

The Relationship between Spiritual Intervention and Physical Exercise on Quality of Life of Cancer Survivors: A Bibliometric Analysis

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Abstract. Quality of life in cancer survivors is a primary concern in holistic health interventions. Recent research suggests that an integrative approach—combining spiritual interventions and physical activity—has the potential to significantly impact the physical, psychological, and spiritual well-being of cancer survivors. However, there is still a gap in the exploration of local culture-based interventions, such as *qosidah* therapy and *dhikr*, in the global scientific literature. This study aims to map global trends, key themes, and research gaps in the field of spiritual and physical interventions on the quality of life of cancer survivors using a bibliometric approach, to support the development of more contextual and integrative therapy models. This study uses a quantitative descriptive design with a bibliometric approach. Data were obtained from 650 scientific publications indexed in the Scopus database during the period 2015–2024, using a combination of keywords such as spiritual intervention, mind-body therapy, physical activity, cancer survivors, and quality of life. Data analysis was performed using VOSviewer v1.6.20 software, to visualize the collaboration network of authors, institutions, countries, and keyword co-occurrence maps. The results show a sharply increasing publication trend, peaking in 2024. Research is dominated by institutions from the United States such as Harvard Medical School and the NIH. The main themes that emerged included controlled trials, mind-body therapy, complementary medicine, and psychology. Popular interventions studied include yoga, tai chi, and mindfulness. However, local culture-based approaches such as *qosidah*, *dhikr*, or religious music have not received much attention in international literature. This analysis reveals that spiritual and physical activity interventions for cancer survivors tend to emphasize Western-based medical and psychological approaches. There is a need to develop more contextual and culturally based integrative research, especially in developing countries. The results of this study provide an important basis for the development of an Integrative Model of Qosidah Therapy and Physical Activity that is spiritually, psychosocially, and culturally relevant to improve the quality of life of cancer survivors in Indonesia and regions with similar characteristics.

Keywords: breast cancer survivors, physical activity, spiritual intervention, well-being

1 Introduction

Cancer is one of the leading causes of death worldwide and continues to be a global health challenge. Data from the Global Cancer Observatory [1] reported that there were more than 19.3 million new cases of cancer and nearly 10 million cancer deaths globally. In Indonesia, cancer is among the top five causes of death, with breast cancer topping the list in women. Advances in early detection and oncology therapy have improved survival rates, but this has created new challenges in the form of an increasing number of cancer survivors. In this group, attention is not only focused on survival rates, but also on post-treatment quality of life (QoL).

Cancer survivors often face various long-term problems, such as chronic fatigue, sleep disorders, pain, depression, anxiety, and decreased physical and social functioning [2]. This condition shows the need for a holistic approach that not only focuses on biomedical aspects, but also touches on psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions. Two non-pharmacological interventions that have

received widespread attention are physical interventions (e.g., structured exercise, yoga, tai chi, breathing exercises) and spiritual interventions (e.g., prayer, religious meditation, spiritual counseling, or religious music) [3].

Various studies have supported the benefits of both. A 2024 systematic review of 53 articles with over 13,590 cancer patients showed that spirituality and religious coping were positively associated with quality of life, reduced distress, and improved emotional well-being [4]. A recent meta-analysis also confirmed that higher levels of spirituality are consistently associated with better quality of life in cancer survivors. On the other hand, physical intervention studies show that activities such as yoga and light exercise can increase fitness, reduce fatigue, and improve patients' psychological conditions [5].

However, the available literature tends to discuss the two approaches separately. Integrative studies that explicitly link physical and spiritual interventions simultaneously are still very limited. In fact, both have the potential to have a synergistic effect—physical exercise can improve physiological and psychological conditions, while spiritual interventions provide inner peace, meaning in life, and resilience. This condition indicates the existence of a research gap that is important to explore [6].

Global publication trends also show an increasing trend in the field of mind-body therapies such as yoga, meditation, and tai chi, with the majority of research coming from developed countries (United States, Canada, Germany) [7]. In contrast, local culture-based spiritual interventions—such as prayer, dhikr, or religious music—are still rare in international literature. This indicates the limited representation of cultural context in global research, including the large potential contribution from developing countries such as Indonesia.

Based on this phenomenon, this study is important to conduct to bibliometrically map the relationship between spiritual interventions and physical exercise in improving the quality of life of cancer survivors. Bibliometric analysis allows researchers to identify: (1) trends and developments in scientific publications, (2) dominant keywords and thematic connections, (3) the institutions and countries that contribute the most, and (4) research gaps that can become opportunities for further exploration.

Thus, this research not only maps the global knowledge landscape, but also provides a strong argument regarding the urgency of developing an integrative model based on local culture. It is hoped that this will enrich the international scientific literature and provide practical benefits for improving the quality of life of cancer survivors in Indonesia.

2 Methods

The research conducted by the researcher used quantitative descriptive and bibliometric approaches [8]. The unit of analysis used in this study is scientific articles. The research data source is a scientific publication regarding the Development of an Integrative Model of Qosidah Therapy and Physical Activity in Improving the Quality of Life of Cancer Survivors. Searching for scientific articles via the website www.scopus.com. The reason for selecting the Scopus database was determined purposively, taking into account its quality and reputation, which have been recognized internationally, both by universities and research institutions. The analysis process in this study was continued using VOSviewer software version 1.6.20, a bibliometric software developed specifically to compile and depict scientific network maps based on co-occurrence data.

In describing the network results from VOSviewer, Each node will represent an entity from the research, such as country, institution and author. The size of a node describes the level of significance of its entity, such as the number of citations or publications. Then the color of the node indicates the group of associations that are formed automatically using the clustering method. The relationship between entities is visualized with connecting lines, and the thickness of the lines indicates the intensity of the frequency or collaborative relationship [9].

In this study, we used VOSviewer to analyze various types of bibliometrics, such as inter-country collaboration networks, inter-institutional collaboration networks, co-authorship collaboration networks and co-citation networks. Then, keyword analysis was also carried out to identify various main themes and trends from the research.

Data collected from several scientific articles in English available online. This literature search was carried out by combining keywords such as ALL (((("Spiritual intervention" OR "Mind-Body Therapy") AND ("Physical Activity" OR "Exercise") AND ("Breast Cancer Survivors" OR "Oncology") AND ("Quality of Life" OR "Well-being")))) AND PUBYEAR > 2014 AND PUBYEAR < 2025 AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar") OR LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "re")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English"))

The search focused on the title, abstract, and keywords of the article. The data obtained were in the form of publications for spiritual interventions and physical interventions to improve the quality of life in cancer survivors during the period 2015-2024. Based on the search results, 650 documents were obtained. After obtaining the search results, the researcher conducted data exploration on the Scopus database to see the growth of scientific publications, core journals, author productivity, author collaboration, growth of publications by institution or affiliation, as well as distribution of publications by country.

Next, the researcher visualized the research development using VOSviewer software by exporting the search results from Scopus into CSV format, then the CSV data is input into VOSviewer to create a keyword map (keyword co-occurrence), co-authorship network, and citation network.

The data analysis techniques in this study are quantitative descriptive and qualitative descriptive. Quantitative analysis is carried out by processing data using the analyze search results feature in Scopus so that the output is in the form of statistics in graphical form (JPEG). Meanwhile, qualitative analysis was conducted to interpret the visualization results from Scopus and VOSviewer, including mapping research trends, main themes, and collaboration networks.

3 Results And Discussion

Trends in Scientific Publications on the Development of an Integrative Model of Qasidah Therapy and Physical Activity to Improve the Quality of Life of Cancer Survivors: Quantitative Studies are Increasing.

The number of publications from research results obtained by researchers regarding spiritual interventions and physical interventions to improve the quality of life in cancer survivors indexed in the Scopus database from 2015-2025 was 650 documents (last retrieved September 5, 2025) Table I presents the distribution pattern of research results on this topic. The growth of publications indexed by Scopus shows a significant increase in the last nine years with a peak of 94 publications (14.46%) in 2024. The second highest number in 2022 was 89 publications (13.69%) in sequence, seen from the next highest number in 2021, as many as 88 publications (13.53%), In 2023, there were 77 publications (11.84%), in 2019 there were 65 publications (10%), in 2020 there were 58 publications (8.92%), in 2018 there were 56 publications (8.61%), in 2017 there were 52 publications (8%), and the last two were in 2015 and 2016 with 36 (5.53%) publications and 35 (5.38%) publications respectively.

Tabel 1. Trends in Scientific Publications on Spiritual and Physical Interventions to Improve Quality of Life in Cancer Survivors

Publication Year	Number of Publications	Percentage (%)
2024	94	14,46
2023	77	11,84
2022	89	13,69
2021	88	13,53
2020	58	8,92
2019	65	10
2018	56	8,61
2017	52	8

Publication Year	Number of Publications	Percentage (%)
2016	35	5,38
2015	36	5,53
Total	650	100,00%

Source: Personal Data Processing Results (2025)

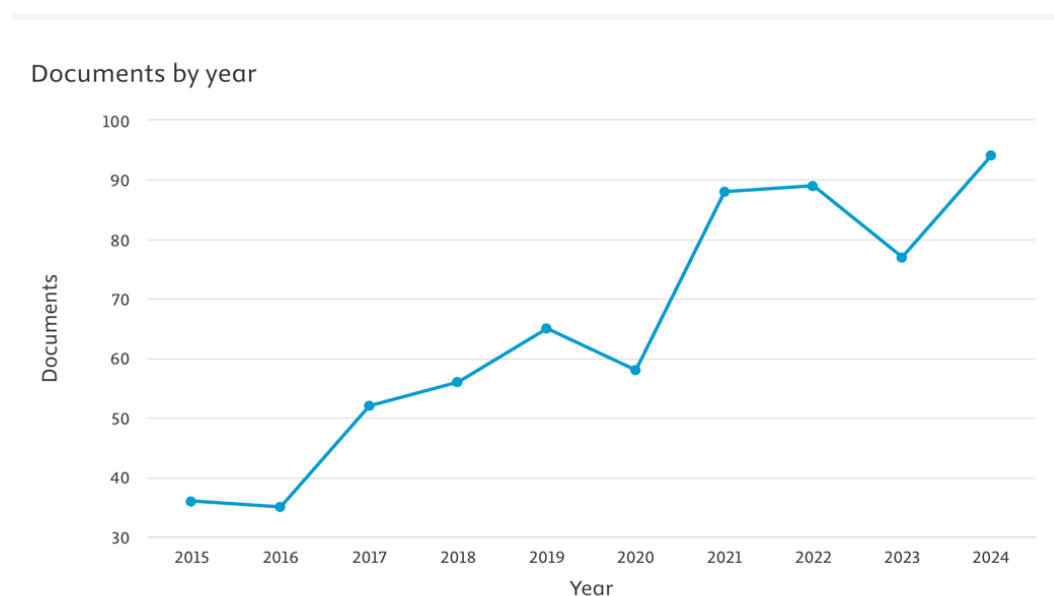


Fig 1. Trends in Scientific Publications on Spiritual and Physical Interventions to Improve Quality of Life in Cancer Survivors (Source: Scopus.com (2025)).

Core Journal of Scientific Publication on spiritual interventions and physical interventions to improve the quality of life in cancer survivors

The search results show that based on 650 publications on spiritual interventions and physical interventions to improve the quality of life in cancer survivors indexed in the Scopus database, The publication was published in a number of international journals. Of these journals, there are five main journals that publish the most research on this topic as shown in Table 2.

Tabel 2. Distribution of Publications Based on Journal Source

Journal Name	Number of Publications	Percentage (%)
Supportive Care in Cancer	23	28,4
Complementary Therapies in Medicine	20	24,7
Integrative Cancer Therapies	14	17,3
Evidence Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine	12	14,8
Internasional Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health	12	14,8
Total	81	100

Documents per year by source

Compare the document counts for up to 10 sources.

[Compare sources and view CiteScore, SJR, and SNIP data](#)

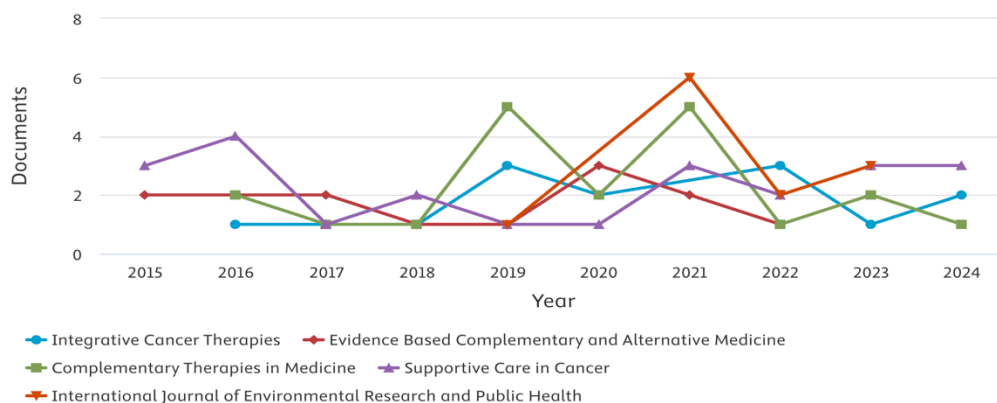


Fig 2. Core Journal of Scientific Publications (Source: Scopus.com (2025)).

Of the top five journals, Supportive Care in Cancer is ranked first as the journal that published the most research on this topic, with 23 (28.4%) publications. The peak occurred in 2016 with 4 documents. Second place by Complementary Therapies in Medicine with 20 (24.7%) publications, the highest peak in 2019 and 2021 with a total of 5 documents. Furthermore, Integrative Cancer Therapies had 14 (17.3%) of the highest peak publications in 2019 and 3 documents in 2022. The fourth most journals are Evidence Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine and the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health with 12 (14.8%) each. The highest peak was Evidence Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine in 2020 with 3 documents and the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health in 2021 with 6 documents. These data show that research related to spiritual interventions and physical interventions to improve the quality of life in cancer survivors tends to be published in highly reputable journals in the fields of Medicine-Rehabilitation, Nursing-Advanced and Specialized Nursing, Health Professions-Complementary and Manual Therapy.

The number of productive researchers who publish scientific publications on spiritual interventions and physical interventions to improve the quality of life in cancer survivors

Analysis of author productivity shows that there are ten authors who are the most productive in publishing research results related to this topic, Cramer, H is the author with the most publications, namely 14 articles (16.1%), Carlson, L.E. is in the next position with 12 articles (13.7%). 3rd place Vrancea, A.M and Wayne, M each with 10 articles (11.5%). Next, in fourth place are Bowe, J.E and Irwin, M.R, each with 8 articles (9.2%), in fifth place with the most articles is Dobos, G with 7 articles (8%), in sixth place with the most articles is Innes, K.E, Lauche, R and Lucchetti, G, each with 6 articles published (6.9%). This can be seen in Table 3 regarding the number of productive researchers who publish scientific papers.

These results indicate that research on spiritual interventions and physical interventions to improve the quality of life in cancer survivors is often carried out collaboratively by researchers across countries, with relatively even contributions among productive authors.

Table 3. Number of Productive Researchers Who Publish Scientific Papers

Researchers	Number of Publications	Percentage (%)
Cramer, H	14	16,1
Carlson, LE	12	13,7
Vranceanu, A.M	10	11,5

Researchers	Number of Publications	Percentage (%)
Wayne, P.M	10	11,5
Bower, J.E	8	9,2
Irwin, M.R	8	9,2
Dobos, G	7	8,0
Innes, K.E	6	6,9
Lauche, R	6	6,9
Lucchetti, G	6	6,9
Total	87	100

Source: Personal Data Processing Results (2025)

Documents by author

Compare the document counts for up to 15 authors.

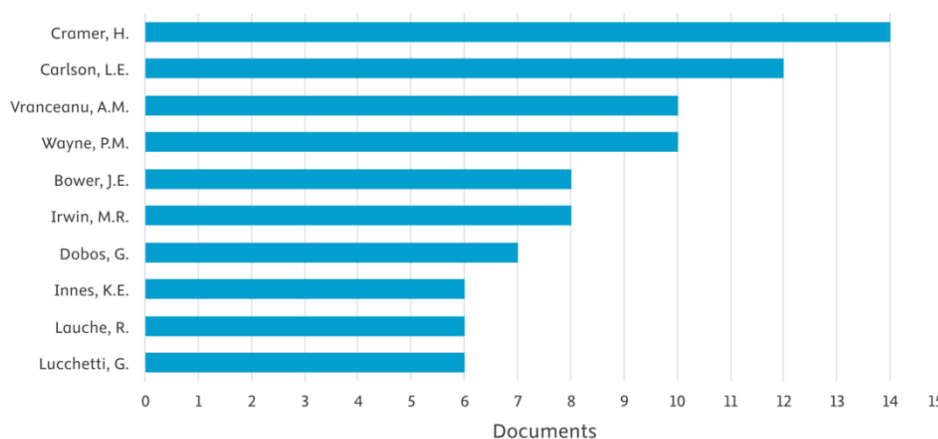


Fig 3. Number of Productive Researchers Who Publish Scientific Papers (Source: Scopus.com (2025)).

Number of Scientific Publications on spiritual interventions and physical interventions to improve the quality of life in cancer survivors

Bibliometric analysis based on 650 publications indexed in Scopus in the period 2015–2024 shows that research on spiritual and physical interventions to improve the quality of life of cancer survivors is dominated by academic institutions and leading research hospitals in the world.

Harvard Medical School was recorded as the institution with the highest number of publications (44 documents (19.2%)), followed by the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) with 31 documents (13.5%) and Massachusetts General Hospital with 28 documents (12.2%).

Other academic health institutions such as Brigham and Women’s Hospital (24 documents (10.4%)), University of Calgary (21 documents (9.1%)), Jane & Terry Semel Institute for Neuroscience & Human Behavior (20 documents (8.7%)), Cumming School of Medicine and David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA with 17 documents (7.4%) and MD Anderson Cancer Center with 14 documents (6.1%) followed by Universitat Duisburg-Essen with 13 documents (5.7%). Table 4 shows the number of affiliated institutions with the highest productivity.

These findings show that the United States dominates the global research landscape in the field of spiritual and physical interventions, both through educational institutions and world-class cancer centers.

Our findings support the notion that technology alone is insufficient to achieve health equity. As Badr et al. (2024) and others have cautioned, DHTs can inadvertently reinforce or even create new forms of inequality if they are not designed with equity as a foundational principle [25, 26]. The most promising path forward lies in the convergence of all three clusters: developing technologies that are not only accessible and usable by all (addressing the digital divide) but are also explicitly

designed to identify, mitigate, and ultimately dismantle the social and structural drivers of health disparities.

This requires a shift from a purely biomedical or technological model to a socio-technical one. This model acknowledges that health technologies are embedded within complex social systems and must be co-designed with the communities they aim to serve. The work of Menon et al. (2019) on the CONNECT framework provides a valuable model for this, emphasizing community engagement and a multi-level approach to health equity [27].

Table 4. Number of Institutional Affiliations with the Highest Productivity

No	Affiliate Name	Number of Documents	Percentage (%)
1.	Harvard Medical School	44	19,2
2.	University of California, Los Angeles	31	13,5
3.	Massachusetts General Hospital	28	12,2
4.	Brigham and Women's Hospital	24	10,4
5.	University of Calgary	21	9,1
6.	Jane & Terry Semel Institute for Neuroscience & Human Behavior	20	8,7
7.	Cumming School of Medicine	17	7,4
8.	David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA	17	7,4
9.	The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center	14	6,1
10.	Universitat Duisburg-Essen	13	5,7
Total		229	100,00

Source: Personal Data Processing Results (2025)

Documents by affiliation

Compare the document counts for up to 15 affiliations.

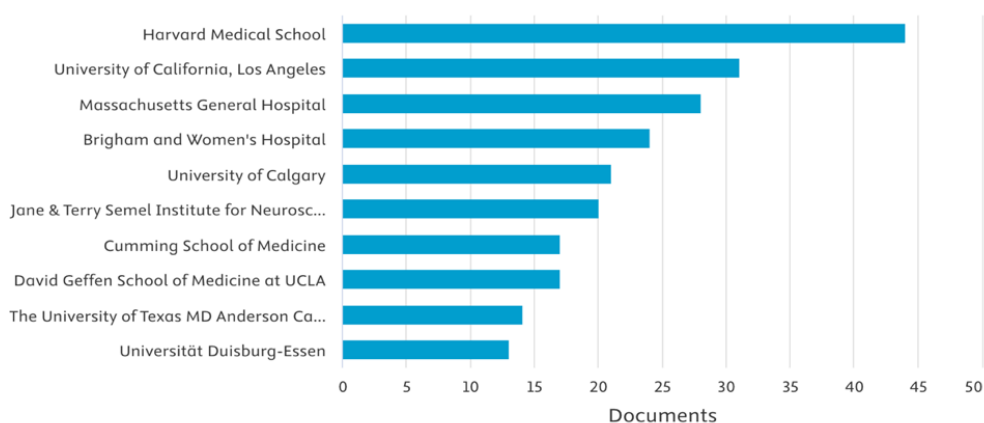


Fig. 4. Scientific Publications on Spiritual Interventions and Physical Interventions to Improve Quality of Life in Cancer Survivors (Source: Scopus.com, (2025)).

The number of scientific publications on spiritual interventions and physical interventions to improve the quality of life in cancer survivors by country or region is shown in Table 5 with the United States being the most productive country in this study with a total of 282 publications (45.7%). Second place is occupied by China with 76 (12.3%) publications, followed by Australia with 47 (7.6%) publications. The next contributions in succession came from Canada with 45 (7.2%) publications, Germany with 45 (7.2%) publications, the United Kingdom with 30 (4.8%)

publications, and Italy with 27 (4.3%) publications. The three countries with the fewest contributions on this list came from Brazil, with 23 (3.7%) publications, followed by Iran and Spain, each with 21 (3.4%) publications. Table 5 shows the countries with the highest contributions.

Table 5. Countries with the Highest Contributions

No	Country or Territory	Number of Documents	Percentage (%)
1.	United States	282	45,7
2.	China	76	12,3
3.	Australia	47	7,6
4.	Canada	45	7,2
5.	Germany	45	7,2
6.	United Kingdom	30	4,8
7.	Italy	27	4,3
8.	Brazil	23	3,7
9.	Iran	21	3,4
10.	Spain	21	3,4
Total		617	100,00

Source: Personal Data Processing Results (2025)

Documents by country or territory

Compare the document counts for up to 15 countries/territories.

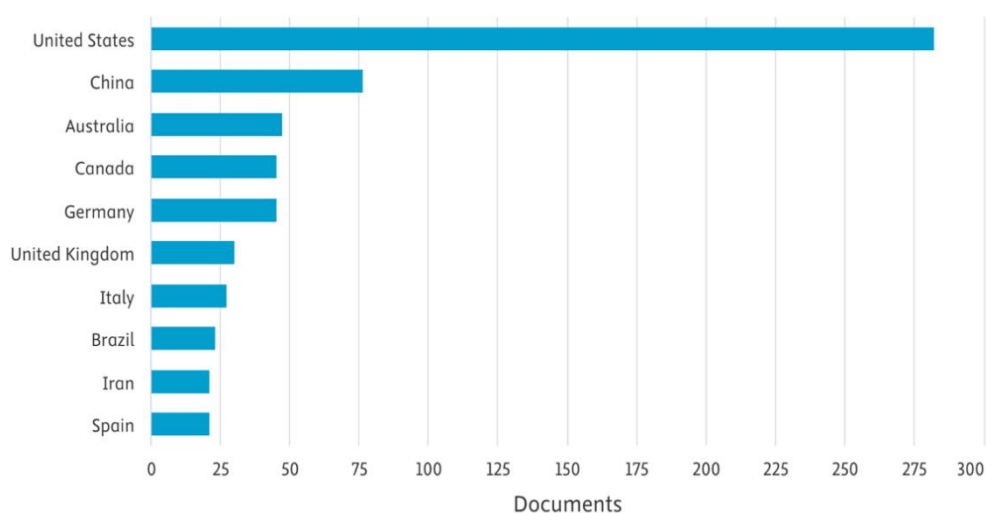


Fig. 5. Scientific publications on spiritual interventions and physical interventions to improve the quality of life in cancer survivors (Source: Scopus.com, (2025)).

Number of Scientific Publications on spiritual interventions and physical interventions to improve quality of life in cancer survivors. Based on the Professional Subject, presented in table 6, Medicine is the most dominant field in this publication, amounting to 501 (53.3%). Second place is occupied by Nursing with 111 (11.8%) followed by the Psychology category with 95 (10.1%). The next contributions in succession came from Biochemistry, Genetics and Molecular Biology as many as 66 (7.0%), Health Professions (49) (5.2%), Neuroscience (45) (4.8%), Social Sciences (21) (2.2%), Arts and Humanities (15) (1.6%), and Pharmacology, Toxicology, and Pharmaceutics (14)

(1.4%). The two fields with the fewest contributions to this list came from Environmental Science (12) (1.2%) and Multidisciplinary/Other (10) (1.0%).

Table 6. Countries with the Highest Contributions

No	Subject Area	Number of Documents	Presentase (%)
1.	Medicine	501	53,3
2.	Nursing	111	11,8
3.	Psychology	95	10,1
4.	Biochemistry, Genetics and Molecular Biology	66	7,0
5.	Health Professions	49	5,2
6.	Neuroscience	45	4,8
7.	Social Sciences	21	2,2
8.	Art and Humanities	15	1,6
9.	Pharmacology, Toxicology and Pharmaceutics	14	1,4
10.	Environmental Science	12	1,2
11.	Other	10	1,0
	Total	939	100%

Source: Personal Data Processing Results (2025)

Documents by subject area

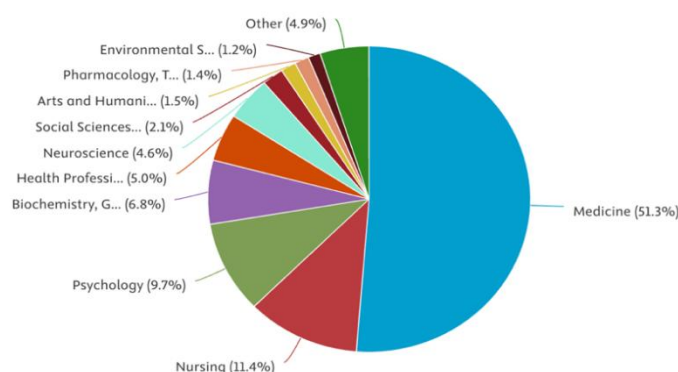


Fig. 6. Scientific Publications on Spiritual Interventions and Physical Interventions to Improve The Quality of Life in Cancer Survivors (Source: Scopus.com (2025)).

Number of Scientific Publications on spiritual interventions and physical interventions to improve quality of life in cancer survivors, Based on funding sponsors, it can be seen in Table 7 that the National Institutes of Health is the institution that funds the most publications with a total of 64 documents. Second place is occupied by the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health with funding contributions for 35 documents. Furthermore, the National Cancer Institute has 33 documents and the National Natural Science Foundation of China has 15 documents, the National Institute on Aging has 13 documents, the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences has 11 documents, and the National Institute of Mental Health has 10 documents. The last three are the Breast Cancer Research Foundation and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research with 9 documents each, and the American Cancer Society with 8 documents.

Table 7. Scientific publications on spiritual interventions and physical interventions to improve the quality of life in cancer survivors

No	Funding Sponsor	Number of Documents	Percentage %
1.	National Institutes of Health	64	30,9
2.	National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health	35	16,9
3.	National Cancer Institute	33	15,9
4.	National Natural Science Foundation of China	15	7,2
5.	National Institute on Aging	13	6,2
6.	National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences	11	5,3
7.	National Institute of Mental Health	10	4,8
8.	Breast Cancer Research Foundation	9	4,3
9.	Canadian Institutes of Health Research	9	4,3
10.	American cancer Society	8	3,8
Total		207	100

Source: Personal Data Processing Results (2025)

Documents by funding sponsor

Compare the document counts for up to 15 funding sponsors.

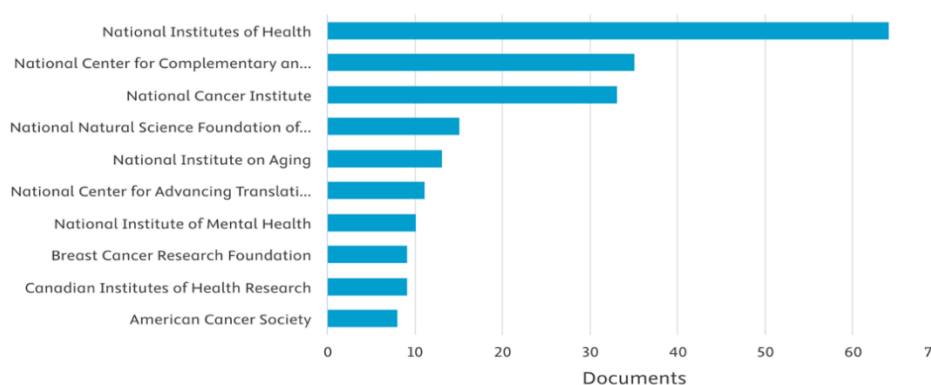


Fig. 7. Scientific publications on spiritual interventions and physical interventions to improve the quality of life in cancer survivors (Source: Scopus.com, (2025))

The highest frequency of keyword occurrences in Scientific Publications on spiritual interventions and physical interventions to improve the quality of life in cancer survivors is found in the visualization map from VOSviewer. According to Figure 9 below, it shows the relationship between the keywords that appear most frequently in the research, which are grouped into several thematic clusters based on color. The most prominent keywords, marked with the largest circle size, are “human”, “depression”, “mental stress”, “inflammation”, and “pathophysiology”, “immune system”.

The red cluster in the middle appears to be the center of research focused on general psychological and physiological aspects. The green cluster on the bottom left focuses on the theme of cancer and nursing which includes terms such as “neoplasms”, “cancer patient”, “nursing”, “cancer survivorship”, “supportive care”, “self-care”. Connected to the top blue cluster is the focus of alternative and spiritual interventions related to “alternative medicine”, “yoga”, “mind-body

therapies”, “complementary therapies”, “relaxation training”, “spiritual care” focusing on non-conventional therapies that are spiritual and complementary in nature to improve well-being.

On the top right side, the yellow cluster specifically addresses physiological & biological stress topics such as “metabolism”, “aging”, “gene expression”, “telomere length”, “physiology”, “c-reactive protein”. Meanwhile, the purple cluster focused on the discussion on the left highlights research on research design and clinical studies with the keywords “randomized controlled trial,” “major clinical study,” “controlled study,” “qualitative research,” and “pilot project.” Overall, this map depicts the research landscape focusing on clinical studies of breast cancer survivors, especially in adult women, elderly with the main themes of physical activity therapy and spiritual therapy for improving quality of life.

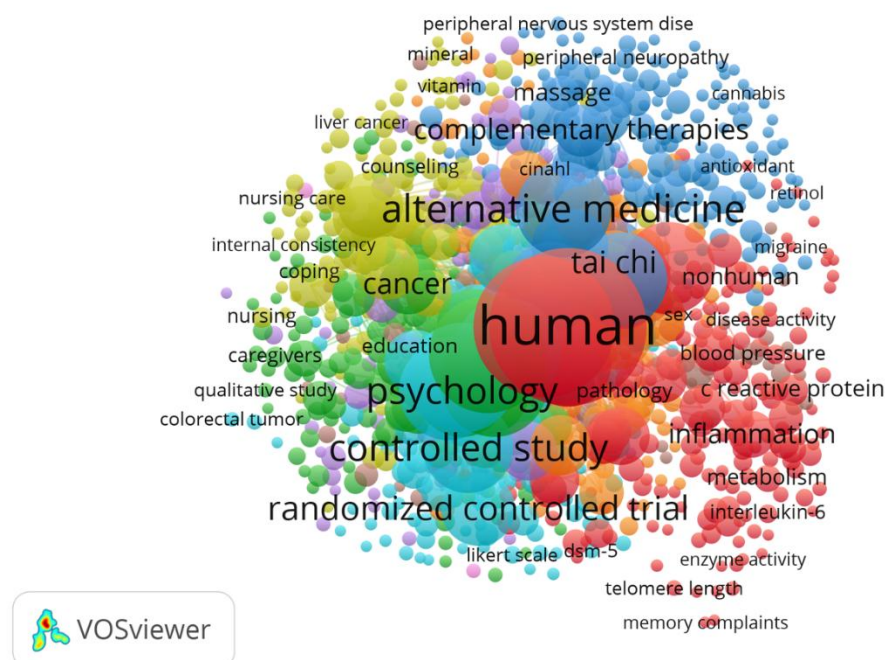


Fig. 8. Research Trends (Source: Personal Data Processing Results, (2025)).

4 Conclusion

The results of the bibliometric analysis show that research on spiritual and physical interventions in cancer survivors in the context of quality of life is dominated by big keywords such as human, alternative medicine, psychology, controlled study, and randomized controlled trial. This confirms that the majority of publications focus on adult-based research with complementary therapy approaches, both physical and psychological, and use rigorous clinical methodology to test the effectiveness of interventions.

The most widely studied types of interventions are movement-based and mind-body therapies, such as tai chi, massage, and various forms of complementary therapies. On the other hand, the psychosocial dimension also receives great attention, as indicated by the emergence of keywords such as psychology, coping, caregivers, and nursing care. Interestingly, this study also shows a correlation between spiritual/physical interventions and biological indicators, such as inflammation, c-reactive protein, and interleukin-6, thus showing that the effects of the intervention are not only on the psychological aspects, but also on the physiological aspects of the patient.

However, this map analysis also reveals a research gap. While popular alternative therapies like yoga, tai chi, and mindfulness are widely studied in developed countries, spiritual interventions based on local cultural values-such as prayer, dhikr, or religious music like qasidah-have yet to gain prominence in the global landscape. This opens up new research opportunities to develop integrative

models that combine physical and spiritual interventions with a culture-based approach, especially in developing countries like Indonesia.

Thus, this study not only maps global research trends, but also highlights the need for further exploration of contextual, integrative interventions that can holistically address the spiritual, psychological, and physical needs of cancer survivors.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declare that they have no conflict of interest

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our gratitude to the institutions and parties that supported this research, including the UNNES Public Health Doctoral Program, the Nursing Study Program, and the Nursing Professional Program at the Mahardika Institute of Cirebon.

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