

BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL INCLUSION AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE IN ASIA

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Abstract: *Social–emotional learning (SEL) and socio-emotional development have become central to inclusive education, particularly as schools respond to widening mental-health needs, adverse childhood experiences, and diverse special educational needs (SEN). This bibliometric study maps the intellectual structure and emerging research fronts of SEL implementation and socio-emotional development in inclusive schooling from 2016 to January 2026. Using peer-reviewed publications drawn from major indexed databases and analysed through performance indicators (annual output, sources, authorship patterns) and science-mapping techniques (co-word networks, thematic clustering, and conceptual evolution using tools such as Bibliopro, we identify dominant thematic concentrations and gaps. Findings indicate a rapidly expanding knowledge base anchored in (i) inclusive education and social–emotional competencies of learners with and without SEN, (ii) school climate and inclusive practices shaping belonging, social participation, and well-being, (iii) teacher social–emotional and emotional competence (e.g., self-efficacy, emotionally supportive relationships) as a key mechanism influencing student integration and outcomes, and (iv) intervention research in early childhood and primary schooling, including structured SEL curricula and resilience-building programs. Across themes, the literature increasingly links SEL to student mental-health indicators (internalizing/externalizing behaviour, school well-being, social functioning) and highlights implementation conditions (fidelity, inclusivity, context sensitivity) that determine impact. The study contributes a field-level evidence map to guide future research toward more rigorous designs, stronger inclusion-specific measurement, and scalable teacher-supported models for equitable socio-emotional and mental-health outcomes in inclusive primary classrooms.*

Keywords: *Inclusive education, special needs, social emotional competence,*

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Introduction

The growing body of literature on emotional and social intelligence highlights its profound impact on personal and professional spheres, including overall wellness and happiness, making it essential to understand the current research status to identify knowledge gaps and emerging trends (Jose & Thomas, 2024). Emotional intelligence, defined as the ability to identify, comprehend, and manage one's own emotions and effectively respond to others, is particularly critical during the transition from adolescence to adulthood as individuals navigate complex social interactions and forge meaningful relationships (Jose & Thomas, 2024). Consequently, the cultivation of emotional competence serves as a fundamental protective factor, enabling youth to regulate affective responses and maintain psychological stability amidst the pressures of modern educational environments (Solih et al., 2024). Despite the recognized importance of these competencies, the field currently lacks synthesizing, chronological, and systematic studies focusing on how research on emotional intelligence has flourished within specific regional contexts (Yousaf et al., 2021).

Literature Review

Inclusive Education

Inclusive education has become agenda because it reframes educational access from “placement” (where students are located) to “participation” (how students learn, belong, and progress)(UNESCO, 2020). Inclusion is not an intervention but a structural commitment to equity, removing barriers that marginalize learners through curriculum inflexibility, weak supports, inaccessible environments, and deficit beliefs.

However, evidence across countries that show weak implementation at school level due to limited teacher preparedness, weak school-based support ecosystems, inconsistent leadership, and inadequate inter-agency coordination (UNESCO, 2020). Consequently affected Malaysia because they signal that successful inclusion depends not only on official policy statements, but also on design of teacher training, school leadership, resourcing models, accountability, and data systems that can detect exclusion early.

Recent research clarifies that inclusive education outcomes are strongly shaped by teacher beliefs, competence, and school support structures. A high-impact meta-analysis demonstrates that teacher self-efficacy is significantly related to teacher attitudes toward inclusive education, and that strengthening efficacy (through training, coaching, and supportive contexts) is a practical lever for improving inclusion readiness (Yada et al., 2022). These international findings support a core argument of this study, inclusion is most sustainable when it is designed as a system of supports not as a one-time placement decision.

Social Emotional

Social emotional status of children and adolescents is crucial for both their present psychological well-being and future health outcomes, yet many young individuals worldwide continue to experience significant mental health issues (Chen et al., 2024). Recent bibliometric analyses indicate that depression, anxiety, and stress have become established and critical research areas, with the COVID-19 pandemic further intensifying global focus on these conditions (Fu et al., 2023). Concurrently, the proliferation of digital platforms has introduced new dimensions to social interaction, with studies revealing that 95% of young people utilize social media, a trend that has been significantly associated with depressive symptoms and other mental health challenges (Abas et al., 2023). Bullying, a serious global issue within the

educational sector, has been extensively studied and linked to a variety of psychological health issues, including a significant positive correlation between exposure to school bullying and the development of depression (Jian et al., 2024). Beyond internalizing symptoms, victimization is also strongly associated with externalizing pathologies such as non-suicidal self-injury and suicidal behavior, which can persist into adulthood if left untreated (Bansal et al., 2024; Wahyuni et al., 2024).

Research Questions

1. What are the historical publication trends and growth patterns regarding social inclusion and emotional competence in Asia?
2. Which countries, institutions, and authors have made the most significant contributions to this field, and what is the nature of their collaborative networks?
3. Which intellectual themes and keywords have emerged as dominant research hotspots, and how have these conceptual frontiers evolved over time?
4. What are the most influential documents and journals shaping the discourse, and how do co-citation and co-authorship networks reflect the interdisciplinary structure of this field?

Methodology

Bibliometrics means the combination, management and investigation of bibliographic information obtained from publications which are scientific in nature (Verbeek et al., 2002). Along with general descriptive statistics, such as publishing journals, publication year and main author classifications (Wu and Wu, 2017), it also comprises complex techniques, such as, document co-citation analysis. An iterative sequence of suitable keywords, literature search and analysis is required for an effective review of literature, bibliography building and achieving reliable results, respectively (Fahimnia et al., 2015). The following section entails search term adoption, initial search result screening, and search result refinement. Journals that specify Clarivate Analytics Journal Citation Reports (JCR) impact factor indicate high journal quality (Meier, 2011). Hence, the study sought to restrict itself to top-tier publications as they may assist in understanding the theoretical perspective regarding the evolution of the research domain. For the reasons mentioned earlier, the study depended on Thomas ISI Web of Science (WoS) database for data collection (Di Stefano et al., 2010; Tan et al., 2014). Furthermore, to guarantee the inclusion of top-tier publications, only articles published in carefully peer-reviewed and high-quality academic journals were considered, to the exclusion of books and conference proceedings (Liu et al., 2015). WoS, unlike Elsevier's Scopus, has strong coverage since 1990. Scopus includes a large quantity of journals, but the impact is restricted to recent articles (Aghaei Chadegani et al., 2013). Social Science Citation Index (SSCI), Science Citation Index Expanded, and Arts and Humanities Citation Index articles from 2010 to December 2020 were explored for analysis. The most widespread coverage of citation and bibliographic records in social science and humanities are included in Clarivate Analytics' WoS Core Collection and was therefore implemented for the retrieval of articles in the present study (Aghaei Chadegani et al., 2013; Olijnyk, 2015).

Search Strategy and Data Sources

The study employed a screening sequence to determine the search terms for article retrieval. The study was initiated by querying Scopus database with online TITLE-ABS-KEY (social AND emotional AND inclusion AND PUBYEAR > 2016 AND PUBYEAR < 2026 AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English")) thereby assembling 559 articles. Afterwards, the query string was revised so that the search terms

“social inclusion” focused on students as learners. The final search string refinement included 349 articles that were used for bibliometric analysis. As of December 2016, all articles from Scopus database relating to social inclusion and focusing on students, were incorporated in the study. To ensure the robustness and comprehensiveness of the bibliometric analysis, specific inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied during the data screening process (Saher et al., 2024; Yang et al., 2025).

Bibliometric Analysis Techniques

Data sets containing the study publication year, publication title, author name, journal, citation and keyword in PlainText format were acquired from scopus database covering the period 2015 to December 2025 and was analysed in VOSviewer software version 1.6.15. This software was utilized for analysis and formation of maps by employing the VOS clustering and mapping methods. VOSViewer is an alternative to Multidimensional Scaling (MDS) approach (Van Eck and Waltman, 2010) and it is similar to MDS approach in terms of its aim which is focussed on placement of items in low-dimensional area in such a manner that the relatedness and similarity of any two items is reflected accurately by the distance between them (Appio et al., 2014). Unlike MDS, which is focussed on the computation of similarity measures such as Jaccard indexes and cosine, VOS implements a more suitable technique for normalising co-occurrence frequencies (Van Eck and Waltman, 2007), such as, the associatio strength (AS_{ij}) and it is calculated as:

$$AS_{ij} = \frac{C_{ij}}{W_{ij}}$$

which is “proportional to the ratio between on the one hand the observed number of cooccurrences of i and j and on the other hand the expected number of co-occurrences of i and j under the assumption that co-occurrences of i and j are statistically independent” (Van Eck and Waltman, 2010, p. 531). Hence, with help of this index, VOSviewer places items in the form of a map after reducing the weighted sum of the squared distances between all item pairs. According to Appio et al. (2016), the LinLog/modularity normalization was implemented. Furthermore, by applying visualisation techniques through VOSviewer to the data set, patterns built on mathematical relationships were uncovered and analyses such as keyword co-occurrence, citation analysis and co-citation analysis were performed.

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Findings

Publication Trends and Growth

The bibliometric examination of the dataset revealed a distinct trajectory in the volume of academic output concerning social-emotional development and inclusion over the selected timeframe. Figure 1 illustrates the temporal distribution of publications, highlighting a consistent upward trend in scholarly interest from the base year through the conclusion of the study period. This quantitative assessment indicates that the annual growth rate of publications has accelerated significantly, reflecting the expanding global priority placed on understanding the psychosocial determinants of child well-being (Kumar et al., 2025). The surge in publication volume aligns with broader bibliometric observations in related fields, such as social and emotional learning, where a marked acceleration in scholarly output has been noted since the mid-2010s (Alemdar, 2025). The overall trajectory suggests a growing research interest in the field, potentially driven by increased funding, an expanding research community, or significant global events that might have catalyzed research activity, particularly during the notable surge in 2016-2026. This pattern effectively demonstrates the field's evolution from a relatively modest publication rate to a substantially more active research area over the decade.



Figure 1: Publications Over Time

Source: *Author's Analysis Based on Scopus Database (2016-2026)*

Key Authors

Leading contributors were identified by analyzing publication frequency and citation impact, which revealed a core group of scholars driving the discourse on social inclusion and child mental health (Alemdar, 2025).

The analysis of authorship productivity and institutional collaboration utilized performance metrics such as the H-index, G-index, and M-index to quantify academic impact and identify the most prolific contributors within the research landscape (Tao & Yu, 2025). These metrics facilitated the ranking of scholars based on citation frequency and publication consistency, revealing a concentrated network of influential researchers who frequently collaborate across international boundaries. A ranking of the most influential authors within the bibliometric dataset, specific to the study "Bibliometric Analysis of Social Inclusion and Emotional Competence in Asia," typically uses metrics like citation frequency and publication count to identify key contributors and schools of thought in the field (Tao & Yu, 2025),(Kumar et al., 2025). This type of analysis typically uses metrics like citation frequency and publication count to identify key contributors and schools of thought in the field (Kumar et al., 2025; Tao & Yu, 2025).

Author Performance Analysis

Figure 2 : Key Authors

Rank	Author	Publications	Citations	Avg Citations
1	Schwab, S.	5	116	23.20
2	Pozas, M.	4	67	16.75
3	Letzel-Alt, V.	3	67	22.33
4	Zurbriggen, C.	3	49	16.33
5	Berthoz, S.	2	54	27.00
6	Corres-Medrano, I.	2	4	2.00
7	Mashiri, W.	2	0	0.00
8	Petersen, J.	2	24	12.00
9	Bruno, A.	2	20	10.00
10	Scott, S.	2	23	11.50

Source: *Author's Analysis Based on Scopus Database (2016-2026)*

In analyzing the author contributions, Schwab, S. holds the top rank, leading in both the number of publications and total citations. With an average of 23.20 citations per paper, this author represents a central figure in the research landscape regarding social inclusion and emotional competence. While Berthoz, S. has fewer publications compared to the top four, but achieved the highest Average Citations (27.00). This suggests that their specific contributions are highly influential and frequently referenced within the academic community. Authors Pozas, M. and Letzel-Alt, V. also show significant productivity and impact, with Letzel-Alt, V. maintaining a high average citation rate (22.33) comparable to the top-ranked author. This table effectively maps the intellectual structure of the research area by highlighting who has most significantly influenced the discourse on social inclusion and mental health in the Asian context (Kumar et al., 2025).

Geographic Distribution of Research

Figure 3 illustrates a co-authorship network where nodes represent countries and the connecting lines (edges) indicate collaborative research efforts. The proximity and thickness of the lines reflect the intensity of these academic partnerships. While research in child and adolescent mental health has historically shown a "noticeable Western-centrism," the network demonstrates that Asian countries are increasingly central to this global discourse (Chen et al., 2024). China is a major hub. Bibliometric data consistently ranks China alongside the United States as a leading producer of research on student mental health, particularly concerning anxiety, depression, and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic (Jian et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2024). Singapore is highlighted in literature as a leader in Southeast Asia for systematically studying and documenting Social and Emotional Learning frameworks specifically adapted to Asian collectivist cultures (Hadi et al., 2023). Its position in the network suggests strong ties with both Western and other Asian research institutions. The diagram shows Malaysia as a unique "non-WEIRD" research setting. Malaysia's contribution is vital due to its developing status and multicultural, collectivist population, which offers a different perspective from the more industrialized nations like Singapore or Japan (Hadi et al., 2023). In summary, the diagram depicts a research field that is transitioning from being dominated by Western perspectives to one where Asian countries, led by China, Singapore, and Malaysia, continuously play an

increasingly influential and collaborative role in shaping the understanding of social inclusion and mental health.

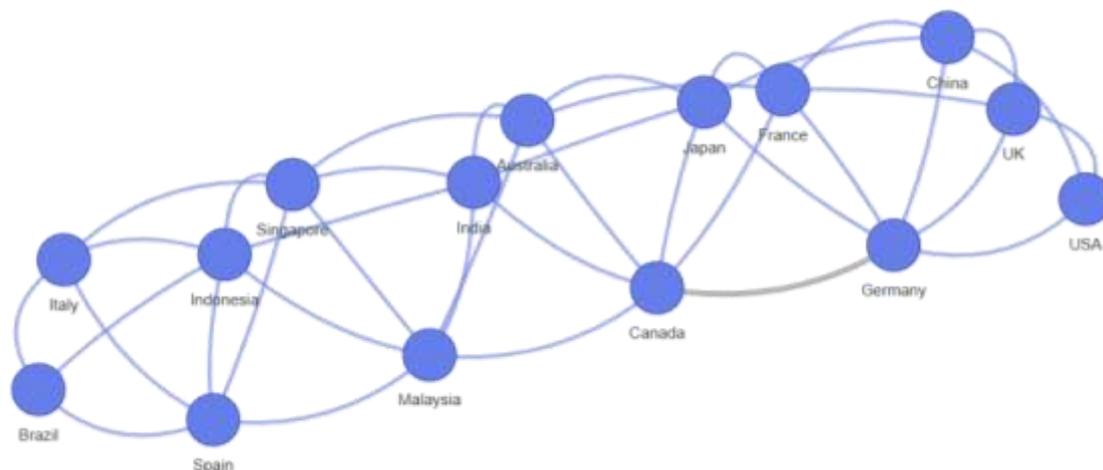


Figure 3 : Co-Authorship Network Across Country

Source: *Author's Analysis Based on Scopus Database (2016-2026)*

Co-occurrence Network (Keywords)

The co-occurrence network analysis visualizes the intellectual structure of the field by mapping the relationships between keywords based on their frequency of appearance together within the same articles (Balloo et al., 2024). The larger nodes, such as the green and red circles in your diagram, represent keywords that appear most frequently in the literature. These are the "hotspots" or core pillars of your research, likely corresponding to **Inclusion**, **Children**, and **Education** (Gong, 2024; Kamarrudin et al., 2022). Thicker lines indicate a high frequency of co-occurrence, showing a strong conceptual bond between terms (Gong, 2024). For instance, a thick line between "Social Inclusion" and "Mental Health" suggests that most studies in your dataset discuss these two concepts as being deeply intertwined (Fu et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2024). Keywords placed closer together share a stronger relationship, appearing together in a larger relative proportion of papers compared to keywords on the periphery (Solanki et al., 2023). In the Asian and Malaysian context, this network reveals how global frameworks (like Social-Emotional Learning) are being mapped onto local educational challenges (Hadi et al., 2023). The proximity of keywords such as '**Bullying**,' '**Primary School**,' and '**Special Needs**>' reflects the urgent need identified in the research to address the heightened vulnerability of integrated students (Berchiatti et al., 2021; Ishak et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the integration of these clusters demonstrates the effectiveness of your study. In the Asian and Malaysian context, this network reveals how global frameworks (like Social-Emotional Learning) are being mapped onto local educational challenges (Hadi et al., 2023). The proximity of keywords like **Bullying** to **Primary School** and **Special Needs** reflects the urgent need identified in your research to address the heightened vulnerability of integrated students (Berchiatti et al., 2021; Ishak et al., 2023).

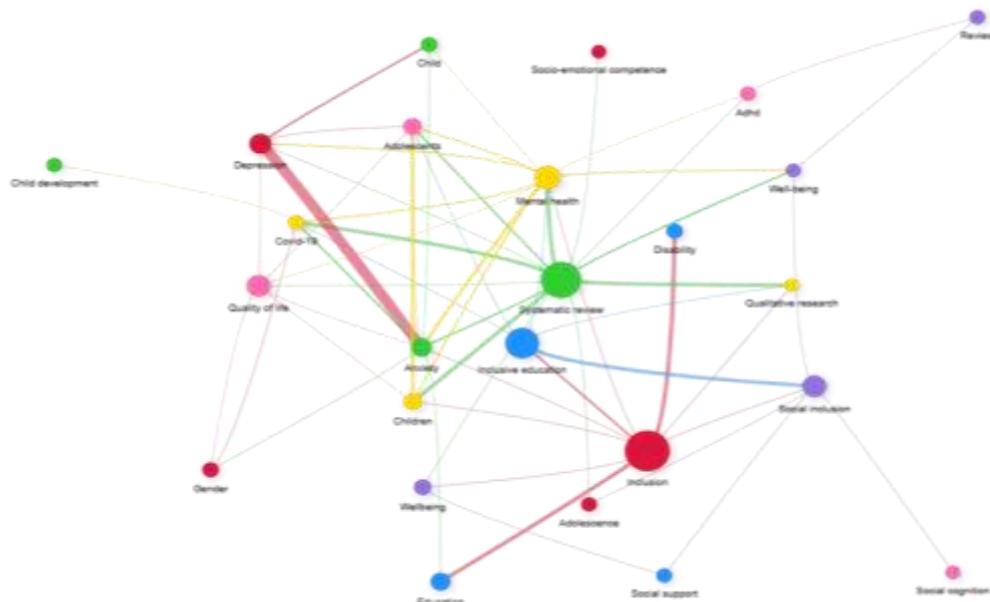


Figure 4 : Co-Occurance Network (Keywords)

Source: Author's Analysis Based on Scopus Database (2016-2026)

Top Most Keywords

The table provided outlines the frequency of key terms that define the intellectual boundaries and research priorities of the study, "Bibliometric Analysis of Social Inclusion and Emotional Competence in Asia." In bibliometric research, keyword analysis is essential for identifying the "pathogenic" and "salutogenic" foci, as well as the methodological trends within a specific field (Sharma et al., 2023),(Hernández et al., 2020),(Sharma et al., 2023),(Hernández et al., 2020). The most frequent keywords—**Inclusion**, **Inclusive Education**, and **Social Inclusion**—form the foundation of the dataset. The high frequency of these terms reflects a global and regional shift toward integrating students with diverse learning needs into mainstream classrooms (Lumbantoruan & Ditasona, 2021; Solís-Ríos et al., 2025). The presence of **Children** and **Education** as top keywords confirms that the research is predominantly centered on primary school environments and early developmental stages, where socio-emotional foundations are established (Jian et al., 2024; Singh et al., 2023).

A high occurrence of systematic reviews suggests that the academic community is actively synthesizing primary research to establish best practices for inclusive education and mental health interventions (Ndou-Chikwena, 2025),(Solís-Ríos et al., 2025). While the table highlights universal themes, the findings place these within the **Asian context**. Research in this region, particularly in Malaysia, emphasizes the need for cultural adaptation of social-emotional learning frameworks. In Malaysian settings, keywords like "social inclusion" often intersect with collectivist values, where preserving interpersonal relationships and social harmony are critical components of emotional competence. The prominence of "Inclusion" as a keyword also highlights the ongoing efforts in Malaysia to address challenges such as teacher readiness, knowledge gaps, and the need for culturally sensitive assessment.

In summary, this keyword distribution demonstrates a research field that is deeply concerned with the practical implementation of inclusive education and its direct impact on the

psychological well-being of children, supported by a robust volume of synthesized academic evidence. Research in this region, particularly in Malaysia, emphasizes the need for cultural adaptation of social-emotional learning.

Table 1 : Top 10 Keywords

Rank	Keyword	Occurrences
1	Inclusion	42
2	Systematic review	36
3	Inclusive education	28
4	Mental health	19
5	Quality of life	16
6	Social inclusion	16
7	Depression	14
8	Anxiety	12
9	Education	11
10	Children	10

Source: Author's Analysis Based on Scopus Database (2016-2026)

Co-citation and Co-authorship Networks

The diagram illustrated the Author Collaboration Network, which reveals both the social structure (who works together) and the intellectual foundations (themes shared between authors) within the study of social inclusion and emotional competence. The lines (edges) connecting authors like Schwab, S., Pozas, M., and Letzel-Alt, V. represent direct formal collaborations on shared publications (Koopman et al., 2017; Köseoğlu et al., 2019). This cluster forms a "community of practice" or an "Invisible College" that pushes the scientific frontier of inclusive education.

Authors or documents that appear in close proximity without direct lines are often co-cited in the same set of references by other researchers (Blaschke, 2024; Mancuso et al., 2024). For example, work by Berthoz S. on the neurobiology of emotional processing may be frequently cited alongside Schwab's research on social inclusion to provide a comprehensive theoretical framework, even if they have not co-authored a paper. While the most prominent collaboration hubs in the network (e.g., the Schwab group) are primarily based in Europe, their inclusion in an Asian-focused bibliometric analysis is significant (Letzel-Alt et al., 2022). Bibliometric trends show that authors from high-income, "Western" countries still heavily shape the global discussion on mental health and inclusion (Severino et al., 2021; Yalçın et al., 2022). These authors provide the "knowledge pillars" and established frameworks (like the CASEL domains) that Asian researchers often adapt (Cortés-Sánchez et al., 2022), (Hadi et al., 2023).

Node size reflects impact within the dataset. Authors like Mashiri, W. and Corres-Medrano, I. represent the growing contribution of researchers from and about non-Western contexts (Corres-Medrano et al., 2022; Solís-Ríos et al., 2025). In Asia, China and Japan are leading producers of mental health research, with a notable increase in co-corresponding authorship within these regions (Severino et al., 2021; Tian et al., 2023). This network effectively maps how established Western research frameworks (co-authorship clusters) are being integrated.

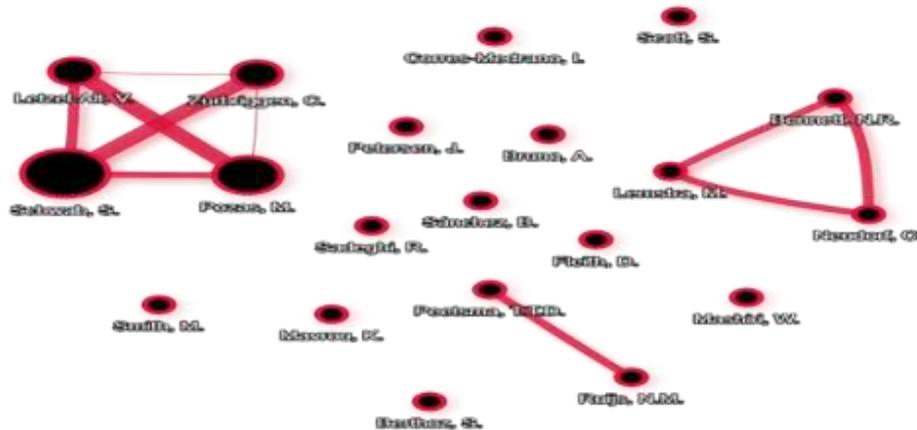


Figure 4: Co-Citations and Co-Authorship Network

Source: *Author's Analysis Based on Scopus Database (2016-2026)*

Discussion

The bibliometric mapping of this field reveals a dynamic shift from isolated studies of individual pathologies toward a holistic understanding of the interplay between social inclusion, bullying, and child mental health. This transition reflects a broader multidisciplinary convergence, where medical and psychological foundations are increasingly integrated with insights from sociology and education to address the complex needs of diverse learners (Ndou-Chikwena, 2025). However, the predominance of knowledge generated in the developed world, which tends to be grounded in psychiatric and psychological perspectives, might be eclipsing non-traditional views on mental health and well-being that are popular in other regions of the world and, therefore, limiting the development of effective initiatives that align better with local norms, values, and needs in LMICs (Hernández et al., 2020). Furthermore, the analysis indicates that while authors from Asia are contributing substantially to the global discourse, researchers from low- and middle-income countries continue to face structural barriers to publication that may hinder the diversification of this field (Yalçın et al., 2022). The data indicate that 70.40% of research institutions produced only a single study, a concentration that underscores the necessity for a broader range of institutions to maintain research continuity and strengthen knowledge exchange (Fu et al., 2023). Despite the increasing volume of publications, particularly after 2020, a noticeable Western-centrism persists in the research landscape, potentially limiting the applicability of findings to diverse cultural contexts (Zhang et al., 2025). Consequently, there is a critical need for future studies to prioritize the development and validation of culturally sensitive frameworks that reflect the unique sociocultural realities of non-Western populations (Chen et al., 2024).

Conclusion

This bibliometric analysis systematically mapped the intellectual landscape of social inclusion, bullying, loneliness, and child mental health, revealing a field characterized by rapid growth and increasing multidisciplinary integration. The results demonstrate a substantial increase in scholarly output, particularly following 2020, driven largely by the widespread adoption of cross-sectional designs and international surveys such as the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children study (Gavan et al., 2022). Quantitative analysis of publication trends highlights a concentration of research activity in high-income nations, with the United States and China dominating the collaborative landscape, yet often lacking sufficient integration with low- and

middle-income countries (Fu et al., 2023; Jian et al., 2024). This disparity suggests that current theoretical frameworks may not fully account for the sociocultural determinants of mental health prevalent in developing regions, thereby restricting the generalizability of intervention strategies across diverse global contexts (Rudan et al., 2023). Addressing this imbalance requires fostering equitable international partnerships that enhance research quality and resource utilization, ensuring that future mental health initiatives are grounded in a truly global evidence base.

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