



# Humility Research Trend in One Decade (2013-2023) and Future Research Directions: Bibliometric Analysis

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## Highlights

- This study provides topics that are relevant to humility and are still not widely researched, so it can be a research suggestion for researchers who are interested in humility variables.
- The study identifies humility research trends in the past decade and describes document types, authors, institutions, and research fields that are popular in humility research.

## Abstract

Humility makes people to have attachments and increases empathy. People with humility would be open and consider the opinions and beliefs of others. This study aims to identify and analyze the research trend of humility in one decade. This study used literature review with a bibliometric approach. SCOPUS was used as the database for this study and used humility as the main keyword. The analyses used VOSviewer and Microsoft Excel. The bibliometric analysis included document type, authorship, institution, subject area, growth trend, and future research directions. The 6 clusters explained that humility is discussed in various fields such as individual characteristics, personality, culture, religiosity and spirituality, and leadership or organization. For future research, it is expected that researchers can discuss humility related to the topics mentioned in the discussion section.

Keywords: Bibliometric; Humility; Research Trend

## **INTRODUCTION**

Humility has its roots in the Latin *humus* meaning "earth" or "soil" and from the word *humilis*, meaning "in the ground". Thus, humility can be interpreted as a trait in individuals with a down-to-earth view or perspective toward themselves or others (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2010). Humility is an individual's sensitivity to his relationships with others, reflecting the desire to be aware of his strengths and weaknesses in interpersonal relationships and when considering something more significant than oneself or beyond personal interests (Nielsen & Marrone, 2018).

Humility is vital for individuals because humility can make a person have compassion and foster empathy for others (Harvey & Pauwels, 2005). In addition, individuals with humility traits will tend to be more open and consider every opinion and belief of others (Van Tongeren et al., 2019). The importance of humility in life makes this topic very interesting to be discussed by researchers from various countries worldwide. Humility is interesting to know its development in the academic world or publications. Only one related article was found based on the results of screening on the SCOPUS database through the Publish or Perish (PoP) application by searching for keywords in humility and bibliometrics. The article was published in 2015 and belongs to the field of management studies. The lack of research related to bibliometrics on humility, so this study aims to find out and analyze research trends with humility in the last decade and provide recommendations for humility research topics in future research. In this study, several research questions were made, namely 1) What Types of documents related to humility in a decade? 2) Who are the most active researchers? 3) What institutions are most productive? 4) What areas of humility are the most discussed? Moreover, 5) How has the trend of humility research grown in a decade? 6) Research recommendations on humility in the future?

## **METHOD**

The method in this study is a literature review method. Research using the literature review method must use a systematic, explicit, and can-be-produced method (Fink, 2005; Garza-Reyes, 2015). This study used a bibliometric approach. Bibliometrics is an analysis to examine the evolution of keywords or research variables, including topics and authors, social, intellectual, and conceptual structures of disciplines (Donthu et al., 2020). Bibliometrics is further an analysis that uses a quantitative approach (statistics) to produce patterns of article distribution in a research discussion (variables) (Martí-Parreño et al., 2016).

The commonly used indicators in bibliometric studies are publication classification, citation, authorship, publication impact, and country (Ahmi & Mohamad, 2019). Fahimnia et al. (2015) revealed five steps in the bibliometric analysis, consisting of 1) defining search keywords, 2) initial search results, 3) Refinement of the search results, 4) Compiling statistics on the initial data, and 5) data analysis. In summary, the steps start with defining the search keyword. Next, the initial search about the desired topic, variable, or keyword. Then, perform a narrowing or simplification of the initial search results. Then, compile statistics by downloading or saving information from a database. Finally, analyze the data results that have been found quantitatively or descriptively. The data source in this study was obtained from the search results in the SCOPUS database using research from 2013 to 2023. The data is then processed using the help of Microsoft Excel and VOSviewer applications. Analysis using VOSviewer is done by analyzing co-authorship and co-occurrence.

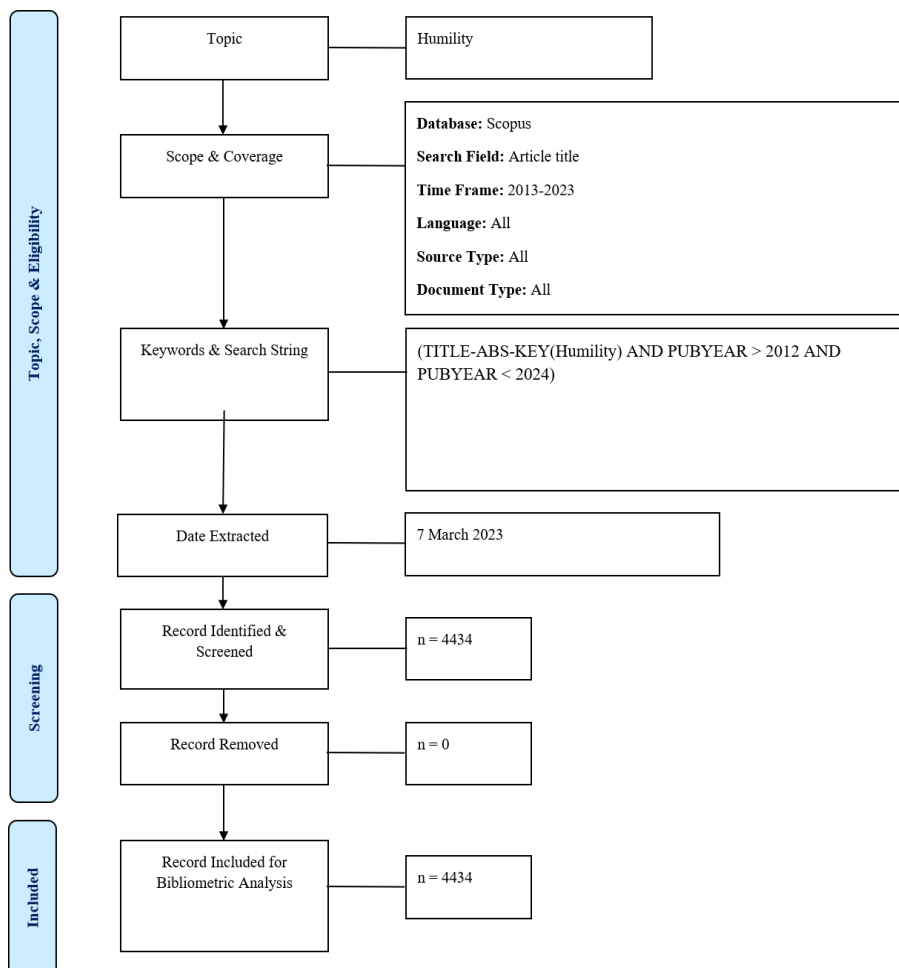
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**Figure 1.** Research flowchart of bibliometric analysis

**RESULT**

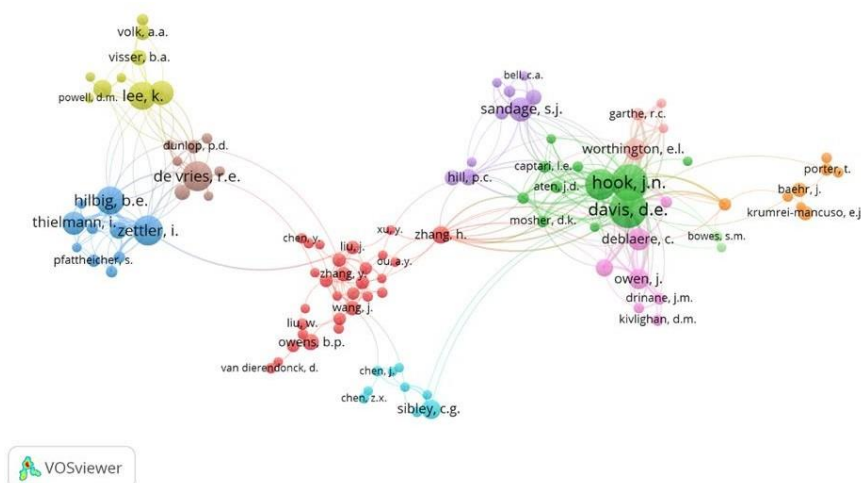


**Figure 2.** Flow diagram of the research strategy

**Table 1.**  
Results of the most popular categories of bibliometric analysis

	Total Publications (TP)	Percentage (%)
Article	3208	72.35
Joshua N. Hook	64	1.44
University of North Texas	83	1.87
Social Science	1617	36.47

Based on the SCOPUS database, the results show 12 types of documents found. The results showed that the most journal articles were found (72.35%), followed by book chapters (9.43%), reviews (7.67%), notes (2.46%), conference papers (2.39%), books (2.37%), editorials (1.85%), letters (0.63%), erratum (0.41%), short surveys (0.36%), each data papers and Conference review (0.05%). The famous author of humility research trends in one last decade is Joshua N. Hook. He has 64 publications and dominates with a percentage of 1.44%. Other authors followed by Davis, D. E (TP=62), Van Tongeren (TP=43), Zettler (TP=41), Hilbig (TP=38), de Vries (TP=37), Lee (TP=31), Ashton (TP=27), Sandage (TP=27), and Thielmann (TP=25) followed. Furthermore, other researchers have a total of under 25 publications. Based on the results of VOSviewer (Figure 3), the co-authorship analysis provides results that, based on the results of bibliometric data collection, 335 links were obtained with 11 clusters and 106 items. Furthermore, researcher Davis, D.E. is the largest with 30 links. Hook, J. N. follow them with 26 links and van Tongeren with 22 links. This link indicates collaboration between authors on research related to Humility. So, it can be said that the author of many links is more active in contributing to Humility-related authorship.



**Figure 3.** Output of co-authorship analysis

Based on the results obtained from the database, it is known that the University of North Texas is the most active institution in research related to humility, with a total of 83 publications with a percentage of 1.87%. Then followed by Georgia State University with a total of 83 publications. In addition, institutions active in research related to humility include the University of Calgary (65), University of Toronto (57), Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (53), Brock University (52), Hope College (50), Boston University (46), Københavns Universitet (45), and Harvard Medical School (40). Based on the results obtained from the database, it is known that the subject

or field of social sciences is the field that researches the most related to humility, with a total of 1617 publications and a percentage of 36.47% of all findings from the database. Then the fields with a total publication of more than 1000 are the arts and humanities (1350) and psychology (1252). Furthermore, other fields have total publications below 1000, such as medicine (878), business, management, and accounting (377), nursing (251), economics, econometrics, and finance (136), environmental science (130), engineering (119), and computer science (104). Based on the results of bibliometrics, it was found that the development of research on humility has grown in the last decade. The total growth of publications related to humility can be seen in Figure 4. From 2013 to 2022, growth increased significantly from 206 publications in 2013 (5.82%) to 891 publications in 2022-2023 (first trimester).

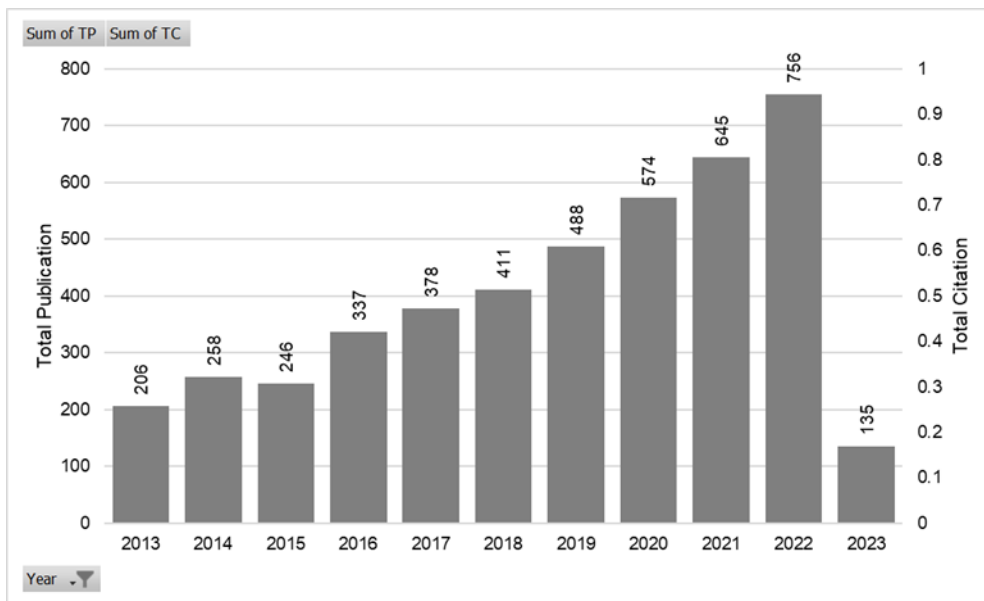


Figure 4. Growth of humility research

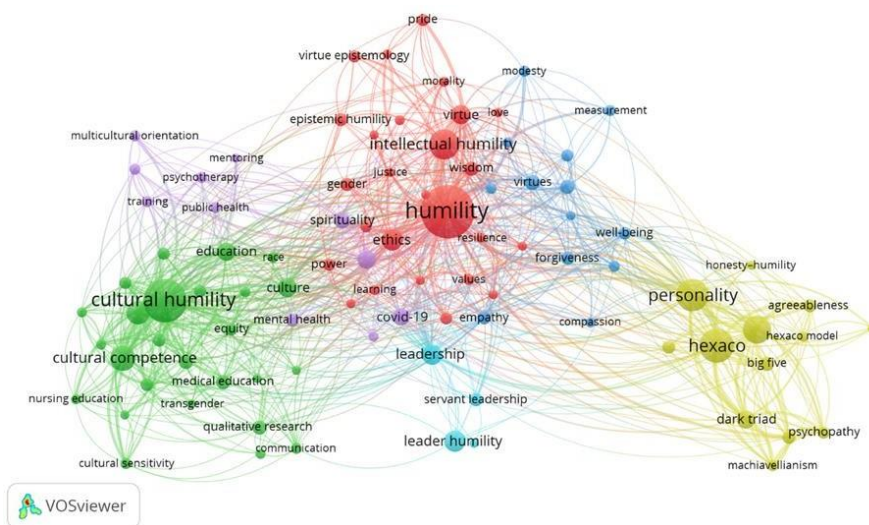


Figure 5. The output of co-occurrence analysis

Based on the results of co-occurrence analysis from VOSviewer, four themes or clusters can be identified that can be marked with each color. It is further described as follows:

1. **Cluster 1** (red): 26 items related to humility in general were found. This cluster includes intellectual humility, values, virtue, love, identity and others.
2. **Cluster 2** (green): 26 items related to cultural humility were found in this cluster. This cluster consists of items including cultural competency, racism, social justice, cultural sensitivity, and others.
3. **Cluster 3** (blue): 13 items related to humility with individual characteristics were found. This cluster includes well-being, forgiveness, empathy, and character strengths.
4. **Cluster 4** (yellow): This cluster found 13 items related to humility with personality. This cluster includes hexaco-humility, the big five, agreeableness, dark triad, and others.
5. **Cluster 5** (purple): This cluster found 11 items related to humility with the concepts of religiosity and intervention. This cluster includes religion, spirituality, training, psychotherapy, and others.
6. **Cluster 6** (light blue): This cluster found 4 items related to humility with leadership and organization. This cluster consists of humble leadership, leader humility, leadership, and servant leadership.

## **DISCUSSION**

The trend of humility research in the last decade has continued to grow until now. In 2013 there were 206 publications related to humility, which has grown until the last time in 2022 and the first trimester in 2023, with as many as 891 total publications. Humility research is widely published in article journals (TP = 3208) and book chapters (TP = 418). Many writers in the last decade have been by Hook, J. N. (TP=64) and Davis, D. E. (TP=62). The institutions most actively publishing humility-related documents are the University of North Texas (TP=83) and Georgia State University (TP=80). Humility research is found in many subjects, such as Social Sciences (TP = 1617) and Arts and Humanities (1350).

Based on the results of Vosviewer analysis in Figure 4, In cluster 1, humility topics are widely discussed related to intellectual humility, uncertainty, morality, and ethics. Intellectual humility is related to credibility in the research process, such as acknowledging the limitations of the research conducted; current research norms have not encouraged the existence of intellectual humility in practice (Hoekstra & Vazire, 2021). Humility is essential to reduce unethical behaviors and negatively affect moral disengagement (Guo et al., 2021; Zettler et al., 2020). The topic of humility in cluster 1 has not been studied much related to pride, politics, values, trust, and gender. Humility toward gender can be seen in cross-cultural interventions such as counseling. Humility is needed by counselors in conducting multicultural counseling, and humility is needed as an affinity for narrative therapy, especially those related to counseling gender minority clients (Madigan, 2011; Sadusky & Yarhouse, 2020). Being a counselor who has humility means being able to serve clients to help and curiosity while still paying attention to research and clinical frameworks (Hook et al., 2017).

Topics widely discussed in cluster 2 include cultural competence, racism, diversity, health equity, social justice, nursing, and global health. Based on the literature, healthcare providers or social services have limitations on their cultural competence. Culturally good health or social services will offer culturally appropriate services to the population they serve. Studies state that training related to cultural competence is needed to reduce inequality, reduce racism, and improve service quality (Lekas et al., 2020; Stubbe, 2020). In cluster 2, humility topics are

still not widely studied related to inclusion, communications, education, intersectionality, power, equity, and pedagogy. Psychotherapy and applied psychology have essential components, including cultural humility (Davis et al., 2018). Cultural humility has not been applied in educational settings, especially psychological education (Abbott et al., 2019). Cultural humility can be a self-reflection and evaluation of individual strengths, privilege, and marginalization, as well as developing mutual respect and fostering cultural identity (Abbott et al., 2019). In order to advance the tenets of liberation psychology, we must adopt an attitude of cultural humility. To this end, we advocate for an intersectional-informed, strengths-based methodology to empower and affirm clients whose multifaceted religious experiences intersect with their marginalized identities as sexual and gender diverse (SGD) Muslims (Vaughan et al., 2021).

The topics widely discussed and researched in cluster 3 include wisdom, empathy, resilience, character strength, and positive psychology. Resilience is the ability to bounce back from conflict, adversity, failure, favorable events, progress, and increased responsibility (Luthans, 2002). One form of resilience is in employees. Employee resilience has significant implications for promoting individual competence, increasing resilience to stress, and improving work performance (Masten, 2001; Youssef and Luthans, 2005; Cooper et al., 2019). Studies in the past decade, researchers have provided results that resilience-building processes are influenced by leadership (Nguyen et al., 2016). One type of leadership that can support the resilience-building process is humble leadership (Zhu et al., 2019). Humble leadership enhances employees' resilience through simultaneous increases in work-related promotion focus and perceived insider identity (Zhu et al., 2019). In cluster 3, humility topics have not been studied much related to well-being, compassion, motivation, mindfulness, stress, modesty, gratitude, forgiveness, and measurement. Problems with the measurement of humility have occurred in recent times, humility researchers now have the task of reconciling definitions and measures (McElroy-Heltzel et al., 2019). Studies on humility have been slow due to concerns about the validity of self-report measures (Davis et al., 2011). A study measuring humility with relationship satisfaction and forgiveness as mediators using self-report measures found that humility is associated with relationship satisfaction starting with the emergence of self-forgiveness and then partner forgiveness (Bell & Fincham, 2019).

Topics widely discussed with humility in cluster 4 include cooperation, honesty-humility, Hexaco, big five, and agreeableness. Personality, such as the Big Five theory (Goldberg, 1992) consists of several domains: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. Agreeableness in the Big Five Model is defined as the tendency of individuals to obey other individuals and avoid conflict, and this domain has advantages such as cooperative attitude, confidence, humbleness, and helping each other (Goldberg, 1992; Simanullang, 2021). The neuroticism domain is defined as a pattern of anxiety, worry, moodiness, and negative emotions instead of a calm, contented, accomplished, and stable set of feelings, reactions, and social interactions (Friedman, 2019). Studies explain that neuroticism has a negative relationship with resilience and a positive relationship with other domains in the Big Five theory (Marta Nieto et al., 2022). In cluster 4, humility topics related to dark triad, narcissism, impressions, and management have not been studied much. The dark triad has traits such as narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism that are related to bad behavior in organizations and have a negative impact on the organization or company. The dark triad has been studied in relation to one of the humility measuring tools, HEXACO, which has personality traits including openness to experience, extraversion, agreeableness, emotionality, conscientiousness, and honesty-humility. Studies state that the domain in HEXACO (honesty-humility, openness to experience,

emotionality, and agreeableness) is a significant predictor of the domain of the dark triad, namely Machiavellianism and psychopathy (Cömert & Gizir, 2020).

Topics widely discussed with humility in cluster 5 include morality, philosophy, knowledge, spirituality, and religion. The manifestation of the individual's religiosity is humility and forgiveness (Sumatri, 2016). Religiosity can affect the behavior or attitude of individuals in the social environment. Humility as a manifestation of religiosity has a positive impact, promoting diversity and increasing tolerance (AlSheddi, 2020). It is further explained that in the domain of religious behavior, there is cognitive flexibility is a capacity to shift one's point of view to gain a more separated view of a circumstance, including cultural/religious differences, and to extend compassion that makes a difference to advance valuable intelligent (Morgan & Sandage, 2016). Cognitive flexibility and humility, especially intellectual humility, are related to deliberative thinking processes associated with cognitive control performance, which regulates all thought processes (Lubis & Sianipar, 2022). Religiosity and spirituality are related to cultural humility, as a therapist's multicultural orientation can facilitate collaboration with cross-cultural background clients (DeBlaere et al., 2019). In cluster 5, the topic of multicultural orientation and psychotherapy is a topic that has not been widely discussed or researched related to humility. Other topics include training and supervision.

In cluster 6, all existing topics are rarely researched or discussed in research on humility. These topics include humble leadership, leader humility, leadership, and servant leadership. Humility and leadership are examined related to the benefits provided by humble leadership to employees, such as generating trust, loyalty, learning, employee empowerment, and a supportive work context, that humble leadership has an impact on organizational outcomes such as employee retention and financial performance (Brunzel & Ebsen, 2022; Nielsen & Marrone, 2018; Owens et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2021). Owens et al. (2013) Began introducing the term leader humility to answer the challenges researchers related to humility with leadership in the context of organizations. Leader humility is defined as a leader who can be able to assess himself accurately, able to appreciate the strengths, shortcomings, and contributions of members, and the ability to be taught lessons (Wang et al., 2021). Leader humility deals with servant leadership and satisfaction with leaders (Krumrei-Mancuso & Rowatt, 2023).

Furthermore, these three things can be related because humility can increase social bonding between leaders and followers (Van Tongeren et al., 2019). Humility is positioned as an operating mechanism of servant leadership that contributes to realizing positive outcomes such as increasing mutual respect, trust, and communication quality (Krumrei-Mancuso & Rowatt, 2023). Leader-follower solid communication, trust, and loyalty are hallmarks of servant leadership. Servant leadership can be raised by first knowing expressed humility and intellectual humility because these are tools for leaders to bring servant leadership to themselves (Krumrei-Mancuso & Rowatt, 2023).

## **CONCLUSION**

The trend of humility research has grown in the last decade. Discussions about humility are widely published in journal articles and widely discussed in social sciences. The most famous author who has published the most works on humility is Joshua N. Hook, and the University of North Texas is the institution that has published the most works related to humility. Six clusters were found based on analysis using Vosviewer. The 6 clusters explained that humility is discussed in various fields, such as individual characteristics, personality, culture, religiosity and spirituality, and leadership or organization. For future research, it is expected that researchers can

discuss humility related to the topics mentioned in the discussion section. The limitations of this study are 1) 2023 has just entered the first trimester, so there have not been many publications detected on the SCOPUS search engine, 2) researchers only use the SCOPUS database, and 3) the study only reveals data trends in the last decade. The suggestion for future research is to use more diverse databases to make the data obtained more comprehensive. In addition, future research can find out trends over ten years or a decade in the period.

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