

## Trends, Thematic Maps, and Collaboration Networks in Singapore's Multicultural Counseling Research: A Bibliometric Review

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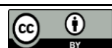
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**Abstract.** The purpose of this study is to determine (1) the development trends of multicultural counseling research analysis in Singapore based on bibliometrics; (2) Main themes, study focus, and research trend topics in multicultural counseling studies in Singapore; (3) Research collaboration in multicultural counseling studies in Singapore. The study uses bibliometric analysis with data from OpenAlex totaling 600 manuscripts for the period 2020–2026 using the search query TITLE-ABS-KEY ("multicultural counseling" OR "cultural counseling" OR "cross-cultural counseling" OR "culturally responsive counseling") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (Singapore) analyzed using Biblioshiny and R.Studio. The results show that the annual publication trend is fluctuating but tends to increase, with peak productivity in 2025, predominantly published in the Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development. Thematic map and keyword analysis found psychology, multiculturalism, and pedagogy as the main basis of the research. However, this academic landscape faces structural challenges in the form of fragmented collaboration between authors and a heavy reliance on the Singapore–United States transnational research axis.

**Keywords:** Bibliometric Analysis, Multicultural Counseling, Singapore, Research Trends, Scholarly Collaboration.



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### INTRODUCTION

The development of an increasingly multicultural global society has driven significant changes in counseling practice, particularly in countries with high ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity like Singapore. As a multicultural nation

comprising Chinese, Malay, Indian, and other international communities, Singapore faces complex challenges in providing culturally sensitive counseling services. Counseling practice in Singapore has evolved within the context of a rapidly modernizing society while maintaining collectivist Asian values oriented toward social and family relationships (Yeo et al., 2015). This requires counselors to possess not

only professional competence but also multicultural competence, enabling them to understand how culture shapes clients' emotional experiences, coping mechanisms, and psychological help-seeking processes (Lee, 2024).

The growing need for mental health services in Singapore is not always accompanied by a contextual and inclusive counseling system. Counseling practices in Singapore are still heavily influenced by Western approaches that emphasize individualism and personal autonomy. Meanwhile, Asian societies, including Singapore, tend to have collectivist cultures that place family and social relationships at the center of decision-making. (Krishna et al., 2015). The mismatch between Western approaches and local cultural values is one of the main challenges in the practice of multicultural counseling in Singapore (Yeo et al., 2012). In addition, the counseling profession in Singapore still faces limitations in professional regulation, making it difficult for the public to distinguish between credible, culturally competent counseling services and those that are less professional (Yeo et al., 2015).

School counseling is one of the main focuses of counseling service development in Singapore. School counseling is designed to help students cope with academic pressures and emotional challenges in a competitive educational environment. School counselors in Singapore are encouraged to develop cultural humility and epistemological flexibility so they can understand the diversity of students' cultural perspectives (Lee, 2024). However, there are still various challenges in the implementation of multicultural counseling, particularly regarding the adaptation of counseling models, cross-linguistic communication, and cultural sensitivity in psychological interventions (Suppiah et al., 2026).

A number of previous studies have examined multicultural counseling in Singapore from various perspectives. Researchers have highlighted the development of the counseling profession and regulatory challenges in Singapore (Yeo et al. 2015), while Rivera et al. (2008) discussed the training of school counselors in addressing multicultural challenges. Other studies have also emphasized the importance of developing cultural competence through experiential learning and social justice approaches in counselor education (Smith et al., 2014). Furthermore, psychotherapy practices in Singapore tend to employ relational and contextual approaches that take into account the client's spirituality and cultural values (Jennings et al. 2008). Research on counseling for the elderly (Mathews, 2016), gifted children (Yeo & Pfeiffer, 2018), and other vulnerable groups is also beginning to emerge.

Although various studies have addressed multicultural counseling in Singapore, most of these studies remain fragmented and have not yet provided a comprehensive synthesis of research trends, patterns

of scholarly collaboration, or directions for future research. Previous research has tended to focus on counselor competencies, therapeutic experiences, or counseling education in isolation (Goh et al., 2012; Geerlings et al., 2017). Furthermore, empirical research on the effectiveness of implementing multicultural competencies in clinical practice remains relatively limited (Wang & Kim, 2010). The lack of integration between theoretical, pedagogical, and field practice approaches has resulted in a limited understanding of how multicultural counseling services can be optimally adapted within the context of Singapore's complex and dynamic society.

On the other hand, several significant research gaps remain. First, there is still a lack of longitudinal studies examining the development of counselors' multicultural competencies from their training through to professional practice (Raval et al., 2024). Second, there is currently no standardized assessment of multicultural counseling skills in counselor education (Redmond-Matz et al., 2025). Third, studies on vulnerable and minority groups such as migrants, the elderly, and marginalized communities remain very limited in the counseling literature in Singapore (Vaingankar et al., 2024). Furthermore, existing multicultural training approaches tend to be incidental and have not been systematically integrated into the counselor education curriculum (Akalin & Koç, 2024; Harun et al., 2023). Fourth, research on the effectiveness of culturally-based counseling interventions, marginalized groups, adolescent mental health, and the sustainable implementation of counseling programs remains relatively limited (AshaRani et al., 2026; Seah et al., 2025). Furthermore, there has been little research that comprehensively and systematically maps the development of themes, publication trends, researcher collaboration networks, and the direction of multicultural counseling research in Singapore. Given these circumstances, this study is novel in its use of a bibliometric approach to comprehensively map the development of multicultural counseling research in Singapore. The bibliometric approach is used to identify publication trends, author collaboration patterns, keyword evolution, and the distribution of research in the field of multicultural counseling, as well as to conduct an in-depth examination of research themes in multicultural counseling in Singapore. This study will provide theoretical and practical contributions to the development of counseling services that are more culturally sensitive, contextual, and relevant to multicultural Asian societies, particularly Singapore

## METHOD

### Data Sources and Search Strategy

This study employs a bibliometric approach to identify trends in publications, research themes, and

patterns of scientific collaboration in the field of multicultural counseling in Singapore. The research data were obtained from the OpenAlex database, which was selected for its extensive coverage of scientific literature, standardized metadata, and high-quality indexing that supports comprehensive bibliometric analysis. Additionally, OpenAlex has good compatibility with bibliometric analysis tools such as Biblioshiny and RStudio, thereby facilitating data processing and visualization (de Oliveira Dias & de Miranda Rocha, 2024; Guleria & Kaur, 2021; Kemeç & Altınay, 2023). Another advantage of OpenAlex is the availability of relatively consistent and curated metadata, which can improve the reliability of bibliometric mapping results on a broader scale (Baas et al., 2020).

Data collection was conducted in February 2026, with the publication range limited to the period 2020–2026. The search strategy was designed to capture various terms related to multicultural counseling in the Singaporean context through the following queries: TITLE-ABS-KEY ("multicultural counseling" OR "cultural counseling" OR "cross-cultural counseling" OR "culturally responsive counseling") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (Singapore). The use of these search terms was intended to accommodate the variety of terminology used by researchers in describing cross-cultural counseling practices and research. The search yielded 600 documents, which were then exported and analyzed using the Bibliometrix package via the Biblioshiny interface in RStudio software. The analysis was conducted to identify annual publication productivity, the most productive journal sources, research topic trends, thematic maps, keyword networks, as well as patterns of author and country collaboration in the field of multicultural counseling in Singapore.

### Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To ensure that the analyzed data are relevant and of sufficient quality, this study systematically applied inclusion and exclusion criteria. The documents included in the analysis were peer-reviewed journal articles that substantively addressed multicultural counseling in the Singaporean context. Additionally, the selected articles are English-language publications released between 2020 and 2026 and include empirical, conceptual, and review articles relevant to the research topic. Each document must also have complete bibliographic information, including the title, abstract, keywords, authors, affiliations, and citation data required for bibliometric analysis.

Conversely, documents that did not meet these criteria were excluded from the analysis. The excluded categories included dissertations, theses, conference proceedings, editorials, book reviews, and various other types of non-article publications. Publications that had no direct relevance to multicultural

counseling in Singapore were also excluded from the research dataset. Additionally, duplicate data, articles with incomplete metadata, documents lacking abstracts, and publications that do not provide adequate bibliographic information were also excluded from the selection process. After undergoing these screening stages, all documents that met the criteria were used as the final dataset for bibliometric analysis. The subsequent analysis focused on evaluating publication performance and mapping the scientific structure to describe the development, research focus, and research collaboration networks in multicultural counseling studies in Singapore.

### Data Extraction and Cleaning

Bibliographic data obtained from OpenAlex was exported in CSV and RIS formats, containing information on authors, titles, abstracts, keywords, affiliations, citations, and references. Before finalization, all data underwent a cleaning process to ensure its quality and consistency. This stage includes removing duplicate data, standardizing author names and institutional affiliations, and normalizing keywords with similar meanings so they are not identified as distinct terms in bibliometric analysis. Additionally, a manual review of titles and abstracts was conducted to ensure the documents align with the topic of multicultural counseling in Singapore. Articles that were irrelevant, had incomplete metadata, or did not provide an abstract were excluded from the dataset. This data preprocessing was conducted to improve bibliometric accuracy and ensure the reliability of the research results (Hassan & Duarte, 2024; Nowakowska, 2025).

### Analysis Tools

This study utilized Biblioshiny, RStudio as the primary tools for data analysis. Biblioshiny and RStudio were used to construct and visualize bibliometric networks such as author collaborations, keyword associations, and relationships between publications thereby enabling an understanding of collaboration patterns and the conceptual structure of the research. It also visualizes publication trends, identifies the most productive sources of analysis, performs thematic mapping, and evaluates publication performance based on authors, journals, institutions, and countries. The integrated use of these two software tools yields more comprehensive, systematic, and easily replicable analysis results (Arabi et al., 2025;).

### Data Analysis Procedure

Bibliometric analysis was conducted through several interconnected stages. The first stage involved a descriptive analysis to identify trends in publications and citation patterns related to multicultural counseling research in Singapore during the 2020–2026 period. The next stage was a performance

analysis to identify the journals, authors, institutions, and countries that made the greatest contributions to the field. Subsequently, science mapping\* is conducted through keyword network analysis, thematic maps, author collaboration, and cross-national collaboration to map the intellectual structure and research concepts. The final stage of the analysis focuses on the evolution of research themes and trends to identify shifts in research focus as well as emerging themes (Hassan & Duarte, 2024) in multicultural counseling studies in Singapore

**Validation and Interpretation of Results**

The validity and reliability of the research results were ensured through several verification

procedures. The analysis results obtained from Biblioshiny were cross-checked to ensure the consistency of the resulting network patterns, clusters, and bibliometric indicators. Each cluster was interpreted by examining dominant keywords, the most cited documents, and representative publications that form specific themes. Additionally, the research findings were compared with relevant previous bibliometric studies and literature reviews to ensure contextual appropriateness. This approach, which combines quantitative bibliometric analysis with a qualitative examination of the core of these publications, helps enhance the credibility of the research results and reduces the likelihood of interpretive bias.

**Table 1.** Main Information About Data

<b>MAIN INFORMATION ABOUT DATA</b>	
Timespan	2020:2026
Sources (Journals, Books, etc)	298
Documents	600
Annual Growth Rate %	-8.62
Document Average Age	3.03
Average citations per doc	2.712
References	9909
<b>DOCUMENT CONTENTS</b>	
Keywords Plus (ID)	404
Author's Keywords (DE)	690
<b>AUTHORS</b>	
Authors	1392
Authors of single-authored docs	148
<b>AUTHORS COLLABORATION</b>	
Single-authored docs	192
Co-Authors per Doc	2.78
International co-authorships %	6.833
<b>DOCUMENT TYPES</b>	
article	442
book	12
book-chapter	75
dataset	5
dissertation	9
libguides	19
other	4
paratext	3
preprint	6
reference-entry	15
review	10

A bibliometric analysis of research on multicultural counseling in Singapore reveals that between 2020 and 2026, a total of 600 documents were published across 298 sources, including journals, books, and other forms of scholarly publications. The

annual growth rate of publications reached 8.62%, indicating increasing academic attention to counseling issues in Singapore’s multicultural society. The analyzed publications received an average of 3.03 citations per document with an average of 2.71

citations per year, reflecting a moderate level of scientific influence. From a conceptual perspective, 690 author-provided keywords and 404 Keywords Plus were identified, indicating the diversity of research focus. A total of 1,392 authors were involved in these publications, with an average of 2.78 authors per document, signaling a predominance of collaborative research. However, the proportion of international collaboration remains relatively low (6.83%), thereby opening opportunities to strengthen cross-national research networks. Journal articles

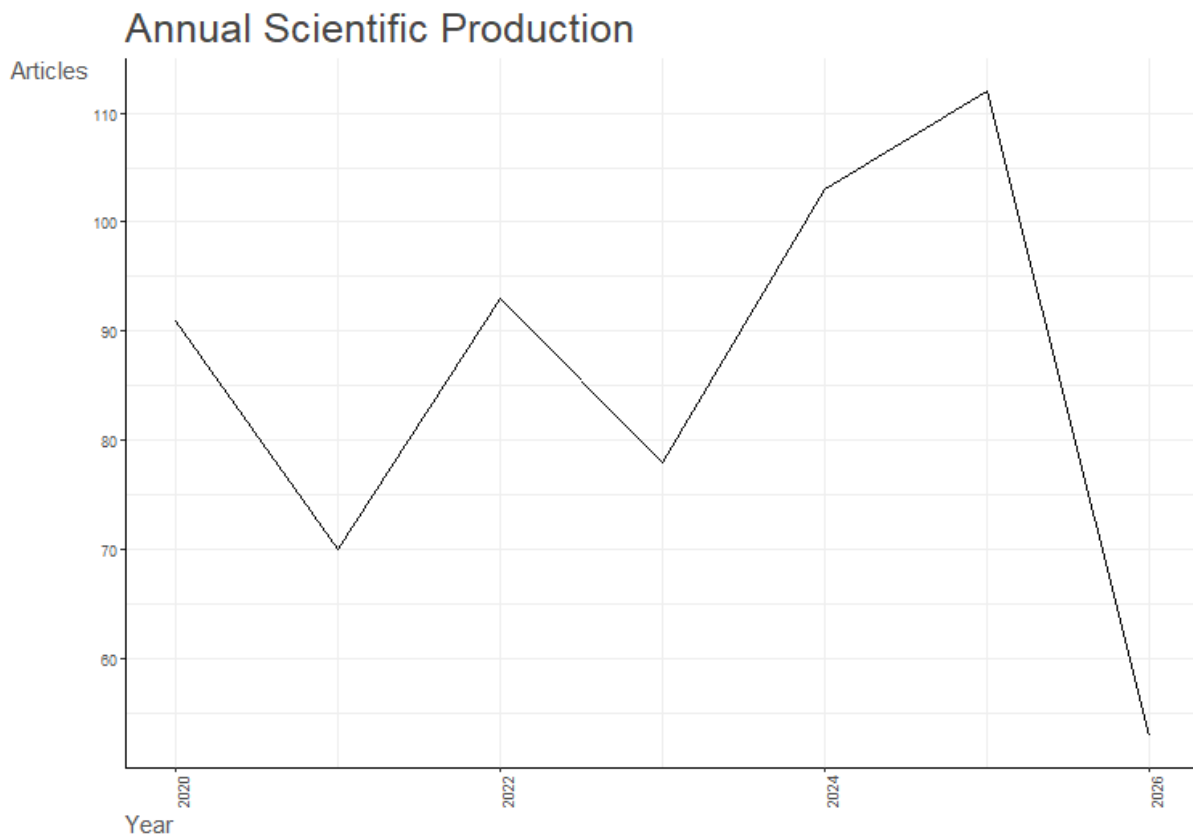
were the most dominant type of document (442 documents), indicating that knowledge development in the field of multicultural counseling in Singapore is primarily disseminated through reputable scientific publications.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Trends in the development of multicultural counseling research in Singapore based on bibliometric analysis

**Table 1.** Number of publications per year (Annual Scientific Output)

Year	Articles
2020	91
2021	70
2022	93
2023	78
2024	103
2025	112
2026	53



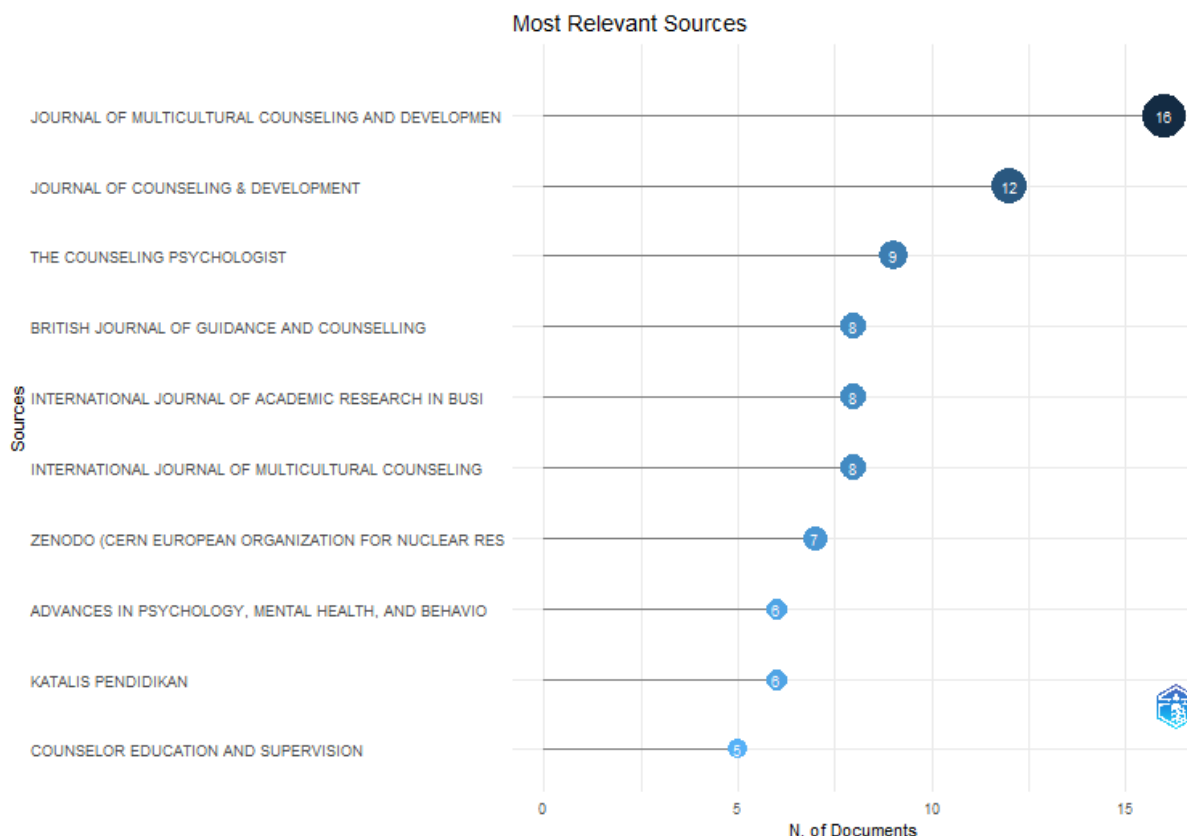
**Figure 1.** Analysis of Annual Scientific Production: Trends in Multicultural Counseling Research in Singapore for the Period 2020–2026

Based on an analysis of Annual Scientific Production, the trend in multicultural counseling research in Singapore during the 2020–2026 period

shows dynamic growth with fluctuating patterns but an overall upward trend. In 2020, there were 91 publications, which then decreased to 70 in 2021.

Research productivity rebounded in 2022 with 93 publications, before declining to 78 in 2023. A more significant increase was observed in 2024 and 2025, with 103 and 112 publications, respectively the highest numbers during the observation period. This rise indicates growing academic attention to multicultural counseling issues as the complexity of cultural diversity within Singaporean society

increases. Meanwhile, the number of publications in 2026 was recorded at 53 documents. However, this figure should be interpreted with caution as the 2026 data may not yet cover the entire publication period. Overall, these findings suggest that research on multicultural counseling in Singapore is experiencing positive growth and is gaining increasing attention within the international scientific community.



**Figure 2.** The most productive journal sources for publications on multicultural counseling in Singapore

Based on the Most Relevant Sources analysis, publications on multicultural counseling in Singapore are spread across various international journals focusing on counseling, psychology, education, and cultural diversity. The most prolific publication source is the Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development with 16 articles, followed by the Journal of Counseling and Development with 12 articles and The Counseling Psychologist with 9 articles. Other journals that also contribute significantly include the British Journal of Guidance and Counseling, the International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences, and the International Journal of Multicultural Counseling, each with 8 publications. The dominance of these journals indicates that research on

multicultural counseling in Singapore is developing primarily within the fields of professional counseling and applied psychology oriented toward cultural diversity. Furthermore, the presence of publications in multidisciplinary journals indicates that multicultural counseling issues are not only examined from a psychological perspective but are also linked to education, human resource development, and the social dynamics of multicultural societies. These findings confirm that the field of multicultural counseling in Singapore has a strong publication record in internationally renowned journals, while also demonstrating the expanding scope of research that supports the advancement of counseling knowledge and practice within the context of a diverse society.





Based on the figure 4, The keyword network visualization shows that research on multicultural counseling in Singapore centers on the themes of multiculturalism, psychology, pedagogy, and sociology, which are strongly interconnected, indicating a multidisciplinary approach to understanding cultural diversity and mental health. Other clusters reveal a focus on cultural competence, social psychology, and medical education, indicating a growing emphasis on cultural competence in counseling practice and professional education. These findings align with the research by Ow and Osman

(2003), which underscores the importance of cross-cultural competence within the context of Singapore’s multiethnic society. Furthermore, these results support the culture-infused counseling model developed by Collins and Arthur (2010), which places cultural competence at the core of counseling practice. The findings are also consistent with the study by Jennings et al. (2012), which showed that therapists in Singapore integrate cultural knowledge and multicultural skills into professional counseling services.

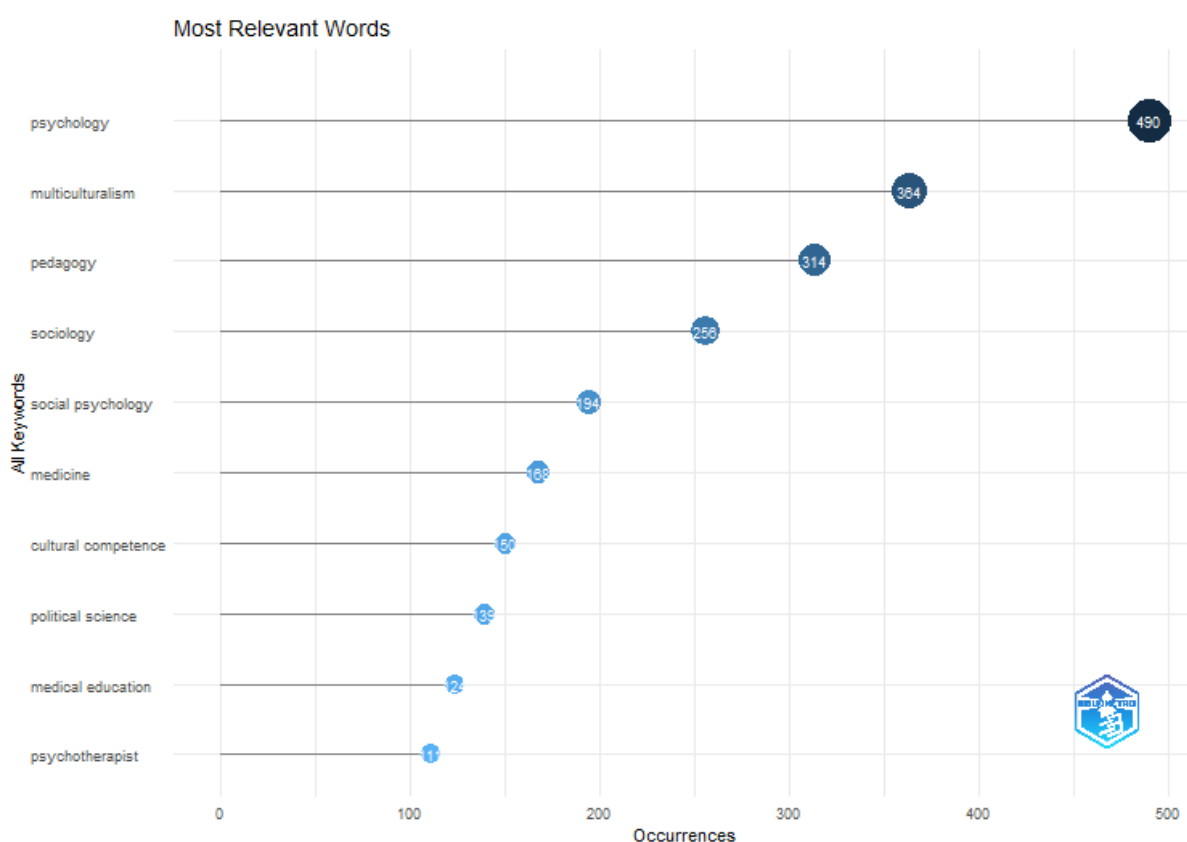


Figure 5. Bibliometric visualization of the most relevant keywords

The results in Figure 5 regarding the bibliometric visualization of the most relevant keywords indicate that the primary research focus in multicultural counseling studies in Singapore is dominated by the domains of psychology (490 occurrences), multiculturalism (364 occurrences), and pedagogy (314 occurrences). A strong interdisciplinary pattern is evident through the close integration of basic social sciences such as sociology and social psychology with applied fields such as medicine and medical education. This pattern aligns with Sim’s (2020) findings, which emphasize the urgency of operationalizing cross-cultural competence within Singapore’s medical workplaces and

institutions to ensure the effectiveness of interventions. Furthermore, the dominance of the keywords “pedagogy” and “cultural competence” reflects the strong academic focus on counselor training curricula, as highlighted by Poon et al. (2017) regarding the importance of modifying universal therapeutic skills to be culturally adaptive to local contexts. This keyword-based collaboration demonstrates that the development of psychotherapy models in Singapore is no longer a standalone endeavor but relies on cross-sectoral synergy to address psychological complexities within a diverse society.



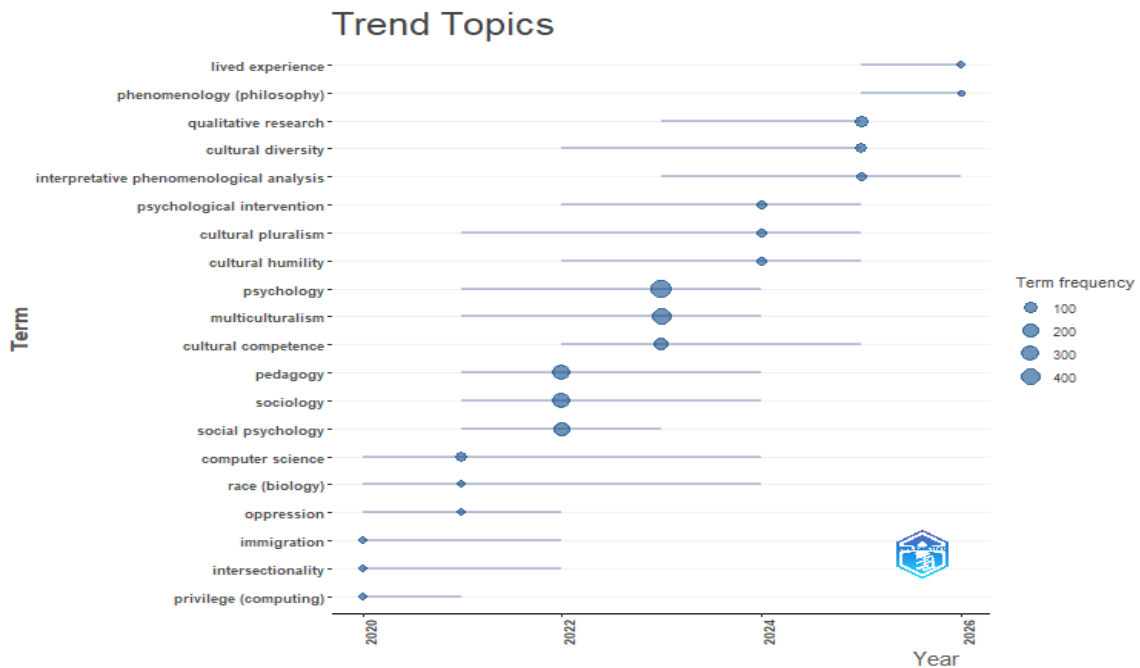
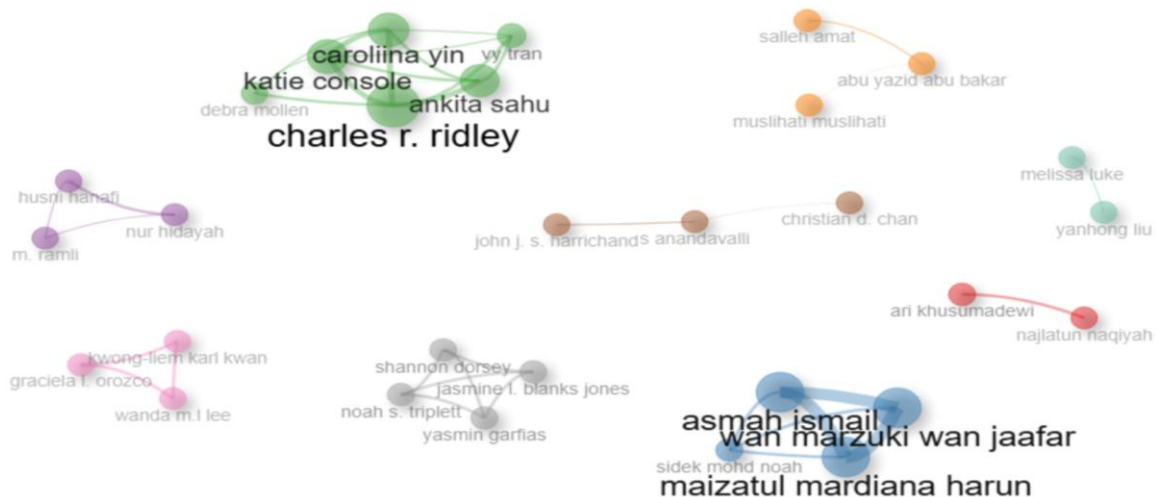


Figure 6. Trend topic analysis

Based on the figure 6 This bibliometric trend topic analysis reveals a dynamic paradigm shift in the study of multicultural counseling in Singapore from 2020 to 2026. In the early phase (2020–2021), research was dominated by macro-structural issues such as intersectionality, immigration, and oppression. Entering the middle phase (2022–2024), the research focus shifted massively toward institutional and clinical approaches, marked by the high frequency of terms such as pedagogy, psychology, and multiculturalism, as well as the emergence of the concept of cultural humility. The latest trend (2025–

2026) marks a significant methodological leap, where researchers’ attention centers on in-depth exploration based on subjective experience through qualitative research, interpretative phenomenological analysis, lived experience, and phenomenology (philosophy). This shift from macro-structural issues toward personal phenomenological interpretations underscores that the landscape of counseling research in Singapore is increasingly moving toward a more intimate, humanistic, and culturally contextualized approach grounded in the psychological realities of individuals in the field.

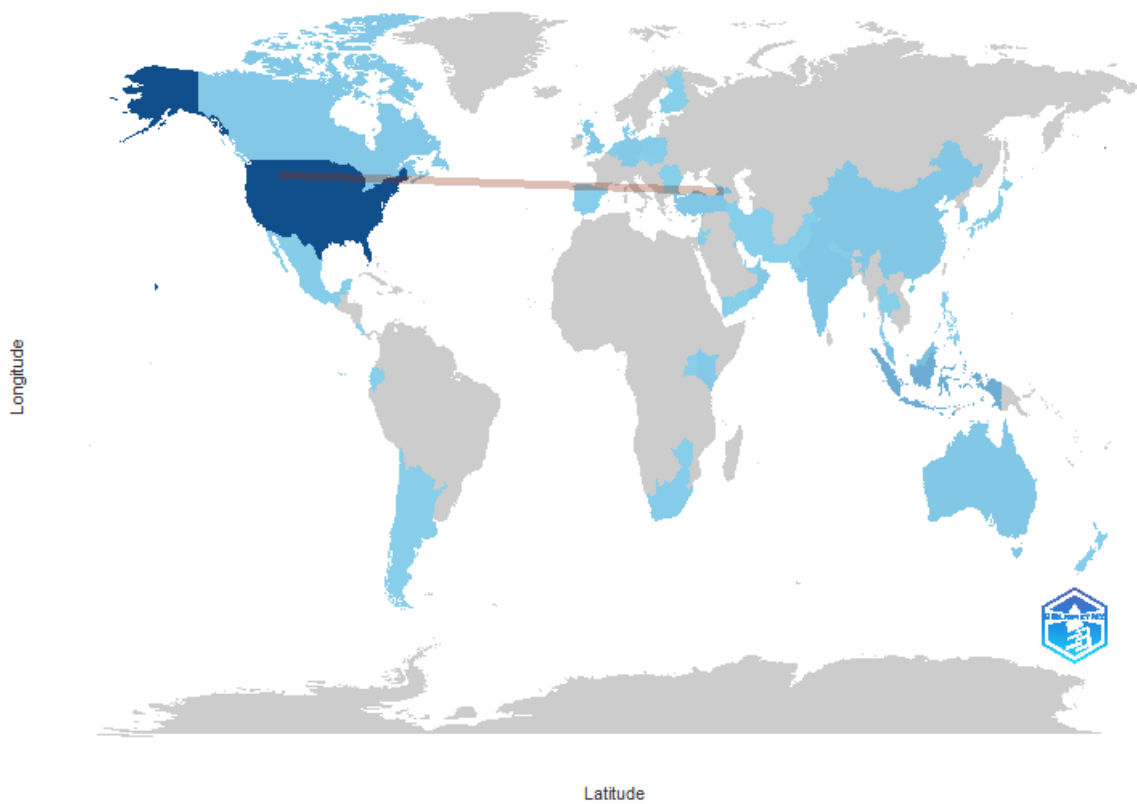
3. Research collaboration on multicultural counseling studies in Singapore



**Figure 7.** Visualization of the bibliometric network depicting author collaboration patterns

The visualization of the bibliometric network depicting author collaboration patterns reveals the fragmentation of research groups in the field of multicultural counseling studies in Singapore. The collaboration structure is dominated by two distinct major clusters: the green cluster led by Charles R. Ridley, Ankita Sahu, and Carolina Yin, and the blue cluster driven by Wan Marzuki Wan Jaafar, Asmah Ismail, and Maizatul Mardiana Harun. In addition to these two main groups, there are several small independent clusters (such as the Nur Hidayah group

and the Salleh Amat group) as well as scattered dyadic relationships without any bridging actors between networks. This fragmented network pattern aligns with the perspective of Yeo et al. (2019), who state that counseling research in the Southeast Asian region is often compartmentalized within local institutional groups without strong cross-boundary integration. These characteristics of collaboration underscore the need to build more inclusive and integrated research alliances to develop a comprehensive multicultural counseling model in Singapore.



**Figure 8.** This global scientific collaboration map

This global scientific collaboration map (country collaboration map) shows that the partnership network in multicultural counseling studies in Singapore is centered on strong transnational ties with the United States, as indicated by the thick red connection lines spanning both continents. In addition to the dominance of partnerships with the United States as the primary research producer (dark blue), publication contributions are also supported by secondary collaborations with countries in the Asia-Pacific and European regions, such as Australia, China, India, Indonesia, and the United Kingdom. This pattern of research centralization along the Singapore-US axis aligns with the analysis by Yeo et al. (2019), who noted that the development of clinical psychology and

schools in Singapore has been significantly influenced by the adoption of Western models, which were subsequently adapted to the local context through international academic collaboration. This reliance on this axis underscores the importance of expanding regional collaboration networks among Southeast Asian countries to enrich counseling perspectives with a more indigenous character.

### **Discussion**

Bibliometric analysis indicates that research on multicultural counseling in Singapore during the 2020–2026 period has experienced dynamic and fluctuating growth with an upward trend, peaking in 2025 with 112 publications. This productivity is

dominated by high-impact international journals such as the Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development and the Journal of Counseling and Development. From a conceptual perspective, there has been a highly progressive paradigm shift from macro-structural issues in the early period (such as intersectionality and immigration) toward an institutional-clinical approach, ultimately transforming into in-depth methodological explorations grounded in subjective experience through qualitative research and interpretive phenomenological analysis during the 2025–2026 period. This thematic focus positions cultural competence, psychotherapy, and pedagogy as the primary drivers of academic advancement. These findings substantively support the culture-infused counseling model proposed by Collins & Arthur (2010), the study on cultural integration by Jennings et al. (2012), and the emphasis by Poon et al. (2017) on the urgency of adapting Western therapeutic skills to be compatible with Singapore's local culture. Practically, this interdisciplinary integration of psychology, pedagogy, and medical aspects reinforces Sim's (2020) argument regarding the importance of operationalizing cross-cultural competencies across various public service institutions in a multicultural society.

Although this research has advanced rapidly in conceptual terms, network visualization analysis reveals a significant structural barrier: acute fragmentation of collaboration. The network of authors is compartmentalized into separate, self-contained clusters (such as the Ridley et al. cluster and the Wan Jaafar et al. cluster) without any bridging actors. Global scientific collaboration patterns also reveal a highly skewed reliance on the Singapore–United States transnational axis. This fragmented and Western-biased structure confirms the concerns of Yeo et al. (2019) regarding counseling research in Southeast Asia, which tends to be confined to local institutional circles and heavily reliant on the adoption of Western models. This is where the primary novelty of this study lies: it successfully uncovers a paradox within Singapore's academic landscape. On one hand, there is a methodological leap that is deeply rooted in local, humanistic, and phenomenologically grounded approaches; on the other hand, its collaborative infrastructure remains trapped within a model of dependence on Western scholarship and group-centric systems. These findings offer a new contribution in the form of critical recommendations to deconstruct the Singapore-US axis through the formation of an inclusive Southeast Asian regional research association, in order to shift the orientation of research toward a multicultural counseling model that is truly indigenous-based and globally integrated.

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTION

This study concludes that the field of multicultural counseling in Singapore during the 2020–2026 period is experiencing dynamic positive growth, marked by a paradigm shift from macro-structural issues toward a more intimate and humanistic phenomenological approach. Topics in psychology, pedagogy, and cultural competence form the primary foundation dominating reputable international journals. However, this academic landscape faces structural challenges in the form of fragmented collaboration among authors and a high reliance on the Singapore–United States transnational research axis.

Based on these findings, it is suggested that future researchers and academic practitioners in Singapore deconstruct Western dependency models by expanding their collaborative networks to the Southeast Asian region. This cross-border integration is essential for building inclusive research partnerships that can yield culturally grounded, multicultural counseling models. Additionally, synergy among local research clusters needs to be enhanced through joint research projects to address institutional fragmentation and enrich culturally adaptive clinical interventions.

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