



## REVIEW ARTICLE

**MAPPING RESEARCH TRENDS IN GENERATION ALPHA MENTAL HEALTH: A BIBLIOMETRIC REVIEW OF PSYCHOSOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL FACTORS**Nurul Zahrah<sup>1\*</sup>, Muh Akbar<sup>2</sup>, S Suhasman<sup>3</sup><sup>1</sup> Department of Communication Science, Faculty of Social and Political Science, Hasanuddin University, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. [nurulzahra0228@gmail.com](mailto:nurulzahra0228@gmail.com)<sup>2</sup> Department of Communication Science, Faculty of Social and Political Science, Hasanuddin University, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. [muh.akbar@unhas.ac.id](mailto:muh.akbar@unhas.ac.id)<sup>3</sup> Department of Forestry, Faculty of Forestry, Hasanuddin University, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. [ssuhasman@yahoo.com](mailto:ssuhasman@yahoo.com)**Corresponding Author:** Nurul Zahrah Department of Communication Science, Faculty of Social and Political Science, Hasanuddin University, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. [nurulzahra0228@gmail.com](mailto:nurulzahra0228@gmail.com)**Received:** Dec 12, 2025; **Accepted:** Jan 4, 2026; **Published:** Jan 20, 2026**Abstract**

This study aims to map research trends, thematic structures, and knowledge concentration in the field of Generation Alpha mental health, with a specific focus on psychosocial and emotional factors. A quantitative bibliometric approach was employed using publications indexed in the Scopus database covering the period from 2011 to 2024, with the identification and selection of documents guided by the PRISMA framework. The analysis included publication performance indicators, annual publication trends, and network visualization using VOSviewer to examine keyword co-occurrence and thematic structures within the literature. The analysis of 630 publications reveals a steady growth in research output over time, indicating an increasing scholarly interest in Generation Alpha mental health, particularly in relation to early developmental stages within digitally mediated environments. The thematic mapping shows that the literature is structured around interconnected orientations, including psychological well-being, emotional distress such as anxiety and depression, social relationships, and community-based perspectives related to access to support. At the level of knowledge structure, research production remains concentrated in specific countries, institutions, and specialized journals, which may influence dominant research agendas and limit the representation of diverse socio-cultural contexts. Overall, this study highlights the central role of psychosocial and emotional factors in Generation Alpha mental health research and provides a macro-level overview that can serve as a reference for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers in developing more integrative, context-sensitive, and development-oriented approaches to mental health.

**Keywords:** Generation Alpha, Bibliometric Review, Mental Health**INTRODUCTION**

Generation Alpha—children born around 2010/2011 to the mid-2020s—is the first generation to grow up entirely in a digital environment. Exposure to technology from an early age has shaped the way they interact, communicate, and express emotions, both in the context of family, school, and online social spaces<sup>1,2</sup>. This condition makes the issue of mental health and psychological well-being of children an important concern, especially because the dynamics of communication and emotional regulation in the digital-native generation have different characteristics compared to previous generations.

Children's mental health is not only influenced by

biological factors, but also by psychosocial and emotional factors that develop through daily social interactions. A number of studies have shown that interpersonal support, social relationships, and the family environment have an important role in shaping the psychological well-being of children and adolescents<sup>3-5</sup>. In this context, emotional intelligence is seen as a key ability that enables individuals to recognize, understand, and manage emotions adaptively, thus contributing to better mental health<sup>6-9</sup>.

Besides emotional intelligence, interpersonal communication is also a psychosocial factor that is inseparable from the development of children's mental health. Interpersonal communication allows for the formation of meaningful relationships, emotional openness, and emotional regulation through interactions

with parents, teachers, and peers.<sup>10,11</sup> Various empirical studies show that the quality of interpersonal communication is related to the ability to regulate emotions, emotional intelligence, and psychological adjustment in adolescents and school students.<sup>12</sup>

Generation Alpha's development takes place in a social context increasingly influenced by digital and social media. Research shows that the intensity of social media use in children and adolescents is related to empathy, emotional regulation, and vulnerability to stress and anxiety. It also emphasizes that this generation is more open in expressing emotions in digital spaces, which can have both positive and negative impacts on their socio-emotional development. These findings suggest that the relationship between interpersonal communication, emotional intelligence, and mental health in Generation Alpha is complex and influenced by the evolving digital context.

As academic interest in Gen Alpha mental health has grown across disciplines such as psychology, education, communication, and public health, research topics related to emotional intelligence, interpersonal communication, and psychological well-being have become increasingly prominent. However, there is a lack of a comprehensive map that integrates these themes and explains how they interconnect within the broader literature. This fragmentation makes it difficult to identify dominant research trends, emerging themes, and underexplored areas in the study of Gen Alpha mental health.

To address this need, bibliometric analysis offers a systematic approach to mapping research developments, thematic structures, and study directions in a scientific field. Therefore, this study aims to map trends in Generation Alpha mental health research through a bibliometric approach, highlighting psychosocial and emotional factors that emerge in the literature. This study is expected to complement previous empirical findings by providing a macro overview of the research landscape, thematic patterns, and developmental directions of Generation Alpha mental health studies. The following research questions (RQs) guide this study:

RQ1: What is the development trend of research publications related to Generation Alpha mental health over time?

RQ2: What are the dominant themes and keywords that represent psychosocial and emotional factors in Generation Alpha mental health literature?

RQ3: What research gaps are still open and what research directions have the potential to be developed in the future in the study of Generation Alpha mental health?

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Research design.

This study uses a quantitative approach with bibliometric analysis to map and synthesize the development of scientific literature related to Generation Alpha mental health. Bibliographic data was collected through the **Google Scholar database with the help of Harzing's Publish or Perish (PoP)** software, which allows for comprehensive cross-disciplinary literature searches, covering the fields of psychology, public health, education, and social sciences. Bibliometrics was chosen because of its ability to identify the conceptual structure of a research field, thematic patterns, and the direction of future research development based on existing publications. The use of Google Scholar as a data source is based on its broad and inclusive coverage of various types of academic publications, including journal articles, conference proceedings, and other scholarly works relevant to the topic of child and adolescent mental health. Through Publish or Perish, bibliographic data was systematically extracted based on predetermined keywords and timeframes, then filtered to ensure the relevance and completeness of the bibliographic information. This approach allows for a comprehensive overview of research trends, dominant themes, and research gaps in the study of Generation Alpha mental health.

### Search strategy, criteria, and data collection

*Harzing's Publish or Perish (PoP)* software with Google Scholar data sources, which were selected for their broad coverage and ability to reach publications across disciplines, including psychology, public health, education, and social sciences. The search strategy was designed to capture literature relevant to the study of Generation Alpha mental health and related psychosocial and emotional factors. Search keywords were developed based on the research objectives and conceptual framework, with a combination of terms ("*mental health*" OR "*psychological well-being*") AND ("*emotional intelligence*" OR "*emotional competence*") AND (*child\** OR *adolescent\**). The publication timeframe was limited to the period 2011–2024 to represent the early emergence and development of studies relevant to Generation Alpha.

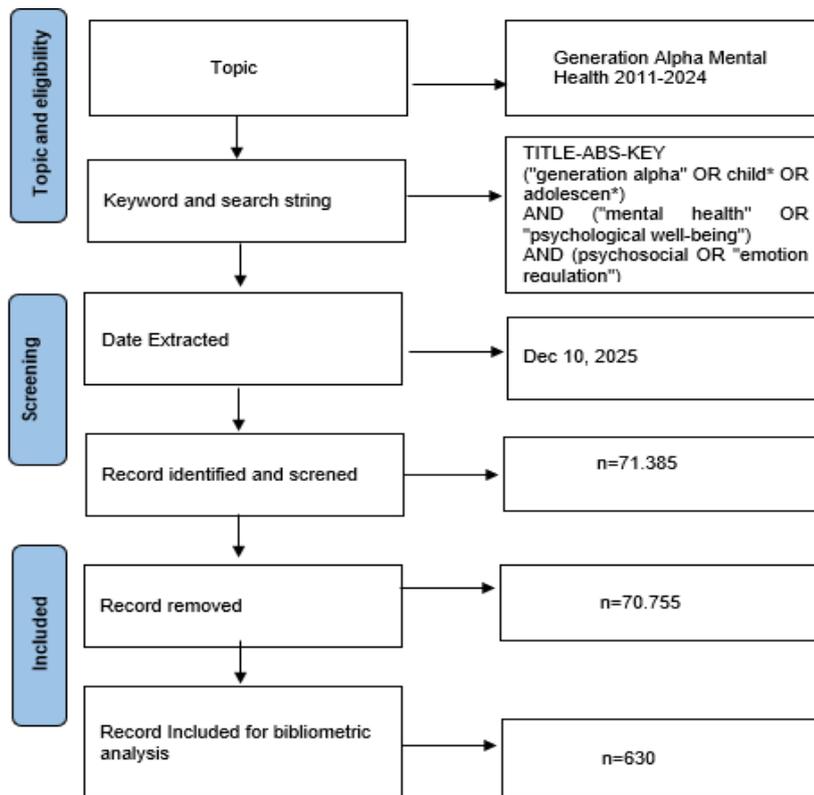
The initial search results were then filtered through a multistep selection process. Publications considered in this study included journal articles, conference proceedings, and other scholarly works published during the period that addressed mental health, psychological well-being, or psychosocial aspects of children and adolescents, including topics related to emotional intelligence, interpersonal communication, and social relations. Conversely, publications that were thematically irrelevant, duplicate, lacked adequate bibliographic information, or had not gone through a formal academic process were excluded from the

analysis. The data selection process involved initial identification, title and abstract screening, and a thorough evaluation of document eligibility. The entire selection process was documented using a PRISMA diagram to ensure transparency and reproducibility of the data collection process.

**Tools and data analysis**

Bibliometric analysis in this study was conducted using several supporting software tools. Bibliographic data was extracted and filtered through *Harzing's Publish or Perish* (PoP) according to a predetermined search strategy, also to obtain initial descriptive information such as the number of publications and citations. The final dataset was then exported in RIS format and

processed using Microsoft Excel for simple descriptive analysis, including publication distribution by year. Further bibliometric analysis was performed using *VOSviewer* to visualize the bibliometric network. Keyword *co-occurrence analysis* was conducted using *author keywords* as the unit of analysis using the *full counting* method to identify dominant themes and thematic linkages in the literature, while *co-authorship analysis* was used to map collaboration patterns between authors and between countries. This combination of analytical techniques allows for a comprehensive mapping of publication trends, thematic structure, and development directions of Generation Alpha mental health research. the direction it is likely to take in the future.



**Figure 1.** PRISMA flow diagram of the literature selection process for the bibliometric analysis of Generation Alpha mental health research.

**RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

*Descriptive analysis*

This study analyzed 630 journal publications discussing the mental health of Generation Alpha, published between 2011 and 2024. The dataset yielded a total of 68,531 citations, with an average of 4,895 citations per year, indicating a high level of academic attention to this topic. A total of 1,095 authors were involved in the analyzed publications, with an average of 3.43 authors per article, indicating a relatively high level of research collaboration.

The publication's citation impact is also reflected in the h-index value of 138, indicating that many articles in this field have sustained scientific influence. Overall, the results of this descriptive analysis illustrate the increasing research activity and interest in Generation Alpha mental health studies, as summarized in Figure 2.

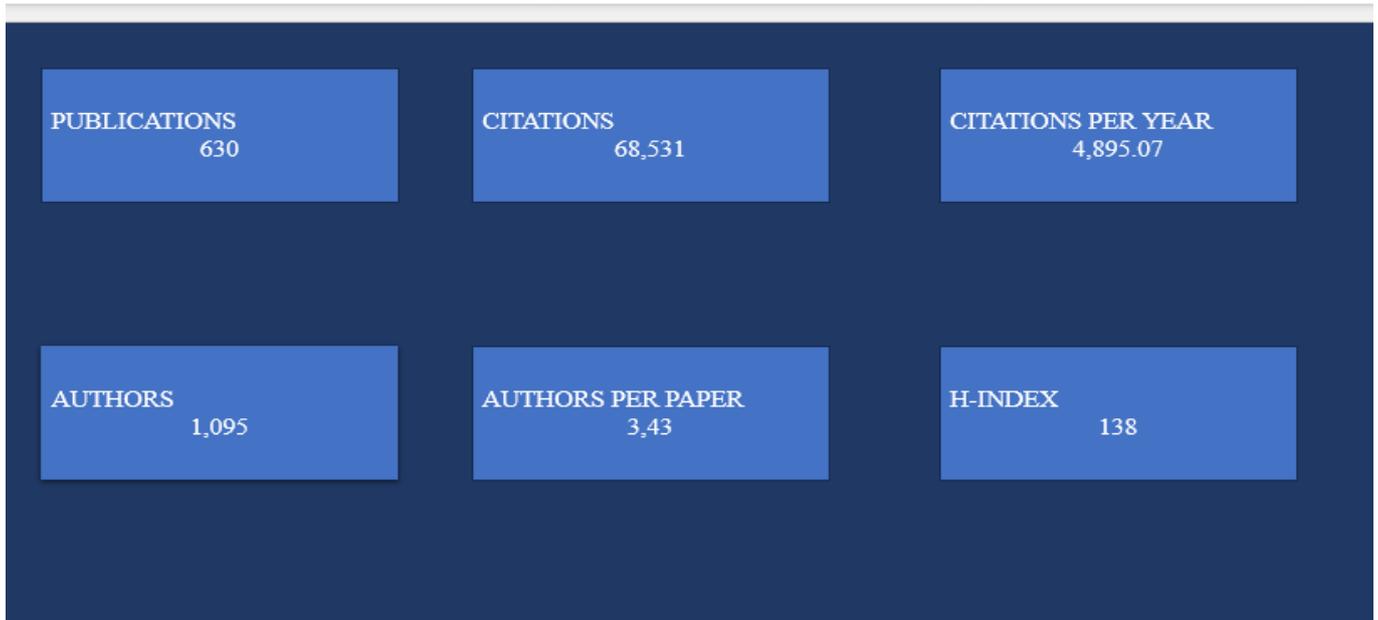


Figure 2. Dataset

Figure 3 illustrates the annual publication trend of research on Generation Alpha mental health between 2011 and 2024. The findings show that publications began to emerge in the early 2010s and gradually increased over time, although some fluctuations were observed across the years. A more noticeable growth in the number of publications occurred after 2015, indicating increasing academic attention to mental health issues among children and adolescents. The most prominent rise was observed in the period between 2021 and 2022, reflecting heightened scholarly interest in psychosocial and emotional well-being in early life stages. Overall, the upward trend suggests that Generation Alpha mental health has become an increasingly important topic within the academic literature in recent years.

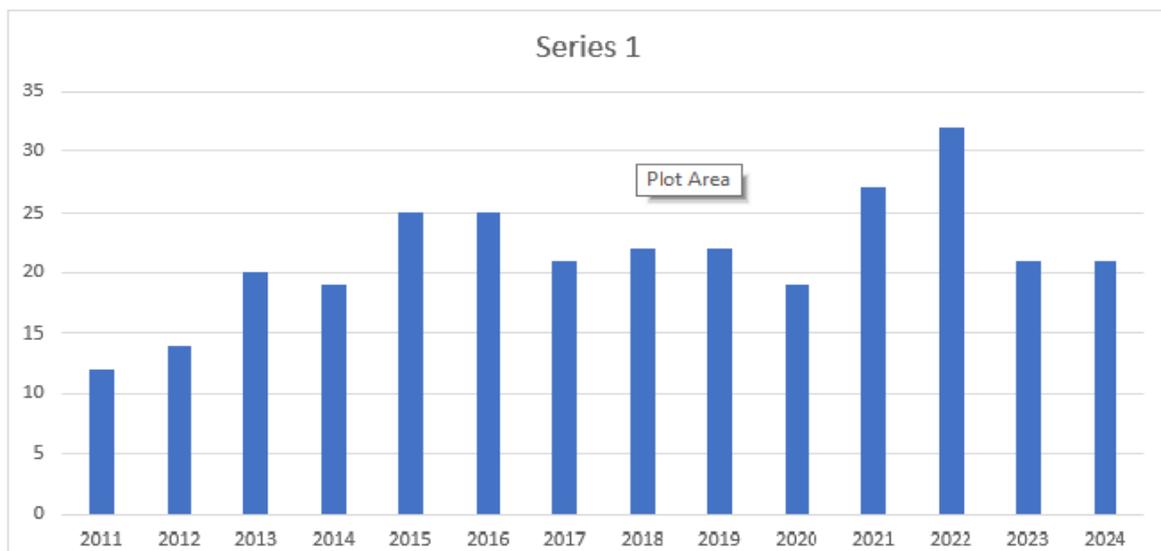


Figure 3. Annual publication trend of Generation Alpha mental health research (2011–2024).

**Research trend analysis**

Figure 3 shows that of the 630 documents, Medicine was the largest contributor with 515 documents (49.2%), followed by Psychology with 230 documents (22.0%). Below these two main fields, the contribution of other disciplines was much smaller, namely Social Sciences (76 documents; 7.3%) and Neuroscience (67 documents; 6.4%), while the other categories were each below 5%. This distribution indicates that the literature on child and early adolescent mental health is consolidated primarily within the domains of health/clinical and developmental psychology, while socio-environmental approaches and supporting disciplines (e.g., nursing and health professions) still play a complementary role. This pattern indicates that the research landscape is driven by a health sciences framework (screening–diagnosis–intervention) with strong support from

psychological perspectives (emotional and behavioral mechanisms), while cross-disciplinary integration outside these two domains is relatively limited.

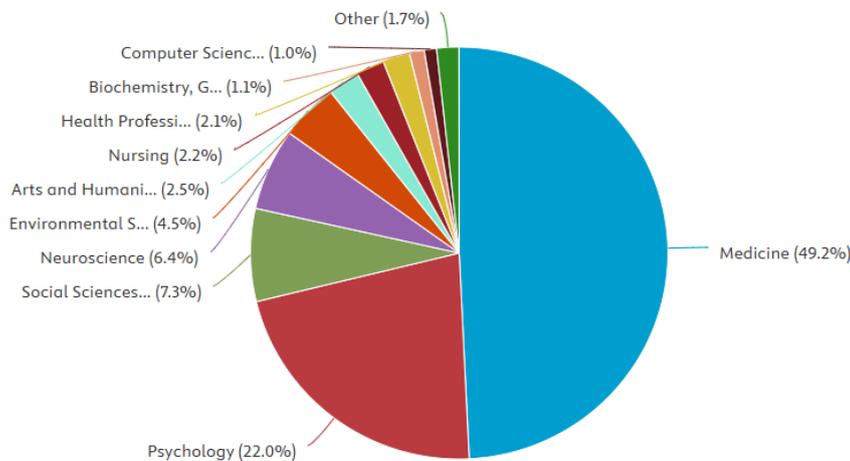


Figure 4. Subject Area

The distribution of publications by country shows that research on child and early adolescent mental health is dominated by high-income countries. The United States is the leading contributor with 139 papers, followed by the United Kingdom (82 papers) and Spain (54 papers). Other significant contributors include Australia (45 papers) and Italy (35 papers), while China (31 papers) and Canada and the Netherlands (28 papers each) are in the middle.

In contrast, contributions from developing countries are relatively limited, as seen in India (approximately 20 papers) and several other countries outside the top ten. This pattern suggests that scholarly production related to child and early adolescent mental health remains concentrated in North America, Western Europe, and Australia, reflecting global disparities in research capacity, funding, and mental health research infrastructure. These findings highlight that the research landscape is dominated by developed country perspectives, while scientific evidence from low- and middle-income country contexts remains relatively underrepresented.

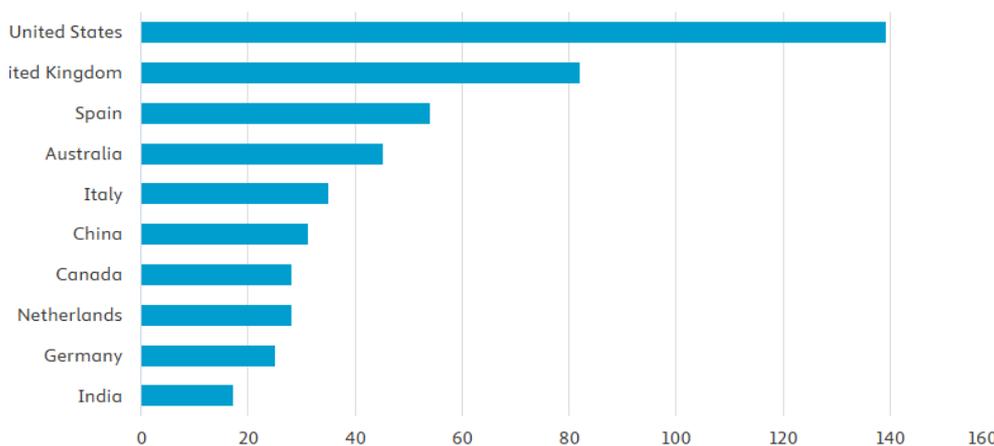


Figure 5. Top 10 Countries contributed to the publication

Shows the most productive authors in research on mental health among children and early adolescents. Arseneault, L., Charman, T., Moffitt, T.E., Montoya-Castilla, I., Pickles, A., and Simonoff, E. each contributed 5 publications, making them the most prolific authors in this field. Baird, G. and Caspi, A. followed with 4 publications each. Several other authors contributed 3 publications, indicating a broader distribution of research contributions across multiple scholars.



Figure 6. Top 10 Authors contributed to the publication

The figure above presents the most relevant affiliations based on the number of publications in research on mental health among children and early adolescents. King's College London leads with 21 publications, indicating its strong contribution to this research field. The University of Melbourne follows with 16 publications, reflecting a substantial research focus on child and early adolescent mental health. University College London ranks third with 13 publications, highlighting its consistent involvement in this area.

Furthermore, Universitat de València and Murdoch Children's Research Institute each contributed 12 publications, demonstrating their important roles in advancing research on mental health in younger populations. Erasmus MC recorded 9 publications, while Erasmus MC Sophia Children's Hospital and the University of Southampton each contributed 8 publications. Additional contributions were made by The University of Sydney and South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, each with 8 publications. Overall, this distribution highlights key academic and clinical institutions that actively drive and shape research on mental health in children and early adolescents at a global level.

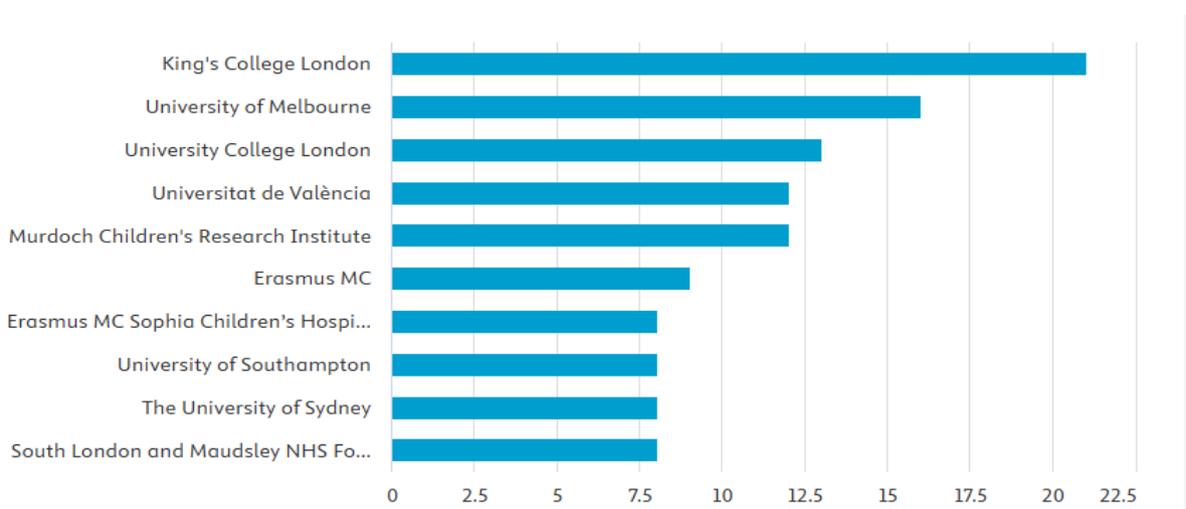


Figure 7 The Top Relevant Affiliations

Table 1 presents the top 10 journal sources contributing to publications on Generation Alpha mental health. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health* emerged as the most productive journal with 37 publications, accounting for 12.33% of the total dataset. This was followed by *BMJ Mental Health* with 21 publications (7.00%) and *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry* with 16 publications (5.33%). High-impact multidisciplinary journals such as *The Lancet* and *Current Psychiatry* also appear among the leading sources, each contributing 14 articles. Overall, the distribution indicates that research on Generation Alpha

mental health is predominantly published in specialized child and adolescent mental health journals, supported by contributions from broader medical and psychiatric outlets

**Table 1. Top 10 journal sources publishing research on Generation Alpha mental health (2011–2024)**

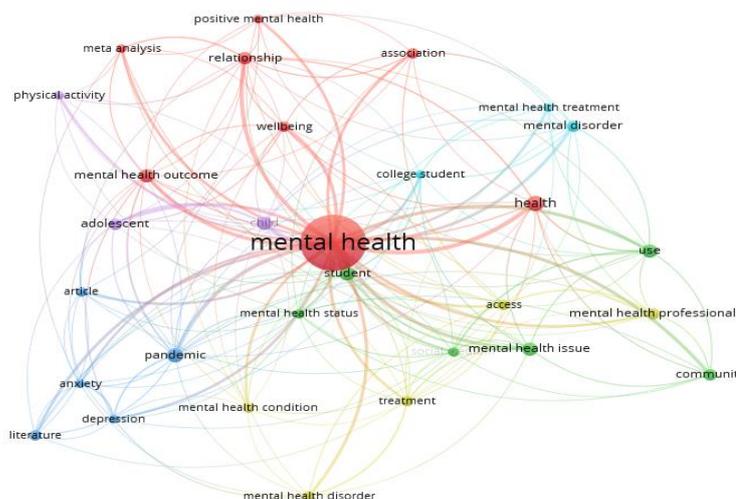
No.	Source Title	TP	%	Publisher
1	Child and Adolescent Mental Health	37	12.33	childpsych.theclinics.com
2	BMJ Ment Health,	21	7.00	Bmj.com
3	European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry	16	4.67	Springer
4	The lancet	14	4.67	TheLancet.com
5	Current psychiatry	14	5.33	Springer,
6	Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry	13	4.33	Wiley
7	Frontiers in Public Health	12	4.00	Frontiers Media SA
8	Academy of children	9	3.00	Elsevier Ltd
9	Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry	6	2.00	Mdpi.com
10	BMC psychiatry	3	1.00	Springer

Figure 8 shows a keyword co-occurrence network generated using VOSviewer, illustrating the conceptual structure of research on mental health among children and early adolescents. The network is centered on the keyword "mental health", which appears as the most prominent node, indicating its high frequency and central role in the literature. This core keyword is strongly connected to several thematic clusters that represent the main research directions in the field.

The red cluster focuses on psychological well-being and relational aspects of mental health, including keywords such as *wellbeing*, *positive mental health*, *relationship*, *association*, and *mental health outcome*. This cluster reflects studies that emphasize emotional well-being and positive mental health frameworks. The blue cluster is characterized by keywords such as *anxiety*, *depression*, *mental health condition*, and *article*, indicating research that concentrates on emotional disorders and mental health conditions commonly examined in empirical studies.

The green cluster represents a public health and service-oriented perspective, including keywords such as *community*, *mental health issue*, *mental health professional*, *access*, and *use*. This cluster highlights research related to mental health services, community involvement, and access to professional support. The yellow cluster includes keywords such as *treatment* and *mental health disorder*, reflecting intervention-focused and clinical research approaches.

Keywords such as *child*, *adolescent*, *student*, and *college student* appear across multiple clusters, indicating that mental health research in this field spans different developmental and educational contexts. Overall, the network visualization reveals a structured and interconnected research landscape, integrating psychological well-being, mental health conditions, treatment approaches, and community-based mental health services.



**Figure 8.** VOSviewer Visualization of Keyword Co-occurrence

## DISCUSSION

### *Development and Dynamics of Generation Alpha Mental Health Research*

The increasing number of publications on the mental health of Generation Alpha reflects a shift in scientific attention towards early development as a critical period for the formation of long-term mental health. Recent literature indicates that mental health problems that emerge in childhood and early adolescence have a high probability of persisting into later life if not addressed early, thus encouraging an increased research focus on this young population<sup>16</sup>. In this context, the growth in publications represents not only an increase in academic output, but also a scientific response to the global urgency to understand and prevent mental health problems from an early age.

A number of recent bibliometric studies examining child and adolescent mental health report a consistent pattern of literature growth, particularly after 2020, with topics such as anxiety, depression, and psychological well-being dominating<sup>17,18</sup>. This pattern reinforces the interpretation that the Generation Alpha research trend is part of a broader dynamic in child mental health studies, where the research focus is moving from a reactive, disorder-based approach to a preventive and developmental approach. Thus, the increasing publication trend can be interpreted as an indication of the maturation of the field of study that increasingly positions Generation Alpha as a strategic group in the global mental health research agenda.

### *Psychosocial and Emotional Factors Dominating Generation Alpha Mental Health Studies*

The cluster structure of keywords in the Generation Alpha mental health literature indicates that psychosocial and emotional factors are not understood as a single issue, but rather are divided into several intersecting conceptual orientations. The dominance of themes related to well-being, social relationships, and emotional disorders such as anxiety and depression indicates that research in this field has moved beyond a purely diagnostic approach. Recent literature confirms that child and early adolescent mental health is increasingly understood as a spectrum of emotional and social functioning influenced by relational contexts and developmental environments. Thus, the cluster patterns emerging in Results can be interpreted as reflecting a conceptual paradigm shift in Generation Alpha mental health research.

The strong association between the themes of well-being and social relations in the keyword structure indicates that psychosocial factors, particularly the quality of

interpersonal relationships, are a focus of attention in the current literature. This finding is in line with empirical evidence from the last five years which shows that relationships with family, peers, and the school environment play a significant role in children's emotional regulation and psychological resilience<sup>19,20</sup>. Therefore, the dominance of relational themes in Results not only reflects the popularity of certain topics, but also confirms the position of social relations as a key mechanism bridging emotional experiences with mental health outcomes in Generation Alpha.

Furthermore, the emergence of emotional distress themes such as anxiety and depression in clusters linked to the well-being theme suggests a dual approach in the literature: a disorder-based approach and a well-being-based approach. This approach is consistent with *the dual-factor model of mental health*, which in contemporary literature is used to explain that low levels of psychopathological symptoms do not automatically reflect high levels of psychological well-being<sup>21</sup>. In the context of Generation Alpha, this theme structure indicates that research is beginning to integrate measures of emotional distress with indicators of positive psychosocial functioning.

Furthermore, the presence of themes related to community, access, and use of services within the cluster structure indicates that psychosocial-emotional factors are also understood within the framework of support systems and structural barriers. The literature of the last five years emphasizes that access to psychosocial support and mental health services is an important determinant in preventing the escalation of emotional problems in children and adolescents [22], [23]. Thus, the pattern of themes identified in Results can be interpreted as evidence that Generation Alpha mental health studies are beginning to integrate individual, relational, and structural perspectives simultaneously.

### *Knowledge Structure Patterns and Research Concentration in Generation Alpha Mental Health Studies*

The knowledge structure in Generation Alpha mental health studies shows a strong concentration of research in specific countries, institutions, and journals, reflecting the global imbalance in knowledge production. The dominance of high-income countries as major contributors to publications indicates that the research agenda in this field is still heavily influenced by the social, economic, and policy contexts of developed countries. Recent literature confirms that geographic imbalance in child mental health research has the potential to limit the diversity of perspectives and the relevance of findings to different cultural contexts and social systems<sup>24</sup>. Thus, the concentration pattern seen in Results is not only descriptive, but has epistemological

implications for how Generation Alpha mental health is understood globally.

In addition to geographic concentration, the dominance of large academic institutions and established research centers suggests that knowledge production in the field of Generation Alpha mental health relies heavily on research capacity, funding, and international collaborative networks. A recent meta-research study suggests that institutions with stronger access to resources tend to determine the direction of research topics, conceptual frameworks, and methodologies used broadly<sup>25</sup>. In this context, the institutional structures identified in Results can be interpreted as factors that shape the mainstream of Generation Alpha mental health studies, while simultaneously limiting the visibility of more contextual or local issues.

This pattern of concentration is also evident in publication sources, with specialist journals specializing in child and adolescent mental health becoming the primary platform for knowledge dissemination. While this reflects the maturity of the field, recent literature warns that the dominance of specialized journals can limit interdisciplinary dialogue, particularly with social sciences, education, and public policy<sup>26</sup>. As a result, Generation Alpha's understanding of mental health risks becoming focused on clinical-psychological perspectives, while broader structural and social factors are less optimally integrated.

Overall, the knowledge structures identified in Results indicate that Generation Alpha mental health studies are still developing within a centralized and uneven research ecosystem. An important implication of these findings is the need to foster cross-national, cross-institutional, and cross-disciplinary collaboration to enrich conceptual frameworks and enhance the global relevance of research. By broadening the knowledge base, Generation Alpha mental health studies have the potential to produce a more inclusive understanding that is sensitive to the diverse contexts of child development across the globe.

### ***Theoretical and Practical Implications of Bibliometric Findings***

The bibliometric findings in this study provide theoretical implications that the study of Generation Alpha mental health is increasingly understood through a multidimensional and developmental trajectory-based approach. Recent literature emphasizes that children's mental health does not develop in isolation, but rather is shaped by the interaction of emotional, relational, and social contextual factors that change over time. The conceptual framework developed by<sup>27</sup> emphasizes that *the life-course approach* allows for a more

comprehensive understanding of how early life experiences, social environments, and repeated exposures contribute to the psychosocial well-being of children and adolescents. Thus, the thematic structure identified in Results can be interpreted as a reflection of the strengthening of the developmental paradigm in Generation Alpha mental health studies.

From a practical perspective, the coexistence of the themes of emotional distress, psychological well-being, social relationships, and community support suggests that responses to Generation Alpha's mental health are ineffective if they rely solely on individual clinical services. Evidence map of mental health interventions and psychosocial support for children and adolescents compiled by<sup>28</sup> emphasizes that school-, family-, and community-based interventions are essential components of promotive and preventive efforts, particularly in contexts with limited access to specialist services. These findings reinforce the implication that the psychosocial factors dominant in the literature need to be translated into integrated support strategies across children's life settings.

Another practical implication relates to the use of scientific evidence for policy and programs. The concentration of knowledge structures on specific countries and institutions suggests that recommendations widely cited in the global literature often originate from specific social contexts and service systems. A cross-country review conducted by<sup>29</sup> This indicates that research on child and adolescent mental health is still dominated by high-income countries, while low- and middle-income countries are relatively underrepresented. Therefore, the research findings that dominate the literature need to be applied carefully, considering contextual adaptations to ensure relevance for Generation Alpha in various social and cultural settings.

At the systems level, the implications of these bibliometric findings align with calls for a transformation of the global mental health response. emphasize that despite the increasing mental health needs of children and adolescents, the response of health and social systems remains inadequate. In this context, the findings of this article reinforce the importance of an approach that integrates mental health promotion, prevention of psychosocial problems, and ongoing care. Thus, a key contribution of these bibliometric findings lies in affirming that the mental health of Generation Alpha requires a coordinated, contextualized, and developmentally focused, evidence-based response.

## CONCLUSION

This bibliometric review mapped research trends in Generation Alpha mental health over the period 2011–2024, highlighting the growth, thematic structure, and knowledge concentration of the field. The results indicate a steady increase in publications, with research predominantly anchored in Medicine and Psychology, while contributions from Social Sciences remain limited. The thematic analysis reveals that psychosocial and emotional factors—particularly psychological well-being, emotional distress, social relationships, and access to support—form the core structure of the literature. At the structural level, the evidence base remains concentrated in high-income countries, major academic institutions, and a small number of specialized journals, shaping dominant research orientations and potentially constraining contextual diversity. Overall, this study offers a comprehensive macro-level overview of Generation Alpha mental health research and provides a reference point for situated future studies within the evolving landscape of psychosocial and emotional factors.

## DECLARATION

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### Conflict of Interest

None to declare.

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