

A Scientometric Overview of the Current Status and Trends of Holistic Nursing Studies

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Holistic nursing care, which has been discussed a lot recently, provides better quality and more effective patient care. This study was planned to analyze the studies conducted on holistic care, by using the bibliometric method and to reveal which types of studies are needed to increase the effectiveness of holistic nursing care and to make it more widespread. The study has the potential to guide scientists who would like to work on this subject. This study describes the current published evidence about holistic nursing between January, 1, 1979 and March 18, 2023. The study's data obtained from the Web of Science (WOS) database were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative measures. The Excel program was used to analyze the study's data, and VOSviewer was used to visualize it. A total of 3887 publications (reviews and articles) obtained in the search for holistic nursing have been published. A total of 2716 (69.875%) of all publications on holistic nursing were published since 2013, and these publications were cited 45 843 times, and 77.832% of all citations were cited to publications published since 2013. The top 5 countries that made the highest number of contributions were the United States (1259 documents), England (457 documents), Australia (380 documents), Canada (253 documents), and Sweden (183 documents). The University of London in England was the top institute focused on holistic nursing. Holistic nursing is a growing and developing subject, especially considering the number of citations and publications in the last 10 years. Most research and cooperation has occurred in a few developed nations: America, Australia, and European countries.

KEY WORDS: *bibliometric analysis, holistic nursing, patient care, publications* *Holist Nurs Pract* 2024;38(1):3–13

INTRODUCTION

Nurses are prepared to provide care to help individuals in protecting, maintaining, and achieving the integrity of their existence in all dimensions.¹

The concept of holism has a long history. The word was first coined in 1926 by Jan Christian Smuts, a

North African philosopher, in his book *Holism and Evolution*.² The holism term derives from the ancient Greek word “holos,” which means complete and all, and comes from the same root as the English word “whole.”³ The American Holistic Nurses Association defines good health as the level of harmony between the mind, body, and soul and emphasizes the holistic view that nurses should consider people not just physically but as a whole.⁴

To improve patient outcomes and satisfaction, holistic nursing considers the “unity, healthiness, and interconnectedness of human beings and their environment.”⁴ In an effort to give the individual dignity and respect, holistic nursing also advocates participatory person-centered care.⁵ Holistic nursing care is a special nursing practice that argues that the body, mind, spirit, emotions, environment, relationships, and social and cultural aspects of life are interconnected and should be considered a whole. The holistic nurse focuses on the use of nursing knowledge, theory, expertise, and intuition to provide care to the person during the healing process of the patient.⁶

Holistic nursing care is based on various theories.⁶ The holistic approach was also used in ancient

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civilizations. Treatment and healing with a holistic approach go back to Hippocrates, the founder of medicine, who stated for the first time that the mind and body affect each other. A comprehensive and holistic approach has been shown in the healing of patients, with both the treatment administered by physicians and the practices, such as magic made by the clergy used together, supported by faith for the healing of the disease.⁷ Founder of modern nursing and the first holistic nurse, Florence Nightingale talked about holistic aspects many years ago.⁸ Nurses have traditionally provided care with a holistic approach, but the term “holistic care” was introduced into the nursing literature in the 1980s by nurse theorists, such as Rogers, Parse, and Newman.⁶

This study aims to provide a bibliometric overview of research on holistic nursing and understand the state of holistic nursing. This study will help researchers understand trends and the state in holistic nursing research between January 1, 1970 and March 18, 2023.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study design

This study, which used science mapping and bibliometric methodology, was an observational, descriptive, and retrospective study.

Data collection

A detailed search was carried out in the Web of Science (WOS) Core Collection (Thomson Reuters, Philadelphia, PA, the USA) online database on March 18, 2023. This is a global database of high-impact, high-quality scientific journals.⁹

The terms and retrieval techniques used were as follows: The selected keywords (holistic nursing* OR holistic nurse* OR holistic care nursing*) were used. The “Topic” section of the WOS search engine (*publication’s abstract, titles, keywords, and keyword plus*) included the word holistic and related topics in the field of the nursing research area (holistic philosophy: theory and ethics; holistic nursing theories; holistic care process; holistic communication; creating a therapeutic environment; cultural diversity; holistic education and research; and holistic nurse self-care).

The following inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied:

1. There were no limitations on language or accessibility.
2. The publications other than in nursing area were excluded.
3. Only articles and reviews were chosen according to the document type.
4. Abstracts, congress meeting abstracts, erratum, etc, were excluded from the search.

According to the inclusion and exclusion criteria mentioned above, 3887 publications (articles and reviews) were included in the study.

The data obtained from the WOS database were downloaded to the computer in *plain text* format and Excel file format. And both qualitative and quantitative analyses were made.

Bibliometric methodology

The study’s aim was to analyze all publications on holistic nursing. Many bibliometric parameters were evaluated, such as the distribution of the number of publications over the years since 1970, the authors with the most publications, the countries with the most publications, the institutions/ organizations/universities to which the authors are affiliated, the distribution of the publications’ citations over the years, the most frequently published journals, the most preferred keywords by the authors, and the Hirsch (H) indexes. As a gauge of the effectiveness of individual researchers, the H index has been proposed. The scientific community has started to use it considerably worldwide. The H index is not significantly affected by those with many low-impact publications or just a few high-impact articles.^{10,11} The descriptive analysis of the publication years, citation counts, first authors, affiliations, countries, funding sponsors, journals, and highly cited publications were carried out using Microsoft Excel 2010. This software also enabled mapping the historical distribution of the works and citations received according to the scientific category, as well as computing the growth prediction of publications. After the data were downloaded to the computer in Excel format and reviewed by the researchers for duplication, the obtained data were summarized with percentages and numbers in tables and Excel graphics. H indexes, total citations, and average citations were

obtained from the analysis of the WOS database. This bibliometric database itself provides graphs after making relevant selections and restrictions (eg, year, document type, and country). There was no usage of advanced statistical analytic tests.

The secondary outcome was to investigate international collaborations, to make bibliographic coupling, co-citations, and keyword co-occurrence analysis. The VOSviewer software (version 1.6.18) was used for this analysis and to build the triage literature maps. This method, including co-citation, bibliographic coupling, and keyword co-occurrence, refers to the frequency with which 2 units are cited together, indicating similarity between them. When 2 publications are coupled together bibliographically, the number of references they have in common is used as a proxy for how similar they are to one another.¹² By employing the most crucial phrases or keywords in the texts, co-occurrence, on the other hand, identifies word connections when they co-occur, enabling researchers to examine the conceptual structure of a research topic.¹³

Ethical Approval

The present study complied with the Helsinki Declaration, revised in 2013. Ethics committee approval was not required as there was no human or animal research. An ethics committee document (dated November 10, 2022, and numbered 71089) was obtained from the university.

RESULTS

Distribution of published articles and cited papers

A total of 3887 documents obtained in the search for holistic nursing have been published since 1970 and they have been cited 45 843 times (the average of 11.79 citations per document) and the total H index was 71. The first article on holistic nursing was published in 1978. Between 1978 and 2000, there was little literature regarding holistic nursing. Overall, the number of publications increased since 2012 (more than 100 articles per year), but the number continues to grow. A total of 2716 (69 875%) of all publications on holistic nursing were published since 2013. The highest number of publications was in 2021 (407 publications). These articles had been cited 37 782 times since 2013, which is 77.832% of all citations. Figure 1 shows the holistic nursing publications and citations by years from 1970 to the present.

Geographical distribution of the articles

The works on holistic nursing involved 110 countries globally, although only 21 countries contributed more than 50 articles and 11 countries contributed more than 100 articles (Figure 2). The top 5 countries that made the highest number of contributions were the United States (1259 documents), England (457 documents), Australia (380 documents), Canada (253

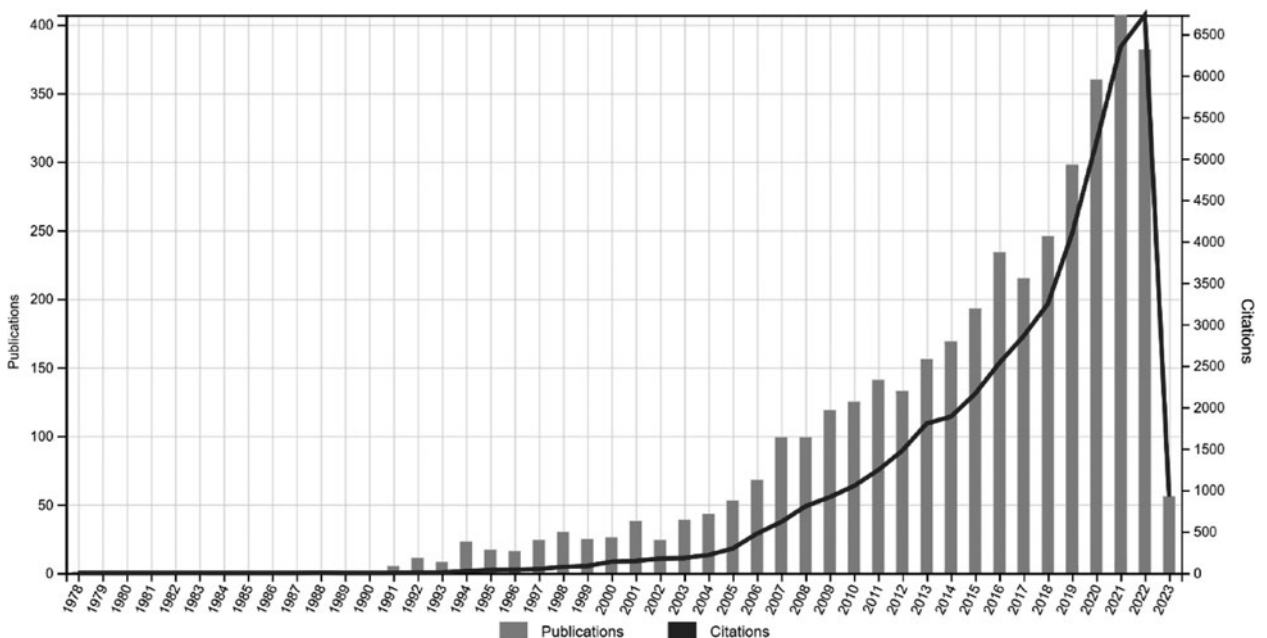


FIGURE 1. Holistic nursing publications and citations by years from 1970 to the present.

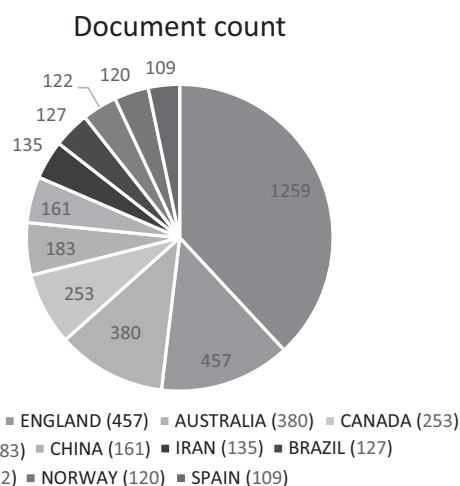


FIGURE 2. Most publishing countries of holistic nursing publications.

documents), and Sweden (183 documents). The top 5 most cited countries in the retrieved documents from the WOS database on holistic nursing-related publications are shown in Table 1.

The publications from the United States had the highest number of citations ($n = 14\,346$, and H index = 49) (Table 1). These results were automatically extracted from the WOS database website.

A total of 1521 of these publications were supported by the funding institution. The United States Department of Health and Human Services was the leading funding sponsor of holistic nursing studies and funded 97 of the work cited in the publications (Table 2).

Authors from 4000 different institutions/organizations/universities have contributed to the literature on holistic nursing. The University of London from England was the top institute focused on holistic nursing. But, the top 15 institutions/organizations/universities with the highest number of publications on holistic nursing were frequently located in the United States. Institutions in the UK, Canada, and Australia were also in the top 15. Other top institutions/organizations/universities with

the highest number of publications on holistic nursing are summarized in Table 3.

Publications on holistic nursing were published in 919 different journals. The journals that published the most publications on holistic nursing were *the Journal of Holistic Nursing* (257 documents), *the Journal of Advanced Nursing* (215 documents), *the Journal of Clinical Nursing* (203 documents), *Holistic Nursing Practice* (117 documents), and *Nurse Education Today* (84 documents). The articles on holistic nursing published in the *Journal of Advanced Nursing* received the highest number of citations (5841 citations). The top 10 publishing journals and citation numbers on holistic nursing are noted in Figure 3.

The most cited article on holistic nursing was published in 2007 by Davidson et al.¹⁴ This article has received a total of 751 citations and an annual average of 44.18 citations since its publication. A summary of articles with a total of 100 or more citations is given in Table 4.

Collaborative Co-author Network Analysis

Network visualization map of co-authorship among countries (Figure 2), citation map among countries (Figure 3), and among authors (Figure 4) are summarized in Figures 2-4. Thicker lines indicate stronger collaborations between authors or countries. Countries/author names represented by larger circle sizes or font sizes have a higher number of publications or citations.

Figure 2 and Figure 3 shows that the country with the largest bubble is the USA, which means that the USA has the highest number of publications and citations.

Figure 3 shows that Australia and European countries have citation cooperation. Also this figure shows that countries such as the USA, Brazil, Turkey, Twain have citation cooperation.

TABLE 1. Citation Numbers and H Indexes of the Top 5 Most Publishing Countries

Country	Number of Publication	Total Citation Numbers	H Index
The USA	1259	14 346	49
England	457	8 968	46
Australia	380	5 574	36
Canada	253	3 215	30
Sweden	183	2 405	25

TABLE 2. Funding Agencies^a

Funding Agencies	Record Count	% of 3.887
United States Department of Health Human Services	97	2.495
National Institutes of Health, USA	81	2.084
National Institute for Health Research	33	0.849
National Institute of Nursing Research	24	0.617
Australian Government	21	0.540
Canadian Institutes of Health Research	14	0.360
National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia	11	0.283
National Cancer Institute	11	0.283
National Institute on Aging	10	0.257
Chief Scientist Office	9	0.232
Netherlands Organization for Health Research and Development	9	0.232
United Kingdom Research Innovation	9	0.232
European Commission	8	0.206
National Natural Science Foundation of China	8	0.206
Tehran University of Medical Sciences	8	0.206
Agency for Healthcare Research Quality	7	0.180
Department of Health Ageing	7	0.180
Isfahan University of Medical Sciences	7	0.180
Ministry of Education Culture Sports Science and Technology Japan (MEXT)	7	0.180
Ministry of Science and Technology, Taiwan	7	0.180
NIH National Center for Complementary Alternative Medicine	7	0.180
Projekt DEAL	7	0.180
Swedish Research Council	7	0.180
Grants in Aid for Scientific Research (KAKENHI)	6	0.154
Japan Society for the Promotion of Science	6	0.154

^aShows 25 out of 1521 funders.

Keyword mapping

Keyword mapping also is summarized in Figure 5. Figure 5 depicts the keyword visualization map of articles with a minimum of 20 occurrences on holistic

nursing. While selecting the minimum threshold value in occurrence, a restriction was made to visualize the keywords that are most frequently used during usage so that the keywords are visible in the mapping created. Keywords represented with larger circle size

TABLE 3. Top 15 Publishing Institutions/Organizations/Universities on Holistic Nursing^a

Ranking	Affiliations, Country	n	% of 3.887
1	University of London, England	80	2.058
2	The University of Texas System, the USA	67	1.724
3	State University System of Florida, the USA	54	1.389
4	The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the USA	49	1.261
5	National University of Singapore, Singapore	46	1.183
6	King's College London, England	42	1.081
7	Karolinska Institutet, Sweden	39	1.003
8	Monash University, Australia	38	0.978
9	University of Pennsylvania, the USA	36	0.926
10	University System of Ohio, the USA	36	0.926
11	The University of California, the USA	34	0.875
12	The University of Sydney, Australia	34	0.875
13	The University of Minnesota System, the USA	33	0.849
14	The University of Toronto, Canada	33	0.849
15	University of Collage London, England	32	0.823

^aShows 15 out of 4000 entries.

Journals Publishing on Holistic Nursing with Highest Citation Numbers

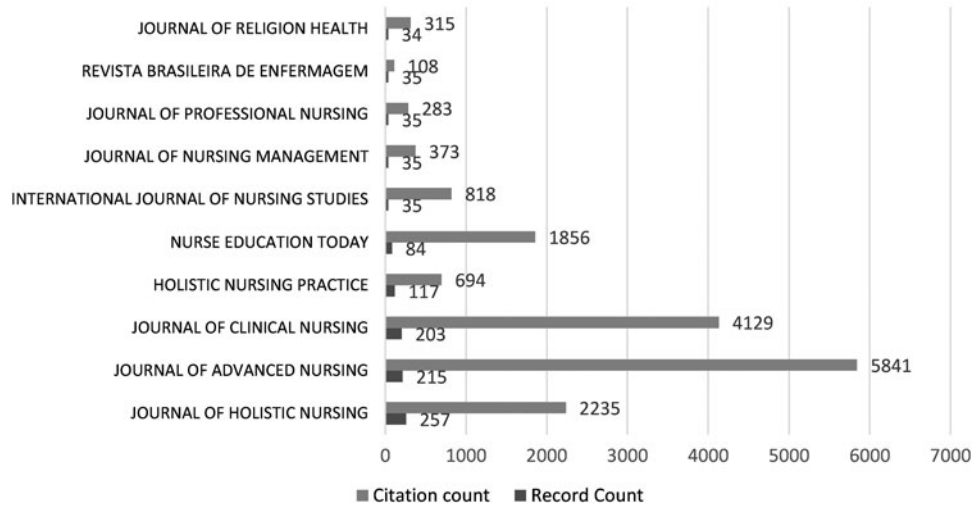


FIGURE 3. Top 10 publishing journals on holistic nursing.

or font size had relatively more occurrence in the articles. Lines connecting are indicative of occurrence relations in articles.

DISCUSSION

To evaluate the scientific impact of any scientific publication, bibliometric methods are frequently utilized. The bibliometric analysis uses a quantitative approach to describe, assess, map, visualize, couple, and track published research on a particular subject. Large-scale mapping and visualization of the scientific literature published in a particular field of study are made easier by bibliometric analysis.¹⁵⁻¹⁹

The nursing process cannot be separated from holistic assessment and care. The interconnectedness of body, mind, and spirit is acknowledged by holistic nursing practice, which is based on a holistic philosophy that balances art and science. The practice of holistic medicine uses knowledge, theories, skill, intuition, and creativity. Process and presence are integrated into delivering care in a holistic nursing approach.²⁰ Because of the emphasis holistic nurses place on patient-centeredness, self-care, and self-responsibility as well as on understanding the interconnectedness of all people and their environments, the American Nurses Association has recognized holistic nursing as a specialty.⁴ There have been many bibliometric studies on various medical topics and nursing research area, recently. However, to our knowledge, in the existing literature, there is no

bibliometric analysis study on holistic nursing themes. Thus, the current study is the first bibliometric analysis of holistic nursing research and may serve as a beneficial resource for researchers seeking to delve deeper into hot themes in this area. In this study, the most prolific authors, affiliations, countries, funding sponsors, journals, and top-cited articles on holistic nursing topics were identified.

Although the concept of holism has a history of more than 100 years, it has been determined that publications increased, especially in the last 20 years. Over the years, there has been a steady rise in the number of articles in this area. More attention was being paid to this issue, as seen by the gradual increase. Since 2000, many articles have been published, especially since 2014 when more than 100 articles were published each year. The United States, as the leading country, published the most articles and England ranked second. It should be noted that although the United States published one-third of articles in this field, “the University of London” from England was the top institute focused on this topic. The works on holistic nursing involved 110 countries globally, although only 21 countries contributed more than 50 articles and 11 countries contributed more than 100 articles. According to our study of the top 11 publishing countries, some institutions in European countries and Australia also work in the field, but most of the affiliations are from the United States. Most nations in the world—nearly three-quarters—have not made any contribution in this area. This study reveals that despite being a widespread issue, the value of holistic nursing is not

TABLE 4. Highly Cited Documents on Holistic Nursing

Authors	Journal Title	Publication Year	DOI	Total Citations	Average per Year
Davidson et al	<i>Critical Care Medicine</i>	2007	10.1097/01.CCM.0000254067.14607.EB	751	44.18
Davis-Floyd, R	<i>International Journal of Gynecology & Obstetrics</i>	2001	10.1016/S0020-7292(01)00510-0	259	11.26
McMullan et al	<i>Journal of Advanced Nursing</i>	2003	10.1046/j.1365-2648.2003.02528.x	252	12
Wojnar et al	<i>Journal of Holistic Nursing</i>	2007	10.1177/0898010106295172	233	13.71
Biagi et al	<i>Age</i>	2012	10.1007/s11357-011-9217-5	229	19.08
Cowan et al	<i>Nurse Education Today</i>	2005	10.1016/j.nedt.2005.03.002	205	10.79
Foureur et al	<i>Contemporary Nurse</i>	2013	10.5172/conu.2013.45.1.114	200	18.18
Haboubi et al	<i>Disability and Rehabilitation</i>	2003	10.1080/0963828021000031188	195	9.29
Kennedy et al	<i>Pediatrics</i>	2011	10.1542/peds.2010-1722N	187	14.38
Dyer et al	<i>Journal of Sexual Medicine</i>	2013	10.1111/j.1743-6109.2012.02856.x	184	16.73
Grundy, E; Sloggett, A	<i>Social Science & Medicine</i>	2003	10.1016/S0277-9536(02)00093-X	183	8.71
Dyson et al	<i>Journal of Advanced Nursing</i>	1997	10.1111/j.1365-2648.1997.tb00811.x	183	6.78
Ross, Linda	<i>Journal of Clinical Nursing</i>	2006	10.1111/j.1365-2702.2006.01617.x	168	9.33
Ryan, Polly	<i>Clinical Nurse Specialist</i>	2009	10.1097/NUR.0b013e3181a42373	167	11.13
Takeda et al	<i>Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews</i>	2012	10.1002/14651858.CD002752.pub3	158	13.17
Baldacchino, D; Draper, P	<i>Journal of Advanced Nursing</i>	2001	10.1046/j.1365-2648.2001.01814.x	156	6.78
Tully et al	<i>American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology</i>	2017	10.1016/j.ajog.2017.03.032	150	21.43
Mok et al	<i>Journal of Advanced Nursing</i>	2004	10.1111/j.1365-2648.2004.03230.x	149	7.45
Ramezani et al	<i>International Nursing Review</i>	2014	10.1111/inr.12099	133	13.3
Kolcaba, KY	<i>Journal of Advanced Nursing</i>	1994	10.1111/j.1365-2648.1994.tb01202.x	132	4.4

recognized by researchers. It was observed that holistic nursing studies, which were initiated around the turn of the century, are still in their infancy and have not yet reached their full potential. However, there is an urgent need for more research on it, given the rise of holistic nursing studies globally in this century.

According to the results of this search, using the same key words on the same date in the “title, abstract and keyword” section of the Scopus database search engine, we reached 10 301 articles and reviews. The first article in the Scopus database was published in 1971. As with our WOS database results, there has been an upward trend in the number of publications since 2012, never falling below 80 publications per year; 2022 was the year with the highest number of

publications (499 publications) (Figure 6). *Beginnings* (American Holistic Nurses Association) was the journal with the highest number of publications on holistic nursing with 617 articles. When the number of publications by country was analyzed, similar to our WOS results, the countries with the highest number of publications were the United States (3053 publications), the United Kingdom (1369 publications), Australia (548 publications), Canada (400 publications), and Sweden (259 publications). These differences in the databases varied due to the difference in journals they indexed. The higher number of publications in Scopus was attributed to the fact that the Scopus database includes a greater number of journals.

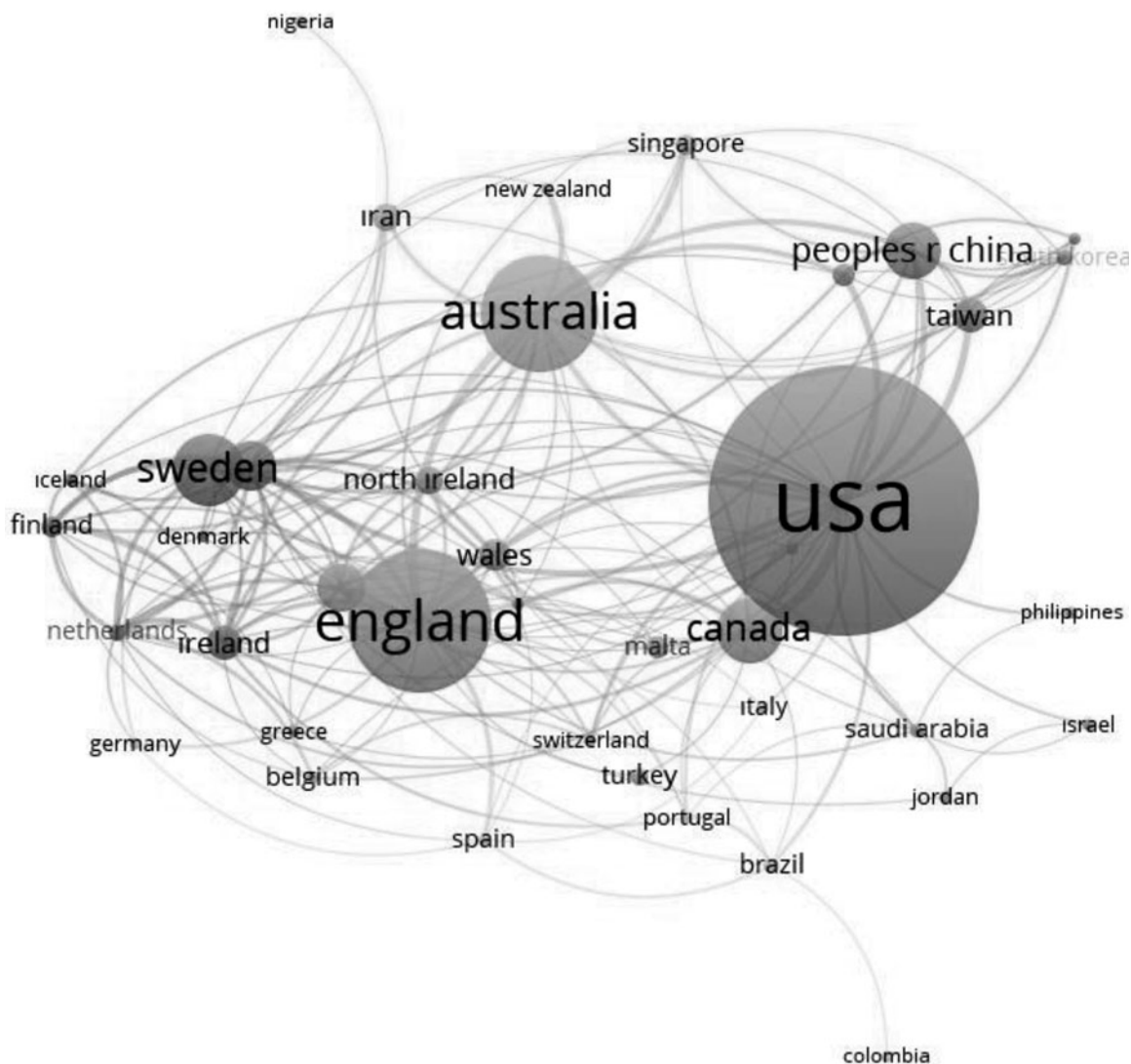


FIGURE 4. Network visualization map of coauthorship among countries.

The number of citations to previously published work is a gauge of its significance and eventual acceptance in a field of study.²¹ Over time, there has been an increase in citations in the holistic nursing specialty, with particularly strong development over the last 10 years, which might be due to the rise in the number of papers and researchers interested in this subject. Our results showed that, 2716 (69.875%) of all publications on holistic nursing were published since 2013. The highest number of publications was in 2021 (407 publications). These articles were cited 37 782 times since 2013, which is 77.832% of all citations (Figure 1).

With the bibliometric method, it is also possible to evaluate the most cited articles on a subject. In our

study, we analyzed the most cited articles with the data obtained from the WOS database.^{22,23} The most cited article on holistic nursing was published in 2007 by Davidson et al.¹⁴ This article was a guideline for holistic practices in the intensive care unit. This article has received a total of 751 citations and an annual average of 44.18 citations since its publication.

In this study, we conducted a network analysis by using the VOSviewer program (Figures 4, 5, and 7). We evaluated the nodes that are situated in the network's center and may be in a better position to disseminate information throughout the entire system. The nodes inside these clusters are extremely tightly coupled, making an information diffusion within them highly plausible. Because clusters are connected by

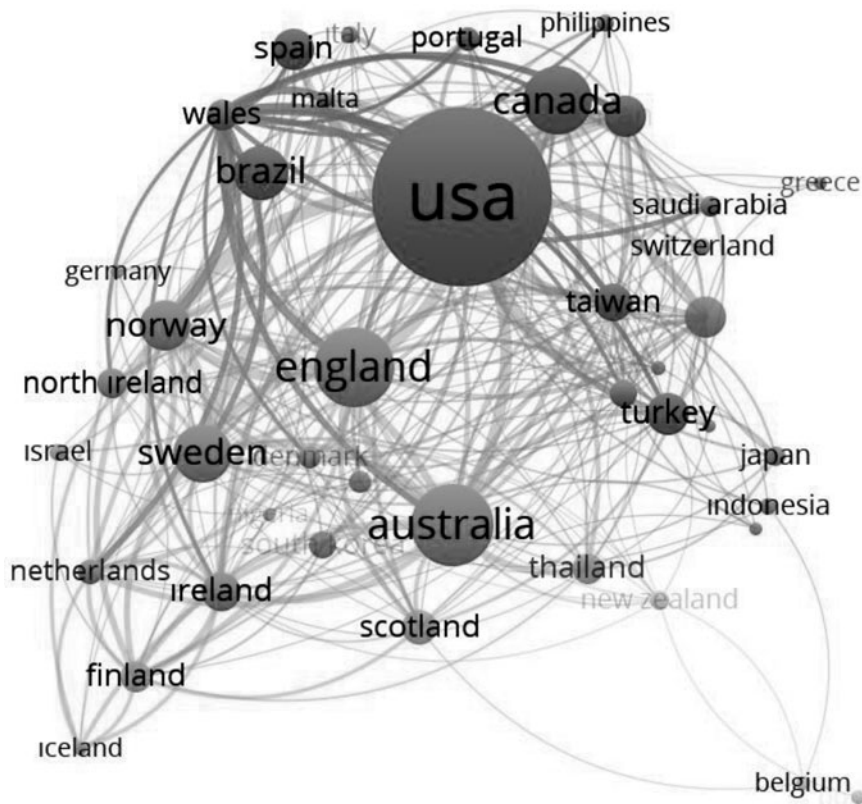


FIGURE 5. Network visualization map of citation map among countries.

bridges, the network also exhibits significant clustering and strong global connections.²⁴ This study's network analysis results showed that the country with the largest bubble is the United States, which means that the United States has the highest number of publications, citations and global connections.

The 5 core principles and standards of practice for holistic nursing are highlighted. These include holistic care processes, holistic communication, therapeutic environments and cultural diversity, holistic education and research, and holistic nurse self-care. Holistic

philosophy, theory, and ethics are also included.²⁵ Our keyword mapping analyses also are summarized in Figure 8.

Limitations and superiority

In recent years, bibliometric analyses have taken place frequently in the field of nursing.^{26,27} However, no similar bibliometric analysis study has been published on holistic nursing, which is one of the main building blocks of nursing practices. This study, which is the

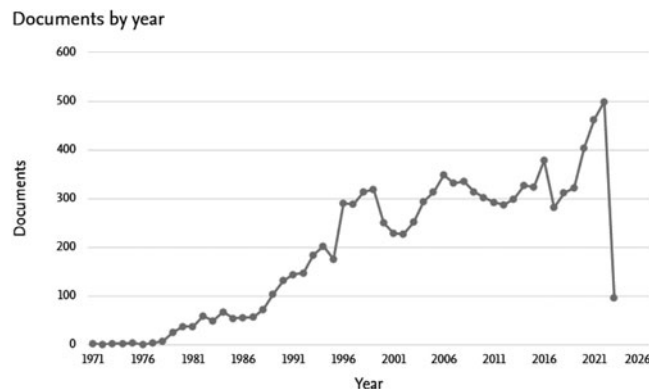


FIGURE 6. The number of holistic nursing publications by year (Scopus database).

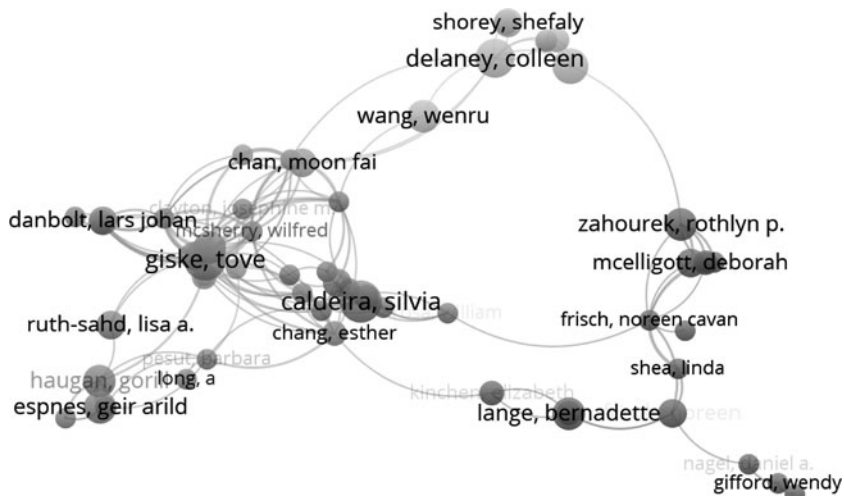


FIGURE 7. Citation visualization map among authors.

first bibliometric analysis study available on holistic nursing, unfortunately, has some limitations. First, it was not possible to read all of the published articles to provide more details. The options offered by database applications also impose restrictions on types of factors that can be examined in bibliometric research. In future research, other databases can be examined. In addition to Thomson Reuters Web of Science. The number of citations and publication frequency in holistic nursing may have been influenced using only one database search (WOS) in the current study. The reason that we did not choose an additional database other than WOS was that it was not possible to merge the data of other databases with the visualization

program we used in our study. On the other hand, one of the most used databases for bibliometric analysis is the WOS database. In the selection of keywords, we chose the topic part of the search engine. This was because we aimed to reach the articles on holistic nursing in the title, abstract, and keywords. We included only research articles and reviews as the type of publication. We wanted the scientific value to be higher, as other types of publications rank lower in the science pyramid. We conducted the literature review only in English. The scientific publications that are the subject of our study do not represent the entire holistic nursing literature. All these limitations should be kept in mind when evaluating our data. Despite all these

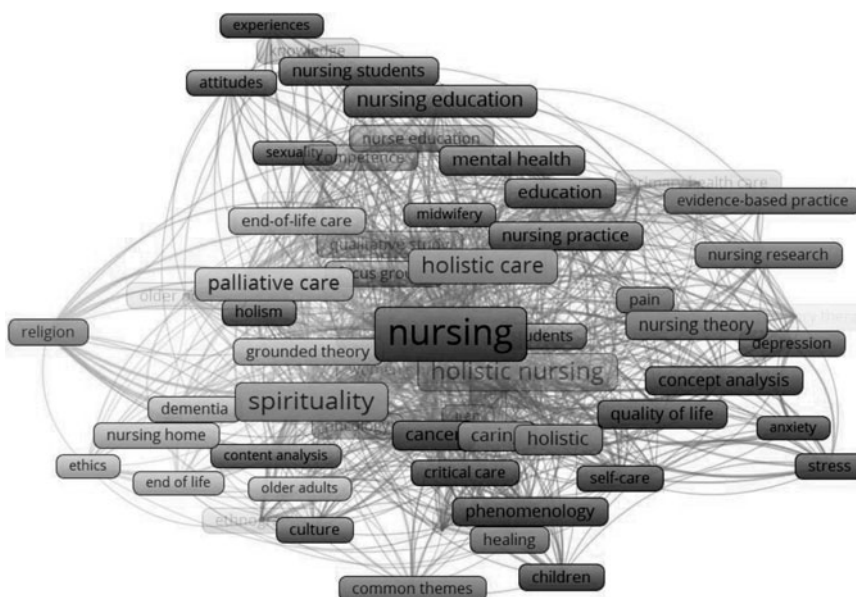


FIGURE 8. Keyword visualization map of articles.

limitations, this bibliometric study, which is an initial study on holistic nursing, may guide future studies.

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