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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Section: *Literature, Linguistics & Criticism***Epistemology of *maslahah* and its implementation in gender-related Qur'anic verses: Insights from a bibliometric review (2015–2025)**Zakiyatul Fitriyah¹, Wifayatul Amani¹, Ernawati¹, Mutamimah¹, Sofi Faiqotul Hikmah¹, Mildanti¹, Bunga Ifatun Nisa¹, Yara Laela¹, Muhammad Labib¹, Julhelmi Erlanda¹, Darlis¹ & Asep Muksin¹¹Universitas PTIQ Jakarta, Indonesia*Correspondence: zakiyatulfitriyah1996@gmail.com**ABSTRACT**

Research on *maslahah*, Islamic law, and gender has expanded significantly between 2015 and 2025, driven by strong scholarly collaboration and citation networks. Yet, studies specifically addressing the intersection of *maslahah* and gender from a Qur'anic perspective remain limited, leaving a gap in both academic and legal discourse. This study aims to map the intellectual landscape of gender research in Islamic law and to highlight the role of *maslahah* and *maqasid* as epistemological tools for reinterpreting gender-related Qur'anic verses. The research employed the SALSA framework (Search, Appraisal, Synthesis, and Analysis) using the Scopus database. Bibliometric techniques were applied to analyze publication trends, geographical distribution, collaboration networks, and thematic concentrations within the field.

The findings show that SAMARAH is the most productive journal, publishing 65 articles with 435 citations, while EL-USRAH and AL-IHKAM demonstrate high impact despite fewer outputs. Affiliation analysis highlights the central role of Islamic universities in Indonesia and Malaysia—particularly UIN Ar-Raniry, IIUM, and Universiti Malaya—positioning Southeast Asia as the hub of scholarship on gender and Islamic law. Thematically, debates remain concentrated on family issues such as inheritance and marriage, while research explicitly integrating *maslahah* with gender perspectives remains underdeveloped. These results imply the necessity of strengthening Qur'anic epistemology-based studies that integrate *maslahah* into contemporary gender and legal debates. Doing so can enrich scholarly discourse and provide alternative frameworks for addressing questions of gender equality in both national legal systems and global contexts.

KEYWORDS: bibliometric analysis, gender, Islamic law, *Maslahah*, Qur'anic epistemology

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I. Introduction

The question of gender equality in Islamic law remains one of the most contested debates in contemporary Muslim societies (Dawood, 2024). Although the Qur'an repeatedly affirms the spiritual and moral equality of men and women, the lived realities in many Muslim-majority contexts continue to reflect entrenched gender disparities in both legal frameworks and social practices (Begum et al., 2024). Verses revealed to promote justice and equity are frequently interpreted in ways that reinforce patriarchal norms and male privilege, highlighting the persistent tension between scriptural ideals and socio-cultural realities. This tension bears significant implications not only for women's rights in personal and public domains but also for the broader credibility and adaptability of Islamic law in addressing modern human concerns. Several Qur'anic passages affirm the principle of gender justice and mutual responsibility. For instance, QS. al-Ahzab [33]:35 underscores the equality of men and women in faith, piety, and deeds, thereby rejecting spiritual hierarchy between the sexes (Affandi & Billah, 2024). Similarly, QS. al-Baqarah [2]:228 emphasizes reciprocal rights and responsibilities within marriage during the waiting period ('iddah), offering a framework of balance rather than domination. The principle of reconciliation (*iṣlāh*) in divorce further reflects the Qur'an's concern for fairness and harmony in marital relations. These outcomes stem less from the Qur'anic text itself than from interpretive traditions and patriarchal social structures that privilege hierarchical readings over egalitarian ones. Thus, gender inequality in Islamic law is shaped more by human exegesis influenced by historical, cultural, and political contexts than by divine revelation.

In response, Muslim scholars have sought epistemological tools to reconcile the Qur'an's ethical imperatives with evolving societal needs. One such tool is *maṣlaḥah*, commonly defined as the pursuit of public good, which has historically served in *uṣūl al-fiqh* (principles of Islamic jurisprudence) to preserve the objectives of Sharia (*maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*) (Muhtar & Megawati, 2023). Classical jurists divided *maṣlaḥah* into three categories: *al-darūriyyah* (necessities including religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property), *al-ḥājiyyah* (facilitating life needs), and *al-taḥsīniyyah* (enhancing human well-being) (Syarifuddin, 2024). Mustafa al-Syalabi later differentiated between *maṣlaḥah thābitah* (permanent, such as religious obligations) and *maṣlaḥah mutaghayyirah* (variable, contingent on time, place, and context) (Fadilah & Tanjung, 2024). This framework highlights the potential of *maṣlaḥah* as a dynamic hermeneutical principle capable of addressing contemporary challenges such as gender justice.

Despite its importance, the operationalization of *maṣlaḥah* in Qur'anic gender exegesis remains underdeveloped. Much of the scholarly debate remains normative, focusing on whether *maṣlaḥah* can override explicit texts (*naṣṣ*) or only supplement them, without systematically applying this methodology to reinterpret verses historically shaped by patriarchal readings (Wijaya et al., 2025). A methodological reorientation is therefore required to integrate *maṣlaḥah* into the exegesis of gender-related verses, aligning legal interpretation with the Qur'an's ethical commitment to justice and balance.

While scholarship on gender and Islamic law has expanded considerably in the past decade, notable gaps persist. First, many studies prioritize socio-cultural dimensions over epistemological frameworks. For example, Mufti (2024) examines the sociological roles of women in family and society but does not employ *maṣlaḥah* as a methodological tool for textual interpretation. Similarly, Azhari (2025) analyzes the political dynamics of family law reform and its implications for gender equality yet does not address the potential of *maṣlaḥah* in Qur'anic hermeneutics. These contributions enrich the sociological discourse but leave unaddressed the methodological foundations necessary for transformative interpretation. Second, studies that do employ *maṣlaḥah* frequently situate it outside the domain of gender justice. For instance, Syatar et al. (2024) examine its role in the application of the death penalty for sexual crimes in Indonesia, thereby demonstrating its relevance in criminal law but not in relation to gender. Similarly, works by Zuhdi and Nasir (2024) explore the transformation of *maṣlaḥah* into *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* as a paradigm for legal reform, but their discussions remain abstract and conceptual, without practical application to gendered exegesis. Third, there is an absence of bibliometric mapping in this field. Although individual studies address gender, Islamic law, and occasionally *maṣlaḥah*, there has been little systematic effort to analyze how these themes intersect within global academic discourse. Bibliometric methods,

widely employed in other fields to trace publication trends, collaboration networks, and thematic clusters, remain underutilized in Islamic studies (Maimun et al., 2024; Suhartini, 2023). The absence of such mapping risks scholarly fragmentation, with studies proceeding in isolation rather than contributing to a cumulative knowledge base. These gaps indicate a scholarly niche situated at the intersection of *maṣlaḥah* epistemology, gender-oriented Qur'anic exegesis, and bibliometric analysis. Addressing this niche is vital for advancing both methodological innovation and substantive contributions to Islamic legal discourse.

This study seeks to fill this gap by systematically mapping research on *maṣlaḥah* and gender in Islamic law between 2015 and 2025 through bibliometric analysis. Employing the SALSA framework (Search, Appraisal, Synthesis, and Analysis) and the Scopus database, it investigates publication trends, geographical distribution, collaboration networks, and thematic concentrations. Particular attention is devoted to Southeast Asia—particularly Indonesia and Malaysia—as a hub of scholarship, given the central role of institutions such as UIN Ar-Raniry, the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), and Universiti Malaya (Begum et al., 2024; Khanom et al., 2025). This study is guided by three research questions:

1. What are the publication trends related to *maṣlaḥah* and gender in Islamic law during 2015–2025?
2. What thematic clusters have emerged in the scholarship on *maṣlaḥah* and gender?
3. What are the implications of bibliometric mapping for the exegesis of gender-related Qur'anic verses, particularly QS. al-Ahzab [33]:35, QS. al-Nisa [4]:34, QS. al-Baqarah [2]:228?

II. Literature Review

II.1 *Maslahah*

The concept of *maṣlaḥah* occupies a pivotal role in the intellectual framework of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, functioning as a normative principle designed to promote benefit (*jalb al-maṣāliḥ*) and prevent harm (*dar' al-mafāsid*). Al-Ghazālī classified *maṣlaḥah* into three hierarchical levels: *darūriyyah* (primary necessities), *ḥājīyyah* (secondary needs), and *taḥsīniyyah* (tertiary enhancements). These levels are intrinsically connected to the protection of the five universal values (*al-kullīyyāt al-khams*), namely religion (*dīn*), life (*nafs*), intellect (*‘aql*), lineage (*nasl*), and property (*māl*). This conceptual structure establishes *maṣlaḥah* as the foundational basis for Islamic legal reasoning, ensuring its orientation toward human welfare. Al-Syātibī (2005) subsequently advanced this framework through the theory of *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah*, situating *maṣlaḥah* within a teleological paradigm in which legal interpretation is guided not solely by textual literalism but also by the higher objectives of the Sharia. This interpretive shift reflects the transition from a rigid textualist approach to a functionalist orientation that enhances the law's relevance across time and context (Kamali, 2003).

From a theoretical perspective, scholars have persistently underscored the dynamic and adaptive qualities of *maṣlaḥah*. Al-Syātibī (2005) articulated an important distinction between *al-maṣlaḥah al-thābitah* (permanent benefits) and *al-maṣlaḥah al-mutaghayyirah* (context-dependent benefits), highlighting the inherent flexibility of Islamic law in addressing diverse temporal and spatial realities. This conceptual division acquires particular relevance in the field of gender studies, where Qur'anic verses related to inheritance, family structures, and marital roles have frequently been interpreted through patriarchal frameworks. By invoking the principle of *maṣlaḥah*, reinterpretations of such verses may promote social justice and gender equity while simultaneously safeguarding the overarching objectives of the Shari‘ah (Auda, 2008). Etymologically, the term *maṣlaḥah* derives from the Arabic root *ṣ-l-ḥ*, which conveys meanings such as bringing benefit, improving conditions, and preventing harm. Within Islamic legal terminology, *maṣlaḥah* is understood as a mechanism to preserve the objectives of the Shari‘ah. Al-Ghazālī affirmed that the measure of benefit is not determined by human preference but rather by divine will (*al-shar‘*). Consequently, *maṣlaḥah* is only deemed valid if it aligns with the higher purposes of the Shari‘ah, even when it conflicts with subjective human interests (Abdullah & Maharani, 2024). Complementing this view, Syarifuddin emphasized the role of reason (*‘aql*) in discerning benefits, noting that sound intellect has the capacity to identify *maṣlaḥah* within real-life circumstances (Edy, 2023). These objectives are framed around the preservation of five essentials—religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property—which form

the foundation of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* and constitute the ultimate aim of all applications of *maṣlaḥah* (Khaidzir et al, 2018).

The theoretical construction of *maṣlaḥah* has produced several categories reflecting its diverse functions and degrees of necessity. First, *maṣlaḥah mu'tabarāh*, which refers to benefits explicitly supported by Sharī'ah evidence, whether directly or indirectly. Second, *maṣlaḥah ḍarūriyyah*, or primary necessities, associated with the preservation of the five essentials. Third, *maṣlaḥah ḥājiyyah*, which facilitates the fulfillment of basic needs by providing ease, particularly in cases of hardship. Fourth, *maṣlaḥah taḥsīniyyah*, which pertains to ethical values, refinement, and practices that enhance the quality of life. This classification underscores that *maṣlaḥah* extends beyond practical utility to encompass moral and qualitative dimensions, thereby affirming its relevance to legal reform in line with evolving socio-historical contexts (Khairunnas, 2009). In the discourse of Islamic legal reform, Najm al-Dīn al-Ṭūfī advanced a distinctive position in contrast to the mainstream jurists. He elevated *maṣlaḥah* as the foremost source of law in addressing societal change, while rejecting conventional classifications such as *maṣlaḥah mursalah*, *ḍarūriyyah*, *ḥājiyyah*, and *taḥsīniyyah*. For al-Ṭūfī, these categories impose unnecessary restrictions that undermine flexibility. He argued that *maṣlaḥah* should function as an independent and primary legal proof, unencumbered by rigid taxonomies or traditional conditions. In his view, prioritizing *maṣlaḥah* ensures that Islamic law remains responsive to contemporary needs and transformations (Khairunnas, 2009). In contemporary scholarship, the discourse on *maṣlaḥah* has been further elaborated through the framework of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*. Jasser Auda, for instance, proposed a systemic approach encompassing six dimensions: cognition, purposefulness, interconnectedness, openness, continuity, and multidimensionality. This model conceptualizes Islamic law as a dynamic system in which texts are not merely prescriptive, but also inspirational sources for articulating value-driven legal objectives. Such an orientation reflects a decisive shift from static to adaptive jurisprudence, enabling Islamic law to contribute more effectively to global discourses in a humanistic and socially relevant manner (Alfina, 2025).

Within this framework, the present study situates *maṣlaḥah* as a methodological instrument for examining the nexus between Islamic law and gender justice. Existing scholarship has primarily concentrated on socio-cultural or political dimensions of Islamic family law reform. For instance, Azhari (2025) analyzed the political dynamics shaping reform processes and their implications for gender equality, while Zuhdi and Nasir (2024) highlighted the epistemological evolution of *maṣlaḥah* into the *maqāṣid* paradigm. Despite these contributions, much of the literature remains confined to conceptual or normative discussions and provides limited systematic analysis of how *maṣlaḥah* has been operationalized in the exegesis of gender-related Qur'anic verses. Similarly, research focused on criminal law (Syatar et al., 2024) or general legal constructs has often neglected the gender-specific application of *maṣlaḥah* in exegetical contexts.

This gap underscores two defining characteristics of the current study. First, it positions *maṣlaḥah* within an epistemological discourse that examines both its theoretical foundations and its interpretive deployment in verses directly related to gender relations. Second, it employs a bibliometric approach to systematically map and analyze research trends from 2015 to 2025, thereby offering insights into thematic clusters, geographical trajectories, and methodological orientations. Such a meta-analytical perspective remains uncommon in Islamic law scholarship but is essential for identifying patterns in the treatment of *maṣlaḥah* and gender, as well as for charting future directions for research (Maimun et al., 2024; Khanom et al., 2025). This study bridges classical and contemporary formulations of *maṣlaḥah* while addressing an underexplored intersection between epistemology, gender-related exegesis, and bibliometric inquiry. Through this dual theoretical and methodological contribution, it enriches the epistemological discourse of Islamic legal methodology and facilitates the rearticulation of Qur'anic interpretation in ways that substantively advance gender justice.

II.2 Hermeneutical Theories of Qur'anic Interpretation

The interpretation of gender-related verses in the Qur'an represents one of the most contested issues in Islamic scholarship, particularly as patriarchal readings continue to dominate classical and contemporary exegetical traditions. The central issue lies in the tension between the Qur'an's ethical vision of justice and equality and

interpretive traditions that reinforce male authority. In this regard, hermeneutical theories provide critical methodological resources to ensure that interpretation remains aligned with both the text and the principle of *maṣlaḥah*—the pursuit of human welfare and prevention of harm—thereby offering a framework for gender-sensitive exegesis.

Hermeneutics, broadly defined, refers to the theory and methodology of interpretation. In the Islamic intellectual tradition, modern hermeneutical approaches have been employed to bridge the gap between text and context. Rahman (1982) introduced the *double movement theory*, which emphasizes two interconnected processes: first, understanding the Qur’anic text within its historical context; and second, extracting universal moral principles to be applied to contemporary realities. Within this framework, *maṣlaḥah* functions as a criterion for ensuring that interpretations not only remain faithful to revelation but also respond to evolving social conditions in the pursuit of justice. Similarly, Esack (1997) advanced a contextual hermeneutics that situates the Qur’an within the broader struggle for social justice, highlighting the importance of defending marginalized groups, including women. This perspective resonates with the principle of *jalb al-maṣāliḥ wa dar’ al-mafāsid* (promoting benefits and preventing harm), which reinforces the Qur’an’s relevance in addressing contemporary social challenges. The feminist hermeneutical tradition has made further contributions by challenging male-centered exegetical paradigms. Scholars such as Wadud (1999) and Hassan (2003) emphasized the necessity of incorporating women’s lived experiences as valid epistemological resources in Qur’anic interpretation. Their critiques of patriarchal readings underscore how classical exegesis frequently marginalized women’s voices. By integrating the principle of *maṣlaḥah mursalah*, feminist hermeneutics advocates for egalitarian interpretations grounded in substantive justice. Barlas (2002) further developed this perspective, arguing that women must be positioned as active subjects rather than passive objects of interpretation. These theoretical contributions underscore the potential of hermeneutics to operationalize *maṣlaḥah* in ways that promote gender equity.

In the context of this study, hermeneutical theories are positioned as complementary to the epistemology of *maṣlaḥah*. While the principle of *maṣlaḥah* provides the normative foundation for ensuring justice and human welfare, hermeneutical approaches supply the methodological tools necessary for reinterpreting gender-related verses. They establish a framework through which contested verses—such as those on inheritance, marital roles, and family law—may be re-examined in light of both textual fidelity and contemporary demands for justice.

II.3 Theories of Gender and Justice

The issue of gender inequality remains a persistent concern within both contemporary social discourse and Islamic hermeneutics. While the Qur’an emphasizes justice and human dignity, interpretations have often been shaped by patriarchal traditions that limit women’s access to education, economic opportunities, and decision-making roles. This interpretive imbalance necessitates the integration of gender theories and the epistemology of *maṣlaḥah* to re-establish justice as a central value in Qur’anic exegesis. Social Role Theory, proposed by Eagly and Wood (1999), defines gender differences as primarily products of socially constructed roles rather than immutable biological factors. This theoretical framework posits that when structural barriers are removed, disparities between men and women decline significantly. Within the context of Islamic thought, this resonates with *ḥifẓ al-‘ird* (protection of dignity) and *ḥifẓ al-‘aql* (protection of intellect), principles within the *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah* that safeguard human capacity and integrity as essential aspects of communal welfare.

Complementing this, the Gender Stratification Hypothesis advanced by Baker and Jones (1993) emphasizes that gender inequality arises from unequal access to education, economic resources, and social capital. This perspective aligns with *ḥifẓ al-māl* (protection of property) and *ḥifẓ al-naḥs* (protection of life), underscoring the importance of equitable distribution of resources to ensure the flourishing of all members of society. By integrating this theory, the study situates *maṣlaḥah* not only as an abstract principle but also as a practical tool to address structural imbalances that hinder women’s empowerment. The discourse is further enriched by Rawls’ (1971) theory of Justice as Fairness, which advocates for substantive justice that prioritizes the welfare of marginalized and vulnerable groups. Rawls’ principles of equality of opportunity and the difference principle converge with Islamic values, where *‘adālah* (justice) is the primary aim of the Sharia. This

intersection provides a strong philosophical foundation for rereading Qur'anic gender-related verses in ways that reinforce inclusivity, fairness, and human dignity.

Previous studies have applied these theories in diverse contexts. Social Role Theory has been used to analyze cross-cultural variations in gender norms, demonstrating that structural reforms reduce disparities (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Similarly, the Gender Stratification Hypothesis has been validated through comparative studies showing that equitable access to education significantly improves women's socioeconomic outcomes (Charles & Bradley, 2009). Rawlsian justice has been widely adopted in political philosophy and Islamic legal studies to frame discussions of equity and distributive justice (Kamali, 2008). However, few works have systematically integrated these theories with the epistemology of *maṣlaḥah* in the interpretation of Qur'anic verses on gender. This study builds upon these theoretical insights by positioning *maṣlaḥah* as a mediating principle that bridges Islamic jurisprudence with contemporary gender and justice theories. It not only highlights the compatibility between classical Islamic objectives and modern egalitarian values but also provides a framework for reinterpreting gender-related Qur'anic verses. Such integration underscores the relevance of *maṣlaḥah* as both an epistemological and practical tool to ensure that Qur'anic interpretation remains ethically grounded, socially responsive, and oriented toward justice in contemporary contexts.

II. 4 Bibliometric and Knowledge Mapping in Islamic Studies

The central methodological challenge in contemporary Islamic studies lies in developing systematic approaches to map the rapidly expanding scholarship on *maṣlaḥah* and gender. Conventional literature reviews typically adopt normative or descriptive orientations, but they seldom capture longitudinal publication trends, collaborative networks, or thematic shifts within the field. Bibliometric methods offer a rigorous alternative by enabling transparent and replicable mapping of scholarly landscapes. Frameworks such as SALSA (Search, Appraisal, Synthesis, and Analysis), alongside digital tools like VOSviewer, provide robust instruments for identifying publication patterns, geographical concentrations, research gaps, and intellectual linkages (Donthu et al., 2021). Although bibliometric approaches are increasingly utilized across the social sciences, their application within Islamic legal studies remains limited. Existing research indicates that Southeast Asia—particularly Indonesia and Malaysia—has emerged as a central hub for scholarship on Islamic law and gender (Tazkia et al., 2022). Nevertheless, studies that explicitly integrate the epistemology of *maṣlaḥah* with gender-focused Qur'anic interpretation through bibliometric analysis remain rare. This lacuna highlights the need for interdisciplinary approaches that can reveal structural patterns of scholarship while also addressing urgent normative debates. Bibliometric analysis is distinguished from classical jurisprudential inquiry by its systematic, data-driven orientation. Rather than focusing on individual interpretations, it provides a meta-level understanding of collective scholarly trajectories. For instance, Suhartini (2024) demonstrated that research on gender equality in Islam has increased substantially in the past decade, yet remains dominated by normative-descriptive frameworks with limited methodological innovation. Embedding *maṣlaḥah* within bibliometric frameworks can bridge this divide by linking the epistemological principles of Islamic law with empirical insights drawn from publication patterns. The intellectual trajectory of *maṣlaḥah* itself reinforces this potential. From al-Ghazālī's tripartite classification of *ḍarūriyyah*, *ḥājīyyah*, and *taḥṣīniyyah*, through al-Shāṭibī's teleological framework of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, to al-Tūfī's radical assertion of *maṣlaḥah* as an autonomous source of law, the discourse illustrates a gradual shift toward jurisprudential adaptability. Contemporary scholars such as Jasser Auda further advance this tradition by framing *maṣlaḥah* within a multidimensional systems approach that emphasizes dynamism, interconnectivity, and human welfare. These developments underscore *maṣlaḥah*'s potential as an epistemological bridge between normative Islamic theory and socio-legal realities, particularly in advancing gender justice.

Previous bibliometric inquiries in Islamic studies have addressed domains such as Islamic finance, family law, and political Islam (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017), but few have foregrounded *maṣlaḥah* as a central organizing principle. The present study extends this literature by combining bibliometric analysis with epistemological reflection. It not only maps the intellectual terrain of *maṣlaḥah* and gender-oriented Qur'anic interpretation from 2015 to 2025, but also demonstrates how bibliometric findings can be normatively enriched through

the lens of *maslahah*. Accordingly, integrating bibliometric methods with the epistemology of *maslahah* offers a dual contribution. Empirically, it generates a systematic overview of global research trends; conceptually, it reaffirms *maslahah* as a dynamic and justice-oriented principle capable of guiding contemporary Islamic scholarship in addressing the challenges of gender equity.

III. Methods

III. 1 Data Collection and Search Strategy

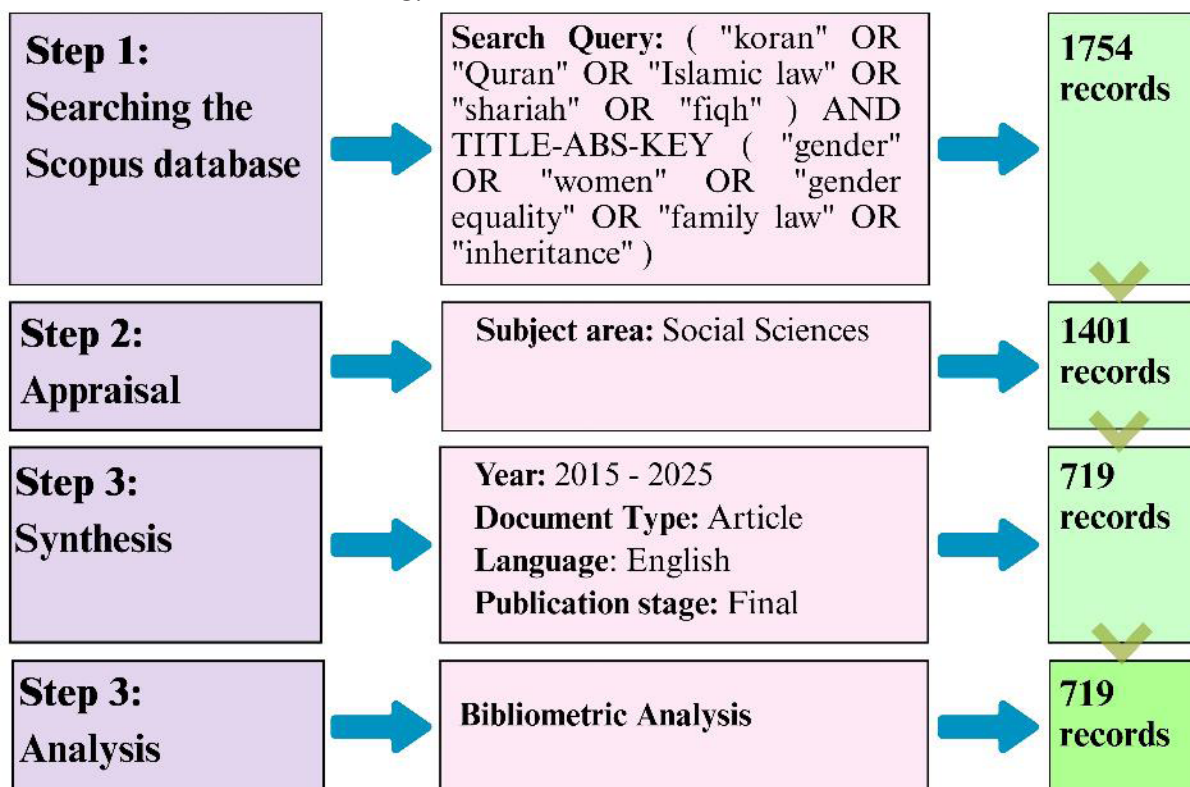


Figure 1. The SALSA methodological stages applied in data selection and analysis.

The data collection process was conducted using the SALSA technique (Search, Appraisal, Synthesis, and Analysis), which ensures methodological transparency and reproducibility in bibliometric research (Sahoo et al., n.d.). During the initial search stage, queries were executed in the Scopus database by combining terms associated with Islamic law and gender, such as “*Islamic law*,” “*shariah*,” “*fiqh*,” “*gender*,” “*women*,” “*family law*,” and “*inheritance*.” This search yielded 1,754 documents, which served as the preliminary dataset for subsequent screening. In the appraisal stage, the dataset was refined by limiting the subject area to Social Sciences, thereby reducing the corpus to 1,401 documents and ensuring disciplinary relevance.

In the synthesis stage, further inclusion criteria were applied, specifically restricting the time frame (2015–2025), document type (article), language (English), and publication status (final). This step narrowed the dataset to 719 articles that met the established eligibility standards for analysis. The final stage, analysis, involved conducting a bibliometric examination of the selected articles, focusing on publication trends, geographical distribution, patterns of author collaboration, and thematic concentrations in research on gender within Islamic law. The methodological flowchart presented in the Methods section illustrates the progressive data reduction from the initial corpus of 1,754 documents to a final set of 719 eligible articles. This process ensured that only relevant, up-to-date, and fully published literature was included, thereby strengthening the reliability and validity of the findings.

IV. Result

VI. 1 Main Information and Annual Growth of Publications

Figure 2 presents the preliminary bibliometric analysis, demonstrating that between 2015 and 2025 a total of 719 documents were published across 201 sources, authored by 2,871 scholars. The data reveal a high level of collaboration, with an average of 7.53 authors per publication, while single-authored works accounted for only

nine documents. International collaboration reached 17.52%, indicating substantial cross-border engagement. In addition, each article received an average of 4.523 citations, underscoring the visibility and influence of this body of research. Collectively, these findings suggest that scholarship on *maṣlaḥah*, Islamic law, and gender is not only substantial in scale but also characterized by robust collaborative networks and a competitive citation impact.



Figure 2. Main Information of the Dataset

The predominance of collaborative publications, as depicted in Figure 3, underscores the inherently multidisciplinary nature of this field, which integrates perspectives from law, gender studies, and human rights. Consequently, single-authored contributions remain relatively marginal. The average citation rate of more than four per article indicates that scholarship in this domain has achieved notable global visibility, albeit not yet comparable to fields such as international law or economics. The proportion of international collaboration, measured at 17.52%, further suggests substantial scope for enhancing transnational research connectivity. From an academic standpoint, these findings consolidate the position of *maṣlaḥah* and gender as a rapidly expanding field of inquiry that merits more systematic exploration. From a practical perspective, the strong patterns of collaboration and citation open pathways for integrating scholarly insights into the formulation of family law, inheritance law, and gender equality policies in Muslim-majority contexts.

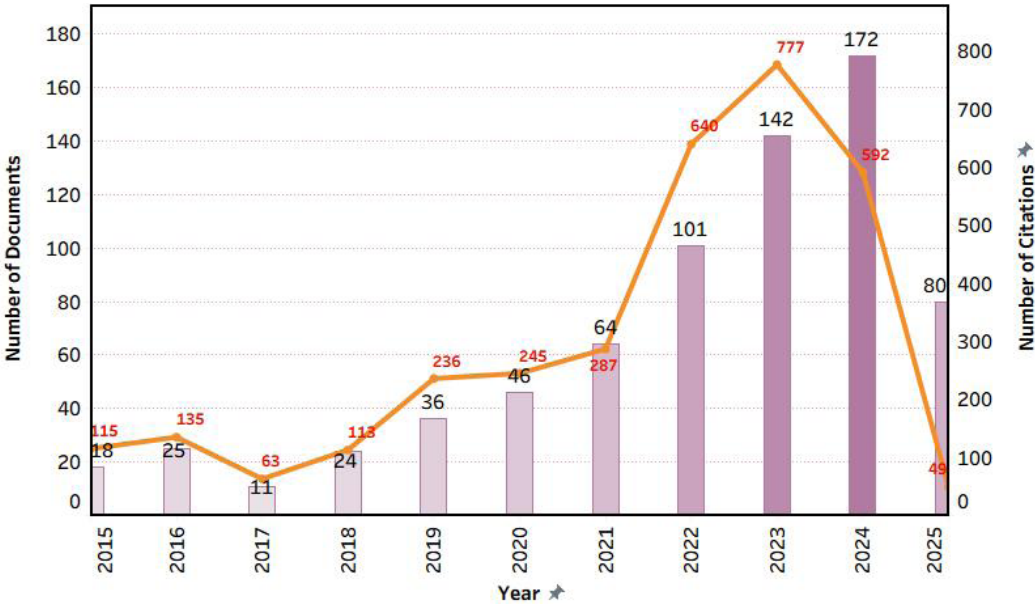


Figure 3. Annual Publication Trends and Citations.

The publication trajectory demonstrates a steady upward trend, rising from only 18 documents in 2015 to a peak of 172 in 2024, before declining to 80 in 2025 due to the ongoing nature of the year. However, citation patterns reveal greater fluctuation, with a significant surge in 2022 (640 citations) and the highest peak in 2023 (777 citations), followed by a decline in 2024–2025. This pattern indicates that while the field has experienced consistent growth in publication volume, its citation impact has been concentrated within specific periods. The marked increase in publications between 2022 and 2024 suggests a growing scholarly interest in the themes of *maṣlaḥah* and gender, whereas the citation peak in 2023 points to the emergence of influential articles that

have served as key reference points. The decline in 2025 is largely attributable to the partial-year effect and citation lag (Zhang et al., 2024). Academically, these trends affirm that the field is moving toward consolidation, supported by an increasingly robust body of literature. Practically, the surge in both publications and citations during 2022–2024 signals a critical momentum that can strengthen policy discourse in Islamic law, particularly in enhancing responsiveness to gender-related issues.

IV. 2 Most impactful journal publication

Table 1. Top 15 Most Influential Journals Based on H-Index

Journal	h_index	g_index	m_index	Total Citation	Number of Publication
Samarah	12	13	2,4	435	65
Al-Ihkam: Jurnal Hukum Dan Pranata Sosial	8	11	1,333	154	22
El-Usrah	8	11	2,667	176	25
Ahkam: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah	7	11	0,875	144	20
Al-Manahij: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam	7	9	2,333	85	9
De Jure: Jurnal Hukum Dan Syar'iah	7	8	1,75	98	18
Ijtihad: Jurnal Wacana Hukum Islam Dan Kemanusiaan	7	10	1,75	124	10
Journal Of Islamic Law	7	10	1,75	101	11
Al-Istinbath: Jurnal Hukum Islam	6	8	1	75	18
Al-Risalah: Forum Kajian Hukum Dan Sosial Kemasyarakatan	6	7	1	60	9
Juris: Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah	6	11	1,2	123	12
Islamic Law And Society	5	7	0,455	64	10
Milrev: Metro Islamic Law Review	5	7	1,667	75	13
Al-'Adalah	4	6	0,667	55	17
Al-Ahkam	4	6	0,667	62	6

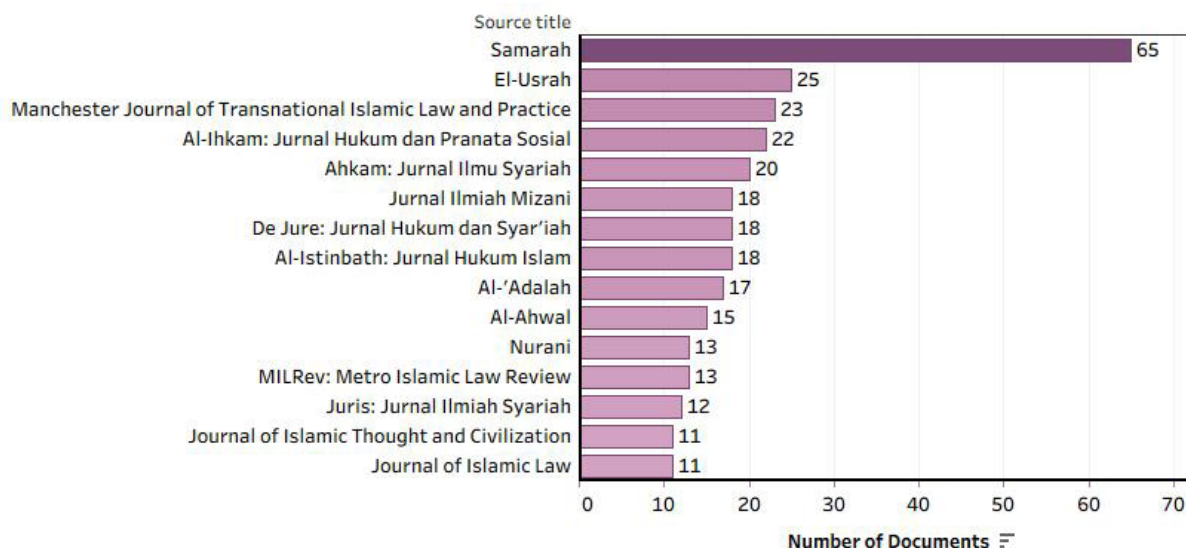


Figure 4. Most Influential Journals

Table 1 presents the most influential journals in the study of Islamic law and gender, measured by publication volume, h-index, g-index, and total citations. *SAMARAH* emerges as the leading journal, with 65 publications and 435 citations, supported by an h-index of 12 and a g-index of 13, underscoring its significant impact in the field. *EL-USRAH* and *AL-IHKAM: Jurnal Hukum dan Pranata Sosial* also demonstrate notable scholarly quality, each with an h-index of 8 and a g-index of 11, despite publishing fewer articles than *SAMARAH*. While *SAMARAH* maintains dominance in terms of output, the higher g-index values of *EL-USRAH* and *AL-IHKAM* indicate that their articles are frequently cited, suggesting greater influence per publication. This pattern

illustrates that journal quality is not determined solely by the number of publications but also by citation-based indicators of scholarly impact.

The data further highlight the importance of the h-index and g-index in evaluating journal quality in Islamic law and gender studies. Although *SAMARAH* dominates in terms of volume, journals with lower overall output, such as *EL-USRAH* and *AL-IHKAM*, demonstrate the capacity to shape theoretical and jurisprudential discourse through more widely referenced contributions (Abramo et al., 2013). This relationship is visually represented in Figure 4, which illustrates the interplay between publication volume and citation impact across leading journals. Collectively, the findings confirm that *SAMARAH* and *EL-USRAH* constitute central reference points for scholarship in this field. For researchers seeking to deepen engagement with the epistemology of *maṣlaḥah* and gender in Islamic law, these journals represent primary sources of reference. At a practical level, the findings underscore the need for evidence-based legal reform, particularly in advancing gender equality, through established and globally recognized academic platforms.

IV.3 Geographic Distribution and Institutional Productivity

Table 2 outlines the leading contributing institutions, illustrating the significant role of Islamic-based universities in Indonesia and Malaysia in advancing scholarship on gender issues within Islamic law. Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Ar-Raniry emerges as the most productive institution, with 77 published articles, followed by the International Islamic University Malaysia (52 articles) and Universiti Malaya (47 articles). Further analysis demonstrates that the top five contributing institutions are largely comprised of Indonesian UINs, each producing between 37 and 77 articles. This trend highlights that knowledge production in this field is predominantly concentrated within state Islamic universities, particularly UINs. These findings suggest that the growth of academic inquiry into Islam and gender is occurring primarily within Islamic higher education institutions, rather than in general universities. The implications are significant, as they indicate that the trajectory of gender discourse in Islamic law across Southeast Asia is substantially shaped by the intellectual frameworks developed within Indonesian UINs and Malaysian Islamic universities. As such, these institutions serve as pivotal actors in shaping both regional and global academic debates on gender within the context of Islamic law.

Table 2. Top 15 Contributing Institutions on Gender Issues in Islamic Law

Affiliation	Country	Articles
Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry	Indonesia	77
International Islamic University Malaysia	Malaysia	52
Universiti Malaya	Malaysia	47
Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga	Indonesia	45
Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang	Indonesia	38
Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta	Indonesia	37
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia	Malaysia	35
Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin	Malaysia	33
Universitas Islam Negeri Imam Bonjol Padang	Indonesia	32
Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Intan Lampung	Indonesia	32
Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara	Indonesia	24
Institut Agama Islam Negeri Bone	Indonesia	19
Universitas Islam Negeri Antasari Banjarmasin	Indonesia	18
Institut Agama Islam Negeri Manado	Indonesia	17
Universiti Teknologi Mara	Malaysia	16

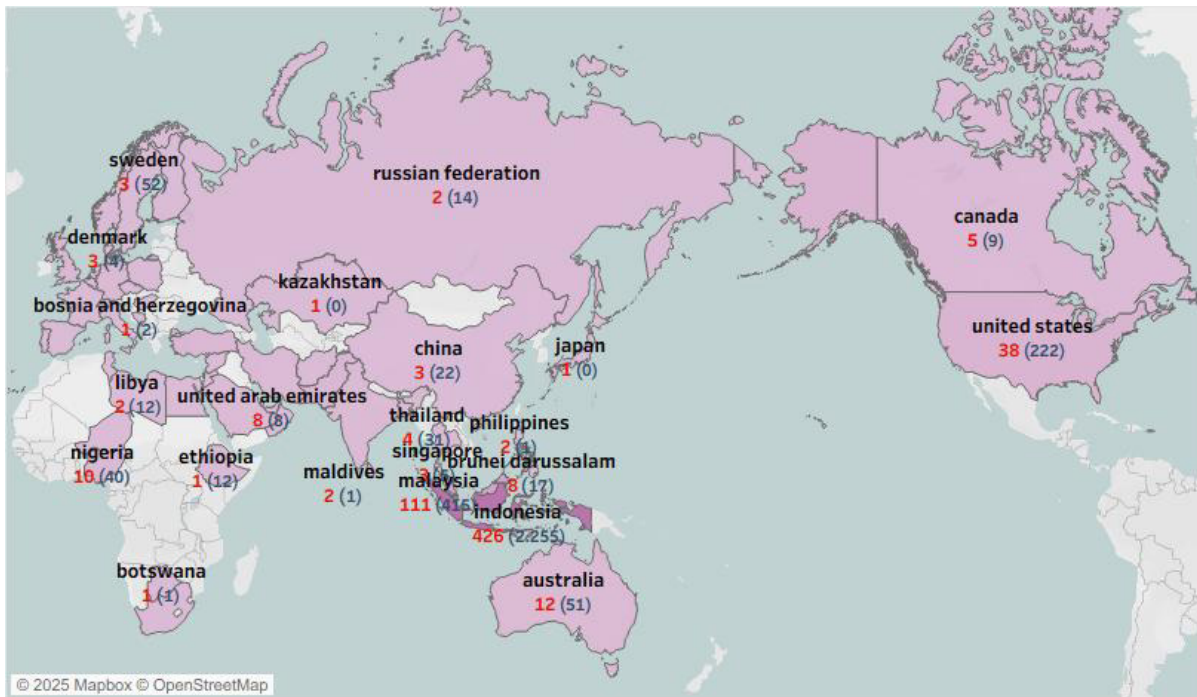


Figure 5. Geographic distribution of publications on gender issues in Islamic law.

The geographic distribution illustrated in Figure 5 highlights Indonesia's predominant position, contributing 426 publications—significantly exceeding Malaysia, which occupies the second position with 111 publications. The United States (38 publications) and Australia (12 publications) represent Western academic engagement, although their overall contributions remain comparatively modest. Similarly, Middle Eastern countries, including the United Arab Emirates (8 publications), Libya (4 publications), and Ethiopia (3 publications), demonstrate relatively limited scholarly output in this domain. From an analytical standpoint, these findings confirm that Southeast Asia constitutes the central locus of research on gender issues in Islamic law, while Western contributions primarily function as complementary or secondary academic centers. The implications of this pattern underscore the necessity of fostering cross-national collaboration to enrich scholarly perspectives. Such cooperation is essential to ensure that discourse on gender in Islamic law is not confined to Southeast Asian contexts but is also positioned to engage meaningfully with broader global debates.

IV. 4 Authorship Trends

Table 3. Top 10 Most Productive Authors in the Study of Gender in Islamic Law

Authors	Links	Total link strength	Documents	Citations
abdullah, rbh	5	33	5	32
cheema, sa	5	9	5	7
nur, i	6	14	5	29
amir, r	3	14	4	18
busyro, b	3	3	4	33
hasballah, k	10	21	4	92
huda, m	6	35	4	40
maimun	13	22	4	21
musyafa'ah, nl	4	37	4	6
nasution, k	13	23	4	22

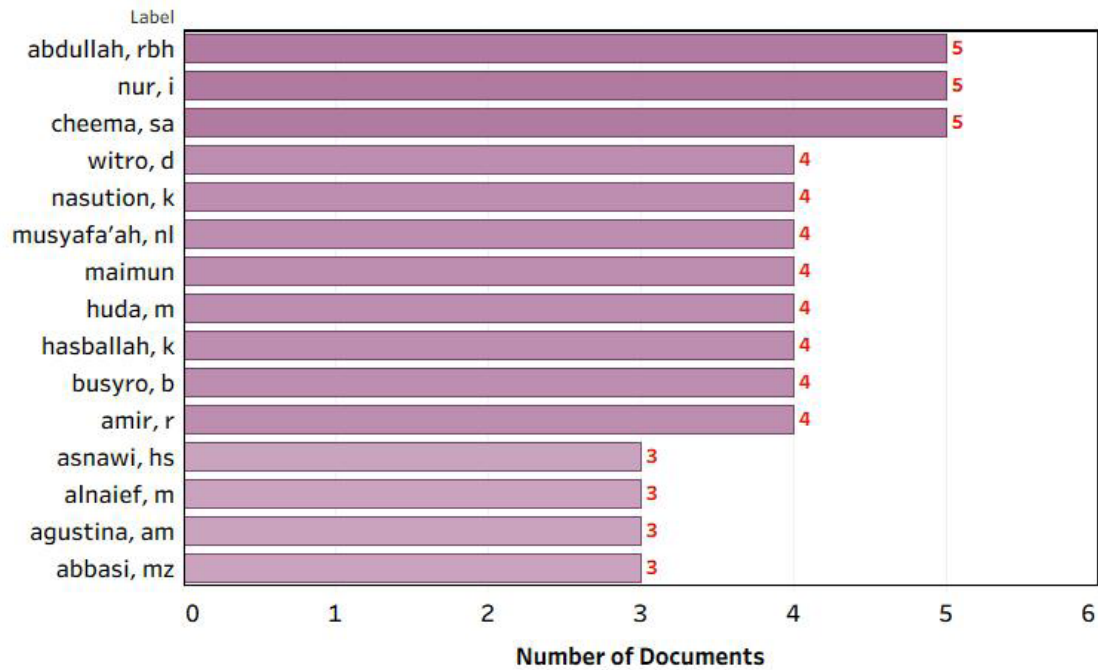


Figure 6. Top 15 most active authors in the study of gender in Islamic law.

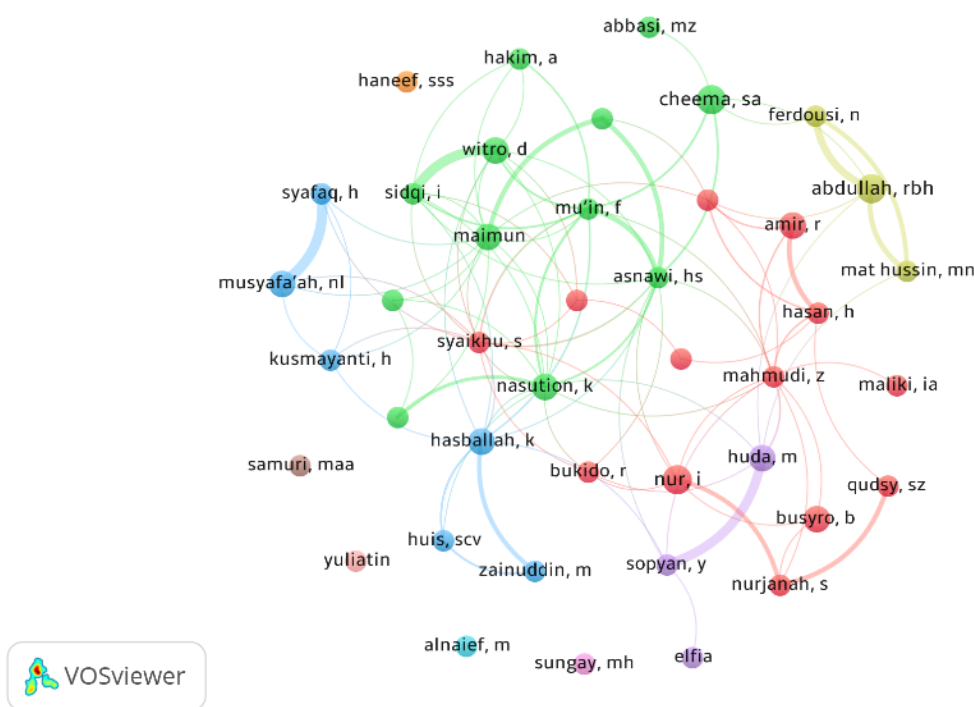


Figure 7. Collaboration network of authors in the study of gender in Islamic law.

The analysis of authorship productivity indicates that only a limited number of scholars consistently dominate publications on gender issues in Islamic law. As presented in Table 3, the ten most prolific authors account for a greater number of publications compared to others, although the overall distribution remains relatively dispersed. This pattern reflects a concentration of contributions among a select group of scholars who have established the foundational contours of the academic discourse. Within the field of gender studies in Islamic law, such concentration suggests that global scholarship continues to be shaped predominantly by the perspectives of a relatively narrow circle of authors, thereby underscoring the necessity of fostering greater diversity of voices to enhance representational breadth.

In terms of academic influence, citation and indexing analyses reveal that research productivity does not always equate to scholarly impact. As illustrated in Figure 6, several authors with a moderate number of publications have achieved higher citation counts, highlighting the theoretical and methodological significance of

their contributions. This trend demonstrates that impactful scholarship often arises from innovative approaches rather than from the volume of publications alone. In the context of gender in Islamic law, it implies that works offering critical frameworks or alternative interpretations of religious texts possess the potential to become pivotal references, even when produced in limited quantity.

Patterns of academic collaboration reveal a different trajectory. Figure 7, which visualizes author collaboration networks through VOSviewer, shows fragmented clusters with relatively weak interconnections among scholars. These tenuous collaborative links suggest that research on gender issues in Islamic law remains partially developed, with progress driven primarily by individuals or small groups engaged with specific thematic concerns. This condition highlights the importance of strengthening international research networks in order to foster a more inclusive, interdisciplinary, and cross-regional discourse on gender in Islamic law.

IV. 5 Most Cited Articles

Table 4. Top 10 Most Cited Articles on gender issues in Islamic law (2015–2025)

Author	Title and source	Total Citations	Total Citation Per Year	Ref.
Djawas, M (2022)	“The Construction of Islamic Inheritance Law: A Comparative Study of the Islamic Jurisprudence and the Compilation of Islamic Law.” <i>JURIS (Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah)</i>	42	10,5	(Djawas et al., 2022)
Harahap, B (2023)	“Non-Muslims and Sharia-Based Regional Government; Comparison between Aceh, Indonesia and Selangor, Malaysia.” <i>AL-IHKAM: Jurnal Hukum & Pranata Sosial</i>	31	10,33	(Harahap et al., 2023)
Bahrami-Rad, D (2021)	“Keeping it in the family: Female inheritance, inmarriage, and the status of women.” <i>Journal of Development Economics</i>	31	6,2	
Taufiqurohman, T & Fauziah, N (2023)	“The Evaluation of Maqāṣid Asy-Syarī’ah on Discourses of the Islamic Family Law.” <i>El-Ussrah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga</i>	27	9	(Taufiqurohman & Fauziah, 2023)
Mansoor, M (2020)	“Corporate governance, shariah governance, and credit rating: A cross-country analysis from Asian Islamic banks.” <i>Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity</i>	27	4,5	(Taufiqurohman & Fauziah, 2023)
Assaad, AS (2022)	“Gender Equity in Inheritance System: The Collaboration of Islamic and Bugis Luwu Customary Law.” <i>AL-IHKAM: Jurnal Hukum & Pranata Sosial</i>	26	6,5	(Assaad et al., 2022)
Nasir, MA (2022)	“Negotiating Muslim Interfaith Marriage in Indonesia: Integration and Conflict in Islamic Law.” <i>Mazahib</i>	25	6,25	(Nasir, 2022)
Nuroniayah, W (2022)	“Muslim Women Adhering to Minagkabau’s Bajapuik Tradition in Cirebon, West Java: Compromizing a Gendered Culture in Islamic Law.” <i>Ijtihad: Jurnal Wacana Hukum Islam dan Kemanusiaan</i>	25	6,25	(Nuroniayah, 2022)
Reskiani, A (2022)	“Reform Methods of Islamic Inheritance Law in Indonesia in Jurisprudence.” <i>JURIS (Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah)</i>	25	6,25	(Reskiani et al., 2022)
Delia DN & Jacobson, D (2015)	“The prosperous hardliner: Affluence, fundamentalism, and radicalization in Western European Muslim communities.”	25	6,25	(Delia Deckard & Jacobson, 2015)

The red cluster encompasses keywords associated with normative dimensions, such as Islamic law, sharia, fiqh, and women. The prevalence of this normative orientation suggests that discussions on gender are predominantly framed within the epistemological domain of Islamic jurisprudence. Within this context, *maslahah* and *maqasid* function as critical instruments for negotiating the interpretation of gender-related scriptural texts, thereby ensuring their acceptance within the *fiqh* tradition (Mubarrak et al., 2025). Consequently, any attempt at reinterpretation necessitates a strong alignment with the framework of *usul fiqh* to secure both academic credibility and religious authority.

The blue cluster centers on family law, with primary keywords including Islamic family law, marriage, divorce, and domestic violence. This cluster highlights that gender-related issues are most frequently scrutinized within the spheres of marriage, divorce, and domestic protection. The prominence of family-related themes illustrates that the domestic realm operates as a primary site for the application of *maslahah*-based approaches. Accordingly, reforms in Islamic law aimed at promoting gender equality are most tangibly manifested in family law policies, particularly through marriage regulations and mechanisms designed to safeguard women within households (Taufiqurohman & Fauziah, 2023).

The yellow cluster emphasizes issues pertaining to inheritance and religious courts, with central keywords including inheritance, Islamic inheritance law, and religious court. Inheritance emerges as one of the most extensively debated areas, as it reflects the tension between rigid textual regulations and the imperatives of social justice. In this context, *maslahah* functions as a critical framework for reinterpreting inheritance provisions to enhance their responsiveness to contemporary realities, particularly with respect to the equitable distribution of women's economic rights. This underscores that the epistemology of *maslahah* extends beyond the domestic domain to encompass broader concerns of distributive justice within society.

The green cluster engages directly with issues of equality and human rights, with prominent keywords such as gender equality, women's rights, and human rights. The presence of these concepts illustrates the intersection of Islamic legal discourse with global debates on gender justice. Scholarship in this field operates not only within the theological-*usul* paradigm but also incorporates human rights frameworks as a basis for legitimacy. This development signifies the emergence of a methodological dialogue that necessitates building conceptual bridges between *maqasid al-shariah* and international human rights norms.

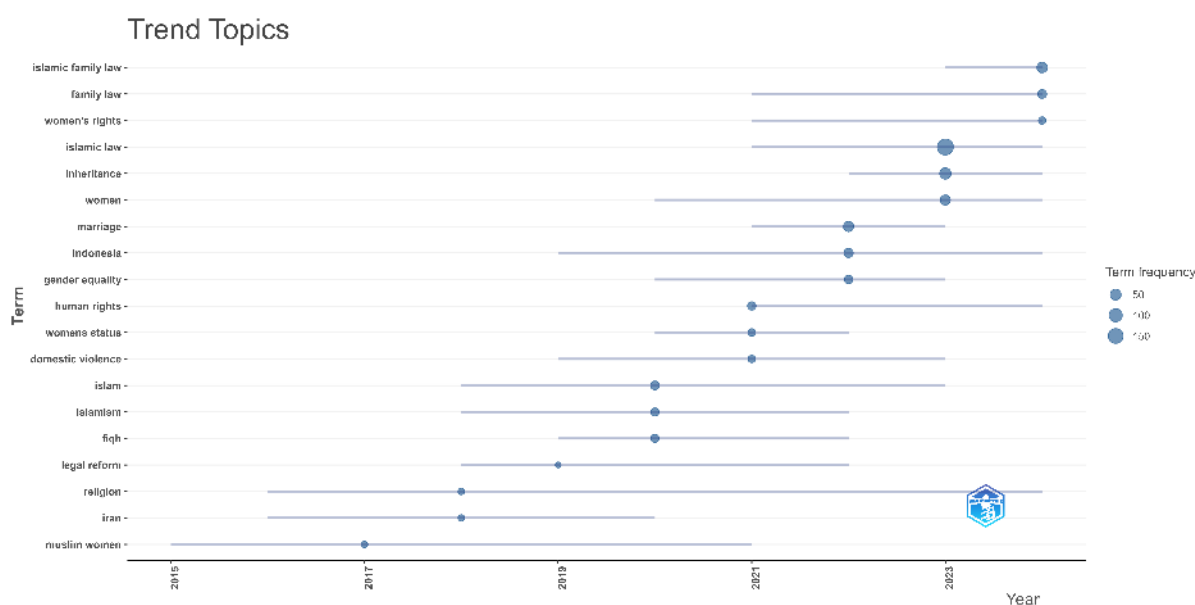


Figure 9. Topical trend evolution (Bibliometrix) on gender issues in Islamic law, 2015–2025.

The findings of the network map align with the results of the Bibliometrix topical trend analysis presented in Figure 9. Between 2015 and 2020, the discourse was predominantly shaped by broad terms such as *fiqh*, religion, and Islamism. From 2021 onward, however, a discernible shift emerged toward more applied themes, including Islamic family law, inheritance, women's rights, and domestic violence. This transition signifies a movement away from abstract normative debates toward issues with greater relevance to contemporary legal and policy contexts.

The topical trends further underscore the pivotal role of Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia and Malaysia, as central hubs for gender discourse in Islamic law. The intersection of these geographic contexts with themes such as human rights and gender equality illustrates how regional socio-political dynamics have catalyzed the development of more applied research. This trajectory highlights a growing imperative to connect the epistemology of *maslahah* with concrete societal concerns, including family law reform, the protection of women’s rights, and the restructuring of religious court systems.

Gender studies in Islamic law appear to be progressing along two complementary trajectories: on the one hand, preserving the traditional framework in the domains of family and inheritance, and on the other, engaging with global discourses on gender equality and human rights. The implications for future scholarship point to the necessity of adopting interdisciplinary approaches that integrate *usul fiqh* methodologies with insights from gender studies and human rights. Such integration would enable the epistemology of *maslahah* to function not merely as a normative justification but as a substantive foundation for Islamic legal reform that is more attuned to the imperatives of gender justice.

IV.7 Implementation in Qur’anic Verses Related to Gender

Table 6. Implementation of Maslahah in Qur’anic Verses Concerning Gender

Verse	Gender Theme	Maslahah Application	Normative Limitation	Ref.
QS. Al-Ahzab:35	Equality in deeds	Affirms spiritual equality and equal rewards for both genders; contemporary reform uses <i>maslahah</i> to advocate for gender fairness and justice.	Must align with <i>maqasid al-shariah</i> ; traditional interpretations restrict full egalitarian application.	(Khorchide, 2019; Yusuf, 2020a)
QS. An-Nisa:34	Qiwamah & domestic roles	Maslahah balances <i>qiwamah</i> as protective responsibility, not oppression; reformists use public interest to justify shared or redefined domestic leadership.	Bound by protection of family stability and essential <i>maqasid</i> safeguards, limiting radical reinterpretation.	(Ahmad & Rasheed, 2018; Nelli et al., 2024)
QS. Al-Baqarah:228	‘Iddah period, Principle of Reconciliation (Islah) in Raj’i Divorce, and Rights and Duties of Husband and Wife	Maslahah ensures women’s protection during ‘iddah, preserves family stability, balances husband-wife rights in divorce and reconciliation, and prevents harm from misuse of <i>talak raj’i</i> .	Limited by patriarchal interpretations and legal hierarchies; must uphold <i>maqasid al-shariah</i> , preventing abuse of authority or neglect of women’s rights.	(Alwani, 2016; Baderin, 2010; Banu & Jamal, 2019)

Table 6 illustrates how the principle of *maslahah* is operationalized in Qur’anic verses addressing gender, with QS. Al-Ahzab:35 serving as a central reference. The verse emphasizes spiritual equality by promising equal rewards for men and women based on their deeds. In contemporary discourse, *maslahah* has been invoked to extend this principle toward broader advocacy for gender fairness and justice, particularly in socio-legal contexts. However, the table also highlights an important normative limitation: while *maslahah* supports egalitarian interpretations, its application must remain consistent with the objectives of *maqasid al-shariah*. Traditional interpretations, therefore, often impose constraints that prevent full realization of gender equality. This tension between reformist readings and classical hermeneutics underscores the epistemological role of *maslahah* as both an enabler of contextual reasoning and a principle bound by textual fidelity.

V. Discussion

V.1 Interpretation of the Findings

The scale and characteristics of the dataset underscore a rapidly expanding body of scholarship. Between 2015 and 2025, a total of 719 documents were identified across more than 200 sources, authored by 2,871 contributors, with an average of 7.53 authors per publication (see Figure 2). The average annual growth rate of 16.09% illustrates an accelerated pace of knowledge production (see Figure 3: Annual Publication Trends). Particularly noteworthy are the high levels of collaborative authorship and the marked surge in output between

2021 and 2024. These dynamics suggest a period of both expansion and consolidation, in which the themes of *maslahah* and gender in Islamic law have evolved from a relatively limited scholarly niche to a broader, cross-disciplinary field of inquiry. This quantitative expansion, however, also implies a dual responsibility: to capitalize on the opportunity for establishing a new body of literature while simultaneously enhancing the quality of research in terms of methodological rigor and policy relevance. Such efforts are essential to ensure that the growth in volume contributes substantively rather than remaining merely numerical.

In terms of publication outlets and contributing institutions, the data reveal a pronounced regional concentration. Islamic-oriented journals, such as *Samarah*, *El-Usrah*, and *Al-Ihkam*, dominate both in publication volume and citation impact, while leading institutions are predominantly Islamic universities in Southeast Asia, including UIN Ar-Raniry, the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), and Universiti Malaya (see Table of Top Contributing Institutions and Table of Top Journals). The prominence of regional journals and affiliations indicates that discourse on gender in Islamic law is significantly shaped by the Southeast Asian context. This concentration generates two key implications: first, the richness of local contexts—including customary law, practices within religious courts, and national reform initiatives—enriches the discourse; second, it risks creating a degree of insularity, as the research may remain insufficiently connected to mainstream Q1 international journals, thereby limiting its global reach. To address this challenge, strategies that emphasize cross-linguistic publication and international collaboration are recommended as means of broadening both the visibility and influence of research in this field.

The trajectories of authors and the most influential articles demonstrate a well-defined thematic orientation. Patterns of scholarly collaboration, as illustrated in the Author Network Figure, reveal clusters concentrated around several core groups, indicating the presence of key actors who shape and sustain the discourse. Table 4 (Top 10 Most Cited Articles) further highlights that the most frequently cited works are primarily concerned with inheritance law, family law, *maqāṣid*/*maslahah*, and the intersection between Islamic law and customary practices. Of particular significance is the clustering of citations within these domains; for example, studies addressing the construction of inheritance law and the evaluation of *maqāṣid* consistently occupy leading positions. Analytically, this concentration underscores that matters relating to family and the distribution of rights (inheritance, marriage, divorce) transcend the boundaries of purely academic inquiry, emerging instead as socio-legal issues that fuel substantive debate and legal reform. Consequently, researchers and policymakers are urged to prioritize studies that move beyond normative discourse toward empirically grounded approaches, such as fieldwork, judicial case analyses, and contextual investigations, thereby enabling *maslahah*-based arguments to be both tested and practically applied.

The mapping of keywords and the evolution of thematic concerns corroborate these observations. VOSviewer identifies four interrelated clusters—normative-usul, family law, inheritance and religious courts, and human rights and equality—while trend analysis conducted with Bibliometrix reveals a marked shift from theoretical orientations (*fiqh*, religion) in 2015–2020 toward more applied themes (Islamic family law, inheritance, women’s rights, domestic violence) since 2021 (see Figures 8 and 9). Notably, this shift reflects an increasing cohesion between normative foundations (*maslahah*/*maqāṣid*) and the practical demands of family law and judicial processes. From an analytical standpoint, this trend illustrates two key dynamics: first, *maslahah* functions as an epistemological bridge for articulating contextually relevant legal solutions; second, such reasoning remains bounded by hermeneutical constraints, most notably the *qat’i* (definitive) provisions of the Qur’an. Considering scholarly caution that “*maslahah* must not contravene Qur’anic injunctions” and recognition that discrimination often arises from interpretive traditions or social structures, these findings point to the necessity of a dual approach: (a) rigorous textual analysis to demarcate the boundaries of *maslahah*-based *ijtihād*, and (b) empirical research to expose practices that perpetuate injustice, such as the double burden experienced by women in Indonesia. The broader implication is that *maslahah*-based reasoning should be mobilized not to legitimize departures from foundational texts but rather to redress harmful practices, and its persuasiveness will depend on empirical substantiation that secures both theological legitimacy and social resonance.

The epistemology of *maslahah*, understood as a teleological framework, underscores that the interpretation of sacred texts must be oriented toward the overarching objectives of the *sharia*, which aim to preserve communal welfare. Within this paradigm, *maslahah* and justice function as central epistemic principles

that guide the exegesis of verses related to gender relations. In practical terms, a *maqāṣid*-oriented approach privileges the functional meaning of the verses in safeguarding dignity, safety, and the welfare of vulnerable groups, thereby facilitating interpretations that align with the aims of justice and human flourishing (Mohammed, 2024). Thus, *maslahah* serves as an epistemic criterion that legitimizes interpretive choices emphasizing ethical and social outcomes over literalist readings that disregard the normative purposes of *sharia*.

Maqāṣid-based exegesis further operates as a hermeneutical framework bridging text and context, particularly when gender-related verses present ambiguity. This approach argues that interpretations grounded in the objectives of *sharia*—namely, *hifzh al-dīn*, *hifzh al-nafs*, *hifzh al-‘aql*, *hifzh al-nasl*, and *hifzh al-māl*—are better equipped to produce readings that uphold gender justice. Epistemologically, the *maqāṣid* approach compels evaluative reflection on the balance of benefit and harm in specific interpretations, thereby enabling the re-examination of verses historically mobilized to justify gender inequality (Affandi et al., 2025). In this respect, *maslahah* emerges as a decisive parameter for selecting among interpretive options in order to realize the Qur’anic ethical imperatives.

When combined with a socio-ecological perspective, *maqāṣid* yield a theoretical framework that integrates contextual dimensions—such as social structures, domestic violence, and marginalization—with the principle of *maslahah* in interpreting gender-related verses. This integration demands that exegetical practices account for socio-ecological factors affecting the well-being of women and families. Methodologically, incorporating socio-ecological analysis within a *maqāṣid* paradigm prioritizes the assessment of interpretive consequences on safety, dignity, and reproductive rights, thereby facilitating the development of text-based policies that protect victims of violence and gender injustice (Al-Sowaidi, 2024). Consequently, interpretations informed by social *maslahah* reorient the understanding of gender-related verses toward practical protection and communal welfare. Qur’anic feminist hermeneutics further contributes as an epistemic approach by reconstructing exegetical authority to recognize gendered experiences as a legitimate source of knowledge alongside *maslahah*. This framework emphasizes that gender-sensitive interpretations, when anchored in the objectives of *sharia*, generate readings of gender-related verses that affirm substantive equality. Conceptually, it fuses the critique of patriarchal exegesis with the principle of *maslahah*, redirecting interpretive attention from structural domination toward the promotion of dignity and gender justice (Hidayatullah, 2014). In this way, feminist hermeneutics, in conjunction with the epistemology of *maslahah*, creates space for normative interpretations that support legal reform and social practices advancing gender justice.

QS. Al-Ahzab verse 35 underscores the principle of spiritual equality between men and women, affirming that both are entitled to equal rewards for their righteous deeds. This verse is frequently regarded as a pivotal reference in affirming that gender justice is firmly embedded within the *nass* (the Qur’anic text itself), rather than being a derivative product of interpretive discourse (Khorchide, 2019). Within the framework of *maslahah*, the equality of deeds serves as a normative foundation for advocating justice in social, educational, and economic domains (Yusuf, 2020a). Nevertheless, the verse also illustrates an inherent limitation: *maslahah* can reinforce and expand principles already enshrined in the text but cannot introduce new principles of equality that contradict explicit textual provisions. Consequently, it operates as corroborative evidence for progressive gender interpretations rather than as a basis for radical restructuring of Islamic legal frameworks.

QS. An-Nisa verse 34 remains among the most contested passages, particularly with regard to the concept of *qiwāmah* (male authority) over women (Ahmad & Rasheed, 2018). Conventional exegesis frequently interprets *qiwāmah* in hierarchical terms, often giving rise to discriminatory practices within the domestic sphere. Through the epistemological lens of *maslahah*, however, *qiwāmah* may be reinterpreted as a principle of responsibility and protection, rather than domination. The Indonesian socio-economic context further underscores the urgency of such reinterpretation, as many women simultaneously fulfill dual roles as both wives and economic providers (Nikmatullah, 2024). Within this framework, *maslahah* highlights the imperative of ensuring an equitable and adaptive distribution of roles, while retaining fidelity to the essential meaning of *qiwāmah* as articulated in the text (Nelli et al., 2024). This illustrates the potential of *maslahah* to reformulate interpretive understanding while remaining within the normative boundaries of the Qur’an.

QS. Al-Baqarah verse 228 addresses multiple dimensions of marital and post-marital relations, including the *iddah* period for women, the principle of reconciliation (*islah*) in *talak raj’i* (revocable divorce)—which prohibits the misuse of the right to return as an act of vengeance or as a barrier to remarriage—and the balance

of rights and obligations within marriage, framed by the principle of *mu'āsharah bi al-ma'rūf* (kindness, fairness, and compliance with the sharia). While the numerical stipulations regarding inheritance and post-divorce rights are textual and unequivocal (*qat'ī*), empirical realities often reveal structural injustices, particularly when women bear disproportionate economic burdens or face unequal access to inheritance (Alwani, 2016). In such cases, *maslahah* does not seek to abrogate definitive rulings but rather operates at the level of practical implementation: ensuring that the distribution of rights and obligations does not produce harm for women. This may be achieved through complementary mechanisms such as gifts, wills, social support structures, or economic policies that strengthen the formal legal framework (Alwani, 2016; Baderin, 2010). Accordingly, *maslahah* functions as a corrective mechanism within applied contexts, rather than as an instrument for supplanting the revealed text.

A comparative examination of these verses reveals both areas of convergence and divergence in the application of *maslahah*. The verse on equality in deeds (QS. Al-Ahzab:35) is relatively more conducive to advancing arguments for gender egalitarianism, as it explicitly affirms the spiritual equality of men and women and their entitlement to equal rewards for righteous actions. In contrast, the verse on *qiwāmah* (QS. An-Nisa:34), the verse on *iddah* and the reciprocal rights and obligations of spouses (QS. Al-Baqarah:228) are more contentious. Their interpretive complexity is rooted in their deep entrenchment within established socio-legal structures, which have historically reinforced gender hierarchies (Duderija, 2014; Mubarrak et al., 2025; Nisa et al., 2025; Yusuf, 2020b). Within the Indonesian context, this tension is manifest in religious court rulings, customary law debates, and family policies, where *maslahah* is often mobilized as an *ijthadic* framework to negotiate a balance between the normative authority of the text and the evolving realities of contemporary society (Andri Nirwana et al., 2024; Ropei et al., 2023). Such developments underscore that gender discrimination is less a product of the Qur'anic text itself than of interpretive traditions and social practices shaped by patriarchal assumptions. Accordingly, *maslahah* emerges as an epistemological tool for reorienting and correcting discriminatory practices while maintaining fidelity to revelation, rather than as an instrument for negating or displacing the textual foundations of Islamic law.

V.2 Comparison with Previous Research

The findings of this study exhibit notable points of convergence with several influential contributions to the discourse on *maslahah* and gender. Djawas (2022) and Reskiani (2022), for instance, examine Islamic inheritance law and demonstrate how *maslahah* may be employed to address the practical injustices encountered by women, thereby resonating with the discussions on QS. Al-Baqarah 228. Similarly, Taufiqurohman and Fauziah (2023) underscore the significance of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* in family law, aligning with the epistemological framework of *maslahah* applied in this study to reinterpret the concept of *qiwāmah* in QS. An-Nisa 34 (Djawas et al., 2022; Reskiani et al., 2022). Furthermore, Assaad (2022), through an examination of Bugis customary law, illustrates how the integration of adat and *maslahah* fosters more contextually grounded expressions of gender justice (Assaad et al., 2022). Such insights reinforce the argument that in the Indonesian context, where women frequently assume dual roles as wives and economic providers, a flexible and adaptive application of *maslahah* holds particular relevance.

Conversely, divergences in the literature illuminate the distinctive contributions of the present study. Bahrami-Rad (2021), for example, analyzes inheritance patterns and women's status largely from economic and anthropological perspectives, without explicitly situating them within the framework of *maslahah*. This orientation contrasts with the present study, which explicitly connects the *nass* to legal praxis. Harahap (2023), although relevant in examining the implementation of sharia in Aceh and Selangor, primarily emphasizes Muslim–non-Muslim relations rather than questions of gender equality within the family (Harahap et al., 2023). Mansoor (2020), meanwhile, extends the discourse on *maqāṣid* to corporate governance, but pays little attention to the issue of gender justice (Mansoor et al., 2020). Accordingly, this research advances the discussion by applying the epistemology of *maslahah* directly to the exegesis of three key gender-related verses, rather than limiting its focus to legal frameworks or broader sociocultural contexts.

A critical synthesis of these comparisons indicates that although earlier studies have provided valuable openings for integrating *maslahah* into Islamic law, many remain constrained within normative analysis or are shaped by patriarchal interpretive tendencies. This article contributes a fresh perspective by combining bibliometric analysis (2015–2025) with a thematic reading of gender-related verses, thereby bridging the

Qur'anic text, *uṣūl al-fiqh* methodology, and contemporary social realities. In the Indonesian context, where women frequently shoulder dual responsibilities, the findings affirm that gender discrimination is rooted primarily in interpretive and social practices rather than in the Qur'an itself (Rokan & Batubara, 2025). Thus, the epistemology of *maslahah* can be positioned as a corrective mechanism to mediate between normative textual imperatives and the demands of gender justice in the modern era (Bauer, 2015).

V.3 Theoretical and Practical Implications

The epistemology of *maslahah* carries significant implications for advancing contemporary interpretations of gender in Islam. As a methodological instrument, it serves as a bridge between normative texts and present-day social realities, thereby fostering more inclusive interpretations that reflect women's lived experiences (Ismail, 2016). Within this framework, debates on gender-related verses are not confined to the dichotomy of literalism versus progressivism but are redirected toward discovering a middle ground oriented to the public good. Nevertheless, *maslahah* is bound by a crucial limitation: it cannot contravene definitive (*qat'ī*) texts. This constraint safeguards the consistency of Islamic epistemology, reminding us that gender justice in Islam must emerge through creative reinterpretation while remaining anchored in the principles of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*.

Balducci (2023), writing in *Frontiers in Psychology*, divides theories of gender equality into two broad categories. The first group assumes that greater equality diminishes gender differences, including Social Role Theory and the Gender Stratification Hypothesis. The second contends that equality may instead accentuate differences, known as the Gender Equality Paradox, explained by the Essentialist/Individualist Approach and Evolutionary Theory.

Social Role Theory posits that gender differences stem primarily from socially constructed divisions of labor. As equality advances, such differences should lessen (Eagly & Wood, 1999). This resonates with *maslahah* in *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, particularly the preservation of dignity (*ḥifẓ al-'ird*) and intellect (*ḥifẓ al-'aql*), as it underscores the importance of dismantling discrimination that undermines women's dignity. By securing equal opportunities, this theory aligns with *maslahah* in protecting women's rights across domains such as education, work, and family.

Similarly, the Gender Stratification Hypothesis attributes inequality to women's restricted access to education and resources, predicting smaller gender gaps as societies become more egalitarian (Baker & Jones, 1993). This perspective reflects *ḥifẓ al-māl* (preservation of wealth) and *ḥifẓ al-nafs* (preservation of life), as it emphasizes economic justice and protection. Within the framework of *maslahah*, equitable access to resources prevents structural poverty and social vulnerability disproportionately borne by women.

By contrast, the Essentialist/Individualist Approach argues that in more egalitarian societies, gender differences may widen as individuals feel freer to pursue stereotypically gendered preferences (Charles & Bradley, 2009). From the standpoint of *maslahah*, this freedom falls within *ḥifẓ al-ḥurriyyah* (preservation of freedom, under *maslahah mursalah*). Yet such liberty requires regulation to prevent harm (*mafsadah*), such as occupational segregation that confines women to certain sectors. Hence, *maslahah* demands a balance between protecting autonomy and preventing negative outcomes.

Evolutionary Theory holds that in affluent and egalitarian societies, biological gender differences are more visibly expressed, thereby widening observable gaps (Schmitt et al., 2008). This theory connects with *ḥifẓ al-nafs* (preservation of life) and *ḥifẓ al-nasl* (preservation of lineage), as it recognizes the role of human biology in *maslahah*. However, *maslahah* insists that acknowledging biological distinctions must never justify discrimination but should be managed for collective welfare, consistent with the principle of *jalb al-maṣāliḥ wa dar' al-mafāsid* (promoting benefits and preventing harms) (al-Shāṭibī, 2004).

Theoretically, *maslahah* provides a framework for systematic and contextual gender interpretation. The thematic (*mawḍū'ī*) method enables scholars to explore relationships between gender-related verses and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* holistically, rather than through fragmented textual citation (Zakiyah, 2022). Fazlur Rahman's double-movement hermeneutics, which progresses from historical context to universal moral principles before reapplication to contemporary realities, is particularly relevant (Faiq Ainurrofiq, 2019). Similarly, John Rawls' theory of justice as fairness offers a conceptual lens to articulate how Islamic justice (*al-'adālah*) can inform gender-responsive legal policies (D'amodio, 2020). The synergy of these approaches allows *maslahah* to function not merely as a principle of jurisprudence but as an epistemological foundation for inclusive, critical, and

substantively just interpretations.

Practically, the integration of *maslahah*, *maqāṣid*, and social realities provides opportunities for transforming Islamic legal norms in ways that are both socially and theologically viable. This is particularly crucial in Indonesia, where family law, inheritance rules, and household leadership often perpetuate gender inequalities. Within this context, *maslahah* can guide institutions such as the Supreme Court, the Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI), and fatwa councils in adopting *ijtihād taṭbīqī*—a form of *ijtihād* responsive to contemporary social welfare (Suhaili, 2025). For example, policy reforms concerning the legal age of marriage or inheritance rights for adopted children can be framed through *maslahah*, ensuring flexibility without undermining Qur’anic authority. Collaboration among scholars, jurists, and policymakers is essential to translate this epistemology from abstract theory into actionable frameworks that advance gender justice.

In the Indonesian context, where women frequently balance dual domestic and public roles, the corrective application of *maslahah* is particularly urgent (Azni et al., 2025). It can help ensure that family law, inheritance rules, and fatwas do not disproportionately burden women. For instance, textual inheritance rules may be complemented by mechanisms such as grants (*hibah*) or wills (*waṣiyyah*) to maintain fairness, while *qiwāmah* can be reinterpreted as a principle of protection and collaboration rather than domination. Cross-national comparisons further reveal diverse applications. In Malaysia, *maslahah* has informed family law decisions, such as child custody, although constraints of positive law limit interpretive flexibility. In Egypt, a more conservative orientation narrows the role of *maslahah* in gender-sensitive exegesis. Conversely, global feminist scholarship, such as that of Amina Wadud and Asma Barlas, emphasizes gender justice as a primary goal of *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah*, though their approaches are sometimes dismissed as overly liberal by traditionalists. Indonesia occupies an intermediate position, balancing openness to reinterpretation with textual legitimacy.

Yet gaps remain. Much of the scholarship on *maslahah* and gender remains normative, lacking empirical exploration of how judges, policymakers, and communities operationalize *maslahah*. Risks of misapplication persist, as when *maslahah* is invoked to justify practices detrimental to women, such as child marriage. To mitigate such risks, an ethically grounded framework oriented toward *maqāṣid* is required, particularly emphasizing child protection and family justice. Interdisciplinary methodologies combining law, gender studies, and empirical research are necessary, alongside capacity building among legal actors to apply *maslahah* responsibly. The synthesis of this analysis underscores that *maslahah* can serve as a gender-sensitive conceptual framework situating normative texts, social realities, and *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah* in a complementary relationship. From this vantage point, gender discrimination emerges not from the Qur’an itself but from human interpretations shaped by bias. *Maslahah* thus functions to realign Islamic law with substantive justice for women. By integrating theoretical inquiry, social practice, and future research agendas, the epistemology of *maslahah* offers a timely methodological approach for advancing gender justice in Indonesia and within broader global discourse.

Ultimately, the epistemology of *maslahah* in gender-related Qur’anic interpretation establishes a framework that balances textual authority with the imperatives of social transformation. Within the tradition of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, it serves as a flexible yet principled tool, enabling interpretations that are progressive while normatively grounded. In practice, it offers avenues of *ijtihād taṭbīqī* to address family law and inheritance issues, aligning with the lived realities of women who shoulder disproportionate burdens. Positioned as both a hermeneutical method and an operational instrument, *maslahah* not only bridges text and context but also ensures the realization of *maqāṣid*, particularly justice and the protection of vulnerable groups, in the contemporary socio-legal landscape.

VI. Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the role of *maslahah* as an epistemological framework in the interpretation of gender-related verses of the Qur’an by integrating bibliometric mapping (2015–2025) with thematic exegetical analysis. The primary objective was to assess how far scholarly discourse has progressed in linking Islamic law, *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah*, and gender justice, and to identify gaps that remain underexplored. The findings indicate that while research on *maslahah* and gender has expanded significantly in the last decade, most works remain at the level of theoretical or normative discussion. Explicit applications of *maqāṣidī* exegesis to reinterpret gender-related verses—such as those concerning inheritance, leadership, and *qiwāmah*—remain scarce. The bibliometric data further reveal that Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia and Malaysia, constitutes the center

of global scholarly contributions to this discourse, while polarization persists between high-output journals and those with stronger impact indices. This highlights the uneven distribution of research quality in the field. The implications of these findings are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, positioning *maslahah* as an epistemology foster controlled epistemic pluralism, in which Qur'anic interpretation must pass normative verification (consistency with *maqāṣid*) and procedural verification (transparency, rational justification, and empirical grounding). Practically, the framework encourages reforms in fatwa issuance, legal policies, and institutional structures to ensure that women's rights and dignity are substantively safeguarded. Despite its contributions, this study is limited by its reliance on bibliometric and thematic analysis rather than empirical case studies. While it maps scholarly discourse and proposes epistemological innovations, it does not assess the practical implementation of *maslahah* in religious courts, fatwa councils, or community practices. Future research should therefore focus on empirical applications of *maslahah* in legal decisions and policy-making, particularly in contexts where women face structural disadvantages. Comparative studies across Muslim societies would also enrich understanding of how *maqāṣidī* hermeneutics can be operationalized to promote gender justice in diverse socio-cultural settings.

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