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Mapping Thematic Diversification in Islamic Thought Studies: A Bibliometric and Abstract-Based Review of Scopus-Indexed Literature

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Abstract

Islamic thought encompasses *kalām*, *fiqh*, philosophy, *taṣawwuf*, *tafsīr*, the authority of *ʿulamā*, reformism, modernism, and Muslim responses to modernity. Because this literature spans multiple disciplines, mapping is needed to show how Islamic thought studies are represented in academic publications. This article maps thematic shifts in English-language journal articles indexed by Scopus from 1974 to 2026. It combines bibliometric analysis with abstract-based thematic screening. The retrieved corpus comprises 465 articles used to analyze publication trends, source titles, countries of author affiliation, citations, and author-keyword co-occurrence using VOSviewer. Of these, 272 articles constitute the core thematic corpus used for thematic synthesis. Publications increased substantially in 2020–2026, accounting for 269 articles (57.8% of the retrieved corpus). T5 (state, politics, democracy, and secularism) is the largest theme in both corpora, while the core thematic corpus also substantially represents reformism, education, classical domains, Islamic law, *taṣawwuf*, and religious authority. The findings indicate that thematic change in Scopus-indexed literature is better understood as diversification than as a linear transition from classical to modern themes. By distinguishing bibliometric visibility from substantive thematic relevance, this article maps how Islamic thought studies are represented in English-language Scopus-indexed literature.

Keywords

study of Islamic thought; thematic diversification; thematic shifts; bibliometric review; abstract-based thematic screening

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1. INTRODUCTON

Islamic thought is a broad field of inquiry. It includes *kalām*, *fiqh*, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *falsafa*, *taṣawwuf*, *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, *akhlāq*, and *ulama* authority. In Islamic intellectual history, these domains have provided the basis for discussing revelation, law, reason, society, power, spirituality, and moral life. The literature on philosophical commentary, *ḥāshiya*, and the *sharḥ* tradition indicates that Islamic intellectual traditions developed through reasoning, transmission, and reinterpretation (Ahmed & Larkin, 2013; Van Lit, 2017; Wisnovsky, 2004).

In contemporary academic literature, Islamic thought studies do not address only classical legacies. Many articles situate Islamic thought in relation to modernity, the state, democracy, secularism, gender,

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education, identity, globalization, and religious authority. Studies on Islamic modernism, reformism, and revivalism show that Islamic traditions are often discussed through their relationship with modern education, the modern state, social change, and the formation of new forms of authority (Bano, 2014; Brophy, 2016; Dorroll, 2014; Duarte, 2016; Epkenhans, 2011; Ibrahim, 2012).

The dispersion of this literature creates a methodological need. Islamic thought studies appear across religious studies, Islamic studies, area studies, the social sciences, the humanities, and education. Mapping is therefore needed to identify publication patterns, journal sources, countries of affiliation, highly cited articles, and relationships among keywords. Bibliometric analysis is useful for reading publication structures and thematic connectivity within a corpus, but it is not, by itself, sufficient for interpreting conceptual content (Donthu et al., 2021; Zupic & Čater, 2015).

The academic problem addressed in this article concerns how thematic shifts in Islamic thought studies should be read. If they are inferred only from publication growth or keyword emergence, thematic shifts can too easily be understood in an overly linear way, as if the field had moved from classical themes to modern themes. Such a reading risks exceeding the data, because bibliometric patterns are not equivalent to the history of Islamic thought. A reading is needed that can distinguish bibliometric visibility from substantive thematic relevance.

This article maps Islamic thought studies in English-language journal literature indexed by Scopus for the period 1974-2026. Its focus is not to construct a comprehensive history of Islamic thought, but to examine thematic representation in Scopus publications. Within this scope, the article addresses three research questions: (1) how publications on Islamic thought studies have developed in Scopus literature; (2) which major themes shape the retrieved corpus and the core thematic corpus; and (3) how thematic shifts should be read after bibliometric mapping and abstract-based thematic screening are analyzed together.

This article employs a bibliometric review combined with abstract-based thematic screening. All search results are retained as the retrieved corpus for bibliometric mapping, while the articles most relevant to Islamic thought studies are screened as the core thematic corpus for thematic synthesis. This distinction allows the article to assess whether thematic shifts appear as the dominance of one theme, a linear shift, or thematic diversification in the representation of Islamic thought studies.

2. METHOD

2.1. Research Design

This study uses a bibliometric review design combined with abstract-based thematic screening. The bibliometric component maps the publication structure of Scopus-indexed English-language journal articles on Islamic thought studies, including publication trends, source-title distribution,

countries of author affiliation, citations, and author-keyword co-occurrence. Abstract-based thematic screening distinguishes the broad retrieved corpus from the core thematic corpus that is more thematically relevant (Donthu et al., 2021; Zupic & Čater, 2015).

This design was selected because the article does not aim to produce a full-text systematic literature review or a complete history of Islamic thought. Rather, it maps how Islamic thought studies are represented in Scopus-indexed literature during 1974-2026. Under this design, all search results are retained for bibliometric mapping, while thematic synthesis is based only on articles directly related to Islamic thought studies.

2.2. Data Source and Search Strategy

Data were retrieved from Scopus through Advanced Search on 3 May 2026. The search was conducted in the TITLE-ABS-KEY field and limited to English-language journal articles with the document type Article. These restrictions were used to maintain consistency in document type and corpus language. Scopus was used as the data source because it provides bibliographic metadata suitable for bibliometric review; however, its use is not intended to represent the entire knowledge production on Islamic thought.

The search query was designed to capture four elements: core terms for Islamic thought studies, terms of change or transformation, temporal-historical contexts, and major thematic domains. The query also excluded terms dominant in the literature on Islamic banking, Islamic finance, the halal industry, tourism, marketing, and supply chains in order to reduce noise from articles not directly related to Islamic thought.

The search query used in Scopus Advanced Search was as follows:

TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Islamic thought" OR "Muslim thought" OR "Islamic intellectual history" OR "Islamic intellectual tradition*" OR "Muslim intellectual tradition*" OR "Islamic scholarship" OR "Islamic scholar*" OR ulama OR ulema OR "Muslim intellectual*" OR "Islamic intellectual*" OR "Islamic reform*" OR "Islamic modernism" OR "Islamic revival*" OR "Islam and modernity" OR "Islamic modernity")
AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (evolution OR development OR transformation OR shift* OR change* OR genealogy OR "historical development" OR "intellectual history" OR "discursive transformation" OR "intellectual change" OR "epistemic shift*")
AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (classical OR medieval OR premodern OR modern OR contemporary OR postcolonial OR reform* OR revival* OR modernity OR colonialism OR globalization)
AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (theology OR kalam OR philosophy OR falsafa OR jurisprudence OR fiqh OR "usul al-fiqh" OR Sufism OR tasawwuf OR reformism OR modernism OR revivalism OR "religious authority" OR "intellectual movement*" OR education OR politics OR state OR democracy OR secularism OR pluralism)
AND NOT TITLE-ABS-KEY (banking OR finance OR sukuk OR takaful OR halal OR tourism OR marketing OR "supply chain" OR "Islamic bank*" OR "Islamic finance")
AND DOCTYPE(ar) AND LANGUAGE(english)

2.3. Metadata, Corpus Construction, and Screening

The exported metadata included author information, title, publication year, source title, citations, DOI, affiliation, abstract, author keywords, index keywords, document type, publication stage, source, and EID. The dataset was checked by title, DOI where available, and EID; no technical duplicates were detected. Articles without DOI were not removed because DOI availability is not a criterion of thematic relevance. Articles without author keywords were retained in the retrieved corpus, but they did not contribute to the author-keyword co-occurrence analysis.

Table 1. Metadata availability in the retrieved corpus.

Indicator	Result
Total records	465
Document type	Article: 465
Language	English: 465
Publication year range	1974-2026
Unique source titles	257
DOI available	430
Total citations	3,725
Substantive abstract available	462
Author Keywords available	375
Index Keywords available	71
Publication stage	Final: 460; Article in press: 5
Technical duplicates detected	0

The search produced 465 articles. All these articles are referred to as the retrieved corpus and are used for general bibliometric mapping. Next, rule-based abstract-based thematic screening was conducted on titles, abstracts, author keywords, and index keywords to classify articles into Core/Include, Medium/Maybe, and Peripheral/Exclude. The screening identified 272 Core/Include articles as the core thematic corpus, 129 Medium/Maybe articles, and 64 Peripheral/Exclude articles.

The Core/Include category comprises articles directly related to Islamic thought studies and is used for thematic synthesis. Medium/Maybe includes articles with partial, indirect, or ambiguous relevance; this category is documented but not used as primary thematic evidence. Peripheral/Exclude includes articles whose relevance is too weak for thematic synthesis, although they remain part of the retrieved corpus for bibliometric mapping.

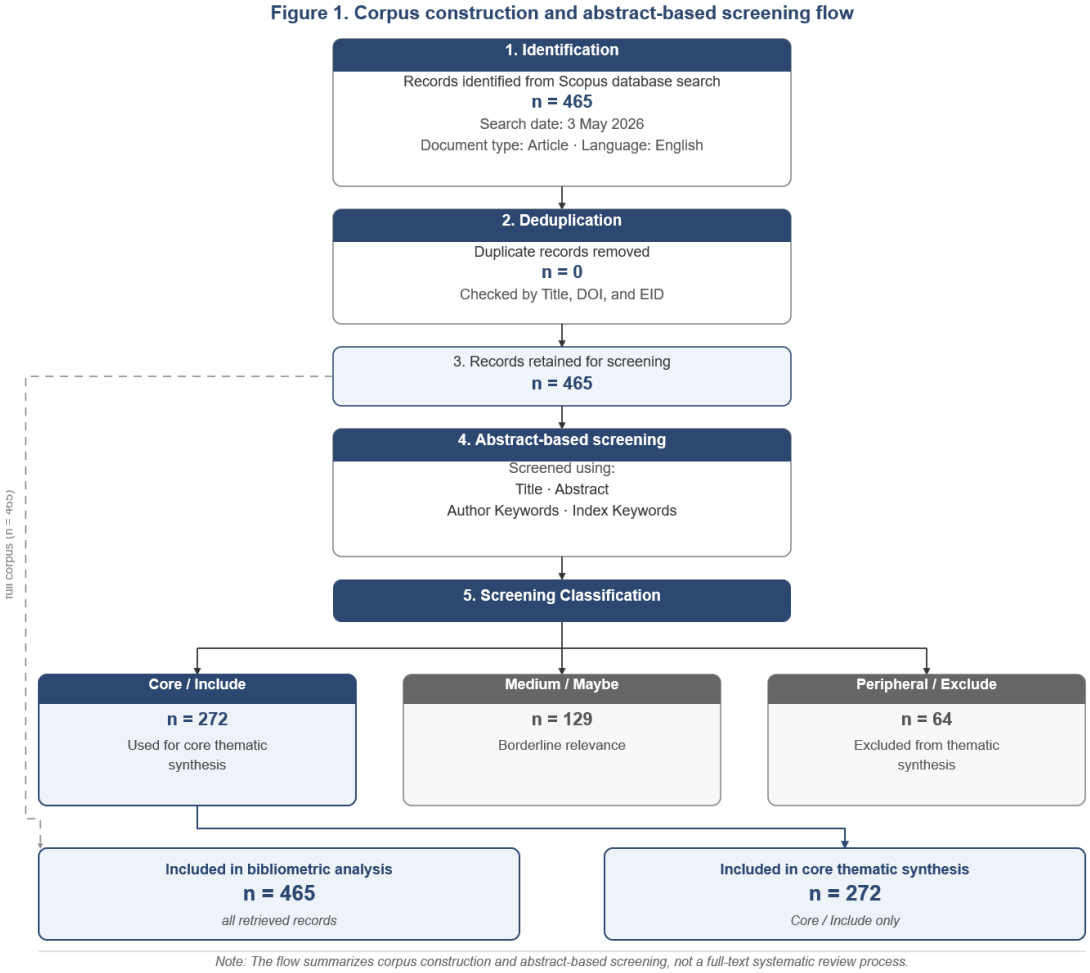

Figure 1. Corpus construction and abstract-based screening flow.

Table 2. Corpus construction and screening categories.

Corpus Category	Number Of Articles	Percentage	Function
Retrieved corpus	465	100.0%	Main bibliometric mapping
Core/Include	272	58.5%	Core thematic synthesis
Medium/Maybe	129	27.7%	Borderline records; documented but not used as main thematic evidence
Peripheral/Exclude	64	13.8%	Excluded from core thematic synthesis

2.4. Bibliometric Analysis

The bibliometric analysis covered annual publication trends, publication distribution by period, the most productive source titles, countries of author affiliation, the most cited articles, and author-keyword co-occurrence. Citation counts are read as indicators of article visibility in publication networks, not as direct measures of academic quality or the normative value of article content.

Co-occurrence analysis was conducted in VOSviewer using author keywords as the unit of analysis, full counting as the counting method, and a minimum occurrence threshold of 3. Before

visualization, keywords were normalized using a conservative thesaurus to unify spelling variations, capitalization, transliteration, singular-plural forms, and clear synonyms. Closely related but non-identical terms, such as *fiqh*, *sharīʿa*, Islamic law, and *fatwa*, were retained as distinct nodes to preserve conceptual nuance. The co-occurrence map is used to read term connectivity, not causal relationships among themes.

Table 3. VOSviewer settings for author-keyword co-occurrence analysis.

Parameter	Setting
Type of analysis	Co-occurrence
Unit of analysis	Author Keywords
Counting method	Full counting
Minimum number of occurrences	3
Thesaurus	Conservative thesaurus normalization
Corpus base	465 retrieved articles
Keyword availability	375 articles with author keywords

2.5. Thematic Screening and Methodological Limits

In addition to relevance classification, articles were assigned thematic codes based on eight main categories. Articles could receive more than one thematic code when they contained multiple themes, but one primary thematic code was assigned for the summary of thematic distribution. The eight codes are T1 *kalām*, theology, philosophy, Qur'an, and *turāth*; T2 *fiqh*, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *sharīʿa*, and *fatwa*; T3 *taṣawwuf*, Sufism, spirituality, and ethics; T4 reformism, modernism, and revivalism; T5 state, politics, democracy, and secularism; T6 education, knowledge institutions, and epistemology; T7 gender, rights, pluralism, and identity; and T8 *ulama* authority, Muslim intellectuals, media, and digital religious authority.

Table 4. Thematic Codes used for Screening and Synthesis.

Code	Theme	Operational focus
T1	*Kalām*, theology, philosophy, Qur'an, *turāth*	Classical and intellectual domains: *kalām*, theology, philosophy, *falsafa*, Qur'an, tafsīr, *turāth*, intellectual history.
T2	*Fiqh*, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *sharīʿa*, *fatwa*	Legal reasoning and normative authority: *fiqh*, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *sharīʿa*, Islamic law, *fatwa*, *maqāṣid*.
T3	*Taṣawwuf*, Sufism, spirituality, ethics	Spiritual, mystical, and ethical dimensions in Islamic thought studies.
T4	Reformism, modernism, revivalism	Renewal of thought and responses to modernity, including reformism, modernism, and revivalism.
T5	State, politics, democracy, secularism	Relations between Islamic thought and the state, politics, democracy, secularism, nationalism, and Islamism.
T6	Education, knowledge institutions, epistemology	Knowledge production and transmission: Islamic education, *madrasah*, *pesantren*, curriculum, epistemology.
T7	Gender, rights, pluralism, identity	Social issues and public ethics: gender, rights, pluralism, identity, minorities, interfaith relations.

T8	*Ulama* authority, intellectuals, media, digital religious authority	Actors and mediation of knowledge: *ulama*, intellectuals, muftis, scholars, media, digital platforms, and digital religious authority.

This method has several limits. The corpus includes only English-language journal articles indexed by Scopus and does not represent the entire Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Urdu, Malay, Indonesian, classical *turāth*, manuscript, monograph, or non-journal literature. Abstract- and metadata-based screening does not replace full-text review. Author-keyword co-occurrence analysis represents only articles that have author keywords. Overlay visualization shows temporal tendencies based on average publication year, not direct evidence of historical change in Islamic thought. The 2026 data are also read as partial because they were retrieved on 3 May 2026.

3. FINDINGS

3.1. General Profile of the Corpus

The retrieved corpus in this study consists of 465 journal articles published between 1974 and 2026. All documents in the corpus are of the Article document type and are written in English, in accordance with the search limits specified in the Methods section. The corpus covers 257 unique source titles, 430 articles with DOI, and a total of 3,725 citations recorded in the Scopus metadata. In terms of publication stage, 460 articles are Final and 5 articles are Article in press.

Metadata availability shows that most articles have abstracts suitable for thematic screening. A total of 462 articles have substantive abstracts, while 375 articles provide author keywords and 71 articles provide index keywords. These differences in metadata availability are important because author-keyword co-occurrence analysis can represent only articles with author keywords. Accordingly, the retrieved corpus is used for general bibliometric mapping, while keyword-based analysis is read within the limits of metadata availability.

Because the data were retrieved on 3 May 2026, publication data for 2026 do not represent a full publication year. The 2026 figures are therefore read as partial data.

3.2. Annual Publication Trends

The publication distribution shows an increase in the number of articles in the most recent period. During 1974-1999, the corpus contained 25 articles, or 5.4% of the total retrieved corpus. This number rose to 44 articles in 2000-2009, or 9.5%, and then to 127 articles in 2010-2019, or 27.3%. The 2020-2026 period contains the largest number of articles, with 269 articles, or 57.8% of the entire corpus.

This pattern indicates that Scopus-indexed English-language publications captured by the research query on Islamic thought studies increased strongly in the most recent period. However, these data do not explain the historical, institutional, or geopolitical causes of this increase. The finding is therefore

read as a pattern of publication growth in the retrieved corpus, not as direct evidence of historical change in Islamic thought.

Table 5. Publication distribution by period.

Period	Number of articles	Percentage
1974-1999	25	5.4%
2000-2009	44	9.5%
2010-2019	127	27.3%
2020-2026	269	57.8%

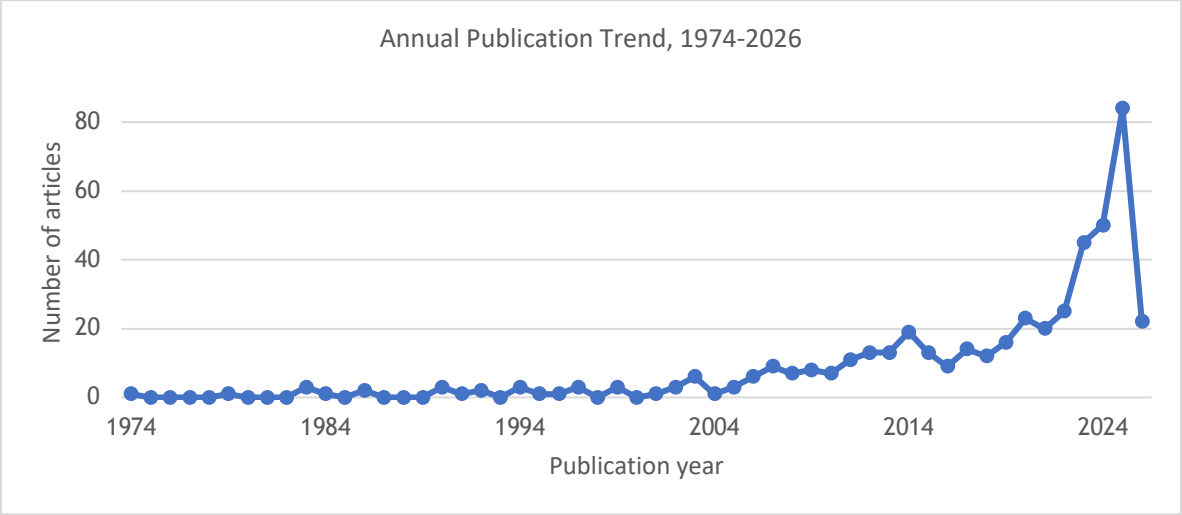

Figure 2. Annual publication trend of Islamic thought studies in Scopus, 1974-2026.

3.3. Source-Title Distribution

Publications in the retrieved corpus are distributed across 257 unique source titles. The ten most productive source titles indicate that Islamic thought studies in the corpus are not concentrated in a single type of journal, but are dispersed across journals in religious studies, Islamic studies, area studies, the social sciences, and the humanities.

The source title with the largest number of articles is Religions, with 24 articles, followed by Contemporary Islam with 15 articles. Other source titles, such as Welt des Islams, Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, Modern Asian Studies, Third World Quarterly, Journal of Al-Tamaddun, Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies, Miqot: Jurnal Ilmu-ilmu Keislaman, and Al-Shajarah, indicate the diversity of publication channels in the corpus.

This list shows source productivity within the retrieved corpus, not journal quality ranking, quartile status, or level of academic authority. Verification of journal quartiles lies outside this Results analysis unless conducted as an additional analysis.

Table 6. Most productive source titles in the retrieved corpus.

Rank	Source title	Articles
1	Religions	24
2	Contemporary Islam	15
3	Welt des Islams	8
4	Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations	8
5	Modern Asian Studies	7
6	Third World Quarterly	7
7	Journal of Al-Tamaddun	7
8	Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies	6
9	Miqot: Jurnal Ilmu-ilmu Keislaman	6
10	Al-Shajarah	6

3.4. Distribution of Countries of Affiliation

The distribution of countries of affiliation shows that Indonesia is the country with the largest number of documents in the retrieved corpus, with 112 documents. It is followed by the United States with 78 documents, the United Kingdom with 43 documents, and Malaysia with 40 documents. Other countries appearing in the top ten are Germany, Turkey, Australia, Pakistan, the Netherlands, India, and Kazakhstan.

This distribution indicates the institutional location of authors based on affiliation metadata, not the origin of ideas, the location of the research object, or the geographical representation of the Muslim world as a whole. The strong contribution of Indonesian affiliations in the corpus should therefore be read as a pattern of academic production in the retrieved corpus, not as evidence that Indonesia is a center of global Islamic thought.

Table 7. Leading countries by author affiliation.

Rank	Country	Documents
1	Indonesia	112
2	United States	78
3	United Kingdom	43
4	Malaysia	40
5	Germany	22
6	Turkey	19
7	Australia	16
8	Pakistan	12
9	Netherlands	11
10	India	10
11	Kazakhstan	10

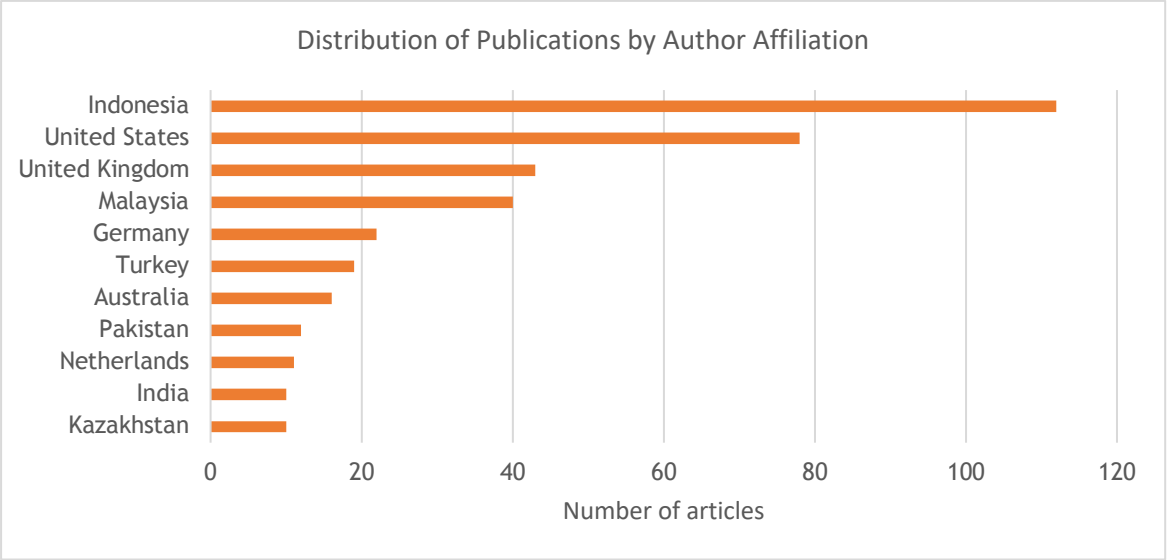

Figure 3. Distribution of publications by author affiliation.

3.5. Most Cited Articles

The most cited articles in the retrieved corpus indicate articles with high visibility in Scopus publication networks. The most cited article is "State versus Islam: Malay families, women's bodies, and the body politic in Malaysia" with 185 citations, followed by "Religion and politics in Egypt: The *ulema* of al-Azhar, radical Islam, and the state (1952-94)" with 167 citations, and "British Muslim Perspectives on Multiculturalism" with 156 citations.

Thematically, many of the most cited articles lie at the intersection of Islam, the state, gender, religious authority, reformism, modernity, multiculturalism, and Islamic revival. However, citation counts are not used to assess the normative quality or conceptual depth of articles. Citations are read only as indicators of academic visibility within the corpus.

Table 8. Most cited articles in the retrieved corpus.

Rank	Citations	Year	Article	Source title
1	185	1990	State versus Islam: Malay families, women's bodies, and the body politic in Malaysia	American Ethnologist
2	167	1999	Religion and politics in Egypt: The *ulema* of al-Azhar, radical Islam, and the state (1952-94)	International Journal of Middle East Studies
3	156	2007	British Muslim Perspectives on Multiculturalism	Theory, Culture & Society
4	110	2008	Islamic reform and modernities in South Asia	Modern Asian Studies

5	100	2006	"Family values" and Islamic revival: Gender, rights and state moral projects in Malaysia	Women's Studies International Forum
6	94	2008	Islamism and social reform in Kerala, South India	Modern Asian Studies
7	91	2006	Muslim women and the challenge of Islamic fundamentalism/extremism: An overview of Southeast Asian Muslim women's struggle for human rights and gender equality	Women's Studies International Forum
8	63	2012	Being a nonbeliever in a time of Islamic revival: Trajectories of doubt and certainty in contemporary Egypt	International Journal of Middle East Studies
9	61	2009	Crisis of authority: Crisis of Islam?	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society
10	58	2016	Towards an overlapping consensus: Muslim teachers' views on fundamental British values	Journal of Education for Teaching

3.6. Author-Keyword Co-occurrence and Overlay Visualization

Author-keyword co-occurrence analysis was conducted with VOSviewer on articles that have author keywords. After normalization with a conservative thesaurus, the co-occurrence map shows several prominent thematic nodes in the corpus, including Islam, Islamic reformism, Islamic revivalism, Sufism, *ulama*, Islamic law, religious authority, secularism, Salafism, Muhammadiyah, Indonesia, politics, *fiqh*, *fatwa*, *kalām*, and Islamic philosophy.

General nodes such as Islam and religion were retained because they were used by article authors as author keywords. Geographical nodes such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Kazakhstan, and Aceh were also retained in the conservative map to show the keyword structure as it appears in the corpus. This decision follows the principle of a conservative thesaurus: only clearly identical term variants are merged, while terms that are adjacent but conceptually distinct are not combined.

The network map shows term connectivity based on co-occurrence in author keywords. Relationships among nodes are therefore not read as causal relationships or direct intellectual influence. Co-occurrence only indicates that certain terms frequently appear together in article metadata.

In addition to network visualization, VOSviewer was used to generate an overlay visualization based on average publication year. This visualization helps identify keywords that tend to appear in earlier or more recent periods within the retrieved corpus. However, overlay results cannot be used as sole evidence of historical shifts in Islamic thought. Average publication year only indicates the mean publication year of articles containing a given keyword. Overlay visualization therefore needs to be

read together with abstract-based thematic screening and the thematic distribution of the corpus.

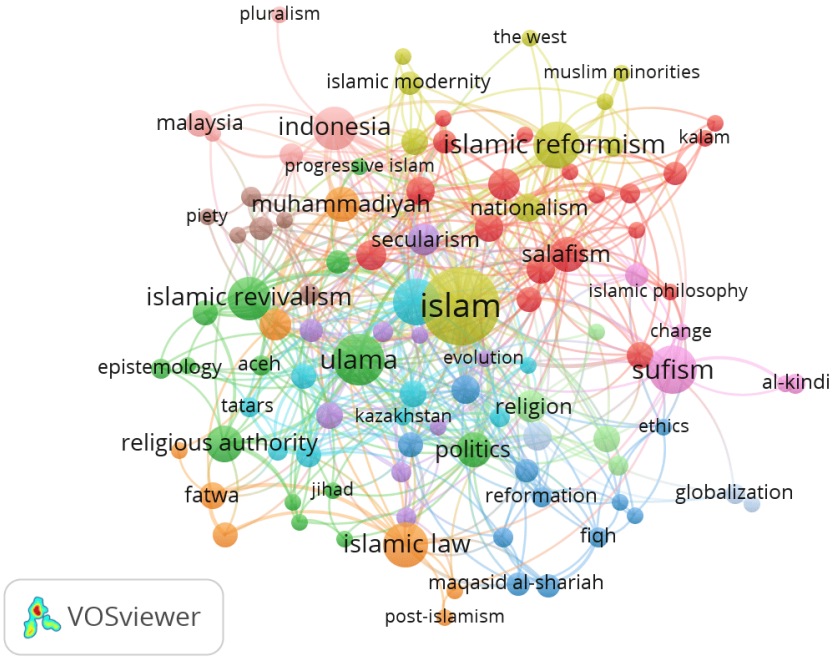

Figure 4. Author-keyword co-occurrence network after conservative thesaurus normalization.

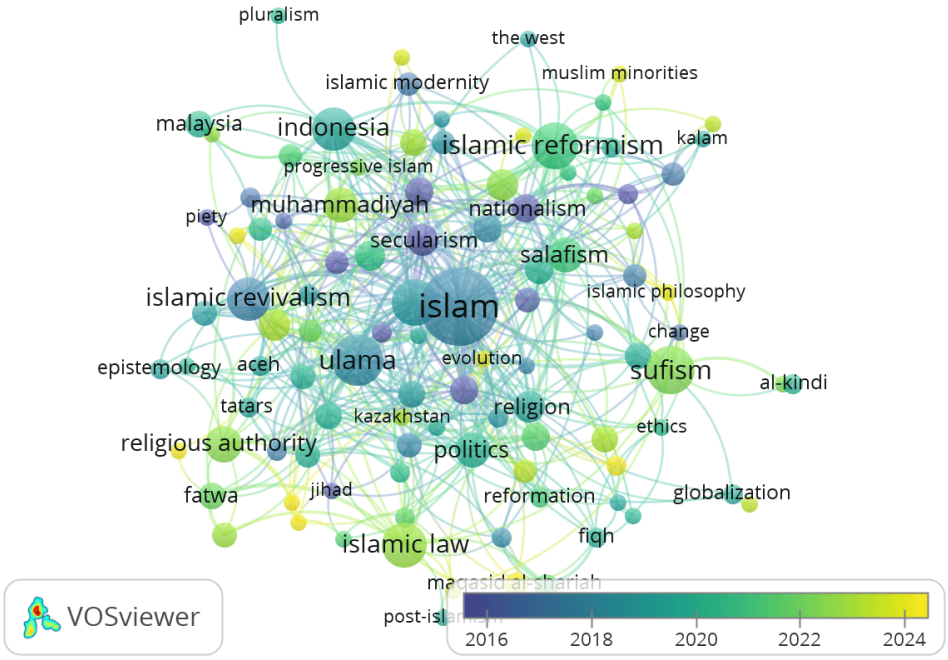

Figure 5. Overlay visualization of author-keyword co-occurrence by average publication year.

3.7. Results of Abstract-Based Thematic Screening

Abstract-based thematic screening classified the 465 articles in the retrieved corpus into three relevance categories: Core/Include, Medium/Maybe, and Peripheral/Exclude. The screening results show that 272 articles, or 58.5%, were classified as Core/Include and used as the core thematic corpus. A total of 129 articles, or 27.7%, were classified as Medium/Maybe, while 64 articles, or 13.8%, were classified as Peripheral/Exclude.

The Core/Include category is used for thematic synthesis because it has a direct relationship with Islamic thought studies. The Medium/Maybe category indicates articles with partial, indirect, or ambiguous relevance. The Peripheral/Exclude category indicates articles whose relevance is too weak for thematic synthesis. Nevertheless, all 465 articles remain part of the retrieved corpus for general bibliometric mapping.

The distribution of screening results by period shows that Core/Include articles are most numerous in 2020-2026, with 177 articles. This period is also the period with the largest overall publication volume. However, this pattern should be read as a corpus distribution by publication period, not as evidence of the causes behind the growth of Islamic thought studies.

Table 9. Abstract-based thematic screening results.

Category	Number of articles	Percentage	Decision
Core/Include	272	58.5%	Included in core thematic corpus
Medium/Maybe	129	27.7%	Borderline records; documented but not used as main thematic evidence
Peripheral/Exclude	64	13.8%	Excluded from core thematic synthesis

Table 10. Screening result by publication period.

Period	Total	Core	Medium	Peripheral
1974-1999	25	7	7	11
2000-2009	44	27	12	5
2010-2019	127	61	49	17
2020-2026	269	177	61	31

3.8. Thematic Distribution

The thematic distribution shows thematic variation in the retrieved corpus and the core thematic corpus. In the retrieved corpus, the largest theme is T5: state, politics, democracy, and secularism, with 121 articles, or 26.0%. The next largest themes are T6: education, knowledge institutions, and epistemology, with 71 articles, or 15.3%, and T4: reformism, modernism, and revivalism, with 63 articles, or 13.5%.

In the core thematic corpus, the largest theme remains T5, with 50 articles, or 18.4%, followed by T4 with 48 articles, or 17.6%, T6 with 36 articles, or 13.2%, and T1: *kalām*, theology, philosophy, Qur'an,

and *turāth*, with 33 articles, or 12.1%. T2: *fiqh*, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *sharīʿa*, and *fatwa* and T3: *taṣawwuf*, Sufism, spirituality, and ethics each include 29 articles, or 10.7%, in the core thematic corpus.

This pattern indicates that the core thematic corpus is not dominated only by socio-political issues. Classical themes, law, *taṣawwuf*, education, reformism, and religious authority remain important parts of the representation of Islamic thought studies in the corpus. However, this distribution should not be read as a measure of the normative importance of each theme within the tradition of Islamic thought. It shows only the thematic proportions in the retrieved corpus and the core thematic corpus based on the screening procedure used

Table 11. Primary thematic distribution of the retrieved and core corpora.

Code	Theme	Retrieved n	Retrieved %	Core n	Core %
T1	*Kalām*, theology, philosophy, Qur'an, *turāth*	40	8.6%	33	12.1%
T2	*Fiqh*, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *sharīʿa*, *fatwa*	39	8.4%	29	10.7%
T3	*Taṣawwuf*, Sufism, spirituality, ethics	32	6.9%	29	10.7%
T4	Reformism, modernism, revivalism	63	13.5%	48	17.6%
T5	State, politics, democracy, secularism	121	26.0%	50	18.4%
T6	Education, knowledge institutions, epistemology	71	15.3%	36	13.2%
T7	Gender, rights, pluralism, identity	52	11.2%	23	8.5%
T8	*Ulama* authority, intellectuals, media/digital	47	10.1%	24	8.8%

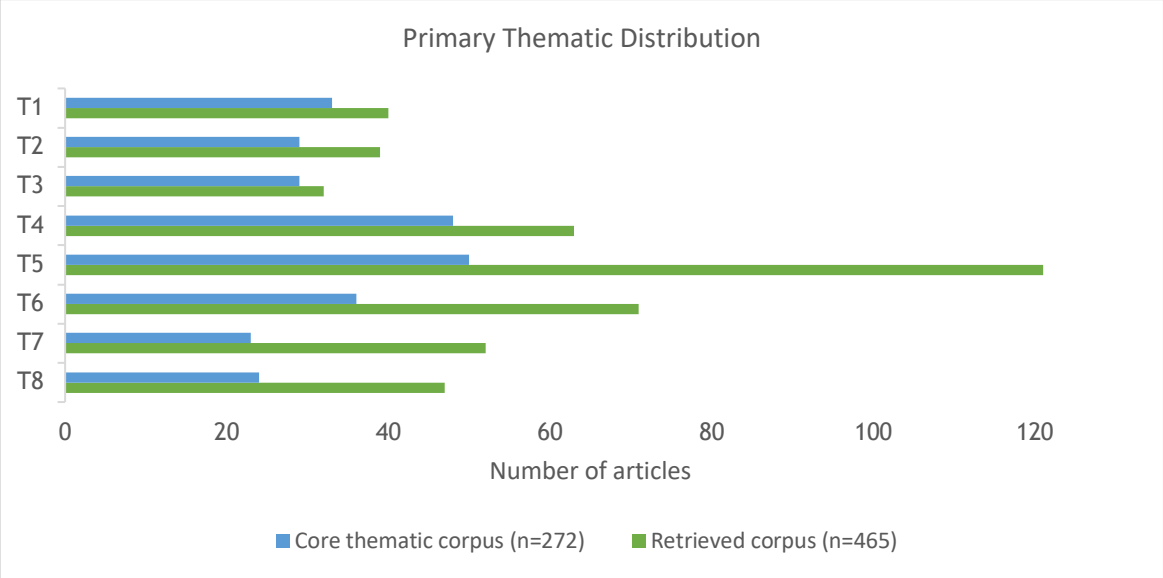

Figure 6. Primary thematic distribution in the retrieved corpus and core thematic corpus.

4. Discussion

4.1. Thematic Diversification in Islamic Thought Studies

The findings of this study indicate that thematic shifts in Scopus-indexed Islamic thought studies are more accurately understood as thematic diversification rather than as a linear shift from classical

themes to modern themes. In the retrieved corpus, T5, namely state, politics, democracy, and secularism, is indeed the largest theme. However, in the core thematic corpus, T5 does not function as a single center. Reformism, education, classical domains, Islamic law, *taṣawwuf*, and religious authority all retain significant representation. This pattern indicates that Islamic thought studies in the corpus do not move along a single thematic pathway, but through a more diverse configuration of themes.

This reading is important because the term shift can imply a clear historical transition from one phase of thought to another. The data in this study do not support such a claim. A more accurate conclusion is that English-language Scopus-indexed literature represents Islamic thought studies through an increasingly broad thematic field. Classical themes remain visible, while issues of the state, reformism, education, public law, religious authority, gender, identity, pluralism, and digital media become important contexts in recent scholarship.

The pattern of diversification also appears in articles within the corpus that intersect several fields of inquiry. The study of al-Azhar *ulama*, radical Islam, and the state in Egypt shows the relationship between religious authority and modern politics (Zeghal, 1999). Research on Islamic reform and modernities in South Asia shows that Islamic reformism is discussed through relations among tradition, modernity, and social change (Robinson, 2008). An article on Islamic law and family planning in Indonesia shows how Islamic law is read together with public policy, the state, and social change (Menchik, 2014). Meanwhile, studies of the Gülen Movement, Muhammadiyah, and Nahdlatul *Ulama* show that progressive Islamic thought is discussed through civil society, philanthropy, and socio-religious institutions (Barton, 2014).

Accordingly, this Discussion does not read thematic shifts as a narrative that Islamic thought has abandoned classical domains and moved into modern domains. A more defensible reading is that Islamic thought studies in the Scopus corpus undergo thematic diversification: classical domains, law, spirituality, and religious authority remain present, but are increasingly discussed together with the state, education, the public sphere, gender, identity, and media. The shift at issue is a shift in academic representation, not a direct transformation in the history of Islamic thought as a whole.

4.2. The Visibility of Classical Themes in the Corpus

The presence of T1, T2, and T3 in the core thematic corpus shows that classical domains retain visibility in Scopus-indexed Islamic thought studies. Themes such as *kalām*, theology, *falsafa*, Qur'an, *turāth*, *fiqh*, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *sharīʿa*, *fatwa*, *taṣawwuf*, Sufism, spirituality, and ethics have not disappeared from the corpus. The presence of nodes such as *kalām*, Islamic philosophy, *fiqh*, Islamic law, *fatwa*, and Sufism in the author-keyword co-occurrence map also confirms that classical domains remain part of the thematic structure represented by article authors.

Visibility, however, is not the same as historical continuity in a strong sense. The literature on

commentary traditions, *ḥāshiya*, and Islamic intellectual history helps explain that classical Islamic thought developed through transmission, interpretation, and commentary (Ahmed & Larkin, 2013; Van Lit, 2017; Wisnovsky, 2004). Yet the corpus of this study is not sufficient to establish the full continuity of that history. The data used here consist of metadata, author keywords, index keywords, abstracts, and thematic screening results. The defensible claim is therefore that classical themes remain represented in Scopus-indexed literature, not that this corpus has mapped Islamic intellectual history comprehensively.

Several articles in the corpus illustrate this visibility. Research on the *Muʿtazila* in Islamic history and thought shows that classical rational theology remains an object of contemporary academic discussion (Campanini, 2012). A study of ways of knowing and paths of power in medieval Islamic works shows that premodern sciences continue to be read as part of the history of Islamic knowledge (Saif, 2017). An article on sex differences in medieval scholarly Islamic thought shows that classical texts and discourses can also be read in relation to the body, gender, and knowledge authority (Gadelrab, 2011).

Within these limits, classical themes in the corpus should be read as part of a living academic representation, but not as standing alone. In many cases, classical domains appear together with questions of law, authority, education, gender, and social change. This is why thematic diversification is more persuasive than a narrative in which modern themes replace classical themes.

4.3. Modernity, Reformism, and Public-Institutional Recontextualization

Modern-contemporary themes in the corpus do not indicate the replacement of classical themes. They are more accurately read as recontextualization. T4, T5, and T6 show that reformism, modernism, revivalism, the state, politics, democracy, secularism, education, knowledge institutions, and epistemology constitute important fields in the way Islamic thought studies are discussed. Modernity in the corpus does not appear as a single issue, but as a set of contexts in which Islamic concepts, authority, law, education, and identity are negotiated.

The literature on Islamic modernism and reformism shows that modern Islamic thought is often discussed through its relationship with education, the modern state, social change, and the formation of the modern Muslim subject (Bano, 2014; Brophy, 2016; Duarte, 2016; Epkenhans, 2011). The corpus of this study extends that reading by showing that modernity is related not only to reformism as an intellectual movement, but also to educational institutions, public law, religious authority, and social space. Research on *madrasa* reforms in Bangladesh shows the relationship between Islamic education and intellectual renewal (Bano, 2014), while a study of normative Islam in Tajikistan shows the interrelationship among *sharīʿa*, society, and contemporary authority (Epkenhans, 2011).

In this context, T5 must be read proportionally. The size of T5 indicates that the state, politics,

democracy, and secularism are highly visible in the retrieved corpus. Yet T5 should not be treated as evidence that Islamic thought studies in Scopus are entirely dominated by politics. The core thematic corpus reveals a more balanced configuration because T4, T6, T1, T2, and T3 remain significant. T5 is therefore better understood as one major axis through which other themes interact, not as the single center of the field.

Recontextualization is also visible in articles that connect Islamic thought with civil society, public policy, and modern identity. The study of progressive Islamic thought, philanthropy, and civil society in the Gülen Movement, Muhammadiyah, and Nahdlatul *Ulama* shows that Islamic thought is understood through social institutions and public movements (Barton, 2014). Research on the sacred and the secular in Islamic law and family planning shows that Islamic legal thought can appear in negotiations among the state, religious authority, and social policy (Menchik, 2014). These articles indicate that modernity is not the single cause of thematic shifts, but a public-institutional context that allows classical themes, law, authority, and education to be read in new configurations.

4.4. Authority, Law, Education, Media, and Public Ethics

One important pattern in the corpus is the interconnection among religious authority, Islamic law, education, media, and public ethics. These themes should not be read as entirely separate subfields. In many articles, they function as nodes that connect knowledge production, normative legitimacy, knowledge transmission, and the public articulation of Islamic thought. T2, T6, and T8 show that Islamic law, education, *ulama* authority, Muslim intellectuals, *fatwa*, knowledge institutions, and digital media are part of an intersecting thematic configuration.

Religious authority in the corpus is not limited to *ulama* as traditional actors. A study of *fatwa* and *ulama* authority in Indonesia shows how religious authority operates in the public sphere and social institutions (Kaptein, 2004). Discussions of consensus and religious authority in modern Islam show that modern *ulama* authority is shaped by texts, institutions, communities, and claims to religious representation (Zaman, 2006). Research on individualization and religious authority in Western European Islam shows changes in authority in the context of Muslim minorities and the European public sphere (Peter, 2006). In the corpus, this pattern is expanded by studies of religious authority in modern Asia (Feener, 2014).

The link between authority and law appears in the article on *Fatwas* and Democracy in Indonesia, which reads the Indonesian Council of *Ulama* in the context of democracy and religious conservatism (Hasyim, 2020). The study of Yusuf al-Qaradawi's changing *fiqh* of citizenship shows how *fiqh* is read through questions of citizenship, the nation-state, and Islamic legal tradition (Warren & Gilmore, 2014). An article on divorce in Islamic legal reform in imperial Russia shows that legal change can occur from within a normative tradition, not only through external pressures of modernity (Garipova, 2022). These

findings show that Islamic law in the corpus appears not merely as internal doctrine, but as a field of debate about authority, family, citizenship, policy, and social change. This pattern is also consistent with studies of changing assessments of *ḥadīth* in Islamic thought and the contestation of Islamic legal thought in responding to global issues (Danial et al., 2022; Duderija, 2009).

Education is also part of this node. Islamic education entails not only the transmission of knowledge, but also the formation of authority, curriculum, scholarly habitus, and models of the Muslim subject. Studies of *madrasa* reforms show the relationship between education and Islamic modernism (Bano, 2014). Research on Muslim girls and religious authority in a modernist Islamic boarding school shows that education can become a space for the formation of women's religious authority and social transformation (Hefner, 2016). T6 therefore indicates not merely the presence of education as a theme, but also that knowledge production and transmission are important elements in the representation of Islamic thought studies in the corpus.

Media change expands this configuration. An article on Islamic emoticons and religious authority shows how digital practices can produce new forms of expression and authority in religious space (Stanton, 2018). A study of internet and Islamic learning practices in Indonesia shows that social media, religious populism, and religious authority are interconnected in contemporary Islamic learning practices (Solahudin & Fakhruroji, 2020). Research on Muslim millennials and social media influencers shows that religious authority can be reimagined through digital platforms (Zaid et al., 2022). Recent articles on digital Islamic authority and the digital *minbar* also show that digital media are part of the latest corpus, although 2026 data must be read as partial and should not be used as evidence of the dominance of digital themes (Fauzi et al., 2026; Wahid & Abdulloh, 2026).

Gender, rights, pluralism, identity, and Muslim minorities need to be situated within the framework of public ethics. T7 is not the largest theme in the core thematic corpus, but it is important because it shows that Islamic thought studies are not discussed only through doctrine, institutions, or formal authority. Research on the construction of gender in Islamic legal thought shows that Islamic law is an important site of debate over gender and reform (Mir-Hosseini, 2003). The article on family values and Islamic revival in Malaysia and the study of Muslim women and Islamic fundamentalism/extremism in Southeast Asia show the relationship among gender, rights, state moral projects, and Islamic revivalism (Othman, 2006; Stivens, 2006). Research on knowledge, empowerment, and religious authority among pious Muslim women in France and Germany also shows that gender and authority cannot be separated from knowledge production and the religious practices of Muslim minorities (Jouili & Amir-Moazami, 2006).

4.5. Reading Thematic Shifts through the Retrieved Corpus and the Core Thematic Corpus

The reading of thematic shifts in this article depends on the distinction between the retrieved corpus and the core thematic corpus. The retrieved corpus provides a broad picture of publication structures, source titles, countries of affiliation, citations, and author-keyword co-occurrence. The core thematic corpus provides a more focused basis for thematic synthesis because it was constructed through abstract-based thematic screening. This distinction is important because not all articles captured by the Scopus query have the same level of relevance to Islamic thought studies.

In a bibliometric review, bibliometric visibility is not automatically the same as substantive thematic relevance. Productive source titles do not directly indicate academic quality or quartile status. Countries of affiliation are not identical to centers of Islamic thought. Citation counts cannot be treated as measures of normative value or conceptual depth. Similarly, large nodes in author-keyword co-occurrence do not indicate causal relationships among themes. This principle is consistent with the use of bibliometric analysis as a tool for mapping publication structures and item connectivity, not as a substitute for substantive interpretation of article content (Donthu et al., 2021; Van Eck & Waltman, 2010; Zupic & Čater, 2015).

The use of a conservative thesaurus in VOSviewer also has analytical significance. Terms that are technically identical or very close can be normalized, but conceptually adjacent terms such as *fiqh*, *sharīʿa*, Islamic law, and *fatwa* are retained as distinct nodes. This decision preserves conceptual nuance in Islamic thought studies. *Fiqh*, *sharīʿa*, Islamic law, and *fatwa* can overlap, but they are not identical. Such distinctions are important because themes in Islamic thought are often interrelated without being equivalent.

Overlay visualization helps read temporal tendencies in keywords through average publication year, but it cannot stand alone as evidence of historical shifts in Islamic thought. Overlay only shows when certain keywords tend to appear in the corpus. It must therefore be read together with abstract-based thematic screening. When the keyword map shows term connectivity and screening shows thematic distribution in the core thematic corpus, the reading of thematic shifts becomes more precise: it does not merely observe frequently appearing terms, but assesses whether the articles are substantively relevant to Islamic thought studies.

This two-layered reading explains why the thesis of thematic diversification is stronger than a narrative of linear shift. The retrieved corpus shows a broad publication field, while the core thematic corpus shows that major themes are not concentrated in only one domain. T5 is indeed prominent, but T4, T6, T1, T2, and T3 retain important positions. Thematic shifts in this corpus therefore point to the expansion and reconfiguration of thematic representation, not to the displacement of classical themes by modern themes.

The limits of interpretation must still be maintained. This article does not assess the normative quality of articles in the corpus, determine centers of global Islamic thought authority, or construct a complete history of Islamic thought. The data come from English-language journal articles indexed by Scopus and are analyzed through metadata, keywords, abstracts, and thematic screening. The findings of this article are therefore best read as a map of academic representation of Islamic thought studies in Scopus literature, not as a comprehensive map of the entire Islamic intellectual tradition.

5. CONCLUSION

This article mapped thematic shifts in Islamic thought studies within Scopus-indexed English-language journal literature from 1974 to 2026. The retrieved corpus consisted of 465 articles, while 272 articles were classified as the core thematic corpus through abstract-based thematic screening. The full retrieved corpus was used for bibliometric mapping, whereas the core thematic corpus provided the basis for a more focused thematic synthesis.

The bibliometric results indicate a strong increase in publications during 2020–2026. This period accounts for 269 articles, or 57.8% of the entire corpus. Publications are distributed across 257 source titles, with strong author-affiliation contributions from Indonesia, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Malaysia. These patterns, however, should be read as publication patterns within the retrieved corpus, not as measures of quality, intellectual authority, or full representation of the Muslim world.

The author-keyword co-occurrence analysis and abstract-based thematic screening show that the corpus contains both classical and modern-contemporary themes. T5, namely state, politics, democracy, and secularism, is the largest theme in both the retrieved corpus and the core thematic corpus. However, the core thematic corpus also shows substantial representation of T4, T6, T1, T2, and T3. Therefore, thematic shifts in Scopus-indexed Islamic thought studies are better understood as thematic diversification rather than as a linear shift from classical to modern themes.

This article also clarifies the importance of distinguishing bibliometric visibility from substantive thematic relevance. The retrieved corpus helps map the broader structure of publication, while the core thematic corpus enables a more direct reading of themes that are substantively related to Islamic thought studies. Within these limits, the article contributes to mapping the representation of Islamic thought studies in Scopus-indexed literature and offers a more proportionate interpretation of thematic shifts as thematic diversification.

Several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the dataset is drawn only from Scopus and therefore does not cover the entire literature on Islamic thought. Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Urdu, Malay, Indonesian, classical *turāth* texts, manuscripts, monographs, book chapters, and non-journal sources are

not included in this corpus. Second, the corpus includes only English-language articles, which creates language bias and may reduce the representation of Islamic intellectual traditions in the major languages of the Muslim world. Third, the thematic synthesis is based on titles, abstracts, author keywords, and index keywords; it therefore does not replace a full-text systematic literature review. Fourth, the VOSviewer analysis based on author keywords does not capture the full thematic variation of the articles because not all articles provide author keywords. Fifth, overlay visualization indicates temporal keyword tendencies based on average publication year, not direct evidence of historical change in Islamic thought. Sixth, the 2026 data do not represent a full publication year because the data were retrieved on 3 May 2026.

Future research should conduct a full-text review of articles in the core thematic corpus to deepen the conceptual synthesis. It may also compare the Scopus corpus with other databases, monographs, non-English literature, and primary classical sources. Subsequent bibliometric analysis can add co-citation analysis and bibliographic coupling if reference metadata are exported completely from Scopus. Journal quartile verification may also be conducted to build a stricter corpus based on journal ranking, particularly when future research objectives require quality-based restrictions.

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