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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Section: *Philosophy and Religion***Exploring non-formal Islamic education: Research trends, contextual practices, and participant impacts (2015–2025)**

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the landscape of non-formal Islamic education through a systematic literature review (SLR), bibliometric mapping, and content analysis of scholarly publications published between 2015 and 2025. The Scopus database served as the primary data source, yielding 46 eligible articles in accordance with PRISMA guidelines. Bibliometric analysis, performed using Biblioshiny (R-package) and VOSviewer, was employed to investigate publication trends, methodological orientations, thematic structures, and the most influential journals, authors, and contributing countries. The results indicate a consistent upward trajectory of research output, with an annual growth rate of 7.18%, largely dominated by contributions from Indonesia and Malaysia. Keyword mapping reveals major thematic clusters, including religious practices and psychological well-being, religious identity, community engagement, digital Islamic learning, and public religious discourse. Complementary content analysis demonstrates that non-formal Islamic education is manifested in diverse forms such as majelis taklim (Islamic study group), halaqah (Islamic learning circle), pengajian (Islamic religious lecture), mosque-based education, and community-based study circles. These platforms collectively contribute to the dissemination of religious knowledge, the strengthening of spiritual identity, the promotion of social solidarity, and resilience against radical ideologies. The novelty of this study lies in its provision of the first integrative evidence that compares non-formal Islamic education across multiple countries and contexts, while linking bibliometric trends with participant-level impacts. The findings underscore that non-formal Islamic education functions not only as a means of transmitting religious knowledge but also as a vehicle for fostering psychological well-being, community empowerment, and digital transformation. Nonetheless, the study acknowledges limitations, particularly its reliance on a single database (Scopus) and the exclusion of non-indexed local literature, which may result in the underrepresentation of grassroots practices. Future research should extend the scope by incorporating additional databases, including grey literature, and undertaking comparative case studies to enhance understanding of the evolving role of non-formal Islamic education within Muslim societies.

KEYWORDS: bibliometric analysis, content analysis, non-formal Islamic education

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Introduction

Non-formal Islamic education (NFIE) has increasingly emerged as a focal point in global educational research, reflecting its multifaceted contributions to Muslim societies (Salsabilah et al., 2025; Rahman & Jalil, 2021). Historically regarded as a supplementary practice, NFIE is now recognized as a dynamic and adaptive form of education that complements and surpasses the functions of formal schooling (Hasan, 2019). Its significance lies not only in transmitting religious knowledge but also in cultivating community resilience, strengthening moral character, enhancing religious literacy, and expanding women's participation in public life (Fauzi, 2020). Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia and Malaysia, constitutes one of the most vibrant arenas for NFIE. Indonesia, as the world's largest Muslim-majority nation with approximately 240 million Muslims—or about 12% of the global Muslim population offers fertile ground for the diversification of NFIE. Within this context, a variety of institutions flourish, including *pondok pesantren* (Islamic boarding school), *majelis taklim*, Qur'anic Learning Centers (*Taman Pendidikan Al-Qur'an* or TPQ), and *madrasah diniyah* (Abdullah, 2018; Ningsih, 2020). These institutions embody a flexible approach that enables religious education to be tailored to the diverse needs of different communities, whether in rural villages, urban neighborhoods, or digital spaces (Robbaniyah & Lina, 2025; Sari, 2020). Malaysia, though smaller in population, demonstrates another important model. NFIE is often formalized through government-supported programs such as Kelas al-Qur'an dan Fardhu Ain (KAFA), which integrate classical religious instruction with contemporary life skills (Rahman et al., 2015). This state involvement underscores NFIE's recognized role in strengthening religious identity while preparing participants for broader socio-economic participation (Hussin & Nordin, 2017). Indonesia and Malaysia demonstrate how NFIE serves as a strategic tool for promoting religious moderation, empowering communities, and preserving cultural continuity (Hussin & Nordin, 2017; Ningsih, 2020).

At the same time, NFIE is not confined to Southeast Asia. In Muslim-minority contexts such as the Netherlands, NFIE often provides a space for identity affirmation and solidarity among Muslims navigating challenges of discrimination and marginalization (Altinyelken, 2021; Maliepaard et al., 2015). In sub-Saharan Africa, NFIE programs are increasingly linked to community development and women's empowerment (Namooga & Agyekum, 2024). These diverse manifestations highlight NFIE's global relevance and its adaptability to local social, cultural, and political contexts (Sholeh, 2023). The diversity of NFIE highlights the need for a clear conceptual understanding. Broadly defined, NFIE refers to structured educational activities organized outside the formal school system. These activities are typically systematic, goal-oriented, and community-based, often embedded within broader religious or social initiatives (Magfiroh et al., 2023). Unlike formal education, which is governed by standardized systems, NFIE is characterized by flexibility and responsiveness (Al-Khalidi, 2019). It allows pedagogical methods to be tailored to local realities and can incorporate both traditional and digital learning modes (Alfandi & Inayati, 2024). Such flexibility ensures NFIE's continuing relevance, particularly in rapidly changing social environments.

Despite its recognized importance, scholarship on NFIE remains fragmented. Much of the existing literature concentrates on Indonesia and Malaysia, with relatively limited contributions from Muslim-minority societies or other regions such as the Middle East and Africa (Rezaei, 2022). This geographical imbalance restricts NFIE scholarship to a regional focus, leaving unexplored how NFIE adapts in diverse national contexts shaped by different political, economic, and cultural forces. Methodologically, NFIE research has been dominated by qualitative approaches, particularly case studies, phenomenology, and ethnography (Khaeruniah, 2024). These methods offer rich insights into local practices, but they also yield literature that is highly context-specific and difficult to generalize (Rahman et al., 2015). Large-scale comparative research, cross-national surveys, or bibliometric mapping studies remain relatively scarce. As a result, there is a lack of systematic analysis that could provide an integrated view of global NFIE trends. Another limitation lies in theoretical grounding. While NFIE has been explored descriptively in terms of institutional practices and participant experiences, relatively few studies have engaged with broader theoretical frameworks. For example, Bandura's social learning theory, which emphasizes learning through observation, modeling, and reinforcement (Irama, 2020), offers significant potential for understanding NFIE's interactive pedagogical environment. Similarly, UNESCO's lifelong learning paradigm (UNESCO, 2022) aligns closely with NFIE's emphasis on continuous, community-based education. However, these frameworks remain underutilized, leading to conceptual fragmentation and limiting the broader educational implications of NFIE scholarship.

Moreover, existing research has not sufficiently addressed the impact dimension. While empirical studies demonstrate positive outcomes—such as increased psychological well-being, enhanced discipline in worship, women’s self-confidence, and reduced risks of radicalization (Aziz et al., 2022; Jufri et al., 2024; Fauzi, 2020; Hidayat, 2021; Kamaruddin, 2022)—these findings are rarely synthesized into a coherent body of knowledge. As a result, the broader significance of NFIE for individual and community development is often overlooked. Rapid transformations brought about by globalization, digitalization, and the COVID-19 pandemic have reshaped NFIE practices (Aziz & Abdullah, 2022). The emergence of *e-halaqah*, online *pengajian*, and digital Qur’anic learning platforms represents a profound shift in how religious education is delivered (Zahrah et al., 2023; Razzak et al., 2024). Yet, scholarship on these new modalities remains limited, fragmented, and often anecdotal. Without systematic investigation, the field risks underestimating the long-term significance of digital NFIE for shaping religious identities in the 21st century.

This study aims to address existing gaps by examining non-formal Islamic education (NFIE) across three interrelated dimensions: research trends, contextual practices, and participant impacts, spanning the period from 2015 to 2025. The first dimension concerns the mapping of research trends, focusing on how NFIE has been conceptualized, investigated, and debated in academic discourse over the past decade. Particular attention is given to the shift from predominantly descriptive accounts toward more analytical examinations of empowerment, inclusivity, and digital innovation. Through bibliometric analysis, the study traces patterns of scholarly publication, highlights influential contributions, and identifies areas that remain underexplored. In this way, NFIE is situated within the broader trajectory of Islamic education research, thereby contributing to a more systematic and comprehensive understanding of the field.

The second dimension examines contextual practices, emphasizing NFIE’s capacity to adapt to national and local conditions. In Indonesia, for example, institutions such as *Taman Pendidikan Al-Qur’an* (TPQ) and *madrasah diniyah* integrate Qur’anic instruction with community service, while urban movements such as *Majelis Rasulullah* combine religious devotion with elements of popular culture to appeal to younger audiences (Wahyudi, 2018; Rijal, 2020). In Malaysia, state-supported programs integrate religious curricula with entrepreneurship and practical skill development (Hussin & Nordin, 2017). In contrast, in Western contexts, NFIE frequently serves as a space for identity affirmation among Muslim minority communities (Altinyelken, 2021). These examples illustrate NFIE’s adaptability and demonstrate its responsiveness to both traditional religious needs and contemporary societal demands. The third dimension analyzes the impacts of participants at both the individual and community levels. Empirical studies suggest that participation in *majelis taklim* (Islamic study group), enhances psychological well-being by alleviating depressive symptoms and improving life satisfaction (Aziz et al., 2022). At the community level, Qur’anic study groups have been shown to promote social resilience, strengthen legal literacy, and function as preventative mechanisms against radicalization (Hamid, 2022; Jalaluddin, 2023; Jufri et al., 2024). For women, NFIE provides an empowering platform for developing religious literacy and self-confidence, thereby supporting greater engagement in civic and public life (Kamaruddin, 2022; Fauzi, 2020). For children, participation in NFIE fosters religious discipline, moral development, and ethical awareness (Zahrah, 2023).

These findings underscore NFIE’s dual role as both an educational and socio-cultural institution that contributes to intellectual development, identity formation, and collective empowerment. By simultaneously addressing research trends, contextual practices, and participant outcomes, this study makes three key contributions: it offers a systematic overview of NFIE scholarship and its trajectories, highlights the adaptability and diversity of NFIE practices across different contexts, and foregrounds the multifaceted impacts of NFIE on individuals and communities. The study positions NFIE as a critical contributor to social cohesion, resilience, and empowerment in contemporary Muslim societies.

The findings of this study highlight the dual function of non-formal Islamic education (NFIE) as both an educational framework and a socio-cultural institution that fosters intellectual growth, identity construction, and collective empowerment. By examining research trends, contextual practices, and participant outcomes in an integrated manner, the study advances three principal contributions. First, it provides a systematic overview of NFIE scholarship, thereby clarifying its developmental trajectories and scholarly orientations. Second, it demonstrates the adaptability and diversity of NFIE practices across varying cultural and national contexts, underscoring its responsiveness to local needs and social dynamics. Third, it highlights the multifaceted impacts

of NFIE on individuals and communities, encompassing personal well-being, religious literacy, community resilience, and civic engagement. Collectively, these contributions position NFIE as a vital instrument in strengthening social cohesion, enhancing resilience, and promoting empowerment within contemporary Muslim societies.

Literature Review

Islamic Non-Formal Education: Theoretical Perspectives and Contemporary Developments

Recent scholarship on Islamic Non-Formal Education (INFE) has witnessed notable advancements, characterized by the incorporation of diverse contemporary theoretical frameworks. These approaches provide critical insights into the function of INFE not only as a vehicle for the transmission of religious knowledge but also as a dynamic platform for social, cultural, and personal transformation (Laeheem, 2020). The adoption of such perspectives provides a more comprehensive understanding of INFE's capacity to foster lifelong learning, strengthen social capital, and cultivate both moral and spiritual dimensions among learners. Furthermore, these theoretical paradigms underscore the adaptability of INFE in addressing contextual challenges, including the integration of local wisdom, the promotion of tolerance and moderation, and the empowerment of learners as active agents of change within their communities. Consequently, the application of these frameworks establishes a robust foundation for advancing INFE research and situating it within broader discourses on education, society, and cultural continuity.

The Hidden Curriculum

The hidden curriculum encompasses values, norms, and habits that are implicitly transmitted through interactions, cultural practices, and daily routines within non-formal Islamic educational institutions, such as pesantren. Its effective implementation requires strategic management, integration with the formal curriculum, the exemplary conduct of educators, and continuous evaluation to achieve optimal outcomes. This approach aims to produce graduates who are intellectually competent, possess Islamic character, and are responsive to contemporary challenges (Latif et al., 2025). Complementarily, al-Ghazali's theory of Sufi education expands upon the hidden curriculum by emphasizing moral cultivation, purification of the heart, and spiritual training. Education, therefore, extends beyond the acquisition of knowledge to encompass inner transformation through *riyadhah* (discipline and training) and *mujahadah* (spiritual perseverance). In the context of non-formal education, this Sufi perspective enriches character formation through role modeling, habituation, and spiritual reinforcement beyond the classroom (Mukti et al., 2021).

Critical Thinking and Transformative Learning

Critical thinking and transformative learning have become increasingly salient within INFE, highlighting the importance of dialogic, reflective, and participatory pedagogies that encourage learners to critically engage with religious teachings and authority. This development has been particularly visible among Muslim communities in Europe and North America, where younger generations have challenged traditional pedagogical approaches emphasizing rote memorization and uncritical acceptance, instead seeking opportunities for discussion, questioning, and deeper reflection to render religious understanding more relevant to contemporary realities (Altinyelken, 2021). Transformative learning aims to foster critical reflection that reshapes individual perspectives while reinforcing the internalization of Islamic values (Asrin, 2024). Mezirow's theory emphasizes that education extends beyond the accumulation of knowledge to the reconstruction of personal frames of reference through reflection and dialogue, enabling learners not only to "know more" but also to "see differently" (Hayashi, 2014). This perspective is complemented by Freire's critical pedagogy, which conceptualizes education as a participatory and dialogic process that empowers learners as agents of social change rather than passive recipients of knowledge (Phillips, 2014). Within INFE, these principles are operationalized through activities such as *halaqah*, *madrrasah diniyah*, and community-based programs, which cultivate critical awareness, creativity, and reflective skills. Empirical studies demonstrate that such approaches enhance lifelong learning motivation, strengthen social agency, and equip learners to address personal and societal challenges effectively (Guefara et al., 2024; Sholeh et al., 2023; Mohamed et al., 2024). Accordingly, INFE constitutes a critical space for individual and social empowerment, aligning with the principles of transformative learning and critical thinking.

Integration of Islamic Values with Local Wisdom

Nafisendy et al. (2025) mention that Islamic values can be found in story excerpts that depict the behavior of characters, dialogues between characters, and descriptions of characters in the folktale. Reading folktales allows people to learn about ethics, discern between good and bad, understand exemplary things in behavior, and foster care for others (Junaidi, et al., 2024).

The integration of Islamic values with local wisdom illustrates the capacity of INFE to cultivate tolerant, moderate, and socially conscious learners while simultaneously reinforcing Islamic identity and maintaining harmony with surrounding cultural traditions. This approach prevents radicalism, promotes inclusivity, and strengthens intercommunal tolerance. Beyond cultural integration, INFE contributes to the development of social capital and facilitates transformative learning. Drawing on Bourdieu and Putnam, social capital within INFE emerges through both internal bonds, such as *halaqah* (Islamic learning circle) and *majelis taklim* (Islamic study group), and external bridges that facilitate intercommunity dialogue, thereby fostering solidarity and empowerment (Rahmadani & Alimi, 2023; Choir & Aziz, 2024). Simultaneously, transformative learning, as articulated by Mezirow and Freire, positions INFE as a participatory and dialogic space where learners critically reflect, challenge social structures, and cultivate agency for change (Guefara et al., 2024; Sholeh et al., 2023). Recent innovations, such as the integration of STEAM education with Islamic values in pesantren, further illustrate INFE's potential to nurture critical, innovative, and reflective capacities (Mohamed et al., 2024). Thus, INFE not only transmits religious knowledge but also fosters resilience, empowers learners, and contributes to broader social transformation.

Classical Islamic Education

Education is a fundamental necessity in building a nation and shaping its future. Through education, human potential can be optimally developed, resulting in competent, qualified, and competitive individuals (Tohirin et al., 2025). Islamic non-formal education extends beyond knowledge transmission to serve as a social arena that strengthens social capital through both internal and external networks, while simultaneously fostering individual transformation through dialogue and reflection (Rahmadani & Alimi, 2023; Choir & Aziz, 2024). This orientation resonates with Imam al-Shafi'i's tradition of lifelong learning, which emphasizes intellectual rigor, perseverance, teacher guidance, and the spiritual dimensions of piety and morality (Syitaywi, 2008; Nuruddin, 2014). Such a perspective aligns with Bourdieu's theory of habitus, capital, and field, which elucidates how pesantren reproduce values, discipline, and authority through collective practices and the circulation of social, cultural, and symbolic capital (Ma'rifah & Mustaqim, 2015; Syahidan, 2020). Historically, classical Islamic education encompassed diverse non-formal models—including *maktab*, *halaqah*, mosque schools, bookshop schools, and literary salons—that were flexible and dialogical compared to modern formal systems. For example, *maktab* not only offered literacy and basic Islamic knowledge but also training in character formation, calligraphy, language proficiency, and social competencies, while *halaqah* embodied dialogical learning through direct teacher-student interaction in mosques and public spaces.

The Qur'anic Learning Centers

The Qur'anic Learning Centers (*Taman Pendidikan Al-Qur'an*, TPA) represents a significant manifestation of INFE, originating from small community-based initiatives aimed at teaching children Qur'anic literacy and foundational Islamic knowledge from early childhood through higher levels of education. Research demonstrates a positive correlation between participation in such programs and improved Qur'anic reading and writing skills, highlighting their potential to achieve broader educational outcomes (Latif et al., 2020). Conceptually, TPAs reflect INFE principles of flexibility, active participation, and responsiveness to social needs. Beyond knowledge acquisition, they also foster social capital through meaningful interactions among learners, instructors, and communities (Rahmadani & Alimi, 2023; Saharuddin et al., 2020). Within this context, children not only develop literacy skills but also internalize values such as cooperation, solidarity, and social responsibility. Furthermore, the incorporation of transformative learning and critical pedagogy—emphasizing reflection, dialogue, and empowerment—facilitates both cognitive and moral growth, enabling students to critically and contextually engage with religious teachings (Guefara et al., 2024; Sholeh et al., 2023). Accordingly, TPAs contribute simultaneously to Qur'anic literacy, character formation, social awareness, and learner agency.

Majelis Ta'lim

As a form of non-formal education, *majelis ta'lim* functions not merely as a forum for religious study but also as a strategic institution for shaping Islamic character, strengthening social values, and preserving communal religious culture. In line with Umar Muhammad al-Syaibani's theory of integrative Islamic education, *majelis ta'lim* integrates religious, cultural, and social values into a holistic practice rooted in everyday life. Within this framework, *majelis ta'lim* serves not only as a site for religious learning but also as a mechanism for strengthening family bonds, fostering social solidarity, and internalizing values of mutual assistance, brotherhood, and justice (Al-Zaman, 2022; Pane et al., 2023). Due to its intergenerational nature, *majelis ta'lim* significantly contributes to the moral and spiritual development of Muslim communities while addressing the practical challenges of contemporary society (Fadillah, 2023; Barus et al., 2025).

Methods

This study adopted a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) design, integrating two complementary modes of analysis: bibliometric analysis and content analysis. The bibliometric component was employed to address the first and second research questions (RQ1 and RQ2), which focused on mapping publication trends, methodological patterns, prolific authors and institutions, and the dominant themes emerging from the literature on non-formal Islamic education. Bibliometric analysis was performed using Biblioshiny (RStudio) to compute key indicators, including annual growth rate, average citations per document, number of authors per publication, levels of international collaboration, and the distribution of publications by journal, country, and institutional affiliation. In addition, keyword co-occurrence mapping and thematic clustering were conducted with VOSviewer, thereby enabling the identification of dominant research clusters and evolving thematic trajectories in the field (Donthu et al., 2021; Moral-Muñoz et al., 2020).

To address the third and fourth research questions (RQ3 and RQ4), an in-depth content analysis was undertaken on the relevant articles included in the final dataset. Each article was systematically coded based on the type of non-formal Islamic education under examination, the national context in which it was situated, and the reported outcomes for participants. The results of this analysis were synthesized into comparative tables, which highlight the variations in non-formal Islamic educational practices across diverse national settings, including Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, Norway, the Netherlands, and the United States. This comparative approach provided a richer contextual understanding of how non-formal Islamic education operates across different socio-cultural and institutional landscapes.

The review process was conducted in alignment with the PRISMA 2020 protocol (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses), thereby ensuring methodological transparency, replicability, and rigor (Page et al., 2021). The procedure comprised four key stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion, which together established a systematic and auditable pathway from the initial pool of studies to the final body of literature analyzed.

Step 1: Identification

The primary data source for this study was the Scopus database, selected for its extensive coverage of reputable, peer-reviewed publications across the fields of education, social sciences, religion, and the humanities. The methodological justification for using Scopus rests on its broader coverage of scholarly outputs in the social sciences and humanities relative to the Web of Science (Pranckutė, 2021). In addition, Scopus maintains a rigorous selection process, ongoing evaluation, and oversight by an independent advisory board to ensure the reliability and quality of its indexed publications (Baas et al., 2020). A further advantage of Scopus lies in its comprehensive author and institutional profiles, robust bibliometric indicators, detailed citation analysis, and compatibility with analytical tools such as Biblioshiny (Bibliometrix R-package) and VOSviewer, which enable bibliometric mapping and data visualization (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017; Dervis, 2019).

The temporal scope of the search was limited to the period 2015–2025 in order to capture contemporary developments in the field, including the digital transformation of Islamic education during the COVID-19 pandemic. This ten-year timeframe was also selected to enhance citation relevance and to ensure the inclusion of publications that adequately reflect scholarly impact within the dataset (Abramo et al., 2012). At this stage, a total of 114 documents were identified as potentially relevant. The search strategy employed a set of core

keywords, including:

Search Terms for Non-Formal Islamic Education:

“mosque-based education” OR “community-based Islamic education” OR “Islamic study group” OR “informal Islamic education”

Search Terms for Asian Local Traditions:

“halaqah” OR “Islamic gathering” OR “majlis dhikr” OR “pengajian” OR “majelis taklim”

Step 2: Screening

The screening stage was conducted by restricting the publication period to 2015–2025, which initially yielded 91 documents. Further refinement was undertaken by limiting the document types to articles, conference papers, and reviews, resulting in 85 documents. Subsequent exclusion of records containing irrelevant keywords (e.g., global warming, diabetes, cybersecurity, code switching, engineering education, and higher education) reduced the dataset to 70 documents. At this stage, additional criteria were applied to ensure that only sources published in journals and conference proceedings were included, with publication languages restricted to English, Indonesian, and, to a limited extent, Malay/Arabic. Following these procedures, the final dataset comprised 70 documents.

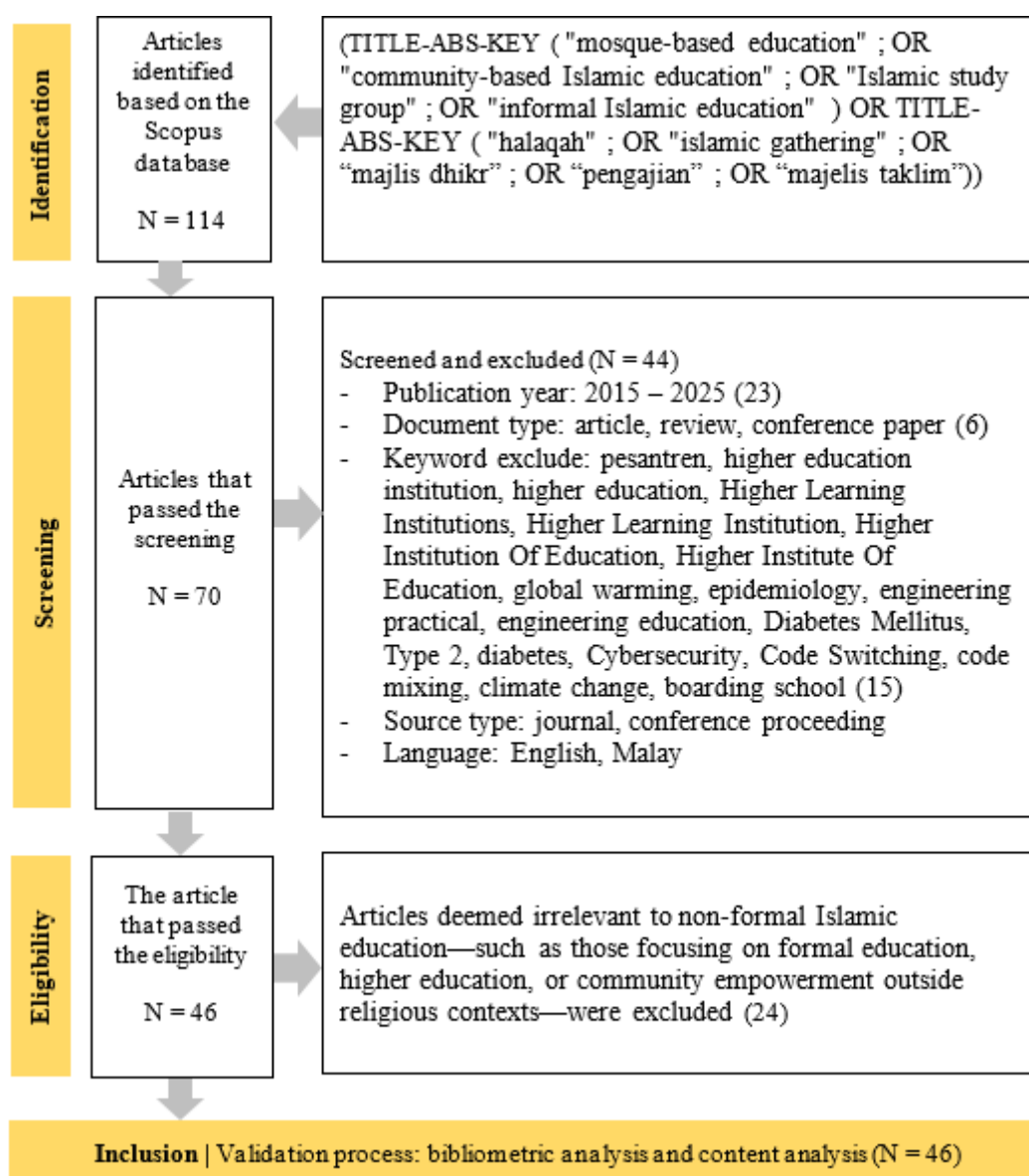


Figure 1. The systematic review process

Source: Author compilation, 2025

Step 3: Eligibility

During the eligibility stage, the full texts of the articles were reviewed to confirm their relevance to the study's

scope. Articles that focused exclusively on formal education, higher education, or community empowerment unrelated to *majelis taklim* (Islamic study group), *halaqah* (Islamic learning circle), or *pengajian* (Islamic religious lecture), were excluded. Nonetheless, articles addressing campus-based *halaqah* as a deradicalization strategy were retained. This process resulted in 46 articles meeting the eligibility criteria.

Step 4: Inclusion

At the inclusion stage, the 46 eligible articles underwent bibliometric analysis to examine publication trends, methodological patterns, and central themes (RQ1 and RQ2). Complementarily, content analysis was applied to investigate variations in non-formal Islamic educational practices across diverse national contexts, as well as their impacts on participants (RQ3 and RQ4).

Results and Discussions

Publication Trends, Publication Patterns, and Methodological Trends in the Literature

General information

Table 1 provides an overview of the characteristics of the 46 articles included in this study. Analysis of the documents published between 2015 and 2025 reveals an annual growth rate of 7.18%, with an average document age of 3.39 years and a mean citation rate of 4.67 per article. These findings indicate that research on non-formal Islamic education is relatively recent yet demonstrates a growing level of scholarly interest. The articles were published across 38 distinct outlets and cited a total of 449 references. The dataset generated 44 Keywords Plus and 224 Author Keywords, reflecting the thematic diversity of the literature. All articles were co-authored, with no single-authored publications identified, involving a total of 296 authors and an average of eight authors per article. Among these contributions, 10.87% represented international collaborations, highlighting a modest but notable degree of cross-national scholarly engagement.

Table 1. Summary of the key characteristics of the 46 articles analyzed

Description	Results
MAIN INFORMATION ABOUT DATA	
Timespan	2015:2025
Sources (Journals, Books, etc)	38
Documents	46
Annual Growth Rate %	7,18
Document Average Age	3,39
Average citations per doc	4,674
References	449
DOCUMENT CONTENTS	
Keywords Plus (ID)	44
Author's Keywords (DE)	224
AUTHORS	
Authors	296
Authors of single-authored docs	0
AUTHORS COLLABORATION	
Single-authored docs	0
Co-Authors per Doc	8
International co-authorships %	10,87
DOCUMENT TYPES	
Article	44
conference paper	1
Review	1

Source: Output produced using Biblioshiny (Bibliometrix R-package), 2025

Annual Scientific Production

Figure 2 presents the trajectory of global publications on non-formal Islamic education between 2015 and 2025. During the initial stage (2015–2019), scholarly output remained limited and inconsistent, with a maximum of three publications in 2015 and no recorded contributions in 2017. A marked increase occurred in 2020, with six articles published, a development that coincided with the global shift in educational practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. At this juncture, the disruption of formal learning activities prompted the transformation of *majelis taklim* (Islamic study group), *halaqah* (Islamic learning circle), *pengajian* (Islamic religious lecture), into online formats (Aghajani, 2024; Idris et al., 2023). Although publication numbers experienced a slight decline in 2021, the trend subsequently rebounded, culminating in a peak of nine articles in 2023—the highest volume within the observed decade. This growth is strongly linked to the intensifying scholarly interest in the digitalization of *dakwah*, the proliferation of online *pengajian*, and the integration of non-formal Islamic education with digital technologies. While the numbers decreased modestly in 2024 (seven articles) and 2025 (six articles), overall productivity remained significantly higher than in the earlier years. This sustained level of output underscores the increasing visibility of non-formal Islamic education in global academic discourse. The continued scholarly engagement with the field further highlights its critical role in strengthening community resilience, enhancing religious literacy, and advancing the agenda of religious moderation in contemporary contexts.

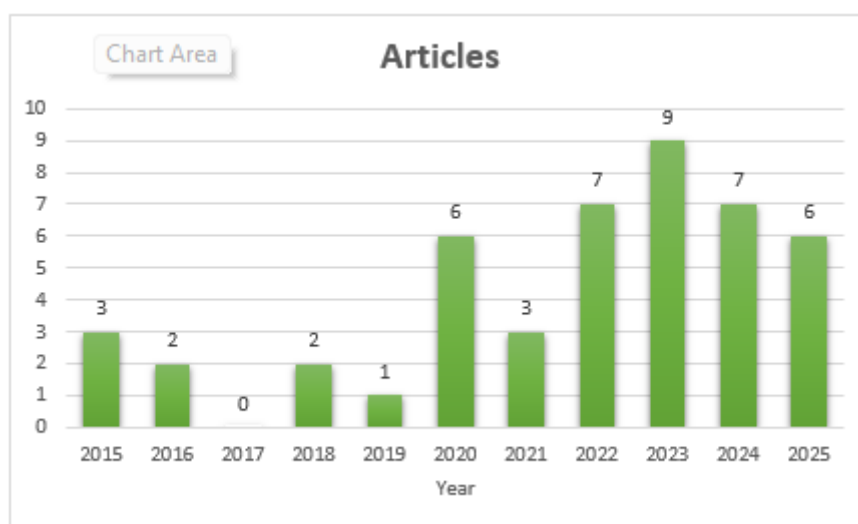


Figure 2. Publication output by year
Source: Author compilation, 2025

Top Sources

Figure 3a displays the journals that most frequently published studies on non-formal Islamic education during the review period. The three leading outlets—*Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, and *Quranica*—each contributed three publications. These are followed by *Al-Bayan* and the *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, which published two articles each. Other journals, including the *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, *Abkam: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah*, and the *Anthropology of Work Review*, contributed only a single article. This distribution demonstrates that the literature on non-formal Islamic education remains relatively fragmented across publication venues, yet it reveals a notable concentration within Indonesia-based journals, reflecting the regional significance of Islamic studies in Southeast Asia.

Figure 3b illustrates the distribution of journals according to local impact as measured by the H-index. Both the *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* and the *Journal of Indonesian Islam* attained the highest H-index scores (2), indicating that publications in these outlets are more frequently cited than those in comparable journals. In contrast, outlets such as *Abkam: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah*, *Anthropology of Work Review*, *Asian Social Science*, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, and the *Global Journal Al-Thaqafah* each recorded an H-index of 1, suggesting relatively limited citation impact within the field.

Figures 3a and 3b highlight Indonesia's position as a central hub of scholarly production on non-formal Islamic education, both in terms of publication output and citation influence. This pattern is consistent

with Indonesia's status as the world's largest Muslim-majority country, characterized by a rich and diverse tradition of non-formal Islamic educational practices, including *majelis taklim* (Islamic study group), *halaqah* (Islamic learning circle), modern *pengajian* (modern Islamic religious lecture). However, the generally low H-index scores across many international journals indicate the need to expand cross-national collaborations and increase publication in high-impact outlets to enhance the global visibility and recognition of research on non-formal Islamic education.

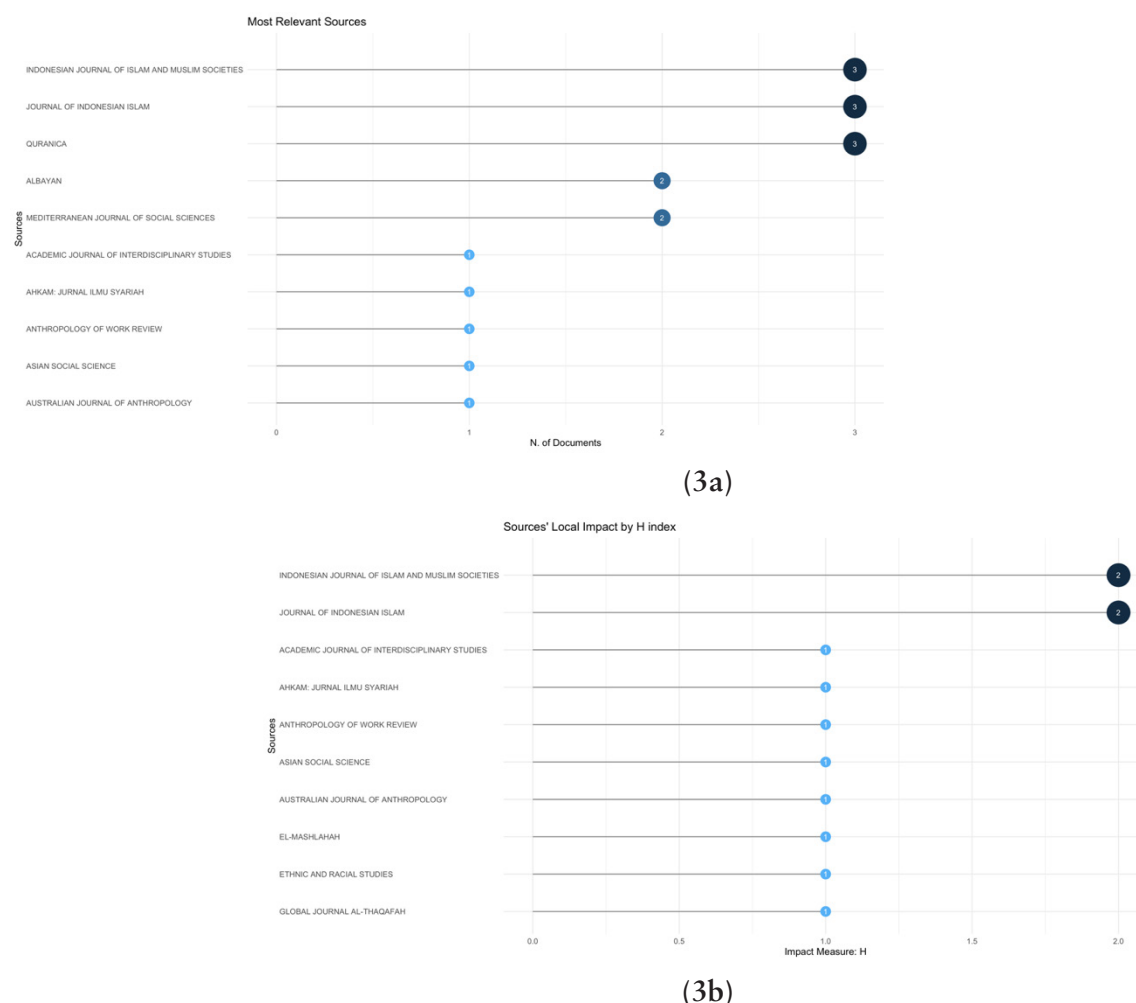


Figure 3. Top sources: (3a) most relevant sources, (3b) sources' local impact by H index
Source: Output produced using Biblioshiny (Bibliometrix R-package), 2025

Leading Authors

Figure 4 depicts the distribution of the most productive authors contributing to publications on non-formal Islamic education during the review period. The three leading contributors, each authoring two articles, are Laeheem, K., Mushoffa, E., and Toyibah, D. Their contributions demonstrate the sustained scholarly engagement with *pengajian*, *halaqah*, and community-based educational practices, underscoring their significance in reinforcing religiosity and promoting social empowerment across diverse contexts. By contrast, the majority of other authors produced only a single publication, including Ab Rahim, N.M.Z., Ab Rahman, H., Monika Abd Razzak, M.M., Abdullah, A.H., Abdullah, S., Aditoni, A., and Ahmad, K. This distribution indicates that the body of literature on non-formal Islamic education remains fragmented and widely dispersed among numerous researchers with relatively modest contributions. Furthermore, the absence of a dominant author suggests both the lack of centralized scholarly leadership and the presence of opportunities to foster broader collaborative networks within the field. The relatively balanced pattern of author productivity further reflects the developmental stage of this research area, underscoring the need to enhance long-term publication consistency. Looking ahead, greater research consolidation and enhanced cross-national collaboration—particularly within Southeast Asia—are essential for increasing global visibility and advancing the recognition of non-formal Islamic education as a significant area of inquiry within international academic discourse.

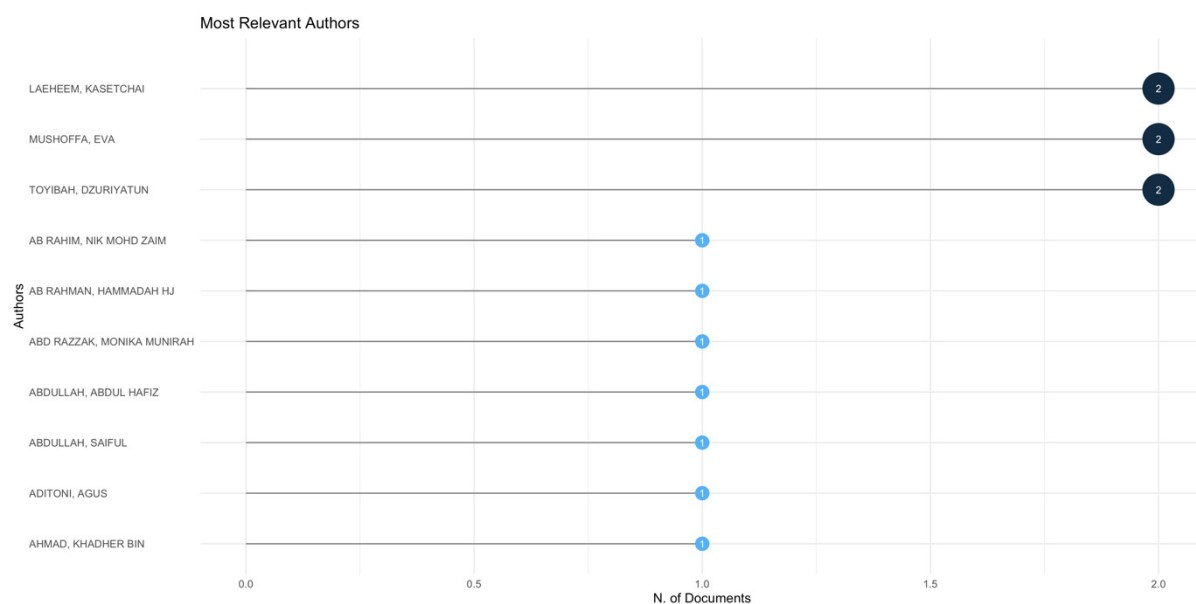


Figure 4. Most Relevant Authors

Source: Output produced using Biblioshiny (Bibliometrix R-package), 2025

Most Active Universities

Figure 5 depicts the institutions with the most prominent author affiliations in publications on non-formal Islamic education. Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta occupies the leading position, contributing 12 articles, thereby reaffirming its role as a principal center for Islamic studies and non-formal education research in Indonesia. Universiti Malaya follows in second place with nine publications, underscoring Malaysia's substantial contribution to the advancement of cross-national scholarship in this domain. Additional significant contributions are noted from UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta and Universitas Negeri Surabaya (six articles each), as well as Universitas Negeri Semarang and Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (five articles each). Universitas Sebelas Maret and Universitas Trunojoyo Madura each contributed four publications, while the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) and Monash University Malaysia produced three publications apiece. This distribution indicates that research on non-formal Islamic education is primarily driven by Islamic and public universities in Indonesia, with notable contributions also coming from Malaysian institutions. Cross-national collaboration, particularly between Indonesia and Malaysia, plays a crucial role in shaping regional academic discourse. Nevertheless, the limited participation of institutions outside Southeast Asia highlights the need to expand international research networks to enhance the global visibility and impact of scholarship in non-formal Islamic education.

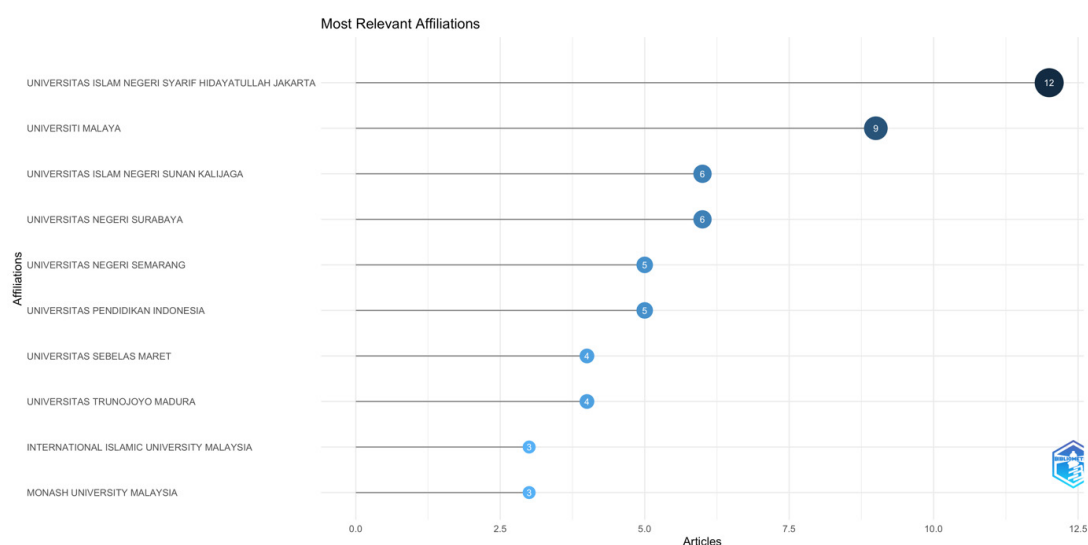


Figure 5. Most Relevant Affiliations

Source: Output produced using Biblioshiny (Bibliometrix R-package), 2025

Contributing Countries

Figure 6 illustrates the distribution of author affiliations by country, revealing that research on non-formal Islamic education is predominantly driven by Indonesia, which accounts for 81 publications. This underscores Indonesia's position as a central hub in the global scholarly discourse on this topic. Such dominance corresponds with Indonesia's socio-religious context, as the country hosts the largest Muslim population worldwide and exhibits a rich diversity of non-formal educational practices, including majelis taklim, pengajian, halaqah, and Qur'anic learning centers, which constitute key objects of academic inquiry. Malaysia ranks second with 26 publications, indicating a consistent contribution to the field, particularly in domains such as digital pengajian, Qur'anic exegesis (tafsir), and tarannum. This prominence further reflects the historical and cultural-religious affinity between Malaysia and Indonesia. Contributions from other countries are comparatively limited, with Australia (4), Thailand (3), the Netherlands (2), Norway (2), and one publication each from Belgium, Iran, Singapore, and the United States, highlighting the regional concentration of scholarship in Southeast Asia.

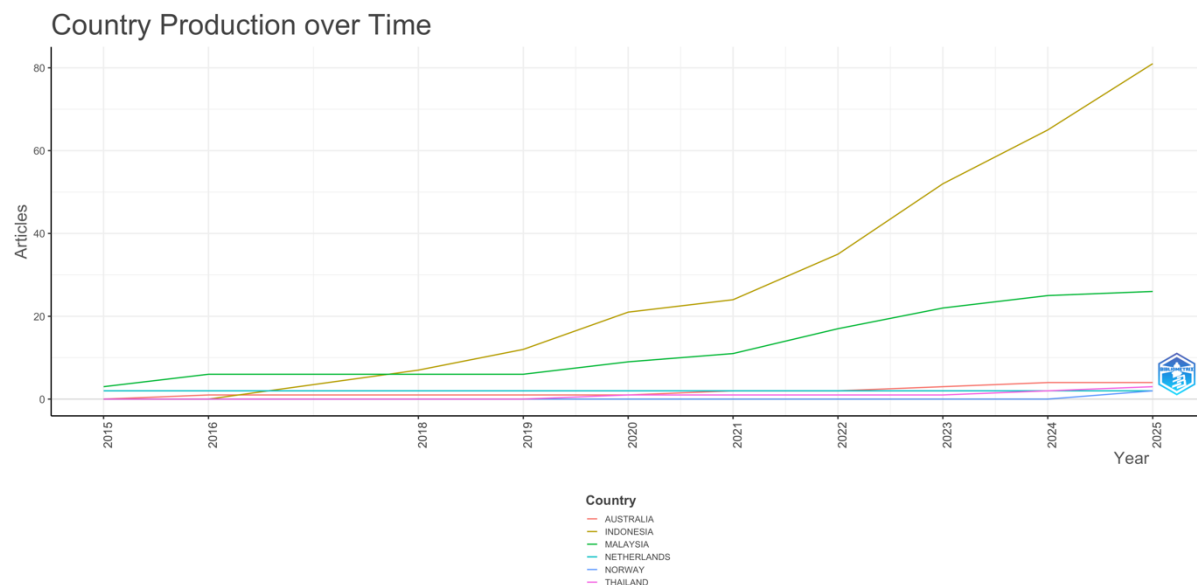


Figure 6. Most Productive Countries

Source: Output produced using Biblioshiny (Bibliometrix R-package), 2025

Most Relevant Articles

To identify the most influential contributions, this study reviews the 15 most frequently cited articles, as presented in Table 2. The table summarizes each work's research objectives, subjects, methodological approaches, and citation counts. Presenting the most cited studies by year of publication serves to minimize potential biases related to document age in citation analysis. This mapping further illustrates which works are most frequently referenced in the field of non-formal Islamic education, thereby providing an overview of seminal contributions that continue to inform and shape scholarly discourse in this domain.

Table 2 synthesizes 15 key articles that address non-formal Islamic education across various social, geographical, and methodological contexts. The most cited article is Arifianto (2020) [A1], with 53 citations, which examines the dynamics of Islamism in post-Reform Indonesia and its implications for moderate Islamic authority. This is followed by Tan et al. (2022) [A2], which has 48 citations, underscoring the role of religion in COVID-19 prevention in Malaysia. Several studies focus on minority communities, including Rahmawati et al. (2018) [A3] on Chinese Muslim communities in Indonesia and Maliepaard et al. (2015) [A4] on religious affirmation among Muslim minorities in the Netherlands, both of which have 19 citations. Further contributions explore diverse dimensions of non-formal Islamic education. Rijal (2020) [A5] investigates the popularity of *habaib* and the Majelis Rasulullah among urban youth, while Zamhari and Han (2021) [A6] analyze the role of the digital platform *Cariustadz.id*. Other studies address informal education practices within Chinese Muslim communities (Machali et al., 2023) [A7], the relationship between religiosity and mental health (Aziz et al., 2022) [A8], and the ideologization of Islamic philanthropic institutions (Triatmo et al., 2020) [A9]. Warouw (2016) [A10] examines the engagement of female industrial workers in religious study groups, whereas Helim et

al. (2024) [A11], Fadillah (2023) [A12], and Wanto et al. (2022) [A13] investigate the dynamics of *majelis taklim* in Indonesia, with specific attention to Islamic jurisprudence, women's political participation, and their influence on religiosity. The additional article extends the analysis to global contexts, Rezaei (2022) [A14] examines the religious practices of Iranian women in the Los Angeles diaspora community, while Aditoni and Rohmah (2022) [A15] investigate the learning preferences of millennial Muslims in the digital era. Collectively, these studies highlight the thematic and methodological diversity of scholarship on non-formal Islamic education, which has been investigated through qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method approaches. Taken together, these contributions provide critical insights into the intersections of religion, identity, health, and the digitalization of religious practices.

Table 2. Summary of the most-cited articles based on annual citation rates

ID	Purpose	Subject	Method	TC	Ref
A1	To explain the mechanisms behind the rise of Islamism in post-Reformasi Indonesia and its impact on moderate Islamic authority.	Islamic groups, preachers, and mainstream organizations (NU, Muhammadiyah, Ahmadi, Shi'a) in Indonesia	Qualitative analysis	53	(Arifianto, 2020)
A2	To examine the role of religion in influencing COVID-19 prevention and to recommend partnerships between healthcare and religious organizations.	Religious congregations and organizations in Malaysia (Islamic and Christian communities)	Qualitative analysis	48	(Tan et al., 2022)
A3	To explore how Chinese communities in Indonesia embrace Islam through mosque development, Islamic education, and media literacy practices.	Chinese Muslim communities and converts in Indonesia	Qualitative analysis	19	(Rahmawati et al., 2018)
A4	To examine the relationship between perceptions of discrimination and religious affirmation among Muslim minorities in the Netherlands.	Muslim minorities from five ethnic groups in the Netherlands	Quantitative survey analysis	19	(Maliepaard et al., 2015)
A5	To analyze the popularity of Hadhrami Arab preachers (habaib) among urban Muslim youth in Indonesia and the factors shaping their participation.	Urban Muslim youth and Habib Munzir's sermon group, <i>Majelis Rasulullah</i> , in Jakarta	Qualitative analysis	13	(Rijal, 2020)
A6	To examine the role of the Cariustadz.id platform as a cyber fatwa and alternative Islamic preaching medium for urban middle-class Muslims in Indonesia.	Middle-class urban Muslims, traditional santri, and transnational groups (Salafi, Jamaah Tabligh) in Indonesia	Qualitative analysis - Phenomenological approach	12	(Zamhari & Han, 2021)
A7	To investigate the methods of informal Islamic education within the Chinese ethnic minority Muslim community in Yogyakarta.	Chinese ethnic minority Muslim community in Yogyakarta	Qualitative analysis	5	(Machali et al., 2023)
A8	To examine how perceived religiosity, daily prayer, and participation in Majelis taklim affect depression and subjective well-being across age groups of Muslims.	Young, adult, and older Muslims in Indonesia (27,246 respondents from IFLS Wave 5)	Quantitative analysis - survey	4	(Aziz et al., 2022)

A9	To analyze the ideologization practices within the Islamic philanthropy institution Suryakarta Beramal and its affiliation with the Tarbiyah movement.	Suryakarta Beramal Foundation, its educational institutions, and alumni in Indonesia	Qualitative analysis - interviews, observation, and documentation	4	(Triatmo et al., 2020)
A10	To explore how young female industrial workers engage with company-sponsored Islamic gatherings in the context of rural–urban transition and capitalist discipline.	Young female workers in industrial towns (Tangerang, Indonesia)	Qualitative analysis	4	(Warouw, 2016)
A11	To analyze the patterns of fiqh references used by Majelis Taklim in Central Kalimantan and their ideological implications.	Majelis Taklim groups in Central Kalimantan	Empirical legal research with sociological, juridical, and socio-legal approaches	3	(Helim et al., 2024)
A12	To trace the history and dynamics of Majelis Taklim in Indonesia, focusing on women’s roles and political awareness in Jambi.	Majelis Taklim groups and Muslim women in Jambi, Indonesia	Historical review and socio-political analysis	3	(Fadillah, 2023)
A13	To analyze how motivation and satisfaction in Majelis Taklim learning influence religiosity (cognition and attitude) in urban Muslim communities.	Urban Muslim communities in Indonesia (Majelis Taklim participants, 348 from 24 provinces)	Quantitative analysis	3	(Wanto et al., 2022)
A14	To explore the domestic religious practices of Iranian Muslim women in Los Angeles and their role in shaping diasporic faith and nostalgia.	Iranian Muslim women in Los Angeles diaspora communities	Qualitative analysis - Ethnographic study	3	(Rezaei, 2022)
A15	To describe urban millennials’ preferences in learning Islam in the digital era.	University students and teachers of Islamic courses in Surabaya, East Java (134 surveyed, 3 interviewed)	Mixed-method (survey and interviews)	3	(Aditoni & Rohmah, 2022)

Source: Author compilation, 2025

Key Themes in Non-Formal Islamic Education Research

This section offers a comprehensive overview of the directions, focal areas, and dynamics of research on non-formal Islamic education over the past decade. Figure 7 displays the most frequently occurring keywords identified through bibliometric analysis, while Figure 8 presents a co-occurrence network visualization generated with VOSviewer, highlighting the structural relationships among these keywords. The word cloud underscores the prominence of terms such as *Islamism*, *religiosity*, *religion*, *majelis taklim*, and *pengajian*, thereby providing an overview of the dominant concepts represented in the literature. The co-occurrence network further illustrates the interconnectedness of these concepts. For instance, *Islamism* appears as a central node, strongly associated with the themes of *religion* and *religiosity*, indicating the inseparability of ideological dimensions from everyday religious practices. Similarly, *majelis taklim* and *pengajian* form a distinct cluster that is closely tied to public spaces and social interaction, suggesting that these practices function not only as religious activities but also as arenas for constructing social and political identities. Collectively, these visualizations reaffirm that non-formal Islamic education is a multidisciplinary field encompassing ideological, spiritual, social, and cultural dimensions, while reflecting the diversity of Islamic practices across local and global contexts. The integration of word cloud and network mapping techniques thus provides critical insights by revealing not only the most frequently researched themes but also the patterns of interconnection that shape contemporary academic discourse.



Figure 7. Word Clouds
Source: Output produced using Biblioshiny (Bibli

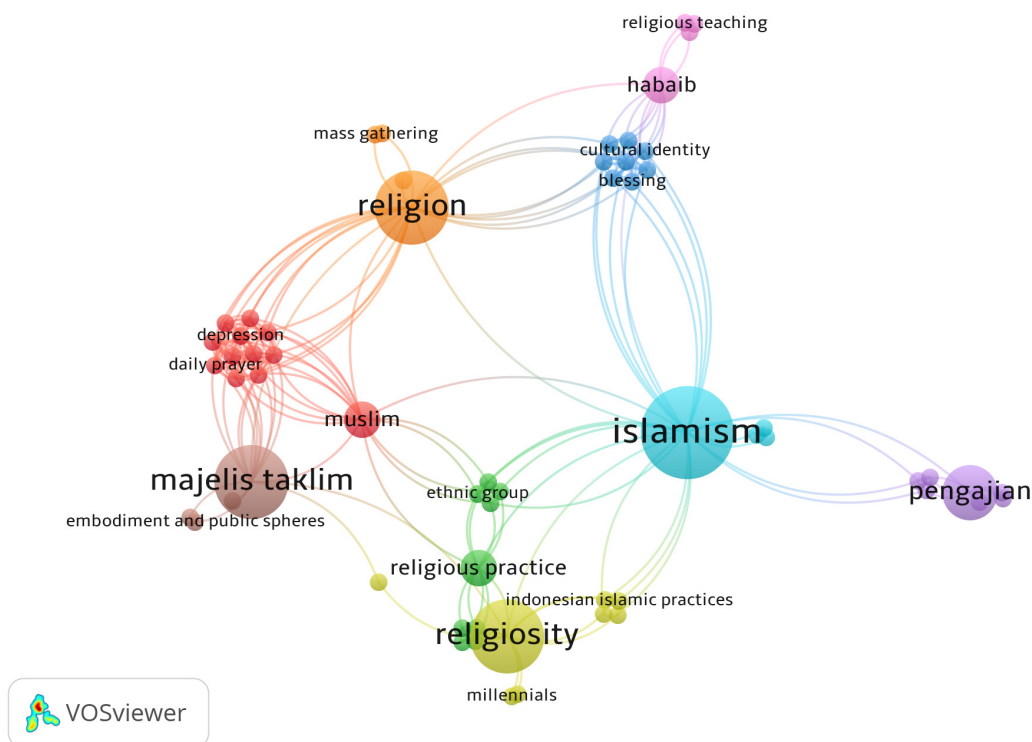


Figure 8. Visualization of the co-occurrence network
Source: Output produced using VOSviewer, 2025

Building on the identification of key themes through word cloud analysis (Figure 7) and co-occurrence network visualization (Figure 8), the subsequent step was to organize these keywords into structured clusters to capture the conceptual interrelationships among research topics. Whereas the word cloud provides a visual representation of term frequency, cluster analysis allows for a deeper examination of how keywords are interconnected and how they collectively delineate specific areas of scholarly inquiry. The clustering results, presented in Table 3, identify eight major clusters that represent the broad spectrum of research on non-formal Islamic education. These clusters encompass psychological dimensions such as well-being and religiosity, as well as social, political, and cultural dynamics, including religious identity, community engagement, women's roles, and public discourse. Collectively, the table offers a clearer conceptual mapping of the field, highlighting the thematic complexity of the literature and underscoring the significant contributions of non-formal Islamic education to diverse aspects of contemporary Muslim societies.

Table 3. Research Clusters in Non-Formal Islamic Education

Cluster 1: Religious Practices and Psychological Well-Being	
Daily prayer, depression, emotional well-being, happiness, life satisfaction, mental health, perceived religiosity, subjective well-being, young adult	This cluster highlights the relationship between religious practices—such as daily prayer, <i>pengajian</i> , and perceived religiosity—and individual psychological health. The focus lies on the impact of religiosity on depression, happiness, life satisfaction, subjective well-being, and overall mental health, particularly among adolescents and young adults.
Cluster 2: Religious Identity	
Blessing, cultural identity, cultural influence, <i>dakwah</i> , <i>majelis rasulullah</i> , muslim youth, piety, social participation	This cluster emphasizes how religious identity is constructed through spiritual experiences, <i>dakwah</i> (Islamic preaching), and participation in religious activities such as <i>Majelis Rasulullah</i> . It further illustrates the role of cultural influences, blessings, and social participation in shaping Muslim identity, especially among youth.
Cluster 3, 4, 5: Community Organization and religious engagement	
Cluster 3	
Ethnic group, ethnic minority, immigrant, reactive religiosity, religious practice, <i>santri</i> society, social aspect, sociology of literature	This cluster explores the interplay between religious practices and ethnic or minority groups. It examines how <i>santri</i> communities, immigrants, and ethnic minorities express religiosity reactively to reinforce social identity and confront cultural challenges, including perspectives from the sociology of literature.
Cluster 4	
Digital natives, learning satisfaction, millennials, muslim urban community, pluralism, religiosity, urban city	This cluster focuses on digital natives and urban Muslim communities, analyzing how religiosity is practiced within pluralistic urban contexts. It considers themes such as learning satisfaction, millennial lifestyles, and the dynamics of digital communities.
Cluster 5	
Female <i>majelis taklim</i> , female migrant worker, indonesia millennial, <i>mahdlatul ulama</i> , <i>pengajian</i> , <i>muhammadiyah</i> , religious engagement	This cluster highlights women's participation in religious activities, particularly within <i>majelis taklim</i> and migrant communities. It also underscores the role of major Islamic organizations such as <i>Muhammadiyah</i> and <i>Nahdlatul Ulama</i> in shaping the religious engagement of Indonesian millennials.
Cluster 6: Religious Discourse	
Embodiment and public shperes, <i>fiqh</i> refernces, <i>majelis taklim</i> , public islam in indonesia, religion and the public sphere	This cluster centers on religious discourse in the public sphere, including references to <i>fiqh</i> (Islamic jurisprudence), <i>majelis taklim</i> , and public expressions of Islam in Indonesia. It examines how religious narratives are constructed, negotiated, and enacted within broader social and public contexts.
Cluster 7: Collective Religious Life	
Humans, kinship, mass gathering, rationalism, religion	This cluster captures the collective dimensions of religious life, encompassing kinship ties, mass gatherings, and rationalist approaches to religion. The focus is on how religion is practiced in communal settings, fostering solidarity and creating shared experiences that bind individuals to their communities.
Cluster 8: Islamic Preching and spiritual leader	
Congregation, <i>hababib</i> , religious teaching, urban spiritualism, <i>ustadz</i>	This cluster investigates the role of spiritual leaders, such as <i>ustadz</i> and <i>habaib</i> , and the practice of <i>dakwah</i> in shaping urban spirituality. It highlights the interaction between congregations, religious teaching, and urban spiritualism, while emphasizing the influence of charismatic religious figures in mobilizing communities and shaping collective religiosity.

Source: Output produced using VOSviewer, 2025

Major Forms of Non-Formal Islamic Education by National Context

The results of the SLR presented in Table 4 highlight Indonesia's highly diverse ecosystem of non-formal Islamic education. This ecosystem encompasses *majelis taklim*, *Majelis Rasulullah*, *pengajian* (general, thematic,

migrant-oriented, and locally rooted), *halaqah*, Qur’anic learning centers (*balai pengajian Qur’an*), *Maiyah*, mosque-based education, Islamic recitation groups, Islamic study circles, community-based education, family- and community-oriented education, as well as digital *dakwah*. Such diversity illustrates that non-formal Islamic education in Indonesia serves not only as a means of transmitting religious teachings but also as a platform for identity formation, socio-economic empowerment, cultural integration, and resistance to radicalism.

A prominent trend is the gradual transition from traditional models to more adaptive forms that align with modern contexts. Classical formats such as *majelis taklim*, neighborhood *pengajian*, and *halaqah* continue to thrive, as they are widely regarded as effective in cultivating social cohesion and strengthening religious commitment among participants. At the same time, new modalities have emerged, including digital *pengajian*, online *halaqah* on business and entrepreneurship, and various digital *dakwah* platforms, signaling a broader transformation toward the digitalization of religious practice. Furthermore, cultural inclusivity has become increasingly evident, exemplified by Qur’anic learning centers in Aceh that incorporate local architectural traditions, and the *Maiyah* movement, which integrates scientific, cultural, and Sufi perspectives.

Non-formal Islamic education in Indonesia exhibits a dual dynamic that is both conservative and progressive. It safeguards the continuity of tradition while simultaneously addressing contemporary challenges such as urbanization, migration, and digitalization. In this regard, non-formal Islamic education should be understood not merely as a vehicle for religious instruction but also as a mechanism of social adaptation that remains relevant across generations and social strata.

Table 4. Core Activities and Descriptions of Non-Formal Islamic Education in Indonesia

Key Term	Description	Participants	Author(s)
<i>Majelis Taklim, Majelis Rasulullah</i>	Informal study forums with variations in <i>fiqh</i> references; platforms for women and urban <i>santri</i> .	General congregations, women, university students, <i>santri</i> .	(Aziz et al., 2022; Fadillah, 2023; Helim et al., 2024; Rijal, 2020; Wanto et al., 2022)
<i>Pengajian</i> (general & thematic)	Includes Sunday morning study circles, Qur’anic exegesis sessions, neighborhood gatherings, and industry-based <i>pengajian</i> . Functions as mass tradition, religious expression, and socio-cultural practice; used for purification or continuation of local traditions.	NU and Muhammadiyah members, general public, workers.	(Sutiyono, 2015; Toyibah et al., 2025; Waluyo & Allien, 2018; Warouw, 2018)
<i>Halaqah</i>	Campus-based <i>halaqah</i> and online business community study circles; small group model with an emphasis on intensive religious formation.	University students, housewives.	(Winarno & As-sa’diyah, 2023; Yani et al., 2023)
<i>Balai Pengajian Qur’an</i>	Local cultural transformation (e.g., <i>Rumoh Aceh</i>) into Qur’anic learning facilities.	Acehnese communities.	(Sahputra et al., 2022)
<i>Maiyah / Juguran Syafaat</i>	Modern forms of <i>pengajian</i> integrating eight traditions; combines scientific, cultural, Sufi, and <i>tadabbur</i> approaches.	<i>Maiyah</i> congregations.	(Suprpto et al., 2025)
Mosque-based Education	The mosque as a center for alternative educational curricula.	Mosque congregations, educational units.	(Susilo & Kartowagiran, 2023)
Islamic Religious Lecture (<i>Pengajian</i>)	Serve as media for legal and religious education as well as prevention of radicalism.	Rural communities, local authorities.	(Jufri et al., 2024)

Islamic Study Groups / Clubs	Includes Salafi study groups and campus-based religious clubs; focus on textual study and group discussion.	Female university students, young <i>santri</i> .	(Marhumah et al., 2024; Prasetyo & Halimatusa'diyah, 2024)
Community-based Islamic Education	Focuses on community empowerment through religiously oriented local initiatives.	Marginalized groups.	(Sukman et al., 2025)
Informal Islamic Education	Family- and community-based education.	Chinese Muslim communities.	(Machali et al., 2023)
Online / Digital <i>Da'wah</i>	Digital platforms for issuing <i>fatwa</i> and disseminating <i>da'wah</i> .	Millennial students, urban middle class.	(Aditoni & Rohmah, 2022; Zamhari & Han, 2021)

Source: Author compilation, 2025

Table 5 illustrates that non-formal Islamic education in Malaysia embodies a synthesis of classical traditions and digital innovations. On one side, established practices such as *halaqah*, Qur’anic exegesis sessions (*pengajian tafsir*), *tarannum*, and mosque- or *pondok*-based education continue to serve as foundational pillars in shaping Muslim identity, enhancing Qur’anic literacy, and sustaining Malay-Islamic traditions. On the other side, Malaysia exhibits a notable shift toward the digitalization of *da’wah*, exemplified by Qur’anic and tafsir lessons disseminated through platforms such as YouTube, digital animation, and other interactive media. These initiatives represent ongoing efforts to modernize religious pedagogy and to enhance its relevance for younger generations.

The Malaysian case further highlights the crucial role of the state and philanthropic institutions in preserving the quality of non-formal Islamic education through infrastructure investment, financial support, and the professional development of halaqah instructors. This institutional engagement demonstrates that non-formal education is not confined to spiritual concerns but is also closely aligned with regulatory frameworks and broader state policies. Furthermore, the inclusion of hadith and tafsir studies within mosque settings reflects a growing academic orientation in non-formal spaces, thereby extending the mosque’s role as a hub of religious scholarship and community learning.

Non-formal Islamic education in Malaysia reflects a hybrid model that simultaneously preserves tradition while embracing digital innovation and institutional reinforcement. This trajectory highlights Malaysia’s strategic approach to positioning non-formal Islamic education not only as a channel for religious learning but also as a vehicle for cultivating a modern Muslim society that is both devout and responsive to contemporary social transformations.

Table 5. Core Activities and Descriptions of Non-Formal Islamic Education in Malaysia

Istilah Utama	Penjelasan	Peserta	Author(s)
Qur’anic and Tafsir Studies via Social Media	Online <i>da’wah</i> disseminated through multiple digital formats, including webinars, lectures, forums, debates, Tajwīd tutorials, <i>tarannum</i> , <i>qirā’at</i> , animations (PowerPoint, Moovly, Powtoon, kinetic typography, GoAnimate), films, daily vlogs, and even games.	Muslim audiences on YouTube and other social media platforms	(Razzak et al., 2024)
Hadith Studies	Study of hadith in both academic and community contexts, focusing on scholarly authority and the development of hadith sciences.	University students and Muslim communities	(Noor, 2023; Yusoff, 2023)

Halaqah (Qur'an Memorization, Study Circles, and Universities)	Implemented in multiple contexts: (1) Qur'an memorization, supported by government and philanthropic institutions, including teacher training, halaqah management, and pedagogical improvement; (2) University study circles, which foster learning motivation, elaboration, peer learning, and positive correlations between motivation and learning strategies. Overall, halaqah functions as a platform for strengthening Qur'anic literacy and developing social and intellectual skills.	(1) Qur'an students and recitation groups (2) University students	(Almo-shagah et al., 2022; Syam et al., 2016)
Qur'anic Exegesis (Tafsir) Studies	Tafsir sessions in mosques that nurture and educate Muslim character toward achieving both worldly and spiritual goals.	Mosque congregations in Johor Bahru (Sultan Abu Bakar Mosque and Bandar Baru Uda Mosque)	(Isnin & Abdullah, 2021)
Tarannum Instruction	Transformation of <i>tarannum</i> study streams in Kelantan, shifting from Hijdzi to Misri styles, aimed at improving the quality of Qur'anic recitation and producing competitive <i>qāri</i> and <i>qāri'ah</i> .	Qur'an reciters in Kelantan and across Malaysia	(Safie et al., 2020)
Mosque- and Pondok-Based Non-Formal Education	Various classes and teaching methods conducted in mosques and <i>pondok</i> . Participants are typically divided into youth and adult groups. Government support in infrastructure and funding sustains these programs within Malay communities.	Pondok students and mosque congregations (youth and adults)	(Ab Rahman et al., 2015)

Source: Author compilation, 2025

Non-formal Islamic education across countries exhibits diverse practices that are deeply influenced by the respective social, political, and cultural contexts of each country. In Norway, mosque-based education is primarily directed toward reinforcing Muslim identity in the face of secular critique and negotiating with more radical interpretations of Islam. Its central function lies in enhancing intellectual capacity and strengthening the social position of Muslim minorities (Kjelling & Markeng, 2025). In Thailand, *halaqah* and *qiyamullail* serve as platforms for cultivating ethics, religious devotion, and the identity of Muslim youth (Laeheem, 2025). In Singapore, non-formal Islamic education is institutionalized within modern mosques such as the Darul Quran at Siglap Mosque, which offers tiered programs (basic, intermediate, and advanced) and collaborates with Malaysia's JAKIM and Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI). The accreditation of Qur'anic instructors by the Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura (MUIS) further reflects the formalization and regulation of non-formal Islamic education (Norasid et al., 2023).

By contrast, in the United States, Islamic gatherings within diaspora communities highlight affective, performative, and nostalgic dimensions, whereby religious practice operates as a medium of emotional connectedness and identity formation in transnational settings (Rezaei, 2022). Similarly, in the Netherlands, mosque-based non-formal education functions as a symbolic response to discrimination. Higher levels of discrimination correlate with stronger Muslim participation in mosque activities, positioning the mosque as a critical site for solidarity, identity reinforcement, and community resilience (Maliepaard et al., 2015). Overall, Tables 4, 5, and 6 illustrate that, despite differences in terminology and practice—from *halaqah* and *qiyamullail* to Islamic gatherings—the essential functions of non-formal Islamic education remain consistent: reinforcing identity, fostering solidarity, and addressing the social challenges faced by Muslim communities in diverse global contexts.

Table 6. Key Activities and Characteristics of Non-Formal Islamic Education in Selected Countries

Country	Main Activities	Participants	Explanation	Author(s)
Norway	Mosque-based education	Congregants	Islamic knowledge is emphasized as essential for addressing critiques from secular peers. It equips students to challenge secular perspectives and negotiate with fellow Muslims who advocate more “radical” interpretations.	(Kjelling & Markeng, 2025)
Thailand	<i>Halaqah</i> learning activities	Congregants	Ethical and religiously observant behavior among youth has significantly increased following participation in <i>halaqah</i> activities.	(Laeheem, 2025)
	Group studies (<i>Halaqah</i>) and voluntary post-midnight praying (<i>Qiyam-ullail</i>)	Muslim youth	Provides a more intensive religious learning space through small-group <i>halaqah</i> sessions and collective night prayers, reinforcing identity and spiritual practice among youth.	(Laeheem, 2020)
Singapore	<i>Darul Quran</i> at Siglap Mosque	Congregants and participants of the ‘aLive’ and ‘ADIL’ modules	Siglap Mosque serves as a central hub for Qur’anic education in Singapore, offering tiered programs (basic, intermediate, advanced). It collaborates with Malaysia’s JAKIM and Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI). Instructor accreditation by MUIS strengthens the standards of Qur’anic education.	(Norasid et al., 2023)
United States	Islamic gatherings	Muslim diaspora communities (e.g., Iranian women)	Community- and home-based religious activities emphasize affective and performative experiences. Rituals serve as multi-layered interpretive practices, functioning not only as expressions of belief but also as spaces of diaspora nostalgia.	(Rezaei, 2022)
Netherlands	Islamic gatherings in mosques	Muslim minorities	Experiences of discrimination are directly correlated with more frequent mosque attendance, where the mosque functions as a space for identity reinforcement, solidarity, and community resilience.	(Maliapaard et al., 2015)

Source: Author compilation, 2025

The Impact of Non-Formal Islamic Education on Participants

Majelis Taklim (Islamic study group)

Majelis taklim constitutes one of the most widespread forms of non-formal Islamic education in Indonesia and Malaysia. It is defined as a community established independently and outside formal institutional structures by Muslim communities (Wanto et al., 2022). The impact of majelis taklim is extensive and multidimensional, encompassing contributions to religiosity, life satisfaction, and worship discipline.

Drawing on evidence from the Indonesian Family Life Survey (IFLS) Wave 5, which includes a sample of 27,246 Indonesian Muslims, Aziz et al. (2022) demonstrated that religiosity has a stronger effect on positive affect, happiness, and life satisfaction among younger cohorts compared to adults and the elderly. Attendance at majelis taklim was also found to significantly improve happiness and overall quality of life, particularly among older participants. Notably, religiosity and the frequency of participation in Muslim community forums were negatively associated with depression across all age groups (Aziz et al., 2022). Subsequent research has further established the role of majelis taklim as a mediating factor in the relationship between religiosity and psychological well-being (Nuruddaroini et al., 2024). These findings are consistent with meta-analytical evidence indicating that components of religiosity, including participation in religious activities, are positively associated with life satisfaction (Sholihin et al., 2022).

Islamic study groups, including those formed among Salafi women, serve as spaces for cultivating collective piety and negotiating the intersection of religious texts and women's agency. However, in certain contexts, these groups may foster exclusivity and intolerance when conducted in rigid or closed forms (Marhumah et al., 2024; Prasetyo & Halimatusa'diyah, 2024).

From a socio-cultural and gender perspective, majelis taklim also functions as an important forum for women to articulate piety while simultaneously engaging in political discourse. These discussions encompass ideological loyalty based on madhhab affiliation (e.g., Shafi'i), organizational identity, or Tarbiyah movements. Nevertheless, potential risks arise when majelis taklim becomes a vehicle for partisan politics or overly rigid ideological orientations, which may limit intellectual freedom and reduce tolerance toward diverse perspectives (Aziz et al., 2022; Fadillah, 2023; Helim et al., 2024; Wanto et al., 2022).

Majelis Rasulullah (Habib Munzir)/ The Prophet's Assembly (Habib Munzir)

Majelis Rasulullah, a dhikr-based assembly founded and led by Habib Munzir al-Musawa, has become a prominent urban religious phenomenon in contemporary Indonesia. Established in 1998, the movement has grown rapidly in Jakarta and is distinguished by its ability to attract tens of thousands, and at times hundreds of thousands, of predominantly young worshippers. Its appeal is strongly associated with the charismatic authority of its founder. Rijal (2020) demonstrates that Majelis Rasulullah serves as both a site of collective identity formation among Muslim youth and a platform for the performance of piety, interwoven with the dynamics of urban youth culture. Through a moderate and inclusive Sufi approach, the majelis provides public access to spiritual practices, particularly dhikr, in a manner that resonates with urban contexts without compromising its connection to traditional Sufi heritage. This phenomenon corresponds with scholarship on urban Sufism in Southeast Asia, which emphasizes the role of collective ritual and charismatic leadership in mediating contemporary forms of religiosity (Abrori, 2022; Rijal, 2020). Consequently, Majelis Rasulullah should not be understood merely as a variant of non-formal Islamic education within the framework of the majelis taklim. Rather, it represents a concrete manifestation of how traditional spirituality—anchored in ritual and charismatic authority—creates new avenues for strengthening identity and religiosity among urban Muslim youth in Indonesia.

Pengajian (Islamic Religious Lecture)

General and thematic *pengajian* play a pivotal role in strengthening the identity of Javanese *santri*. They function as a medium of purification, particularly within Muhammadiyah or *Tarjih* traditions, while simultaneously fostering solidarity among workers and local congregations. Qur'anic exegesis-based *pengajian* in particular shapes Muslims with Qur'anic-oriented values and moral integrity, embedding Qur'anic culture more deeply into everyday life. However, some intra-religious *pengajian* have the potential to reinforce exclusivism and intolerance (Sutiyono, 2015; Toyibah et al., 2020; Waluyo & Allien, 2018; Warouw, 2018; Zamhari & Han, 2021). Findings from the systematic literature review (SLR) reveal that the notion of *pengajian* is used in varied contexts depending on participants, socio-cultural conditions, and objectives, including migrant *pengajian*, *pengajian tarannum*, Qur'anic and tafsir-oriented *pengajian*, and *Maiyah* or *Juguran Syafaat*.

Migrant *pengajian* serves not only as religious learning forums but also as sources of spiritual and social support for migrant workers. For instance, studies show that Indonesian migrants in Taiwan (Nafis, 2024) and Muslim minorities in the Netherlands (Maliepaard et al., 2015) rely on *pengajian* to establish communication networks, maintain national solidarity, and reinforce Muslim identity in diaspora contexts.

In Malaysia, *pengajian tarannum* demonstrates the transformation of Qur'anic recitation traditions from the Hijazi to the Misri style. This development has produced highly skilled *qari* and *qariah* while creating a competitive Qur'anic recitation community at national and regional levels (Safe et al., 2020). The leadership of Faridah binti Mat Saman has been particularly influential, inspiring the growth of *tarannum* institutions until 2018. Research in Johor further indicates that *tarannum* instructors possess strong theoretical knowledge, although their practical skills remain moderate; nonetheless, contemporary pedagogical approaches increasingly integrate technological tools (Latif et al., 2020). This reflects an ongoing process of modernization in Qur'anic education while safeguarding the quality of religious instruction.

Qur'anic and tafsir-oriented *pengajian* have also flourished through digital platforms such as YouTube.

Diverse formats—including webinars, lectures, debates, tajwid tutorials, *tarannum*, *qiraat*, animations, and vlogs—have contributed to the growth of Islamic digital literacy and attracted significant youth engagement. The proportion of Islamic video content on YouTube increased from 6.04% in 2011 to 13.11% in 2019, accompanied by high levels of interaction through comments and likes (Al-Zaman, 2022). Similarly, platforms such as Cariustadz.id provide digital fatwas and promote moderate forms of da'wah, positioning themselves as alternative authorities amid the growing influence of Salafi and Tablighi movements (Razzak et al., 2024; Aditoni & Rohmah, 2022; Zamhari & Han, 2021). Offline practices also remain significant. In Aceh, Qur'anic learning centers (*balai pengajian Qur'an*) embody a fusion of local cultural traditions and Islamic education, with the *Rumoh Aceh* serving as the architectural basis of these institutions, thus reinforcing cultural identity while nurturing Qur'anic literacy rooted in local wisdom (Sahputra et al., 2022).

Meanwhile, *Maiyah* or *Juguran Syafaat* exemplifies a more contemporary and inclusive form of *pengajian*. Characterized by eight core practices—including intellectual dialogue, cultural integration, *tawassul*, acceptance of diversity, and *tadabbur*—it provides a transformative space for personal growth and inter-community openness (Suprpto et al., 2025). This model highlights the potential of non-formal Islamic education to serve as a progressive medium for social engagement and spiritual dialogue in urban contexts.

Islamic religious lecture groups in Pamekasan, Madura, Indonesia, exemplify the role of Qur'anic study circles in preventing radicalization. By integrating religious and legal education, these groups enhance community resilience against extremist ideologies and cultivate broader awareness of tolerance. Empirical studies demonstrate that such initiatives strengthen local social resilience (Jufri et al., 2024). Incorporating recitation groups into non-formal curricula and community activities has proven to be an effective mechanism for embedding values of tolerance, nationalism, and interfaith dialogue, particularly in rural areas vulnerable to ideological polarization (Mustapa et al., 2025).

Halaqah (Islamic Learning Circle)

The findings of the systematic literature review (SLR) identify three distinct forms of *halaqah*: campus-based *halaqah*, online business-community *halaqah*, and *tahfiz al-Qur'an halaqah*. Campus-based *halaqahs* function not only as a spiritual forum but also as a space for leadership development and collective learning. Employing peer-learning methods, these groups enable students to motivate one another, enhance self-efficacy, and adopt more effective academic strategies (Winarno & Assa'diyah, 2023; Yani et al., 2023). Nevertheless, in certain contexts, such as at UNESA, *halaqah* may also serve as potential entry points for radical ideologies when pedagogical structures are not accompanied by sufficient ideological moderation (Yani et al., 2023).

Digital *halaqahs* have gained traction within business-oriented communities, particularly among housewives. These online forums provide entrepreneurial literacy that enhances household business management skills while simultaneously fostering an economic mindset grounded in Islamic values (Winarno & Assa'diyah, 2023). This development reflects broader global trends demonstrating that peer-to-peer learning communities can cultivate a strong sense of belonging and facilitate motivational interactions that support personal growth and economic advancement (Gamage & Whitting, 2021).

The *tahfiz al-Qur'an halaqah* and study circles within formal educational institutions contribute significantly to the internalization of Islamic values and the cultivation of spiritual discipline. Group learning in these contexts has been shown to strengthen elaborative and reflective learning strategies while nurturing religious motivation among students (Almoshagah et al., 2022; Isnin et al., 2021; Syam et al., 2016). In several countries, including Saudi Arabia, governments have further institutionalized the *halaqah tahfiz* tradition by providing teacher training, promoting pedagogical innovation, and offering institutional support, thereby ensuring both educational quality and the long-term sustainability of this practice.

Mosque-Based Education

Mosques remain central institutions for non-formal Islamic education across various countries. Their role extends beyond supporting formal education policies, such as the *Merdeka Curriculum* in Indonesia, by providing intergenerational learning spaces through traditional methods, including *halaqah* and the study of classical texts (*kitab kuning*). Government support, including infrastructural investment and funding, has sustained the relevance of mosque-based education among Malay communities and younger generations (Susilo

& Kartowagiran, 2023). In Malaysia, mosque- and *pondok*-based education has endured due to continued state support, with traditional *halaqah* and *kitab kuning* instruction operating alongside modern schools. This coexistence illustrates the resilience of tradition while simultaneously adapting to institutional modernization (Ab Rahman et al., 2015). In Singapore, mosques have been transformed into centers of “lifelong Islamic learning.” Programs such as aLIVE for children and adolescents and ADIL for adults are administered by MUIS, featuring tiered curricula and certified instructors (ARS), thereby ensuring pedagogical quality and curricular relevance across areas including practical *fiqh*, ethics, halal issues, and Islamic history. Contemporary scholarship further highlights the mosque’s role as a site for the transmission of knowledge and character formation, where discussions, *halaqah*, and teacher guidance serve as primary mechanisms for both deepening religious understanding and internalizing Islamic values. Moreover, the mosque has increasingly become a hub of social engagement, fostering cohesion within modern Muslim communities (Satibi, 2024).

Community-based Islamic Education

Community-based Islamic education plays an important role in empowering marginalized groups. In Papua, for instance, it has become a means of expanding educational access, opening career opportunities, and strengthening local Muslim identity in underdeveloped regions. Among Chinese Muslim communities in Yogyakarta, family- and community-based non-formal education instills the values of *rahmatan lil-‘alamin* while also serving as a vehicle for social integration among minority groups (Machali et al., 2023; Sukman et al., 2025).

Hadith Studies

The study of *hadith* represents another form of non-formal Islamic education that has gained prominence in both academic and religious contexts. Functioning alongside tafsir and *halaqah*, *hadith* studies deepen textual understanding and reinforce the intellectual tradition of Islam in contemporary society (Noor, 2023; Yusoff, 2023). Hadith, which hierarchically ranks immediately below and alongside the Qur’an, is the locus of reference in the development of Islamic law (Abdullaieva et al., 2024). Because of this fundamental position, the study of hadith in its methodological framework requires rigor in verifying the authenticity of the statements attributed to the Prophet Muhammad in order to ensure the integrity of Islamic teachings. (Sagir et al., 2024). On the other hand, studies of the Hadith provide historical context on the dynamics of education in Islam. Muslims perceive faith and knowledge as solid grounding. They firmly ground their faith and knowledge in the Quran and Hadith. As such, this notion can be explicitly recognized through the study of Hadith (Baiza, 2022).

Conclusion

This study systematically reviewed the literature on non-formal Islamic education published between 2015 and 2025, guided by four central research questions. The analysis of publication trends reveals a substantial increase in scholarly output since 2020, with a diverse range of methodological approaches, although qualitative research remains the predominant approach. This growth reflects heightened academic attention to the role of non-formal Islamic education, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, when formal learning activities were disrupted and increasingly shifted to digital platforms. Thematic analysis, conducted through word cloud and co-occurrence network mapping, identified eight major clusters, including religious practices and psychological well-being, religious identity, community organization and engagement, public discourse, collective life, and spiritual leadership. Cross-national comparisons reveal notable variations: Indonesia emphasizes *majelis taklim*, *pengajian*, *halaqah*, and digital da’wah; Malaysia highlights *halaqah tahfiz*, Qur’anic exegesis, and *tarannum*; while Western contexts such as Norway, the Netherlands, and the United States employ non-formal education as a means of strengthening Muslim minority identities and countering discrimination. The documented impacts of non-formal Islamic education encompass enhanced religiosity, psychological well-being, community solidarity, and socio-economic empowerment, although risks of exclusivism and politicization remain present.

The novelty of this study lies in its cross-national mapping, which demonstrates that non-formal Islamic education serves not only as a channel for the transmission of religious knowledge but also as a resilient mechanism for addressing global challenges, including pandemics, urbanization, migration, and discrimination. The rise of digital Islamic education—through social media and platforms such as *Cariustadz.id*—further illustrates its adaptability in meeting the needs of millennial and urban Muslim communities. The implications

are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, the study contributes to the literature on Islamic education by integrating social, psychological, and cultural perspectives, underscoring the importance of multidisciplinary approaches. Practically, it provides policymakers, educational institutions, and religious communities with insights for developing inclusive and context-sensitive models of non-formal Islamic education. Nonetheless, the study has limitations, particularly its reliance on Scopus-indexed articles within a specific timeframe, which may exclude other relevant sources. Moreover, the dominance of qualitative research suggests limited exploration through quantitative or mixed-methods approaches, which could enhance generalizability. Future research should therefore broaden data sources, undertake longitudinal analyses of digital Islamic education, and conduct empirical investigations into the socio-economic impacts of non-formal Islamic education, especially in the contexts of Muslim minorities and multicultural societies.

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