



Muslim feminism: A systematic literature review and bibliometric analysis

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ABSTRACT

Background: Islamic feminism has emerged as a critical epistemological framework that integrates gender justice with Islamic values, necessitating systematic exploration due to its fragmented and context-dependent nature. This study aims to map the development of Islamic feminism through a Systematic Literature Review using the PRISMA framework to identify theoretical trends and gaps within the field. The literature reveals that Islamic feminism engages in reinterpretation of religious texts while challenging patriarchal norms, with particular relevance in Muslim-majority countries like Indonesia and Iran. While it promotes women's agency through contextual, faith-based strategies, its acceptance remains contested due to political resistance and limited intersectional solidarity. Ultimately, this review provides a comprehensive analysis that contributes to the academic development of Islamic feminism and informs educational and policy-oriented practices aligned with human rights and social justice. **Methods:** This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach based on the PRISMA framework to evaluate literature on Islamic feminism as an epistemological approach in Islamic studies. Articles were collected from the Scopus database, limited to English-language publications from 1990 to 2025. Bibliometric analysis was conducted using VOSviewer to map keyword trends, author networks, and citation relationships among the literature. **Findings:** The findings reveal a significant development in the discourse of Islamic feminism, particularly in the Global North and in Muslim-majority countries such as Iran and Indonesia. The main emerging themes include the reinterpretation of religious texts and critiques of patriarchal social structures within Muslim societies. However, the integration of hermeneutical approaches and social critique into a cohesive epistemological framework remains suboptimal. **Conclusion:** This study concludes that Muslim feminism is a dynamic and expanding discourse that emphasizes culturally grounded social experiences and epistemological reform in Islamic thought. Its global and transnational character highlights its role as both a theoretical and practical framework for advancing justice, equality, and contextual scholarship in contemporary Islamic studies. **Novelty/Originality of this article:** This study offers an original contribution through the systematic mapping of the theoretical direction of Islamic feminism as a contemporary epistemological paradigm.

KEYWORDS: bibliometric analysis; epistemology; gender justice; islamic feminism; prisma; systematic literature review.

1. Introduction

Conducting a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) on the variable of Islamic feminism is essential for organizing, evaluating, and developing a growing body of research that remains epistemologically diverse and fragmented. Islamic feminism offers a reinterpretation of sacred texts such as the Qur'an and Hadith through a gender-sensitive lens rooted in Islamic epistemology (Al-Sharmani, 2024; Erwani & Siregar, 2025). An SLR

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enables scholars to comprehensively synthesize various approaches, ranging from hermeneutical methods to socio-political critique, thereby mapping key concepts in the field and identifying significant theoretical shifts (Resanović, 2018).

Moreover, Islamic feminism is highly contextual, shaped by cultural, political, and regional dynamics, including feminist activism in Pakistan (Zia, 2009) and challenges in educational leadership across the Arab world (Hilal et al., 2024). The literature also highlights persistent barriers to gender equality, such as conservative interpretations of Islamic law, while also uncovering reformist efforts like reframing women's political authority in Shi'a Islamic thought (Goudarzi, 2025).

Beyond its academic contributions, the SLR is highly valuable for policy development and education. It can inform curriculum design and empower stakeholders by linking Islamic feminism with human rights, Islamic economics, and frameworks of social justice (Insani et al., 2024; Morgan et al., 2017). Ultimately, an SLR bridges disciplinary boundaries and reveals research gaps, particularly regarding intersectionality and the marginalization of women's voices within Islamic traditions (Potokri, 2014; Pérez-Martín et al., 2025). Therefore, a rigorous systematic review not only consolidates existing knowledge but also fosters further scholarly inquiry and practice oriented toward gender justice in Islam.

Islamic feminism is a conceptual framework that seeks to integrate principles of gender justice with Islamic values. However, it is often contested and misunderstood, necessitating a systematic exploration to map its key contributions and internal divergences (Resanović, 2018; Ahmed-Ghosh, 2008). Beyond its theological foundations, Islamic feminism intersects deeply with local cultures, legal systems, and postcolonial discourses, thus requiring context-sensitive approaches (Crabtree & Husain, 2012). Through a systematic literature review, researchers can identify gaps in empirical and conceptual studies, particularly regarding the underrepresentation of certain regions and the epistemological tensions between secular and faith-based feminist paradigms (Potokri, 2014; Pérez-Martín et al., 2025). Additionally, SLR findings have practical implications for educational curriculum development, public policy formulation, and the design of gender empowerment strategies that are grounded in Islamic values while upholding human rights (Insani et al., 2024; Morgan et al., 2017). Thus, the SLR serves not only to summarize and strengthen the existing body of literature but also to promote cross-disciplinary dialogue and reinforce the intellectual legitimacy of Islamic feminism as a transformational paradigm rooted in justice, equality, and the lived experiences of Muslim women.

Islamic feminism, as reflected in 11 Scopus-indexed journal sources reviewed, represents a critical approach that challenges the subordination of women in traditional interpretations of Islam (Nurmila, 2021). This movement seeks gender justice through the reinterpretation of the Qur'an and other religious texts using contextual methods that remain rooted in Islamic values (Nurmila, 2021). In this regard, Islamic feminism questions patriarchal religious authority and promotes alternative interpretations that are more gender-just (Ali-Shah, 2023; Glas & Alexander, 2020).

Rather than rejecting religion, Islamic feminism offers a post-patriarchal lens through which Islam can be understood in a more equitable and inclusive manner (Petersen, 2019). This movement grounds its struggle in religious texts, rather than secular or extremist ideologies, which makes it more culturally acceptable in many Muslim communities (Gajjala et al., 2023). Furthermore, Islamic feminism critiques conservative interpretations that constrain women's roles and articulates alternative voices of liberation within an Islamic framework (Fox et al., 2016).

Through women's leadership and participation in religious rituals, Islamic feminism reclaims sacred spaces traditionally dominated by men (Bøe, 2020). Media narratives also shape public perceptions of female imams, thereby expanding public understanding of gender roles within Islam (Fox et al., 2016). As such, Islamic feminism addresses not only universal issues affecting women but also religiously specific concerns such as kinship laws, gender relations, and citizenship rights within Islamic contexts (Nurmila, 2021; Ali-Shah, 2023). This approach positions Islamic feminism as a reformist movement aimed at achieving social justice and gender equality without abandoning religious identity.

Key findings from the reviewed articles include the advocacy by Indonesian Muslim feminists for equal partnerships in marriage and their challenge to traditional views that limit women's roles in the family. They argue that the home is not the only space for women and that leadership is not the sole domain of men. They also critique traditional religious interpretations that perpetuate gender inequality and call for fairer, more contextual readings (Nurmila, 2013).

Muslim feminist ideas began to spread in Indonesia in the early 1990s and experienced significant acceleration with broader internet access after 2010. Nevertheless, this dissemination faces challenges such as the digital divide and resistance from conservative groups. Meanwhile, offline media continues to play a crucial role in disseminating feminist discourse to a broader audience (Nurmila, 2021).

The decision of the FFQ regarding Muslim women's agency reflects a defensive political compromise and a reluctance to openly support Muslim women's rights. The limits of intersectionality further hinder the solidarity that should be established between mainstream feminists and Muslim women, often resulting in the marginalization of Muslim women's contributions in dominant feminist narratives. Accordingly, several studies emphasize the importance of developing a feminist epistemology grounded in religious experience to create more inclusive spaces of representation. In this context, symbolic acts such as Muslim women in Quebec wearing hoodies are interpreted as forms of resistance against patriarchal systems and secular stereotypes (Taher & Zoghalmi, 2025).

The Arab Spring triggered increased support for interpretations of Islam that uphold women's rights, demonstrating that gender equality is not necessarily viewed as conflicting with Islamic values in the MENA region. During this period, support for secular approaches to women's status declined, coinciding with rising revolutionary sentiment rejecting authoritarian regimes and Western interventions. This shift was particularly evident in Egypt, contrasting with weaker responses in Tunisia and Yemen (Fox et al., 2016). Other studies highlight how women build agency and visibility through digital spaces, as exemplified by the women of Shaheen Bagh who used social media to expand the global reach of their protest movement through transnationally connected local activism (Gajjala et al., 2023).

Tabel 1. Elements defining islamic feminism

No	Elements defining islamic feminism	References
1	Challenging the subordination of women in traditional interpretations of Islam	Nurmila (2021)
2	Seeking gender justice through reinterpretation of the Qur'an	Nurmila (2013)
3	Questioning patriarchal religious authority through the lens of gender justice	Taher (2025)
4	Offering a post-patriarchal perspective; challenging traditional patriarchal structures	Ali-Shah (2023)
5	Grounding women's rights in religious texts rather than ideology	Fox et al. (2016)
6	Advocating for gender equality and women's empowerment within the context of Islam	Glas (2020)
7	Critiquing patriarchal interpretations; advancing women's rights without abandoning religious identity	Gajjala (2023)
8	Reclaiming Islam through women's leadership and ritual practices	Pettersen (2019)
9	Criticizing conservative interpretations of women's roles in Islam	Bøe (2020)
10	Pursuing reform within Islam rather than through secular ideologies	Feillard (1997)
11	Negotiating kinship laws, gender relations, and citizenship	Ong (1999)

Public attention to the phenomenon of female imams also illustrates how religious narratives are often shaped by commercial media interests (Petersen, 2019). In the educational context, approaches that teach Islam through controversial issues have been shown to enhance the effectiveness of religious education while raising students' awareness of the social realities faced by Muslim women (Bøe, 2020; Feillard, 1997).

Tabel 2. Key elements that define islamic feminism

No	Defining Factors of Islamic Feminism	References
1	Islamic feminism challenges the subordination of women in traditional interpretations of Islam.	Nurmila (2021)
2	It seeks gender justice through the re-interpretation of the Qur'an.	Nurmila (2013)
3	Islamic feminism questions the patriarchal authority of religion by advancing gender justice.	Taher (2025)
4	It offers a post-patriarchal lens through which Islam can be reinterpreted. This approach challenges patriarchal structures associated with traditional Islamic interpretations.	Ali-Shah (2023)
5	Islamic feminism grounds women's rights in religious texts rather than in external ideologies.	Fox et al. (2016)
6	It promotes gender equality and women's empowerment within an Islamic framework.	Glas (2020)
7	Islamic feminism critiques patriarchal interpretations of Islamic texts. It advocates for women's rights without abandoning religious identity.	Gajjala (2023)
8	Islamic feminism reclaims Islam through women's leadership and ritual performance. Media narratives shape public perception of female imams and their roles.	Pettersen (2019)
9	It critiques conservative interpretations of women's roles in Islam, promoting gender equality and inclusion in Islamic teachings.	Bøe (2020)
10	Islamic feminism seeks reform within Islam, rather than aligning with secular or Islamist ideologies. It addresses both issues affecting all women and specific concerns within Islamic contexts.	Feillard (1997)
11	Islamic feminists not only seek to express women's voices within Islam but also renegotiate various issues related to Islamic kinship law, gender relations, and citizenship.	Ong (1999)

2. Methods

A Systematic Literature Review (SLR), particularly when combined with bibliometric analysis, has become a vital approach for synthesizing evidence from various empirical studies and mapping knowledge gaps as well as thematic configurations that inform policy strategies (Marzi et al., 2024). Moreover, a rigorous SLR employing frameworks such as PRISMA—with its 27-item checklist and transparent flow diagram—ensures replicability, accuracy in study selection, and transparency in reporting (Malapane et al., 2022). When integrated with bibliometric techniques, this method can uncover publication patterns, research trends, and key actors in a given scientific domain, resulting in a comprehensive mapping of the research landscape and potential policy or programmatic directions (Marzi et al., 2025; Virani et al., 2020). Additionally, mapping reviews—or systematic mapping, a variant of SLR—are valuable for identifying evidence-rich or evidence-scarce areas, guiding decision-making, and shaping future research agendas (Li et al., 2025). Thus, this approach is not only academically relevant but also provides concrete input for strategic policymaking, programming, and operations, strengthening the connection between research impact and real-world policy outcomes (Virani et al., 2020).

The decision to combine Systematic Literature Review (SLR) with bibliometric techniques represents a strategic methodological approach to capture both the qualitative depth and the quantitative patterns of a specific scientific domain. While SLR facilitates the critical identification of theories, concepts, and methodologies across various studies, bibliometric analysis—including co-authorship, keyword co-occurrence, and citation network visualizations—reveals intellectual networks, leading contributors, and emerging topics in a systematic manner (Zupic & Čater, 2015; Marzi et al., 2025). Thematic approaches in SLR support deep conceptual synthesis, while bibliometric techniques complement this analysis by providing visual and statistical representations of research trends. This combined methodology has proven effective in expanding the scope and precision of literature mapping and offering new directions for relevant and contextual research (Marzi et al., 2025). Therefore, the integration of SLR and bibliometric analysis in

this study not only serves as a tool for assessing the development of Muslim Feminism scholarship but also functions as a strategic framework for building more systematic and sustainable academic contributions.

Furthermore, this approach enables the identification of thematic saturation, conceptual fragmentation, or convergence within the existing literature. By examining how various studies address key issues such as gender justice, textual interpretation, and religious authority, this review aims to provide a foundational map for further epistemological exploration in Islamic gender studies.

The inclusion criteria used in this study comprised peer-reviewed scholarly articles indexed in the Scopus database. The selected articles were written in English and specifically addressed the topic of Muslim Feminism—whether from theoretical, methodological, or practical perspectives. The time frame was limited to publications from 2003 to 2025, reflecting the increasing relevance of Islamic feminism discourse over the past two decades. The study excluded conference proceedings, unpublished dissertations, and publications that were not available in full-text format.

The primary data source was the Scopus database, accessed on July 14, 2025. Scopus was selected due to its broad coverage and credibility in providing reputable international journal references, ensuring the quality and consistency of selected articles. This database is considered representative for capturing current and relevant academic literature. The article search was systematically conducted through the Scopus database using a combination of keywords aligned with the study's focus on Muslim feminism. The search was executed on July 14, 2025, using keywords placed in the title, abstract, and keyword fields. Boolean strategies were applied to broaden or narrow the search, such as: ("Muslim Feminism" OR "Islamic Feminism") AND ("patriarchy" OR "gender justice"). This combination was selected to capture the diversity of terms used in the literature and ensure comprehensive topical coverage.

The primary keyword used was "Muslim Feminism." The initial search returned 779 articles. To narrow the scope specifically to the term "Muslim Feminism," a screening process was applied to identify articles that explicitly used the phrase. At this stage, only 62 articles met the specific keyword criteria. Beyond this basic keyword filtering, no additional Boolean exploration was conducted to maintain a focused terminological scope as used by authors discussing Muslim feminism.

The selection process followed several rigorous screening stages based on PRISMA principles. Out of the initial 779 articles, 717 were excluded for not using the keyword "Muslim Feminism" explicitly in the title, abstract, or keywords. From the remaining 62 articles, further exclusions were made based on document type: book chapters (11), books (4), review articles (6), conference papers (1), editorials (1), and notes (1) were removed to maintain consistency with peer-reviewed journal standards.

The final screening stage involved language-based exclusion. Articles published in Arabic, French, and Indonesian were excluded, leaving a total of 38 articles written in English and aligned with the topic of Muslim feminism. The data were then categorized into several key themes to facilitate further analysis and establish conceptual linkages among the articles. These themes were used for thematic analysis and visual mapping using VOSviewer software. Thematic clustering was conducted inductively based on the content of the 38 selected articles. The collected data included author names, publication years, journal titles, authors' countries or institutions, keywords, conceptual definitions, methodological approaches, and key findings. These categories were designed to enable both qualitative and quantitative analyses, especially in identifying topic trends and methodological patterns within the literature. Risk of bias assessment was conducted by considering publication quality and document type; only peer-reviewed journal articles were included. Popular writings, editorials, and unpublished academic works were deliberately excluded to ensure the accuracy, objectivity, and validity of the data synthesis.

The effectiveness of the review was measured using two approaches: (1) the frequency of key theme occurrences in the articles, and (2) the analysis of keyword relationships through bibliometric techniques. The combination of thematic and bibliometric analysis

was used to identify discourse directions, topic dominance, and conceptual distribution within Muslim feminism studies. The thematic approach was applied to answer three research questions through manual classification of conceptual narratives across articles. Meanwhile, the bibliometric analysis was conducted using VOSviewer software to generate visualizations of the interconnections among authors, institutions, countries, and keywords. The article selection process was documented systematically following the PRISMA 2020 flow diagram.

To maintain validity and neutrality, the selection and review processes involved two independent researchers. Discrepancies in assessment were resolved through open discussion or consensus. Articles that lacked methodological clarity were rated lower in quality during the final analysis stage. To provide clear direction in this systematic review, the study was designed to answer the following three key research questions: RQ1: Is the exploration of Islamic feminism still a relevant and significant subject for future Islamic academic studies?; RQ2: How have research allocations or thematic trends related to Islamic feminism developed thus far?; RQ3: What are the theoretical and practical implications of Islamic feminism when examined from an Islamic epistemological perspective?

3. Results and Discussion

The results are divided into two main sections: bibliometric-based quantitative findings and thematic synthesis that address the three research questions (RQs). The discussion in this chapter refers to publication trends, keyword and author mapping, as well as conceptual findings that illustrate the development of Muslim Feminism discourse in contemporary Islamic studies. This approach aims not only to map the extent of scholarly development on this topic, but also to uncover how Muslim Feminism is epistemologically positioned as a critique of religion-based patriarchy. The findings presented in this chapter are expected to contribute significantly to the development of a more just, inclusive, and contextually grounded theoretical framework within Islamic and gender studies.

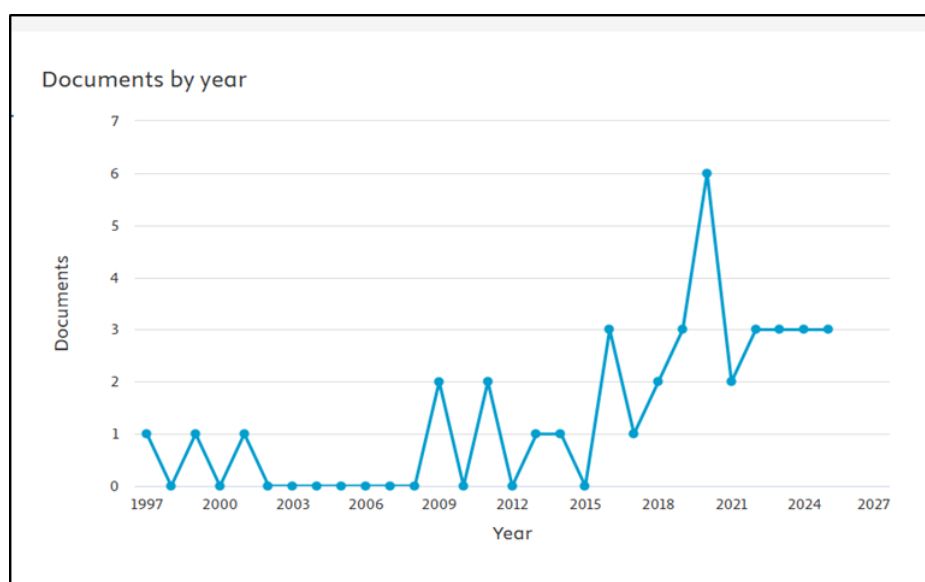


Fig. 1. Number of islamic feminism publication

RQ1: Is the exploration of Islamic feminism still a relevant and significant subject for future academic inquiry in Islamic studies?. The trend of scholarly publications on "Muslim Feminism" shows a fluctuating pattern, yet with a significant increase over the past decade. According to the "Documents by Year" graph, the earliest publication was recorded in 1997, followed by sporadic numbers until the mid-2000s. The first notable surge occurred in 2009

and 2012, each recording two documents. However, since 2016, research activity has shown consistent growth, reaching its peak in 2020 with six publications. This trend may be interpreted as a response to the growing global awareness of gender justice issues within Islam, as well as the rise of religion-based feminist discourses. After 2020, the number of publications has remained relatively stable, ranging between two to three articles per year up to 2025. This consistency suggests that Muslim Feminism is not merely a fleeting academic trend, but has developed into an increasingly established area of focus within Islamic and gender studies. The stability in academic production also reflects that Muslim Feminism has garnered serious attention from the international scholarly community and has contributed to broadening the epistemological discourse of Islam to be more inclusive of women's issues and social justice.

Based on the publication trend graph on the theme of Islamic feminism within Islamic studies from 1997 to 2025, a significant increase is observed beginning in 2015, peaking with six documents in 2019. Although the initial number of publications was limited and fluctuating, the trend has become more stable since 2020, with an average of three documents published annually. This pattern reflects growing academic interest in Islamic feminism as an epistemological approach rooted in Islamic thought, as well as a rising critical awareness of gender justice issues in Islam from a contextual and progressive perspective.

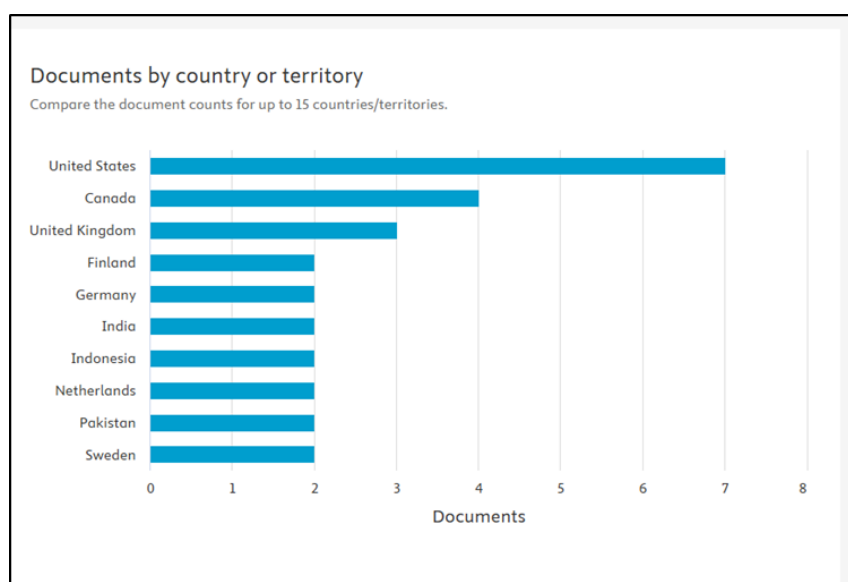


Fig. 2. Number of islamic feminism publication

RQ2: How have existing studies allocated or focused their research on Islamic feminism thus far?. The geographical distribution analysis of publications related to Muslim Feminism reveals that the majority of articles examined in this study originate from Western countries. The United States ranks highest, contributing seven documents, followed by Canada (four documents) and the United Kingdom (three documents). These three countries reflect the dominance of Western academic institutions in producing scholarly literature on this topic. Other countries such as Finland, Germany, India, Indonesia, the Netherlands, Pakistan, and Sweden each contributed two documents. Although the contributions from these countries are relatively limited, the presence of non-Western nations such as Indonesia and Pakistan suggests that the discourse on Muslim Feminism is also evolving within majority-Muslim contexts, albeit on a smaller scale. These findings indicate that studies on Muslim Feminism remain heavily influenced by the frameworks and knowledge production of the Global North. This raises critical questions regarding representation, scholarly authority, and the potential for deconstructing dominant narratives through more contextual, community-based epistemologies rooted in Muslim-majority societies themselves.

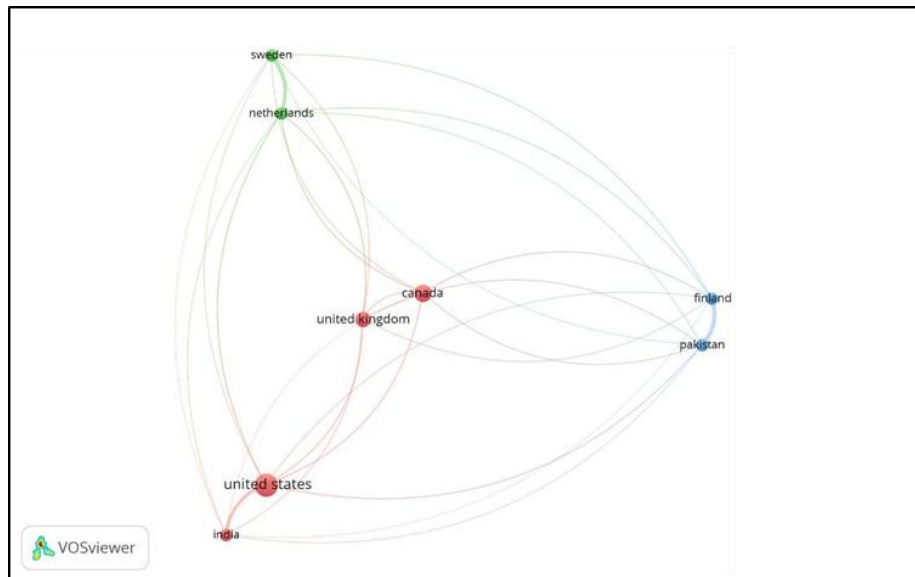


Fig. 3. Network country visualitation

Based on the international collaboration network visualization generated using VOSviewer, it is evident that research on Islamic feminism as an epistemological approach within Islamic studies involves active contributions from multiple countries, with a strong dominance from Global North nations such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the Netherlands. The United States appears as a central node with strong connections to India, the United Kingdom, and Canada, reflecting a high intensity of knowledge production and extensive academic networking. Additionally, the cluster formed by the Netherlands and Sweden indicates close regional collaboration, while Finland and Pakistan form a separate cluster, signaling contributions to the discourse from more geographically diverse regions. This visualization affirms that Islamic feminism has garnered global attention, not only in Muslim-majority countries but also within Western academic environments. The cross-national interconnectedness reflects the role of Islamic feminism as a transnational dialogical space, where ideas of gender justice in Islam are tested and developed within a collaborative and mutually influential global context.

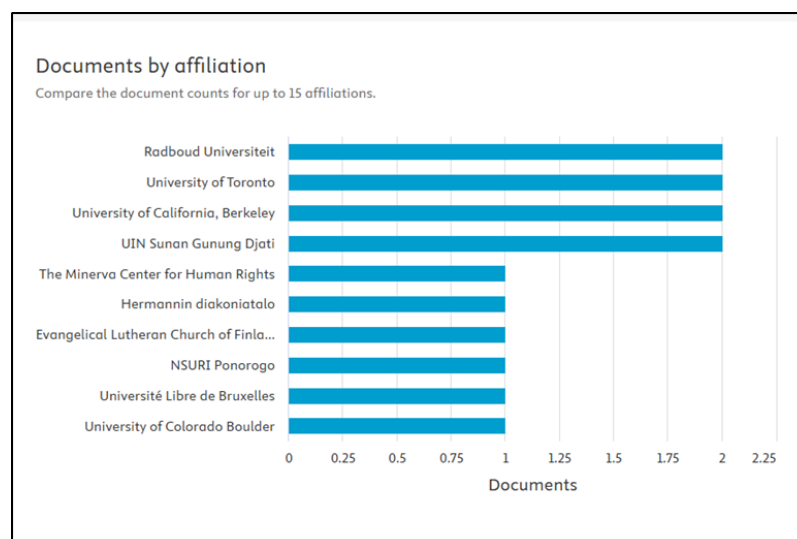


Fig. 4. Network by affiliation

Based on the *Documents by Affiliation* graph, academic contributions to the study of Islamic feminism as an epistemological approach originate from institutions across various countries, including both Western nations and Muslim-majority countries. Four institutions

recorded the highest number of documents—Radboud University (Netherlands), the University of Toronto (Canada), the University of California, Berkeley (United States), and UIN Sunan Gunung Djati (Indonesia)—each contributing two publications. This indicates a relatively balanced distribution of research interest between Western and Muslim institutions, suggesting that Islamic feminism has evolved into a discourse that transcends geographical and ideological boundaries.

Meanwhile, other institutions such as the Minerva Center for Human Rights, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, NSURI Ponorogo, and Université Libre de Bruxelles each contributed one publication. This reflects the diversity of perspectives—from universities, human rights organizations, religious institutions, to Islamic boarding schools (pesantren)—in exploring issues of gender justice in Islam. These findings reinforce the position of Islamic feminism as an interdisciplinary field of study that attracts attention not only from scholars of Islamic studies but also from interfaith communities, humanist institutions, and progressive gender thinkers across the globe.

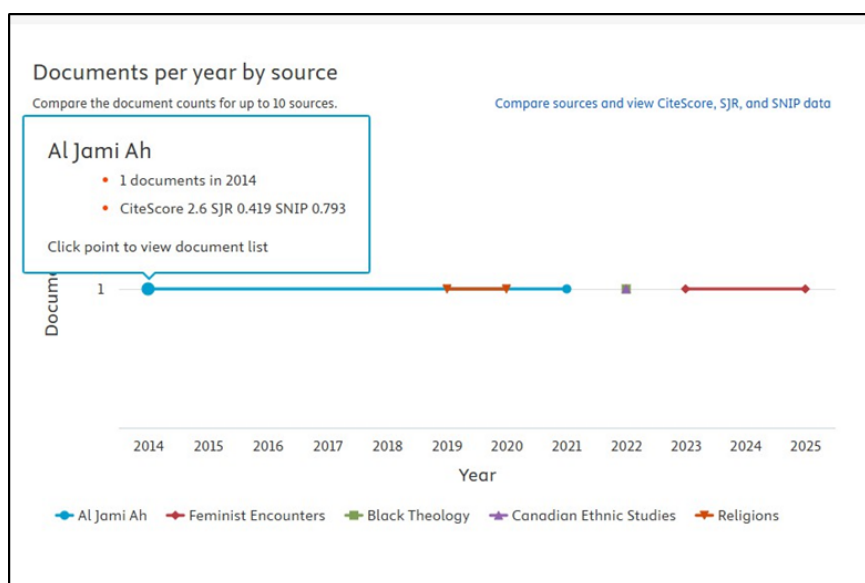


Fig. 5. Number of article by source

The figure presented in Figure 5 illustrates the distribution of publications by journal source from 2014 to 2025, indicating that studies on Islamic feminism are disseminated across various interdisciplinary journals. Notably, *Al Jami'ah* emerged as one of the pioneering journals in publishing on this topic as early as 2014, signaling the active engagement of Islamic studies-based journals in articulating discourses on gender justice rooted in Islamic values. In subsequent years, publications have also appeared in journals such as *Feminist Encounters*, *Black Theology*, *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, and *Religions*, suggesting that the topic is not confined to Islamic frameworks alone, but is also gaining traction within broader discourses of global feminism, liberation theology, ethnic studies, and religious studies.

This pattern highlights the plurality of approaches employed in analyzing Islamic feminism, encompassing theological, sociological, and cultural perspectives. It further affirms that Islamic feminism is not an exclusive discourse confined to Muslim communities, but has become part of a broader international academic conversation that bridges religious traditions with critical gender theory. Thus, the cross-journal distribution of publications reflects the significance of interdisciplinary approaches in comprehending the complexity of Islamic feminism as both an intellectual movement and a socially contextual praxis.

Figure 6 presents the distribution of publications based on contributing authors in the field of Islamic feminism. It shows that the top four contributors—Glas, S.; Munawar, S.; Nurmila, N.; and Ong, A.—each have authored two publications, indicating their relatively significant engagement with the topic. Other authors, such as Alaoui, F.Z.C.; Alexander, A.;

and Edwards, E.L., have each contributed a single publication. This suggests that, while authorship is diverse, no single scholar or a small group dominates the production of literature in this area. Instead, there is a collective contribution from individuals with varied geographical and disciplinary backgrounds.

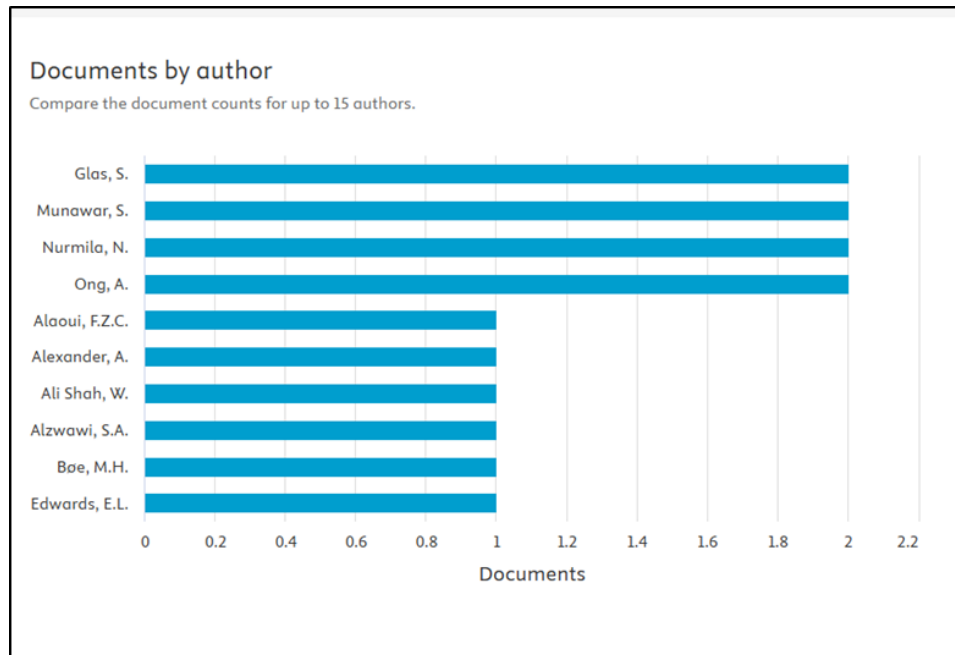


Fig. 6. Network country visualitation

This finding opens up space for the discussion that Islamic feminism is an inclusive discourse, welcoming multivocal approaches. The presence of authors from both the Global North and Global South reflects that the reinterpretation of gender relations within Islam is not an exclusive intellectual project but rather a cross-national and interdisciplinary endeavor. Such diversity reinforces the position of Islamic feminism as a developing alternative epistemology that actively responds to both local and global challenges related to gender justice and scholarly authority in Islam.

Table 3. Distribution of authors in the study of islamofeminism based on figure 6 description

No	Author	Number of Publications	Remarks
1	Glas, S.	2	First Author
2	Munawar, S.	2	First Author
3	Nurmila, N.	2	First Author
4	Ong, A.	2	First Author
5	Alaoui, F.Z.C.	1	Co-authors
6	Alexander, A.	1	Co-authors
7	Ali, K.	1	Co-authors
8	Badran, M.	1	Co-authors
9	Buitelaar, M.	1	Co-authors
10	Chaudhry, A.	1	Co-authors
11	Edwards, E.L.	1	Co-authors
12	Wadud, A.	1	Co-authors

RQ 3: What are the theoretical and practical implications of Islamic feminism from the perspective of Islamic epistemology? Figure 7 presents a keyword co-occurrence visualization generated using VOSviewer, illustrating thematic interconnections among concepts in the literature on Islamic feminism based on their appearance between 2016 and 2024. Keywords such as “Muslim feminism”, “Islam”, “feminism”, and “Islamism” emerge as central nodes with high connectivity, indicating that these four terms constitute the core of an interconnected discourse within the study of Islamic feminism. The prominence of other

keywords such as intersectionality, secular feminism, cultural identity, gender disparity, and Islamic modernism further reflects the broadening of debates—ranging from theoretical dimensions to socio-political praxis. These interconnected themes suggest that Islamic feminism is not merely concerned with theological interpretations, but also engages with contemporary issues of identity, justice, and reform within Muslim societies.

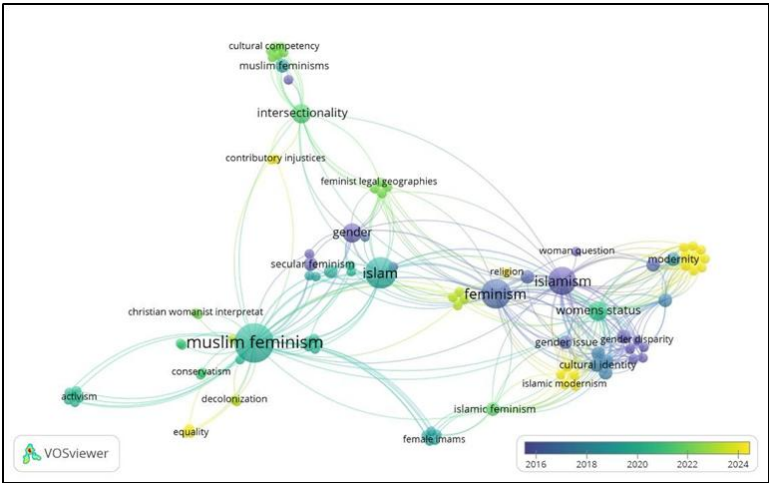


Fig. 7. Co-occurrence visualization generated using VOSviewer

Visually, the colors used in Figure 7 represent the chronological evolution of the discourse. The dominance of yellow and light green hues on the right side of the visualization indicates that keywords such as modernity, women’s status, and gender issue have appeared more prominently in recent literature (2022–2024), signaling a shift in scholarly attention toward contemporary and global themes. In contrast, darker green and blue clusters around terms like Muslim feminism, Islam, and feminism suggest that these foundational concepts have remained central to the debate since earlier years.

Table 4. Keyword by outhers

Rank	Keyword	Occurrences	Total link strength
1	Muslim Feminism	16	76
2	Islam	10	42
3	Feminism	9	80
4	Islamism	8	75
5	India	6	55
6	Womens Status	4	51
7	Intersectionality	4	30
8	Gender	4	25
9	Gender Issue	2	25
10	Islamic feminism	2	19

This visualization reinforces the idea that Islamic feminism is not solely understood as a reinterpretation of religious texts, but rather as a complex epistemological field where debates on modernity, cultural identity, secularism, and Muslim women’s agency converge. Islamic feminism thus emerges as a dynamic space that bridges diverse approaches—from normative Islam, critical feminist theory, to the lived socio-cultural practices of the global Muslim community.

Based on the keyword ranking data obtained from the bibliometric analysis using VOSviewer, “Muslim feminism” ranks highest with 16 occurrences and a total link strength of 76, confirming its position as the most dominant and widely connected discourse node in the literature. This is followed by “feminism” (9 occurrences; link strength 80) and “Islamism” (8 occurrences; 75), highlighting the intense dialectic between feminist discourse, Muslim feminist thought, and political Islam within the broader framework of gender and Islamic studies.

The keyword “Islam” (10 occurrences; link strength 42) also emerges as a significant node that connects key discourses. Interestingly, “India” ranks fifth (6 occurrences; link strength 55), indicating that the socio-political and geographical context of the country constitutes a critical site for the exploration of contemporary Islamic feminism. Other keywords such as “women’s status”, “intersectionality”, and “gender issue” reflect an increasing focus on structural concerns and the intersectional experiences of Muslim women.

Notably, the term “Islamic feminism”, which is conceptually and semantically close to “Muslim feminism”, appears far less frequently (2 occurrences; link strength 19). This may suggest that the literature tends to prefer the term “Muslim feminism” to emphasize subjective experiences and socio-cultural identities rather than solely normative-religious approaches. These findings illustrate that current Islamic feminist discourse is broad, interdisciplinary, and increasingly contextual in addressing the evolving socio-political and religious dynamics.

3.1 Normative pillars in the islamofeminism discourse: A synthesis of slr findings

Based on the results of a systematic literature review (SLR) and bibliometric analysis of Muslim feminism literature, it was found that the development of Islamic feminism is rooted not only in the reinterpretation of religious texts but also framed within a normative Islamic value system that emphasizes justice and progressiveness. Three main pillars—*Musawah* (equality), *al-‘Adl* (justice), and *Maslahah* (public good or collective welfare)—serve as the epistemological foundation for shaping the direction and character of contemporary Islamic feminism (Wadud, 1999; Badran, 2009; Mir-Hosseini, 2015).

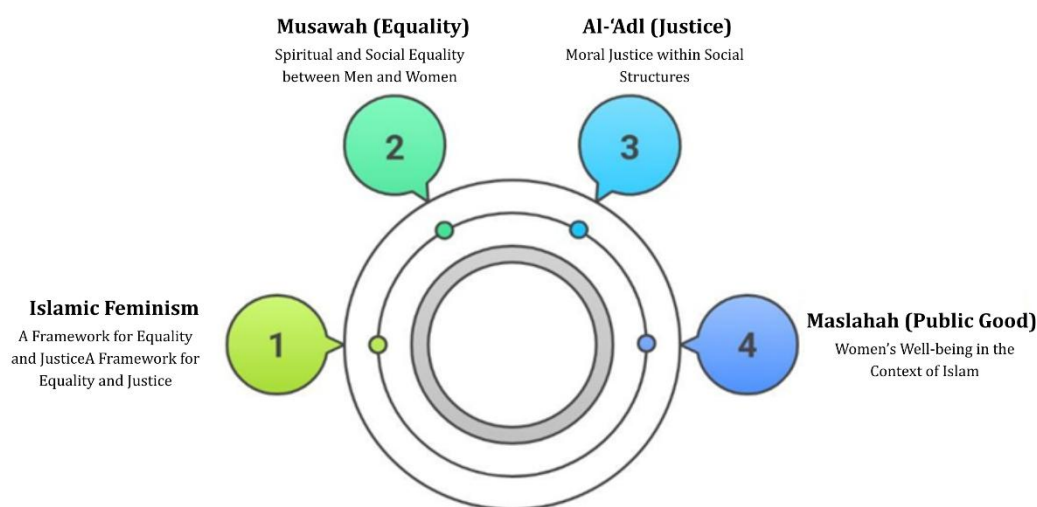


Fig. 8. Normative pillars of Islamic feminism

First, *Musawah* (Equality). This pillar underscores spiritual and social equality between men and women, which has emerged as a central theme in the majority of literature on Muslim feminism. This is evident in the dominance of keywords such as gender, women’s status, and intersectionality, alongside the emphasis on women’s lived experiences as complete religious subjects. Several articles emphasize that equality is not only understood in formal terms but also as recognition of women’s agency in both theological and public spheres (Al-Sharmani, 2024; Erwani & Siregar, 2025). The growing body of literature from countries such as Indonesia, Pakistan, and India further illustrates how the idea of *Musawah* has become a globally contextual discourse (Zia, 2009).

Second, *al-‘Adl* (Justice). The concept of justice forms a crucial foundation that distinguishes Islamic feminism from secular feminism. In this review, justice is understood as a moral principle embedded in both social structures and religious interpretation.

Articles within the SLR dataset explicitly highlight how patriarchal interpretations of Islamic family law have resulted in gender disparities that are ethically and practically unjust. Scholars such as Goudarzi (2025) offer a reinterpretation of female political leadership in Shia Islam as an epistemic resistance to masculinized constructs of authority. This indicates that Islamic feminism advocates for al-‘adl not merely as a normative value but also as a tool for structural critique (Goudarzi, 2025).

Third, *Maslahah* (Public Good). This pillar emphasizes the collective well-being of women within Muslim societies. The SLR findings reveal that Muslim feminism literature is not solely normative but also practical—particularly in areas such as religious education, female leadership, and sociopolitical participation. Research emerging from institutions like Radboud University, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati, and the University of California demonstrates that the Islamic feminist approach is increasingly being applied in policy and educational spaces (Insani et al., 2024; Hilal et al., 2024). Hence, *maslahah* functions as an operational principle that connects Islamic values to contemporary social imperatives.

These three pillars do not stand in isolation but are interrelated and mutually reinforcing as the epistemological architecture of Islamic feminism. Within the context of this SLR, they are not merely normative ideals but have been empirically utilized as a conceptual framework across diverse academic disciplines and geographical regions. *Musawah* embodies the spirit of emancipation, al-‘adl articulates justice as an ethical foundation, and *maslahah* defines the practical direction of the gender justice movement in Islam. Based on these foundations, Islamic feminism emerges not only as a form of critique but also as a theoretical and practical proposition for contemporary Islamic scholarship and human development.

4. Conclusions

Based on a systematic review of 38 articles retrieved from the Scopus database and a bibliometric analysis conducted using VOSviewer, it can be concluded that Muslim feminism is a continually evolving discourse, both quantitatively and conceptually. This discourse emerges not only as a response to patriarchy in Islamic interpretation but also as an epistemological effort to construct a just, inclusive, and contextually grounded academic paradigm. The predominance of the term “Muslim feminism” over “Islamic feminism” in the data further indicates a tendency within the literature to emphasize social experiences and cultural identity rather than merely normative approaches.

The global dissemination of this literature reflects the multivocal and transnational character of Islamic feminism. Contributions from scholars in both the Global North and South demonstrate that this is not an exclusive intellectual project but rather a cross-cultural agenda that continuously adapts to socio-political and religious dynamics. Therefore, Muslim feminism holds a significant position as both a theoretical and practical framework in the pursuit of *musawah* (equality), *‘adl* (justice), *‘ilm* (knowledge), and *maslahah* (public good) within contemporary Islamic studies.

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