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Research paper

Mapping the Research Landscape of Islamic Theology: A Bibliometric Analysis Using Web of Science (WOS)

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Abstract

This paper embarks on systematically exploring the research landscape in Islamic theology. The objective is to discern the primary themes under investigation, identify key contributors, and trace the field's evolution over time. This study employs bibliometric analysis, a method that applies quantitative evaluation to peer-reviewed articles from a variety of Islamic theology-related publications. The dataset utilized in this investigation comprised 185 scholarly articles, collectively authored by a diverse group of 245 individuals from the Web of Science (WOS) database. Within this pool of contributors, a small subset of five authors emerged as particularly prolific, each contributing three publications, which collectively account for approximately 1.62% of the total document corpus. The analysis reveals that the four most prolific authors are associated with institutions housed within the University Putra Malaysia. The United States emerges as the frontrunner, making a substantial contribution of 29 articles, accounting for 15.67% of the overall publications. The outcomes of the co-occurrence network analysis delineate five principal clusters. Interestingly, Cluster 5 by the names "Fakhr al-Din al-Razi" or "Avicenna," both prominent figures in Islamic philosophy and theology, appears to be isolated from the other four clusters, indicating a lack of connection between the nodes in this cluster and those in the rest of the network. By pointing out areas that require further exploration and highlighting important existing works, this research aims to steer the direction of future research in Islamic theology.

Keywords: *Bibliometric, Islamic Theology, Islamic, WOS*

1. Introduction

The field of Islamic theology, a critical component of one of the world's major religions, has been a subject of enduring interest for scholars across diverse disciplines. Islamic theology (ʿIlm al-Kalām) delves into core questions about the nature of God (Allah), prophecy, eschatology, human responsibility, divine justice, and the interpretation of revelation (Qur'an and Hadith). It represents an essential intellectual tradition that bridges classical Islamic philosophy, jurisprudence, and mysticism (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2000; Chang, 2009; Winter, 2013). Despite its significance, comprehensive insights into the overarching trends and patterns characterizing this field remain somewhat elusive (Latuconsina, 2023; Pahlevi, 2023). The present research endeavor seeks to address this gap. This paper embarks on systematically exploring the research landscape in Islamic theology. The objective is to discern the primary themes under investigation, identify key contributors, and trace the field's evolution over time. To achieve this, the study employs a methodological approach known as bibliometric analysis (Ninkov et al., 2022).

Bibliometric analysis is a sophisticated technique that applies statistical methods to the examination of books, articles, and other forms of scholarly communication. Rather than engaging with each article individually, bibliometric analysis enables a macroscopic view of the field of study. This approach facilitates the analysis of various elements, including citation frequency, author keyword usage, and patterns of author collaboration, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of the field in its entirety (Samala et al., 2023). In the context of Islamic theology, such an analysis is vital for mapping how classical theological debates—such as those among the Ashʿarites, Muʿtazilites, and Māturīdīs—have been revisited, reinterpreted, or expanded upon in modern academic discourse.

The bibliographic data obtained from these articles underwent a thorough analysis utilizing the "bibliometrix" package within the R Language software. The package under consideration has been purposefully developed to cater to the needs of bibliometric analysis (Ahmar & Azzajjad, 2023; F Fitria et al., 2024), encompassing a diverse range of capabilities for the manipulation, examination, and representation of data. The subsequent sections of this paper will present the results of this extensive bibliometric analysis. The discourse will encompass the author keywords that are most utilized, the articles that are most frequently cited, and the authors and institutions that have produced the highest volume of work. Moreover, this paper will explore the interconnectedness among various subjects and their progression throughout history.

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Previous bibliometric studies in religious studies (Latuconsina, 2023; Pahlevi, 2023) have largely focused on broader themes such as interfaith dialogue, spirituality in healthcare, or general theology research trends. For instance, Latuconsina examined bibliometric indicators in theological journals indexed in major citation databases to explore publication productivity and impact across denominations. Similarly, Pahlevi analyzed the global landscape of research on interreligious dialogue and ethics. However, few of these studies have directly examined Islamic theology as a standalone field within the bibliometric framework. The limited attention to Islamic theology is a notable gap, especially given its deep historical and contemporary relevance across religious, philosophical, and political contexts. This study addresses this deficiency by conducting a focused bibliometric analysis on Islamic theology over the past decade (2013–2022), drawing on data from the Web of Science Core Collection. In doing so, it provides targeted insights into author productivity, keyword evolution, thematic clustering, and global research trends, offering a foundational perspective that complements and extends previous generalist studies in religious scholarship.

This research endeavor aims to make a significant contribution to the field of Islamic theology by illuminating the overarching trends and patterns characterizing the field. By identifying areas that warrant further investigation and highlighting the seminal work already undertaken, this study seeks to guide future research trajectories. Furthermore, the findings of this study are anticipated to serve as a valuable resource for other scholars, aiding them in navigating the intricate landscape of Islamic theology. Ultimately, this study seeks to deepen the collective understanding of Islamic theology and contribute to the ongoing scholarly discourse on this pivotal subject. The journey of exploration embarked upon in this paper invites readers to engage with the dynamic and multifaceted field of Islamic theology.

2. Methods

This study employs bibliometric analysis, a method that applies quantitative evaluation to peer-reviewed articles from a variety of Islamic theology-related publications (Roig-Tierno et al., 2017). Pritchard introduced the concept of bibliometrics and defined it as the use of mathematical and statistical techniques to analyze books and other communication media. Bibliometrics is the quantitative analysis of published materials to discern patterns and tendencies within a particular academic field. According to Vogel and Güttel, bibliometrics is essential for identifying and investigating emergent themes within a given field of study (Gorraiz, 2021). It offers a methodical and objective method for measuring the scope and impact of scholarly output, thereby shedding light on the evolution of a field over time.

To augment the comprehension and analysis of bibliometric data, science mapping techniques are frequently employed in conjunction. These methodologies facilitate the creation of visual depictions that illustrate the cognitive framework within a particular discipline, thereby revealing connections between research themes, topics, and ideas. Bibliometric analysis utilizes a diverse range of tools, including citation analysis, co-citation analysis, keyword analysis, and co-authorship analysis. Each of these tools provides a distinct perspective through which to examine the academic terrain (Valérie & Pierre, 2010).

Citation analysis evaluates the frequency and patterns of citations in scholarly works; co-citation analysis examines the frequency with which two works are cited together; keyword analysis assesses the usage and co-occurrence of keywords in publications; and co-authorship analysis investigates collaboration patterns among authors. Together, these tools provide a comprehensive picture of the research activity within a field, highlighting key trends, influential works and authors, and emerging areas of interest (Trujillo & Long, 2018).

A common challenge in bibliometric studies is to construct valid search queries that allow the retrieval of multiple articles while minimizing the frequency of irrelevant articles. In the case of articles related to Islamic theology, the keyword "Islamic Theology" was used as the search topic, which included the title, abstract, author keywords, and keywords plus. Our study used the Web of Science Core Collection (WOS-CC) articles. The Web of Science Core Collection is a trusted, comprehensive bibliographic resource for scholarly research. This database is useful for researchers who want to review literature across many disciplines. Our dataset is comprehensive and representative of the field's scholarly output because we used the Web of Science Core Collection. The WOS-CC only incorporates peer-reviewed materials from renowned journals, lending credibility to our study. Our findings are more reliable and valid because our dataset articles have been rigorously screened for quality and relevancy (Pasko et al., 2021).

After the completion of the data cleaning process, a total of 185 documents were gathered, which were considered appropriate for subsequent analysis. The compilation of these documents constitutes a substantial dataset, offering a thorough examination of the academic terrain within the specific area of inquiry. The bibliographic data extracted from these documents underwent a thorough analysis using the "bibliometrix" package in the R Language software (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). The package provided is a robust instrument for conducting bibliometric analysis, encompassing a wide range of features for the manipulation, examination, and representation of data. The utilization of the "bibliometrix" package within the R programming language facilitated the effective management and analysis of our dataset. The advanced analytical functionalities of the system facilitated an extensive exploration of the data, leading to the identification of concealed patterns, trends, and relationships that would have otherwise remained undisclosed. In addition, the visualization capabilities of the tool helped in the concise and impactful communication of our research outcomes, thereby enhancing their comprehension and interpretation (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017).

While this study applies to a robust bibliometric methodology, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The exclusive use of the Web of Science Core Collection may result in the underrepresentation of regionally significant or non-English language journals. The reliance on the keyword “Islamic Theology” may also omit relevant articles labeled under different theological terms. Additionally, the dependence on author-supplied keywords introduces potential inconsistencies in thematic analysis. These constraints could impact the comprehensiveness and generalizability of the findings, particularly in representing the full diversity of global Islamic theology. Future research should consider incorporating complementary databases such as Scopus or regional indexing services to mitigate these limitations.

This study exclusively utilized the Web of Science Core Collection (WOS-CC) to ensure high-quality, peer-reviewed, and citation-indexed sources that align with the methodological rigor required for bibliometric analysis. The WOS database was selected for its well-established standards in scholarly indexing, which allow for consistent data extraction, robust citation tracking, and the application of advanced bibliometric techniques.

Nonetheless, we acknowledge that this reliance on WOS may limit the inclusion of regionally significant works, particularly those published in non-English languages or local or emerging journals not yet indexed in WOS. As such, while the dataset offers a reliable and representative view of global Islamic theology scholarship within established academic circuits, it may underrepresent scholarly contributions from regional or non-Western academic communities.

3. Results and Discussion

Based on the explanation in the introduction section and the methodology described above, the following are the results and discussion of this study.

3.1 Prolific Authors and Countries

The attributes of an author significantly influence the potential impact of their scholarly contributions. Authors who frequently publish within a particular domain often shape the trajectory of subsequent research, establishing prevalent themes and setting the stage for future inquiries. Consequently, it is crucial to scrutinize the work of the most prolific authors in the realm of social media sentiment analysis in the stock market (Bergh et al., 2006). By doing so, we can gain a comprehensive understanding of the historical progression within this field and anticipate the future direction of research. This approach not only elucidates the evolution of the field but also provides valuable insights into potential future trends and research avenues. This understanding is instrumental in fostering a robust and dynamic research environment that can adapt and respond to the ever-evolving landscape of social media sentiment analysis in the stock market.

The sample utilized in this investigation comprised 185 scholarly articles, collectively authored by a diverse group of 245 individuals. Within this pool of contributors, a small subset of five authors emerged as particularly prolific, each contributing three publications, which collectively account for approximately 1.62% of the total document corpus. In addition, a slightly larger group of 10 authors each contributed two publications to the sample. The remaining authors within the sample each made a singular contribution, with one publication apiece. Among the group of contributors, a limited subset of five authors displayed a notable level of productivity, with each author producing three publications. These publications, when taken together, constitute approximately 1.62% of the entire document corpus. Furthermore, an expanded cohort of 10 authors contributed two publications each to the sample. Each of the remaining authors in the sample made a single contribution, as evidenced by their publications.

The results of a Pearson correlation coefficient calculation are displayed in Table 1 (Putra et al., 2022), indicating a value of -0.414. The observed negative correlation indicates a moderate inverse association between an author's article production and their fractionalized count. Within the framework of this research, the fractionalized count is utilized as a metric for assessing collaboration, whereby lower values are indicative of reduced levels of collaboration. Hence, the observed negative correlation coefficient implies that there is a tendency for authors to decrease their involvement in collaborative efforts, as evidenced by a decline in their fractionalized count, when they increase their publication output.

This discovery suggests that authors who are more productive in this field may reflect varying collaboration patterns, warranting further qualitative research or collaborating with a smaller number of co-authors. Alternatively, it could be posited that as authors accumulate additional experience and expertise within their respective fields, they may exhibit an increased inclination to assume greater responsibility for the research and writing components, consequently diminishing the necessity for extensive collaborative efforts.

Table 1: Top Ten Most-Published Authors Based on Adjusted and Total Appearances

Authors	Articles	Articles Fractionalized
Abdullah H	3	0.75
Al-Issa RS	3	0.75
Krauss SE	3	0.75
Roslan S	3	0.75
Shihadeh A	3	3.00
Abou El Fadl K	2	2.00
Brodersen A	2	2.00
Erlwein HC	2	2.00
Flaskerud I	2	1.50
Leirvik O	2	1.50

According to the method suggested by Cuccurullo et al. (2016) (Cuccurullo et al., 2016), the researchers in this study were evaluated and put into groups based on two main factors: the total number of articles published and a fractionalized frequency count that tried to take into account the complexity of articles written by more than one person. The fractionalized frequency approach provides a clearer understanding of the individual contributions made by each author in the context of multi-authored works. Within this particular system, the credit assigned to a publication is distributed evenly among all individuals who have contributed as authors. In the context of a publication featuring two authors, it is customary for each contributor to be assigned an equal share of credit. Likewise, within a publication featuring three authors, everyone is allocated a proportionate credit of one-third, and this pattern continues accordingly.

This approach facilitates a fairer depiction of an author's productivity and impact, especially within the framework of collaborative research endeavors. Recognition is given to the fact that in articles with multiple authors, the intellectual contribution is collectively shared among the authors, necessitating the equitable distribution of credit. This methodology offers a more precise and equitable evaluation of an author's academic productivity, particularly in disciplines characterized by frequent collaborative authorship.

The analysis reveals that the four most prolific authors are associated with institutions housed within the University Putra Malaysia. This observation underscores the significant role that Malaysian research institutions, particularly University Putra Malaysia, are playing in shaping the discourse in the field of Islamic Theology. This could be indicative of a robust and supportive research environment within the country and the university that encourages and facilitates high-quality research in this field. The influence of these authors and their affiliated institutions extends beyond their immediate academic community, contributing to the broader research agenda in the field of Islamic Theology. Their work not only advances knowledge within the field but also sets the direction for future research, thereby reinforcing the pivotal role of Malaysia, and particularly University Putra Malaysia, in the global landscape of Islamic Theology research.

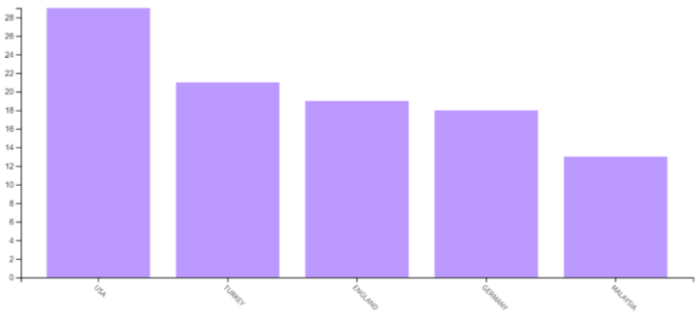

Fig. 1: Most Productive Countries

The analysis of search results indicates that the corpus of literature on Islamic Theology examined in this study originates from a wide range of 24 distinct countries, thereby highlighting the worldwide attention and scholarly involvement in this domain. Figure 1 provides a detailed analysis of the geographical distribution of these publications, focusing on the top five countries that have made significant contributions. These countries collectively account for a substantial body of 100 articles.

The United States emerges as the frontrunner, contributing of 29 articles, accounting for 15.67% of the overall publications. The noteworthy contribution highlights the considerable influence that the United States holds in promoting research in the field of Islamic Theology. This observation is intriguing, as the United States of America does not possess a Muslim-majority demographic. Turkey has emerged as the second-most productive country, making a significant contribution of 22 articles, which accounts for 11.35% of the overall output. This observation suggests that the country is actively involved and holds significant sway in the realm of Islamic Theology.

The United Kingdom exhibits a significant presence in the academic domain, with a substantial influence of 19 articles, accounting for approximately 10.27% of the overall publications. This observation signifies the United Kingdom's notable academic interest and research capabilities in this particular field. Germany, comprising 18 articles and representing 9.73% of the overall publications, emerges as a significant contributor in the realm of Islamic Theology, thereby showcasing its dedication to promoting scholarly investigations in this domain. Finally, it is worth noting that Malaysia, with its contribution of 13 articles, or 7% of the total publications, serves as an additional illustration of the extensive global influence of research in the field of Islamic Theology. Although Malaysia's article contribution is relatively lower compared to other leading countries, it remains significant, suggesting the presence of a thriving research ecosystem within the nation.

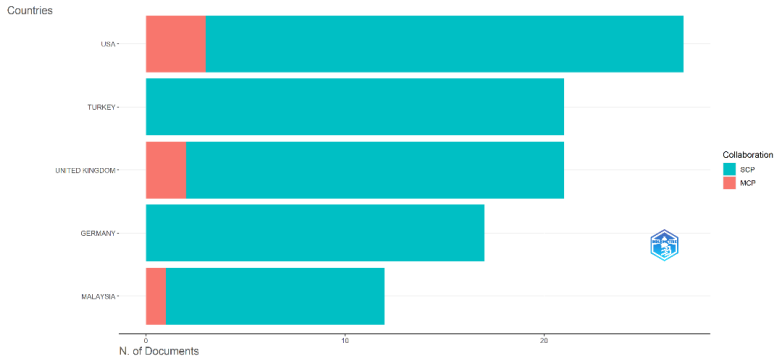

Fig. 2: Most Productive Countries Based on Collaboration

Figure 2 provides an intriguing insight into the collaborative dynamics among the most productive countries in Islamic Theology research. It reveals that the United States, despite being the most prolific in terms of publication output, also leads in terms of international collaborations. This suggests a research culture that not only values domestic scholarship but also actively seeks international perspectives and partnerships. Following the United States, the United Kingdom and Malaysia also demonstrate a strong propensity for international collaboration. This indicates a commitment to fostering a global research community in Islamic theology where knowledge and insights are shared across borders

It is noteworthy that Turkey and Germany, despite their high productivity rankings, do not seem to actively participate in substantial international collaborations. This observation may indicate a research approach that is more centered on domestic matters in these countries, or it may be influenced by other factors that were not accounted for in this analysis. One notable observation pertains to the predominant influence exerted by non-Muslim countries in the realm of Islamic Theology research. This counterintuitive discovery highlights the widespread appeal and significance of Islamic Theology as an academic discipline, surpassing geographical and cultural limitations.

3.2 Document and Source Analysis

It is noteworthy that Turkey and Germany, despite their high productivity rankings, do not seem to actively participate in substantial international collaborations. This observation might be a sign of a research strategy that focuses more on domestic issues in these nations, or it might be a result of other factors that this analysis did not consider. One notable observation pertains to the predominant influence exerted by non-Muslim countries in the realm of Islamic Theology research. This counterintuitive discovery highlights the widespread appeal and significance of Islamic Theology as an academic discipline, surpassing geographical and cultural limitations.

The utilization of citations as a criterion for evaluation offers a dependable method for gauging the scholarly influence of a publication, as it signifies the extent to which other researchers have engaged with the research, built upon it, or acknowledged its significance. By giving priority to the examination of literature that is frequently cited, it becomes feasible to discern publications that have not only made substantial contributions to the scholarly discourse on Islamic theology but have also exerted an impact on the advancement of subsequent research endeavors in this domain. Consequently, this analysis offers a valuable viewpoint regarding the most influential research

in the field of Islamic theology, emphasizing the works that garnered significant recognition within the scholarly community and exerted a profound influence on the field's advancement.

This citation analysis provides a comprehensive overview of the impact of articles on "Islamic Theology" over ten years from 2013 to 2022 based on WOS CC. During this time, a total of 185 publications were produced, contributing significantly to the body of knowledge in this field. These publications have garnered considerable attention within the academic community, as evidenced by the 326 cited articles. This figure represents the total number of times these 185 publications were cited in other scholarly works, indicating their influence and the extent to which they have informed subsequent research. When self-citations are excluded, the number of cited articles remains high at 318, further underscoring the impact of these works beyond their original authors.

The total number of citations received by these publications is 342, or 331 when self-citations are excluded. This translates to an average of 1.85 citations per item, suggesting that, on average, each publication has been cited nearly twice in other scholarly works. This is a testament to the relevance and significance of these publications in the field of Islamic Theology. The data suggests that Islamic theology is a field with a significant level of academic engagement and impact, making it a potentially interesting area of study for academics, particularly those with an interest in religious studies, theology, or related disciplines.

Table 2: Most Cited Articles

No.	Author(s)	Title	Total Citations	TC Per Year	Normalized TC
1	Noha El-Bassiouny (2013) (El-Bassiouny, 2014)	The one-billion-plus marginalization: Toward a scholarly understanding of Islamic consumers	69	6.90	7.06
2	Anderson et al (2015) (Anderson & McKnight, 2015)	Understanding al-Shabaab: clan, Islam and insurgency in Kenya	27	3.00	5.28
3	Fatimah Husein (2018) (Husein & Slama, 2018)	Online piety and its discontent: revisiting Islamic anxieties on Indonesian social media	16	2.67	12.61
4	Mansur Ali (2014) (Ali, 2014)	Perspectives on Drug Addiction in Islamic History and Theology	14	1.40	1.43
5	Mohammad Zafir Al-Shahri (2016) (Al-Shahri, 2016)	Islamic theology and the principles of palliative care	14	1.75	7.37
6	Benjamin Bruce (2019) (Bruce, 2020)	Imams for the diaspora: the Turkish state's International Theology Programme	12	3.00	817
7	Sözeri et al (2018) (Sözeri et al., 2019)	Training imams in the Netherlands: the failure of a post-secular endeavour	11	2.20	4.79
8	Gerhard Hoffstaedter (2013) (Hoffstaedter, 2013)	Islam and freedom of religion: Anthropology, theology and clashes of universalisms in contemporary Malaysia	10	0.91	6.43
9	Aria Nakissa (2020) (Nakissa, 2020)	Cognitive Science of Religion and the Study of Islam: Rethinking Islamic Theology, Law, Education, and Mysticism Using the Works of al-Ghazālī	9	2.25	6.13
10	Lili Di Puppo (2019) (Di Puppo, 2019)	The paradoxes of a localised Islamic orthodoxy: Rethinking Tatar traditional Islam in Russia	9	1.80	3.92

Table 2 shows the most frequently cited articles in the analysis period, which is between 2013 and 2022. The most cited article is Noha El-Bassiouny's article entitled "The one billion-plus marginalisation: Towards a Scientific Understanding of Islamic Consumers". This article relates to Islamic theology as it presents a conceptualization of Islamic religiosity and its marketing implications, building on the infrastructure of Islamic theology in terms of its inherent general goals (Maqasid ash-shariah) (El-Bassiouny, 2014).

The article underscores the importance of understanding the Islamic perspective on marketing and the opportunity costs associated with marginalizing the billion-plus Muslim consumer segment. His research has a total number of citations of 69, meaning it has been cited 69 times in other works since publication. The total number of citations per year of 6.90 is calculated by dividing the total number of citations (69) by the number of years since the article was published. This gives the average number of times the article is cited per year. The normalized citation count of 7.06 is slightly higher than the total citations per year of 6.90. This could indicate that this work is cited slightly more than average compared to other similar works (e.g., other works in the same field published in the same year).

3.3 Keyword Analysis

The authors of the articles included in this study furnished keywords that encapsulate the essence of their research and offer a succinct summary of the content of their articles. This section is dedicated to presenting the findings related to the most frequently employed keywords in the literature under review. The scope of this study spans a decade, encompassing articles published from the inaugural piece in 2013 through the most recent contribution in 2022. This ten-year period provides a comprehensive timeframe for analyzing the evolution and trends in keyword usage by authors in the field of Islamic theology.

Table 3, presented in this section, presents a comprehensive analysis of these patterns. The data presented displays the top ten most frequently used author keywords over the sample period. This provides a snapshot of the prevailing themes and key areas of interest within the field over the past ten years. Through the examination of keyword frequencies and patterns, a more comprehensive understanding of the main subjects that have influenced the discipline over the previous decade can be achieved.

Table 3: Most Frequent Words (Author's Keywords)

Words	Occurrences
Islamic theology	43
Islam	35
Kalam	10
theology	10
philosophy	7
indonesia	4
islamic philosophy	4
covid-19	3
divine attributes	3
fakhr al-din al-razi	3

"Islamic theology" emerged as the most frequently employed keyword, appearing 43 times across the various articles. This prevalence underscores the centrality of this term within the field, reflecting its primary focus on the study of Islamic religious beliefs and practices. The term "Islam" was the second most used keyword, with 35 instances. This frequency suggests a broad interest in the religion of Islam as a whole, beyond the specific confines of theology.

The keywords "Kalam" and "Theology" each appeared 10 times, indicating a significant interest in these areas. "Kalam" refers to Islamic scholastic theology, while "Theology" more broadly encompasses the study of religious beliefs and practices. "Philosophy" was used seven times, suggesting an intersection of interests between theology and philosophy in the study of Islam. The terms "Indonesia" and "Islamic philosophy" each appeared four times, indicating specific geographical and philosophical areas of focus within the broader field of Islamic theology. The terms "Covid-19," "Divine attributes," and "Fakhr al-Din al-Razi" each appeared three times. The inclusion of "Covid-19" suggests a recent focus on the impact of the pandemic on Islamic theology, while "Divine Attributes" and "Fakhr al-Din al-Razi" reflect specific theological and historical interests within the field.

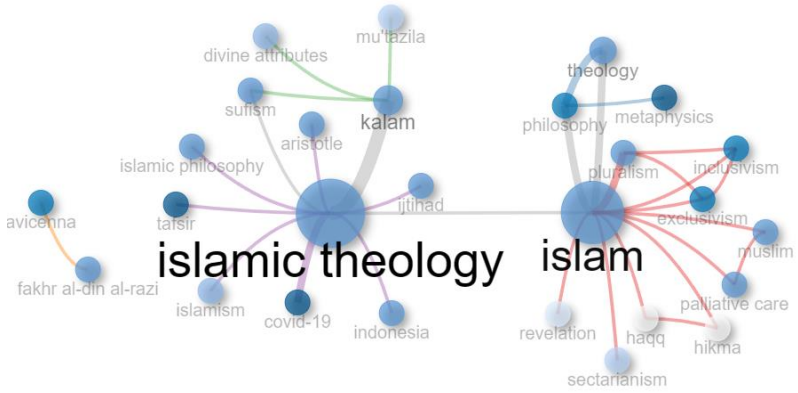

Fig. 3: Author keyword co-occurrence network

The technique of author keyword co-occurrence analysis is employed to ascertain the strength of associations between various keywords within a collection of documents (Eck & Waltman, 2009). This method is particularly valuable as it illuminates the research frontiers of a specific academic domain by identifying the key themes and concepts that are frequently linked together in the literature. The significance of author keyword co-occurrence analysis lies in its ability to expose the underlying structure of a research field. By examining the frequency with which certain keywords appear together, we can gain insights into the main topics of interest and their interconnections, thereby mapping the intellectual landscape of the field.

To ensure clarity and focus on the visualization of author keyword co-occurrence, a filter was applied to the analysis. This filter restricted the analysis to keywords that appeared more than five times in the documents, thereby eliminating less frequently used keywords that could potentially clutter the visualization. The outcomes of the author's keyword co-occurrence analysis are graphically represented in a network diagram, as depicted in Figure 4. This diagram provides a visual representation of the relationships between the most frequently used keywords, offering a clear and concise overview of the main themes and their interconnections in the field of study. This visualization serves as a valuable tool for understanding the structure and evolution of the academic domain under investigation.

The outcomes of the co-occurrence network analysis, as graphically represented in Figure 4, delineate five principal clusters. Each of these clusters is characterized by a dominant keyword that signifies the primary theme or area of focus within the cluster. The keyword "Islam" denotes Cluster 1, and it indicates that the articles within this cluster primarily concentrate on the more general aspects of the religion. Cluster 2, characterized by the keyword "Islamic Theology," suggests a concentration of articles that delve into the theological aspects of Islam.

The keyword representing Cluster 3 is "Kalam," a term referring to Islamic scholastic theology, indicating a subset of articles that engage with this specific theological tradition. The keyword "Islamic Theology" reappears in Cluster 4, suggesting another group of articles that explore different facets of Islamic theological thought. Cluster 5 is characterized by the names "Fakhr al-Din al-Razi" or "Avicenna," both prominent figures in Islamic philosophy and theology. The articles in this cluster likely focus on their contributions and influence on Islamic thought.

Interestingly, Cluster 5 appears to be isolated from the other four clusters, indicating a lack of connection between the nodes in this cluster and those in the rest of the network. This could suggest that the topics or themes explored in this cluster are distinct or specialized and do not overlap significantly with the themes prevalent in the other clusters. This isolation might also reflect a unique or niche area of study within the broader field of Islamic theology, warranting further investigation to understand its distinctiveness.

3.4 Critical Analysis of Findings

The evolving landscape of Islamic theology research, particularly over the past decade, is marked by a dynamic interplay of authorial influence, international collaboration, keyword evolution, and thematic concentration. Through a bibliometric lens, this study critically examines these elements, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the field's intellectual structure and global reach.

The presence of a few prolific authors significantly shaping the discourse in Islamic theology is consistent with Lotka's Law, which predicts that a small proportion of scholars contribute many publications (Du Toit, 2024). In this analysis, five authors were responsible for 1.62% of the entire dataset, demonstrating their potential role in directing thematic and methodological trends. Interestingly, a Pearson correlation coefficient of -0.414 was found between publication count and fractionalized collaboration, suggesting that increased individual productivity is inversely related to collaborative efforts. This supports the hypothesis that established scholars might favor independent or small-group authorship, possibly due to increased expertise, confidence in handling complex theological content, or institutional research structures that reward individual authorship.

However, this trend may be a double-edged sword. While high productivity can centralize thought leadership, it might also limit diverse epistemological perspectives if collaboration is deprioritized. Cuccurullo et al.(Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017) argue that fractionalized counts

offer a more balanced view of academic contributions, particularly in multi-authored religious studies where interpretative nuance benefits from multiple voices.

Moreover, the clustering of top authors around the University Putra Malaysia underscores the strategic role of Malaysian institutions in shaping Islamic theology scholarship. This is in line with prior studies emphasizing Southeast Asia's emerging prominence in religious research, suggesting an institutional commitment to both academic production and regional theological discourse.

The geographic analysis revealed contributions from 24 countries, with notable dominance by non-Muslim-majority nations such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany. This reflects the cross-cultural appeal of Islamic theology as an academic discipline—a phenomenon previously highlighted by Moosa (Anderson & McKnight, 2015), who argues for the universality of Islamic thought in philosophical and ethical debates beyond the Muslim world.

Despite Turkey and Germany's high productivity, their limited international collaboration contrasts sharply with the United States, the UK, and Malaysia. This discrepancy may point to internal academic strategies, language barriers, or differing institutional priorities (Nakissa, 2020). For instance, German and Turkish theological research may cater more to local socio-religious needs, potentially limiting its alignment with international frameworks.

This pattern, while not inherently negative, introduces a limitation: the risk of intellectual silos that could hinder the cross-pollination of ideas. Future research should investigate whether domestic-focused research achieves similar scholarly impact or if broader engagement correlates with increased citation and academic influence.

Citation analysis further reinforced the field's vibrancy, with an average of 1.85 citations per item across 185 publications—indicating healthy academic engagement. The highly cited article by El-Bassiouny (El-Bassiouny, 2014) on Islamic consumer behavior, grounded in maqasid ash-shariah, exemplifies how applied theology intersects with modern disciplines like marketing. This supports Masud's claim that Islamic theology today is not confined to dogma but extends into socio-economic realms.

Nonetheless, the relatively low average citation rate also reveals a potential limitation: the field may lack seminal, widely referenced works capable of anchoring future scholarship. This could be attributed to the diversity of subfields or fragmented discourse across regions and languages.

The most frequently used keywords— "Islamic theology," "Islam," "Kalam," and "Theology"—indicate a consistent emphasis on core doctrinal and philosophical areas. The inclusion of terms like "Covid-19," "Fakhr al-Din al-Razi," and "Divine Attributes" highlights both contemporary relevance and historical grounding, reflecting a dual orientation of Islamic theological research: addressing current societal issues while revisiting classical thought.

This trend is supported by previous research in religious studies emphasizing the importance of contextual theology, where theological inquiry responds to both tradition and transformation.

Author keyword co-occurrence analysis provided deeper insight into intellectual interconnectivity within the field. The identification of five thematic clusters, each anchored by dominant keywords such as "Islam," "Islamic theology," "Kalam," and key scholars like "Fakhr al-Din al-Razi," reveals a bifurcation between generalized religious themes and specialized historical-philosophical studies.

Cluster 5's isolation—associated with thinkers like Avicenna—suggests a niche intellectual enclave within the broader field. This aligns with findings that emphasized the limited modern engagement with classical Islamic philosophers in mainstream theology. While this independence highlights the uniqueness of historical studies, it also reveals a gap in integrative discourse that connects classical thought with contemporary challenges.

Despite the robust findings, several limitations warrant consideration. First, reliance on author-supplied keywords may obscure latent themes not explicitly stated. Second, the observed preference for solo or limited collaboration among productive authors may reflect systemic incentives rather than intentional isolation. Third, the relatively modest citation rates and thematic silos suggest the need for greater synthesis across subfields.

Furthermore, the dominance of non-Muslim countries raises critical questions about interpretative frameworks and the possible decentering of traditional theological epistemologies. While this may enhance objectivity or methodological diversity, it could also risk marginalizing insider perspectives unless carefully balanced.

4. Conclusions

This research has made a notable contribution to the field of Islamic theology by shedding light on the prevailing trends and patterns that define the discipline. By mapping the current intellectual landscape, the study provides actionable insights for educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers. For instance, the dominance of certain institutions and authors, such as University Putra Malaysia, can inform strategic academic partnerships and highlight potential centers of excellence for Islamic theological education and training. By pinpointing areas that necessitate further exploration and spotlighting significant existing works, this study aims to steer the direction of future research. The study analyzed 185 scholarly articles authored by a diverse group of 245 individuals, with a small group of five authors emerging as particularly prolific. Interestingly, a negative correlation was observed between an author's publication output and their involvement in collaborative efforts. The four most productive authors were found to be affiliated with University Putra Malaysia, highlighting the university's significant role in shaping Islamic theological discourse. The United States, despite not being a Muslim-majority country, was identified as the leading contributor to the field. The analysis also revealed a high level of international collaboration, led by the United States. The average citation per article was found to be 1.85, indicating the influence of these works on the field. The most cited article was Noha El-Bassiouny's work on Islamic consumers, demonstrating the intersection of Islamic theology with other fields.

These findings have several applied implications. For curriculum developers in theological education, the results suggest the integration of interdisciplinary modules, such as Islamic ethics in business, comparative religion, and digital theology, to reflect contemporary scholarly intersections and emerging themes. Institutions could also revise accreditation standards to ensure inclusion of global theological thought, including non-Western contributions and digitally driven scholarship.

For policymakers, particularly those involved in religious affairs, education, and cultural diplomacy, the observed international collaboration highlights the potential for formalized interfaith dialogue initiatives. National and regional governments might consider leveraging these scholarly linkages to support peacebuilding, social cohesion, and counter-extremism programs through inclusive theology curricula and joint research centers. Moreover, policy frameworks could be developed to support public theology projects that engage both religious leaders and secular institutions in addressing societal challenges from a faith-based perspective.

Future research should focus on: (1) underexplored or isolated clusters identified in the co-occurrence analysis to bring neglected theological subfields into broader discourse; (2) the role of digital platforms and AI in Islamic theological scholarship; and (3) comparative studies across regions to understand how Islamic theology is evolving in different sociopolitical and educational contexts. The co-

occurrence network analysis identified five main clusters, with one cluster appearing isolated, suggesting a unique or niche area of study within Islamic theology.

This bibliometric analysis provides a thorough overview of the scholarly landscape of Islamic theology in the past decade, revealing several underexplored areas that present promising opportunities for future research. A significant gap exists at the intersection of digital platforms and theological discourse. This study analyzes current literature, highlighting classical scholarship, institutional productivity, and traditional themes, including Kalam, divine attributes, and historical theologians such as Fakhr al-Din al-Razi. The influence of online communities in shaping, challenging, and disseminating theological debates is largely overlooked.

Considering the rising prevalence of digital religious engagement via YouTube sermons, TikTok preachers, online fatwa platforms, and decentralized Islamic forums, future research ought to investigate how these digital ecosystems influence contemporary theological development. This may include thematic analysis of content, network mapping of influential voices, or sentiment analysis of audience reception. Bibliometric techniques may be utilized to analyze citation and co-mention patterns between digital theologians and traditionally published scholars, facilitating a comparison of epistemological authority in digital and academic contexts.

Additionally, broadening the bibliometric analysis to encompass gray literature, social media discussions, or open-access repositories could provide deeper insights into non-institutional yet significant contributors to Islamic theology. This is particularly pertinent for comprehending youth engagement, progressive theological reinterpretations, and transnational religious movements that function beyond formal academic frameworks

Interdisciplinary integration with communication studies, digital ethnography, and AI-driven discourse analysis may yield a comprehensive understanding of the evolution of theology in real time within digital publics. Such research not only bridges academic and societal concerns but also offers valuable inputs for public policy, educational reform, and interfaith understanding in increasingly pluralistic societies. This research will address a significant gap in existing literature and illustrate the evolving forms of religious knowledge production in the 21st century

To address this, we recommend that future research complement WOS-based studies with additional data sources such as Scopus, DOAJ, Sinta (Indonesia), or MyCite (Malaysia), as well as qualitative methods that engage with gray literature, regional theological discourse, and online platforms. Such an expanded approach would provide a more comprehensive and inclusive understanding of Islamic theology scholarship across diverse epistemic traditions.

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