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## Trends in Contemporary Qur'anic Exegesis: A Bibliometric Analysis of Its Alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

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### Abstract

**Objective:** This study investigates the intellectual trends in contemporary Qur'anic exegesis and examines their alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). **Theoretical framework:** Grounded in the theoretical framework of Islamic ethics, particularly the concepts of adl (justice), khilafah (stewardship), maslahah (public welfare), and environmental responsibility, the research explores how Qur'anic interpretation contributes to contemporary sustainability discourse. **Literature review:** Previous studies have discussed Qur'anic perspectives on environmental ethics, social justice, and sustainable development separately; however, comprehensive bibliometric evidence demonstrating the evolution, knowledge structure, and scholarly networks connecting Qur'anic exegesis with the SDGs remains limited. **Methods:** To address this gap, this study employs a bibliometric approach using 356 Scopus-indexed publications published between 2019 and 2026. Data were analyzed through citation analysis, co-authorship networks, keyword co-occurrence mapping, and thematic visualization using bibliometric software to identify influential authors, institutions, countries, research clusters, and emerging themes. **Results:** The findings reveal a significant increase in publications linking Qur'anic exegesis with sustainability issues, particularly environmental stewardship, climate responsibility, social justice, ethical governance, and equitable resource management. Nevertheless, collaboration among scholars remains relatively fragmented, and the integration of classical and contemporary Qur'anic interpretations with SDG frameworks is still underdeveloped. These findings indicate considerable opportunities for interdisciplinary research bridging Islamic studies, sustainability science, and public policy. **Implications:** The study implies that policymakers, educators, religious institutions, and Muslim communities can utilize Qur'anic ethical principles to strengthen sustainable development initiatives and promote socially inclusive environmental governance. The originality of this research lies in providing the first comprehensive bibliometric mapping specifically examining the convergence between contemporary Qur'anic exegesis and the SDGs. **Novelty:** Its novelty resides in integrating bibliometric techniques with Islamic theological analysis to reveal emerging research patterns, collaboration networks, thematic evolution, and practical implications for advancing faith-based contributions to global sustainable development agendas.

**Keywords:** qur'anic exegesis, sustainable development goals (sdgs), islamic ethics, bibliometric analysis, sustainability.

### INTRODUCTION

A crucial and widely acknowledged objective, sustainable development necessitates integrated solutions that strike a balance between social fairness, economic prosperity, and environmental preservation. With the Qur'an having a key role in forming ethical frameworks,

religious and cultural values have a big impact on how communities approach sustainability in many societies. The ideals of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN are closely aligned with the teachings of the Qur'an, which provide deep insights into social justice, equitable distribution, and the care of natural resources [1], [2], [3], [4], [5], [6].

The Qur'an's ethical teachings are becoming more widely acknowledged, but little is known about how directly they relate to contemporary sustainability frameworks, especially the SDGs. Few studies have carefully looked at how modern exegesis can be in line with the SDGs, despite the fact that prior research has addressed environmental ethics in Islam. This study gap offers a chance to more systematically and meaningfully link Qur'anic ideas with international endeavours. The absence of a thorough framework that combines Qur'anic interpretation with sustainable development methods is the main problem this study attempts to solve. Important religious insights are underutilised in tackling today's global issues in the absence of this congruence [7], [8], [9], [10], [11]. Therefore, the primary objective of this study is to explore how modern interpretations of the Qur'an can contribute to discussions on sustainability, especially in relation to the SDGs.

The purpose of this study is to analyse the Qur'anic ethical teachings on justice and resource management, look into how well they correlate with the SDGs, and offer a methodological framework for modern exegesis that connects these teachings to the objectives of global sustainability. In addition to providing useful insights for policymakers, religious leaders, and development practitioners looking to incorporate religious principles into sustainability initiatives, this study will contribute to the advancement of academic understanding by bridging the gap between Islamic studies and sustainable development, ultimately helping to achieve the SDGs [12], [13], [14]. The following research questions will guide this study:

1. What role may modern interpretations of the Qur'an play in the international conversation on sustainable development?
2. How do the fairness and equitable teachings of the Qur'an relate to the tenets of the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN?
3. How may contemporary strategies for environmental sustainability be informed by the Qur'anic idea of khilafah (stewardship)?
4. What approaches of Qur'anic exegesis can be modified to tackle contemporary worldwide issues like social inequity and climate change?
5. How do the SDGs for social justice and poverty alleviation relate to Islamic ethical principles for resource management and income distribution?
6. How can frameworks for policies intended to achieve sustainable development incorporate the lessons of the Qur'an on fairness and social justice?
7. How can Islamic communities use their reinterpretation of religious scriptures to further the SDGs, especially in tackling the world's environmental issues?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Contemporary Qur'anic exegesis has increasingly expanded beyond its traditional theological orientation to engage with contemporary global challenges, including environmental sustainability, social justice, economic equity, and ethical governance. This development reflects a broader tendency among Muslim scholars to reinterpret Qur'anic teachings in response to changing social, political, and ecological realities. Rather than limiting interpretation to textual analysis, contemporary exegesis emphasizes contextual understanding and practical application, positioning the Qur'an as a dynamic source of guidance for addressing modern societal issues. The concept of sustainable development shares several ethical foundations with Islamic teachings. Principles such as justice (adl), stewardship (khilafah), public welfare (maslahah), moderation (wasatiyyah), and responsibility toward future generations provide a normative framework that resonates with

the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Consequently, recent scholarly discussions have increasingly explored how Qur'anic values may contribute to environmental conservation, poverty alleviation, gender equity, peaceful societies, and responsible resource management [12], [13], [14].

Despite this growing scholarly interest, existing studies remain fragmented across different disciplines. Research commonly focuses on specific sustainability themes or individual Qur'anic concepts without providing a comprehensive understanding of the broader intellectual landscape. Furthermore, previous investigations primarily employ qualitative approaches, including thematic interpretation, conceptual analysis, and case studies, while quantitative assessments of publication trends, collaboration networks, influential authors, and thematic evolution remain relatively scarce. The absence of systematic bibliometric mapping limits understanding of how research on Qur'anic exegesis and sustainable development has evolved internationally. It also restricts the identification of emerging research directions, interdisciplinary collaboration patterns, and knowledge gaps requiring further investigation. Therefore, a bibliometric review offers a comprehensive perspective by revealing the structure, dynamics, and development of this rapidly growing field. Such an approach provides valuable insights into the convergence of Islamic studies and sustainability research while establishing a stronger foundation for future interdisciplinary scholarship and policy-oriented research [12], [13], [14].

## METHODOLOGY

This study examines current trends and advancements in Qur'anic exegesis and how they relate to sustainable development using a bibliometric approach. The pertinent data for this analysis was gathered from the Scopus database, which is renowned for its worldwide coverage and scholarly integrity. Title-Abs-Key (contemporary exegesis), Title-Abs-Key (Qur'an), Or Title-Abs-Key (sustainable development) were the keywords used in the first search. Initially, 686,492 documents from a variety of publishing kinds were found through the search. The dataset was refined using a number of filters. An emphasis on recent research was ensured by selecting publications from 2019 to 2026. To further guarantee the papers' applicability to the cultural and interpretive facets of Qur'anic exegesis, the search was restricted to publications in the "Arts" subject area. Specific terms like "Qur'an," "Sustainable Development Goals," and "Exegesis" were used as additional filters, concentrating the search on papers that specifically addressed these topics [15], [16], [17], [18], [19]. Additionally, only papers (DOCTYPE: "ar") authored in English (Limit-To Language: "English") and published in respectable journals (PUBSTAGE: "final") were included in the dataset after the filtering procedure. Following the application of these filters, 356 documents were included in the final dataset for additional examination.

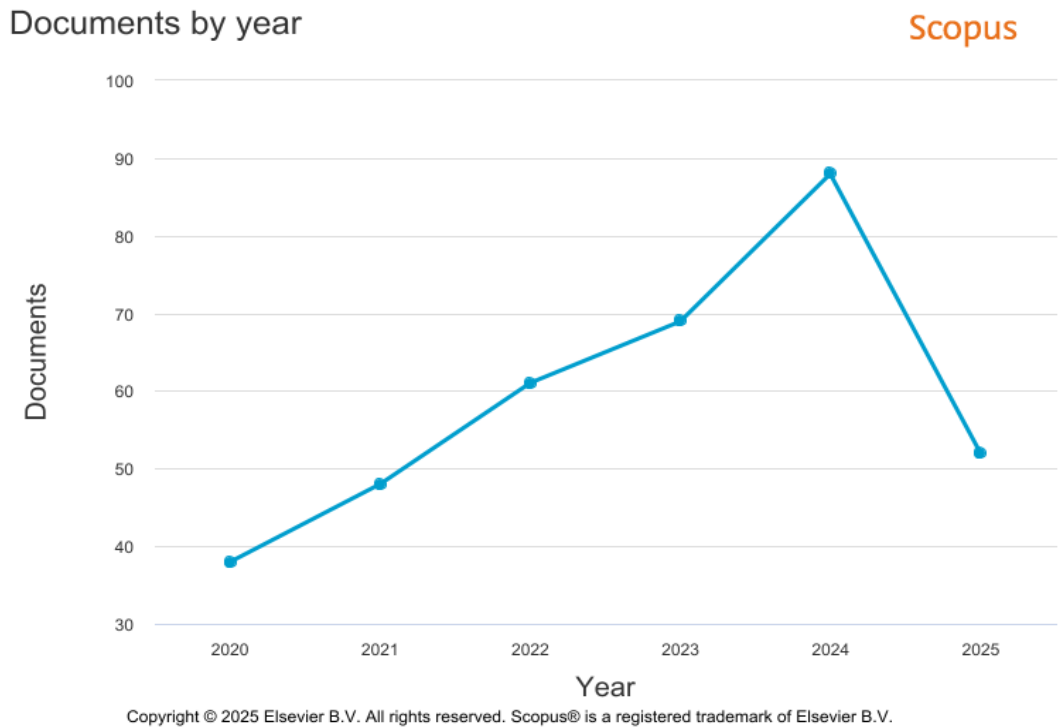
R software and Biblioshiny tools were used to process the data, allowing for citation analysis, keyword network analysis, and bibliometric visualisations. These resources aided in the identification of significant literary trends, well-known writers, cooperative patterns, and new subjects at the nexus of sustainable development and modern Qur'anic interpretation. Insights into the theoretical and practical contributions of Qur'anic interpretation in tackling current world issues are provided by this technique, which offers a thorough assessment of the study field [21], [22].

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The bibliometric analysis's findings, which are based on a review of literature that is indexed by Scopus, offer a thorough summary of the major themes and determinants in cultural studies. The results show important trends in the number of publications, author contributions, and topic advancements in the discipline. In addition to taking into account the socio-political and economic circumstances that may have influenced these patterns, this debate explores the

relevance of these trends, looking at how they represent larger changes in cultural studies and their implications for future research.

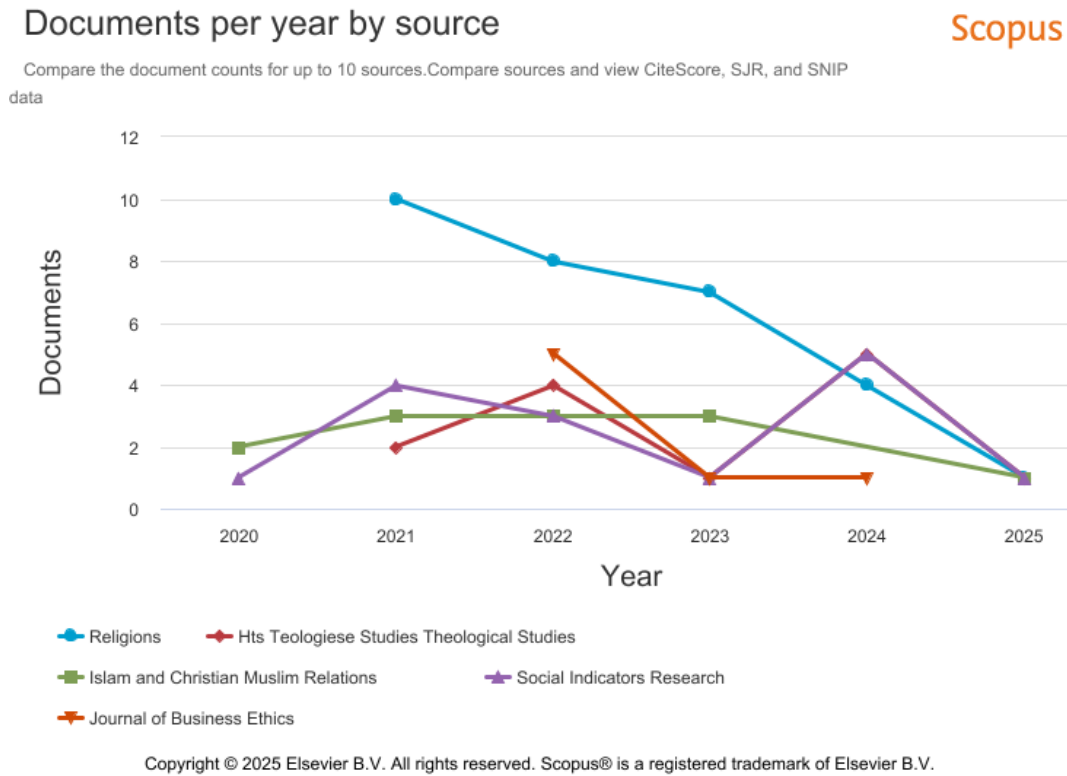
### Trends in Publications per Year



**Figure 1. Publication Trends per Year**

Figure 1 illustrates the publication trends per year from 2020 to 2025 based on the Scopus database. Publications increased steadily between 2020 and 2024, with a notable spike in 2024 and a notable drop in 2025, according to the data. About 40 documents were released in 2020, which was a comparatively small quantity. By 2022, this number had progressively grown to about 60. In 2023, the growth rate accelerated and reached 70 publications. A significant increase in research output was shown by the peak in 2024, when there were over 90 publications. However, in 2025, the number of documents decreased back to roughly 50, representing a substantial fall compared to the previous year. Many socio-political and economic variables are responsible for this 2025 drop. For example, the decrease in publishing output may have been caused by global events such as the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, changes in academic funding, or shifts in academic focus. These developments may also have been impacted by a post-peak reduction in activity or shifts in scholarly emphasis. A more nuanced reading of the data is possible when these elements are understood in the larger context of the international academic environment [23], [24], [25].

## Most Productive Journals



**Figure 2. Document per year by source**

The number of documents published annually by various sources between 2020 and 2025 is shown in Figure 2. Religions, HTS Teologiese Studies, Theological Studies, Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, Social Indicators Research, and the Journal of Business Ethics are among the sources that are compared. Significant variations in the quantity of documents released by various sources over time are depicted in the graph. Religion was the primary source from 2020 to 2024, although its output of documents steadily decreased until 2024, when it peaked at about 10 documents. HTS Teologiese Studies Theological Studies displayed an increase in document output until 2023, with a sharp decline afterward. Conversely, Islam and Christian Muslim Relations showed a relatively stable trend in the number of publications, fluctuating slightly but remaining consistent compared to the other sources [26][27][28][29][30].

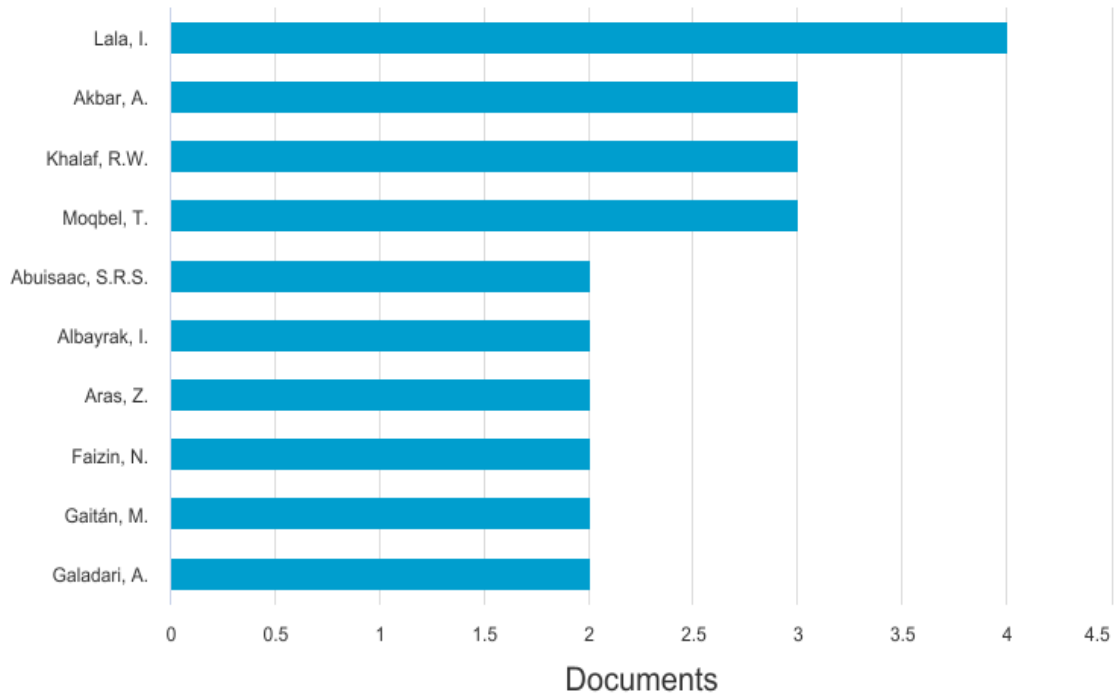
The development paths of the Journal of Business Ethics and Social Indicators Research were different; the former saw an increase in publications around 2023, while the latter displayed steady but lower publication counts in comparison to the other sources. A decrease in activity or interest within these domains is suggested by the overall drop in papers from 2024 to 2025 across various sources, which could be the result of changes in academic focus, shifting publication trends, or variations in external research funding. In addition to particular institutional changes or changing academic priorities, this tendency might also be impacted by more general socioeconomic changes [31], [32].

## Most Active Authors and Affiliations

### Documents by author

Scopus

Compare the document counts for up to 15 authors.



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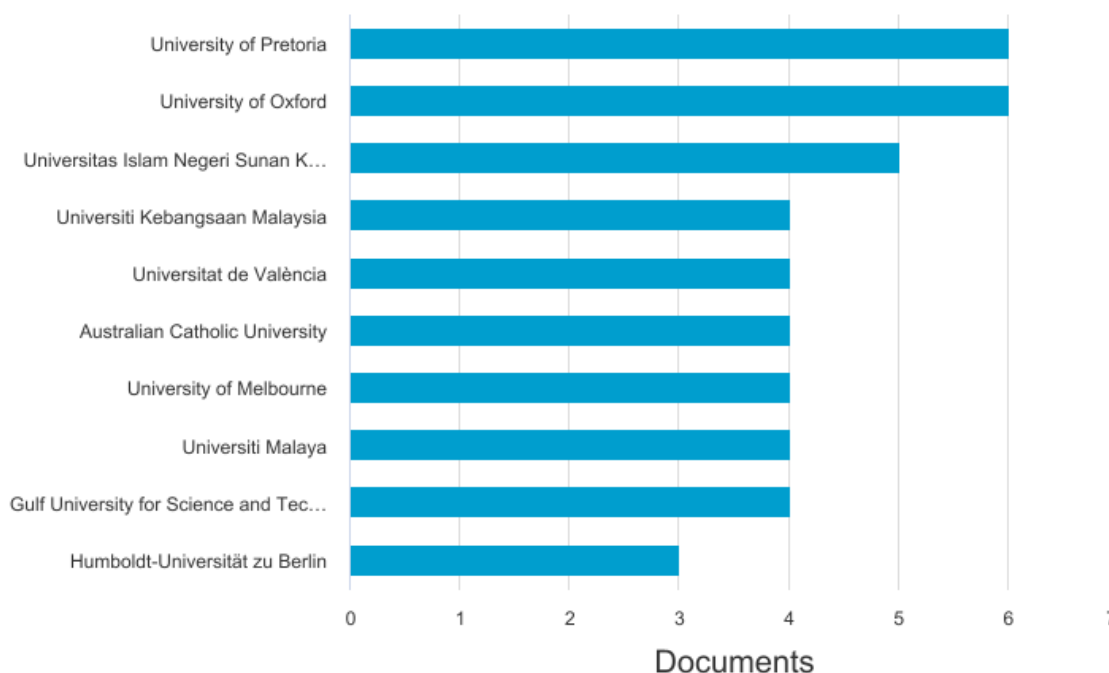
**Figure 3. Documents by the Authors**

Figure 3 displays the number of documents published by various authors, highlighting the top contributors in terms of publication volume. The data shows that Lala, I. leads the list with the highest number of documents, followed by Akbar, A., Khalaf, R.W., and Moqbel, T., each contributing a significant number of publications. Other authors, such as Abuisaac, S.R.S., Albayrak, I., Aras, Z., Faizin, N., Gaitán, M., and Galadari, A., contributed fewer publications, with counts ranging from 1.5 to just under 3 documents [33], [34], [35], [36], [37], [38], [39], [40]. This distribution suggests that Lala, I. is the most prolific author, potentially indicating their leading role in the research area. The dominance of a few authors in the dataset may reflect a concentration of expertise or leadership within this field. However, the diverse set of contributors also indicates a collaborative and evolving research landscape, highlighting the interdisciplinary nature of the field.

## Documents by affiliation

Scopus

Compare the document counts for up to 15 affiliations.



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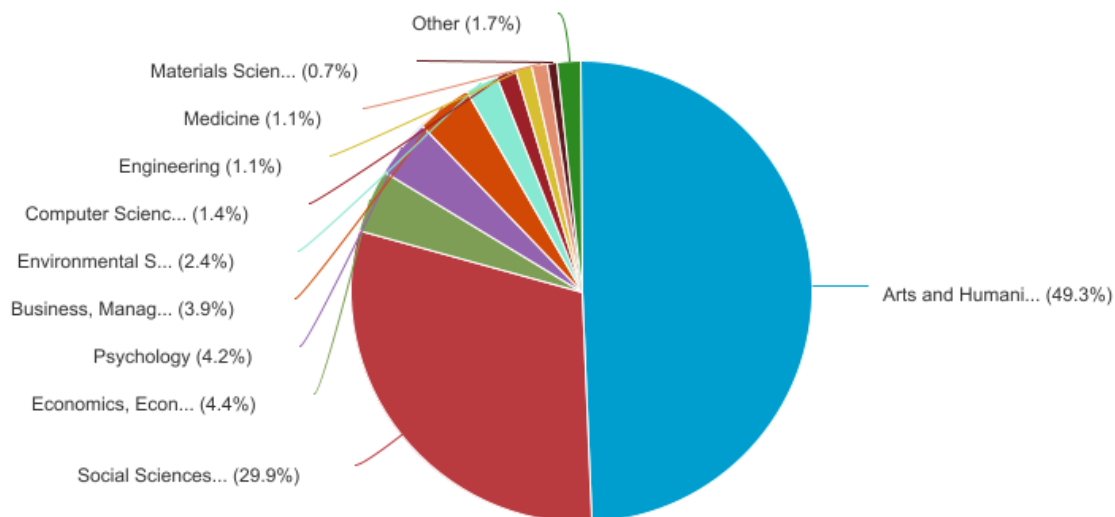
**Figure 4. Document by affiliation**

Figure 4 presents the number of documents published by various academic institutions, highlighting the leading affiliations in terms of publication volume. The University of Pretoria stands out as the most prolific institution, followed closely by the University of Oxford, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga (Indonesia), and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, each contributing a notable number of publications. This distribution underscores the strong academic presence of the University of Pretoria and University of Oxford in this research area. It also reflects the diversity and global reach of the research community, with significant contributions from institutions across Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. These trends may be influenced by regional research funding, institutional priorities, and international collaborations [41], [42], [43].

## Contributing Disciplines

### Documents by subject area

Scopus



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**Figure 5. Document by Subject Area**

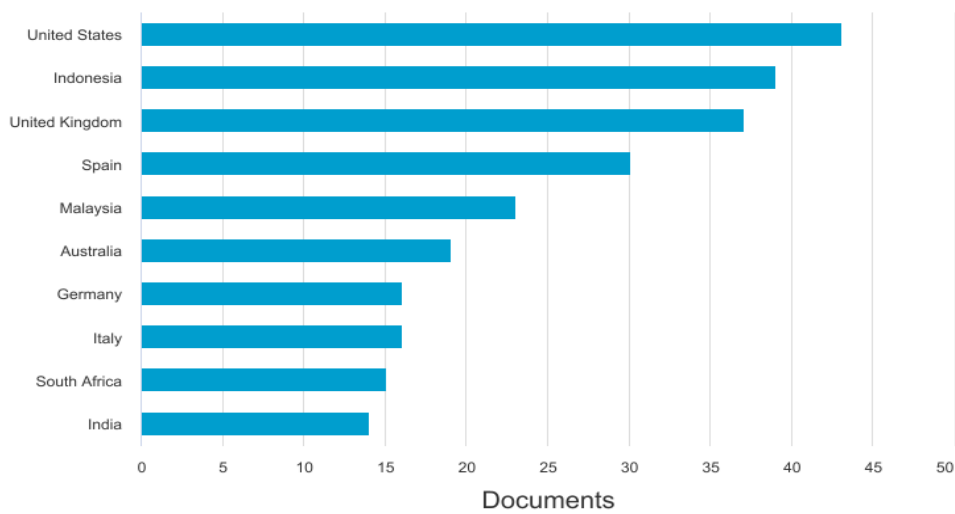
Figure 5 displays the distribution of documents by subject area, based on the Scopus database. A significant proportion of the documents, nearly 49.3%, fall under the category of Arts and Humanities, indicating that this field is the dominant subject area in the dataset. The other subject areas include Social Sciences (29.9%), Economics and Economics-related subjects (4.4%), Psychology (4.2%), and Business and Management (3.9%). This distribution reveals a strong focus on Arts and Humanities in the academic publications, with other fields like Social Sciences contributing significantly. The smaller contributions from technical fields like Engineering and Medicine suggest that the research area is more focused on social sciences and humanities than on medical or technical sciences. This could reflect the broader cultural and societal focus of the research, where social impacts, sustainability, and human development are more central [44], [45], [46], [47].

## Major Contributing Countries and International Collaboration

### Documents by country or territory

Scopus

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



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Figure 6. Document by country

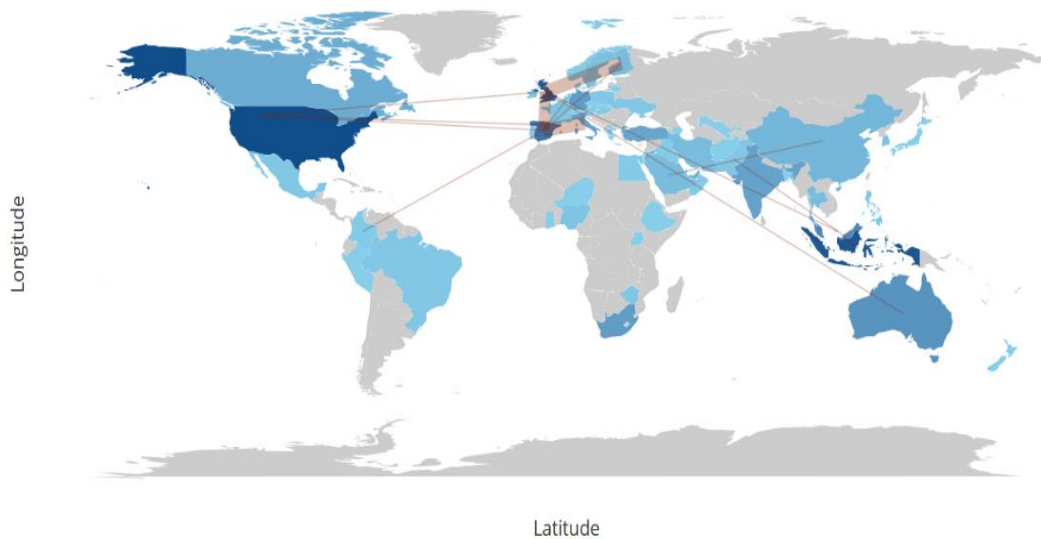
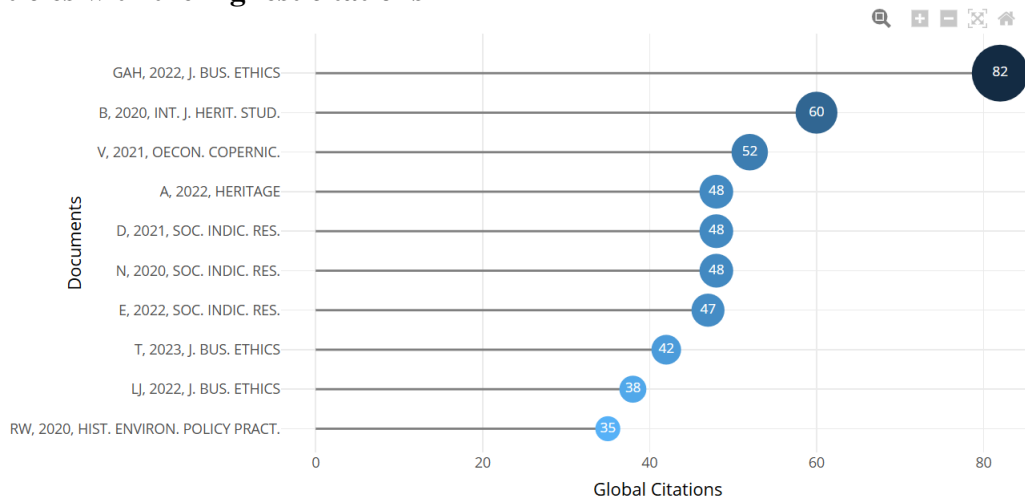


Figure 7. Documents by International Collaboration

Figures 6 and 7 together provide a comprehensive view of the geographical distribution of publications and international collaborations in the dataset. Figure 6 presents the number of documents published by country or territory, showcasing a global distribution of research activity. The United States leads with the highest number of documents, followed by Indonesia, the United Kingdom, and Spain. Other contributors include Malaysia, Australia, Germany, Italy, South Africa, and India, each with varying publication outputs, indicating global interest in the research area. Figure 7 highlights the countries that have collaborated the most in publishing documents. Countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, and

Spain show strong collaboration ties, particularly in Europe, North America, and Asia. This suggests that international collaborations are a key feature of the research landscape, with countries that lead in publication output also fostering cross-border cooperation [48], [49], [50], [51].

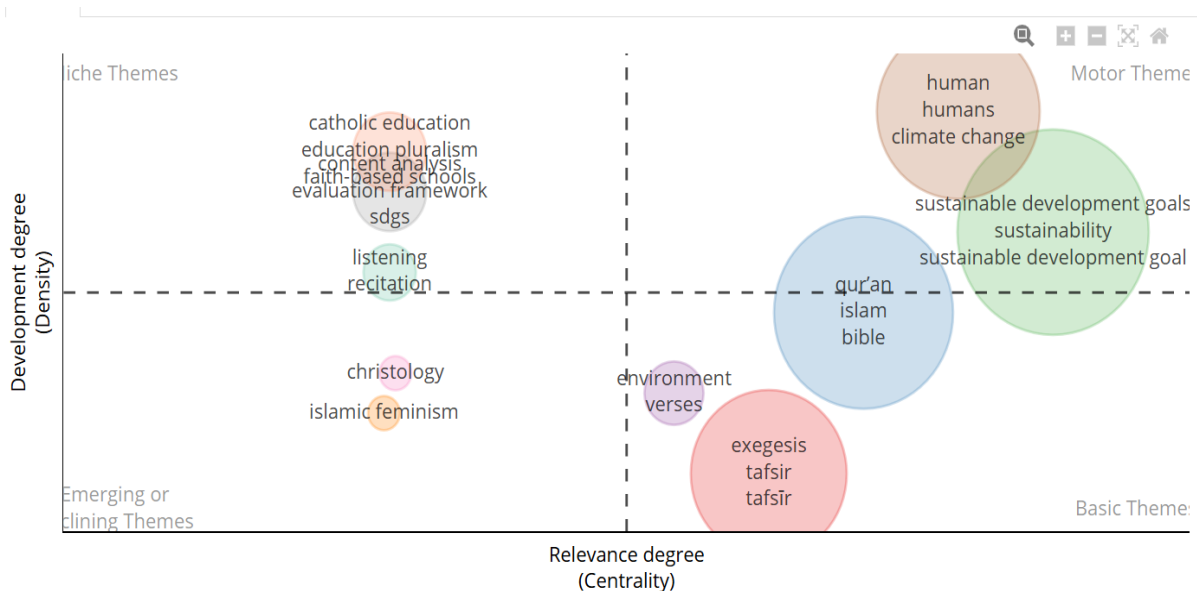
### Articles with the highest citations



**Figure 8. Most Globally Cited Documents**

Figure 8 presents the most globally cited documents based on their number of global citations and the number of documents published. The chart shows that documents published in journals like Journal of Business Ethics and International Journal of Heritage Studies have the highest citations, indicating their substantial impact on the field. This highlights the importance of citation count as an indicator of scholarly influence and demonstrates the key contributions of these articles in shaping the academic discourse [52], [53].

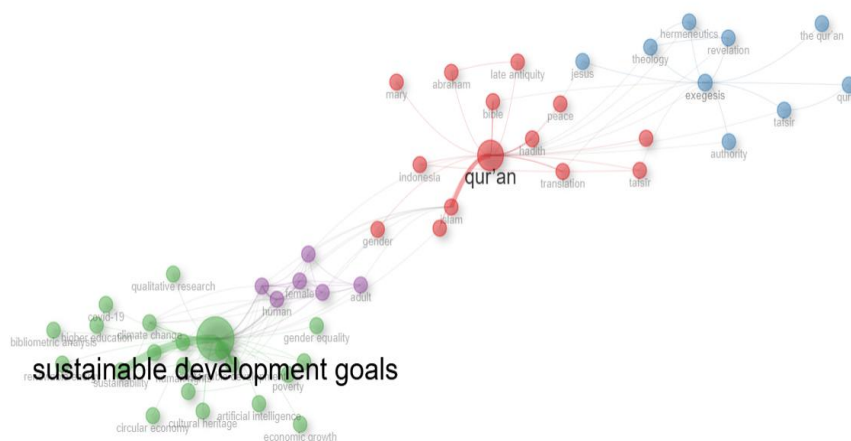
### Current Key Research Topics and Future Trends



**Figure 9. Thematic Map**

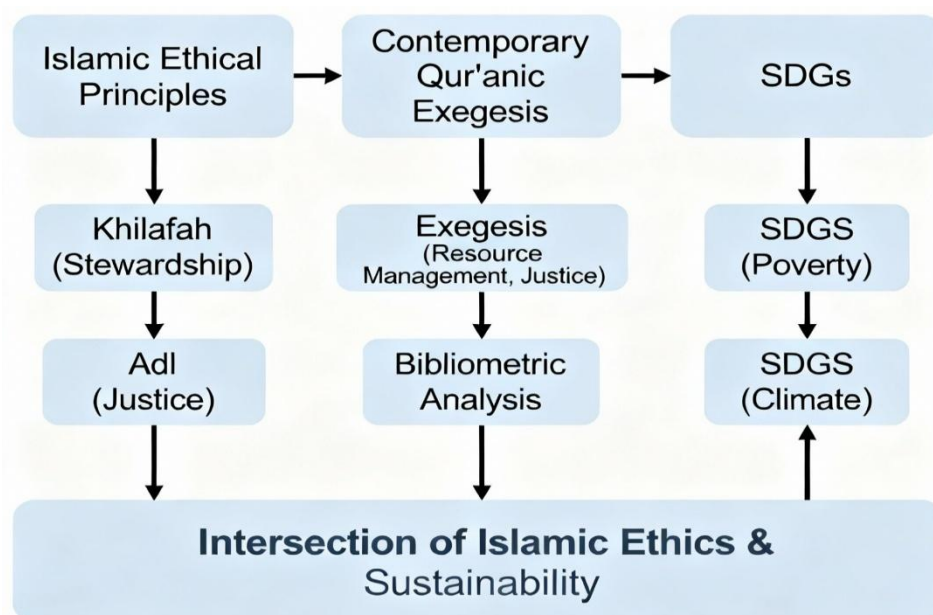
Based on the arrangement of different themes, the Current Key Research Topics and Future Trends can be deduced from Figure 9 (thematic map). The current major study issues are represented by the themes in the Motor Themes quadrant, which include human, climate

change, sustainability, and sustainable development goals. These themes play a crucial part in the continuing scholarly discussions within the dataset, as evidenced by their high level of relevance and development. On the other hand, themes like Catholic education, education pluralism, and SDGs that are located in the Emerging or Declining Themes quadrant represent possible future developments. Despite their slow development, these themes are becoming more and more relevant, and they might continue to develop and gain significance over the next several years. Thus, the thematic map effectively highlights the current focal points of research as well as emerging areas that could shape future academic directions [54], [55], [56].



**Figure 10. Keyword Co-occurrence Network**

A Keyword Co-occurrence Network, which illustrates the connections between different keywords in the dataset, is shown in Figure 10. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are linked to terms like economic growth, climate change, qualitative research, and the circular economy, are at the centre of the network and reflect the growing interest in sustainability and related fields of study. The network also highlights the significant presence of Islamic studies and religious themes in the dataset, with the Quran's theme playing a vital role and being strongly related to keywords like hadith, exegesis, theology, and revelation. Furthermore, terms like “human,” “gender equality,” and “poverty” group together, indicating the substantial focus on social sciences and human development subjects, especially those associated with the SDGs. The network further reveals connections between the Quran and biblical studies, with terms such as Mary, Abraham, and Jesus appearing together, indicating a scholarly exploration of interfaith themes. This co-occurrence network effectively illustrates the interconnectedness of themes across different disciplines, showing how religious studies, social sciences, and sustainable development intersect within the research [56], [57], [58], [59], [60], [61], [62].



**Figure 11. Conceptual Framework**

The relationship between the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Islamic ethical concepts, particularly khilafah (stewardship) and adl (justice), is graphically depicted by this conceptual framework. Particularly in areas with a majority of Muslims, the framework provides useful insights into how Islamic teachings might add to talks about global sustainability. Future study and implementation in local communities and policy-making environments will benefit from this systematic approach to the incorporation of theological ideas into policy frameworks.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between modern Qur'anic interpretation and sustainable development, emphasising how Islamic morality might support international sustainability initiatives. Through bibliometric analysis of 356 pertinent publications, this study identified important patterns in the expanding corpus of literature linking sustainability with Qur'anic teachings. The results highlight the potential of Qur'anic exegesis to solve urgent global issues like poverty, injustice, and climate change by highlighting concepts like resource management, social justice, and environmental stewardship. The study confirms the importance of Islamic ethics in forming modern sustainability frameworks, especially the ideas of adl (justice) and khilafah (stewardship). It implies that, especially in areas with a majority of Muslims, contemporary interpretations of the Qur'an can provide insightful guidance for accomplishing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN. This study emphasises the intellectual and practical value of Qur'anic teachings for policymakers, religious leaders, and development practitioners working to promote more sustainable societies by fusing them with global sustainability initiatives. By fusing Islamic theological discourse with bibliometric analysis, an inventive methodological approach creates new opportunities for investigation at the nexus of sustainable development and religious studies. Future research might examine the direct applications of particular Qur'anic texts and interpretations to social justice, economic progress, and environmental preservation. Additionally, research could investigate the role of Islamic communities in advancing the SDGs at the grassroots level, fostering collaboration between religious institutions and sustainability advocates. As the world continues to confront complex sustainability challenges, it is crucial to recognize the untapped potential of religious insights in guiding practical solutions. This study calls for greater interdisciplinary collaboration, encouraging scholars, policymakers, and religious communities to unite in leveraging the

ethical teachings of the Qur'an to promote sustainable development worldwide. By doing so, we can create a more holistic approach to sustainability, one that integrates both secular and spiritual dimensions of human well-being.

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### Author Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study, data collection, bibliometric analysis, interpretation of the findings, manuscript preparation, revision, and final approval of the published version. Each author accepts responsibility for the integrity and accuracy of the work.

### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no financial, professional, or personal conflicts of interest that could have influenced the research, analysis, interpretation of the data, or publication of this manuscript.

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