

# Where is research on multicultural educator competence heading? A bibliometric analysis

Siti Nurul Hajirotul Qudsiyah<sup>a,1,\*</sup>, Elsa Carmen Montaña<sup>b,2</sup>, Prima Suci Rohmadheny<sup>c,3</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Guidance and Counseling, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Mulawarman, Samarinda, Indonesia

<sup>b</sup> College of Arts and Sciences, Western Philippines University, Palawan, Philippines

<sup>c</sup> Department of Learning, Development, and Professional Practice, Faculty of Arts and Education, The University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand

<sup>1</sup> [stnurulhajirotul@gmail.com](mailto:stnurulhajirotul@gmail.com); <sup>2</sup> [elsa.carmen.montano@wpu.edu.ph](mailto:elsa.carmen.montano@wpu.edu.ph); <sup>3</sup> [proh106@aucklanduni.ac.nz](mailto:proh106@aucklanduni.ac.nz)

\* corresponding author

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## ABSTRACT

In the era of globalization, teachers' multicultural competence is a key factor in creating a learning environment that is inclusive and responsive to cultural diversity. Although research on teachers' multicultural competence has grown rapidly, studies that comprehensively analyze global publication trends in this field are limited. This study aims to identify research trends on teachers' multicultural competence through a bibliometric approach. This study used data from reputable academic databases and analyzed with VOSviewer software to map publication trends, academic collaboration networks, and key emerging themes. The analysis was conducted on 288 articles that met the inclusion criteria, which were selected based on the PRISMA method. The results showed a significant increase in publications related to teachers' multicultural competence since 2020. The United States is the country with the highest contribution of publications, followed by Turkey, China and Canada. Other findings indicate that recent research has focused more on multicultural education implementation strategies, the effectiveness of teacher training, and the relationship between multicultural competence and teaching effectiveness. This research will provide insights for academics, policymakers and education practitioners in designing evidence-based teacher training strategies to improve multicultural competence in educational settings.

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## 1. Introduction

In the era of globalization, cultural diversity in educational environments is increasingly becoming a major concern (Basnet, 2024). Teachers as educational agents have an important role in building an inclusive learning environment that is responsive to cultural differences (Anugrah et al., 2024; Hendriksen et al., 2024; Syamsuardi et al., 2024). Teachers' multicultural competence is a fundamental aspect in building understanding, tolerance, and classroom management that respects diversity (Anthony-Stevens & Langford, 2020; Chima Abimbola Eden et al., 2024). As social complexity in the world of education increases, research on teachers' multicultural competence continues to develop to understand trends, challenges, and solutions in its development (Anugrah et al., 2024; Naz et al., 2023).

Although many studies have been conducted on teachers' multicultural competence, there is still a gap in understanding how this research trend is developing globally (Dyankova & Nikolova, 2023; Muhamad Pilus & Nguyen, 2023; Rodiyana et al., 2022). Most research were focused on theory development and implementation in various educational contexts, but few studies on the development and research patterns of teachers' multicultural competence comprehensively (Anthony-Stevens &

Langford, 2020; Karatas, 2020). Bibliometric analysis enables a thorough review that shows all literatures relevant to any field of research but little research used a bibliometric approach to identify publication trends, collaborations between researchers, and the main themes developing in academic literature (Mahendra & Maftuh, 2023).

Various studies have highlighted the importance of multicultural competence in improving teaching effectiveness and building harmony in the school environment (Karacsony et al., 2022). Several studies emphasize the cognitive, affective, and skill aspects that teachers must have in dealing with students from different cultural backgrounds (Hariyadi & Rodiyah, 2023; Young et al., 2024). However, studies that map the evolution of this concept from a global perspective through a bibliometric approach are still very limited (Kilavuz, 2023; Rodiyana et al., 2022; Thresia et al., 2024). Therefore, this study attempted to fill these gaps by identifying publication trends, key keywords, and academic collaborations in teacher multicultural competency research.

Given the aforementioned gaps, bibliometric analysis was used to explore publication trends related to teachers' multicultural competence. The data used come from reputable academic databases covering publications in the last few decades. Using quantitative analysis techniques, publication growth, geographical distribution, collaboration networks, and key emerging themes were mapped. This approach provides a more objective picture of how this research is developing and in which direction the research trend is moving.

The results of this study are expected to provide new contributions to the literature on teacher multicultural competence by offering a data-based perspective on the development of research in this field. These findings are not only useful for academics and researchers who want to understand the dynamics of teacher multicultural competence research, but also for educational policymakers in designing more inclusive and evidence-based teacher training strategies. Thus, this study will contribute to enriching the understanding of the development of teacher multicultural competence research and its implications for educational practices in various countries.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Research design

This study utilized a bibliometric approach to analyze research trends related to teachers' multicultural competence. Bibliometric analysis is a quantitative method that allows mapping of scientific publication patterns based on bibliographic data from reputable journals (Moher et al., 2009). The research data were obtained only from the Scopus, which has a wide coverage of global scientific publications. The search was conducted using keywords such as "teacher multicultural", "teaching multicultural", "multicultural educator", "culturally competent teacher", "cross-cultural teacher", or "global-minded teacher". The selected articles met the inclusion criteria, namely being published in reputable international journals indexed by Scopus, relevant to teachers' multicultural competence at various levels of education, and available in English. Non-academic articles such as editorials, commentaries, and short reports were excluded from the analysis.

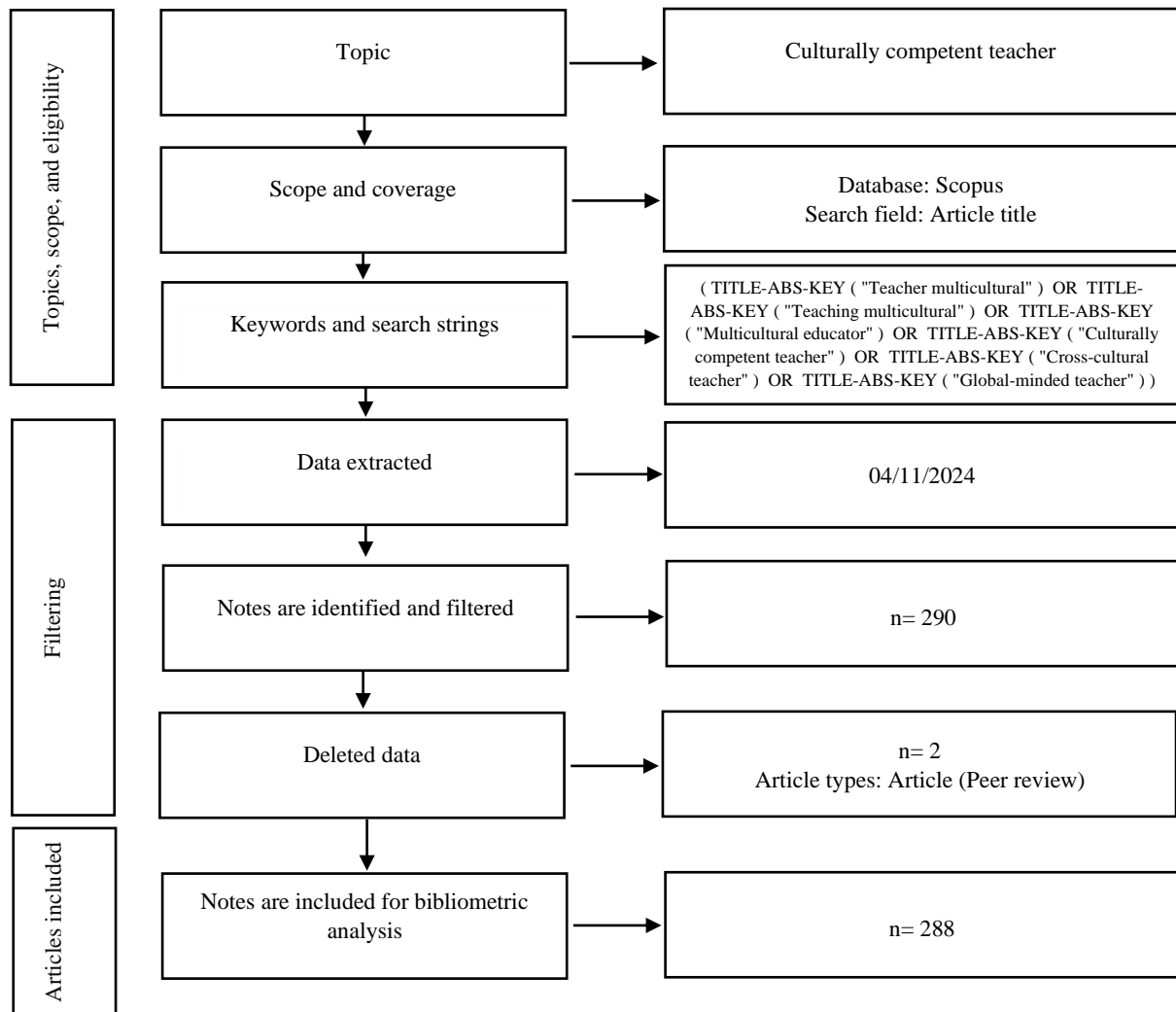
### 2.2. Data of the research

This study uses articles from the Scopus database with the theme of educators' multicultural competence. The selection of sources from Scopus was carried out to ensure that the articles analyzed have high credibility and have gone through a strict peer review process. The articles used cover various perspectives on educators' multicultural competence, including teaching strategies, professional development, and their impact on diversity in educational environments. Thus, this study can provide a comprehensive picture of the trends and developments in educators' multicultural competence studies in various educational contexts. Based on the results of the analysis, 288 articles were obtained as the unit of analysis.

### 2.3. Data collection tools

The PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses) model was used in this study to describe the process of identifying, selecting, and filtering articles published in scientific journals (Moher et al., 2009; Page et al., 2021). This was done to obtain accurate data related to the articles used in this study. A total of 288 scientific articles were analyzed. Figure 1 describes the research flow with the PRISMA model. This model helps researchers in developing

systematic and transparent steps in selecting relevant articles. Thus, the results of this study have a strong foundation and can be accounted for.



**Fig. 1.** PRISMA diagram on culturally competent teacher publication

#### 2.4. Research procedure

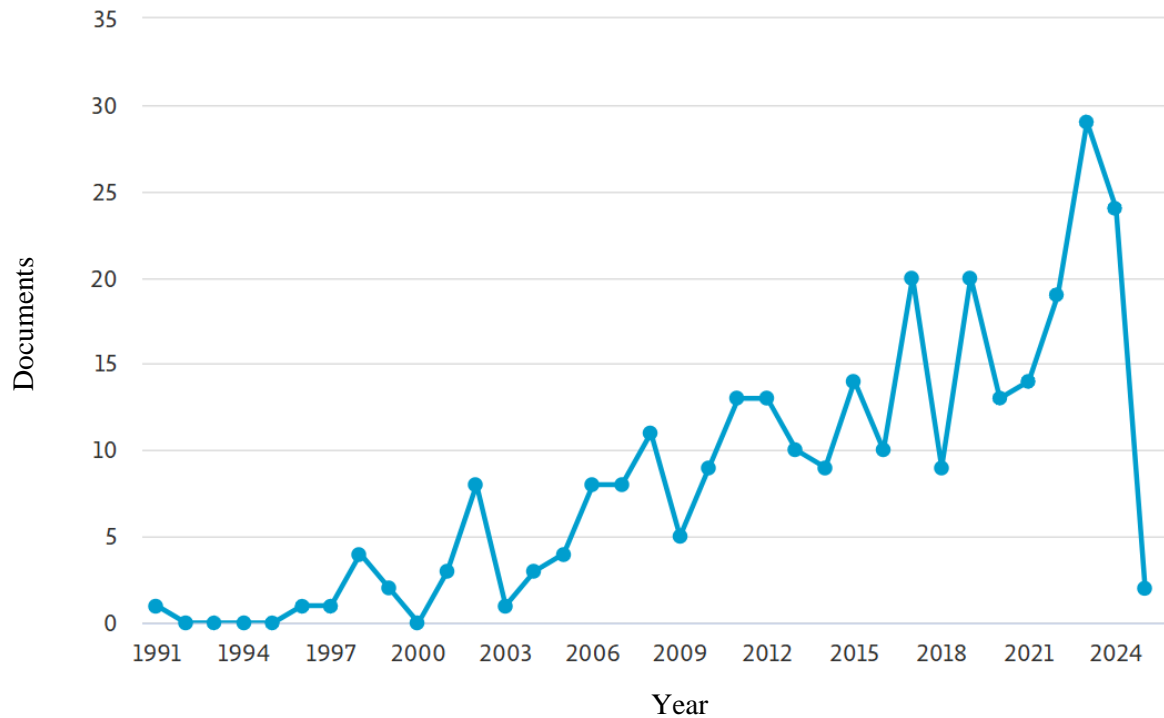
This research was carried out in several stages. To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, a series of verifications were conducted, including data cleaning to eliminate duplication and irrelevant articles, and reliability testing by comparing results from two different databases. In addition, manual cross-checks were conducted on articles identified as primary research in this field. With this approach, the study is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the trend of teacher multicultural competence research and contribute to the development of academic studies and evidence-based education policies.

#### 2.5. Data analysis technique

Bibliometric analysis in this study was conducted using VOSviewer software to identify publication trends, academic collaboration networks, and key themes in teacher multicultural competence research. Microsoft Excel is one of the tools to facilitate data analysis using VOSviewer. Some of the key analyses used include the distribution of publications for a specific year, identification of authors and institutions with the largest contributions, journals that contributed the most, countries and institutions that contributed significantly, and themes that frequently emerged. This analysis process allows for a deeper understanding of how teacher multicultural competence research has developed and the direction of future research.

### 3. Results and Discussion

Multicultural competence is one of the fundamental elements that teachers must have. The increasing awareness of the implementation of multicultural competence in teachers has encouraged more research on it. Figure 2 illustrates the number of publications on teacher multicultural competence from 1991 to 2024 which were obtained from the Scopus database. Publications on teacher multicultural competence began in 1991. In the 2020s, the number of publications on teacher multicultural competence have shown significant increase. In 2024, there were 29 articles published.



**Fig. 2.** Number of publications on educator multicultural competence

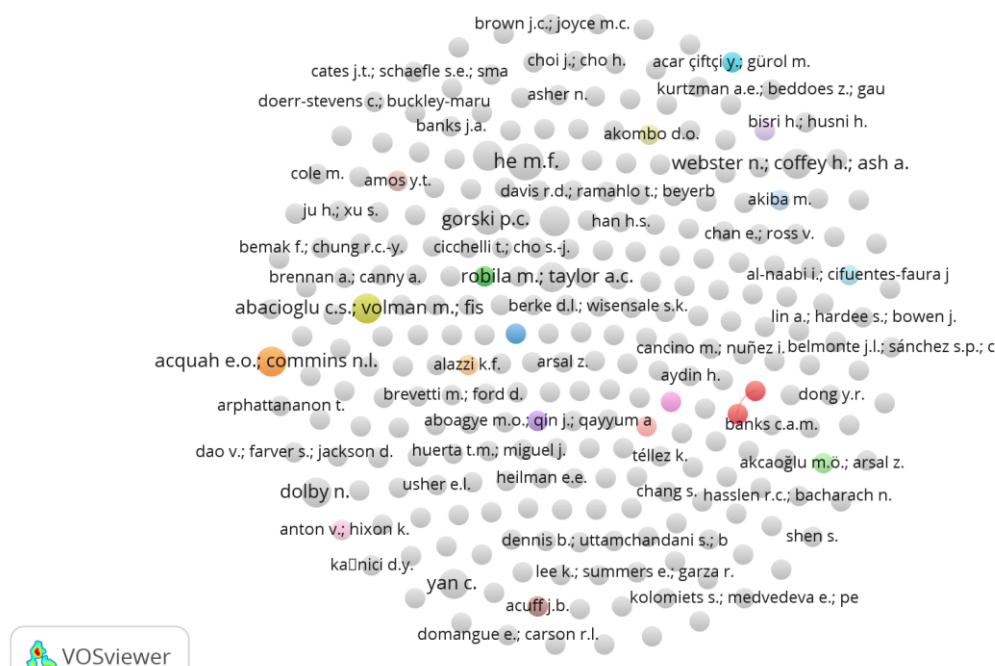
The number of published articles correlates with the contribution of authors who conduct research on teacher multicultural competence. Table 1 describes the ten authors who contributed the most to publications on teacher multicultural competence. In addition, table 1 is also equipped with information related to the number of citations for each author who contributed the most to the multicultural competence of educators publications. This data provides insights into the most influential researchers in the field and highlights the impact of their work. Understanding these contributions can help identify key trends and potential gaps in the existing literature.

Table 1 shows the ten researchers who contributed the most to publications on teachers' multicultural competence based on the number of documents and citations. Abacioglu, C.S. from the Universiteit van Amsterdam, Netherlands, is the researcher with the highest number of citations, which is 154 citations from three published documents. He, M.F. from Georgia Southern University, United States, also has three publications with a total of 95 citations, followed by Thijs, J. from the Universiteit Utrecht, Netherlands, with 48 citations. Meanwhile, Chan, E. from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln has three publications but has not received any citations. In addition, researchers such as Xu, S. from the University of Windsor, Canada, and Yan, C. from Central China Normal University, China, each have three publications with a relatively lower number of citations, which are 23 and 12. Several other researchers, such as Acquah, E.O. from Åbo Akademi University, Finland, and Aرسال, Z. from Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal Üniversitesi, Türkiye, have two publications with 54 and 29 citations respectively. Overall, the contributions of these researchers demonstrate the spread of teacher multicultural competence research across academic institutions worldwide, with variations in citation counts reflecting the level of influence of each publication within the scientific community.

**Table 1.** The ten key contributors to multicultural competence of educators

Author Name	Name of Institution	Number of Documents	Number of Citation
Abacioglu, C.S.	Universiteit van Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands	3	154
Chan, E.	University of Nebraska–Lincoln, Lincoln, United States	3	0
He, M.F.	Georgia Southern University, Statesboro, United States	3	95
Thijs, J.	Universiteit Utrecht, Utrecht, Netherlands	3	48
Xu, S.	University of Windsor, Windsor, Canada	3	23
Yan, C.	Central China Normal University, Wuhan, China	3	12
Acquah, E.O.	Åbo Akademi University, Turku, Finland	2	54
Agirdag, O.	KU Leuven, Leuven, Belgium	2	6
Arsal, Z.	Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal Üniversitesi, Bolu, Türkiye	2	29
Ash, A.	The University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Charlotte, United States	2	4

In the next stage, a network map analysis on co-authorship with the unit of analysis focusing on the authors to identify and describe collaboration patterns in publications discussing educators' multicultural competence. This analysis was based on all of the author's keywords and used co-occurrence analysis with a minimum of one occurrence out of 277 that appeared, and 277 meet the threshold. This analysis provides insight into the extent to which researchers network and collaborate in producing scientific work in the field. The results of the analysis indicate that there are not many networks formed among researchers who contribute to related publications, indicating that collaboration in this field is still limited and can be an opportunity for further research to encourage broader collaboration. The visualization of the results of this analysis can be seen in Figure 3, which shows the network structure between authors in related publications.



**Fig. 3.** Co-authorship network with the highest contributing authors

Authors who contribute to publications on educators' multicultural competence publish their research results in internationally reputable scientific journals, which are the main references in this field. The main references of this research were the publications on teacher's multicultural competence in reputable scientific journals. These publications not only support the development of multicultural education theory and practice, but also broaden the understanding of how teachers can improve their competence in the context of cultural diversity. Table 2 specifically describes the ten reputable international journals that publish the most research related to educators' multicultural competence, reflecting the important role of these journals in disseminating relevant scientific findings.

**Table 2.** The top ten journals publishing on educators' multicultural competence

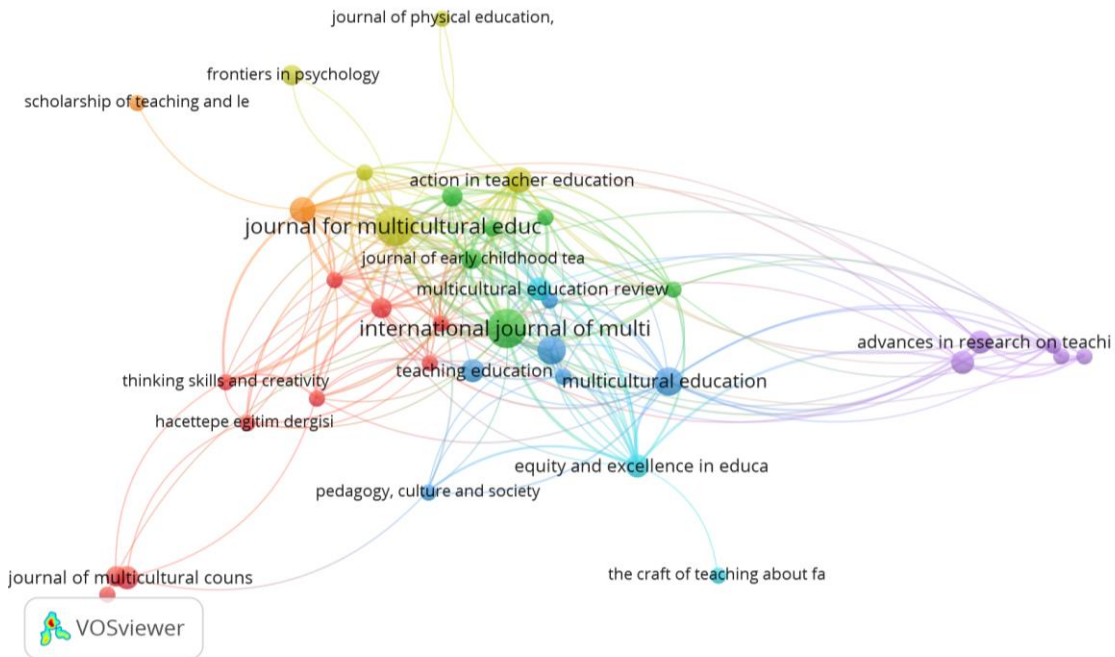
Journal Name	Number of Documents	Number of Citation
International Journal of Multicultural Education	11	59
Journal for Multicultural Education	11	90
Multicultural Education	6	51
Multicultural Perspectives	6	34
Action in Teacher Education	5	58
Teaching and Teacher Education	5	121
Advances in Research on Teaching	4	4
Equity and Excellence in Education	4	48
Journal of Curriculum Studies	4	118
Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development	4	44

Table 2 shows the ten reputable international journals that contribute the most to publications related to educators' multicultural competence based on the number of documents and citations. The International Journal of Multicultural Education and the Journal for Multicultural Education are the two journals with the highest number of publications, each publishing 11 documents with a total of 59 and 90 citations. Teaching and Teacher Education has the highest number of citations (121) though only five documents were published. This only implies that their field of study is significant in the research world. This is followed by the Journal of Curriculum Studies with 118 citations from four publications. Other journals, such as Multicultural Education, Multicultural Perspectives, and Action in Teacher Education, also have significant contributions with varying numbers of publications and citations. Meanwhile, Advances in Research on Teaching has the same number of publications as several other journals, but with the lowest number of citations (4), indicating that its influence is still relatively limited. Overall, these data reflect that research on educators' multicultural competence has been published in a variety of academic journals that focus on education and multiculturalism, with some journals having a greater impact than others based on the number of citations.

A number of journals that contribute to publications on educators' multicultural competence have networks, mainly related to citations. This analysis was based on all of the sources keywords and used citation analysis with a minimum of 2 occurrences out of 200 that appeared, and 39 meet the threshold. Based on the results of the analysis, a strong and interconnected network map between journals was obtained. In other words, they cite each other to conduct scientific publications on educators' multicultural competence. Figure 4 displays the number of citations from the highest contributing journals

Based on Figure 4, it can be seen that there are several journals that have strong connections in this study. These journals include the International Journal of Multicultural Education, Journal for Multicultural Education, Action in Teacher Education, Teaching and Teacher Education, and Equity and Excellence in Education. The strong connections between these journals indicate that the topics discussed in this study have high relevance to previous studies, especially in the field of multicultural education and inclusive teaching. The existence of relationships between these journals also reflects a consistent citation pattern in related studies, indicating that researchers in this field refer to the same sources to develop concepts and theories that support their studies. In addition, these journals not only provide theoretical perspectives but also present empirical research results that can be used as a basis for understanding the trends and dynamics of multicultural education in various contexts. Thus, the selection of these journals as the main references in this study provides a strong foundation in

ensuring that the results obtained have high academic validity and are relevant in the context of current educational research.



**Fig. 4.** Citation network with the highest contributing journals

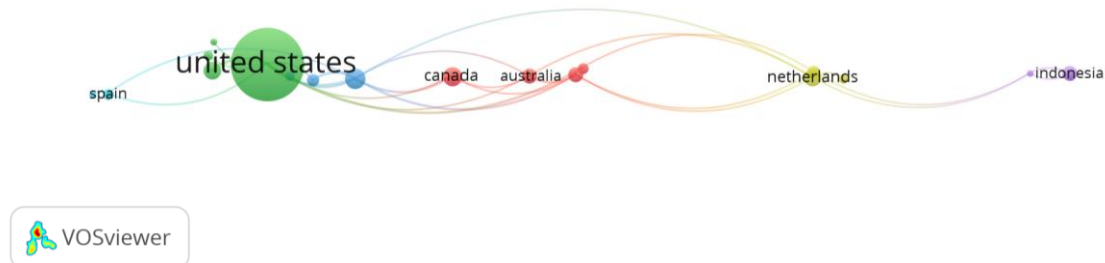
Several countries have played a role in the increasing number of publications related to educators' multicultural competence. Table 3 presents the list of the ten countries with the largest contributions to research in this area and the number of citations received by each country, reflecting the level of influence of their publications on the development of teacher's multicultural competence studies.

**Table 3.** Top ten countries in multicultural competency publications and citations for educators

Country	Number of Documents	Number of Citation
United States	167	2269
Turkey	16	187
China	13	89
Canada	12	61
South Korea	11	101
Netherlands	10	197
Australia	8	74
United Kingdom	8	104
Indonesia	7	29
Belgium	5	22

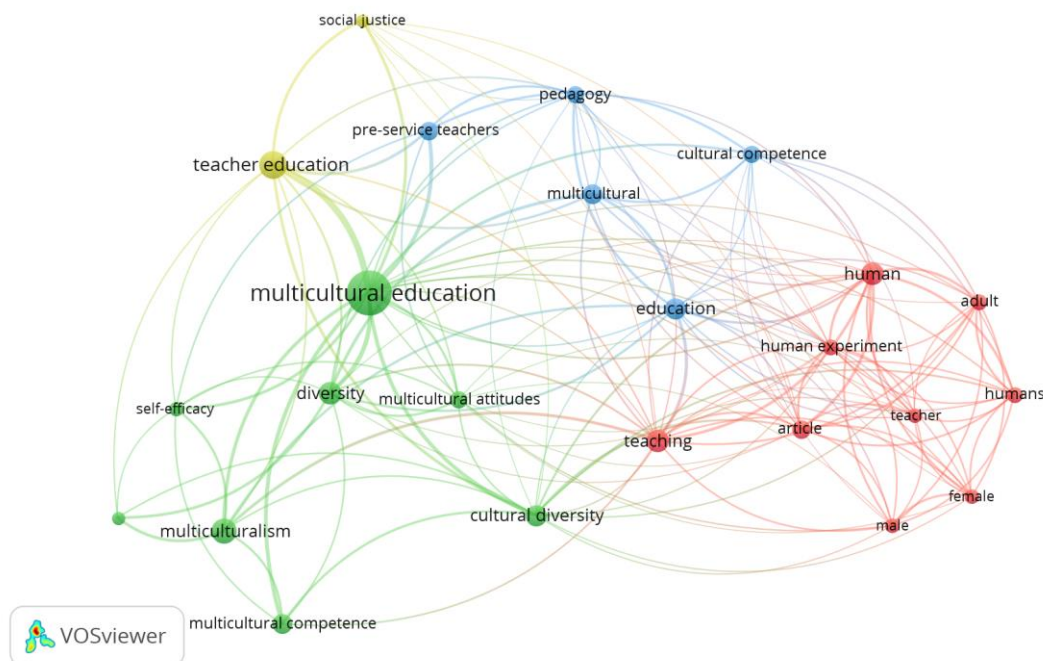
Table 3 shows the top ten countries that contributed the most publications related to educator multicultural competence based on the number of documents and citations. The United States ranked first with 167 publications and 2,269 citations, reflecting the dominance of research from this country in this study. Turkey, China, and Canada also made the list with fewer publications, but still made significant contributions to the development of research. The Netherlands and South Korea showed a fairly high balance between the number of publications and citations, indicating that research from these countries has a strong academic impact. Australia, the United Kingdom, and Indonesia also made the list, with Indonesia having seven publications that are beginning to attract attention in this study. Meanwhile, Belgium had the fewest publications among the ten countries, but still contributed to the dissemination of knowledge about educator multicultural competence. Overall, this distribution of publications reflects the global interest in educator multicultural competence, with certain countries dominating in producing and disseminating research in this area.

The next step is to conduct a network map analysis between countries. This analysis was based on all of the sources keywords and used citation analysis with a minimum of 2 occurrences out of 54 that appeared, and 24 meet the threshold. Countries that have networks include the United States, Spain, Canada, Australia, Netherlands, and Indonesia. The United States has the strongest network map than any other country. The results of the analysis of the country network map in the publication of educators' multicultural competence are presented in Figure 5.



**Fig. 5.** Co-authorship network with the highest contributing countries

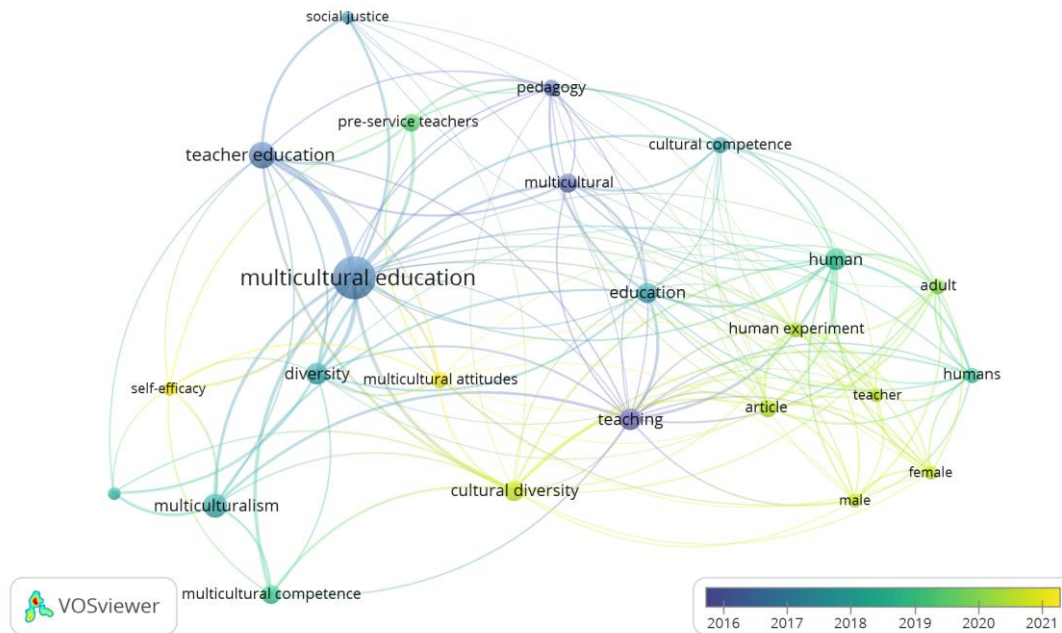
The publication trend on educators' multicultural competence can be seen from a number of identified keywords. The identified keywords provide a description of the research subthemes related to educators' multicultural competence. These keywords illustrate the key focus areas that researchers have explored in the field of educators' multicultural competence. By analyzing these keywords, it is possible to identify dominant research trends and emerging topics within this domain. Furthermore, the distribution of these keywords reflects the evolving academic discourse and the interdisciplinary nature of multicultural competence in education. This analysis helps in understanding the shifting priorities and gaps in the existing literature on multicultural competence. Additionally, it provides insights into potential future research directions that can further enhance educators' ability to navigate diverse classroom settings. Figure 6 provides an overview of keywords related to educators' multicultural competence.



**Fig. 6.** Figure 5 Co-occurrence network with research themes based on author keywords



Figure 6 is analyzed based on the overall keywords used by the author, with the co-occurrence analysis method that sets a minimum threshold of 5 occurrences out of a total of 751 identified keywords. From the analysis results, there are 24 keywords that meet these criteria. The keywords that most frequently appear in publications on educators' multicultural competence include multicultural education, teacher education, multiculturalism, diversity, and teaching. Meanwhile, new research opportunities can be directed at keywords such as multicultural competence, cultural competence, multicultural attitudes, social justice, and teacher beliefs. A visualization of this condition can be seen in Figure 7.



**Fig. 7.** Research themes in 2016-2021 on multicultural competence of educators

Figure 7 illustrates the trend of publication themes over a period of time. Dark blue represents publications in 2016, light blue for 2017, dark green for 2018, light green for 2019, yellow for 2020, and light yellow for 2021. In the 2020s, research on multicultural competence, cultural competence, multicultural attitudes, social justice, and teacher beliefs related to educators' multicultural competence has received increasing attention and has been widely studied.

The keywords in this study indicate that the main concepts that often appear in the study of educators' multicultural competence include multicultural education, teacher education, multiculturalism, diversity, and teaching. This finding is in line with previous studies that emphasize the importance of multicultural education in improving teacher readiness to face diverse learning environments (Banks, 2019; Gay, 2018). In addition, keywords such as multicultural competence, cultural competence, multicultural attitudes, social justice, and teacher beliefs indicate new research opportunities that can be developed further.

The existence of these keywords indicates a shift in focus from simply understanding multicultural education to strengthening specific competencies that teachers must have in dealing with cultural diversity in the classroom (Stunell, 2021). Furthermore, recent research highlights how teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward diversity play a significant role in the successful implementation of multicultural education (Choi & Mao, 2021). Therefore, the results of this study provide a foundation for further exploration of how teacher competencies and attitudes can be developed effectively in various educational contexts.

Educator multicultural competence is a crucial aspect of education in the current era of globalization. This competence includes understanding, attitudes, and skills that enable Educator to teach effectively in culturally diverse environments (Banks, 2019). Multicultural education aims to increase awareness of diversity and reduce bias that can occur in the learning process (Freire, 2020;

Gay, 2018; Torres & Tarozzi, 2020). Multicultural competence is one of the professional competencies of educators (Setianingrum & Da Costa, 2023).

In the context of multicultural life, teachers must have several core competencies, including pedagogical, social, personality, and professional competencies (Gay, 2018). Studies show that integrating multicultural approaches into the curriculum can increase student engagement and create an inclusive learning environment (Uzunboyly & Altay, 2021). In addition, teachers who have skills in a multicultural approach are better able to handle intercultural conflicts and guide students in understanding and appreciating differences (Borge et al., 2022; Vallone et al., 2022).

However, several studies have revealed that many teachers still have difficulty implementing the principles of multicultural education. One of the main challenges is the lack of training and resources available to teachers to understand and implement culturally sensitive learning strategies (Buchs & Maradan, 2021). In addition, bias in the education system can also hinder the optimal implementation of a multicultural approach (Budirahayu & Saud, 2021).

In Indonesia, Islamic Religious Education teachers have a significant role in shaping students' understanding of tolerance and diversity (Amri et al., 2017). Multicultural competence in Islamic Religious Education teaching includes understanding the differences in religion, culture, and social values that develop in society (Raihani & Drysdale, 2013). Another study showed that the use of technology in multicultural education can help teachers deliver material that is more interactive and interesting to students (Golubovschi, 2024).

In addition to the learning setting, a multicultural approach in guidance and counseling is very important. Counselors who have multicultural competence are more effective in providing services to students from different cultural backgrounds (Sue et al., 2022). Unfortunately, research shows that many Guidance and Counseling teachers in Indonesia still have limited understanding of multicultural counseling (Mohammad et al., 2021). Therefore, improving multicultural competence through training and professional development is an urgent need.

Overall, strengthening multicultural competence for teachers should be a priority in the education system. By having a good understanding and skills in teaching students from various cultural backgrounds, teachers can create a more inclusive learning environment, support diversity, and encourage social harmony in schools and communities (Antón-Solanas et al., 2020). This will ultimately contribute to the development of a more tolerant and cohesive society.

#### 4. Conclusion

This research reveals that educators' multicultural competence has become a major focus in academia, especially in the last two decades. Bibliometric analysis of 288 articles showed a significant increase in related publications since 2020, with the United States as the country with the largest contribution, followed by Turkey, China, and Canada. The study also found that the main emerging themes in educator multicultural competence research include multicultural education implementation strategies, the effectiveness of teacher training, and the link between multicultural competence and teaching effectiveness.

The results of this study confirm the importance of multicultural competence in building an inclusive learning environment that supports cultural diversity in schools. Therefore, more systematic policies are needed in teacher training so that they have adequate skills to manage diversity in the classroom. In addition, academic collaboration and data-driven research need to be enhanced to better understand how multicultural competence can be effectively applied in various educational contexts. The findings provide insights for academics, education practitioners and policy makers in designing strategies to improve teacher competence. Future research could place more emphasis on evaluating the effectiveness of multicultural competence training programs as well as exploring innovative methods in implementing multicultural competence.

This study has several limitations. First, this study uses a search with specific keywords, namely "teacher multicultural", "teaching multicultural", "multicultural educator", "culturally competent teacher", "cross-cultural teacher", or "global-minded teacher". A number of articles were found that did not meet the terminology of educator multicultural competence in its entirety. Second, this study used the Scopus database. It is possible that in other search engines such as Google Scholar

and other search engines, other articles are found that are the results of research on educator multicultural competence, although they are categorized as articles published not in reputable international journals. Third, this study is limited to identifying research trends on educator multicultural competence, so the study does not carry out empirical measurements or structured behavioral manipulation.

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- Conflict of interest** : The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript.
- Additional information** : Understood, there is no additional information available for this paper.

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