

Trends and Developments in Religious Psychology Research Methods: A Bibliometric Study of SCOPUS Publications (2015–2025)

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh meningkatnya kebutuhan akan kajian sistematis mengenai metode dalam psikologi agama, yang hingga kini masih didominasi oleh pendekatan kuantitatif dan belum banyak mengintegrasikan pendekatan kualitatif serta interdisipliner. Perubahan paradigma penelitian psikologi agama ke arah yang lebih kontekstual dan fenomenologis menuntut adanya pemetaan ilmiah yang komprehensif terhadap tren metodologis yang berkembang. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis tren, sumber, dan tema publikasi ilmiah terkait metode penelitian psikologi agama selama periode 2015–2025, serta memberikan rekomendasi bagi arah pengembangan metodologi di masa depan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan metode bibliometrik terhadap 160 publikasi yang diperoleh dari database Scopus, dianalisis menggunakan Publish or Perish, VOSviewer, dan Microsoft Word melalui pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya peningkatan signifikan jumlah publikasi, dengan puncaknya pada tahun 2025, meskipun hanya 44,4% yang secara langsung membahas topik utama psikologi agama. Sebagian besar publikasi (93,1%) berasal dari jurnal ilmiah, menunjukkan dominasi literatur digital dalam penyebaran pengetahuan. Analisis terhadap kontributor aktif mengungkap keterlibatan lima peneliti dari berbagai negara, menegaskan sifat global dan interdisipliner bidang ini. Kata kunci “religion” menjadi yang paling dominan, sementara “qualitative study” masih kurang terintegrasi dalam diskursus utama. Implikasi penelitian ini menunjukkan perlunya penguatan integrasi pendekatan kualitatif dalam studi psikologi agama untuk memperdalam pemahaman atas pengalaman subjektif, makna personal, dan dimensi spiritual individu secara lebih holistik.

Kata kunci: Analisis Bibliometrik; Literatur Internasional; Metode Penelitian; Psikologi Agama; Scopus

Abstrack

This study is motivated by the growing need for a systematic examination of research methods in the psychology of religion, a field still largely dominated by quantitative approaches and lacking integration of qualitative and interdisciplinary perspectives. As research paradigms shift toward more contextual and phenomenological orientations, a comprehensive mapping of methodological trends has become essential. The purpose of this study is to analyze the trends, sources, and themes of scientific publications on research methods in the psychology of religion during the 2015–2025 period and to provide recommendations for future methodological development. Using a quantitative bibliometric approach, 160 publications were collected from the Scopus database and analyzed with Publish or Perish, VOSviewer, and Microsoft Word through a descriptive qualitative lens. The findings reveal a significant increase in publication volume, peaking in 2025, although only 44.4% directly address the core topic of psychology of religion. Most publications (93.1%) appeared in academic journals, indicating the dominance of digital dissemination in scientific communication. Analysis of active contributors identified five researchers from different countries, reflecting the field's global and interdisciplinary nature. The keyword “religion” appeared most frequently, whereas “qualitative study” remained peripheral and insufficiently integrated into the main discourse. The study highlights the need

to strengthen qualitative approaches within the psychology of religion to deepen understanding of subjective experience, personal meaning, and spiritual dimensions more holistically.

Keywords: Bibliometric Analysis; International Literature; Research Methods; Psychology of Religion; Scopus

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the development of research methods in the psychology of religion has shown significant growth, particularly in methodological discussions. However, despite this progress, research in this field still faces a crucial gap, namely, the limited integration of diverse research methods. Most studies tend to rely on a single methodological approach, often quantitative, which restricts the exploration of complex religious and psychological phenomena. This methodological limitation highlights the need for a more integrative framework that combines traditional and modern research approaches to enhance the depth and validity of findings in the psychology of religion. (Wahab Syakhrani, 2019; Hafiz & Aditya, 2021; Avellia et al., 2023).

Various research methods have been applied in the psychology of religion, encompassing both qualitative and quantitative approaches. These approaches form the foundation for understanding the methodological dynamics and development of research in this field. Qualitative methods, such as case studies and phenomenological analysis, are employed to explore individuals' subjective experiences within religious contexts. (Lindawati & Martoyo, 2022; Widyastuti & Nur, 2022). Meanwhile, quantitative methods often utilize surveys and measurements of psychological variables related to religiosity and psychological well-being. (Lathifah & Pujiанти, 2024). Selecting an appropriate research method is crucial, as it influences data collection and analysis processes and ultimately shapes the interpretation of research findings.

The application of these various research methods contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of religion in human psychological functioning. The psychology of religion itself plays a crucial role not only in individual development but also within broader social and cultural contexts. Numerous studies have demonstrated that aspects of religiosity positively influence the psychological well-being of individuals and communities. (Lathifah & Pujiанти, 2024; Maulidah et al., 2024). In addition, research exploring the influence of religious psychology on personal identity and belief systems has become increasingly relevant

amid the rapid changes in contemporary social dynamics. (Lindawati & Martoyo, 2022; Avellia et al., 2023).

The research methods most commonly used in the psychology of religion are literature studies and critical analyses. Previous studies have revealed significant deficiencies in the mapping and systematization of existing research, creating a gap that needs to be addressed in future investigations. (Hafiz & Aditya, 2021; Avellia et al., 2023; Hasibuan et al., 2024). This limitation underlines the need for a systematic bibliometric analysis to comprehensively map research trends, sources, and thematic developments in the psychology of religion. Conducting such an analysis is essential to identify patterns of methodological use, key contributors, and emerging directions that can guide the advancement of future research in this field.

Conducting this research is essential as it can provide a comprehensive scientific map of research methods in the psychology of religion, particularly during the period 2015-2025. By understanding existing trends and developments, researchers can identify existing gaps and propose new methodologies that are more effective in studying the relationship between religion and psychology. (Lathifah & Pujiyanti, 2024; Maulidah et al., 2024). Therefore, the creation of scientific maps in this research will provide significant contributions not only for scientists but also for practitioners in the fields of psychology and religious education worldwide.

Based on the context of this research, several key questions are formulated to guide the study. First, it is essential to identify the trends in the development of academic publications related to the psychology of religion from 2010 to 2025. These trends encompass two main aspects: the number of publications and the recurring themes discussed. Previous studies indicate that topics related to religious psychology and spirituality have multiplied in psychological literature, reflecting a rising interest in the interaction between religion, psychology, and mental well-being. (Cunha & Scorsolini-Comin, 2020; Paloutzian & Park, 2021). Secondly, it is crucial to examine the primary sources of publications that address studies on the psychology of religion. These sources include various psychology and religion journals that frequently publish research related to this theme, such as *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* and the *Journal of Black Psychology*. (Kelley et al., 2020; Lewis et al., 2021). Thirdly, identifying the most productive institutions and authors contributing to this field is crucial to understanding their influence on the development of the psychology of

religion.(Dawood &Purdie-Greenaway, 2024). Finally, a bibliometric analysis is needed to reveal emerging themes and patterns that may guide future research directions in this area. Based on these problem formulations, this study aims to 1) Examine the development of research topics related to research methods in the psychology of religion over the past decade (2015–2025). 2) Identify the key themes and frequently studied topics in publications on research methods in the psychology of religion during this period. 3) Provide recommendations for the future development of research methods in the psychology of religion based on bibliometric analysis findings.

METHOD

This study employs a bibliometric approach to analyze international publications on research methods in the psychology of religion from 2015 to 2025. Bibliometrics is applied to systematically examine scientific literature using quantitative techniques to identify publication trends, thematic developments, and research patterns in this field.(Manterola et al., 2024). Bibliometric studies usually use databases such as Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) to collect data. Combining these databases can enhance the completeness of the analysis. (Kasaraneni &Rosaline, 2024). The methodology aims to identify and map trends, main themes, and research methods that have developed over time. The primary goal of bibliometrics is to provide comprehensive insight into studied topics and identify potential gaps in the existing literature. Bibliometrics also has a normative role in shaping scientific communication by providing metrics that influence how scientific output is perceived and prioritized.(Ball, 2020).

The analysis process begins with collecting data from international journal databases, such as Scopus, using relevant keywords like "religious psychology research methods." The data obtained includes publication year, type of research, and main findings. Furthermore, this data will be analyzed using the VOSviewer analysis tool to identify collaboration networks among authors, publication patterns, and research. The analysis is based exclusively on data obtained from the Scopus database to ensure the dataset's accuracy and consistency.

The unit of analysis in this study includes journal articles, authors, and keywords related to research methods in the psychology of religion. Data collection was conducted using relevant search terms such as “religious psychology research methods.” The resulting dataset contains information on publication year, author identity, source type, and study focus. The collected data were analyzed using VOSviewer to perform co-authorship analysis, co-occurrence

(keyword) analysis, and citation analysis. Together, these analyses reveal collaboration networks, dominant themes, and the evolution of research trends. (Winarso & Riyanto, 2023; Dursun, 2024; Hamdi et al., 2025). To complement the bibliometric mapping, visual network analysis was conducted to illustrate relationships among authors, topics, and institutions. Statistical tools were also employed to ensure the validity and reliability of the analytical process (Ho et al., 2021; Li et al., 2025). Beyond quantitative mapping, this study also considers the broader social and cultural contexts that may influence the direction and character of research in the psychology of religion. In doing so, it provides not only a systematic overview of existing academic efforts but also a deeper interpretive understanding of how methodological trends reflect the dynamics of religious and psychological inquiry worldwide. (Yan & Zhiping, 2023; Kizilgeçit & Yıldırım, 2022). At the final stage, the study identifies existing research gaps and offers recommendations for future studies. These include suggestions for adopting more innovative, interdisciplinary, and multicultural research methods that capture the diversity of religious and psychological experiences in contemporary contexts. (Uyun, 2023; Ngamake et al., 2024)

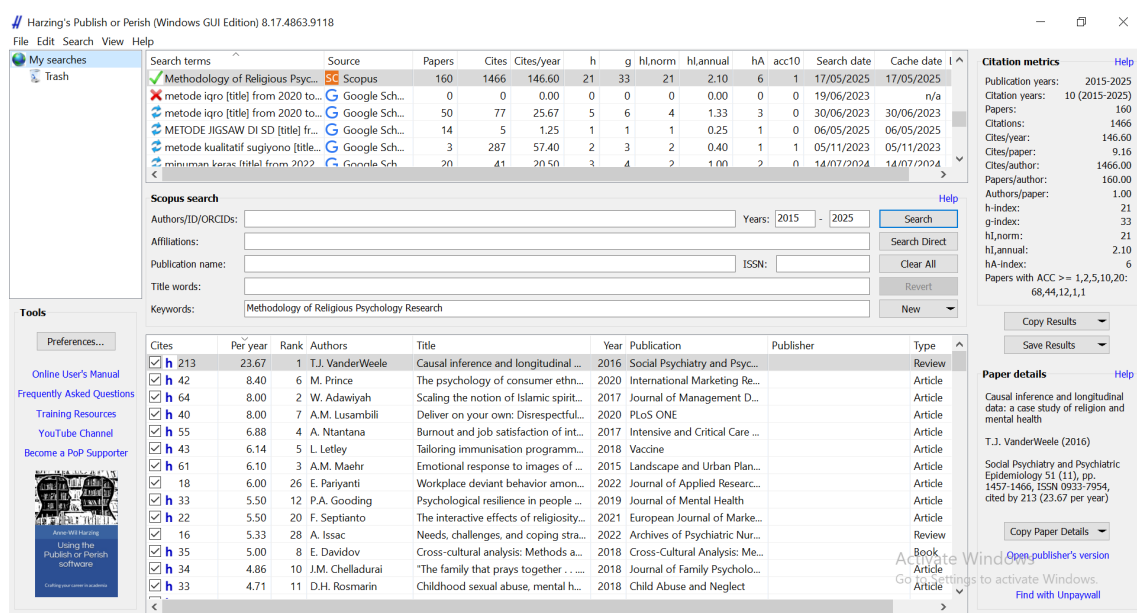


Figure 1. Results of Metadata Exploration Through PoP Version 8.12 on the Topic of Research Methods in Religious Psychology

Based on the analysis conducted using the *Publish or Perish* application, a total of 160 articles related to research methods in religion were identified from 2015 to 2025. Citation metrics were used to evaluate the productivity and impact of these scientific publications, including contributions from individual authors, journals, and institutions.

The data collection process was carried out through database searches limited to journal articles published in English within the field of psychology and religious studies. The selected data were exported and stored in *RIS* (Research Information System) format, allowing for structured and easily accessible storage for subsequent analysis. The next stage involved the use of *VOSviewer* software version 1.6.20 to visualize relationships among elements such as authors, keywords, and sources. This step aimed to map the development and thematic patterns of publications on research methods in religion. The overall bibliometric procedure of this study, beginning from data retrieval, data storage, and visualization analysis, is illustrated in Figure 2.

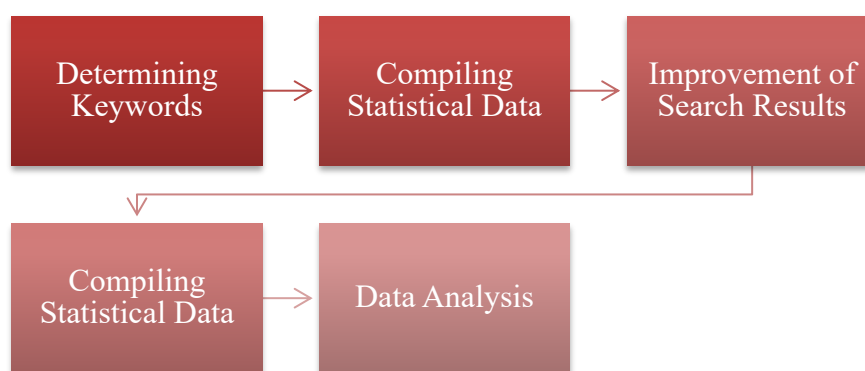


Figure 2. Flow of Bibliometric Research (Iriyani, 2023)

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Pattern of Development of Scientific Works on Religious Psychology Research Methods from 2015 to 2025

To answer the first research question, which is regarding the development of research publications on religious psychology research methods over the last ten years (2015-2025), an exploration of publications in SCOPUS Journals was conducted using the Publish or Perish application as the data source. The procedure involved the following steps: first, the researcher entered the keyword "Religion Psychology Research Methods." Next, the search range was limited between the years 2015 and 2025. In this search process, the researcher did not limit the number of publications to include all relevant articles in the Scopus Journal, resulting in 160 publications. After that, a manual analysis was conducted by sorting the publications based on the year of publication as the criteria for article relevance, which met the criteria from 2015 to 2025, which will be elaborated further as follows:

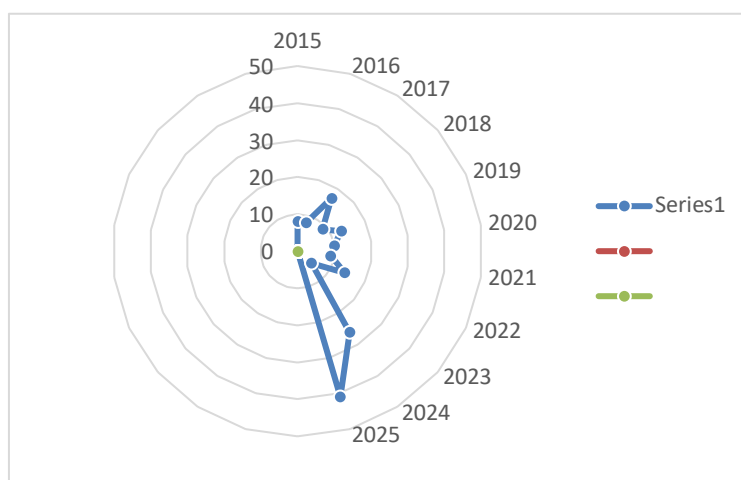


Figure 3. Trends in Scientific Publications on Research Methods in Religious Psychology from 2015 to 2025

The image above shows the results of an analysis of relevant references on research methods in religious psychology. The total number of references that appeared in the search in international journals amounted to 160 publications. From 2015 to 2025, there was a significant increase in the number of publications discussing research methods in the field of religious psychology. In the early period, namely 2015 and 2016, the number of publications was still relatively low, with only eight articles each. However, in 2017, there was a spike to 17 publications, indicating a growing interest in this topic. After that, the number of publications varied. The years 2018 and 2021 recorded relatively low numbers, with only nine articles each. On the other hand, 2019 and 2022 showed moderate increases, with 13 and 14 articles, respectively. The year 2023 has become the lowest point in this decade, with only five publications, which may be caused by external factors such as constraints in research or changes in academic focus.

However, the trend experienced a drastic change in 2024 and 2025, with a significant increase in the number of publications. The year 2024 recorded 26 articles, while 2025 saw a sharp surge to 41 publications. This increase reflects a great interest and attention towards research methods in religious psychology. Several factors may contribute to this, including the increasing complexity of religious phenomena in society, the emergence of psychological issues related to spirituality, and the push to apply more varied and integrative research approaches. Overall, despite variations in the last decade, the development of publications shows a rising trend. This reflects an increasing academic interest in religious psychology,

particularly in its methodology, which is expected to continue to develop.

The next step the researchers have taken is to reanalyze the most relevant references on Research Methods in Religious Psychology from 2015 to 2025. The data can be seen in the following table.

Table 1.
Comparison Table of Relevant and Irrelevant Publications

Year	Initial Amount	Number of Relevant	Relevant Percentage (%)
2015	8	4	50.0%
2016	8	3	37.5%
2017	17	5	29.4%
2018	9	4	44.4%
2019	13	6	46.2%
2020	10	8	80.0%
2021	9	7	77.8%
2022	14	9	64.3%
2023	5	7	140.0%
2024	26	11	42.3%
2025	41	7	17.1%

Based on an analysis of 160 publications, only 71 entries (about 44%) are directly relevant to the psychology of religion. Although the year 2025 recorded the highest total number of publications overall, its contribution to this topic is notably low (17.1%), indicating a dominance of other themes outside the religious context. In contrast, the years 2020 and 2021 showed the highest relevance levels (80% and 77.8%, respectively), likely influenced by the context of the global pandemic and an increased interest in the role of spirituality in mental health. The stable trend from 2019 to 2022 reflects consistent scientific attention to the psychology of religion. The year 2023 shows an anomaly where the number of relevant entries exceeds the initial total, possibly due to the presence of duplicate entries or those covering multiple years. Overall, the psychology of religion remains a specialized field, but it shows a positive growth trend in the current academic and social context.

Source of scientific works on research methods in religious psychology from 2015 to 2025

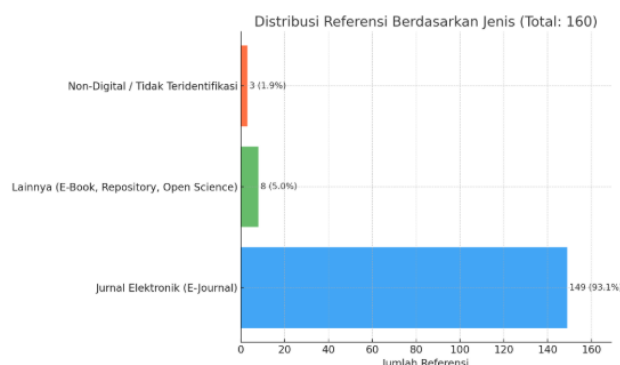


Figure 4. Graph of Publication Sources collected from 160 references

Based on Figure 4, it is elaborated that out of a total of 160 references analyzed in the document, electronic journal sources dominate, with a proportion reaching 93.1% (149 references). This indicates that the authors heavily rely on scientific articles published online, reflecting the use of credible and current academic sources. Other digital sources, such as e-books, repositories, and open knowledge sources, only contribute 5% (8 references), while three references (1.9%) come from non-digital sources or those not identified in electronic format. These findings indicate a strong preference for accessing information through indexed scientific journals, which are not only academically relevant but also easily accessible in the context of research on religious psychology and spirituality.

Researchers Publishing Scientific Works on the Issue of Research Methods in Religious Psychology from 2020 to 2025

The findings from the third study trace researchers who actively contributed to producing scientific publications on the Method of Psychological Research in Religion over the past five years (2020-2025). This tracing process was conducted with the assistance of the VosViewer application version 1.6.20, without imposing any limitations, thus broadly browsing Scopus journals. Based on the results of the tracing, 160 references were obtained from the Scopus database through the Publish or Perish application, with the following steps:

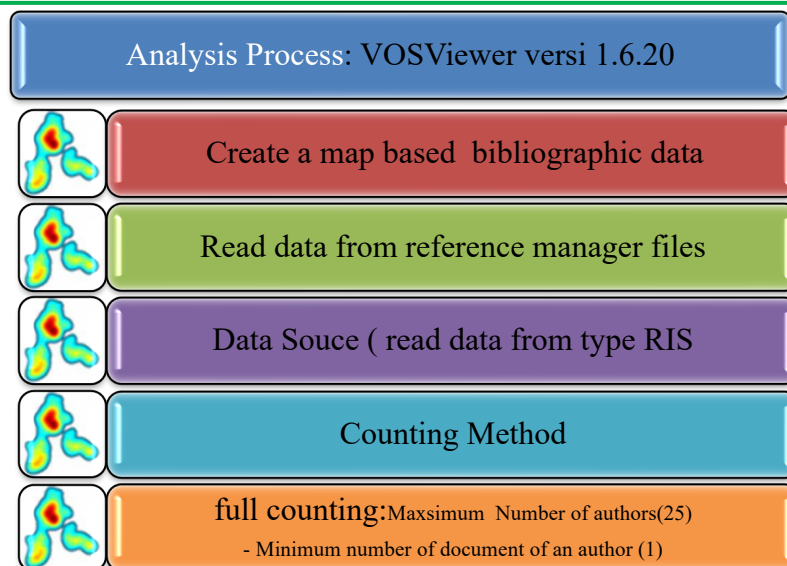


Figure 5. The stages of exploration by researchers that contributed to producing research on the topic of Religious Psychology Research Methods from 2015 to 2025.(Hamdi, 2024)

Based on image 5 above, the first stage is selecting the type of data, where the researcher creates an illustration with a map using bibliographic data. Next, in the data source section, read from the menu, the selected data type is RIS. Furthermore, in selecting the counting method, the researcher opts for complete counting and the maximum number of documents for an author, which is 25. From a total of 25, 159 are selected who meet the criteria and are then automatically filtered again by the Vos Viewer application, resulting in 5 final researchers, as shown in the following image.



Figure 6. The Researchers who Contributed to Producing Research on the Issue of Religious Psychology Research Methods from 2015 to 2025.

Based on Figure 6, it can be concluded that five researchers contributed to scientific publications on the Methods of Religious Psychology Research from 2015 to 2025. These researchers come from various institutions and have diverse academic backgrounds, indicating a broad interest in the theme of Pancasila at the international academic level. The first researcher, Katy Andrade Monteiro Zacaron, is affiliated with two institutions in Brazil: the School of Medicine, Federal University of Juiz de Fora, Juiz de Fora 36036-330, and the Institute of Life Sciences, Department of Physiotherapy, Federal University of Juiz de Fora, Governador Valadares 35012-140. Her contribution highlights the health field's involvement in studying Pancasila values, particularly in an interdisciplinary context. The second researcher, Ying Zhang, is affiliated with the Department of Family Medicine at the University of Washington, United States (325 Ninth Ave, Box 359846, Seattle, WA, 98104; zhangy07@uw.edu). Her involvement demonstrates the interest of American academics in Pancasila, particularly from the perspective of family medicine and social community studies. The third researcher, Muhammad Zakiy, is an academic from Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta, Indonesia. As the only researcher from an Indonesian institution, his participation reflects the domestic contribution to maintaining and developing studies on Pancasila as the nation's ideology. The fourth researcher, Anastasiya A. Zubkovskaya, is from the Institute for Scientific Information on Social Sciences. Her involvement indicates that research on Pancasila is also attracting the attention of social research institutions in Eastern Europe. The fifth researcher, Mahadura Indrajee Lilantha De Zoysa, is a lecturer in the Department of English Language Teaching, Faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. His participation emphasizes the cross-cultural aspect of research on Pancasila and how this ideology is analyzed in the context of language teaching and humanities studies.

Dominant Issues in Religious Psychology Research Methods: Developing from 2015 to 2025.

The fourth finding of this research is to identify the main issues related to the methods of religious psychology research, using stages similar to those employed by researchers who contributed to their publications. This process uses the Vos Viewer application version 1.6.20, beginning with the selection of the data model type, where this research opts to create a map based on text data. Furthermore, in the data source section, the option to read data from a reference manager file with the supported file type being RIS is selected. Then, in the counting method, Binary Counting is chosen with a minimum occurrence count of terms set at nine terms, and the number of selected terms that appear is three terms from a total of 623 terms, as shown in Figure 7. After that, the sorted and cleaned items are analyzed in more detail, and the results

of the analysis can be seen in Figure 8 with the network visualization display mode.

Create Map

Verify selected terms

Selected	Term	Occurrences	Relevance
☒	religion	16	1.50
☒	spirituality	13	1.50
☒	qualitative study	12	0.00

Figure 7. 3 Term Item data from Binary Counting with Minimum Numbers of Occurrences of Term Number of term to be Selected

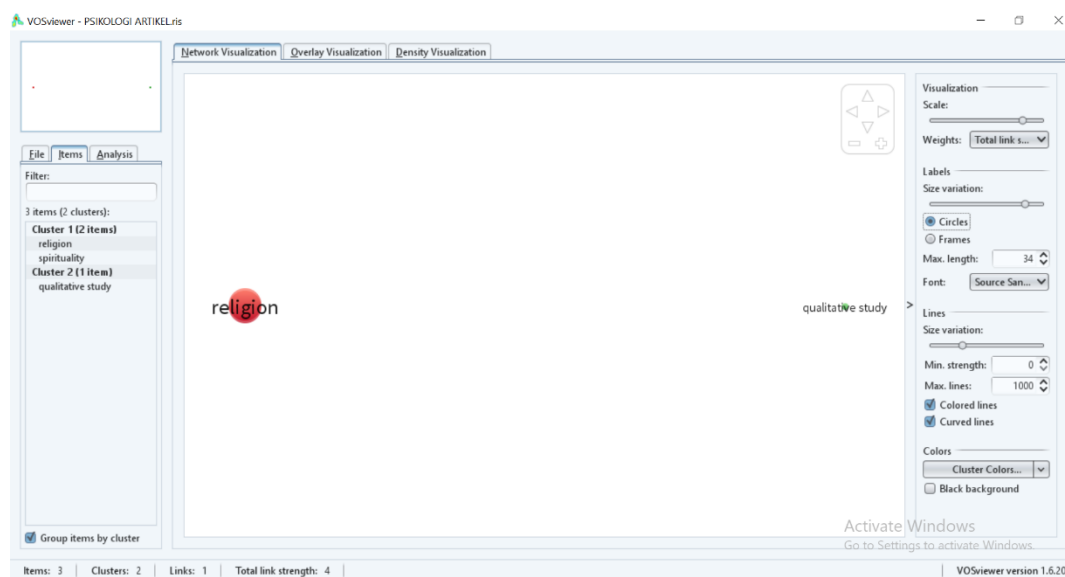


Figure 8. Cleaned items selected with the Network Visualization display mode.

The bibliometric analysis of international literature in the field of religious psychology, conducted during the period 2015–2025 and sourced from the SCOPUS database, produces a network visualization as shown in Figure 8. This visualization illustrates the co-occurrence relationships between keywords used in the analyzed scientific articles. In this view, two central nodes are identified: 'religion', marked in red and larger in size, and 'qualitative study', marked in green and smaller in size. The size of the node reflects the frequency of keyword occurrences across all documents, while the color indicates the thematic cluster divisions that are automatically formed by the bibliometric software (VOSviewer). This result shows that 'religion' is one of the most commonly used keywords in the literature related to the psychology of religion, indicating the dominance of religious themes in academic discourse in this field. Meanwhile, 'qualitative study' appears as a separate keyword, much smaller in size and with no direct link to 'religion'. The absence of a connecting line between the two suggests that qualitative studies have not yet become a significantly integrated methodological approach in

the research of the psychology of religion over the past decade. Furthermore, the difference in color between the two nodes indicates that they are in different topic clusters. This reflects a fragmentation or separation between substantial religious themes and qualitative methodological approaches in the analyzed literature. In other words, the study of religion is still more often conducted with other approaches, most likely quantitative or theoretical, which do not yet reflect the full utilization of in-depth qualitative methodology. The implications of these findings indicate an opportunity to develop methodologies in the study of the psychology of religion, particularly by encouraging the broader use of qualitative approaches. Qualitative methods have great potential to explore subjective dynamics, religious experiences, and the construction of meaning in religious contexts that quantitative approaches cannot fully capture. Thus, integrating qualitative methods into the study of the psychology of religion can enrich perspectives and understanding of the spiritual and existential aspects of human life.

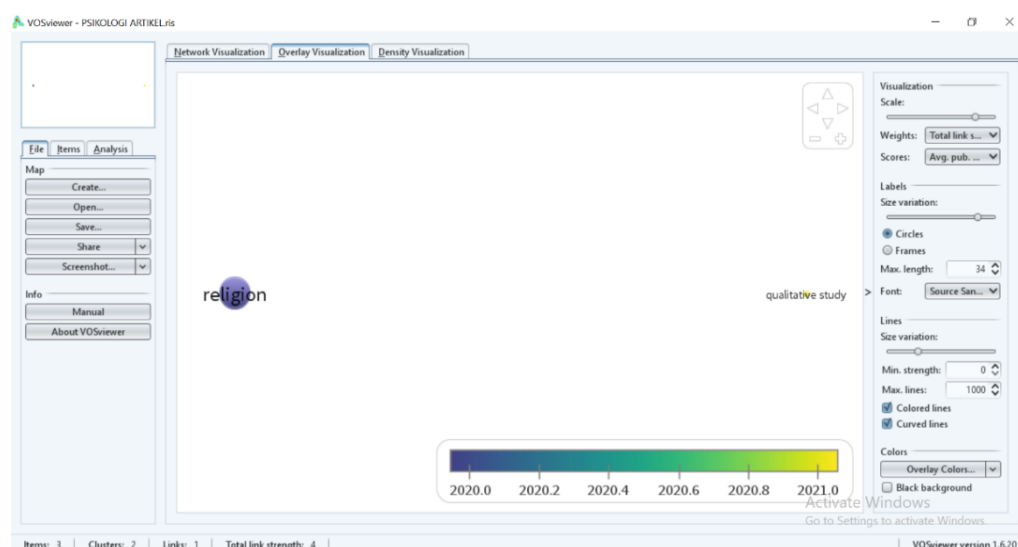


Figure 9. Overlay visualization of dominant issues in Religious Psychology Research Methods, developing from scientific publications during the years 2015-2025.

The overlay visualization in this bibliometric analysis depicts the changes over time in the use of keywords in the international literature of religious psychology indexed in SCOPUS during the period 2015–2025. Figure 9 displays two main keywords, namely "religion" and "qualitative study," with color gradations representing the average year of occurrence for each term. The node "religion" appears in reddish-yellow, indicating that this term predominantly emerged in the early years (around 2015–2018). This confirms that the theme of religion has been a primary focus in the academic discourse of religious psychology since the beginning of the analyzed decade. The large size of the node also reflects the high frequency of this term in

various scholarly articles. On the other hand, "qualitative study" appears in green, indicating that this term began to be used more frequently in the mid to late years of the analysis period (2019–2025). This indicates the presence of a new methodological trend in the psychology of religion, namely the increasing interest in qualitative approaches in recent years. However, neither terms show direct connectivity in network visualization. The lack of a connecting line between "religion" and "qualitative study" reflects the low thematic correlation between religious themes and qualitative methodological approaches in the analyzed literature. This suggests that studies in the psychology of religion have not yet widely integrated qualitative approaches within their research framework. The implications of these findings provide an overview of the development map of research methodology in the psychology of religion over the past ten years. Although religious topics remain the primary foundation, qualitative approaches seem to still be in the early stages of their integration into the study of the psychology of religion. Thus, there is a significant opportunity to expand the scope of religious psychology research by better accommodating qualitative methods. This is important because qualitative approaches have advantages in exploring subjective meanings, spiritual experiences, and personal dynamics in a religious context that are not always adequately addressed by quantitative methods. Based on the overlay visualization, it can be concluded that the term 'religion' had become a significant focus in the literature of religious psychology since the early period of 2015–2025, while 'qualitative study' is a methodological approach that has emerged later and has not been significantly connected with religious studies. This indicates the need to encourage the integration of qualitative approaches in future research on religious psychology.

Potential New Issues in the Topic of Research Methods in Religious Psychology

The fifth stage of this study explores emerging issues and potential directions in research methods within the psychology of religion through bibliometric analysis using the VOSviewer application. The density visualization highlights the dominance of the term “religion” and the relatively weak connection of “qualitative study”, reflecting a global methodological tendency that remains largely quantitative and Western-centered. This pattern suggests the need for broader epistemological inclusion that accommodates diverse cultural and contextual perspectives in religious psychology research.

Building on these findings, several strategic directions can be outlined systematically. Conceptually, researchers are encouraged to reexamine the theoretical assumptions underlying the study of religion to integrate non-Western paradigms and indigenous epistemologies. Methodologically, the diversification of approaches—particularly the strengthening of

qualitative, mixed-method, and participatory designs—can provide a more comprehensive understanding of religious phenomena. Contextually, fostering interdisciplinary collaborations and enhancing methodological literacy among scholars can bridge gaps between global and local research practices.

These strategies directly respond to the bibliometric evidence, indicating that while the field shows growing productivity, it still requires methodological pluralism and contextual sensitivity to achieve a more balanced and globally representative development of religious psychology research.

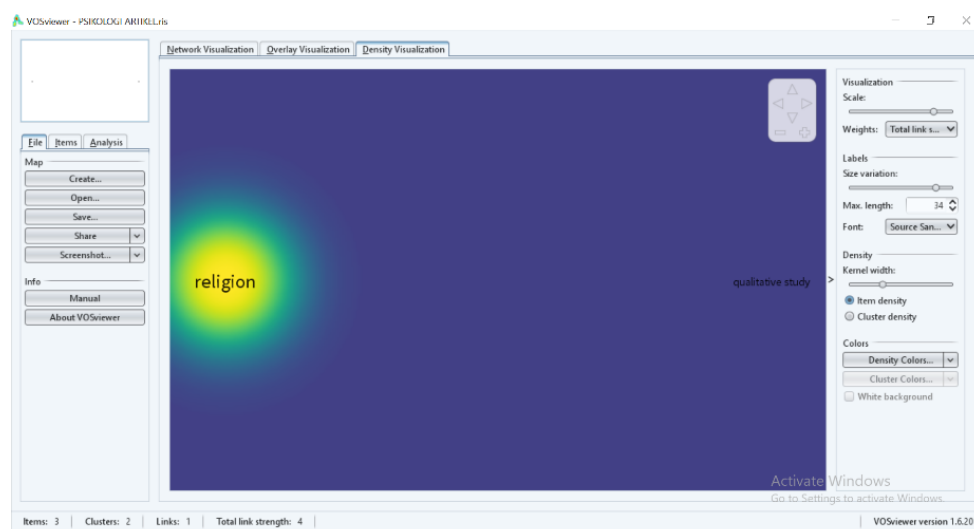


Figure 10. Results of density visualization on psychological research methods in religious studies that can be developed in the future

The density visualization analysis obtained from the VOSviewer software shows the density level of keyword occurrences in the literature on the psychology of religion listed in SCOPUS from 2015 to 2025. Figure 10 shows two main identified keywords, 'religion' and 'qualitative study', with variations in color indicating the intensity of these terms within the research network. The visualization results indicate that the term 'religion' is very dominant, as seen from the large label size and bright yellow color in the center of the map. This color indicates that the term has the highest frequency of occurrence and strength of connection in the dataset. The central position of the word 'religion' suggests that religious issues have been the primary and most discussed topics in the psychology of religion research over the past decade. Conversely, the term "qualitative study" is located in the bottom right corner of the map, marked in dark blue and with a small label size. This indicates that the qualitative research approach is still rarely applied or has not become a primary focus in the study of religious psychology.

Additionally, "qualitative study" does not show a strong connection with other keywords, suggesting low correlation or methodological integration within the thematic network. The interpretation of these findings suggests that between 2015 and 2025, religious psychology focused more on developing substantive topics related to religion than on variations in methodological approaches. This indicates that traditional or quantitative approaches still dominate the research framework in this field, while qualitative methodologies have not received sufficient attention in the international literature. The academic implications of the dominance of conceptual issues suggest that the literature primarily focuses on religious content rather than exploring methodological approaches. The limitations of qualitative approaches in studies based on experience, spiritual meaning, and the phenomenology of religiosity are still very few. Opportunities for methodological integration are crucial to encourage the use of qualitative methods, which are more suitable for exploring aspects of spiritual psychology and subjective experiences in religiosity. The conclusions from the density visualization results indicate that 'religion' is the main center of density in the international literature on the psychology of religion. At the same time, 'qualitative study' remains in a peripheral position and is underdeveloped. This indicates an imbalance between thematic focus and variations in research approaches, and provides an opportunity to develop religious psychology research using more reflective and contextual qualitative methods.

A bibliometric analysis of publications related to the psychology of religion in the Scopus database over the past ten years (2015–2025) yields several significant findings that reflect the dynamics and direction of development in this field. The analyzed documents reveal that quantitative approaches are highly dominant, with survey methods, questionnaires, and psychological scales as the main techniques used. The primary themes frequently addressed include spirituality, psychological well-being, anxiety, and mental health. This indicates a tendency towards a thematic-substantive approach in understanding religious phenomena from a psychological perspective.

Other findings indicate that the focus of the study of religious psychology is still centered on a Western context, with countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada dominating the production of literature. This trend raises issues related to the lack of cultural diversity and non-Western religious experiences that could enrich the global understanding of religious psychology. In terms of methodology, there are significant limitations in the use of qualitative methods. Only a small fraction of the total publications apply phenomenological, case study, or narrative approaches. This is a critical concern because religious experiences are often subjective, contextual, and not always measurable in quantitative ways. The limitations in the use of qualitative methods indicate that there is

untapped potential for understanding the complexities of spirituality and religiosity. Another limitation is the lack of an interdisciplinary approach. Religious psychology studies are often conducted separately from other disciplines such as religious anthropology, religious sociology, and contextual theology. Meanwhile, collaboration between disciplines can enrich perspectives on religious phenomena, especially in addressing contemporary issues such as pluralism, secularism, and the dynamics of religious identity. Strengthening and Strategic Development in Religious Psychology Studies Based on bibliometric analysis over the last ten years, it can be concluded that religious psychology studies are still dominated by thematic-substantive approaches (such as issues of spirituality and religion) that have not been balanced with a diversity of methodological approaches, especially qualitative methods. This condition reflects a methodological gap that needs to be addressed with a strategic response. Thus, the following are the recommended strategies for strengthening and developing research methodology in religious psychology.

The first strategy is to actively encourage methodological diversification in religious psychology by integrating qualitative approaches, such as phenomenology, narrative, case studies, or ethnography, which are very useful in researching cognitive development.(Khikmiyah et al., 2024) This approach allows for a deeper exploration of religious experiences that are subjective and contextual, which cannot be fully explained through quantitative data. Qualitative research is well-suited to explore religious phenomena within their cultural contexts, which is crucial for building strong culturally-informed theories in the psychology of religion. Qualitative methods enable a deeper and more nuanced understanding of religious and spiritual experiences, which are often subjective and context-dependent. These methods can capture the complexities and richness of individual experiences that quantitative data may overlook.(Pak, 2017). In therapeutic settings, integrating qualitative methods can help practitioners better understand clients' religious and spiritual issues, leading to more effective and personalized interventions. (Richards & Barkham, 2022; Vu, 2025). Encouraging methodological diversification in research can stimulate the development of new theories and models that better capture the complexities of religious and spiritual experiences. This can lead to more innovative and culturally sensitive approaches in the psychology of religion.(Brandt, 2019).

The second strategy is to enhance qualitative methodology literacy in the medium term by including training, workshops, and the publication of methodological guides that focus on applying qualitative methods in the study of religious psychology. Qualitative methodology allows for in-depth and multilevel analysis of spiritual and religious phenomena, which are often challenging to capture through quantitative methods. (Lloyd, 2023). Higher education institutions and religious

study centers can play a pioneering role in this initiative. Training in qualitative methodology should ideally begin at the early stages of higher education. A study shows that training provided at an early stage can help students understand and appreciate qualitative approaches, as well as dispel existing myths about this method. (Antunes & Araújo, 2021). Workshops that provide practical experience in using qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews, narrative analysis, and case studies, can enhance students' competencies in applying these methods in their research.(Lloyd, 2023). By applying these strategies, it is expected that the literacy of qualitative methodologies in the study of religious psychology can improve, resulting in research that is deeper and more relevant to the existing social and cultural context.

The third strategy is to build a collaborative interdisciplinary network between psychologists, theologians, anthropologists, and sociologists, which will enrich methodological perspectives and open opportunities to explore religious phenomena more holistically. Strengthening this network can be facilitated through international conferences, collaborative research forums, and cross-disciplinary publications. An interdisciplinary approach is essential for a more holistic understanding of religious phenomena. Collaboration between psychology, theology, anthropology, and sociology can enrich methodological perspectives and open new opportunities in religious research. (Bielo, 2018;Sasaki &Kim, 2021). Interdisciplinary collaboration can help solve complex problems that a single discipline cannot solve. A concrete example is the use of philosophy and theology to resolve textual issues in religious studies.(Mikulka, 2024) International conferences, collaborative research forums, and cross-disciplinary publications are effective ways to strengthen these collaborative networks. For example, workshops and conferences can produce experimental methodologies that enable cross-disciplinary collaboration.(Hollander, 2020). Interdisciplinary collaboration not only enriches research but also can inspire the development of new concepts in theology and social sciences, such as in the study of masculinity. (Rybicki &Jastrzębski, 2021). Interdisciplinary approaches can also help in the development of more comprehensive and applicable pastoral research methodologies. (Szymczak, 2020).

The fourth strategy is to shift the focus of research not only to answer questions about what and how much (quantitative) but also to understand how and why (qualitative) in the context of religious experiences. This approach is important for capturing the dynamics of contemporary spirituality in multicultural societies. Qualitative research allows for a deeper exploration of personal and collective experiences, which is crucial in understanding the nuanced and complex nature of religious experiences. For example, qualitative methods such as ethnographic studies and narrative

interviews provide rich and detailed insights into how individuals and communities experience and practice their faith. (Susanto, 2025) In multicultural settings, qualitative research is very valuable because it captures the intersection of various social categories and contexts that influence religious experiences. For example, studies on Black Muslims emerging in the U.S. highlight how systemic and interpersonal racism, community dynamics, and family influences shape their religious experiences. (Ahmed & Abdallah, 2023), This level of detail is often overlooked in quantitative research. Qualitative research can reveal the mechanisms through which harmony and interreligious tolerance are fostered in multicultural communities. Research in Indonesian villages and other Southeast Asian contexts demonstrates how local wisdom and cultural practices contribute to religious tolerance and social cohesion. (Maretha, 2020), This insight is essential for developing strategies to promote peaceful coexistence in diverse communities. Understanding the spiritual and psychological dimensions of religious experience requires a qualitative approach. Studies on missionary experiences and the role of spirituality in overcoming challenges illustrate how a personal relationship with the divine provides comfort and psychological strength. (Fatemeh et al., 2019; Wilczewski et al., 2020), It can thus be concluded that the shift in research focus to include qualitative methods is crucial for capturing the full spectrum of religious experiences in a multicultural society. This approach not only provides deeper insights into how and why individuals practice their faith but also informs strategies to promote interfaith harmony and address social injustices. By embracing both qualitative and quantitative methods, researchers can develop a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of contemporary spirituality.

The fifth strategy, which involves the production and publication of research focusing on the local context, especially in Indonesia and Southeast Asia, is crucial for developing qualitative methods sensitive to local cultural and religious values. This strategy will strengthen epistemological uniqueness and enrich contributions to global discourse. By implementing these strategies, the enhancement of religious psychology studies aims not only to address methodological gaps but also to promote the development of more reflective, contextual, and transformative science. The study in Kayu Aro, Kerinci, Indonesia, emphasizes the importance of character education within families to moderate local religious and cultural values. This suggests that local values can serve as an important foundation in facing the changes of the times. (Wisnarni, 2023). Research on Islamic universities in Indonesia shows that they must balance religious values with the demands of the global market. This context-sensitive approach helps universities maintain their identity while

remaining relevant on the global stage.(Fathana et al., 2024). Production and publishing strategies for research that focus on the local context in Indonesia and Southeast Asia are crucial for developing qualitative methods that are sensitive to local cultural and religious values. This not only strengthens epistemological uniqueness but also enriches contributions to the global discourse, making research more relevant and contextual with local challenges.(Gerke &Evers, 2018;Rasit et al., 2019;Irawan et al., 2022;Afaradi, 2025).

CONCLUSION

A bibliometric analysis of scientific publications on research methods in the psychology of religion during the period 2015–2025 indicates a significant upward trend in publication volume. However, this growth is not always matched by thematic consistency and relevance to the core topic. The year 2025 recorded the highest number of publications, a pattern likely influenced by the increasing adoption of open-access policies, the rise of interdisciplinary research interests, and advances in digital technology that facilitate broader dissemination of academic work. However, this expansion also highlights the challenge of maintaining conceptual focus within the growing body of literature.

Most of the analyzed publications originate from indexed electronic journals, emphasizing the central role of digital platforms in shaping the development of this research area. In terms of scholarly contributions, five leading researchers from diverse institutional and geographic backgrounds emerged between 2020 and 2025, reflecting the field’s growing global and interdisciplinary character. This finding underscores the importance of strengthening the focus on religious studies within the broader context of contemporary psychological research. Methodologically, the keyword “religion” appears as the dominant term, while “qualitative study” remains peripheral and insufficiently integrated into the research discourse. The limited connection between qualitative approaches and religious themes suggests an underexplored potential within the field. When viewed in relation to publication trends, this methodological gap indicates that the quantitative expansion of studies has not yet been accompanied by comparable methodological diversification. Therefore, reinforcing the use of qualitative and mixed-method approaches is essential to deepen the exploration of subjective experiences and spiritual dimensions in the psychology of religion. Such methodological enrichment would not only balance the quantitative dominance but also open new avenues for theoretical and empirical advancement in the discipline.

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