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Review Article

Mapping the Landscape of Social Media Cyberbullying Research: A Scopus Bibliometric Study

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Abstract *- The rapid adoption of social media has reshaped interactions and contributed to the general issue of cyberbullying, defined as electronic harassment or intimidation. This study provides a bibliometric review of studies conducted between 2012 and 2024 on cyberbullying on social media, with the aim of mapping trends, identifying influential contributors, and assessing the impact of various publications in the field. A total of 207 publications from the Scopus database were analyzed using VOSviewer and Microsoft Excel to identify publication trends, perform citation analysis, and assess country-specific contributions. The results indicate a steady increase in publications, peaking in 2023, but with a decline in average citations per publication from 2021 to 2023, suggesting a potential shift in research focus or quality. The United States was the top contributor, with the most publications (35) and citations (1,152), while countries like Canada and Australia, despite fewer publications, demonstrated high citation rates in the field. Analysis of keywords revealed a growing focus on machine learning and classification techniques in understanding cyberbullying. The most influential sources included Lecture Notes in Computer Science and IEEE Access, both playing pivotal roles in disseminating high-impact research. Notably, key authors such as Robin M. Kowalski and Mark D. Griffiths have significantly shaped the field. This research highlights the need for high-quality, interdisciplinary research to tackle the evolving challenges of cyberbullying, with implications for both academic scholarship and policy development. Future research should aim to diversify data sources and incorporate qualitative analyses to enhance the understanding of cyberbullying's complex dynamics.*

Keywords *- Social media, Cyberbullying, Computer crime, VOSviewer, Digital victimization.*

1. Introduction

For many people, especially young people, social media platforms have become an essential part of their everyday lives [1]. These platforms provide opportunities for communication, information sharing, and social connection. However, they have also become a breeding ground for cyberbullying [2], which refers to the use of electronic communication to harass, intimidate, or threaten others [3]. This issue raises significant concerns about mental health and well-being, particularly among adolescents [4].

Despite the growing prevalence of cyberbullying, there is a lack of comprehensive research that synthesizes the thematic evolution of the field, identifies regional disparities, and maps out the collaborative networks in this area. While previous studies have explored specific aspects of cyberbullying, such as its psychological impacts, prevalence rates, and intervention strategies [5, 6] they have not fully examined global trends, key authors, or the development of research themes over time. Additionally, there is limited research on how different regions contribute to the field, particularly underrepresented developing countries. The studies span a spectrum of investigations, ranging from the examination of cyberbullying prevalence rates to the exploration of its psychological ramifications on victims [4]. Moreover, researchers have explored the role of social media in facilitating cyberbullying and the effectiveness of intervention strategies [6].

To address these gaps, this study stands out by applying bibliometric analysis, which offers a systematic approach to mapping research patterns and thematic developments [7]. In this context, bibliometric analysis-a quantitative method for analyzing published literature trends-has gained prominence in bullying and cyberbullying research. This review highlights the utility of bibliometrics in analyzing research patterns and guiding solutions within this area.

This study aims to address these gaps by conducting a bibliometric analysis of scholarly publications on social media cyberbullying between 2012 and 2024. Using data from the Scopus database, this research seeks to identify key

publication trends, influential contributors, thematic areas, and regional contributions. The findings will provide a deeper understanding of the evolution of this research domain and highlight critical gaps, such as the underrepresentation of studies from developing regions.

The Research Questions (RQs) will be answered to direct this study.

Research Question	Significance
RQ1: What are the current publication trends regarding social media cyberbullying research output?	This question would assist researchers in understanding the current state and evolving patterns of scholarly discourse on social media cyberbullying, providing insights into the volume and trajectory of research in this field.
RQ2: Which countries have actively contributed to research on social media cyberbullying?	This question aims to identify global participation in social media cyberbullying research, enabling researchers to locate potential collaborators and assess geographical variations in research focus and output.
RQ3: Who are the most prolific authors that have been prominently engaged in research on social media cyberbullying?	By identifying prolific authors in the field of social media cyberbullying, researchers can recognize key contributors and potential collaborators, facilitating networking and knowledge exchange.
RQ4: What are the most influential journals cited in the literature on social media cyberbullying?	This question seeks to identify leading journals shaping scholarly discourse on social media cyberbullying, aiding researchers in selecting appropriate venues for publication and staying abreast of seminal research in the field.
RQ5: What are the most frequently used keywords among the top-cited publications on social media cyberbullying within the Scopus database?	By identifying common keywords, researchers can gain insights into prevalent themes and topics within social media cyberbullying research, informing their selection of research questions and study focus.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. The next section provides a brief literature review and a comprehensive overview of the methodological approach used for the bibliometric analysis. A presentation and discussion of the findings follows this. Finally, conclusions are drawn based on the outcomes of this study, along with implications for future research and interventions.

2. A Brief Literature Review

Bibliometric analysis has become essential for understanding scholarly output, research trends, and the evolving landscape of academic discourse. It involves quantitatively examining publication and citation data to extract meaningful insights into scientific productivity, impact, and collaboration patterns. Within the field of cyberbullying research, bibliometric analysis plays a crucial role in identifying emerging trends, influential authors, and thematic developments. This section presents an overview of key studies that have utilized bibliometric methods to explore these dynamics, emphasizing their significance in mapping the route of cyberbullying research.

Previous bibliometric studies in the domain of bullying and cyberbullying have examined various dimensions of the field. These include tracking the growth of cyberbullying research, analyzing keyword co-occurrences, identifying co-authorship patterns, and exploring the geographical distribution of publications. For instance, González-Moreno et al. (2020) conducted a bibliometric analysis that mapped the growth of cyberbullying research, providing insights into the increasing scholarly attention to this issue over the last decade [1, 8]. Similarly, Cretu and Morandau (2024) analyzed trends in cyberbullying literature over three decades, highlighting key articles and authors that have shaped the field's development [9]. These studies demonstrate the power of bibliometric tools in revealing the structure of academic knowledge and guiding future investigations into cyberbullying.

The geographical distribution of cyberbullying research is another important area explored through bibliometric analysis. Studies have shown significant regional disparities in research output, with North America and Europe being the most productive regions. Denche-Zamorano et al. (2023) and Barragán Martín et al. (2021) conducted bibliometric studies that illustrated how countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom have led the discourse on cyberbullying, while regions such as Africa and South America remain underrepresented in the academic literature [10, 11]. This geographic imbalance focuses on critical gaps in the global understanding of cyberbullying and calls for more inclusive research that encompasses perspectives from underrepresented regions.

2.1. Fundamentals of Bibliometric Analysis

Bibliometric analysis is built on a range of core principles and metrics that ensure a robust understanding of academic outputs. Key elements such as data accuracy, database coverage, and metric analysis have been extensively outlined in foundational studies. Amsterdam (1995),

Weingart (2005), and Thompson and Walker (2015) stressed the importance of reliable bibliometric data and the role of accurate database indexing in producing valid results [7, 12, 13]. Ellegaard and Wallin (2015) further discussed the development of bibliometric methods as a specialized research evaluation tool that enhances the systematic mapping of knowledge across scientific disciplines [14].

In the context of cyberbullying research, bibliometric tools have been used to identify leading authors, journals, and institutions that contribute significantly to the field. Mongeon and Paul-Hus (2016) conducted a comparative analysis of journal coverage between databases like Web of Science and Scopus, highlighting the strengths and limitations of each for bibliometric research [15]. These tools have proven crucial in providing a clear map of the research landscape, allowing scholars to identify central themes, influential researchers, and key publications.

A critical discussion on theory development and future research directions in bibliometric studies between Web of Science and Scopus demonstrates the importance of these databases, emphasizing the need for systematic reviews and evaluative studies [16].

Additionally, Moral-Muñoz et al. (2020) reviewed available software tools for bibliometric analysis, discussing their strengths in data acquisition, performance evaluation, and visual representation [17]. Tools such as VOSviewer and CiteSpace are commonly used to create visualizations of citation networks and co-authorship maps, offering insights into how research themes evolve over time [18-20].

2.2. Applications in Bullying and Cyberbullying Research

Bibliometric studies focusing on cyberbullying have provided invaluable insights into the evolving research landscape. These studies have analyzed trends and thematic trajectories, shedding light on the shifting focus of cyberbullying research-from the psychological effects on victims to broader societal impacts [21, 22]. Pyżalski (2012) and Barragán Martín et al. (2021) emphasized the transition of bullying from traditional school environments to digital platforms, marking a significant shift in how the phenomenon is understood [3, 11, 23]. Ho and H. T. Luong (2022) and Kim et al. (2021) showed a bibliometric study on workplace cyberbullying, further expanding the scope of cyberbullying research beyond adolescence and into professional settings [23, 24].

Research on cyberbullying victimization has also been a focal point in bibliometric studies, with many studies examining the prevalence of cyberbullying among various demographic groups [25]. Hamm et al. (2015) and Lancaster (2018) investigated the psychological and social effects of cyberbullying on children and young people, offering a comprehensive look at how these studies have evolved over time [5, 6]. These outcomes suggest that while significant progress has been made in understanding the impact of cyberbullying on mental health, there remains a need for more effective interventions and preventative measures.

Another important aspect explored through bibliometrics is the identification of influential journals and research institutions in the field. Cretu and Morandau (2024) mapped out the leading journals publishing cyberbullying research, identifying key publications that have influenced both academic discourse and public policy [9]. This is crucial for future research, as identifying these journals can help new researchers target high-impact venues for publication, thus contributing to the broader dissemination of findings.

3. Methodology

The methodology employed in this study utilizes bibliometric analysis to systematically evaluate and synthesize scholarly research on social media cyberbullying. Bibliometric analysis is a quantitative technique that facilitates an objective assessment of publication trends, citation networks, and thematic advancements within the field [26]. This method was applied to a dataset comprising 207 peer-reviewed articles, enabling an in-depth exploration of the scholarly landscape, including key authors, journals, and institutions, as well as emerging research directions.

Figure 1 provides a structured visualization of the various stages involved in the research process.

3.1. Selecting the Database and Data Collection

To ensure comprehensive coverage, the Web of Science and Scopus databases were evaluated for their suitability in conducting this bibliometric analysis. Scopus was ultimately selected due to its extensive indexing of peer-reviewed publications in the social sciences and because the search string used in this study (“Cyberbullying” OR “bullying”) AND (“Social Media”)-yielded no relevant results from Web of Science. Scopus is well-established and widely recognized for its comprehensive coverage of social science and interdisciplinary research, making it a reliable choice for the scope of this study.

Previous studies have demonstrated the reliability of Scopus for bibliometric analyses in similar contexts [27, 28]. The search strategy employed the following string: (“Cyberbullying” OR “bullying”) AND (“Social Media”). In addition, the following filters were applied: exclusion of document types such as editorials, letters, errata, and notes (EXCLUDE DOCTYPE “ed”, “le”, “er”, “no”); restriction to final stage publications (LIMIT-TO PUBSTAGE "final"); and inclusion of only English-language publications (LIMIT-TO LANGUAGE "English”). No time-frame restrictions were applied to maximize the scope of research covered. The final dataset, extracted on February 11, 2024, consisted of 219 articles imported as CSV files for subsequent analysis.

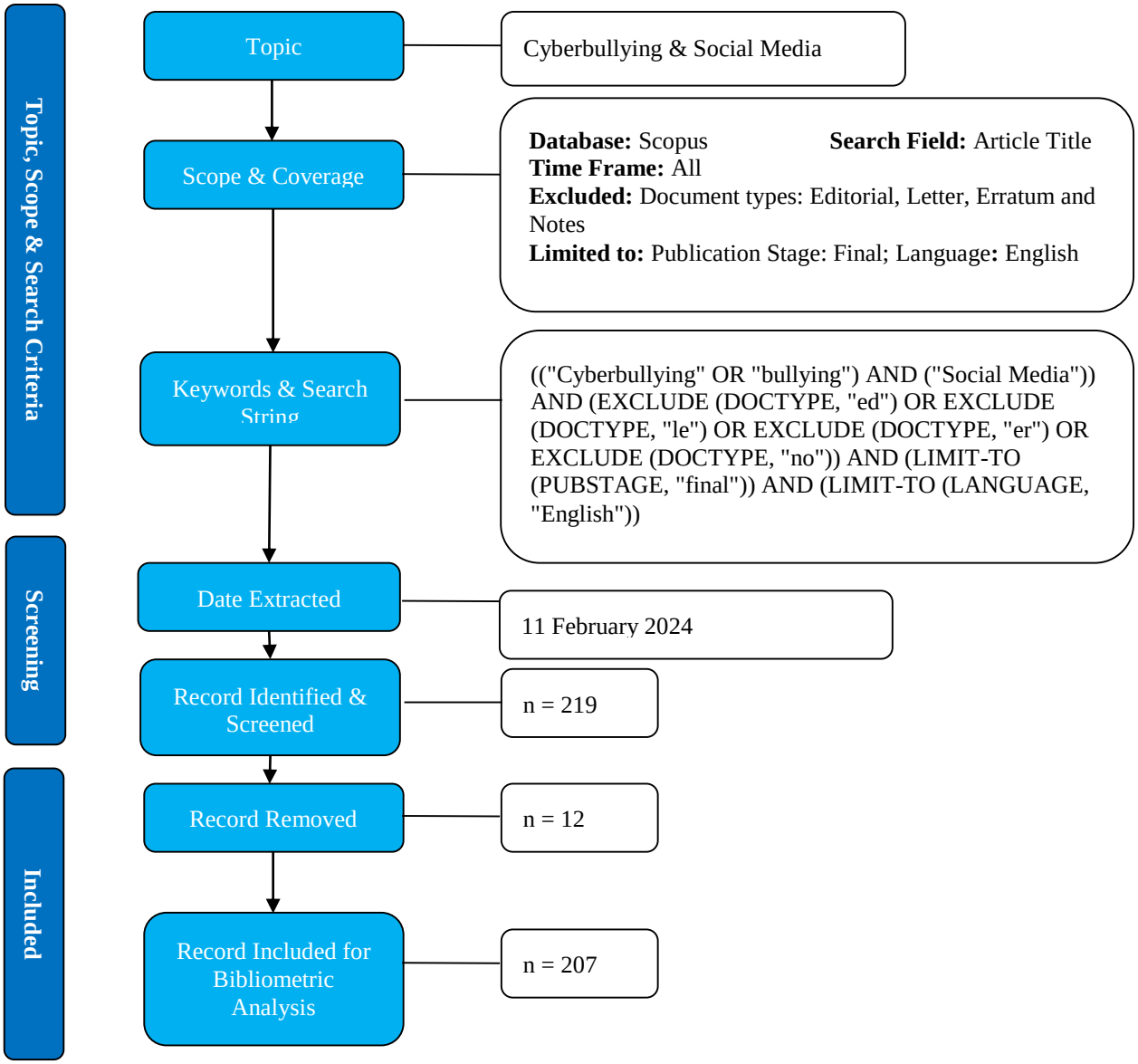

Fig. 1 Flow diagram of the search strategy

3.2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria for this study comprised: (a) articles addressing cyberbullying or bullying within the context of social media, (b) publications in the English language, and (c) studies marked as "final" in the publishing stage. Exclusion criteria included non-English publications and document types such as editorials, letters, errata, and notes. Following applying these criteria, the dataset was refined from an initial 219 records to 207 peer-reviewed articles for subsequent analysis.

3.3. Data Analysis

The bibliometric analysis examined multiple dimensions, including (i) publication and citation trends, (ii) contributing authors, (iii) journals, (iv) countries of origin, (v) publication years, and (vi) author keywords. This approach follows the framework outlined by Van Eck (2010) [29]. For visualization and mapping, VOSviewer was used, a tool known for its efficiency in processing and visualizing large bibliometric datasets.

VOSviewer was specifically chosen for its ability to create clear clustering visualizations and handle large-scale datasets, allowing for the identification of key relationships among authors, research themes, and citation patterns. Additionally, Microsoft Excel generated supplementary graphical representations, such as publication trends over time. VOSviewer's distance-based visualizations highlight stronger relationships by positioning nodes closer together, and its temporal mapping capability illustrates the evolution of research trends [30].

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

4.1.1. Trends Over Time

According to Table 1, scholarly production in the field of social media cyberbullying study has steadily increased between 2012 and 2024. Research in this field began in 2012 with just one publication. Over the following years up to 2017, the number of publications slowly increased, reaching a peak of 53 in 2023. However, the number of citations doesn't always match the publication trend. For example, although there was only one publication in 2012, it received a high number of citations (280), indicating significant early attention. Conversely, some years with more publications, like 2022, had lower citation rates per publication.

In 2018, publications and citations increased significantly; this trend continued into 2019 and 2020. However, from 2021 to 2023, although publications kept increasing, the citation rate per publication decreased. This might suggest a change in research quality or impact during these years. In the first two months of 2024, there were only four publications hinting at a potential slowdown or shift in research focus.

Table 1. Year of publication

Year	TP	NCP	TC	C/P	C/CP	h	g
2012	1	1	280	280.00	280.00	1	1
2013	1	1	58	58.00	58.00	1	1
2014	1	1	85	85.00	85.00	1	1
2015	5	5	630	126.00	126.00	4	5
2016	9	9	336	37.33	37.33	4	9
2017	3	3	159	53.00	53.00	3	3
2018	14	13	638	45.57	49.08	8	14
2019	17	16	692	40.71	43.25	9	17
2020	26	23	604	23.23	26.26	13	24
2021	29	23	358	12.34	15.57	11	18
2022	44	33	351	7.98	10.64	10	17
2023	53	15	36	0.68	2.40	4	4
2024	4	0	0	0.00	0.00	0	0

Notes: TP=total number of publications; NCP=number of cited publications; TC=total citations; C/P=average citations per publication; C/CP=average citations per cited publication; h=h-index; and g=g-index.

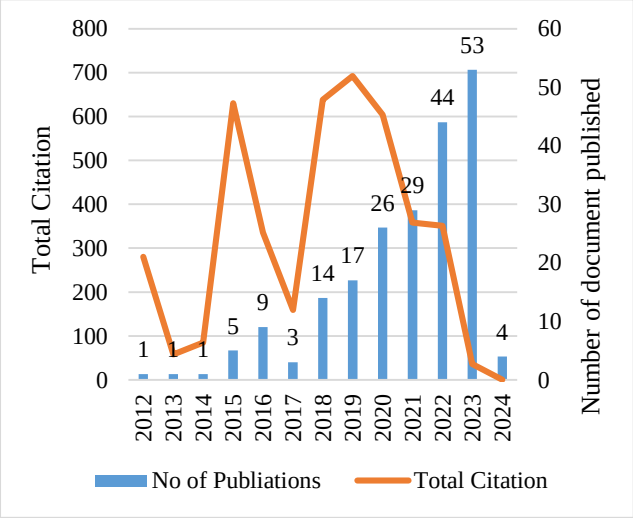

Fig. 2 Total publications and citations by year

4.1.2. Countries/Regions

Table 2 highlights the research output and impact of various countries in terms of publications, citations, h-index, and g-index. Among the top contributors, the United States stands out with 35 publications and 1,152 citations, resulting in a high h-index of 14 and g-index of 33, indicating substantial influence and productivity. Similarly, the United Kingdom demonstrates a strong presence with 20 publications and 612 citations, leading to an h-index of 8 and g-index of 20, reflecting significant research impact.

Notably, countries like Canada and Australia exhibit relatively lower publication numbers but maintain high citation rates per publication, resulting in notable h-index values of 4 and 7, respectively, suggesting impactful research despite fewer outputs.

Conversely, countries such as China and India show remarkable publication outputs (13 and 46 publications, respectively), contributing substantially to the global research landscape, with h-index values of 6 and 9, respectively, and g-index values reflecting their influence.

Additionally, countries like Malaysia and Saudi Arabia demonstrate significant impact with relatively high citation rates per cited publication, indicating the quality of their research output reflected in their h-index and g-index values.

Table 2. Top 20 countries contributed to the publications

Country	TP	TC	C/P	C/CP	h	g
Australia	7	170	24.29	28.33	4	7
Bangladesh	8	52	6.50	8.67	4	7
Canada	5	419	83.80	104.75	4	5
China	13	479	36.85	53.22	6	13
Egypt	4	91	22.75	30.33	2	4
Hong Kong	6	281	46.83	70.25	4	6
India	46	467	10.15	19.46	9	21
Indonesia	13	16	1.23	2.67	2	3
Ireland	4	127	31.75	42.33	3	4
Italy	3	129	43.00	64.50	2	3
Jordan	3	26	8.67	13.00	2	3
Malaysia	21	190	9.05	13.57	4	13
Nigeria	4	87	21.75	43.50	1	4
Saudi Arabia	12	266	22.17	33.25	6	12
Singapore	3	66	22.00	33.00	2	3
Spain	7	117	16.71	19.50	4	7
Turkey	8	374	46.75	53.43	6	8
United Arab Emirates	4	84	21.00	84.00	1	4
United Kingdom	20	612	30.60	40.8	8	20
United States	35	1152	32.91	44.31	14	33

Notes: TP=total number of publications; TC=total citations; C/P=average citations per publication; C/CP=average citations per cited publication; h=h-index; and g=g-index

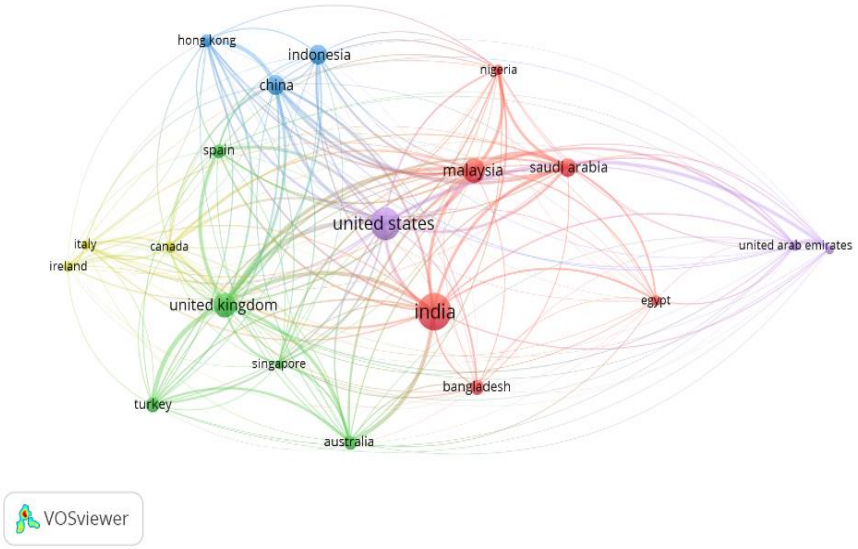

Fig. 3 Citation network visualization map by nation

Note: The country's minimum number of papers is 3, and its minimum number of citations is 16

4.1.3. Most Influential Sources

A total of 207 publications on social media cyberbullying were distributed across 166 sources, focusing on identifying significant contributors with three or more publications and at least one citation. Along with important information like CiteScore, Source Normalized Impact per Publication (SNIP), Scimago Journal & Country Rank (SJR), journal ranking, and publisher details for 2022, Table 3 lists the top 8 journals with the most cited publications in this literature. In analysing the top 8 journals, Lecture Notes in Computer Science, published by Springer Nature, emerges as the most cited journal. It has the highest number of publications among the selected journals, with 277 citations and 6 publications, signifying its substantial impact on the field. Additionally, among the top journals, IEEE Access stands out with an impressive Citations per Publication (CPP) of 39.7, indicating its substantial impact per published article. Notably, IEEE Access and the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health are prominently represented in the best Quartile (Q1) by ScimagoJR 2022.

Table 3. Most influential source titles

Source Title	TP	TC	Publisher	Cite Score	SJR 2022	SNIP 2022	Rank 2022
Lecture Notes in Computer Science	6	277	Springer Nature	2.2	0.542	0.32	Q3
Frontiers in Psychology	5	12	Frontiers Media S.A.	4.5	1.422	0.891	Q2
International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health	4	36	Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute (MDPI)	5.4	1.28	0.828	Q1
Lecture Notes in Networks and Systems	4	13	Springer Nature	0.7	0.19	0.151	Q4
Communications in Computer and Information Science	3	8	Springer Nature	1.0	0.241	0.194	Q4
IEEE Access	3	119	IEEE	9.0	1.422	0.926	Q1
Journal Of Physics: Conference Series	3	5	IOP Publishing Ltd	1.0	0.26	0.183	Q4
Procedia Computer Science	3	75	Elsevier BV	4.0	0.885	0.507	Q2

4.1.4. Most Productive Authors

The analysis of the most productive authors in Table 4 is based on the criteria for selecting authors with at least two publications in the landscape of social media cyberbullying research. Among the selected authors, Robin M. Kowalski stands out with the highest average citations per publication (C/P) 182, indicating significant impact and recognition of Kowalski's work in this domain. Mark D. Griffiths also demonstrates substantial influence with an average C/P of 81.3, underscoring his contributions to understanding cyberbullying within the context of social media. Additionally, authors from Universiteit Gent in Belgium, namely Véronique Hoste, Gilles Jacobs, and Cynthia Van Hee, collectively exhibit an average C/P of 101, highlighting impactful collaborative research efforts from this institution. Although other authors like Milosevic, Demetrovics, and Király have comparatively lower C/P values (ranging from 15 to 78.5), their contributions remain meaningful in advancing the discourse on social media cyberbullying. This analysis emphasizes the importance of specific researchers and collaborative endeavors in shaping scholarly discussions and interventions related to social media cyberbullying, providing valuable directions for further investigation and academic exploration in this critical field.

Table 4. Most productive authors

Author's Name	Affiliation	Country	TP	TC	C/P
Milosevic, Tijana	Dublin City University	Ireland	4	60	15
Griffiths, Mark D.	Nottingham Trent University	United Kingdom	3	244	81.3
Kowalski, Robin M.	Clemson University School of Nursing	United States	2	364	182
Hoste, Véronique	Universiteit Gent	Belgium	2	202	101
Jacobs, Gilles	Universiteit Gent	Belgium	2	202	101
Van Hee, Cynthia	Universiteit Gent	Belgium	2	202	101
Demetrovics, Zsolt	Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem	Hungary	2	157	78.5
Király, Orsolya	Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem	Hungary	2	157	78.5
Kircaburun, Kagan	Düzce Üniversitesi	Turkey	2	121	60.5

4.1.5. Keywords

Among the 1161 keywords in the sample, 75 had at least five co-occurrences. The most often used keywords are "social media", "cyberbullying", "social networking (online)", "cyber bullying", "computer crime", "machine learning", "bullying", "human", "deep learning", and "classification (of information)" (131, 120, 100, 93, 91, 44, 35, 26, 25, and 22 occurrences, respectively) Figure 4(a). Figure 4(b) shows how keywords have changed over time in an overlay visualization map. In Figures 4(a) and (b), the size of a node represents a keyword's frequency, and the line joining nodes indicates the occurrence of two keywords in the same document simultaneously. In Figure 4(a), the node color represents the cluster of keywords; in Figure 4(b), the node color represents the average year of keyword occurrence.

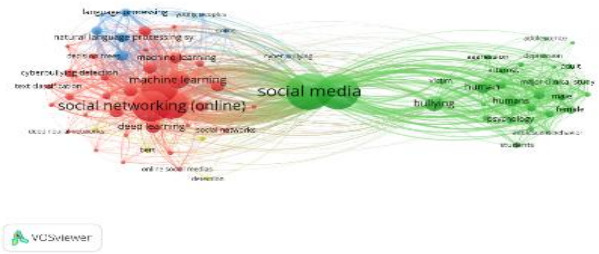

Fig. 4(a) Network visualization map of the keywords

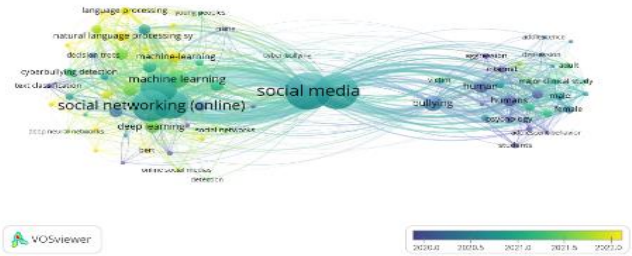

Fig. 4(b) Overlay visualization map of the keywords

4.2. Discussion

The findings of this bibliometric analysis provide a detailed overview of the evolving research landscape on cyberbullying within social media contexts over the past decade. The increased number of publications indicates growing scholarly interest in this critical area. At the same time, identifying key authors and institutions highlights the collaborative nature of this research domain. However, the recent decline in citation rates for newer publications raises concerns about the potential impact and quality of these studies. This could reflect various factors, including the saturation of certain research topics or the need for innovative approaches to studying cyberbullying. Despite its comprehensive nature, the study has several limitations, including the exclusive use of the Scopus database, which may have resulted in the exclusion of relevant research from other databases. Additionally, the focus on English-language publications could overlook significant contributions.

The analysis, while extensive, may not fully capture the latest research trends due to its temporal cutoff in early 2024. Moreover, while bibliometric indicators provide valuable quantitative insights, they do not offer a qualitative assessment of research content and implications. Future research should address these limitations by incorporating a broader range of data sources and qualitative evaluations to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the field. Despite these limitations, the study underscores the importance of continued, high-quality research and collaborative efforts to effectively address the complex challenges of cyberbullying in the digital age.

5. Conclusion

This study has successfully mapped the research trends in cyberbullying within social media from 2012 to 2023, aligning with the objectives stated in the introduction. The study identified significant growth in publication volume and contributions from key researchers and institutions. Despite this progress, the decline in citation rates for recent works indicates potential challenges in maintaining research impact and quality. These findings highlight the need for continuous, high-quality research and interdisciplinary collaboration to address the evolving challenges of cyberbullying. Future studies should aim to overcome the current limitations by integrating diverse data sources and methodologies, thereby enhancing the robustness and applicability of research outcomes. By doing so, the academic community can develop more effective strategies and interventions to mitigate the adverse effects of cyberbullying and promote safer online environments.

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