

# Meta-Analysis of Children's Moral Education in the Digital Era: A Bibliometric Analysis (1977-2021)

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## ABSTRACT

This study uses bibliometric methods to conduct a meta-analysis of research on children's moral education in the digital era, published between 1977 and 2021. The study analyzes literature to address questions related to children's moral education in a digitalized society, where digitalization affects various aspects of social life and changes ways of thinking and living. The bibliometric analysis excludes the year 2022. Data was collected to examine the contributions of various authors, research institutions, and countries in this field. The analysis identifies key authors contributing to the field, with Cooney, M., Firth, A., and Herman-Pillath, C. being the most prolific. Leading research institutions include Delft University of Technology, City University of New York, and Cornell University. The United States, the United Kingdom, and China are the top contributing countries. The study also visualizes the types of documents published, with articles being the most common (48.6%), followed by book chapters (27.6%), books (10.0%), reviews (9.0%), conference papers (2.1%), editorials (2.1%), and notes (0.7%). This study highlights the importance of moral education in the digital era, emphasizing that effective methods—such as best practices, socialization, counseling, mindfulness, humor, and supervision—are crucial for children to navigate digital media responsibly. The findings provide valuable insights for families, educators, and policymakers to enhance moral education strategies in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.

**Keywords:** Bibliometric; digital era; meta-analysis; children's moral education

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the global era, the rapid advancement of information and communication technology (ICT) has brought positive and negative consequences across various aspects of life. One of the negative aspects of society is that human behavior from the age of children to adults has decreased and even concern. The influence of gadgets on children's behavior is a growing concern in modern society, with one of the most significant issues being the phenomenon of children becoming ignorant when called by their parents. In such a case, education and moral development are the foremost priorities for fostering individual and social piety, particularly in children and generally for all individuals. Education can be defined as a deliberate effort by

educators to facilitate students' physical and spiritual growth across formal, informal, and non-formal settings. "Towards the formation of a complete (primary) personality to achieve high-value happiness, namely insanity (noble qualities as a human being) and divine (perfection of God's nature)," Al-Ghazali said. Character measures a Muslim's personality (Suryadarma & Haq, 2015). Morals are traits that are deeply ingrained in a person and then transformed into an action without requiring protracted consideration and thought. If the deed is good, it is called commendable morality; if it is bad, it is called despicable morality. Instilling morals early in children will help them socialize with their family, school, and community environment. Children will become accustomed to behaving in a manner that embodies religious values.

Social and emotional learning is significant for providing children with adequate skills to shape a supportive society (Riyanti et al., 2022; Schiele et al., 2024). The inculcation of these moral values and teachings must be coupled with an emphasis on the benefits and applications of moral behavior. This ensures that children comprehend and appreciate the significance of their actions and words. In carrying out moral education for children, an appropriate way or method is needed for its delivery (Huynh et al., 2024). Raising moral awareness in an online experiment is not sufficient to mitigate cheating behavior. In early childhood education, moral and ethical issues are fundamental and manifest in the educators' interactions with children, families, colleagues, supervisors, pre-service teachers, and the wider community. These issues also arise in the context of societal development and the implementation of national policies (Lipponen et al., 2024a). Self-concept in the moral domain encompasses several dimensions. For instance, extensive research has explored the perception of moral identity's importance as a crucial factor linking moral values to moral behavior. (Giacomantonio et al., 2024). (Smith et al., 2024) adds to sociological understandings of service reconfiguration by considering the interaction of structure, agency, and power while also developing the concept of the moral background to show how power relations can influence moral beliefs and (Lipponen et al., 2024b) identify two historical developments which produce the moral-ethical tensions in educators' work, and we explore how the educators invented.

According to the theory of "Morality-as-Cooperation", morality is a collection of cooperative rules that help humans work together, keep the peace, and promote the common good (Alfano et al., 2024). Several methods can be applied in the process of education and instilling morals in children, including the *uswah* method (abandonment), *riyadhah* (habituation exercises), *mauidhah* (advice), and *qishah* (storytelling) (Nurhalimah, 2023). The sophistication of contemporary knowledge and technology has created a seemingly borderless world, enabling various virtual communication activities across the globe in a short time. Additionally, advancements in technology and communication have triggered significant changes in human life. This phenomenon is marked by the increasingly central role of cyber technology in all areas of life (Zucca, 2022). Digitization impacts every aspect of human life, promoting instant and practical thinking while often neglecting the importance of the process. This has led to unavoidable lifestyle changes. One particularly concerning issue is the rise of social media, which can undermine moral values. Children born in this century are immediately confronted with both the real and the virtual world. Therefore, parents play a crucial role in creating an environment that better prepares children to face the various challenges of the digital era. Therefore, moral education becomes crucial, ensuring that children possess the necessary foundation to navigate their future lives, uphold morality within society, and respect religious authority (Tao & Chen, 2023) and global purposes of Islamic religious education in societies (Saada, 2023). These previous studies attempted to develop the human development index in accordance with Islamic objectives, but they did not put it to the test empirically (Widiastuti et al., 2022).

Bibliometrics is a statistical method to analyze scientific literature and patents for evaluation of progression, identification of major gaps and challenges and prediction of future (Fuente & Rutaisire, 2024). In this way, bibliometric quantitative analysis uses mathematical and statistical techniques to measure and evaluate scientific publications and patents' quantity,

quality, structure, and impact in a specific field or subject. This literature review focuses on moral thoughts in social life within the context of the world's digitalization. Employing a descriptive bibliometric approach, the study analyzes publications and patents to identify key gaps and limitations in controlling children's moral education amidst the digital era. The findings aim to propose future directions for addressing these limitations globally. Given that children represent the future generation and future leaders shaping the country's state, it is imperative to address these issues effectively.

## 2. METHODS

Bibliometric analysis, through examination of existing publications encompassing authors, keywords, publishing locations, sources, and countries, enables the comprehensive evaluation of the status within a specific research area (Xu et al., 2024). The Scopus database was used to collect all the bibliographical data on moral thought in the social life of society. The research limits data collection to the year 2021 without considering the year 2022 so that the annual data obtained describes the research condition in one whole year from January to December. The key command applied when mining data in Scopus is TITLE-ABS-KEY (moral AND thoughts AND social AND life AND society). This research employs strategy-type analysis and counting methods such as the type of analysis of co-authorship with the unit of analysis of authors, organization, countries, and full counting method.

The examination of research themes involves the organization of scholarly literature, thereby unveiling coherence and evolutionary trends. Prominent publications derive their significance from quantified co-cited counts and link strength. It can be interpreted as a model for keyword search based on words in the title, abstract, author keywords, and keywords plus, we chose the search topic to obtain a more precise topic (Zhang et al., 2024). In these ways, such methods are used to consolidate the opinions of many researchers publishing in a particular field and to express their opinions through citation (Sottini et al., 2024).

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Education Morals

According to the Indonesian dictionary, education is defined as the process of altering attitudes and systems to meet the needs of individuals or groups, facilitating their maturity through teaching and training efforts. In the context of Islam, education is referred to as *at-tarbiyah*, derived from a word that conveys nurturing, educating, and fostering growth. According to al-Qurtubi, *rabb* signifies ownership, extensive care, arrangement, augmentation, and fulfillment. Al-Jauhari interprets it as providing sustenance, nurturing, and parental care. In the Qur'an, *rabba* is used to denote "Lord," as the inherent nature of a Lord encompasses education, nurturing, and creation. From these interpretations, it is evident that education involves the concerted effort to guide, construct, and steer children towards goodness. This holds paramount significance for parents and educators in the digital age, ensuring children utilize technology responsibly and are shielded from the detrimental effects of unrestricted access to information.

Regarding morals, Hamzah Ya'qub traces its origin to Arabic, the plural form of *khuluqun*, denoting actions. It is *akin* to *khalqun*, meaning occurrence, and *khaliqun*, signifying creation, and *makhluqun*, representing the created. Consequently, the terminology of morals underscores the intimate connection between the Creator and His creation and among fellow creatures. According to Ibn Maskawaih, morality is an inherent quality of the soul that compels it to act without the need for conscious thought or deliberation. Al-Mawardi further elucidates that an individual possesses admirable character if they exhibit kindness, gentleness, a pleasant demeanor, an aversion to scolding, and a tendency to consistently speak words of goodness (Jaelani, 2021). According to Shaykh Ibn Sa'di, noble morality is characterized by

principled and dignified behavior. It is considered a fundamental human necessity rooted in qualities like patience, gentleness, and a predisposition toward commendable conduct. This ethos encourages forgiveness, tolerance, and a willingness to share one's blessings with others. Furthermore, commendable morals are exemplified by the ability to remain patient in the face of others' wrongdoing, to forgive their mistakes, and to respond to their unkindness with kindness.

From these various definitions, it is evident that moral education entails a conscientious, consistent, and systematic effort by parents at home or educators at school to guide and mentor children toward cultivating honorable habits, behaviors, and a resilient personality.

Mankind's tendency to exhibit good or bad morals is shaped by a process that plays a crucial role in determining the final behavior tendencies of individuals. Educational experts utilize this process to conceptualize how humans can consistently adhere to goodness, primarily through education. This underscores the urgency of moral education, especially for children, as it is the most effective method for fostering a generation of noble character in today's digital era. Given their pure and uncontaminated nature, moral education is essential for children from an early age. Therefore, it is incumbent upon parents and educators to teach and exemplify honorable deeds following the Qur'an's teachings and the Prophet Mohammed's hadith ([Hayati & Caniango, 2012](#)).

According to Ahmad Amen, several cases strengthen education morals and elevate it, that is:

1. Expand the environmental mind because a narrow mind is the source of several evils and confused minds; no disaster can produce tall morals.
2. Friends with the selected person matter because the man likes to imitate.
3. Read and investigate the journey of heroes and think outside normal.
4. more importantly, it gives encouragement to education so a person obliges himself to do good deeds for the public (prioritize interests).

Engaging in good deeds should become a habit. The aim of moral education for children is to cleanse them from sinful and immoral acts. Physical cleanliness is achieved through jurisprudence, while spiritual cleanliness is achieved through moral conduct. Individuals with a pure mind and heart will naturally engage in commendable actions, fostering a society that values mutual respect and happiness in this world and the hereafter. Moral education also aims to help children discern good actions for everyday life and recognize and avoid despicable deeds and their dangers. This enables children to differentiate between acceptable behaviors and those that should be avoided.

Moral education aims to cultivate character and shape the child's soul through lessons, coaching, and guidance in good morals at school and within the family environment. Teaching children good morals is a gradual process that must begin within the family, the smallest educational and social sphere. Moral education is the first type of education a child receives from their family ([Riyanti et al., 2022](#)). Research by Rohner indicates that early childhood experiences significantly impact personality development, influencing emotional, behavioral, social-cognitive, and psychological health into adulthood.

## **Digitalization**

Digitalization marks a period where digital systems are widely integrated into everyday life. In this digital era, technology and communication have become increasingly sophisticated ([Haudi et al., 2022](#)). The digital system is far more sophisticated compared to the previous analog system. The analog system generates a continuous signal derived from natural sources, often leading to signal degradation and resulting in unclear transmission. In contrast, the digital system eliminates such confounding factors by converting the original signal into bits and sampling sound waves at a specific rate, ensuring clearer signals and

minimizing delays. Digital media also has the advantage of being manipulable and networked, which enhances public access to information.

The rapid advancements in digital technology have led to significant global changes, with various types of digital technology continually emerging. This progress has made information easily accessible and has provided numerous facilities that can be enjoyed freely and under control. However, the digital era has also impacted privacy, as personal online data can be easily tracked. The digital age is inevitable and not a matter of choice, as technology will continue to evolve and integrate into human life. Therefore, managing and utilizing technology correctly is crucial to reap its benefits.

## ***Discussion***

### **Education Morals In the Digital Era**

The approach to education morals held by parents at home and educators at school is as follows.

#### ***Riyadah* (Habit) Approach**

*Riyadah* (practice and habituation) is a learning technique that students can use repeatedly. Habituation will provide profound benefits for students. Children will be more accustomed to behaving with moral values because habituation is an effect of continuous training. This habituation method was applied by the Prophet Muhammad PBUH to familiarize children with the basics of manners, such as eating and drinking ethics and praying before and after waking up. He also accustoms children to performing the obligatory prayers from the age of seven so that when they become adults, they are used to them and can easily carry them out. Children must be accustomed to engaging in good deeds from an early age, trained to behave appropriately, and taught politeness and other virtues. Educating, practicing, and guiding children gradually is essential to help them develop strong character and skills, ensuring their beliefs and morals are firmly established. Additionally, this process of human development can be achieved through a systematic approach involving constant reflection on one's actions accompanied by *riyadah* (spiritual training) (Ismail et al., 2013).

Morals, principles, and belief systems, including physical skills, require a gradual process to be achieved. This process must be habitual and repetitive to ensure they are well-mastered and easily performed. Parents at home and school educators should consistently teach, practice, and instill these values in children. Teaching children to speak politely, kindly, gently, and courteously is essential because children tend to mimic the speech they rehearse. A child's behavior is influenced by their educators; if they are trained in good speech and deeds, they will develop positively, and vice versa. In terms of technology use, children should also be accustomed to time restrictions to prevent dependency or addiction to the internet, games, and other digital activities.

#### ***Mauidhah* (Advice) Approach**

*Mauidhah* (advice) is a presentation on truth and virtue to invite the person who is given the advice to stay away from danger and guide him to a path that is happy and useful for him (Hayati et al., 2023). Giving advice and warnings should be done in a way that can touch the heart and inspire students to practice it. With regard to the implementation of moral education in children, good words (advice) should always be heard in the ears of children so that what they hear enters the heart, which is then moved to practice in life. Advice can enlighten children, elevate their morals, and instill Islamic principles. The Qur'an uses various methods to encourage virtuous behavior. When accepted by an open heart and mind, sincere advice prompts immediate and lasting positive responses.

Recommendations encourage beneficial actions and instill discipline and religious obligations in children, shaping a noble personality. For example, the Prophet Muhammad

PBUH advised encouraging children to pray from the age of seven to foster a connection with the Creator. Imam al-Ghazali emphasized teaching children about purification, prayer, and fasting as they reach the age of discernment. Prohibitions prevent harmful actions, like stealing or fighting, instilling a sense of what is forbidden early on. This strategy aims to develop discipline and promote good behavior in children, making wrongful actions inherently taboo as they grow.

### **Uswah (Exemplary) Approach**

*Uswah* (exemplary) is a method in Islamic education that makes teacher figures, other school officials, parents, and members of the community a mirror for students by giving good examples to children in the form of words and actions (Ismail et al., 2013). This exemplary method is the most appropriate method in moral education because without exemplary, what is taught to children will only be theory. This good example will foster a desire for others to imitate and follow him. Through this method, the Prophet Muhammad PBUH was also sent by Allah SWT to be a good role model for mankind. Armed with noble morals, one can succeed in preaching, educating, and guiding people to become faithful, knowledgeable, and highly civilized individuals with strong moral values. In Islamic education, exemplifying good behavior is crucial. Teachers, school officials, parents, and community members serve as role models for students, providing positive examples through their words and actions (Wantu, 2020).

The exemplary method is the most effective approach in moral education because, without positive examples, teachings remain theoretical. Good examples inspire others to imitate and follow suit. This method was exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad, who was sent by Allah as a role model for humanity and successfully guided people towards faith, knowledge, and high moral standards. Children are natural imitators, and their parents at home are their best examples. Parents' behavior significantly influences their children's mental and moral development. Deeply ingrained exemplary education is the most convincing method for morally, spiritually, and socially shaping children.

Similarly, educators at school serve as influential examples for children, whether consciously or unconsciously. Their behavior, both in speech and action, leaves a lasting impression on students. Educational efforts will be ineffective without positive examples, and advice will not be internalized. Parents should also set a positive example for their children using information technology, such as the internet and gadgets. Using these tools for beneficial purposes and being mindful of appropriate times and places within a moral framework is essential (Zou et al., 2024).

### **Attention Approach**

Our beliefs significantly shape our perception of the social world. Particularly, our views of others are heavily influenced by social biases (Engels et al., 2024). An educational approach that emphasizes attention, awareness, and continual monitoring of a child's moral, spiritual, and social development, alongside physical education and intellectual empowerment, is crucial. This attentive method is the most effective in shaping individuals into well-rounded individuals who can fulfill their duties and obligations thoroughly. Moral education underscores the importance of teaching moral absolutes to the younger generation, ensuring they grasp concepts of goodness and righteousness (Suta & Supartha, 2017).

### **Punish and Reward Approach**

The punishment approach involves intentionally addressing a child's errors, such as using information technology for criminal activities or disobedience to God. Through punishment, the child experiences remorse and is deterred from repeating the offense, fostering discipline (Nurrohmatulloh & Mulyawati, 2022). This method, advocated by Gazali, aims to dissuade children from engaging in religiously prohibited acts. However, ideally, actions should not be motivated solely by fear of punishment but also by self-awareness and

obedience to God, seeking His pleasure (Rasyidah, 1969). Additionally, rewarding children for commendable deeds is crucial. Rewards need not be material; gestures like a smile or thumbs up can boost a child's morale, instilling confidence and enthusiasm for learning.

### Supervision Approach

This approach prevents unwanted occurrences, as human beings are prone to errors and deviations. To avert such mistakes, constant supervision is necessary before they escalate. Effective supervision is crucial, particularly in today's digital age, where children are adept at using gadgets. Failing to monitor them may result in accessing morally damaging content. Islamic education plays a vital role in shaping children's family piety (Siregar, 2017). Forming good morals is a gradual process, requiring parents to educate and instill values in their children from a young age.

### Visualization of Moral Thoughts Research in the Social Life

Figure 1 illustrates the trend of research publications on moral thoughts in the social life, with the highest peak recorded in 2022, totaling 240 documents. Research on this topic has been ongoing since 1977, showing a fluctuating but generally increasing trend in international publications each year. The data suggest the likelihood of continued growth in research on Moral Thoughts in the Social Life of Society, potentially indicating increased scholarly interest in the topic in 2022.

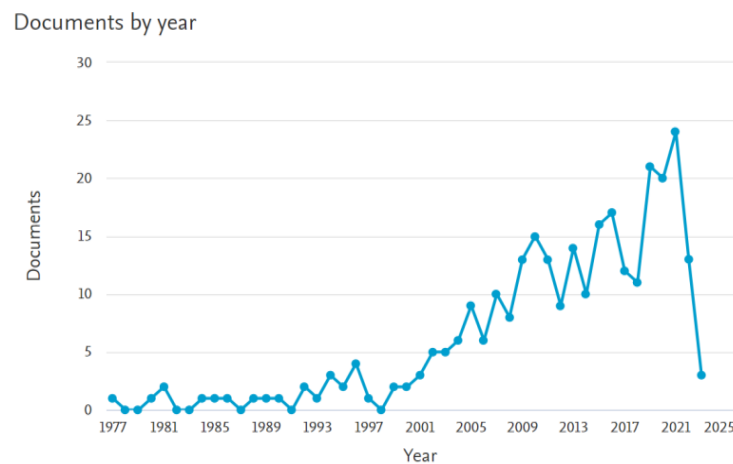


Figure 1. The number of publication documents over years

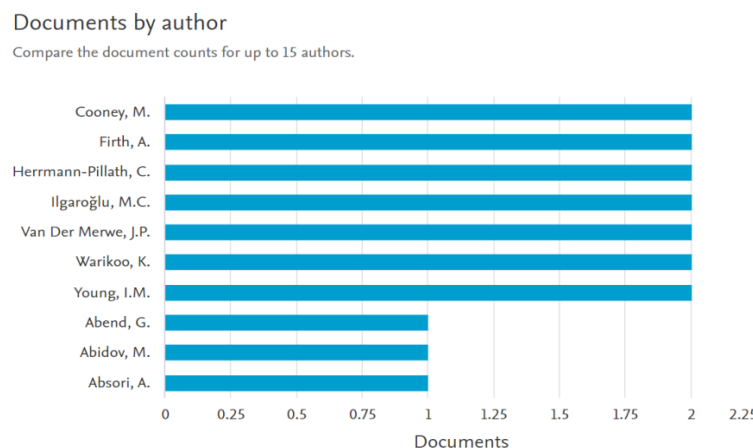
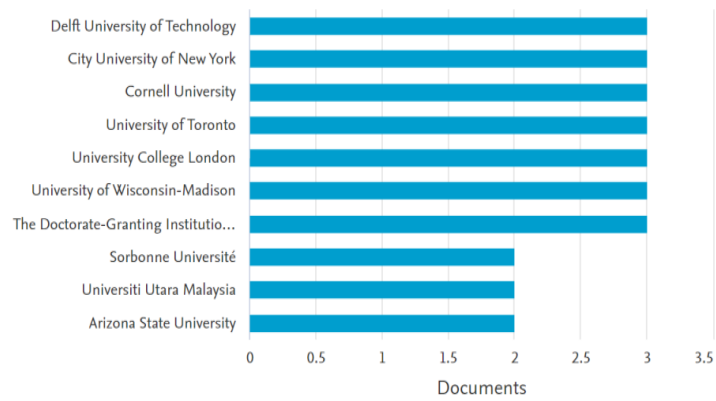


Figure 2. The authors of moral thoughts in the social life of society

### Documents by affiliation

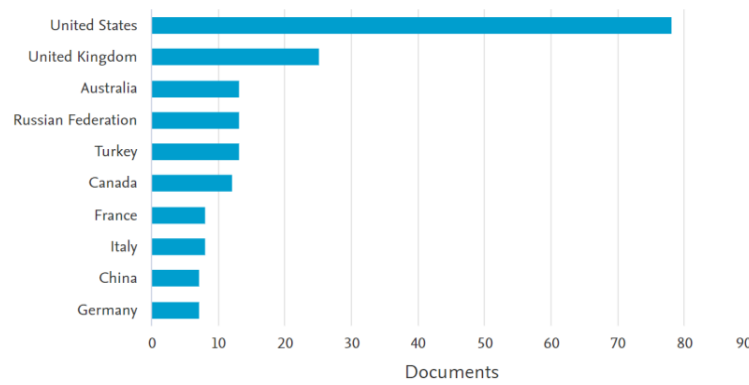
Compare the document counts for up to 15 affiliations.



**Figure 3.** The affiliations

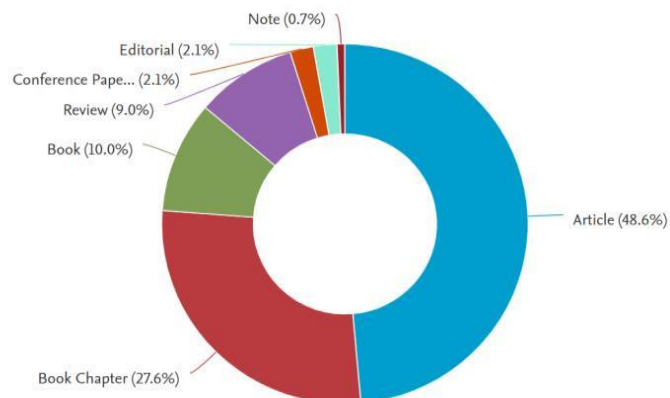
### Documents by country or territory

Compare the document counts for up to 15 countries/territories.



**Figure 4.** The countries

### Documents by type

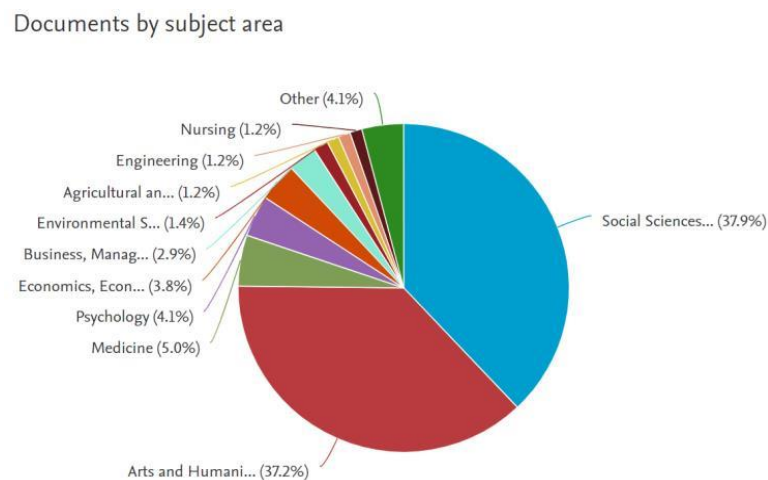


**Figures 5.** The document publication types



Figure 5 provides a visualization of the most commonly published types of documents in the field of Moral Thoughts in the Social Life of Society. Articles constitute the majority at 48.6%, followed by Book Chapters at 27.6%, and Books at 10.0%. Reviews and Editorials both account for 9.0% of the publications, while Conference Papers make up 2.1%. Notes have the smallest share at 0.7%.

Meanwhile, Figure 6 presents a visualization of the most intensive fields of study in the publication of Moral Thoughts in the Social Life of Society. Social Sciences and Arts and Humanities are the most prominent, accounting for 37.9% and 37.2% of publications respectively. Psychology follows at 4.1%, while Medicine and Economics, Econometrics, and Finance contribute 5.0% and 3.8% respectively. Business, Management, and Accounting make up 2.9%, and Environmental Science, Nursing, and Engineering each have smaller shares at 1.4%, 1.2%, and 1.2% respectively. Other areas collectively represent 0.79% of publications.



Figures 6. The subject areas

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Family moral education, especially for children, requires special attention from parents. The behavior of children, whether good or bad, is largely influenced by the education they receive. In today's digital era, the complexities of moral education are amplified by various societal impacts. It is crucial to employ appropriate methods to instill moral values in children, ensuring they become individuals with admirable morals in the future. In the field of moral thoughts in the social life of society, authors such as Cooney, M., Firth, A., and Herman-Pillath C., have made significant contributions through their publications. Institutions like Delft University of Technology, City University of New York, and Cornell University are notable contributors to research in this field. The United States, United Kingdom, and China are among the countries with the largest contributions to publications in Moral Thoughts in the Social Life of Society. The most common types of documents published in this field include Articles (48.6%), Book Chapters (27.6%), and Books (10.0%). Reviews and Editorials each constitute 9.0% of publications, while Conference Papers make up 2.1%. Notes have the smallest share at 0.7%.

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