



RESEARCH TRENDS COMMUNICATION OF SOCIOLOGY AND RELIGION: A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS (2005-2025)

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Abstract

Research on communication in sociology and religion shows increasingly significant developments alongside the dynamics of global social, cultural, and technological changes. Religion is no longer understood solely as an individual spiritual practice, but as a social phenomenon mediated through communication processes in various contexts of community life. This study aims to map the trends, scientific structure, and development of research themes related to the communication of sociology and religion during the period 2005–2025 through a bibliometric approach. In contrast to previous descriptive studies, this research utilizes a knowledge structure analysis framework to identify a paradigm shift from traditional communication toward digital mediation. Data were obtained from the Scopus database using keywords relevant to communication, sociology, and religion, and then analysed using the R-based Biblioshiny software (bibliometrix). The analysis includes annual publication productivity, major source journals, the most influential authors and institutional affiliations, the geographical distribution of research, citation patterns, and thematic mapping through keyword co-occurrence analysis. The research findings indicate that the number of publications has shown an increasing trend over the past two decades, with contributions primarily from developed countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom, although developing countries like Indonesia are beginning to play an increasingly significant role. Findings indicate an increasing publication trend, dominated by issues of identity, health, and social justice. The theoretical implications of this research confirm that religious communication now functions as a social infrastructure that shapes public reality, rather than merely a private practice.

Keywords: Communication, Sociology, Religion, Bibliometrics, Research Trends

Abstrak

Kajian mengenai komunikasi dalam sosiologi dan agama menunjukkan perkembangan yang semakin signifikan seiring dengan dinamika sosial, budaya, dan teknologi global. Agama tidak lagi dipahami semata sebagai praktik spiritual individual, melainkan sebagai fenomena sosial yang dimediasi melalui proses komunikasi dalam berbagai konteks kehidupan masyarakat. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memetakan tren, struktur keilmuan, dan perkembangan tema penelitian terkait communication of sociology and religion selama periode 2005–2025 melalui pendekatan bibliometrik. Data diperoleh dari basis data Scopus dengan menggunakan kata kunci yang relevan dengan komunikasi, sosiologi, dan agama, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan perangkat lunak Biblioshiny berbasis R (bibliometrix). Analisis mencakup produktivitas publikasi tahunan, jurnal sumber utama, penulis dan afiliasi institusi paling berpengaruh, distribusi geografis penelitian, pola sitasi, serta pemetaan tema melalui analisis ko-okurensi kata kunci. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa jumlah publikasi mengalami tren peningkatan dalam dua dekade terakhir, dengan dominasi kontribusi dari negara-negara maju seperti Amerika Serikat dan Inggris, meskipun negara berkembang seperti Indonesia mulai menunjukkan peran



yang semakin signifikan. Tema penelitian didominasi oleh kata kunci *religion, sociology, dan interpersonal communication*, dengan keterkaitan kuat pada isu identitas, kesehatan, keadilan sosial, dan budaya. Pendekatan interdisipliner dan metodologi kualitatif tampak mendominasi kajian di bidang ini. Secara keseluruhan, penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa komunikasi dalam sosiologi dan agama merupakan bidang kajian yang relevan dan terus berkembang, serta memiliki potensi besar untuk dikembangkan melalui kolaborasi internasional, pendekatan metodologis yang lebih beragam, dan eksplorasi isu-isu kontemporer di era digital.

Kata Kunci: *Komunikasi, Sosiologi, Agama, Bibliometrik, Tren Penelitian.*

Introduction

The development of sociological studies on communication and religion has seen a significant increase alongside global social, cultural, and technological transformations (Acker, 2008). Religion is no longer understood solely as an individual spiritual practice, but also as a social phenomenon that is constructed, mediated, and communicated in the public sphere. In a sociological context, communication plays an important role in shaping religious meaning, social relations, collective identity, and power dynamics within religious societies (Turner, 2008). Therefore, the study of communication in the sociology of religion has become an interdisciplinary field that is constantly evolving and relevant for systematic analysis.

Since 2005, scientific publications examining the relationship between communication, sociology, and religion have shown a consistent upward trend. Scopus data shows that research in this field not only focuses on interpersonal and institutional religious communication but also extends to contemporary issues such as digital religion, social media, digital transformation, artificial intelligence, and religious practices in digital space (Nahon-Serfaty & Ahmed, 2014). This shift marks a paradigm change in the study of religion, from traditional approaches toward an analysis of technology-based communication and digital society.

Although the number of publications continues to increase, previous research has generally been thematic or conceptual and has not comprehensively mapped the development of the field. These studies tend to focus on specific cases, limited geographical regions, or particular theoretical approaches without considering the overall structure of knowledge (McMahon, 2011). As a result, the patterns of author collaboration, productive countries, core journals, and dominant keyword trends in the field of sociological and religious communication have not been systematically mapped. The research gap lies in the lack of longitudinal analysis linking keyword evolution with global academic actors in a single systematic map.

Bibliometric analysis is becoming a relevant approach to fill this gap. This method allows for the quantitative mapping of research development based on indicators such as the number of publications, citations, authors, affiliations, journals, and research keywords (Arjmand, 2016). By utilizing the Scopus database, bibliometric analysis can provide an objective overview of the scientific evolution, dominant research focus, and direction of communication research development in sociology and religion during the period 2005–2025. The selection of the 2005–2025 timeframe is based on a sociological turning point where Web 2.0 technology began to redefine social and religious interactions globally. This two-decade period is considered sufficient to capture the phases of adoption, stabilization, and digital disruption in religious communication.



Based on this background, this study aims to analyse the research trends in sociological and religious communication through a bibliometric approach. This study is expected to identify publication growth patterns, key themes, the development of digital religion research, and the contributions of influential academic actors in this field. Academically, the results of this research are expected to serve as a reference for researchers in understanding the scientific landscape, identifying research gaps, and developing further studies related to communication, sociology, and religion in the future.

Methods

This research uses a quantitative approach with bibliometric analysis methods to map the development of communication research in sociology and religion. Research data was obtained from the Scopus database due to its reputation as one of the most comprehensive and reputable international scientific publication indexes. Scopus was chosen because it offers broader coverage of sociology and humanities journals compared to Web of Science (WoS) for the Southeast Asian region, which is relevant to the growth of research in Indonesia and Malaysia identified in this study. While WoS maintains strict citation standards, Scopus provides richer bibliographic data for analyzing inter-institutional collaboration networks in developing countries. Data were obtained from the Scopus database using the keyword combination: TITLE-ABS-KEY ("communication" AND "sociology" AND "religion"). Inclusion Criteria: Journal articles, conference proceedings, and review articles published between 2005–2025. Exclusion Criteria: Editorial notes, errata, and book chapters that did not undergo a rigorous peer-review process were excluded to maintain data validity.

Bibliographic data obtained from Scopus was exported in RIS format and analysed using the R-based Biblioshiny software (Bibliometrix package). The analysis conducted includes annual publication productivity, the most productive source journals, the most influential authors and institutions, and the geographical distribution of research. Additionally, citation analysis was conducted to identify articles, authors, and sources that have a significant impact in the fields of sociological and religious communication. Mapping the network of author and country collaborations is also used to understand patterns of academic cooperation and the structure of the scientific community.

Afterwards, a conceptual analysis was conducted through keyword co-occurrence mapping to identify dominant research themes and emerging topic trends. Network visualization and topic clustering were used to illustrate the interconnections between topics and the shift in research focus over time, particularly regarding the development of digital religion and media-based communication. The results of this bibliometric analysis are presented in the form of tables, graphs, and visual maps to provide a systematic overview of the direction and structure of communication research in sociology and religion during the period 2005–2025.

Results and Discussion

The results of the analysis conducted by Biblioshiny show the distribution of articles published in the last 20 years, spanning the period from 2005 to 2025. A total of 177 documents from 87 sources were analyzed, with 358 authors. Of these, 101 articles were written by single authors. The number of international authors identified was 13.56%. For more details, please refer to Image 1.



Image 1. Main Information of the Data Analyzed

Image 1 shows that the involvement of 358 authors reflects broad academic interest, although it is still dominated by limited collaboration patterns, as evidenced by an average of 2.06 authors per document and relatively low international contribution (13.56%). The presence of 101 single authors indicates that this study also developed thru an individual approach, which is common in the social sciences and humanities. The 584 keywords indicated the diversity of themes and conceptual approaches in discussing the relationship between communication, social structure, and religion. The average age of the documents was 8.19 years, and the average citation per document was 15.6, indicating that publications in this field have academic resilience and medium to long-term relevance. Overall, these findings confirm that the study of sociological and religious communication is a stable and growing field, but it still has significant opportunities to strengthen international collaboration and expand scientific impact thru a more global research network.

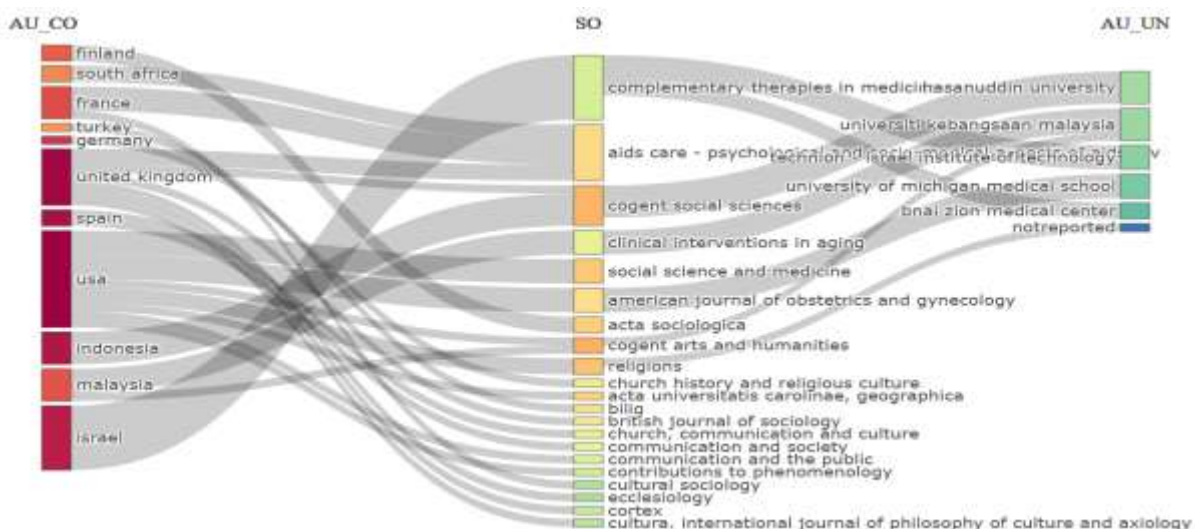


Image 2. Three-Field Plot (Source, Countries and Affiliations)



Based on Image 2, the analysis results show that research on the theme of communication of sociology and religion during the period 2005–2025 is dominated by contributions from countries with strong academic traditions, particularly the United States, the United Kingdom, Israel, Indonesia, and Malaysia. The United States appears to be a major hub for knowledge production, drawing from a diverse range of interdisciplinary journal sources, spanning social science and medicine, cogent social sciences, and communication and society. This indicates a strong interdisciplinary approach between sociology, communication, and religious issues. Prominent journal sources such as Religions, Acta Sociologica, British Journal of Sociology, and Church, Communication and Culture show that this study is not only rooted in classical sociology but also develops within the fields of culture, public communication, and contemporary religious studies. From an affiliation perspective, institutions such as Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Hasanuddin University, University of Michigan Medical School, and Israel Institute of Technology emerged as important nodes connecting research production with regional and global contexts, although there were still a number of publications with unreported affiliations. This flow pattern indicates that communication research in sociology and religion is developing thru an uneven international network, with developed countries dominating but accompanied by significant contributions from developing countries, particularly Southeast Asia. Overall, these findings confirm that the scientific dynamics in this field are shaped by the interaction between geographical context, the choice of multidisciplinary journal sources, and the role of academic institutions in broadening the global perspectives of communication, sociology, and religious studies.

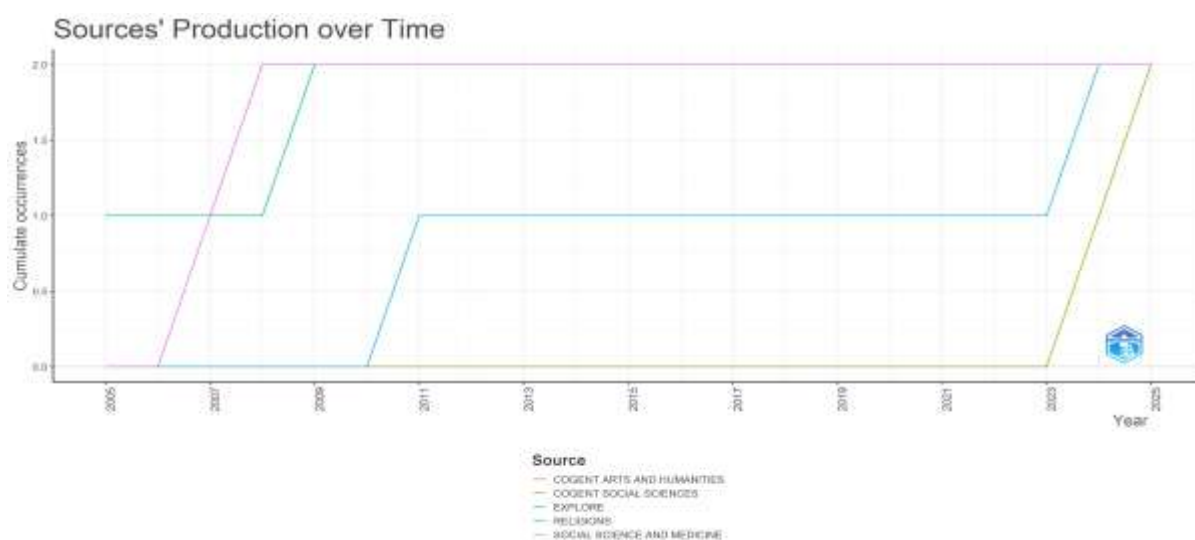


Image 3. Sources' Production over Time on Each Journal

Based on Image 3, the development of publications on the theme of communication of sociology and religion during the period 2005–2025 shows a sporadic growth pattern but indicates a strengthening of cross-disciplinary interest in certain journals. Social Science and Medicine appear to be one of the early sources that began contributing since the mid-2000s and maintained consistent publication until later periods, indicating a strong overlap between communication, religion, and social health issues. The journal Explore shows a relatively early emergence but with limited intensity, reflecting the role of alternative journals in introducing religious and spiritual perspectives



into social studies. Meanwhile, Religions began to show clearer contributions from around 2010 and continued steadily until near 2025, strengthening its position as the leading platform for the study of communication and religion. On the other hand, Cogent Arts and Humanities and Cogent Social Sciences show a more recent emergence, particularly after 2020, indicating an expansion of academic interest in this topic within the open humanities and social sciences domains. Overall, this pattern indicates that although the volume of publications per journal is not high, there has been a diversification of publication sources over time, reflecting the increasing acceptance of communication studies in sociology and religion as interdisciplinary fields relevant to contemporary social dynamics.

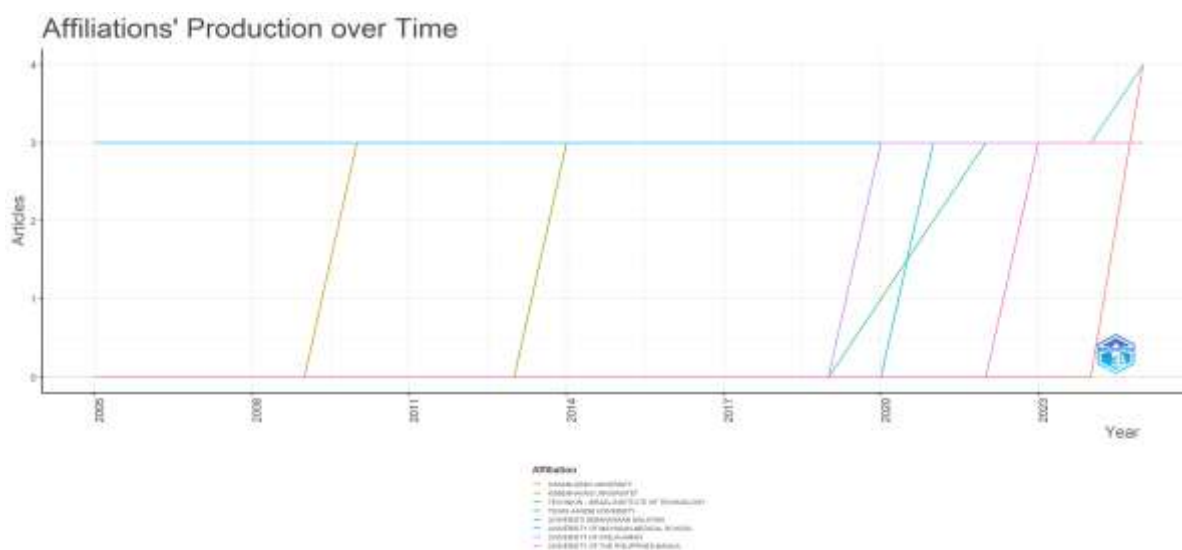


Image 4. Affiliations' Production over Time

Image 4 shows an uneven but increasingly diverse pattern in the last decade. The University of Michigan Medical School appears to be one of the early affiliates that has consistently contributed since the mid-2000s, reflecting the strong connection between sociological studies, communication, religion, and social health issues. Affiliations from Europe and the Middle East, such as the University of Copenhagen and the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology, began to emerge in the late 2000s to early 2010s, signaling a geographical expansion of research into different cultural and religious contexts. Entering the post-2019 period, there is a significant increase in Asian and American affiliations, including Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Texas A&M University, Hasanuddin University, University of Padjadjaran, and University of the Philippines Manila, indicating a strengthening role for institutions from developing countries in global discourse. The pattern of publication surges in recent years indicates that issues of communication, sociology, and religion are becoming increasingly relevant in responding to contemporary social dynamics such as pluralism, health, and cultural change. Overall, these findings confirm a shift away from the dominance of Western institutional affiliations toward a more inclusive and multiregional research landscape, although contributions remain episodic and could be enhanced thru more sustainable institutional collaborations.

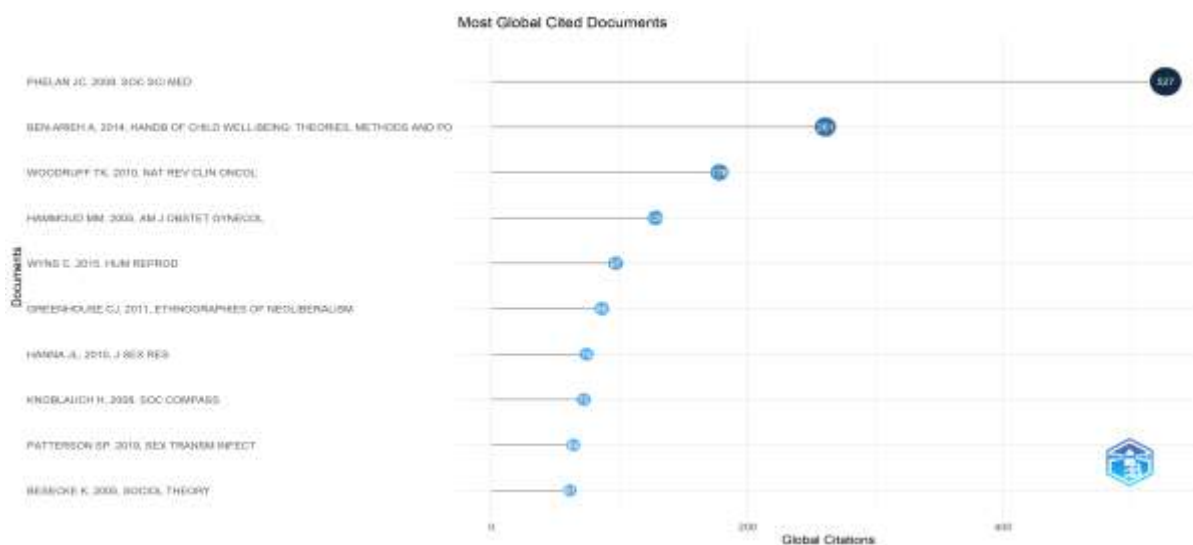


Image 5. Most Global Cited Documents

Based on Image 5, the most cited document is Phelan's (2008) work in Social Science & Medicine with 527 global citations, indicating a strong connection between religious issues, communication, and social inequality in the context of health. Furthermore, Ben-Arieh's (2014) work in the Handbook of Child Well-Being received 261 citations, confirming the relevance of sociological perspectives and moral-religious values in the study of child well-being. The articles by Woodruff (2010) in Nature Reviews Clinical Oncology and Hammoud (2005) in the American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology show that the themes of communication and religion also resonate strongly in the fields of medicine and reproductive health. Meanwhile, works in sociology and humanities journals such as Ethnographies of Neoliberalism, Sociological Compass, and Sociological Theory show that theoretical contributions still have a significant citation impact despite their more limited volume. This citation pattern indicates that academic influence in this field is not solely determined by purely religious or sociological journals, but is instead strengthened by an interdisciplinary approach that links communication, religion, health, and social structures. Overall, these findings confirm that the most highly cited documents have served as the conceptual foundation shaping the direction of communication research development in sociology and religion over the past two decades.



Image 7 shows that the keywords "religion" and "sociology" are the most dominant themes, each with a proportion of approximately 9%, which confirms that communication studies often focus on the relationship between religious practices and social structures. The dominance of the human, humans, and article categories indicates a strong research orientation toward human subjects and both empirical and conceptual publications. Additionally, the inclusion of demographic variables such as male, female, adult, aged, young adult, and child indicate attention to age and gender differences in religious and social communication. Supporting topics such as interpersonal communication, psychology, philosophy, identity, morality, and spirituality reflect an interdisciplinary approach that connects communication with psychological, ethical, and identity formation aspects. From a methodological perspective, the presence of terms like "interview," "qualitative research," "questionnaire," "review," and "controlled study" indicates a diversity of methods, although the qualitative approach appears more prominent. Overall, this tree map illustrates that communication research trends in sociology and religion from 2005 to 2025 are developing widely but remain centered on human issues, social interaction, and religious contexts, with a tendency toward contextual, multidisciplinary, and contemporary social dynamics analysis.

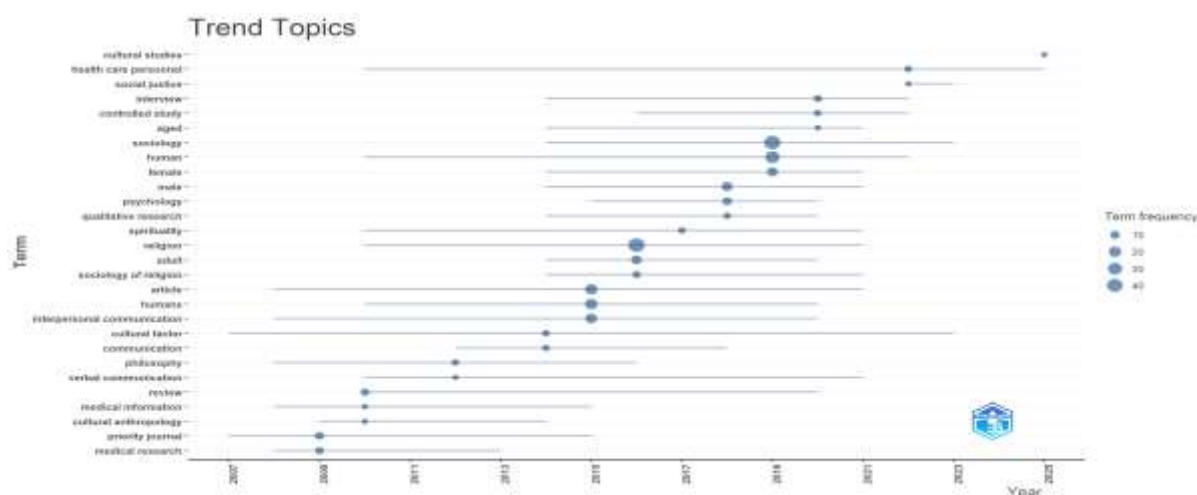


Image 8. Trend Topics on Religion with Other Variables

Image 8 shows that the topic of religion demonstrates consistency and significant growth since the middle of the study period, particularly after 2015, with the highest intensity around 2016–2019. This indicates a strengthening of academic attention to the issue of religion in communication and sociology studies. This trend developed alongside the emergence of supporting variables such as spirituality, the sociology of religion, and interpersonal communication, indicating a shift in focus from normative studies toward an analysis of religious experiences, social interactions, and everyday communication practices. Additionally, the connection between religion and demographic variables (human, humans, male, female, adult, aged) and related disciplines such as psychology and philosophy reflects a multidimensional approach to understanding the role of religion in shaping attitudes, identity, and social behavior. In more recent periods, the emergence of topics such as social justice, healthcare personnel, medical information, and cultural studies indicates that religious research is increasingly contextualized within contemporary issues, including health, social justice, and culture. Methodologically, the sustained use of qualitative research, interviews, and reviews confirms the dominance of the qualitative approach in examining the complexities of religious communication. Thus, the trend of this topic shows that research on religious communication is not



only enduring but also becoming increasingly integrated with relevant social, cultural, and humanitarian issues within the dynamics of modern society.

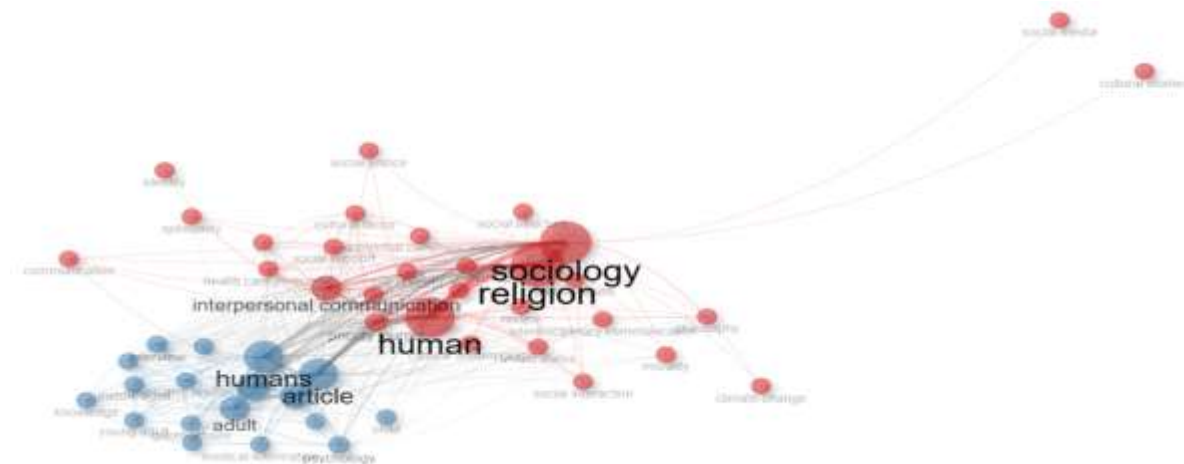


Image 9. Co Word Net (Network of Relations between Religion and Other Keywords)

Based on Image 9, it can be seen that the keywords "religion" and "sociology" occupy a central position with a high degree of interconnectedness to various other concepts, indicating their role as the main axis in the study of sociological communication of religion. The strong connection between religion and humans, interpersonal communication, and social structure confirms that research is heavily focused on human experiences, patterns of social interaction, and the social structures that frame religious practices. This network also shows a close relationship with normative and cultural themes such as spirituality, identity, morality, and cultural factors, indicating a focus on the formation of meaning, values, and identity thru religious communication. Additionally, the connection of religion with contemporary issues such as social justice, healthcare personnel, climate change, and social media indicates an expansion of research scope toward modern social problems and digital communication spaces. On the other hand, clusters related to humans, articles, adults, and psychology reflect a strong empirical basis and methodological approach, particularly in human-based studies. Overall, this co-word network illustrates that religious communication research from 2005–2025 is multidimensional and integrated, with religion serving as the main conceptual node connecting social, cultural, moral, and communicative dimensions in contemporary society.

Table 1. Number of Articles Published in Scopus Per Year

Year	Articles
2005	6
2006	2
2007	5
2008	4
2009	3
2010	4
2011	4
2012	4
2013	10
2014	5



2015	14
2016	10
2017	6
2018	4
2019	10
2020	13
2021	16
2022	11
2023	9
2024	20
2025	17

Based on Table 1, it can be seen that research publications with the keywords communication, sociology, and religion show a fluctuating but generally increasing trend in the long term. In the early period of 2005–2012, the number of articles was relatively low and stable, ranging from 2 to 6 articles per year, indicating that this topic was still limited and had not become a major focus of academic study. The increase began to be noticeable in 2013 with a surge to 10 articles, then peaked in 2015 with 14 articles, reflecting the growing interest of researchers in the issue of religious communication in a social context. Although there was a decline in 2017–2018, the publication trend strengthened again since 2019 and showed significant growth in the 2020–2025 period, with the highest number of articles in 2024 at 20 articles. This condition indicates that in recent years, the study of sociological and religious communication has become increasingly relevant and responsive to social and cultural dynamics, as well as contemporary issues such as identity, social justice, and communication transformation in the digital age. Overall, this data confirms that research in the fields of communication, sociology, and religion has experienced progressive and sustainable development over the past two decades.

Table 2. Most Relevant Publication Sources.

Sources	Articles
COGENT ARTS AND HUMANITIES	2
COGENT SOCIAL SCIENCES	2
EXPLORE	2
RELIGIONS	2
SOCIAL SCIENCE AND MEDICINE	2
ACTA SOCIOLOGICA	1
ACTA UNIVERSITATIS CAROLINAE, GEOGRAPHICA	1
AIDS CARE - PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIO-MEDICAL	1
ASPECTS OF AIDS/HIV	1
AMERICAN JOURNAL OF OBSTETRICS AND GYNECOLOGY	1
ASIA-PACIFIC SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW	1

Based on Table 2, it can be seen that articles related to communication, sociology, and religion are distributed across various interdisciplinary journals. The journals Cogent Arts and Humanities, Cogent Social Sciences, Explore, Religions, and Social Science and Medicine are at the top with two articles each, indicating that this study is not only developing within the fields of sociology and religious studies but is also integrated with the humanities, applied social sciences, and health. Meanwhile, journals with a single article, such as Acta Sociologica, Asia-Pacific Social



Science Review, and AIDS Care – Psychological and Socio-Medical Aspects of AIDS/HIV, reflect the diversity of research contexts and approaches, ranging from purely sociological perspectives to health and social issues. The presence of medical and health journals, such as the American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology and Social Science and Medicine, indicates an intersection between religious communication and issues of well-being, health, and social practices. Overall, the distribution of these publication sources confirms that research in sociological and religious communication is multidisciplinary, with widespread dissemination across various reputable journals, and indicates the potential for developing studies that are increasingly open to cross-disciplinary collaboration.

Table 3. Top Ten Countries

Country	Frequency
USA	81
UK	37
SPAIN	27
INDONESIA	13
ISRAEL	10
CANADA	8
CHINA	8
GERMANY	8
INDIA	8
DENMARK	7

Based on Table 3, it can be seen that the United States (USA) dominates article production with the highest frequency of 81 publications, confirming its role as a major global center for research in communication, sociology, and religion. The next positions are held by the United Kingdom (UK) with 37 articles and Spain with 27 articles, demonstrating the strong contribution of Western European countries to the development of this study. Indonesia ranks fourth with 13 publications, indicating growing academic attention in developing countries, particularly within the context of multicultural and religious societies. Other countries such as Israel (10 articles), Canada, China, Germany, and India (8 articles each), as well as Denmark (7 articles), reflect a fairly even geographical distribution across the Americas, Europe, and Asia. This distribution indicates that research on the sociology of communication and religion is global, with variations in social, cultural, and religious contexts enriching research perspectives. Overall, these findings confirm that the dominance of developed countries remains strong, but the contribution of developing countries is becoming increasingly significant in shaping international academic discourse related to communication, sociology, and religion.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the study of the communication of sociology and religion has experienced significant and sustained development during the period 2005–2025, marked by an increase in the number of publications, the expansion of research themes, and the strengthening of interdisciplinary approaches. Bibliometric analysis shows that religion and sociology occupy a central position as conceptual pivots closely linked to issues of interpersonal communication, identity, health, social justice, and cultural dynamics. The dominance of developed countries, particularly the United States and Western Europe, is still strong in knowledge production, but the contributions of



developing countries like Indonesia show a promising upward trend. From a methodological perspective, the research is dominated by a qualitative approach and a conceptual study that focuses on human experience and the socio-religious context. This finding confirms that communication in sociology and religion is a relevant field of study, adaptable to contemporary issues, and has the potential for continued development. This research proves a shift from the classic sociology of religion paradigm, which focused on secularization, toward a mediatization paradigm, where religion and communication mutually shape each other's social structures. Moving forward, further research is suggested to strengthen international collaboration, expand quantitative and computational approaches, and explore more deeply the role of digital technology and new media in shaping religious communication practices and meanings in global society.

Implications and Limitations

These findings provide guidance for researchers to identify unsaturated topics, such as the influence of AI in moral communication. The limitation of this study lies in its reliance on a single database (Scopus); therefore, publications in local journals not indexed by Scopus may not have been captured. Future research is suggested to integrate data from Crossref or Google Scholar using computational linguistics techniques to deepen text content analysis.

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