

# Global trends and research mental health counseling: a bibliometrics analysis

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## Keywords

Mental health counseling, bibliometric analysis, global trends

## Abstract

The topic of mental health counseling is one that is now being explored quite a bit. The significance of preserving mental health is becoming increasingly clear to people. We use network visualization and quantitative bibliometric analysis to identify research trends and focus areas. We hope that this research will serve as a guide for upcoming follow-up research by outlining trends in mental health counseling research. The Scopus database's relevant English publications were taken out. The coauthorship networks of authors, nations, and the cooccurrence networks of author keywords were constructed using VOSviewer (version 1.6.17). We analyzed 452 articles published using the term "mental health counseling" from 1965 to 2022. The number of scientific articles related to mental health counseling jumped quite sharply in 2021 with a total of 52 documents. The top three earning authors are: Myers, B., Sorsdahl, and Lund, C. Some of the newest keywords that have emerged include: covid-19, counselor education, clinical mental health counseling, therapy, stress, mindfulness, self-care, substance use, psychological distress.

## INTRODUCTION

Mental health refers to a person's overall psychological well-being (Preston, Rew, & Young, 2023). It includes a person's emotional, social, and psychological well-being, and is an important aspect of overall health (Adler et al., 2023; Kwobah et al., 2023). Mental health is important because it affects how we think, feel, and act. It also plays a role in determining how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices (Kwobah et al., 2023). Good mental health is associated with feelings of happiness, well-being, and contentment, while poor mental health is associated with feelings of anxiety, sadness, and isolation. There are many factors that can affect a person's mental health, including genetics, life experiences, and environmental factors (Paterson, Paterson, & Ferris, 2023).

Mental health in the 21st century continues to be a major concern and focus for individuals, communities, and society as a whole (Kato et al., 2023; Slobodskaya, Safronova, Kharchenko, Rezun, & Kornienko, 2023). In recent years, there has been an increased awareness of the importance of mental health and the impact it can have on a person's overall well-being (Roy et al., 2020). Many people are now seeking help for mental health issues, and there is a growing recognition of the need for mental health services and support (Saltzman, Hansel, & Bordnick, 2020).

One of the key challenges in addressing mental health in the 21st century is the increasing prevalence of mental health disorders (Kato et al., 2023; Slobodskaya et al., 2023). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health disorders are among the leading causes of disability worldwide. These disorders can range from common conditions such as depression and anxiety, to more severe conditions such as bipolar disorder and schizophrenia (WHO, 2019).

Another challenge in addressing mental health in the 21st century is the stigma that still surrounds mental health issues. Many people continue to feel ashamed or embarrassed to seek help for mental health issues, which can prevent them from getting the support they need. This can make it difficult for individuals to receive the care and treatment they need, and can also make it harder for them to recover and live fulfilling lives. Mental health counseling can be provided to help those who need mental health services (Kato et al., 2023; Slobodskaya et al., 2023).

Mental health counseling, also known as psychotherapy or talk therapy, is a form of treatment that involves talking with a mental health professional in order to address and manage mental health issues and concerns (Crumb, Haskins, & Brown, 2019; Shea, Wong, Nguyen, & Gonzalez, 2019). Mental health counselors help their clients to understand and work through their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in order to improve their overall mental health and well-being (Ulupinar, Zalaquett, Kim, & Kulikowich, 2021). The goal of mental health counseling is to help people better understand themselves and their lives, and to develop the skills and strategies needed to cope with life's challenges in a healthy and productive way (Kim & Zalaquett, 2019).

The purpose of mental health counseling is to provide support, guidance, and treatment to individuals who are struggling with mental health issues (Crumb et al., 2019). Mental health counselors are trained to help people understand and manage their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, and to develop healthy coping skills (Ulupinar et al., 2021). They can provide a safe, non-judgmental space for individuals to explore their emotions and experiences, and can help them to identify patterns and behaviors that may be contributing to their mental health issues (Paterson et al., 2023). Mental health counselors can help people to cope with a wide range of mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, stress, trauma, and relationship issues. They can also help people to manage chronic mental health conditions, such as bipolar disorder and schizophrenia (Kim & Zalaquett, 2019).

Mental health counselors use a variety of therapeutic approaches and techniques to help people improve their mental health. These can include cognitive-behavioral therapy, which focuses on helping people change their negative thought patterns and behaviors; psychodynamic therapy, which focuses on exploring unconscious motivations and conflicts; and solution-focused therapy, which focuses on helping people develop and implement solutions to their problems (Kim & Zalaquett, 2019; Ulupinar et al., 2021). Overall, the purpose of mental health counseling is to provide support, guidance, and treatment to individuals who are struggling with mental health issues, and to help them improve their overall well-being and quality of life.

In the current study we used bibliometric quantitative analysis and network visualization to highlight research trends, areas of particular interest, and rising subjects. Mental health counseling is an interesting topic that can help people to have good mental health. We hope that by summarizing trends in mental health counseling, our work will serve as a roadmap for future research initiatives, allowing us to advance this field of study further.

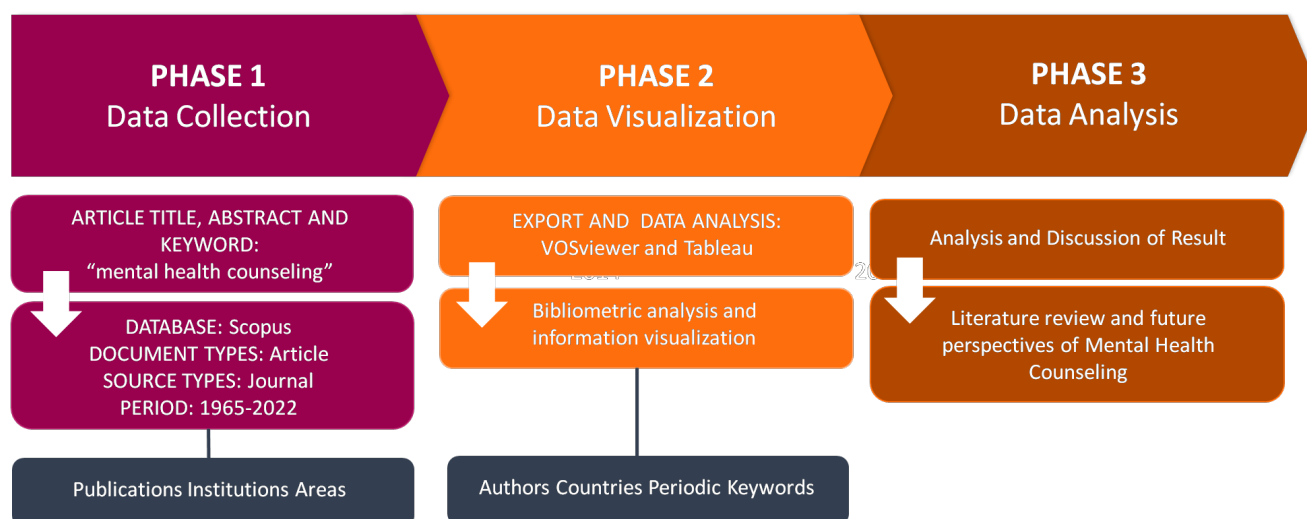
## METHODS

### Search strategy and inclusion criteria

The literature collection and evaluation of the documents obtained are divided into three phases in Figure 1: (Phase 1) definition of search criteria to identify records in the Scopus database; (Phase 2) documents exported to VOSviewer and Tableau for bibliometric analysis of publication, author, journal,

country, or institution; (Phase 3) data analysis to identify the main themes discussed in mental health counseling research.

A literature search was carried out on 15 August 2022, the documents collected in this study came from the Scopus database with key word input (TITLE-ABS-KEY ("mental health counseling")). We limit literature to article-type documents and those from journals only. Uses bibliometric analysis and network visualization to summarize trends in mental health counseling research. Bibliometric analysis can identify hotspots in a particular field, measuring the productivity of authors, journals, countries or institutions. We calculated the co-occurrence frequency of bibliographic information using co-word analysis. Clusters are displayed using co-occurrence information. Finally, the clusters were graphically visualized using VOSviewer version 1.6.17 (<http://www.vosviewer.com/>; Leiden University, The Netherlands) (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010, 2017) and Tableau to build a bibliometric network.



**Figure 1.** The methodological phase and its main steps and analysis criteria applied to this study

### Bibliometric analysis

One common step in bibliometric study is the visualization of bibliometric maps. It can identify hotspots in specific industries and assess the productivity of authors, journals, countries, or organizations. In order to visualize and assess bibliometric data in the area of mental health counseling, we adopted this method. We calculated the co-word frequency of the bibliographic data using co-word analysis. The clusters were made using the co-occurrence data. The clusters were graphically shown using VOSviewer version 1.6.17 ([http://www.vosviewer.com](http://www.vosviewer.com/); Leiden University, Netherlands) (Van Eck & Waltman, 2017) to complete the bibliometric networks (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010). We produced bibliometric maps using network mapping techniques that considered author coauthorships, countries and regions, and the co-occurrence of author keywords.

### Research ethics

Using Scopus, we looked for and downloaded data from bibliographic records. Access to this information was unrestricted. Neither human participants nor animal models were used in the study. So there was no requirement for ethical approval.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### The development of mental health counseling publications

For the period 1965 to 2022, according to search results in the Scopus database, 452 publications were found that used the term "mental health counseling". Over a period of time the number of journal articles shows an increasing trend (Figure 1). The results of the data analysis revealed that between 1965



### Coauthorship of organization

A total of 452 publications related to mental health counseling were obtained from Scopus. 1165 organizations are involved in research in the area of this publication. Figure 4 displays the top 10 contributing organizations, these organizations are among them: Department of Health Care Policy (3), Department of psychiatry (2), Mental Illness Research (2), Center for Information Technology and Evaluation Research (2), Ariadne Labs (1), Center for Surgery and Public Health (1), Department of Health Care Policy (1), Department of Psychiatry (2), Center for Primary Care (1), dan Department of Psychology (1). From figure 4 it is found that the top 10 organizations that contribute are all from the United States.



**Figure 4.** The coauthorship network of organizations who contributed to mental health counseling

### Coauthorship of authors

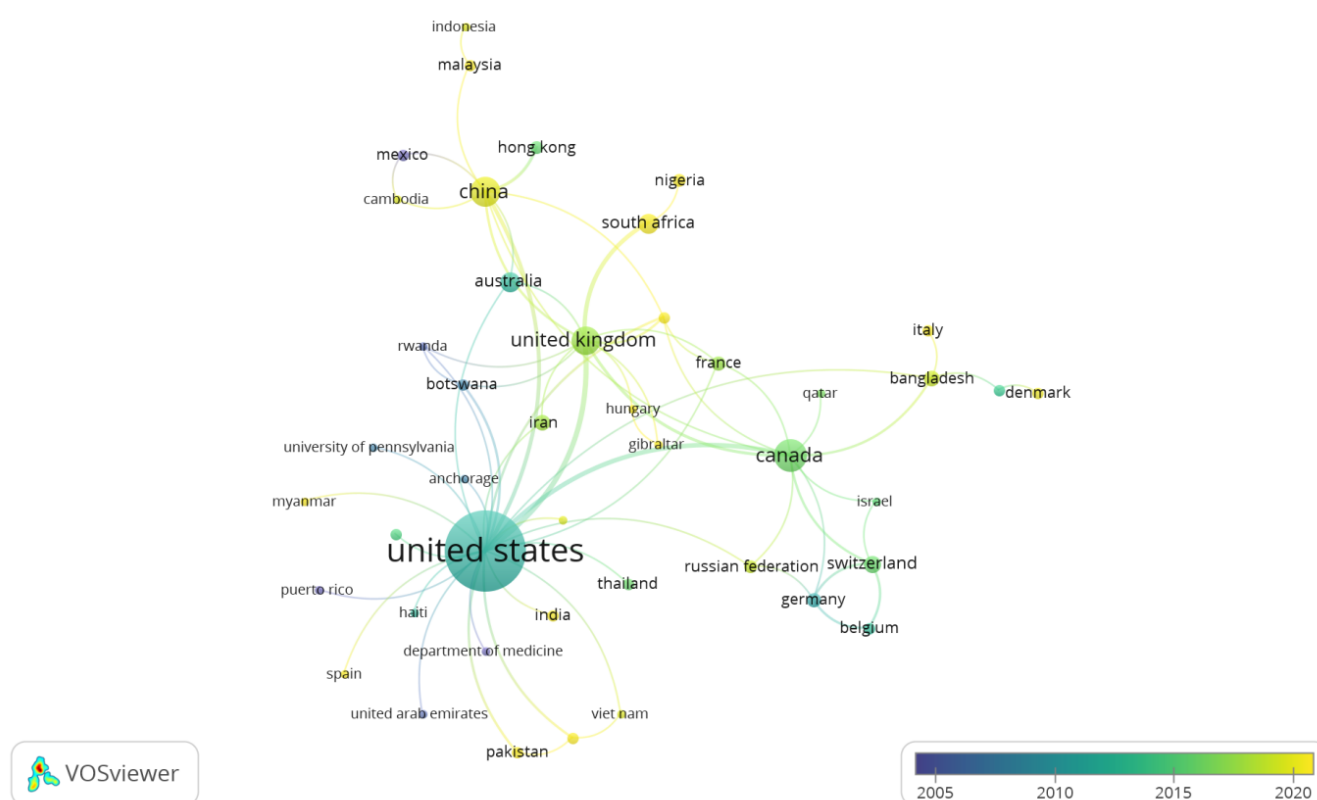
Overall, 1621 authors authored 452 publications, none of whom had fewer than two publications. The top 10 authors are shown in Table 1. The first authors are Myers, B. and Sorsdahl (7 publications), followed by Lund, C. and Naledi, T. and Stein, D.J. (5 publications). Further analysis shows that the most extensive co-authorship network is 100 authors visualized in 3 groups of figure 3.

**Table 1.** Top 10 most productive authors in mental health counseling research

Rank	Author	Publication, n	Citation, n
1	Myers B.	7	95
2	Sorsdahl K.	7	95
3	Lund C.	5	85
4	Naledi T.	5	85
5	Stein D.J	5	85
6	Van Der Westhulzen C.	4	38
7	Milligan P.	3	72
8	Janjua N.Z.	3	85
9	Krajden M.	3	85
10	Wong J.	3	85

### Mental health linked co-authorship networks

The visualized co-authoring map highlights the status of collaboration between researchers and countries. They shape the current opportunities and possibilities for future collaboration. The results of the co-authorship analysis were carried out to determine research collaboration on the basis of countries in the field of mental health counseling with a total of 65 countries. The United States is the most significant published country in the field of mental health research. In Figure 3 it can be seen that in research related to mental health several countries are directly connected to the United States, while several other countries are connected by Canada, China and the United Kingdom. Countries in Southeast Asia, including Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar, Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia, are still relatively new countries contributing to research in the field of mental health counseling marked in yellow in the image. Indonesia is one of the countries that is new to mental health counseling publications and only has collaboration with Malaysia.

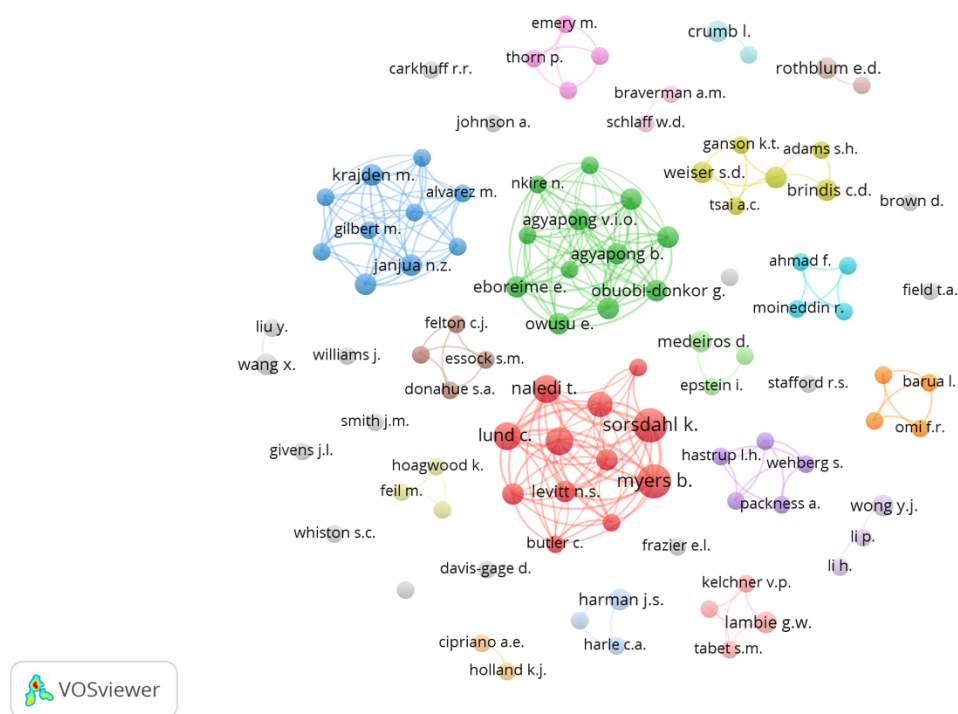


**Figure 5.** Overlay visualization Analysis co-authorship with countries analysis unit

### The areas in particular interest in mental health research

Keyword frequency co-occurrence analysis provides information on a wide range of topics in each field. However, having keywords that are frequently new in a given timeline indicates trending topics. Figure 6 displays an overlay on the authors keyword visualization. Based on the display in Figure 6, it can be seen that several keywords are divided into 5 clusters based on the time range. Cluster 1 (purple nodes) keyword that appeared in the latest 2012 is marked in yellow, which includes: covid-19, counselor education, clinical mental health counseling, therapy, stress, mindfulness, self-care, substance use, psychological distress.





**Figure 7.** The coauthorship network of authors who contributed to mental health counseling research

### The areas in particular interest in mental health counseling research

Analyzing the co-occurrence of keywords reveals information about the broad subjects in each discipline. However, the presence of fresh, frequently used phrases in a particular timeline indicates hot subjects. The use of keywords in mental health counseling research is growing and expanding over time. In Fig. 6 shows several nodes that have a larger size than other nodes, which means that these keywords are widely used in mental health counseling research with a total link strength above 20. These keywords include: mental health, depression, anxiety, covid-19, and counseling. Among these five keywords, covid-19 is the most recently used keyword which is indicated by yellow nodes.

Covid-19, also known as the coronavirus disease, was first identified in Wuhan, China in December 2019 (Ifdil, Fadli, Suranata, Zola, & Ardi, 2020). The World Health Organization declared it a global pandemic on March 11, 2020. During that period there were many mental health problems caused by public anxiety world against Covid-19, so many experts are doing research related to this problem (Ifdil, Fadli, Gusmaliza, & Putri, 2020). As of August 2022, there have been numerous research studies conducted on the impact of Covid-19 on mental health (Dela Cruz, Marcelo, Naling, & Ty, 2023; Schrempt et al., 2023). These studies have shown that the pandemic has had a significant impact on mental health, with many people experiencing increased levels of anxiety, depression, stress, and other mental health issues (Ifdil, Fadli, Suranata, et al., 2020; Putri et al., 2022; Situmorang & Ifdil, 2021). Studies have found that the isolation and uncertainty caused by the pandemic, as well as the loss of jobs and income, have contributed to these increased mental health concerns. Research has also shown that the pandemic has disproportionately affected certain groups, including health care workers, and those with pre-existing mental health conditions (Fadli, Amalianita, Zola, Situmorang, & Ifdil, 2021; Paterson et al., 2023; Putri et al., 2022). Due to the pandemic, many research papers were peer-reviewed and published more quickly than usual, and the number of studies on this topic is expected to continue to grow in the coming months and years.

## Mental health treatments

The keywords that are also widely used by the authors are those related to mental health treatments, keywords that have been trending before which are marked with dark colored nodes such as psychotherapy, counseling, medication (antidepressants), motivational interviewing, and care coordination. Then the newest keywords (yellow nodes), namely self-care, mindfulness, therapy, and clinical mental health counsel.

There are several types of mental health treatments that are effective in addressing the mental health concerns: 1) Psychotherapy: This type of treatment involves talking to a trained therapist about your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Different types of psychotherapy, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), have been found to be effective in treating anxiety and depression (Markowitz et al., 2021); 2) Medication: Antidepressant and anti-anxiety medications can be prescribed by a doctor or psychiatrist to help alleviate symptoms of depression and anxiety (Morris et al., 2021); 3) Self-help: There are many self-help strategies that individuals can use to improve their mental health. These include exercise, mindfulness, relaxation techniques, and staying connected with friends and family (Mills et al., 2020); 4) Support groups: Support groups can provide a sense of community and a safe space to talk about the emotional and psychological challenges (Bucher, Suzuki, & Samuel, 2019).

## CONCLUSIONS

Mental health counseling is one of the fields that always attracts the attention of researchers of mental health experts, this is shown by the increase in research in this field every year. The highest increase occurred starting in 2021 to coincide with the Covid-19 pandemic. There have been many research studies conducted on the impact of Covid-19 on mental health. The United States is the country that produces the most papers, followed by other countries in America, Europe and Asia. We hope that this work will serve as a guide for future research directions to advance this field of study, as well as a valuable foundation for identifying important research questions and opportunities for collaboration between research groups in the field of mental health counseling. This research highlights global trends in mental health counseling research, relating to the authors, countries and organizations involved, as well as the keywords used. Regarding limitations, data for analysis is currently only collected from Scopus (Elsevier), not from other search engines such as WOS, PubMed, or Google Scholar (Google LLC). As a result, it is conceivable that articles that are only available through one of these search engines are ignored.

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