

## Bibliometric Analysis of Studies on Child Abuse and Negligence

Çocuk İstismarı ve İhmaline Yönelik Bir Bibliyometrik Analiz

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of the research is to determine and analyze the research trends of studies on child abuse and neglect from a bibliometric perspective. The data of the study were obtained by using the SCOPUS database on 04.12.2022 without any year limitation. The research was searched using the keywords "child", "maltreatment", "abuse", "neglect", "violence", "physical abuse", "emotional abuse", "sexual abuse", "physical neglect", "emotional neglect". As a result of the search, 97703 studies were reached. 84376 studies that were not related to the subject and included different disciplines were excluded. Within the scope of the study, 13327 research articles covering psychology, social sciences and nursing disciplines were evaluated. VOS-viewer, a mapping and visualization program, was used in the analysis of the data. It was determined that the most frequently used keywords related to the subject were "Child abuse" and "Child maltreatment". It was determined that the countries, with the highest number of publications were in Unites States (59.54%), and author collaborations were mostly made in the USA, England and Australia. However, it is predicted that the estimated number of studies will be 1407 in 2030. Bibliometric indicators show that studies on child abuse and neglect have increased considerably in recent years. In this context, distinguishing whether the factors causing the increase are related to increased awareness or abuse and neglect will guide the planning of protective preventive interventions.

**Keywords:** Bibliometrics, Child abuse, Child maltreatment, Child neglect.

### ÖZ

Bu araştırmanın amacı çocuk istismarı ve ihmali ile ilgili yapılan çalışmaların, bibliyometrik bakış açısıyla araştırma eğilimlerini belirlemek ve analiz etmektir. Araştırmanın verileri, herhangi bir yıl sınırlaması yapılmadan, 04.12.2022 tarihinde SCOPUS veri tabanı kullanılarak elde edilmiştir. Verilerin elde edilmesinde "çocuk", "kötü muamele", "istismar", "ihmal", "şiddet", "fiziksel istismar", "duygusal istismar", "cinsel istismar", "fiziksel ihmal", "duygusal ihmal" anahtar kelimeleri kullanılmıştır. Tarama sonucu 97703 çalışmaya ulaşılmıştır. Konu ile ilişkili olmayan ve farklı disiplinleri içeren 84376 çalışma, kapsam dışı bırakılmıştır. Psikoloji, sosyal bilimler ve hemşirelik disiplinlerini içeren 13327 araştırma makalesi çalışma kapsamında değerlendirilmiştir. Verilerin analizinde haritalama ve görselleştirme yazılım programı olan VOS-viewer kullanılmıştır. Konu ile ilişkili en sık kullanılan anahtar kelimelerin "Child abuse", "Child maltreatment" olduğu belirlenmiştir. En fazla yayın yapan ülke, Unites States (%59,54), yazar iş birliğinin yoğunlukla ABD, İngiltere ve Avustralya'da yapıldığı belirlenmiştir. Bununla birlikte tahmini çalışma sayısının 2030 yılında 1407 olacağı öngörülmektedir. Bibliyometrik göstergeler, çocuk istismarı ve ihmaline yönelik çalışmaların son yıllarda oldukça arttığını göstermektedir. Bu bağlamda artışa neden olan faktörlerin artan farkındalıkla mı yoksa istismar ve ihmalle mi ilgili olduğunun ayırımının yapılması, koruyucu önleyici müdahalelerin planlanmasında yol gösterici olacaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Bibliyometri, Çocuk istismarı, Çocuğa kötü muamele, Çocuk ihmali.

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## INTRODUCTION

Child abuse is a serious neglect of children's rights and is a universal problem with medical, legal and psychosocial dimensions that almost every child is at risk of encountering all over the World.<sup>1</sup>

Child abuse is defined by the World Health Organization as any physical, emotional and sexual maltreatment perpetrated by an adult or society that harms the child's health, physical and psychosocial development and child neglect is expressed as failure to fulfill responsibilities towards the child.<sup>2,3</sup>

Early childhood experiences form the basis of healthy development and have a profound impact on life. Responsive, safe, egalitarian environments and positive experiences in childhood are associated with a happy, productive and healthy life in adulthood<sup>4</sup> It is stated that negative childhood experiences are associated with harmful health outcomes.<sup>5-7</sup>

Many studies on the subject show that children are exposed to different types of violence.<sup>8-10</sup> Globally, it is estimated that one billion children aged 2-17 suffer physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or neglect annually.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, it is estimated that more than 1000 children die each year due to these reasons.<sup>12</sup> Depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, aggression, emotional problems, low self-esteem, attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder, substance use in adulthood, etc. in children exposed to abuse and neglect situations can develop.<sup>13-15</sup>

In a meta-analysis study conducted in China for child abuse and neglect, 35.2% of women; It was stated that 43.8% of men were exposed to physical abuse.<sup>16</sup> The prevalence of child abuse in Scandinavian countries was determined to be 11-36% in girls and 3-23% in boys.<sup>17</sup>

It has been reported that adolescents in Saudi Arabia are exposed to emotional abuse the most and sexual abuse the least and that the exposure of boys to sexual abuse is significantly higher than that of girls.<sup>18</sup> Pereda et al. reported the prevalence of child sexual abuse as 19.2% and 7.4% for girls and boys, respectively.<sup>19</sup> Although public awareness of child abuse and neglect has increased in recent years<sup>20</sup>, this situation differs between countries.<sup>21,22</sup>

Sexual abuse experienced during childhood negatively affects not only the period in which the child is exposed but also his entire life, mental health, and functionality. Children exposed to abuse and neglect may develop depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, aggression, self-harming behavior, social and emotional problems, tendency to crime, substance use, attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder.<sup>13,15</sup>

It is stated that studies investigating negative childhood experiences have increased significantly in the last two decades and have turned into a multidisciplinary research area.<sup>23</sup> In this context, the use of bibliometric methods, quantitative analysis of scientific publications, seeing the changes and developments in science<sup>24</sup> analyzing the connections of any study with other studies<sup>25</sup>, general information about any subject or field It is becoming more and more widespread in different disciplines in order to reveal the trends.<sup>26-28</sup>

However, the number of bibliometric analyses for child abuse and neglect is quite limited, and it is thought that the data to be obtained from the study will contribute significantly to the development of the research agenda in the field.

## MATERIAL AND METHOD

### Research Purpose

To identify and analyze the research trends of studies on child abuse and neglect from a bibliometric perspective.

### Method of Research

In the research, bibliometric analysis and science mapping method were used.

## Data Collection

Within the scope of the research, the SCOPUS database was scanned on 04.12.2022. For this purpose, a literature search was conducted using the keywords "Child", "Neglect", "Abuse", "Physical Abuse", "Emotional Abuse", "Sexual Abuse", "Physical Neglect" and "Emotional Neglect". There was no year limitation in the research, and as a result of the scanning, 97703 studies were reached. 84376 studies that were not related to the subject or included different disciplines were excluded. Within the scope of the research, 13327 studies covering the fields of nursing, psychology, and social sciences, and only research articles were evaluated.

## Analysis of Data

VOSviewer, a mapping and visualization software program, and MS Excel programme was used in the analysis of the data.

## Limitations

This research is limited to research articles and keywords published before 02.06.2022 in the SCOPUS database. Another limitation is that studies that are not open to access cannot be included in the research.

## Ethical Permission

Ethical permission is not required as the data of the research constitutes published studies.

## Author Contribution

Design: NGB; data collection: EÖ; data analysis: EÖ; interpretation: NGB; writing the article: NGB, EÖ; critical revision: NGB, EÖ

## Data Availability Declaration

Data supporting the findings of this study are openly available at <https://www.scopus.com/search/form.uri?display=basic#basic>.

## Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest between the authors.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Within the scope of the research, it was determined that the country with the highest number of publications on child abuse and neglect was the United States (59.54%), and the most frequently used publication language was English (94.31%) in the (Table 1).

**Table 1. Percentage and Numbers of Work by Country and Languages**

Country (N:13.327)	Number (%)	Language N: (13.327)	Number (%)
ABD	(%59.54)	English	(%94.31)
United Kingdom	(%12.85)	Spanish	(%1.62)
Australia	(%7.31)	French	(%1.34)
Canada	(%7.31)	Portuguese	(%1.18)
Spain	(%2.93)	Italian	(%0.58)
South Africa	(%2.47)	German	(%0.39)
Brazil	(%2.19)	Chinese	(%0.16)
Israel	(%2.03)	Croatian	(%0.14)
Germany	(%1.70)	Russian	(%0.14)
Sweden	(%1.63)	Turkish	(%0.08)

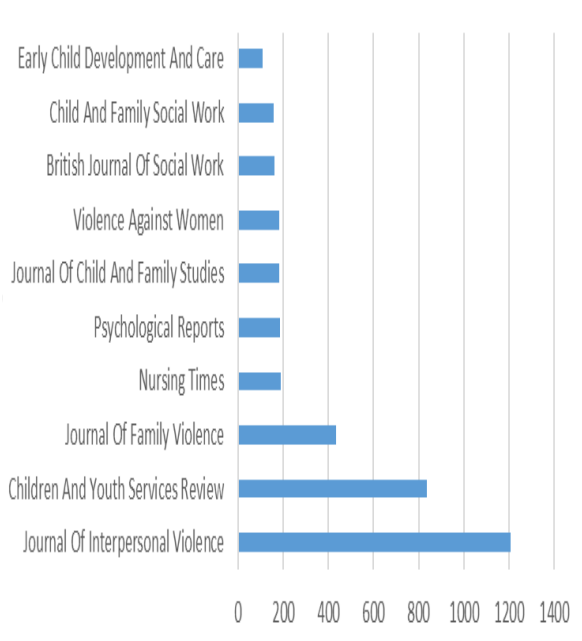
The most cited (N:3869) research on the subject was published by Hawkins et al in 1992 (Table 2).

**Table 2. Top Four Most Cited Authors, Publications, and Journals On Child Abuse**

References	Cite (n)	Source	Year	Name of Article
Hawkins et al.	869	Psychological Bulletin	1992	Risk and Protective Factors for Alcohol and Other Drug Problems in Adolescence and Early Adulthood: Implications for Substance Abuse Prevention
Kendall et al.	799	Psychological Bulletin	1993	Impact of Sexual Abuse on Children: A Review and Synthesis of Recent Empirical Studies

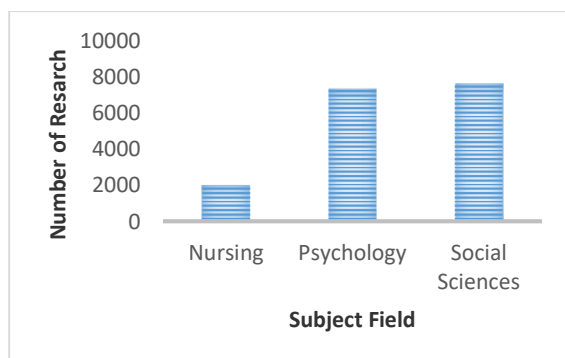
**Table 2. (Continued)**

<b>Tangney et al.</b>	677	<u>Annual Review of Psychology</u>	2007	Moral emotions and moral behavior
<b>Tolin and Foa</b>	340	Psychological Bulletin	2006	Sex differences in trauma and posttraumatic stress disorder: A quantitative review of 25 years of research



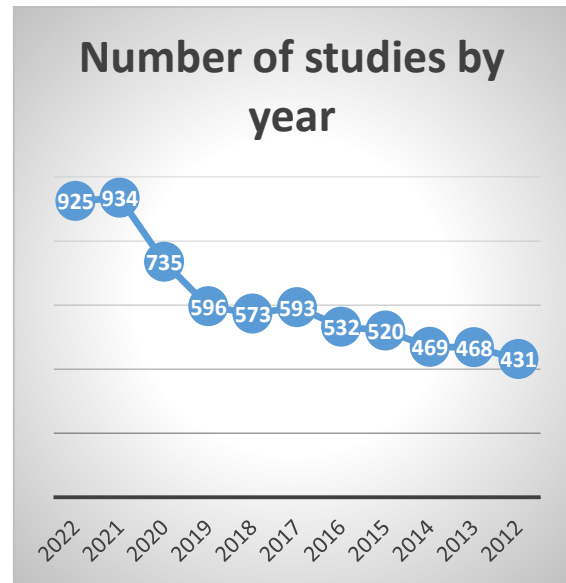
**Figure1. Top Ten Journals With the Most Publications on Child Abuse**

Within the scope of the research, the journal with the highest number of publications related to the subject was determined as the Journal of Interpersonal Violence with 1206 studies (Figure 1).



**Figure 2. Distribution of Research Numbers by Subject Areas**

Considering the distribution of the number of studies according to disciplines, it was determined that 7627 studies were published in the field of social sciences, 7336 studies in the field of psychology, and 2008 in the field of nursing (Figure 2).



**Figure 3. Distribution of the Number of Studies According to the Years**

The number of publications, which was 431 in 2012, was determined as 925 in 2022. As a result of seasonal forecast analysis of Microsoft excel program; it is predicted that the estimated number of studies on the subject will be a minimum of 1115 and a maximum of 1407 in the 95% confidence interval in 2030 (Figure 3).

Based on the Vos-viewer analysis result The most frequently used keywords; It was determined as “child abuse,” “child maltreatment”, “domestic violence”, “child sexual abuse”, “trauma”, “child protection” The countries with the most author collaboration were determined as the United States, England, Canada, and Australia, respectively. In this research, scientific reports of international studies on child neglect and abuse were analyzed without any year limitation. Based on the research publications in the SCOPUS database, the most dynamic authors, countries, universities, frequently used keywords, author and country

collaborations, and the most productive journals and citation reports were evaluated.

First of all, it has been determined that the countries that broadcast the most on the subject are concentrated in Western European countries such as Australia, Canada, and Spain, especially the USA and the United Kingdom. It has been thought that this situation may be related to the concern that child maltreatment may have individual, familial, and social consequences in the short or long term, especially in developed countries. However, the increased awareness of child maltreatment in recent years can be associated with the focus of these countries on the issue. In parallel with this, one of the findings of the study is that studies on child abuse and neglect have increased considerably in the last ten years.

The National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) reports indicated a 64% decline in child sexual abuse between 1990 and 2014.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, child abuse in the USA is much lower than it has been in the last decade, which has been associated with the fact that children are stuck at home due to the pandemic and cannot receive the intervention service they need.<sup>30</sup> In line with these results, it shows that there is a great increase in the number of scientific publications on child maltreatment in developed countries and It has been determined that the number of scientific publications on child abuse in developing countries is much less than in developed countries (Table 1). However, when we look at the publications on child abuse and neglect in developing countries, it is indicated that child maltreatment is proportionally much higher;<sup>31-33</sup> It has been reported that stigma in social and cultural beliefs can be effective in victims' telling their stories.<sup>34</sup>

We attribute the low number of publications in developing countries to the stated situation. When the results of the analysis are examined, it has been determined that the countries with the strongest cooperation worldwide are the developed countries such as the USA, England, Canada, and Australia. Developed countries have

focused on children's well-being, healthy development, and improving their conditions in recent years.<sup>35</sup> In low-income countries, the role of parents in meeting the basic needs of children is limited. It may not be sufficient for children to benefit from sleep, clothing, shelter, medical care, and appropriate physical conditions. This can cause parental stress or depression. It can be thought that cooperation especially in developed countries is proportional to both the better economic resources and the value given to the child in these countries. Journal of Interpersonal Violence and Children and Youth Services Review were identified as the journals that published the most on child abuse and neglect. However, when we look at the research disciplines, it is seen that the studies in the field of nursing are quite low compared to the fields of psychology and social sciences. Tackling child maltreatment requires a multidisciplinary approach. It can be said that nurses should give more weight to studies on the subject in order for different occupational groups working with children to find common ground in the fight against child abuse and neglect.

The most frequently used keywords within the scope of the research were determined as "child abuse", "child maltreatment", and "domestic violence", respectively. It is difficult to define child abuse universally because of cultural differences or the problems arising from the widely accepted and applied disciplinary methods regarding the child in that culture.<sup>15</sup> Child abuse and child maltreatment, which are the most frequently used keywords in this study, may have been preferred because they are related and have similar definitions. Another frequently used keyword, domestic violence, can be said to be considered within the scope of abuse and neglect, considering that it has negative effects on the physical and mental development of the child. In the most cited research articles within the scope of the research, different dimensions of child abuse and neglect were evaluated. In this context, studies on the fight against alcohol and substance addiction in adolescents, the effects of abuse on children, moral behavior and



emotions, and post-traumatic stress disorder are mostly cited by the authors. Alcohol and substance abuse can be considered as a result of child neglect. In most cases, the first contact of individuals with alcohol and drugs is during childhood or adolescence. This period is very critical in terms of the risk of developing addiction.<sup>37,38</sup>

In a recent cohort study with children and adolescents, it was found that cannabis and

alcohol use increased.<sup>39</sup> Another most cited study topic is the effects of abuse on children. Existing studies have analyzed the effects of childhood abuse and neglect during adolescence and adulthood,<sup>39,40</sup> The negative effects of abuse and neglect, whether in the short or long term, may have been remarkable for researchers. In this respect, it can be thought that researchers reflect the negative effects of child maltreatment in their scientific studies.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMENDATION

As a result, with this study, a general evaluation of scientific studies on child abuse and neglect was made. The study will contribute to the literature on child abuse and neglect, a universal problem. Child abuse and neglect will guide preventive interventions.

Socioeconomic and cultural differences in developing countries, and continuing cooperation between authors, countries, and institutions will significantly contribute to the fight against child abuse.

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