



The Intellectual Landscape of Teacher Burnout Research: Evidence from Scopus Publications

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ABSTRACT

This study maps the intellectual landscape of burnout research indexed in Scopus, highlighting how the field has evolved, where it is published, what themes dominate, and which methodological and geographic patterns shape the literature. A bibliometric study was conducted using Scopus metadata covering 1,421 English journal articles from 2020–2025. The analysis integrates performance analysis, annual publication trends, source productivity, and local source impact using the H-index within the corpus, science mapping three-field plot and word-frequency mapping or word cloud, complemented by corresponding-author country distribution to describe geographic contribution and collaboration patterns. The literature shows steady growth with a marked acceleration after 2022, rising from 167 publications in 2020 to 340 in 2025. Output is distributed across multiple key outlets, with strong visibility in education, behavioral science, and health-related journals. Local source impact indicates a small set of journals function as central knowledge anchors in the corpus. Thematic mapping confirms burnout as the core topic, strongly connected to psychology, mental health, job satisfaction, and related occupational outcomes. Methodologically, the field is dominated by cross-sectional survey designs, while mediator or moderator testing is a growing analytical trend. The study provides a consolidated evidence map to clarify research directions, dominant themes, and underexplored opportunities for future studies and collaborations.

Keywords: Burnout, Teacher, Education, Mental health, Bibliometric analysis

INTRODUCTION

The teaching profession constitutes a central pillar of educational quality because teachers translate the curriculum into meaningful learning experiences, shape classroom climate, and build pedagogical relationships that support students' cognitive and social development (Bagazi, 2025; Benevides et al., 2025; Postigo-Zegarra et al., 2025). In practice, teachers' workloads have increasingly expanded beyond instructional delivery to include lesson planning, continuous assessment, managing student behavior and diverse learning needs, intensive communication with parents, as well as administrative demands and ongoing technological adaptation (Ferreira et al., 2025). This combination of cognitive and emotional responsibilities renders teachers' psychological well-being a prerequisite for instructional effectiveness and the organizational stability of schools (Brunsting et al., 2025; Chen et al., 2025; Daniilidou et al., 2025).

Burnout is commonly understood as a condition that arises when chronic work-related stress is not adequately managed (Biçen & Balo, 2025; Muehlbacher et al., 2025). The World Health

Organization characterizes burnout as an occupational phenomenon, marked by energy depletion or exhaustion, increased mental distance from one's job or feelings of negativism toward work, and reduced professional efficacy (Wu et al., 2025). Emphasizing the occupational context is particularly relevant for teaching, given that sources of pressure are often structural, including layered role expectations, limited institutional support, and classroom dynamics that require sustained emotional regulation (Bonea, 2025; Kumyoung & Kumyoung, 2025).

Teachers' vulnerability to burnout is also linked to the emotionally demanding nature of their work, where emotion management is integral to professional service (Almutlaq & Alsaleh, 2025; L. Wei et al., 2025). In school settings, teachers are expected to remain calm, empathetic, and fair under stressful conditions, making emotional labor a routine practice that may gradually accumulate into emotional exhaustion (Çetin et al., 2025; Rizzo et al., 2025). Syntheses of empirical evidence indicate a consistent association between emotional labor and teacher burnout across school contexts. Accordingly, teacher burnout should not be conceptualized merely as physical fatigue, but as psychological exhaustion rooted in relational and affective demands (Carrard et al., 2025; Powers et al., 2025).

The consequences of teacher burnout are multidimensional and directly implicate instructional quality. When teachers experience prolonged exhaustion, their capacity to design adaptive teaching strategies, foster student engagement, and sustain high-quality pedagogical interactions tends to decline (Burt-Miller et al., 2025; Ortiz-Paredes et al., 2025). Evidence from systematic reviews further suggests that teacher burnout is associated with lower student academic achievement and poorer student motivational quality (Cai & Liu, 2025). Thus, burnout is not solely an individual issue; it constitutes a risk factor that can undermine classroom performance and educational outcomes. From a school management perspective, burnout is also consequential because it affects workforce sustainability and organizational stability (Budnyk et al., 2025; Cha & Amrein-Beardsley, 2025; Oberg et al., 2025).

The Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) theory posits that high job demands primarily contribute to exhaustion, whereas insufficient job resources are more closely related to disengagement from work. In the teaching context, resources such as leadership support, professional autonomy, a collaborative climate, and role clarity may function as protective factors that mitigate burnout risk. Therefore, preventing teacher burnout requires a systemic approach that redesigns work conditions and strengthens organizational support, rather than relying exclusively on individual-level interventions (Anderson, 2025; Lee & Garwood, 2025; Ma et al., 2025; Rajak et al., 2025).

In light of the foregoing, teacher burnout represents a strategic educational issue with implications for instructional quality, occupational health, and schools' capacity to sustain educational service performance over time (Ling et al., 2025; Scarzello & Prino, 2025). Scientifically grounded understanding of burnout among teachers is essential for developing more humane, effective, and evidence-informed school policies and practices, enabling teachers to perform optimally without enduring chronic exhaustion that compromises educational quality (Cao et al., 2025; Dandan et al., 2025; Oberg, 2025).

Despite the expanding body of empirical work on teacher burnout, the research gap lies in the limited consolidation of how this topic is intellectually organized across recent Scopus-indexed literature. Previous discussions have generally emphasized isolated determinants, outcomes, or

intervention issues, whereas fewer studies systematically integrate publication trends, source productivity, local source impact, thematic linkages, and geographic collaboration patterns within a single bibliometric evidence map. This study therefore contributes novelty by clarifying the post-2020 structure of teacher burnout scholarship, identifying dominant and emerging themes, and revealing methodological tendencies that can guide more targeted future research.

Accordingly, this study aims to map the research landscape on teacher burnout within Scopus-indexed publications from 2020 to 2025, with a focus on: (1) publication trend dynamics and the consolidation of research agendas, (2) identification of key source journals and their impact within the corpus, and (3) exploration of dominant themes, population contexts, methodological tendencies, and collaboration patterns that shape the knowledge structure of burnout research. This mapping is expected to provide a systematic foundation to clarify the research roadmap on burnout, assist scholars in identifying meaningful research gaps, and offer practical reference points for stakeholders.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Materials

This study is a bibliometric investigation using secondary data in the form of scientific publication metadata retrieved from Scopus. The dataset comprised 1,421 English-language journal articles (document type: article) indexed in Scopus and published between 2020 and 2025. Records were identified through a structured search strategy applied to the title–abstract–keyword fields. The search query was formulated as follows: TITLE-ABS-KEY ((burnout OR "burnout syndrome" OR "occupational burnout" OR "work-related stress") AND (teacher OR teachers OR educator OR educators OR "teacher profession")) AND PUBYEAR > 2019 AND PUBYEAR < 2026 AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, "English")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE, "j")). To ensure corpus relevance, the search was restricted to journal sources and refined using indexed keywords related to burnout, mental health, teachers, and education.

Methods

First, data were collected from Scopus by applying all filters specified in the search string, including publication year, document type, language, source type, and indexed keywords. The records were exported with bibliographic information, abstracts, author keywords, source titles, citation counts, affiliations, countries, and references. The dataset was then screened to remove duplicate or incomplete records and to standardize source and keyword information before analysis. Bibliometric processing and visualization were conducted using Biblioshiny, the web interface of the bibliometrix package in R, while Microsoft Excel was used for tabulation and descriptive cross-checking.

Second, the analysis proceeded in two main streams. (1) Performance analysis was conducted to describe productivity and impact dynamics, including annual publication trends and citation patterns, the distribution of productivity across source journals, and the assessment of journals' local impact within the dataset using the H-index, namely a combined indicator of productivity and citation consistency within the corpus. (2) Science mapping was employed to examine thematic structures and knowledge networks. The three-field plot, sources' local impact, corresponding-author country distribution, and word-frequency visualization were generated in Biblioshiny to trace linkages among affiliations, countries, keywords/topics, and source outlets. The distribution of corresponding authors'

countries was also examined to identify geographic centers of contribution and patterns of cross-national collaboration within the corpus.

Because this study exclusively used bibliographic data from publications that are publicly available and/or accessible under license via Scopus, it did not involve direct human participants and therefore did not require human research ethics approval.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Publication trends

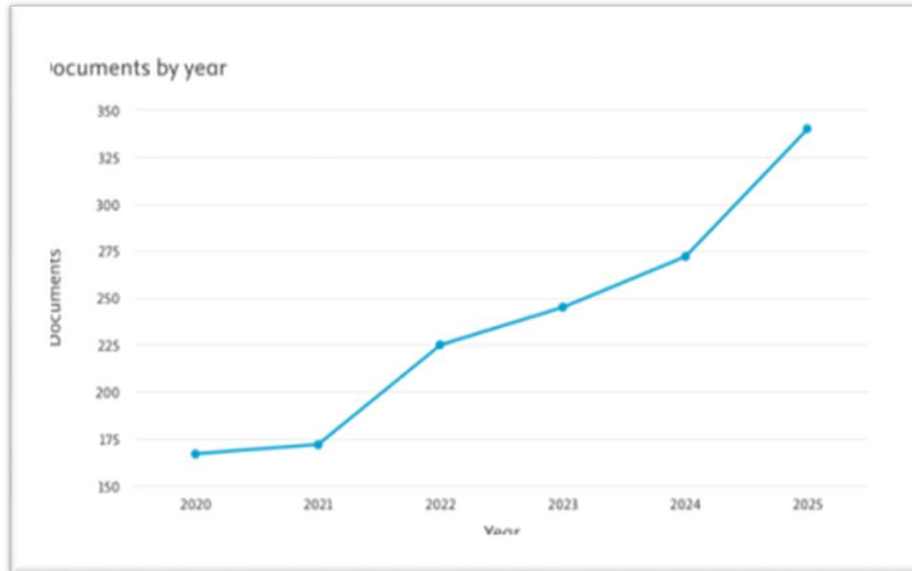


Figure 1. The number of published articles 2020-2025.
Source: Scopus Database, 2025.

Publication trends derived from the Scopus analysis indicate a steady increase across the 2020–2025 period, yielding a total of 1,421 documents. Output in 2020 began at a baseline of 167 documents and rose slightly in 2021 to 172. A more pronounced acceleration emerged in 2022, when the number of documents increased to 225. Growth continued in 2023 with 245 documents and climbed further in 2024 to 272. The publication peak occurred in 2025 with 340 documents, representing the most substantial surge at the end of the observation period.

This pattern underscores an intensification of scholarly attention to the investigated topic, particularly from 2022 onward. The sharper increases in the most recent years suggest that the field is in an expansionary phase, characterized by rising article productivity and the strengthening of an international research agenda. Overall, these findings confirm a progressive growth trajectory in the literature and point to the consolidation of the topic as an increasingly established research focus.

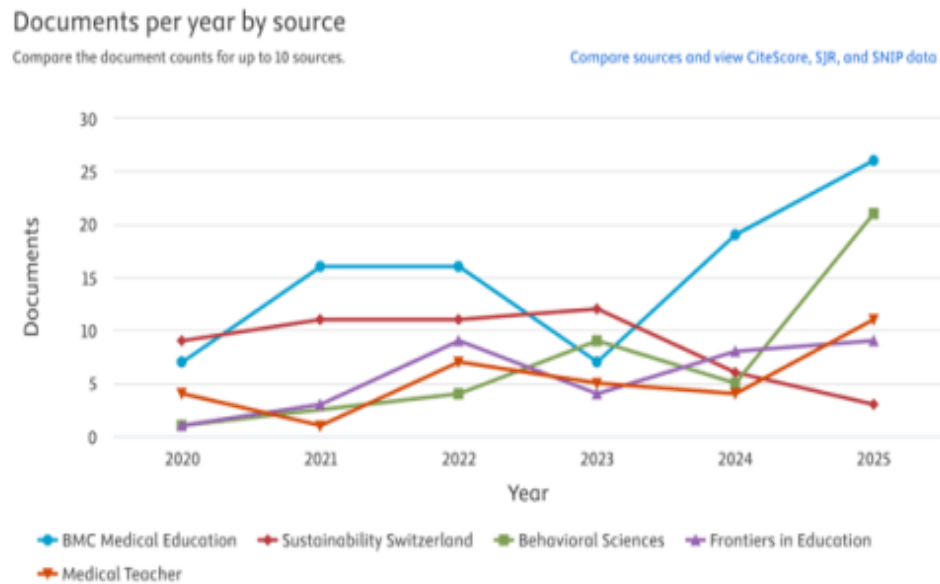


Figure 2 Documents per year by source journal, 2020–2025.
Source: Scopus Database, 2025.

The figure depicts the distribution of publications by source journals over the 2020–2025 period. Out of a total of 1,421 documents, several journals emerge as the primary outlets. BMC Medical Education is the most productive source with 91 documents, followed by Sustainability (Switzerland) with 52, Behavioral Sciences with 40, Frontiers in Education with 34, and Medical Teacher with 32. Other contributing sources include Psychology in the Schools (28 documents), Teaching and Teacher Education (24), Journal of Surgical Education (21), and Education Sciences (20). These results indicate that the literature is not concentrated in a single journal; rather, it is distributed across multiple relevant outlets, reflecting the field’s interdisciplinary character.

From an annual perspective, BMC Medical Education shows an upward trend toward the end of the period and reaches its highest value in 2025, suggesting a strengthening research emphasis within the health professions education domain. Behavioral Sciences exhibits the sharpest increase approaching 2025, highlighting the growing importance of behavioral science perspectives in explaining the topic under investigation. Frontiers in Education demonstrates a more stable and incremental rise across the years, whereas Medical Teacher appears more volatile but rebounds in 2025. In contrast, Sustainability (Switzerland) maintains relatively strong output in the early-to-middle years but shows a decline in its contribution in the final years.

Overall, the graph points to two key implications. First, publication productivity has increased and is driven by a set of core journals. Second, journal-level contributions shift over time, signaling an evolving research focus and the increasingly prominent role of education- and behavioral science-oriented outlets in the most recent years.

Source impact



Figure 3. H-index values of each journal.
Source: Scopus Database, 2025.

The figure presents Sources' Local Impact, namely a mapping of the influence of source journals within the analyzed article corpus, with impact operationalized using the H-index. In simple terms, the H-index reflects the combined weight of publication productivity and citation strength. A journal attains a given H value when it has at least H articles in the corpus, each receiving a minimum of H citations. Accordingly, higher H-index values indicate a stronger role of the journal as a key reference point for the research topic represented in this dataset.

The visualization shows that the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health occupies the top position with an H-index of 34. This finding indicates that the journal is the most dominant source, not only because it appears frequently among the corpus sources, but also because its articles achieve consistently high citation levels. At the next tier, Frontiers in Psychology and the Journal of Nursing Management both record an H-index of 26, suggesting that each functions as a central reference with substantial influence. The mid-impact group includes BMC Nursing (H = 23), the Journal of Advanced Nursing (H = 20), and PLOS ONE (H = 19), which can be interpreted as key supporting outlets due to their relatively strong productivity and consistent citation visibility.

Below this tier are Frontiers in Public Health (H = 18), Journal of Clinical Nursing (H = 16), Sustainability (H = 16), and BMC Health Services Research (H = 15). These journals remain relevant within the corpus, although their local impact is comparatively lower than that of the top-ranked sources. Overall, the pattern suggests that the intellectual base of the literature is anchored in public health, nursing, health services, and psychology, indicating an interdisciplinary field with a pronounced emphasis on health-related issues and the management of professional practice and service delivery.

participants, adult age groups, and sex, as well as terms indicating professional and disciplinary settings. The presence of keywords such as job satisfaction and psychology suggests that the literature extends beyond exhaustion itself to examine its relationship with job-related attitudes and broader psychological factors. Methodologically, keywords such as cross-sectional study and surveys and questionnaires indicate that survey-based, cross-sectional designs are the predominant approach. The occurrence of keywords such as nurse and COVID-19 further highlights that a substantial portion of the corpus is situated in healthcare contexts particularly nursing including research conducted during the pandemic period.

Overall, this visualization indicates that the literature in the dataset is centered on professional burnout, grounded in well-established occupational stress theory, and most commonly investigated through quantitative survey designs to examine correlates of burnout and its implications for work-related outcomes such as job satisfaction.

Corresponding author's countries

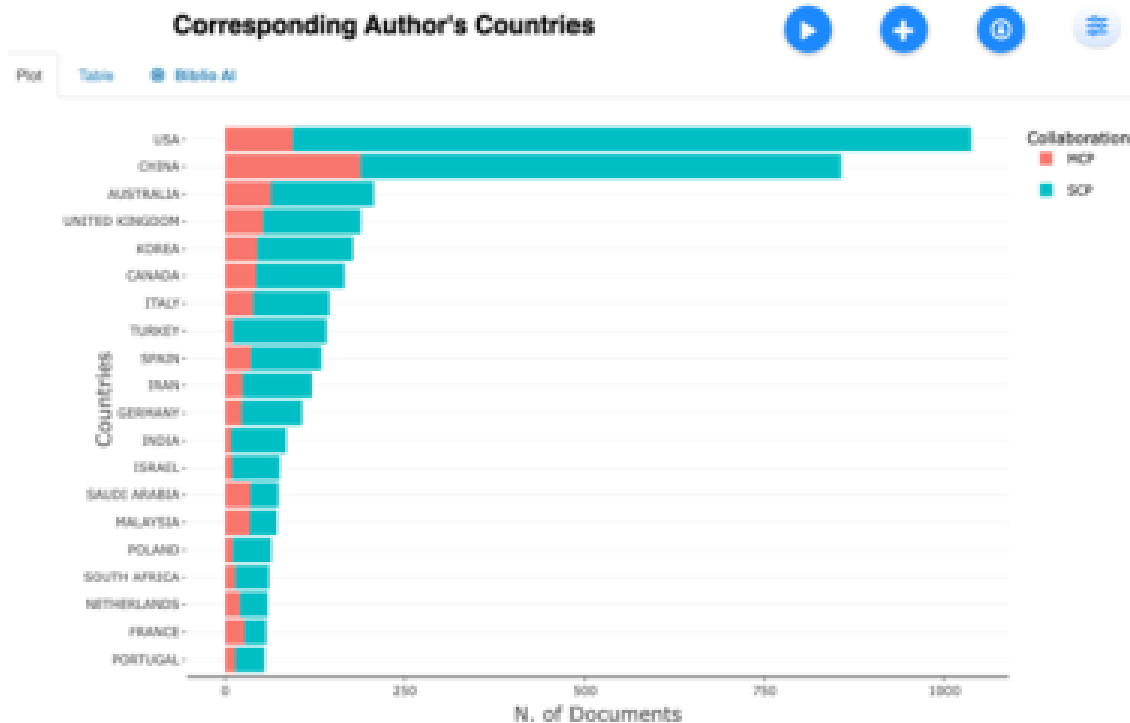


Figure 5 Corresponding authors' countries.
Source: Scopus Database, 2025.

The Corresponding Author's Countries figure depicts the distribution of corresponding authors' countries of origin across the analyzed publications. Each country is represented by a horizontal bar, with the x-axis indicating the number of documents. The bars are divided into two segments to capture collaboration patterns: SCP (Single Country Publications) refers to papers produced within a single country, whereas MCP (Multiple Country Publications) denotes papers developed through international collaboration. In this way, the chart not only identifies which

countries most frequently lead publications, but also illustrates how research collaboration is structured across the corpus. The results indicate that the United States contributes the largest number of documents, followed by China in second place. For both countries, the SCP segment is substantially larger than the MCP segment. This suggests that most articles with corresponding authors from the United States and China are produced primarily through domestic collaboration, while international co-authorship exists but represents a smaller share of their output. Beyond the two leading countries, the next major contributions come from Australia and the United Kingdom, followed by a set of countries with moderate to smaller publication counts, including South Korea, Canada, Italy, Turkey, Spain, Iran, Germany, India, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Poland, South Africa, the Netherlands, France, and Portugal. Across many of these countries, a similar pattern is observed in which single-country outputs exceed internationally co-authored publications. However, the presence of an MCP segment for nearly all countries indicates that international research networks are active, albeit with varying intensity. Overall, the figure suggests that publication leadership within the corpus remains concentrated in major research-producing countries, especially the United States and China. At the same time, collaboration structures appear more robust at the domestic level, with international collaboration functioning as a secondary but present reinforcing mechanism rather than the dominant mode. This finding is important for interpreting the position and direction of the research network, as it highlights continued opportunities to strengthen cross-national collaboration to support more even knowledge exchange and enhance research quality across contexts.

Word cloud

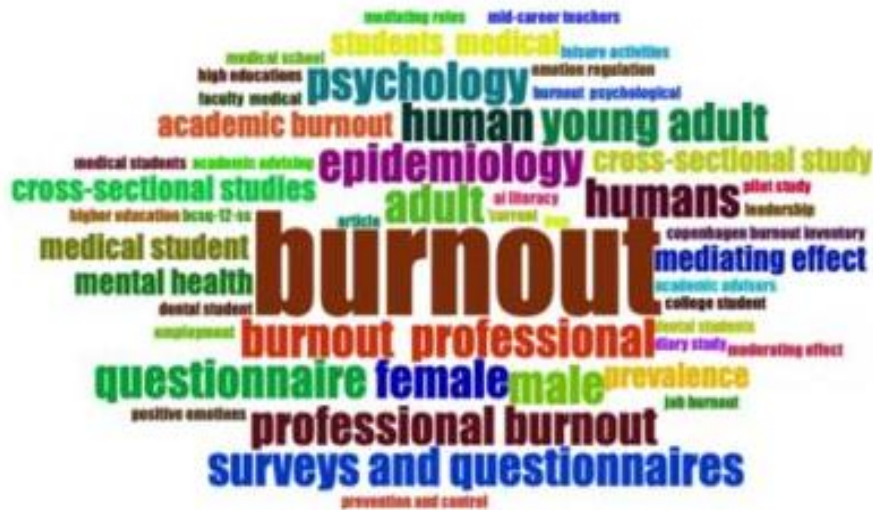


Figure 6 shows a visualization of the most frequently occurring words in the papers.

Source: Scopus Database, 2025

The word cloud summarizes the most frequently occurring terms across the article corpus. Word size reflects frequency, such that larger terms represent more dominant themes. The most prominent theme is burnout, confirming that the literature primarily focuses on work-related and academic exhaustion, including professional burnout. The appearance of psychology and mental health

suggests that burnout is commonly framed as a psychological and mental health concern, while terms such as epidemiology and prevalence indicate sustained efforts to quantify the magnitude of the problem within specific populations.

In terms of study subjects, keywords such as humans, adult, young adult, as well as female and male, point to a predominance of adult and young adult samples and a recurring attention to sex-based differences. The presence of students, medical, and medical student further highlights educational settings particularly medical education as a salient research context. Methodologically, cross-sectional study and surveys and questionnaires underscore the dominance of questionnaire-based cross-sectional survey designs. Finally, terms such as mediating effect and moderating effect suggest that a portion of the literature has begun to test explanatory mechanisms among variables, moving beyond descriptive accounts of burnout.

Discussion

This study maps the research landscape on burnout using a bibliometric approach based on Scopus-indexed publication metadata, drawing on a corpus of 1,421 English-language journal articles published between 2020 and 2025. Analytically, the study integrates performance analysis to examine productivity and impact trends and science mapping through a three-field plot and a word cloud to identify thematic structures and relationships among key knowledge elements.

First, in terms of publication dynamics, the literature demonstrates sustained growth, with a particularly marked strengthening from 2022 onward. The number of documents increased from 167 in 2020 to 340 in 2025, with clear acceleration during 2022–2025. This pattern indicates that burnout research is in an expansionary stage while simultaneously consolidating as an increasingly established research agenda.

Second, with respect to source journals, publications are distributed across several key outlets, underscoring the interdisciplinary nature of the field. The most productive journals in the corpus include BMC Medical Education (91 documents), Sustainability (Switzerland) (52), Behavioral Sciences (40), Frontiers in Education (34), and Medical Teacher (32). Importantly, journal contributions shift over time (e.g., certain outlets strengthen toward the end of the period), which may be interpreted as evidence of evolving emphases and changing “publication homes” for burnout scholarship.

Third, journal local impact measured via the H-index within the dataset places the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health at the top ($H = 34$), followed by Frontiers in Psychology and the Journal of Nursing Management ($H = 26$). This H-index pattern suggests that the corpus draws its most influential foundations from domains spanning public health, psychology, and health management/health services, positioning burnout as a cross-disciplinary theme with a strong orientation toward occupational health and psychological dimensions of work.

Fourth, science mapping results confirm burnout as the central theme, closely connected to terminology related to psychology, mental health, and job satisfaction. From a methodological standpoint, keywords such as cross-sectional study and surveys and questionnaires indicate the predominance of questionnaire-based cross-sectional survey designs in the analyzed literature. Notably, the presence of mediating effects and moderating effects implies that a segment of the field is moving beyond descriptive accounts toward testing explanatory mechanisms among variables.

Fifth, in terms of geographic contribution, publication leadership by corresponding authors' countries remains concentrated in the United States and China, with collaboration patterns that are more domestically oriented than internationally co-authored. Nevertheless, participation from many other countries indicates that a global research network is already in place, while substantial opportunities remain to strengthen international collaboration to broaden knowledge exchange and enhance research quality.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that burnout research in the analyzed Scopus corpus experienced consistent growth during 2020–2025, with the strongest acceleration after 2022. The field is supported by interdisciplinary publication outlets spanning education, public health, psychology, and health-service management. The most productive journals indicate broad publication dispersion, while local H-index patterns show that several outlets function as central knowledge anchors within the corpus.

The science mapping results demonstrate that burnout remains the core theme and is closely connected to psychology, mental health, job satisfaction, and occupational outcomes. Methodologically, the literature is still dominated by questionnaire-based cross-sectional survey designs, although the appearance of mediating and moderating effects indicates a growing interest in explanatory mechanisms. Geographically, publication leadership remains concentrated in major research-producing countries, particularly the United States and China, with domestic collaboration still more dominant than international co-authorship.

Future research should therefore move beyond descriptive mapping by developing deeper co-word or co-citation cluster analyses, constructing sector-specific sub-corpora such as school teachers and health-professions education, and strengthening longitudinal, mixed-method, and cross-national designs. These directions can improve theoretical precision, reduce methodological limitations associated with cross-sectional evidence, and support more context-sensitive strategies for preventing and mitigating teacher burnout.

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