

RESEARCH ARTICLE / ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ

# Bridging borders in healthcare: A bibliometric insight into migration, health, and cultural awareness

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## Abstract

This study aims to analyse studies conducted on the migration, health, and cultural awareness triangle and published in the Web of Science (WoS) database using bibliometric methods. 405 open-access research articles published between 2014 and 2024, using the specified keywords, were identified and examined. Analyses were conducted using the Bibliometrix (4.3.0) package and the Biblioshiny tool in R Studio. There is a continuous increase in the number of studies on the subject. Indeed, an average increase of 17.63% has been observed since 2014. The affiliations producing the most articles were the University of Copenhagen, Denmark (34), the University of Amsterdam, Netherlands (22), and McGill University, Canada (21). The findings indicate that migrant and refugee health is increasingly prominent on the global health agenda, with cultural awareness, health literacy, and service delivery becoming central themes. The most central and relevant concept in the studies included in the analysis is "cultural competence." Strong matches were found around this theme with the themes "qualitative research," "migrants," and "health communication." The second most concentrated focus is "migration," with matches found with the themes "refugee," "mental health," and "primary care." Consequently, the relatively small number of studies conducted in immigrant-receiving countries like Türkiye is striking. This suggests that directly affected countries need to contribute more strongly to the global academic literature. Increasing interdisciplinary research at the national level will contribute to the transformation of healthcare services into a more inclusive and culturally sensitive framework for immigrants.

**Keywords:** Cultural Awareness, Cultural Competence, Health Inequity, Immigrant Health, Migration.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The intersection of migration, health, and cultural awareness is a complex area that requires a nuanced understanding to improve access and outcomes for immigrant populations. While immigrants can access services within healthcare systems, they face numerous challenges, primarily due to a lack of awareness, cultural differences, and inadequate healthcare resources tailored to their needs. Among the significant barriers to immigrants' access to effective healthcare is a lack of health literacy and awareness of available services. Furthermore, the awareness of service providers can be considered a key factor. Indeed, the cultural awareness and competence of healthcare providers are crucial for reducing disparities in health outcomes.

Migration and displacement are complex phenomena with multidimensional causes. These factors include urbanisation, the migration of skilled labour (brain drain), cash transfers to families left behind, discrimination, human trafficking and smuggling, and climate change. Conflict and war lead to the forced displacement of people and can cause lasting damage to both physical and mental health. Unplanned urbanisation overburdens healthcare infrastructure, increasing health risks such as infectious diseases. Brain drain leads to a shortage of specialists and disruptions in healthcare systems in countries of origin. Discrimination, language, and cultural differences fuel xenophobia, restricting migrants' access to healthcare. While human smuggling and trafficking expose migrants to serious physical and psychological trauma, climate change threatens the health of millions of people through direct disasters such as floods and droughts and indirect effects such as resource scarcity, malnutrition and the increase in infectious diseases (IDMC, 2021; Rigaud et al., 2018; Butler, 2014).

According to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), as of 2020, approximately 281 million people lived outside their country of birth, representing an increase of 128 million compared to 1990 and more than tripling the estimated number in 1970 (IOM, 2023). The Mexico-United States route, encompassing 11 million

people worldwide, stands out as the busiest international migration corridor today. This is followed by the Syria-Türkiye corridor, largely comprised of Syrian refugees heading to Türkiye as a result of forced migration triggered by the Syrian civil war. Migration between Russia and Ukraine, on the other hand, increased particularly after the conflicts in 2014 and 2022, making it one of the busiest migration corridors globally (McAuliffe and Oucho, 2024).

Predictably, increasing conflict will lead to more health-related problems for both migrants and refugees and their destination countries. Indeed, displacement and migration are among the primary factors determining individual health status. Therefore, understanding the causes of migration and displacement can significantly contribute to the efforts of health systems, policymakers, and practitioners to protect and improve the health of refugees and migrants (Kennedy et al., 2016; Moullan and Jusot, 2014).

Furthermore, if migrants live and work in unhealthy conditions, they face worse health outcomes compared to those in their host countries worldwide. However, threats, risks, and vulnerabilities may vary across regions and within groups. Health outcomes for refugees and migrants are not always worse; research has shown that there are deviations from this general pattern in some regions and for some diseases. In jobs that often involve poor conditions, conditions are often poor, leading to risks to their physical and mental health, and even to abuse. All these factors are exacerbated by their inadequate access to social protection (WHO, 2022).

Strengthening awareness levels can address cultural barriers that prevent immigrants from seeking preventive care and treatment. Furthermore, unique health challenges arise due to the cultural connotations of certain health behaviours and beliefs. Consequently, addressing the interaction between immigration, health outcomes, and cultural awareness is essential for creating effective health policies and practices. Cultural competence within health systems, combined with targeted educational initiatives, can bridge the accessibility gap faced by immigrant populations, ultimately leading to improved health

outcomes and greater equity within healthcare frameworks.

The purpose of this study is to analyse the studies conducted between 2014 and 2024 on the triangle of migration, health and cultural awareness and published in the WoS database using bibliometric methods, and to reveal the research trends, most frequently studied topics, journals, universities, methodologies used and scientific collaboration networks in this field.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

### 2.1. Data Collection and Search Criteria

In the study, open-access research articles on the triangle of migration, health and cultural awareness topics and the WoS database were examined. A search was conducted within the scope of certain keywords. The keywords in the research were determined as TS=(("health" OR "healthcare") AND ("migration" OR "migrant" OR "refugee" OR "immigrant") AND ("cultural awareness" OR "cultural competence" OR "cultural sensitivity" OR "intercultural communication" OR "cultural differences")). The timespan was determined as 2014-2024. As a result of the search carried out by the determined keywords, a total of 405 research articles were identified, and these articles were examined comprehensively using the bibliometric analysis method.

### 2.2. Data Analysis

Bibliometrics is an analytical approach that applies mathematical and statistical methods to examine interaction and other publishing processes

in scientific studies (Diodato & Gellatly, 2013). This study evaluated studies addressing migration, health, and cultural awareness. This study identified influential researchers, universities and other institutions, interaction networks, and journals in the field. Furthermore, current research trends, thematic clusters, and research trends were systematically identified. Data access date was July 1, 2025. Analyses were conducted using the Bibliometrix package and Biblioshiny tools in the R Studio programming language (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017).

### 2.2. Limitations

The research was limited to open-access research articles in the main collection of the WoS database. Future studies can be expanded to include more comprehensive databases and detailed content analyses, contributing more in-depth to the field.

## 3. RESULTS

### 3.1. General Information

405 research articles were identified in the WoS database according to the determinant criteria. An average annual increase of 17.63% was observed in the publication volume. The average age of the documents was 4.57 years, and the average number of citations per document was 11.3. The average number of authors per publication was 5.46. The international co-authorship rate was 25.19%, demonstrating that the topic is open to global collaboration. Also, the increase was significantly above average, especially in 2024. A general assessment reveals an upward

**Table 1.** General information

Main Information	Data	Year	Articles	(%)
Timespan	2014:2024	2024	71	17.53
Sources (Journals)	238	2023	54	13.33
Studies	405	2022	50	12.35
Annual Growth Rate (%)	17.63	2021	53	13.09
Document average age	4.57	2020	39	9.63
Average citations per article	11.3	2019	36	8.89
References	170001	2018	26	6.42
Authors of single authored articles	16	2017	20	4.94
Co-authors Per Article	5.46	2016	17	4.20
Authors (totally)	1996	2015	25	6.14
International co-authorship (%)	25.19	2014	14	3.46
Keywords Plus	932			

trend. Basic information obtained from the WoS is detailed in Table 1.

### 3.2. The Journals Leading to Field

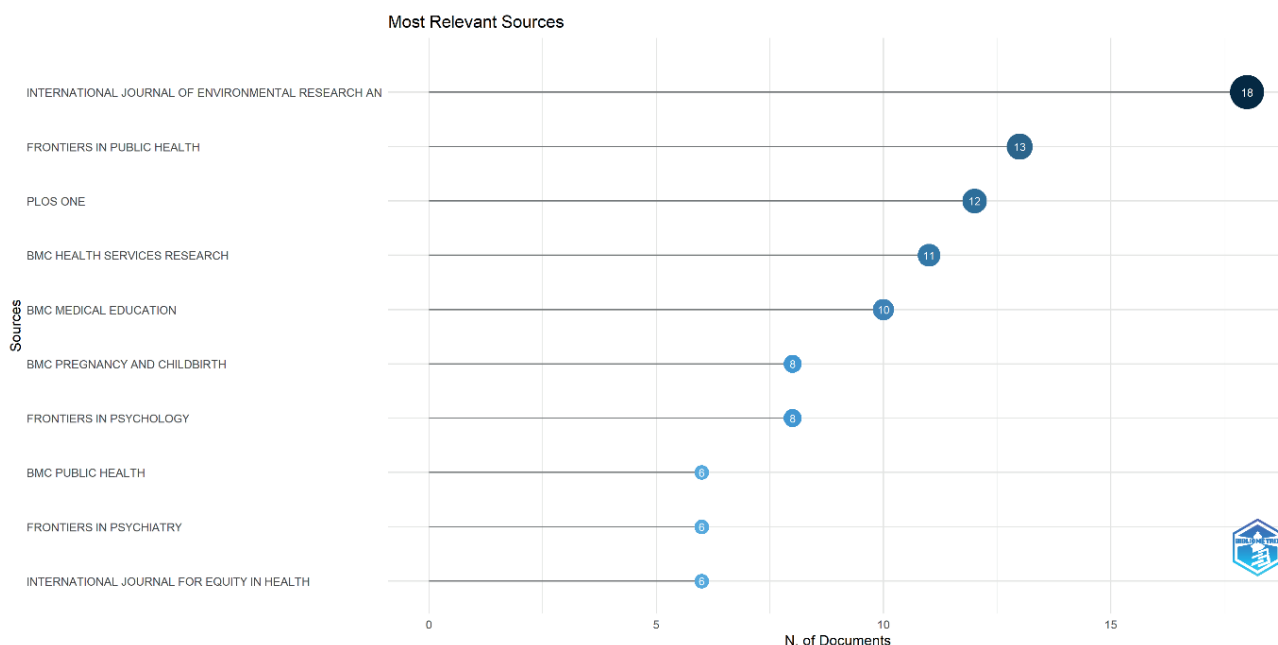
240 different journals contributed to the publication of the reviewed articles. The most frequently and frequently published journals are listed in Figure 1. Indeed, these journals accounted for approximately 40.83% of the reviewed articles.

The top 10 journals listed are, respectively, *International Journal of Environmental Research* (18), *Research and Public Health* (13), *Frontiers in Public Health* (12), *PLOS ONE* (11), *BMC Health Services Research* (10), *BMC Medical Education* (8), *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth* (8), *Frontiers in Psychology*

*ogy* (6), *BMC Public Health* (6), *Frontiers in Psychiatry* (6), *International Journal for Equity In Health* (6).

In addition, the top 10 most cited journals from all reference lists are shown in Table 2, ranked by frequency values.

The top ten most cited articles, including the top 10 journals in the relevant field, are, respectively; Lesser et al. (2014) 118 citations (average increase of 9.83 per year); Chuah et al. (2018) 97 citations (average increase of 12.13 per year); Woodgate et al. (2017) 78 citations (average increase of 8.67 per year); Linton and Green (2019) 73 citations (average increase of 10.43 per year); Zhong et al. (2016) 72 citations (average increase of 7.20 per



**Figure 1.** The top ten journals publishing the most articles in the field

**Table 2.** Journals with the most cited articles

No	Journal	Cited article number
1	<i>Social Science &amp; Medicine</i>	306
2	<i>BMC Health Services Research</i>	219
3	<i>BMC Public Health</i>	195
4	<i>Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health</i>	194
5	<i>Patient Education and Counseling</i>	186
6	<i>PLOS ONE</i>	178
7	<i>The Lancet</i>	140
8	<i>International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health</i>	135
9	<i>Journal of Transcultural Nursing</i>	130
10	<i>The European Journal of Public Health</i>	107

year); Kehoe et al. (2016) 65 citations (average increase of 6.50 per year); Brown et al. (2016) 63 citations (average increase of 6.30 per year); Zubair and Norris (2015) 63 citations (average increase of 5.73 per year); Block and Gibbs (2017) 62 citations (average increase of 6.89 per year); Karasz et al. (2019) 62 citations (average increase of 8.86 per year) (Figure 2).

The study shows that only 758 of the 4,578 citations from the articles included in the study were made to these studies. As a matter of fact, these data represent approximately 16.85% of the total

number of citations. This suggests a democratic distribution among other studies, rather than a concentrated dominance in the field.

### 3.3. Affiliations and Countries Leading the Field

The most influential universities in the field are listed in order in Figure 3. Accordingly, the following are the University of Copenhagen, Denmark (34), University of Amsterdam, Netherlands (22), McGill University, Canada (21), Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Germany (17), Radboud University Nijmegen, Nether-

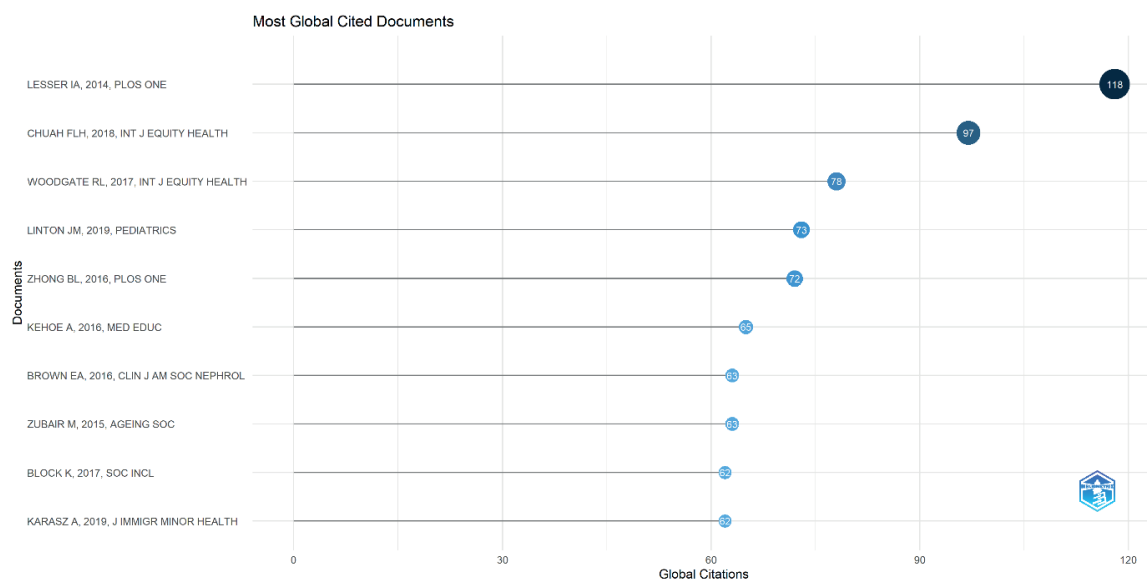


Figure 2. The most cited articles

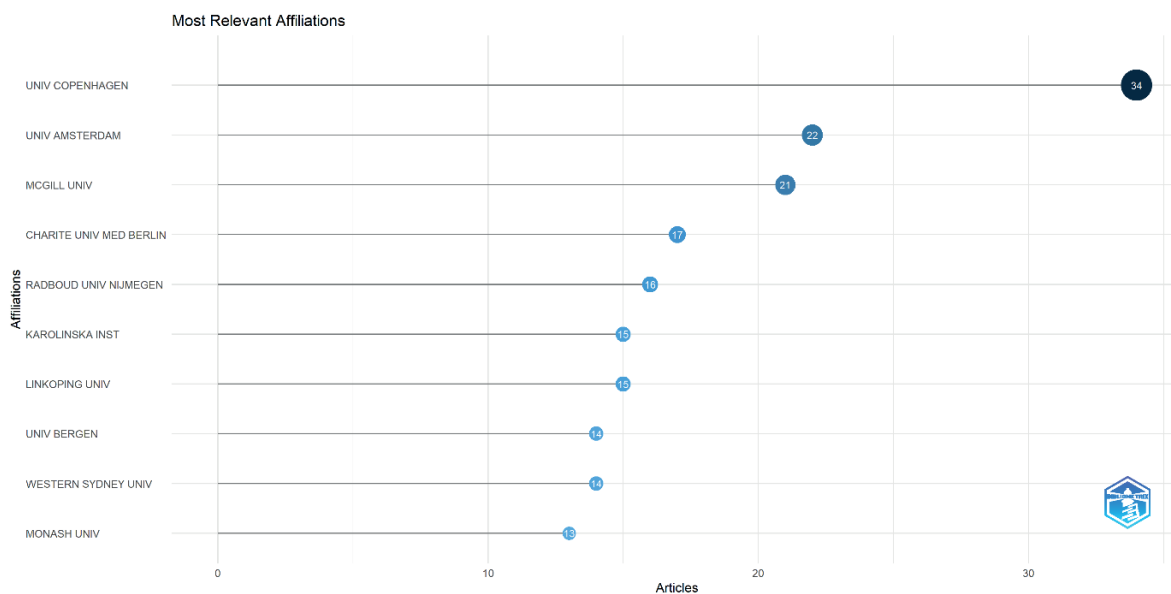


Figure 3. Articles by Affiliations

lands (16), Karolinska Institutet, Sweden (15), Linköping University, Sweden (14), University of Bergen, Norway (14), Western Sydney University, Australia (14), and Monash University, Australia (13). These universities are among the institutions with the highest publication volumes in their respective fields.

In terms of article production, the University of Copenhagen (34), the University of Amsterdam (22), and McGill University (21) have shown a high level of production over the last decade (Figure 4). The University of Copenhagen's affiliation saw a notable acceleration, particularly after 2018, becoming the highest-producing affiliation. Overall, it's possible to say that there has been a significant increase in the volume of publications in this field since 2020.

According to articles published in the WoS database between 2014 and 2024, the country with the highest number of publications was the United States, with 55 articles. Australia (n=34), Canada (n=33), Germany (n=32), Sweden (n=31), and Norway (n=27) follow. The distribution of single-country publications (SCP) and multi-country collaborative publications (MCP) is also reflected in the table. For example, the United Kingdom produced 45.5% of its publications through international collaboration. Similarly,

some countries, such as China (69.2%), Singapore (66.7%), and Ireland (66.7%), have a high rate of multi-country publications (Table 3).

In terms of citation counts, the highest number of citations per article was recorded for Singapore (48.3), the United Kingdom (22.0), and China (17.1). Türkiye topped the list with 3 articles, with an average citation count of 5.3. The data in Table 3 reflects the academic contributions, international cooperation levels and scientific impact of countries in this field.

### 3.4. Concentrations and Trends of Research

By analysing keywords, it is possible to identify key points in the research field and the authors' focus areas. In this context, 50 different keywords were preferred in 405 articles selected according to the study criteria. Figure 5 illustrates the first 20 relevant keywords with a word tree. These keywords are: health (56), cultural competence (54), care (42), mental health (40), experiences (39), immigrants (38), barriers (37), services (37), disparities (36), migration (34), health care (33), communication (25), perceptions (25), women (24), access (22), competence (22), children (21), impact (19), prevalence (18), and acculturation (17).

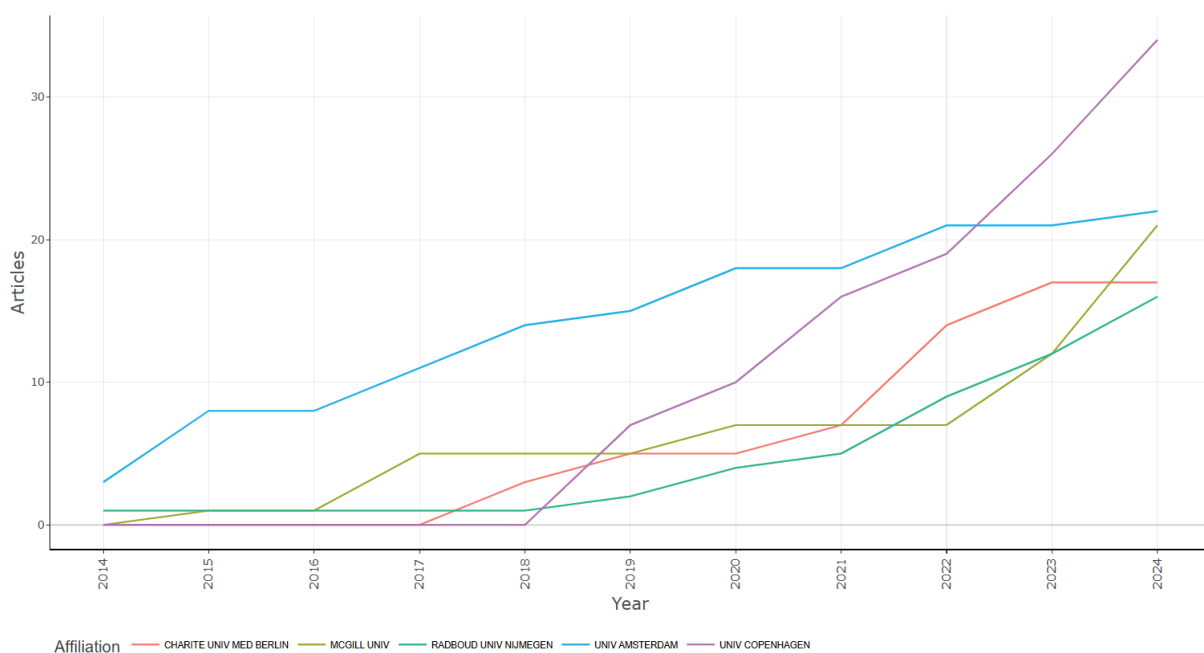


Figure 4. Articles by affiliation: trend in the last ten years

Authors' approaches and trends in a given field demonstrate a composition through the keywords used. In this context, the keywords have significantly diversified since the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, while migration, immigrants, cultural competence, health, and care were researched in an integrated manner during the relevant period, quality, society (which continued to be included in research topics in the post-pandemic period), and language were intensively re-

searched in the pre-pandemic period. Researchers' trends over time are shown in Figure 6.

A co-occurrence network graph is used to reveal the pattern of relationships between topics. As shown in Figure 7, the most frequently occurring concept in the literature and most closely linked to other themes is "cultural competence." Those with a strong correspondence to this term are "qualitative research", "migrants", "health communication", "public health", "discrimi-

**Table 3.** Countries of corresponding authors, their collaborations, and citation counts by country.

Country	Articles	Articles %	SCP*	MCP**	MCP %	Citation	Average citation
USA	55	13,6	45	10	18,2	709	12,90
Australia	34	8,4	30	4	11,8	488	14,40
Canada	33	8,1	30	3	9,1	476	14,40
Germany	32	7,9	24	8	25	313	9,80
Sweden	31	7,7	26	5	16,1	280	9,00
Norway	27	6,7	19	8	29,6	221	8,20
Netherlands	26	6,4	23	3	11,5	313	12,00
Spain	23	5,7	16	7	30,4	190	8,30
United Kingdom	22	5,4	12	10	45,5	483	22,00
Denmark	14	3,5	11	3	21,4	162	11,60
China	13	3,2	4	9	69,2	222	17,10
Belgium	10	2,5	7	3	30	65	6,50
Switzerland	9	2,2	5	4	44,4	105	11,70
Finland	8	2	6	2	25	37	4,60
Italy	7	1,7	6	1	14,3	28	4,00
Chile	5	1,2	3	2	40	44	8,80
France	5	1,2	5	0	0	22	4,40
Austria	4	1	1	3	75	28	7,00
Ireland	3	0,7	1	2	66,7	24	8,00
Korea	3	0,7	3	0	0	9	3,00
Poland	3	0,7	2	1	33,3	8	2,70
Portugal	3	0,7	2	1	33,3	27	9,00
Singapore	3	0,7	1	2	66,7	145	48,30
Türkiye	3	0,7	3	0	0	16	5,30
Brazil	2	0,5	1	1	50	3	1,50
Czech Republic	2	0,5	1	1	50	1	0,50
Japan	2	0,5	2	0	0	10	5,00
Nepal	2	0,5	0	2	100	11	5,50
Slovenia	2	0,5	1	1	50	8	4,00

\*SCP: Single country publications

\*\*MCP: Multiple Country Publications

\*\*\*The countries Argentina, Ethiopia, Ghana, Greece, Hungary, India, Iran, Israel, Malaysia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Romania, Slovakia, South Africa, Thailand, Ukraine produced just one article in the field.

nation”, “immigration” and “Covid-19”. This composition demonstrates that the topic of cultural competence is particularly relevant within the framework of public health and immigrant health. Another important focus of the network in the visual is “migration”. It can be stated that this term is linked to the concepts of “refugee”, “integration”, “mental health”, “acculturation” and “primary care”.

In generally terms, “immigrant health”, “public health” and “health literacy” are clustered

(green); migration, adaptation, and mental health are clustered (blue); Studies focusing on “cultural education”, “medical education” and “cultural competence of health professionals” form one cluster (red); studies evaluating “pregnancy”, “prenatal care” and “ethnicity” form another cluster (purple); and finally, a composition consisting of clusters representing very specific topics such as “transcultural nursing” and “medical education” (pink and orange).

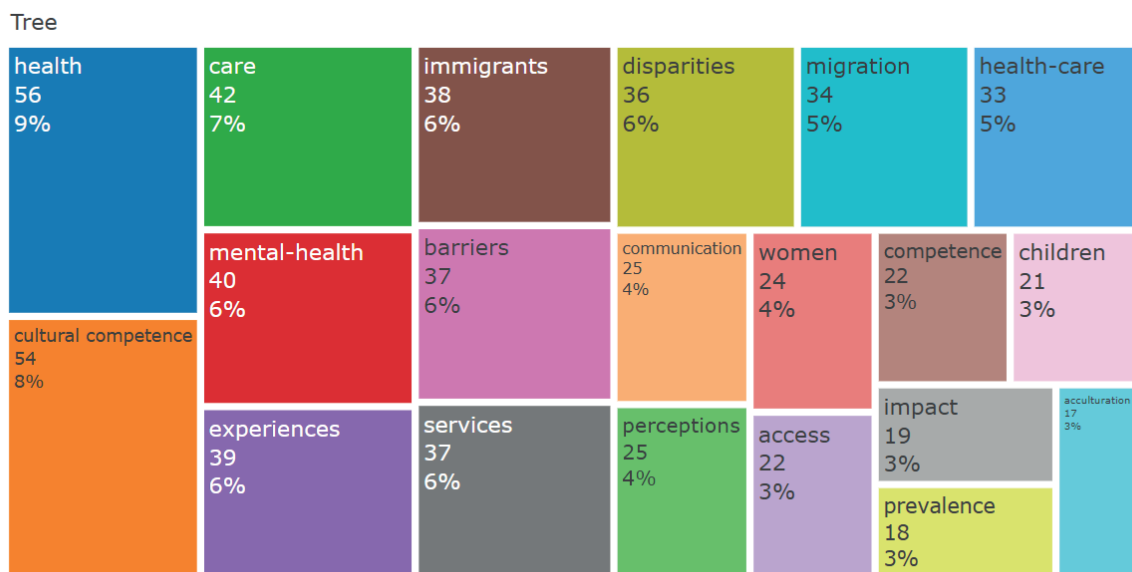


Figure 5. Word tree (20 words)

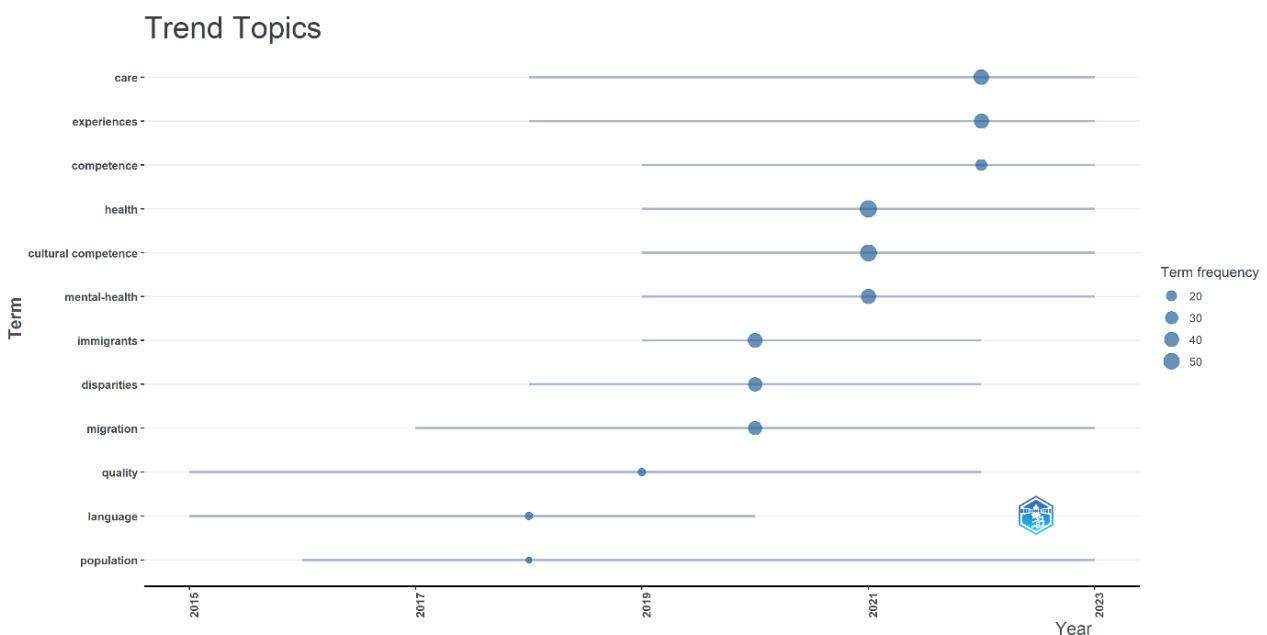
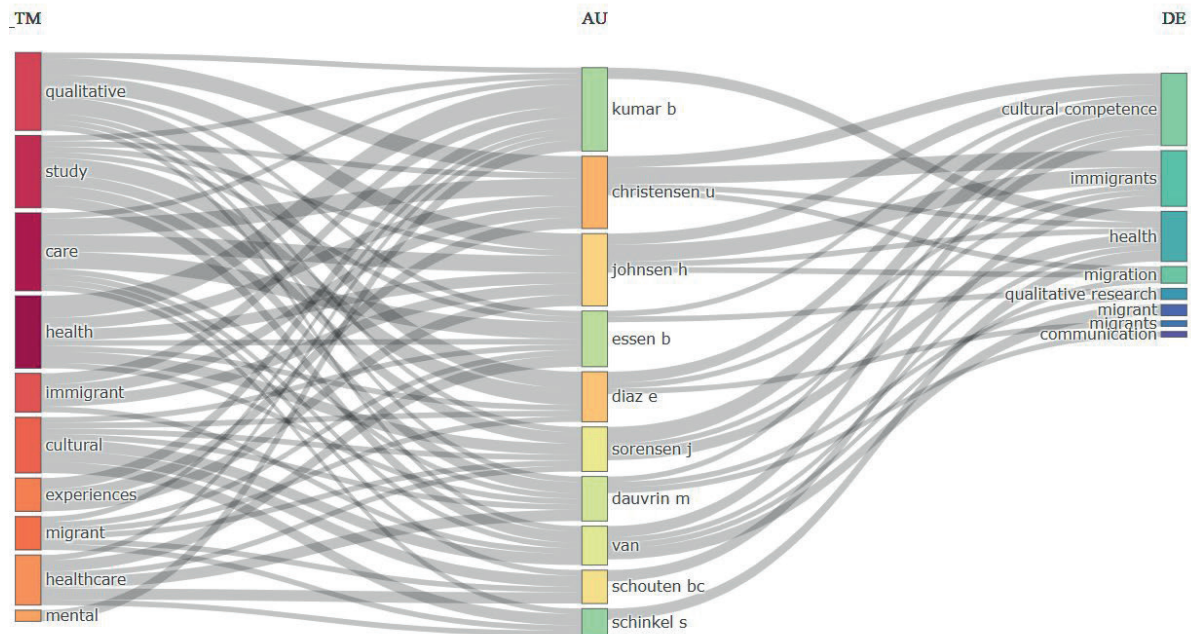


Figure 6. Keywords trend





**Figure 9.** Triple field analysis of conceptual matches between title, author, and keywords

The triple field analysis, consisting of the most frequently repeated words (left), author names (middle), and keywords (right) in the titles of the articles examined within the scope of the subject, is illustrated in Figure 9. This analysis, which shows the most frequently occurring title-author-keyword trio together, visually presents a synopsis of the conceptual integrity of the relevant subject. The most frequently repeated words in the titles were “qualitative”, “study”, “care”, “health”, “immigrant”, “cultural”, “experiences”, “migrant”, “healthcare” and “mental”, while “cultural competence”, “immigrants”, “health”, “migration”, “qualitative research”, “migrant” and “communication” were frequently used in the keyword pool.

A detailed focus on Figure 9 reveals that the words “qualitative”, “study”, and “experiences” appear in the title, while the words “qualitative research” and “immigrants” appear in the keyword pool. This combination demonstrates that studies on the topic are largely conducted using qualitative research methods and are focused on the experiences of immigrant individuals. The research is grounded in concepts such as immigrant health, cultural competence, access to healthcare, and communication. Furthermore, the studies provide in-depth analyses of individual experiences, care processes, and interactions

with healthcare professionals. This suggests that the literature in the field tends to focus more on understanding, interpretation, and the identification of contextual differences.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

This study analyses scientific studies published in the WoS database between 2014 and 2024 on migration, health, and cultural awareness using bibliometric methods to provide a general overview of trends in the field.

The majority of research in the field focuses on immigrants’ experiences of accessing healthcare and understanding the cultural barriers involved. Indeed, it can be argued that qualitative research designs were used to uncover this pattern.

The level of cultural awareness among healthcare providers also impacts equity in access to services, including for immigrants. Indeed, this study highlights this as one of the most important issues. This has also been identified in other studies. For example, Wamwayi et al. (2019) stated that training on the cultural implications of mental health issues should be increased to ensure effective healthcare delivery. It has also been emphasized that this situation, which applies to various healthcare services, will enhance

communication and understanding between service providers and immigrants (Gany et al., 2012; Kocaman et al., 2024).

In addition, cultural differences, such as misunderstanding health interventions, can negatively impact critical treatment processes and increase the incidence and prevalence of certain diseases (Agi et al., 2016). Adaptation to the healthcare system and society, along with healthy lifestyle choices, also highlights the need for training in relevant areas (Lesser et al., 2014). Indeed, it can be stated that the articles in this study focused on adaptation and cultural integration.

Furthermore, the issue of health literacy, which is evaluated and researched within the scope of this topic, has also been emphasized in the literature regarding access to healthcare services. Dzurova et al. (2014) argue that immigrants' inadequate understanding of the dimensions and stages of the healthcare system creates barriers to accessing healthcare and enrolling in health insurance, and that these barriers create barriers to health literacy. Furthermore, Cheng and Lo (2023) emphasized the importance of community education programs to improve child health. As a matter of fact, a study conducted in Canada revealed that the training received by immigrants and refugees included in the system regarding the health system made significant contributions to health literacy (Dahal et al., 2022).

## 5. CONCLUSION

This bibliometric study analysed the academic literature at the intersection of migration, health, and cultural awareness for the period 2014–2024, revealing trends, gaps, and strong thematic structures. The findings demonstrate that migrant and refugee health is increasingly prominent on the global health agenda, with cultural awareness, health literacy, and service delivery becoming central themes.

Research in this area is largely based on qualitative approaches, allowing for a deeper understanding of individual experiences, cultural interactions, and healthcare contexts. However, this methodological focus can be supplemented with quantitative and mixed methods, leading to more generalizable and comparable results.

Additionally, it is noteworthy that the number of studies conducted in immigrant-receiving countries such as Türkiye is relatively low. Although Türkiye is represented by only three publications in the dataset, this limited academic output is a notable and thought-provoking finding, especially given the country's geopolitical significance and its central role in major migration corridors, such as the Syria–Türkiye axis. This demonstrates the need for directly affected countries to contribute more strongly to the global academic literature. Increasing interdisciplinary research at the national level will contribute to the transformation of healthcare services into a more inclusive and culturally sensitive system for immigrants.

Researchers focusing on experiences and observational studies on cultural integration and raising awareness in Türkiye, in terms of cultural differences and awareness, will make significant contributions to the field.

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