



Development of Moral Education Research: Bibliometric Analysis of the Scopus Database

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Abstract

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This study discusses the development and direction of moral education research at the global level through bibliometric analysis of Scopus-indexed publications from 2019 to 2023. The main focus of this study is to identify publication trends, author productivity, institutional collaboration, and the main topics of scientific interest in moral education studies. The approach used is a descriptive quantitative one, using R and Biblioshiny to analyze 1,924 articles retrieved using the keyword "moral education." The data were analyzed by year of publication, country of origin, number of citations, and the most frequently appearing keywords. The results show that the number of publications fluctuated, peaking in 2022. The most productive countries were the United Kingdom and the United States, while Indonesia began to show an increase in contribution. The dominant topics that emerged included ethics, psychology, human, and students, reflecting a shift in approach from conceptual to empirical and multidisciplinary. This study contributes to a global intellectual map that can serve as a basis for the future development of moral education research.

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1. Introduction

Moral education is a conscious effort aimed at fostering self-confidence and cultivating habits oriented toward goodness (Armini, 2024). It serves as an essential means to address students' negative behaviors while also enhancing their academic motivation (Anggraini et al., 2023). The implementation of moral education can be carried out through three primary methods: understanding moral principles, habituation of good conduct, and modeling exemplary figures who can serve as role models (Kurniawan, 2021). In general, moral education represents a systematic and comprehensive approach to teaching moral principles and nurturing students' moral development (Nurjanah et al., 2020). The main objective is to guide students' behavior in accordance with the norms prevailing in their social environment (Setyawan, 2019).

Moral education is also closely linked to religious teachings. In Islam, moral values are reflected in three essential components: akhlak (morality), adab (manners), and keteladanan (exemplarity). Morality refers to virtuous values, while adab and keteladanan denote courteous and noble character traits that uphold the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Hence, moral education plays a crucial role in addressing moral degradation among students and within society (Budiarto, 2020; Syarifuddin et al., 2021, Salfadilah, 2024).

In Indonesia's national education policy, the curriculum consists of four core competencies (KI 1–KI 4). KI 1, which focuses on spiritual and religious values, has a strong connection to moral education (Khoiruddin & Sholekah, 2019). These spiritual values, derived from divine teachings, emphasize that human thought,

speech, and behavior must be grounded in religious principles (Juliani & Bastian, 2021; Alwizar et al., 2022; Wahib & Nafi'ah, 2022). The harmony between religion and morality helps create a balanced and respectful social order. The urgency to cultivate good moral character has long been a central theme in various studies (Tsoraya et al., 2023). In education, the ultimate goal of moral education is to develop learners who are honest, disciplined, tolerant, and responsible (Cahyaningrum et al., 2017). The formation of good morals can take place anywhere and involve anyone (Marsen & Neviyarni, 2021), as all forms of learning inherently contain moral values. Such moral cultivation can be achieved through diverse teaching methods, including habituation and modeling (Nurjanah et al., 2020).

However, the current state of moral education in Indonesia is quite concerning. According to the Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA, 2023), students aged 7–18 in Indonesia face various forms of violence: 15% experience bullying, 19% exclusion, 22% humiliation, 14% threats, 18% physical attacks by peers, and 20% involvement in the spread of negative rumors. Data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI, 2023) also reveal alarming figures, reporting 2,133 cases of child sexual abuse in 2022. As of January 1, 2023, there were 9,898 recorded cases of child abuse 1,900 male and 8,855 female victims.

Indonesia is a nation that strongly upholds moral values, traditions, and cultural virtues (Rosida et al., 2022), earning it a reputation as a civilized country. Therefore, the younger generation must be morally educated to internalize and embody the values of Pancasila (Syaparuddin & Elihami, 2019; Akhwani et al., 2021). Pancasila serves as the philosophical foundation of Indonesia, reflecting the nation's

customs and moral principles aligned with its cultural identity (Adha & Susanto, 2020; Dwiputri & Anggraeni, 2021). One of the government's key initiatives to strengthen moral education is the Character Education Strengthening Program (PPK) launched by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek), which aims to foster students' moral and spiritual awareness (Umam, 2021).

The ultimate goal of moral education is to develop individuals who possess good character—wisdom, honesty, discipline, responsibility, courtesy, and trustworthiness. Therefore, teaching and learning processes should emphasize religious and moral values. Based on the foregoing background, this study aims to present a bibliometric analysis, a scholarly approach grounded in the assumption that research should be interconnected with other studies. This analysis seeks to map the global development of scholarly works on moral education, providing an overview of how the field has evolved worldwide and identifying key trends shaping the future of moral education research.

2. Literature Review

As the theoretical core of this article, the literature review not only presents a summary of relevant previous research, but also evaluates and synthesizes these works to establish a clear academic position. In the context of bibliometric studies on moral education, the literature review is organized to identify key intellectual conversations, methodological trends, and knowledge gaps in this field. The synthesis of information focuses on how various studies relate to each other and

contribute to our collective understanding of the research landscape of moral education.

2.1. Map of Moral Education Research

Research on moral education has developed rapidly and has become increasingly multidisciplinary, involving various approaches from philosophy, pedagogy, sociology, and psychology. This study is no longer limited to normative aspects of right and wrong, but has expanded to include efforts to understand how moral values can be instilled, internalized, and realized in complex social contexts. A study by Fazil & Maknum (2024) emphasizes the need for a systematic and comprehensive approach to moral education, with the aim of fostering good habits and guiding behavior in accordance with prevailing social norms. This approach affirms that moral education is not merely the teaching of values, but also a process of continuous character building through practice and habituation.

Meanwhile, religious perspectives, particularly Islam, provide significant conceptual contributions by placing morality within the framework of distinctive spiritual and ethical values. In this view, moral education cannot be separated from the formation of morals, manners, and role models as explained by Salfadilah (2024) and Syarifuddin et al. (2021). This approach emphasizes the integration of cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects as a whole in the formation of individual morals. An evaluation of the existing literature shows that scholars' responses to the phenomenon of moral degradation still tend to be fragmented based on academic disciplines. Therefore, there is an urgent need for a comprehensive and

interdisciplinary synthesis to understand the interconnections between fields of study and to develop a more holistic and contextual moral education paradigm.

2.2. Methodology and Approaches in Moral Education Studies

Questions regarding how information in literature reviews is synthesized are highly relevant in the context of moral education research, especially as this field continues to evolve and produce an increasing number of publications each year. Previous studies have mostly used qualitative approaches, such as that of Kurniawan (2021), which focused on identifying moral learning methods, and Cahyaningrum et al. (2017), which evaluated the output of character education. These approaches provide an in-depth understanding of values and the character formation process, but are often limited in terms of generalization and mapping of a broader knowledge structure.

In this context, there is a need to complement qualitative approaches with methods that are capable of describing research patterns quantitatively and visually. Unfortunately, there is still a scarcity of studies that attempt to map the scientific landscape of moral education in this way. This is where bibliometric studies, as proposed in this article, play an important role. The bibliometric approach allows researchers to systematically organize a broad body of knowledge, identify patterns of collaboration between authors and institutions, and track topic trends and the evolution of the field over time. Thus, this method not only provides a descriptive literature review but also produces a large-scale synthesis of literature that cannot be achieved by traditional literature reviews, thereby providing a more comprehensive and measurable picture of the direction of moral education science.

2.3. Local and Global Contexts

The literature review in this study was compiled with the aim of highlighting the specific context of the development of moral education research, both at the national and international levels. In Indonesia, most research focuses on the implementation of Pancasila values and the application of the 2013 Curriculum, which emphasizes character building through the integration of moral values in the learning process (Khoiruddin & Sholekah, 2019; Akhwani et al., 2021). In addition, much research has also been directed at evaluating the government's Character Education Strengthening program, which aims to strengthen national identity and tackle the phenomenon of moral degradation among students (Umam, 2021). The urgency of this theme is even more apparent with empirical data from PISA (2023) and KPAI (2023) showing serious challenges in terms of the morality and character of the nation's children, thus emphasizing the importance of more in-depth and focused follow-up research.

Meanwhile, in the global context, the literature tends to examine moral education within a universal framework, including the idea of 21st-century character education that emphasizes moral competence, ethics, and social responsibility as key competencies. This article hypothesizes that through bibliometric mapping, it can be revealed that although moral education research in Indonesia has experienced rapid development, international collaboration and its influence in global discourse are still limited. In addition, there is a gap between the number of studies and their effectiveness in overcoming the moral crisis as depicted in empirical data. Therefore,

this literature review not only serves to summarize but also to critique and link previous findings in building a strong rational basis for this bibliometric study.

3. Methods

The type of research used in this study is Descriptive Quantitative Research, which aims to systematically and objectively describe the dynamics of research in the field of moral education over a specific period. The data analyzed consist of journal articles indexed in the international database Scopus (www.scopus.com). Data collection was conducted through searches within the Scopus database using the keyword “moral education.” The initial search generated a substantial number of relevant articles, which were then compiled and screened using the filter features available in Scopus to ensure that only documents meeting the research criteria were included in the analysis.

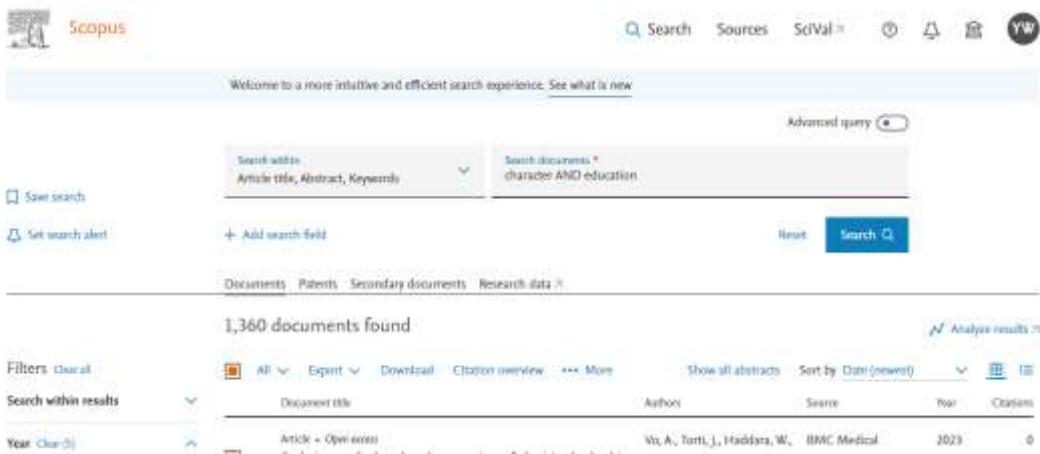
The selected data were then processed in the form of metadata, encompassing essential information such as publication year, author name, institutional affiliation, country of origin, journal title, and main keywords. This metadata formed the foundation for bibliometric analysis, which was used to map patterns of publication, researcher collaboration, and thematic trends within the field of moral education. The bibliometric analysis was conducted using the R and RStudio software programs, which assisted in managing, visualizing, and presenting the data comprehensively and measurably.

The population of this research includes all publications related to the development of moral education from 2019 to 2023, with units of analysis covering

journals, authors, affiliations, countries, documents, research topics, thematic classifications, and future directions of moral education studies. The data obtained from Scopus were stored in BibTeX file format, which is a standard format for bibliographic references. This file was then imported and analyzed using the web interface Biblioshiny, a component of the Bibliometrix package within the R program.

The data search and selection process in Scopus was carried out systematically using the following query syntax: TITLE-ABS-KEY (moral AND education) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2023) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2022) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2021) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2020) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2019)) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "ar")).

This search string ensured that only scientific articles (article type) published between 2019 and 2023 were included in the analysis. Through this procedure, the study obtained valid, up-to-date, and relevant data, enabling an accurate representation of the trends, directions, and scientific landscape of moral education research at the global level.



Source: scopus

Figure 1. Page Scopus

4. Results

This section presents a descriptive statistical summary of the information collected and the results of bibliometric analysis relevant to the data corpus. All findings are presented in detail to enable evaluation of the methodology and justification of conclusions.

Annual scientific production is research produced each year based on the number of articles published annually. Grouping articles by year of publication makes it easier for researchers to see the pattern or flow and trends in research subjects from year to year (Royani & Idhani, 2018). Analysis of annual publication productivity shows a trend in the development of research volume on moral education during the 2019-2023 period. As shown in Table 1, there are fluctuations in the number of articles published each year. The total number of publications in these five years is 1,924 articles.

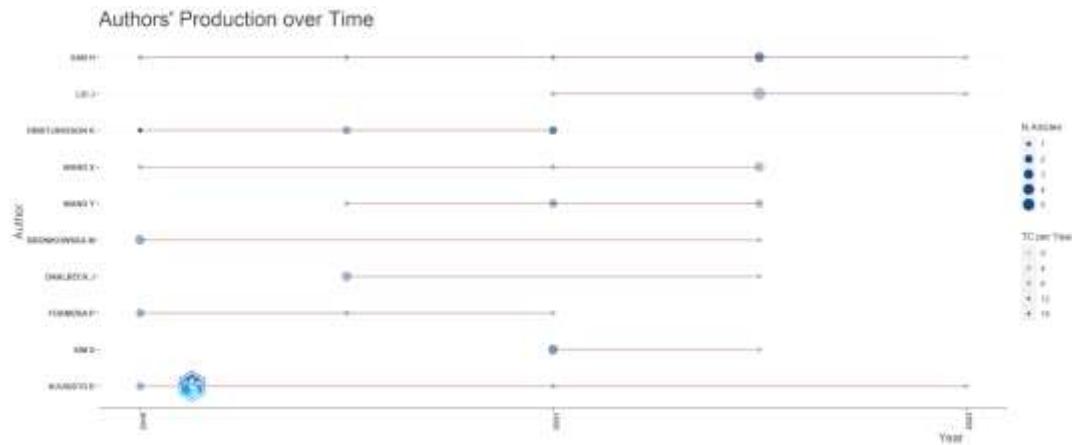
Table 1. Annual Scientific Production

Year	Total Article
2019	413
2020	401
2021	438
2022	583
2023	89

Source: scopus

The data shows a significant increase in 2022 with 583 articles, which is the highest number in this period. On the other hand, 2023 recorded the lowest number (89 articles), which is logically due to the data only covering up to March of the data collection year. These findings provide a basic overview of the dynamics of research productivity in this field.

Author Production Over Time is the production of articles by authors over time, which serves to determine the number of research authors each year.

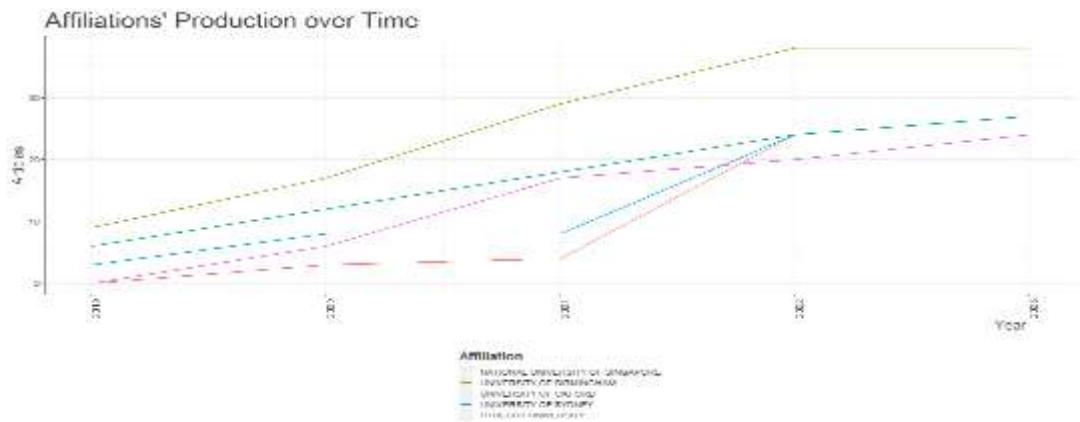


Source: Program R

Figure 2. Author Production Over Time

The author performance analysis reveals the most productive contributors. The author named 'Han H' emerged as the most productive author with 5 articles over a 5-year period. This was followed by a group of authors including 'Kristjansson K', 'Formosa P', 'Wang X', 'Kuusisto E', 'Wang Y', and 'Liu J', who each published 3 articles. The cumulative number of articles from these top ten authors per year is 6 articles (2019), 5 articles (2020), 8 articles (2021), 7 articles (2022), and 3 articles (2023).

Affiliation Production Over Time is used to monitor affiliations over time, the relationship between campuses over time.



Source: Program R

Figure 3. Affiliation Production Over Time

Figure 3 illustrates the levels of articles at various universities that have many different publications each year.

Table 2. Affiliation Production Over Time

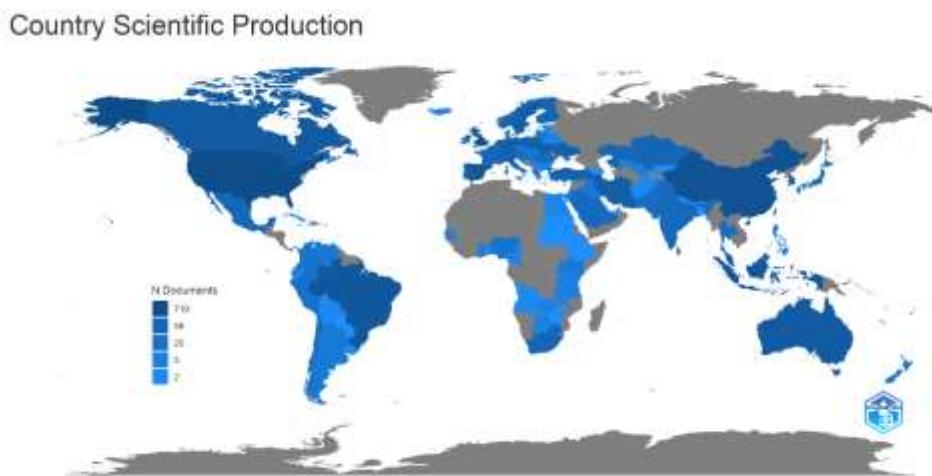
Affiliation	Number of Articles by Year				
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM	9	17	29	38	38
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD	6	12	18	24	27
UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY	3	8	8	24	24
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE	0	3	4	24	24
UTRECHT UNIVERSITY	0	6	17	20	24

Source: Program R

At the institutional level, the Affiliation Production Over Time analysis ranks the University of Birmingham as the most productive institution, with a consistent

number of publications peaking at 38 articles in 2022 and 2023. Other institutions in the top five are the University of Oxford, the University of Sydney, the National University of Singapore, and Utrecht University, all of which show a steady upward trend in productivity from year to year.

Scientific production analysis by country places the United States (USA) as the main contributor with 719 articles, followed by the United Kingdom (UK) with 500 articles, and China with 371 articles. Indonesia ranks sixth with 260 articles, indicating a significant contribution to the global conversation on moral education.



Source: scopus

Figure 4. Country Scientific Production

Table 3. Country Scientific Production

Region	Freq
USA	719
UK	500

CHINA	371
SPAIN	285
BRAZIL	265
INDONESIA	260
CANADA	185
AUSTRALIA	176
NETHERLANDS	153
MALAYSIA	127

Source: Scopus

100 countries produce scientific papers on moral education, and after analysis, there are 10 top countries that have the highest frequency of scientific paper production on moral education. Based on Table 3, the USA is the country that discusses moral education the most, with a production frequency of 719 scientific papers in the 2019 – 2023 time frame.

Most Cited Countries is used to determine which countries have the most citations. The following is the average number of article citations to determine the citations in each country.

Table 4. Most Cited Countries

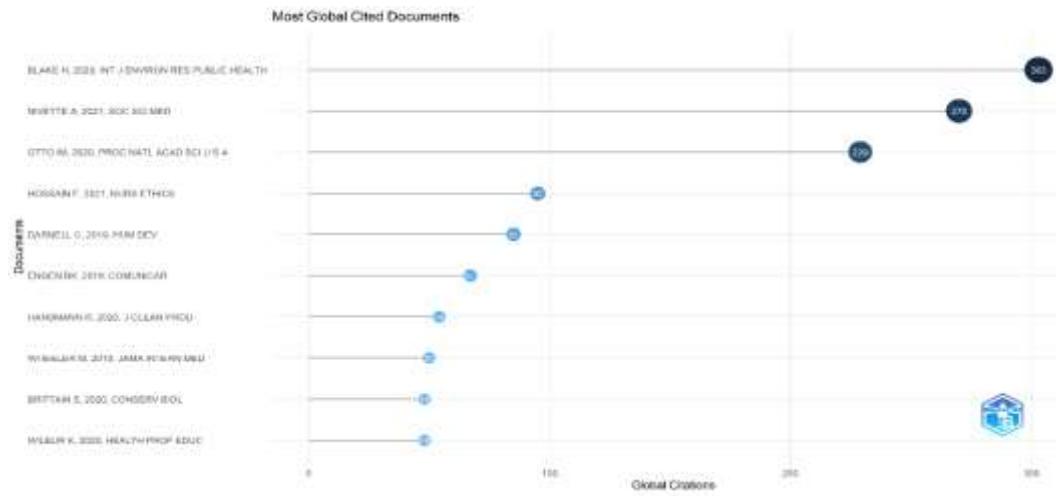
Country	TC	Average Article Citations
UNITED KINGDOM	1396	6.90
USA	995	5.90
NETHERLANDS	448	9.30
GERMANY	301	8.90

CHINA	284	2.00
SWEDEN	270	5.00
AUSTRALIA	250	4.80
SPAIN	224	2.50
CANADA	219	4.60
SWITZERLAND	133	6.30

Source: Scopus

However, when the impact of research is measured through citation analysis, the results are different. As shown in Table 4, although the United Kingdom (UK) produces fewer articles than the United States, articles from the UK have a higher citation impact with a Total Citation (TC) of 1396 and an average citation per article of 6.90. The Netherlands and Germany also stand out with very high average citations per article, 9.30 and 8.90 respectively, despite their lower publication volumes. These findings reveal disparities between the productivity and scientific impact of different countries.

Analysis of The Most Cited Documents is a study of bibliometric analysis that examines citations from a scientific work or analysis of the most cited scientific works.



Source: Program R

Figure 4. Analysis of The Most Cited Documents

The analysis of the most cited documents shows that Blake H's (2020) work is the most influential, with a total of 303 citations, followed by Nivette A and Otto IM. These top ten documents have a citation range of 48 to 303, marking the key articles that shape the research discourse.

Trend Analysis of Moral Education Topics is used to determine the trend analysis of topics over time. This research is limited to the period from 2019 to 2023 in terms of various aspects and frequency.

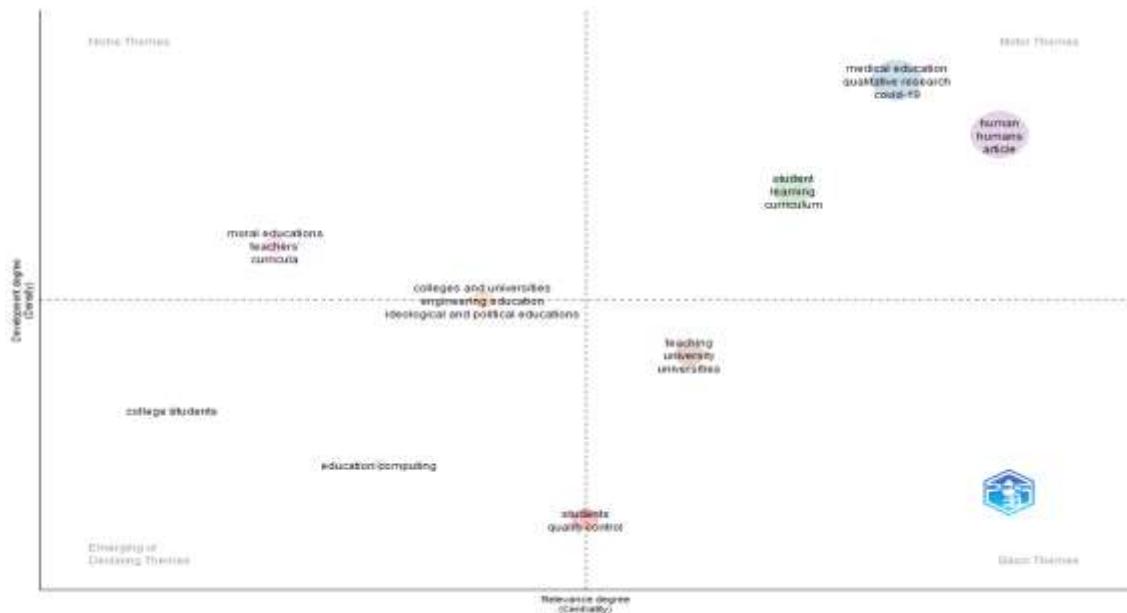
Table 5. Trend Analysis of Moral Education Topics

Item	Freq	Year_q1	Year_med	Year_q3
middle aged	65	2019	2019	2021
organization and management	15	2019	2019	2019
personal autonomy	14	2019	2019	2020
male	304	2019	2020	2022
psychology	127	2019	2020	2022
ethics	120	2019	2020	2021
human	489	2020	2021	2022
humans	371	2020	2021	2022
morality	371	2020	2021	2022
students	86	2021	2022	2022

Source: Scopus

Trend analysis based on keywords reveals the evolution of research focus. As shown in Table 5, themes such as 'human', 'humans', 'morality', and 'male' have a very high frequency of occurrence (>300) and remain relevant from 2020 to 2022. Meanwhile, the topic 'students' shows a more recent trend, with a median year of appearance (Year_med) in 2022, indicating an increased focus on the context of formal education in recent research.

The data presented below provides information on the degree of development (density) and the degree of relevance (centrality).



Source: Program R

Figure 5. Analysis of The Topic of Moral Education in The Future

Finally, thematic map analysis based on density (topic development density) and centrality (relevance to other topics) identified areas for future research. Several theme clusters emerged with high centrality but low density, marking them as important and wide-ranging basic themes that still require further development.

5. Discussion

This section not only summarizes the findings but also emphasizes their broader implications and connections to previous studies. The fluctuating annual scientific productivity, with a peak in 2022, reflects the academic community's

dynamic response to issues of moral education. The significant increase in 2022 can be linked to the rising global awareness of the post-pandemic character crisis, which triggered a new wave of research. This finding aligns with the concerns raised by Tsoraya et al. (2023) and empirical data from PISA (2023) and KPAI (2023), as mentioned in the introduction, which together created an academic climate conducive to the proliferation of studies in this field. The dominance of the United States and the United Kingdom in research productivity confirms the traditional hegemony in the production of social sciences and humanities knowledge. However, Indonesia's position in sixth place is a noteworthy finding, indicating that despite often being categorized as a country with limited research output, Indonesia has made a substantial contribution in the field of moral education. This can be interpreted as a direct response from Indonesia's academic community to the local challenge of moral degradation, as well as a reflection of the social pressure to find solutions through education, as advocated by Rosida et al. (2022) and Akhwani et al. (2021).

Another critical finding is the dissonance between productivity and scientific impact. Although the United States is the largest producer of articles, the United Kingdom and European countries such as the Netherlands and Germany have much higher citation impact per article. This indicates that quantity does not always correlate with quality and influence. Research from the UK and Europe appears to define the core discourse and paradigms within the field of moral education. This has important implications for researchers, including those in Indonesia, to focus not only on publishing but also on building international collaborations and

enhancing the quality and originality of their studies to achieve broader impact. This finding reinforces the importance of research strategies oriented toward scholarly impact rather than merely quantity, as often emphasized in national publication policies.

Furthermore, the analysis of topic trends and conceptual mapping provides a clear picture of the field's evolution. The shift of focus toward the topic of 'students' with a median year of 2022 indicates that research is increasingly centered on learners within the context of formal education. This aligns with Cahyaningrum et al. (2017), who emphasized the importance of character education outcomes, while the bibliometric approach captures this shift as a measurable global trend. The emergence of themes such as 'ethics' and 'morality' with high frequency is consistent with the philosophical and conceptual approaches discussed in earlier studies (Nurjanah et al., 2020; Harimulyo et al., 2021). The results of the conceptual map (Thematic Map) analysis reveal clusters with high centrality but low density strategic opportunities for future research. These themes are highly relevant yet underexplored, representing promising foundations for further studies that could significantly and transformatively contribute to the field of moral education.

Overall, the bibliometric evidence presented not only maps the academic landscape but also reinforces the thesis that the field of moral education is dynamic and responsive to social challenges. This study successfully addresses how scholarly discourse in this field has evolved using measurable data while providing a strong empirical foundation for researchers and policymakers to direct their contributions

toward the most strategic and impactful areas, as called for by Kurniawan (2021) and Nurjanah et al. (2020).

6. Conclusion

This study presents a comprehensive mapping of the development of moral education research between 2019 and 2023 based on a bibliometric analysis of Scopus data. The results show that publication trends fluctuated, peaking in 2022, which indicates an increase in global attention to moral education in response to social challenges and the crisis of values in the aftermath of the pandemic. Analysis of author, affiliation, and country productivity reveals the dominance of contributions from institutions and researchers in developed countries, such as the United Kingdom and the United States, while contributions from developing countries remain relatively limited. In addition, emerging topic trends such as ethics, psychology, human, and students show a paradigm shift from a normative approach to a more multidisciplinary empirical study. These findings confirm that moral education research is not only conceptual but also has strategic implications for strengthening the character and human values of students in the era of globalization.

Based on these results, it is recommended that future research develop an interdisciplinary approach that integrates moral theory, psychology, and character education in local and global contexts. International collaboration needs to be expanded to create a balance in research contributions between developed and developing countries, including increasing the capacity for academic publications in Indonesia. In addition, the strengthening of moral education must be directed at

developing a curriculum and pedagogical practices based on religious values, social ethics, and national culture. Future researchers are advised to explore the effectiveness of implementing moral education through long-term empirical studies and character-based learning approaches so that the research results not only enrich scientific literature but also have a real impact on shaping the character of students.

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