



The Trend of the Toxic Positivity Phenomenon and Its Impact on Mental Health Generation Z: A Bibliometric Analysis

Divia Kamila Mawarnhi¹, Shalvina Nurul Aridza Pratiwi², Zenia Desy Nurlita³,

¹Indonesia University of Education

Correspondence: E-mail: diviakamila557@student.upi.edu

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Article History: Submitted/Received August 05, 2024 First Revised September 10, 2024 Accepted November 12, 2024 First Available online December 01, 2024 Publication Date December 23, 2024</p> <p>Keyword: Generation Z; Mental health; Toxic Positivity</p>	<p>The phenomenon of toxic positivity is increasingly prevalent among Generation Z, particularly as the use of social media grows, encouraging individuals to constantly project an excessively positive attitude. This situation has the potential to cause negative impacts on mental health, such as emotional invalidation, stress, anxiety, and a decline in psychological well-being. This study aims to analyze trends and developments in research related to the phenomenon of toxic positivity on the mental health of Generation Z through a bibliometric analysis approach. Research data were obtained from the Google Scholar database using the Publish or Perish application with the keywords “toxic positivity” and “mental health” for the period 2020–2025, with a maximum of 500 articles. Bibliometric analysis was conducted using the VOSviewer application through three types of visualizations: network visualization, overlay visualization, and density visualization. The results indicate that the keyword “toxicity” serves as a central hub connecting various research topics, such as empirical studies, individual responses, and mental health contexts. Overlay visualization reveals a shift in research focus from conceptual studies toward empirical research in recent years. Meanwhile, the density visualization results indicate that studies on the impact of toxic positivity remain more dominant than specific and in-depth discussions. This study concludes that research on the effects of toxic positivity on Generation Z’s mental health continues to evolve but still holds significant potential for more comprehensive examination, particularly by integrating theoretical and empirical approaches).</p>

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the phenomenon of toxic positivity has become increasingly prevalent in everyday life, particularly among Generation Z, who are active on social media. On various platforms, such as TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter, many teenagers and young adults share overly positive messages, even in situations that actually require space to express negative emotions. This phenomenon has also been highlighted in several Indonesian mental health articles, which emphasize that the pressure to “always be happy” can stifle the process of self-validation and worsen a person’s emotional state (Pijar Psikologi, 2021). This issue is particularly significant for Generation Z, who are in the phase of identity formation and are heavily influenced by digital social norms that demand absolute positivity.

The Indonesia Digital Report 2023 reveals that 79% of Generation Z actively uses social media daily, and the majority of them admit to frequently feeling pressured to appear strong, happy, and productive (We Are Social & Hootsuite, 2023). A survey by the UIN Jakarta Psychology Journal (Putri & Rahmawati, 2022) revealed that 41% of students have felt uncomfortable sharing negative feelings for fear of being labeled “over-the-top” or “weak,” a hallmark of the toxic positivity response. Meanwhile, an international study by Bastian et al. (2022) shows that the pressure to always be positive correlates with increased anxiety, stress, and a decline in psychological well-being. This data illustrates that toxic positivity is not merely a social trend but has the potential to be a risk factor for the mental health of Generation Z.

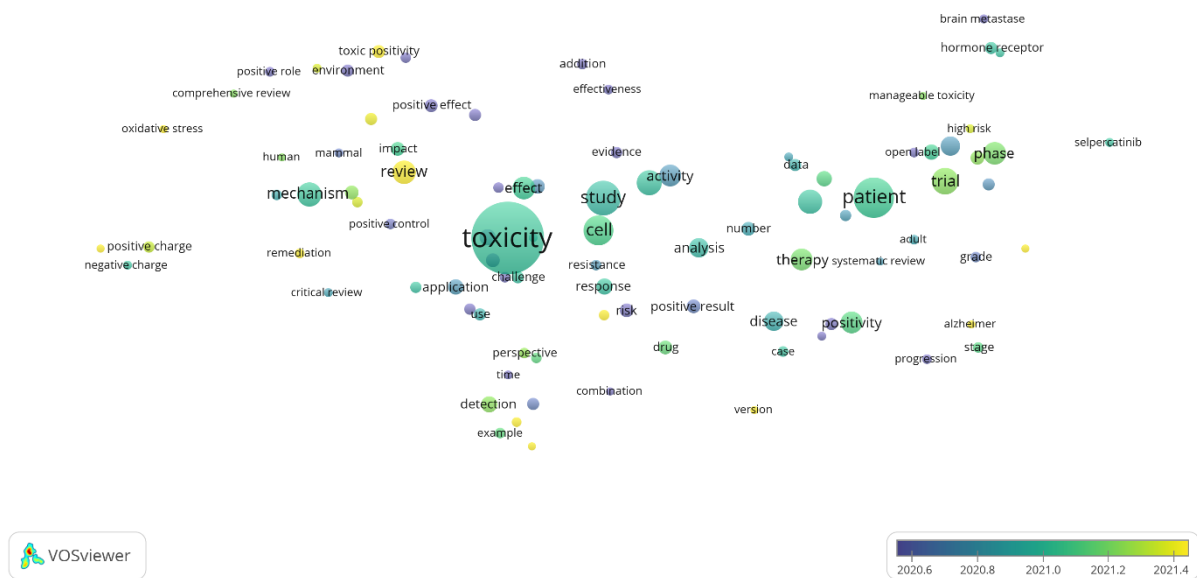
Generation Z’s increasing exposure to digital culture makes them increasingly vulnerable to unhealthy communication patterns, including toxic positivity. If not thoroughly understood, this phenomenon can lead to long-term consequences such as emotional invalidation, academic and social burnout, and a decline in self-regulation skills (Rahmawati, 2021). Therefore, it is important to examine this phenomenon scientifically, particularly to understand how this trend has evolved in the academic literature and to what extent previous research has provided insights into its impact on Generation Z’s mental health. Bibliometric analysis serves as an appropriate approach to map research trends and identify unexplored research gaps.

Research on toxic positivity in Indonesia remains relatively limited and generally focuses on analyzing behavior on social media or its impact on individual emotional regulation (e.g., studies by Rahmawati, 2021; Putri, 2022). However, most of these studies do not comprehensively map the development of scientific trends, whether in terms of the number of publications, dominant themes, or the direction of research development at the national and international levels. Furthermore, no study has specifically analyzed how the phenomenon of toxic positivity is examined in the context of Generation Z’s mental health through a bibliometric approach. Therefore, this study offers novelty by conducting a bibliometric analysis to identify patterns, trends, and research gaps regarding toxic positivity among Generation Z, thereby providing a comprehensive overview of the direction of this field’s development.

2. METHODS

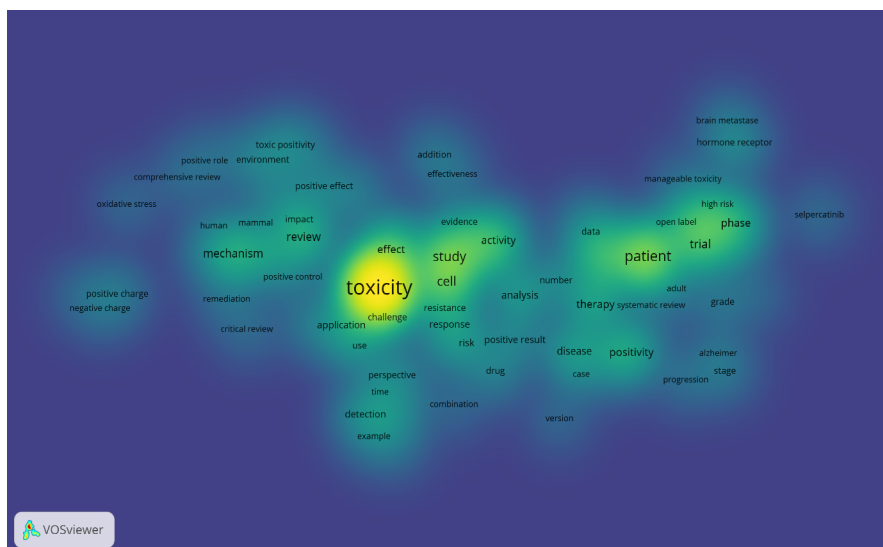
One type of research data meta-analysis known as bibliometric analysis helps researchers understand bibliographic content and analyze citations from articles and other scientific works (Al Husaeni & Nandiyanto, 2022a). The mapping tool used in this study is VOSViewer, an application capable of displaying specific information about the research conducted (Al Husaeni & Nandiyanto, 2022). Data was collected from the Google Scholar database using the Publish or Perish application. This study employed a three-stage approach.

Figure 2. Visualization of Trends in the Phenomenon of Toxic Positivity and Its Impact on the Mental Health of Generation Z.



In the visualization overlay, different colors indicate the time of emergence of research topics. Blue indicates topics that were studied earlier, while green through yellow indicate more recent topics. Keywords such as “review,” “mechanism,” and “oxidative stress” tend to appear in the early period, suggesting that research on toxic positivity was initially discussed more from a conceptual perspective. Meanwhile, keywords such as “toxicity,” “study,” “patient,” “trial,” and “phase” are shown in brighter colors, indicating that in recent years research has begun to shift toward empirical and data-driven studies. This suggests that the topic of toxic positivity is evolving and is being examined in a more applied manner, particularly in relation to individual health and mental well-being.

Figure 3. Visualization of the Trend of the “Toxic Positivity” Phenomenon and Its Impact on Generation Z’s Mental Health



Based on the results of the density visualization, it is evident that the keyword “toxicity” is the most dominant, as it appears in the brightest color and largest size. This indicates that discussions regarding toxic positivity often center on the concept of toxicity and its general effects. Several other keywords, such as study, effect, patient, and cell, are also clustered around the center, indicating that research on toxic positivity is frequently examined through empirical studies and linked to individual conditions. Meanwhile, keywords like mechanism, review, and positivity appear with moderate density, suggesting the presence of theoretical analyses and literature reviews. On the other hand, keywords located in darker-shaded areas indicate that these topics are still rarely discussed and have not yet become the primary focus of research. Overall, these results show that research on toxic positivity still emphasizes its impacts and phenomena more than more specific and in-depth discussions.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of a bibliometric analysis using the VOSviewer application on publications related to toxic positivity from 2020 to 2025, it can be concluded that this topic has seen significant development. The keyword “toxicity” is central to the discussion and is linked to various other topics, such as empirical studies, individual responses, and health and patient contexts. The visualization results indicate that research on toxic positivity was initially discussed primarily in conceptual terms through theoretical studies and literature reviews; however, in recent years, it has begun to shift toward more empirical and data-driven research. Nevertheless, the relationships between research topics remain not yet fully robust and tend to be fragmented, suggesting that studies on toxic positivity still have ample room for development, particularly within the context of mental health.

Based on the results of this study, it is recommended that future research focus more specifically on the impact of toxic positivity on mental health, for example, among college students or adolescents. Further research could also integrate conceptual and empirical approaches to provide a more comprehensive understanding of toxic positivity. Additionally, the use of more diverse data sources, such as Scopus or Web of Science, along with an increased number of analyzed articles, is expected to yield a stronger and more in-depth bibliometric mapping. For practitioners and academics, the findings of this study can serve as a basis for consideration in raising awareness of the impacts of toxic positivity and promoting healthier approaches to support mental well-being.

5. REFERENCES

- Al Husaeni, D. F., & Nandiyanto, A. B. D. (2022). Bibliometric analysis of the use of VOSviewer in scientific publications. *Indonesian Journal of Science and Technology*, 7(1), 1–10.
- Bastian, B., Koval, P., Erbas, Y., Houben, M., & Pe, M. (2021). The social costs of happiness: When happiness makes us unhappy. *Emotion*, 21(2), 362–372.
- Bastian, B., Pe, M. L., & Kuppens, P. (2017). Perceived social pressure not to experience negative emotion is linked to depressive symptoms. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 36(7), 536–559.
- Davis, D. E., Choe, E., Meyers, J., Wade, N., Varjas, K., Gifford, A., Quinn, A., Hook, J. N., Van Tongeren, D. R., & Worthington, E. L. (2020). Thankful for the little things: A meta-analysis of gratitude interventions. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 67(1), 20–31.

- Garcia, D., & Sikström, S. (2014). The dark side of happiness: Subjective well-being and psychopathology. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 15(4), 1–17.
- Kramer, A. D. I., Guillory, J. E., & Hancock, J. T. (2014). Experimental evidence of massive-scale emotional contagion through social networks. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 111(24), 8788–8790.
- Nolen-Hoeksema, S., Wisco, B. E., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2008). Rethinking rumination. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 3(5), 400–424.
- Publish or Perish. (2023). *Publish or Perish software*. <https://harzing.com/resources/publish-or-perish>
(dituliskan bila jurnal memperbolehkan sitasi perangkat lunak)
- Seligman, M. E. P. (2011). *Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and well-being*. New York: Free Press.
- Van Eck, N. J., & Waltman, L. (2010). Software survey: VOSviewer, a computer program for bibliometric mapping. *Scientometrics*, 84(2), 523–538.
- Van Eck, N. J., & Waltman, L. (2014). Visualizing bibliometric networks. In Y. Ding, R. Rousseau, & D. Wolfram (Eds.), *Measuring scholarly impact* (pp. 285–320). Springer.
- Wood, A. M., Froh, J. J., & Geraghty, A. W. A. (2010). Gratitude and well-being: A review and theoretical integration. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 30(7), 890–905.