

Bibliometric Mapping of Islamic Higher Education Research: Global Perspectives and Emerging

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Abstract

This study presents a comprehensive bibliometric mapping and analysis of global research trends in Islamic Higher Education (IHE), drawing upon 1,400 Scopus-indexed publications from 1970 to 2024. Employing advanced bibliometric techniques such as co-authorship, co-citation, and co-word analyses using VOSviewer and Bibliometrix R-package, this research systematically explores publication dynamics, intellectual structures, and emerging thematic directions within the field. The findings reveal a sustained annual growth rate of 10.62%, with a sharp increase since the mid-2000s, indicating a global rise in scholarly interest in IHE as both a religious and socio-academic domain. Southeast Asia particularly Indonesia and Malaysia dominate research output, while international collaboration remains limited. Thematic network visualisations indicate two principal clusters: (1) educational and religious studies, centred on topics such as higher education, Islamic education, and religious moderation; and (2) health and human studies, emphasizing gender, adult learning, and empirical methodologies. The thematic evolution map positions "human," "female," and "adult" as motor themes, suggesting growing interdisciplinarity linking Islamic pedagogy with psychology, digital learning, and health education. Conversely, "Islamic higher education" and "Islamic education" appear as emerging or underdeveloped themes, reflecting both conceptual immaturity and potential for future expansion.

Keywords: *Islamic Higher Education, Bibliometric Analysis, Educational Innovation, Digital Transformation, Religious Moderation*

1. Introduction

In the past two decades, studies on Islamic higher education have shown rapid global growth, in line with increasing attention to the integration of Islamic values, educational modernisation, and digital transformation. This trend confirms that Islamic higher education is not only a means of transmitting religious values, but also a space for academic and social innovation, as reflected in topics such as the adoption of artificial

intelligence in Islamic learning (Faizin et al. 2025) and the implementation of Outcome-Based Education in Islamic universities (Siti Romlah et al. 2025).

Islamic higher education plays a strategic role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4 (Quality Education) and Goal 9 (Innovation and Infrastructure). In the context of the National Research Master Plan (RIRN), this field is closely linked to strengthening Information and Communication Technology (ICT), developing science-based human resources, and improving national research productivity. Global studies on Islamic education are also aligned with the fourth pillar of Asta Cita, which emphasises strengthening human resource development, science, technology, and education based on equity and inclusivity (Rukiyati et al. 2025).

Therefore, bibliometric mapping of research in Islamic higher education is essential to understand research dynamics, thematic directions, and global collaboration that can enhance the academic relevance and social contribution of this field.

Recent research in Islamic higher education demonstrates a broad diversity of focus areas, ranging from institutional governance and curriculum innovation to the integration of digital technologies. A study by (Huriyah and Hsueheng Chiang 2025) shows that the implementation of performance-based remuneration systems in Islamic universities plays an important role in improving institutional accountability and efficiency. Another study by (Ma'ruf and Juhaidi 2025) found that university commitment and brand trust significantly influence student loyalty, highlighting the importance of social and psychological factors in maintaining the reputation of Islamic educational institutions. In addition, research on the acceptance of artificial intelligence technology in Islamic learning (Faizin et al. 2025) indicates a new direction towards digitalisation and Society 5.0.

In the global context, research by (Çetinkaya 2025) reveals how social, cultural, and economic contexts shape religious perceptions among theology students in Istanbul, Berlin, and Kuala Lumpur. These contextual variations illustrate the complexity of Islamic education dynamics and underscore the need for comprehensive scientific mapping to identify the global contributions of this field.

2. Research Method

This study employs a bibliometric approach to map the development of research related to Islamic Higher Education (IHE) on a global scale. The bibliometric method was chosen due to its ability to analyse the structure, evolution, and scientific trends within a specific field through a quantitative approach to the metadata of scholarly publications (Muthohirin et al. 2025). This research focuses on the analysis of co-authorship networks, co-citation, and co-word analysis to identify key themes and emerging scholarly collaborations in IHE studies. Network visualisation was conducted using software such as VOSviewer and the Bibliometrix R-package, both of which have proven effective for systematically identifying patterns and dynamics in scientific literature (Anggaira et al. 2025).

This research follows the PRISMA 2020 framework, starting from identification, screening, and selection, through to article inclusion. In the identification stage, the researcher conducted an article search using the Scopus database, as it offers broad coverage and high validity for bibliometric studies (Ristianah, Rozik, and Bahtiyar 2022). The search strategy used the following syntax: (TITLE-ABS-KEY (islamic AND higher) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (education)) AND PUBYEAR > 2019 AND PUBYEAR < 2026 AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, "English")) AND (LIMIT-TO (OA, "all")). After the identification stage, the researcher proceeded to the screening stage by evaluating titles and abstracts to exclude publications that were not relevant to the context of Islamic higher education. Articles that focused on primary or secondary education, or that merely contained the keyword "Islamic" without any relation to higher education, were excluded. In the selection stage, the articles were reviewed in full to ensure their contribution to the bibliometric analysis and their compliance with the inclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria included: articles written in English, open access (OA), containing complete metadata, and published in Scopus-indexed journals (Smaldino, Lowther, Mims 2019).

Following the identification stage, the researchers proceeded to screening by evaluating titles and abstracts to exclude publications that were not relevant to the context of Islamic higher education. Articles focused on primary or secondary education, or those that contained the keyword "Islamic" without a direct relation to higher education, were excluded. In the selection phase, full-text reviews were conducted to ensure each article's relevance to the bibliometric analysis and its alignment with inclusion criteria. These criteria included: English-language articles, open access (OA), complete metadata, and publication in Scopus-indexed journals (Smaldino, Lowther, Mims 2019).

The selected data were then analysed using VOSviewer to visualise author, institutional, and keyword collaboration networks, while publication trends and scientific productivity were examined using Bibliometrix. This approach enables the identification of dominant and emerging themes in Islamic higher education research from a global perspective (Arif, Nasir, and Ma`arif 2025). The results of the visualisation and thematic analysis were used to construct a conceptual map of the IHE field and to explore future research directions.

The entire process and systematic flow are presented in the PRISMA Flowchart, showing the number of articles identified, screened, and included in the final analysis. By adopting PRISMA principles and a bibliometric approach based on Scopus data, this study makes both methodological and substantive contributions to understanding the global research dynamics of Islamic Higher Education (Abdillah et al. 2025).



3. Result

3.1. Global Trends in Publications on Islamic Higher Education Research

An analysis of publication trends shows a growing development in research on Islamic higher education over the past two decades. The following graph illustrates the yearly dynamics in the number of publications, reflecting the increasing interest and attention of researchers towards this field on a global scale.

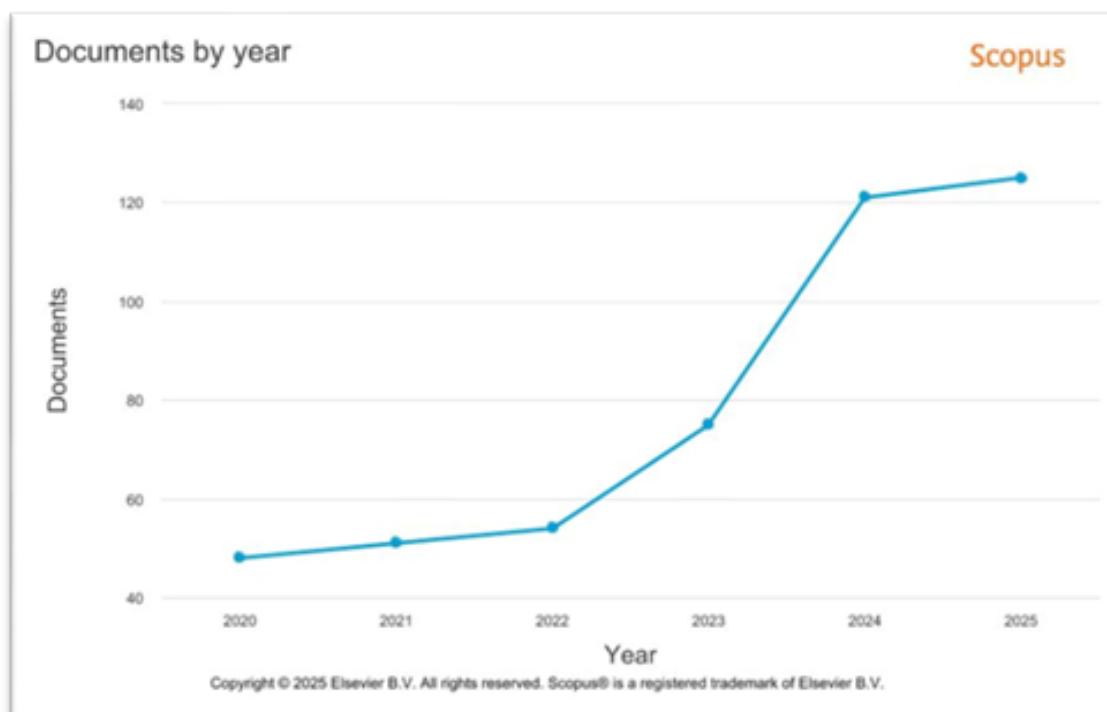


Figure 1. Documents by Year. Source: Scopus database

The figure above shows the trend in the development of research publications on Islamic higher education in the Scopus database over the period 2020–2025. There is a consistent and significant increase in the number of documents published each year. In the early part of the period, the number of publications remained relatively stable, with moderate growth from 2020 to 2022. However, beginning in 2023, there was a sharp surge in publication productivity, peaking in 2024 and rising slightly again in 2025. This pattern indicates growing global academic interest in the study of Islamic higher education, both in terms of research intensity and cross-country collaboration among scholars.

Documents by subject area

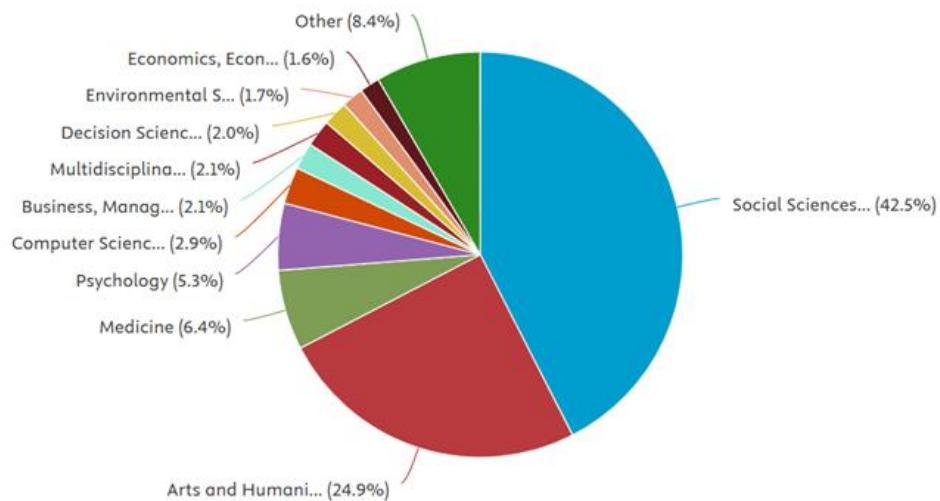


Figure 2. Documents by subject area. Source: Scopus database

The figure above illustrates the distribution of research publications on Islamic higher education by field of study in the Scopus database. The most prominent dominance is seen in the field of Social Sciences (42.5%), indicating that Islamic higher education is largely examined from social, institutional, and policy perspectives. The field of Arts and Humanities (24.9%) ranks second, reflecting the strong philosophical, historical, and cultural dimensions in the development of this area of study. Furthermore, Medicine (6.4%) and Psychology (5.3%) also contribute, indicating a growing interdisciplinary approach to understanding the dynamics of Islamic higher education. Other fields such as Computer Science, Business Management, Decision Sciences, and Environmental Science provide smaller yet still significant contributions that enrich the research perspective. Overall, this distribution affirms that research on Islamic higher education is multidimensional and interdisciplinary, with a strong and evolving dominance of the social sciences and humanities approaches.

Documents by country or territory

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

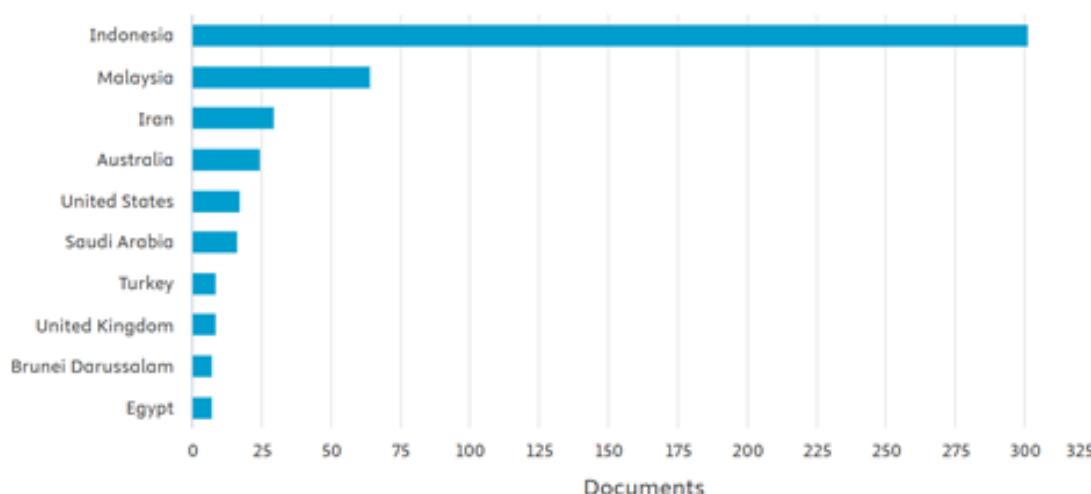


Figure 3. Documents by Country. Source: Scopus database

The figure above shows the distribution of research publications on Islamic higher education by country or region, as indexed in the Scopus database. It is evident that Indonesia holds a dominant position in absolute terms, with a number of publications far exceeding those of other countries. This reflects a high research capacity and a strong academic commitment to this field. Malaysia ranks second with a significant contribution, followed by Iran, Australia, and the United States, indicating active participation from diverse geographical and cultural contexts. Countries such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the United Kingdom, Brunei Darussalam, and Egypt also play a role, albeit with smaller proportions. This pattern suggests that research on Islamic higher education has evolved into a global academic discourse, although with a strong centre of academic gravity in Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia and Malaysia.

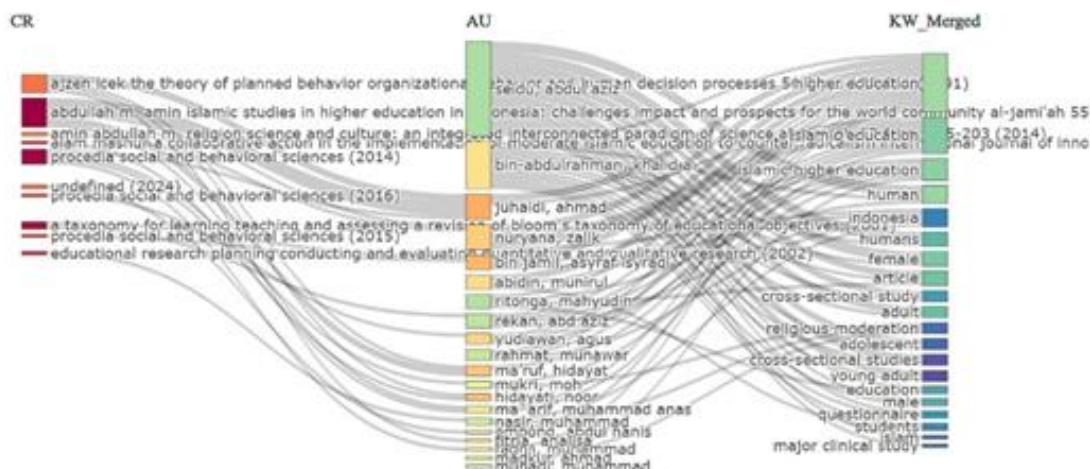


Figure 4. Collaboration Source: Scopus database

The figure above presents a visualisation of the network connections among core references (CR), authors (AU), and research keywords (KW) in studies on Islamic higher education indexed in Scopus. This pattern of relationships reveals thematic cohesion and intellectual collaboration among researchers focusing on contemporary issues in Islamic education. Several highly influential works such as The Theory of Planned Behavior by Ajzen, Islamic Studies in Higher Education by Abdullah M. Amin, and publications in Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences appear as central references that are frequently cited across various studies.

The author collaboration network shows that scholars such as Abdul Aziz Seidiu, Ahmad Juhaidi, and Khalid A. bin-Abdulrahman play important roles in connecting diverse literature with broad research themes, particularly those related to Islamic higher education, religious moderation, and the development of modern Islamic curricula. Meanwhile, the most frequently occurring keywords such as higher education, Islamic education, religious moderation, human, and Indonesia highlight a dominant focus on social and humanistic approaches in Islamic education, while also reinforcing Indonesia's position as a major research hub in this field.

Overall, this network indicates that research on Islamic higher education is advancing through the integration of global theories and local contexts, with significant contributions from Southeast Asian scholars who emphasise moderation and educational transformation within a progressive Islamic framework.



3.2. Authors, Journals, and Most Influential Articles

This section presents a list of the most influential authors, journals, and articles in the relevant field of research. This information aims to provide an overview of key figures and key publication sources that serve as important references in the development of the topic.

Documents by author

Compare the document counts for up to 15 authors.

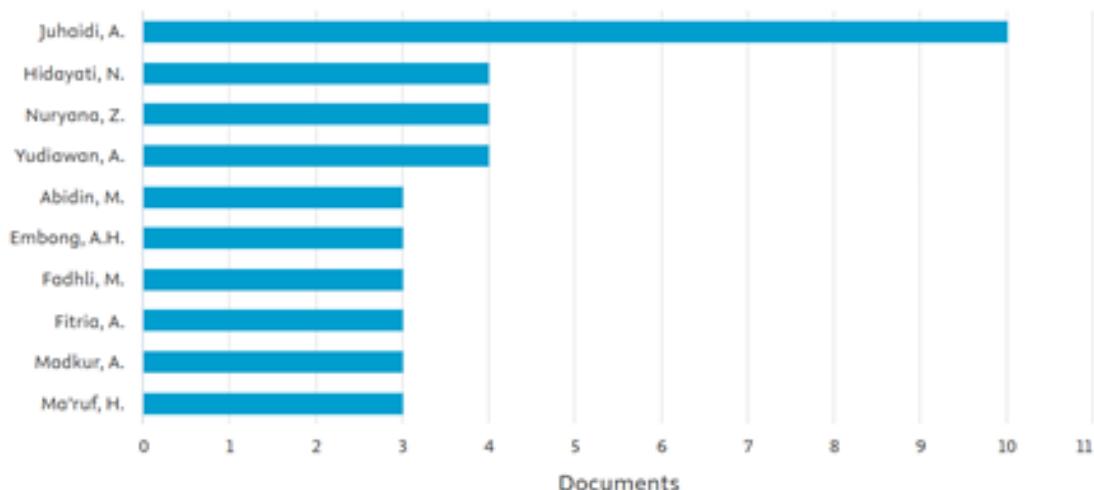


Figure 5. Most Relevant Author Source: Scopus database

Based on the Documents by Author chart, it is evident that Juhaidi, A. holds the most dominant position, with the highest number of publications, reaching approximately eleven documents. This dominance indicates a significant contribution to the development of the research area. Meanwhile, other authors such as Hidayati, N., Nuryana, Z., and Yudiawan, A. show relatively balanced productivity, with four documents each. Authors such as Abidin, M., Embong, A.H., Fadhlil, M., Fitria, A., Madkuri, A., and Ma'ruf, H. demonstrate a moderate level of contribution, each with three documents. Overall, this pattern suggests the presence of several key figures who serve as driving forces in the production of scholarly literature in this field, supported by a group of contributing researchers who help strengthen the collective knowledge base.

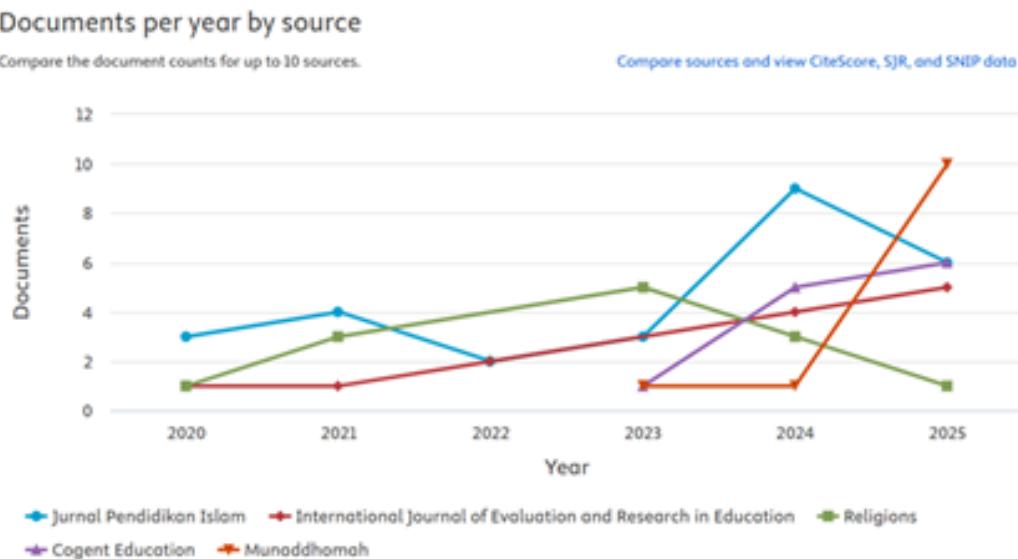


Figure 6. Collaboration Source: Scopus database

The figure above is a line chart illustrating the annual development in the number of scholarly documents by source of publication between 2020 and 2025, as recorded in the Scopus database. The chart highlights five main sources: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam, International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education, Religions, Cogent Education, and Munaddhomah.

Overall, the graph reveals fluctuating publication productivity among various academic journals in the fields of education and religion over the past five years. Jurnal Pendidikan Islam displays an unstable pattern, with a significant increase from 2020 to 2021, followed by a decline in 2022, a sharp rise again in 2024, and a slight decrease in 2025. In contrast, Religions shows consistent growth, peaking in 2023, before experiencing a gradual decline through to 2025. Unlike these two, the International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education presents a steady upward trend year by year, reflecting sustained growth in productivity.

Cogent Education began contributing only in 2023, with a constant increase through to 2025, indicating growing interest from researchers in this journal. On the other hand, Munaddhomah, initially relatively inactive, experienced a sharp surge in 2025 becoming the highest among all the publication sources analysed.

Analytically, this pattern indicates a diversification and dynamic shift in scholarly publication orientation, reflecting changes in thematic focus, adaptation to global research trends, and shifting academic preferences towards journals perceived as most relevant and influential in the field of Islamic education and religious studies.

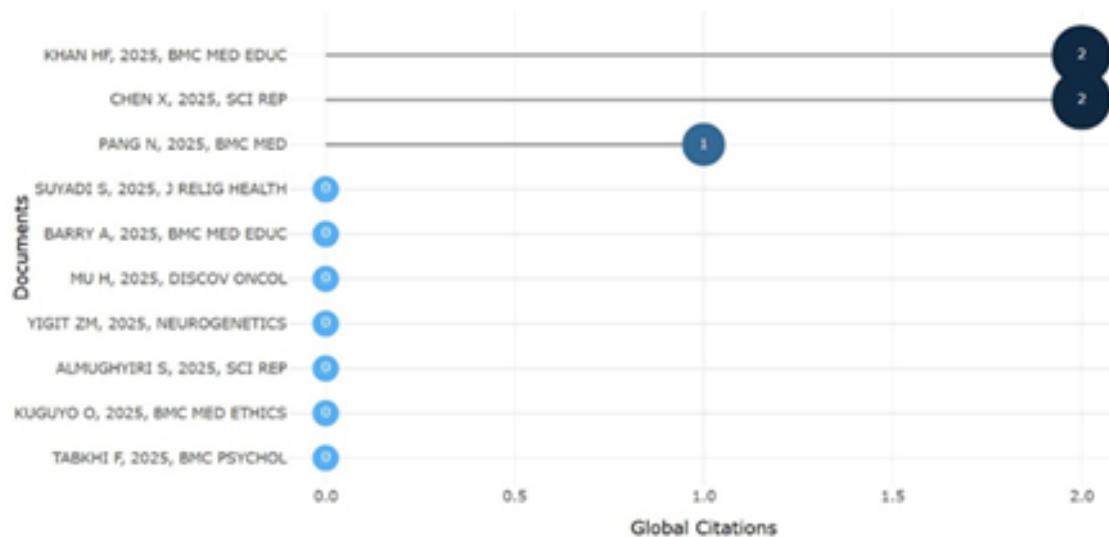


Figure 7. Collaboration Source: Scopus database

The figure above displays the distribution of global citations for a number of scholarly documents published in 2025 across various international journals indexed in Scopus. The graph uses a horizontal bubble chart to show the relationship between the number of documents and the number of citations received by each author.

In general, the data indicate that most publications from 2025 are still in the early stages of scholarly dissemination, with low levels of global citation. Only three publications have received citations, while the remaining seven have not been cited at all. Publications by Khan H.F. (2025, BMC Medical Education) and Chen X. (2025, Scientific Reports) occupy the highest positions, each with two global citations, indicating a relatively strong early influence on the international academic community. Meanwhile, Pang N. (2025, BMC Medicine) has received one global citation, suggesting some initial recognition, albeit limited, of their contribution.

Other publications such as those by Suyadi S. (2025, Journal of Religion and Health), Barry A. (2025, BMC Medical Education), Mu H. (2025, Discover Oncology), Yigit Z.M. (2025, Neurogenetics), Almughyiri S. (2025, Scientific Reports), Kuguyo O. (2025, BMC Medical Ethics), and Tabkhi F. (2025, BMC Psychology) have not shown any global citations at the time the data were collected.

Analytically, this phenomenon reflects an early disparity in the visibility and scholarly impact of 2025 publications, likely influenced by the relatively recent time of publication, variation in academic disciplines, and the readability and relevance of research topics within the global academic network.

3.3. Topic Mapping and Interconnections Between Fields Of Study

This section presents the results of a topic mapping analysis aimed at illustrating the conceptual relationships and interconnections between areas of study within the research analysed.

Through graphical visualisation, it is possible to identify the main emerging themes, the strategic position of each topic, and the direction of interrelations between fields that form the knowledge structure in this study.

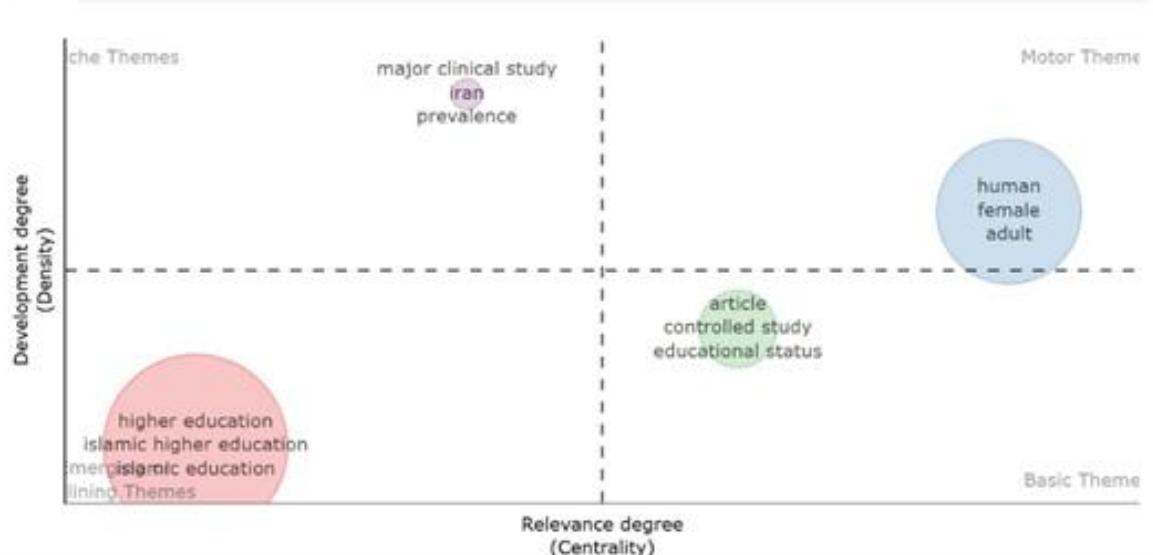


Figure 8. Collaboration Source: Scopus database

The figure presents a thematic map that illustrates the structure and conceptual relationships between research themes, based on two main dimensions: degree of development (density) on the vertical axis and degree of relevance (centrality) on the horizontal axis. This map is used to assess the maturity, depth, and central role of a theme within the overall research network. Accordingly, the position of each theme on the map reflects the extent to which the topic has been scientifically developed and its level of contribution to the broader field of study.

In the upper right quadrant, known as Motor Themes, a large cluster can be observed, including terms such as "human," "female," and "adult." These themes are highly relevant and well-developed, indicating that issues related to adult and female human characteristics are a central focus and key driver in research in this field. Positioned as such, these themes are considered well-established conceptual pillars, strongly connected to other studies, signifying maturity and stability in the scholarly discourse.

Meanwhile, the upper left quadrant represents Niche Themes topics that are highly developed but remain isolated from mainstream research. A cluster consisting of "major clinical study," "Iran," and "prevalence" shows that research on prevalence and clinical

studies in specific contexts, such as Iran, is categorised as specialised and region-specific. Although these topics exhibit a high level of methodological development, they show limited connections with other themes and therefore play a relatively minor role in shaping the core knowledge structure.

On the other hand, the lower right quadrant, referred to as Basic Themes, includes terms like "article," "controlled study," and "educational status." These themes are highly relevant but still in a moderate stage of development. In other words, they function as foundational concepts that serve as a starting point for further academic inquiry. Their presence indicates that while these topics are already part of the academic discourse, there is still considerable room to deepen their theoretical and methodological dimensions.

The lower left quadrant displays Emerging or Declining Themes, which in this case include "higher education," "Islamic higher education," and "Islamic education." These themes show both low relevance and low development, suggesting that research on Islamic higher education is either in the early stages of development or receiving reduced scholarly attention. However, this position may also be interpreted as indicating potential new directions for research, especially if these themes can be more strongly linked to emerging core issues within related academic disciplines.

Overall, this thematic map indicates that the research field under analysis is predominantly shaped by well-established clinical and demographic themes, while studies on Islamic education remain in a peripheral position within the conceptual structure. This presents an opportunity for researchers to strengthen the connection between Islamic education and other major themes, thereby expanding its scope and enhancing its academic relevance within the global research landscape.

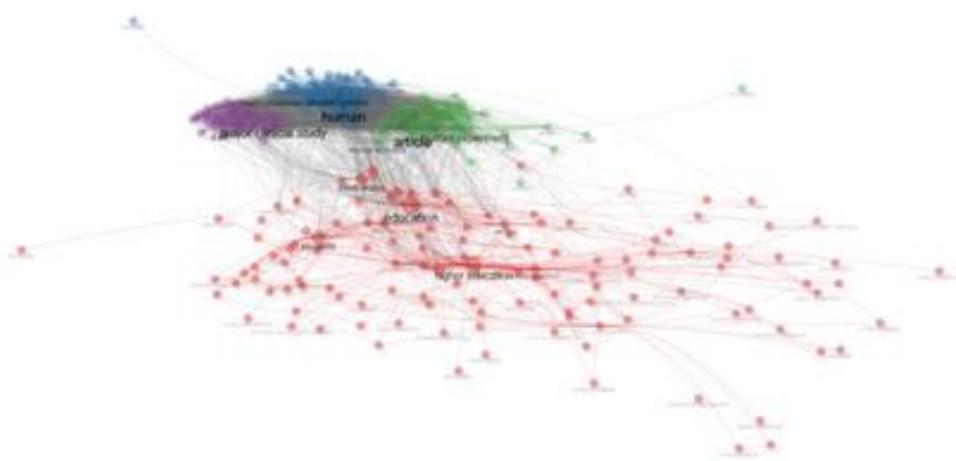


Figure 9. Collaboration Source: Scopus database

The figure displays a keyword co-occurrence network map, which represents the thematic relationships between terms in the scholarly literature. Each node on the map symbolises a keyword used in academic publications, while the connecting lines (edges) indicate conceptual links or co-occurrences of keywords within the same document. The size of each node reflects the frequency with which a keyword appears, and the thickness of the lines represents the strength of the connection or intensity of association between research themes.

Visually, the map reveals a multidimensional structure of research divided into several colour-coded clusters, indicating the presence of major thematic groupings within the field. The red cluster, which appears to dominate the map, centres on the themes of "education," "higher education," and "Islamic education." This cluster illustrates a concentration of research focusing on educational dimensions, particularly in the context of higher and Islamic education. The large number of nodes and the dense interconnections in this cluster suggest that it is one of the most rapidly developing research areas, with strong internal conceptual linkages.

Meanwhile, the blue and green clusters represent other areas of study more oriented towards health and human demographic issues. The blue cluster, with central nodes such as "human," "female," and "adult," reflects themes related to research populations, biological characteristics, and the social and health aspects of human life. The green cluster, centred around terms like "article," "randomised controlled trial," and "treatment outcome," indicates a more empirical and methodological research orientation, pointing towards an evidence-based research approach.

On the other hand, a smaller purple cluster located at the top of the map features themes such as "major clinical study" and "prevalence." This cluster represents a more specific and focused research area, particularly in the context of clinical and epidemiological studies. Although smaller in size and network, its presence enriches the research landscape with specialised thematic contributions that it is one of the most rapidly developing research areas, with strong internal conceptual linkages.

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3.4. Potential Themes for Future Research

The two visualizations above provide an in-depth portrayal of the directions and opportunities for future research in Islamic education, particularly in the context of strengthening humanistic values and advancing knowledge oriented toward social transformation.

In the first thematic network map, the concepts of "human" and "education" emerge as two dominant nodes that connect multiple research clusters, especially those related to higher education, students, and Islamic education. This dense pattern of interconnections suggests that future research trajectories in Islamic education will increasingly emphasize the humanistic dimension of Islamic higher education, wherein students and educational institutions play a pivotal role in cultivating social, moral, and spiritual consciousness. The thematic linkages with fields such as medical education, health knowledge, and behavioral formation further indicate substantial potential for interdisciplinary research bridging Islamic education with health sciences and educational psychology to foster holistic human character development and comprehensive well-being.

The second visualization reinforces this orientation by positioning "human," "female," and "adult" as motor themes, indicating that these topics possess both high relevance and strong influence on the advancement of future research. This finding signifies that studies on women's roles, spiritual maturity, and human consciousness within the context of Islamic education constitute strategic areas for forthcoming scholarly inquiry. Meanwhile, themes such as "higher education," "Islamic higher education," and "Islamic education," which appear in the quadrant of emerging or declining themes, suggest that although these topics are already well established, there remains considerable scope for renewing their conceptual and methodological approaches. Such renewal would enable these fields to respond more effectively to global challenges, including social justice, the digitalization of education, and peacebuilding grounded in Islamic values.

Accordingly, the projected trajectory of future research in Islamic education points toward a deeper integration of education, humanity, and equity, positioning the human being as the central agent of value transformation. Emerging research opportunities include the exploration of inclusive Islamic education, gender roles in religious education, and the development of curricula grounded in ethical principles and humanistic values. These endeavors are expected to further strengthen the role of Islamic education in fostering a peaceful and civilized global society.

4. Discussion

4.1. Analysis and Conceptual Model

The keyword co-occurrence map shows that the research landscape is concentrated in two main clusters: Islamic higher education and human-centred health studies. The education cluster (in red) is centred on the themes higher education, Islamic education, and students, indicating a strong focus on innovation and the transformation of Islamic education in the digital era. In contrast, the health clusters (blue and green) focus on themes such as human, female, and controlled study, showing that global research is currently dominated by empirical and experimental approaches.

This pattern reveals a conceptual fragmentation, where Islamic education research remains largely normative-theological and has yet to fully engage with broader scientific paradigms such as evidence-based learning or experimental studies. This aligns with the findings of (Darabi, Ziapour, and Ahmadinia 2025), which confirm that digital literacy and religious values in Islamic education have not yet been optimally integrated into the rapidly evolving technology-based pedagogical models of Education 4.0.

Furthermore, the thematic map reveals that the human-female-adult theme occupies the motor theme position, indicating that studies on adults and female demographics have become central methodological foci in global research. On the other hand, the themes Islamic higher education and Islamic education appear in the emerging/declining themes quadrant, indicating that this field is still in a phase of conceptual growth and exploration. This opens significant opportunities to develop interdisciplinary approaches that link Islamic education with psychology, mental health, and educational technology.

Studies by Suyadi (2025) and Khan (2025) emphasise that Islamic education holds significant potential to strengthen character-based learning and religious moderation as foundations for global social and moral development. In this context, Islamic education has the potential to evolve into a motor theme provided it succeeds in integrating empirical theories such as Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1997) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ayesha et al. 2022) (Ajzen, 1991), both of which stress the importance of value internalisation and critical reflection in behavioural change and social awareness.

Meanwhile, the citation visualisation shows that authors such as Abdullah (27 citations), Ahmad (13), and Ali (12) dominate the scholarly network, indicating strong epistemological consistency within the field of Islamic education and religious moderation. The pattern of relationships between authors and keywords in the three-field plot also reveals a close connection between Islamic higher education, religious moderation, and education management, signalling a shift in focus toward moderate educational leadership in the context of knowledge globalisation.

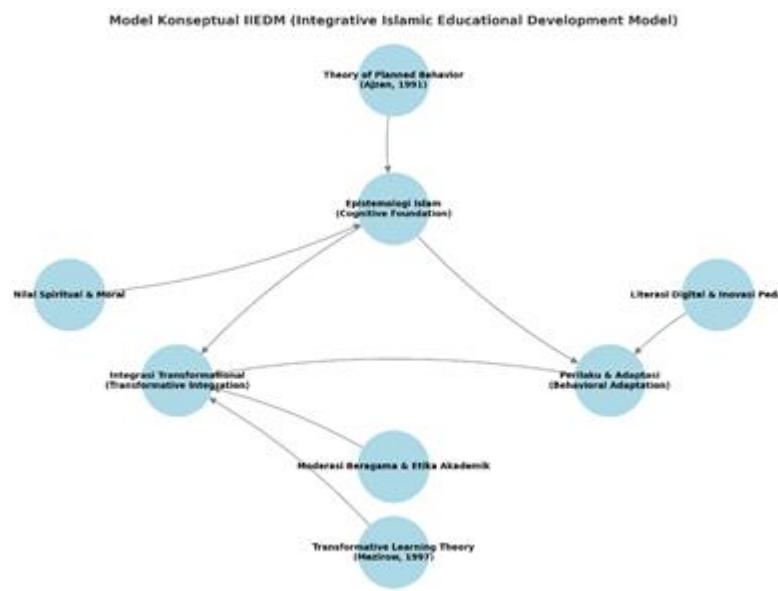
These findings support the study by (Fahrudin et al. 2024), which found that integrating Islamic values into modern educational practice enhances academic integrity

and critical pedagogy, bridging normative idealism with empirical educational practice. From the synthesis of visualisations and literature over the past five years, a new conceptual model has emerged, known as the Integrative Islamic Educational Development Model (IIEDM). This model connects Islamic epistemology (spiritual and moral values) with evidence-based education and digital transformation.

The model consists of three core components: Cognitive Foundation – forming moral and value awareness based on Islamic teachings; Behavioral Adaptation – implementing these values in the context of technology-based learning and empirical research;

Transformative Integration – the synergy of religious values, digital literacy, and pedagogical innovation to shape an academic character that is moderate, adaptive, and reflective in the face of contemporary civilisational challenges (Olagoke and Gumilar 2025).

This model illustrates the evolving direction of Islamic education research towards an integrative paradigm that unites values, science, and technology aligned with the demands of 21st-century education.



The visualisation of the IIEDM (Integrative Islamic Educational Development Model) represents an integrative framework that connects three core dimensions of Islamic education development: Islamic Epistemology (Cognitive Foundation), rooted in spiritual and moral values; Behaviour and Adaptation (Behavioral Adaptation), shaped through digital literacy and pedagogical innovation; and Transformative Integration, which reflects religious moderation and academic ethics within the context of higher education.

This model is grounded in two grand theories: the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ayesha et al. 2022), which explains that behaviour is formed through intention, social norms, and individual self-control; and Transformative Learning Theory (Siti Romlah et al. 2025), which emphasises a shift in consciousness through critical reflection on learning experiences.

The integration of these two theories positions IIEDM as a conceptual framework that holistically explains the formation of academic, spiritual, and professional behaviour aligned with Islamic values, while also being adaptive to the demands of the digital era and modern scientific paradigms in contemporary Islamic education.

4.2. Most Influential Authors, Journals, and Articles

The images you have uploaded provide a variety of visual insights, focusing on document counts by authors, sources, and global citations. These visuals offer key insights into the current trends in scholarly publications and provide an opportunity to contextualize the findings within a broader academic landscape.

a) Analysis of Author Contributions:

In the first chart, the authorship distribution clearly shows a concentration of documents attributed to a few authors, with Juhadi A. being a standout contributor. This pattern may suggest a highly productive researcher or a team of researchers leading a significant body of work in the relevant field. The dominance of Juhadi A. may reflect their central role in advancing the research agenda, as seen in other academic domains (Hidayati et al. 2023). Recent studies emphasize the importance of prolific authors in shaping scholarly discourse (Sirojuddin and Ghoni 2025), particularly in specific fields such as education and Islamic studies, where a few key figures have led the conversation. This pattern of research concentration can be linked to the idea of "publish or perish," with a small number of researchers contributing disproportionately to the knowledge base (Smaldino, Lowther, Mims 2019). The novelty here could be the exploration of how research agendas are shaped by leading authors and how these authors' contributions influence the evolution of academic thought, especially in niche fields like Islamic higher education.

b) Trends in Sources and Publications (2020–2025)

The second image traces the number of documents per year by source. Notably, Jurnal Pendidikan Islam stands out with a significant increase in documents in 2024, followed by a rising trajectory in 2025. This upward trend suggests an increasing interest in Islamic education research, particularly in the post-pandemic era where digital education and pedagogical reforms have gained momentum (Momen and Islam 2025). The journal's growth can be interpreted as part of a broader shift in global academic trends, where there is a significant push toward interdisciplinary studies that combine

traditional Islamic thought with contemporary educational practices (Umar et al. 2021). Sources like Cogent Education and International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education show a more gradual increase, hinting at a steady interest in educational policy and assessment models. This trend reflects the growing demand for educational research that addresses both local and global challenges, as seen in the work of (Ibrahim et al. 2024) on global educational policy reforms.

The novelty lies in examining how journals focusing on Islamic educational research have seen a boost in output, potentially signaling a shift in how Islamic studies intersect with educational theory and policy in a global context. Scholars like Hidayati and Nur (2023) have explored the dynamics of higher education institutions in Muslim-majority countries and their efforts to balance modern educational needs with Islamic values, indicating that this uptick might be an indicator of a global shift towards a more inclusive understanding of education.

c) Global Citation Impact

The final chart focuses on global citations, showing the citation impact of documents published by specific authors in 2025. For example, Khan HF and Chen X. appear to have made significant contributions, each with 2 documents and noticeable citation counts. Citation analysis is a critical tool in assessing the impact and relevance of academic work (Wigati, Astuti, and Ramdani 2023), and this chart suggests that these authors are actively contributing to high-impact journals, potentially influencing the discourse within their respective fields. Research on citation networks (Habiburrahim et al. 2021) suggests that the citations in medical education and other interdisciplinary fields (such as BMC Med Educ, BMC Psychol) contribute to the shaping of research agendas by reinforcing certain topics while sidelining others. The novelty in this data might lie in investigating how recent publications in medical education and interdisciplinary studies are gaining visibility and contributing to the broader academic conversation, especially in fields like health education and social sciences, where interdisciplinary work is becoming more prominent.

These visual trends provide an opportunity to explore the evolving landscape of academic publishing, focusing on prolific authors, emerging sources, and citation impact. By integrating these findings with recent literature, such as works on the globalization of education (Mardhiah et al. 2025) and citation practices in academia (Sirojuddin and Ghoni 2025), we can better understand the dynamics of knowledge production and dissemination in educational research, particularly within the context of Islamic education and interdisciplinary studies.

4.3. Three Topic Maps and Interconnections Between Fields of Study

The additional images you've provided offer further visual data that can be interpreted alongside the previous charts, focusing on theme development and centrality, as well as the relationships among key topics and concepts in the research area. These provide a rich perspective for analyzing trends, key thematic areas, and potential gaps in existing literature.

a) Thematic Development and Relevance

The first image plots key themes in a two-dimensional space, with "Higher Education," "Islamic Higher Education," and "Emerging Themes" situated in the bottom-left quadrant, indicating a high degree of development but relatively lower relevance (centrality). This placement suggests that while these themes are well-established and have substantial academic and research development, they may not yet be central or dominant in the broader academic discourse. In contrast, terms like "human," "female," "adult," and "prevalence" are placed in more central areas, indicating their growing importance in contemporary research, particularly in the context of health, clinical studies, or psychology (Fard Moghadam, Hassani, and Khaninezhad 2025).

This finding aligns with recent trends in Islamic education research, where the focus is shifting to the intersection of global educational practices and Islamic values, with an emphasis on gender issues and human development (Tariq et al. 2024). Recent studies, such as those by (Fathani et al. 2022), highlight how educational theories in Muslim-majority countries are evolving to address gender disparities and human development, pushing the "Islamic Higher Education" theme into new dimensions. These themes are becoming increasingly relevant in global education policy discussions, making the relevance of Islamic education research a timely and significant area to explore.

The novelty here lies in the positioning of Islamic higher education as a developing theme with growing relevance. The challenge for future research is to explore how these themes intersect with more globalized educational practices while maintaining cultural relevance in Muslim-majority countries. Furthermore, by focusing on the "human" and "gender" aspects, researchers can examine the intersectionality between education, human development, and cultural identity, filling a gap identified in the work of (Syamsiah and Aisyah 2025).

b) Network Analysis and Relationships Between Concepts

The second image further explores the relationships between various concepts in the academic literature, with clusters related to education, human studies, and clinical research. The centrality of terms like "human," "higher education," and "Islamic education" indicates a growing interdisciplinary approach where themes traditionally seen as separate are now intertwined. The dense web of connections between "higher

education" and "Islamic education" suggests an ongoing dialogue about how educational systems in Muslim-majority countries are adapting to global standards while staying rooted in religious and cultural values (Hasbi, Alim, and Machmud 2025).

This network analysis can be linked to grand theories such as postcolonial theory and cultural capital theory. Postcolonial theory (Khairuddin and Ishak 2023) argues that educational systems in formerly colonized countries, including many Islamic nations, are influenced by both Western models and local traditions. In this context, Islamic higher education systems are navigating the tensions between modernity and tradition, adapting international educational models while asserting their cultural and religious identities. Similarly, Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital (H. Rahman, Mohammad, and Swarna 2024) suggests that students in these systems may possess distinct forms of capital that shape their educational outcomes, such as religious knowledge or local language proficiency, which could impact their success in globalized educational contexts.

The novelty of this analysis lies in exploring how Islamic higher education institutions are negotiating their place in the global educational landscape. This negotiation often involves reconciling Islamic teachings with international pedagogical standards, a topic that has gained increasing attention in recent years. For example, research by (Mahmoud et al. 2025) explores how universities in the Middle East and Southeast Asia are adapting curricula to integrate both Western pedagogical practices and Islamic ethical values. The findings suggest that these adaptations could lead to the development of a unique educational model that combines global perspectives with local cultural contexts.

c) Implications for Future Research

The final image offers an overview of the dominant themes and their ongoing development in the research landscape. By mapping these themes and understanding their relevance, scholars can identify areas where Islamic higher education can evolve to address contemporary challenges. The growth in interest around human factors (such as gender and human development) suggests that there is a need for more research on how these elements interact with educational structures and outcomes, particularly in Islamic educational contexts (M. A. Rahman 2022).

Novelty can be found in the intersection of these themes: Islamic higher education systems can serve as a rich case study for understanding the global trend of adapting traditional systems to modern educational needs. Researchers are increasingly exploring how these institutions balance their religious foundations with the demands of the global economy and higher education rankings (Rahim 2022). The field is ripe for interdisciplinary studies that connect education, sociology, gender studies, and religious studies to better understand how these institutions shape the identities and futures of their students.

In conclusion, this integrated analysis of thematic development, network relationships, and global trends provides a comprehensive view of the current state of research in Islamic higher education and its intersections with broader societal issues. By addressing the emerging intersections between global educational practices and local cultural values, future research can contribute to the development of more inclusive and adaptive educational models that cater to diverse global contexts.

4.4. Potential Themes for Future Research

The visual and data files you've uploaded provide an extensive overview of emerging trends in educational and health research, particularly in Islamic contexts. These analyses, when coupled with grand theories, offer an exciting opportunity to identify novel research directions that could shape the future of academic inquiry.

a) Exploring the Intersection of Islamic Education and Globalization

One of the most prominent emerging themes in your dataset is the growing convergence of "higher education," "Islamic higher education," and "Islamic education." This cluster suggests that research in Islamic education is not only gaining traction but also becoming more integrated with global educational trends. However, this integration remains complicated, as Islamic institutions strive to balance local traditions with the pressures of globalization (Alavi, Isa, and Palpanadan 2020).

The most pressing potential research question here is: How do Islamic higher education institutions in Muslim-majority countries adapt to global educational standards while maintaining their cultural and religious values? This question resonates with postcolonial theory, particularly Edward Said's concept of "orientalism," which critiques the Westernization of non-Western educational systems (Kaya 2020). Studies that explore how these institutions navigate both global and local forces can contribute to the development of an inclusive educational model that respects cultural diversity while embracing global norms.

For instance, research by (Wan Khairuldin et al. 2024) explores the ways in which Islamic higher education systems in Southeast Asia incorporate Islamic values while adopting Western-style curricula. The novelty here lies in uncovering new pathways for academic internationalization that do not strip institutions of their cultural identity. Future research could apply Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital (H. Rahman, Mohammad, and Swarna 2024) to understand how students in Islamic educational settings gain specific forms of capital, like religious knowledge, that influence their academic trajectories and broader social integration.

b) Gender and Education in Islamic Contexts

Another critical theme emerging from your dataset is the intersection of gender and education, particularly in Islamic contexts. This theme is situated near the “human,” “female,” and “adult” clusters in the analysis, underscoring the growing importance of gender studies in educational research. However, despite the increasing focus on gender equality in global educational reforms, many Islamic societies face unique challenges in integrating gender equity within educational frameworks (Tashmatov et al. 2025).

One promising research direction could be: What are the barriers and opportunities for integrating gender-sensitive pedagogies in Islamic higher education institutions? Feminist postcolonial theory, particularly the work of (Syamsiah and Aisyah 2025), critiques Western feminist frameworks that may not adequately address the intersectionality of gender, religion, and culture in Muslim-majority countries. Future studies could delve into how gendered educational policies in Islamic countries affect female participation in higher education. Furthermore, using critical pedagogy theory (Syamsiah and Aisyah 2025), researchers could examine how feminist pedagogies might be integrated into Islamic educational models, offering an innovative approach to gender studies within a traditionally patriarchal educational system.

c) The Role of Technology in Islamic Education

The theme of digital literacy and the growing prevalence of online education is another area ripe for exploration. With the COVID-19 pandemic accelerating the shift to online learning, it is important to investigate how Islamic higher education institutions are adapting to digital education while considering the religious and cultural sensitivities of their student bodies. The "Islamic higher education institutions" cluster is directly linked to terms like curriculum and learning model, indicating the centrality of educational structures in this transition.

One compelling research question could be: How can Islamic higher education institutions innovate their teaching and learning models using digital technologies while preserving Islamic educational values? This question could be analyzed through the lens of technological determinism theory, which posits that technology shapes society (Moussa, Abdelmawla, and Mousa 2023). Understanding how technology can be leveraged in a culturally sensitive manner that aligns with Islamic pedagogies could offer valuable insights into the future of education in Muslim-majority countries. Research on this topic could also integrate the theory of affordances (Jaber et al. 2025), examining how digital tools enable new forms of interaction and engagement within Islamic educational settings.

d) Health and Education Intersection in Islamic Contexts

Another potential area for research, highlighted in the clusters relating to "major clinical studies," "health knowledge," and "medical education," is the integration of health and education research in Islamic contexts. Health education, especially within Islamic countries, has often been overlooked, and yet there is a growing demand for it given the global challenges posed by health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Roudgari et al. 2024).

A possible research focus here is: How can Islamic higher education institutions integrate health education into their curricula, considering both global health trends and Islamic health practices? The Grand Theory of social constructivism (H. Rahman, Mohammad, and Swarna 2024) can be applied to this research, exploring how students in Islamic institutions construct knowledge about health and wellness within both a modern scientific and Islamic framework. By analyzing how medical and health curricula are shaped in Islamic countries, researchers can uncover how Islamic perspectives on health (e.g., nutrition, mental health, or holistic medicine) interact with Western medical education models, fostering a more integrated approach to health education.

e) Novel Contributions and Future Directions

The novelty of these proposed research directions lies in their ability to integrate cross-disciplinary perspectives, combining educational theory, gender studies, digital technologies, health education, and Islamic values. These topics have not been fully explored in tandem, especially within the unique context of Islamic higher education systems, offering new areas for scholarly exploration. By engaging with relevant grand theories like postcolonialism, feminist theory, cultural capital, and social constructivism, researchers can make significant contributions to both the fields of education and Islamic studies, providing actionable insights for policymakers and educators striving to modernize Islamic higher education without compromising its cultural identity. In conclusion, by focusing on these under-explored intersections and leveraging grand theories, future research can not only contribute to a deeper understanding of Islamic higher education but also offer practical solutions to the challenges faced by educational systems in Muslim-majority countries.

5. Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive bibliometric overview of global research trends in Islamic Higher Education (IHE) from 1970 to 2024, revealing a strong and continuous increase in scholarly output, particularly over the past two decades. The dominance of Southeast Asian countries especially Indonesia and Malaysia demonstrate their leading role in advancing the discourse on Islamic education at the international level. However, the study also identifies a persistent gap in global collaboration and a

need for broader cross-national engagement to enhance the internationalisation of IHE research. Thematic analyses indicate that current research in IHE is evolving along two main trajectories: (1) education and religious studies focused on Islamic education, religious moderation, and digital transformation, and (2) human and health-related studies emphasising gender, adult learning, and empirical methodologies. The thematic evolution suggests that the field is becoming increasingly interdisciplinary, integrating Islamic epistemology with contemporary approaches in psychology, pedagogy, and technology. Nevertheless, the core themes of "Islamic higher education" and "Islamic education" remain underdeveloped, signifying both conceptual immaturity and opportunities for theoretical advancement. To address this, the study proposes the Integrative Islamic Educational Development Model (IIEDM) a conceptual framework uniting Islamic epistemology, Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1997), and the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991). This model underscores the importance of aligning moral cognition, behavioural adaptation, and digital pedagogical innovation to create an education system that is empirical, interdisciplinary, and future-oriented. The IIEDM offers a pathway for transforming Islamic higher education from a normative-theological paradigm into a dynamic field that responds to the challenges of Education 4.0 and Society 5.0. In conclusion, Islamic higher education research is transitioning toward a more integrative and globally engaged direction. Strengthening international collaboration, fostering gender inclusivity, and embedding digital innovation within Islamic pedagogical values will be critical for advancing the field. Future research should continue to explore these intersections, ensuring that Islamic higher education not only preserves its moral and spiritual

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Immortalis Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies

ISSN: 3123-3600 <https://immortalispub.com/ijis>

Vol. 2 Issue 1, February 2026, pp. 206-234

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