



## Healing through compassion: a bibliometric analysis of the evolution of compassion-focused therapy

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REVIEW ARTICLE



# Healing through compassion: a bibliometric analysis of the evolution of compassion-focused therapy

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## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** The goal of this paper is to present a thorough grasp of the direction, major ideas, and future possibilities of Compassion-Focused Therapy (CFT) research.

**Method:** A quantitative bibliometric analysis was used to evaluate the theme trends in CFT literature. Using Scopus and Web of Science as the main databases, pertinent articles on CFT from 2005 to 2025 were found. The features and patterns of CFT research were examined using VOSviewer and Harzing's Publish or Perish software.

**Results:** The databases yielded 662 documents, 465 of which were journal articles. The year 2025 had the highest number of publications (105), while 2017 received the most citations (Scopus = 2,066; Web of Science = 1,674). The top nation and institution for CFT research are the United Kingdom and the University of Derby. With 90 articles, Paul Gilbert, the founder of CFT, was the most influential author. The most productive journal in the CFT literature was the Mindfulness Journal.

**Conclusion:** This paper offers helpful information about the trajectory of CFT and outlines a road map for future research and ongoing development in the field.

## KEY POINTS

### What is already known about this topic:

- (1) Compassion-Focused Therapy is an integrative psychotherapeutic approach developed by Paul Gilbert that primarily targets shame and self-criticism and has been applied across a range of clinical presentations and delivery formats.
- (2) Compassion-Focused Therapy has demonstrated promising effectiveness across multiple clinical presentations, including depression, anxiety, PTSD, eating disorders, psychosis, and obsessive-compulsive disorder, among others, in both individual and group-based interventions.
- (3) Compassionate Mind Training (CMT) is a set of therapeutic exercises within Compassion-Focused Therapy designed to help individuals develop self-compassion, regulate emotions, and reduce shame and self-criticism.

### What this topic adds:

- (1) This is the first bibliometric analysis of Compassion-Focused Therapy research (2005–2025), revealing accelerated publication growth from 2021 to 2025 and identifying the United Kingdom, particularly the University of Derby and Paul Gilbert, as the dominant force in the field.
- (2) Compassion-Focused Therapy research remains concentrated in Western countries, with limited representation from Asia and other non-Western regions, which calls for cross-cultural research and culturally responsive adaptations.
- (3) Depression, anxiety, PTSD, psychosis, and eating disorders were identified as the primary research hotspots, while future directions include expanding Compassion-Focused Therapy to more diverse populations and exploring its integration with emerging therapeutic approaches and interdisciplinary fields.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

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## KEYWORDS

Compassion-focused therapy; compassionate mind training; bibliometric analysis; bibliometrics

## Introduction

Compassion-Focused Therapy (CFT) has gained increasing recognition in psychotherapy, with research on compassion-based interventions expanding significantly over the past two decades. Developed by Paul

Gilbert, CFT was specifically designed to support individuals struggling with chronic shame, self-criticism, and trauma, particularly those with adverse early experiences (Gilbert, 2010). Its primary objective is to help individuals recognise how early negative experiences,