

A Bibliometric Analysis of Refugee Health Publications in the Nursing Field between 1980 and 2023 by Visual Mapping Method

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1 **A Bibliometric Analysis of Refugee Health Publications in the Nursing Field between**
2 **1980 and 2023 by Visual Mapping Method**

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7

8 **Abstract**

9 **Background:** Millions of people worldwide are forced to migrate to another country, and nurses
10 are the key professionals for providing necessary health care to this population. Providing nursing
11 care to refugees or immigrants requires diverse transcultural professional competencies based on
12 standardized guidelines. This study aimed to examine the bibliographic characteristics of
13 publications on refugees and asylum seekers in the nursing field.

14 **Methods:** Data were obtained from articles scanned in the Web of Science Core Collection
15 database. The 1672 articles that were published between 1980 and 2023 and met the inclusion
16 criteria were analyzed using VOSviewer and Microsoft 365 Excel software. The BIBLIO Checklist
17 was used for reporting.

18 **Results:** Most publications were published in 2020. The United Kingdom, the United States,
19 Canada, and Australia have the highest number of publications, citations, and international
20 cooperation. Additionally, "mental health" was one of the most commonly used keywords in the
21 studies.

22 **Conclusion:** The findings show the importance of empowering nurses working in this field,
23 especially in determining the needs related to mental health services for refugees. The increased
24 migration rates and the growing need for health care for refugees highlighted the importance of
25 investment in nursing research within this field. Nurses and researchers should aim to establish
26 partnerships and share best practices with leading countries. Furthermore, nurses require
27 specialized training to competently evaluate and provide nursing care and mental health services
28 to this vulnerable population.

29

30 **Contributions to the literature**

- 31 • The findings show the importance of empowering nurses working in this field, especially in
32 determining the needs related to mental health services for refugees.
- 33 • The development of targeted policies and educational programs should aim at empowering
34 nurses and advocating for standardized guidelines to enhance nursing care for refugees.
- 35 • Policymakers must prioritize international collaboration, equitable healthcare, and the
36 integration of mental health services within healthcare systems to improve refugee health and
37 reduce barriers between them and health services.

38 **Keywords:** Asylum seekers, Healthcare, Mental health, Public Health, Refugee, Transcultural
39 nursing, Türkiye

40 **Background**

41 Millions of people worldwide are forced to migrate yearly due to violence, war, and natural
42 disasters. Political events such as the US invasion of Iraq [1] and Afghanistan [2], the Arab Spring
43 that started in 2010 [3], the civil war that emerged in Syria immediately afterward [4], the anti-
44 democratic rule in Iran [5], and finally the Russian Ukraine crisis [6] were effective in the
45 emergence of large population movements and large migration waves after World War II. These
46 waves of migration affected Türkiye and Eastern European countries the most in terms of the
47 regions where the mentioned political crises occurred [4, 6]. At the end of 2022, approximately
48 108.4 million people worldwide have been forcibly displaced. While the number of refugees has
49 decreased relatively in the last year, Türkiye is still the country hosting the world's highest number
50 of refugees (3.6 million) [7]. Although a significant proportion of the immigrant population who

51 headed to the closest safe areas managed to survive, they also faced significant social and health
52 problems in the regions to which they migrated [8, 9].

53 Refugees need to benefit from health services, education, and social assistance services [10].
54 Although legislative arrangements aim to ensure that all individuals have access to healthcare
55 services, there are many obstacles to achieving this goal. For example, refugees and asylum seekers
56 experience communication problems in the host country, and to avoid this problem, host countries
57 may offer limited translation services. In addition, the numerical and qualified inadequacy of health
58 professionals and their inability to provide culture-specific care also restrict access to services. As
59 a result, mental and physical health problems arise in refugees [8, 9].

60 As in every part of society, nurses are at the forefront of providing health services to refugees and
61 asylum seekers [11]. They play a crucial role in solving these individuals' physical and mental
62 health problems [12]. They carry out periodic health check-ups, provide preventive care, and
63 organize health education specific to these groups [13]. Therefore, it is recommended that nurses
64 working with individuals from different cultural backgrounds be competent in providing culturally
65 sensitive care [14]. Previous studies have shown that there are a limited number of guidelines that
66 guide nurses in providing culturally sensitive care, and the sufficiency of existing guidelines has
67 been debated [15-17]. Furthermore, providing culturally responsive care to support refugee
68 families' access to health services and community-based services has limitations as well as
69 facilitating aspects for individuals and health professionals [18].

70 It is necessary to evaluate the current health services to identify the barriers to accessing these
71 facilities by refugees and asylum-seekers, plan the necessary changes, and guide health
72 professionals, especially nurses. This study aimed to examine the bibliographic characteristics of
73 publications on refugees and asylum seekers in the nursing field. The results are anticipated to

74 establish a foundation for future research, aiding in the monitoring of advancements in nursing
75 practices. Furthermore, these findings are expected to contribute to the identification of areas for
76 improvement, aiming to alleviate challenges in delivering health services to refugees and
77 addressing their struggles in accessing healthcare. Additionally, even though the bibliometric
78 characteristics of the studies published on migrants, refugees, or asylum seekers in the field of
79 health services have been examined [19-21], similar studies have not been carried out in the field
80 of nursing in this respect.

81 **Materials & Methods**

82 *Aim*

83 This study aimed to reveal the characteristics of publications on refugees and asylum seekers in the
84 nursing field; and to analyze the citations made to these studies, the authors' countries, their
85 interactions, and international collaborations on this subject and to contribute to the literature.

86 *Design*

87 This study used bibliometric analysis methods to investigate refugee health publications in the
88 nursing field.

89 *Bibliometric analysis*

90 Bibliometric analysis includes quantitative and qualitative analysis of selected literature using
91 thematic, mathematical, and statistical methods [22, 23]. Bibliometric analysis thoroughly
92 examines information such as year, author, institution, language, country, publication type,
93 research area, number of citations, and keywords [24]. It also shows the extent of the national and
94 international contributions to the literature in a particular field. It establishes the basis for future
95 studies by identifying the gap in the literature with the data it provides [21]. In addition, if the

96 results of the analyses are concentrated on a specific issue or geographical region, they can guide
 97 decision-makers regarding possible problems and solutions [21]. The BIBLIO Checklist was used
 98 [25], and previous studies [26-28] were used as a guide for the present study.

99 *Data collection*

100 The data of this study were obtained from articles scanned in the Web of Science Core Collection
 101 (WoSCC) database, as they were considered suitable for this bibliographic review by the first
 102 (MSc) and second (PhD) authors. The reason for using the WoSCC was that this database is
 103 constantly being evaluated and updated to provide adequate and safe information and descriptive
 104 details about publications [27].

105 The words (ALL=(refeguee\$ OR asylum seeker\$)) AND ALL=(nurse* OR nursing) were used as
 106 the search criteria. The first search revealed 1708 studies published between 01.06.1945 and
 107 22.05.2023. However, considering the problems with old documents (inaccessibility of full text
 108 and potential information losses), the publication date in the search was limited to 1980-2023
 109 (Table 1).

110 Table 1. Data collection strategy and filtering

Database	Web of Science Core Collection	Number of articles
Keywords	(ALL=(refeguee\$ OR asylum seeker\$)) AND ALL=(nurse* OR nursing)	1708
Publishing year	1980-2023	1699
Document type	Article Review Article Editorial Material Early Access Meeting Abstract Letter Proceeding Paper	1672
Web of Science Index	Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) Science Citation Index (SCI-EXPANDED)	1672

	Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI) Arts & Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI) Conference Proceedings Citation Index – Science (CPCI-S) Conference Proceedings Citation Index – Social Science & Humanities (CPCI-SSH)	
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111 In the next step, other filtering features in the WoSCC database were used for the 1699 retrieved
112 studies. The "Book chapter," "correction," "news item," "book review," "note," and "meeting"
113 document types were excluded, and all Web of Science Index groups were included in the search.
114 After filtering, 1672 articles were obtained for bibliometric analysis. The data collection criteria
115 are given in Table 1. The information about the articles was downloaded from the WoSCC database
116 on 22.05.2023 in Excel Spreadsheet (savedrecs.xls) format for the analysis of descriptive data and
117 in RIS (saved-recs.ris) and Tab Delimited File (savedrecs.txt) formats for the analysis of
118 bibliographic citations.

119 *Data analysis*

120 A WoSCC-based literature analysis was conducted to obtain general information about publication
121 years, document types, languages, and the distribution of research areas. Descriptive characteristics
122 were analyzed using Microsoft 365 Excel software. The results obtained were visualized using
123 tables and figures. In the bibliometric analysis, VOSviewer software was used
124 (www.vosviewer.com), which visualizes the relationships and connections between the data. The
125 software has dots and lines connecting these points to visualize this information. The size of the
126 points and the lines connecting the points show the level of relationship and strength of the
127 connections between the values [29]. Link maps between authors, publications, journals, countries,
128 and the most frequently used keywords were created with this analysis.

129 *Ethical consideration*

130 This study was conducted according to the Declaration of Helsinki guidelines; ethical approval and
131 patient consent were not required for this study, as all the data were obtained from articles scanned
132 in the Web of Science Core Collection (WoSCC) database.

133 **Results**

134 *General information*

135 Firstly, the document type, languages, research categories, and publication years of 1672 studies
136 were analyzed. These articles were cited 21,677 times, with an average of 12.96 citations per
137 article. The h-index was 60, indicating that 60 articles were cited at least 60 times.

138 The document types of studies published between 1980 and 2023 were diverse. The original articles
139 (1366, 81.69%) were published most frequently. These were followed by review articles (185,
140 11.061%), editorial material (65, 3.88%), early access (41, 2.45%), meeting abstracts (32, 1.91%),
141 letters (16, 0.95%) and proceedings papers (16, 0.95%), respectively. It was found that articles
142 were published in 11 different languages, with English being the most common language (1641,
143 98.14%). Other languages used, although not commonly used, are German (11), Greek (4), Spanish
144 (4), French (3), Korean (3), Danish (2), Portuguese (1), Serbian (1), Italian (1), and Turkish (1).
145 Moreover, most studies were categorized as "nursing, 503 publications" or "public environmental
146 occupational health, 481 publications" when the research areas were analyzed (Figure 1).

147 The most publications were published in 2020 (213 publications), and it was observed that the
148 number of studies published in the last two decades increased almost continuously until 2020
149 (Figure 2).

150 *Journals, countries, institutions*

151 The 1672 studies reviewed in the study were published in 639 different journals. It was determined
152 that at least 20 articles were published in 10 journals on the subject. These ten journals were related
153 to immigration, nursing, public health, and mental health (Figure 3). The most active journal in
154 refugees, asylum seekers, and nursing was the "Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health," with
155 56 (3.34%) studies and 980 citations. The number of publications and the number of citations did
156 not increase at the same rate (Figure 3). The "Journal of Transcultural Nursing" (43 publications,
157 389 citations) and "International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health" (32
158 publications, 335 citations) ranked second and third, respectively, in the list of journals with the
159 most publications (Figure 3). The second (International Journal for Equity in Health, 14
160 publications and 706 citations) and the third journal with the highest number of citations (Social
161 Science & Medicine, 11 publications and 667 citations) received significantly fewer citations than
162 the first journal (Figure 3).

163 Clusters of different colors were obtained when the citation numbers of the journals that published
164 at least ten studies on the related subject and received at least five citations were compared. This
165 color indicates that "The Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health" was the most cited journal
166 and was closely connected with other journals with many citations (Figure 4).

167 Figure 5 shows the distribution of studies on refugees and nurses conducted in 122 countries and
168 the number of refugees in these countries according to The World Bank [30] data on a world map.
169 As the green color becomes darker, the number of publications increases. The five countries with
170 the most academic publications were the USA (600), Canada (279), Australia (278), England (148),
171 Jordan (83), and Türkiye (80) (Figure 5).

172 When the institutions to which the authors are affiliated were examined, it was seen that they were
173 mostly located in the United Kingdom (UK), the United States (US), Canada, and Australia. RLUK

174 Research Libraries UK produced the most articles, with 106 publications (Figure 6). It was
175 followed by John Hopkins University (75 publications), the University of Toronto (64
176 publications), the University of Alberta (59 publications), and Monash University (55
177 publications). Similarly, the countries with the most international cooperation among the authors
178 were the UK, the US, Canada, and Australia (Figure 7).

179 *Authors, citations, countries, keywords*

180 Table 2 shows that the most cited study is the "International Journal for Equity in Health" by
181 Shadmi et al. [31], followed by studies published by Roberts et al. [32] and Martin et al. [33].

182 In the analysis carried out to determine the most cited authors with studies in the field of refugees
183 and nursing, 5701 authors were identified. Seven hundred fifty-three authors with at least two
184 publications and ten citations were included in the analysis. Figure 8 shows that there are clusters
185 in different colors, and the cluster size increases as the number of citations of the authors increases.
186 Clusters of the same color from different authors and lines between clusters indicate that the authors
187 have worked together. Gagnon, Anita J. received 545 citations (18 publications) and had the most
188 collaborations with other authors. The second-ranked Merry, Lisa, conducted 17 studies and
189 received 402 citations. These authors were followed by Guruge, Sepali (nine publications),
190 Johnson, DR. (three publications), and Savik, K. (three publications), with 336, 329, and 329
191 citations, respectively (Figure 8).

192 When the number of citations was analyzed by country (minimum six publications and five
193 citations), Figure 9 shows that 578 studies based in the USA, which has the largest cluster, received
194 8,505 citations in total. Australia received 273 citations with 4080 citations, Canada received 4682
195 citations with 273 studies, and England received 1666 with 146 studies. Notably, these countries

196 had links between Sweden (1153 citations), Norway (950 citations), Jordan (844), Switzerland
 197 (780), Germany (727), the Netherlands (619 citations), and Türkiye (355 citations), which had
 198 fewer citations, meaning that the researchers worked together (Figure 9).

199 The analysis revealed that of the 3132 keywords used in refugee and nursing studies, 218 (at least
 200 five times) were used the most. Colors ranging from purple to yellow indicate the timeliness of the
 201 publications; the increasing size of the clusters indicates how often the keyword was used. In
 202 addition, words that are close to each other or have a line between them provide information about
 203 the extent to which these words were used together in the studies. In Figure 10, the word "refugees"
 204 in the center of the map was used 310 times. The keywords "refugee (176 times)", "mental health
 205 (120 times)", "migration (57 times)", and "depression (52 times)" were the other most used
 206 keywords in the map (Figure 10).

207 **Table 2.** Most cited studies

No.	Titles	Author (s), year	Journal	Total Citation
1	Health Equity and COVID-19: global perspectives	Shadmi et al. (2020) [31]	International Journal for Equity in Health	297
2	Mortality before and after the 2003 Invasion of Iraq: cluster sample survey	Roberts et al. (2004) [32]	LANCET	237
3	Canada's Universal health-care system: achieving its potential	Martin et al. (2018) [33]	LANCET	183
4	Population and fertility by age and sex for 195 countries and territories, 1950-2017: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2017	GBD 2017 Population and Fertility Collaborators (2018) [34]	LANCET	180
5	Somali immigrant women and the American health care system: Discordant beliefs, divergent expectations, and silent worries	Pavlish et al. (2010) [35]	Social Science & Medicine	165
6	Somali and Oromo refugees: Correlates of torture and trauma history	Jaranson et al. (2004) [36]	American Journal of Public Health	162
7	Language barriers between nurses and asylum seekers: their impact on symptom reporting and referral	Bischoff et al. (2003) [37]	Social Science & Medicine	152

8	Coping with trauma and hardship among unaccompanied refugee youths from Sudan	Goodman (2004) [38]	Qualitative Health Research	143
9	Challenges and facilitators for health professionals providing primary health-care for refugees and asylum seekers in high-income countries: a systematic review and thematic synthesis of qualitative research	Robertshaw et al. (2017) [39]	BMJ Open	130
10	Prevalence and care-seeking for chronic diseases among Syrian refugees in Jordan	Doocy et al. (2015) [40]	BMC Public Health	126

208 **Discussion**

209 This bibliometric analysis was designed to evaluate the existing studies on refugees or asylum
210 seekers in the nursing field. The literature emphasizes that nurses treating refugees with respect,
211 allocating sufficient time to them, and examining them comprehensively increase individuals'
212 satisfaction with health services [41]. However, since there was no such knowledge and experience
213 in Türkiye in the past, a comprehensive literature review would be useful in dealing with the
214 difficulties encountered in the system's functioning.

215 In this direction, when the findings of the study were analyzed, there were significant increases in
216 the number of publications on the access of the migrant population to health services in 1992, 2000,
217 2002, 2008, 2014, and 2018, respectively. It was observed that the number of publications rose
218 continuously from 2014 until 2020. The partial decline after 2020 was thought to be related to the
219 COVID-19 outbreak that caused the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic, which emerged acutely
220 at the end of 2019, has become the focus of researchers from all fields [42]. Therefore, teams
221 working on immigrants may have also shifted to this area. Alternatively, the submission processes
222 for studies on immigrants may have progressed more slowly, as journals preferred to publish
223 publications on research related to COVID-19.

224 The bibliometric analysis showed that the related studies were mostly published by journals in
225 subdisciplines such as migration, intercultural nursing, and health. The related journals stand out
226 as the first addresses to submit studies directly on these topics due to their subject areas. Therefore,
227 this may be why the journal with the greatest number of publications was the Journal of Immigrant
228 and Minority Health. The Journal of Transcultural Nursing was the most frequently published
229 nursing journal. Additionally, it is an important finding that the Journal of Advanced Nursing and
230 International Nursing Review, which is published in the field of nursing and is in the Q1 category
231 in the related field, was also included in the list [43]. Among these, the International Nursing
232 Review is a journal published by the International Council of Nurses, and it represents professional
233 nursing organizations worldwide and focuses on global political issues related to nursing [44].

234 When the countries in which publications on access to health services by asylum seekers/refugees
235 were published were analyzed, studies on these topics were often published by authors working in
236 the United States (339,179 refugees), Canada (130,125 refugees), and Australia (55,606 refugees),
237 countries founded by immigrants and still regularly receiving immigrants [30]. Nevertheless, it is
238 noteworthy that Jordan (3,047,612 refugees) and Türkiye (3,759,817 refugees), which stand out as
239 the two countries that have accepted the highest number of asylum seekers, especially after the
240 Syrian civil war [30], were also among the top six countries with the greatest number of
241 publications right after the UK, which ranked fourth in this topic. When the institutions were
242 analyzed, it was seen that the United States, Canada, and Australia were again in first place.
243 Regarding the number of citations, Jordan and Turkey were also included in the list; Jordan ranked
244 fifth after the UK, which was also fourth in this ranking according to the number of citations.
245 However, Türkiye was behind the number of citations to studies from Germany and Switzerland.

246 Although it is difficult to determine the exact reason for this, it is thought that it may be related to
247 the quality of the studies.

248 When research collaborations are evaluated, it should be considered that countries such as Turkey
249 and Jordan, which received great immigration in the last quarter century, lagged behind others in
250 research collaborations. Research collaborations were made between the UK, the US, Canada, and
251 Australia, as usual. At this point, it may be beneficial for researchers working in countries such as
252 Türkiye and Jordan to take the initiative to participate in these collaborations to carry out more
253 qualified and comprehensive studies.

254 Another important finding of the present study was determined by analyzing the frequently used
255 keywords in the publications. Keywords such as "mental health" and "depression" are, in the first
256 place, revealing how critical the studies in the field of mental health will be for this population.
257 Refugees and asylum seekers are more prone to mental disorders due to the problems they
258 experience during and after migration [45, 46]. It is known that refugees are in great need of mental
259 health services for reasons such as depression, anxiety, and posttraumatic stress disorder [45], and
260 it was stated that they were exposed to stigma and discrimination while receiving mental health
261 services [47, 48]. Furthermore, some of the studies aimed to improve this disadvantaged group's
262 health and mental well-being levels with evidence-based programs and interventions [49, 50].
263 However, for more effective results, psychiatric and mental health nurses should be included in the
264 team, and health professionals should provide culturally sensitive care [51]. The findings of the
265 present study show the importance of empowering nurses working in this field, especially in
266 determining the needs related to mental health services. In addition, it can be considered as
267 evidence that nurses specializing in psychiatric and mental health should also work in the refugee
268 health field.

269 *Limitations*

270 As in every study, some aspects could be improved in this bibliometric analysis. The study was
271 able to examine the articles published during a certain period. The studies included in the analysis
272 were limited to the articles scanned in the Web of Science Core Collection (WoSCC) database.

273 **Conclusion**

274 This bibliometric analysis revealed that the number of studies focusing on refugees in nursing
275 increased steadily until the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to the countries that
276 have received immigrants in the past, Türkiye and Jordan have also climbed to the top of the
277 ranking of countries with the highest number of scientific publications focusing on refugees;
278 however, it has been found that researchers from these countries were not sufficiently involved in
279 research collaborations. Nurses and researchers should aim to establish partnerships and share best
280 practices with leading countries. Additionally, keywords such as "mental health" and "depression"
281 were frequently used in the studies, indicating that mental health nursing and its competencies
282 should be given special importance in human resource planning and that nurses require specialized
283 training to competently evaluate and provide nursing care and mental health services to this
284 vulnerable population.

285 **Declarations**

286 *Ethics approval and consent to participate*

287 Not applicable.

288 *Consent for publication*

289 Not applicable.

290 *Availability of data and materials*

291 The datasets used during the current study are available from the corresponding author on
292 reasonable request.

293 *Competing interests*

294 The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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296 There was no external funding.

297 *Authors' contributions*

298 Study design: GO, GD, AKHS; Data collection: GO, GD, AKHS; Data analysis: GO, GD, AKHS;
299 Study supervision: GD, AKHS; Manuscript writing: GO, GD, AKHS; Critical revisions for
300 important intellectual content: GD, AKHS; all the authors have read and approved the final
301 manuscript.

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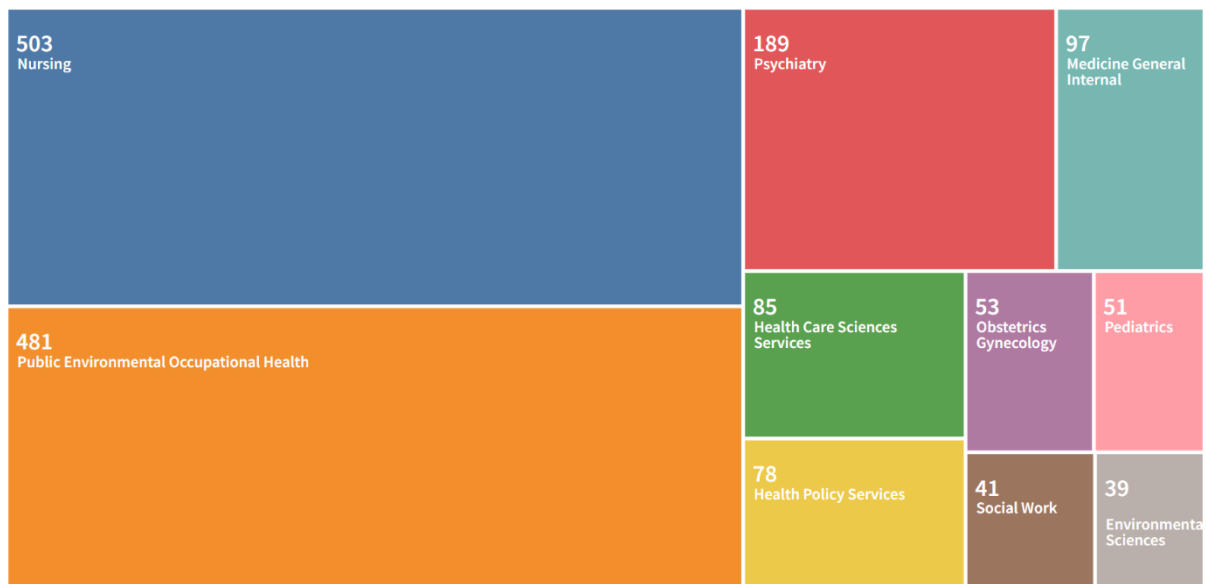
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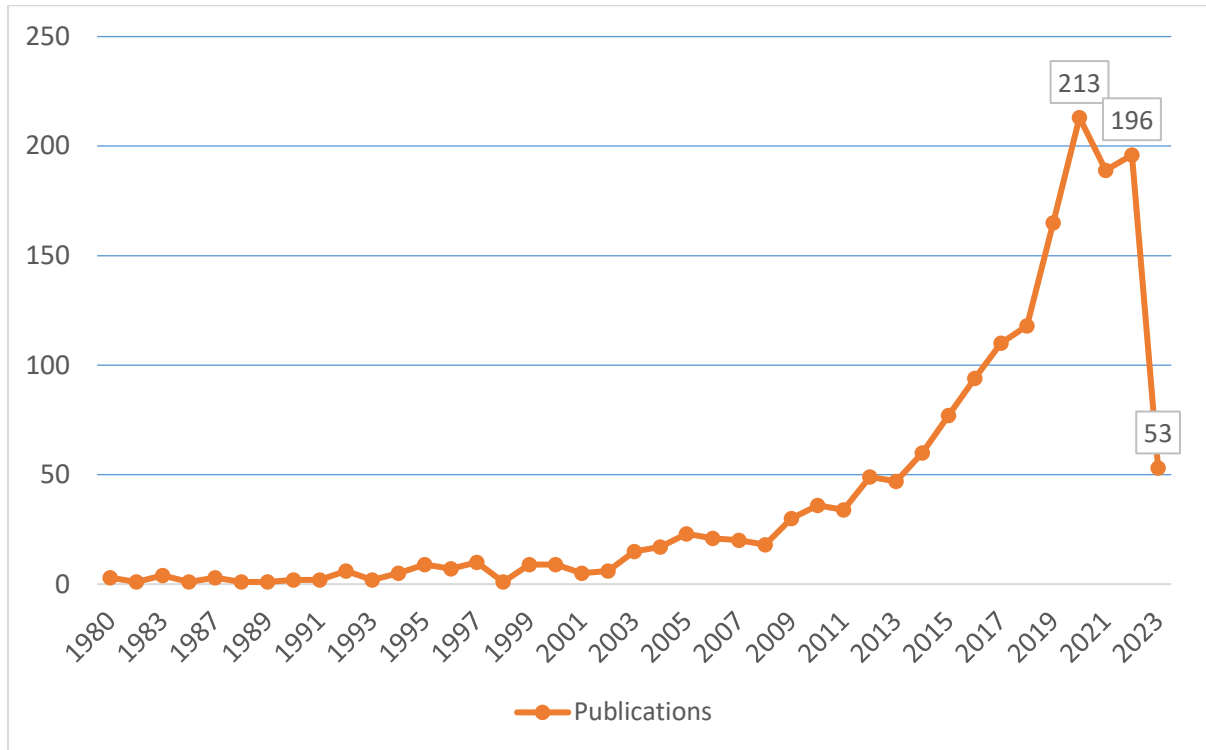
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448 **Figures**

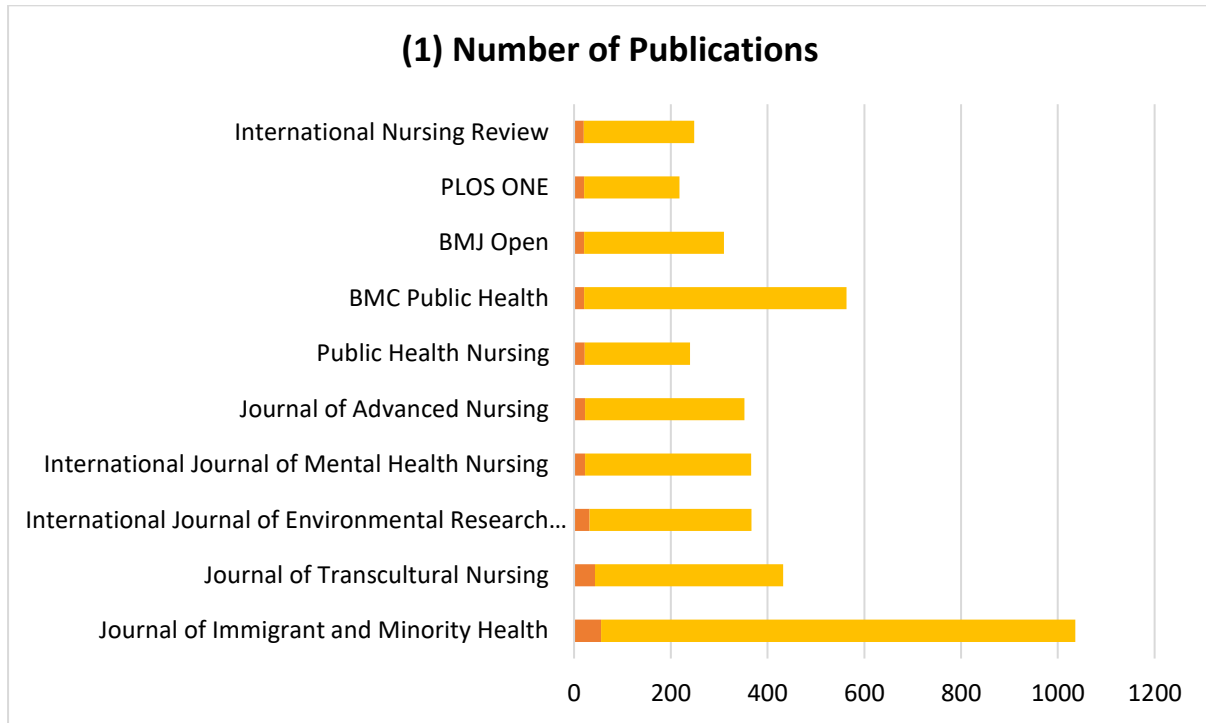


449
 450 Figure 1. Research areas of studies

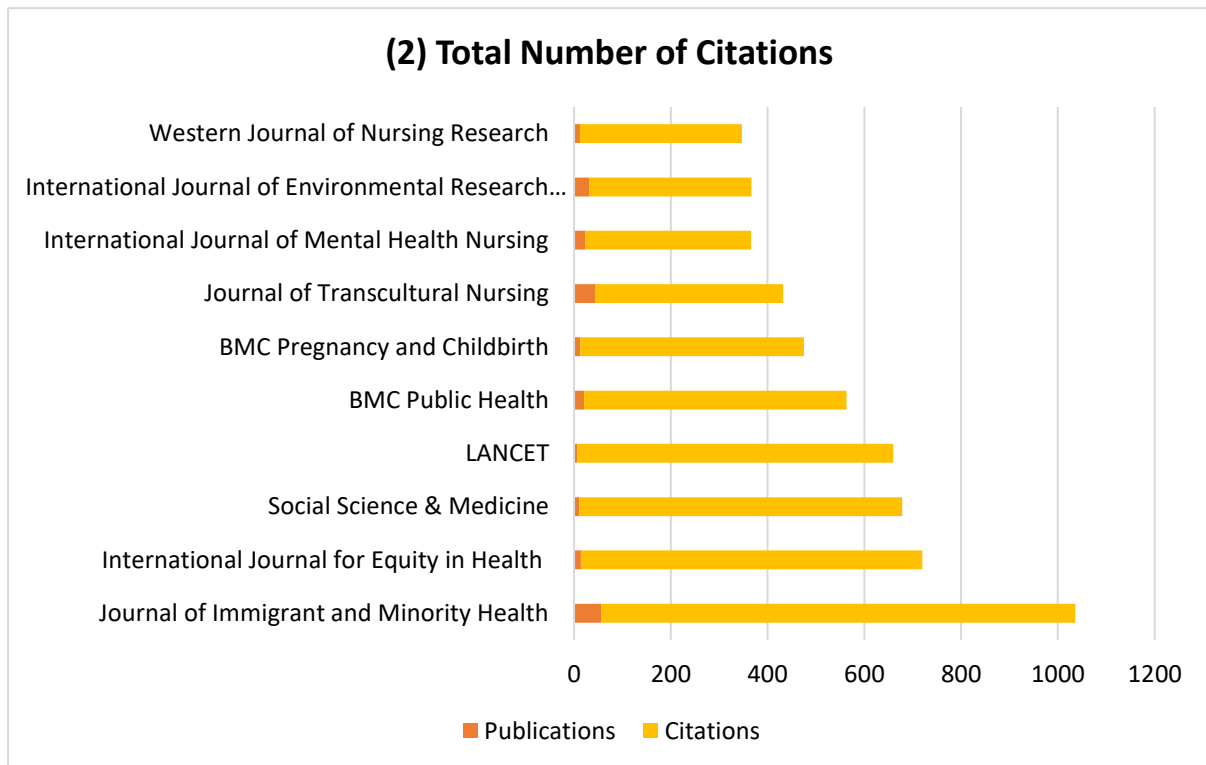


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452 Figure 2. Distribution of publications on refugees, asylum, and nursing by years (1980-2023)

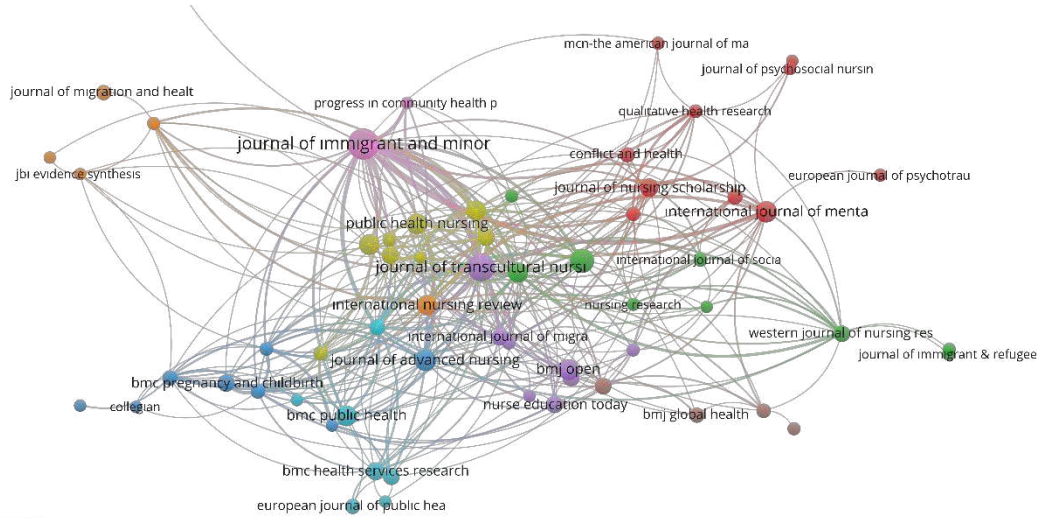


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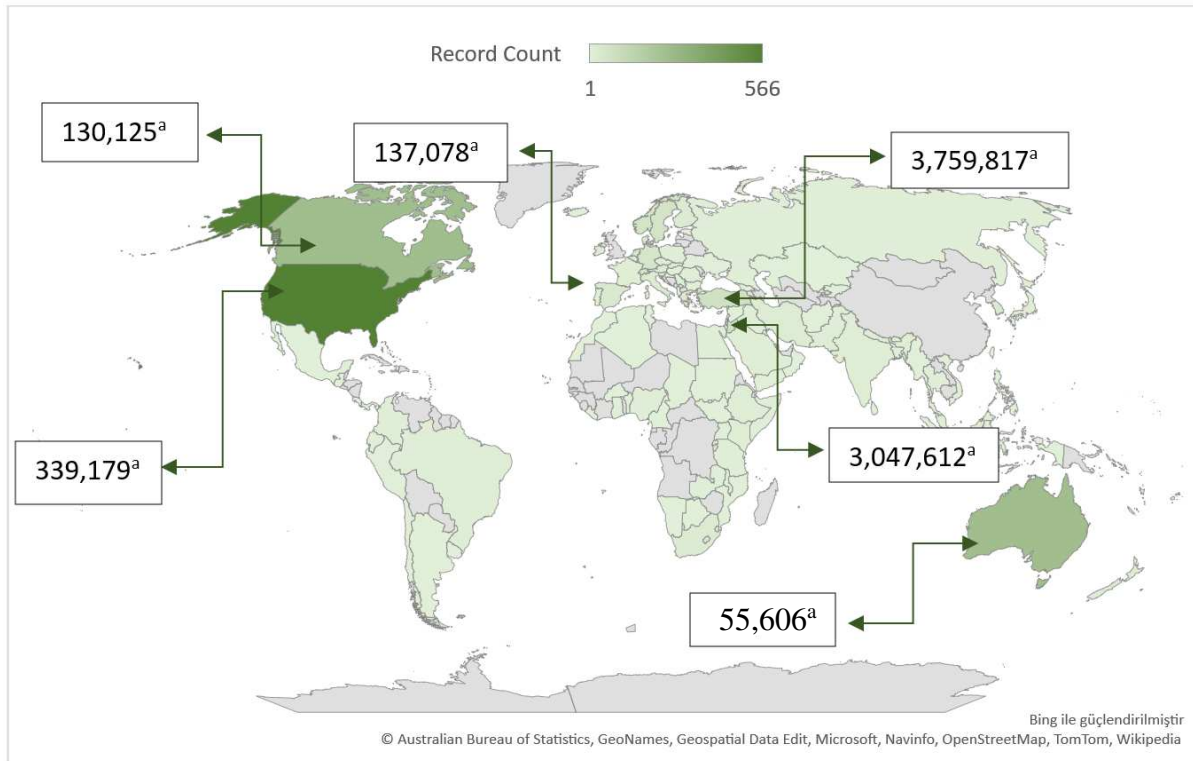
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455 Figure 3. Number of publications and total citations of journals



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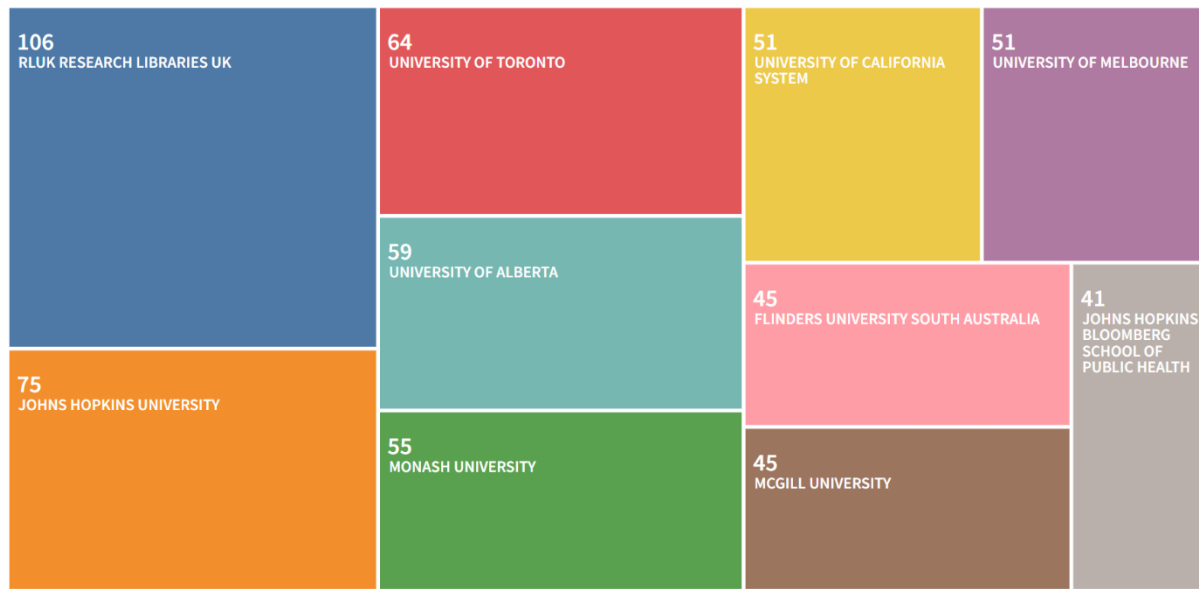
457 Figure 4. Citation count of journals and linkage map with other journals



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459 Figure 5. Geographical distribution of studies and number of refugees in countries

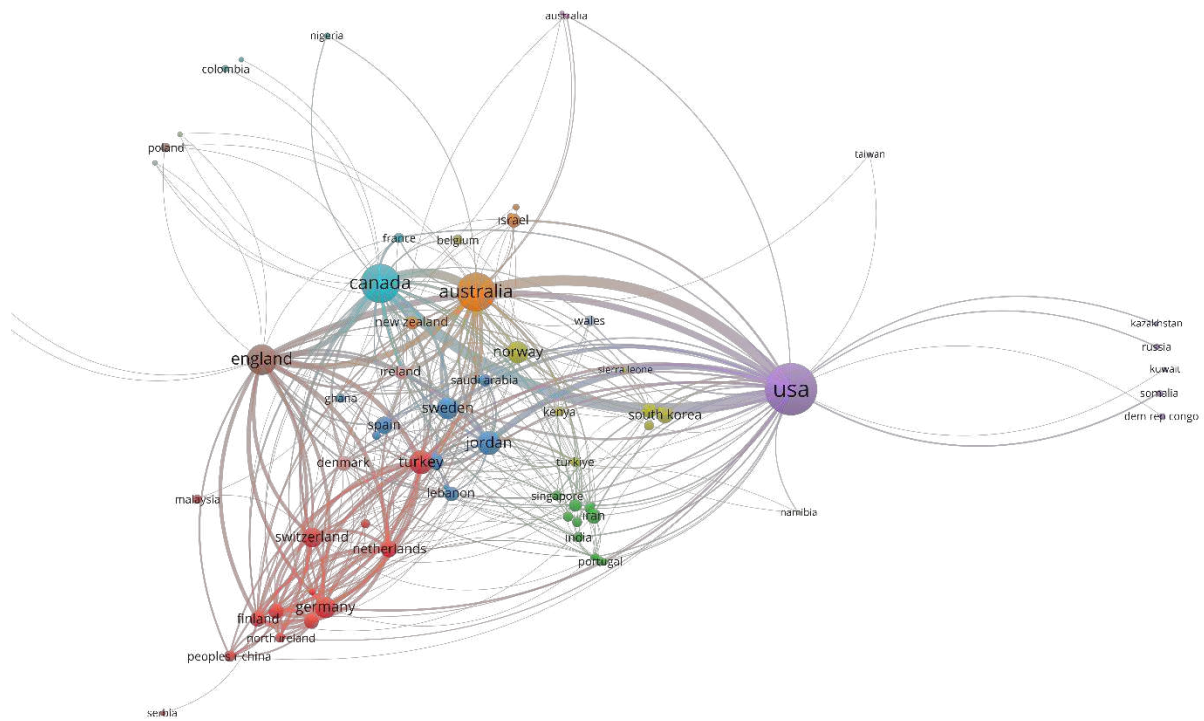
460 a The World Bank (2023)



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462 Figure 6. Organizations producing the most publications

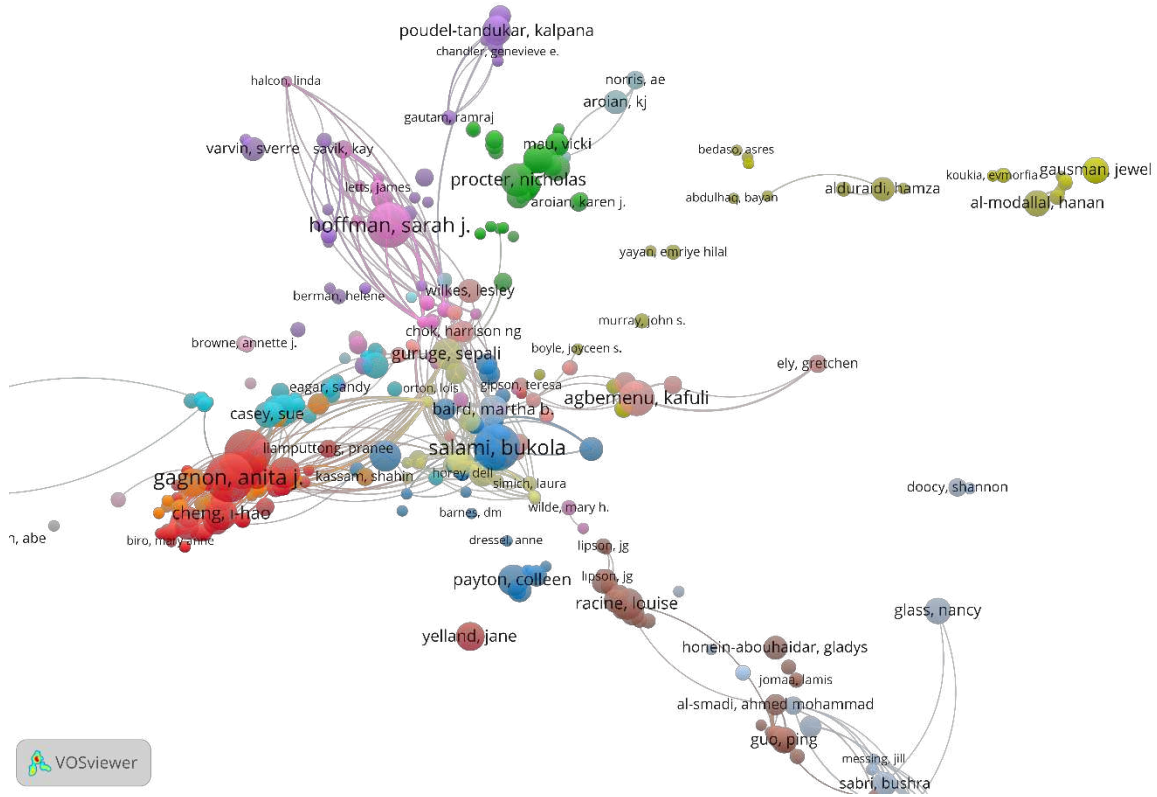
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VOSviewer

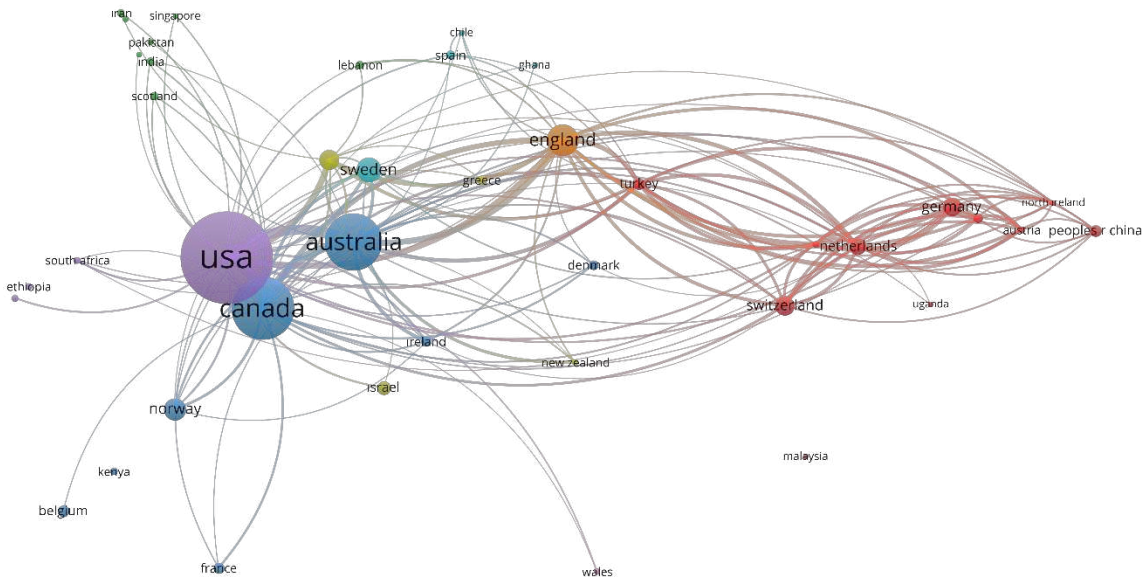
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465 Figure 7: Countries with the most international cooperation



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467 Figure 8. Map of authors, citations and linkage with other authors



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