

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

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Abstract

This study aims to map the trends, key contributors, collaborations, and dominant themes in research on the quality of Islamic education indexed in the Scopus database during the 2015–2025 period. Using a quantitative approach with a bibliometric design, this research analyzed 427 scientific articles through *VOSviewer* and *Biblioshiny for R* to identify publication trends, author productivity, institutional and national contributions, and the most influential keywords. The findings reveal a significant increase in publication numbers since 2019, peaking in 2024. Indonesia and Malaysia emerged as the leading contributors, with Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University of Malang identified as the most productive institution. Thematic mapping showed five major clusters: quality management, Islamic curriculum, values and character formation, social dimensions, and global education evaluation. Although international collaboration is developing, research networks remain concentrated in Southeast Asia. These results highlight the importance of strengthening international partnerships, integrating multidisciplinary approaches, and exploring emerging themes such as digitalization and Islamic financial education to enhance the global development of Islamic education quality.

Keywords: Bibliometric analysis, islamic education quality, publication trends, research collaboration, Scopus.

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INTRODUCTION

The quality of education is a strategic issue of global concern, especially in the context of Sustainable Development Goals that emphasize access, quality, and relevance of education. UNESCO's report (2022) notes that around 244 million children and adolescents in the world still do not have access to education, while the quality of learning remains a major challenge in many developing countries. In the context of Islamic education, the issue of quality is not only related to the transfer of knowledge, but also concerns character building and the internalization of spiritual values that are characteristic of Islamic educational institutions (Syukri et al., 2019). The increase in the number of Islamic educational institutions globally, for example, more than thousands of madrasas active in South Asia, further emphasizes the importance of paying attention to the issue of Islamic education quality as part of the sustainable development agenda.

The link between the quality of Islamic education and the sustainable development agenda is specifically connected to SDG 4, which is to ensure inclusive,

equitable, and quality education (Alfaian et al., 2023). The low quality of Islamic education has the potential to limit the contribution of Muslim human resources to global socio-economic development. Conversely, if the quality of education can be improved, it will strengthen the integration between Islamic values and science while accelerating the achievement of SDG 4 targets (Muala & Nugraheni, 2024). Therefore research on the quality of Islamic education is of high urgency not only from an academic perspective but also in a practical context to address global development challenges (Maslamah & Mufidah, 2025).

Research over the past decade has shown a significant increase in publications related to the quality of Islamic education, particularly after the digitization of learning systems and the emergence of quality evaluation methodologies based on international standards. Meanwhile Siahaan et al., (2023) explains that the success of a country depends on the education available in that country, so it is necessary to improve and maintain the quality of education, which is also closely related to the role of curriculum quality and teacher professionalism. Publications on the quality of Islamic education have increased sharply since 2018, in line with the strengthening of the globalization of Islamic higher education. However, most of these studies still use a case study or survey approach, thus failing to provide a comprehensive picture of the global research map using the bibliometric method (Kamila et al., 2025).

Although there are various studies on the quality of Islamic education, most tend to focus on conceptual or implementational aspects in certain institutions. The lack of studies using a bibliometric approach makes it difficult to identify the most influential actors, patterns of collaboration, and dominant topics in global research on the quality of Islamic education. This information is crucial for mapping the direction and future research agenda (Ni & Ariati, 2023). As an illustration, a bibliometric study by Nasrudin et al., (2021) which focuses on quality assurance in Islamic education, also found patterns of research development from 2000 to 2021, but it is still partial in its approach and does not provide a clear picture of global trends and gaps in the context of comprehensive Islamic education quality.

In addition, recent research shows that the trend in Islamic education research is not only increasing in terms of the number of publications, but also developing in terms of innovation and international collaboration, as described in a number of cross-theme bibliometric studies on Islamic education using Scopus data and analysis tools such as VOSviewer or Biblioshiny (Adima et al., 2025). Although there are various studies on the quality of Islamic education, most tend to focus on conceptual aspects, implementation in specific institutions, or studies confined to specific sub-themes. The lack of comprehensive bibliometric studies to map trends, thematic trajectories, major contributors, and research collaboration patterns on the quality of Islamic education makes it difficult to synthesize this extensive information in a global context. This limits understanding of the actual research map and future development directions, even though such mapping is important for developing a more strategic and integrated research agenda (research gap) (Dessy & Lismawati., 2025).

Therefore, there is still a research gap in providing bibliometric analysis that can provide a comprehensive picture of the dynamics of Islamic education quality research based on Scopus-indexed international publication data. The main problem arising from this condition is the absence of systematic mapping related to trends, dynamics, major contributors, most published journals, articles with the highest citations, and collaboration patterns. As well as the direction of global Islamic education quality research (Oliveira et al., 2019). If this problem is not addressed,

Islamic education quality studies risk becoming fragmented, difficult to collaborate on, and less able to make a significant contribution to the development of education policy at the national and international levels. Academically, the absence of comprehensive studies also has the potential to hinder the enrichment of in-depth literature on the quality of Islamic education from a global perspective (Zuhri., 2023). Based on these conditions, this study attempts to present a comprehensive picture of the development of research on the quality of Islamic education. The research questions in this study are formulated as follows:

1. What is the trend in the development of scientific publications on the quality of Islamic education indexed by Scopus between 2015 and October 2025?
2. Who are the most productive and influential authors in research on the quality of Islamic education?
3. Which institutions have made the largest contribution to publications on the quality of Islamic education?
4. Which countries are most dominant in producing publications related to the quality of Islamic education?
5. Which journals publish the most research on the quality of Islamic education?
6. Which articles have the highest citation rates in the field of Islamic education quality studies?
7. What are the most dominant topics and keywords, and how has the theme of Islamic education quality research developed over time?
8. How are research collaboration patterns formed, both between authors, between institutions, and between countries?
9. What research gaps are still relatively unexplored in research on the quality of Islamic education based on the bibliometric thematic map?

The contributions of this research include academic and practical aspects. From an academic perspective, this research enriches the literature by providing a comprehensive mapping of trends in Islamic education quality research while strengthening the theory that explains the relationship between Islamic education quality and the globalization of science. Meanwhile, from a practical perspective, the results of this research can be utilized by policy makers, Islamic education institution managers, and researchers to formulate evidence-based strategies for improving education quality and strengthening cross-border research collaboration. Thus, this research not only fills a gap in the literature but also provides strategic direction for the development of Islamic education policy in the global era.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a quantitative approach with a bibliometric design. This design was chosen because it is capable of providing scientific mapping of the development of publications on the quality of Islamic education comprehensively through Scopus-indexed bibliographic data. The research data was collected on October 22, 2025, at Prof. DR. Hamka Muhammadiyah University, obtained from the Scopus database. The object of research in this context was scientific publications discussing the topics of quality and Islamic education. The Scopus database was chosen because it provides complete publication metadata, covering key actors such as authors, countries, and institutions that contribute and dominate, exploring topics, journals with the most publications, articles with the highest citations, thematic evolution, keywords, and gap identification. The research period covers publications from 2015 to October 2025, where there has been a significant increase in research on the quality of Islamic education, especially after the digitization of learning, the use of

international quality standards, and the globalization of Islamic higher education.

The research population consists of all articles relevant to the quality of Islamic education indexed in Scopus. An initial search using the keywords quality AND Islamic education applied to the title, abstract, and keywords (TITLE-ABS-KEY) columns yielded 808 documents. After filtering with the criteria: publication year 2015–2025, field of study limited to Social Sciences (SOCI), Arts and Humanities (ARTS), and Business, Management and Accounting (BUSI), document type journal article, source type scientific journal, and language English, 427 articles were obtained as the research data corpus.

The data collection process was carried out by exporting publication metadata from Scopus in CSV format. The metadata included citation information, affiliations, keywords, and bibliographic details. To analyze the data, this study used VOSviewer software to map co-authorship, co-citation, and keyword co-occurrence networks, as well as Biblioshiny for R to perform statistical analysis and bibliometric visualization. Data analysis was carried out in several stages: (1) descriptive analysis to determine trends in the number of publications per year; (2) productivity analysis () of authors, institutions, and countries; (3) citation analysis to identify the most influential authors, articles, and journals; (4) co-authorship analysis to map collaborations between authors and between countries; and (5) co-word analysis (keyword co- occurrence) to identify dominant topics and research theme developments over time (Dienana et al., 2024).

RESULTS

Trends in Scientific Publications on the Quality of Islamic Education

The trend graph of publications on the quality of Islamic education recorded in the Scopus database in 2015 shows 5 documents, increasing to around 12 documents in 2016. Entering 2017–2018, publications tended to stagnate with slight fluctuations, namely around 14 documents in 2017 and a slight decrease to around 11 documents in 2018.

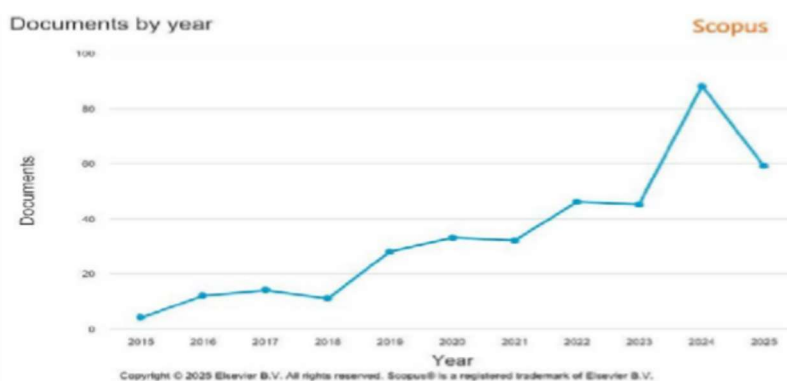


Figure 1. Publication Development

More significant and stable growth occurred when the number of publications increased sharply from around 28 documents in 2019 to around 33 documents in 2020, and remained stable at almost the same number in 2021. In 2022–2023, research on the quality of Islamic education increased again to around 45 documents per year. The peak of growth occurred in 2024 with the number of publications reaching around 90 documents. However, in 2025, the number of studies on quality appears to have

decreased to around 60 publications. This is due to the fact that the data is still partial because the current year has not yet ended.

Most Relevant Authors

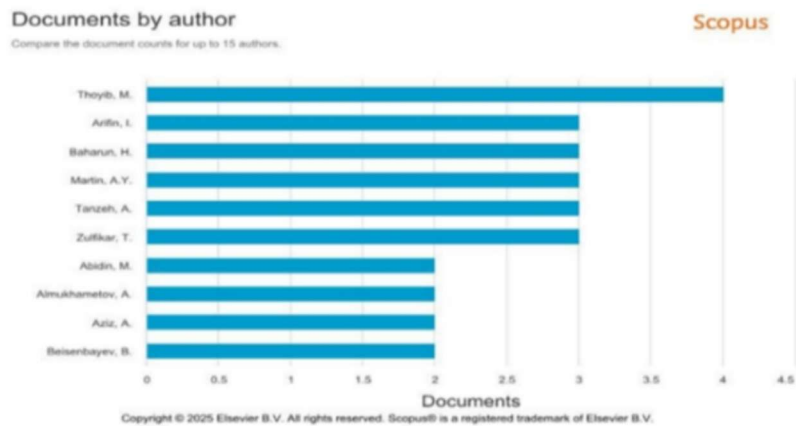


Figure 2. Author Contributions

The results obtained show that there are 10 most relevant authors who have contributed publications on the topic studied. The author with the highest number of publications is Thoyib, M., who produced 4 documents. Next, with the same number of publications, namely 3 documents each, are Arifin, I., Baharun, H., Martin, A.Y., Tanzeh, A., and Zulfikar, T. The consistency in the number of publications shows that these five authors are active researchers who have made significant contributions. In addition, there are four other authors who each have 2 publications, namely Abidin, M., Almukhametov, A., Aziz, A., and Beisenbayev, B.

Documents Based on Affiliation

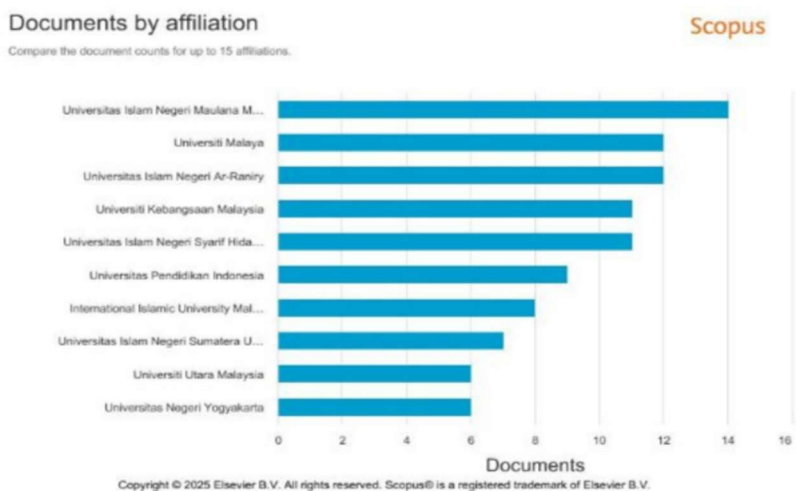


Figure 3. Institutional Contributions

The top institution is UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, which produced 14 publications. It is followed by Universiti Malaysia and Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry, which each recorded around 12 documents. Next, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta showed high productivity with 11 publications, while several other institutions such as Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia and International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)

contributed around 9 publications. Meanwhile, Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Universiti Utara Malaysia, and Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta occupied the next positions with around 6–7 documents.

Country Contribution

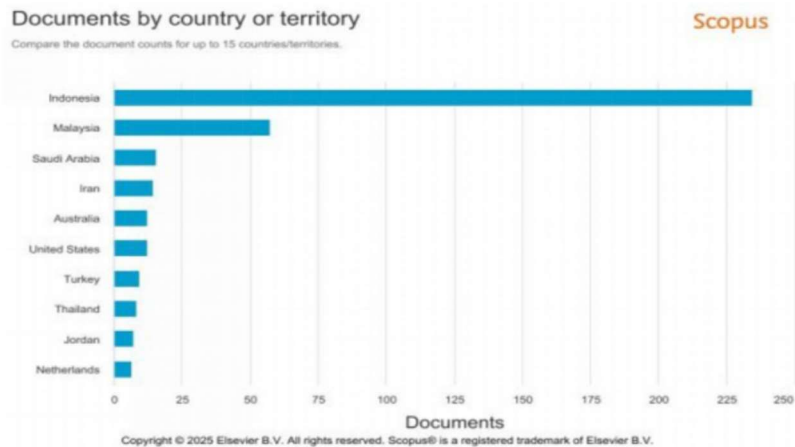


Figure 4. Country Contribution

Indonesia ranks first with the highest number of publications, around 235-240 publications. Malaysia follows in second place with around 55-60 publications. In the study by Thahir et al., (2023) these two countries are also the most productive in the topic of Islamic education. Saudi Arabia and Iran occupy the next positions with around 15-20 publications. Next are Australia and the United States with 15-20 publications. Then, Turkey has around 10-15 publications. Countries such as Thailand, Jordan, and the Netherlands have the fewest publications among the top ten, estimated at around 5-10 publications each.

Journals with the Most Publications

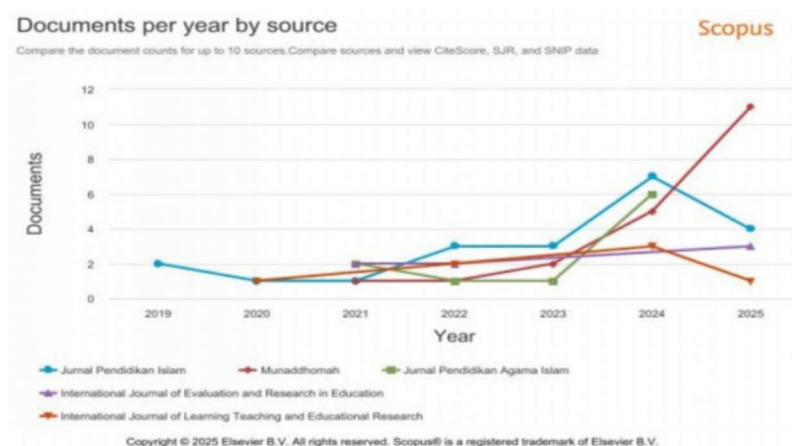


Figure 5. Journals with the Most Publications

The data above shows that Munaddhomah experienced the most significant surge in 2025, with more than 11 publications, making it the most productive source of publications. Meanwhile, the Journal of Islamic Education (blue) shows a gradual increase from 2020 to 2024, reaching 7 documents, before experiencing a slight decline in 2025. Other journals, such as the Journal of Islamic Religious Education, show a

noticeable increase in 2024 with around 6 documents.

Topics and Keywords

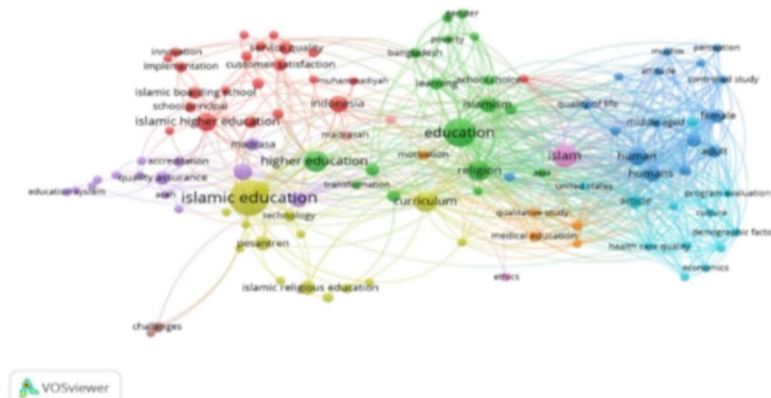


Figure 6. Topics and Keywords

The results of the analysis of topics and keywords related to quality Islamic education show that research in this field is developing with diverse but interrelated orientations. In general, the major themes that emerge can be categorized into five main clusters, as follows:

1. The Islamic education management and quality cluster (colored red), which includes keywords such as Islamic higher education, service quality, customer satisfaction, accreditation, quality assurance, school principal, and madrasa, emphasizing the importance of professional institutional management, including service quality management, accreditation, and the role of school or madrasa principals in improving the quality of learning.
2. The Islamic curriculum and learning cluster (green) shows keywords such as education, curriculum, learning, religion, Islamism, school choice, motivation, gender, and poverty. It focuses on developing a curriculum based on Islamic values while remaining adaptive to the social context, and covers issues such as gender, poverty, motivation, and school choice as part of an interdisciplinary approach.
3. The values, character, and spirituality cluster (yellow-green) includes keywords such as Islamic education, Islamic religious education, Islamic boarding schools, technology, transformation, and challenges. This cluster highlights the internalization of Islamic values and the role of Islamic boarding schools and madrasas in shaping the character and spirituality of students amid the demands of modern educational transformation.
4. The human and social dimension cluster (blue) includes keywords such as humans, female, attitude, motivation, culture, perception, article, and program evaluation. This cluster links research on Islamic education with psychological, social, and demographic aspects, including individual perceptions, attitudes, and motivations toward Islamic education.
5. The global education system and evaluation cluster (purple and orange) includes keywords such as education system, program evaluation, medical education, qualitative study, ethics, and health care quality. Research in this cluster highlights the application of quality, ethics, and evaluation principles in Islamic education and its relationship to global standards and interdisciplinary fields.

Articles with the Highest Citations

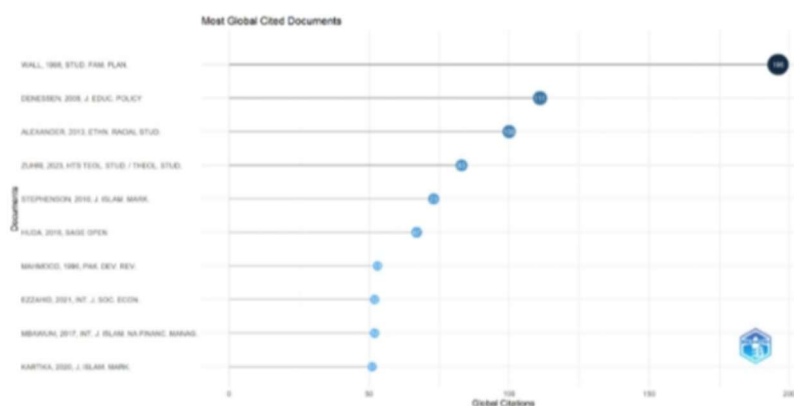


Figure 7. Most Cited

The most cited article is Wall's (1998) work published in *Studies in Family Planning* with 196 global citations, followed by Denessen (2005) in the *Journal of Educational Policy* with 111 citations, and Alexander (2013) in *Ethnic and Racial Studies* with 100 citations. Meanwhile, more recent works such as Zuhri (2023) in *HTS Theological Studies*, which received 83 citations, quickly gained academic attention. Most other articles, such as Huda (2016) in *SAGE Open* (67 citations), Stephenson (2010) (73 citations), Mahmood (1996) (53 citations), Ezzahid (2021) (52 citations), and Mbawuni (2017) (52 citations) are within a relatively balanced range.

This document is not only sourced from journals focused on education and theology, but also from broader fields such as management, marketing, and Islamic economics, as seen, for example, in the contributions of articles by Stephenson (2010) and Kartika (2020) published in the *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, as well as the work of Mbawuni (2017) in the *International Journal of Islamic and Financial Management*. In addition, articles by Mahmood (1996) from *Pakistan Development Review* and Ezzahid (2021) from the *International Journal of Social Economics* show the connection between the theme of education quality and social and economic aspects.

Patterns of Collaboration Between Authors

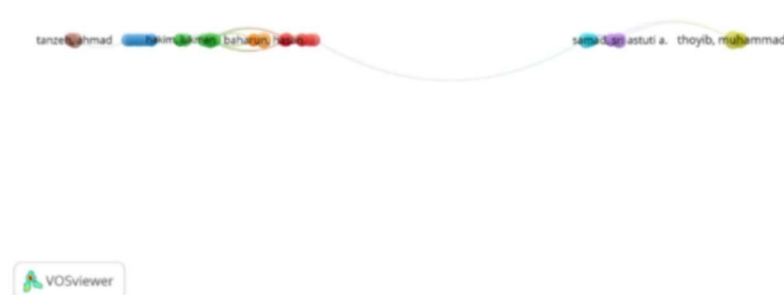


Figure 8. Collaboration between Authors

Based on the network visualization, there are three main clusters that are interconnected with fairly strong collaboration intensity. The largest cluster is dominated by authors from state Islamic universities, consisting of Tanzeh, Ahmad Hakim, Lukman Baharun, and Hasan, who actively collaborate in research on curriculum evaluation and learning quality improvement.

Meanwhile, the second cluster, consisting of Samad, Sri Astuti A., and Thoyib,

Muhammad, focused more on the themes of teacher professionalism development and education quality management, with collaboration between several authors from Java and Sumatra. The third cluster, or the connecting cluster, consists of Baharudin and Hasan, which is relatively smaller and focuses on technology-based learning innovation and strengthening the character and spirituality of students.

Patterns of Inter-Institutional Collaboration

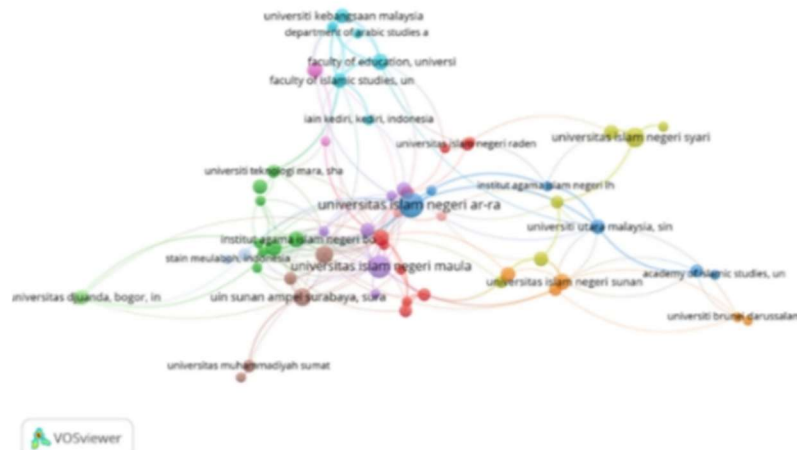


Figure 9. Collaboration between Institutions

Research related to the quality of Islamic education is dominated by Islamic university networks in Indonesia and Malaysia. The network visualization shows that Ar-Raniry State Islamic University, Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University, and Sunan Ampel State Islamic University are the main centers of collaboration that are closely connected to various other universities, such as Raden Intan State Islamic University, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University, and Lhokseumawe Islamic State University. On the other hand, universities in Malaysia include Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Universiti Teknologi MARA, and Universiti Brunei Darussalam.

Patterns of Inter-Country Collaboration

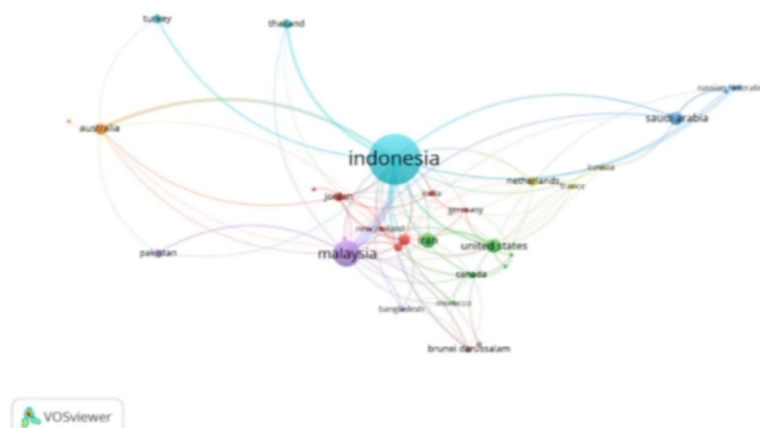


Figure 10. Collaboration between Countries

Indonesia occupies the most central and dominant position in research related to the quality of Islamic education, establishing strong collaboration with Malaysia,

which occupies the second most prominent position, affirming the important role of this region as the epicenter of modern Islamic education studies. In addition, significant collaboration is also evident with other countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Turkey, which represent the center of Islamic studies in the Middle East and play an important role in strengthening the scientific dimension based on classical Islamic traditions. The involvement of Thailand, Pakistan, and Brunei Darussalam demonstrates the expansion of networks in the Asian region, while Australia and New Zealand add a dimension of collaboration from the Pacific region that contributes to the enrichment of research approaches and educational methodologies. Collaborative relationships also extend to Western countries such as the United States, Canada, the Netherlands, France, and Germany, which demonstrate the involvement of interdisciplinary perspectives and the application of global education quality standards

Tren Topik

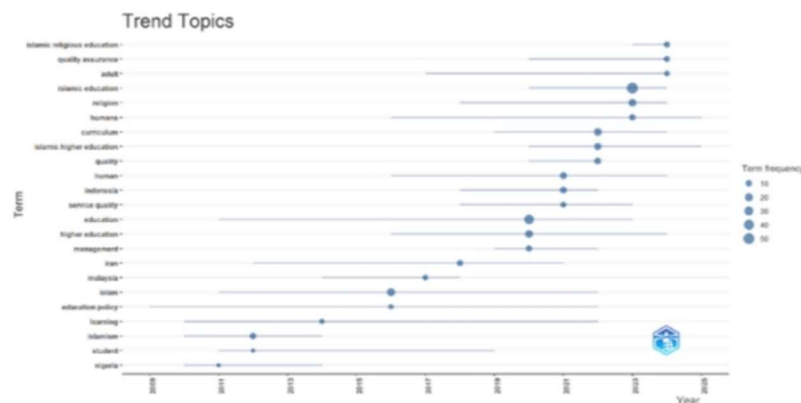


Figure 11. Topic Trends

In the early period (2009–2015), the dominant topics included education, higher education, and management, indicating an initial focus on educational management and institutional systems. In this phase, terms such as education policy, learning, student, and Islamism also appeared, reflecting an interest in policy and social dynamics in the context of Islamic education. Entering the 2016–2020 period, there was a shift towards more contextual themes such as Malaysia, Iran, and Indonesia, indicating an expansion of the scope of research towards regional and comparative studies. In this phase, topics such as service quality and quality also began to emerge. During the period 2021–2023, research trends increasingly focused on key themes such as Islamic education, Islamic religious education, Islamic higher education, religion, and curriculum, with a high frequency of occurrence. These topics show that scientific attention is now largely directed at strengthening the scientific foundations of Islamic education, curriculum innovation, and the development of an Islamic higher education system that is adaptive to changing times. On the other hand, terms such as humans, quality assurance, and service quality indicate the integration of educational quality management approaches and human dimensions in the management of Islamic educational institutions.

Research Gap Identification

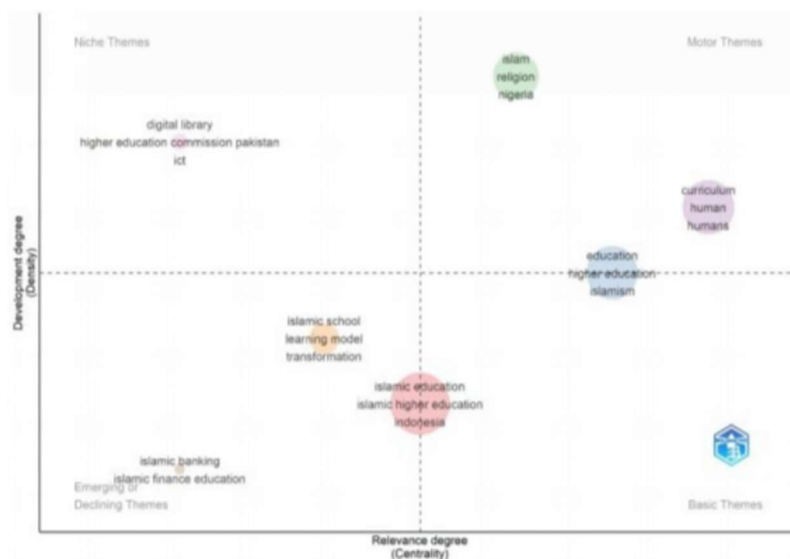


Figure 12. Research Gap

Based on the thematic map, there are four main groups, namely motor themes, basic themes, niche themes, and emerging or declining themes, each of which shows the position and level of relevance of the theme in the global Islamic education research map. In the motor themes quadrant, themes such as Islam, religion, and Nigeria emerge as themes with high levels of centrality and development. Meanwhile, in the basic themes quadrant, there is a concentration of themes such as education, higher education, and Islamism. These themes have a high level of relevance but a relatively lower level of development, thus serving as a conceptual foundation in Islamic education studies.

In the niche themes quadrant, themes such as digital libraries, the Pakistan Higher Education Commission, and ICT emerged. These themes have a fairly high level of development but their relevance is still limited, as they are specific to the context of technology and higher education policy in certain regions. This shows that digital innovation in Islamic education has developed, but it is not yet mainstream in the global research landscape. In the emerging or declining themes quadrant, themes such as Islamic banking and Islamic finance education are visible.

DISCUSSION

Trends in the Development of Scientific Publications on the Quality of Islamic Education

A significant increase in publications on the quality of Islamic education since 2019 is the main finding of this study, which shows a shift in the orientation of studies from a normative approach to a systemic and quality-based approach. This finding is in line with the research objective to map the development and direction of Islamic education quality studies in a global context. Theoretically, this phenomenon can be explained through the theory of quality assurance in education and institutional theory, which states that educational institutions tend to adjust their academic practices and discourse to external pressures such as global standards, accreditation, and demands for institutional legitimacy.

Previous studies by Busro et al (2021) and Kusharyati & Aziz (2025) show that the COVID-19 pandemic has encouraged an increase in research on the quality of

Islamic education, especially in the aspects of learning, evaluation, and leadership. However, these studies still emphasize situational impacts and have not examined long-term trends. Within the framework of Total Quality Management and continuous improvement, these findings reinforce the view that the quality of Islamic education is now positioned as a continuous process and part of the global SDG 4 agenda.

Unlike previous studies that focused on institutional practices, Mayangsari et al, (2023) shows that the application of TQM principles and the PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycle can systematically improve the quality of Islamic educational institutions. Additionally, a study by Iqbal (2025) indicates that the integration of TQM in Islamic education contributes to increased public trust and institutional competitiveness. This research empirically links publication trends with quality theory and the global context, thereby scientifically explaining that the improvement in quality variables occurs due to the convergence of global pressures, the adoption of modern quality management paradigms, and the transformation of the role of Islamic education in the global education system.

Most Relevant Authors

The distribution of author productivity shows a relatively even pattern, with one dominant author supported by other authors with medium and low productivity levels who remain active. This pattern indicates that the development of the field of study does not depend on one central figure, but rather on a collaborative scientific community. Theoretically, this finding is in line with Lotka's Law, which explains that only a small number of authors are highly productive, while the majority produce fewer publications but still contribute to the accumulation of knowledge. Empirically, similar trends have also been found in the field of library science by Winoto & Yuliani (2021) and research Monica et al, (2025) Monica et al, (2025) which show the existence of a core researcher structure and supporting researchers.

Unlike previous studies, which generally focused on testing the suitability of productivity distribution against the Lotka Law model or in specific fields and journals, this study emphasizes the interpretation of these patterns in the context of the dynamics and maturity of scientific fields. Thus, this study fills a research gap in the form of a lack of studies linking author productivity distribution with the stability and sustainability of scientific development. These findings reinforce the results Machali & Suhendro (2022) on the distribution of productivity among Islamic education authors in Indonesia and Malaysia, while also explaining that the relatively even distribution is the result of increased collaboration, open access to publications, and the development of an inclusive research community, thereby supporting stable and sustainable knowledge production in line with the research objectives.

Documents Based on Affiliation

The findings of this study indicate that publications on the quality of Islamic education are concentrated in institutions with strong research ecosystems, such as the presence of postgraduate programs, adequate academic resources, and supportive research policies. Bibliometrically, this concentration is reflected in the dominance of universities that offer master's and doctoral programs in Islamic education. This condition aligns with the concept of *institutional research productivity*, which positions institutional capacity as a key determinant of both research productivity and scholarly

direction. These results support the findings of Jannah (2022) regarding the dominance of State Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN) and major universities in Muslim-majority countries; however, the present study differs in that previous research focused on general mapping, whereas this study explicitly links institutional affiliation strength to issues of Islamic education quality.

This publication concentration has formed regional clusters or research hubs, particularly in Indonesia and Malaysia, which explains why the institutional affiliation variable tends to cluster. Productive institutions not only generate a higher volume of publications but also shape dominant themes such as accreditation, quality evaluation, and the development of Islamic value-based curricula. This pattern is consistent with the findings of Febriani & Maika (2023) in the ASEAN region; however, their study was limited to identifying productive institutions, whereas the present study interprets the implications of institutional dominance for the quality orientation of Islamic education. Therefore, the research gap lies in the limited number of studies that connect institutional affiliation patterns with the dynamics of Islamic education quality, and this study confirms that publication dominance is the result of academic policies and the strength of research ecosystems that directly influence the direction of Islamic education quality development.

Contribution of the State

Based on the country contribution map, this study shows that publications on the quality of Islamic education are dominated by Indonesia and Malaysia, consistent with previous bibliometric studies that identify both countries as major actors in global Islamic education research due to the strength of their Islamic educational institutions and the increasing demands for accreditation and quality assurance (Yulianti et al., 2022). However, earlier studies have generally focused on broad mapping or thematic trends in Islamic education and have not positioned the quality of Islamic education as a primary analytical focus directly linked to national contributions, thereby leaving a research gap regarding the role of quality as a driver of cross-national scientific productivity. In contrast to previous studies, this research positions the quality of Islamic education as a central variable in cross-country bibliometric analysis, which can be theoretically explained through core-periphery theory, where countries with strong academic networks and robust education policies occupy a central position in knowledge production.

Furthermore, the involvement of non-Muslim-majority countries such as the United States, Australia, the Netherlands, and Thailand extends earlier findings on the globalization of Islamic education studies (Puspitasari et al., 2023). and indicates that quality-related issues emerge as responses to challenges of pluralism, curriculum integration, and global education quality standards. Therefore, these findings address the research objectives by affirming that the quality of Islamic education is no longer understood as a local issue but rather as part of a global discourse on educational quality and sustainability, reflecting an epistemic shift from regional studies toward a broader global context (Baguio et al., 2025).

Journal with the Most Publications

The data shows that Munaddhomah experienced the most significant surge in publications in 2025 with more than 11 documents, making it the most productive

journal in the field of Islamic education. This dominance reflects the acceleration of knowledge production and dissemination, particularly on issues of Islamic education management, curriculum innovation, and the integration of learning technology. Munaddhomah's role as an agent for disseminating new ideas is in line with the theory of Islamic Educational Leadership, which emphasizes transformational and collaborative leadership (E-sor & Ishaque, 2025). Meanwhile, the Journal of Islamic Education shows a gradual increase from 2020 to 2024 before declining in 2025, and the Journal of Islamic Religious Education experiences an increase in 2024, indicating a diversification of research focus in Islamic education.

These findings are consistent with the research by Aryadi et al, (2025) which places Indonesia as a major contributor to Islamic education publications, and Asari et al, (2024) which highlights the trend of Islamic value-based pedagogical modernization. However, unlike previous studies, this study specifically reveals productivity disparities between journals, thereby filling the gap related to the identification of key journals in accelerating publications. Theoretically, the surge in Munaddhomah can be explained through the Theory of Innovation Diffusion, in which journals serve as the main channel for the dissemination of ideas that have academic legitimacy. These findings also complement Adima et al, (2025) which identified an increase in Islamic digital literacy research but did not indicate the most influential publication channels. Thus, this study confirms that the increase in Islamic education publications is not only influenced by research themes but also by the capacity of journals as nodes of scientific collaboration in an increasingly modern and sustainable research ecosystem.

Topics and Keywords

The results of the topic and keyword analysis show that research on quality Islamic education is developing multidimensionally in five main interconnected clusters, with the cluster of Islamic education management and quality as the dominant foundation. The emphasis on quality assurance, accreditation, and madrasah leadership confirms that quality improvement is largely determined by professional institutional governance. These findings reinforce the principles of Total Quality Management (TQM) as stated by Salsabilah (2025). However, unlike previous studies that generally focus solely on managerial aspects, this study demonstrates a systemic interrelationship between quality management and the dimensions of curriculum, values, character, and global evaluation. This relationship explains the dominance of management-related variables in the data, alongside increasing demands for accountability and competitiveness in Islamic education at the global level.

Furthermore, the clusters related to curriculum, values, and socio-human dimensions indicate a shift from normative pedagogy toward a more adaptive and humanistic model of Islamic education. This shift is reflected in the prominence of keywords such as *curriculum*, *motivation*, *transformation*, and *culture*. These findings are consistent with Aryadi et al, (2025) and Uddin et al, (2025) yet they go beyond prior studies that examined curriculum and character in a fragmented manner. Specifically, this study reveals an integrative relationship between learning processes, character formation, and quality evaluation, thereby addressing the *research gap* concerning the lack of a holistic understanding of the interaction among the multiple dimensions of Islamic education quality within the context of educational globalization.

Article with the Highest Citations

Citation data shows that classic works such as Wall (1998), Denessen (2005), and Alexander (2013) still dominate global citations, confirming that a strong theoretical and methodological foundation has a long-term influence. This finding is in line with the Theory of Scientific Knowledge Accumulation (Merton, 1973) and consistent with bibliometric studies Aryadi et al, (2025) and Asari et al, (2024) which show citation stability in works with a universal framework. Unlike previous descriptive studies, this study analytically links the dominance of citations with the research objective, which is to explain the relationship between the strength of classical theory and the dynamics of contemporary scientific needs. Thus, the research gap lies in the lack of studies linking publication age, social relevance, and citation accumulation patterns in the fields of education and Islamic education.

Conversely, the surge in citations in recent works such as Zuhri (2023) indicates a shift in knowledge consumption patterns towards contextual and interdisciplinary research. This phenomenon can be explained by the increasing need for studies that are responsive to contemporary socio-religious issues, particularly the integration of theology and Islamic education. These findings expand on the results of Stephenson (2010), Kartika (2020), and Mbawuni (2017), who previously viewed interdisciplinarity in a sectoral manner. This study shows that interdisciplinarity functions as a citation accelerator, explaining the increasing trend of novelty and social relevance variables in the data. Thus, citation dynamics reflect adaptive scientific developments, where classical theory serves as a foundation, while cutting-edge research addresses current academic and socio-economic needs.

Patterns of Collaboration Among Authors

Based on the visualization of the author collaboration network, this study identifies three main clusters with strong collaboration intensity, in which the largest cluster is dominated by authors from state Islamic higher education institutions focusing on curriculum evaluation and the improvement of learning quality. This pattern indicates that the production of knowledge in Islamic education remains concentrated within certain institutions and develops through intensive internal collaboration. These findings are consistent with previous studies that have highlighted the dominance of specific institutions and countries within Islamic education academic collaboration networks (Jannah., 2022; Hidayaturrahman & Kusumawati, 2021).

Unlike earlier studies, which generally focused on institutional analysis or productivity metrics, this research addresses the research gap by bibliometrically mapping the structure of collaboration networks, thereby linking key actors, collaboration intensity, and the direction of knowledge diffusion to the objective of improving the quality of Islamic education. From a theoretical perspective, this tendency toward homogeneous clustering can be explained by academic collaboration network theory, which emphasizes institutional proximity and the role of central actors. At the same time, this framework helps explain why cross-institutional and international collaboration remains limited. Therefore, the findings underscore the need for more open and inclusive collaboration strategies to expand the impact and

scholarly development of Islamic education.

Patterns of Inter-Institutional Collaboration

The results of the analysis show that research on the quality of Islamic education is dominated by Islamic university networks in Indonesia and Malaysia, with UIN Ar-Raniry, UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim, UIN Sunan Ampel, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, and Universiti Utara Malaysia as the main centers of collaboration. This dominance confirms the strong role of both countries in the development of Islamic education scholarship in Southeast Asia, in line with the finding of Jannah, et al (2022) which show that the productivity and influence of global Islamic education research are largely led by institutions from this region. However, unlike previous studies that emphasized productivity and institutional descriptions, this study empirically highlights collaboration network patterns as a determining factor in improving the quality of Islamic religious education.

Within the framework of Social Capital Theory, these findings explain that collaborative relationships between institutions serve as strategic capital for building trust, accelerating knowledge diffusion, and strengthening academic reputation, so that institutions with strong networks tend to be more productive and influential (Kafid Nur., 2019). and research Susilawati et al, (2025) showing that collaboration, which is further strengthened by the use of technology, is not only a supporting factor but also a key mechanism that bridges the goal of improving the quality of Islamic education with global demands. Thus, this study fills a research gap by linking collaboration network data directly to efforts to achieve SDG 4 (Quality Education) and strengthening the position of Islamic education in the context of global competition and relevance.

Patterns of Collaboration Between Countries

The results of the collaboration network analysis indicate that Indonesia occupies the most central position in research on the quality of Islamic religious education, with Malaysia serving as its primary partner. This finding reinforces previous bibliometric studies showing that both countries are the main producers of Islamic education research, although earlier studies were generally limited to quantitative mapping and did not examine the structural positions of countries within global collaboration networks (Jannah., 2022). In contrast to those studies, the present research finds that Indonesia and Malaysia function as regional *knowledge hubs* that integrate Islamic scholarly traditions with modern education systems across national boundaries. This tendency emerges from the strong ecosystem of Islamic institutions, sustained educational policy support, and moderate academic traditions that are adaptive to globalization, thereby directly addressing the research objective of understanding the dynamics of regional leadership in improving the quality of Islamic religious education.

Furthermore, collaboration with Middle Eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Turkey indicates the presence of epistemological integration between classical Islamic traditions and contemporary educational approaches. This finding aligns with the Theory of Islamic Knowledge Integration, which emphasizes a

balance between revelation and reason (Efendi et al., 2025). However, this study extends previous research by demonstrating that such integration occurs not only at the curricular or institutional level but also through international collaboration network structures as a form of academic social capital. Therefore, this research bridges the existing *research gap* regarding the limited number of studies that link global collaboration network structures with the quality of Islamic religious education, while also explaining that cross-regional collaboration trends emerge as a response to global education quality standards and the need to align Islamic values with international educational practices.

Topic Trends

The development of Islamic education research themes from 2009 to 2023 shows a significant shift in scientific orientation. In the early phase (2009–2015), topics such as education, higher education, and management dominated, indicating a primary focus on the management of Islamic educational institutions and policies. Entering the 2016–2020 period, the emergence of themes such as Malaysia, Iran, and Indonesia indicates an expansion of the scope of research towards regional and comparative studies, in which the social context and Islamic educational policies began to receive attention. This trend then transformed in the 2021–2023 phase with the dominance of the terms Islamic education, curriculum, and Islamic higher education, indicating a strengthened focus on curriculum innovation, the development of Islamic higher education systems, and their relevance to changing times.

This shift in focus reflects the application of the Theory of the Evolution of Knowledge (Kuhn, 1962), in which the paradigm of Islamic education research has evolved from a structural level to a holistic and contextual approach. The emergence of terms such as quality assurance and service quality indicates the integration of quality management concepts in Islamic education. Thus, the dynamics of this research not only describe scientific evolution but also confirm the strategic direction towards strengthening quality, curriculum innovation, and cross-country collaboration to build an Islamic education system that is superior, adaptive, and globally competitive.

Identification of Research Gaps

The results of the thematic map analysis indicate that global Islamic education research is divided into four main clusters, with the dominance of motor themes such as Islam, religion, and Nigeria, which underscores the strong role of religious dimensions and socio-cultural contexts as the primary drivers of scholarly inquiry. This finding is consistent with Barry et al., (2025) who argue that Islamic education remains deeply rooted in theological values despite ongoing adaptation to modernization. However, unlike previous studies that are predominantly conceptual and descriptive in nature, this study empirically maps the interconnections among themes through knowledge network analysis, thereby revealing the role of basic themes as structural foundations and highlighting a research gap related to the limited integration of bibliometric approaches and Knowledge Network Theory.

Within this framework, the emergence of niche themes such as digital libraries and ICT explains why technological integration has developed but has not yet become dominant, as also demonstrated by Tijjani et al., (2026). Overall, these thematic

tendencies are shaped by demands for social relevance and development, reinforcing the position of Islamic education as a strategic field in supporting the achievement of SDG 4 and SDG 8.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings, studies on the quality of Islamic education indexed in Scopus during the 2015–October 2025 period show a significant increase since 2019, with a peak in 2024, indicating the strengthening of global academic attention to issues of Islamic education quality. Research contributions remain dominated by Indonesia and Malaysia in terms of countries, institutions, and collaboration networks, although participation from non-Muslim countries has begun to expand. The thematic mapping identifies five main clusters quality management, Islamic curriculum, values and character, socio-humanitarian dimensions, and global education evaluation reflecting a shift from a conceptual approach toward a systemic approach based on quality assurance and international standards.

These findings provide an empirical foundation for the formulation of research agendas and quality-oriented policies, while also underscoring the need to strengthen international collaboration, adopt multidisciplinary approaches, and further develop future studies through longitudinal bibliometric analysis and the integration of multiple databases. Such efforts are essential to ensure that research on the quality of Islamic education becomes more comprehensive and responsive to global challenges, including the digitalization of learning, technological innovation, and Islamic financial education.

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