Gender Equality in Islamic Education: Promoting Democratic Values and Advancing SDGs 4 & 5

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the development of gender discourse in Islamic education from 2015 to 2025 in the context of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4 and 5. Using a bibliometric quantitative design, it analyzes 428 Scopus-indexed documents to identify publication trends, prolific authors, dominant disciplines, geographic distribution, and emerging research themes. The results show a significant rise in gender-related publications between 2019 and 2024, peaking in 2024, indicating growing academic attention to gender equality in Islamic education. Indonesia emerges as the leading contributor, signaling a shift in the epistemic center from the Middle East to Southeast Asia. Thematic analysis reveals a shift from normative discourse to more critical themes such as Islamic feminism, gender identity, and inclusive education. This study uniquely maps the literature and examines the mechanisms of discrimination, alongside the moderating role of Islamic legal interpretation in shaping gender-based Islamic education. The findings advocate for the integration of gender justice frameworks into Islamic curricula and call for a paradigm shift from symbolic representation to substantive structural transformation. The study also highlights the concern of "bibliometric activism," where publication surges are driven by institutional or geopolitical factors, rather than epistemologically grounded engagement. This underscores the need for deeper interdisciplinary collaboration to enhance both theoretical development and the transformative potential of gender discourse in Islamic education.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, the discourse on gender equality in Islamic education has increased significantly, especially amid the global push towards more inclusive and equitable education [1]. Gender, as a social construct, has become a focal issue in the study of Islamic education due to persistent biases and inequities in the representation and roles of women in teaching materials and daily educational practices [2], [3], [4], [5], [6], [7]. An analysis of Islamic textbooks shows that patriarchal constructions still dominate, with men often placed as the main characters and women marginalized [8], [9], [10], [11], [12]. This phenomenon reflects the existence of structural inequalities in the Islamic education system that need to be systematically mapped.

Global data from UNESCO underscores that, despite progress since 2015 in women's access to education, gender disparities remain substantial in many Muslim-majority countries. In 2023, 122 million girls were out of school, predominantly in low- and middle-income nations with large Muslim populations. In some cases, such as Afghanistan, more than 80% of school-age girls lack formal education, and in others like Niger and Eritrea, this figure is even higher. Moreover, disparities extend to leadership and decision-making positions; for example, only 16% of primary school principals in French-speaking Africa are women [13]. These data show that inequality occurs not only in access, but also in structural representation in the education sector. Therefore, an in-depth study is needed to understand the complexity and root of the problems in the discourse of gender and Islamic education, so that the solutions offered are not only symbolic, but touch the structural

and cultural dimensions that affect them [14]. Such inequalities are not only about access but also about systemic representation and institutional power.

The issue of gender equality in Islamic education also has high significance in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 4 on quality education and SDG 5 on gender equality [15], [16], [17], [18], [19], [20]. Islamic education has a strategic position as a forum for the formation of values and morals, so it has the potential to be a driving force for more just and inclusive social transformation [21], [22], [23], [24], [25], [26], [27]. However, in order for this potential to be realized optimally, a rereading of Islamic teachings that are more progressive and contextual in responding to the issue of equality is needed [28]. This is important because the global agenda that encourages women's empowerment through education still faces complex local challenges.

Various studies have discussed content bias, access inequality, and the urgency of a more gender-responsive curriculum. Hairiyah et al. (2024) highlight the importance of Islamic religious education as a tool to instill gender justice values [7]. On the other hand, Yusuf (2020) shows that in the African Muslim community, Islamic education approaches to gender issues are still inadequate [29]. Meanwhile, Wicaksono et al. (2021) highlight the sustainability of patriarchal narratives in Islamic history textbooks [12]. However, until now there has been no study that systematically maps the patterns and trends of gender discourse in Islamic education using a bibliometric approach.

To address this gap, this study not only conducts a comprehensive bibliometric mapping of gender discourse in Islamic education from 2015 to 2025 but also proposes a conceptual model explaining how gender perceptions, experiences of discrimination, and Islamic legal interpretations mediate and moderate the achievement of gender-equitable education. The research seeks to answer eight guiding questions on publication trends, journal productivity, author contributions, disciplinary involvement, country-level engagement, citation impact, recurring themes, and emerging research directions aligned with SDGs 4 and 5.

By combining bibliometric mapping with a theoretically grounded causal model, this study contributes to both scholarly theory-building and practical policy design [30], [31]. It advances the understanding of how structural, cultural, and legal factors shape gender equality in Islamic education and provides empirical evidence to inform curriculum reform, institutional policy, and cross-sectoral collaboration aimed at achieving substantive rather than symbolic equality.

Addressing gender equality within Islamic education is closely linked to the broader goals of multicultural education and democratic development. By integrating gender justice into Islamic educational curricula, institutions can create inclusive learning environments that respect cultural diversity while fostering equal participation for all students. Such efforts reinforce democratic values by promoting equity, dialogue, and mutual understanding among different social groups. Therefore, this study not only contributes to the academic discourse on Islamic education and SDGs but also provides insights into how education can serve as a transformative tool for building pluralistic and democratic societies.

This study aims to fill this gap by analyzing scientific publications bibliometrically during the period 2015 to 2025. In this regard, eight main questions are asked to answer the complexity of the ongoing phenomenon: (1) what is the trend of scientific publications related to gender discourse in Islamic education from 2015 to 2025?; (2) which scientific journals are most active in publishing articles related to gender and Islamic education in the context of the SDGs?; (3) who are the authors who have contributed the most to the production of academic literature on gender in Islamic education?; (4) what fields of study or discipline are most often involved in publications related to gender discourse in Islamic education?; (5) which country is the most dominant in the contribution and collaboration of publications on gender issues in Islamic education?; (6) which articles or

scientific works are the most influential in gender studies and Islamic education, based on the number of citations?; (7) what are the main topics that have frequently appeared in the literature related to gender and Islamic education over the past decade?; and (8) what topics or themes have the potential to be the direction of further research development in gender studies and Islamic education to support SDG 4 and SDG 5? .

This study aims to analyze and map the development of gender discourse in Islamic education during the period 2015 to 2025 using a bibliometric approach. In particular, this study aims to identify the growth trend of scientific publications that discuss gender issues in Islamic education, as well as uncover the most active scientific journals that publish the topic in relation to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In addition, this research also aims to find out who are the most prolific authors and contribute to shaping related academic literature. This study will also examine the most dominant disciplines in supporting this topic, as well as map the countries that show the highest levels of research contribution and collaboration. Furthermore, this study aims to identify the most influential articles based on the number of citations, as well as map the main topics that frequently appear in the literature over the past decade. Finally, this study aims to formulate potential topics that can be the focus of future studies in the field of gender and Islamic education, in line with efforts to support the achievement of SDG 4 (quality education) and SDG 5 (gender equality).

By answering these questions, this study is expected to present a comprehensive knowledge map of the development of gender discourse in Islamic education from a quantitative perspective. The findings will not only enrich the academic literature in this field, but also make a practical contribution to policymakers and educational institutions in designing a more equitable, progressive, and oriented curriculum oriented towards achieving sustainable development targets.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a Mixed Method approach that combines bibliometrics-based quantitative design with a thematic qualitative approach to obtain a comprehensive picture of the development of gender discourse in Islamic education. At the quantitative level, bibliometric methods are used to analyze trends, patterns, and distribution of gender-related scientific knowledge in Islamic education over the past decade. This approach allows statistical analysis of publication metadata, including the number of documents, journal sources, author affiliations, countries, and number of citations, to understand the development of the literature in a global and thematic context [32], [33], [34], [35] This research is descriptive and exploratory because it does not test hypotheses, but rather maps knowledge and trends based on digital documents in reputable databases. The research population includes all scientific documents that discuss gender issues in Islamic education and are indexed in Scopus in the period 2015–2025. Search results with the keywords TITLE-ABS-KEY (islamic AND education) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (gender) yielded 428 documents, including journal articles, conference proceedings, and literature reviews. All documents are used as samples (*total sampling*) to increase the scope and validity of the findings [36].

The integration of bibliometric and thematic approaches was chosen to provide a more comprehensive understanding of gender discourse in Islamic education. Bibliometric analysis offers a quantitative mapping of global publication trends and structural patterns, while thematic analysis provides deeper insights into the cultural, social, and political contexts underlying these patterns. By combining both methods, this study ensures that quantitative data supports qualitative interpretations and vice versa, resulting in findings that are empirically grounded and contextually meaningful. This integration also strengthens the study's capacity to generate actionable recommendations for policy reform and educational practice aligned with SDG 4 and SDG 5.

The main instrument of the study is bibliographic metadata downloaded directly from Scopus in CSV format, including the year of publication, the name of the journal, the name of the author, the affiliation of the institution, the number of citations, and keywords. Supporting tools such as RStudio are used for collaboration mapping and thematic networking, while Microsoft Excel is used for tabulation and visualization of annual data trends [37].

The data collection procedure begins with a document search in Scopus in early 2024 using Advanced Search, followed by data export, duplication cleanup, removal of irrelevant entries, and correction of author - or institution name misspellings. The analysis includes: (1) annual publication productivity analysis; (2) analysis of the most productive journals; (3) analysis of the most active authors; (4) analysis of state contributions and international collaboration; (5) citation analysis; and (6) thematic analysis based on keyword coexistence, using *co-authorship*, *co-word analysis*, and *citation mapping* techniques. External validity is strengthened with Scopus databases and replicable analysis tools, while data reliability is maintained through a systematic cleansing process and the use of the total document population as a sample [36].

At the qualitative stage, this study uses thematic analysis to complement bibliometric findings with in-depth insights into the mechanisms, context, and interpretation of quantitative results. The research resource persons consisted of four categories, namely: (1) academics (lecturers, researchers) who focus on gender studies and Islamic education; (2) policy makers in the field of education, both in ministries and Islamic educational institutions; (3) gender activists who have direct involvement in advocacy for educational equality; and (4) education practitioners in madrasas, Islamic boarding schools, and Islamic universities. Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews to allow for an in-depth exploration of the interviewees' experiences, perceptions, and analysis, while maintaining a consistent framework of questions for comparison between participants. Qualitative data analysis was carried out in stages, including full transcription of interviews, *open coding* to identify relevant meaning units, *axial coding* to group codes into thematic categories, and *selective coding* to formulate main themes directly related to bibliometric results. This process is carried out with the principle of triangulation of methods to ensure consistency and depth of findings, so that qualitative results can enrich the interpretation of quantitative data and provide a holistic picture of the development of gender discourse in Islamic education [38].

To ensure the validity and reliability of the results, this study applies the principle *of triangulation of bibliographic data*, namely by combining several metadata dimensions (year, author, keyword, journal, and citation). External validity is strengthened by the use of the Scopus database which has international standards in the curation of scientific documents. In addition, Rstudio software has been proven to produce stable visual mapping and can be replicated in similar research. Data reliability is ensured through a systematic *data cleaning* process and the use of the entire document population as a sample, which avoids selection bias and improves the accuracy of the analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Main Findings

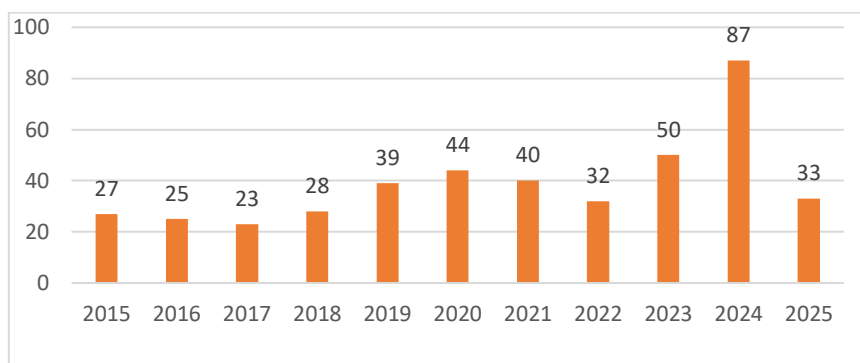### *Publication Trends (2015–2025)*

Figure 1. Documents By Year

The trend of scientific publications on gender discourse in Islamic education from 2015 to 2025 (figure 1) shows a fluctuating pattern shaped by shifts in academic focus and global agendas like the SDGs. From 2015–2017, publications were stable at 25–28 per year, reflecting limited institutional awareness and low integration of gender and Islamic educational values, before rising significantly in 2018–2020 due to the growing relevance of SDGs 4 and 5 and interdisciplinary approaches. The number declined in 2021–2022 as attention shifted during the COVID-19 pandemic, then spiked sharply in 2023, peaking in 2024 with over 90 publications—the highest in a decade—driven by global interest in gender justice-based educational transformation, increased funding, and international collaboration. In 2025, numbers dropped again, likely due to publication delays, thematic saturation, or shifting priorities, reflecting a "deadline-driven scholarship" pattern ahead of the 2030 SDG targets. This suggests not only quantitative growth but also the need to shift from descriptive studies to deeper theoretical development and a more holistic, sustainable paradigm for gender justice-based Islamic education.

The sharp rise in publications in 2024 can be attributed to several interrelated factors. These include increased international funding for SDG-related research, heightened global attention to women's access to education following restrictive policies in some Muslim-majority countries, and the approaching 2030 SDG deadline that has incentivized scholars and institutions to prioritize gender-focused studies. This surge demonstrates that academic production is influenced not only by scholarly interest but also by geopolitical and policy dynamics, underscoring the need for sustained, qualitative engagement rather than purely quantitative expansion.
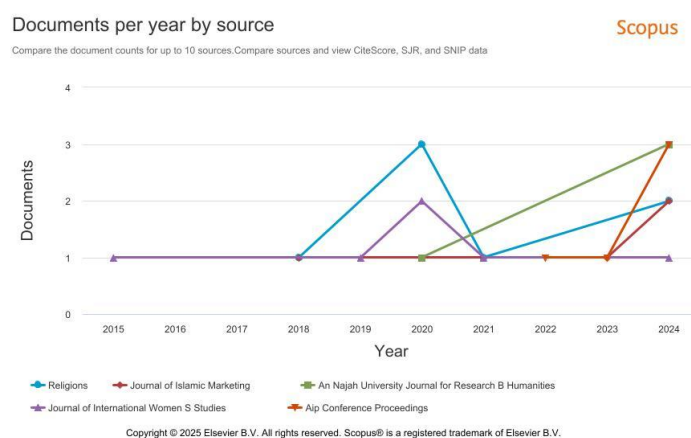
The Most Productive Journal

Figure 2. Documents by Source

Scopus data from 2015–2025 shows no single journal consistently dominating publications on gender discourse in Islamic education, reflecting both the cross-disciplinary nature of the topic and its search for a definitive "academic home." Notable contributors include *Religions*, peaking in 2020 and active until 2024 as a platform integrating religious

studies with gender issues; *An Najah University Journal for Research B Humanities*, which has grown since 2019 and peaked in 2024, signaling stronger engagement from Muslim-majority institutions; and the *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, which broadens the discussion to da'wah, social representation, and public perceptions. *AIP Conference Proceedings* played a key role in 2023–2024, showing the use of conferences to disseminate ideas, while the *Journal of International Women's Studies* reflects the entry of Islamic perspectives into global feminism discourse. This diversity points to both fragmentation and thematic flexibility, highlighting the opportunity to establish a dedicated journal for "gender in Islam" and the shift from local to international platforms. Going forward, the challenge lies in consolidating these discussions into a more focused, sustainable academic space that advances both theoretical and practical contributions to gender-equitable Islamic education.
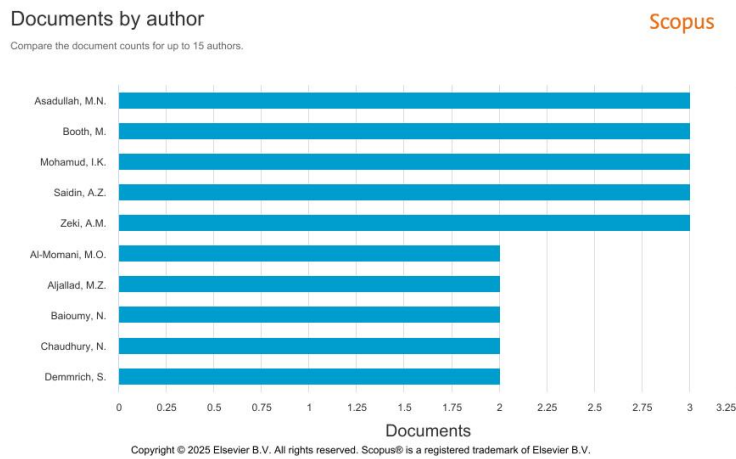
Most Active Author

Figure 3. Most Relevant Authors

Scopus data for 2015–2025 shows no single author dominating publications on gender discourse in Islamic education, with the top four—Asadullah, M.N., Booth, M., Mohamud, I.K., and Saidin, A.Z.—each producing three documents, and six others, including Zeki, A.M., Al-Momani, M.O., and Demmrich, S., contributing two each. This even distribution indicates the field is still developing, open to diverse contributions, and enriched by cross-disciplinary and cross-regional perspectives from education, Islamic studies, sociology, and gender studies. While this inclusivity fosters variety, the lack of central figures risks uncoordinated progress, highlighting the need to build stronger research networks, institutional engagement, and collaborative agendas to ensure sustained development and meaningful contributions toward SDG 4 (inclusive, quality education) and SDG 5 (gender equality).
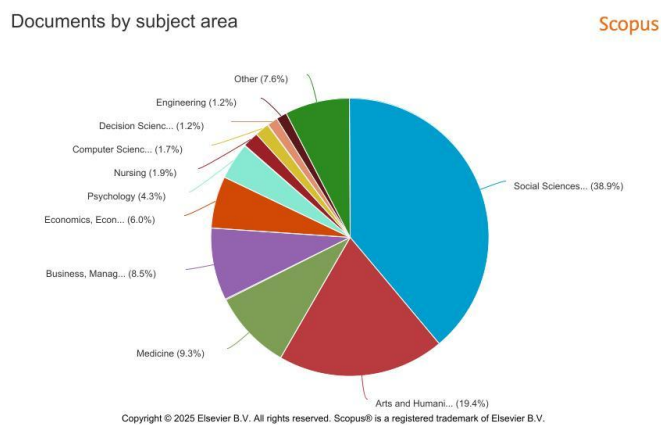
Contributions of Discipline

Figure 4. Documents by Subject Area

The study of gender discourse in Islamic education, based on the distribution of documents by field, is dominated by Social Sciences (38.9%), followed by Arts and Humanities (19.4%) and Medicine (9.3%), indicating a stronger focus on social, cultural, and human values than on technical approaches. Social Sciences frame it as a complex social construct tied to power, culture, and institutions, while Arts and Humanities emphasize philosophical and theological interpretations. Contributions from Medicine and Management/Business highlight its practical reach into health education, policy, and economic empowerment, with Psychology, Economics, and Nursing reinforcing the need for interdisciplinary analysis. Smaller inputs from Engineering, Computer Science, and Decision Science suggest emerging roles for technology and AI in promoting inclusivity. Overall, the field remains rooted in social-humanities perspectives but requires broader methodological expansion to achieve comprehensive, cross-sectoral transformation aligned with SDG 4 and SDG 5.
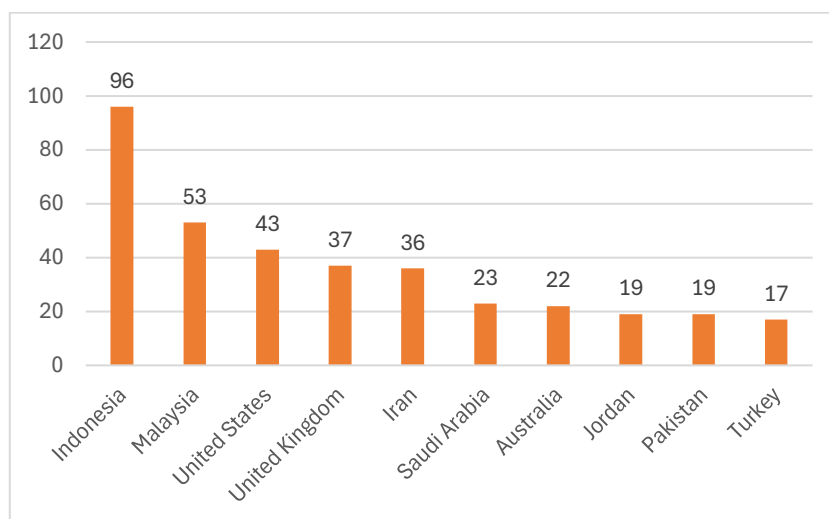
Contributions by Country

Figure 5. Documents by Country

Data on publication contributions by country shows Indonesia leading with 96 documents, far ahead of Malaysia (53), the United States (43), the United Kingdom (37), and Iran (36), highlighting Southeast Asia—especially Indonesia and Malaysia—as a major hub for literature on gender in Islamic education. Indonesia's dominance reflects its large Muslim population, extensive Islamic education system, and policies promoting reputable publications, while Malaysia plays a key regional role through policy and sociological approaches. Western countries contribute through critical, interdisciplinary research, often involving diaspora scholars, and Iran's participation reflects active theoretical engagement from the Middle East. Other contributors, including Saudi Arabia, Australia, Jordan, Pakistan, and Turkey, add diversity despite smaller outputs. This distribution shows the topic's global reach but also a disparity that calls for greater cross-regional collaboration and funding, with Indonesia well-positioned to serve as a progressive, inclusive knowledge hub aligned with SDGs 4 and 5.

The Most Influential Articles

Table 1. Most Cited Document Globally

Paper	Total Citations	TC per Year	Normalized TC
Harris-Fry H, 2017, Int J Equity Health	149	16,56	10,29
Darvishi M, 2019, Open Access Maced J Med Sci	55	7,86	6,40
Khurshid A, 2015, Gender Soc	55	5,00	4,04
Uysal N, 2020, Health Soc Care Community	47	7,83	6,15

Shome A, 2018, Int J Islam Middle East Financ Manage	47	5,88	3,43
Ruslan Aaa, 2018, Int Food Res J	44	5,50	3,21
Moazam F, 2018, Med Educ	42	5,25	3,06
Iranmanesh M, 2018, Asia Pac J Tour Res	41	5,13	2,99
Lee Jfk, 2020, Sex Cult	39	6,50	5,11
Forster G, 2015, Eur Manage J	39	3,55	2,86

Global data on the most cited documents in table 1 shows a strong focus on the intersection of health, gender, and social justice in Muslim societies or developing countries, with Harris-Fry et al. (2017) leading at 149 citations for their work on health equity in marginalized settings, underscoring the value of interdisciplinary approaches. Darvishi et al. (2019) and Khurshid (2015) follow with 55 citations each, the latter highlighting tensions between Islamic gender norms and formal education, while Uysal (2020) emphasizes community-based strategies to address inequality. All top articles appear in reputable, cross-disciplinary international journals, reflecting that integrative research bridging gender, education, health, and policy garners higher global visibility than single-focus studies. Their global scope signals that gender challenges in Islamic education are part of broader debates on social justice and human rights, offering researchers in the Islamic world an opportunity to boost citations and impact through robust, globally connected, and solution-oriented research aligned with the SDGs.

Dominant Topics in the Literature

Table 2. Topic Trends

Term	Frequency	Year (Q1)	Year (Median)	Year (Q3)
United Arab Emirates	5	2015	2016	2020
Ethnicity	5	2016	2017	2023
Islamism	14	2018	2018	2020
Bangladesh	8	2017	2018	2020
Gender Identity	6	2016	2018	2021
Psychology	11	2018	2019	2024
Medical Student	9	2017	2019	2021
Islamic Feminism	8	2016	2019	2023
Religion	29	2017	2020	2024
Islamic Education	26	2019	2020	2024

Analysis of topic trends in literature from 2015–2025 in table 2 above shows that discussions on gender in Islamic education have shifted from broad themes like "gender" or "Islam" to more contextual issues such as "Islamism" (most frequent, 14 times, peaking 2018–2020), reflecting the impact of Islamic political ideology on policies, curricula, and socio-religious narratives. "Gender identity" (2016–2021) signals a move beyond male-female equality toward identity, self-expression, and social acceptance, while geographical and ethnic keywords like "United Arab Emirates," "Bangladesh," and "ethnicity" highlight regional and cultural diversity shaping gender discourse. Most topics peaked between 2017–2021, aligning with heightened SDG attention, marking a shift toward data-driven, policy-relevant research. Overall, the trend reflects a move from theological-conservative to critical-contextual approaches that integrate ideology, identity, ethnicity, and geography, underscoring the need for interdisciplinary collaboration and curricula that are both gender-equitable and responsive to diverse local contexts.
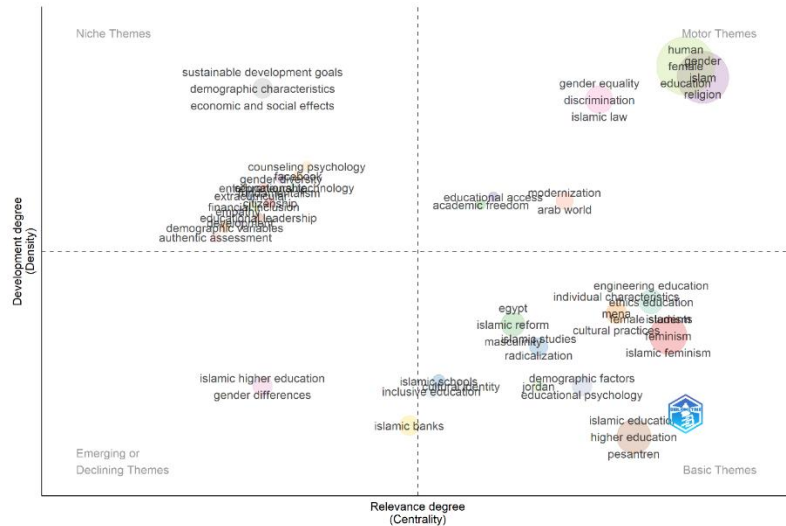
Potential Upcoming Topics

Figure 6. Thematic Map

The thematic map from bibliometric analysis highlights several emerging and basic themes with high strategic relevance to SDG 4 and SDG 5, despite limited literature and structural maturity. Key emerging topics include Islamic higher education, focusing on gender dynamics in recruitment, leadership access, and curriculum governance, and inclusive education, exploring how Islamic institutions apply principles of inclusion beyond gender to disability, identity, and socioeconomic background through an intersectional lens. Islamic feminism also holds strong potential as an epistemological foundation for substantive justice in curricula, pedagogy, and institutional structures. Transitional themes like academic freedom, modernization, and the Arab world link directly to geopolitical and ideological debates shaping gender policies, while global themes such as sustainable development goals and socio-economic effects remain under-integrated into Islamic education. Future research should strengthen these themes, aligning Islamic education with visionary, inclusive, and globally responsive approaches that expand and enrich gender discourse in the Muslim world.

Discussion

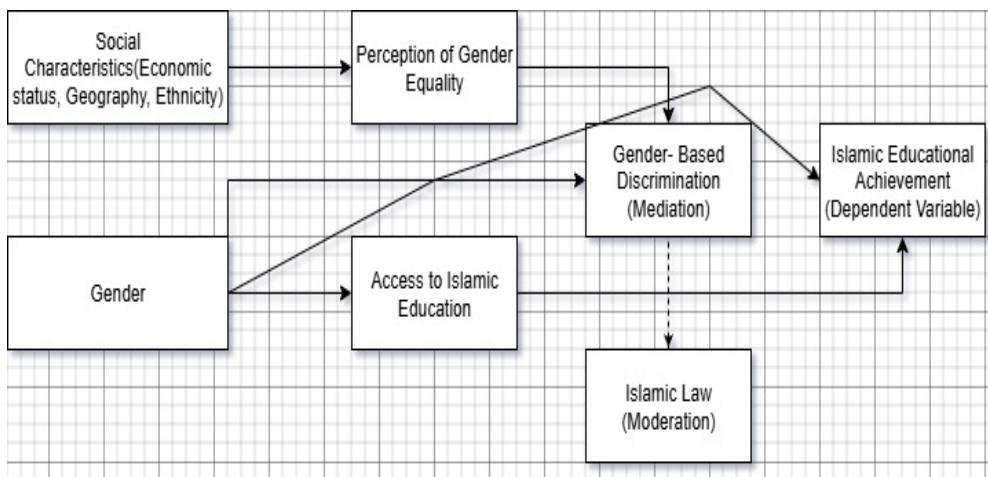*Conceptual Model and Integration of Findings*

Figure 7. Conceptual Model of Gender Equality in Islamic Education

The results of this study, both from bibliometric analysis and thematic interviews, show a causal relationship between gender variables, discrimination, interpretation of Islamic law, and Islamic educational achievement.

Bibliometric analysis confirms that *motor themes* such as *gender*, *Islam*, *education*, *religion*, *discrimination*, *gender equality*, and *Islamic law* are at the center of academic discussions, while qualitative findings provide an in-depth explanation of the mechanisms of the relationship between these variables.

Conceptually, the resulting model positions gender as the main independent variable that directly or indirectly influences the achievement of Islamic education through gender-based discrimination pathways (see figure 7). Interviews with academics, students, pesantren caregivers, gender activists, and policymakers reveal that discrimination often appears in subtle forms—from stereotypes of women's roles to institutional policies that limit women's participation in academia. A lecturer in Islamic education stated: *"In many institutions, women are indeed allowed to teach, but only in certain classes or for subjects that are considered 'in nature'. It's a subtle but deep-rooted form of discrimination."*

A pesantren caregiver adds that resistance is often wrapped up in religious interpretations: *"We follow Islamic law, but the interpretation needs to be contextualized. If you only stick to the literal, it will be difficult for women to advance in education."* In this model, the interpretation of Islamic law acts as a moderation variable that can strengthen or weaken the influence of discrimination on educational outcomes. Conservative interpretations tend to reinforce structural boundaries, while interpretations based *on sharia maqashid* are able to open up more inclusive access. One gender activist underlined this: *"Once the interpretation refers to benefits, many doors are open for women. But if the interpretation only repeats the old view, then access remains closed."*

Social characteristics variables such as economic status, geographical location, and ethnicity also affect perceptions of gender equality and access to Islamic educational institutions. Female students from rural areas confessed: *"The school exists, but it is far away. Parents sometimes do not allow girls to go to school because they are considered vulnerable or do not need to be high in school."* A more egalitarian perception of equality has implications for lower discrimination, which in turn improves educational attainment, especially for women. Adequate access, such as the establishment of women's madrassas or affirmative programs, has been empirically and statistically proven to increase the achievement index of women's groups, as recorded in EMIS data and field testimonials.

This conceptual model integrates six research hypotheses (H1–H6) and illustrates that the achievement of Islamic education is the result of a complex interaction between structural factors (access to education, social status), cultural (perception of gender equality, interpretation of Islamic law), and individual (gender identity). Thus, policy interventions must be multi-level: reforming legal interpretations, strengthening gender awareness programs, and expanding access to education that is sensitive to women's needs. This model also fills the gap in previous research by shifting the focus from mere content analysis to mapping knowledge ecosystems that reveal the mechanisms of discrimination in the context of Islamic education.

Interpretation of Results

The study's key findings not only show an increase in the number of gender-related publications in Islamic education from 2015 to 2025, but also show an interesting symptom: gender discourse in Islamic education has shifted from a fringe space to a middle space in the global Muslim academic ecosystem. The significant surge in 2023–2024 is not merely a sign of growing scientific interest, but reflects the *collective epistemic anxiety* about inequality that is constantly legitimized by a patriarchal education system [39], [40].

Nevertheless, trend fluctuations—especially the sharp decline in 2025—raise critical questions: is this exploration of discourse really born out of an established epistemological consciousness, or simply as a pragmatic response to external impulses such as the 2030 SDGs targets? If publication increases simply because of institutional needs (accreditation, publication incentives, etc.), then we are facing what might be termed "bibliometric activism"—the

production of knowledge that appears to be progressive, but lacks the power of substantive transformation in the real world of Islamic education.

These thematic insights align with the bibliometric findings, which show a notable increase in the frequency of keywords such as *Islamic feminism* and *gender identity* beginning in 2020 and peaking between 2023 and 2024. This parallel growth highlights a shift in the global academic community toward more nuanced and contextual understandings of gender equality in Islamic education. For instance, the rise of *Islamic feminism* in recent literature corresponds with broader discussions about reconstructing Islamic curricula to promote substantive justice rather than mere symbolic inclusion. Similarly, the emerging discourse on *gender identity* reflects a move beyond binary gender debates toward more inclusive policies that address diverse identities in multicultural educational settings.

Deeper, the structure of the results shows that this discourse is still very fragmented. There are no dominant actors, no specialized journals, no major theories. This opens up a wide range of participation, but at the same time shows that we are still in the "surface exploration" stage. In other words, the study has not yet reached the "depth of interpretation" of the theological, historical, and cultural roots of gender inequality in Islamic education. We need more than just trend charts; We need the dismantling of the educational paradigm itself.

Interestingly, the results of this study also give rise to the phenomenon *of geographical dislocation of discourse*: Indonesia and Malaysia are the centers of the production of Islamic-gendered knowledge, not the Middle East which has been constructed as the center of Islamic authority. This shows the occurrence of epistemic decentralization—where Muslim-majority countries in Southeast Asia are emerging as new actors in shaping Islamic-based gender justice narratives.

Thus, the interpretation of the results of this study leads us to the understanding that although the gender discourse in Islamic education shows a trend of quantitative growth, qualitatively it is still in the process of "finding form". This study still requires methodological breakthroughs, theoretical consolidation, and courage to challenge the old dogma—so that Islamic education is not only a vehicle for the reproduction of patriarchal values, but really a space for radical liberation and humanization.

Comparison with Previous Studies

If we place the results of this study in the landscape of previous studies, what is immediately apparent is not only thematic consistency, but also a radical methodological shift. Studies such as Hairiyah et al. (2024) and Wicaksono et al. (2021) underscore how patriarchal narratives still dominate Islamic textbooks and educational structures—with a strong focus on content analysis and normative approaches [7], [12]. But this study comes with a different offer: it maps the trends and epistemic forces of hundreds of literature systematically through bibliometrics. It is a transition from narrative to structure, from content to ecosystem.

In previous studies, gender issues have often been positioned as *moral issues* or *social issues*, but this study shows that it has become an *issue of knowledge infrastructure*. Where we used to be busy discussing "what the text says," we can now ask "who spoke, where, and how often"—and more importantly, "what was not said and by whom." Yusuf's study (2020), for example, criticized the lack of integration of equality values in Islamic education in Africa [29]. However, the criticism is case-based and local. This research expands the scope by revealing that the new geographical dominance comes from Southeast Asia, with Indonesia as the epicenter of Islamic-gender literacy. This contradicts the expectations of many early studies that predicted that a center of Islamic-based gender reform would emerge from the Middle East. In other words, global literature has undergone a "polar discourse shift" to the Global South.

Thematically, previous studies have often addressed the classic dichotomy: male vs. female, text vs. interpretation, conservative vs. progressive. Meanwhile, the results of this study show the emergence of more complex themes such as *Islamic feminism*, *gender identity*, and *inclusive education*—which indicate a transformation from structural

criticism to epistemological criticism. This is not just a shift in terminology, but also a way of thinking: from norm reform to paradigm reconstruction.

However, there is also a consistent gap: most studies (including this one) still do not touch the realm of educational practice directly—classroom curriculum, teacher-student relations, or the politics of Islamic educational institutions in micro. This shows that there is still an "epistemic chasm" between discourse and praxis that has not been bridged. In other words, we are getting smarter in theory, but not yet radical enough in action. Overall, compared to previous studies, this study is more systemic, broader, and more reflective. However, she also pointed out that gender awareness in Islamic education is still segmental, not yet organized into a structured academic movement.

Implications of the Findings

The findings of this study show that gender discourse in Islamic education is no longer just a fringe topic in Islamic literature, but has become an important arena for epistemic and ideological battles. Theoretically, this study has disrupted the establishment of traditional narratives that have long considered patriarchy to be a "natural" part of Islamic teachings. Drawing on a bibliometric map over a decade, this study shows the tendency of alternative approaches such as *Islamic feminism* and faith-based intersectional approaches to emerge. This approach not only highlights gender relations in the text, but also challenges who has the authority to interpret Islam in an educational context. The implications are enormous: Islamic education is not enough to simply insert women's names into the curriculum, but must be fundamentally reconstructed through a paradigm of substantive justice, not mere cosmetic representation.

Furthermore, these findings highlight the potential of Islamic education to act as a platform for democratic participation and multicultural harmony. By challenging patriarchal structures and promoting equitable representation, Islamic educational institutions can become arenas where diverse voices are heard and respected. This approach not only addresses gender disparities but also fosters critical thinking and civic engagement, both of which are essential for nurturing democratic values and social cohesion in Muslim-majority contexts.

From a practical point of view, the finding that there is no dominance of certain figures or journals in this topic implies a fluid and open field of discourse. This can be seen as an opportunity for the democratization of knowledge, but at the same time it shows the absence of a centralized force capable of driving concrete changes at the level of curriculum, teacher training, or learning design. Without dominant actors who dare to voice transformation decisively, there is a risk that the developing literature only stops in academic spaces, not reaching the classes where that inequality is reproduced every day. Even more than that, Islamic education has the potential to become a space for co-optation—where gender justice discourse is only used as a rhetorical complement to gain accreditation or funding, not as a tool of structural liberation.

From a policy perspective, the study shows that global agendas such as SDG 4 and SDG 5 have been important catalysts in driving knowledge production. However, the surge in "deadline-driven" publications ahead of 2030 implies that gender equality is still often interpreted administratively rather than ideologically. This raises the irony: the language of equality is used, but the practice remains conservative and resistive to change. In order for policy to be truly transformational, it must dare to touch the root of the problem: the distribution of power in Islamic educational institutions, the relationship between religious interpretation and social control, and the inequality of representation in decision-making.

Finally, the contribution of this research to the field of science is very significant because it indirectly encourages the decolonization of Islamic epistemology from within. Islamic education is no longer enough to be read as a normative system, but must be understood as a political arena of knowledge—where narratives, authority, and value structures are fought. By uncovering the diversity of themes and approaches from hundreds of scholarly documents, the study

offers the foundation for the birth of a more spiritual, critical, and equitable Islamic education. But for that to happen, we need more than just theory. We need intellectual courage to challenge, dismantle, and rebuild Islamic education as a space that truly humanizes all—not just men, not just the elite, but all.

Research Limitations

This study has several limitations that need to be noted. First, because it uses a bibliometric approach, the main focus of this study is on publication trends and patterns, not on an in-depth analysis of the content or social context of each article. Second, data were drawn from a single database (Scopus), so unindexed literature—especially those written in local languages or published by non-international institutions—was most likely unaffordable in this analysis. Third, this study does not examine external factors such as national education policies or social dynamics that can influence the production and direction of gender discourse. Nevertheless, the bibliometric approach still makes an important contribution in mapping the scientific landscape broadly and systematically, which can be the basis for further research with a qualitative or contextual approach.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study shows that gender discourse in Islamic education during the period 2015–2025 has experienced significant development. Based on a bibliometric analysis of 428 documents, publication trends show a consistent increase since 2019, with the peak of productivity occurring in 2021. This indicates a growing academic awareness of the importance of integrating gender equality values in the Islamic education system, in line with the global agenda of SDG 4 and SDG 5. Although no single journal is predominantly a publication forum, the wide distribution of articles in various multidisciplinary journals indicates that this issue has cross-disciplinary relevance and continues to evolve in an open academic ecosystem. Furthermore, the author's contribution to this literature is even in the absence of individual dominance, reflecting a collaborative ecosystem that promises to strengthen scientific networks. The range of disciplines is broad, with a focus on social sciences, humanities, education, and even health and management. From a geographical perspective, Indonesia leads in publications volume, followed by Malaysia, the US, the UK, and Iran. This shows that Southeast Asia is an intellectual hub for gender discourse as well as Islamic education—both in scholarly output as well as the local context's importance.

Most impactful within this body of literature are gender issues integrated with health and social development; they are published in reputable journals and receive the most citations. The dominating overarching themes covered within this area of literature include debate regarding equality, discrimination, education under Islamic law along with identity which suggest that there has been progress toward more contextual rather than normative discussions. Meanwhile, topics such as Islamic higher education or inclusive education—and even Islamic feminism—though still nascent hold promise for further academic exploration. Thus, it can be concluded that the academic literature on gender in Islamic education has undergone significant evolution in the last decade. In addition to strengthening the understanding of dominant issues, this research also opens up space for the exploration of new themes that are more reflective and contextual. These results are expected to be a foothold in designing research agendas, education policies, and curriculum development that are more gender-equitable, inclusive, and contribute to the achievement of sustainable development goals globally and locally.

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Author Contribution

All authors contributed significantly to the conception, design, analysis, and preparation of this manuscript. Muhammad Ikhlasul Amala led the conceptual framework development, conducted bibliometric data analysis using RStudio, and drafted the initial manuscript. Sahensyah Luthfi contributed to the literature review, data validation, and refinement of the methodological framework. Kayyis Abiy Auliya assisted in data visualization, interpretation of findings, and final editing of the manuscript. All authors discussed the results, provided critical revisions for intellectual content, and approved the final version of the paper for publication.

Conflicts of Interest

Authors declare no conflict of interest.

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