

Social Media And Islamic Discourse: A Bibliometric Study of Research Trends and Patterns



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Abstract

This study combines bibliometric mapping and systematic review to explore how scholarship on social media and Islam has evolved between 2016 and 2025. Drawing on the Scopus database, 1498 publications were analyzed with the support of VOSviewer and Biblioshiny to trace patterns of growth, influential contributions, and thematic orientations. The analysis reveals three central directions of inquiry: the role of digital platforms in shaping Muslim identity, their use in political and social movements, and their significance as tools for da'wah and religious communication. Beyond these thematic clusters, the review highlights a growing pedagogical dimension, where social media is increasingly regarded not only as a cultural and religious arena but also as a technological medium that supports online learning, digital literacy, and innovative approaches to Islamic education. Taken together, these findings suggest that social media has moved beyond being a site of representation to becoming a transformative platform with direct implications for educational technology, teaching practices, and identity formation in Muslim societies.

Abstrak

Studi ini menggabungkan pemetaan bibliometrik dan tinjauan sistematis untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana beasiswa di media sosial dan Islam telah berkembang antara tahun 2016 dan 2025. Mengacu pada basis data Scopus, 1498 publikasi dianalisis dengan dukungan VOSviewer dan Biblioshiny untuk melacak pola pertumbuhan, kontribusi berpengaruh, dan orientasi tematik. Analisis ini mengungkapkan tiga arah utama penyelidikan: peran platform digital dalam membentuk identitas Muslim, penggunaannya dalam gerakan politik dan sosial, dan signifikansinya sebagai alat untuk dakwah dan komunikasi keagamaan. Di luar kelompok tematik ini, tinjauan ini menyoroti dimensi pedagogis yang berkembang, di mana media sosial semakin dianggap tidak hanya sebagai arena budaya dan agama tetapi juga sebagai media teknologi yang mendukung pembelajaran daring, literasi digital, dan pendekatan inovatif terhadap pendidikan Islam. Secara keseluruhan, temuan-temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa media sosial telah bergerak melampaui menjadi situs representasi menjadi platform transformatif dengan implikasi langsung untuk teknologi pendidikan, praktik pengajaran, dan pembentukan identitas dalam masyarakat Muslim.

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary digital era, the rapid advancement of communication technologies has fundamentally reshaped how individuals interact, exchange information, and construct meaning across societies worldwide. The Muslim world is no exception to this transformation. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (now X), YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok have not only altered the nature of personal interactions but also significantly influenced the ways in which religious discourse is produced, disseminated, and consumed. Within the context of Islam, these platforms provide dynamic opportunities for da'wah, Islamic education, community engagement, and the reconfiguration of religious identities (Campbell & Tsuria, 2021; Bunt, 2018). Consequently, social media has become a powerful arena where Islamic teachings are not only conveyed but also debated, contested, and reinterpreted across diverse cultural contexts.



The expansion of Islamic discourse through digital media demonstrates both opportunities and challenges. On one hand, social media enables Muslim scholars, preachers, and educators to transcend geographical limitations, reaching global audiences with new pedagogical approaches and interactive forms of religious engagement. It supports the promotion of Islamic knowledge, nurtures spiritual practices, and strengthens community bonds in real time (El-Nawawy & Khamis, 2020). On the other hand, these very platforms have also been associated with the dissemination of radical ideologies, misinformation, hate speech, and polarized interpretations of Islam (Awan, 2017; Olorunnisola & Martin, 2020). This dual character positions social media as a double-edged sword for Islamic discourse—empowering inclusive education and da’wah while simultaneously exposing communities to risks of misrepresentation, extremism, and Islamophobia.

Over the last decade, scholars from various disciplines—communication studies, religious studies, sociology, political science, and education—have increasingly examined the intersection of social media and Islam. Existing studies have highlighted diverse themes, including digital da’wah, Islamic pedagogy, political mobilization, identity construction, and counter-radicalization (Mandaville, 2020; Abas & Yusuf, 2021). However, despite the richness of this scholarship, research in this field remains fragmented, often confined to specific case studies, regional contexts, or narrowly defined thematic concerns. To date, there has been no large-scale bibliometric mapping that synthesizes these disparate strands into a comprehensive understanding of how the field has evolved globally.

This gap underscores the need for a systematic bibliometric study to provide a holistic overview of the intellectual landscape and knowledge structure surrounding social media and Islamic discourse. Bibliometric methods allow for the quantitative examination of large volumes of publications, enabling the identification of publication growth trends, citation patterns, influential authors and institutions, keyword co-occurrence, and thematic clusters (Donthu et al., 2021). Such an approach is particularly significant for analyzing the period 2016–2025, which marks not only the post-Arab Spring digital reconfiguration but also the rise of new platforms like TikTok and the acceleration of online religious engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to analyze global research trends on social media and Islamic discourse through bibliometric methods. Drawing on 1,498 documents indexed in Scopus, this study addresses key questions concerning publication dynamics, citation networks, thematic evolution, and geographic contributions. Beyond mapping research trends, the findings are expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of Islamic communication in digital spaces, offering insights for scholars, educators, and policymakers in navigating the complex interplay between technology, religion, and society.

METHODS

This study employed a mixed bibliometric and qualitative synthesis approach to map and analyze research on social media and Islamic discourse published between 2016 and 2025. The methodological design consisted of three main stages: data collection, bibliometric analysis, and thematic synthesis. Such a design is widely adopted in communication and religious studies to capture both the quantitative growth of scholarship and its qualitative depth (Donthu et al., 2021; Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017).

Data Collection

The data were retrieved from the Scopus database, chosen for its comprehensive coverage of peer-reviewed and internationally indexed journals (Mongeon & Paul-Hus, 2016).

The search query was constructed as follows:

((TITLE-ABS-KEY("social media" OR "Facebook" OR "YouTube" OR "Twitter" OR "Instagram" OR "TikTok") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY(islamic OR islam)) AND PUBYEAR > 2015 AND PUBYEAR < 2026)

This strategy ensured the inclusion of studies explicitly linking Islamic discourse with social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok. The inclusion criteria were: Articles and reviews published between 2016–2025; Written in English; and Explicitly addressing the relationship between social media and Islamic discourse.

Publications such as conference proceedings, book chapters, and non-peer-reviewed sources were excluded to maintain rigor and comparability. After screening for relevance and duplication, a final dataset of 1,498 documents was obtained.

Bibliometric Analysis

Bibliometric techniques were applied to identify publication trends, most cited documents, influential authors, and contributing institutions. VOSviewer and R Bibliometrix package were used to visualize co-authorship networks, citation maps, and thematic clusters. This step enabled the identification of the intellectual structure of the field and the mapping of dominant research streams.

Thematic Synthesis

To complement the bibliometric findings, a qualitative thematic analysis was conducted. Full texts of the most cited and thematically relevant articles were reviewed to extract insights on how Islamic discourse is constructed, contested, and mediated through social media. The synthesis focused on recurring themes, methodological diversity, and emerging issues such as radicalization, identity politics, pandemic-related communication, and the rise of artificial intelligence in digital religion.

Rationale for Methodological Integration

The integration of bibliometric mapping and thematic synthesis was designed to provide both a macro-level overview of research trends and a micro-level understanding of content and discourse. This combination ensured that the study not only mapped the growth and networks of publications but also critically engaged with the substance of scholarly debates surrounding social media and Islamic discourse.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

1. Publication on Social Media and Islamic Discourse research according to years

The analysis of 1,498 documents published between 2016 and 2025 shows a clear upward trend in research related to social media and Islamic discourse. Figure 1 presents the annual distribution of publications.

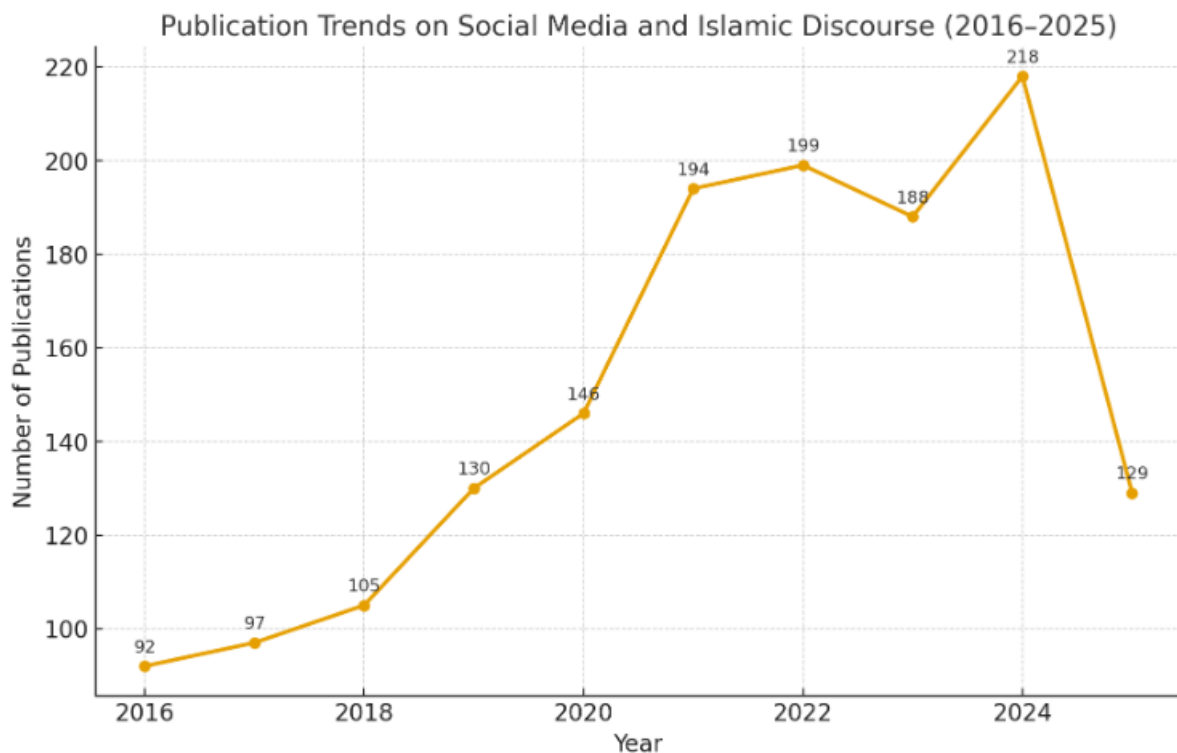


Figure1. Publication on Social Media and Islamic Discourse research according to years

The findings indicate a steady growth of publications from 2016 (92 documents) to 2024 (218 documents), representing more than a twofold increase in less than a decade. The early phase (2016–2018) shows a gradual rise in publications, with numbers ranging between 92 and 105 documents. This period reflects the initial scholarly interest in exploring how social media intersects with Islamic discourse, particularly in the context of online da’wah and community engagement.

A significant surge is observed from 2019 onwards, where publications grew more rapidly. In 2019, 130 documents were published, followed by 146 in 2020. The year 2021 marks a breakthrough, with publications jumping to 194, which may be associated with the global intensification of digital reliance during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The peak occurred in 2024 with 218 publications, indicating the maturity of this field of research and its global recognition as an important scholarly domain.

Although the data for 2025 (129 documents) appears lower, this is expected since the year is ongoing and the dataset may not yet capture the full volume of publications. Therefore, the declining figure should not be interpreted as a decrease in research interest but rather as an incomplete dataset.

Overall, the trend demonstrates that scholarly attention to social media and Islamic discourse has consistently increased, reflecting the critical role of digital platforms in shaping religious communication, education, and identity within the Muslim world and beyond.

2. Publication on Social Media and Islamic Discourse research according to countries

The distribution of research output on social media and Islamic discourse across countries highlights significant regional variations. Table 1 shows the top contributing countries between 2016 and 2025.

Table 1. Publications by Country (2016–2025)

Country	Publications
Indonesia	363
United States	225
Malaysia	163
United Kingdom	123
Australia	67
Germany	62
Saudi Arabia	48
Canada	39
Pakistan	39
Netherlands	33
Iran	32
Spain	30
United Arab Emirates	30
Turkey	27

The analysis reveals that Indonesia is the leading contributor, with 363 publications (24.2% of the total). This dominance reflects the central role of Indonesia as the world's largest Muslim-majority country, where social media platforms are widely used for da'wah, Islamic education, and religious community interaction. The strong academic output also demonstrates the rapid growth of Islamic studies and communication research within Indonesian universities.

The United States follows with 225 publications, representing 15% of the total. Research from the U.S. often focuses on themes such as Islamophobia, representation of Muslims in Western media, radicalization, and identity politics in digital spaces. Similarly, the United Kingdom (123) and Germany (62) contribute significantly to these debates, often from a sociological and political science perspective.

Malaysia (163 publications) is also a major contributor, emphasizing Islamic pedagogy, digital da'wah, and the role of social media in religious learning. Other Muslim-majority countries such as Saudi Arabia (48), Pakistan (39), Iran (32), Turkey (27), and the UAE (30) are actively represented, though their outputs remain lower compared to Southeast Asia.

Western countries such as Australia (67), Canada (39), the Netherlands (33), and Spain (30) also play a role, mainly in the context of Muslim minorities, online radicalization, and intercultural communication.

Overall, the data suggests a dual geographical emphasis:

- 1) Southeast Asia (Indonesia and Malaysia), where the focus is largely on digital da'wah and Islamic education.
- 2) Western countries (U.S., UK, Europe, Australia, Canada), where the discourse revolves around Islamophobia, extremism, and Muslim identity in digital media.

This indicates that scholarly interest in social media and Islamic discourse is not limited to Muslim-majority contexts, but also strongly shaped by Western academic perspectives on Islam in the digital era.

3. Publication on Social Media and Islamic Discourse research according to languages

The analysis shows a clear dominance of English, with 1,439 documents published in this language. This strong prevalence reflects the global orientation of research on Social Media

and Islamic Discourse, where much of the scholarship is directed toward international audiences and disseminated through global journals.

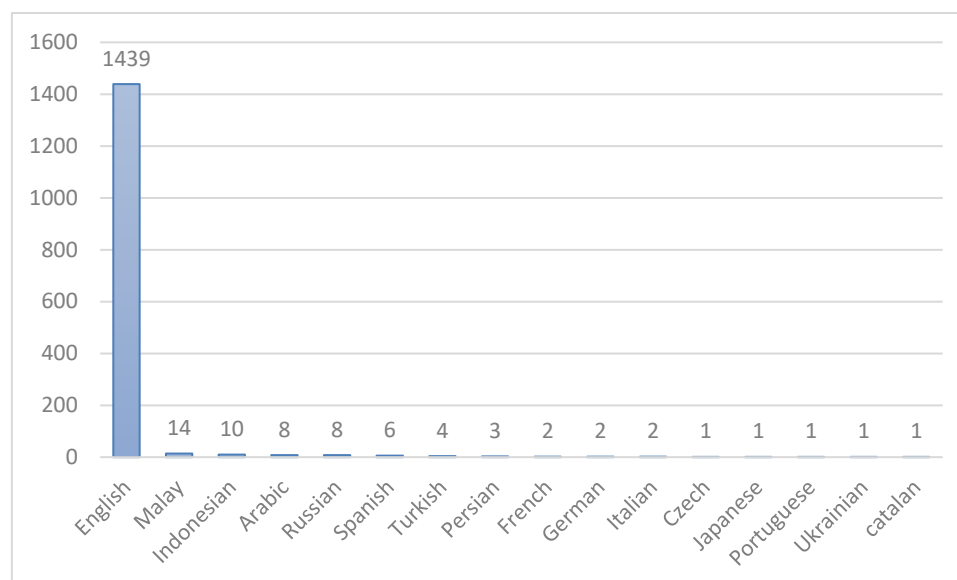


Figure 2. Publication on Social Media and Islamic Discourse research according to languages

Other languages appear only in small proportions. Malay (14), Indonesian (10), and Arabic (8) follow behind, representing contributions from Southeast Asia and the Middle East—regions closely tied to Islamic studies. A handful of additional languages, such as Russian (8), Spanish (6), Turkish (4), Persian (3), as well as several European languages (French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Ukrainian, and Catalan), register only a very limited presence (≤ 2 –3 publications).

Overall, these findings highlight a linguistic imbalance in scholarly communication. While English remains the dominant medium of global academic exchange, Arabic—the language of the Qur'an and the broader Islamic intellectual tradition—is relatively underrepresented. This gap signals an opportunity for researchers in the Muslim world to strengthen academic publishing both in local languages and on international platforms.

4. Publication on Social Media and Islamic Discourse according to research areas

The distribution of research areas shows that Social Sciences (957 publications) and Arts and Humanities (595 publications) dominate the field, reflecting the strong emphasis on social, cultural, and religious aspects of Islamic discourse in digital spaces. Computer Science (207) and Business, Management, and Accounting (129) represent the next significant clusters, indicating attention to digital platforms, algorithms, online behavior, and organizational aspects of social media use.

Other areas such as Engineering (98), Medicine (82), Economics (69), and Decision Sciences (43) show a more interdisciplinary engagement, where social media and Islam intersect with health, technology, and decision-making studies. Fields like Psychology (40), Mathematics (37), Environmental Science (36), and Multidisciplinary research (25) highlight the broad yet less concentrated exploration of Islamic discourse within diverse domains. Table 2, shows publication according to research areas.

Meanwhile, highly technical fields—such as Chemistry, Neuroscience, Pharmacology, and Veterinary sciences—show minimal contributions (≤ 3 publications each), which suggests that the discourse remains predominantly social and humanities-driven rather than scientific or biomedical. This indicates that research on Social Media and Islamic Discourse is deeply rooted

in social sciences and humanities, while still opening pathways for interdisciplinary collaborations with technology, health, and environmental fields.

Table 2. Publication according to research areas

SUBJECT AREA	Total	SUBJECT AREA	Total
Social Sciences	957	Earth and Planetary Sciences	16
Arts and Humanities	595	Energy	14
Computer Science	207	Nursing	14
Business, Management and Accounting	129	Biochemistry, Genetics and Molecular Biology	10
Engineering	98	Materials Science	9
Medicine	82	Agricultural and Biological Sciences	7
Economics, Econometrics and Finance	69	Health Professions	5
Decision Sciences	43	Chemical Engineering	3
Psychology	40	Immunology and Microbiology	3
Mathematics	37	Neuroscience	3
Environmental Science	36	Pharmacology, Toxicology and Pharmaceutics	3
Multidisciplinary	25	Veterinary	2
Physics and Astronomy	20	Chemistry	1

5. Publication on Social Media and Islamic Discourse according to organizations

The organizational distribution reveals that research in this field is heavily concentrated in Southeast Asia, particularly in Malaysia and Indonesia. Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (33 publications) and Universiti Malaya (29) lead the ranking, followed closely by UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta (25) and Universiti Teknologi MARA (24). Other strong contributors include UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta (21), International Islamic University Malaysia (18), and UIN Sunan Gunung Djati (15), underlining the significant role of Islamic universities in shaping this research area. Well-established public universities such as Universitas Padjadjaran (14), Universitas Indonesia (12), and Universiti Sains Malaysia (12) also demonstrate active engagement.

Smaller but notable contributions come from Universiti Putra Malaysia, Universiti Brunei Darussalam, Universitas Islam Indonesia, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, UIN Alauddin Makassar, Universiti Utara Malaysia, and Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, each contributing between 10–11 publications. These findings highlight that Malaysia and Indonesia serve as the global hubs for scholarship on Social Media and Islamic Discourse. This reflects both the demographic prominence of Muslim societies in these countries and the strong institutional investment in Islamic and communication studies. Table 3, shows Publication according to organizations.

Table 3. Publication according to organizations

AFFILIATION	TOTAL
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia	33
Universiti Malaya	29
Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta	25
Universiti Teknologi MARA	24
Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta	21
International Islamic University Malaysia	18
UIN Sunan Gunung Djati	15
Universitas Padjadjaran	14
Universiti Sains Malaysia	12
Universitas Indonesia	12
Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara	12
Universiti Putra Malaysia	11
Universiti Brunei Darussalam	11
Universitas Islam Indonesia	11
Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin	11
UIN Alauddin Makassar	11
Universiti Utara Malaysia	10
Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia	10

6. Publication on Social Media and Islamic Discourse according to authors

The analysis of leading authors in the field shows that E.F. Nisa is the most prolific scholar with 7 publications, positioning her as a key contributor in the study of Social Media and Islamic Discourse. Other notable researchers include Abokhodair, N., Hashmi, U.M., Magdy, W., and Slama, M., each with 6 publications. Their works collectively represent diverse perspectives, spanning digital ethnography, online communities, computational analysis, and Islamic discourse studies. A second tier of contributors—Al-Rawi, A., Evolvi, G., Peterson, K.M., and Rashid, R.A.—have each produced 5 publications, reflecting steady engagement in exploring how Islamic narratives intersect with digital media. Finally, Hudaefi, F.A. appears with 4 publications, also contributing valuable insights into the emerging debates.

These findings illustrate that the research landscape is shaped by a relatively small but influential group of authors, who drive much of the global conversation on the relationship between social media and Islamic discourse. Figure 3, show Publication according to authors

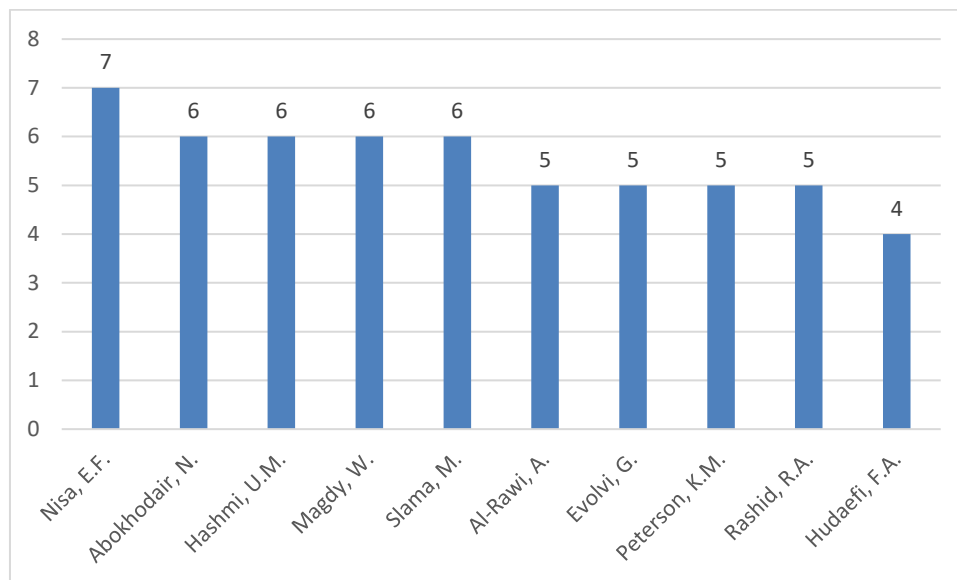


Figure 3. Publication on Social Media and Islamic Discourse according to authors

7. Most global cited documents

The citation analysis identifies the top ten most influential works on Social Media and Islamic Discourse between 2016–2025. These publications have gained global scholarly attention, crossing disciplinary boundaries from communication studies, political science, computer science, to health and information sciences. Table 4 and Figure 4 present the top 10 most cited documents on Social Media and Islamic Discourse between 2016 and 2025.

- 1) Khan et al. (2020), published in *The American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*, is the most cited work with 200 citations. The study addresses COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy in Pakistan, highlighting the role of misleading narratives on social media. Its high normalized citation score (15.52) demonstrates exceptional impact, particularly in the intersection of health communication and Islamic discourse.
- 2) Öztürk (2018), in *Exit from Democracy* (Routledge), with 145 citations, explores the shifting role of Turkey's Diyanet under AKP rule, linking state ideology with Islamic authority and the role of digital communication in shaping political legitimacy.
- 3) Törnberg & Törnberg (2016), in *Discourse, Context & Media*, received 144 citations. Using topic modeling and critical discourse analysis, they examine how Muslims are represented in social media discourse, uncovering patterns of Islamophobia and negative framings.
- 4) Alvares & Dahlgren (2016), in the *European Journal of Communication*, with 127 citations, analyze populism, extremism, and media, mapping the uncertainties of digital discourse that often involve Islamic narratives in European contexts.
- 5) Che Mat et al. (2020), in the *Journal of Travel Medicine*, has 124 citations with a high annual citation rate (20.67). The study investigates travel restrictions and religious gatherings during the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasizing how Islamic practices intersect with global health measures.
- 6) Abokhodair & Vieweg (2016), presented at the ACM Conference on Designing Interactive Systems, has 122 citations, focusing on privacy, digital identity, and social media use in the Arab Gulf, situating Islamic values within rapidly evolving digital contexts.
- 7) Mitts (2019), in the *American Political Science Review*, gathered 100 citations, analyzing how anti-Muslim hostility online contributes to radicalization and support for ISIS in Western contexts, offering crucial insights into the links between online hate speech and extremist mobilization.

- 8) Benigni, Joseph, & Carley (2017), published in PLOS ONE, with 99 citations, examine online extremist communities on Twitter, particularly ISIS supporters, using computational methods to model how extremist networks form and expand.
- 9) Johnson et al. (2016), in Science, with 95 citations, highlight the network ecology of ISIS and extremist groups online, pioneering large-scale computational social science in mapping global extremist communication patterns.
- 10) Aljarah et al. (2021), in Journal of Information Science, has 90 citations with a strong normalized citation impact (10.56). This study advances machine learning approaches to detect Arabic hate speech, demonstrating the growing integration of artificial intelligence in Islamic discourse studies.

Table 4. Top 10 Most Cited Documents on Social Media and Islamic Discourse (2016–2025)

Rank	Reference	Source	Citations	TC/Year	Normalized TC
1	Khan et al. (2020)	Am. J. Trop. Med. Hyg.	200	33.33	15.52
2	Öztürk (2018)	Exit from Democracy (Routledge)	145	14.50	7.30
3	Törnberg & Törnberg (2016)	Discourse, Context & Media	144	14.40	7.25
4	Alvares & Dahlgren (2016)	Eur. J. Communication	127	12.70	6.40
5	Che Mat et al. (2020)	J. Travel Medicine	124	20.67	9.62
6	Abokhodair & Vieweg (2016)	ACM Conf. on Designing Interactive Systems	122	12.20	6.14
7	Mitts (2019)	Am. Political Sci. Rev.	100	14.29	9.35
8	Benigni et al. (2017)	PLOS ONE	99	11.00	7.23
9	Johnson et al. (2016)	Science	95	9.50	4.78
10	Aljarah et al. (2021)	J. Information Science	90	18.00	10.56

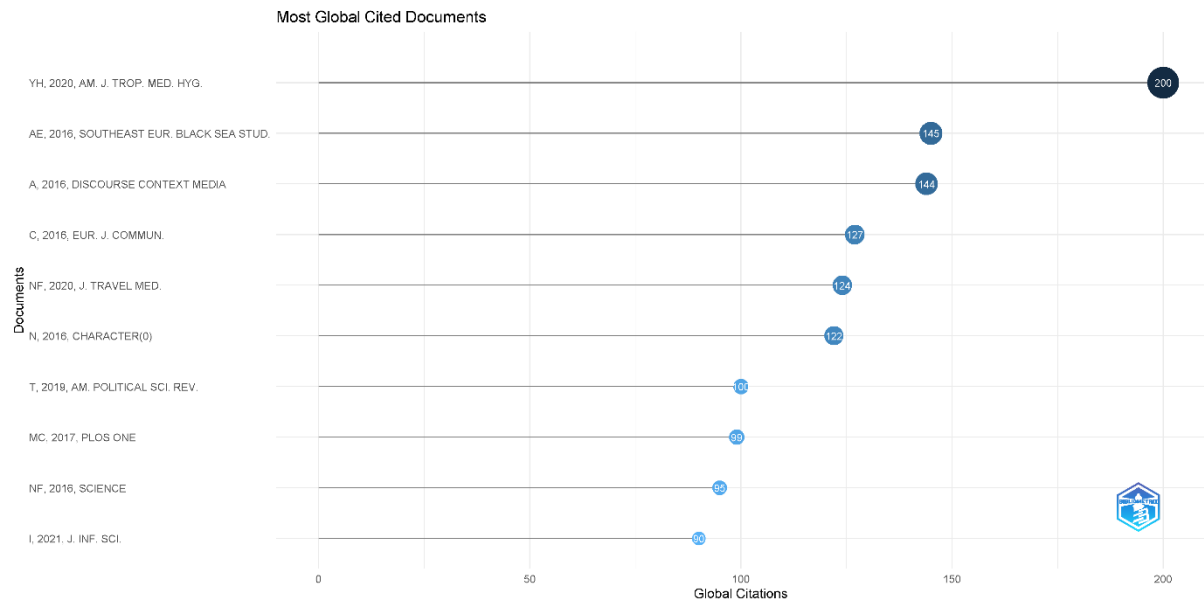


Figure 4. Most global cited documents

Collectively, the top 10 most cited works on social media and Islamic discourse (2016–2025) reveal the multidisciplinary nature of the field. The research spans public health communication (e.g., Khan et al., Che Mat et al.), political and institutional dynamics (Öztürk; Alvares & Dahlgren), representation and discourse analysis (Törnberg & Törnberg), and privacy in digital contexts (Abokhodair & Vieweg). At the same time, studies like Mitts (2019), Benigni et al. (2017), and Johnson et al. (2016) underscore the security dimensions of online extremism, while Aljarah et al. (2021) highlights the emergence of artificial intelligence in monitoring hate speech.

This diversity demonstrates how social media functions as both a space of contestation and negotiation of Islamic discourse—influencing health behaviors, shaping political legitimacy, reproducing stereotypes, and providing new tools for counter-extremism. The breadth of citations also reflects how the intersection between Islam, media, and technology has become a central topic across communication, political science, health, and computational research.

8. WordCloud Analysis

The WordCloud analysis highlights the most frequently used terms in studies on social media and Islamic discourse. Unsurprisingly, “social media” (210) and “social networking (online)” (97) appear as the most dominant terms, reflecting the central role of digital platforms as spaces of communication, identity construction, and debate.

Human dimensions also emerge strongly. Terms such as “human” (94), “female” (82), “adult” (73), “male” (70), and “young adult” (24) suggest that many studies focus on how different age groups and genders engage with social media.

Religion-related terms are equally significant. Words like “Islam” (69), “Muslim” (24), and “Islamism” (41) highlight the core thematic focus, often intersecting with issues of security and radicalization, as indicated by terms like “terrorism” (37) and “religion” (33).

At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic is clearly represented, with terms such as “coronavirus disease 2019” (20), “COVID-19” (18), “pandemic” (18), and “vaccination” (17). This shows how the health crisis shaped online narratives, particularly in the spread of information and misinformation across Islamic communities.

The WordCloud also reflects research approaches, with methodological terms like “cross-sectional study” (31), “questionnaire” (31), “qualitative research” (18), and “controlled study” (16). This diversity illustrates how both qualitative and quantitative methods have been employed to examine digital Islamic discourse.

Overall, the WordCloud reveals three major directions that dominate research on social media and Islamic discourse. First, social media clearly emerges as the primary arena of discourse, underscoring its role not only as a communication tool but also as a space where identities are shaped and contested. Second, Islamic identity frequently intersects with themes of extremism and security concerns, reflecting how digital platforms can amplify both religious expression and radical narratives. Finally, public health communication, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, stands out as another significant strand of research, as studies examine how misinformation and narratives related to vaccination and disease spread across Muslim communities online. Together, these themes highlight the complex and multifaceted ways in which social media mediates religious, political, and health-related discussions in contemporary society.



Figure 5 WordCloud Analysis

9. Trend topics

The trend topic analysis illustrates the shifting focus of research on social media and Islamic discourse between 2016 and 2025. In the early years (2016–2017), studies were strongly oriented toward data mining and propaganda, reflecting an interest in computational approaches to online communication as well as concerns about the spread of extremist narratives. During the same period, Twitter also emerged as a dominant platform under investigation, serving as a key site for studying discourse and radicalization.

Between 2017 and 2020, research began to broaden, incorporating themes such as decision making, semantics, and health education. This reflects the growing diversity of methodological approaches and the recognition that online discussions extend beyond politics into areas like education and cognitive processes. Notably, terrorism peaked as a major theme between 2018 and 2021, aligning with global security debates and digital counter-radicalization efforts.

From 2019 onward, topics shifted toward identity, society, and health. Terms such as religion, Indonesia, Islam, and psychology gained prominence, signaling a closer engagement

with socio-cultural contexts. By 2020–2024, the focus expanded further to demographic variables such as female, male, adult, and young adult, suggesting that scholars increasingly examined how digital Islamic discourse intersects with gender and generational experiences.

In the most recent years (2023–2025), research directions reflect pressing contemporary challenges. Topics like surveys and questionnaires, ethnicity, and the health care system dominate, indicating a methodological shift toward empirical, data-driven studies and a stronger interest in diversity and public health. Interestingly, fasting also appears as a trend in 2024, which highlights how religious practices continue to be negotiated in online spaces. Figure 6 shows the Trend topics between 2016 and 2025.

The evolution of trend topics shows a clear trajectory: from early technical and security-oriented concerns (propaganda, terrorism, data mining) toward broader social, cultural, and health-related dimensions (psychology, ethnicity, health care). This indicates that research on social media and Islamic discourse is becoming increasingly interdisciplinary, combining perspectives from computer science, sociology, religion, and public health.

Evolution of Trend Topics

- **2016–2017 (Early Phase):**
 - Focus on *data mining*, *propaganda*, and *Twitter*.
 - Research driven by computational analysis and concerns about extremist narratives.
- **2017–2020 (Expansion Phase):**
 - Emergence of *decision making*, *semantics*, and *health education*.
 - *Terrorism* peaks (2018–2021) as a dominant theme, reflecting global counter-radicalization debates.
- **2019–2022 (Socio-Cultural Shift):**
 - Increasing focus on *religion*, *Islam*, and *Indonesia*.
 - Growing attention to *psychology* and cultural contexts of digital discourse.
- **2020–2024 (Identity and Demographics):**
 - Topics on *human*, *female*, *male*, *adult*, and *young adult* dominate.
 - Scholars analyze how gender and generational identities shape online Islamic discourse.
- **2023–2025 (Contemporary & Empirical Phase):**
 - Strong presence of *surveys and questionnaires*, *ethnicity*, and the *health care system*.
 - Indication of more empirical, data-driven studies.
 - *Fasting* appears (2024), highlighting religious practices in digital environments.

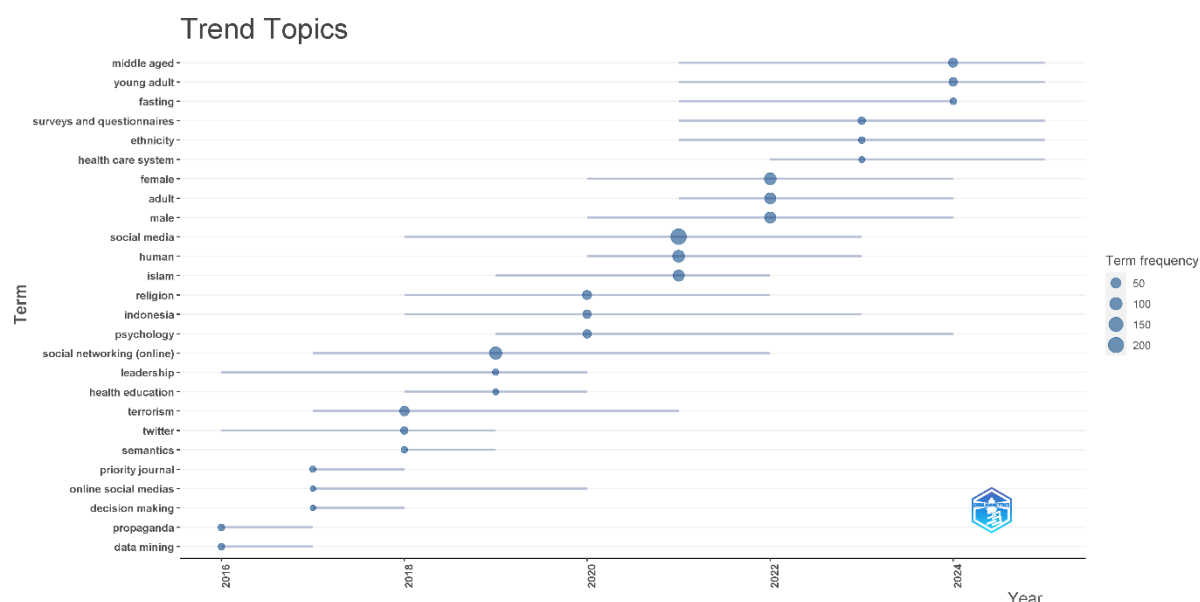


Figure 6. Trend topics

10. Co-citation network

The co-citation network reveals how scholarly works on social media and Islamic discourse are intellectually connected. Several clusters emerge, each representing a distinct line of inquiry while also showing overlaps across themes.

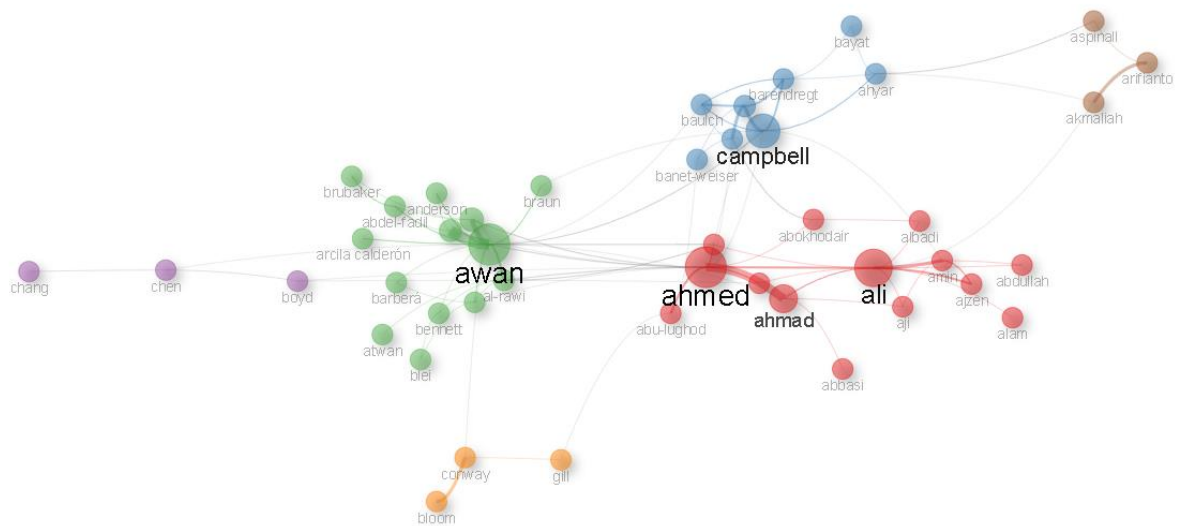
In Cluster 1, figures such as Ahmed, Ali, Ahmad, and Amin stand out as foundational voices in Islamic and social studies. Their works form the backbone of identity-focused scholarship, bridging discussions on Islam, culture, and society. Among them, Ahmed holds the highest betweenness, suggesting his work often connects otherwise separate strands of research.

Cluster 2 reflects the growing attention to digital culture and Southeast Asian studies. Scholars like Campbell, Abidin, Ahyar, and Baulch focus on how online platforms shape cultural expression, particularly in Indonesia. Campbell plays a pivotal role by linking communication theories with digital realities, underscoring the global relevance of localized studies.

Cluster 3 captures the intersection of media, extremism, and online communication. Awan, Al-Rawi, Baker, and Bail dominate this group, with Awan holding the highest PageRank, marking him as one of the most influential scholars in this discourse. Their research highlights the role of media narratives in shaping perceptions of Islam and security concerns.

In Cluster 4, scholars such as Chen, Boyd, and Chang emphasize digital society and communication theory. Their work expands the network beyond Islam-focused studies, integrating perspectives from big data and digital sociology.

Cluster 5 foregrounds religion and public discourse, led by Conway, Bloom, and Gill. Here, the focus is on the intersection of faith, politics, and representation in the public sphere. Conway emerges as a central connector, suggesting broad relevance across disciplines.



Finally, Cluster 6 centers on Indonesian Islamic studies and politics. Akmaliah, Arifianto, and Aspinall contribute significant insights into the local dynamics of Islam, democracy, and media in Indonesia. With Akmaliah at the core, this cluster demonstrates how local scholarship resonates in global debates. Taken together, the co-citation network reveals three major intellectual orientations: Islamic identity and cultural studies; digital media and online discourse; and religion, politics, and public representation. Key scholars such as Ahmed, Campbell, and Awan act as bridges across these clusters, ensuring that discussions of Islam remain situated not only in theology and identity but also in the broader contexts of media, security, and society. This synthesis illustrates that scholarship on social media and Islamic discourse is deeply interconnected—linking local perspectives with global frameworks, and ensuring that debates on Islam remain both contextually grounded and theoretically expansive.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal how scholarship on social media and Islamic discourse has evolved into a multidisciplinary field that intersects religion, communication, technology, politics, health, and education. Beyond mapping research clusters, the analysis highlights how digital platforms are not merely technological tools but also lived spaces where Muslims negotiate identity, knowledge, and community belonging in everyday life.

Theoretical Implications

Three major intellectual orientations dominate the field. First, Islamic identity and cultural studies emphasize how Muslims and Islamic institutions are represented in digital discourse (Öztürk, 2018; Törnberg & Törnberg, 2016). This aligns with critical discourse analysis and mediatization theory, while also showing that online spaces function as classrooms of identity formation where new ways of learning and belonging emerge.

Second, research on digital media and online discourse, especially regarding extremism (Johnson et al., 2016; Benigni et al., 2017; Mitts, 2019), reveals how radical narratives spread. Yet it also points to the potential of digital literacy initiatives and educational technology as counterweights. In this sense, the debate is not only about security but also about how education can empower Muslim communities to critically engage with media.

Third, religion, politics, and public representation remain central in regions such as Turkey, the Arab Gulf, and Indonesia. These findings echo Habermas's public sphere theory, but within digital conditions that amplify both dialogue and contestation. Importantly, they also underscore the pedagogical role of media in shaping civic awareness, democratic participation, and religious literacy.

Empirical Insights

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly redirected scholarly attention toward health communication, online education, and misinformation. Studies such as Khan et al. (2020) and Che Mat et al. (2020) demonstrate how social media directly influenced public trust and behavior, while also becoming an essential channel for sustaining da'wah, teaching, and community learning during lockdowns. These experiences show how technology was not only a medium of communication but a lifeline for religious education.

Parallel to this, research on extremism and radicalization continues to dominate, reflecting global anxieties. Yet a countercurrent of scholarship emphasizes social media as a platform for inclusive Islamic education, youth engagement, and interfaith understanding. The growing contribution of Indonesian scholars—visible in Cluster 6 of the co-citation analysis—further illustrates how Global South perspectives enrich the field by grounding digital religion in local pedagogical realities.

Methodological Reflections

Bibliometric trends indicate that quantitative and computational methods—topic modeling, sentiment analysis, machine learning—dominate. These approaches are effective in managing large datasets but often miss the human, everyday experiences of Muslims online. More ethnographic and interpretive studies are needed to capture how digital interactions shape religious learning, family life, and youth culture.

The analysis of trending topics also suggests a temporal shift: early emphases on "propaganda" and "data mining" (2016–2017) gave way to "digital literacy," "pedagogy," and "health education" (2020–2025). This evolution highlights how education and technology have moved to the center of scholarly concerns about Islam and digital media.

Practical Contributions

The findings point to several practical applications. The proliferation of misinformation during the pandemic highlights the urgency of integrating media and health literacy into Islamic educational curricula. Religious educators, NGOs, and policymakers can design learning programs that combine technological skills with Islamic ethical values, fostering digitally resilient Muslim citizens.

Moreover, studies on extremism emphasize the importance of balanced policies that safeguard religious freedoms while addressing security concerns. Emerging technological tools, such as AI-driven hate speech detection (Aljarah et al., 2021) or adaptive learning systems, show promise for creating safer and more meaningful online learning environments.

Future Directions

Looking ahead, scholarship should expand geographically, engaging more with Muslim minority contexts and comparative case studies. Such diversity will enrich theoretical frameworks and provide more inclusive perspectives on how Islam is lived online.

Second, greater integration of AI and algorithmic studies is needed—not only to analyze how platforms shape discourse but also to harness these tools for advancing Islamic pedagogy and critical digital literacy.

Third, intersectional approaches should be prioritized, exploring how online Islamic discourse intersects with gender, youth, ethnicity, and migration. These perspectives are vital for understanding how diverse Muslim voices experience education and identity-making in digital contexts.

Finally, bridging macro-level analyses (network patterns, thematic trends) with micro-level lived experiences will ensure a more holistic understanding. By listening to the voices of students, teachers, preachers, and everyday Muslims, research can move beyond abstract models to capture the realities of faith, learning, and technology in the digital age.

Conclusion

This study has mapped the evolving landscape of research on social media and Islamic discourse between 2016 and 2025 through bibliometric and thematic synthesis. The findings reveal three central trajectories. First, social media has become a primary arena where Muslims construct, negotiate, and contest religious identity, authority, and expressions of faith. Second, research continues to highlight the intersections of Islam, politics, and security, particularly in relation to radicalization and the securitization of Muslim identity. Third, the COVID-19 pandemic opened new directions, positioning digital platforms as vital spaces for communication, public trust, and the reconfiguration of religious practices.

Beyond these thematic clusters, the study underscores the transformative role of social media in the realm of education and pedagogy. Digital platforms are not merely channels of communication but living classrooms where da'wah, religious learning, and community engagement take place. They enable innovative pedagogical approaches, foster digital literacy, and expand access to Islamic knowledge across geographical and generational boundaries. In this sense, social media functions both as a space of religious expression and as a technological tool that reshapes how Muslims learn, teach, and participate in religious communities.

The analysis also demonstrates that influential scholarship combines theoretical creativity with methodological diversity, ranging from discourse analysis and ethnography to computational modeling and machine learning. Contributions from Southeast Asia and the Middle East illustrate how local contexts enrich global debates, while co-citation networks reveal interdisciplinary bridges connecting cultural studies, political science, media research, and educational technology.

Taken together, this study affirms that research on social media and Islamic discourse is not only global and interdisciplinary but also deeply connected to the everyday realities of Muslim societies. The challenge ahead is to move beyond abstract theorization and engage more closely with the lived experiences of learners, teachers, and communities in digital environments. Future research should explore how artificial intelligence, algorithmic systems, and emerging technologies shape Islamic discourse while also offering opportunities for inclusive, ethical, and innovative education.

By situating Islamic discourse at the intersection of media, technology, and education, scholars and practitioners can contribute to building a more informed, critical, and

compassionate digital society. In doing so, research in this area has the potential to enrich not only academic theory but also curriculum design, policy development, and pedagogical practice in a rapidly digitalizing religious landscape.

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