populations [3]. A systematic review of psychiatric research on approximately 7,000 refugees living in Western countries found that the prevalence of PTSD among refugees was almost ten times higher than in the non-refugee population [4]. Exposure to trauma, which often first occurs during the pre-migration phase, is the most important determinant of PTSD among resettled refugee populations [5]. However, the origin of depression may be due to post-resettlement factors such as language difficulties, social isolation, and unemployment problems [6]. This situation is prompting researchers to look at refugee mental health.

Bibliometrics is a tool used to assess the state of the science in a given field [7]. Therefore, employing bibliometric analysis to identify and scrutinize the scientific contributions of authors, articles, journals, institutions, and countries through the examination of keywords and citation counts is a crucial component. This approach enables researchers to pinpoint potential avenues and novel directions within a scientific research topic [8]. Bibliometric methodologies are considered useful as tools to support decision-making in, among others, setting research priorities, tracking the development of science and technology, allocating funds and rewarding scientific excellence. Given their versatility, these methods quickly spread beyond the field of information and library science from where they began. Part of this expansion is due to the abundance and ease of accessibility of data [9]. Scholars use bibliometric analysis for a variety of reasons, including uncovering emerging trends in article and journal performance, patterns of collaboration, and research components, and exploring the intellectual structure of a particular field in existing literature [10].

Highlight key points

- Psychiatry emerges as the leading field, constituting the highest percentage of articles at 30.88%.
- During the period from 1992 to 2022, the number of citations exhibited a consistent upward trend, culminating in its zenith at 13.383 in 2021.
- The top three contributing countries, based on the number of publications, are the United States with 1455 publications, Australia with 620 publications, and England with 465 publications.

As far as we reviewed the literature, many bibliometric studies were conducted on refugees [11–13]. However, we have not encountered a worldwide bibliometric study on the mental health of refugees. Hence, the objective of this study is to assess the effectiveness and trends in research on the mental health of refugees over the span of thirty years.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Data Collection

This research paper employs descriptive bibliometric analysis as its methodology. Through the application of mathematics and statistical methods, bibliometric analysis elucidates and visualizes the academic research landscape [8]. For this investigation, data were sourced from the Web of Science Core Collection (WOS) database (Thomson Reuters, New York, USA) spanning the years 1992 to 2022 [data access date: 5 January 2023]. The first article on this subject was published in 1982. However, there are approximately 50 articles in the 10-year period (1982–1991). For this reason, the first 10-year period was not included in the interpretation. The keywords “mental health” and “refugee” were used by selecting the “Title” section. No restrictions were applied regarding the selection of journals and authors in this study. All research articles, reviews, systematic reviews, short reports are included. A total of 3912 publications were evaluated. The bibliometric analyses and the creation of bibliometric network visualization maps were conducted using VOSviewer software (version 1.6.17).

Cluster Analysis with Network and Density Visualization Maps

Network visualization maps encompass various elements such as colors, labels, lines, and circles. Cluster analysis is conducted as an integral part of network analysis. The

TABLE 1. The 10 most frequently appearing research fields in the period of 1992–2022

Research fields*	Frequency	%
Psychiatry	1208	30.88
Public environmental occupational health	885	22.62
Psychology clinical	379	9.69
Social work	285	7.29
Demography	235	6.01
Psychology multidisciplinary	213	5.45
Psychology developmental	204	5.22
Ethnic studies	196	5.01
Pediatrics	187	4.78
Medicine general internal	175	4.73

*: Categories of research areas were taken from the WoS database.

colors within the maps signify the clusters to which the elements belong, and rings of the same color within a cluster denote a stronger relationship among them. The size of the rings corresponds to the magnitude of the citation counts, indicating that larger sizes represent a higher number of citations or articles. The closeness or distance between the rings signifies their relationship; typically,

closer proximity implies a stronger connection between the respective elements. Moreover, the thickness of the lines denotes the strength of the relationship. In density visualization maps, each point assumes a distinct color corresponding to the density of elements present at that specific location. By default, this color changes from red to blue. The color of a point shifts towards yellow when there is a greater number of adjacent elements and higher weights associated with those elements. Conversely, the color of a point tends towards blue when there is a smaller number of adjacent elements and lower weights.

RESULTS

Publication Types and Research Fields

3,912 of the publications including the keywords “refugee” and “mental health” were found in the WOS database from 1992 to 2022.

Of the publications, 3,286 were in the “article” category, 403 in the “Review article” and 104 in the “editorial material” category. 3,826 of the publications were in English, 54 in German and 9 in French. Table 1 illustrates the top 10 most prevalent research fields in publications concerning the mental health of refugees from 2012 to 2021. Psychiatry emerges as the leading field, constituting the highest percentage of articles at 30.88%.

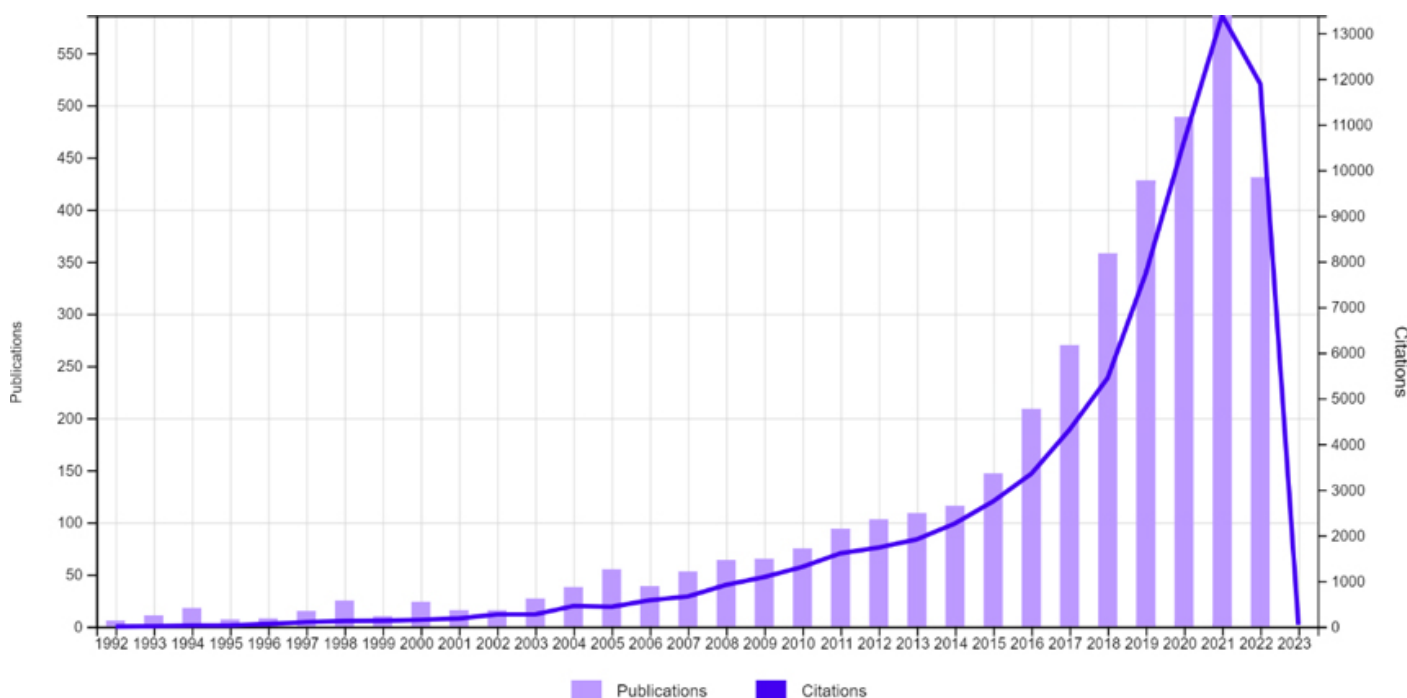


FIGURE 1. Number of publications and citations indexed by Web of Science Core Collection in this field.

TABLE 2. Top ten most cited articles on the mental health at refugee in the period from 1992 to 2022

Article	Author	Journal	Total citation	Year	Average citations per year
Association of torture and other potentially traumatic events with mental health outcomes among populations exposed to mass conflict and displacement a systematic review and meta-analysis	Steel, Z; Chey, T; Silove, D et al. [14]	Journal of the American Medical Association	1187	2009	79.13
The Harvard Trauma Questionnaire - Validating a cross-cultural instrument for measuring torture, trauma, and posttraumatic-stress-disorder in indo-chinese refugees	Mollica, RF; Caspiyavin, Y; Bollini, P et al. [15]	Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease	1165	1992	36.41
Predisplacement and postdisplacement factors associated with mental health of refugees and internally displaced persons - A meta-analysis	Porter, M; Haslam, N [16]	Journal of the American Medical Association	965	2005	50.79
Mental health of displaced and refugee children resettled in high-income countries: Risk and protective factors	Fazel, M; Reed, RV; Panter-Brick, C et al. [17]	The Lancet	713	2012	59.42
War exposure, daily stressors, and mental health in conflict and post-conflict settings: Bridging the divide between trauma-focused and psychosocial frameworks	Miller, KE; Rasmussen, A. [18]	Social Science&Medicine	692	2010	49.43
Common mental health problems in immigrants and refugees: General approach in primary care	Kirmayer, LJ; Narasiah, L; Munoz, M et al. [19]	Canadian Medical Association Journal	621	2011	47.77
Measuring trauma and health status in refugees - A critical review	Hollifield, M; Warner, TD; Lian, N et al. [20]	Journal of the American Medical Association	438	2002	19.91
Multicultural assessment of child and adolescent psychopathology with Achenbach System of Empirically Based Assessment and Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire Instruments: Research findings, applications, and future directions	Achenbach, TM; Becker, A; Dopfner, M et al. [21]	Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry	414	2008	25.88
Anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder in asylum-seekers: Associations with pre-migration trauma and post-migration stressors	Silove, D; Sinnerbrink, I; Field, A et al. [22]	British Journal of Psychiatry	411	1997	15.22
Review of child and adolescent refugee mental health	Lustig, SL; Kia-Keating, M; Knight, WG et al. [23]	Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry	394	2004	19.7

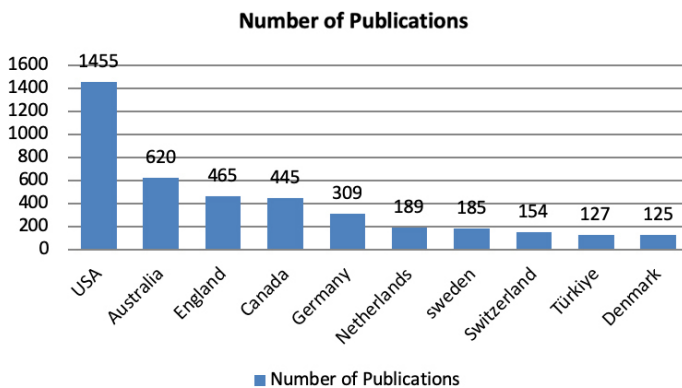


FIGURE 2. Top 10 countries according to total number of publications.

Development of Publication and Citation Numbers

It was found that the 3,912 manuscripts included in the evaluation were cited a total of 73,833 times and had an H-index of 102 (These results were calculated automatically by the WoS database). Figure 1 illustrates the trend in the number of publications and citations per year. Fig-

ure 1 shows that the number of publications has tended to increase over the years, and this increase continued exponentially, especially after 2016. However, in 2022, there is a decrease in the number of publications. The number of citations exhibited an upward trajectory over the years, culminating in its peak at 13,383 in 2021. In 2022, however, it decreased (citations: 11,886).

Active Country, Institution and Collaboration Analysis

The outcomes of the active country analysis were derived from 32 countries, each having a minimum of 25 publications, out of a total of 118 countries. The top three contributors, based on the number of publications, were United States of America (USA) with 1,455 publications, Australia with 620 publications, and England with 465 publications. The top 10 countries are shown in Figure 2. When Figure 3, which includes the citation links of the countries, is examined, it is seen that there are a total of six clusters and 720 links. The size of each circle

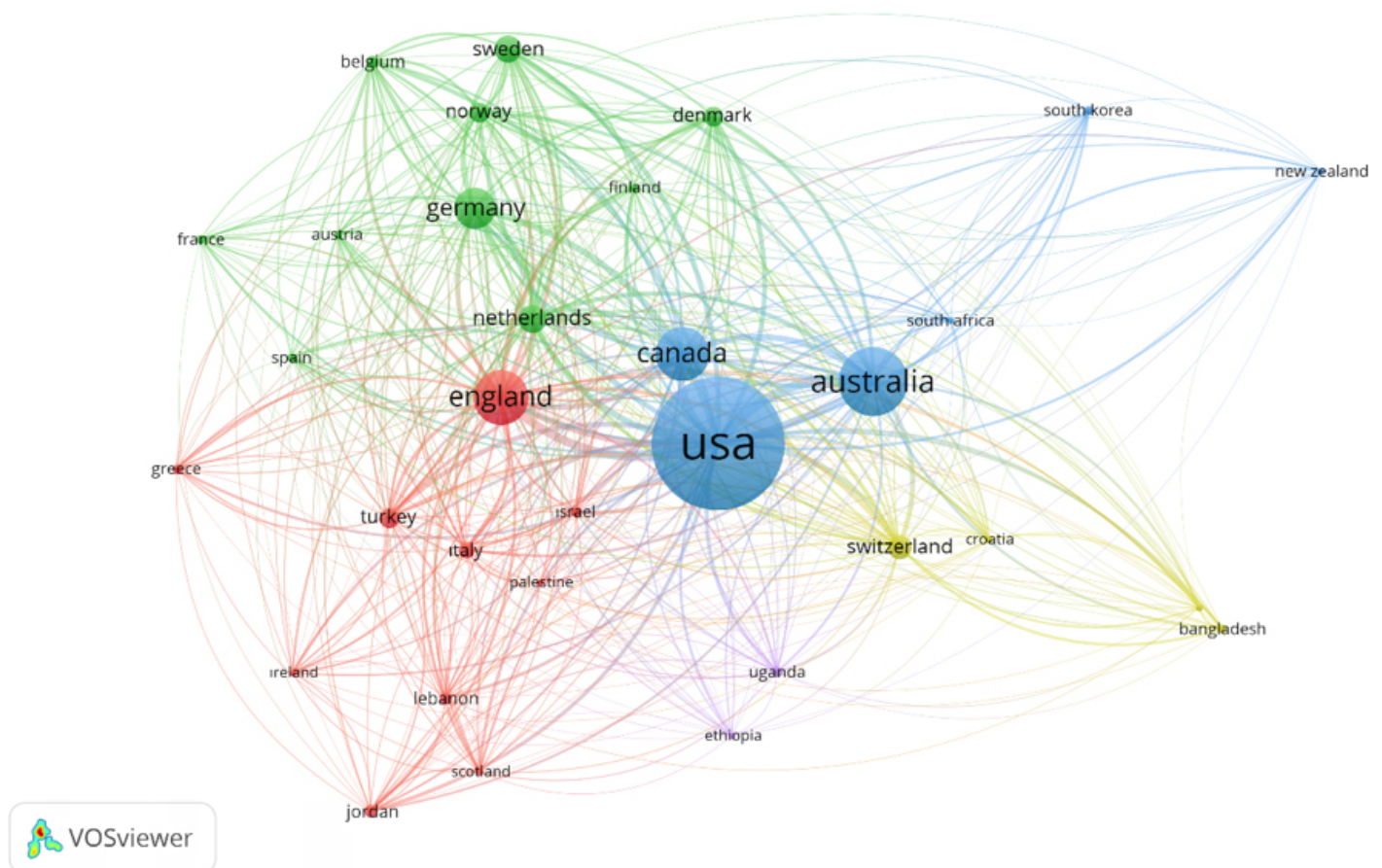


FIGURE 3. Citation link of countries.

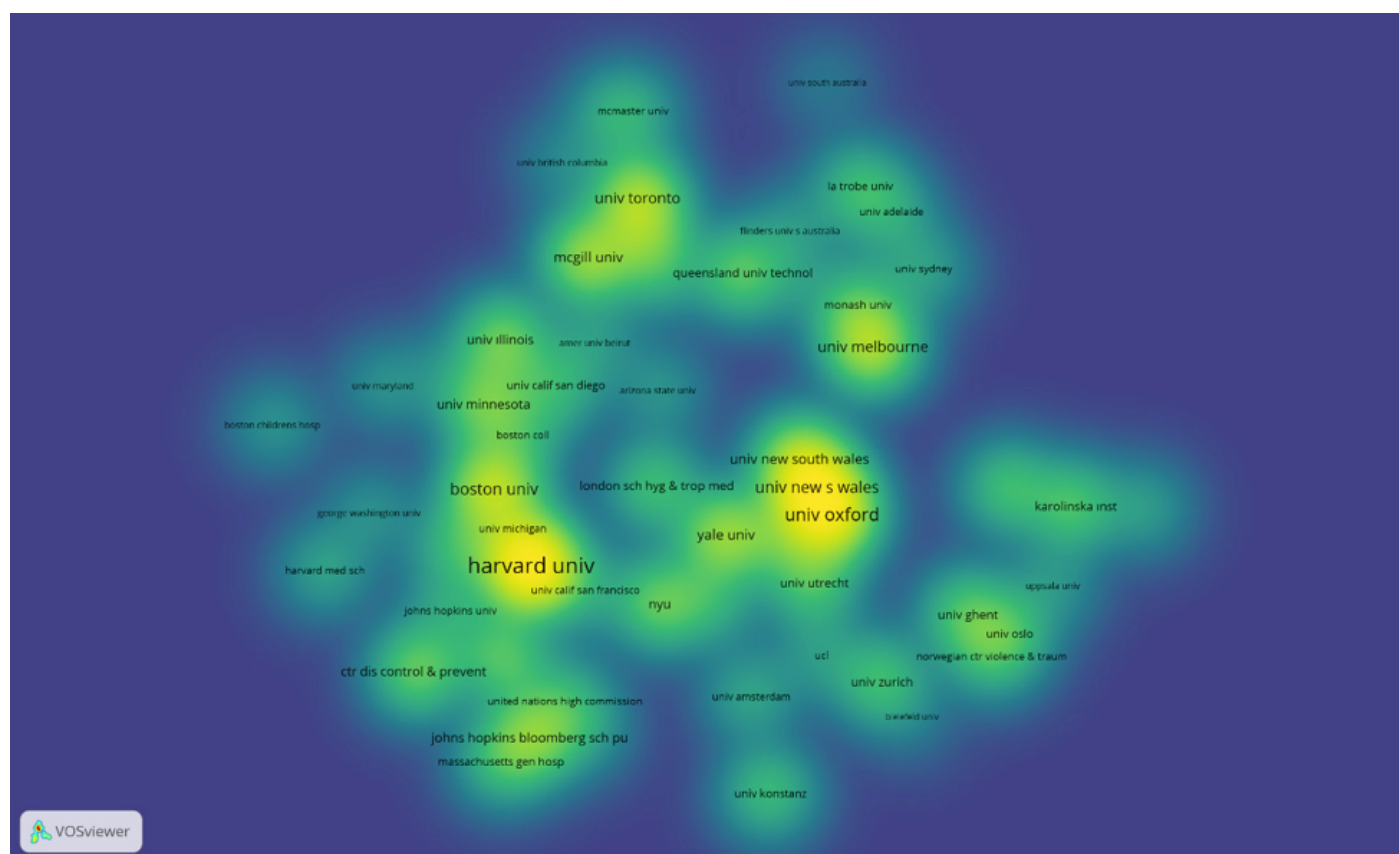


FIGURE 4. Density visualization map of citation analysis of active institutes.

corresponds to the number of publications, with larger circles indicating a higher quantity.

Density analyses of institutes were conducted, involving 60 institutions that published a minimum of 25 articles out of a total of 3,463 institutes. In Figure 4, clusters of the four hotspots have been grouped together due to their correlation with publishing articles. In Figure 4, institutions with the highest citation density are depicted in yellow, with the color transitioning to turquoise as the citation density decreases. The institutions that publish the most are University of New South Wales-Australia (108), the University of Melbourne-Australia (100), and McGill University-Canada (96), respectively. The most cited institutions are Harvard University-USA (4,961), Oxford University-England (3,287) and New South Wales University-Australia (2,782), respectively.

Most Cited Articles

Table 2 presents the top ten most cited articles on the mental health of refugees from 1992 to 2022. The most cited publication with 1,187 citations was published in “Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)”

TABLE 3. First 10 authors by record count and citation on the mental health of refugee

Authors	Record count	%	Citation
Silove D	57	1.45	2613
Nickerson A	51	1.29	1470
Bryant RA	46	1.17	2337
Ventevogel P	41	1.04	820
Rousseau C	39	0.99	1194
Derluyn I	34	0.86	1105
Bolton P	30	0.76	893
Steel Z	30	0.76	2017
Betancourt TS	29	0.73	864
Mollica RF	27	0.63	348

with the title of “Association of Torture and Other Potentially Traumatic Events With Mental Health Outcomes Among Populations Exposed to Mass Conflict and Displacement A Systematic Review and Meta-anal-

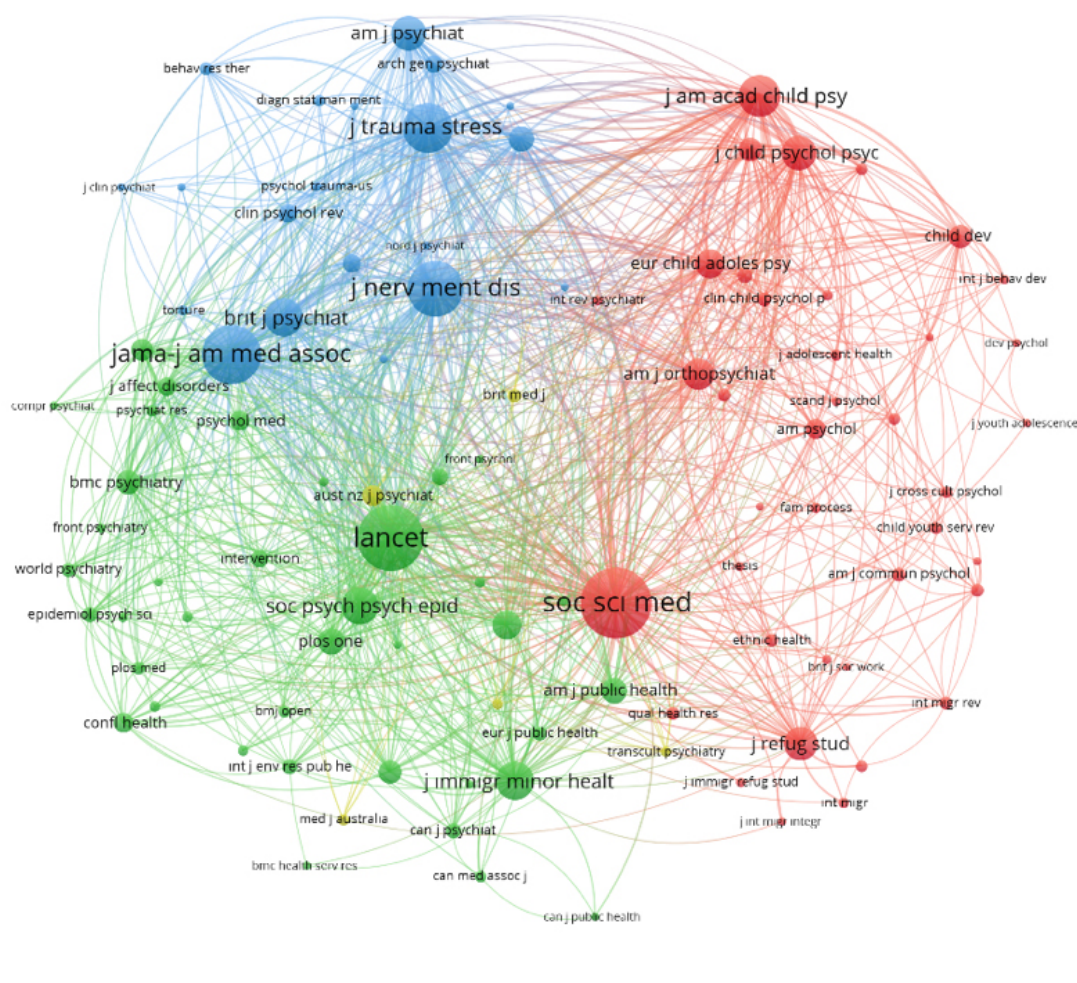


FIGURE 6. Network visualization maps of co-citation analysis of active journals.

(107; 2.72%), and Intervention International Journal of Mental Health Psychosocial Work and Counseling in Areas of Armed Conflict (104; 2.03). The top three most cited journals were Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease (3.588), Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health (2066) and Transcultural Psychiatry (1.392), respectively.

Commonly Used Keywords Analysis

Table 5 presents the top 10 most frequently utilized keywords that appeared in publications on the mental health of refugees from 1992 to 2022. The three most frequently used keywords were “Refugees”, “Mental health”, and “Refugee”. A total of 5606 distinct keywords were identified across 3912 publications. Bibliometric analyses of frequently used keywords were conducted, revealing 35 keywords that were employed at least 50 times.

DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to identify the bibliometric characteristics of 3912 research articles on mental health of refugee using WOS from 1992 to 2022, as listed in the supplementary material. This study represents the inaugural bibliometric analysis in this particular field. The bibliometric analysis reveals a consistent rise in the number of publications and citations over the years, particularly notable after 2016. This increase demonstrates the importance of bibliometric analysis in facilitating further research on refugee mental health by researchers. The increase in refugee mental health studies in the mid-2010s can be linked to the Syrian civil war. In fact, on a global scale, the largest irregular migration wave since World War II was experienced [24]. We predict that this increase will continue steadily in the coming years. We think that scientists will especially examine the changes in the mental health of refugees in depth.

TABLE 4. First ten journals sources by number of publications and citations in the mental health of refugee

Journal Name	Number of publications	%	Citations	Citations/article
International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health	112	2.84	744	6.64
Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health	107	2.72	2066	19.31
Intervention International Journal of Mental Health Psychosocial Work and Counselling in Areas of Armed Conflict	104	2.64	552	5.31
Journal of Refugee Studies	80	2.03	656	8.20
Journal of Immigrant Refugee Studies	69	1.75	573	8.30
Transcultural Psychiatry	63	1.60	1392	22.10
European Journal of Psychotraumatology	59	1.50	1074	18.20
Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease	53	1.34	3588	67.70
Conflict and Health	51	1.29	544	10.67
BMC Public Health	49	1.24	896	18.29

TABLE 5. Most frequently used 10 words and centrality

Words	Frequency	Total link strength
Refugees	887	1209
Mental helath	843	1312
Refugee	726	1038
Trauma	348	695
Depression	217	501
Post traumatic stress disorders	197	403
Children	160	323
Asylum seekers	148	265
Migration	122	207
Resilience	122	206

The results of this study show that refugee mental health is an important issue, especially for researchers working in the fields of psychiatry, clinical psychology, and public health. In terms of active countries and collaboration, the United States is surprisingly the largest contributor to publications on refugee mental health. The United States also ranks first in article citations, indicating its central role in scientific collaboration (Fig. 3). The United States is followed by Australia and England. These findings suggest that the aforementioned countries are attempting to address refugee health issues through their integration. In this regard, the study was consistent with previous bibliometric studies on various issues re-

lated to refugees [6, 8, 20, 25]. It is interesting to note that Turkiye [1], the country that hosts the most refugees in the world, ranks ninth among the countries that publish the most on this topic. We think that Turkiye follows the literature on this topic due to lack of resources and indifference. We think that encouraging measures should be taken for researchers in Turkiye to focus on this issue.

Furthermore, a majority of the most productive collaborations between institutions and institutes in this field have been identified in Australia and Canada. Harvard University (USA) is the institution that has the most references in this field. Strong citation collaboration was also observed between the University of Oxford and the University of New South Wales. The number of citations received is indicative of scientific productivity and quality, serving as a measure of the robust relationship within an active, motivated, and productive research team [26]. In this study, Steel et al. [14], Mollica et al. [15], and Porter and Haslam [16] were the articles with the three highest citation counts in this area. The extensively cited articles served as primary references in this domain, while the most frequently cited authors are recognized figures in their respective field [27]. In this study, Silove D's [14] research team was the most active with the most articles and the most citations. Silove is also the author of the highest rated publication.

In this study, the analyses of publication efficiency, citations and co-citations of active journals, International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health and Intervention International Journal of Mental Health Psychosocial

Work And Counselling in Areas of Armed Conf. obtained from the bibliometric analysis showed that it was the journals that published the first 10 articles most frequently. Most of the research papers were published in the most prominent journals in the field. The most important journals in terms of citation and co-citation analysis were Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease, Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health, and Transcultural Psychiatry.

Keywords provide a logical description of a journal topic and can profile an author's research preferences. They are also crucial for emphasizing the focal points of research and exploring trends within scholarly studies [24]. According to the results of the network analysis, the most frequently used keywords from 1992 to 2022 were refugees, mental health, refugee, trauma, depression, Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), children. Not surprisingly, the terms refugee and mental health were central. However, it was interesting that children were on the list. This shows that researchers focus on studies related to children.

This study has several limitations that should be highlighted. The first limitation is that although the title search minimised false positives, it may also yield false negatives. In the study, a search was made at the title level using only two words. This may cause deviations from focus by keeping the scope searched too broad, or may cause some articles to be missed because it is based only on title. Another limitation is that the keywords utilized in our study might not be exhaustive, and certain authors may have employed different terminology, leading to the exclusion of relevant publications. Finally, bibliometric data have limitations, such as differences in spelling, errors and inconsistencies related to indexing of topics, changes in journal titles, different ways of presenting authors' last names and initials, etc.

Conclusions

In summary, this bibliometric study shows that publications on refugee mental health have been observed since 1992 and are gaining momentum, especially after 2016. Most of these publications come from three countries: the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom. In addition to the terms "refugees" and "mental health," the keywords "depression," "PTSD," and "children" were most commonly used. Refugee communities also appear to have similar mental illnesses and experiences regardless of where and when they settled in the world. Research collaboration and networks should be encouraged to prioritize research in refugee mental health.

Ethics Committee Approval: This study is based on an open-access dataset, therefore, an ethical board review was not sought.

Informed Consent: Written informed consents were obtained from patients who participated in this study.

Conflict of Interest: No conflict of interest was declared by the authors.

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