

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

## From Clinical Practice to Scientific Growth: The Development of EMDR Research in Türkiye

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** This study provides the first comprehensive bibliometric analysis of Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) research conducted in Türkiye, offering a panoramic view of the field's academic evolution from 2004 to 2025.

**Method:** Drawing data from the Web of Science Core Collection, a total of 79 EMDR-related publications were analyzed using R (Biblioshiny) and VOSviewer to identify trends in productivity, collaboration, citation impact, and thematic development.

**Results:** Results indicate a steady growth in Turkish EMDR scholarship, with an annual publication increase of 7.97% and expanding institutional contributions from both metropolitan and regional universities. The most frequent research themes include trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety, while emerging topics such as digital EMDR, artificial intelligence, and supervision point toward the field's methodological and technological diversification.

**Conclusion:** These findings reflect the unique sociocultural and humanitarian context of Türkiye, where repeated exposure to natural disasters and collective trauma has catalyzed the integration of EMDR into public mental health practices. The study highlights the need for greater international collaboration, longitudinal and experimental research designs, and systematic development of EMDR supervision and training models. Overall, Türkiye's EMDR research landscape demonstrates a transition from clinical dissemination to scientific consolidation, contributing to the broader advancement of trauma-focused psychotherapy within a cross-cultural framework.

**Keywords:** EMDR, Trauma, Türkiye, Bibliometric Analysis.

## Introduction

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) therapy, developed by Francine Shapiro in the late 1980s, has become one of the most empirically supported psychotherapeutic approaches for trauma-related conditions.<sup>1,2</sup> EMDR's structured eight-phase model enables the reprocessing of distressing experiences and promotes adaptive information integration, leading to significant reductions in post-traumatic

stress, depression, and anxiety.<sup>3-5</sup> Over the past three decades, EMDR has evolved from a trauma-processing method into a comprehensive psychotherapy model that emphasizes emotional regulation, attachment repair, and resilience.<sup>6</sup>

In Türkiye, the development of EMDR reflects the country's unique sociocultural and Originating from Ancient Greek, the term stigma means "hole," "puncture," "scar," and "black stain".<sup>5</sup> Sociologically, the term 'stigmatization' is used to refer to discreditation and humiliation.<sup>6</sup>

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In Türkiye, the development of EMDR reflects the country's unique sociocultural and humanitarian landscape. Positioned between Europe and Asia, Türkiye has repeatedly faced large-scale collective traumas—such as the 1999 Marmara and 2011 Van earthquakes, the Syrian refugee crisis, and the 2023 Kahramanmaraş earthquakes—which have shaped national priorities for trauma-informed mental health.<sup>7,8</sup> These experiences have accelerated the integration of trauma-focused therapies into both public and clinical practice, with EMDR becoming one of the most prominent and evidence-based approaches within post-disaster psychological care.<sup>9</sup>

The introduction of EMDR to Türkiye began in the early 2000s through the pioneering efforts of Emre Konuk, who founded the EMDR Türkiye Association and initiated the first accredited EMDR Europe training programs. Over time, several professionals made significant contributions to the dissemination and adaptation of the method within the national context. Ümran Korkmazlar played a key role in developing EMDR applications for children and adolescents, integrating developmental and play-based principles into trauma work, while Asena Yurtsever contributed to the standardization of training processes and represented Türkiye within EMDR Europe's educational and supervisory frameworks. The collective work of these and other early trainers established a foundation for the ethical, developmental, and educational advancement of EMDR in the country.<sup>10</sup>

In parallel with these clinical and educational initiatives, Turkish researchers have begun to produce a growing body of empirical and conceptual literature on EMDR. Studies have expanded the scope of EMDR beyond trauma to include anxiety, depression, and obsessive-compulsive symptoms, as well as post-disaster and refugee-related interventions.<sup>11-16</sup> This

transition from practice-based reports to structured research reflects Türkiye's broader movement toward evidence-based mental health and the academic institutionalization of EMDR.<sup>17</sup>

Despite this growing body of work, Türkiye's contribution to the international EMDR literature has not yet been systematically mapped. A bibliometric approach offers a valuable opportunity to examine publication trends, authorship patterns, institutional networks, and thematic evolution.<sup>18-19</sup> Such analyses can illuminate how national scientific communities evolve and how local practices align with global developments in psychotherapy research.

Therefore, the present study aims to provide a comprehensive bibliometric overview of EMDR research conducted in Türkiye between 2004 and 2025. By mapping publication trends, leading contributors, and evolving themes, this study seeks to document how EMDR in Türkiye has evolved from clinical practice to a scientifically grounded and internationally recognized field. In doing so, it underscores the collaborative, ethically grounded, and multidisciplinary nature of Turkish EMDR scholarship and its expanding role within the global trauma-informed psychotherapy community.

## Method

### Research Design

This study employed a bibliometric research design, which systematically and quantitatively analyzes patterns within the scientific literature to reveal the intellectual, structural, and temporal dynamics of a specific research domain.<sup>19</sup> Bibliometric methods allow for the identification of publication growth, citation impact, collaboration networks, and thematic clusters that reflect the scientific

development of a field.<sup>18</sup> Given the growing academic and clinical interest in Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) in Türkiye, this approach was chosen to map publication trends, highlight the most influential authors and institutions, and explore emerging topics in EMDR research.

### Data Source and Search Strategy

The bibliometric data were extracted from the Web of Science (WoS) Core Collection, one of the most comprehensive and reliable databases for multidisciplinary citation analysis. WoS was selected because of its rigorous indexing standards and citation tracking capabilities, which provide a robust foundation for performance and trend analyses in psychology and psychotherapy.<sup>20</sup>

The search was performed in September 2025 using the following Boolean string:

"Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing" OR "EMDR"

This query was limited to publications between 2004 and 2025 and filtered by "Turkey/Türkiye" under the "Country/Region" field to ensure that at least one author or institution was affiliated with Türkiye. Only peer-reviewed journal articles and conference proceedings were included to ensure scholarly quality and comparability.

The initial search yielded 79 records from Web of Science Core Collection. All 79 publications were included in the bibliometric performance analysis, including annual publication trends, authorship patterns, institutional productivity, and citation analysis. For thematic and content-oriented analyses, a refined subset of 63 publications that directly addressed EMDR interventions, training, supervision, or mechanisms of change was further examined.

### Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To ensure consistency and relevance, the following inclusion criteria were applied:

1. **Document type:** Peer-reviewed empirical or theoretical articles, reviews, or conference proceedings.
2. **Language:** English or Turkish (if indexed in WoS).
3. **Topic relevance:** Studies explicitly referring to EMDR in the title, abstract, or keywords.
4. **Affiliation:** At least one author affiliated with a Turkish institution or the study context conducted in Türkiye.
5. **Publication period:** Studies published between 2004 and 2025.

Exclusion criteria comprised book reviews, editorials, dissertations, theses, and studies mentioning EMDR only tangentially (e.g., in theoretical discussions without data or intervention).

### Data Processing and Analysis Tools

The bibliographic data were exported from Web of Science in BibTeX and plain text formats and subsequently imported into R Studio (Biblioshiny interface) and VOSviewer 1.6.20 for analysis. R Studio (Biblioshiny) was used to calculate descriptive metrics such as annual publication growth, authorship patterns, citation averages, and keyword frequencies.<sup>21</sup> VOSviewer was used to construct and visualize bibliometric networks including author co-authorship, institutional collaborations, and keyword co-occurrence.<sup>22</sup>

Normalization was performed using the association strength method, and fractional counting was applied to adjust for multi-authored papers. Thematic and trend analyses were conducted to identify evolving research



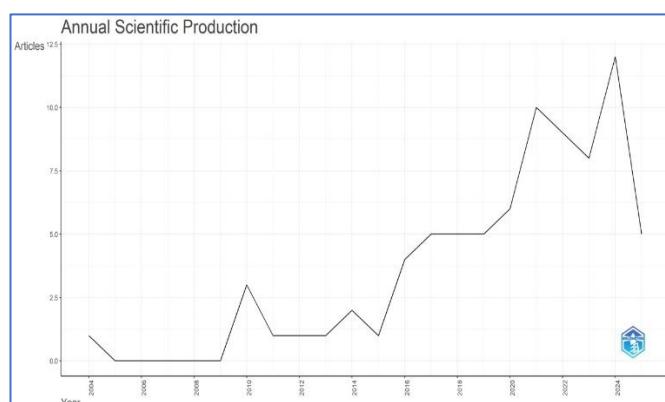
**Figure 1.** Main Information Summary

clusters and conceptual relationships across the examined period.

### Indicators and Visualization

The study produced the following visual and analytical outputs:

- Annual publication and citation trends (growth rate and average citations per year),
- Most productive authors, institutions, and journals,
- Most cited papers and international collaborations,
- Keyword co-occurrence and thematic evolution maps, and
- Word cloud visualizations summarizing conceptual focus areas.



**Figure 2.** Annual Scientific Production

### Ethical Considerations

Since this research used open-access bibliographic data available in the Web of Science database, no ethical approval was required. The study did not involve human participants or personal data. All analyses adhered to academic integrity and transparency standards recommended for bibliometric studies.<sup>23</sup>

### Results

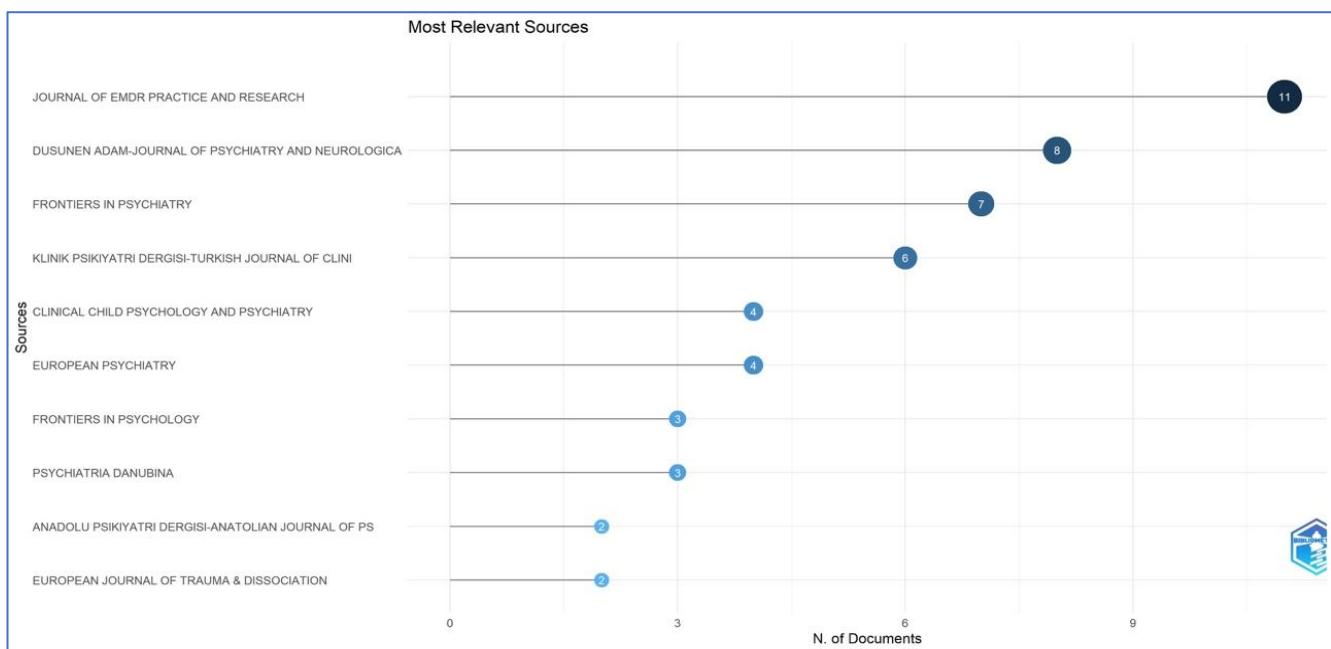
#### Main Information About the Data

The bibliometric dataset retrieved from the Web of Science Core Collection covered publications between 2004 and 2025, yielding a total of 79 EMDR-related documents, all of which were included in the bibliometric performance analyses.

As shown in Figure 1, the dataset included 184 authors, of whom 7 were single-authored, and the remaining represented collaborative works, with an average of 3.62 co-authors per paper.

The annual growth rate was 7.97%, indicating a steady increase in EMDR research in Türkiye

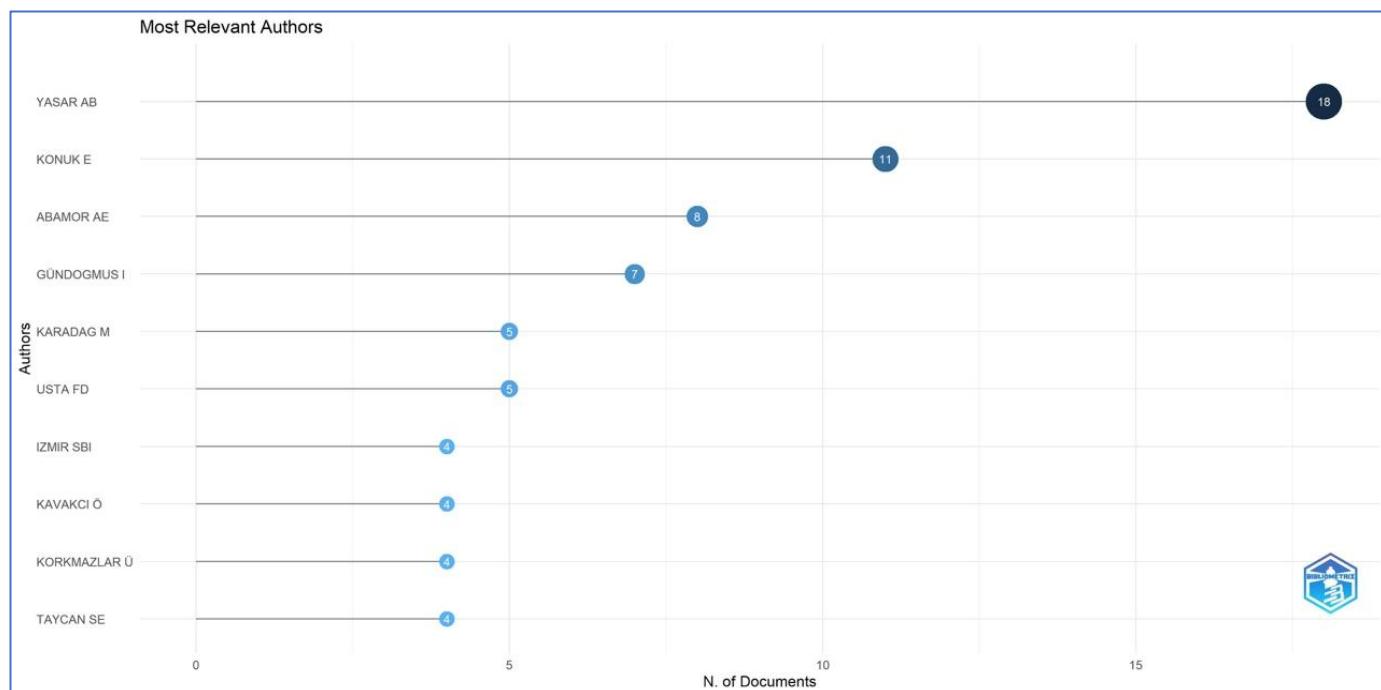
## The Development of EMDR Research in Türkiye



**Figure 3.** Most Relevant Sources

over the past two decades. International co-authorship accounted for 6.33% of all publications, suggesting that Turkish EMDR research remains largely nationally driven but is beginning to build international visibility. The total number of references cited across all

documents was 2,347, while the average citation rate per document was 5.89. Overall, these indicators demonstrate a developing but growing research field, characterized by multidisciplinary contributions from psychology, psychiatry, and counseling.



**Figure 4.** The Most Relevant Authors

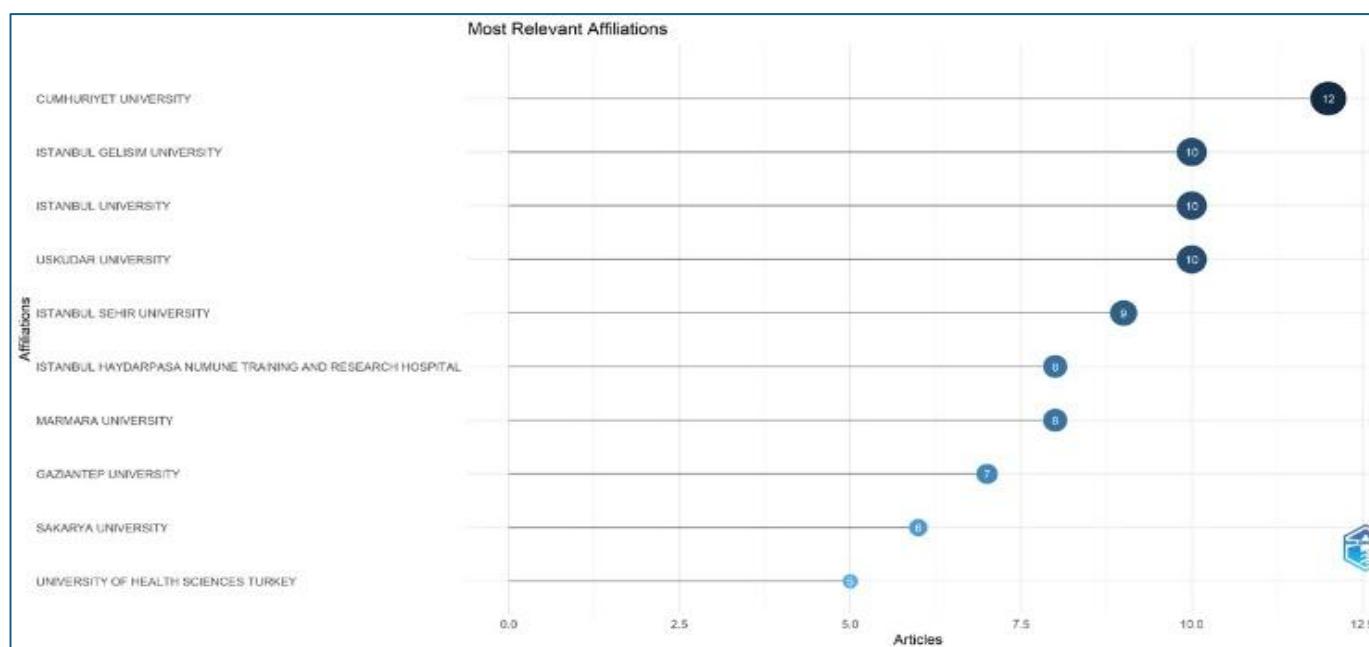
## Annual Scientific Production

Publication trends reveal that EMDR research in Türkiye began slowly, with the first paper appearing in 2004, followed by intermittent production until 2015. A noticeable increase occurred between 2016 and 2020, marking a period of institutional expansion in EMDR training, clinical applications, and academic supervision. As illustrated in Figure 2, the peak of publication output occurred in 2023, with over 12 articles—driven largely by post-disaster interventions and trauma studies following the 2023 Kahramanmaraş earthquakes. Although there was a slight decline in 2024, the overall upward trajectory (Figure 2) indicates that EMDR research in

Türkiye is entering a phase of scientific consolidation and diversification.

## Most Relevant Sources

Analysis of publication outlets showed that Turkish EMDR studies were most frequently published in the *Journal of EMDR Practice and Research* (n = 11), followed by *Düşünen Adam – Journal of Psychiatry and Neurological Sciences* (n = 8), *Frontiers in Psychiatry* (n = 7), and *Klinik Psikiyatri Dergisi* (n = 6). Other notable journals included *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, *European Psychiatry*, and the *European Journal of Trauma & Dissociation*.



**Figure 5.** The Most Relevant Affiliations

As demonstrated in Figure 3, this distribution indicates a dual publication pattern, with strong representation in both international and national journals, reflecting Türkiye's growing contribution to global EMDR research.

## Most Relevant Authors

The most productive authors in Turkish EMDR research were Yaşar A. B. (n = 18), Konuk E. (n = 11), and Abamor A. E. (n = 8). Other key contributors included Gündoğmuş İ. (n = 7), Karadağ M. (n = 5), Usta F. D. (n = 5),

Kavakci Ö. (n = 4), Korkmazlar Ü. (n = 4) and İnci İzmir S. B. (n = 4).

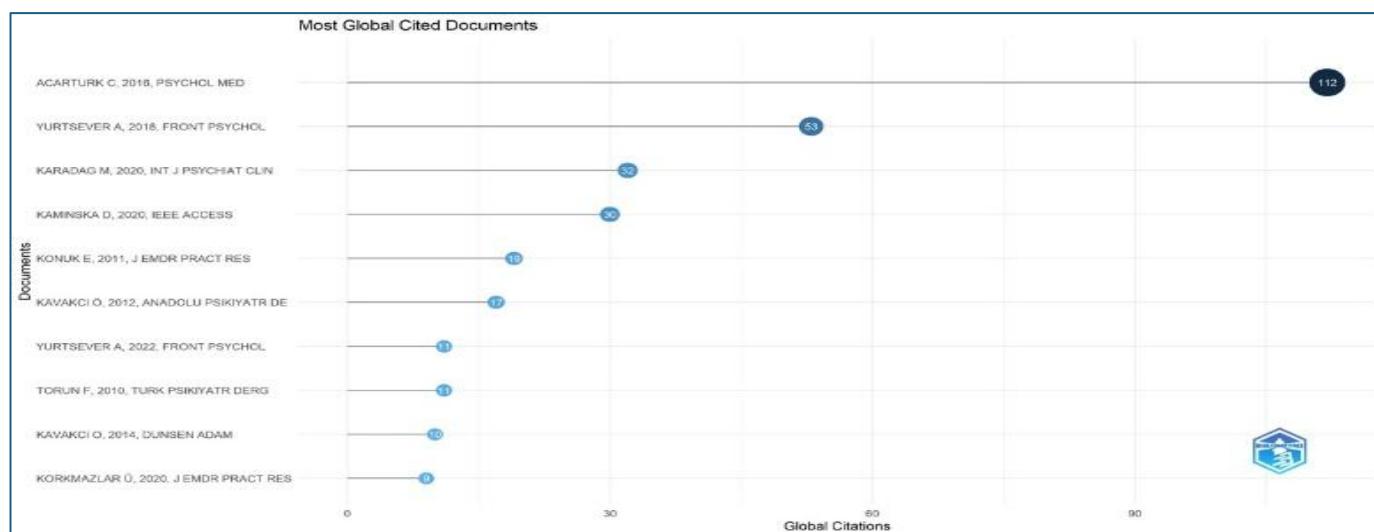
As seen in Figure 4, this author distribution demonstrates that the field is multi-centered, combining academic researchers, clinical practitioners, and medical professionals. Early pioneers such as Emre Konuk, who introduced EMDR to Türkiye, laid the foundation for later academic proliferation, while newer authors increasingly focus on trauma, depression, and anxiety treatment in clinical and community contexts.

### Most Relevant Affiliations

Institutional collaboration analysis revealed that *Sivas Cumhuriyet University* ranked first with 12 publications, followed by *Istanbul*

*Gelişim University* (n = 10), *Istanbul University* (n = 10), and *Üsküdar University* (n = 10). Other active institutions included *Istanbul Şehir University* (n = 9), *Marmara University* (n = 8), *Gaziantep University* (n = 7), *Sakarya University* (n = 6), and the *University of Health Sciences Türkiye* (n = 5).

As depicted in Figure 5, this institutional landscape suggests a concentration of EMDR research in metropolitan regions—particularly Istanbul and Ankara—alongside growing contributions from Anatolian universities such as *Sivas Cumhuriyet University*, indicating regional expansion and decentralization.



**Figure 6.** Most Globally Cited Documents

### Most Globally Cited Documents

As shown in Figure 6, citation analysis highlights several Turkish EMDR-related publications with high global citation counts.

Among these, early and methodologically influential studies stand out, followed by later publications published in high-impact international journals. As detailed in the figure and accompanying table, the most frequently cited documents span a

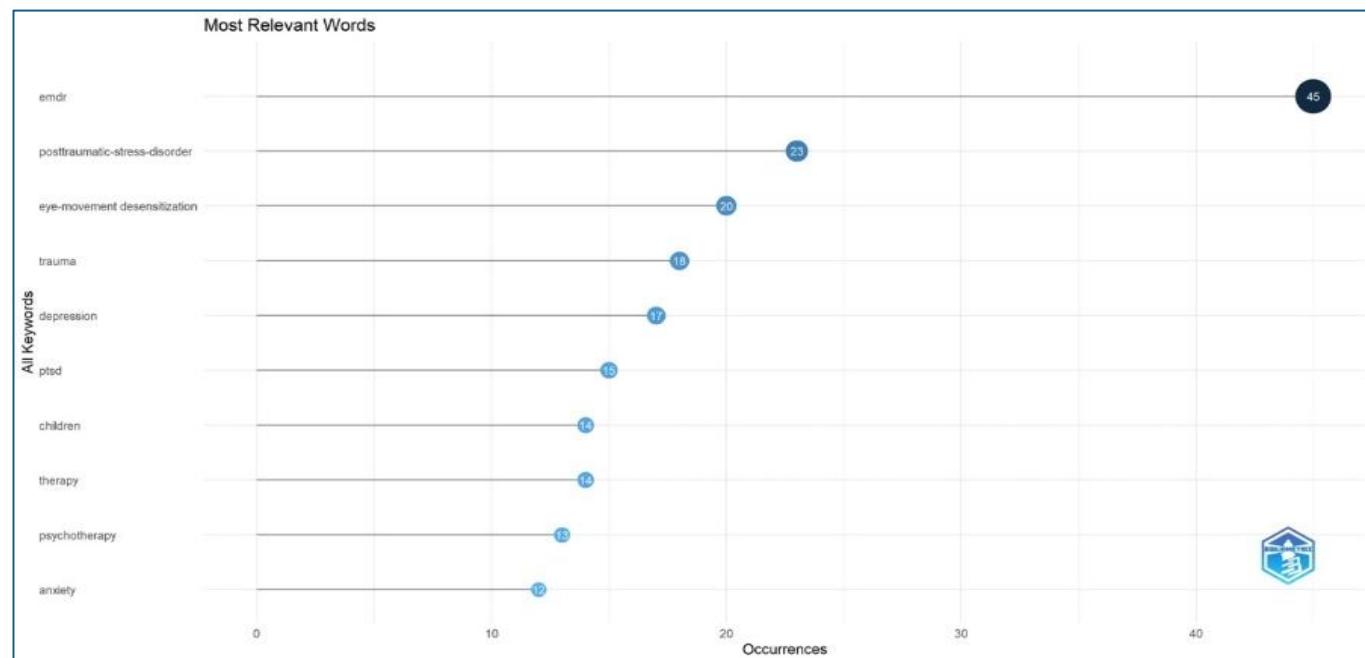
publication period from the early 2010s to the late 2010s and reflect diverse research foci. Overall, the citation patterns indicate that Turkish EMDR research has gained international visibility, particularly through studies situated at the intersection of psychotraumatology, clinical practice, and emerging interdisciplinary approaches.

### Most Frequent Keywords

Keyword co-occurrence analysis showed that the most frequent terms were *EMDR* (n = 45), *posttraumatic stress disorder* (n = 23), *eye movement desensitization* (n = 20), *trauma* (n =

18), *depression* (n = 17), *PTSD* (n = 15), *children* (n = 14), *therapy* (n = 14), *psychotherapy* (n = 13), and *anxiety* (n = 12).

As illustrated in Figure 7, these results highlight Türkiye's emphasis on trauma-related and clinical disorders—especially PTSD, depression, and anxiety—while also reflecting the integration of EMDR into child and adolescent psychotherapy. The inclusion of “children” among the top keywords suggests a growing trend toward developmental and school-based EMDR research.



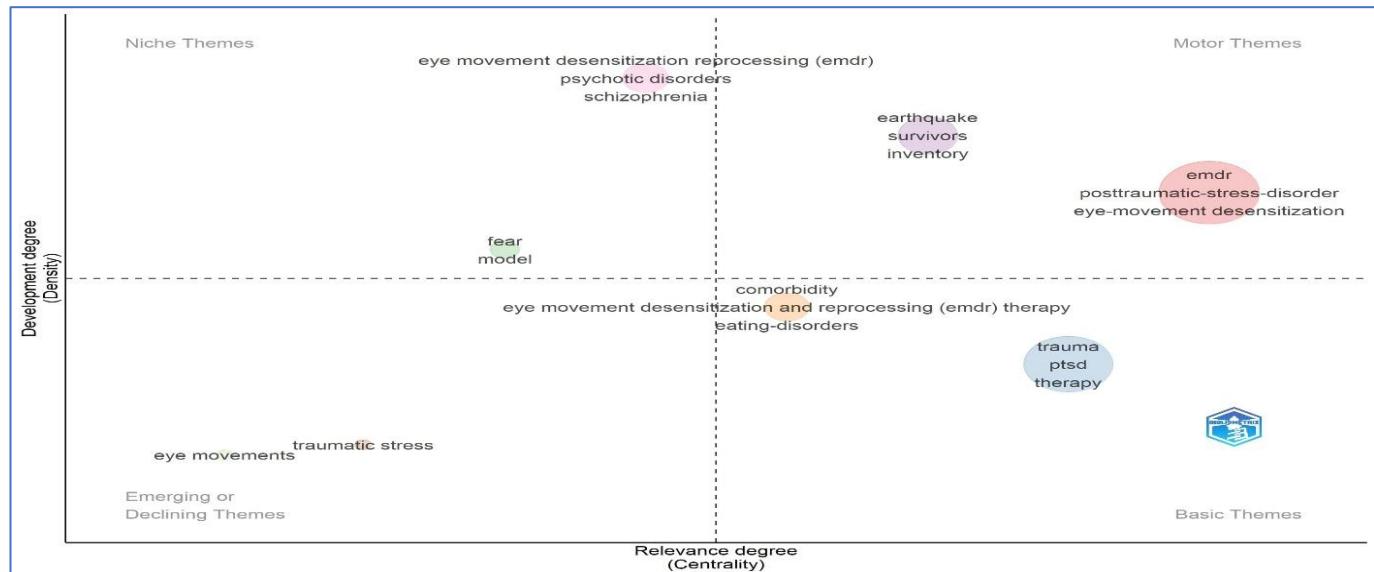
**Figure 7.** Most Relevant Keywords

### Thematic Map

As shown Figure 8, the thematic map identifies four major clusters in Turkish EMDR research. These clusters were generated based on the *centrality* and *density* values of keyword

co-occurrence, which together indicate both the importance and the developmental maturity of research themes.<sup>24</sup> Motor Themes represent well-developed and central topics with high density and strong relevance to the overall research field.

## The Development of EMDR Research in Türkiye



**Figure 8.** Thematic Map of Turkish EMDR Research

In the present analysis, *EMDR*, *posttraumatic stress disorder*, *eye-movement desensitization*, and *earthquake survivors* constitute the motor themes—reflecting Türkiye's primary research focus on trauma-related interventions and post-disaster recovery. These themes define the core scientific identity of Turkish EMDR research. Niche Themes refer to specialized or emerging domains that are internally cohesive yet less

connected to the mainstream research structure. In this study, *psychotic disorders* and *schizophrenia* emerged as niche themes, suggesting an expanding interest in applying EMDR beyond traditional PTSD treatment toward complex or comorbid psychological conditions. Basic Themes are highly central but less developed topics that form the conceptual foundation of the field.



**Figure 9.** Word Cloud Visualization

*Trauma, PTSD, and therapy* were identified as basic themes, representing the theoretical and clinical roots upon which EMDR research in Türkiye has evolved. These areas continue to anchor national academic discussions and training practices. Emerging or Declining Themes denote low-density and low-centrality topics that may represent either nascent or diminishing research interests. *Eye movements* and *traumatic stress* appeared in this quadrant, reflecting ongoing efforts to explore process-level and neurocognitive mechanisms of EMDR, consistent with global trends emphasizing attentional and neurobiological models of change.

As displayed in Figure 8, the Turkish EMDR field demonstrates a strong trauma focus, with increasing diversification toward specialized, developmental, and experimental subdomains. This distribution suggests that the discipline has matured beyond early clinical reports into a structured and conceptually evolving research ecosystem.

### Word Cloud Visualization

The word cloud further illustrates the prominence of terms such as *EMDR, posttraumatic stress disorder, trauma, depression, children, anxiety, and therapy*. As visualized in Figure 9, the dominance of trauma-related terms underscores Türkiye's unique context, where natural disasters, collective trauma, and community-based interventions have shaped the direction of EMDR research. Emerging terms like "digital mental health" and "AI" suggest that the field is beginning to explore

technological adaptations of EMDR within digital therapy environments.

### Discussion

The present bibliometric analysis provides the first systematic overview of Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) research in Türkiye between 2004 and 2025. The results reveal a steady expansion of scholarly output, reflecting the integration of trauma-focused psychotherapy into both academic and clinical practice. This trajectory mirrors a broader global trend in which EMDR transitions from practitioner-led innovation to evidence-based scientific inquiry.<sup>25</sup>

### Evolution and Contextual Dynamics

EMDR research in Türkiye emerged within a distinctive sociocultural and humanitarian context marked by repeated exposure to collective trauma—earthquakes, migration crises, and socio-political stressors. Early studies (2004–2015) were predominantly clinical reports led by pioneering practitioners such as Emre Konuk and colleagues, who established the foundation for EMDR practice in Türkiye. These works were closely aligned with global post-traumatic intervention efforts that emphasized accessibility, brevity, and adaptability in disaster contexts.<sup>26</sup>

After 2016, the field experienced a notable acceleration, corresponding with the institutionalization of EMDR training through the EMDR Türkiye Association and an increasing presence of university-based trauma research centers. This period

coincided with EMDR's integration into national mental health responses—most prominently following the 2023 Kahramanmaraş earthquakes. The shift from case-based documentation to empirical intervention studies represents a significant step toward scientific maturity and methodological standardization.

### Research Productivity and Collaboration

The steady increase in publication volume over the examined period, together with an annual growth rate of nearly 8%, indicates a developing yet vibrant research ecosystem. Similar to patterns observed in Latin America and South Asia, Turkish EMDR scholarship demonstrates strong internal collaboration but limited international co-authorship (6.3%).<sup>26</sup> Strengthening cross-border research partnerships—especially through EMDR Europe, COST Actions, or Horizon Europe initiatives—would enhance the visibility and comparative validity of Turkish contributions.

Leading authors have contributed to expanding EMDR beyond PTSD to include anxiety, depression, and psychosomatic disorders. Institutional clusters led by universities such as Cumhuriyet, Üsküdar, and Istanbul suggest an emerging national research network that bridges clinical and academic practice. This aligns with international trends in which EMDR's scientific advancement has been driven by collaborative university-clinic partnerships.<sup>27,28</sup>

### Thematic Development and Scientific Maturity

Thematic analysis identified four core research clusters: trauma and PTSD (basic themes), clinical and humanitarian EMDR applications (motor themes), psychotic and complex disorders (niche themes), and mechanistic or experimental studies (emerging themes). These correspond to the field's global conceptual evolution, shifting from outcome-based efficacy studies to process-oriented and neurobiological investigations.<sup>25,29</sup> Within this framework, Türkiye's growing focus on child and adolescent EMDR, school-based trauma prevention, and group protocols indicates diversification and responsiveness to public health needs. The emphasis on post-disaster and refugee populations further illustrates the contextual relevance of Turkish EMDR practice and its contribution to culturally adapted trauma care.

### Citations and International Recognition

Highly cited Turkish EMDR studies have achieved significant global visibility. Their integration of EMDR with humanitarian, digital, and community-based frameworks situates Türkiye as a bridge between applied and research-based trauma work. This reflects the emerging interdisciplinary nature of EMDR internationally, which increasingly intersects with psychiatry, neuroscience, and digital mental health.<sup>29,30</sup>

### Emerging Directions

The findings also point to several evolving directions in Turkish EMDR research. The rise

of digital EMDR, AI-assisted assessment tools, and tele-supervision aligns with Europe's broader digital mental health agenda.<sup>31,32</sup> Likewise, the increasing attention to child and adolescent interventions demonstrates a preventive and developmental shift consistent with international trauma-informed education movements.<sup>33</sup> Another emerging domain is supervision research, where Türkiye has begun to develop frameworks that integrate EMDR Europe's ethical and competence-based standards. This focus on reflective practice and professional identity formation among therapists parallels trends across European EMDR communities.<sup>34,35</sup>

## Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, the analysis was restricted to publications indexed in the Web of Science Core Collection; therefore, relevant EMDR-related studies indexed in other databases such as Scopus, PubMed, or PsycINFO may have been excluded. As a result, the findings may not fully represent the entire body of EMDR research conducted in Türkiye. Second, because bibliometric analyses rely on publication metadata and citation patterns, they do not allow for a direct assessment of the methodological quality or clinical effectiveness of individual studies. In addition, recently published studies may be underrepresented due to their limited time for accumulating citations. Finally, the interpretation of thematic mapping results involves a degree of subjectivity. Despite these limitations, the study provides a

comprehensive overview of the general trends and structural development of EMDR research in Türkiye.

## Conclusion and Implications

This study provides a comprehensive mapping of Türkiye's EMDR research landscape, revealing a gradual but steady transformation from practice-based dissemination to scientific consolidation. Over the past two decades, Turkish researchers have bridged clinical innovation with academic rigor, contributing to the regional and global advancement of trauma-focused psychotherapy. Future progress will depend on several key developments:

1. Enhancing methodological sophistication through mixed-methods, longitudinal, and mechanistic research;
2. Strengthening international collaboration, particularly through multi-site and cross-cultural projects;
3. Integrating technological innovation by expanding AI- and VR-assisted EMDR applications; and
4. Developing structured supervision research that aligns with EMDR Europe's competency standards.

By pursuing these directions, Türkiye can consolidate its role as a regional hub for trauma-focused innovation and contribute to a more interconnected and culturally responsive EMDR research network. In conclusion, Türkiye's EMDR research reflects a broader narrative of adaptation and growth—rooted in the country's lived

experience of collective trauma yet expanding toward a scientifically robust and globally engaged field of psychotherapy.

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**Conflict of Interest:** The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

**Ethical Approval:** Since this research used open-access bibliographic data available in the Web of Science database, no ethical approval was required.

**Informed Consent:** Informed consent was obtained from all participants.

**Use of AI for Writing Assistance:** Not declared.

**Peer-review:** Externally peer-reviewed.

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