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CURRENT TRENDS IN RESEARCH ON CONFIDENCE IN THE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

Abstract. The sphere of trust in the health care system, which is actively developing in covid and postcovid conditions, is accompanied by a significant increase in the amount of scientific literature that requires detailed analysis. Accordingly, the primary purpose of this study is to conduct a multilevel bibliometric analysis of publications on trust in the health care system. This will provide a global picture of the phenomenon to determine the dynamic aspects of trends from a statistical point of view, using content-contextual, descriptive, comparative, cluster and evolutionary-temporal analysis. The methodological basis of the study is a set of scientific publications indexed in the scientometric database Scopus, which was analyzed using analytical tools ScopusTools and VOSViewer. A total of 1,134 articles published between 1999 and the second quarter of 2022 were analyzed. The results show a growing trend in the spread of research on trust in the health care system. According to the results, five stages of scientific development of the researched subject were identified, in particular, the last one is characterized by extremely high research interest and covers the period from 2020 to the second quarter of 2022. The geographic center of research is the United Kingdom, and a significant contribution to the development of trust research in the health care system has been made by scientists in the United States, Australia and Canada. The analysis of the sectoral structure of financial sector trust research shows a weak diversification, and a comparative analysis of publications shows a close link between the concepts of trust in the health care system, vaccination and COVID-19. Cluster analysis identified five main groups of research. The results of evolutionary-temporal analysis show that at the beginning of scientific interest, research focused on interpersonal relationships between doctors and patients, and the latest area of research is to study the impact of trust on public decision-making on vaccination and other preventive measures. Thus, the study results showed that trust is one of the most crucial components in ensuring an effective health policy.

Keywords: bibliometric analysis; vaccination; trust in the health care system; cluster analysis; scientometric database; COVID-19, VOSViewer, Scopus.

Introduction. Public trust in the healthcare system is indispensable in ensuring public health. It is essential for the effectiveness of government policy in medicine. Thus, the treatment outcome largely depends on the attitude of the medical service consumers to the healthcare delivery, the management of the medical institution and the medical institution itself, and the level of trust in the doctor and his decisions. At the same time, overcoming diseases at the state level depends on promoting a healthy lifestyle, prevention policy, and public awareness of medical issues. Lack of trust in state preventive measures and

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immunization programs could lead to the public refusal to follow the necessary rules and actions. As a result, it provokes an outbreak of diseases and complicates the epidemiological situation. The COVID-19 pandemic has identified vulnerabilities in healthcare, with the main problem being non-compliance with public health norms and regulations due to the low level of trust in the healthcare system. Lack of trust in immunization programs has led to the rejection of vaccination as an effective lever to prevent and alleviate the course of viral disease. Therefore, a detailed study of the mechanisms and trends of public trust in the health care system will provide an opportunity to develop a clear set of tactical and strategic actions to combat dangerous diseases and ensure public health. In this regard, it is important to conduct a comprehensive and in-depth review of the literature, which will be the basis for studying the concept of trust in the health care system. The complexity of the studied concept requires a multilevel bibliometric analysis based on analytical tools Scopus AnalysisTools and VOSViewer.

Literature Review. The relevance of the concept under study is confirmed by many scientific works addressing trust in healthcare. Thus, Boulware et al. (2003) considered the influence of the racial differences on trust in doctors, health insurance plans, and hospitals. Zhao et al. (2018) studied international differences in trust in health systems. Calnan and Sanford (2004) explored systemic and individual approaches to trust in the healthcare system.

Noteworthy here, Alaszewski (2003) identified trust as a key component in the risk management system in the healthcare system. In turn, trust in the healthcare system is explored by addressing the issues of self-perceived health status (Mohseni and Lindstrom, 2007), quality of medical services (Musa et al., 2009), a coronavirus pandemic caused by SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) (Baker, 2020; Chan et al., 2020).

Researchers emphasized the possibility of overcoming the healthcare crisis by increasing public trust in it. In the study (Bagheri-Lankarani et al., 2021), the Iranian scientists assessed the level of trust in the health care system in Iran during the COVID-19 pandemic. The scholars found a negative impact of destructive rumors and public fears on trust. This process was accompanied by panic among the citizens and uncertainty about the reliability and correctness of the health professionals' decisions and the health care system in general. In addition, the study found that the lowest level of trust in the health care system in times of crisis is observed in citizens with low socio-economic status and low education levels. Similar findings were found in analyzing the population's behavior under the Switzerland avian influenza (H1N1) vaccination in 2009 (Gilles et al., 2011). The authors proved that public trust is a decisive factor in determining vaccination behavior. Thus, they emphasized the practical importance of trust management in disease prevention campaigns.

However, despite the significant scientific background on the investigated topic, the study of trust in healthcare systems in the context of multilevel bibliometric analysis of research has received insufficient attention.

Methodology and research methods. Given the recent research trends, multilevel bibliometric analysis to form and provide a methodological basis has become quite popular in scientific works. It allows for determining the main trends in the development of the studied concepts (Yu et al., 2020; Shah et al., 2020; Hamidah et al., 2020). The structural and comparative literature review is the main theoretical method used to identify relationships at the theoretical and empirical levels, little-studied aspects, and previously studied key concepts. This study applied the analytical tools to conduct the bibliometric analysis on structural (ScopusTools), comparative (Google Trends), and cluster analysis (VOSViewer v.1.6.13).

Conducting multilevel bibliometric analysis requires a clear structure and formalization (Fig. 1).

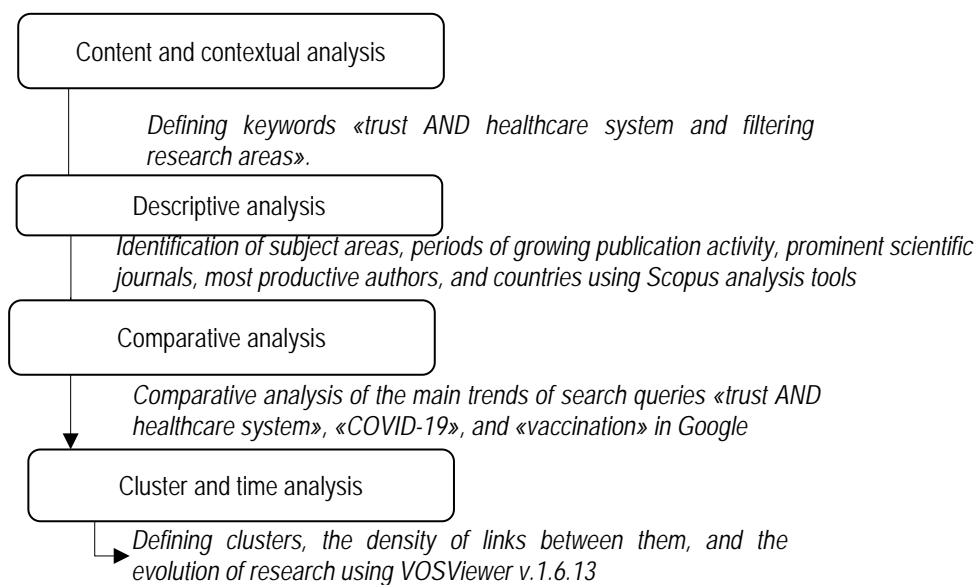


Figure 1. Structure and formalization of bibliometric analysis of the publications on trust in the health care system

Sources: developed by the authors.

Results. For selecting the appropriate articles for bibliometric analysis in the Scopus scientometric database, this study used the keyword combination "trust AND healthcare system". The results identified 3587 scientific publications. Then, the obtained studies were filtered by industry to exclude some inappropriate areas of research (computer science, engineering, mathematics, and the humanities). The publication period was chosen from 1999 to 2022. Thus, the study sample consists of 1134 scientific publications indexed in the Scopus scientometric database.

The descriptive data analysis was provided based on statistical information obtained using Scopus analysis tools. It included an analysis of industry branching, determining the most influential journals and productive authors, and identifying leaders in the investigated studies.

The cross-sectoral analysis showed a weak diversification in the scientific publications. Figure 2 shows that 61.6% of scientific works addressing the trust in healthcare belong to the field of medicine. The above could be explained by the comprehensiveness of the medical field, which includes the health care subsystem. More than 5% of all papers were conducted in biochemistry and molecular biology and care, 4.5% – in the social sciences, 2.5% – in natural sciences, and more than 2% – in pharmacology and immunology. Therefore, based on the statistical data, the key area addressing the issues of public trust in healthcare and its relationship is medical (Fig. 2).

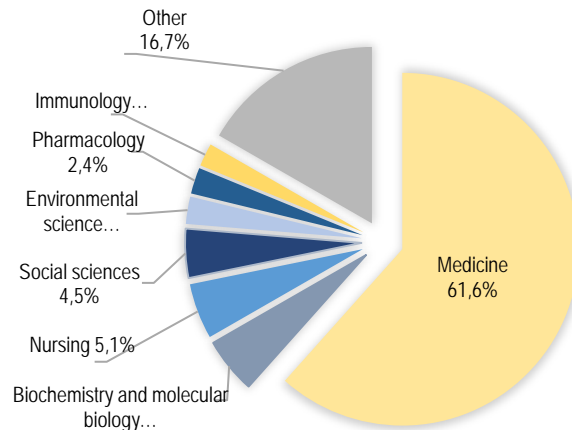


Figure 2. Visualization of the documents by subject area

Sources: developed by the authors based on the Scopus data.

The studies addressing the trust in healthcare have started being indexed in the Scopus scientometric database since 1999. However, the scientific interest in this topic has been growing significantly since 2016 (Figure 3). Thus, the most significant number of publications on the search query «trust AND healthcare system» is noticed during the pandemic (2020-2021). For comparison, 42 scientific papers were published in 2013. This number increased to 60 studies in 2016, while publications doubled in 2020 (124 papers). In 2021, the number of published studies on trust in the health care system amounted to 252 scientific papers, which is approximately equal to the number of published papers for the previous two years.

Thus, Figure 3 shows a clear tendency to sway waves of growing and declining scientific interest in the trust in the health care system.

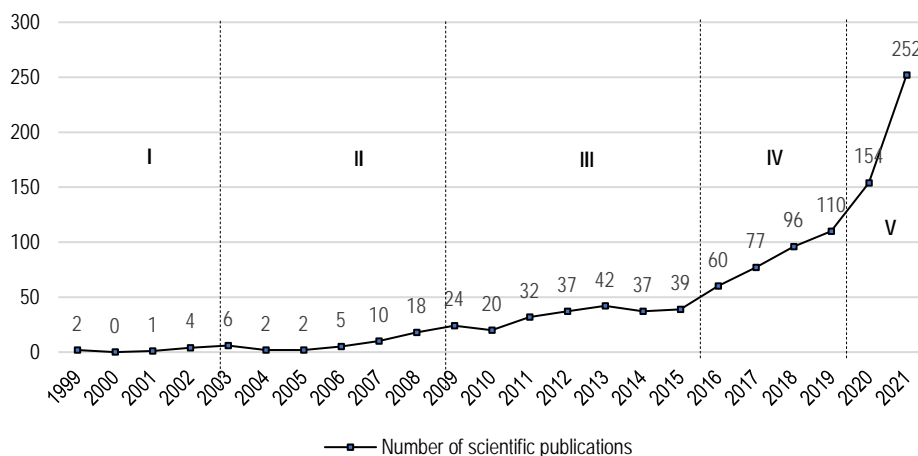


Figure 3. Publication activity dynamic on trust in the health care system (1999-2021)

Sources: developed by the authors based on the Scopus data.

Thus, Figure 2 allows identifying several periods of scientific interest towards the issues of trust in healthcare as follows:

- Stage I is dated from 1999 to 2003;
- Stage II covers 2004-2009. It is characterized by a gradual increase in the number of publications devoted to trust in the healthcare and its practical significance;
- Stage III is dated from 2010 to 2015. This period is similar to the previous, but it has a larger amplitude. Thus, this stage could be called a stage of moderate growth. This stage is characterized by a slight increase in the number of scientific studies;
- Stage IV covers 2016-2019. This period indicates the growing academic interest. The number of studies on trust in the healthcare has been growing every year, so the research topic has been the focus of scientists;
- Stage V is dated from 2020 to 2021. It is a period of «research boom» concerning the investigated topic. Thus, the rapid increase in publications indicates the research topic's relevance. Besides, the need for new research into the trust concept in healthcare is driven by the COVID-19 pandemic and related medical challenges.

The analysis of the prominent journals on trust in healthcare included 10 journals with the largest number of publications on the research topic. Table 1 ranks the above journals in descending order.

Therefore, the UK journal BMJ Open published the biggest number of articles addressing medicine. The TOP-3 prominent scientific journals include the UK scientific journals BMC Health Services Research and Health Services Research. The most influential publishers were BMC Medical Ethics (in ethical issues in medicine) and the International Journal for Equity in Health (in health policy). Besides, the impact factor has a scientific journal that researches health, environment, and occupational health «BMC Public Health». Citation analysis shows that Health Services Research and the Journal of General Internal Medicine are the most cited.

Table 1. TOP-10 leading scientific journals researching trust in the health care system

<i>Journal Name (Subject area)</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Total Number</i>	<i>Citation Score (2021)</i>	<i>Impact Factor (2021)</i>	<i>Rank</i>
BMJ Open (General Medicine)	United Kingdom	76	3.9	1.321	1.132
BMC Health Services Research (Medicine: Health Policy)	United Kingdom	58	3.9	1.445	1.098
Health Services Research (Medicine: Health Policy)	United Kingdom	39	6.1	1.563	1.706
International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health (Medicine: Public Health, Environmental and Occupational Health)	Switzerland	36	4.4	1.356	0.747
BMC Public Health (Medicine: Public Health, Environmental and Occupational Health)	United Kingdom	23	4.9	1.656	1.230
International Journal for Equity in Health (Medicine: Health Policy)	United Kingdom	20	5.4	1.702	1.367

Continued Table 1

Journal Name (Subject area)	Country	Total Number	Citation Score (2021)	Impact Factor (2021)	Rank
PLoS ONE (Multidisciplinary)	United Kingdom	20	5.5	1.349	0.990
Journal of General Internal Medicine (Medicine: Internal Medicine)	United States	17	5.7	1.471	1.746
BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth (Medicine: Obstetrics and Gynecology)	United Kingdom	15	4.1	1.683	1.299
BMC Medical Ethics (Nursing: Issues, Ethics and Legal Aspects)	United Kingdom	13	3.4	1.869	1.075

Sources: developed by the authors based on the Scopus data.

Therefore, the identified research areas of the most influential and cited journals indicate that the concept of trust in healthcare is considered in the studies devoted to health policy, occupational health, medical ethics, and general medicine. Besides, it should be noted that the issue of patients' trust in health care is crucial in obstetrics and gynecology (by «BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth» scientific journal).

On the other hand, the analysis of leading journals has shown that the UK is a leader in research addressing the trust in healthcare. Figure 4 demonstrates the scholars' contribution to the investigated topic by country.

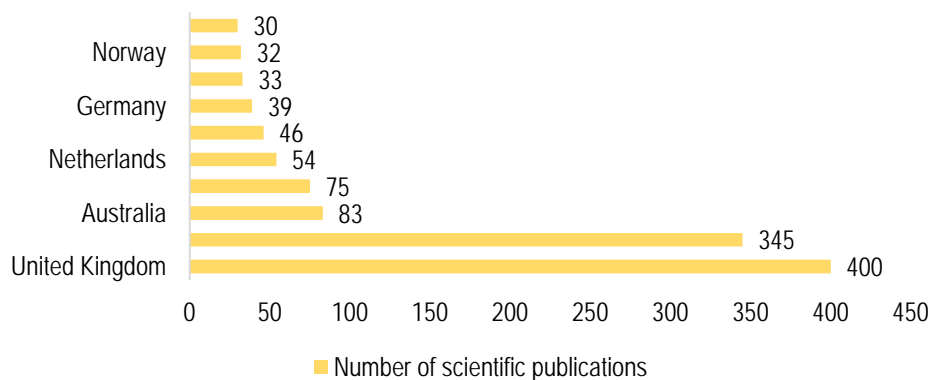


Figure 4. Leading countries in researching trust in the health care system

Sources: developed by the authors based on the Scopus data.

Thus, Figure 4 demonstrates that scientists from the United Kingdom and the United States conducted most research (400 and 345 scientific publications, respectively). Herewith, it stands to mention that the most cited studies in these countries address finding a link between trust in the healthcare system and the process of reporting incidents in the healthcare system (Lawton and Parker, 2002); barriers and facilitators of female vaccination (Ferrer et al., 2014); psychological aspects of medical distrust (Hammond, 2010); physician-patient relationships (Gigerenzer et al., 2007). The above indicates the urgency of using the

concept of trust at all levels of the healthcare system. Thus, it could ensure trust between patient and doctor at the personal level. At the national level, it could encourage public examination, treatment, and vaccination and improve the healthcare work.

The indicator of determining influential authors in the field of trust in healthcare is the number of citations (Table 2). The analysis included the five most-cited authors for the entire study period and the five most cited scientists for the last three years (2020-2022). This data collection was used to identify and compare basic concepts and new trends in COVID-19 pandemic health trust research.

Table 2 shows the general patterns and trends in research on trust in healthcare. During the development of scientific interest in this topic, the authors focused on the relationship between doctors and patients, the impact of trust in the health care system on racial and ethical disparities, and the effectiveness of treatment depending on the patient's trust in the doctor and his decisions. The challenges of the pandemic, which led to a «boom» in health trust, have led to a new trend in coronavirus research. For example, the researchers focused on identifying the impact of trust in healthcare on the COVID-19 vaccination and determining the trust of healthcare professionals in the healthcare system at risk of coronavirus infection. Besides, it's appropriate to mention the studies determining the impact of the introduction of artificial intelligence in the treatment program on the level of patient confidence in the health care system.

Table 2. Authors' contributions to the study of trust in the health care system

Authors	Title	Number of citations
Gigerenze et al. (2007)	Helping doctors and patients make sense of health statistics.	763
Lawton and Parker, (2002)	Barriers to incident reporting in a healthcare system	301
Cruz-Flores et al. (2011)	Racial-ethnic disparities in stroke care: The American experience: A statement for healthcare professionals from the American heart association/American stroke association	299
Saha et al. (2008)	Racial and ethnic disparities in the VA health care system: A systematic review.	170
Ratanawongsa et al. (2013)	Communication and medication refill adherence the diabetes study of northern California	159
Wong et al. (2021)	Acceptance of the COVID-19 vaccine based on the health belief model: A population-based survey in Hong Kong	127
Kavaliunas et al. (2020)	Swedish policy analysis for covid-19	45
Carter et al. (2020)	The ethical, legal and social implications of using artificial intelligence systems in breast cancer care	41
Stall et al. (2020)	A hospital partnership with a nursing home experiencing a COVID-19 outbreak: Description of multiphase emergency response in Toronto, Canada.	35
(Barello and Graffigna (2020)	Caring for health professionals in the COVID-19 pandemic emergency: Toward an "Epidemic of empathy" in healthcare.	35

Sources: developed by the authors based on the Scopus data.

Table 2 indicates that the scholars from Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States are the authors of the most cited articles in the Scopus database (Gigerenzer et al., 2007, Lawton and Parker,

2002, Saha et al., 2008). Besides, the top-10 of most cited scientific publications in the Scopus database include the works by scientists from Italy, Canada, Australia, and Sweden.

The findings of bibliometric analysis showed that the scientists often associate trust in the health care system with the terms: «vaccination» and «COVID-19» (Wong et al., 2021, Kavaliunas et al., 2020, Barello and Graffigna, 2020). Therefore, it is essential to conduct a comparative analysis of the scientific background presented in the Scopus database by the keywords «vaccination», «COVID-19», and «trust AND healthcare system» (Figure 5).

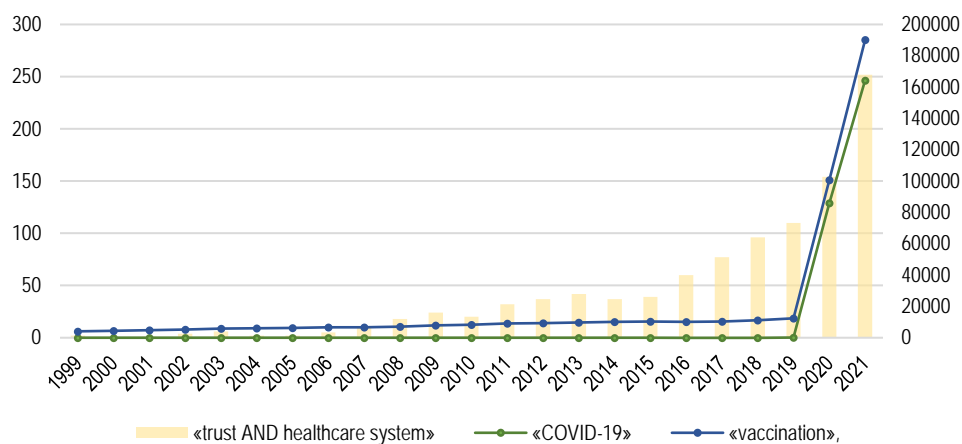


Figure 5. Comparative analysis of the dynamics of the publication on trust in the health care system, vaccination, and COVID-19

Sources: developed by the authors based on the Scopus data.

Figure 5 visualizes the comparative analysis findings of the publication dynamic from 1999 to 2021. The results showed that scientific interest in the studied concepts grew in 2020. It stands to note that scientists have studied vaccination issues since 1984 and trust in the health care system – since 1999. Even though the COVID-19 issue is a new research direction in the medical field, the publication activity on this topic has the largest growth rate during the pandemic. This research dynamic could be explained by the direct link between the perception of efficiency and safety of COVID-19 vaccination and the level of trust in the public health system. For example, in making vital health decisions, individuals rely on trust in the health care system. In turn, healthcare must protect the public lives using preventive measures.

The next stage of bibliometric analysis explored the content of analyzed articles, the publication timeframe, and the total strength of a co-occurrence connection between the keywords using the VOSviewer software. It stands to mention that VOSviewer is one of the leading software applications used to analyze and visualize the networks of co-occurrences. Besides, the VOSviewer advantage is the support of the various bibliographic data formats. It allows visualizing bibliometric data based on keyword co-occurrences, co-citations, co-authorship, etc.

Therefore, the bibliometric analysis included 1134 scientific publications indexed in the Scopus database by «trust AND healthcare system». The study period covers 1999-2022. Figure 6 visualizes the network of keywords' co-occurrences in the analyzed articles.

To avoid keyword duplication and irrelevant terms (such as «age», «person», «method», etc.), 169 keywords were excluded. Thus, 83 out of 252 keywords (frequency > 15) were applied for further analysis. Further, the filtered keywords were divided into 4 clusters (Figure 6) marked with red, blue, yellow, and

Figure 6 shows the links and intercrossing between the clusters. Thus, the concept of trust, which belongs to the green cluster, is meaningful. It has a strong link strength with all other clusters. Confidence in the health care system determines the population's adoption of vaccines and other preventive measures (green and red clusters). Trust directly affects the effectiveness of public health policy (links within the green cluster). Another link could be observed between management in medical institutions and trust. Thus, the lack of trust at the level of medical institutions provokes low efficiency in management decisions. In turn, it could negatively affect the quality of treatment (green and blue clusters). The link between the yellow and green clusters also highlights the role of public confidence in the health care system in the interpersonal relationship between physician and patient.

Figure 7a visualizes a more detailed analysis of the links between the green and red clusters regarding the impact of trust in the health care system on vaccination against COVID-19 and other diseases. Thus, the vaccination decision depends on behavioral factors (individual attitude to health, promotion of a healthy lifestyle), the patient's awareness (health-related literacy and drug safety), government regulation in healthcare (level of trust in the system, availability, and quality of medical services), and interpersonal relationships between the patient and the doctor.

On the contrary, Figure 7b shows the same vaccination decision-making process but in the view of the COVID-19. Vaccination decision depends on the patient's trust of the medical staff and the health care system because of the novelty of the virus and a short period of vaccine testing. Indeed, vaccination against COVID-19 is partly experimental since less than a year has passed from its creation to its introduction. That is why individuals do not rely on their medical knowledge, experience, or health-related literacy. They are guided only by trust in the health care system.

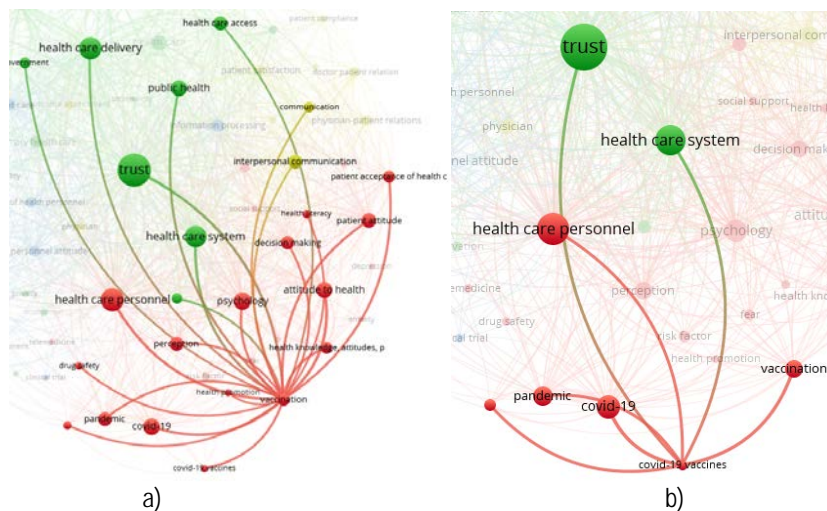


Figure 7. Intercluster linkages

Sources: developed by the authors using the VOSviewer software tools.

Figure 8 visualizes the link strength of the analyzed keywords. The bright yellow visualizes the strongest link strength. The less strong the link strength is, the more faded color is.

Figure 8 shows the strong link strength between studies devoted to the behavioral aspects of the healthcare system. Thus, the above indicates that the scholars are interested in investigating the impact of trust on patients' decision-making. Accordingly, they distinguish such basic concepts as «trust», «health care system», «health care personnel», «health care delivery», «COVID-19», etc.

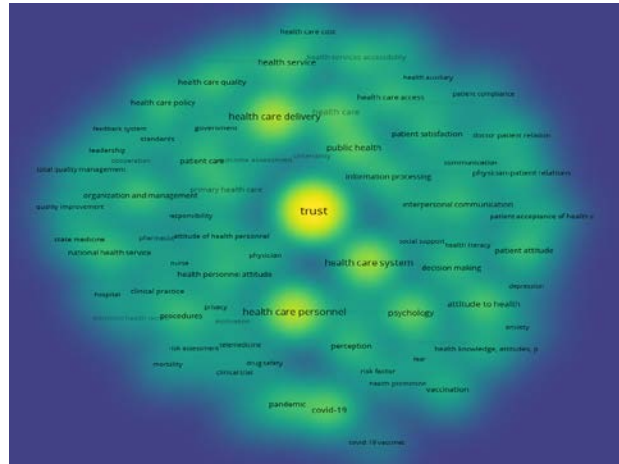


Figure 8. Link density visualization of the analyzed items
Sources: developed by the authors using the VOSviewer software tools.

This study applied the VOSviewer software tools to analyze the evolutionary development of research on trust in healthcare. Noteworthy here, the period from 1999 to 2015 was excluded from the time range because of the insignificant number of publications. Therefore, Figure 9 visualizes the keywords co-occurrences of published articles from 2016 to 2022. Besides, the evolution of the publications is graded depending on the year of publication (deep blue color visualizes elder studies indicated, yellow – newer).

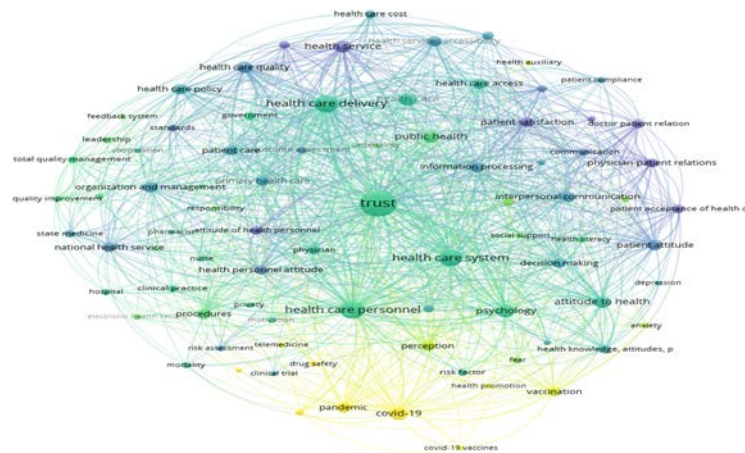


Figure 9. The overlay visualization of the analyzed items
Sources: developed by the authors using the VOSviewer software tools.

The overlay visualization of the analyzed studies showed that trust was studied at the interpersonal level at the beginning of the analyzed period. It concerned the relationship between doctors and patients. Gradually, the scholars took an interest in the patients' behavior and government regulation in healthcare. Since 2019, medical institutions have started to actively implement the ideas of trust in the medical

institution's management. It should be noted that in 2020 the focus shifted due to the pandemic. Therefore, it could be stated that the healthcare crisis provokes the rise in publication activity addressing the issues of trust impact on the public decisions concerning the vaccination and other preventative measures to prevent the spread of the virus.

Conclusions. Trust in the healthcare system is the core of the relationship between patients, doctors, medical administration, and the government. Generally, trust indicates the public perception of healthcare and its participants in terms of the ability to provide quality medical services and preventive measures to improve public health.

This study aimed to analyze the concept of trust in healthcare and provide a meaningful methodological framework for exploring this concept. The bibliometric analysis methods were used for a systematic literature review concerning trust issues in healthcare. The study sample included 1134 scientific publications indexed in the Scopus scientometric database from 1999 to 2022. A comparative dynamic of the number of scientific publications has revealed the link between vaccination, COVID-19, and trust in the healthcare system. VOSviewer software tools were applied to systematize the main trends in the study of confidence in healthcare and identify new research directions.

The results of the initial data analysis showed that trust in the healthcare system is not a new topic. However, the peak of publication activity (154 publications) in this area was 2020. The above resulted from the advent impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

The findings showed that scientists from the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia had published most of the publications on trust in the financial sector. The most influential scientific journal was the British journal BMC Medical Ethics (impact factor of 1,869).

This study confirms VOSviewer software to be a practical and effective tool for identifying new trends in research, analyzing co-citations, and visualizing the evolution of terms. Thus, in the study frame, 83 keywords out of 242. It allowed identifying four clusters of research on trust in the healthcare system: 1) decision-making by patients under the COVID-19 pandemic; 2) provision of accessible and high-quality medical care by the state; 3) organizational aspects of the medical institution; 4) interpersonal relationships between doctor and patient.

It stands to mention that this study is the first attempt to use the bibliometric analysis for a systematic literature overview of trust in healthcare. The obtained results could be used to determine further research directions regarding the analyzed topic.

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Сучасні тенденції наукових досліджень з питань довіри до системи охорони здоров'я

Сфера довіри до системи охорони здоров'я, що активно розвивається в ковідних та постковідних умовах, супроводжується значним ростом кількості наукової літератури, яка потребує детального аналізу. Відповідно, основною метою цього дослідження є проведення багаторівневого бібліометричного аналізу публікацій з питань довіри до системи охорони здоров'я. Це дозволить скласти глобальну картину явища, визначити динамічні аспекти тенденцій

зі статистичної точки зору, використовуючи змістовно-контекстуальний, описовий, компаративний, кластерний та еволюційно-часовий аналізи. Методологічною основою дослідження є сукупність наукових публікацій проіндексованих в наукометричній базі Scopus, які було проаналізовано за допомогою аналітичних інструментів ScopusTools та VOSViewer. Загалом було проаналізовано 1134 статті, опубліковані в період з 1999 по другий квартал 2022 року. Отримані результати свідчать про зростаючу тенденцію поширення наукових досліджень з тематики довіри до системи охорони здоров'я. За результатами було ідентифіковано п'ять етапів наукового розвитку досліджуваної тематики, зокрема останній характеризується надзвичайно високим дослідницьким інтересом та охоплює період з 2020 по II квартал 2022 року. При цьому географічними центром досліджень є Велика Британія, також значний внесок у розвиток досліджень довіри до системи охорони здоров'я було зроблено вченими Сполучених Штатів Америки, Австралії та Канади. Аналіз галузевої структури досліджень довіри до фінансового сектору демонструє слабку розгалуженість, а компаративний аналіз публікацій засвідчує існування тісного зв'язку між поняттями довіри до системи охорони здоров'я, вакцинацією та COVID-19. Кластерний аналіз дозволив виділити п'ять основних груп наукових досліджень. Результати еволюційно-часового аналізу, засвідчують, що на початку розвитку наукового інтересу, дослідження стосувалися міжособистісних відносин лікарів та пацієнтів, а найновішою сферою досліджень є вивчення впливу довіри на прийняття населенням рішень з приводу вакцинації та інших превентивних заходів. Таким чином, результати дослідження показали, що довіра є однією з найбільш вирішальних складових у забезпеченні ефективної політики охорони здоров'я.

Ключові слова: бібліометричний аналіз; вакцинація; довіра до системи охорони здоров'я; кластерний аналіз; наукометрична база даних; COVID-19, VOSViewer, Scopus.