

Gender Studies in Islam (2000–2025): Research Fronts, Hotspots, and Conceptual Shifts in the Literature

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ABSTRACT

In this article, the world research front in the area of gender studies in Islam is considered for the period from 2000 to 2025. Bibliometric and network analysis methods have been used for exploring author collaborations, citation patterns, and keyword relations. In result, it was found that this research network has a complex structure, including significant participation of countries like the US and the UK, as well as developing involvement of Muslim countries such as Malaysia, Turkey, and Indonesia. Citation analysis revealed the most influential literature and themes, including themes on veiling, identity, Islamophobia, and socio-political aspects of gender. Keyword analysis showed that the key concepts included "Islam" and "religion," with other concepts developing in time, like feminism, psychology, culture, and gender identity. Overlay visualization showed that the current state of the research area is dominated by interdisciplinary studies focused on critical analysis rather than initial demographic and statistical approaches. Density map confirmed the importance of the identified topics but also indicated emerging research fronts. In sum, the analysis showed the development of gender studies in Islam from an underdeveloped subject into a multidisciplinary field with significant expansion of concepts and methodologies and international collaboration.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Gender studies in Islam have developed into a lively and growing discipline within the past twenty years due to a range of factors, including global debates among academics, changing socio-political realities, and new hermeneutic perspectives on religious writings [1]. Since the beginning of the century, scholarship on gender in Islam has evolved from merely describing the functions played by women to questioning

issues related to power, authority, and knowledge production [2]. This evolution is also part of a wider phenomenon in the humanities and social sciences in which gender is no longer considered a biologically defined concept but an ever-changing realm of meanings that must be interpreted critically. In the study of Islamic culture, this means addressing the challenge of reconciling traditional religion with the quest for equality and justice [3].

An important factor in the growth of this form of knowledge has been the emergence of Islamic feminism not only as a paradigm but also as an ideology and movement in society. The main aim of Islamic feminism is to promote gender justice through re-interpretation of the core teachings of Islam contained in its primary sources – Qur'an and Hadith – and to question traditionally dominant patriarchal interpretations of religion [4]. It has been observed that this concept is built on the combination of the faith and feminist perspective by which it is emphasized that gender equality is possible within Islamic knowledge and beliefs [5].

Between 2000 and 2025, there is an increasing trend of diversification regarding the thematic focus and methodology in the body of literature. Whereas early literature was focused on the compatibility between Islam and western feminism and discussed how they related to each other, more recent studies have begun working towards building their indigenous approach, which is based on the lived realities of Muslim women in their cultural context. Legal reforms, educational policies, political representation, religious authorities, and more recently the digital activism and transnational networks for feminists have been studied extensively. There have been several bibliometrics analyses, which indicate the increased productivity of the studies conducted in this area.

Also significant is the increasing focus on tafsir and reinterpretation of the Qur'an as a domain of gender discourse. Modern scholars have tried to re-examine the classical interpretations, suggesting that many of the gender-biased interpretations are actually reflections of social realities and cultural traditions rather than intrinsic meanings of the texts. The recent scholarship identifies a clear move towards more open and systematic approaches to interpretation that integrate sociological, linguistic, and feminist analyses. Such a move marks a profound intellectual change, as it questions the validity of orthodox scholarship while

simultaneously broadening the horizon of gender studies within Islam.

In addition, there is increasing dialogue with other wider theories, such as post-colonialism, intersectionality, and critical theory. Such theories allow for a critical examination of how the issue of gender relates to other aspects like race, class, nationalism, and globalization in Muslim communities. On the other hand, there are disagreements about the relationship between feminism and Islam, where while some scholars argue about similarities in terms of justice and equality, others argue about the fundamental differences in their epistemologies.

However, despite all the progress that has been achieved, there are still several weaknesses to point out. First, due to differences in terminological preferences, methodological approaches, and theories employed by various researchers, the current state of the literature looks rather fragmented. While some researchers tend to rely on theological perspectives when developing their normative approaches, other scholars prefer using social science methods and paradigms to study religious beliefs. Thus, it becomes extremely important to perform systematic investigations in order to reveal the evolution of the area.

Despite a noticeable expansion of gender studies in Islam during the period from 2000 to 2025, a comprehensive analysis of the knowledge produced in this discipline is not yet available. While some studies are devoted to particular issues such as Islamic feminism, legal reforms, or interpretations of the Koran, an attempt to offer an integrated picture of connections within this field remains insufficient. In addition, an abundance of different approaches used to investigate the matter, as well as the lack of synthesis of previous studies, does not allow identifying current research fronts and emerging hotspots in the field.

The purpose of this research is to conduct an analysis of the evolution of gender studies in Islam from 2000 to 2025 through the investigation of its research fronts,

identification of thematic hotspots and changes in concepts that have emerged during this period in the literature. In other words, the paper will try to present a full picture of how the field has developed and to reveal patterns in the processes of knowledge generation, major theoretical approaches adopted, and future directions to be taken.

2. METHODS

A mixed methods design, which combines a bibliometric analysis with systematic literature review, will be adopted in this study in order to assess the evolution of gender studies in Islam from the year 2000 to 2025. In bibliometrics, the analysis is aimed at determining the patterns of publications, citations, and collaborations in the literature. In doing so, research fronts and thematic clusters in the literature can be detected. Meanwhile, a systematic literature review will be undertaken to evaluate the intellectual and conceptual aspects of the literature.

The data for this study are collected from leading academic sources, which include articles, journals, books, and proceedings from conferences within the defined period of time. Some of the keywords used for searching include "gender in Islam," "Islamic feminism," "women in Islam," and "gender discourse in Qur'anic interpretation." In terms of inclusion criteria, the research considers those sources that deal with gender as an analytic category in the Islamic context, whereas those sources that discuss gender in a secondary way are not included in the analysis. Once the sources are selected, further data processing and organization takes place by employing bibliometric tools to create networks of co-authors and co-occurring keywords and citations.

The thematic analysis, which follows the bibliometric mapping, helps reveal any concept transformation and emergence of new discourse(s). The literature is sorted into different thematic groups, which include Islamic feminism, law reforms, religious power, and so on. Thematic analysis is carried out in order to reveal transformations that have occurred in the field over time, especially in terms of methodological and theoretical perspectives. Thus, the combination of statistics mapping with interpretation gives a holistic picture of how gender studies within Islam has developed in the last 25 years.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Co-Authorship Analysis

The co-authorship analysis was performed to analyze the dynamics of the research cooperation of the scholars engaged in gender studies in Islam. With the help of co-authorship analysis, the connections between the scholars working in the specified area can be identified, and information about the scope of their collaboration both internationally and interdisciplinarily can be obtained.

4. Author-level Visualization

The collaboration network graph shows the collaborative ties between scholars who work in the discipline of gender studies in Islam. The graph demonstrates how knowledge creation in this discipline occurs through collaborations by depicting the collaborating scholars as nodes and the collaboration ties as lines between nodes. Through the graph's density and connectivity, one gets to understand the level of collaboration among researchers, as well as central figures that connect various research teams.

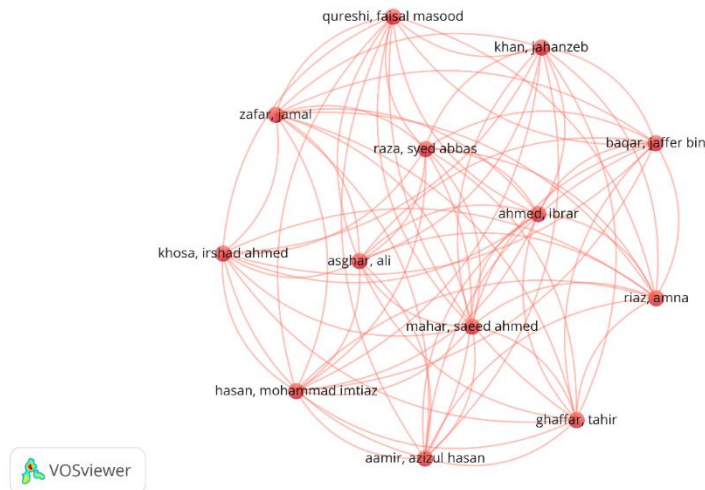


Figure 1. Author-level Visualization

Source: Data Analysis

From the figure, it is evident that the collaboration network exhibits high connectivity since many authors are connected to each other through several co-authorship relationships. Some of the leading scientists in this regard include Faisal Masood Qureshi, Syed Abbas Raza, and Saeed Ahmed Mahar. These individuals seem to be at the center of the network since they play a key role in collaboration within the academic community. The high number of connections indicates that the subject under study has a fairly close-knit academic community, where knowledge is shared between researchers through collaboration. Additionally, lack of separate clusters implies that there is no fragmentation among researchers, but rather they form a cohesive network. Researchers such as Jahanzeb Khan, Jamal Zafar, and

Irshad Ahmed Khosa are in between positions, implying that they act as brokers linking collaborative networks together. This makes for easy exchange of ideas within the discipline.

5. Institution-level Visualization

The network of institutional collaborations depicts the interactions between institutions engaged in research on the field of gender studies in Islam. On this network, nodes represent institutions while links denote collaboration through joint authorship. Such representation allows understanding how different institutions engage in research and cooperate with one another by means of their collaborations in research and knowledge production processes.

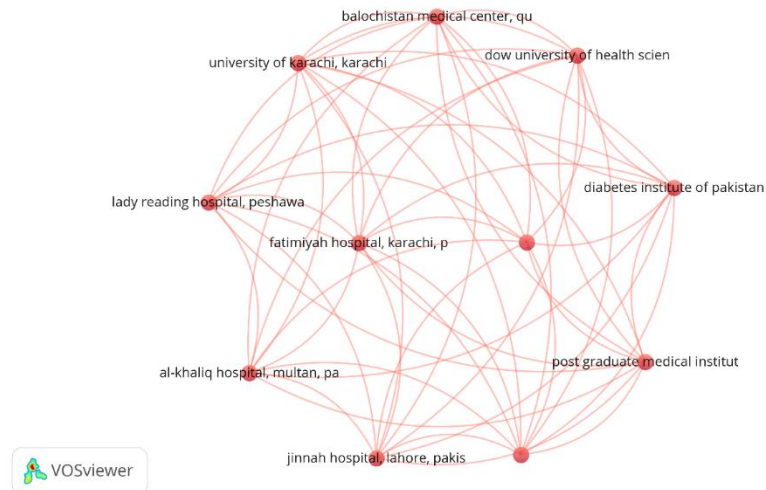


Figure 2. Institution-level Visualization

Source: Data Analysis

In the above-mentioned picture, the institution network can be seen as a very tightly knit one, in which there are several connections between various institutions. It can clearly be seen that the University of Karachi, Dow University of Health Sciences, and Diabetes Institute of Pakistan are among some of the institutions which have a very high visibility factor within the network, hence pointing towards their importance within the process of conducting research and collaborating. The strong connections which exist between the hospital organizations, university organizations, and research organizations clearly indicate that the field consists of both academic and applied research institutions. In addition, there is little fragmentation within the network, where institutions such as Lady Reading Hospital Peshawar, Al-Khaliq Hospital Multan, and Jinnah Hospital Lahore remain linked within the larger network. The homogenous distribution of ties suggests that there is no

institution that is significantly dominant within the field, but rather that collaboration is evenly spread between several institutions. This allows for the free flow of information and materials, resulting in interdisciplinary studies and further development within the field.

6. Country-level Visualization

The country collaboration network illustrates the global structure of research collaboration in the field of gender studies in Islam. Each circle denotes a country, whereas the links represent co-authorship networks among scholars from different countries. The size of each circle shows the extent of contribution or number of publications, while the grouping of colors depicts clusters of countries with closer collaboration ties. This figure presents an overall picture of how knowledge in the field of study is distributed and exchanged across various parts of the world.

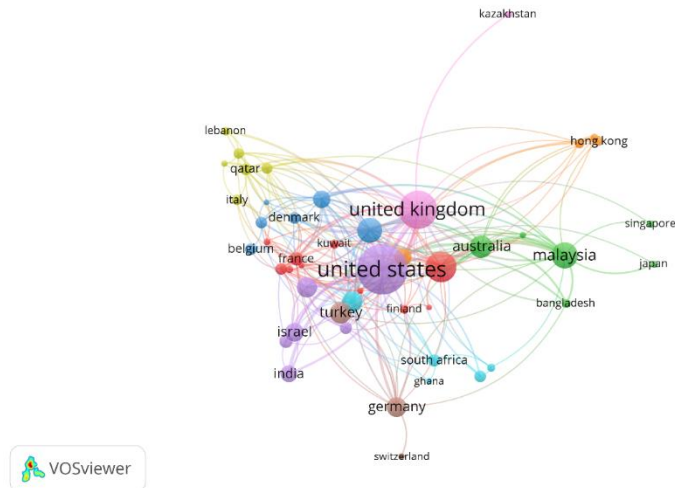


Figure 3. Country-level Visualization

Source: Data Analysis

The diagram demonstrates the prominence of the United States and the United Kingdom as key nodes in the global network of collaboration. It shows that the United States and the United Kingdom have the biggest nodes and the most connections, implying that both of these countries make substantial contributions to the literature and have numerous collaborations internationally. The United States and the United Kingdom are strongly associated with other countries such as Australia, Malaysia, and European countries such as France, Belgium, and Denmark. This implies that Western universities still dominate the discourse but also work with scholars from different parts of the world. In addition, there are strong links between the United States and the United Kingdom and countries such as Kuwait, Qatar, and Lebanon. Moreover, the

network highlights some regional clusters, which denote the formation of new collaborative centers. For example, Malaysia emerges as an important node in the Asian cluster that links Malaysia to countries like Japan, Singapore, and Bangladesh. Another such cluster comprises Turkey, Israel, and India, linking Europe to the Middle East and South Asia. The involvement of African countries, including South Africa and Ghana, even with relatively small nodes, indicates expanding participation from underrepresented regions.

3.2 Citation Analysis

Citation analysis is employed to identify the most influential publications and authors within the literature on gender studies in Islam.

Table 1. The Most Impactful Literatures

Citations	Authors and year	Title
1124	[6]	Panethnic differences in blood pressure in Europe: A systematic review and meta-analysis
671	[7]	The politics of the veil
518	[8]	Oil, Islam, and women
472	[9]	The Digital Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Information Technology and Political Islam
472	[7]	The politics of the veil
396	[10]	Muslim businesswomen doing boundary work: The negotiation of Islam, gender and ethnicity within entrepreneurial contexts

Citations	Authors and year	Title
373	[11]	The Racialization of Muslims: Empirical Studies of Islamophobia
282	[12]	Women and gender in islam: Historical roots of a modern debate
265	[13]	Language Eros being: Kabbalistic hermeneutics and poetic imagination
251	[14]	To veil or not to veil? A case study of identity negotiation among Muslim women in Austin, Texas

Source: Scopus, 2026

As shown in Table 1 below, the most cited papers that have had a significant influence on the field of gender studies within Islam include [6]. Although this paper does not specifically concentrate on issues related to gender, it may be assumed that it reveals the interdisciplinary character of the research area because, apart from the analysis of health, it addresses other factors that affect individuals' lives, including their ethnicity. The primary sources for research on gender and Islam include works like those of [7] and [8]. They analyze the politics behind the wearing of hijabs and the association between natural resources, religion, and the role of women. It should be mentioned that Scott is the author of two highly cited papers; therefore, one may conclude that his contribution to the development of the literature in question has been extremely powerful. In addition, intersectionality is another theme that is explored in [10] and [11]. More recent sources of research include [15]. Earlier foundational studies, such as [14], demonstrate the longstanding scholarly interest in identity negotiation among Muslim women, particularly in Western contexts.

3.3 Keyword Co-Occurrence Analysis

Co-occurrence analysis of keywords is performed to investigate the structure and evolution of themes in the study of gender studies in Islam. This technique helps in identifying the main research areas, new research themes, and changes in the focus of scholars over time by analyzing the occurrence and co-occurrence frequencies of keywords.

1. Network Visualization

The network graph of keyword co-occurrence offers an exhaustive overview of the conceptual framework of the research conducted in the area of gender studies in Islam. In the graph, each node is associated with a keyword, whereas the lines show the frequency of occurrence of these terms in academic publications. The bigger the nodes are, the more important the concepts are. Each color cluster shows the different themes that exist within the body of literature on gender studies in Islam.

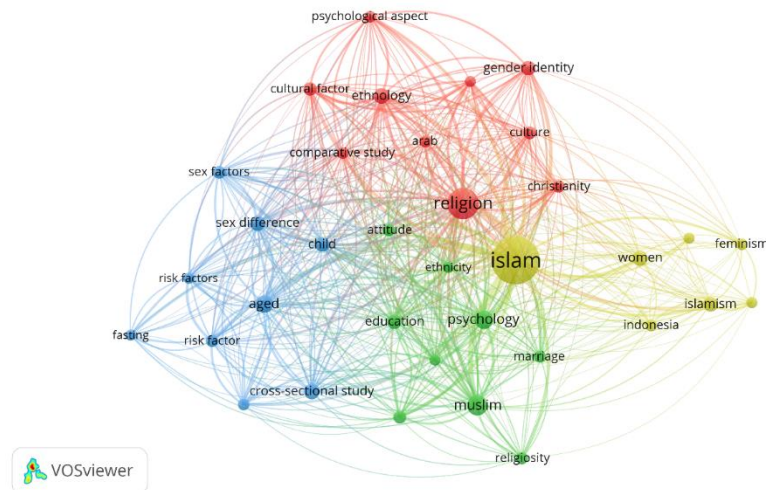


Figure 4. Network Visualization

Source: Data Analysis

It is evident from the graph that "Islam" and "religion" act as central nodes in this network because they are pivotal in creating this discourse. Keywords such as "Islam" and "religion" are linked to other concepts such as "culture," "gender identity," "ethnicity," and "psychological aspect." In addition, the significance of these keywords shows that this research field is integrated with broader social and psychological aspects. This means that there is an integration between gender studies and religion in Islam. Cluster two is a clear grouping that features prominently the terms "feminism," "women," and "Islamism." The significance of this cluster lies in its implication of the importance of the theme of gender equality and feminism in the literature. Cluster two demonstrates how important it is for scholarship to consider issues relating to the position of women and their involvement in Islam in relation to debates regarding modernity, power, and reform. "Indonesia," which is included among the geographical terms, further illustrates this implication.

Another significant cluster, consisting of words like "psychology," "muslim," "education," "marriage," and "religiosity," indicates growing concern with the personal and behavioral aspects of Muslims. The thematic clusters indicate scholarly interest in exploring the role of religion and cultural norms in shaping one's identity, relationships

with family members and society. The relationship between "psychology" and "Islam" may be viewed in light of the development of multidisciplinary fields that combine psychology and the study of religion. On the other hand, the blue group consisting of words like "sex factors," "sex difference," "risk factors," "aged," and "cross-sectional study" signifies the existence of research related to health and demographics in this area. This implies that gender research in Islamic societies is not confined to theoretical and sociological aspects but has an empirical and quantitative aspect too, especially in the fields of public health and medical sciences. "Red cluster" contains the keywords "cultural factor", "ethnology", "arab", "christianity", and "comparative study." The existence of these themes is reflective of the comparative/cross-cultural view that is common in the literature on gender and Islam. The presence of these themes implies that more researchers are focusing on gender within Islam when compared to other religions and cultures.

2. Overlay Visualization

The visualized co-occurrence of keywords in an overlaid format offers a time-based perspective on the changing focus in the field of gender studies in Islam from 2000 to 2025. The colors in this particular visualization represent different shades of the

spectrum, ranging from blue (older years) to yellow (recent years). These represent the

average years when publications were made corresponding to each keyword.

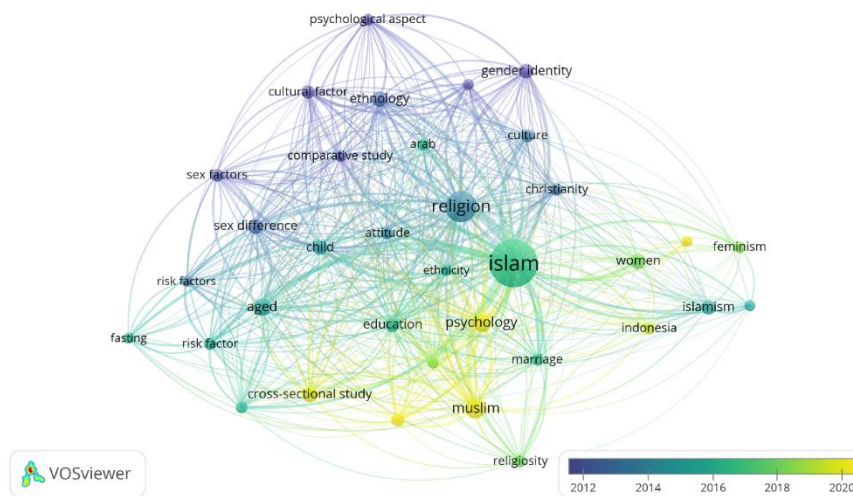


Figure 5. Overlay Visualization

Source: Data Analysis

It is clear from the diagram above that prior studies were mostly concerned with descriptive issues like “sex difference”, “sex factors”, “cultural factor”, “ethnology”, and “psychological aspect”. The emergence of these key terms reveals that prior knowledge about the topic centered on understanding gender relations in Islam from the perspective of comparison, demographics, and sociology, among others. The key terms “religion” and “culture” also emerge relatively early in the process, which indicates the predominance of theory building in the initial stages of exploration of the subject matter. With the development of this area (depicted through green colors), there seems to be a marked tendency towards more integrated and cross-disciplinary topics such as “psychology,” “education,” “ethnicity,” and “marriage.” This stage emphasizes the increasing trend of researching the life situations of Muslims and their interactions within society. The placement of the term “Islam” as the main point on the timeline indicates the constant focus of this discipline on analyzing it. However, its association with a broad variety of subjects points to the broader research perspective of scholars in this field. The recent

time period (characterized by yellow colors) with the appearance of terms like “feminism,” “women,” “Islamism,” and “cross-sectional study” suggests that there is a tendency for more analytical and controversial investigations, which consider different aspects of the topic and use various methodologies, including more quantitative ones. The use of geographic markers like “Indonesia” suggests that there is a trend toward conducting localized studies, which are part of broader global discussions, such as those equality, empowerment, and politics of religion.

3. Density Visualization

Keyword Co-Occurrence Density Visualization shows the concentration of frequently used and highly connected keywords in the domain of gender studies in Islam, indicating its significance by highlighting the frequency and intensity of the themes being discussed. In the given figure, brighter zones (yellow to green) show high-density clusters of frequently used and highly linked keywords, whereas darker zones (blue) signify less discussed themes in this field.

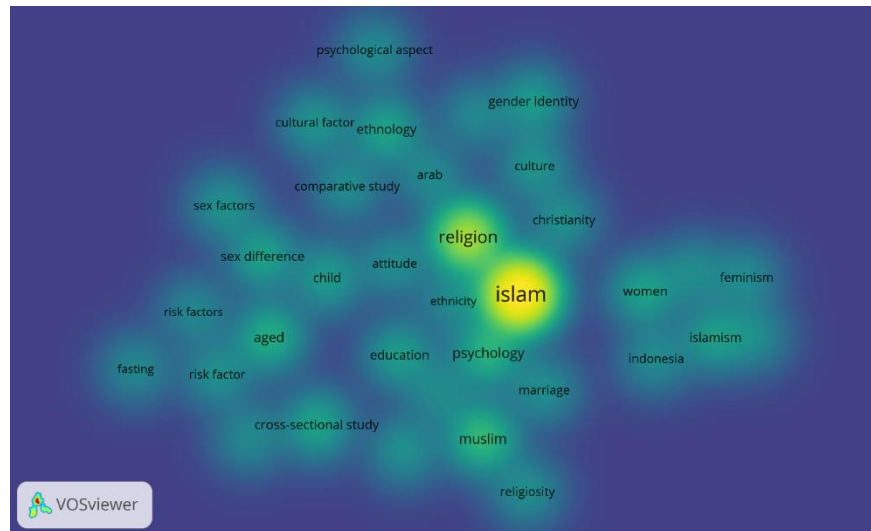


Figure 6. Density Visualization

Source: Data Analysis

From the diagram, one can identify that "Islam" is clearly the dominant hotspot, as evident from its brightness in yellow coloration and central location. Surrounding it closely are concepts such as "religion," "psychology," and "ethnicity," which have a relatively higher concentration level as well, implying that these themes are recurrently interlinked with each other and constitute the focus areas of studies. The presence of such concentration shows that in this line of research, there is an obvious attempt to explore Islam from the perspective of religion as well as sociology and psychology. Beyond the central cluster, other areas of moderate density—such as "women," "feminism," "Islamism," and region-specific terms like "Indonesia"—indicate emerging or specialized research interests. These topics, while not as dominant as the core themes, represent significant and growing areas of inquiry, particularly in discussions gender equality, identity, and socio-political interpretations of Islam. Meanwhile, peripheral and less dense keywords such as "risk factors," "fasting," and "sex difference" suggest niche or context-specific studies, often linked to health or demographic research.

Discussion

Based on the results of this paper, it can be concluded that the studies on gender

issues within the Islamic context have become a very complex and multidimensional field, influenced by many different schools of thought and international cooperation. The co-authorship analysis and the country collaboration analysis confirm the domination of the knowledge production in certain academic centers, mainly located in Western countries like the United States and Great Britain; however, there are still inputs from other countries with a predominantly Muslim population, such as Malaysia, Turkey, and Indonesia. The distribution of the discourse in question may thus be considered both global and involving the exchange between the theories developed in the West and the local context.

The bibliometric analysis also emphasizes the intellectual grounding of the research field in demonstrating how the most frequently cited studies usually deal with issues such as veiling, identity formation, Islamophobia, as well as the connections between religion and socio-political processes. Indeed, prominent scholars helped to shape the image of gender studies within the context of Islam as a constantly evolving and debated area as opposed to a purely doctrinal one. The constant appearance of papers dedicated to the politics of veiling and female agency underlines the importance of identity and representations for academics

and society at large. Finally, the emergence of interdisciplinary sources demonstrates how the field is influenced by other theories like feminist, postcolonial, and sociological approaches to religion.

From the results of co-occurrence and frequency of keywords, it becomes apparent that terms such as “Islam” and “religion” continue to be the key anchors in the sphere of investigation, accompanied by interrelated topics such as psychology, culture, ethnicity, and education. It can thus be assumed that research into gender issues in Islam is becoming more holistic as scholars become more involved in studying the issue from the perspective of individuals' experiences in connection to socio-cultural factors. Clusters related to feminism, women, and Islamism indicate the growing tendency towards taking a critical approach to gender issues by attempting to question conventional understandings and develop alternative gender justice frameworks within an Islamic context.

From the temporal overlay analysis, it can be observed that there is a clear progression in terms of conceptual development. Initially, most of the studies carried out were descriptive and had a demographic focus, while other aspects such as culture and comparative elements prevailed in gender issues among the Islamic world. Later on, the trends changed as researchers delved into complex themes which included the psychological, educational, and relational perspectives of gender roles in society. Recently, there has been a notable trend towards critical discussions revolving around feminist ideology, gender, and socio-political perspectives of the Islamic religion. This clearly illustrates the dynamic nature of the

field as researchers come up with new research directions owing to global changes.

The article provides evidence of the development of gender studies within Islam into becoming a more complex, diverse, and advanced research discipline. Although it is still firmly grounded in traditional religious scholarship, there is a visible trend towards a more interdisciplinary and international approach to research. The use of quantitative tools, such as bibliometrics, along with qualitative and theoretical approaches, indicates the maturity of the field. Nevertheless, future research must focus on filling identified gaps in scholarship and include more scholars from less-represented regions while examining new areas, such as digital religion, intersectionality, and non-binary genders in Islam.

4. CONCLUSION

In this paper, one can see that gender studies in Islam have transformed into a vibrant and multidisciplinary area of investigation with active involvement of researchers worldwide, different thematic emphases, and ongoing conceptualization. Bibliometric analysis allows one to conclude that although the discipline operates within some fundamental concepts like Islam and religion, over time, it has moved on to examine feminism, identity, culture, and socio-political relations critically. The development of novel research directions and topics suggests the increasing openness of the discipline and its interdisciplinary nature. The leading role of particular institutions notwithstanding, the expanding involvement of researchers from various geographical regions implies greater globalization of the subject matter.

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