



**Bibliometric Analysis of Research Trends on Learning Methods in Christian Religious Education in the Period 2014–2023**

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**ABSTRACT**

Research on Christian education plays a crucial role in shaping individuals with strong spirituality. The purpose of this research is to identify trends in research on learning methods in Christian education over the past ten years. This research employs a bibliometric approach. Data were gathered from the international academic database Dimensions. The research identifies the publication output levels, contributing countries, influential authors, and research focuses over the past ten years. The analysis results indicate a surge in the number of publications on learning methods in Christian religious education starting in 2021, coinciding with the COVID-19 pandemic. The highest publication occurred in 2022, while in 2023 it decreased to 646 articles. Six countries have significantly contributed to research on Christian religious education learning methods: The United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, China, and South Africa. Among these, the United States has been the most prolific contributor. The most prominent authors who contributed most to the learning methods in Christian religious education are Sara E. Brownell and Harold G. Koenig, with Ara Norenzayan being the most influential researcher. The predominant research trend in the past three years has been related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the last ten years, research on learning methods in Christian religious education has generally focused on children, knowledge, life, spiritual care, parents, cross-sectional studies, evolution, and God. This research contributes to bibliometric studies related to learning methods in Christian religious education and promotes innovation in these methods. There is a need to enhance the performance of researchers in countries outside of America, Africa, and Europe. Topics such as the digitization of education, learning methods incorporating local wisdom, and intergenerational education in the Asian context still require further development.

**Keywords:** Christian Religious Education; Christian Education; Learning methods; Moral Competence.

## INTRODUCTION

Christian education is a social science that is part of both practical theology and educational science. In practice, it is related to the development of Christian character. Scientifically, it is classified as part of social science (Udo & Udoh, 2023). Over the past 20 years, many researchers have conducted studies within the scope of Christian education. These studies have significantly contributed to the advancement of education in churches, schools, and society. Research on Christian education is important as it relates to various aspects of human life. It is connected to the spiritual life of every Christian. Within the context of the church, it is closely tied to communal spiritual life (Udoh, 2013a; Udoh, 2013b; Udoh, 2014). In a multicultural society, it plays a crucial role in preparing Christians to live within diverse communities.

This research aims to identify research trends in learning methods within the field of Christian education, including identifying output levels, research focus, and influential authors over the past ten years (2014-2023). The ten-year period was chosen due to the substantial accumulation of publications worthy of analysis.

The approach used in this research is bibliometric analysis of Christian education publications indexed in the Dimensions database over the last decade. By utilizing bibliographic data analysis, such as authorship, publication trends, and research topics, bibliometric studies provide an overview of shifts in the research field, key contributors, and emerging trends (Virkus et al., 2023). This research approach has been applied across various disciplines, including educational technology (Erdoğan & Korkmaz, 2022; Virkus et al., 2023).

In the context of research trends on learning methods in Christian religious education, bibliometric analysis can provide a comprehensive overview of the scientific landscape over a specific period, such as the last ten years from 2014 to 2023. By examining publications related to the learning methods in Christian religious education, researchers can identify prominent themes, influential authors, and emerging topics in this field (Murnaka et al., 2021). Bibliometric analysis not only offers a retrospective view of research activities but also informs future research directions by highlighting gaps and areas for further exploration (Sweileh, 2021). Moreover, bibliometric studies can help in mapping global research trends, visualize journal and author metadata, and outline future research agendas (Nuryana et al., 2023). By synthesizing data from scientific publications, researchers can create a roadmap that guides the trajectory of research on learning methods in Christian religious education, facilitating informed decision-making and resource allocation (Sweileh, 2021). Analyzing ten years of research trends in Christian education methods through bibliometric analysis can provide valuable insights into shifts in the field, highlighting key themes, influential contributors, and emerging areas of research. By utilizing quantitative methods to analyze scholarly publications, a comprehensive understanding of the current state of research in the learning methods of Christian education can be obtained, thus mapping out the course for future investigations.

Christian religious education has become an intriguing subject in recent research endeavors. Despite the growing body of literature on various aspects of Christian religious education, including the formation of spirituality (Beard, 2017; Izungo & Muneja, 2021; Woodward, 2021), multicultural education (Labobar, 2024; Suardana et al., 2023), character building (Hendrawan et al., 2023; Labobar, 2022), and the role of Christian religious education teachers, there appears to be a gap in the literature concerning bibliometric analysis specifically focused on learning methods in Christian religious education. Bibliometric analysis has been employed in various fields such as medical education (Hod, 2022), career education (Watrianthos et al., 2022), and educational technology research (Butar-butur et al., 2023; Murnaka et al., 2021; Polat et al., 2024) to provide insights into research trends, the most cited publications, and the overall research landscape.

Previous research has explored various dimensions of Christian religious education, ranging from the role of Christian religious education teachers in developing student skills (Evimalinda et al., 2022), to the integration of psychology in Christian religious education (Boiliu et al., 2021), and anticipatory education within families (Labobar, 2022). Additionally, researches have investigated the impact of Christian religious education on the formation of spirituality (Betakore et al., 2022; Sitanggang, 2023), pedagogical competence (Buchanan, 2020; Ekin & Gul, 2022), Bible-based game learning (Octavianus et al., 2022), and character building (Sugiono et al., 2022). Bibliometric analysis in Christian religious education has been conducted by Sitorus (2022), who utilized the Dimensions database from 2014-2023 and focused on the four core competencies of Christian religious education teachers. However, there is a lack of bibliometric analysis specifically focused on learning methods of Christian religious education in the referenced literature.

Although there are many studies on Christian religious education, including its influence on adolescent character formation, spiritual development, and implementation of teaching materials for character education, the references do not directly discuss bibliometric analysis in the context of learning methods in Christian religious education. This indicates a potential area for conducting bibliometric analysis to map the research landscape, identify major trends, and highlight works in the field of Christian religious education, particularly regarding learning methods. Existing researches have provided valuable insights into various aspects of Christian religious education, but there is a need for bibliometric analysis to systematically evaluate scholarly output, research trends, and the impact of publications in the field of Christian education.

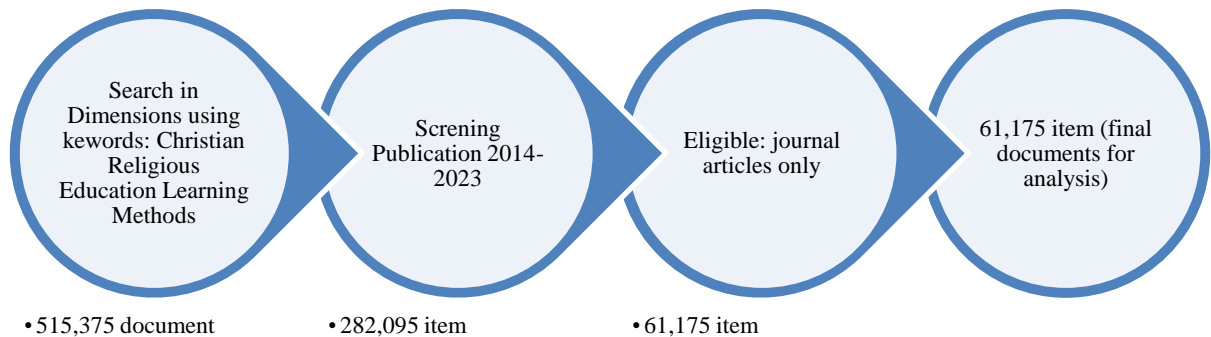
This article is organized into several sections. The methodology section is discussed in detail, outlining the research procedures, followed by data collection and analysis processes. Next, the results and discussions are presented. The following section provides an explanation of theoretical and practical implications of the research findings. Towards the end, there are two important aspects: the direction for future research and the conclusion of the research.

## **METHODS**

This research was conducted using a bibliometric approach. Bibliometric analysis is a quantitative approach used to evaluate and analyze journal article data. It can help provide in-depth insights into research trends, the contribution of an article to the development of knowledge, and the trending topics in a field that have been extensively studied (Herdianto et al., 2021). Data were collected from international academic sources. The data used in this research were obtained from the Dimensions index, one of the indices with vast and reliable data. Data retrieval began on March 28, 2024, using the keyword "teaching method in Christian religious education." The search was not limited to any specific country but was conducted globally. The publication period analyzed was from 2014 to 2023. The tools used to analyze the data were Microsoft Excel and VOS viewer.

In the initial search for the keyword "Learning methods in Christian Religious Education" within the Dimensions database, 515,375 documents were found. This was then filtered to focus on learning methods in Christian religious education within the period from 2014 to 2023, resulting in 282,095 documents, including journals, proceedings, and book chapters. The search was further refined by filtering only for journal articles. This yielded 61,175 articles published in various journals indexed by Dimensions. The decision to filter for journal articles was based on the fact that journal articles undergo a rigorous review process compared to other research objects. Therefore, journal articles were chosen as the object of analysis in this study. The document selection procedure is illustrated in Figure 1 below.

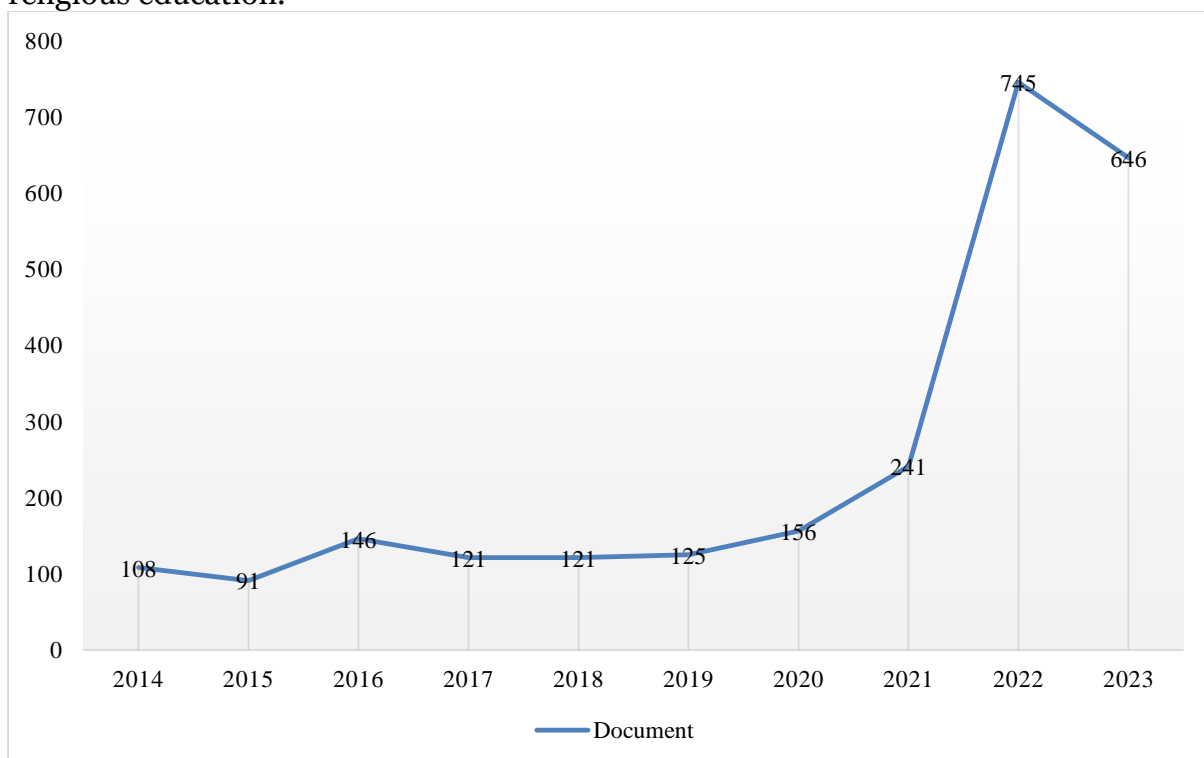
**Figure 1. Document selection**



## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Publication Trends

Figure 2 indicates the distribution of publications on learning methods in Christian religious education over the past ten years. The data in Figure 1 includes 61,175 journal articles that meet the criteria for understanding the research patterns and topic development during this ten-year period. The numbers shown in the figure provide valuable insights into the interest and research activities concerning learning methods in Christian religious education.



**Source: Data processed by researchers using VoS Viewer**

**Figure 2. Publication Trends on Learning methods in Christian Religious**

## Education

From 2014 to 2023, there have been changes in the number of publications on learning methods in Christian religious education. Between 2014 and 2020, the trend averaged 124 publications per year. An increase in publications related to learning methods began in 2021 with 241 articles. There was a significant spike in 2022, reaching 745 articles. However, in 2023, there was a decrease to 646 articles. This data indicates that starting in 2021, there has been a growing trend in the publication of research articles on learning methods in Christian religious education.

In the first seven years, research and publications on learning methods in Christian religious education did not see a significant increase. The trend of increasing research began in 2021, with the numbers being quite significant. This reflects a strong and sustained interest in research within the context of Christian religious education. Policy changes and global conditions may have led to the rise in research on learning methods in Christian religious education. The data indicates that the development of research on these learning methods has a positive contribution to human life.

## Publication and Citation per country

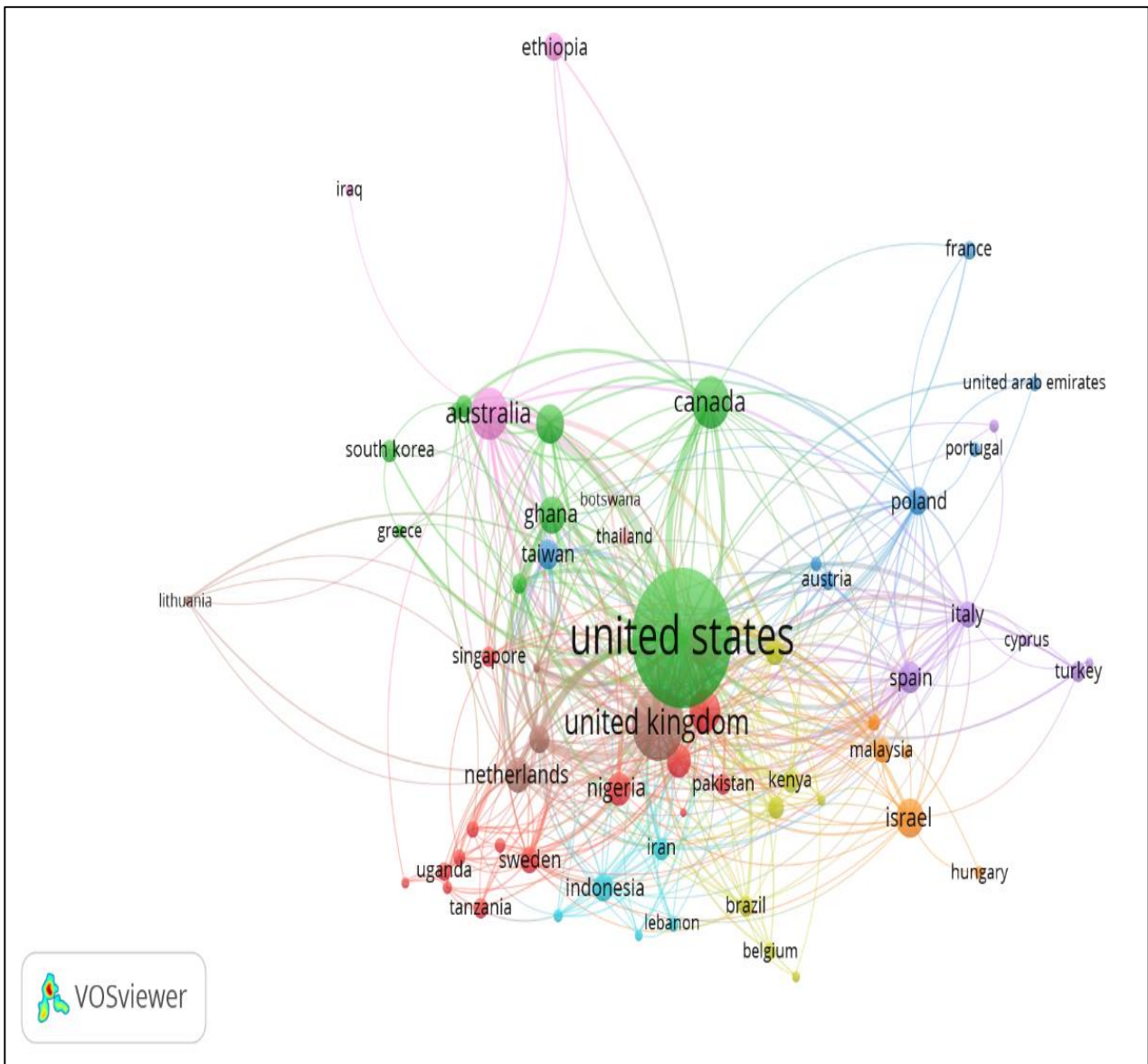
Analysis of publications and citations is presented in Table 1. It indicates the distribution of countries and influential citations on this topic. In the bibliographic coupling analysis, we start with the most basic, which is the analysis of the current state of bibliographic coupling. The distribution of countries contributing to this topic is displayed in Figure 3, depicted by the Vosviewer application's network visualization.

Country	Documents	Citations	Total link strength
United States	1032	12833	506
United Kingdom	284	3433	309
Canada	150	2185	141
Australia	144	1237	180
China	107	1073	111
South Africa	100	1144	135
Israel	85	1124	65
Germany	84	855	125
Ghana	73	590	101
Netherlands	67	949	79

**Source: Data analyzed using VoS Viewer and Excel.**

**Table 1. Publication and Citation Analysis per Country**

Distribution of countries contributing to the learning methods in Christian religious education is shown in Figure 3, depicted in the network visualization by the VoS Viewer application. The analysis set thresholds of a minimum of 5 documents per country and a minimum of 1 citation per country, resulting in the selection of 67 countries. The analysis results are visualized in Figure 3.



**Source: Data analyzed using VoS Viewer**  
**Figure 3. Citation Visualization per Country**

Based on the visualization in Figure 3 and Table 1, six countries significantly contribute to research on learning methods in Christian religious education. This is based on the number of publications and citations from these six countries. The countries are the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, China, and South Africa. Among them, the United States contributes the most to research on learning methods in Christian religious education, with 1,032 documents and 12,833 citations from publications between 2014 and 2023. This data indicates that research from countries other than these six still needs further development.

### **Publications and Citation per author**

The authors significantly influence the development of research on learning methods in Christian religious education. Based on the VoS Viewer analysis, as visualized in Table 2, the most contributing authors in the field of teaching method in Christian religious education are Sara E. Brownell and Harold G. Koenig. Sara E. Brownell has produced 17 articles on this topic with a total of 475 citations. Harold G. Koenig has produced 16 articles with a total of 683 citations. Meanwhile, the most influential researcher is Ara Norenzayan, who has produced 7 documents with 856 citations.

No	Name	Documents	Citations
1.	Ara Norenzayan	7	856
2.	Joseph Henrich	5	843
3.	Aiyana K. Willard	7	796
4.	Harold G. Koenig	16	683
5.	Michelle Pearce	7	519
6.	Sara E. Brownell	17	475
7.	Kerry Haynes	6	475
8.	Wilfred Mcsherry	8	390
9.	Tove Giske	11	383
10.	Donna Ames	5	372

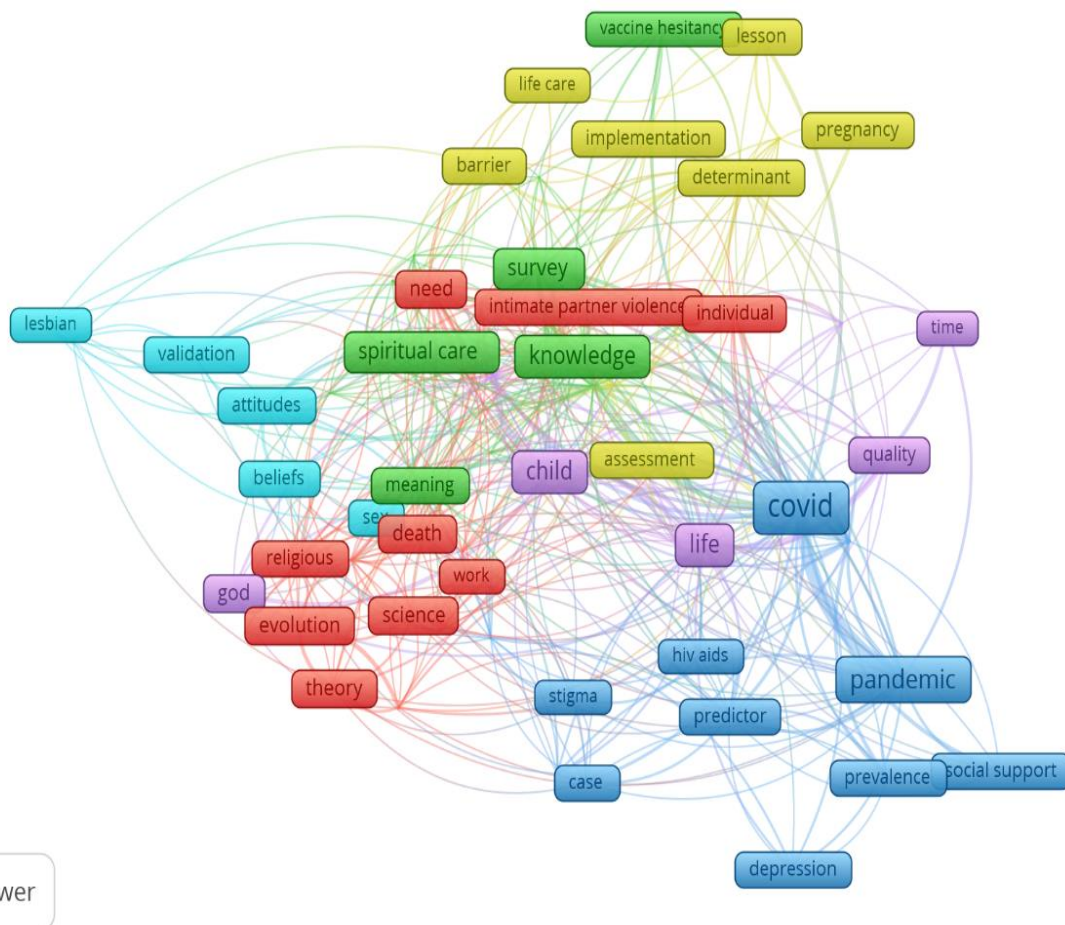
**Source: Data analyzed with VoS Viewer and Excel**

Table 2. Visualization of Influential Researchers

The data in Table 2 indicate that the research trend on learning methods in Christian religious education continues to be a referenced and evolving issue. This is evidenced by the number of works produced by researchers and the high number of citations over the past ten years.

### Research Focus

Research focus is related to trends in the research of learning methods in Christian religious education. Researchers analyzed the research focus over the past ten years. The Vos Viewer visualization results are represented in Figure 4.



**Source: Data analyzed with VoS Viewer**  
**Figure 4. Visualization of Research Focus**

Based on the analysis results as visualized in Figure 4, six clusters were identified. Research on learning methods in Christian religious education in the last 10 years is related to social issues and human life. This is evident from Cluster 1 with the topic: Human life (red color). Popular terms in Cluster 1 include Theory, evolution, religious, death, work, science, need, intimate partner violence, individual. This indicates that research on learning methods is not only about variety of methods. Then in Cluster 2 (green color), emerging popular terms include spiritual care, meaning, knowledge, survey, vaccine hesitancy. Popular terms in Cluster 2 indicate that research on learning methods is related to faith beliefs. Cluster 3 (blue) is related to Human health. This indicates that research on learning methods of Christian religious education is related to human health conditions and social life. This is evident from the popular terms that emerge from the analysis, which are covid, HIV AIDS, depression, prevalence, social support, pandemic, predictor, stigma, case. Cluster 4 (yellow color) represents that research on learning methods is related to life care. This is based on the findings of popular terms that emerge in Cluster 4, which are life care, barrier, assessment, determinant, pregnancy, lesson, implementation. Furthermore, Cluster 5 (purple color) is related to quality of life in children. Popular terms that emerge in this cluster are child, life, quality time, God. Research on learning methods interacts with issues of children's lives, children's beliefs, and quality time. In Cluster 6 (light blue color), there is research on learning methods that interact with human behavior. This is consistent with the findings of popular terms that emerge, which are lesbian, sex, validation, attitudes, beliefs. These findings indicate that research on learning methods in in Christian religious education is not only about variety of learning methods. Research on learning methods of Christian religious education is conducted in interaction with various social situations in each context.

Based on the analysis of research focus conducted in the last 10 years, the topic of research that has received attention is related to COVID. Based on the visualization in Figure 4 and data analysis in Excel, the most researched trend on learning methods in Christian religious education in the last three years is related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The combination of keyword searches for Covid and Pandemic has the highest score, with 254 documents. Additionally, the research focus on learning methods in Christian religious education is related to children, knowledge, life, spiritual care, parents, cross-sectional studies, evolution, and God.

Analysis of research focus based on clusters reveals six clusters.

No	Item	Occurrences
1.	Covid	169
2.	Pandemic	85
3.	Child	74
4.	Knowledge	74
5.	Life	63
6.	Spiritual care	41
7.	Parent	39
8.	Cross sectional study	36
9.	Evolution	36
10.	God	34

**Source: Data analyzed using VoS Viewer and Excel.**  
**Table 2. Research Focus**

Based on this data, the research trend is closely related to the global situation. From 2020



to 2022, the whole world was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The shift to remote learning has prompted innovation in learning methods in (Pramana et al., 2021; Sari & Nayir, 2020).

## **IMPLICATION**

### **Theoretical Implication**

Theoretical implications of this research are: First, while Christian Religious Education research has been conducted by many other researchers, this study contributes to bibliometric studies related to the learning methods of Christian Religious Education. The findings provide more specific insights into the research development of Christian Religious Education. Second, this research contributes to bibliometric literature that promotes innovation in the learning methods of Christian Religious Education. This is closely tied to the post-pandemic global conditions. In post-pandemic, there's a push for the development of learning methods. Research on learning methods needs to continue evolving to adapt to ongoing changes. Previous research has shown that global developments drive innovation in learning methods. This is evident from the increased research output during the COVID-19 pandemic. Third, this research indicates the need for improving the performance of researchers in countries beyond America, Africa, and Europe. Research on learning methods of Christian Religious Education in Asia needs to be enhanced in quality to be published in English-language journals or international journals. The impact of Christian Religious Education researchers in Asia needs to be significantly improved. This aligns with the data in Table 1, which represents that only one Asian country has a high impact.

### **Practical Implication**

The results of this research are expected to assist researchers and practitioners in Christian Religious Education regarding publication output, research focus, and influential authors in the field of Christian Education. Previous research focus can aid in selecting different focuses or in developing existing ones. Topics such as educational digitization in Christian religious education need further development. Additionally, research on learning methods in Christian religious education related to local wisdom from several Asian countries with Christian populations needs to be expanded. Research on learning methods related to intergenerational education in the Asian context still requires development. Issues such as LGBT, Covid, HIV AIDS, religious beliefs, and spiritual care have become emerging concerns in several countries. Emerging social issues need to be addressed in the development of learning methods in Christian religious education.

## **CONCLUSION**

This writing aims to learn the research trends in the learning methods of Christian religious education. More than 61,000 documents were analyzed, indicating a development in research. A surge in the number of publications on learning methods in Christian religious education began in 2021, coinciding with the COVID-19 pandemic. The highest publication occurred in 2022, reaching 745 articles, while there was a decrease in 2023 to 646 articles. These data indicate that since 2021, the trend of publication of research articles on learning methods in Christian religious education has been increasing. Additionally, six countries significantly contributed to research on learning methods in Christian religious education, including the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, China, and South Africa. Among these six countries, the United States made the most significant contribution. This is consistent with the finding of 1,032 documents and 12,833 citations from the United States. The most influential authors in the field of learning methods in Christian religious education are Sara E. Brownell and Harold G. Koenig. Sara E. Brownell has produced 17 articles in this topic with 475 citations, while Harold G. Koenig has produced 16 articles with 683 citations. Meanwhile, the most influential researcher is Ara Norenzayan, who has produced 7 documents with 856 citations. The most researched trend in the last three years

relates to the COVID-19 pandemic. Generally, over the past ten years, the focus of research on learning methods in Christian religious education has been on children, knowledge, life, spiritual care, parents, cross-sectional studies, evolution, and God.

Theoretical implications of this research are as follows: First, this research contributes to bibliometric studies related to learning methods in Christian religious education. Second, it adds to the bibliometric literature that promotes innovation in Christian religious education learning methods. Third, it highlights the need to enhance the performance of researchers in countries outside of America, Africa, and Europe. The practical implications are that previous research focuses can assist in selecting different focuses or further developing existing ones. Topics such as the digitization of education, learning methods incorporating local wisdom, and intergenerational education within the Asian context need further development. Emerging social issues should be considered in the development of learning methods for Christian religious education.

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