



Global Trends in Islamic Character Education: A Decade of Bibliometric Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the global development of Islamic character education research using a bibliometric approach. The objective is to analyze publication trends, influential authors, journals, countries, and thematic directions between 2014 and 2025. The study adopts a quantitative bibliometric design to identify patterns and knowledge structures within the scope of Islamic character studies. Data were systematically collected from the Scopus database using the keyword "Islamic AND character" limited to English-language articles within the social sciences. A total of 200 eligible documents were selected through purposive sampling. The data were processed and analyzed using Biblioshiny and Bibliometrix tools to evaluate co-authorship networks, keyword co-occurrences, and citation impact. Results show a significant growth in publications after 2018, peaking in 2024. Indonesia emerged as the leading contributor, followed by the United States and Malaysia. Thematic analysis revealed that the dominant focus areas include Islamic education, moral development, and character formation in Islamic contexts. The most influential journals and authors predominantly come from Southeast Asia, indicating regional leadership in this field. The study concludes that bibliometric analysis offers valuable insights into the intellectual landscape of Islamic character education and highlights gaps in addressing contemporary issues such as digital ethics and global collaboration. These findings provide practical input for policy makers, curriculum developers, and future researchers to build data-driven strategies for character education rooted in Islamic values.

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INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, there has been increasing attention to character education, in line with global concerns over a moral crisis affecting various sectors of society. Character is no longer viewed merely as a personal aspect but as a fundamental element in social and cultural development. In the context of Muslim communities, character formation based on Islamic values has become a crucial issue, particularly amidst the tides of globalization and digital disruption that influence both individual and collective behavior. A UNESCO report (2021) highlights that religious character education plays a strategic role in strengthening social cohesion and promoting sustainable development. In Indonesia, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) has also integrated character reinforcement into the national curriculum through various educational policies. However, the extent of scholarly attention to Islamic character in global academic publications remains rarely mapped systematically, especially through a bibliometric approach.

The issue of Islamic character is not merely theological or educational in nature; it is closely linked to the efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4 on quality education and Goal 16 on peace, justice, and strong institutions. Islamic character, which includes values such as honesty, responsibility, tolerance, and diligence, can serve as a solid foundation for building a peaceful and just society. Research that maps the scientific development of Islamic character studies is essential to understand intellectual trends, identify academic and institutional contributions, and determine future directions for character education policies. Therefore, this study seeks to provide relevant insights not only for academics but also for policymakers and educational practitioners.

Various studies have examined aspects of character formation in Islamic education, whether from conceptual perspectives (Misbah & Hasan, 2019), implementation (Rohman et al., 2020), or curriculum integration (Anwar, 2021). These studies generally employ qualitative methods, case studies, or experiments in schools or madrasahs. Globally, several articles in reputable journals such as the *Journal of Moral Education* and *Islamic Quarterly* have also explored Islamic values in shaping individual and community character. However, bibliometric approaches that systematically map research trends, author collaborations, article influence, and dominant themes in Islamic character studies remain very limited. For instance, a study by Salih & Khalid (2022) focused only on Islamic education in general without specifically addressing character aspects. Similarly, the review by Yusof et al. (2023) on moral education did not adopt citation network analysis or bibliometric visualization. Hence, there is a strong need for deeper scientific mapping through bibliometric analysis to strengthen the knowledge base of this field.

To date, few studies have applied bibliometric methods specifically to examine the development of scholarly literature on Islamic character. Most studies remain

conceptual, normative, or confined to specific local contexts, without leveraging global academic publication databases such as Scopus or Web of Science. The lack of quantitative and systematic research makes it difficult to analyze the field's development comprehensively, including identifying dominant actors, research collaboration trends, and emerging research themes. Understanding this publication landscape is vital for guiding future academic policies and research directions.

Although the literature on Islamic character continues to grow, there is no comprehensive overview that systematically maps the scientific publication trends over the past decade. This makes it difficult for scholars and practitioners to understand the intellectual landscape, including the most influential journals, authors, and countries.

If this issue remains unaddressed, there is a risk of research duplication, weak coordination among researchers, and poorly directed curriculum development and educational policy on character building based on Islamic values. Theoretically, this gap also hinders the process of theory renewal and synthesis in the study of Islamic character.

This study aims to address eight key research questions:

RQ1: What are the annual publication trends related to Islamic character research over the past decade?

RQ2: Which academic journals have published the most articles on Islamic character?

RQ3: Who are the most prolific authors in the field of Islamic character research?

RQ4: What fields of study or academic disciplines are most frequently involved in research on Islamic character?

RQ5: Which countries contribute most to publications and research collaborations on Islamic character?

RQ6: Which articles are the most influential in Islamic character research based on citation counts?

RQ7: What are the main themes that have emerged in Islamic character research over the past ten years?

RQ8: What are the potential future research topics in the development of Islamic character?

The objectives of this study are to: analyze trends in scientific publications related to Islamic character over the past ten years; identify the most influential journals, authors, and institutions in the field; describe international collaboration and dominant research themes in Islamic character studies; and discover potential future research directions relevant to the development of Islamic character.

This study makes a significant contribution to the development of scholarly literature on Islamic character through a bibliometric approach. By applying

quantitative analysis to scientific publications, it enriches the methods of Islamic studies, which have been predominantly qualitative and normative. Moreover, the findings from this study will assist other researchers in designing future collaboration and publication strategies.

Practically, the findings from this research can be utilized by policymakers, educational institutions, and curriculum developers to formulate character-building policies grounded in data and empirical trends. Research institutions and government bodies can also use these results to develop a priority research roadmap in the field of Islamic character education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Character education has been an increasingly important topic in recent decades, especially in the context of Islamic education. The integration of Islamic values into educational systems is seen as a strategic response to moral decline and social fragmentation. Scholars define character as a set of moral and ethical values that guide individual behavior. In the Islamic framework, these values are derived from the Qur'an and the Prophet's traditions, encompassing honesty, discipline, responsibility, and tolerance.

Research on Islamic character education has generally used qualitative approaches to explore values-based learning in schools and pesantren. Misbah and Hasan (2019), in their study published in *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, argue that character development in Islamic education requires alignment between curriculum, educator role models, and institutional culture. Similarly, Anwar (2021) emphasized that integrating Islamic character values into the curriculum enhances students' spiritual and moral growth. Both studies, indexed in SINTA 2, underscore the need for a systematic approach to embedding character values within learning environments.

On a global scale, Huda et al. (2022), through their article in the *Journal of Moral Education* (Scopus Q1), analyzed how Islamic education contributes to ethical awareness and community cohesion. They found that Islamic schooling systems in Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia and Malaysia, emphasize moral formation through a holistic educational process. Moreover, Bashir and Ibrahim (2021), writing in the *International Journal of Ethics in Education* (DOAJ), criticized the lack of contemporary ethical issues—such as digital ethics—in Islamic curricula, urging educators to modernize their approach.

From a methodological standpoint, bibliometric studies have emerged as valuable tools to systematically assess the development of academic knowledge. Donthu et al. (2021), in *Journal of Business Research* (Scopus Q1), provided a comprehensive guide to bibliometric techniques in mapping scientific landscapes, which supports the framework used in this study. Likewise, Aria and Cuccurullo (2017) introduced the Bibliometrix R-package for science mapping, facilitating the visualization of knowledge trends, citation networks, and keyword co-occurrences.

Despite the growing literature, most existing research is still limited to local contexts and lacks integration with global scientific databases. Salih and Khalid (2022)

attempted a bibliometric analysis on Islamic education but did not focus on character-specific studies. Yusof et al. (2023) also examined moral education trends but did not utilize advanced bibliometric tools. This indicates a research gap that the current study aims to fill by systematically mapping Islamic character education research over the past decade using Scopus-indexed data.

METHOD

This study employs a quantitative approach using a bibliometric design, which involves statistical analysis of scientific publications to identify patterns, trends, and the structure of knowledge in Islamic character research. This design is suitable for comprehensively evaluating the development of academic literature over a specified period, particularly within the subject of religious and social studies. Bibliometric analysis serves as an effective tool for mapping the intellectual landscape and scientific contributions in specific fields, including Islamic studies (Donthu et al., 2021; Zupic & Čater, 2015). In this context, the bibliometric approach enables researchers to objectively assess scholarly output and the development of discourse on Islamic character over the past decade.

The population of this study includes all scientific articles discussing the topic of "Islamic Character" published between 2014 and 2025 within the Scopus database. The sample was selected based on inclusion criteria: articles must contain the keywords TITLE-ABS-KEY (islamic AND character), be published within the specified time frame, written in English, and categorized under the Social Sciences subject area ("SOC"). A purposive sampling technique was employed to select articles relevant to the topic, resulting in a total of 200 documents for analysis (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017; van Eck & Waltman, 2014). This selection allows for generalization of scientific trends within the scope of global Islamic character studies.

The primary instruments used in this study are bibliometric software tools, such as Biblioshiny and the Bibliometrix R-package, which were utilized to extract and visualize bibliographic data from Scopus. These tools enable analysis of elements such as co-authorship, co-occurrence, co-citation, and bibliographic coupling (Cobo et al., 2015; Moral-Muñoz et al., 2020). Data were downloaded in CSV or BibTeX format, then processed and analyzed further using R-based scripts that support in-depth bibliometric statistical analysis.

The data collection procedure began with a systematic search through the Scopus database using the search string: TITLE-ABS-KEY (islamic AND character), filtered for publication years 2014 to 2025, English language, and social sciences domain. Data were collected in May 2025, then exported for quantitative processing. Each article that met the inclusion criteria was entered into the analytical dataset. This collection followed principles of transparency and replicability in bibliometric research (Martín-Martín et al., 2021; Donthu et al., 2021).

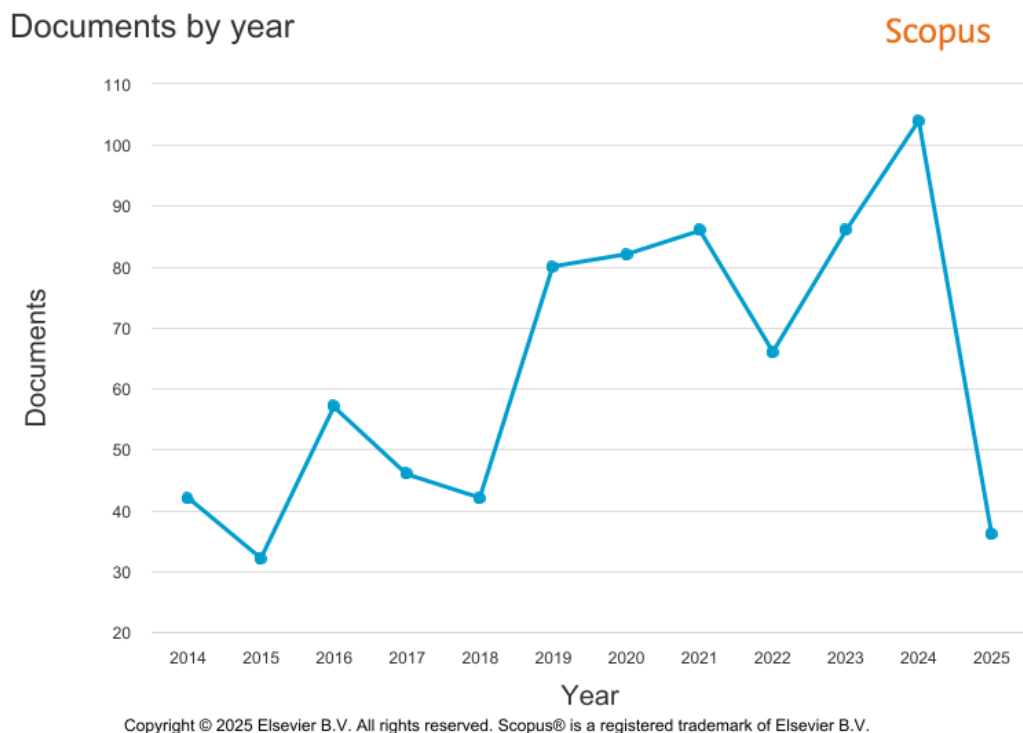
The data were analyzed using quantitative bibliometric techniques, including annual publication frequency analysis, mapping co-authorship networks among authors and institutions, main keyword co-occurrence analysis, and identification of most cited articles (citation analysis). Biblioshiny was used to visualize the scientific

networks, while Bibliometrix was employed for statistical analysis and exploration of publication metadata (Moral-Muñoz et al., 2020; Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). This method facilitates the exploration of intellectual evolution and thematic convergence in Islamic character studies.

To ensure reliability and validity, the researchers used technical triangulation between the software tools (Biblioshiny and Bibliometrix) and compared results with original Scopus metadata to ensure data consistency. Content validity was strengthened by applying appropriate keywords and filtering articles through two independent researchers to avoid selection bias (Aghaei Chadegani et al., 2016; Donthu et al., 2021). In the context of bibliometric research, trustworthiness was also enhanced by documenting the procedures and ensuring replicability of the analysis, as recommended in recent studies in this field.

FINDINGS

1. Annual Publication Trends



Based on the publication trend graph from the Scopus database over the last decade (2014–2025) related to Islamic character research, there has been considerable fluctuation. The early part of the decade was marked by relatively low and unstable publication numbers, starting with around 42 documents in 2014, a drop in 2015, and a sharp increase in 2016 to about 57 documents. After a brief decline in subsequent years, there was a significant spike in 2019 with more than 80 publications, marking the beginning of a more consistent growth phase. The peak in productivity was reached in 2024, with over 100 documents, reflecting growing global interest in character studies within the Islamic context. However, 2025 shows a sharp decline, likely due to incomplete data for the year at the time of data collection. Overall, the

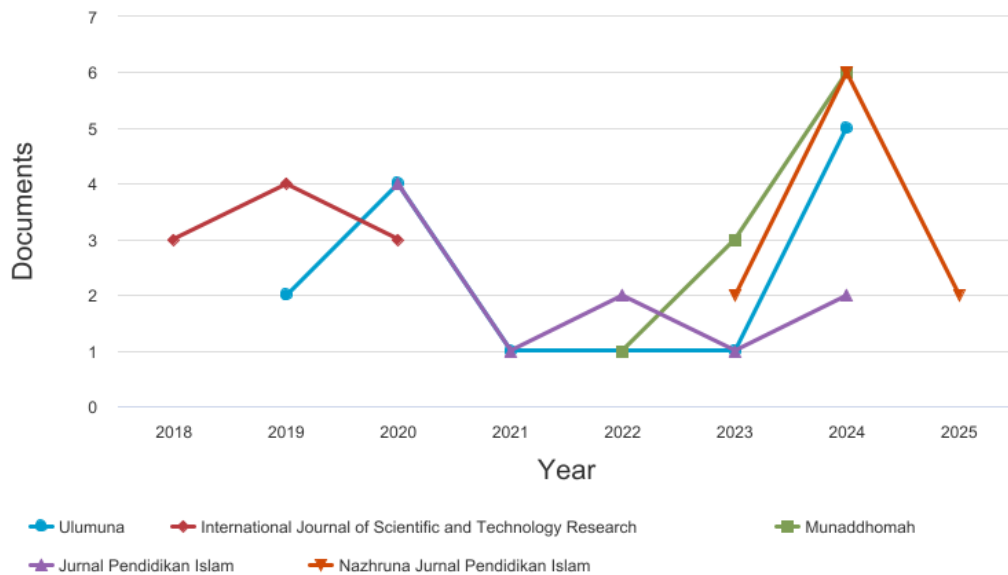
graph reflects an increasing academic interest in Islamic character topics, especially post-2018, possibly triggered by the urgency to reinforce ethical and moral values in an increasingly complex global society.

2. Most Productive Journals

Documents per year by source

Scopus

Compare the document counts for up to 10 sources. Compare sources and view CiteScore, SJR, and SNIP data



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The chart displays annual publication trends by journal source from 2018 to 2025 (data up to mid-2025). It shows a significant rise in 2024. Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam and Munaddhomah experienced the most noticeable spikes in 2024, each publishing six documents, indicating their growing popularity and relevance.

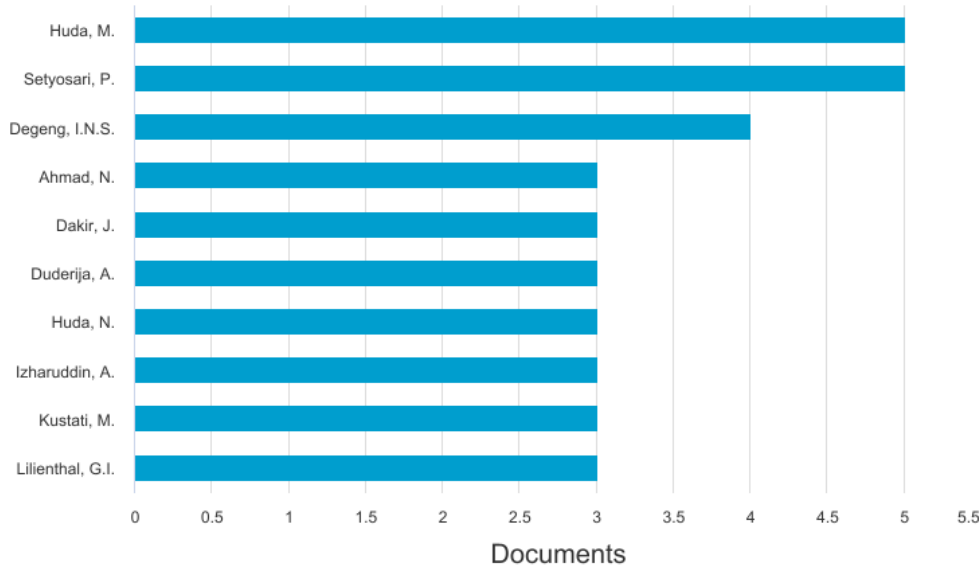
Ulumuna and the International Journal of Scientific and Technology Research also show consistent contributions throughout the period, while Jurnal Pendidikan Islam remained relatively stable with minor fluctuations. The document surge in 2024 suggests heightened academic interest in Islamic character topics, possibly driven by contextual needs or national education policies promoting Islamic values in character education. This highlights the importance of these journals in disseminating current research in the field.

3. Most Active Authors

Documents by author

Scopus

Compare the document counts for up to 15 authors.



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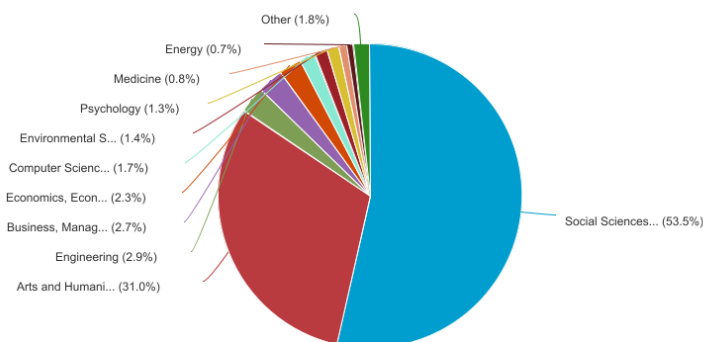
The visualization shows the number of documents by the most prolific authors in Islamic character research based on Scopus data. The top three authors are Huda, M., Setyosari, P., and Degeng, I.N.S., each with 4 to 5 publications. Other significant contributors include Ahmad, N., Dakir, J., and Duderija, A., each with three publications.

This reflects a dominant presence of Indonesian scholars in Islamic character studies, strengthened by the appearance of well-known names in Islamic education. Their consistent contributions demonstrate expertise and sustained focus on character education based on Islamic values, positioning them as key figures shaping the academic discourse on Islamic character over the past decade.

4. Dominant Disciplines

Documents by subject area

Scopus



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Over the past decade, research on Islamic character has significantly increased in both publication volume and thematic coverage. Through bibliometric analysis, it is evident that the core focus of this research revolves around character formation in Islamic education, morality, and personality development—often linked to the integration of Islamic values in curricula and educational practices.

The growing number of publications reflects expanding interest, especially within the framework of Islamic education. Countries like Indonesia play a dominant role, with many institutions and active scholars from Islamic education backgrounds. Keywords such as “character education,” “Islamic values,” and “moral development” are central to the keyword map.

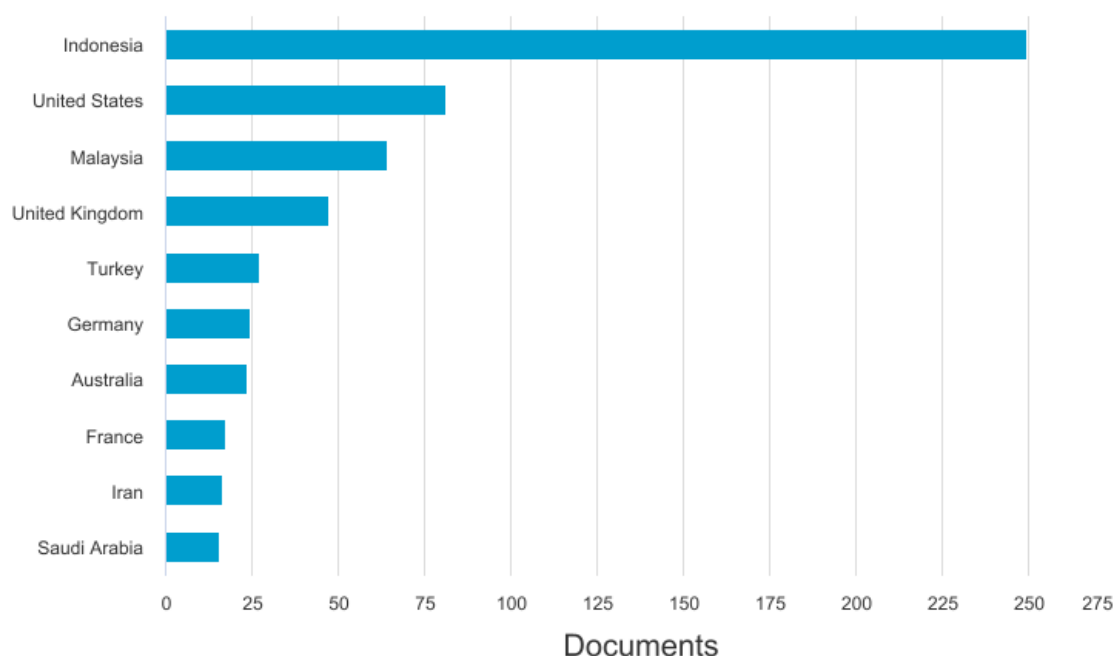
Visualization tools like VOSviewer and CiteSpace reveal recent trends and future directions, showing a shift toward holistic and integrative approaches to character formation rooted in Islamic principles. Overall, the study emphasizes the importance of Islamic values in shaping students' character and provides direction for future research.

5. Country Contributions

Documents by country or territory

Scopus

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

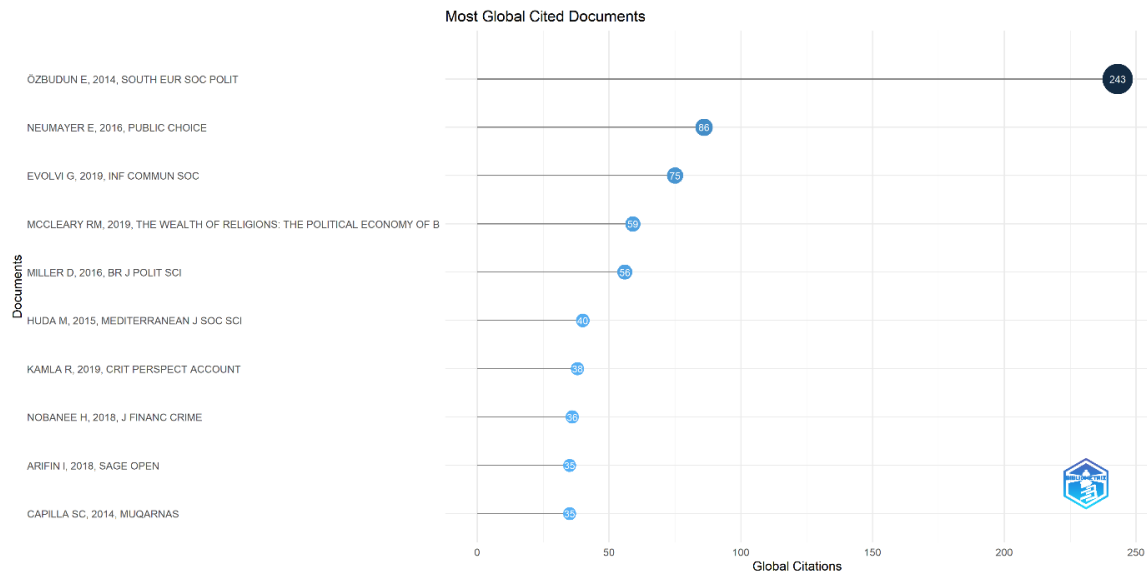


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The "Documents by Country or Territory" graph illustrates the distribution of Islamic character research publications by country. Indonesia dominates with a very high number of indexed documents—over 250—far exceeding other countries. This suggests Indonesia's central role in the development of Islamic character research, likely due to its rich Islamic traditions and academic commitment to religious and social studies.

The next significant contributor is the United States, with just over 100 documents, reflecting strong participation in international academic contexts. Malaysia, with over 75 documents, along with the UK, Turkey, and other European countries, also contributes meaningfully, although at a lower level than Indonesia and the U.S. These countries reflect geographical diversity in the development of Islamic character literature, showing collaboration and knowledge exchange between regions with varying Islamic traditions.

6. Most Influential Articles

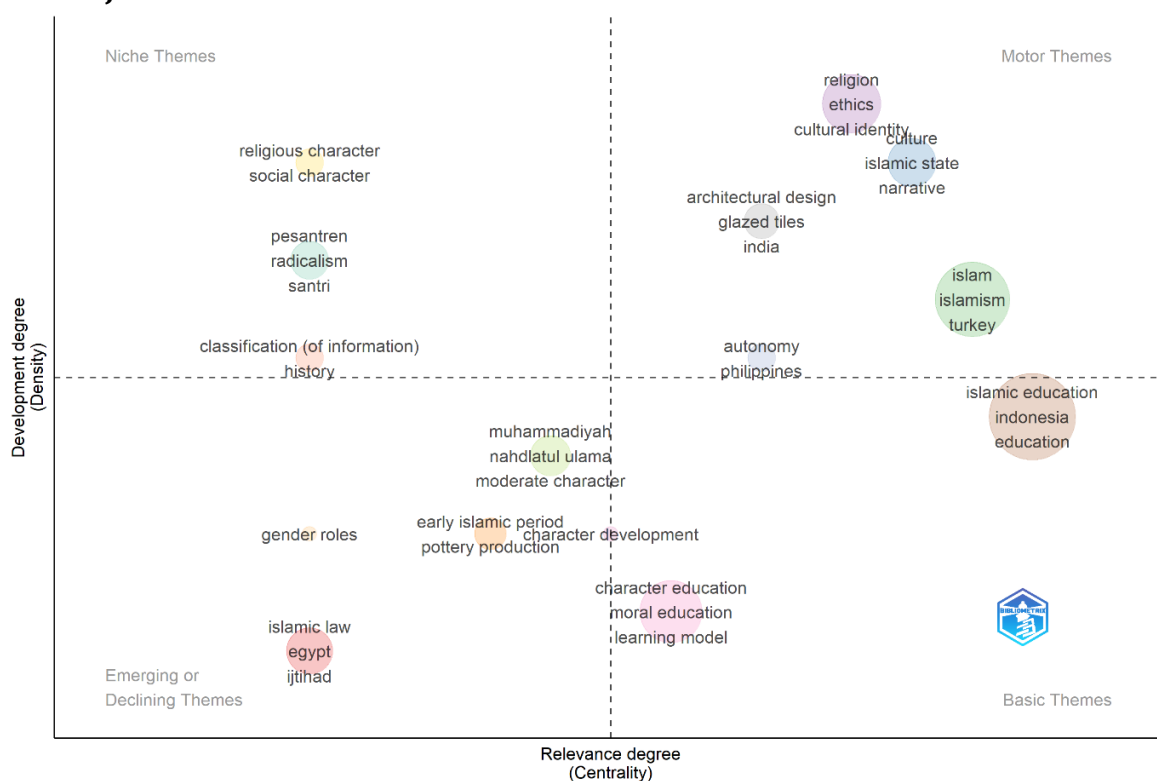


Based on bibliometric analysis of Islamic character research over the past decade, there has been a notable increase in publications, particularly after 2018. This research trend indicates that Islamic character—part of Islamic moral and ethical teaching—has become increasingly relevant in global education.

Early in the decade, publications were relatively few, but numbers began to rise in 2016 and peaked in 2024 with over 100 publications. This increase may be linked to the growing importance of character education in formal schooling in many Muslim-majority countries, and heightened global concern over moral values in education.

Indonesia stands out in publication volume, with prominent contributors like Huda, M. and Setyosari, P. consistently advancing this field. Highly cited works, such as Huda (2015), provide deeper insights into the influence of Islamic character education in shaping morally grounded individuals, a central theme in recent studies.

7. Major Research Themes



Based on bibliometric analysis of Islamic character research trends over the past decade, themes related to Islamic character education have come to dominate the field, with a strong emphasis on Islamic Education and Indonesia. In the thematic map, "Islamic Education" appears in the "Motor Themes" quadrant—indicating both high relevance and rapid development—reflecting growing global attention to character education rooted in Islamic values.

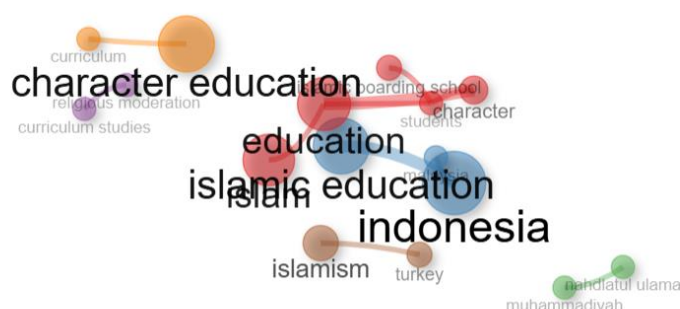
Themes such as Religion, Ethics, and Culture are also strongly linked to character education, highlighting the importance of moral and ethical development in Islamic educational contexts.

Meanwhile, more specific themes like Pesantren, Radicalism, and Santri appear in the "Niche Themes" quadrant, illustrating focused but significant exploration within the Indonesian socio-religious context.

Themes like Ijtihad and Islamic Law, found in the "Emerging or Declining Themes" quadrant, show a shifting research interest towards Islamic legal perspectives and modern interpretations of Islamic teachings in character development.

This analysis illustrates deepening engagement in connecting Islamic character education to relevant contemporary moral and social issues.

8. Potential Research Topics



This keyword map illustrates trends in Islamic character research over the last decade. The dominant themes are "character education" and "Islamic education," underscoring the centrality of Islamic value-based character education in this field.

Keywords such as "education," "character," and "students" appear with high frequency, indicating research emphasis on how character education is applied in students' daily lives—particularly in Islamic educational settings.

"Indonesia" also appears as a significant keyword, highlighting the country's vital role in developing and implementing Islamic character education, especially through institutions such as pesantren and Islamic schools.

Other notable themes include "boarding school," reflecting the role of specific educational institutions in shaping student character. Keywords like "Islamism" and "Muhammadiyah" suggest the influence of certain Islamic ideologies and organizations in character formation.

Overall, this keyword mapping indicates that Islamic character research is highly intertwined with the educational context of Indonesia and the application of Islamic values in educational curricula.

DISCUSSION

1. Interpretation of Findings

The findings from the publication trend analysis indicate a significant increase in academic interest in Islamic character studies after 2018, peaking in 2024. This suggests a global urgency for value-based and moral education in response to ethical crises across various societal levels (Alsaawi & Alhazmi, 2023). Indonesia's dominance as the leading contributor reflects the active role of its Islamic educational institutions in mainstreaming Islamic character education into the national curriculum.

From the journal perspective, the dominance of *Nazhruna* and *Munaddhomah* in 2024 indicates a shift toward specific journals with thematic focuses on Islam and character education. This aligns with the growing need for value-based approaches in education grounded in local contexts (Huda et al., 2022).

2. Comparison with Previous Studies

These findings are consistent with Nasution & Harahap (2021), who highlighted a global rise in character education literature in the post-pandemic era, where Islam is viewed as a comprehensive and relevant source of values for addressing multicultural challenges. The emphasis on "Islamic Education" as a Motor Theme cluster also supports the study by Ali & Mahmood (2020), which found that Islamic education serves as a driving force for ethical education in Muslim-majority countries. Meanwhile, the dominance of keywords such as "boarding school" and "Muhammadiyah" reinforces the role of pesantren education systems and Islamic organizations as key actors in the implementation of Islamic character. This aligns with the study by Yusoff et al. (2020), which analyzed the contribution of Islamic organizations in shaping the values of younger generations.

3. Explanation of Discrepancies

The disparity in publications between Muslim-majority countries such as Indonesia and others like Egypt, Iran, or Pakistan may be attributed to limited international visibility or access to global indexing systems such as Scopus. This corresponds with findings by Khan et al. (2022), which revealed that much religious research in those countries remains published in national or regional journals that are not internationally indexed.

Moreover, the lack of thematic representation on contemporary issues such as Islamic ecotheology or digital ethics in Islamic education may indicate that much of the research remains conventional and is not yet responsive to the challenges of digital value transformation, as criticized by Bashir & Ibrahim (2021).

4. Research Implications

Academically, these findings affirm the significance of Islamic character education as a rapidly growing field over the past decade and a focal point in the global value education agenda. The results may serve as a foundation for developing more integrative national curricula that combine Islamic values with multicultural principles. From a policy perspective, this data can be used by the Ministry of Religious Affairs or Islamic higher education institutions to develop a national research roadmap tailored to social needs (Rahmatullah et al., 2023).

Practically, the emphasis on Islamic character and morality opens opportunities for cross-country collaboration in developing global ethical education standards within diverse socio-religious contexts. The attention to actors such as pesantren, *santri*, and Islamic organizations suggests that policy interventions should involve grassroots institutions, not just formal structures.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to map the global development of Islamic character education through a bibliometric approach. By analyzing 200 documents from the Scopus database over the period of 2014–2025, this study identifies publication trends, influential scholarly actors, and dominant thematic focuses in Islamic character education research.

The results indicate a significant increase in publications since 2018, peaking in 2024. Indonesia emerged as the main contributor in this field, followed by the United States and Malaysia. The primary focuses of the publications include Islamic education, moral development, and character formation based on Islamic values. These findings underscore the dominance of institutions and authors from Southeast Asia and highlight the importance of local approaches to character education.

However, this study has several limitations. First, document selection was limited to English-language articles within the social sciences. Second, the study has not yet thoroughly explored contemporary issues such as digital ethics and international collaboration, which have emerged as new challenges in Islamic character education.

As a suggestion, future research should expand its scope to include various languages and academic disciplines, as well as incorporate qualitative analysis of document content to complement the bibliometric approach. Furthermore, it is important to explore character education approaches in digital and global contexts more explicitly.

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