

Mapping Research Trends in Islamic Religious Education: A Bibliometric Analysis of Scopus-Indexed Publications

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ABSTRACT

Research on Islamic Religious Education (IRE) has expanded in response to globalization, digital transformation, religious moderation, and the growing use of artificial intelligence in education. This study aims to map publication trends, influential contributors, collaboration patterns, dominant themes, and future research directions in Scopus-indexed IRE studies. A bibliometric analysis was conducted using the PRISMA framework. Data were retrieved from the Scopus database using keywords related to Islamic Religious Education, teaching, and learning. After screening, 54 English-language peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2019 and 2025 were analyzed. Biblioshiny in R and VOSviewer were used to examine annual publication growth, country and institutional productivity, citation impact, co-authorship networks, and keyword co-occurrence. The findings show a marked increase in IRE publications, with the highest productivity recorded in 2024. Indonesia emerged as the dominant contributor, supported by leading institutions such as Djuanda University, UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta, and UIN Sunan Kalijaga. Citation analysis identified earlier works by Nahar and Ashraf as highly influential, while recent studies on quality assurance, tolerance, and AI demonstrated strong normalized citation impact. Thematic mapping revealed that Islamic education and Islamic Religious Education remain dominant topics, alongside emerging themes such as religious moderation, radicalism, digital learning, and artificial intelligence. The study indicates a shift in IRE scholarship from primarily normative concerns toward technology-oriented and socially responsive research. Future studies should broaden international collaboration, include databases beyond Scopus, and explore ethical, inclusive, and interdisciplinary approaches to Islamic education in the digital era.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) occupies a strategic position in contemporary education because it does not merely transmit religious knowledge, but also contributes to the formation of moral character, social responsibility, and religious identity in increasingly plural and interconnected societies. In the context of globalization, IRE is expected to respond to complex social changes, including secularization, ideological polarization, radicalism, and the growing influence of global cultural values on Muslim communities. These developments have encouraged scholars and educators to rethink the aims, methods, and relevance of Islamic education in both formal and non-formal learning environments (Husna et al., 2023; Sejdini et al., 2020; Subakir, 2020). As a result, IRE is increasingly positioned as an educational field that must balance the preservation of Islamic values with the need to develop inclusive, critical, and adaptive learning practices.

The transformation of Islamic education has become more urgent in the digital era. The rapid development of educational technology, mobile learning, online platforms, and artificial intelligence has changed how students access knowledge and how teachers design learning experiences. During and after the COVID-19 pandemic, Islamic education institutions were forced to adopt distance learning and digital tools, revealing both opportunities and limitations in the readiness of teachers, students, and institutions (Arim et al., 2024; Kasim et al., 2022). While digital platforms can expand access and support personalized learning, they also create new challenges, including unequal access to resources, limited teacher competence, and the risk of students being exposed to intolerant or misleading religious content through social media and digital devices (Dwijayanto, 2022; Pahrudin et al., 2025). Therefore, digital transformation in IRE requires not only technological adoption but also pedagogical, ethical, and institutional readiness.

Recent scholarship shows that IRE has begun to engage more seriously with innovative pedagogical approaches. Critical pedagogy, contextual teaching and learning, and student-centered learning have been proposed to strengthen students' critical thinking, religious understanding, and social awareness (Bin Zakaria et al., 2025; Hidayat, 2019). In addition, the integration of multiple intelligences theory and educational technology has expanded the discussion on how Islamic education can address diverse learning needs and improve cognitive, affective, and psychomotor outcomes (Andri Nirwana et al., 2025; Mahmud et al., 2024; Ni'mah & Rahmawati, 2023). These developments indicate that IRE is no longer limited to normative or doctrinal instruction, but is increasingly associated with evidence-based pedagogical innovation, curriculum development, and learner-centered practices.

Despite these advances, IRE still faces structural and conceptual challenges. In several Muslim-majority and minority contexts, the development of Islamic education curricula is shaped by national policy, cultural diversity, political conflict, and disparities in educational access (Rohman et al., 2024). Islamic higher education institutions also continue to face governance and human resource challenges that may limit their competitiveness compared with conventional higher education systems (Fathani et al., 2022). At the same time, the growing demand for religious moderation, tolerance, and interreligious understanding requires IRE to function as a social instrument for promoting peaceful coexistence and preventing radicalism (Ashraf, 2019; Tambak, 2021). These issues demonstrate that the field of IRE is developing at the intersection of theology, pedagogy, technology, policy, and social transformation.

Although many studies have examined specific aspects of IRE, such as digital learning, curriculum reform, religious moderation, teacher competence, and pesantren transformation, the overall structure and direction of research in this field remain insufficiently mapped. Existing literature provides valuable insights into particular themes, but there is still a need for a systematic bibliometric overview that identifies publication growth, influential authors and journals, productive institutions and countries, collaboration patterns, and dominant research themes. Such mapping is important because it enables researchers to understand how the field has evolved, where scholarly influence is concentrated, and which topics require further investigation. Scopus is particularly useful for this purpose because it provides broad coverage of peer-reviewed international publications across education, social sciences, and religious studies (Baas et al., 2020).

Therefore, this study conducts a bibliometric analysis of Scopus-indexed publications on Islamic Religious Education published between 2019 and 2025. By using bibliometric tools and science mapping techniques, this study aims to examine the development of scientific publications, identify the most productive and influential journals, authors, institutions, and countries, analyze co-authorship collaboration patterns, and reveal dominant themes and emerging topics in IRE research. This study also seeks to identify potential research gaps and future directions, particularly in relation to artificial intelligence, inclusive education, religious moderation, digital pedagogy, and interdisciplinary collaboration. Through this analysis, the study contributes to a clearer understanding of the intellectual landscape of IRE and provides a foundation for future research that is more globally connected, methodologically rigorous, and responsive to contemporary educational challenges.

Based on the preceding discussion, this study is guided by the following research questions: RQ1. How have scientific publications on Islamic Religious Education developed over time? RQ2. Which journals, authors, institutions, and countries are the most productive and influential in this field? RQ3. What patterns of scientific collaboration, particularly co-authorship among authors, institutions, and countries, can be identified? RQ4. What are the main themes and dominant research topics in Islamic Religious Education studies? RQ5. What research gaps and future directions have the potential to advance Islamic Religious Education research?

2. METHODS

PRISMA enhances transparency, minimizes potential selection bias, and strengthens evidence-based decision-making, making it highly relevant for educational studies that have implications for learning policies and practices, including in the field of Islamic Religious Education. In this study, the PRISMA framework is used to systematically examine the development and characteristics of research on Islamic religious education published in the period 2019–2025. The literature search process was conducted through the Scopus database using Selecting an appropriate database is crucial to ensure the quality, credibility, and consistency of the analyzed literature. Therefore, this study utilized the Scopus database as the sole source of document retrieval. Scopus was chosen because it is one of the largest and most reputable multidisciplinary abstract and citation databases, offering extensive coverage of peer-reviewed international journals across education, social sciences, and religious studies (Baas, Schotten, Plume, Côté, & Karimi, 2020). the search query TITLE-ABS-KEY: "Islamic Religious Education" AND "Teaching" AND "Learning"

The selection of keywords was carefully designed to ensure relevant, focused, yet comprehensive coverage of the literature. The terms Islamic Religious Education, Islamic Education, teaching, and learning were chosen to directly target studies discussing Islamic religious education in both formal and non-formal contexts, while also distinguishing them from general Islamic studies that are not oriented towards pedagogical aspects. Meanwhile, the terms Religious Education in Islam and teaching and learning were used to capture the variation in terminology commonly used in international publications. This combination of keywords allows the identification of studies that specifically address the learning practices, curriculum, pedagogy, and development of Islamic religious education, thus generating a robust database for bibliometric analysis and mapping of global research trends over the specified period.

Selecting an appropriate database is crucial to ensure the quality and comprehensiveness of the analyzed literature. Therefore, this study utilized the Scopus database as the primary source for document searches due to its credibility and global reach of reputable scholarly publications. Inclusion criteria were based on English-language peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2019 and 2025 that explicitly addressed the topic of Islamic Religious Education within the context of Islamic education, learning, curriculum, or pedagogy. 2019 was chosen as the starting point because this period marked the rise of international publications examining Islamic religious education in a more systematic and responsive manner to contemporary issues, such as the digitalization of education and religious moderation. Publications irrelevant to the research focus, of low methodological quality, or

non-journal documents were excluded from the analysis. Articles meeting all inclusion criteria were then analyzed using a bibliometric approach to identify research trends, intellectual structure, and the direction of development of Islamic Religious Education research globally.

Table 1. Inclusion criteria and Exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria	: Articles are published in peer-reviewed scientific journals. Written in English. Focus on religious Islamic education. Published in the period 2019 - 2025. The study was conducted in the context of Islamic education, learning, curriculum, and pedagogy.
Exclusion criteria	: Articles can be editorials, opinions, or news. Articles without abstracts or with incomplete data. Not in English. Published not within the 2019-2025 period Does not discuss aspects of Islamic education, learning, curriculum and pedagogy.

Tabel 1, Inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to ensure the relevance and quality of the analyzed literature. Included studies comprised peer-reviewed English-language journal articles published between 2019 and 2025 that explicitly addressed Islamic Religious Education within the context of learning, curriculum, and pedagogy. Editorials, opinion pieces, news articles, publications without abstracts or incomplete data, non-English articles, studies published outside the specified time frame, and research not focused on Islamic education were excluded. During the eligibility stage, article quality was assessed based on the clarity of research objectives, the systematic discussion of the topic, the relevance of the research context, and the scientific contribution both conceptually and empirically. Consistency between research objectives, findings, and scope was also considered. These criteria ensured that the selected articles were both thematically relevant and academically robust for valid bibliometric analysis.

Following data retrieval from Scopus, the records were exported in CSV and RIS formats for further analysis. A data cleaning process was conducted to ensure metadata accuracy and consistency, including duplicate removal based on DOI, title, and author names, as well as author name disambiguation and keyword standardization. The bibliometric analysis employed co-authorship analysis to map collaboration patterns among authors, institutions, and countries; co-word analysis to identify major themes and conceptual structures based on author keywords; and citation as well as normalized citation analysis to determine influential publications while adjusting for publication year bias. The analyses were performed using Biblioshiny (Bibliometrix package in R, version 4.x) (<https://www.bibliometrix.org/home/index.php/layout/biblioshiny>) for descriptive and structural mapping, and VOSviewer (version 1.6.xx) (<https://www.vosviewer.com/>) for network visualization, applying full counting and association strength normalization with thresholds adjusted to the data distribution.

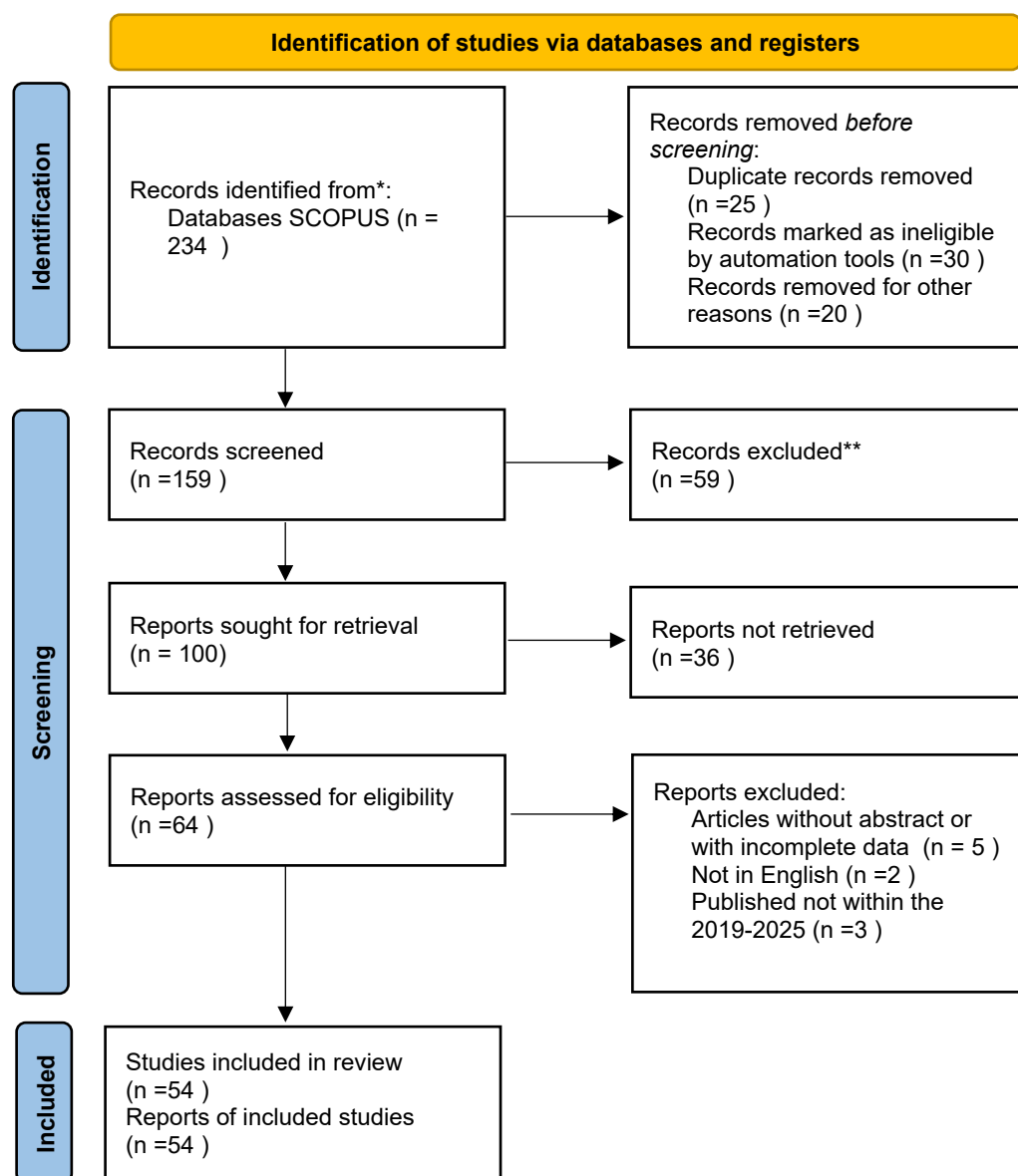


Figure 1. PRISMA (Page et al., 2021)

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings

Based on the results found using keywords: “Islamic Religious Education” AND “Teaching” AND “Learning”, based on Scopus data, a number of articles were found to have entered the analysis process, namely 54 articles that passed the PRISMA process stage.

3.1.1 RQ 1. Development of scientific (year of publication)

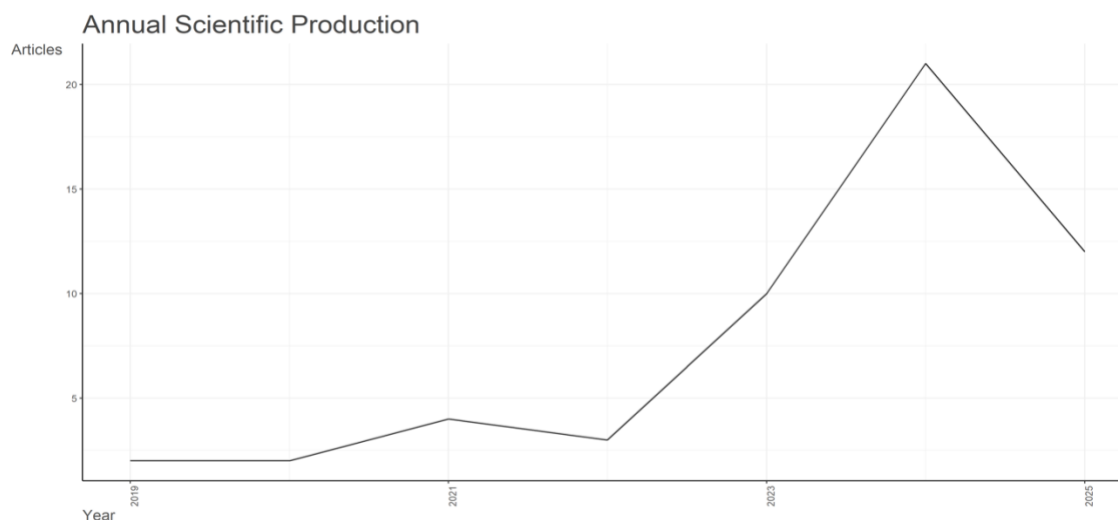


Figure 2. Annual Scientific Production

Figure 2, the Annual Scientific Production of Islamic Religious Education research from 2019 to 2025, shows a very dynamic growth trend with a significant surge in productivity in the second half of the period. In the initial phase between 2019 and 2020, publication activity tended to stagnate with a very low number of articles, namely only around 2 articles per year. Entering 2021, an increase began to be seen, although there were slight fluctuations or a minor decline in 2022. However, a major turning point occurred after 2022, where the number of articles increased drastically to reach 10 publications in 2023, and continued to soar until reaching its highest peak in 2024 with a total of more than 20 articles. Although the graph shows a decrease to around 12 articles in 2025, this is most likely due to the current year's data not being fully indexed or collected. Overall, these data reflect a very strong acceleration in research, with publication volumes at their peak increasing tenfold compared to the start of 2019.

3.1.2 RQ2. Which journals, authors, institutions, and countries are the most productive and influential

Country Scientific Production

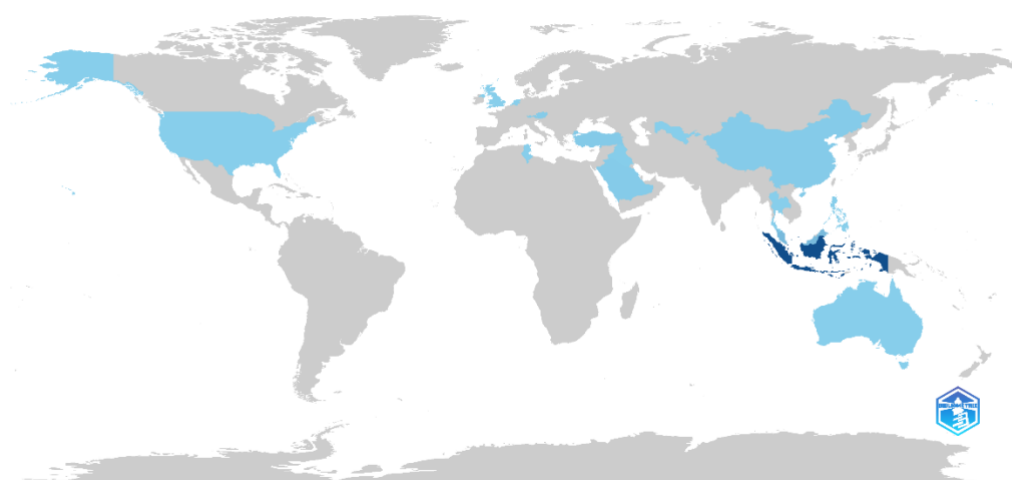


Figure 3: Country Scientific Production

Figure 3, Bibliometric Map of Country Scientific Production, shows the geographic distribution of contributions to scientific publications on the topic of Mapping Research Trends in Islamic Religious Education indexed in Scopus. Based on the color intensity on the map, Indonesia appears as the most dominant contributor with a deep dark blue color, indicating that the volume of Islamic religious education research publications on the Scopus platform is significantly dominated by researchers from this region. In addition to Indonesia, there is a global distribution of research with a lower intensity (light blue) that includes the United States, Canada, Australia, and Asian countries such as China, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Turkey. In Europe, contributions appear to emerge from the United Kingdom, while in Southeast Asia, Malaysia and Thailand also participate in this academic discourse. Overall, this mapping confirms that although the topic of Islamic Religious Education has attracted the attention of the research community across continents, Indonesia remains the center of gravity or main hub in the production of global scientific knowledge in this field.

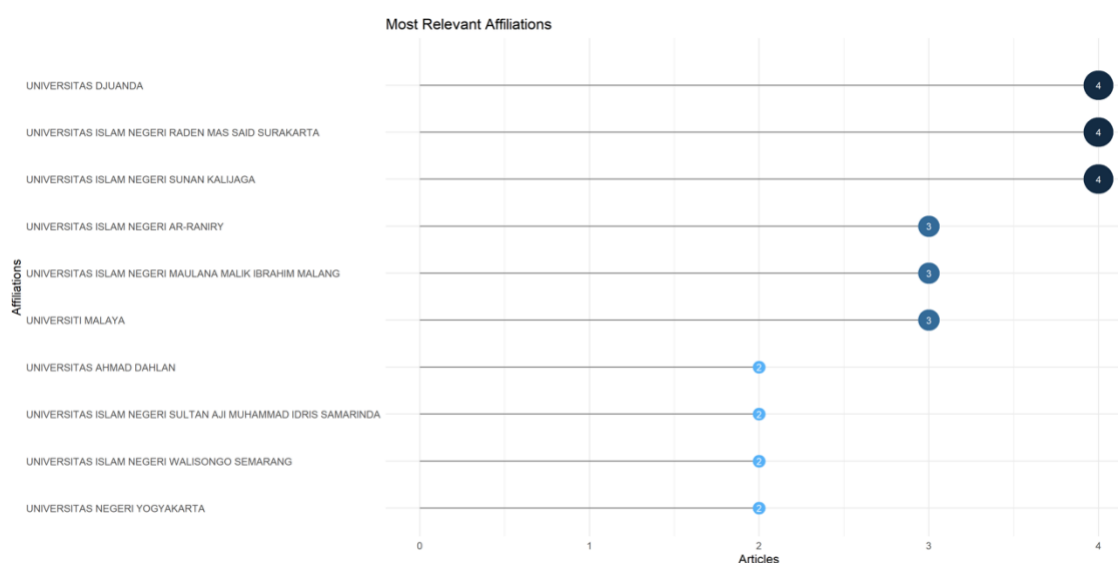


Figure 4: Most Relevant Affiliations

Based on Figure 4, the Country Scientific Production map, Indonesia emerges as the main contributor with the deepest dark blue color intensity, indicating that publication volume surpasses other countries such as Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the United States, and the United Kingdom. This dominance is emphasized by the Most Relevant Affiliations data, where the majority of Indonesian higher education institutions lead research productivity. Djuanda University, UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta, and UIN Sunan Kalijaga are the leading institutions with 4 articles each, followed by UIN Ar-Raniry, UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, and Universiti Malaya with 3 articles each. This phenomenon confirms that the global academic discourse of Islamic Religious Education is centered in Indonesia, making it a major hub in the development of international Islamic education theory and practice.

Table 4. Contribution citation

Author	DOI	Total Citations	TC Per Year	Normalized TC
Nahar S, 2022, Int J Instr	10.29333/Iji.2022.15325a	22	4.40	1.78
Ashraf Ma, 2019, Religions	10.3390/Rel10070429	20	2.50	1.38
Mariyono D, 2024, Qual Edu All	10.1108/Qea-02-2024-0018	9	3.00	3.26

Ok Ah, 2022, Munaddhomah	10.31538/Munaddhomah.V3i3.265	9	1.80	0.73
Tambak S, 2021, Miqot	10.30821/Miqot.V45i1.761	9	1.50	1.64
Rahmat M, 2019, J Islamic Educator	10.15575/Jpi.V5i2.6467	9	1.13	0.62
Warsah I, 2021, J Ilm Islam Futura	10.22373/Jiif.V21i2.7683	8	1.33	1.45
Anwar S, 2024, J Islamic Educator	10.15575/Jpi.V10i2.38649	7	2.33	2.53
Samad Saa, 2023, Ulumuna	10.20414/Ujis.V27i2.710	7	1.75	2.19
Nirwana An, 2025, Qubahan Acad J	10.48161/Qaj.V5n1a1498	6	3.00	8.00

Table 4. Bibliometric analysis of research trends in Islamic Religious Education shows significant scientific contributions with strong citation influence. The article by Nahar S. (2022) is the most influential publication with a total of 22 citations, followed by Ashraf MA (2019) with 20 citations. Recent research also shows rapid impact, such as the work of Mariyono D. (2024) with a Normalized TC value of 3.26 and Nirwana AN (2025) which recorded the highest Normalized TC value of 8.00 despite being recently published. Furthermore, the fairly even distribution of citations in the works of other authors such as Tambak S., Rahmat M., and Warsah I., each of which received 8 to 9 citations, emphasizes the solid foundation of literature in this domain. Overall, these data indicate that academic discourse in the field of Islamic religious education continues to develop dynamically and has high relevance at the global level.

3.1.3 RQ3. Patterns of scientific collaboration (co-authorship) between authors, institutions, and countries

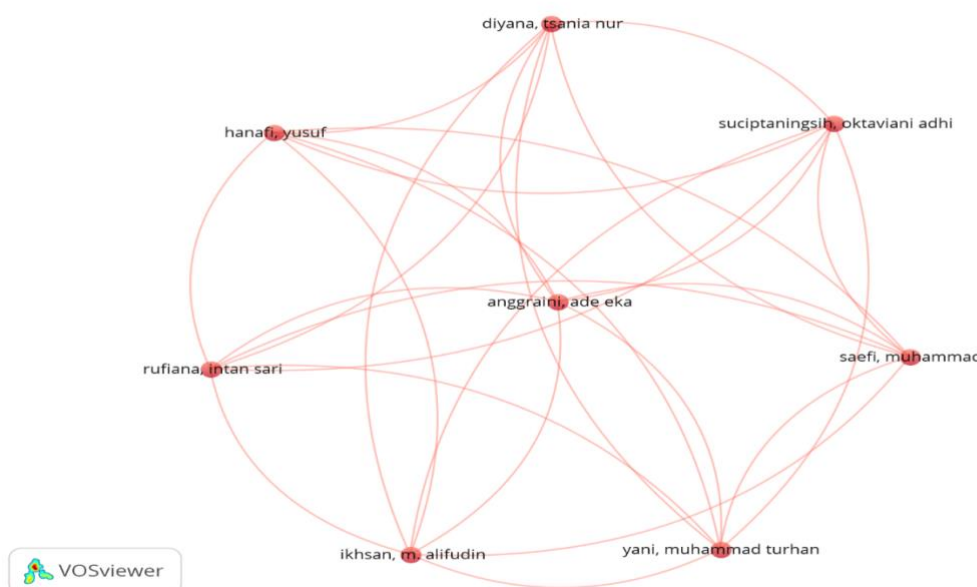


Figure 5: Co-Authorship between author

Figure 5. The pattern of collaboration between researchers captured in the VOSviewer network diagram, such as that involving Ade Eka Anggraini, Tsania Nur Diyana, and Muhammad Saefi, demonstrates a close synergy in the development of this academic discourse. These findings collectively confirm that Indonesia is not only a hub for knowledge production in this field but also a key driver in integrating the values of traditional religious education with the challenges of global modernity.



Figure 6. Co-Authorship between institutional

Figure 6, The VOSviewer network visualization shows the pattern of institutional collaboration in Islamic education publications, where Sunan Kali Jaga State Islamic University appears to be the most central actor with a high level of productivity and intensity of collaboration. The relationship between Ahmad Dahlan University Yogyakarta and Universiti Teknologi MARA Shah Alam indicates cross-border collaboration, while the link with Ar-Raniry State Islamic University strengthens the national collaboration network. The differences in node colors reflect the grouping of institutions based on the proximity of collaboration, which overall indicates that Islamic education research is still centered on certain institutions but is starting to show a tendency to develop international collaboration.

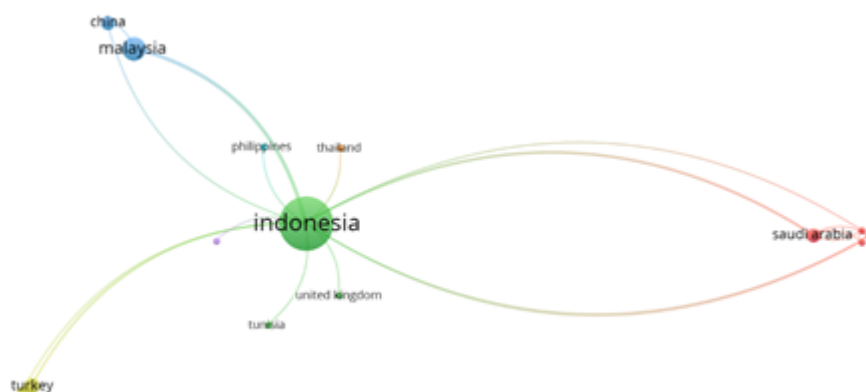


Figure 7: Co-Authorship between country

Figure 7. The VOSviewer visualization shows that Indonesia is the most central actor in international collaboration on Islamic education publications, with a broad network of collaborations spanning Asian, European, and Middle Eastern countries, particularly Saudi Arabia. The different node colors indicate clustering of collaborations between countries, indicating that Islamic education research remains Indonesia-centered but continues to develop through cross-regional and international collaboration networks.

the use of artificial intelligence in education. These findings confirm that Indonesia is not only a hub for knowledge production in this field, but also a key driver in integrating the values of traditional religious education with the challenges of global modernity.

3.1.5 RQ5. What research gaps and research development directions have the potential to be developed in Islamic Religious Education studies in the future?

A review of research trends in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) reveals several significant gaps that could potentially guide future research development. Although the use of artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged in the data, current research remains heavily focused on the basic operational aspects of education. There is an urgent need to explore the ethics of AI from an Islamic legal perspective and the effectiveness of adaptive learning for religious curricula. Furthermore, research needs to expand beyond radicalism and religious moderation to address under-explored global, non-doctrinal topics such as climate justice (eco-theology), Islamic financial literacy, and educational inclusivity for people with disabilities. Geographically, reliance on Indonesia as the center of research creates the risk of becoming overly "Indonesia-centric," making international collaboration with institutions outside Southeast Asia and the Middle East crucial for enriching global theoretical perspectives. Furthermore, the high citation rate of recent articles indicates the need for longitudinal research to measure the long-term impact of proposed learning models on tangible changes in student behavior. Finally, diversifying methodologies through interdisciplinary approaches—such as the use of big data analytics or neuroscience in religious learning—is essential to understanding how Islamic values are internalized by the future digital generation.

3.2 Discussion

A bibliometric analysis of 54 Scopus-indexed articles shows that research on Islamic Religious Education (IRE) has experienced a significant surge in productivity, peaking in 2024 with more than 20 articles. Indonesia has solidified its position as the center of gravity for global research in this field, both in terms of the country's publication volume and the dominance of affiliates led by Djuanda University, UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta, and UIN Sunan Kalijaga. Thematically, Islamic education and Islamic religious education remain the primary focus, but are beginning to be integrated with contemporary topics such as religious moderation, radicalism, and artificial intelligence. The greatest scientific influence is indicated by high citations to works (Nahar, 2022) published in the *International Journal of Instruction* and (Ashraf, 2019) in the journal *Religions*. Recent trends show significant potential for research on the impact of AI in religious education, as reflected in 2025 data. The emerging collaboration patterns demonstrate strong synergy among Indonesian researchers and the growing international network across continents connecting Southeast Asia with the Middle East and Europe.

The results of this study reflect a paradigm shift in Islamic education studies, from a traditional, static approach to one that is more adaptive to the challenges of global modernity. Indonesia's dominance in this discourse demonstrates that the policy of strengthening research in Islamic religious universities has yielded results on the international stage. This is reflected in the quality of publications that have been able to penetrate reputable international journals, such as articles by (Demirel Ucan & Wright, 2019) in the *British Journal of Religious Education*, which examines critical pedagogy in IRE. This reflection demonstrates that Muslim researchers today are no longer merely speaking at the doctrinal level, but have begun to explore scientifically measurable and globally recognized instructional effectiveness through the Scopus platform.

Thematic data shows that IRE research currently serves as both an intellectual bulwark and a social instrument in addressing issues of radicalism and the challenges of diversity. The significant emergence of keywords such as religious moderation and radicalism suggests that Islamic religious education is positioned as a solution to the global security crisis and intolerance. This is supported by the work of (Ashraf, 2019), which emphasizes the important role of religion in shaping moderate character. This research in-depth interprets that the IRE curriculum is no longer solely aimed at transferring religious

knowledge, but has transformed into a systematic effort to deradicalize and shape an inclusive public morality in line with modern demands.

This study takes a distinct position in identifying contemporary issues that will emerge specifically in the 2024-2025 period. Unlike previous IRE bibliometric research, which tended to focus on the history or philosophy of education, this study finds the emergence of advanced technology integration, such as AI and learning study models, as a crucial component of research trends. This is supported by (Mariyono, 2024) which demonstrates immediate impact through high citation rates. These findings indicate that the global scholarly community is now more interested in issues of quality assurance and technological innovation in religious education than simply studying traditional religious texts, marking a new phase in Islamic education literature.

The primary impact of these findings is the need to reorient the curriculum in religious higher education to better integrate digital technology into every aspect of teaching. Given that research trends are beginning to touch on artificial intelligence and online learning, institutions such as UIN Raden Mas Said and UIN Sunan Kalijaga must begin formulating a digital ethics framework in Islamic education. The scientific impact will be a shift in primary references toward new, productive authors with high Normalized Total Citation scores, such as Mariyono (2024) and Andri Nirvana (2025). This finding practically encourages new standards in religious teaching that are no longer taboo against technological innovation, but instead make it the main instrument in achieving learning effectiveness in the industrial era 5.0.

Meanwhile, the impact on future research development is the opening of significant opportunities for interdisciplinary studies that combine religion with modern science. With the emergence of topics such as AI and the challenges of modernity, IRE researchers are encouraged to no longer work in their own scientific silos but instead collaborate with experts in technology, sociology, and psychology. The long-term impact is the creation of a more complex and solution-oriented IRE research ecosystem, capable of addressing real-world problems in the digital society, as demonstrated by Tambak (2021) and Anwar (2024). The surge in articles in 2024 is evidence that this field is ready to enter a more mature, impactful, and globally competitive phase of research transformation.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that research on Islamic Religious Education (IRE) indexed in Scopus has shown significant growth between 2019 and 2025, with the highest publication productivity occurring in 2024 and Indonesia emerging as the most dominant contributor in terms of publication volume, institutional affiliation, and collaboration networks. The findings indicate that IRE scholarship is gradually shifting from traditional and normative discussions toward more contemporary themes, including religious moderation, radicalism prevention, digital learning, and the integration of artificial intelligence in Islamic education. However, this study has several limitations, particularly its reliance on a relatively small dataset of 54 Scopus-indexed articles, the exclusion of other databases such as Web of Science, Dimensions, or Google Scholar, and the dominance of Indonesia-based publications, which may limit the global representativeness of the findings. Future research is therefore recommended to expand the data sources, include broader multilingual and cross-national publications, apply comparative and longitudinal approaches, and investigate emerging issues such as AI ethics, inclusive Islamic education, eco-theology, and interdisciplinary models for strengthening Islamic Religious Education in the digital era.

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