

Bibliometric and systematic review of library roles in early childhood Islamic education

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ABSTRACT

Background: Libraries in Islamic schools globally are increasingly recognized as dynamic learning environments. However, bibliometric evidence on their role in supporting early childhood Islamic education remains limited. **Purpose:** This study examines the role of libraries in advancing early childhood Islamic education, emphasizing their potential as dynamic centers of literacy, pedagogy, and moral formation. **Methods:** This study used Scopus-indexed metadata from 2008 to 2025 as samples. At least 217 documents were analyzed using bibliometric methods (VOSviewer and RStudio), and 64 papers were qualitatively reviewed. **Results:** The results showed that highly cited works emerged from diverse regions, reflecting a global perspective on Islamic pedagogy. Moreover, thematic trends highlighted teacher education, emotional intelligence, and parental involvement. The result also showed that early childhood was a critical stage for instilling Islamic values such as honesty (ṣidq), compassion (raḥmah), tolerance (tasāmuḥ), and discipline (inḍibāt). However, educators often faced challenges, including limited pedagogical innovation, inadequate school training, and restricted access to quality resources. To address these gaps, libraries could provide curated materials, facilitate professional development for teachers, and integrate interactive and technology-driven learning strategies. **Conclusion:** Libraries are not merely repositories but strategic facilitators of holistic child development by leveraging digital innovations such as AI to strengthen children's literacy. **Implication:** The findings of this study imply that libraries can enhance community-based Islamic early-childhood education by providing curated resources and interactive programs for parents and teachers to foster children's literacy and moral development.

Keywords: Early childhood education; Education; *Islam*; Library; Research

INTRODUCTION

Islamic education at an early age is essential in shaping a child's character, personality, and moral foundation (Sari et al., 2023). Early childhood is a period of rapid physical, emotional, and cognitive development, during which the brain is especially receptive to modeling and repetition (Hyde et al., 2022). During this period, children are highly responsive to real-life examples and stories, making it an ideal time to instill the noble principles of Islam: honesty (*ṣidq*), compassion (*raḥmah*), tolerance (*tasāmu*), and discipline (*inḍibā*). Grounded in *akhlāq* and *adab*, these values provide a stable compass for decision-making and self-regulation, helping children understand why a behavior is right, not merely that it is required. As children practice simple routines such as greeting with *salām*, saying *basmalah* before eating, caring for classmates, and tidying the classroom, they begin to link belief to conduct and see worship, learning, and kindness as a coherent whole (Taufik & Ernawati, 2021).

Libraries occupy a central role in Library and Information Science (LIS) as institutions that organize, preserve, and disseminate knowledge to diverse user groups. Within the domain of early childhood education, libraries are increasingly recognized not only as repositories of books but also as dynamic environments that shape information behavior, literacy development, and moral formation. In contexts where religious and ethical education is emphasized, libraries serve as mediators between scholarly resources, pedagogical practices, and community needs. However, bibliometric evidence from

Sujin is limited regarding how libraries contribute to Islamic education for early childhood, particularly in terms of resource provision, service innovation, and digital repository development (Cao et al., 2018).

From a Library and Information Science (LIS) perspective, Knowledge Management highlights how libraries facilitate the creation, sharing, and application of knowledge in educational settings. Information Services Theory emphasizes the design of services tailored to specific user groups, including educators and young learners. Consequently, the Information Services organization addresses the challenges of classifying and providing access to Islamic educational resources in an age-appropriate and culturally sensitive manner (Tella, 2020). Digital repositories and preservation underscore the importance of curating and safeguarding physical and digital assets related to Islamic early childhood education. This framework provides a foundation for analyzing the role of libraries beyond pedagogy, placing them within the broader information and knowledge infrastructure that supports education (Okagbue et al., 2020).

A research gap lies in the absence of systematic bibliometric mapping of scholarship on libraries and Islamic early childhood education. Previous studies tend to examine pedagogy, curriculum, and moral values, but rarely examine the intellectual structure of the field using bibliometric techniques. By applying co-keyword analysis, clustering, and thematic evolution mapping, this study seeks to identify dominant themes,

research trends, and institutional contributions in this area. These findings would clarify the scholarly landscape and also generate implications for library management, collection policy, information service design, and digital preservation strategies. In doing so, this study reframes the discussion from narrative pedagogy to evidence-based LIS insights, contributing to disciplinary knowledge and practical guidance for educators, librarians, and policymakers.

Effective early Islamic education is relational and age-appropriate. It relies on warm adult role models at home and school, story-rich pedagogy of storytelling (*qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā'*, *sirah* episodes, and parables), play and role-playing to cultivate virtues, short, engaging, meaningful memorization sessions (selected *du'ā'* and verses), and reflective conversations that encourage children to notice feelings and motives (Weems et al., 2021). This approach avoids fear-based methods and excessive rote work, favoring encouragement, gentle correction, and consistent routines that build habits of the heart: gratitude, patience, fairness, and respect. It also integrates daily life skills, such as cleanliness and order, taking turns, caring for animals, and caring for the environment, as *khalifah*, with early literacy (listening, speaking, drawing, and early writing), so that moral formation advances alongside language and thinking (Das, 2021).

When home and school partners closely align, sharing goals, language, and expectations, children experience a coherent moral ecology (Weems et al., 2021). Over time, early Islamic education nurtures a sense of identity and

belonging, empathy for diverse others, perseverance in learning, and respectful behavior toward parents, peers, and the wider community. This foundation does not guarantee perfection, but it creates a strong disposition for lifelong ethical behavior and purposeful citizenship, preparing children to navigate a complex world with faith, balance (*wasatiyyah*), and care for the common good (Cao et al., 2018).

Despite its importance, educators in many developing countries, even those with Muslim majorities, often face challenges in effectively teaching *Islamic* values to young children (Acheampong & Agyemang, 2021). Many teachers lack a deep understanding of early childhood psychology and innovative pedagogical methods. Their teaching approaches are often monotonous and fail to engage young learners. Limited access to professional development and training opportunities further constrains teachers, reducing their ability to integrate new technologies or creative methods into the classroom. Consequently, gaps in teaching effectiveness and a lack of innovation hinder children's holistic development in both knowledge and moral character (Cao et al., 2018).

Libraries can serve as a critical solution to these challenges, providing physical and digital resources to support educators in *Islamic* early childhood education (Arar et al., 2023). They can offer books, journals, and educational literature on child development, pedagogical strategies, and innovative learning methods (Decker, 2021). Beyond resource provision, libraries can host workshops and training sessions for teachers, either independently or in

collaboration with other educational institutions (Cox et al., 2019). Such programs may focus on curriculum development, classroom technology integration, and the application of interactive learning strategies. Previous research demonstrates the potential of libraries as effective learning centers for early childhood education. A study by Sujin found that libraries enhance literacy through engaging, interactive methods. Libraries create safe and stimulating environments with educational games, picture books, and librarian-led activities (Cao et al., 2018).

Early childhood, often called the "golden age," is particularly well-suited for instilling religious values. During this phase, children should be introduced to religious experiences, such as observing God's creation in nature, to strengthen their spiritual understanding (Rustandi et al., 2019). Effective value transmission occurs through role modeling by educators and parents, as children tend to imitate the behavior of the adults around them. Actions and behaviors thus have a greater impact than verbal instructions alone (Decker, 2021).

However, young children cannot be expected to replicate adult behavior without specific methods being consistently applied. Integrating religious education with play has been shown to enhance enjoyment and participation, enabling children to learn *Islamic* values in a relaxed, stimulating environment (Tella, 2020). Educational tools such as *hijaiyah* letter puzzles, number and alphabet activities can introduce Arabic letters and basic *Islamic* concepts in a fun way. Interactive methods, including storytelling, singing, role-playing, and

artistic activities, further boost engagement and facilitate the internalization of *Islamic* values (Kistoro et al., 2020).

Islamic libraries have historically played a central role in Muslim communities, dating back to the early days of *Islam* under the *caliphs*, when they became hubs for interdisciplinary research and learning (Cao et al., 2018). In the modern era, particularly amid the fourth industrial revolution, *Islamic* libraries have evolved from traditional spaces to digital and mobile platforms, enabling broader, more flexible access. Mobile libraries, e-books, electronic journals, and digital repositories enable students and educators to access resources anytime and anywhere (Wardhana, 2020b). The integration of cloud computing, social media, and artificial intelligence into library services further enhances accessibility and efficiency. AI-based applications, such as chatbots, provide real-time information, assist in locating resources, and guide library users while analyzing usage patterns to optimize collections and services (Tella, 2020).

Moreover, AI technology enables libraries to automate digitization processes, including document scanning and optical character recognition (OCR), thereby converting printed text into searchable digital formats (Huang, 2021). However, effective implementation of such technology requires trained librarians. Professional development programs should introduce librarians to AI applications, enhancing their capability to effectively support research and educational services (Wardhana, 2020).

While there is substantial literature on the general role of libraries in early childhood education, research on their specific contribution to *Islamic* education for young children remains limited. Most existing studies emphasize literacy, cognitive development, and engagement, but rarely address the integration of religious and moral education within library contexts. This gap presents an opportunity for novel research that can inform curriculum design, educational innovation, and the strategic use of libraries to promote spiritual and ethical development. By exploring the role of libraries in supporting *Islamic* education in early childhood, this study aims to provide educators, librarians, and policymakers with useful insights while addressing the limitations and challenges identified in previous research (Cao et al., 2018).

In summary, libraries are not merely repositories of books; they are dynamic centers that can enrich *Islamic* education for early childhood (Tella, 2020). Through a combination of resource provision, training, interactive learning opportunities, and technological integration, libraries can enhance pedagogical effectiveness, foster moral and spiritual development, and support educators in addressing professional challenges. The purpose of this study is to examine how libraries can support *Islamic* education in early childhood, with a focus on resource provision, teacher training, interactive learning strategies, and the integration of AI technology.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study used secondary data in the form of paper metadata downloaded

from the *Scopus* website. The reason for using the *Scopus* paper database is that *Scopus* indexes millions of journal articles, conference papers, books, and other resources across various disciplines. *Scopus* is internationally recognized as one of the highest-quality, globally relevant scientific databases. This is because all publications indexed in *Scopus* have undergone a strict peer-review process, ensuring the quality and credibility of the content (McMullen et al., 2022). Moreover, *Scopus* was chosen over Web of Science (SCI) because it offered broader journal coverage in education and LIS, particularly for papers written by Asian and Middle Eastern authors. Reliance on *Scopus* is acknowledged as a limitation, as it may introduce source bias, but its comprehensiveness and established use in bibliometric studies justify its selection.

Metadata was collected from the *Scopus* search feature by entering a query related to the role of libraries in early childhood *Islamic* education. The query is shown in the PRISMA flowchart below. A total of 492 documents were found from 2008–2025. The collected documents were first scrutinized before being downloaded. Exclusion criteria for removal were papers in review form, not written in English, and lacking a complete abstract. A total of 217 papers remained. The metadata was then saved into a CSV file. Information saved in the CSV file includes citations from previous studies, bibliographic information, and abstracts and keywords (Azmat et al., 2023).

The units of analysis for this study consisted of author keywords and frequently occurring terms in abstracts. The bibliometric network is constructed

using c-word analysis, which identifies thematic linkages by measuring the co-occurrence of keywords across documents. This approach was chosen to reveal the intellectual structure and thematic evolution of research on libraries and *Islamic* early childhood education (Duffield et al., 2018). On the other hand, networks were normalized using the association-strength method to balance differences in keyword frequency. A minimum threshold of five keyword occurrences was applied to ensure statistical robustness and reduce noise. Clusters are identified using a modularity-based clustering algorithm embedded in Vosviewer, which groups related terms into coherent thematic clusters. Each cluster is qualitatively interpreted to identify dominant themes (Kirby, 2023).

This study employed two methods: bibliometric analysis and literature review. The bibliometric method was used to analyze previous research metrics and the content of the sample. These metrics included the number of citations, affiliations, the number of papers published in journals, and the number of journals with the most published papers. The content primarily consisted of words commonly used in abstracts of previous studies. This study used two software programs for bibliometric analysis: *VOSviewer* and *R Studio*. In addition, the literature review was used to deepen understanding of the thematic focus of previous studies and to contextualize bibliometric findings. This combined approach ensured that the results not only presented numerical data but also provided meaningful interpretations. The use of *VOSviewer* allowed clear

visualization of citation networks and keyword clusters. At the same time, *RStudio* provided advanced text mining and statistical analysis, thereby enhancing the rigor and reliability of the methodology. The bibliometric analysis used a total of 217 document metadata records.

Another method used in this study was a literature review to provide an overview of the steps the library should take to support early childhood Islamic education. Moreover, this study offered suggestions for librarians and parents to optimize library content and enhance children's literacy. The data were presented in flowcharts and tables. To further validate the analysis, triangulation was applied by comparing bibliometric findings with insights from the literature review. After screening the 217 metadata used for the bibliometric analysis by visualizing trends in previous research topics, 64 documents remained to be downloaded for the literature review.

This combination of methods helped ensure that conclusions were not based solely on quantitative mapping but were also aligned with qualitative interpretations. Such integration of approaches is expected to provide more holistic guidance to librarians, educators, and policymakers for strengthening Islamic education in early childhood, especially in the design of strategies that combine academic insights with real-world practices and community engagement. Findings were disseminated to stakeholders through workshops, policy briefs, and the development of practical guidelines nationwide.

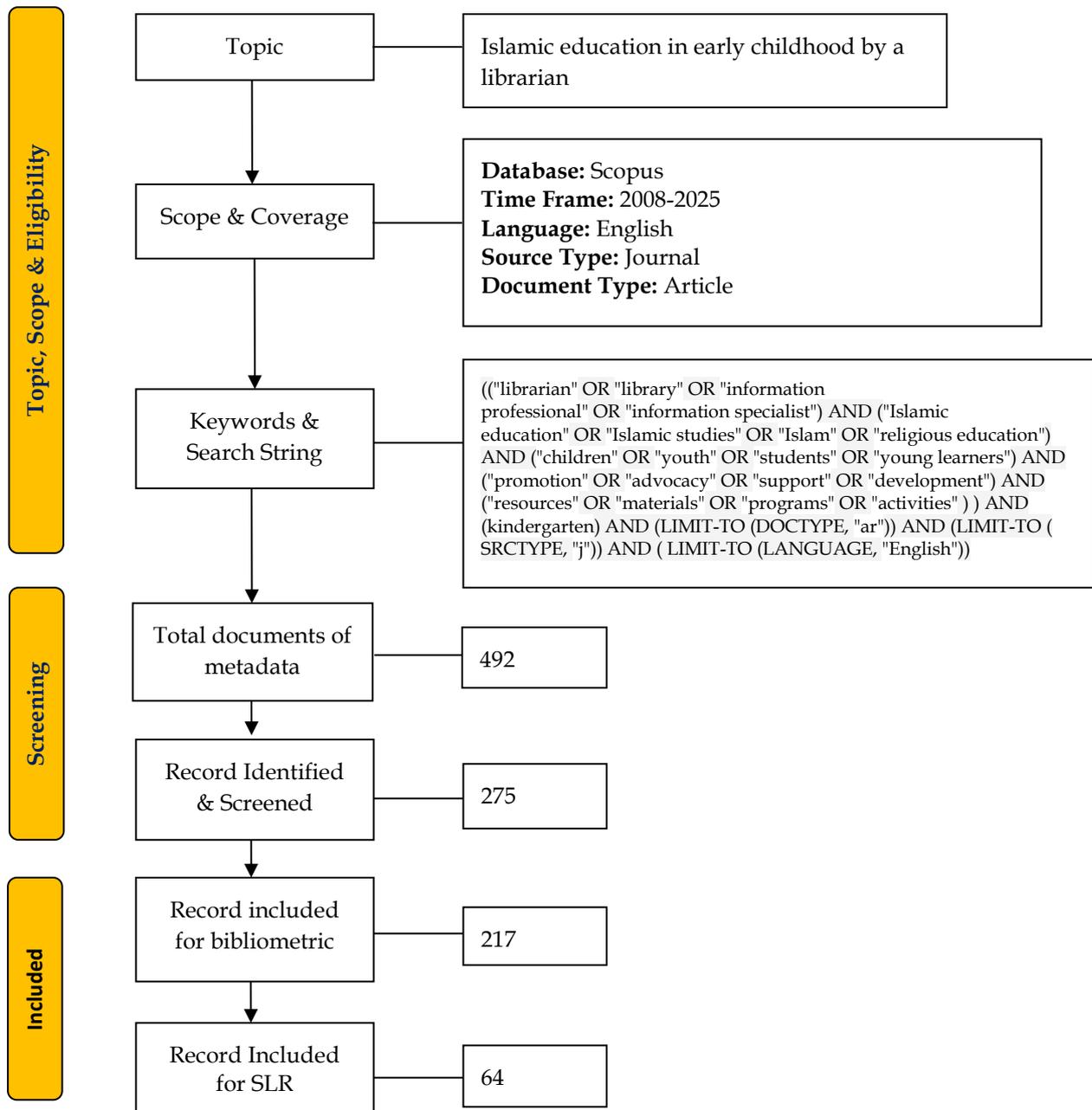


Figure 1. Flowchart of data collection and analysis

Source: Data processed according to a study (Bepouka et al., 2022)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study started the metric analysis by extracting the metadata from an image depicting the most frequently used words in the abstracts of previous studies. The metadata from the CSV file was imported into VOSviewer. The image displayed

several dots of different sizes and colors. The color represented the study's publication date, and the size represented the majority of words. Each word was linked to other words by a thread. The word with the largest dot size was considered the topic of this research.

Table 1

Top 12 Author Affiliations by Citation Count in Islamic Early Childhood Education Research

Institution/University	Documents	Citations
Zagazig University, Sharqia, Egypt	1	19
Institut Agama Islam Sunan Giri Ponorogo, Ponorogo, Indonesia	1	8
Oxford Deanery, Oxford, United Kingdom	1	8
Postgraduate University of Perguruan Tinggi Ilmu Al-Qur'an Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia	1	8
Mazandaran University, Sari, Mazandaran, Iran	1	8
University of Sharjah, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates	1	6
Laboratory Of Physiopathology, Faculté Des Sciences Ain Chock, Casablanca, Casablanca-Settat, Morocco	1	6
University of Sharjah Sharjah, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates	1	6
Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, Iran	1	5
Islamic Azad University, Tuyserkan Branch, Hamedan Province, Iran	1	5
Student Research Center, Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, Iran	1	5
Universitas Sultan Muhammad Syafiuddin Sambas, Sambas, West Kalimantan, Indonesia	1	5

Source: Data processed by Vosviewer, 2024

The authors of papers on Islamic education got the highest citation counts, ranging from Zagazig University in Egypt to several universities in Indonesia and Iran. These institutions depicted the global reach and diversity of scholarship in Islamic education. This distribution of high citation counts underlined not only the geographic trends observed in previous studies across regions, from ethics and human rights to curriculum development and literacy integration, but also the relevance of the literature on Islamic early childhood education. In the field of Islamic early childhood education, libraries could serve as bridges connecting educators and communities with influential works produced in diverse cultural contexts. By curating collections of highly cited research from Egypt, Iran, and the UAE, librarians ensured that teachers and parents in Indonesia and elsewhere had access to global best practices in pedagogy and moral formation. In this

way, libraries served as conduits for knowledge transfer, enabling local educators to benefit from international perspectives while adapting them to their own cultural and linguistic settings (Table 1).

A study by Decker (2021) states that librarians should have a role that extends beyond resource provision to active dissemination. Based on Table 1, it could be inferred that librarians could highlight the thematic strengths of various institutions, such as Egypt's emphasis on human rights and ethics, or Indonesia's focus on curriculum and literacy integration, by organizing these works into easily accessible collections. Librarians could also support educators and parents by providing translations, summaries, and simplified formats of complex academic research.

Furthermore, the UAE had several highly cited papers, suggesting that librarians should explore publications by UAE authors on teacher education

and parental involvement, themes that could be translated into workshops, reading programs, and collaborative initiatives with schools and families.

Librarians could align library programs with the most influential research trends to improve early childhood Islamic education (Table 1).

Table 2
Mean Citation Metrics by Publication Year (2001-2024)

Year	Mean Total Citation/Article	N	Mean Total Citation/Year	Citable Years
2001	162	1.00	6.75	24
2002	1	1.00	0.04	23
2011	30	1.00	2.14	14
2012	237	1.00	18.23	13
2013	27.5	2.00	2.29	12
2014	26.5	2.00	2.41	11
2015	132.33	3.00	13.23	10
2016	51	3.00	5.67	9
2017	26.6	5.00	3.33	8
2018	4.67	3.00	0.67	7
2019	8.71	7.00	1.45	6
2020	13.1	10.00	2.62	5
2021	15.05	20.00	3.76	4
2022	18.11	9.00	6.04	3
2023	2.18	11.00	1.09	2
2024	0.58	12.00	0.58	1

Source: Data processed by R Studio, 2024

The number of papers did not affect the number of citations received. Prestigious international *Islamic* journals often apply very high publication quality standards. Papers that do not meet these standards, even if numerous, will have difficulty getting cited (Decker, 2021). In addition, papers offering novel ideas, fresh perspectives, or innovative methodologies are more likely to be cited. Academics need to choose the right journals to publish their papers. Journals with a good reputation and indexed in comprehensive databases will increase a paper's visibility (Halim et al., 2018) (Table 2).

Sometimes, academics in developing *Islamic* countries choose to publish their papers in low-reputation, paid journals. This is because they publish their papers only to fulfill their obligations as students or lecturers. As long as the journal is indexed in Scopus or Web of Science and readily accepts papers, they are more likely to submit their papers to that journal. High-reputation journals are often less popular among *Islamic* academics in developing countries because of their lengthy or rigorous review processes. They consider the review process of high-reputation journals to be burdensome (Decker, 2021).

Table 3
Top 18 Most-Cited Papers in the Dataset

Paper		Total Citations per Year
Mahdi, 2022, <i>Rob Autom Syst</i>	108	27.00
Andrä, 2020, <i>Educ Psychol Rev</i>	66	11.00
Huda, 2024, <i>High Educ Skills Work-Based Learning</i>	34	17.00
Hwang, 2020, <i>Aera Open</i>	28	4.67
Felvégi, 2012, <i>Comput Sch</i>	28	2.00
Alhammadi, 2023, <i>Cross-Cultr Strategic Manage</i>	25	8.33
Alhosani, 2022, <i>Ecnu Rev Educ</i>	22	5.50
Zhu, 2022, <i>Front Psychol</i>	22	5.50
Ottley, 2015, <i>Teach Educ</i>	22	2.00
Letrud, 2018, <i>Cogent Educ</i>	18	2.25
Rahiem, 2020, <i>Intl J Learn Teach Edu Res</i>	14	2.33
Li, 2020, <i>Interact Learn Environ</i>	14	2.33
Baharun, 2022, <i>J Pendidik Islam</i>	13	3.25
Hariyanto, 2022, <i>Int J Educ Prac</i>	13	3.25
Sáinz, 2021, <i>Sage Open</i>	13	2.60
Harjono, 2020, <i>Int J Emerg Technol Learn</i>	13	2.17
Massing, 2018, <i>Int J Early Years Educ</i>	12	1.50
Bjorklund, 2016, <i>Evol Psychol</i>	12	1.20

Source: Data processed by R Studio, 2024

Many emerging journals are based on general education, psychology, technology, and cross-cultural management. This trend indicated that research on early childhood education (including that related to Islamic values) was often published in interdisciplinary journals rather than in religious journals. Furthermore, based on a search on the Scopus website, journals such as *EDUC PSYCHOL REV*, *AERA OPEN*, *FRONT PSYCHOL*, and *SAGE OPEN* typically fell into Q1-Q2. Meanwhile, journals such as *J PENDIDIK ISLAM* or *INT J EDUC PRAC* were more frequently ranked in Q3-Q4, due to their regional scope and specific focus (Table 3).

Journals in the Q3-Q4 quartiles emphasized Islamic values, local curricula, and community practices. Publications such as *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* (Q3) made an important contribution by providing moral-spiritual

content appropriate to Indonesian culture. These local studies emphasized the relevance of social context, language, and traditions close to children's lives, allowing Islamic values to be instilled more naturally and with greater grounding. Thus, although Q3-Q4 journals might have a more limited citation coverage than Q1-Q2 journals, their contribution remained significant in developing contextual Islamic education.

Within this framework, libraries act as a bridge between global and local research. They not only provide access to reputable international journals but also curate local works relevant to community needs. By connecting these two sources of knowledge, libraries can provide innovative, contextually relevant Islamic teaching materials (Daengs et al., 2022). For example, libraries can combine emotional intelligence theory from the Q1 journal

with local Islamic stories from the Q3 journal to create early childhood learning modules. Such modules will balance cognitive, emotional, and spiritual

aspects, so that children are not only academically intelligent but also possess noble morals in accordance with Islamic teachings (Huang, 2021).

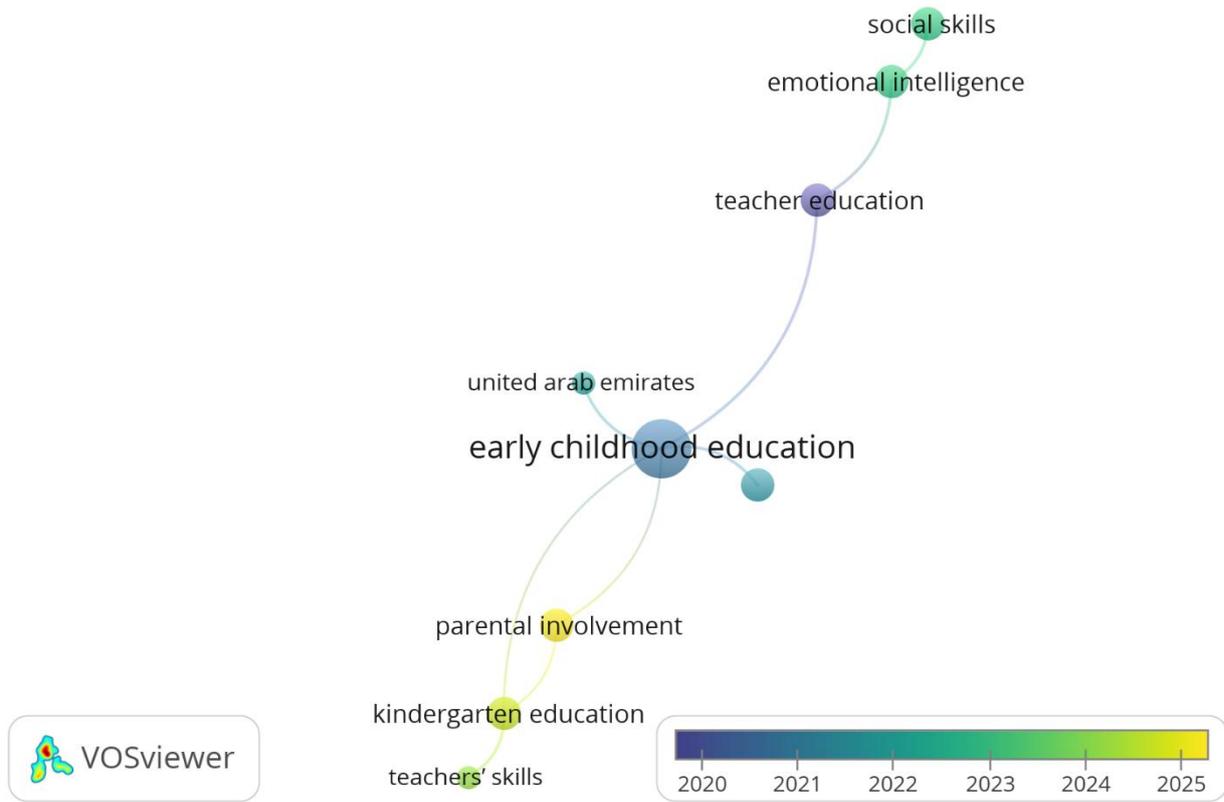


Figure 2. Mostly used words in the abstract of previous studies

Source: Data processed by Vosviewer, 2024

Figure 2 shows that *early childhood education* is a central node in previous studies on themes such as *teacher education*, *social skills*, *emotional intelligence*, *parental involvement*, and *kindergarten education*, alongside a regional focus on the United Arab Emirates. The color gradient from purple (2020) to yellow (2025) highlights the temporal evolution of these studies, indicating that older research trends are giving way to emerging ones. In the context of early childhood education,

librarians are increasingly recognized as strategic facilitators of holistic development, especially in Islamic learning environments. Figure 2 illustrates the growing emphasis on keywords such as *social skills*, *emotional intelligence*, and *teacher education*, suggesting a shift toward holistic childcare. In this context, librarians play a pivotal role in curating resources and designing programs that foster cognitive and emotional growth grounded in Islamic values.

Table 4

Map of co-occurrence of keywords

Cluster	Color	Main Keywords	Characteristics (Density & Centrality)	Implications of LIS
Cluster 1: Teacher Education & Pedagogy	Red	teacher education, pedagogy, curriculum, Islamic education	High density, strong centrality; most established theme	Curation of pedagogical resources, teacher training modules, and integration of collections with Islamic educational innovations
Cluster 2: Emotional Intelligence & Social Skills	Green	emotional intelligence, social skills, moral development	Medium density, centrality increased post-2020	Integrating emotional literacy with Islamic ethics: storybook collection, interactive tools, digital repository
Cluster 3: Parental Involvement & Community Engagement	Blue	parental involvement, family literacy, community	Low density, strong temporal growth post-2018	Family reading program, community archives, contextual Islamic collections based on local culture
Cluster 4: Digital Repositories & Technology Integration	Yellow	digital library, repository, AI, information services	New density, high temporal prominence (latest theme)	Development of digital repositories, adoption of AI for information services, and long-term preservation strategies

Source: Data processed by authors, 2024

A study by Acheampong & Agyemang (2021) found that one of the most significant roles librarians can play is that of an early literacy facilitator. Thus, Amirudin et al. (2025) stated that by selecting and compiling Islamic storybooks, interactive Qur'anic learning tools, and moral stories, librarians help children internalize fundamental concepts of faith, ethics, and empathy. These resources not only build reading skills but also cultivate emotional intelligence and social awareness, both essential qualities for early character development.

On the other hand, Huang (2021) argues that libraries embedded in mosques and community centers can serve as family-centered hubs for Islamic education. The prominence of parental involvement in recent research underscores the importance of engaging families in the learning process. Librarians can host parent-child reading sessions

using Islamic texts, creating shared spiritual experiences that reinforce values such as honesty (*sidq*) and compassion (*rahma*). Moreover, they can provide *halal*-certified educational games and materials that align with pedagogical and religious standards (Fauziah Ramadhany, 2024). Librarians must embrace their roles as trend monitors and resource planners. In response, they can select Islamic books that teach empathy through the stories of the Prophet ﷺ and design reading programs that blend emotional literacy with Islamic ethics. This proactive approach ensures that library offerings remain timely, impactful, and aligned with educational and spiritual goals (Anderson et al., 2021).

Librarians also play a crucial supporting role for kindergarten teachers, particularly in Islamic schools. With "teacher education" emerging as a key thematic node, librarians can offer curated pedagogical resources and facilitate access

to digital repositories of Islamic children's literature. These tools empower educators to integrate Islamic ethics into their classroom instruction more effectively and consistently. Local content development is another area where librarians can lead innovation. The emergence of "United Arab Emirates" in bibliometric maps suggests a trend toward regional adaptation of educational materials. Indonesian librarians can emulate this by developing Islamic content in Bahasa Indonesia that reflects local cultural nuances. Collaborating with Islamic scholars ensures theological accuracy and age-appropriate messages, making the material relevant and spiritually sound.

Early Islamic education is crucial for developing children's character and noble morals. Early Islamic literacy education aims to instill true Islamic values from an early age so that children can grow into a generation that is faithful, pious, and morally upright. Librarians, as library facilitators, can utilize various resources to improve Islamic literacy at an early age. Collaboration between librarians and Islamic kindergartens in literacy programs has great potential to form a generation of readers who are not only intelligent but also morally upright. This program can be strengthened by combining Islamic values with a love of books (Decker, 2021).

Collaboration between librarians and Islamic kindergarten teachers is key to instilling an interest in reading and Islamic values from an early age. Librarians can collect books relevant to the curriculum and interests of Islamic kindergarten students, such as religious books, folk tales, and storybooks. Teachers and librarians can work together to integrate literacy activities into the curriculum by creating required reading lists and holding discussions about the books they have

read. By using technology, such as digital reader applications, librarians and teachers can enrich information resources and facilitate students' access to books, thereby improving their ability to access information digitally (Tella, 2020).

Teachers and librarians can develop students' literacy skills by integrating literacy into subject matter. This creates engaging learning and opportunities for students to acquire new skills. Librarians can collect books that align with children's interests, such as storybooks, fables, and legends, which can be used as sources for storytelling programs at schools or libraries. These programs can include educational library visits where children listen to and engage with interesting stories (Okagbue et al., 2020).

When organizing storytelling activities, librarians and teachers can use media such as puppets, books, or animations to make the stories more interactive. This stimulates children's imaginations and builds emotional connections with educators (Muhammad, 2020). After the story, teachers and librarians can discuss its message, helping children think critically and improving their expressive and receptive language skills. Storytelling activities can be integrated with other literacy activities, such as reading, writing, and book review competitions, increasing students' interest in reading and encouraging them to visit the library (Tella, 2020).

Storytelling activities channel children's imagination and fantasy, making them more creative. Through storytime, children can enhance their verbal skills by talking and discussing stories. Additionally, these activities stimulate imagination and creativity by encouraging children to envision the story and its characters (Haedar et al., 2019).



Figure 3. Concept map between librarians and Early-age education teachers

Source: Data processed by authors, 2024

The approach to improving *Islamic* literacy in early childhood students differs from that for adolescents or adults. This requires appropriate management, as children in early childhood have flexible brains and their senses are not yet fully developed. This is called the golden period of brain development, during which the child's brain undergoes rapid growth and forms new neural connections (synapses) at an incredible rate. They can quickly learn anything they see, whether it is useful or not (Acheampong & Agyemang, 2021).

One approach librarians can use with young children is a multisensory program. This program is a learning approach that engages multiple senses simultaneously. By utilizing resourcefulness, children can better understand and remember information. Multisensory experiences create stronger neural connections, thereby improving memory. In addition, multisensory learning accommodates children with

diverse learning styles, including visual, auditory, and kinesthetic (Mpolomoka, 2025).

For young children, sound recognition is crucial for direct communication. This involves phonology, a branch of linguistics that studies the sounds of language. Phonology is important because it relates to their ability to produce and understand sounds that form words. (Rustandi et al., 2019). Multisensory programs focused on phonology help children develop oral language skills more effectively. In Islamic education, phonology emphasizes the Arabic sounds used in the Quran. Learning Islamic phonology from an early age helps Muslim children better understand and recite the Quran. Librarians and teachers can teach children hijaiyah letters and guessing songs through audio-visual collections. Teachers can also tell stories involving hijaiyah letters and sounds using these resources (Hamidien, et al., 2025).

In addition to speech recognition, the introduction of writing and images is also important for early childhood education. Introducing *Islamic* writing and literacy is a crucial step in instilling religious values from an early age (Tella, 2020). In a fun, interactive way, children can begin to recognize *hijaiyah* letters, read simple words, and understand *Islamic* stories. Early introduction to the *Quran* and *hadith* will help children build a strong foundation of faith. Reading habits from an early age will continue into adulthood. Public libraries usually have a collection of flashcards with pictures and *hijaiyah* letters to help children recognize letters. Groups can use flashcards with simple words related to everyday life or worship (Tella, 2020).

Another library program that can be utilized is shared book reading, an effective and enjoyable way to introduce *Islamic* values to young children. This activity also stimulates children's cognitive development (Abdullah Latuapo, 2022). *Islamic* books often feature stories that teach values such as honesty, compassion, and tolerance. Children are inspired by the stories of the prophets and their wise companions. Sharing reading provides quality time that strengthens the relationship between teacher and student. Indirectly, children's literacy in *Islamic* knowledge increases as their nervous systems are still developing and they feel comfortable with their teachers (Muhardi et al., 2021).

When choosing books to introduce to children, several important factors should be considered regarding their content. Teachers and librarians must choose books that tell stories easy for children to understand and remember, such as the stories of the Prophet Ibrahim,

the Prophet Muhammad, or their companions. In addition, teachers and librarians must ensure that the language used in the books is simple (Halim et al., 2018). Books should also include many interesting pictures to clarify the words conveyed. The books should contain moral messages about good behavior, such as helping each other, respecting parents, and maintaining cleanliness, and showing the consequences of good and bad deeds (Decker, 2021).

However, the program will not be successful without librarians with expertise in early childhood. Professional development for librarians focused on early childhood is essential to providing high-quality services (Tella, 2020). Librarians are not only collection managers but also educators who can stimulate children's interest in reading and learning. Early childhood experiences rapid cognitive, social, and emotional development. Librarians need to continually update their knowledge of child development to choose appropriate reading materials and activities. In addition, learning methods continue to evolve, especially in the era of the 4th industrial revolution. Librarians need to learn new techniques to make reading sessions more interesting and interactive (Cao et al., 2018).

Librarians working with *Islamic* kindergartens or playgroups need a deep understanding of preschool teaching methods to make the library not only a place to borrow books but also a fun learning space for children. Early childhood learners learn through play, exploration, and social interaction, which is very different from how adults and older children learn. (Decker, 2021). Librarians can also assist teachers in using books,

identifying titles, and conducting other library-related activities through demonstrations. They can collaborate with teachers to design learning activities that integrate play and learning, such as drama or role-playing based on stories (Cao et al., 2018).

Libraries lacking collections or resources can collaborate with Middle Eastern embassies to improve Islamic literacy at an early age. Islamic university libraries can request donations from embassies to provide high-quality Arabic-language reading materials, including translations such as the Quran for children,

stories of the prophets, and books on Islamic culture (Frederick, 2019). This collaboration benefits libraries because embassies have extensive networks with other Islamic institutions, both domestically and internationally, and can invite expert speakers to provide training or workshops. In addition, this collaboration can promote a tolerant and peaceful Islamic culture. Librarians can invite experts from embassies to provide training on Islamic literacy, teaching methods, and the selection of reading materials, thereby enhancing librarians' skills (Cox et al., 2019).

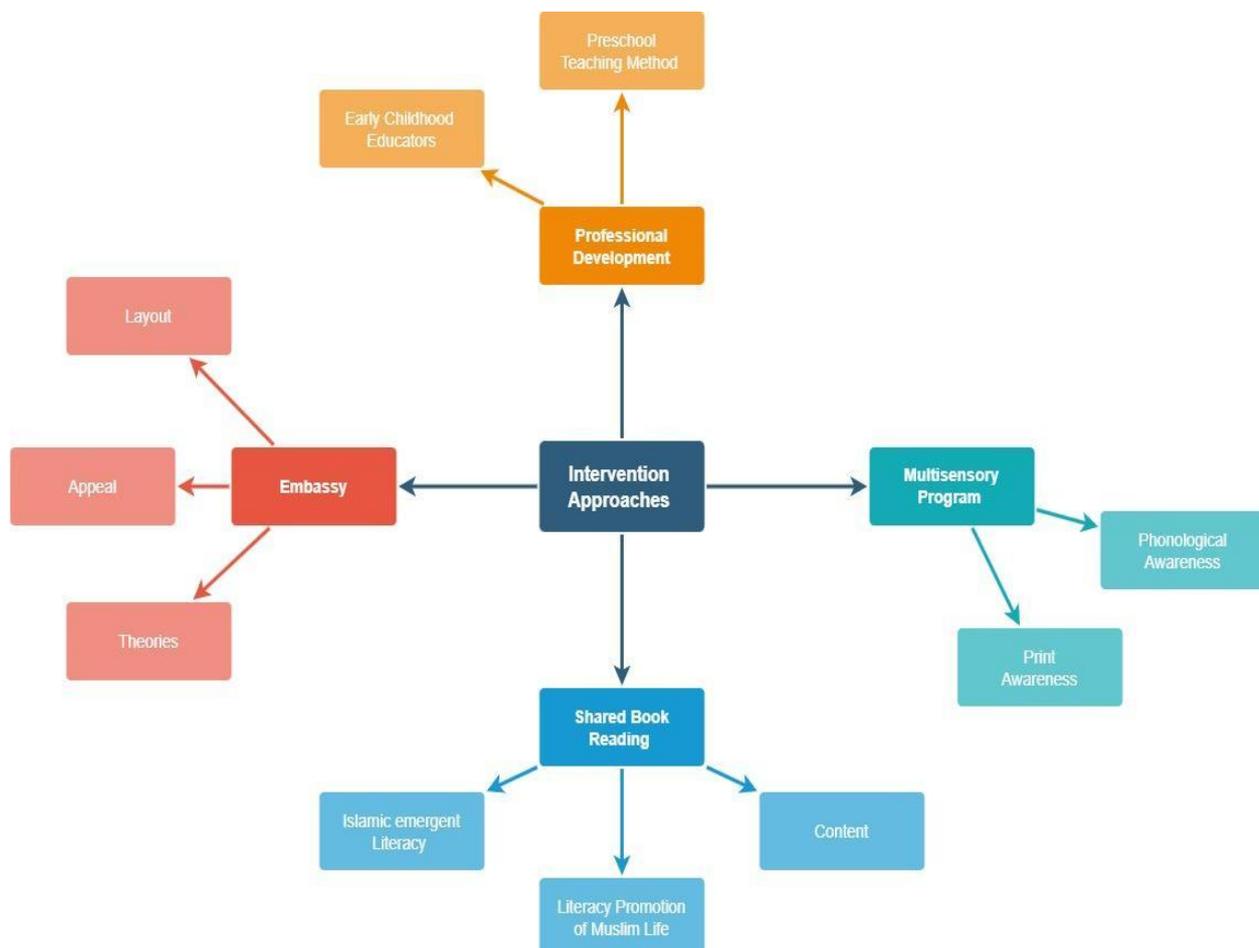


Figure 4. Concept map of approaches for librarians to support *Islamic* education in early childhood
Source: Data processed by authors, 2024

Table 5
 Suggestions for Librarians and Teachers for *Islamic* Literacy Programs

Author	Finding	Suggestion for Librarians	Suggestions for Teachers
(Frederick, 2019)	Public libraries are well-positioned to support family involvement in children's early learning. Their partnership with university researchers is to deliver library-based interactive parent-child programming	Libraries can provide early education experiences that encourage family involvement in children's learning, which is crucial for school readiness	Providing access to a variety of databases, books, and digital resources supports teachers in their professional development and enhances their teaching practices
(Cox et al., 2019)	The use of used goods in learning positively affects children's creativity. Children become more confident in conveying their ideas and thoughts about <i>Islam</i> and <i>monotheism</i> .	Utilizing creative materials, such as used goods, as learning tools makes the educational environment more engaging and stimulates early childhood development	Teachers must be creative in transforming used items such as plastic bottles, cardboard, and ice cream sticks into interesting and educational play tools. This implements <i>Islamic</i> teachings to protect the environment by reducing waste and transforming it into useful items.
(Tamaro, 2020).	Parents must collaborate with schools to build character in early childhood in the current era of disruption. <i>Islamic</i> education from an early age plays a vital role in shaping children's moral and spiritual values.	Utilize books and writings related to early childhood education and <i>Islamic</i> teachings.	Collaborate with parents and the community to ensure children develop a strong moral foundation.
(Tella, 2020)	Public libraries in Connecticut, USA, generally perceive homeschooling positively. They recognize the importance of providing resources and services that meet the unique needs of this community.	Librarians should expand their collections to include a variety of reading materials and digital resources aligned with the homeschool curriculum.	Engage their preschool children in programs specifically designed for children, such as story time, playgroups, or art activities.

(Anggadwita et al., 2021)	The necessity of collaboration between libraries and social workers to provide comprehensive early childhood education programs. The library can hire additional preschool educators to run more literacy programs for children.	Librarians need to design collaborative programs, such as workshops or discussion groups, that involve social workers to provide education and support to parents who bring young children to the library.	Find out if the library offers special religious programs for children, such as <i>Islamic</i> storytelling, <i>Quran</i> reading competitions, or <i>Quran</i> reading classes.
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Source: Data processed by authors, 2024

CONCLUSION

The study shows that Islamic education research often highlights themes such as human rights, ethics, ta'lim al-muta'alim (Islamic religious education), and children's learning, reflecting both internal educational values and broader global interactions. Bibliometric analysis reveals that authors from countries such as China and the United States receive high citation counts, underscoring that scholarly engagement with Islamic education extends beyond Muslim-majority regions. Importantly, citation impact is more closely linked to the quality and relevance of research than to the sheer number of publications. On a practical level, this study emphasizes the vital role of librarians in supporting early childhood Islamic education. By collaborating with teachers and partnering with institutions such as embassies and religious organizations, libraries can expand access to diverse resources and enrich children's learning experiences. While limited by bibliometric data, these findings provide valuable insights and call for future field-based research to explore how library initiatives and cross-sector collaborations can further strengthen Islamic education in practice.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

SI: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Data curation.
 PAN: Formal analysis, Software, Visualization, Writing – review & editing.
 NEVA: Supervision, Conceptualization, Writing – review & editing, Validation.
 MSI: Literature review, Data interpretation, Writing – review & editing.
 NB: Resources, Investigation, Writing – review & editing.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript.

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DATA AVAILABILITY

The bibliometric metadata and secondary data used in this study were retrieved from the Scopus database. The processed data generated during the analysis are included within the manuscript and its tables and figures. Additional data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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