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MAPPING THE LANDSCAPE OF ELDERLY CARE RESEARCH: A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS USING VOSVIEWER

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Abstract: *The increasing global ageing population necessitates a deeper understanding of elderly care dynamics. This study provides a bibliometric analysis of 4,932 peer-reviewed articles related to elderly care published between 2006 and 2025 for 20 years, retrieved from the Scopus database. Using VOSviewer, the study identifies major research trends, co-authorship patterns, institutional and country contributions, keyword co-occurrences, and the most influential publications in the field. Results reveal a consistent growth in scholarly output, strong collaborative networks primarily in developed countries, and dominant research themes revolving around ageing populations, long-term care, mental health, and caregiving. The findings offer valuable insights for academics, practitioners, and policymakers focused on elderly well-being.*

Keywords: *Elderly Care; Bibliometric; Publication trend; Co-authorship*

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Introduction

The world's population is ageing at an unprecedented rate, with individuals aged 65 and older expected to account for 16% of the worldwide population by 2050 (WHO, 2021). This demographic change is primarily caused by falling fertility rates and rising life expectancy in both industrialized and developing countries. As populations age, governments and communities are under increasing pressure to modify healthcare, social services, and infrastructure to accommodate the demands of older persons. The need for comprehensive and sustainable aged care systems has never been more pressing. As a result, research in the subject of aged care has grown dramatically during the last two decades.

This increase in scholarly interest reflects the many concerns that come with aging populations, such as chronic illnesses, mental health issues, elder abuse, and social isolation. Researchers have looked into everything from medical therapies and palliative care to social support networks and governmental frameworks (Pask et al., 2018). These studies frequently emphasise the necessity of combining health and social care to improve the quality of life for the elderly. Furthermore, the role of informal caregivers and the effects of caring on family dynamics have garnered increased attention. Despite the increasing number of research, it is important to understand how knowledge creation has developed over time and where gaps may still persist. Previous surveys of the literature generally used narrative or systematic methodologies to investigate themes and findings in senior care (Aveyard, 2023). Such evaluations have been useful for integrating research on nursing care, dementia, geriatric policy, and elder housing. However, these studies tend to focus on content rather than the structure and dynamics of the study area. Few studies have used quantitative methods to assess publication patterns, scientific partnerships, and the geographic and institutional distribution of research activities. This presents a chance to examine aged care research from a bibliometric standpoint.

Bibliometric analysis is a data-driven approach to investigating the intellectual structure and growth of a study topic (Lagzi et al., 2025)s. It enables academics to analyze publishing patterns, identify key authors and organizations, and map collaboration networks. Keyword co-occurrences and thematic alterations throughout time can be seen using programs such as VOSviewer. Chen et al. (2020) and Wang & Ho (2016) found that similar strategies are beneficial in the disciplines of geriatrics and social sciences. These technologies provide important visual and analytical insights that are typically lacking in standard literature assessments.

To fill the present void, this study undertakes a bibliometric analysis of research on aged care using data from the Scopus database from 2006 to 2025. The study seeks to uncover research trends, cooperation patterns, most cited publications, prominent topics, and worldwide contributions to the subject. The study uses VOSviewer for network visualization and trend analysis to offer a thorough overview of the intellectual environment in aged care. This method not only identifies major areas of academic interest, but it also shows unexplored themes and promising routes for future research. The findings are likely to help academics, practitioners, and politicians improve the well-being of the world's ageing populations.

Literature Review

The global problem of population aging has resulted in an increasing amount of literature concentrating on senior care across several disciplines (Moody & Sasser, 2020). Much of this study has focused on healthcare services, long-term care facilities, and the socioeconomic effects of aging. According to WHO (2021), older people have a higher risk of chronic

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illnesses, diminished mobility, and social marginalization, necessitating a multidisciplinary treatment strategy. As a result, experts have looked into how healthcare and social services may be reorganized to improve the quality of life for the elderly. This rising concern has prompted both empirical and theoretical research on sustainable and inclusive types of care.

A substantial amount of the aged care literature focuses on the issues of informal caring, mental health, and legislative change (Amare et al., 2020; Broese van Groenou, & De Boer, 2016). For example, studies have emphasized the emotional and financial hardships faced by family caregivers, particularly in nations with inadequate governmental support. Research has also recognized mental health as a key concern, with older persons frequently experiencing despair, loneliness, and cognitive impairment. Policy-related research has looked on how governments adapt to an older population through social programs and healthcare improvements (You et al., 2024; Husain, Bloom & Xiao, 2023) . These subjects have helped provide the groundwork for conversations about aging in place, elder abuse prevention, and multigenerational care.

Earlier reviews mostly used narrative or methodical approaches to synthesize results in specialized subfields such as gerontology, nursing, or public policy (Nimmanterdwong, Boonviriya, & Tangkijvanich, 2022; Oliosi, Guede-Fernández, & Londral, 2022). While these methodologies yield thematic insights, they rarely examine the intellectual structure or global collaboration patterns in the subject. Bibliometric analysis bridges this gap by measuring academic production, identifying key authors, and charting topic evolutions. Co-authorship and citation analysis are two techniques that scholars use to track scientific influence and discover developing research clusters. Chen et al. (2020) and Wang & Ho (2016) found that such strategies are useful for analyzing health and social science areas.

Despite the growing number of research, few bibliometric studies have been undertaken on aged care utilizing large datasets. Previous initiatives were scattered, constrained by small sample numbers, or primarily focused on regional trends (Caminade, McIntyre, & Jones, 2019; Gandarillas & Goswami, 2018). This allows for a more comprehensive examination of the knowledge landscape throughout time and across regions. Using VOSviewer and a solid dataset from the Scopus database, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of scholarly advancements in aged care. This technique not only reveals past research trends, but it also guides future academic, clinical, and policy orientations.

Research Methods

Data Source and Search Strategy

The Scopus database was used to retrieve relevant publications. The initial population was 108,752 article. After several selections, only 4,932 peer-reviewed articles related to elderly care published between 2006 and 2025 for 20 years, were retrieved from the Scopus database on 26 May 2026. The search strategy included both English and Malay keywords, only the publication of articles in the journals were selected and those articles with the keywords on aging, very ederly, aging population, ederly and ederly care were selected for the final sample to capture a comprehensive scope of global and regional studies. The advanced search query is:

KEY (ederly AND care) OR (penjagaan AND warga AND emas) OR “Ederly Care” OR “Ederly Population” OR “Ederly” OR “Aging Population” AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , “English”) OR LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , “Malay”)) AND (LIMIT-TO (EXACTKEYWORD , “Aging”) OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTKEYWORD , “Very Elderly”) OR

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LIMIT-TO (EXACTKEYWORD , “Aging Population”) OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTKEYWORD , “Elderly”) OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTKEYWORD , “Elderly Care”)) AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , “SOCI”)) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , “ar”)) AND (LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE , “j”)) AND PUBYEAR > 2005 AND PUBYEAR < 2024.

Analysis Tool

VOSviewer was used for co-authorship based on author, keyword co-occurrence mapping and citation analysis (top-cited works). Data were cleaned to remove duplicates and ensure standardization in author names and keywords (Suffian et al. 2023; Suffian et al., 2023).

Result

Publication Trends

The number of publications on aged care has steadily increased during the last two decades. Beginning with only 69 publications in 2006, the number has progressively climbed, demonstrating significant scholarly interest in the topic. This trend peaked in 2020, with 401 papers published, indicating a greater worldwide attention on age-related concerns. However, there was a minor decrease in the number of publications between 2021 and 2022, most likely due to research impediments induced by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the trend soon rebounded. In 2025, publication output reached 575 articles, the highest volume during the observation period and reaffirming the continued academic interest in elderly care research.

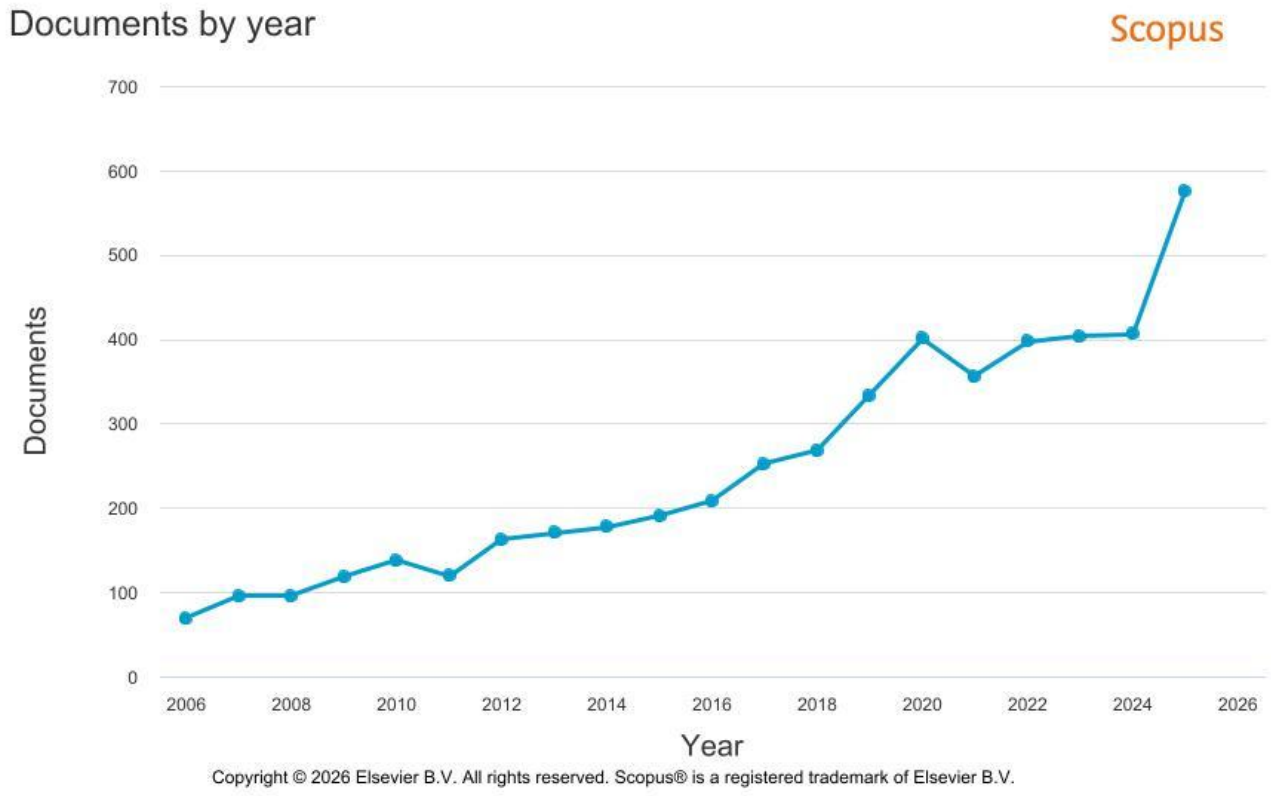


Figure 1: Documents by year

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Co-authorship Based on Author

Only 527 of the 14,418 writers who contributed to the field of aged care research had produced at least three documents. This criterion was utilized to guarantee that the analysis concentrated on the most productive and prominent researchers in the area. Among these prolific authors, Xinqi was the most active, writing 13 documents throughout the research period. Arne, with 12 publications, and Bei and Denis, with 11, come in second and third respectively. These authors have contributed significantly to the scholarly debate on senior care, notably in the domains of geriatric health and policy in East Asia. Based on the Figure 2, some of the items in the network are not connected to each other. Only 173 items are the largest connected set items as shown in Figure 3.

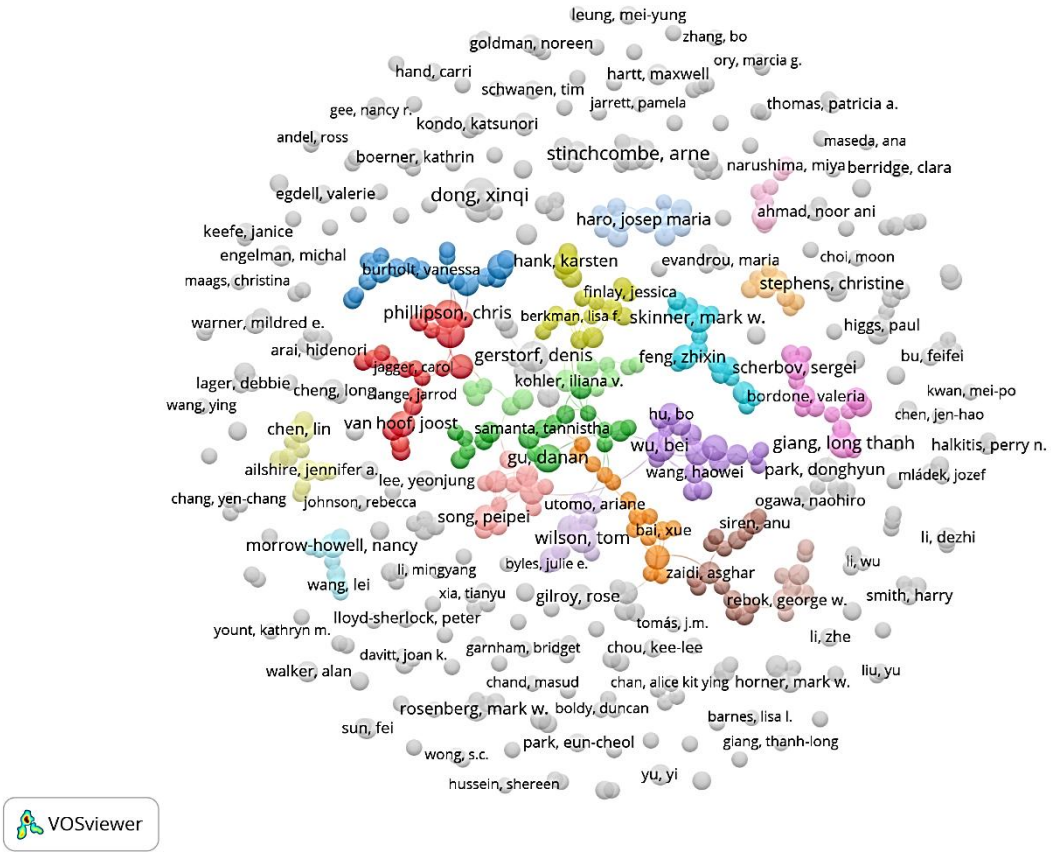


Figure 2: Co-authorship Based on Author

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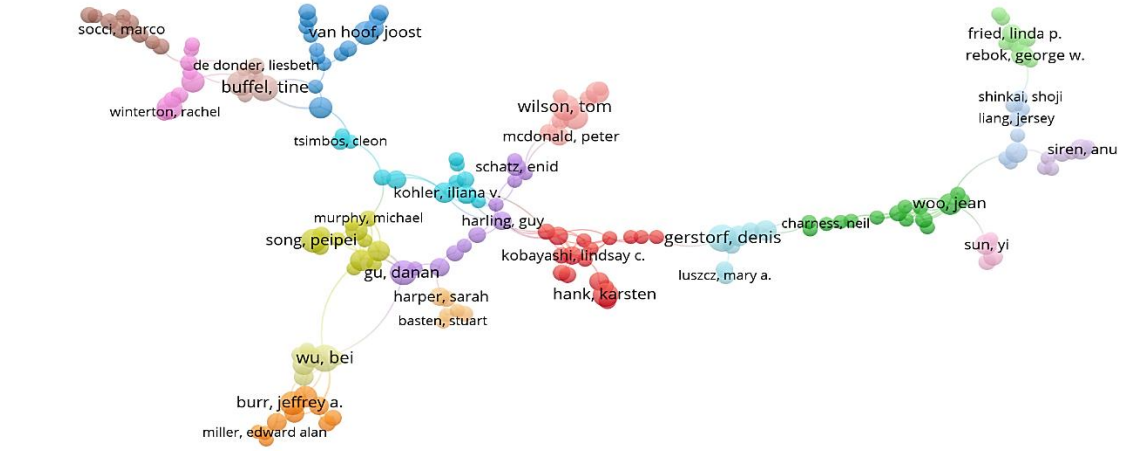


Figure 3: Co-authorship Based on Author (Only Connected Items)

Documents by Country

Only 64 of the 156 nations covered in the sample published at least five documents on senior care research. This criterion was used to identify nations that have consistently contributed to the field during the last two decades. The United States leads by a large margin, contributing 1,253 papers between 2006 and 2025. The United Kingdom comes in second with 713 papers, followed by China with 567, indicating that these industrialized countries conduct a lot of research. These findings highlight these nations' worldwide leadership in senior care research, as well as their critical responsibilities in driving international debates about aging populations and long-term care solutions.

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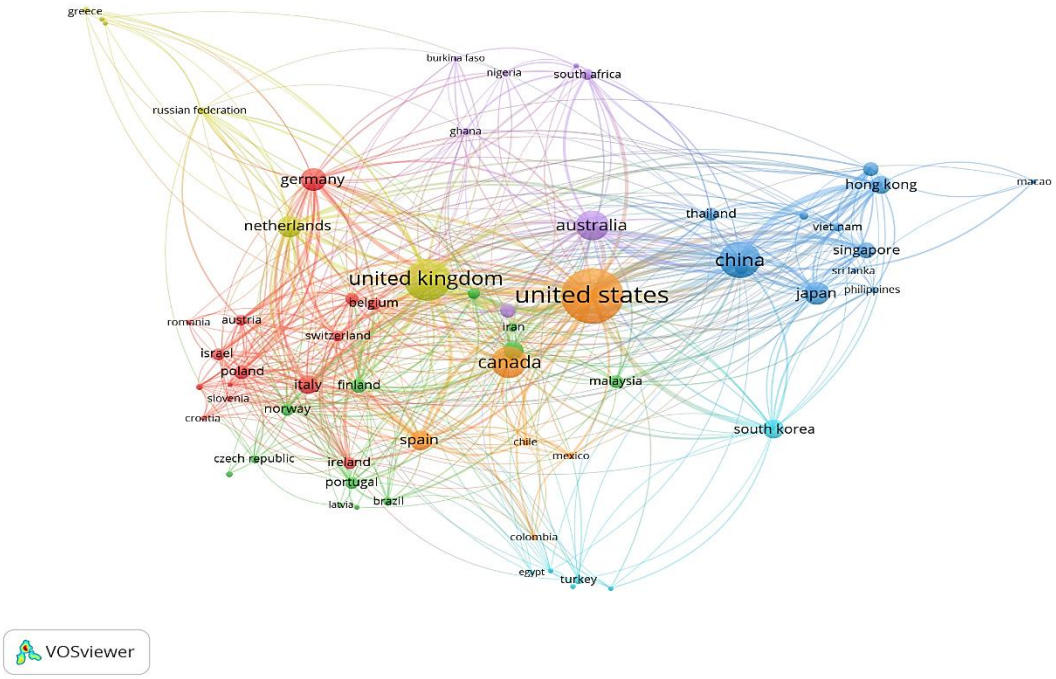


Figure 4: Documents by Country

Keyword Co-Occurrence

Out of 16,924 keywords collected from the papers, 702 had at least 20 occurrences. This filter was used to narrow the analysis to the most often used and thematically relevant keywords in aged care research. “Aging Population” was the most often used term, with 2,748 instances, illustrating the breadth of research using human participants. This was closely followed by “Human” (2,263), “Aged” (1,844), “Humans” (1,748), “Female” (1,642) and “Male” (1,599). These often-used terms represent the demographic focus of aged care studies, emphasizing the importance of gender and population-specific elements in ageing research.

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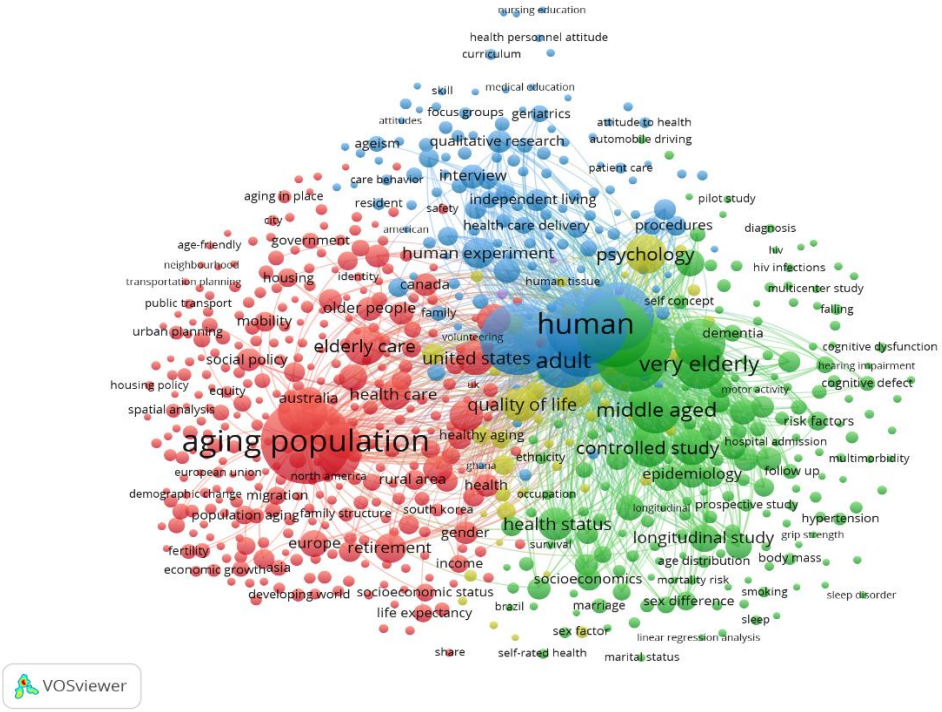


Figure 5: Keyword Co-Occurrence

Most Cited Works based on Number of Citations

Out of the 4,930 papers obtained for this bibliometric study, 603 had at least 50 citations (Refer to Figure 6). This benchmark was created to identify the most influential articles in the subject of aged care. Among these highly referenced publications, Finlay is the most cited author, with 506 citations with an article entitled, 'Change in care regimes and female migration: The 'care drain' in the Medditeranean' published in 2015. Buffel with a number of citations are 424, with an article entitled, 'What do people value when they provide unpaid care for an older person? A meta-ethnography with interview follow-up' published in 2012 and Domenech-abella with 413 citations with an article entitled, 'Restructuring the welfare state: Reforms in long-term care in Western European countries' published in 2017 come in second and third place, respectively. These noteworthy works have influenced important conversations in senior care, notably on social policy, long-term care systems, and gender-related caring challenges. However, some of the items in the network are not connected to each other. Only 15 items is the largest connected items as shown in Figure 7.

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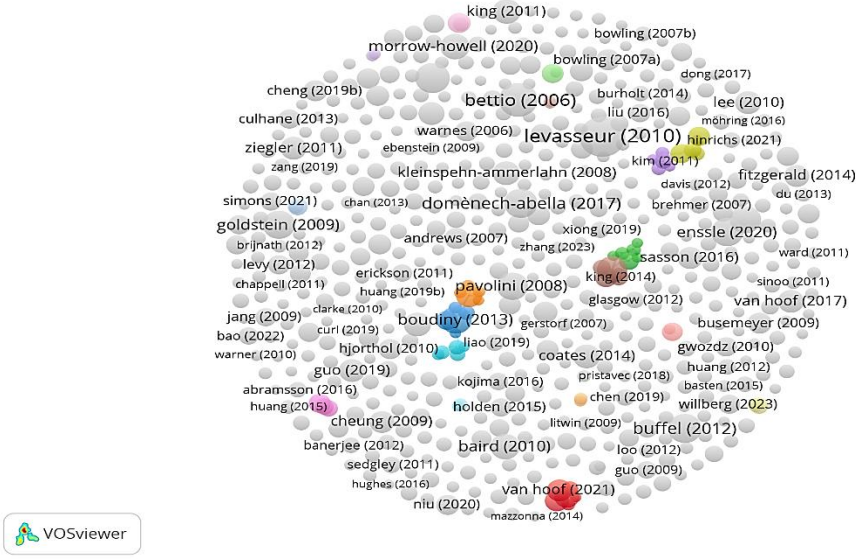


Figure 6: Most Cited Works based on Number of Citations

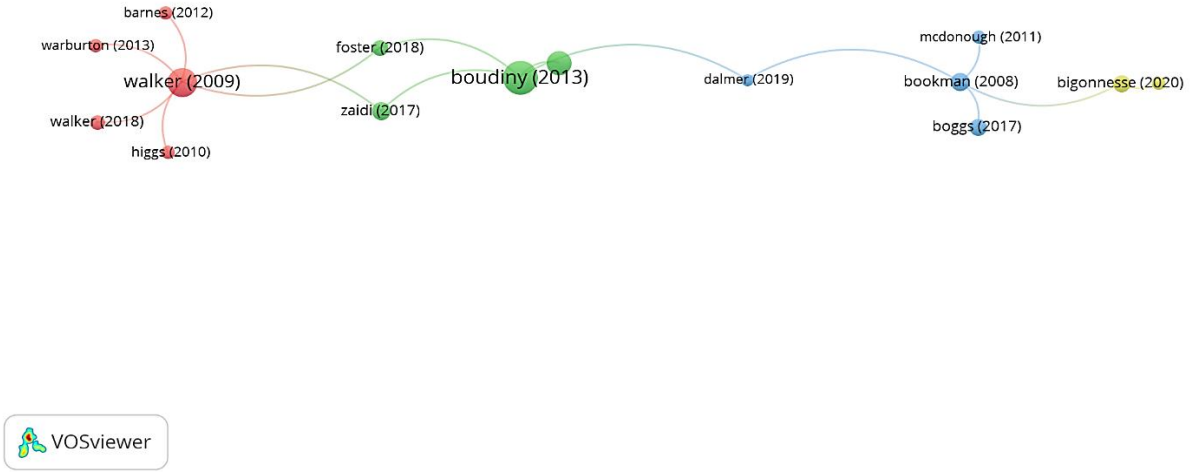


Figure 7: Most Cited Works based on Number of Citations (Only Connected Items)

Discussion

The results of the bibliometric analysis show that eldercare research has grown rapidly in the past two decades, reflecting the increasing global attention to aging populations and long-term care systems. As presented in Figure 1, the publication trend gradually increased from 2006 to 2025, especially after 2017. The pattern indicates that aging-related issues have become a major multidisciplinary research agenda involving healthcare, social sciences, psychology, public policy and community development and it is consistent with Bosco et al., (2024). The increase in the number of publications is also in line with the global demographic transition as reported by the World Health Organization (2021) with the aging population increasing in both developed and developing countries. The temporary decline between 2021 and 2022 may be due to the disruption caused by the health crisis, namely the Covid-19 pandemic. This has affected research activities and the publication process worldwide. However, the sharp increase in 2025 indicates that the pandemic era has revived scholarly momentum and raised awareness of the challenges of eldercare.

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The co-authorship analysis, as shown in Figures 2 and 3, reflects the highly collaborative nature of elderly care research, but the collaboration networks are still relatively fragmented. Even though 527 authors met the criterion of having at least three publications, only 173 authors were part of the biggest connected collaboration network. This implies that many researchers still work in isolated institutional or regional clusters, as opposed to broader international collaborations. This fragmentation may hinder interdisciplinary knowledge sharing and reduce opportunities for integrated solutions to global elderly care challenges (Schiavone et al., 2026). However, the discovery of several active collaborative clusters shows the growing importance of teamwork and international collaboration in tackling complex challenges related to ageing. Significant contributions have come from, among others, Xinqi, Arne, Bei and Denis, suggesting that established researchers continue to contribute to the intellectual development of studies on elderly care, especially in areas like geriatric health, public policy and long-term care systems (Wang et al., 2023).

Figure 4 shows that developed countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom and China have dominated the elderly care research in the country analysis. These countries are the main contributors to the production of publications related to elderly care. This reflects their strong research infrastructure, research funding and policy focus by their governments on the ageing population. The strong collaborative relationships between these countries also indicate that there are active international research collaborations and knowledge sharing networks (Schiavone et al., 2026). These findings support earlier bibliometric studies in healthcare and social sciences such as by Dzau et al., (2010), Watkins, et al., (2015), and Wang et al., (2023) which consistently show that developed countries lead in scholarly output due to greater institutional support and advanced healthcare systems by governments.

However, the relatively low contribution of developing countries such as countries in Southeast Asia, for example Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand, reflects the existence of a geographical research imbalance. This difference may be due to the ageing populations in developed countries and their high research output. Nevertheless, for developing countries, the number of publications related to elderly care is very small even though many developing countries have large numbers of elderly people such as India and Indonesia (Van-Euwijk, 2006; Sudharsanan & Geldsetzer, 2019; Kudrna, Le & Piggot, 2022). This imbalance highlights the need for increased international cooperation between developed and developing countries, financial support and capacity building to increase research on eldercare in underrepresented regions, particularly in Southeast Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Elderly care research is heavily focused on themes related to healthcare, social support, and demographics, as seen by the term co-occurrence analysis displayed in Figure 5. Keywords like “ageing population,” “human,” “aged,” “female,” and “male” are often used, indicating that researchers have focused a lot on gender-related and demographic-specific elements of ageing. These terms’ popularity indicates that concerns pertaining to physical health, chronic illnesses, caregiving obligations, and older individuals’ quality of life are still given top priority in aged care research (Cleland et al., 2021). Additionally, the VOSviewer map’s clustering patterns show the presence of several interrelated study subjects, such as social support networks, mental health, long-term care, and geriatric healthcare. This result bolsters the claim made by Broese van Groenou and De Boer (2016) as well as Boccardi (2023) that providing care for the elderly necessitates a multidisciplinary, all-encompassing strategy that incorporates social, psychological, and medical aspects. The results also suggest that future studies may concentrate

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more on cutting-edge fields including community-based care models, smart ageing systems, and digital healthcare technology.

The citation analysis shown in Figures 6 and 7 highlights the major works and conceptual foundations that have influenced research on eldercare. Some of the key issues, including social policy, care systems, migration, welfare change and unpaid care obligations, remain themes in the literature, as evidenced by highly cited research by authors such as Finlay, Buffel and Domenech-Abella. By emphasizing the social and economic impacts of an aging population, significant research has profoundly influenced academic discourse (Mehmood, 2025). Only a small number of highly cited papers are closely related, according to network visualizations, suggesting that senior care research is fragmented into a variety of specialized subfields that may not necessarily interact directly with each other. To develop a more nuanced framework for eldercare, the fragmentation suggests the potential for future integrative research that links perspectives from public policy, sociology, psychology, healthcare and economics.

Conclusion

This bibliometric study, based on Scopus-indexed literature, presents a systematic overview of academic research on senior care during 2006 – 2025 with a final sample of 4,932 articles published in journals only. The data show a significant rise in publication volume the past two decades even there was a slight downfall from 2021 and 2022 most probably due to Covid-19, with the United States, United Kingdom, and China generating the greatest research outputs. Notably, notable authors like Xinqi, as well as widely referenced works by Arne, Bei and Dennis, have had a significant impact on the conversation. Thematic trends focusing on human aging, gender, and long-term care highlight the complexities and multifaceted nature of aged care. These findings indicate a rising scholarly and policy interest in meeting the requirements of the world's ageing populations.

Despite its merits, this study has numerous shortcomings. It only uses the Scopus database, which may exclude relevant papers that are indexed elsewhere, such as Web of Science or regional databases. The investigation also omitted gray literature and non-English books, which might have provided useful localized knowledge. Furthermore, bibliometric indices like citation counts may not accurately reflect the research's depth, quality, or practical usefulness. These limitations argue against interpreting the findings as totally comprehensive or internationally inclusive.

By using bibliometric methodology and VOSviewer visualization to provide a comprehensive picture of the intellectual structure, collaboration patterns, and thematic evolution of eldercare research, this study makes a significant overall contribution to the literature. The study objectively analyzes the evolution of the field and highlights key contributions, common themes, and research gaps over time, in contrast to conventional narrative assessments. For scholars, policymakers, medical professionals, and organizations seeking to improve long-term care and the well-being of older adults, the results offer insightful information. The findings also highlight the need to strengthen international research collaborations, promote multidisciplinary approaches, and increase research focus on underserved areas and emerging concerns related to eldercare. Future research should consider combining bibliometric analysis with qualitative thematic analysis or systematic literature reviews to offer better conceptual understanding and policy implications for the development of sustainable eldercare.

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Future research also should try combining numerous databases and qualitative methods to have a more comprehensive grasp of the area. Integrating thematic content analysis may show subtle conceptual shifts and theoretical advancement. Expanding coverage to underrepresented areas might provide significant insights into culturally distinctive aged care methods. Furthermore, future study should look into emerging topics including digital technologies in aging, informal caregiver load, and intergenerational support networks. This larger reach would enrich academic understanding and lead evidence-based policies to improve the quality of life for the world's aging population.

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