



Global Research Trends in Cultural Identity Studies Based on Bibliometric Mapping

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ABSTRACT

This study examines global research trends in cultural identity studies using a bibliometric mapping approach. Drawing on bibliographic data indexed in the Scopus database, the study analyzes the evolution, intellectual structure, and thematic composition of cultural identity research. Using VOSviewer, co-authorship, institutional and country collaboration networks, co-citation patterns, and keyword co-occurrence maps were generated to identify influential contributors, dominant knowledge bases, and emerging research themes. The results show that cultural identity functions as a central and integrative concept, strongly connected to psychological and social identity traditions while increasingly intersecting with applied domains such as cultural heritage, tourism, sustainability, and digital media. Overlay and density visualizations reveal a shift from foundational themes related to ethnicity, acculturation, and social identity toward more policy-relevant and digitally mediated perspectives, without displacing established theoretical frameworks. The study also highlights uneven global collaboration patterns, with research concentrated in a small number of leading countries alongside growing contributions from the Global South. Overall, this bibliometric mapping provides a systematic overview of the field's development, offering insights that can support future theory building, interdisciplinary integration, and more inclusive research agendas in cultural identity studies.

Keywords: Bibliometric analysis; Cultural identity; Scopus; VOSviewer

INTRODUCTION

Cultural identity has become one of the most widely discussed concepts in the humanities and social sciences because it sits at the intersection of meaning-making, belonging, power, and social change. As societies experience intensified globalization, migration, and digital connectivity, identity is increasingly negotiated across multiple spaces such as local communities, nation-states, diasporic networks, and online platforms [1]. Rather than a fixed essence, many contemporary perspectives treat cultural identity as a dynamic process: continuously constructed through discourse, representation, and social interaction [2], [3]. This shift has expanded cultural identity studies beyond classical debates on tradition and modernity into broader questions of hybridity, transnationalism, and cultural politics in everyday life. A major driver of this research growth is the recognition that cultural identity is inseparable from collective narratives and imagined communities. Foundational work has shown how nations and communities are socially produced through shared symbols, stories, and institutions [4]. At the same time, identity is also shaped by social categorization and intergroup relations, how people define "us" and "them," form in-groups, and negotiate status and recognition [5]. In many settings, cultural identity becomes the grammar through which people explain social cohesion, conflict, inequality, and solidarity. This is why cultural identity studies appear across disciplines as diverse as anthropology, sociology, communication, education, political science, and cultural studies [6], [7].

In recent decades, cultural identity scholarship has also been reshaped by postcolonial and critical theories that foreground power, history, and representation. Studies of diaspora and hybridity emphasize identity as a negotiation that emerges from displacement, colonial legacies, and

cultural translation [8]. Parallel debates in gender and performativity highlight identity as enacted – produced through repeated practices rather than merely inherited as a stable attribute [9], [10]. These theoretical expansions have generated a rich but complex intellectual landscape, in which cultural identity is simultaneously discussed as discourse, practice, positionality, and political claim-making. As a result, the field has grown not only in size but also in conceptual diversity, sometimes making it difficult to identify dominant themes and converging research fronts.

Digital transformation has further accelerated the evolution of cultural identity studies. Social media, online communities, algorithmic curation, and platform economies create new arenas for identity expression and contestation, enabling individuals to perform identities strategically while also exposing them to surveillance, stereotyping, and polarization [11], [12]. Contemporary debates often address how cultural identities are mediated through digital storytelling, visual culture, fandoms, influencer communities, and transnational online publics. These developments broaden the empirical scope of the field while introducing new methodological challenges, such as tracing rapidly changing topics, understanding interdisciplinary borrowing, and mapping how research clusters form and dissolve over time. Given this expanding and heterogeneous body of scholarship, bibliometric mapping offers a systematic way to understand how cultural identity studies have developed as a research domain. Bibliometric approaches use publication and citation data to reveal intellectual structures, thematic clusters, collaboration networks, and knowledge diffusion patterns, complementing narrative reviews that may be limited by selection bias or disciplinary boundaries [13], [14]. Mapping tools such as co-authorship, co-citation, bibliographic coupling, and keyword co-occurrence can show where influential traditions originate, which topics are emerging, and how distinct subfields connect. In rapidly growing and conceptually plural areas like cultural identity, bibliometric evidence can clarify the “big picture” while still allowing attention to specialized sub-communities.

Despite the maturity and breadth of cultural identity studies, existing reviews often remain fragmented by discipline, region, theoretical tradition, or methodological preference, making it difficult to obtain an integrated understanding of global research trends. The field’s conceptual plurality (spanning discourse and representation, social categorization, diaspora and hybridity, performativity, digital identity, and identity politics) creates a risk that important connections between subfields are overlooked, while newer themes are difficult to detect early using conventional literature reviews. Consequently, there is a need for a comprehensive bibliometric mapping that can identify the intellectual structure of cultural identity research, trace its thematic evolution, highlight influential sources and authors, and reveal patterns of global collaboration in order to inform future research agendas more strategically [13], [14]. This study aims to map global research trends in cultural identity studies using bibliometric analysis and network visualization.

METHOD

This study employed a bibliometric research design to systematically map global research trends in cultural identity studies. Bibliographic data were retrieved from the Scopus database, selected for its wide coverage of peer-reviewed journals across the social sciences and humanities. The search strategy used relevant keywords related to cultural identity in titles, abstracts, and author keywords, and the resulting records were filtered to include only scholarly documents published within the defined study period. The extracted metadata (comprising authors, affiliations, publication years, journals, citations, references, and keywords) were exported in compatible formats and analyzed using VOSviewer. VOSviewer was utilized to construct and visualize bibliometric networks, including co-authorship networks to examine patterns of scholarly collaboration, co-citation networks to identify influential authors and intellectual foundations, and keyword co-occurrence networks to reveal dominant and emerging research themes. Network maps were interpreted based on link strength, cluster formation, and temporal overlay visualization,

enabling the identification of structural relationships and thematic evolution within cultural identity research.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Co-Authorship Analysis

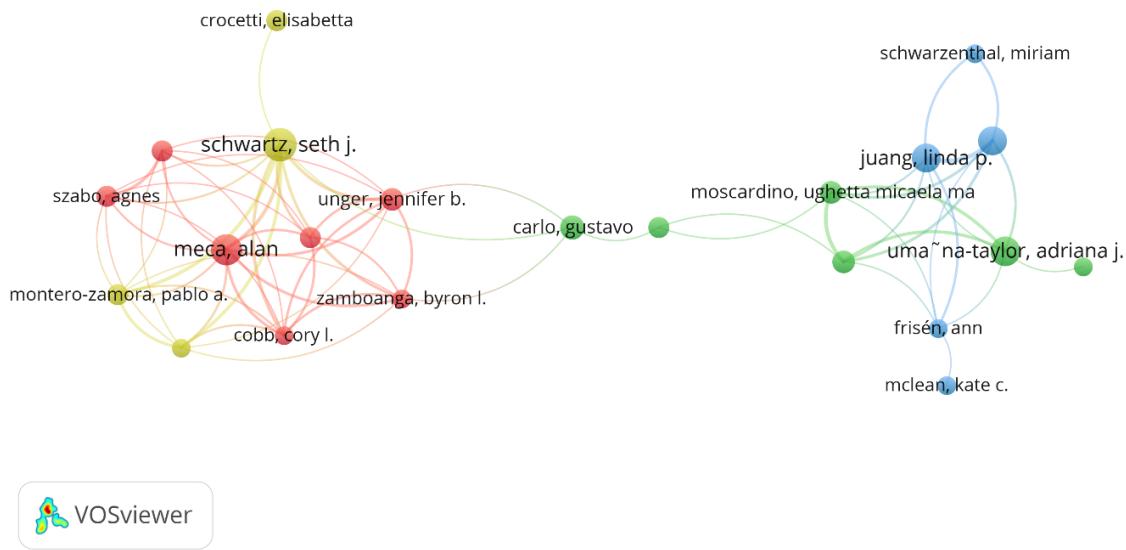


Figure 1. Author Visualization
Source: Data Analysis

Figure 1 revealing several distinct yet interconnected scholarly clusters. On the left, a dense cluster centered around Alan Meca, Seth J. Schwartz, Jennifer B. Unger, and Cory L. Cobb indicates a highly collaborative research community, strongly associated with psychological and developmental perspectives on identity formation, particularly among adolescents and emerging adults. The tight linkages and high node density suggest a well-established and frequently cited body of work. A smaller adjacent connection involving Elisabetta Crocetti highlights cross-cluster intellectual exchange, reflecting the integration of European identity development scholarship with this core group. Toward the center, authors such as Gustavo Carlo and Ughetta Moscardino function as bridging nodes, linking psychological identity research with broader socio-cultural and contextual approaches. On the right side, another prominent cluster led by Linda P. Juang, Adriana J. Umaña-Taylor, Miriam Schwarzenthal, Ann Frisén, and Kate C. McLean reflects a complementary but distinct collaboration network, often associated with ethnic, immigrant, and narrative identity studies.

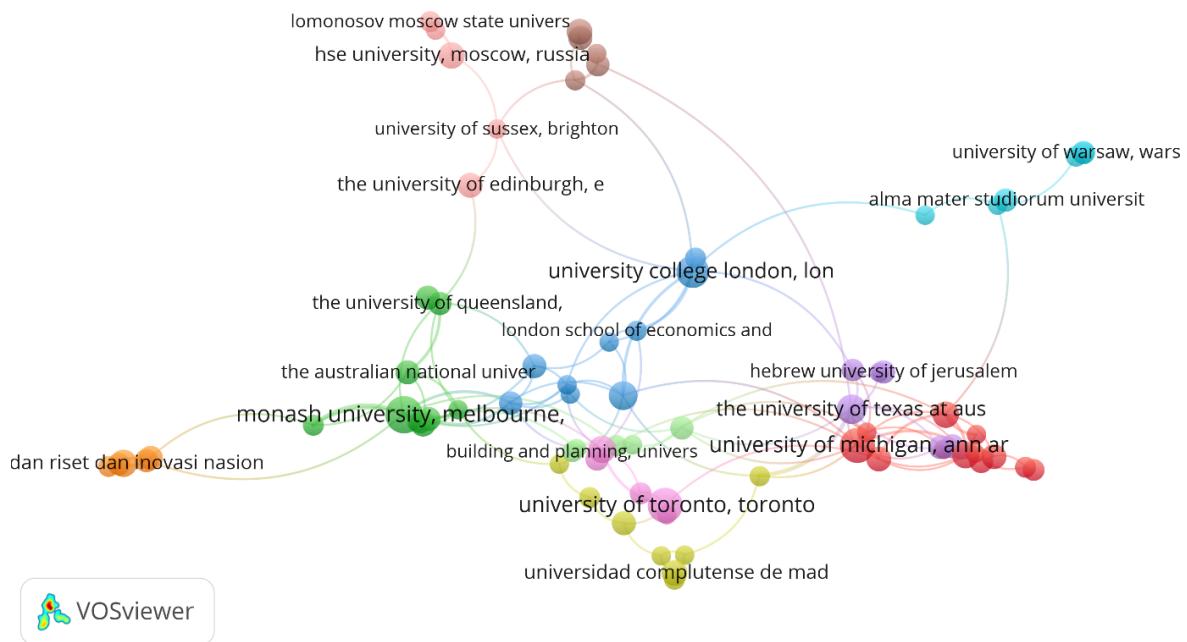


Figure 2. Affiliation Visualization

Source: Data Analysis

Figure 2 illustrates institutional collaboration patterns in global cultural identity research, highlighting several prominent clusters and central hubs. At the core of the network, University College London and the London School of Economics emerge as key bridging institutions, connecting multiple clusters across regions and indicating their central role in facilitating international collaboration and knowledge exchange. A strong Anglo-American cluster is visible around the University of Texas at Austin and the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, reflecting intensive collaboration within North American institutions that are influential in cultural, psychological, and social identity studies. In the Southern Hemisphere, Monash University, the University of Queensland, and the Australian National University form a cohesive cluster, suggesting a robust Australian research network that is well integrated into global identity scholarship. European institutions such as the University of Edinburgh, the University of Sussex, the University of Warsaw, and Alma Mater Studiorum–University of Bologna appear in interconnected but slightly more peripheral clusters, indicating strong regional collaboration with selective global linkages. Additionally, institutions like the Hebrew University of Jerusalem function as cross-regional connectors between European and North American clusters.

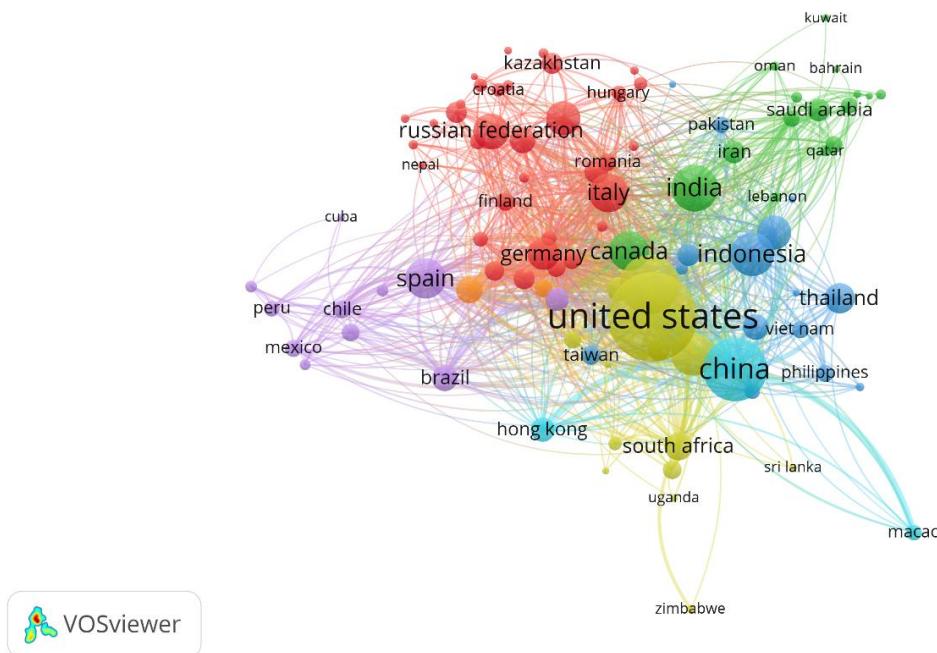


Figure 3. Country Visualization

Source: Data Analysis

Figure 3 highlights the global structure of cultural identity research, showing both dominant contributors and emerging regional clusters. The United States occupies a clear central position with the largest node and the highest number of linkages, indicating its leading role in publication output and international collaboration. Closely connected to the U.S. are China, India, Canada, and Germany, forming a dense core of cross-continental knowledge exchange. A strong European cluster is visible around countries such as Italy, Spain, Germany, Finland, and Hungary, reflecting well-established regional collaboration within Europe that also maintains extensive ties to North America. In parallel, an Asian cluster centered on China, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, and the Philippines suggests growing scholarly engagement from Southeast and East Asia, often connected through collaborations with the U.S. and China. The Middle Eastern cluster, including Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan, and Qatar, indicates increasing participation in cultural identity research, frequently linked to South Asian and Western partners. Meanwhile, countries in Latin America (such as Brazil, Mexico, Chile, and Peru) and Africa (including South Africa, Uganda, and Zimbabwe) appear more peripheral but increasingly integrated into the global network.

Citation Analysis

Table 1. Most Cited Article

| Citations | Author and Year | Title |
|-----------|-----------------|--|
| 1746 | [15] | 2004 presidential address: For public sociology |
| 1696 | [16] | Psychological impact of biculturalism: Evidence and theory |
| 1651 | [17] | Ethnicity without groups |
| 1489 | [18] | Immigrant youth: Acculturation, identity, and adaptation |
| 1109 | [19] | Cultural dimensions of climate change impacts and adaptation |
| 1019 | [20] | Social identity, self-categorization, and the communication of group norms |
| 965 | [21] | Searching for belonging - An analytical framework |

| Citations | Author and Year | Title |
|-----------|-----------------|--|
| 943 | [22] | Cultural memory and early civilization: Writing, remembrance, and political imagination |
| 802 | [23] | Negotiating Biculturalism: Cultural frame switching in biculturals with oppositional versus compatible cultural identities |

Source: Scopus, 2025

Keyword Co-Occurrence Network Analysis

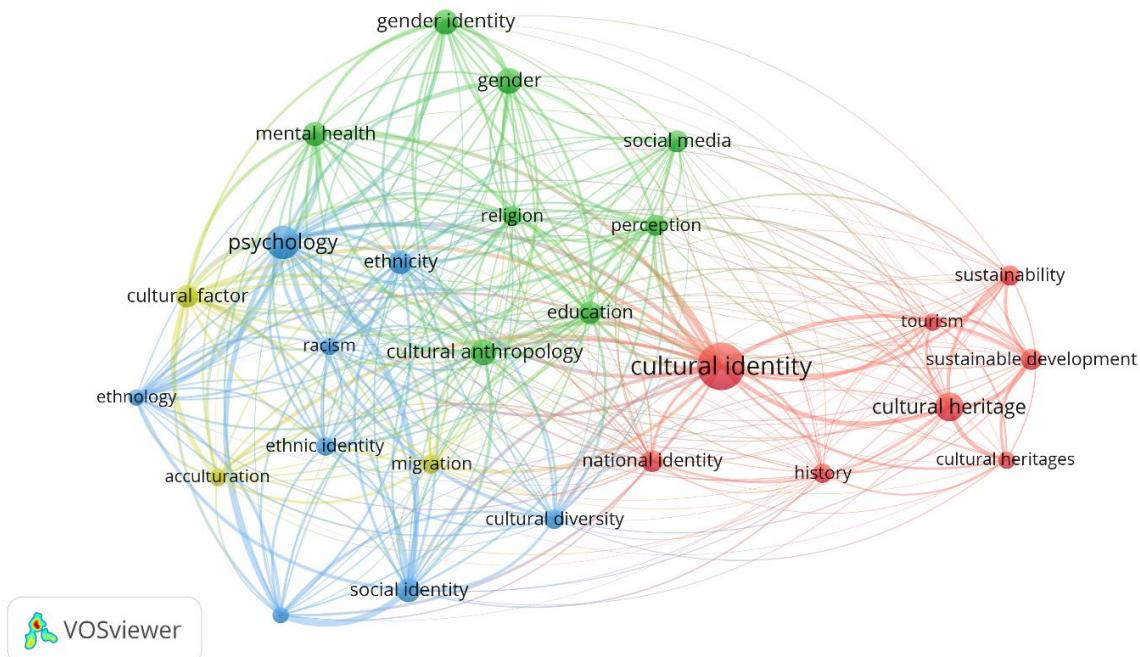


Figure 4. Network Visualization

Source: Data Analysis

Figure 4 reveals the conceptual structure and thematic diversity of global cultural identity research, with cultural identity occupying a central and highly connected position. Its prominence indicates that the concept functions as a unifying anchor linking multiple disciplinary conversations. The dense interconnections surrounding this core term suggest that cultural identity is rarely examined in isolation; instead, it is embedded within broader discussions of social structures, historical processes, psychological dimensions, and cultural practices. This centrality reflects the role of cultural identity as both a theoretical lens and an empirical object across the social sciences and humanities. One major thematic cluster, shown in close proximity to cultural identity, focuses on heritage, history, and sustainability. Keywords such as cultural heritage, history, tourism, sustainable development, and sustainability indicate a strong research stream that examines how cultural identities are preserved, represented, and mobilized within heritage sites, tourism industries, and development agendas. This cluster highlights an applied orientation of cultural identity research, where identity is linked to place-making, memory, and economic strategies, particularly in the context of globalization and heritage commodification.

A second prominent cluster emphasizes psychological and social processes, centered on keywords such as social identity, psychology, ethnic identity, acculturation, racism, and mental health. This cluster reflects a long-standing tradition rooted in social psychology and sociology, focusing on how individuals and groups construct identities through social categorization, intergroup relations, and migration experiences. The strong ties between social identity and cultural

identity suggest that many studies bridge micro-level psychological processes with macro-level cultural frameworks, reinforcing the interdisciplinary nature of the field. Another interconnected cluster highlights gender, religion, and mediated identity, with frequent co-occurrences among gender, gender identity, religion, social media, and perception. This pattern points to growing scholarly interest in how cultural identity is negotiated through gendered norms, belief systems, and digital environments. The inclusion of social media indicates a contemporary research direction that examines identity performance, visibility, and contestation in online spaces, where cultural meanings are continuously produced and reshaped through mediated interaction. The network shows integrative themes related to education, diversity, and anthropology, represented by keywords such as education, cultural anthropology, ethnicity, migration, and cultural diversity. These terms function as connective bridges across clusters, suggesting that educational contexts and anthropological perspectives play a crucial role in synthesizing psychological, historical, and socio-political approaches to cultural identity.

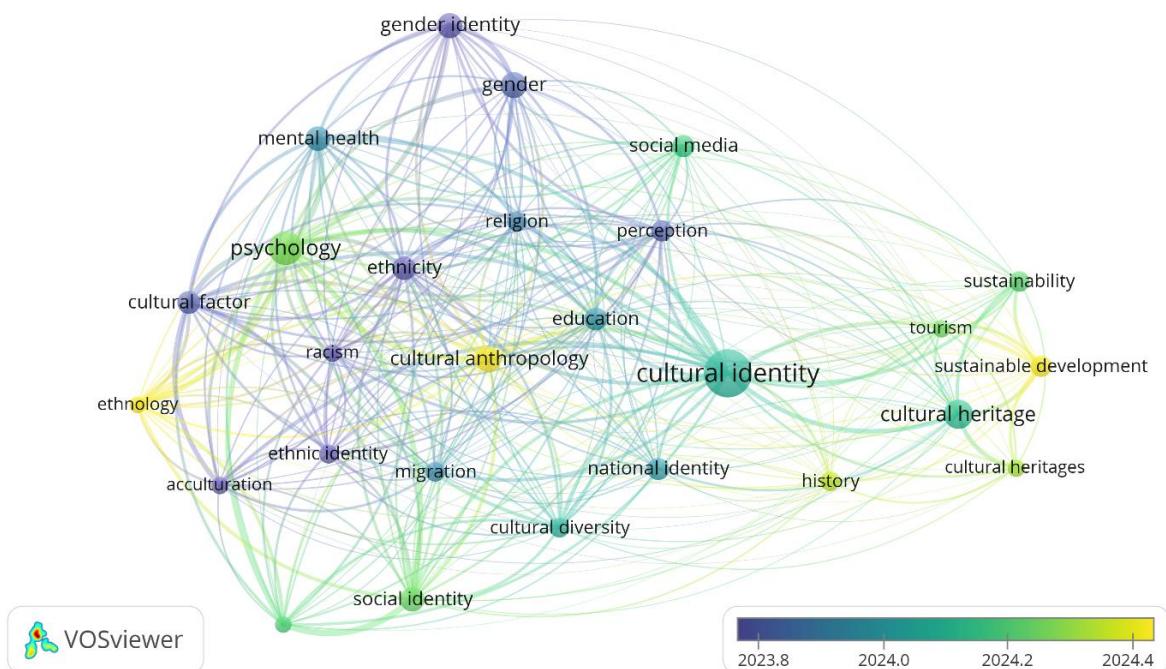


Figure 5. Overlay Visualization

Source: Data Analysis

Figure 5 illustrates the temporal evolution of research themes in cultural identity studies, with node colors indicating the average publication year of keywords. The central positioning of cultural identity, shown in a greenish hue, suggests that it remains a continuously active and integrative concept bridging both earlier and more recent research streams. Its extensive connections to psychological, social, and heritage-related terms indicate that cultural identity functions as a stable core around which new themes are progressively layered rather than replaced over time. Earlier-established themes, represented by cooler blue tones, include gender identity, psychology, mental health, ethnicity, racism, and acculturation. These topics reflect the foundational influence of social psychology, anthropology, and migration studies in shaping early cultural identity research. Their continued linkage to newer keywords suggests that classic theoretical frameworks (such as social identity theory and acculturation models) remain relevant and are frequently reinterpreted in contemporary empirical contexts rather than becoming obsolete. More recent and emerging themes, highlighted in warmer green-to-yellow tones, cluster around cultural heritage, tourism, sustainable development, and sustainability, as well as digitally mediated topics such as social media and

perception. This shift points to a growing emphasis on applied and policy-relevant dimensions of cultural identity, where identity is examined in relation to heritage management, place-based development, and digital representation.

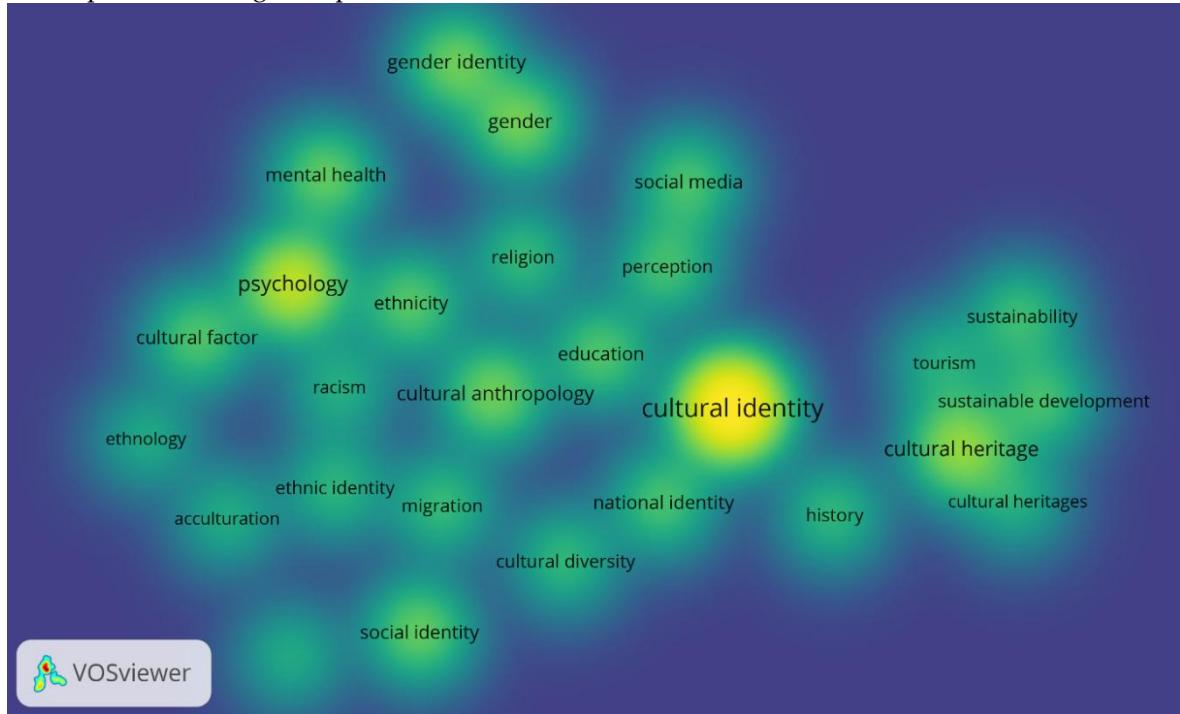


Figure 6. Density Visualization

Source: Data Analysis

Figure 6 highlights the core concentration areas within cultural identity research by illustrating the frequency and intensity of keyword co-occurrence. The most prominent hotspot is centered on cultural identity, indicating that it is the most intensively studied and interconnected concept in the literature. Surrounding this core are dense clusters related to psychology, ethnicity, gender identity, mental health, and social identity, reflecting the strong influence of psychological and sociological perspectives that focus on individual and group-level identity formation. The high density in these areas suggests that issues of identity construction, intergroup relations, and psychosocial well-being remain foundational pillars of the field. A secondary but clearly visible density cluster appears around cultural heritage, tourism, history, and sustainable development, pointing to a growing applied research stream that links cultural identity with heritage management, place-based development, and sustainability agendas. Although slightly less dense than the psychological core, this cluster indicates increasing scholarly attention to how cultural identities are preserved, represented, and leveraged in socio-economic and policy contexts. The spatial separation yet conceptual proximity between these clusters suggests that cultural identity research is characterized by both a strong theoretical nucleus and an expanding applied frontier, reflecting the field's ongoing diversification and responsiveness to contemporary societal challenges.

Discussion

Practical Implication

The findings of this bibliometric mapping offer several practical implications for researchers, policymakers, educators, and practitioners engaged in cultural identity-related work. First, the dominance of psychological, social identity, and ethnic identity themes indicates that interventions addressing social cohesion, inclusion, and mental well-being should continue to integrate identity-sensitive approaches. Policymakers and social institutions can draw on this body of research to design programs that acknowledge how cultural, ethnic, and gender identities shape individuals' experiences in education, migration, and multicultural societies. The strong linkage between cultural

identity and mental health further underscores the need for culturally responsive policies in healthcare, counseling, and community development. Second, the growing prominence of cultural heritage, tourism, and sustainability themes suggests that cultural identity research has direct relevance for place-based development and heritage management. Practitioners in tourism planning, urban development, and cultural policy can leverage insights from this research to balance economic objectives with cultural preservation and community participation. The bibliometric evidence showing increased attention to sustainable development indicates that cultural identity is increasingly framed as a strategic resource, not only for preserving the past but also for fostering inclusive and sustainable futures. This is particularly relevant for regions seeking to develop cultural industries while maintaining authenticity and social legitimacy.

Theoretical Contributions

From a theoretical standpoint, this study contributes by providing an integrative, evidence-based overview of the intellectual structure of cultural identity research. By mapping co-authorship, institutional, country, and keyword networks, the study demonstrates that cultural identity functions as a unifying yet flexible construct that bridges psychology, sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, and development studies. The persistence of foundational themes such as social identity, ethnicity, and acculturation alongside emerging topics like sustainability and digital identity suggests theoretical continuity rather than fragmentation. This supports the view of cultural identity as a dynamic, multi-level concept capable of accommodating new social realities. The thematic evolution revealed through overlay and density visualizations also contributes to theory-building by showing how the field has shifted from primarily descriptive and explanatory models toward more applied and context-sensitive frameworks. The increasing integration of heritage, tourism, and sustainable development reflects a move toward theories that connect identity with place, economy, and governance. At the same time, the growing intersection with digital media studies suggests that existing identity theories are being extended to account for mediated, performative, and algorithmically shaped identities. These patterns highlight the need for more integrative theoretical models that link micro-level identity processes with macro-level cultural, technological, and environmental transformations.

Limitations

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the analysis is based solely on the Scopus database, which, although comprehensive, does not cover all relevant journals, books, and regional publications—particularly those in non-English languages or local contexts. As a result, some culturally significant research traditions may be underrepresented. Second, bibliometric methods rely on publication and citation data, which reflect visibility and academic influence rather than the substantive quality or societal impact of individual studies. Highly cited themes may dominate the maps even if emerging or marginalized perspectives are theoretically innovative but less visible. Third, the interpretation of clusters and themes inherently involves a degree of subjectivity, as bibliometric maps indicate patterns of association rather than causal relationships. The study also does not incorporate qualitative content analysis, which could provide deeper insights into how concepts of cultural identity are theorized and operationalized within specific studies. Future research could address these limitations by combining bibliometric mapping with systematic or narrative reviews, expanding data sources beyond Scopus, and conducting comparative analyses across regions or disciplines. Such approaches would further enrich understanding of the evolving landscape of cultural identity research.

CONCLUSION

This study provides a comprehensive overview of global research trends in cultural identity studies through bibliometric mapping, revealing the field's intellectual structure, thematic evolution, and patterns of scholarly collaboration. The findings show that cultural identity remains a central and integrative concept, anchored in long-standing psychological, social, and anthropological

traditions while increasingly intersecting with applied domains such as cultural heritage, sustainability, tourism, and digital media. The coexistence of foundational and emerging themes highlights the dynamic and interdisciplinary nature of the field, demonstrating how cultural identity research continues to adapt to contemporary social, technological, and global challenges. By offering an evidence-based map of influential actors, institutions, countries, and research themes, this study contributes a strategic reference point for future research, supporting more coherent theory development, inclusive collaboration, and contextually grounded applications of cultural identity scholarship.

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