

Mapping Research Trends on Islamic Universities in Malaysia: A Bibliometric Analysis (2020–2025)

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Abstract

This study conducts a bibliometric analysis to examine research trends and scholarly contributions on Islamic universities in Malaysia between 2020 and 2025. Using Scopus as the primary database, data were refined with OpenRefine, synthesized through NotebookLM, and visualized using VOSviewer. The analysis investigates publication output by year, subject area distribution, document types, influential studies, international collaboration, and thematic developments. A total of 247 documents were retrieved, revealing steady growth in research with significant peaks in 2023 and 2024. The findings indicate that most studies are within the social sciences (40.9%) and arts and humanities (21.3%), reflecting the dominant emphasis on Islamic higher education's educational, cultural, and religious aspects. Journal articles represented the most significant proportion of publications, underscoring their role as the primary channel for scholarly communication. Citation analysis shows that highly cited works frequently focus on moral education, digital learning, curriculum reform, and value-based education. Indonesia emerged as the leading contributor, followed by Malaysia, while collaboration networks highlight strong regional and international linkages. Keyword mapping revealed recurring themes such as higher education, Islamic education, student preferences, and digital transformation. Overall, this study advances understanding of the intellectual structure of Islamic higher education research and offers valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and scholars in shaping institutional strategies and future academic directions.

Keywords: Islamic Higher Education, Bibliometric Analysis, Research Trends, Malaysia, Student Preferences

Introduction

Malaysia has emerged as a significant hub for higher education, attracting students worldwide due to its affordable living costs and high-quality education (Lam et al., 2011). Islamic universities are uniquely appealing among the various types of universities in Malaysia, particularly for Muslim students. These institutions integrate Islamic teachings with modern

education, aiming to produce well-rounded graduates who are academically proficient and grounded in Islamic values (Idris et al., 2019). This essay explores the reasons and preferences of students choosing Islamic universities for higher education in Malaysia, focusing on factors such as institutional reputation, academic quality, and the integration of Islamic and modern knowledge.

Despite the growing popularity of Islamic universities in Malaysia, there is limited research on the specific reasons and preferences that drive students to choose these institutions. Understanding these factors is crucial for Islamic universities to develop effective marketing strategies and improve their educational offerings. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the motivations behind students' choices and identifying the key factors influencing their decision to pursue higher education at Islamic universities in Malaysia.

Several studies have identified various factors influencing students' choice of higher education institutions in Malaysia. These include campus characteristics, academic quality, financial considerations, and external factors such as job prospects and institutional reputation (Binti Ibnu Ruslan et al., 2014; Heng et al., 2024). For Islamic universities, additional factors such as the integration of Islamic teachings and the availability of a Halal ecosystem play a significant role in attracting students (Jamil et al., 2020).

Institutional reputation is a critical factor in students' decision-making process. Research indicates that a university's reputation significantly influences students' choices, as it is often associated with better career prospects and higher academic standards (Heng et al., 2024; Munisamy et al., 2014). Islamic universities in Malaysia, such as the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), have built strong reputations by integrating Islamic knowledge with modern education, appealing to local and international students (Idris et al., 2019; Rizard et al., 2023).

Islamic universities in Malaysia strive to balance traditional Islamic values with contemporary educational practices. This integration is essential for producing graduates who are knowledgeable in their fields and possess strong moral and ethical foundations (Idris et al., 2019). Studies have shown that this approach effectively enhances students' character and academic performance, making Islamic universities a preferred choice for many (Dakir et al., 2015; Sham et al., 2015).

The cost of education is another significant factor influencing students' choices. Islamic universities in Malaysia often offer competitive tuition fees compared to other institutions, making them an attractive option for students who seek quality education without the financial burden (Binti Ibnu Ruslan et al., 2014; Munisamy et al., 2014). Additionally, financial aid and scholarships provided by these universities further enhance their appeal (Yasin et al., 2009).

Islamic universities' social and cultural environment also plays a crucial role in attracting students. These institutions provide a supportive and inclusive environment that aligns with the students' religious and cultural values, fostering a sense of belonging and community (Wan Mokhtar et al., 2025; Islam et al., 2019). The presence of a Halal ecosystem and

adherence to Islamic practices further contribute to students' positive experiences (Jamil et al., 2020).

Despite their advantages, Islamic universities in Malaysia face several challenges, including the need to continuously adapt to changing educational trends and maintain relevance in a competitive higher education landscape (Zahari et al., 2018). However, these challenges also present opportunities for growth and innovation, allowing these institutions to enhance their educational offerings and attract a diverse student population (Idris et al., 2019; Zahari et al., 2018).

Higher education institutions are pivotal in shaping human capital, fostering innovation, and contributing to national development. However, Islamic universities in Malaysia face challenges in positioning themselves as competitive and preferred destinations among students. Within the broader social context, these institutions are responsible for providing academic excellence and upholding Islamic values while integrating them with global educational standards. Despite the growing demand for faith-based education, limited studies have systematically examined the factors influencing students' perceptions and choices regarding Islamic universities, creating a significant research gap in local and international scholarship.

Existing literature on higher education has focused mainly on conventional universities, with less emphasis on how Islamic institutions navigate issues such as quality assurance, employability, digital transformation, and global recognition. This study, therefore, addresses an urgent need to situate Islamic universities within the contemporary higher education landscape by analyzing their unique challenges and opportunities, thereby offering insights for policymakers, educators, and institutional leaders to strengthen their strategic positioning and enhance student engagement.

In summary, the reasons and preferences of students choosing Islamic universities for higher education in Malaysia are multifaceted, encompassing factors such as institutional reputation, academic quality, financial considerations, and the integration of Islamic and modern knowledge. Understanding these factors is essential for Islamic universities to develop effective strategies to attract and retain students, thereby contributing to the overall growth and development of the higher education sector in Malaysia.

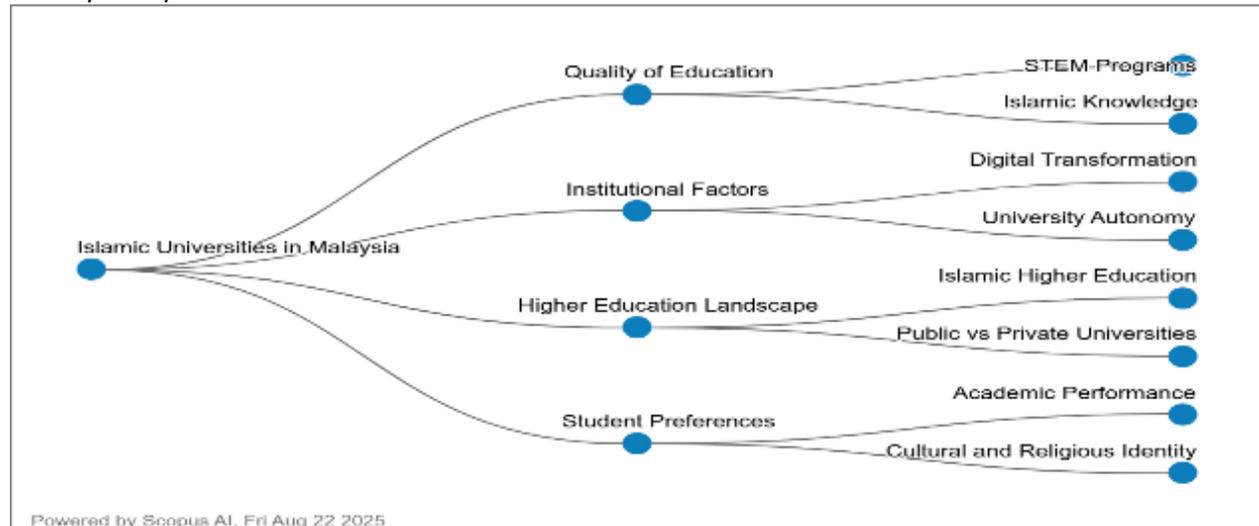
Concept map

Figure 1: The concept map for Islamic universities in Malaysia

The thematic map on Islamic Universities in Malaysia reveals four significant research clusters: quality of education, institutional factors, the higher education landscape, and student preferences. The first cluster, quality of education, emphasizes the balance between STEM programs and Islamic knowledge, reflecting ongoing debates on curriculum integration and graduate employability. The second cluster, institutional factors, highlights issues such as digital transformation and university autonomy, which are increasingly critical in shaping the governance and competitiveness of Islamic universities. The third cluster, higher education landscape, covers broader structural discussions on the role of Islamic higher education and the comparison between public and private universities in Malaysia. Finally, the student preferences cluster underscores the importance of academic performance and cultural and religious identity in influencing students' choice of institutions. These themes collectively illustrate that research on Islamic universities in Malaysia is multifaceted, ranging from internal academic quality to external institutional positioning, while accounting for the socio-cultural dimensions that shape student demand.

Research Question

1. What is the number of publications by year from 2000 to 2025?
2. What are the influences and subject area productivity of the topic?
3. What are the documents for the topic by type?
4. What are the top 10 most-cited articles?
5. What are the top 10 countries based on several publications?
6. What are the popular keywords related to the study?
7. What is co-authorship based on countries' collaboration?

Methodology

Bibliometric analysis is a quantitative approach to assessing scholarly productivity and uncovering trends within specific research domains. Applying statistical techniques to academic literature collections reveals authorship patterns, publication frequency, and citation behavior (Marvi & Foroudi, 2023). Its application has grown significantly across disciplines such as business, management, and health sciences, due to its capacity to trace the historical progression of knowledge and map the evolving structure of scientific inquiry (Öztürk et al., 2024; Koo & Lin, 2023; Lim et al., 2024).

The process typically involves several key steps: extracting data from bibliographic databases such as Scopus or Web of Science, followed by visualization and mapping using tools like VOSviewer and bibliometric software (Lim et al., 2024; Hallinger & Kovačević, 2022; Foudah et al., 2024). This methodology is highly versatile, enabling analyses at multiple levels from macro-level evaluations of entire academic domains to micro-level assessments of individual researchers' output and influence (Costas et al., 2010; Costas et al., 2009). It draws on various indicators grouped under dimensions such as research productivity, scholarly impact, and collaborative activity (Costas et al., 2010) (Costas et al., 2009). These metrics are crucial for identifying dominant research themes, exposing gaps in the literature, and highlighting factors that contribute to academic success (Costas et al., 2010; Siu et al., 2025)

Nevertheless, bibliometric analysis faces challenges, particularly regarding consistency and methodological rigor. There is an urgent need for standardized reporting protocols to enhance reliability and comparability, especially in fields like health and medical sciences, where accuracy and data sensitivity are paramount (Koo & Lin, 2023). Overall, bibliometric analysis remains a vital instrument for monitoring the evolution of academic disciplines, supporting evidence-based evaluations, and guiding the strategic direction of future research efforts (Tomé, 2024; Mezquita et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2018)

Data Search Strategy

The refined search string resulted in 247 documents retrieved from Scopus using the search query: TITLE-ABS-KEY (student AND preferences OR higher AND education AND Islamic AND university) AND PUBYEAR > 2019 AND PUBYEAR < 2026. This query was designed to capture literature published between 2020 and 2025, focusing on research on student preferences, higher education, and Islamic universities. The dataset reflects a growing body of scholarship examining Islamic higher education, particularly concerning student behavior, institutional performance, and the evolving role of universities in Muslim-majority contexts. The selected timeframe also captures post-pandemic developments, where digital learning, institutional adaptation, and cultural identity issues have become increasingly prominent in academic discourse.

Table 1

The search string

Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY (student AND preferences OR higher AND education AND Islamic AND university) AND PUBYEAR > 2019 AND PUBYEAR < 2026
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Data Analysis

VOSviewer

VOSviewer is a specialized software tool for constructing and visualizing bibliometric networks, including citation relationships, bibliographic coupling, co-citation, and co-authorship patterns (Li & Wei, 2022; Van Eck & Waltman, 2009; van Eck & Waltman, 2010). Originally developed to support scientometric studies, the software has evolved into a widely adopted instrument in domain analyses due to its efficiency in processing complex bibliographic data. Its open-access availability and integration with platforms such as Digital

Science's Dimensions have further enhanced its accessibility, enabling researchers to easily create detailed co-authorship and citation network visualizations (Li & Wei, 2022; Van Eck & Waltman, 2009).

A notable strength of VOSviewer lies in its ability to generate advanced graphical representations of bibliometric maps, allowing large and intricate datasets to be interpreted quickly and intuitively (Van Eck & Waltman, 2009). Beyond network visualization, the software also incorporates text-mining capabilities, supporting the construction and display of co-occurrence networks from terms extracted directly from publication content (Li & Wei, 2022). VOSviewer Online extends these functionalities by offering interactive visualizations that can be embedded into web-based platforms, thus enhancing research dissemination and engagement (Li & Wei, 2022). The tool has been successfully applied in diverse fields, including tracking advancements in lactic acid production (Cárdenas-Arias et al., 2023), analyzing multi-input transfer function systems, and examining thematic trends in domains such as corporate governance and leadership.

Ease of use is another defining feature of VOSviewer, supported by its intuitive interface and user-friendly features that accommodate users with varying technical expertise (Van Eck & Waltman, 2009; Van Eck & Waltman, 2010). Its scalability enables the management of extensive datasets, such as co-citation maps involving up to 5,000 scientific journals. The software supports multiple types of bibliometric analyses, including co-authorship networks, keyword co-occurrence patterns, and citation-based metrics (Malmqvist et al., 2019; Sahu & Chakma, 2024; Hasan et al., 2024). However, performance is highly dependent on the quality of structured metadata; incomplete or poorly formatted metadata can undermine results. Additionally, misinterpretation of visualizations remains a risk if proper data cleaning and disambiguation are not performed, potentially leading to flawed insights (Li & Wei, 2022).

A key methodological feature of VOSviewer is its use of the association strength (AS_{ij}) normalization technique for quantifying co-occurrence data:

$$CS = \frac{C_{ij}}{w_i w_j}$$

This formula calculates the strength of association between items i and j by comparing observed co-occurrence frequency against the expected frequency under independence. Doing so ensures that visualized relationships accurately reflect meaningful associations, enhancing the generated bibliometric maps' reliability.

In conclusion, VOSviewer is a powerful and versatile tool in bibliometric research, combining strong visualization capabilities with analytical depth and user accessibility. While its widespread adoption underscores its value across research domains, careful data preparation and cautious interpretation remain critical to avoiding methodological pitfalls. As bibliometric analysis advances, VOSviewer is expected to remain an indispensable resource for uncovering scholarly communication patterns and research trends (Li & Wei, 2022; Van Eck & Waltman, 2009; Van Eck & Waltman, 2010; Malmqvist et al., 2019).

NotebookLM

NotebookLM is an emerging AI-driven research assistant developed by Google that facilitates the synthesis and interpretation of multiple sources, making it highly valuable for academic

research. In analyzing 50 abstracts relevant to the current study, NotebookLM is a systematic tool to extract dominant themes, recurring concepts, and theoretical underpinnings across the literature. This capability enables the researcher to move beyond individual article summaries and instead identify broader patterns, such as the consistent emphasis on managerial skills concerning business performance, or the recurrent focus on supply chain vulnerabilities in the livestock sector. Through its clustering and synthesis functions, NotebookLM thus provides a structured foundation for developing a discussion section that is comprehensive, evidence-based, and aligned with contemporary debates, while simultaneously justifying the unique contribution of the present study.

Results

Document by years

Documents by year

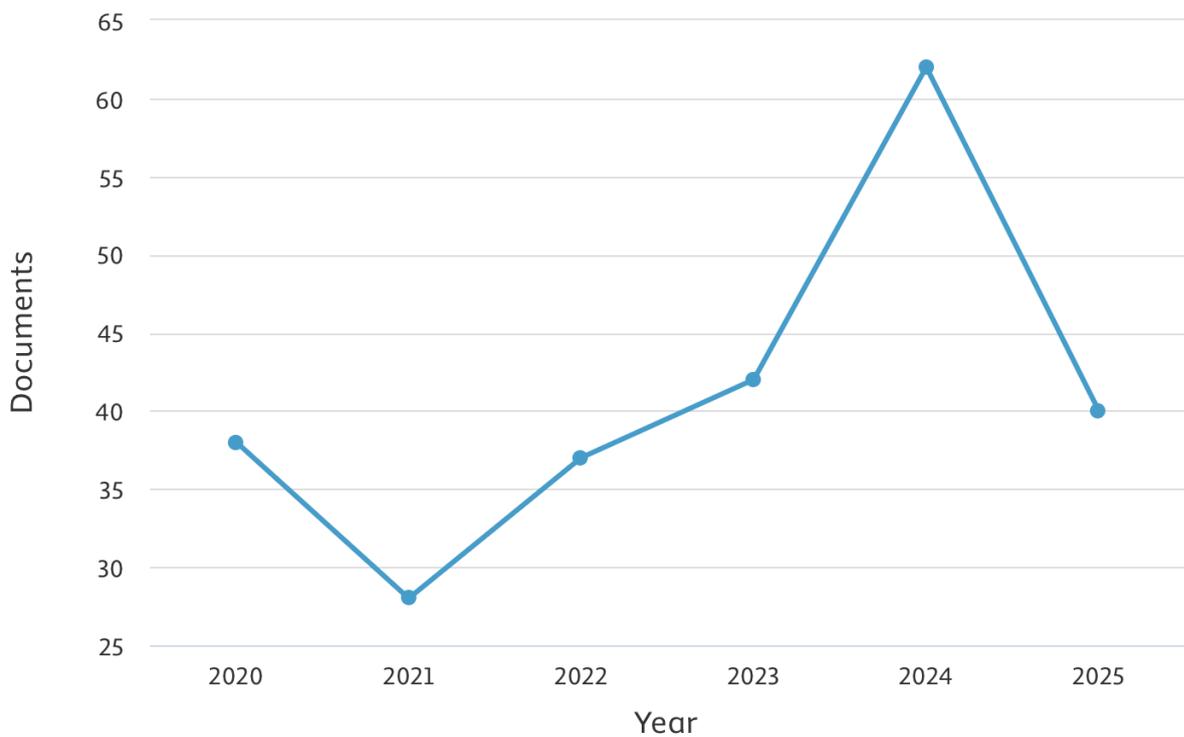


Figure 2: Document by year

Table 2

Document by year

Year	Documents
2025	40
2024	62
2023	42
2022	37
2021	28
2020	38

The annual publication trend indicates fluctuating but generally increasing scholarly interest in Islamic universities in Malaysia. Between 2020 and 2022, the number of publications remained relatively stable, ranging from 28 to 38 documents. A significant rise occurred in 2023 with 42 publications, followed by a peak in 2024 with 62 publications, suggesting heightened academic attention to Islamic higher education issues during this period. Although the number slightly declined to 40 in 2025, the overall trend reflects sustained research growth, demonstrating that Islamic universities remain an important subject of inquiry within Malaysia’s higher education landscape.

Document by Subject Area.

Documents by subject area

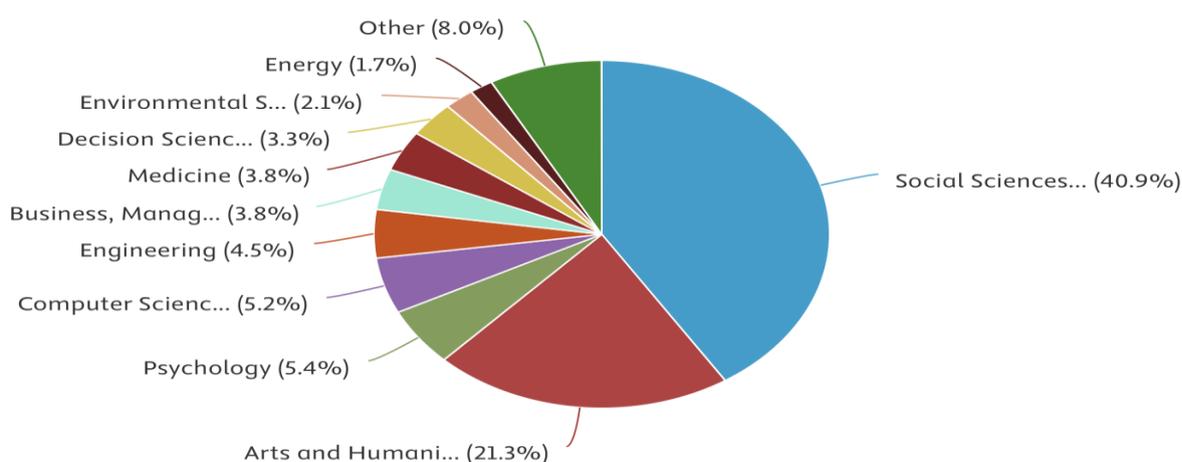


Figure 3: Document by Subject Area

Table 3

Document by Subject Area

<u>Subject area</u>	<u>Documents</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Social Sciences	<u>173</u>	40.9
Arts and Humanities	<u>90</u>	21.3
Psychology	<u>23</u>	5.4
Computer Science	<u>22</u>	5.2
Engineering	<u>19</u>	4.5
Business, Management and Accounting	<u>16</u>	3.8
Medicine	<u>16</u>	3.8
Decision Sciences	<u>14</u>	3.3
Environmental Science	<u>9</u>	2.1
Energy	<u>7</u>	1.7
Economics, Econometrics and Finance	<u>6</u>	
Mathematics	<u>4</u>	

Biochemistry, Genetics and Molecular Biology	<u>3</u>	
Dentistry	<u>3</u>	
Multidisciplinary	<u>3</u>	
Nursing	<u>3</u>	0.8
Pharmacology, Toxicology and Pharmaceutics	<u>3</u>	
Physics and Astronomy	<u>3</u>	
Health Professions	<u>2</u>	
Agricultural and Biological Sciences	<u>1</u>	
Earth and Planetary Sciences	<u>1</u>	
Immunology and Microbiology	<u>1</u>	
Neuroscience	<u>1</u>	

The subject area analysis demonstrates that research on Islamic universities in Malaysia is predominantly concentrated within the social sciences (173 documents, 40.9%), followed by arts and humanities (90 documents, 21.3%). Together, these two areas account for more than 60% of the total output, reflecting the strong emphasis on Islamic higher education's educational, cultural, and religious dimensions. Other notable areas include psychology (5.4%), computer science (5.2%), engineering (4.5%), and business, management, and accounting (3.8%), which suggest growing interdisciplinary engagement with topics such as student behavior, digital transformation, institutional governance, and organizational performance. Publications in medicine (3.8%), decision sciences (3.3%), and environmental science (2.1%) indicate the diversification of research but remain comparatively limited. Smaller subject contributions, including economics (0.8%), mathematics, and various health and science disciplines, collectively highlight that while Islamic university research expands across fields, it remains heavily anchored in the social sciences and humanities. This distribution underscores the dominant focus on societal, cultural, and educational implications, with emerging STEM-related and applied sciences opportunities.

Document by type

Documents by type

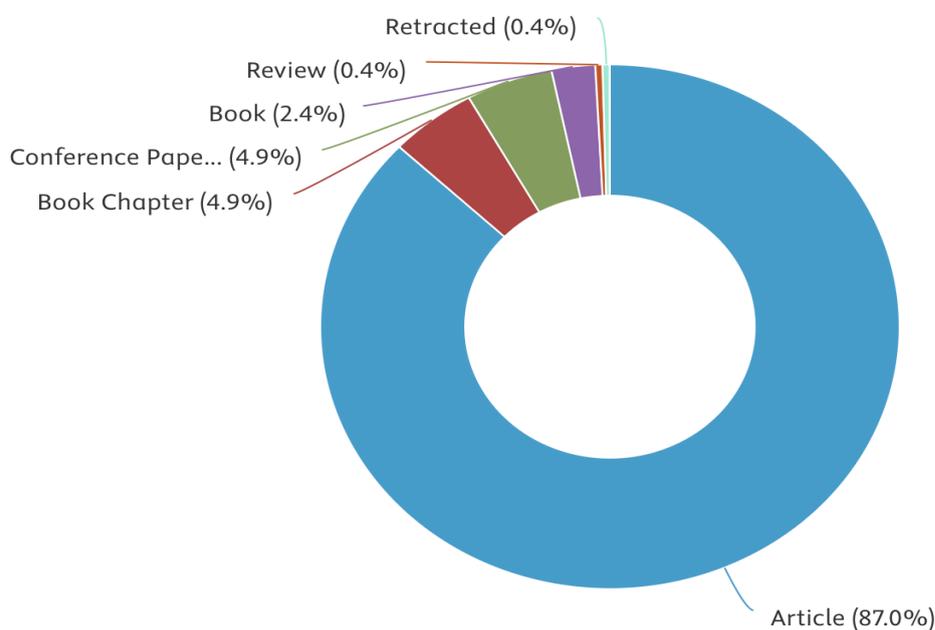


Figure 4: Document by Type

Table 4

Document by Type

<u>Document type</u>	<u>Documents</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Article	<u>215</u>	87
Book Chapter	<u>12</u>	4.9
Conference Paper	<u>12</u>	4.9
Book	<u>6</u>	2.4
Review	<u>1</u>	0.4
Retracted	<u>1</u>	0.4

The analysis of document types reveals that journal articles are the predominant medium of scholarly communication in Islamic universities in Malaysia, comprising 215 publications or 87% of the total output. Book chapters and conference papers account for 12 documents (4.9%), reflecting their supplementary but less dominant role in knowledge dissemination. Books represent 2.4% of the publications, indicating limited yet notable contributions in the form of more comprehensive works. Meanwhile, review papers and retracted publications are rare, with only one document each (0.4%). This distribution highlights the firm's reliance on journal articles as the primary channel for academic engagement in this field, while other forms of scholarly output remain relatively underexplored.

The top 10 most cited authors

Authors	Title	Year	Cited by
Asif T.; Guangming O.; Haider M.A.; Colomer J.; Kayani S.; ul Amin N.(Asif et al., 2020)	Moral education for sustainable development: Comparison of university teachers' perceptions in China and Pakistan	2020	55
Begum A.; Jingwei L.; Haider M.; Ajmal M.M.; Khan S.; Han H.(Begum et al., 2021)	Impact of environmental moral education on pro- environmental behaviour: Do psychological empowerment and islamic religiosity matter?	2021	42
Suyadi; Nuryana Z.; Sutrisno; Baidi	Academic reform and sustainability of Islamic higher education in Indonesia	2022	30
Bi J.; Javadi M.; Izadpanah S.(Bi et al., 2023)	The comparison of the effect of two methods of face-to-face and E-learning education on learning, retention, and interest in English language course	2023	24
Supriyatno T.; Kurniawan F.(Supriyatno & Kurniawan, 2020)	A New Pedagogy and Online Learning System on Pandemic COVID 19 Era at Islamic Higher Education	2020	27
Chanifah N.; Hanafi Y.; Mahfud C.; Samsudin A. (Chanifah et al., 2021)	Designing a spirituality-based Islamic education framework for young muslim generations: a case study from two Indonesian universities	2021	30
Smith E.(Smith, 2020)	No Platform: A History of Anti-Fascism, Universities and the Limits of Free Speech	2020	36
Uysal N.; Ceylan E.; Koç A.(Uysal et al., 2020)	Health literacy level and influencing factors in university students	2020	48
Scott-Baumann A.; Guest M.; Naguib S.; Cheruvallil S.; P(Scott- Baumann et al., 2020)hoenix A.	Islam on Campus: Contested Identities and the Cultures of Higher Education in Britain	2020	33
Jaoua F.; Almurad H.M.; Elshaer I.A.; Mohamed E.S. (Jaoua et al., 2022)	E-Learning Success Model in the Context of COVID- 19 Pandemic in Higher Educational Institutions	2022	31

The citation analysis reveals that the most influential publications on Islamic higher education focus on moral education, sustainable development, and integrating Islamic values into contemporary academic contexts. The most cited study, with 55 citations, compares university teachers' perceptions of moral education in China and Pakistan, highlighting cross-cultural perspectives on sustainability. Other highly cited works address environmental moral education, health literacy among university students, and the contested role of free speech and identity in higher education. Research from Indonesia features prominently, particularly on academic reform and spirituality-based education frameworks, reflecting the country's strong scholarly engagement with Islamic universities. Additionally, several well-cited papers emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasizing online pedagogy, e-learning models, and digital transformation in Islamic higher education. Collectively, these influential works demonstrate that research in this field spans socio-cultural and technological dimensions. Southeast Asia is pivotal in shaping global discourse on Islamic higher education.

Top 10 countries based on publication

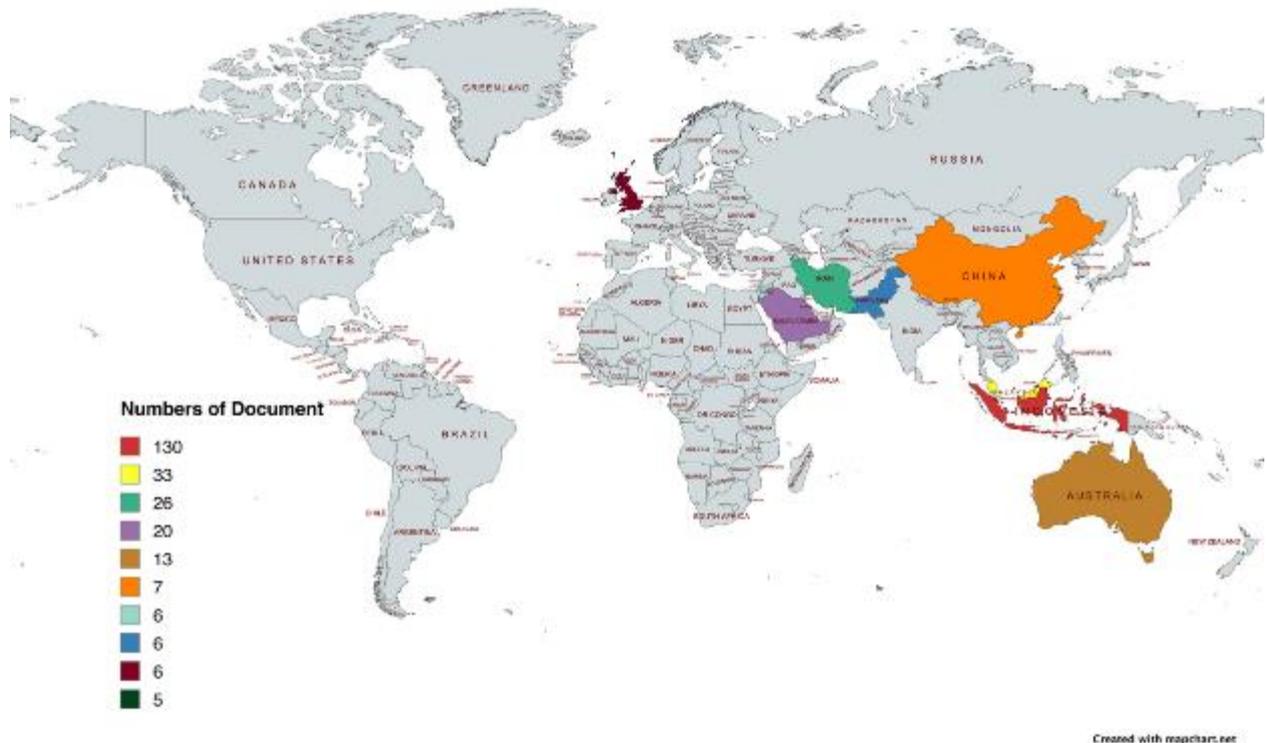


Figure 5: Top 10 countries based on publication

Table 6

Top 10 countries based on publication

<u>Country/Territory</u>	<u>Documents</u>
Indonesia	<u>130</u>
Malaysia	<u>33</u>
Iran	<u>26</u>
Saudi Arabia	<u>20</u>
Australia	<u>13</u>
China	<u>7</u>
Jordan	<u>6</u>
Pakistan	<u>6</u>
United Kingdom	<u>6</u>
Brunei Darussalam	<u>5</u>

The bibliometric data reveal that Indonesia leads significantly in scholarly output on the topic, contributing 130 documents, which positions it as the most active country in this research domain. Malaysia follows with 33 publications, underscoring its growing academic engagement, particularly given the nation’s established role as a hub for Islamic education. Iran and Saudi Arabia also demonstrate notable participation with 26 and 20 documents, respectively, emphasizing higher education and Islamic scholarship. Australia, with 13 contributions, highlights the increasing attention to Islamic studies beyond traditional Muslim-majority contexts, showcasing the global relevance of this research field.

Co-authorship based on countries' collaboration

Figure 7: Co-authorship based on countries' collaboration.

The country collaboration network shows that Indonesia is the dominant contributor and is the central hub in research on Islamic higher education. Indonesia demonstrates strong collaborative links with Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, Pakistan, and Australia, reflecting its active role in regional and international scholarly engagement. Malaysia also occupies a key position, with research ties to Indonesia, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, and Australia, highlighting its importance as both a subject of study and a collaborative partner. Other notable contributors include Iran, China, and Pakistan, which form a smaller but interconnected cluster, suggesting Middle Eastern and Asian involvement in this field. The United Kingdom and Australia also appear to collaborate, showing that Western institutions engage with Islamic higher education research, often in partnership with Southeast Asian scholars. Overall, the map underscores that while Islamic higher education research is globally relevant, Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia and Malaysia, remains at the core of international collaborations.

Discussion

Research in Islamic higher education encompasses various topics, reflecting the sector's efforts to adapt to modern challenges while preserving its core values. A significant area of focus is integrating digital technology and its impact on learning and student performance. Studies indicate a significant relationship between digital literacy, digital usage, and digital transformation with students' academic performance, though digital competence may not always show a statistically significant effect. The adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is also being explored, with Indonesian Islamic universities viewing AI as a tool for modernizing education, especially in distance learning and Qur'anic teaching. At the same time, Thai institutions express concerns about AI's impact on traditional teachers and Islamic cultural

values. Despite the increasing reliance on technology, Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia have yet to fully instill digital citizenship in Generation Z, highlighting a need for teachers, lecturers, and government policies to introduce and reinforce these concepts. Innovative digital tools like *Maktabah Syamilah* are emphasized so that Islamic studies students can access original Arabic literature. Blog-Assisted Language Learning (BALL) has significantly improved students' writing skills. Furthermore, Problem-Based Learning (PBL) with virtual small groups has effectively enhanced academic achievement and participatory learning. The COVID-19 pandemic also necessitated a shift to online education, recommending lecturer training and continuous student and lecturer satisfaction monitoring.

Another critical theme is curriculum development and cultivating specific values, particularly religious moderation and social cohesion. Many studies underscore the importance of integrating Islamic values into various disciplines, such as science and technology, to make learning meaningful and improve expected learning outcomes. The Indonesian *fiqh* curriculum, for example, is designed to foster moderate attitudes by promoting gender equality, interfaith harmony, and democratic principles, encouraging students to integrate religious, social, cultural, and state morals. Efforts to prevent radicalism and extremism are prevalent, with approaches including interreligious literacy learning that involves direct exposure to other faiths and humanistic-functional religious teaching, as well as compulsory Islamic Religious Education courses that emphasize tolerance, moderation, and multi-perspective insights. Multicultural insights in Islamic Religious Education have also been found to significantly affect the prevention of student radicalization, with students generally holding positive perceptions of multiculturalism, though issues of ethnicity and religion still present potential for conflict. Integrating Islamic educational values like brotherhood, tolerance, social justice, and conflict resolution is crucial for social cohesion and peacebuilding within academic environments and the broader community. Universities affiliated with *pesantrens* in Indonesia are noted for combining knowledge production with universal Islamic values, fostering multilingual, open-minded graduates engaged in community volunteerism.

Student well-being, academic honesty, and support systems are also central to the research. Studies reveal a high prevalence of cheating among Islamic university students in Indonesia, driven by external factors like exam difficulty and internal factors like fear of low grades, with a minority abstaining due to religious/moral awareness or fear of sanctions. A Sufism-based Islamic education model has proven more effective than conventional methods in increasing students' honesty. A new approach called E-Counseling Gestalt Prophetic (E-G-Pro) has been developed and validated to address academic procrastination as highly feasible. The concept of well-being for students and teachers in Islamic higher education is explored and conceptualized spiritually, with mutual respect, and by addressing physical/material needs. Furthermore, students' adversity quotient, characterized by persistence, resilience, self-gratefulness, and sincerity, strengthens the constructiveness of online learning, especially with the assistance of humanist-religious lecturers.

From an institutional and quality perspective, various studies examine the factors influencing college selection, institutional internationalization, and service quality. Reputation and quality are key factors for college selection. General Higher Education (GHE) students are often more career-focused than Islamic Higher Education (IHE) students, suggesting IHEs should adapt to the labor market and student needs. Internationalization is crucial for

enhancing quality and global recognition, with recommendations for greater autonomy, policy support, and international accreditation for Indonesian Islamic higher education institutions. A new model, Islamic Higher Education Service Quality (i-HESQUAL), identifies seven quality dimensions, with internalization of Islamic values and library service support being key determinants of overall perceived service quality. Awareness of Sharia Governance among students in Indonesia is noted as lacking compared to microfinance institutions, prompting suggestions for curriculum review. Comparative studies, such as those between higher religious education in Malaysia and Turkey, highlight differences in historical development, aims (e.g., direct references to Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah in Malaysia), program structures (multi-disciplinary in Malaysia), and student admission processes. The quality and novelty of student theses are also a concern, with a significant majority choosing qualitative approaches and institutions needing to direct research towards less saturated topics. Finally, the modernization of Islamic education literature is underway, focusing on regulation, reference development, and technological innovation, despite obstacles like a lack of competence and the dominance of Western science.

Conclusion

This study aimed to analyze research patterns and scholarly output related to Islamic universities in Malaysia using bibliometric techniques. The analysis sought to answer questions concerning annual publication trends, subject area productivity, document types, influential works, geographic contributions, keyword networks, and international collaborations.

The findings reveal several important patterns. First, the annual distribution of publications steadily increases over the years, with notable peaks in 2023 and 2024, indicating sustained academic interest in this area. Research output is dominated by the social sciences and arts and humanities, which account for more than sixty percent of publications, while contributions from applied sciences remain relatively limited. Journal articles emerged as the most common form of scholarly communication, representing the primary medium for academic engagement. Influential studies frequently centered on moral education, digital learning, and curriculum reform, highlighting a dual focus on value-based education and technological adaptation. Indonesia and Malaysia were identified as the most active contributors, with Indonesia taking the lead, while collaboration networks show strong regional ties, particularly between Southeast Asian and selected Western countries. Keyword analysis underscored recurring themes such as higher education, Islamic education, student preferences, digital transformation, and religious values, confirming the multidisciplinary and evolving character of the field.

This study contributes to the literature by mapping the intellectual structure of research on Islamic higher education, clarifying its dominant themes, and identifying gaps for further inquiry. It extends previous discussions by demonstrating how the field has diversified across disciplines while retaining a strong foundation in social and cultural studies. The results also highlight the role of Southeast Asia, especially Indonesia and Malaysia, as a regional hub shaping global conversations on Islamic education.

The implications of these findings are significant for both academic and institutional practice. For policymakers and educators, understanding the trajectory of research themes can guide

curriculum innovation, digital adoption, and strategies for internationalization. Institutions may also draw on these insights to align their educational offerings with student preferences and labor market expectations while maintaining cultural and religious integrity.

Several limitations should be noted. The analysis relied on Scopus as the primary data source, which may exclude relevant publications indexed elsewhere. Furthermore, bibliometric methods capture only quantitative patterns, not the qualitative depth of research contributions. Future studies could integrate content analysis with bibliometric mapping to provide a more comprehensive understanding of thematic developments. Expanding the scope to include comparative datasets across different regions or languages would enrich the findings.

In closing, this bibliometric study demonstrates the value of quantitative mapping in tracing the growth, themes, and global engagement of research on Islamic universities in Malaysia. By uncovering the patterns of scholarly communication, the study highlights the significance of bibliometric analysis as a tool for guiding academic priorities and policy directions. Continued research in this area will ensure that Islamic higher education remains responsive to global challenges while staying grounded in its cultural and ethical foundations.

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