Mapping the Scholarly Landscape of Self-Compassion and Mental Health (2010–2025): A Scopus-Based Bibliometric Analysis

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Review

Mapping the Scholarly Landscape of Self-Compassion and Mental Health 2010–2025: A Scopus-Based Bibliometric Analysis

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Abstract

Objectives: We aimed to map the global research landscape on self-compassion and mental health by analysing publications retrieved from the Scopus database with a focus on publication trends, prolific authors, leading journals, geographic distribution, and the matic developments. **Methods:** We conducted a bibliometric analysis using relevant Scopus-indexed literature from inception through July 2025. We specifically focused on articles from 2010 to 2025. We employed the terms "self-compassion" OR "self compassion" AND "mental health". **Results:** We retrieved a total of 2,437 documents, revealing a significant increase in publication output over the past decade, peaking between 2020 and 2024. The most prolific authors during this period included Paul Gilbert and Yasuhiro Kotera, with 41 publications each. The United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and China emerged as the leading countries in terms of research output. Keyword analysis highlighted recurring themes around mindfulness, resilience, depression, and emotional regulation. Influential articles by MacBeth & Gumley (2012) and Gilbert & Procter (2006) demonstrated foundational impact with over 1,200 citations each. **Conclusion:** The field of self-compassion and mental health research is expanding rapidly and is characterised by strong theoretical foundations, growing global interest, and interdisciplinary relevance.

Keywords: self-compassion; mental health; publication trends; scholarly mapping; Scopus; VOSViewer; Bibliometrix R Package; biblioshiny; bibliometric analysis

1. Introduction

Bibliometric analysis is a valuable quantitative method for synthesising large volumes of peer-reviewed journal literature, offering insights into the productivity of authors, countries, and institutions, as well as co-authorship patterns and conceptual linkages through keywords and co-occurrence (Donthu et al., 2021; Öztürk et al., 2024; Passas, 2024). Extensive research has been conducted and published on the construct of self-compassion (Neff, 2009a, 2023; Neff et al., 2007; Yarnell et al., 2015, 2019), elucidating its significance in fostering mental health and well-being, for example, its impacts on psychological and emotional well-being across diverse populations (Bluth & Blanton, 2015; Rehman et al., 2024). A growing body of empirical research has consistently shown that self-compassion plays a pivotal role in promoting mental health and psychological well-being across diverse populations, including university students, healthcare professionals, and informal

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caregivers via Internet/Web-based interventions during the COVID-19 pandemic (M. Aledeh & Habib Adam, 2020; Kotera, Aledeh, et al., 2022; Kotera, Green, et al., 2021; Kotera, Lieu, et al., 2022; Kotera, Maybury, et al., 2022; Kotera, Ting, et al., 2021; Kotera & Ting, 2021). Swami et al. (2021), MacBeth & Gumley (2012), and Kotera et al. (2020) have published comprehensively on self-compassion, including a bibliometric study (Swami et al., 2021), contributing to its applications, theoretical underpinnings, deeper understanding, and growth in academic literature.

Earlier studies have primarily focused on the broader implications of self-compassion for physical, emotional, and psychological functioning, including its role in mitigating stress, anxiety, and depression across diverse populations (Cowand et al., 2024; Fong & Loi, 2016; Han & Kim, 2023; Homan & Sirois, 2017; Hughes et al., 2021; Muris et al., 2022). However, a critical gap remains because no prior bibliometric studies have specifically targeted the intersection of self-compassion and mental health, explicitly using search terms such as "self-compassion AND mental health." To address this gap, we conducted an exploratory investigation into how self-compassion has been integrated into mental healthcare programmes and published in peer-reviewed journals. Utilising the Scopus database, a premier platform for indexing peer-reviewed publications, we performed multiple searches at various time points to capture the evolving trends in this domain. For instance, we started observing the publication trends during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Aims

In this study, we aim to systematically map and evaluate the global research landscape on self-compassion and mental health, highlighting and analysing publication trends, intellectual structures, thematic developments, and collaborative networks retrieved from the Scopus database within this interdisciplinary field.

While literature reviews continue to play important roles in academic research to study the general state of research, bibliometric analyses have recently become popular in the exploration and analysis of a large body of literature in many research fields (Donthu et al., 2021; Kraus et al., 2024; Linnenluecke et al., 2020; Öztürk et al., 2024). The rationale for conducting this bibliometric analysis arises from several convergent empirical, epistemic, and contextual developments within the scholarly landscape of psychological science (Giamellaro et al., 2025; Olabiyi et al., 2025). The global outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, for instance has acted as a catalyst in accelerating research on psychological resilience, emotional regulation, and adaptive coping mechanisms, among which self-compassion has emerged as a salient construct of theoretical and clinical significance (Demetriou et al., 2023; Matos et al., 2022; Nguyen & Le, 2021; Polizzi et al., 2023).

As populations worldwide grappled with unprecedented levels of stress, anxiety, and social isolation (Bonati et al., 2022; Hammoudi Halat et al., 2023; Robb et al., 2020), researchers increasingly turned their attention to self-compassion as a protective psychological resource capable of mitigating adverse mental health outcomes (Austin et al., 2023; Crego et al., 2022). This shift in scholarly focus is empirically substantiated by a marked proliferation in the volume of publications (Dodson & Heng, 2022; Neff, 2023). An initial systematic search conducted in September 2023 yielded 1,385 published peer-reviewed documents and grey literature, indexed in Scopus, related to self-compassion and mental health. This baseline assessment established a robust foundation for monitoring bibliometric trends in scholarly output in this rapidly evolving field (Kyriakides, 2002; Tijssen & Winnink, 2016). Following this initial retrieval, a marked acceleration in publication activity was observed on the 1st of January 2024.

A retrospective analysis of bibliometric trends (W. Zhou et al., 2020), revealed a pronounced surge in scholarly interest in self-compassion during the last quarter of 2023, which continued into the subsequent year. In response to this trend, systematic tracking of publication volume was formally initiated in March 2024. At that time, 1,679 relevant documents were identified, indicating a substantial and growing body of research. Subsequent longitudinal searches revealed a consistent upward trajectory in scholarly output with 1,800 documents by July 2024, 1,887 documents by August 2024, 2,041 by September 29 2024, and 2,054 by October 3, 2024. By December 31, 2024, the cumulative

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total reached 2,158 publications, a 55% increase from the baseline established in late 2023. This rapid increase reflects an exponential growth pattern characteristic of emerging research domains (Bornmann et al., 2021; Z. Yang et al., 2024).

The surge underscores not only the intensifying academic interest but also the evolvement of self-compassion as a central theme in contemporary mental health discourse (Han & Kim, 2023b). This upward trend persisted into 2025. A follow-up search conducted on June 30, 2025, retrieved 2,426 documents, representing a significant increase of 272 publications within approximately six months, an average growth rate of over 45 articles per month. A subsequent search on July 4, 2025, confirmed the stability of this figure at 2,426, suggesting a brief plateau. However, by July 12, 2025, the number of published documents had reached 2,437, underscoring the dynamic and continuously expanding nature of research production in the field of self-compassion and mental health (Pank et al., 2025; Tiwari et al., 2025).

The rapid expansion of the literature reflects a growing consensus (Smela et al., 2023), that self-compassion functions as a transdiagnostic protective factor that fosters emotional resilience, reduces symptoms of depression and anxiety, and enhances overall psychological well-being (Beshai et al., 2022; Dan et al., 2023; MacBeth & Gumley, 2012; McArthur et al., 2017; Mona & Angela, 2018; Neff, 2009b). Its relevance has been particularly pronounced in high-stress contexts, including public health crises, caregiving environments, and clinical populations (C. Lathren, 2023; Li et al., 2024). Given this momentum, despite this growing interest (Zakamulin & Giner, 2020), there exists a critical need for an update of a systematic and data-driven synthesis that maps the intellectual structure (Arsalan et al., 2025), thematic evolution, and interdisciplinary integration of research at the intersection of self-compassion and mental health (Armaou et al., 2024; H. Zhou & Amaral, 2025).

In this present study, updated literature relevant to the topic is identified. Although there is growing interest in self-compassion and mental health (Crego et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2021), there remains a need for a comprehensive bibliometric evaluation of the literature to map intellectual structures, track thematic developments (Hosseini et al., 2021; Tai et al., 2013), and identify research gaps. Therefore, a detailed bibliometric analysis of the global literature on self-compassion and mental health using data retrieved from the Scopus database was conducted. This bibliometric thus serves not only as a descriptive account of publication trends but also as an analytical tool to inform researchers, practitioners, stakeholders, and policymakers navigating the evolving landscape of self-compassion and mental health promotion in the post-pandemic era (D.-H. R. Zhou & Kwok, 2023).

Research Questions

This bibliometric analysis was specifically guided by the following questions: (i) What are the publication trends over time in the literature? (ii) Who are the most prolific and influential authors in the field of self-compassion and mental health? (iii) Which journals and publication outlets most frequently disseminate research on self-compassion and mental health? (iv) Which countries and institutions contribute most significantly to the literature on self-compassion and mental health? (v) What are the most frequently occurring and co-occurring keywords in the literature, and what thematic clusters do they reveal? (vi) Which documents have received the highest citation impact, and what conceptual or empirical contributions have they made to the field?

2. Materials and Method

Data Source and Search Strategy

We selected the Scopus database as our primary data source for its extensive coverage of peer-reviewed literature in health sciences, psychology, and social sciences. We used a structured search to perform the search and identification of published documents indexed in the Scopus database. We used the query (“self-compassion” OR “self compassion” AND “mental health”. We searched without language or document type restrictions to ensure comprehensive coverage. TITLE-ABS-KEY (self-compassion OR self AND compassion AND mental AND health). The exported data from

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Scopus was uploaded in CSV format to VOSViewer and Bibliometrix/Biblioshiny for the analysis and visualisation (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017; Arruda et al., 2022). All the results we retrieved from inception through July 2025 were included.

Data Export and Preprocessing

The search yielded 2,437 documents. The full metadata was exported in CSV format, including fields such as title, authors, year, source title, abstract, author affiliations, keywords, document type, and citation count. We exported and analysed data for bibliometric indicators, including annual publication trends, document types, citation counts, author productivity, country affiliations, and keyword frequency (Nakagawa et al., 2019; Wu et al., 2025). We completed our search on the 12th of July 2025. Although our search captured publications from 1975, we mainly focused on publications from 2010 to July 12 2025. However, our search captured the most recent publications.

3. Results

3.1. Network Visualisation of Co-Authorship

Our search in the Scopus database identified 2,437 documents. We used VOSViewer and Bibliometrix in R. In VOSViewer, 8,960 authors were identified as having contributed to 2,437 documents. In creating our map, we set the minimum number of documents per author to 3 and the minimum number of citations per author to 2. As a result, 330 authors met the thresh olds. For each of these authors, the total strength of co-authorship links with one another was calculated.

The five top results identified were documents by Gilbert et al., Kotera et al., Ferreira et al., Pinto-Gouveia et al., and Cunha et al., which had the highest number of documents citations and total link strength. However, some of the 330 items in our network are not directly connected. The largest set of connected items in our network consists of 111 items. Interestingly, results from the network visualisation show key authors who have collaborated with each other. See Figures 1–3 and Table 1.

3.1.1. Network Visualisation of Co-Occurrence Using All Keywords

8,771 keywords were identified altogether. We then used the default minimum number of occurrences of keywords by setting it at 5. 1,385 keywords met the threshold. For each of the 1,385 keywords, the total strength of co-occurrence links with other keywords was computed (Arruda et al., 2022). For the computation, we selected only 1000 keywords with the greatest total link strength. See Figures 4 and 5

3.1.2. Citation of Documents

We set the minimum number of citations of documents at 5. Of the 2,437 documents, 1,310 met the threshold. For each of the 1,310 documents, the number of citation links was computed by selecting only the documents with the largest number of links, of which only 1000 documents were included. Because some of the 1000 items (documents) in our network are not connected, 764 of the documents turned out to be the largest set of connected items (Abbasi et al., 2011; Arruda et al., 2022). When the cursor was placed on any of the key contributing authors, for instance, on Gilbert et al., and Macbeth, all authors who are linked with them became highlighted from the background (Arruda et al., 2022).

3.1.3. Citation—Authors

We set the minimum number of documents of an author at 3, with the minimum number of citations per author at 1. Of all the 8,960 authors, 330 met the threshold (Arruda et al., 2022). For each of the 330 authors, the total strength of co-authorship links with other authors was computed. The authors with the greatest total link strength were also computed. 297 documents turned out to be the largest set of connected items. See Figures 6 and 7

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3.1.4. Citations by Organisations

6745 organisations were included in the search. We set the minimum number of documents of an organisation at 3, with the minimum number of citations per author at 1. Of all 6,745 organisations, 106 met the threshold (Arruda et al., 2022; Clarivate, 2025; Scopus, 2025). For each of the 106 organisations, the total strength of co-authorship links with other organisations was computed and 69 organisations turned out to be the largest set connected (Abbasi et al., 2011; Arruda et al., 2022). See Figure 8.

3.1.5. Citation by Country or Territory

121 countries were included in this analysis. We set the minimum number of documents per country at 3 and the minimum number of citations to 1. Of the 121 countries, only 64 met the threshold. For each of the 64 countries that met the threshold, the total strength of links between countries was computed. The countries with the greatest total link strength were also computed, and 64 items (countries) turned out to be the largest set connected (Abbasi et al., 2011; Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017; Arruda et al., 2022; Martinho et al., 2022; Scopus, 2025).

3.1.6. Co-Citation of Cited References

There were 116,209 cited references altogether. We left the minimum number of citations for cited references at the default mode, which is 20. Of the 116209 cited references, only 130 met the threshold. For each of these 130 cited references, the total strength of links with other cited references was calculated. The cited references with the greatest total link strength were selected (Abbasi et al., 2011; Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017; Arruda et al., 2022, 2022; Martinho et al., 2022). See Figure 9.

3.2.1. Publication Type

Our analysis of publication types (Schneider et al., 2022), revealed that original research articles accounted for the majority (n = 2,048), amounting to 84.1%, followed by review articles (n = 194), book chapters (n = 71), conference proceedings (n = 32), and books (n = 29) (Scopus, 2025). This distribution reflects both the empirical depth and conceptual breadth of this field (S. Yang & Han, 2015). Considering the disciplinary growth, the majority of publications were found within medicine (n = 1,262) and psychology (n = 1,092), followed by contributions from the social sciences (n = 511), nursing (n = 288), and the arts and humanities (n = 128) (Scopus, 2025). These figures suggest the interdisciplinary relevance of self-compassion as an established construct intersecting clinical, psychosocial, and philosophical domains (Barnard & Curry, 2011; Neff, 2009a, 2023; Neff et al., 2007).

3.2.2. Keywords of Co-Occurrence

The analysis of keyword co-occurrences revealed high frequency of terms such as “human” (n = 1,452), “humans” (n = 1,112), “mental health” (n = 1,041), “female” (n =1,028), and “adult” (n = 927), including a primary focus on adult mental health and human-centred psychological enquiry (Scopus, 2025). See Figures 10–12.

3.2.3. Linguistic Analysis

In our data, linguistic analysis showed a strong dominance of English language publications (n = 2,380), 97.7%, with limited representation from Spanish (n = 20), Chinese (n = 15), Persian (n = 9), and Portuguese (n = 7). This highlights a persistent Anglophone bias (Huang et al., 2025; Song et al., 2010) in the dissemination of self-compassion research (Scopus, 2025).

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3.2.3. Access Typologies

We examined the access types of all the documents that we identified and exported. 1,159 documents were published as open access, i.e., freely available to the public without restrictions (Scopus, 2025). 816 were found as green access, i.e., self-archived versions in institutional and subject repositories (Scopus, 2025). 615 were identified as gold access, i.e., publisher-provided open access under a licence. 254 were found to be hybrid gold, i.e., subscription journals with select open access articles (Scopus, 2025). Finally, we identified 103 as bronze access, i.e., free-to-read versions, but lacking a clear reuse licence (Carbon et al., 2019; Open Access Network, 2025; Piwowar et al., 2018). Although this diverse access distribution suggests a strong inclination towards open science practices, variations in licencing and permanence exist (Ng et al., 2024; Zečević et al., 2021).

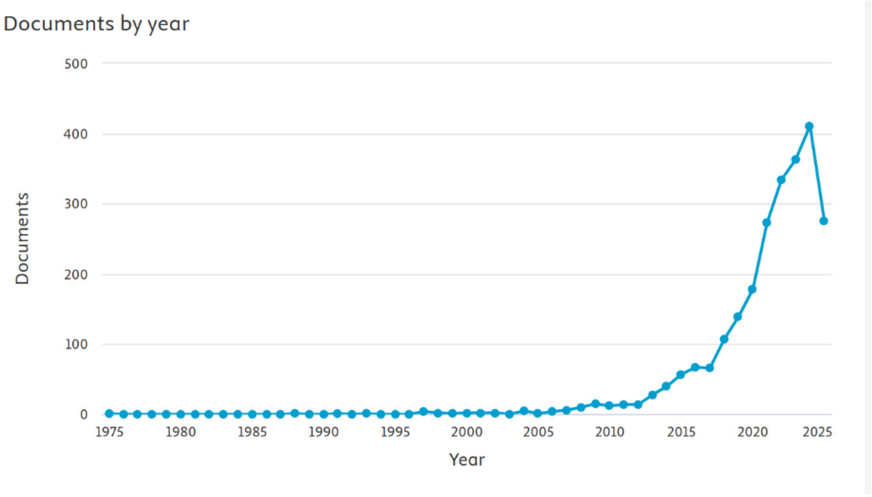

Figure 1. Documents by year.

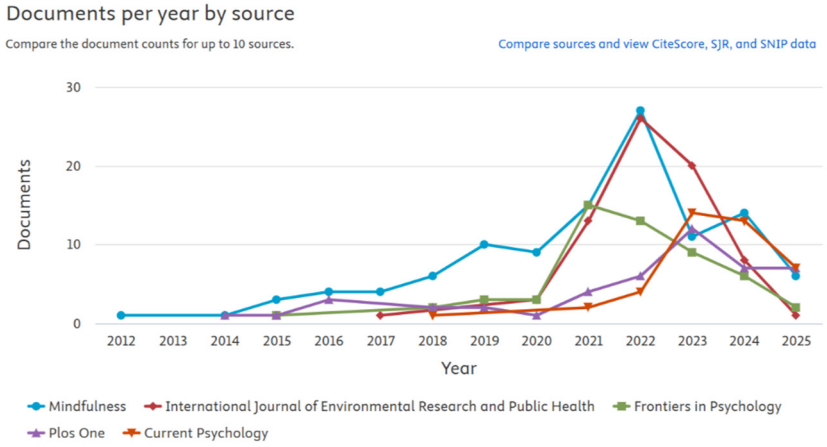

Figure 2. Documents per year by source.

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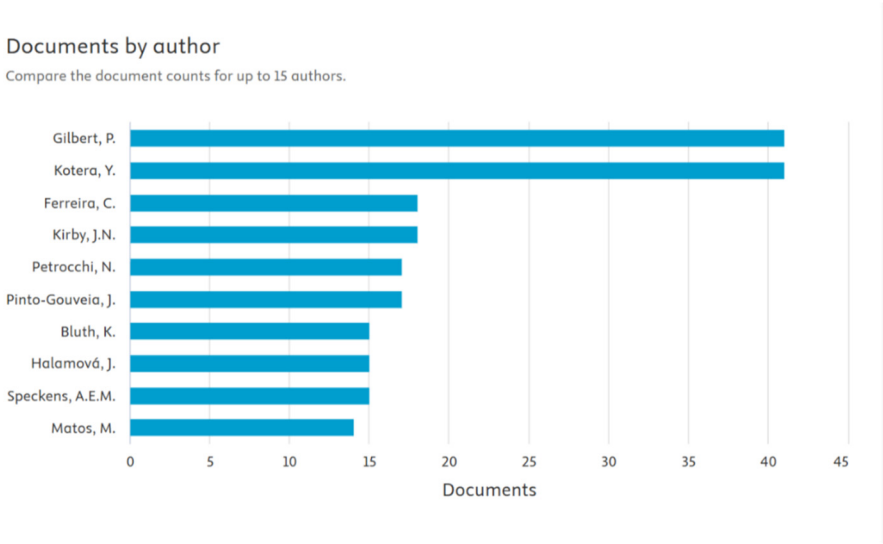

Figure 3. Documents by author.

Table 1. Selected key authors out of 8960 authors.

Verify selected authors

Selected	Author	Documents	Citations	Total link strength
☑	kotera, yasuhiro	39	994	67
☑	gilbert, paul	37	3937	62
☑	ferreira, cláudia	18	411	48
☑	pinto-gouveia, josé	17	904	43
☑	cunha, marina	12	333	40
☑	matos, marcela	10	266	37
☑	carvalho, sérgio a.	12	182	35
☑	petrocchi, nicola	13	705	33
☑	galhardo, ana	8	156	32
☑	baghaei, nilufar	9	80	30
☑	montero-marin, jesus	11	274	29
☑	garcía-campayo, javier	10	181	28
☑	jeste, dilip v.	10	353	28
☑	edwards, ann-marie	8	82	27
☑	trindade, inês a.	7	110	26
☑	boecking, benjamin	4	51	25
☑	lee, ellen e.	8	189	25
☑	paetzold, isabell	4	51	25
☑	palmeira, lara	7	278	25
☑	rauschenberg, christian	4	51	25

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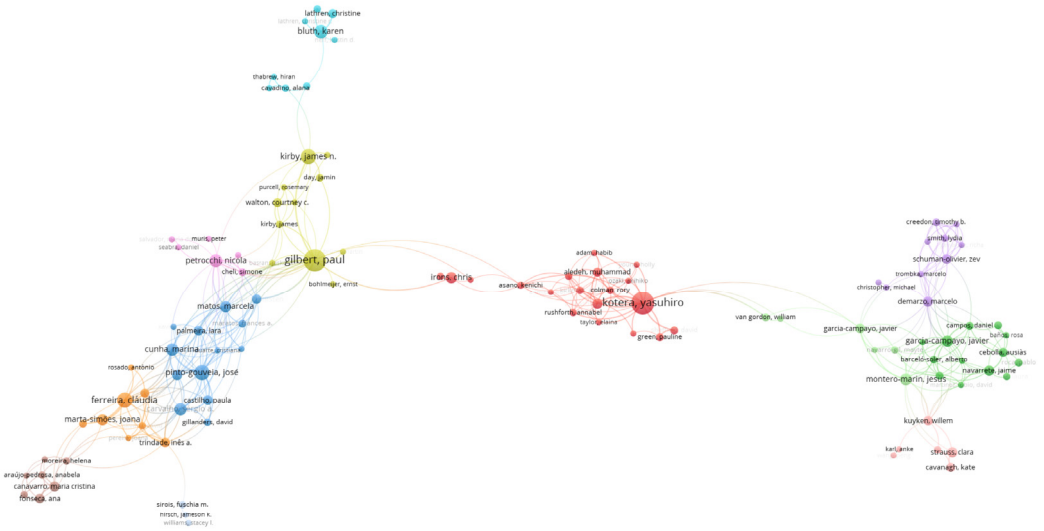

Figure 4. Network visualisation of all authors.

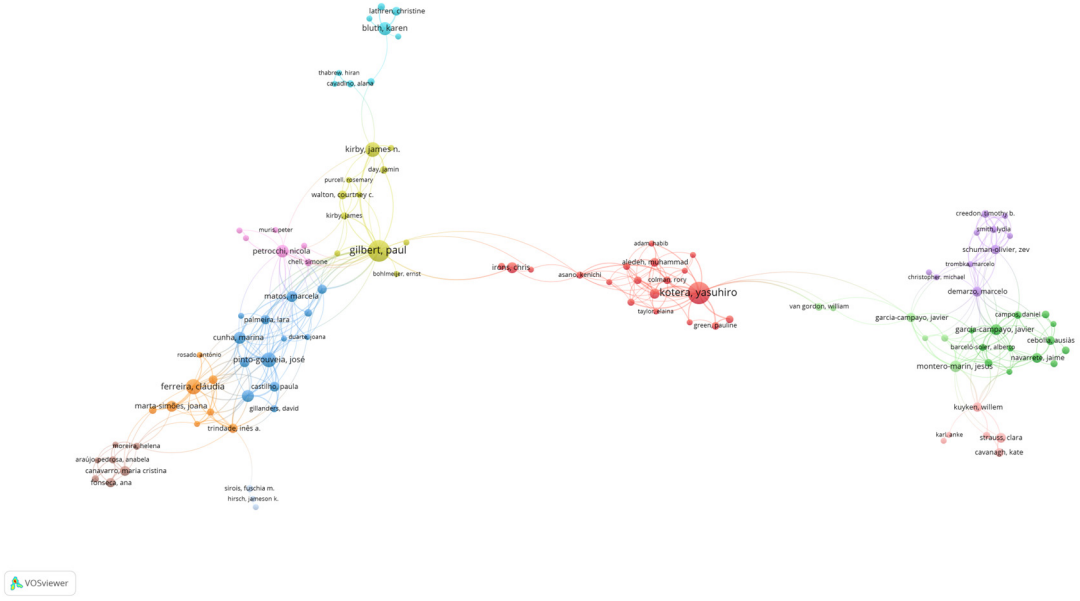

Figure 5. Network visualization of co-authorship.

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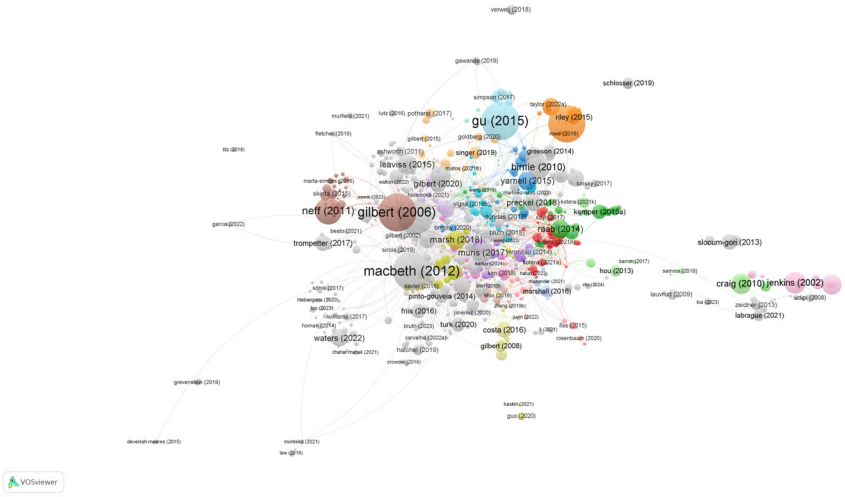

Figure 6. Network visualisation of citation.

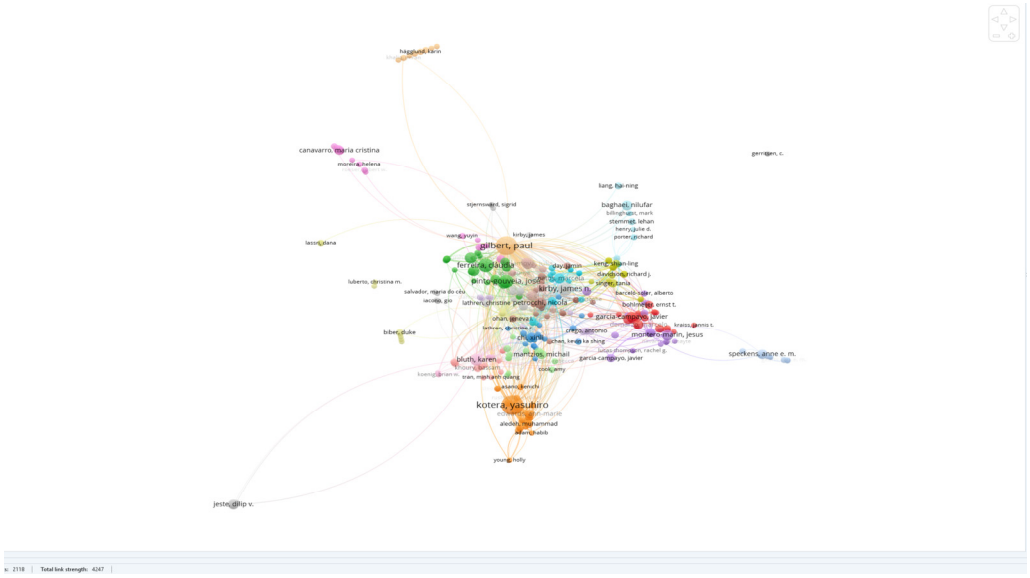

Figure 7. Network visualization of co-citation.

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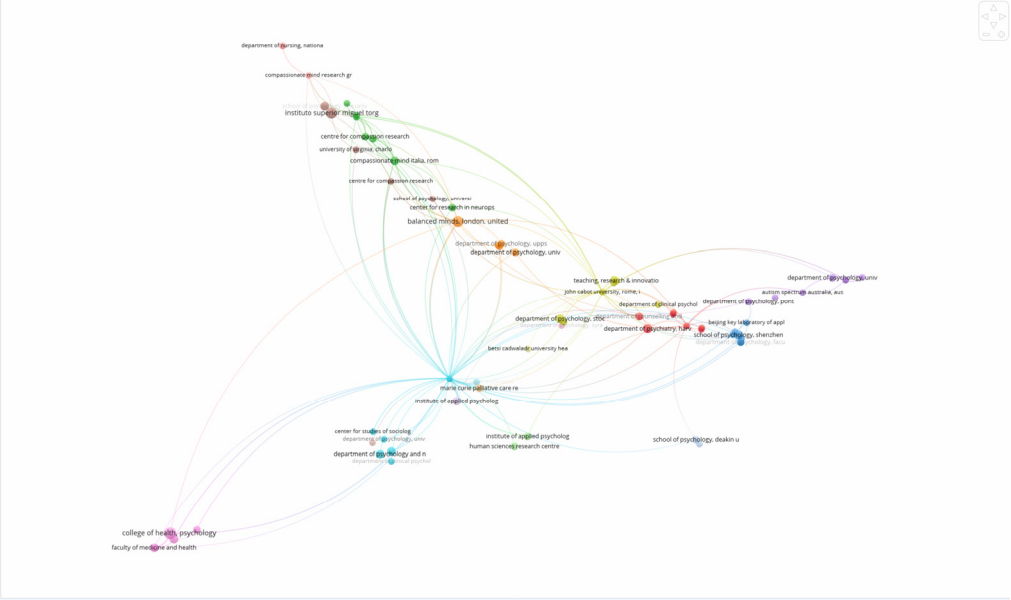

Figure 8. Network visualisation of contributing organisations.

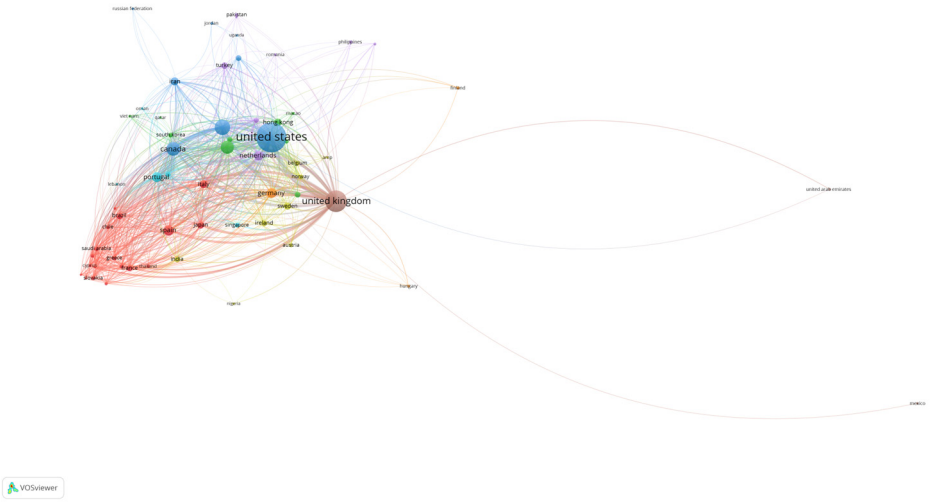

Figure 9. Network visualisation of citation by country/territory.

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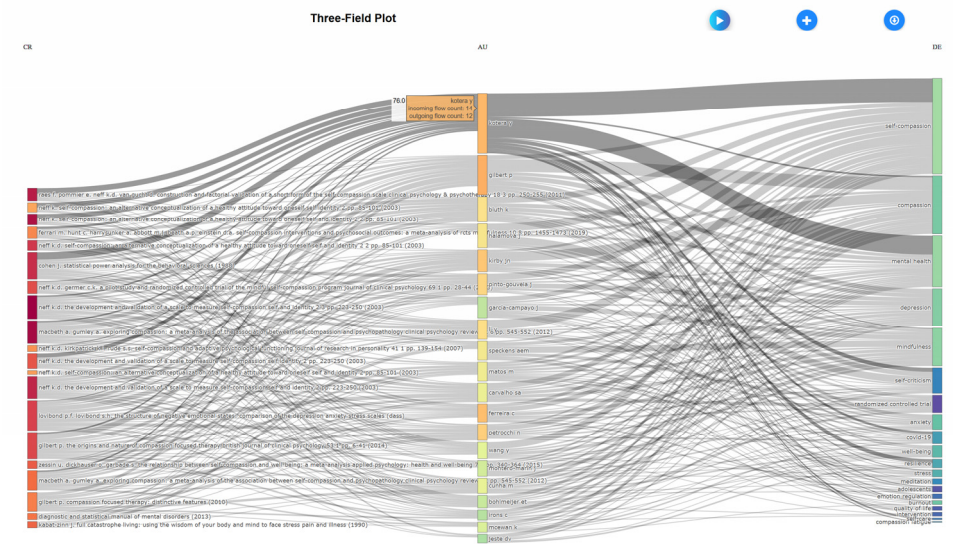

Figure 10. Three-Field Plot of authors and keywords.

Figure 11. WordCloud.

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Figure 12 Thematic Map.

The results of our bibliometric analysis underscore the exponential growth and interdisciplinary expansion of self-compassion research over the past decade, with a pronounced acceleration observed between 2020 and 2024. The initial surge identified between 2021 and 2023 (see Figure 2) appears to coincide with a broader trend in mental health research, where self-compassion is increasingly being explored as a resilience-building and protective psychological mechanism (M. Aledeh et al., 2024, 2025; S. Aledeh et al., 2024; Eghbali et al., 2022; Kotera, Aledeh, et al., 2022; Neff, 2023). The dominance of original empirical research (84.1%), suggests a rapidly growing field grounded in diverse methodologies and empirical rigour (Park et al., 2024; Zolfagharian et al., 2019). The presence of a significant number of review articles and book chapters further reflects efforts to synthesise and consolidate theoretical and applied knowledge in the field (Chigbu et al., 2023; Kunisch et al., 2023).

4.1.1. Growing Scholarly Attention to Self-Compassion in Mental Health Research

The literature on self-compassion and mental health has experienced a significant and sustained growth. The results of this bibliometric analysis underscore the exponential growth (Nakagawa et al., 2019) and interdisciplinary expansion of self-compassion research over the past decade (Centeno & Fernandez, 2020), with a pronounced acceleration observed between 2020 and July 2025. The temporal analysis of publications between 2016 and 2025 reveals a pronounced and steady growth in scholarly output related to self-compassion and mental health (M. Aledeh et al., 2024, 2025; S. Aledeh et al., 2024; Stutts, 2022). From only 67 publications in 2016, the number rose sharply to 411 by 2024, reflecting nearly a sixfold increase over the decade (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017; Arruda et al., 2022; Scopus, 2025). This trend is consistent with the rising global emphasis on non-pharmacological and psychosocial approaches in mental healthcare (Otu et al., 2020; Pinho et al., 2024; Varela et al., 2023). The spike in publications, particularly after 2020, may also reflect a broader societal shift towards self-care and emotional resilience in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its psychological aftermath (Manchia et al., 2022; Schäfer et al., 2022).

4.1.2. Document Type Distribution and Knowledge Dissemination

A review of the most cited articles demonstrated that the field has been significantly influenced by seminal works that link self-compassion to psychological well-being, mindfulness, and compassion-focused therapy (CFT). Notably, MacBeth and Gumley's 2012 meta-analysis (1,308 citations) underscored the inverse relationship between self-compassion and psychopathology, laying a strong empirical foundation (MacBeth & Gumley, 2012b). Kristin Neff's (2011) work further solidified self-compassion as a distinct and measurable construct, differentiating it from self-esteem and emphasising its positive correlation with mental health (Neff, 2011). Paul Gilbert's extensive

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contributions to compassion-focused therapy, for example, have been pivotal in operationalising self-compassion as a therapeutic mechanism (Gilbert, 2014, 2020; Gilbert & Procter, 2006). These influential articles are predominantly published in high-impact psychology and psychotherapy journals, affirming their academic rigour and clinical relevance (BPS Journal, 2025; Dienstag, 2008).

4.1.3. Emerging Themes and Interdisciplinary Engagement

The dataset is largely composed of peer-reviewed journal articles (Jiao et al., 2023; Walters, 2020), including a strong empirical orientation within the field (Moorhead et al., 2025). The presence of review articles, albeit fewer in number, highlights an attempt at synthesising existing knowledge and shaping theoretical frameworks (Luft et al., 2022). This balance between original research and theoretical integration is indicative of an evolving field that is both empirically grounded and conceptually evolving (Cash, 2018; Rahimi & Khatooni, 2024). The exploration of the preliminary keywords suggests frequent associations between self-compassion and constructs (see Figure 3.7., word cloud) such as mindfulness, resilience, stress, depression, burnout, and emotional regulation (Conversano, 2020; Li et al., 2024; Rehman et al., 2024). This aligns with broader movements in positive psychology, clinical psychology, and mental health education (Crego et al., 2022; Kotera & Ting, 2021; Schutte & Malouff, 2025). The interdisciplinary nature of the field is further evidenced by the diverse range of journals spanning clinical psychology, education, healthcare, and social sciences that publish research on this topic (Knappe, 2023; Rozensky et al., 2014; Turpin & Coleman, 2010).

4.1.4. Shifting Paradigms in Mental Health Promotion

The increasing scholarly attention to self-compassion signifies a paradigm shift in mental health promotion (Mey et al., 2023; Tiwari et al., 2020; Walton et al., 2025). The shift goes from pathologising mental illness to enhancing protective psychological resources (Sweeney et al., 2018). Self-compassion is being increasingly recognised as a resilience-building factor that fosters emotional regulation, self-soothing, and adaptive coping (C. Lathren, 2023; C. R. Lathren et al., 2021; Li et al., 2024). Furthermore, the inclusion of self-compassion in therapeutic protocols (Wilson et al., 2019), educational interventions (Othman et al., 2022), and community mental health programmes (Wakelin et al., 2022) demonstrates its applicability across clinical and non-clinical populations, age groups, and cultural contexts (Swami et al., 2025; Yotsidi et al., 2023).

The cross-disciplinary engagement (Brodin & Avery, 2020), particularly from medicine, psychology, nursing, and social sciences (Ding et al., 2020; Sy et al., 2024), indicates that self-compassion is being investigated not only within therapeutic contexts but also as a construct relevant to healthcare delivery, social care, social well-being, and human development (M. Aledeh et al., 2024; Crego et al., 2022; Kotera, Green, et al., 2022; Kotera & Ting, 2021; Malenfant et al., 2022; Super et al., 2024). This aligns with emerging research frameworks that position self-compassion at the intersection of clinical practice, public health, and psychosocial education (Ferrari et al., 2019; Finlay-Jones et al., 2023; Wieder mann et al., 2023).

The high frequency of demographic and thematic keywords (Chen & Xiao, 2016; Dissanayake et al., 2022), such as “mental health”, “female”, and “adult” reinforces the conclusion that self-compassion research has primarily focused on adult populations and gender-based dimensions of psychological vulnerability (Helminen et al., 2023; Musabiq et al., 2024). However, the limited representation of terms related to youth, ageing, or cross-cultural diversity suggests potential gaps in the literature (Snyder, 2019), warranting further exploration.

The linguistic analysis reveals the predominance of English-language publications (Huang et al., 2025; Stockemer & Wigginton, 2019), which may signal a linguistic and geographic skewness in the literature (Skopec et al., 2020). For example, as seen from our data, there is a lack of production, publication, and dissemination of scholarly works on self-compassion and mental health in LMICs (M. Aledeh et al., 2025; S. Aledeh et al., 2024). While this may reflect global trends in academic publishing (Stockemer & Wig ginton, 2019), it also underscores the need for inclusive research

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practices and knowledge production in non-English speaking contexts (Arenas-Castro et al., 2024; Hyland, 2016).

In terms of publication access, the substantial share of open-access and green-access publications reflects a positive movement towards greater transparency, equity, and accessibility in research dissemination (Rane et al., 2024; Umbach, 2024). However, the variability in licencing, for instance, bronze and hybrid gold access, may still limit the utility and reusability of certain studies, particularly in low-resource academic settings, experienced in many Low-Middle-Income Countries (LMICs) (Newton, 2020; Tocco et al., 2025).

5. Limitations

The field of self-compassion and mental health research is expanding rapidly (Forster & Mitchell, 2024), and is characterised by strong theoretical foundations (Anthes & Dreisoerner, 2024), growing global interest (Cavallaro & Rivera, 2025), and interdisciplinary relevance (Conversano, 2020; Muris et al., 2022). In this bibliometric study, we provide insights for future research, policy, and practice (Cao et al., 2025; Scott et al., 2019). Despite the insightful contributions from this bibliometric analysis, several methodological limitations warrant acknowledgement. Firstly, although we decided to limit our literature search exclusively to the Scopus database only due to its comprehensive indexing of peer-reviewed academic content (Baas et al., 2020; Burnham, 2006), we may have inadvertently excluded pertinent publications available in other well-established databases such as PubMed, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar (Chadegani et al., 2013; Falagas et al., 2008). Consequently, there is a risk of publication bias and database selection bias, particularly regarding emerging literature from interdisciplinary or regional journals that may not be indexed in Scopus (Gusenbauer & Gauster, 2025; Heath et al., 2022; Mongeon & Paul-Hus, 2015).

Secondly, the use of a narrow set of keywords, specifically “self-compassion” OR “self compassion” AND “mental health”, while aiming for specificity, may have restricted the retrieval of articles that address similar constructs, e.g., compassion-focused therapy, self-compassion, and emotion regulation, but with different terminologies or conceptual framings (Faber, 2015; Gilbert, 2010; Neff, 2023; Ten Hacken & Resi, 2024). Employing broader search strategies using Boolean operators, synonyms, and controlled vocabulary (e.g., MeSH terms in PubMed) might have yielded a more inclusive dataset (Bramer et al., 2018; McKeever et al., 2015).

Lastly, in the analysis, we did not incorporate cross-database search tools such as Publish or Perish or Rayyan, which could facilitate triangulation and reduce retrieval bias (Bramer et al., 2018; Tran et al., 2024). Moreover, bibliometric software limitations, e.g., reliance on author keywords rather than indexed terms, may have further constrained the breadth and depth of the analysis (Lim et al., 2024; Tomaszewski, 2023).

6. Conclusion and Suggestions for Future Research

We highlight opportunities for greater engagement from underrepresented regions. The bibliometric profile of self-compassion and mental health research demonstrates both quantitative growth and qualitative diversification. The current trajectory highlights the need for more culturally sensitive, demographically inclusive, and methodologically diverse research agendas. Researchers, clinicians, educators, and policymakers may benefit from integrating self-compassion frameworks into mental healthcare strategies, stress reduction, and preventive mental health, especially in post-pandemic recovery (Garcia et al., 2022). Future investigations may benefit from integrating mixed-methods designs, longitudinal frameworks, and more cross-cultural validations to advance the scientific understanding and practical application of self-compassion across diverse popularions and settings.

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and H.A. M.A. took charge of data curation. Writing—original draft preparation was carried out by M.A. X.X. Writing—review and editing, all authors were involved. M.A. carried out visualization. Y.K. supervised this work. M.A. was in charge of the project administration. We declare that no funding was received for this work. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of this manuscript.

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