

Bibliometric Analysis of Women Leadership in Islam

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ABSTRACT

Women leadership in Islam has become an increasingly discussed research topic due to growing academic interest in gender roles, religious interpretation, empowerment, and women's participation in social and institutional contexts. However, existing studies remain fragmented across various disciplines, making it necessary to understand the overall intellectual structure and development of this research field. This study aims to examine the global research landscape of women leadership in Islam through a bibliometric analysis approach. Data were collected from the Scopus database using relevant keywords related to women leadership and Islamic perspectives. The collected publications were analyzed using bibliometric techniques, including publication trend analysis, citation analysis, co-authorship analysis, institutional and country collaboration analysis, keyword co-occurrence analysis, overlay visualization, and density visualization through VOSviewer. The findings indicate that research on women leadership in Islam has developed through interdisciplinary contributions involving Islamic studies, gender studies, leadership, sociology, and social development. Influential literature highlights themes related to Islamic authority, gender equality, women's empowerment, and leadership experiences within Muslim societies. The collaboration analysis demonstrates strong international research networks involving institutions and countries from different regions, reflecting the global nature of this academic discourse. Furthermore, keyword analysis reveals that Islam, women, and leadership represent the dominant research themes, while emerging discussions increasingly focus on feminism, patriarchy, gender equality, and Muslim women's participation. This study contributes by mapping the intellectual evolution of women leadership research in Islamic contexts and identifying future research directions related to inclusive leadership models, gender equity, and the role of Islamic values in shaping contemporary women's leadership practice.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The debates on women's leadership in Islamic environments have developed quite

considerably in the last few decades, considering the overall debate on issues such as gender equality, religious interpretation,

and socio-political involvement that takes place across the globe [1]. Traditionally, research on Islam and gender used to be restricted only to prescriptive works and the roles prescribed within the confines of family and society [2], [3]. The first feminists, both Western and Muslim, challenged the patriarchy in the interpretations of Islamic scriptures as well as pointed out the existence of powerful women figures during the early days of Islam [4], [5].

The current discourse on the leadership of women in Islam is characterized by the employment of a rich hermeneutic methodology that questions simplistic notions of gender and authority within Muslim society. [6], [7], among other scholars, pioneered the interpretation of the Quran that emphasizes gender equity and justice, asserting that, based on a contextual interpretation of the holy book, there exists an affirmative role for female leaders in both the public and private domains. The interpretive turn was concurrent with empirical studies of women's involvement in Muslim organizations and leadership of educational institutions and communities.

While at the same time, the increased globalization of feminist discourses, development issues and human rights perspectives affected the paths taken in research on Islamic and gender studies as well. Multi-disciplinary research started exploring the interactions between the global ideals concerning empowerment of women and local Islamic practices, developing the hybrids of leadership which were both rooted in their contexts and shaped by the global world [8]. For instance, research on Muslim women working in NGOs, political parties and interfaith movements indicates the complicated interactions between religion and the ambitions of being leaders [9], [10].

Although there is more research than ever before, the literature on Muslim women's leadership tends to be spread across many fields including religion studies, gender studies, sociology, political science, and organization studies. Such fragmentation makes it difficult to detect main topics, gaps

and emerging trends in the area. Bibliometrics provides a tool for systematic quantification and visualization of scholarly production and its underlying patterns concerning authorship, citations, keywords and collaborations [11]. Although bibliometric tools have been used in gender and religion studies, they are still underexplored in the area of Muslim women's leadership.

The bibliometric methodology is based on extensive citation databases such as the Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar, thus allowing researchers to visualize intellectual landscapes and measure their impact. The use of bibliometrics in research has led to the discovery of research fronts in areas such as Islamic financing, gender in education, and the identity of Muslim youth [12], [13]. But until now, there has been no overall bibliometric mapping of research concerning women leadership in Islamic context. It is essential to know the history of development of the topic, its focal areas, and the dominant voices of researchers in different locations, institutions, and disciplines.

Leadership by women in Islam has practical applications as well as theoretical discussions. In Muslim majority and minority countries, issues about women's participation in political matters, spiritual affairs, business, and decision-making processes in communities have been raised. Recent cases where Muslim women have gained victories in politics at the parliamentary level and local government, coupled with female leadership of faith-based organizations, have made it necessary for one to understand both theological perspectives and trends in scholarly engagement regarding such matters [14].

Although there has been considerable amount of work done in terms of studying women's leadership within the Islamic framework, the area seems not to have reached an agreement regarding the intellectual structure of the field, the publications in the area, the important authors and the topics within this field. The review studies done on the subject of women's leadership within the Islamic

framework seem to take a narrative and qualitative approach which makes it difficult to evaluate objectively the development of the scholarly area, identify emerging topics and research gaps. This paper will do a bibliometric review of women's leadership within the Islamic framework.

2. METHODS

This study uses a bibliometric research approach in order to conduct a thorough analysis of the existing academic studies related to women leadership in Islam. Bibliometrics represents a quantitative approach, which helps to determine the authorship, citation, and other patterns within scientific publications [11]. The first step in conducting a research process involves the collection of data from the Scopus database. This source was chosen due to its large amount of information about scholarly publications in different subject areas. In order to conduct the search, such keywords as "women leadership," "female leadership," "Islam," "Muslim women," and "gender equality in Islam" have been used. Boolean operators (AND, OR) and truncation symbols were also used in order to retrieve the maximum number of relevant publications.

Bibliographic records that contained information about the authors, their affiliation, year of publication, journal title, keywords, abstracts, and citations were standardized after retrieving the data and were ready to be analyzed. Duplicate records and irrelevant articles were eliminated

manually through a review of their titles and abstracts. Finally, the data set was uploaded into the VOSviewer bibliometric network mapping software. VOSviewer is an advanced software for creating co-authorship networks, co-citation networks, and keyword co-occurrence networks. This software can reveal the most influential authors, institutions, research clusters, and emerging themes. The analysis of women's leadership in Islam will allow us to get a quantitative and visual representation of the intellectual structure of this area.

The process of data analysis involved three stages, all carried out through the use of VOSviewer. To begin with, co-authorship analysis was carried out to determine the collaboration network and identify the leading authors and institutions. Secondly, co-citation analysis was done to establish some seminal works and citations that have made a difference in the field. Finally, keyword co-occurrence analysis was carried out in order to determine key themes, research hot spots and emerging trends in time. Network visualization maps were drawn to depict the clustering of similar research, the level of closeness of relationships among authors, journals, and concepts. With the aid of Scopus database and VOSviewer visualizations, the study is assured of capturing the quantified indicators as well as the relations between them in the literature on the research topic.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

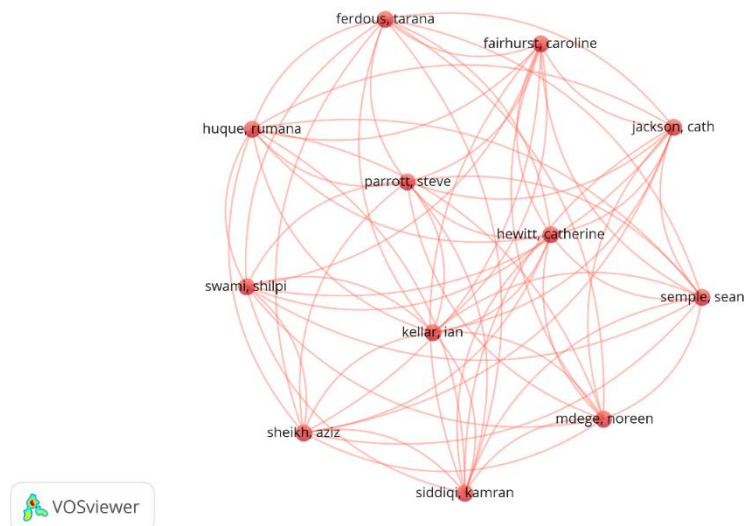


Figure 1. Author-level Visualization

Source: Data Analysis

Figure 1 below is a representation of the interaction between the authors who conduct research on the topic of women leadership in Islam. It can be seen from the graph that there exists a relatively dense network with many connecting lines between the authors, showing a relatively high degree of scholarly collaboration in the research field. Some of the authors, such as Fairhurst Caroline, Ferdious Tarana, Huque Rumana,

Parrott Steve, and Hewitt Catherine, have many linking lines, showing that they play an important role in conducting research collaboration. The presence of clustered networks means that the research done on women leadership in Islamic culture has been achieved through collaborative effort among the scholars. Authors such as Siddiqi Kamran, Sheikh Aziz, Swami Shilpi, and Mdege Nooreen also have many linkages.

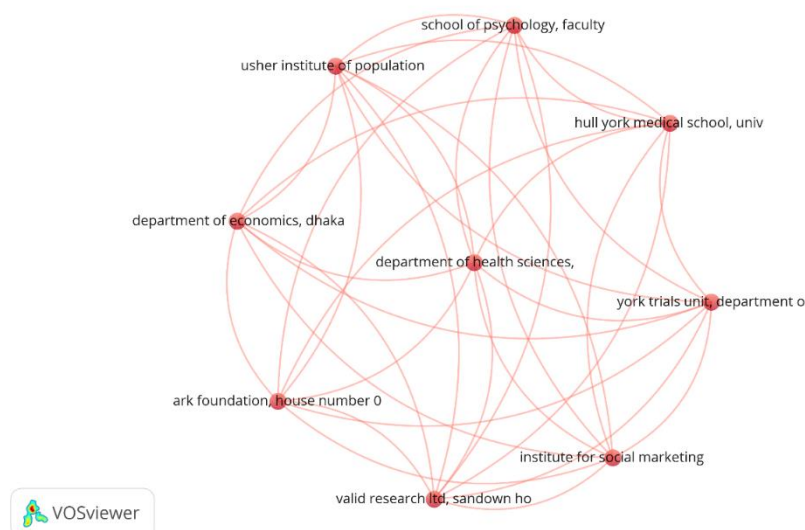


Figure 2. Institution-level Visualization

Source: Data Analysis

Figure 2 presents the institutional collaboration network for institutions

engaged in carrying out research on women leadership in Islam. It can be seen from the

figure that there is a very good institutional collaboration network in place with a lot of collaborations going on among various academic institutions. Various institutions like School of Psychology, Faculty, Usher Institute of Population, Hull York Medical School, University of York, and Department of Health Sciences stand out in this institutional collaboration network owing to the high number of connections they have with other institutions, suggesting the great role they play in collaborative research. From this figure, it becomes clear that research on

women leadership in an Islamic society has taken place within the framework of interdisciplinary study instead of limiting itself to religious and cultural studies. The inclusion of institutions from various disciplines like psychology, health sciences, economics, and social marketing shows the academic facets of this research issue. In addition, the participation of institutions such as the Department of Economics, Dhaka and the Institute for Social Marketing shows the connection between women leadership and social empowerment.

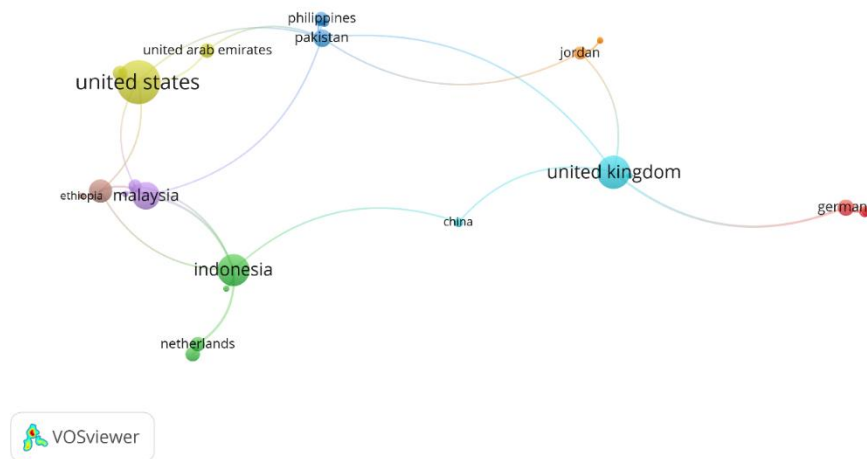


Figure 3. Country-level Visualization

Source: Data Analysis

The figure 3 below depicts the collaboration network for research on women leadership in Islam, demonstrating the geography and international collaboration of countries involved in research. As can be observed from the graph below, there are a number of countries that are instrumental in building up this research field, with the United States, United Kingdom, and Indonesia being prominent nodes in view of their bigger size and high connectivity to other countries. The United States has been able to establish many collaboration links with countries like Malaysia, Ethiopia, and the United Arab Emirates, thereby

showcasing its importance in promoting international research cooperation. In a similar fashion, the United Kingdom is another node that serves as an important bridge connecting research networks in various regions, through its collaboration links with China, Pakistan, Jordan, and Germany. Indonesia too is seen to be an important node due to its linkages with Malaysia, Netherlands, and other countries, highlighting the growing interest in the topic of Islamic women leadership within the academic community of Southeast Asia.

3.1 Citation Analysis

Table 1. The Most Impactful Literatures

Citations	Authors and year	Title
120	[15]	Sufi narratives of intimacy: Ibn 'arab, gender, and sexuality
110	[16]	The charismatic community: Shi'ite identity in Early Islam
96	[17]	Implications of Religion, Culture, and Legislation for Gender Equality at Work: Qualitative Insights from Jordan
87	[18]	The central liberal truth: How politics can change a culture and save it from itself
71	[19]	Islam in diaspora: Between reterritorialization and extraterritoriality
59	[20]	Women Leadership, Culture, and Islam: Female Voices from Jordan
58	[21]	Using the Qur'ān to Empower Arab Women? Theory and Experimental Evidence From Egypt
52	[22]	Islamic organizational leadership within a Western society: The problematic role of external context
51	[23]	Feminizing leadership in the Middle East: Emirati women empowerment and leadership style
48	[24]	Wrapping authority: Women Islamic leaders in a Sufi movement in Dakar, Senegal

Source: Scopus, 2026

Table 1 represents the most impactful literature used in developing research on women leadership in Islam according to citation impact. The results have shown that impactful literature used in this field comprises diverse perspectives such as gender studies, Islamic scholarship, leadership, culture, and women empowerment. For instance, the most impactful article by [15], titled "Sufi Narratives of Intimacy: Ibn 'Arabī, Gender, and Sexuality" has been cited 120 times which shows the need for understanding Islamic scholarship and Sufi perspectives in studying gender relations and identity. In addition,

[16], with 110 citations, discusses about the Shi'ite identity in early Islam, which is another way through which Islamic history and theology can be used in discussing issues of authority and roles in Islamic communities. Contemporary perspectives in this research area include articles like [17] and [20], which focus on the relationship between religion, culture, legislation, and experiences of women leadership in Jordan. The other highly cited articles include Islamic leadership in western societies [22], women empowerment in Middle Eastern countries [23], and women as religious authority [24].

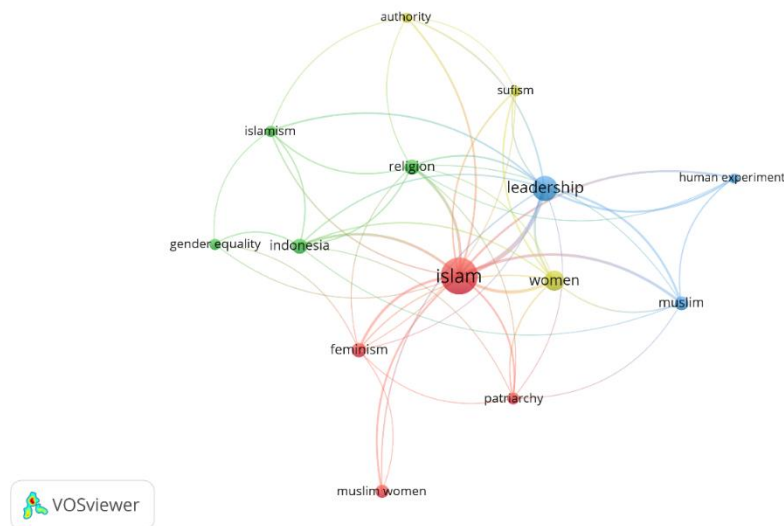


Figure 4. Network Visualization

Source: Data Analysis

Figure 4 shows the co-occurrence network analysis that depicts the conceptual structure of research on women leadership in Islam. In this visualization, some themes can be identified, with the keyword “Islam” being the center of all these themes because of its big node and connections with other nodes. Thus, it becomes clear that the concepts of Islam play an important role in the basis of scientific discussions concerning women’s roles and leadership within it. The close link of the word “Islam” with other words like “women,” “leadership,” “religion,” and “Muslim” shows the multidisciplinary character of this research field.

The association between “women” and “leadership” is considered one of the most significant research themes which concerns the involvement of women in leadership activities and roles among Islamic communities. This grouping shows the existing academic controversies about the possibility of women’s leadership in the religious, social, political, and organizational environment. The existence of such a link between the keywords indicates that recent researches tend to move from the usual discourse about the role of women towards the leadership potential of women. In addition, the link between “Muslim” and the keywords reflects the fact that many studies

consider women’s leadership in Muslim communities.

One other set of themes revolves around the key terms “gender equality,” “feminism,” “patriarchy,” and “Muslim women.” Such themes are based on critical analyses of gender relationships, social systems, and interpretation of the rights of women within the Islamic environment. The use of feminism and patriarchy indicates that studies in this area frequently involve discussion of issues related to gender justice and cultural restrictions. Research linked to this theme often explores ways in which Muslim women engage with leadership and re-interpret their roles within religion and society.

Another key word – “leadership” – is related to “authority,” “Sufism,” and “human experiment,” thus implying the variety of methods applied by researchers to explore the topic of leadership among Muslims. The association of leadership with the concept of authority presupposes the study of the issues of legitimacy, religious authority, and types of power of women leaders. On the other hand, the association of the concept of leadership with Sufism implies the significance of the role of spirituality and the existence of alternative ways of being a religious leader.

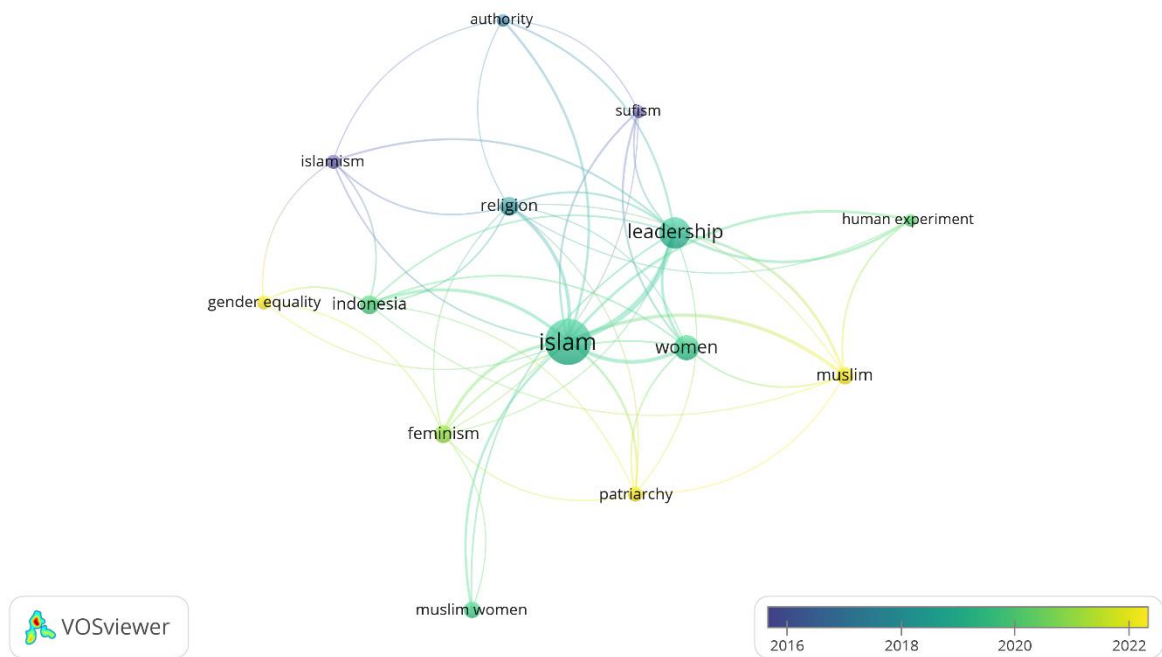


Figure 5. Overlay Visualization

Source: Data Analysis

Figure 5 displays the overlay visualization of the trends in the development of the keywords for the study of women leadership in Islam, showing the evolution of research interests based on the average publication year of keywords. The color scale reflects the evolution of the interest of researchers, with dark blue indicating early research interests (2016-2018), and green and yellow reflecting more recent research interests (2020-2022). It is evident from the visualization that the keywords "Islam," "leadership," and "women" have been important in all stages of research on the topic.

The use of the overlay pattern reveals that the early studies have been more related to the fundamental aspects of "authority," "Sufism," "religion," and "Islamism." All these topics imply that at first, scholars' interest was more concentrated on the

theological understanding and interpretation, religious authorities, and traditional understanding of the status of women in Islam. The research conducted by scholars at this stage was concerned with the influence of Islamic doctrines, spirituality, and history on the interpretation of the leadership and authority concepts.

The more recent trends, as shown by the green and yellowish nodes, are reflective of the shift to modern social concerns, such as "gender equality," "feminism," "Muslim women," and "patriarchy." This is an indication that recent works have evolved from being theological in nature to debates on empowerment, social justice, and involvement of women in leadership. These new trends show that there is a rising academic concern to study how Muslim women manage to become leaders.

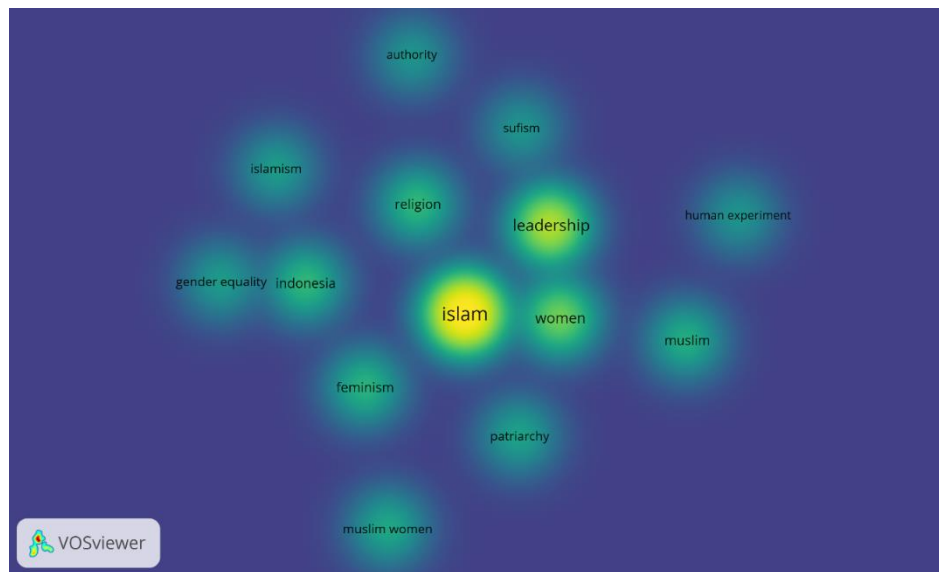


Figure 6. Density Visualization

Source: Data Analysis

As depicted in Figure 6, the density plot of the keywords found in research on the topic of women's leadership in Islam reveals the level of concentration and intensity of important research topics. From the density plot, it can be observed that the concept of "Islam" is the most concentrated, denoted by the most intense yellow section, indicating its importance as the central idea of all literature. Its centrality also indicates that most of the literature is based on an Islamic perspective in discussing the issue of women's leadership. The other dense areas are the concepts of "leadership," "women," and "Muslim."

Additionally, the density distribution shows that there are several other themes which include "gender equality," "feminism," "patriarchy," "authority," and "Sufism" with the same level of intensity. Thus, they can be regarded as relevant themes which do not enjoy mainstream scholarly attention. The inclusion of feminism and patriarchy in the set of themes suggests that there is growing scholarly interest in studying the relationship of gender in Islamic societies. The themes of authority and Sufism indicate ongoing scholarly interest in studying religion and its alternative forms of power.

4. CONCLUSION

The current paper presents a complete bibliometric analysis of the intellectual evolution, collaboration trends, and upcoming research trends in the area of women leadership in Islam. It can be stated that the results of the analysis show that the field under consideration has developed thanks to interdisciplinary researches in areas of Islamic studies, gender studies, leadership theory, sociology, and social development. As for the publication and citation analyses, they prove that there have been many influential works that are dedicated to the analysis of gender roles in Islam, religious authority, women's empowerment and leadership experiences in Muslim communities. The collaboration trends prove that the researches in the field under consideration are conducted under the conditions of the international collaboration between scholars, universities, and countries, including the regions of North America, Europe, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East. As for the keywords, the analysis shows that the main keywords include Islam, women, and leadership, but the current works often deal with such topics as gender equality, feminism, patriarchy, empowerment, and women's social participation.

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