

Mapping the global trends of publications of Vicarious Trauma among Social Work Professionals- A Bibliometric Analysis

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Abstract

While working with the people, social work professionals, through sustained empathic engagement with trauma-affected service users, are at significant risk of developing vicarious trauma and related forms of occupational stress. This study aimed to examine publication trends, identify the most influential authors and contributing countries, analyse collaboration networks, and map thematic developments in the literature on vicarious trauma among social work professionals. The study has followed systematic, bibliometric indicators using VOSViewer software. This study conducted a bibliometric analysis of 442 peer-reviewed articles retrieved from the Scopus database, covering the period January 1990 to January 2026. From the data, it is clear that there is an exponential increase in scholarly outputs, particularly from 2015 onwards, with an impressive peak from 2020 onwards. The US was the main contributor country in terms of publications, citations and collaboration networks, followed by the UK, Canada, Australia and Israel. Low- and middle-income countries are underrepresented too.

1. Introduction

Social workers are regularly in contact with individuals, families, and communities who have been seriously affected by hardship: abuse, violence, displacement, poverty, disasters, and loss. The work is rooted in care, advocacy, and justice, but listening to these traumatic stories again and again can be hard on the helper's own mind. One specific danger is vicarious trauma. It is the gradual, internal change that occurs when a helper listens to trauma survivors long enough and with enough empathy (Adams et al., 2006)

Vicarious trauma is distinct from, but related to, concepts such as secondary traumatic stress, compassion fatigue, and burnout. Although these terms can be considered equivalent in some literature, vicarious trauma specifically emphasizes changes in thinking, feeling, and worldview that occur as a result of repeated exposure to trauma material. Early trauma studies primarily concentrated on clients, with little concern for impact on professionals. However, over time, strong evidence has emerged that social workers repeatedly exposed to trauma stories may experience emotional exhaustion, intrusive images, a reduction in professional efficacy, and reduced overall well-being.

The relevance of vicarious trauma to social work has increased with the expansion of trauma-informed settings, including child protection, health care, disaster response, refugee rehabilitation, and community mental health. Practitioners in these settings are often characterized by high emotional demand, limited resources, and organizational constraints, which increase susceptibility to stress. Consequently, vicarious trauma is currently recognized not only as a mental health concern for the individual but also as an organizational, ethical, and workforce sustainability issue for the profession as a whole.

In the past few years, the need for trauma-informed care, social worker well-being, and ethical care for helpers has led to an explosion of research on vicarious trauma. As a result, the literature has moved from early conceptual work to more in-depth explorations of the prevalence of vicarious trauma, risk factors and protective factors, and organizational approaches to mitigate it.

Despite the growing literature, the area remains fragmented in terms of disciplines, geographical locations, and conceptual perspectives. The studies differ significantly in terms of terminology, methodological paradigms, and conceptual perspectives, making it difficult to have a unified understanding of how research on vicarious trauma among social work professionals has evolved over the years. Further, there is no clear understanding of the geographical spread of the research, the key authors and institutions, collaboration patterns, and the emerging thematic trends, especially in the context of the underrepresented regions of low- and middle-income countries. However, to the best of the current knowledge, no bibliometric analysis has been conducted to date to systematically explore the research landscape on vicarious trauma in particular among social work professionals around the world.

1.1 Bibliometric Analysis

Bibliometric analysis is a systematic and quantitative way of dealing with the above challenges by creating a map of the intellectual structure, growth dynamics, and thematic developments of a research area. By examining publication patterns, citation patterns, authorship patterns, country-wise publication patterns, and keyword co-occurrences, bibliometric analysis allows for an objective examination of how knowledge has been constructed and communicated over time (Börner et al., 2010). Such studies are particularly important in the context of mature and rapidly expanding research areas, as they allow for the identification of research gaps, key contributors, and future research directions. The existing literature reviews have been more focused on conceptual analyses, prevalence, or effectiveness of interventions, without attempting to systematically map the development and structure of the literature.

The current study, therefore, aims to address this knowledge gap by conducting a bibliometric analysis of the literature on vicarious trauma among social work professionals published in the Scopus database from 1990 to 2026. The study will attempt to explore the development of this literature by analysing the trends, patterns of authorship and collaboration, country-wise contributions, citation impact, and thematic development through keyword analysis. The results of this study are expected to provide valuable information to researchers, academicians, practitioners, and policymakers to promote sustainable and trauma-informed social work practice.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1 Aim:

The aim of the study was to understand the global trends of Publications related to Vicarious trauma among the Social work professionals.

2.2 Objectives:

- To explore the decade wise publications and publication growth related to Vicarious trauma among the social work professionals.

- To identify the most influential authors in the field indexed in Scopus database
- To explore country wise distribution of publications related to vicarious trauma among the social work professionals
- To explore the trending keywords in the research related to vicarious trauma among the social work professionals.

2.3 Research Questions

1. As far as the overall scholarly output regarding vicarious trauma among social work professionals is concerned, how has it changed over time?
2. Who are the most influential authors, and what patterns of collaboration can be identified for this subject?

3) Which countries contribute most to the literature, and how are publications and citations spread worldwide?

1. What are the major and emerging themes in the research on Vicarious Trauma for Social Work Professionals?

2.4 Study Design:

The current study adopted quantitative bibliometric design. In the context of this study, it helps to present an accurate and organized account of existing data on vicarious trauma among the social work professionals. By employing this approach, the study aims to provide a clear understanding of publication trends, research focus areas, and the global development of literature on the field of study. The search strategy was systematic and reproducible to ensure the methodological transparency. This bibliometric analysis was performed using the Scopus database due to its good coverage of international peer-reviewed journals and robust multidisciplinary indexing. Scopus offers advanced bibliometric tools like researcher productivity, citation analysis and map of global scholarly networks that are indispensable to perform extensive bibliometric studies.

The search strategy was developed to optimize the balance between sensitivity and specificity, providing a broad scope of relevant concepts, whilst ensuring precision in the identification of relevant literature to social work. We combined trauma-related constructs (e.g., “vicarious trauma,” “secondary traumatic stress,” “compassion fatigue,” “secondary trauma”) and professional identifiers (“social work” OR “social service”). Boolean operators and truncation techniques were applied to capture variations of key terms (e.g., “social work*” for “social worker” and “social workers”) to increase retrieval sensitivity without sacrificing relevance. The keyword string was: • TITLE-ABS (“vicarious trauma” OR “Secondary traumatic stress” OR “Compassion fatigue” OR “Secondary trauma”) AND TITLE-ABS (“social work” OR “Social service”)

The data were then subjected to a comprehensive process of screening and cleaning after data extraction. Duplicates were removed and titles and abstracts were screened for relevance. Studies were included only if they specifically addressed social workers or social work practice. Exclusion criteria were studies involving other professions (e.g., nursing, psychology, emergency services) only, without reference to social work. The study was restricted to English language publications between 1990 and January 2026, a time frame that corresponds to the growing conceptual recognition of vicarious trauma in the literature.

We extracted several bibliometric indicators such as annual publication trends, citation counts, author productivity, contributions from countries, authorship network and keyword co-occurrence patterns. Co-authorship and thematic clustering visual network maps were produced by VOSviewer software, with the use of minimum occurrence thresholds to emphasize dominant trends and relationships. Descriptive statistical analyzes were carried out using spreadsheet software, calculating frequencies, percentages and temporal trends. Procedures were clearly defined and applied consistently to improve the reproducibility and reliability. No formal quality appraisal of individual studies was conducted, in accordance with standard bibliometric methodology. As opposed to systematic reviews or meta-analyses, bibliometric analyzes consider publications not as sources of evidence but as units of analysis and address quantitative patterns of publication output, citation impact, and collaborative networks. Therefore, the methodological quality of each individual study was not assessed. Instead, limiting the dataset to peer-reviewed journals indexed in Scopus provides an inherent quality control mechanism, as these sources are subject to established standards of scholarly publishing.

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Database	Scopus indexed articles	Articles not available in Scopus
Publication type	Peer-reviewed journal articles	Books, book chapters, conference papers, editorials
Language	English	Non-English publications
Time period	January 1990 – January 2026	Articles outside this period
Subject focus	Vicarious trauma among social work professionals	Studies focused exclusively on other disciplineswithout social work reference
Access	Full metadata available	Records with incomplete bibliometric data
(Table 1 represents eligibility Criteria)		

3. Results

Totally 442 Documents were Retrieved and the following were the results drawn from this extensive bibliometric analysis.

3.1 Year-wise Distribution of Publications

Year	Frequency	Percentage
1990	1	0.24
1999	2	0.47
2000	1	0.24
2001	2	0.47
2002	3	0.71
2003	5	1.18
2004	2	0.47
2005	3	0.71
2006	6	1.42
2007	7	1.66
2008	4	0.95
2009	5	1.18
2010	6	1.42
2011	14	3.32
2012	12	2.84
2013	10	2.37
2014	13	3.08
2015	15	3.55
2016	22	5.21
2017	16	3.79
2018	19	4.50
2019	22	5.21
2020	31	7.35
2021	28	6.64
2022	37	8.77
2023	37	8.77
2024	47	11.14
2025	49	11.61

Year	Frequency	Percentage
2026	3	0.71

(Table 2 Represents year wise Distribution of publications related to Vicarious trauma among social workers)

Period	Start Year	End Year	Publications (Start)	Publications (End)	CAGR
Early growth phase	2003	2014	5	13	9.1%
Expansion phase	2015	2025	15	49	12.6%
Post-COVID phase	2020	2025	31	49	9.6%
Overall active period	2006	2025	6	49	11.5%
Note: 2026 data represent partial year only (search conducted January 2026) and was therefore excluded from CAGR calculations.					

(Table 3- Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of Publications on Vicarious Trauma among Social Work Professionals Across Key Research Phases (1990–2025))

The year-wise distribution of publications (Table 2 and Fig. 1) reveals that the first publication related to vicarious trauma and social work indexed in Scopus database recorded in 1990. The early stage witnessed publications below 10 per year, with only one to three publications per year. This phase is the conceptual stage when vicarious trauma was still an emerging concept and was often referred to indirectly through other concepts such as secondary traumatic stress and compassion fatigue. The scarcity of publications during this phase reflects a low level of empirical attention and institutional and academic interest in the occupational trauma of social work professionals.

The number of publications per year steadily increased from 2006 to 2014, ranging from four to thirteen per year. This phase marks a transition from conceptual knowledge to empirical enquiry consistent with increased awareness of the psychological impact of trauma exposure among helping professionals. The field experienced a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 9.1% during this period. This is a steady, but not dramatic rate of scholarly growth, as vicarious trauma became increasingly recognised as a valid and empirically researchable construct in social work. This steady increase during this phase is indicative of an increasing acceptance of vicarious trauma as a valid area of research within the discipline of social work.

However, from 2015 onward a clear acceleration in the rate of publication is observed, marking a transition into a consolidation and expansion phase. The number of publications increased considerably in 2016 (22 publications) and then increased steadily in the following years. The acceleration is reflected in a much higher CAGR of 12.6% for the period 2015–2025, which is almost 40% faster than the previous

decade, indicating massive increase of the global scholarly interest in the occupational well-being of social work professionals. This underscores the increased consciousness in the academy and profession of the mental health and overall well-being of social workers especially those working with trauma-affected populations such as survivors of abuse, violence, disaster and displacement.

The largest growth is in the post-2020 period, with the largest number of publications in 2024 (47 publications) and 2025 (49 publications). “The CAGR for 2020–2025 post-COVID is 9.6%, which is already an accelerated phase, indicating the post-pandemic research growth momentum after the global pandemic and its reported impact on the psychological burden of social work professionals all over the world (Banks et al., 2020).” There are numerous possible reasons for this sharp rise such as the worldwide focus on workforce mental health, the exponential growth of trauma-informed practice models, and the increased vulnerability of social work practitioners to complex trauma due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the past 20 years, vicarious trauma in the social work literature has evolved from an emerging to a mainstream concept. The overall compound annual growth rate for the entire active research period 2006–2025 is 11.5%.

3.2. Authorship Analysis

The authorship analysis has found out that there are 1097 authors out of 442 publications. The co-authorship analysis was performed using VOSviewer Software. The minimum threshold was set at 2. 115 authors met the threshold criteria.

(Fig. 2 Co-authorship Network)

Author	Documents	Citations	Total Link Strength
Figley, Charles R.	7	2133	8
Bride, Brian E.	7	1560	8
Boscarino, Joseph A.	4	1044	6
Adams, Richard E.	3	1023	6
Craig, Carlton David	2	502	1
Sprang, Ginny	2	408	1
Nelson-Gardell, Debra	3	351	2
Bell, Holly	2	305	0
Lee, Jacquelyn J.	3	299	2
Benight, Charles C.	3	278	9

(Table 4 represents Top 10 Most Influential authors in the literature on Vicarious trauma among social workers)

The authorship analysis helps in understanding the research productivity, collaboration, and intellectual contribution in vicarious trauma research among social work professionals. A total of 1,097 authors published 442 articles, signifying a highly collaborative and interdisciplinary research area. The large number of authors per publication signifies that research in this area is often conducted by multiple authors, which is a reflection of the complex and interdisciplinary nature of vicarious trauma research. Table 2 represents top 10 influential authors based on citations, Figley, Charles R records the highest level of influence, as he has been cited the most (2,133) times and has stronger collaborative connections. Bride, Brian E and Boscarino, Joseph A show high levels of scholarly influence, as they have been cited many times. Other authors, such as Benight, Charles C, also important authors in the field of vicarious trauma and social work.

3.3 Country analysis

(Figure.3 represents Country network)

Country	Documents	Citations	Total Link Strength
United States	237	9659	36
Israel	27	514	5
Canada	23	524	6
United Kingdom	23	892	8
Australia	20	1030	5
South Africa	16	236	5
Turkey	12	19	6
China	10	39	7
Poland	9	309	3
Spain	9	87	3
South Korea	8	84	5
New Zealand	6	252	1
India	5	51	2
Italy	4	164	2
Portugal	4	28	4
Romania	4	68	1
Singapore	4	62	1
Germany	3	13	4
Greece	3	11	2
Palestine	3	25	2
Chile	2	7	3
Finland	2	27	0
Hong Kong	2	2	1
Iran	2	14	3
Rwanda	2	14	2
Slovakia	2	75	0
Sweden	2	22	2
Azerbaijan	1	0	1

Country	Documents	Citations	Total Link Strength
Brazil	1	0	1
Colombia	1	9	1
Croatia	1	1	0
Cyprus	1	0	1
Czech Republic	1	0	0
Denmark	1	4	0
France	1	0	1
Indonesia	1	0	0
Ireland	1	5	1
Malaysia	1	15	1
Mexico	1	5	0
Pakistan	1	1	0
Puerto Rico	1	2	0
Saudi Arabia	1	3	1
Switzerland	1	49	1
Taiwan	1	1	1
Ukraine	1	1	1
Virgin Islands (U.S.)	1	0	0

(Table 5 List of Countries with its publications related to Vicarious trauma and social work)

The table 5 and Fig. 3 offers a general overview of the extent of research and collaboration concerning vicarious trauma among social work professionals. Overall, the 46 countries have produced 442 publications examined suggest that indeed, vicarious trauma is a global occupational concern across the world. The country with the largest number of publications and citation count is the United States, with 237 publications, once again underscoring its importance and centrality to theory-building, measurement development, and intervention-focused literature related to vicarious trauma. The distance to the next country reflects not only the influence but also the high level of collaboration occurring both within and outside its borders. Other developed countries, such as the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia, also have satisfactory research productivity and citation impact. Although these countries have fewer publications, they have significant citation impact, which may indicate well-developed social

work education, sufficient research funding, and the implementation of trauma-informed practice approaches early on.

Israel is another prominent contributor, even with the lower number of publications, thanks to its exceptionally strong citation impact and rich collaboration networks, which may be attributed to its long history of involvement in trauma studies, particularly in conflict, displacement, and emergency situations, thereby positing the importance of contextual nuances in academic studies. Moreover, the presence of Australia, South Africa, and New Zealand indicates that research on vicarious trauma is gaining the required attention across diverse settings. South Africa's average citation impact also indicates that this research might be relevant in countries with issues of structural inequalities and social challenges.

Lower and middle-income countries, such as India, China, Turkey, and African, Asian, and Eastern Europeans, have fewer publications and fewer citations. There is considerable trauma exposure within the service users in lower and middle-income countries, and it is possible that they are underrepresented due to structural barriers, given that there is less funding and publication opportunities available to these countries.

3.4 Keyword Analysis

(Fig. 4 represents co-occurrence analysis)

The co-occurrence analysis as shown in figure 4, offers insight into how the literature in the area of vicarious trauma for social work professionals is constructed, where the literature is going, and how concepts have changed. The total author-supplied keywords used in the 442 studies in this collection was 970. Using a frequency requirement of at least five occurrences per keyword, 44 keywords qualified, which indicates a small core group of dominant themes in a wide range of concepts. The key terms, "vicarious trauma," "secondary traumatic stress," "compassion fatigue," "burnout," and "social workers," indicate the relationship that exists between the definition of vicarious trauma and other types of occupational stress, which indicates the development of the subject through borrowing and blending constructs from trauma psychology and stress studies. From the co-occurrence network, it can be seen that there are different distinct clusters. The main cluster focuses on psychological and emotional outcomes, such as stress, burnout, and emotional exhaustion, highlighting the impact on social workers as individuals. A second cluster is related to contexts of practice and service populations, which include child protection, health, mental health, and trauma-informed clientele. The presence of these terms indicates the context-specificity and salience of vicarious trauma, particularly in high-risk service environments. The third group comprises factors related to protective factors and interventions, with words such as resilience, self-care, supervision, coping and trauma-informed practice. This is a movement from saying "yes, I know about vicarious trauma" to talking about protective factors for professionals.

4. Discussion

Through a systematic review of 442 articles on vicarious trauma among social work practitioners from 1990 to 2026, it becomes easy to offer an intellectual, geographical, and thematic development of the topic under discussion in terms of evidence-based analysis. Rather than offering an analysis of publications, however, the following analysis seeks to interpret the publication analysis of this topic and offer some insight into what the future holds for the topic.

When it comes to publication over the years, one trend emerges showing increasing interest although this does not have to be linearly. First, it is notable that only one article was published on the topic of vicarious trauma in social work in 1990 and only a few more were written in the 1990s. This implies that, at the time, vicarious trauma among social workers did not attract much attention even where traumatized individuals were being treated.

The period from 2006 to 2014 might be characterized as one of conceptualization in the development of the field, with the concept of vicarious trauma being researched and empirically studied more in the context of professional practice. This is the period that aligns with the rise of the "evidence-based practice" and the increased focus on the well-being of the practitioner in the curriculum and research in social work (Bride, 2007; Adams, Boscarino, & Figley, 2006). The work being done indicates that it is no longer just seen as an individual concern but as having organizational and professional implications as well.

An increase in research publications after 2015 represents a paradigm shift in the sustainability of the workforce and trauma-informed care. This is in line with the global policy and practice changes being implemented regarding trauma-informed care, supervisory practices that are reflective, and self-care for social work professionals (Knight, 2013; SAMHSA, 2014). A surge in publications after 2020 represents an increase in global crises that have augmented social workers' exposure to client trauma, including the pandemic (Banks et al., 2020). Consequently, the publication surges in 2024 and 2025, placing vicarious trauma as a dominant and sustaining thematic component in social work studies. Vicarious trauma is no longer a peripheral issue but a core construct linked to ethical practice, retention, and quality (Newell & MacNeil, 2010).

The way that publications are disseminated across nations offers insight into the investigation of vicarious trauma that social work professionals experience worldwide, the leadership, the gaps, and the disparities that affect the subject of the research. The investigation is by scientists from 46 nations, yet the subject is highly unbalanced, mostly conducted within a handful of affluent nations.

The United States is a standout in terms of the sheer number of publications and the frequency with which they are cited. This dominance is a reflection of the strength of social work education and research in this country, along with the corresponding funding and the theoretical grasp on the phenomenon and onto associated ideas like secondary traumatic stress and compassion fatigue (Figley, 1995; Bride, 2007). The United States also leads in terms of total link strength, implying a key role in international collaboration and the development of generally accepted theories. Other high-income countries such as the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia also demonstrate significant productivity

and impact. While the levels achieved are not as high as the United States, they are highly cited, which suggests a high level of concepts and methodology used in their work. This might be explained by similar professional values such as a focus on practitioner well-being, the importance of supervision in practice, and trauma-informed practice models within social work (Knight, 2013; McFadden et al., 2015).

It is also worth noting the contributions, in terms of size, made by the state of Israel, which has a strong citation impact, probably as a result of its long tradition of prioritizing the study of trauma within the boundaries of conflict and social stress. Israeli academic contributions have also enhanced the study of coping, particularly those focused on the role of helping professionals, thus increasing the global importance of the field (Ben-Porat & Itzhaky, 2011).

Australia, South Africa, and New Zealand represent an increasing focus in research on vicarious trauma from varied cultural and application-based settings. The presence of South Africa is noteworthy, as this is a culture with significant levels of structural inequality and social trauma, highlighting the need for practitioners in such settings with limited resources to experience well-being (Engelbrecht, 2014).

The research landscape also shows an uneven pattern. Research conducted in low- and middle-income countries such as India, China, Turkey, as well as different countries in Africa, Asia, and Europe has depicted a geographical and epistemological gap in the research landscape. Despite the fact that these social workers are exposed to a high amount of trauma, they are poorly represented in the literature. This might be due to a number of factors such as a lack of research funding and the opportunity to publish in prestigious journals and collaborate internationally (Patel et al., 2018).

Out of a total of 970 author keywords, 44 register a minimum level of usage. The repetition of words like vicarious trauma, secondary traumatic stress, compassion fatigue, and burnout underscores a close relationship. The former studies used these terms interchangeably or in some confusion about when one begins and another ends (Figley, 1995; Stamm, 2010). The ongoing overlap of these terms in contemporary studies underscores an awareness of common elements of practice in spite of growing precision.

A significant thematic concentric set is related to the effects on stress, emotional exhaustion, and mental health. This is related to the foundational body of work aimed at trying to identify the prevalence of vicarious trauma, its magnitude, and the impact on social work staff who are frequently exposed to clients' traumatic events (Bride, 2007; Adams et al., 2006). This body of seminal work was significant in confirming the importance of vicarious trauma within the profession.

Another important word cluster is related to areas of practice and populations served such as child protection, health care, and those exposed to traumatic events. These keywords imply an understanding of the idea that vicarious trauma is grounded in context and that different areas of practice are differentially risky depending on continued exposure to emotionally charged situations (Manning-Jones et al., 2016).

One of the most important and hopeful developments in the literature is the increased emphasis on protective and preventative constructs, as evidenced by the greater prominence of keywords such as resilience, self-care, supervision, coping, and trauma-informed practice. Previous literature on vicarious trauma focused only on negative psychological consequences, whereas more recent literature shows a clear turn to prevention-oriented approaches and promotion of professional sustainability (Knight, 2013; Newell & MacNeil, 2010).

The presence of organisational and systemic keywords also indicates an expansion of the concept in the field. Increasingly, recent research recognises vicarious trauma not just as an individual phenomenon but as embedded within and influenced by organisational contexts. This shift illustrates the significance of organisational culture, workplace environments and institutional support mechanisms in the development and amelioration of social work vicarious trauma.

Limitations >

This study has several limitations that should be noted. The analysis was firstly limited to publications indexed in the Scopus database and to documents in English language. Thus, we may have missed relevant studies published in other databases or in non-English languages. This limitation is especially relevant in light of the study's finding of underrepresentation of low- and middle-income countries in the dataset, as scholars from these countries are more likely to publish in regional databases or non-English journals.

Second, the study was restricted to peer-reviewed journal articles and excluded grey literature such as government reports, policy documents, doctoral theses, conference proceedings and practice-based research reports. The approach improves the overall quality and reliability of the dataset, but it may also exclude valuable practice-oriented and context-specific insights.

Finally, this study is a bibliometric analysis and focuses on quantitative indicators, such as publication output, citation patterns and collaboration networks. It does not appraise the methodological quality or substantive findings of individual studies. As such, the results should be interpreted as indicative of research trends and structural patterns in the field rather than evidence of the effectiveness or rigour of the studies included.

Directions for Future Research

Future research should consider extending empirical studies to underrepresented regions, comparative cross-cultural analysis, and testing the effectiveness of organisational and policy level interventions. The integration of bibliometric results with systematic or scoping reviews may further enhance the understanding of the effectiveness of interventions and their relevance to practice.

5. Conclusions

This bibliometric analysis offers an overview of the international research landscape of vicarious trauma among social work professionals. There has been a substantial increase in research output especially since 2015 which reflects growing awareness of practitioner well-being and trauma-informed practice. The field is shaped by key authors, institutions and collaborative networks, but research is concentrated in high-income countries, particularly the United States. The key word trends show growing interest in resilience, supervision, self-care, and trauma-informed systems. Future research needs to address the translation of evidence into policy and practice at the organizational level, so as to protect social workers and improve the quality of service provided. In particular, collaboration in less explored areas should be more interdisciplinary and cross-cultural.

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Conflict of Interest

The research team declare no conflict of Interest

Declaration of Artificial Intelligence

The research team declare that ChatGPT was used to make conceptual clarity. Quilbot was used to check the grammar.

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Figures

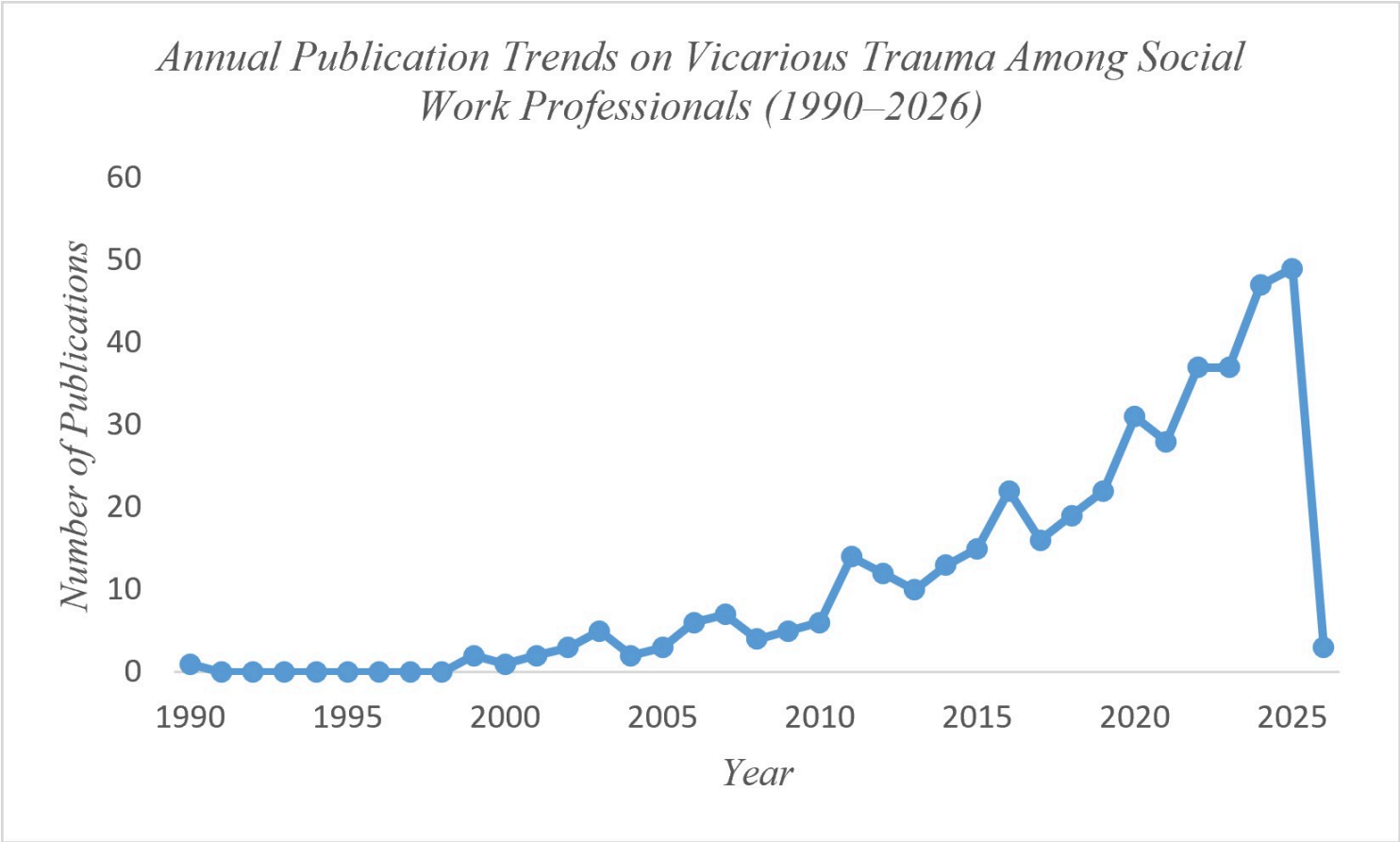


Figure 1

Annual publication trends on vicarious trauma among social work professionals indexed in Scopus (1990–2026)



Figure 2

Co-authorship Network

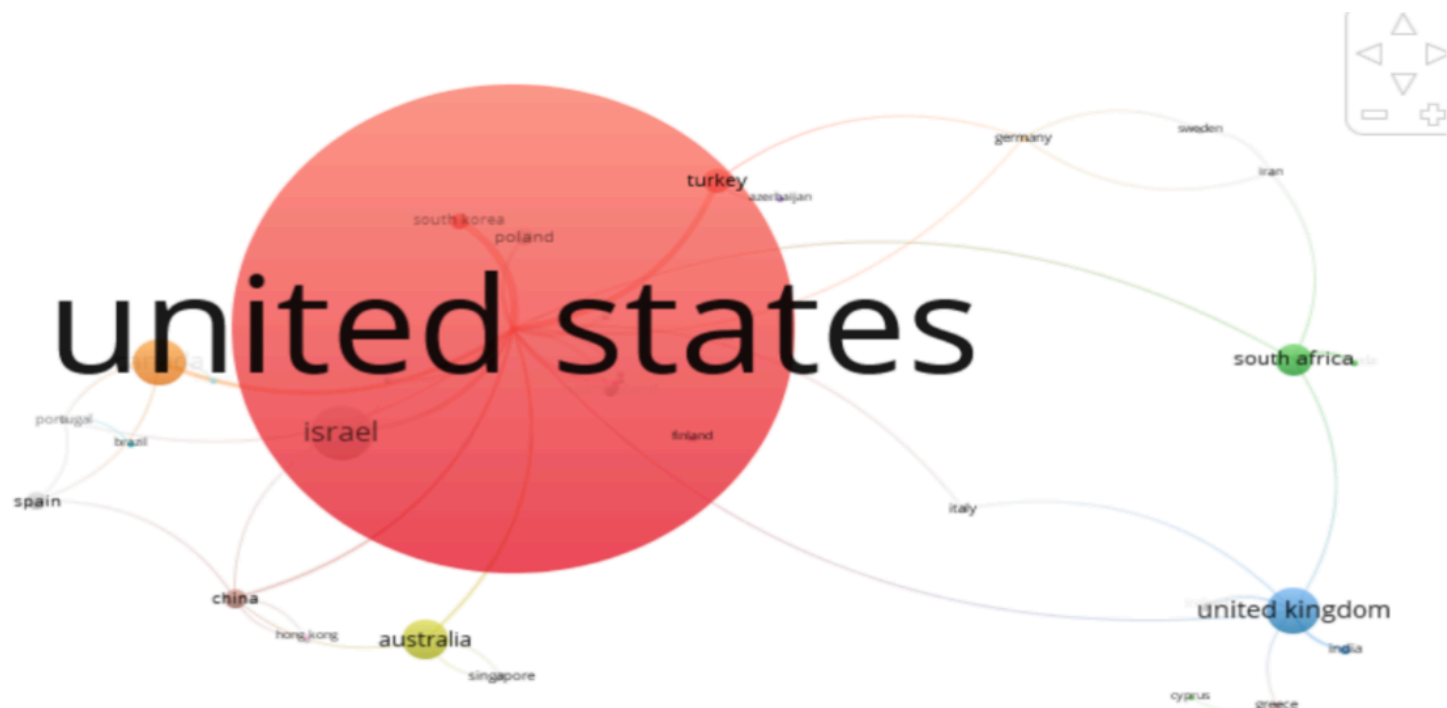


Figure 3

Represents Country network

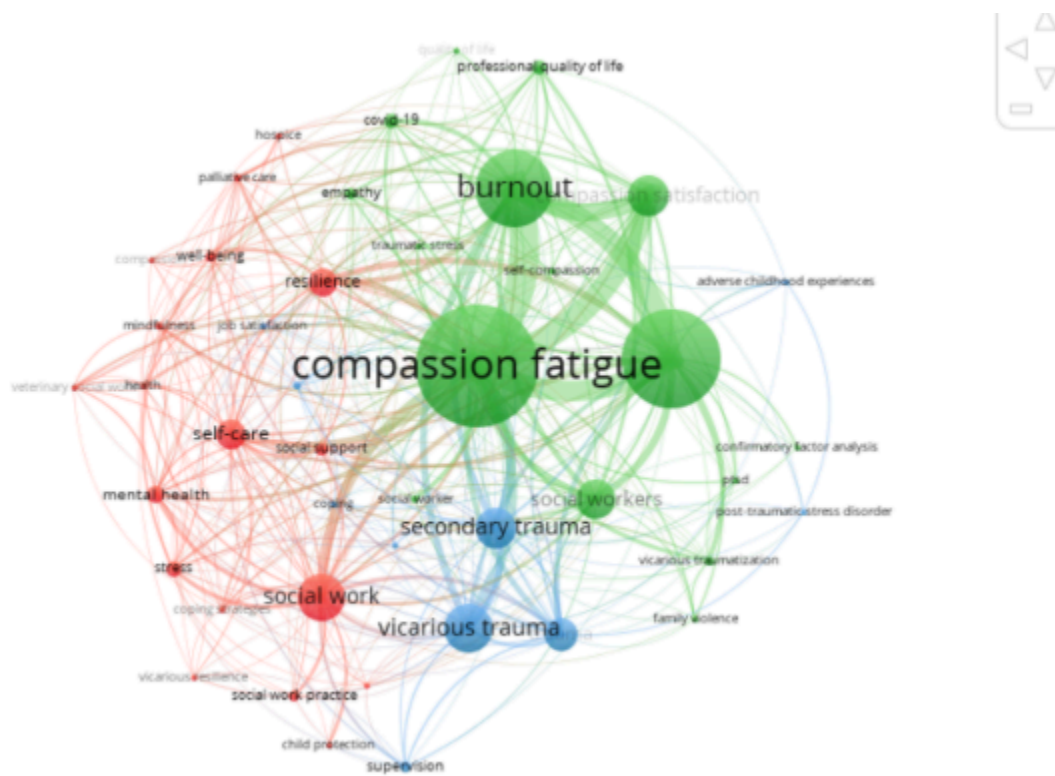


Figure 4

Represents co-occurrence analysis