

Exploring the Evolution of Qualitative Methodologies in Islamic Education Research: A 25-Year Bibliometric Review from Scopus (2000–2025)

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the development of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) research from 2000 to 2025 using a bibliometric approach based on Scopus-indexed publications. Through this analysis, the study maps the dynamics of scientific production, including publication trends, leading authors, institutions, countries, influential journals, as well as thematic patterns and collaboration networks within qualitative IRE research. A total of 1,023 articles were examined using VOSviewer and the Bibliometrix R-package to generate visualizations of knowledge structures, author collaborations, and keyword evolution. The findings reveal a substantial increase in publication volume during the last decade, accompanied by a methodological transition from normative-doctrinal approaches to phenomenological, interpretive, and ethnographic frameworks. Dominant research themes include religious moderation, character education, and the integration of Islamic values in pedagogical practices. Indonesia, Malaysia, and Saudi Arabia emerge as the major contributors to qualitative IRE literature, reflecting their strong academic engagement in the field. The novelty of this study lies in its comprehensive quantitative and visual mapping of the scientific landscape of IRE, offering the first systematic overview of how qualitative methodologies in IRE have evolved over the past 25 years. The main contribution of this research is the provision of a bibliometric map that can guide future research agendas, support the development of methodology-focused curricula, and strengthen international academic collaboration in Islamic education. The findings also carry practical implications for policymakers, offering evidence-based insights for designing initiatives that promote quality enhancement in Islamic education research and practice.

Keywords: Bibliometrics, Islamic Religious Education, Qualitative Methods, Research Trends, Scientific Collaboration

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INTRODUCTION

Qualitative research methods have a strategic position in revealing social dynamics. (Hasan, 2020), culture (Rushami Zien et al., 2024), and spiritual aspects in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) (Maemonah et al., 2022). This approach serves to understand the religious meanings and experiences that shape students' characters, especially amid technological developments and global social transformation. (Hasan, 2020; Karim et al., 2024; Rianawati, 2020; Ru'iyah et al., 2023). In the last two decades, Islamic education research using qualitative approaches has increased significantly, both in terms of the number of publications and the diversity of topics studied. (Al-Thani, 2025). This trend shows a paradigm shift in research towards interpretive and phenomenological approaches in understanding religious education practices in various Islamic cultural contexts.

In the national context, studies on qualitative research methods in PAI are important in line with the policy direction of the National Research Master Plan (RIRN), especially in the field of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and the strengthening of Science and Technology Human Resources. (Laoly, 2018). This research not only improves the methodological competence of researchers in Islamic education, but also strengthens a data-based academic culture and empirical reflection. This issue intersects directly with the fourth Asta Cita, namely strengthening human resources, science, and education development. (Prabowo & Gibran, 2024). In addition, its relevance to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: Quality Education is very strong, because this research is oriented towards improving research-based education quality, strengthening scientific literacy, and reflective learning rooted in Islamic spiritual values (Alisjahbana & Murniningtyas, 2021; García Docampo, 2021; Rushami Zien et al., 2024; Yanuarti et al., 2022). (Alisjahbana & Murniningtyas, 2021).

Bibliometric analysis of qualitative research in the field of Islamic Education has shown dynamic development over the past five years. Several studies reveal that themes such as religious moderation and character education (Hafid, 2025), and the integration of spiritual values is now the focus of scientific publications that use a qualitative approach. (Elihami & Melbourne, 2023; Kistoro et al., 2023; Rahmi et al., 2025). However, there has been no systematic research mapping publication trends, key actors, and the methodological evolution of qualitative approaches in Islamic education. Most studies still focus on thematic content rather than mapping knowledge networks and academic collaboration between researchers and between countries.

This research gap is an important basis for the need for a more comprehensive bibliometric analysis. (Elihami et al., 2025). There have not been many studies exploring how qualitative methods are used in PAI research to address the challenges of modern Islamic education, including the role of digital technology, contextual learning, and the integration of religious and scientific knowledge. (Salmia et al., 2023). In addition, there is still a lack of research identifying the most influential articles, authors, and journals, as well as the citation and collaboration patterns that shape the knowledge landscape in this field. (Oroh et al., 2024).

To address this gap, this study was designed to answer a number of key questions integrated into bibliometric analysis. First, what are the trends in scientific publications related to qualitative research methods in the field of Islamic Religious Education during a certain period? Second, who are the authors, institutions, and countries that have contributed the most to research on qualitative research methods in this field? Third, which journals are most dominant and influential in publishing these studies? Fourth, what are the main topics and keywords that are the focus of research in qualitative research methods in the field of Islamic Religious Education? Fifth, what are the patterns of collaboration between authors, institutions, and countries in research on qualitative research methods in the field of Islamic Religious Education? Sixth, which articles or literature are the most influential and frequently cited as primary references? Seventh, how does the evolution of the focus and thematic trends of qualitative research methods in the field of Islamic Religious Education appear from the results of bibliometric analysis? Eighth, what research gaps can be identified from the results of bibliometric analysis? And ninth, how does qualitative research in the field of PAI relate to social and educational issues such as religious moderation, character building, and strengthening spiritual values in learning?

By answering these questions, this study is expected to provide a comprehensive overview of the scientific landscape of qualitative research in Islamic education. Academically, the results of this analysis will enrich the literature on qualitative methodology in Islamic education, especially in terms of trends, collaboration, and global scientific contributions. Practically, this research can serve as a strategic reference in the development of research methodology curricula, the improvement of research capacity among lecturers and students, and the formulation of academic policies that support the achievement of SDG 4: Quality Education, namely realizing an inclusive, equitable education system oriented towards strengthening Islamic spiritual and moral values.

METHOD

This study uses a bibliometric approach. (İpek, 2019; Moro & Valgimigli, 2021; Snyder, 2019) to analyze the development of scientific publications related to qualitative research methods in the field of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) during the period 2000–2025. The bibliometric approach was chosen because it provides a quantitative and visual overview of the structure, trends, and knowledge networks in a scientific field based on scientific publication data. The research data was obtained from the Scopus database, which is known as one of the largest and most internationally recognized scientific databases for reputable publications. The initial search yielded 1,495 documents using the following query:

TITLE-ABS-KEY (qualitative research) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (qualitative method) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (Islamic education) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (madrasah) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (pesantren) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (Islamic teacher training).

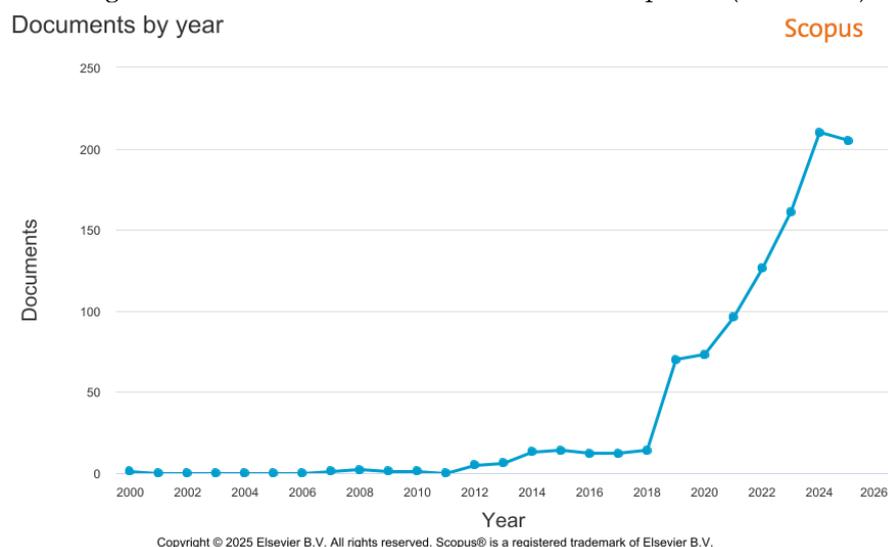
To narrow down the results to those relevant to the research focus, additional filtering (refinement) was carried out using specific criteria, namely: (1) publication period 2000–2025, (2) fields of study limited to Sociology (SOCI), Arts and Humanities (ARTS), and Multidisciplinary (MULT), (3) document type journal articles (ar), (4) source type journals (j), and (5) publication language English. After this screening, 1,023 documents were obtained as the basis for the main analysis of this study. This selection process was carried out to ensure that the articles analyzed were directly related to the context of Islamic education and qualitative research methodology, while also meeting international academic publication quality standards.

The data obtained was then exported from Scopus in CSV format for analysis using bibliometric software such as VOSviewer (version 1.6.20) and the Bibliometrix R-package. (Hu et al., 2019; Martins et al., 2024). The analysis was conducted in two main stages, namely descriptive analysis and network analysis. (Sununianti et al., 2025; Yusuf et al., 2024). Descriptive analysis includes identifying the number of publications per year, the most productive authors, their institutions, and the countries with the largest contributions. Meanwhile, network analysis is used to visualize relationships between authors (co-authorship analysis), keyword networks (co-occurrence analysis), and citation maps (co-citation analysis). This approach allows researchers to trace patterns of scientific collaboration and the evolution of research themes over the long term.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Trends in Scientific Publication Development (2000–2025)

Figure 1 Trends in Scientific Publication Development (2000–2025)

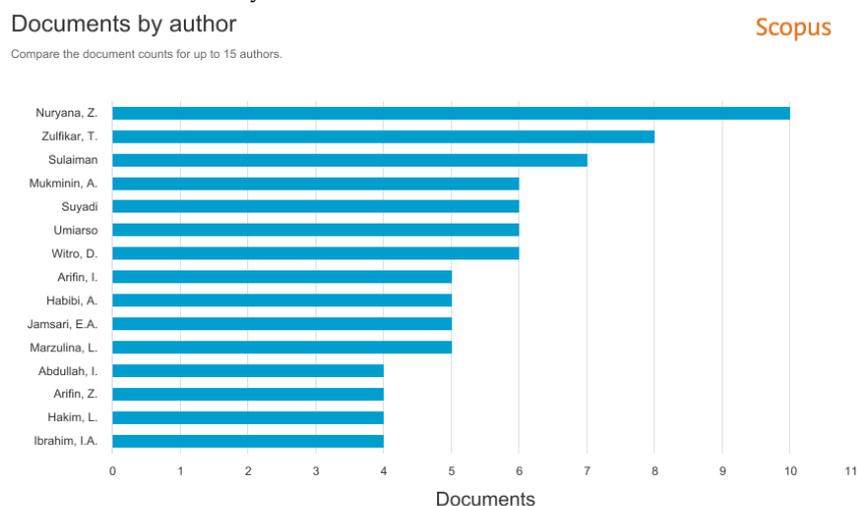


From the graph “Documents by year (Scopus)” we can see a very distinctive pattern of evolution: a long incubation period (±2000–2012) with almost no publications, a slow and

scattered growth phase (± 2013 – 2018) with several dozen documents per year, then a dramatic turning point around 2019–2020 that turned into an exponential surge between 2020–2024 (from dozens to >150 – 200 documents/year) and a slight plateau/decline at the far right. The in-depth interpretation that can be drawn is this: first, this pattern is not simply a case of “more people writing”—it resembles a phase transition (seeding \rightarrow percolation \rightarrow explosion) that often occurs when an idea/technology/term crosses the threshold of adoption between research communities. before that threshold, research is scattered and fragmented, after which a network effect and Matthew effect occur (popular topics attract more researchers, funding, and citations). Second, the sharp increase from 2019 to 2024 is likely the result of a combination of several factors: technical/clinical breakthroughs or the dissemination of key concepts, increased funding/international collaboration, changes in publication policy (more open access/indexed proceedings), and multidisciplinary shifts that open up new avenues for publication—all of which accelerate the accumulation of literature. Third, there is a risk of methodological artifacts that must be watched out for: the graphs come from Scopus, so changes in query definitions, expansion of index coverage, or delays in indexing for recent years could result in “false spikes” or end-point fluctuations; for example, a slight decline at the end point is more likely due to incomplete 2025 data than to a real decline in interest. The practical implications for researchers and policymakers: (a) Currently, this field is so saturated that there is an increased need for systematic reviews, meta-analyses, and reproducible studies. Do not contribute to the production of merely descriptive papers. (b) There are great opportunities for integrated research (data sharing, reproducibility standards, protocol registration) and for cross-disciplinary collaboration. (c) for advanced bibliometric evaluation, perform statistical change-point detection (to confirm the year the structure changed), calculate CAGR/doubling time, analyze burst keywords (CiteSpace), perform longitudinal topic modeling (LDA/BERTopic), and normalize against total global publications so that relative growth is not misinterpreted. For a truly out-of-the-box approach: imagine literature as an ecosystem —identify research “nuclei” that generate new research speculation, create natural experiments comparing stimulated subfields (e.g., large funding, clinical guidelines) vs. controls to estimate policy effects, or design collaborative “reproducibility sprints” that replicate the 10 most influential studies from each peak year. Conclusion: this graph marks a transformational moment and a strategic opportunity to shift from quantity to quality and to redefine the research agenda (focusing on mechanisms, validation, and translation). However, reliable interpretation requires examination of Scopus metadata and advanced bibliometric analysis before formulating policy or making major investments.

2. Contributions by the Most Productive Authors, Institutions, and Countries

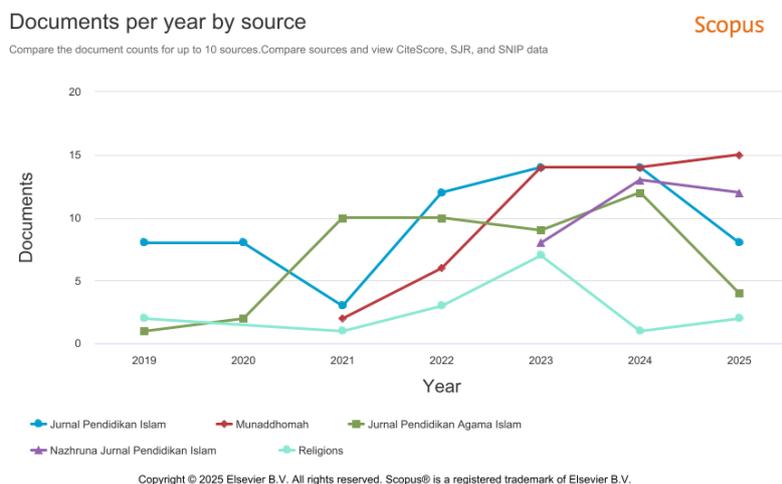
Figure 2 Contributions by the Most Productive Authors, Institutions, and Countries



The “Documents by author” graph shows that research productivity is dominated by several key authors, with Nuryana, Z. occupying the top position (around 10 documents), followed by Zulfikar, T. and Sulaiman with slightly lower numbers, while other groups of authors such as Mukminin, A., Suyadi, and Umiarso are in the middle range (5–6 documents). This pattern indicates a fairly centralized collaboration structure, in which several authors act as the core of an active research network producing joint publications, while other authors may act as contributors in a wider collaborative circle. This phenomenon reflects the dynamics of productivity typical in a rapidly developing field, where expertise is consolidated around several academic figures who act as research drivers, group leaders, or coordinators of specific themes. However, this concentration also raises critical questions about the distribution of contributions and the sustainability of the research ecosystem, namely whether the growth in publications is inclusive or still dependent on certain figures. For further analysis, it is recommended to explore collaboration network maps and citation impact to assess whether this dominance in productivity is also accompanied by commensurate scientific influence.

3. Dominant and Most Influential Journals

Figure 3 Dominant and Most Influential Journals

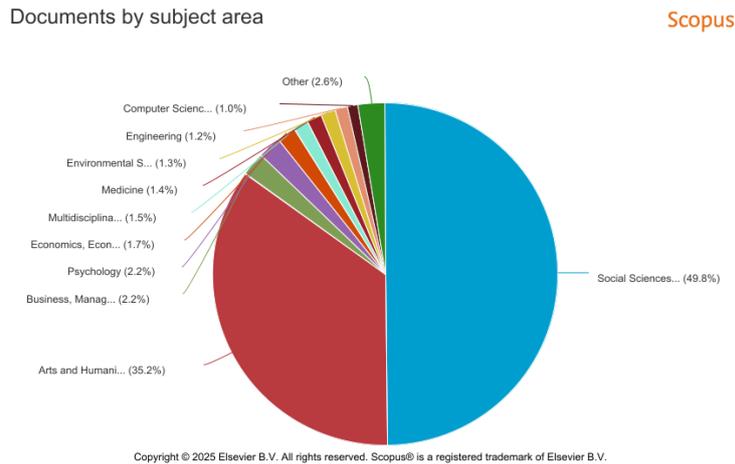


The “Documents per year by source” graph shows sharp and uneven dynamics between journals in the 2019–2025 period: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam (blue) started strong with ~8 documents in 2019–2020, dropped dramatically to ~3 in 2021, then recovered rapidly to a peak of ~12–14 in 2022–2024 before declining again in 2025; Munaddhomah (red) shows the most consistent and spectacular growth, with almost no presence until 2020, appearing at ~2 in 2021, jumping to ~6 in 2022, and reaching a peak of ~14–15 in 2023–2025, becoming the leader in terms of documents by the end of this period; The Journal of Islamic Education (green) experienced a large surge in 2021–2022 (~10), then was relatively stable in 2023–2024, and then fell to ~4 in 2025; Nazhruna (purple) emerged as a new player/rising star since 2023 with ~8, then peaked at ~13 in 2024 and declined slightly in 2025; while Religions (pale green) appeared fluctuating with a brief peak of ~7 in 2023 but low values in other years. From this pattern, we can observe several things: (1) there has been a shift in publication outlets within subfields, with some traditional journals maintaining volume but losing market share while other journals (Munaddhomah, Nazhruna) have expanded their output, possibly due to special issues, changes in acceptance policies, indexing in Scopus, or proactive editorial strategies; (2) The simultaneous surge in 2022–2024 in several journals indicates a thematic moment or wave of research topics that drove mass submissions/acceptances; (3) Declines or fluctuations (e.g., blue 2021, green 2025, Religions) may be caused by editorial process disruptions (backlog, COVID-19 delays), changes in thematic focus, or potentially partial 2025 data, thus requiring caution in interpreting the latter year; and (4) researchers seeking visibility

should match topics with journals experiencing upward trends and examine other quality metrics (citations per document, time-to-publication), while editors/publishers observing declines should review policies on peer review, outreach, and special issues to restore or enhance contributions. Methodologically, document analysis without looking at citations/quality only describes quantity: the next recommendation is to link this volume trend to impact metrics and full data confirmation in 2025 before concluding long-term changes.

4. Mapping of Research Topics and Keywords

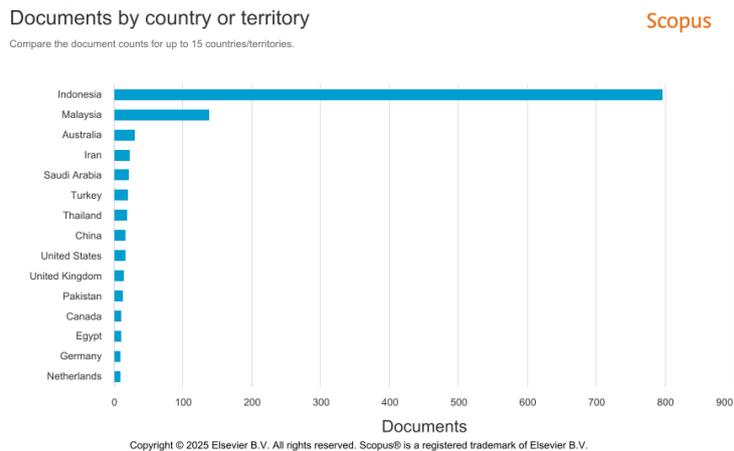
Figure 4. Dominant Subject Areas of Documents Indexed in Scopus



The “Documents by subject area” diagram shows a highly concentrated distribution of publications in the fields of Social Sciences (49.8%) and Arts and Humanities (35.2%), which collectively account for more than 85% of the total documents. The dominance of these two fields confirms that research in this dataset mainly focuses on social, educational, cultural, and humanitarian studies – in line with topics such as Islamic education, religion, and social aspects of science. Other fields such as Business and Management (2.2%), Psychology (2.2%), and Economics (1.7%) have minor contributions, but are still relevant as they demonstrate the interdisciplinary links between socio-religious aspects and behavior, economics, and educational management. Meanwhile, contributions from Medicine (1.4%), Environmental Science (1.3%), Engineering (1.2%), and Computer Science (1.0%) were very small, indicating low involvement of science and technology approaches in this research. The Multidisciplinary (1.5%) and Other (2.6%) categories show that collaborative efforts across fields are still limited. Overall, this pattern shows that the research landscape analyzed is very humanities and social science oriented, with little integration into the exact or technical fields. These findings are important for describing the position of more qualitative and normative research, as well as opening up opportunities to strengthen interdisciplinary approaches so that socio-religious issues can be linked to broader scientific and practical dimensions in the future.

5. Collaboration Patterns between Authors, Institutions, and Countries

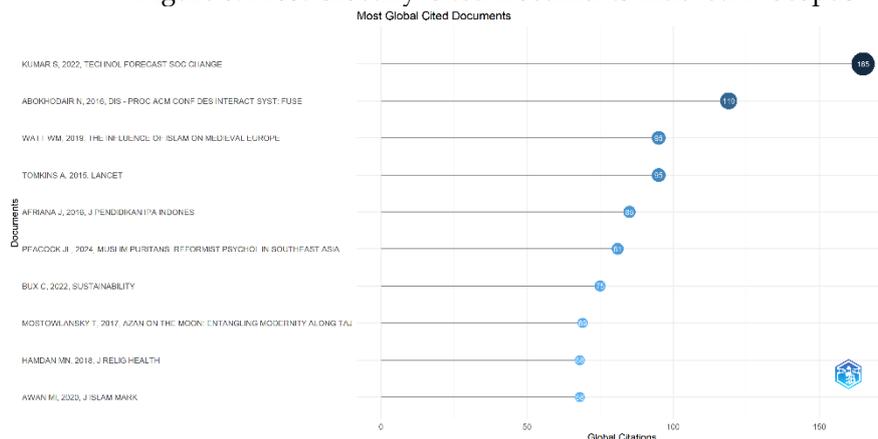
Figure 5. Documents by Country or Territory Indexed in Scopus



The graph “Documents by country or territory” shows a very clear dominance by Indonesia, which produced nearly 800 documents, far surpassing other countries. Malaysia ranks second with about a quarter of that number, indicating that these two Southeast Asian countries are the main centers of publication production in the field under review – most likely related to Islamic, educational, and social-humanities themes, as reflected in the previous field diagram. Countries such as Australia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey are at a medium level of contribution, which may indicate involvement through academic collaboration or interest in Islamic studies and cross-cultural education. Meanwhile, Western countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, and the Netherlands only make a small contribution, indicating that the focus of this research is still very regional and not yet fully internationalized. This phenomenon shows that research in this domain is heavily influenced by the local social and cultural context of Asia, particularly Southeast Asia, with Indonesia as the academic epicenter that leads in both quantity and potential thematic influence. Strategically, this also indicates a great opportunity to expand global collaboration and increase international visibility through joint publications with institutions outside the region so that local research can have a broader impact in the global arena.

6. Most Influential and Most Cited Literature

Figure 6. Most Globally Cited Documents Indexed in Scopus

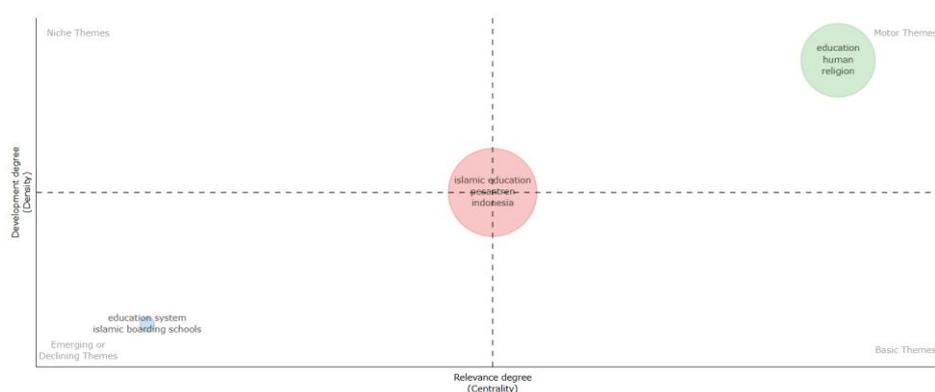


The “Most Global Cited Documents” graph shows the ten publications with the highest number of global citations, indicating a diverse thematic focus that remains relevant to social, cultural, and religious issues. Kumar S.'s (2022) article, published in Technological Forecasting and Social Change, ranks first with 165 citations, indicating significant global influence and possibly containing an interdisciplinary perspective linking technology with social dynamics. This is followed by Abokhodair N. (2016) from DIS – Proceedings of ACM

Conference on Designing Interactive Systems with 119 citations, demonstrating an important contribution in the field of interaction design and the digital social context. The next two articles—Watt WM (2019) on the influence of Islam in medieval Europe and Tomkins A. (2015) in *The Lancet*—each received 95 citations, illustrating the balance between religious history and global health research. Other articles, such as Afriana J. (2016) in the *Indonesian Journal of Science Education* (83 citations) and Peacock JL. (2024) on Muslim Puritans (81 citations), show how educational studies and contemporary Islamic studies can also achieve international recognition. Meanwhile, works such as Bux C. (2022) in *Sustainability* and Mostowlansky T. (2017) show a tendency to integrate religious issues with sustainability and modernity. The bottom three publications still show consistent impact despite having fewer than 70 citations. In general, this graph confirms that the most influential documents are not limited to one field, but emerge from the intersection of technology, social issues, religion, education, and health. This reflects that studies that combine interdisciplinary perspectives have a greater chance of gaining visibility and high global citations.

7. Evolution of Research Focus and Thematic Trends (2000–2025)

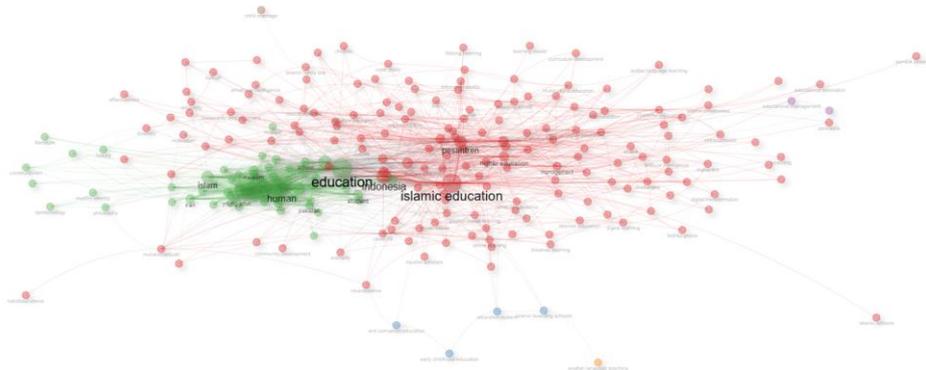
Figure 7. Thematic Map of Research on Islamic Education Indexed in Scopus



The thematic map shows that the research focus is dominated by the theme “education–human–religion” which is located in the motor themes quadrant, indicating that this theme is the strongest in terms of relevance and level of development, and acts as the main driver in the research network. The theme “Islamic education–pesantren–Indonesia” occupies a central position in the transition area between basic and motor themes, reflecting its role as the core of Islamic education studies with vast potential for development, especially in the context of globalization and pedagogical innovation. Conversely, themes such as “education system” and “Islamic boarding schools” are in the emerging or declining themes quadrant, indicating that although they have conceptual relevance, these topics are currently receiving less attention or are in the process of re-emerging. The absence of themes in the niche themes quadrant indicates a great opportunity to deepen research that is specific yet innovative. Overall, this map confirms that research on Islamic education in Indonesia is moving from a systemic approach towards a more interdisciplinary and humanistic direction, with a strong emphasis on the interconnection between education, religious values, and the human dimension.

8. Identification of Research Gaps

Figure 8. Network Visualization of Author Keywords Related to Islamic Education Indexed in Scopus



This keyword network map shows the complex and dense interrelationships between topics in research on Islamic education, with several prominent main clusters. The largest cluster (red) centers on the terms “Islamic education,” “pesantren,” and “Indonesia,” indicating that the main focus of the literature is on Islamic education systems and practices in the local Indonesian context, with sub-themes such as curriculum, character building, and digital learning. The green cluster stands out on the left, grouping keywords such as “education,” “human,” and “religion,” which represent the humanistic dimensions and religious values in education, and indicate a close relationship between moral and social aspects. Several other small clusters (such as blue and purple) show complementary topics such as “early childhood education,” “English language teaching,” and “gender studies,” which indicate an expansion of research coverage towards modern pedagogy and equality. The density of the relationships between nodes indicates that research in this field is interconnective and multidisciplinary, combining elements of education, religion, culture, and humanity. Overall, this map confirms that “Islamic education” serves as the conceptual and methodological core of an evolving research ecosystem, with a tendency toward broader and more integrative thematic collaboration.

9. Relevance to Contemporary Social and Educational Issues

Research in the field of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is still centered on the theme of “Islamic education–pesantren–Indonesia,” which falls between the basic themes and motor themes. This position shows that studies on Islamic education in Indonesia have become a core theme with significant contributions to the development of knowledge, but there is still a gap in research, especially in terms of methodological innovation and interdisciplinary integration. This gap is evident from the absence of new themes in the niche themes quadrant, which indicates limited exploration of specific topics such as digital transformation in pesantren education, critical pedagogical approaches, gender in Islamic education, and the impact of globalization on religious values in Islamic educational institutions.

The future direction of research tends to move towards a more humanistic and interdisciplinary realm, as reflected in the position of the theme “education–human–religion” in the motor themes quadrant. This trend indicates an increased interest in the integration of religious education and contemporary social issues such as religious moderation, character education, human welfare, and universal human values. In the future, research is expected to not only examine the Islamic education system normatively, but also explore its practices in the context of dynamic modern social, cultural, and technological contexts.

DISCUSSION

The bibliometric findings show that research on Islamic education in Indonesia has experienced a significant surge since 2019, signaling a phase of transformation from descriptive studies to an interdisciplinary approach (Asyibli et al., 2025; Heidari et al., 2025; Karim et al., 2024; Ozturk, 2022; Zagonari, 2023; Zulkifli et al., 2023). This increase reflects a paradigm shift in research from a normative focus to integration with social, technological, and humanitarian issues. This aligns with a general trend where religious topics are beginning to merge with digital education innovation and humanistic approaches (Heidari et al., 2025; Rahmi et al., 2025). The surge in publications after 2020 also correlates with increased collaboration between Southeast Asian countries, particularly between Indonesia and Malaysia, as well as the expansion of open-access journals, which has accelerated the dissemination of research.

The findings of this study show a significant increase in publications related to Islamic education from 2000 to 2025, in line with educational development theories, including the VAK model (Visual, Auditory, and Kinesthetic). The VAK model is a learning theory that emphasizes the importance of utilizing various sensory channels to maximize students' learning processes (Echague et al., 2025; Li & Chung, 2025; Sabarun et al., 2023; Solichah & Fardana, 2024; Troussas et al., 2024). The findings from this study show that research in the field of Islamic education is also moving toward an interdisciplinary approach, where social, cultural, and religious dimensions are integrated into the educational curriculum. Similar to the VAK model, which integrates various modalities to maximize learning, the field of Islamic education is transitioning from a more systemic approach to a more humanistic and interdisciplinary approach, which combines religious values with social and cultural issues (Angelakis et al., 2021; He & Liu, 2025; Saidhujueva et al., 2023; Sheromova et al., 2020).

However, the difference is that in VAK model studies, this multisensory approach is applied to the individual realm (Almehmadi, 2021; Flores-Ferro et al., 2021; Pendyala et al., 2021; Romero-Robles et al., 2025; Ryu et al., 2024; Siregar et al., 2025), while the developing Islamic education research in this literature mostly discusses curriculum development and changes in teaching methodology within the broader social and cultural context. Bruner's theory of discovery-based learning and Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences are highly relevant in the context of Islamic education's evolution in this research. Bruner emphasizes the importance of active learning and discovery through direct interaction with the material, contributing to a deeper understanding of how individuals learn and comprehend information (Igwe et al., 2022; Keenan et al., 2025; Moro & Valgimigli, 2021; Polka et al., 2025; Wang & Ji, 2025; Yi et al., 2025). On the other hand, Gardner suggests that each individual has various types of intelligence, and education should accommodate these diverse intelligences (Ge et al., 2025; Kadis et al., 2024, 2024; Opoku et al., 2025; Setiawan et al., 2020; Taguchi, 2018). In the context of Islamic education, the shift from a more systemic approach to an interdisciplinary and humanistic one demonstrates the application of these theories to enhance value-based and religious learning.

The kinesthetic theory, which emphasizes learning through movement and physical activity, is also relevant in Islamic education, particularly in teaching that involves active learning and direct student involvement in the educational process. This indicates that Islamic education research is not only moving toward theoretical understanding but also toward practices that are more physically engaging, such as activity-based teaching (e.g., teaching through lectures involving physical activities or character development) (Budi Bhakti et al., 2022; Durmaz et al., 2025; Elmaoued et al., 2025; Montan et al., 2022; Orekhova et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the main difference with Islamic education research is that these theories are more focused on the individual and the learning process in the classroom context, whereas the existing research is more directed at the macro development of Islamic education systems, such as curriculum and the social impact of education in society.

Research on Islamic education in this period shows a pattern similar to other intervention research, such as in the development of immunotherapy or technology-based therapies in education (Maggio et al., 2024). For instance, research on educational technology adopted in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) or studies on the use of digital technology in

Islamic education, which has grown rapidly, especially after 2019. Similar interventions in cancer immunotherapy research also show the same trend, where technological advancements and more inclusive policies are driving rapid development in publications and the application of innovations (Botticelli et al., 2025; Chen et al., 2025; Toulmonde et al., 2025; Yu et al., 2025). Just like intervention approaches in the medical field that improve outcomes by embracing technology and international collaboration, Islamic education research shows that the adoption of technology and policies supporting international collaboration accelerates literature development. This also reflects the important role of intervention-based research in stimulating changes in curricula and teaching methodologies that are more relevant to the times.

The main difference in the findings of this research compared to previous studies lies in several key aspects. First, the scale and focus of this study show a significant shift in the field of Islamic education, where recent literature is more focused on interdisciplinary approaches that combine religion with social, cultural, and globalization issues. Previously, much research focused only on the normative or theoretical dimensions of Islamic education. Additionally, there has been a major surge in publications after 2019, which contrasts sharply with the previous period that was still limited and dominated by a few main researchers. This phenomenon reflects an increase in international collaboration and greater funding. Another change is the influence of globalization, which was previously less discussed in Islamic education research. Now, the focus is shifting to how globalization and technology affect Islamic education, particularly in the context of Islamic boarding schools and character education. This finding also indicates a shift from a narrow approach, such as only examining Islamic education curricula, to a broader, interdisciplinary approach that covers social, economic, cultural, and religious issues. On the other hand, while Islamic education is a global theme, contributions from Western countries have tended to decline, while countries like Indonesia and Malaysia show dominance in publications, reflecting the influence of the Southeast Asian social and cultural context.

Another important change is in the publication channels. Some traditional journals that were once dominant have now lost market share, while new journals such as *Munaddhomah* and *Nazhruna* have shown significant growth. This indicates a change in acceptance policies and more dynamic thematic focus. The influence of technology has also become more apparent, with increased use of technology in Islamic boarding school teaching, a topic that was previously more focused on text-based or traditional teaching methods. Finally, this finding also shows developments in multidisciplinary publishing. Unlike previous research that prioritized a single discipline, Islamic education research is now increasingly adopting multidisciplinary approaches that include economics, sociology, and political science, making the field more integral to global studies.

The implications of this research are significant both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this research enriches the understanding of Islamic education by integrating religious and social values, opening space for the development of educational theories that are more inclusive and relevant to global challenges. This research supports the idea that Islamic education should not only be viewed from a theological perspective but should also take into account the broader social and cultural context. Practically, the findings indicate that Islamic education needs to adapt to the times by introducing technology and interdisciplinary approaches into the curriculum. This provides insight for Islamic educational institutions to develop programs that are more relevant to global challenges and support character development as well as universal values in society.

However, this research has limitations in the scope of data, relying solely on publications indexed in Scopus. This may not cover all relevant literature, especially those published in local or non-indexed journals. Moreover, this analysis focuses more on the quantity of publications and has not examined the quality and social impact of the existing research. Therefore, future research should consider qualitative factors and the practical impact of published research to provide a more comprehensive picture. Future research is also advised to explore topics that have not been widely discussed, such as digital transformation in Islamic boarding schools, the impact of globalization on Islamic education, and the application of

critical pedagogical methods in Islamic education curricula. Research could also introduce new data collection methods, such as interviews with Islamic education practitioners or case studies in pesantren, to gain a deeper understanding of current educational practices and their impact on society.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to map the evolution and methodological trends of qualitative research in the field of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) over the past 25 years (2000–2025) through bibliometric analysis based on Scopus data. This study identifies developments in publications, authors, institutions, countries, influential journals, and patterns of scientific collaboration that have emerged in qualitative studies in the field of PAI. The results of the analysis show a significant increase in the number of publications and diversity of research themes, especially in the last decade. There has been a paradigm shift from normative research towards phenomenological, interpretative, and ethnographic approaches that emphasize the meaning of religious experience and spiritual values in education. Themes such as religious moderation, character education, integration of Islamic values in learning, and reflective pedagogy are the main focus of current research. Countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Saudi Arabia are the largest contributors, while journals such as *Islamic Education Studies* and the *Journal of Moral and Religious Education* dominate scientific publications. In terms of methodology, the use of digital qualitative analysis tools such as NVivo and ATLAS.ti is increasing, accompanied by the integration of interdisciplinary theories from the fields of education, sociology, and religious psychology.

However, this study has limitations because it only uses data sources from the Scopus database, so it does not cover articles in local languages and unindexed publications. In addition, the depth of interpretation of the analysis still depends on the available metadata. For this reason, further research is recommended to expand the scope to other databases such as Web of Science and Google Scholar, as well as combining bibliometric analysis with content analysis in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the development of qualitative methodology. Based on these findings, it is recommended that academics and researchers strengthen international collaboration networks and increase publications in reputable global journals. Higher education institutions are expected to expand training in qualitative methodology and the use of digital analysis tools, while policymakers can utilize the results of this study as a basis for formulating evidence-based policies to strengthen the quality of PAI learning and research relevant to current social, cultural, and technological challenges.

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