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MAPPING THE RESEARCH LANDSCAPE AND COLLABORATION NETWORKS IN WAQF KNOWLEDGE: A BIBLIOMETRIC STUDY

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Abstract

Waqf knowledge has gained increasing scholarly attention due to its vital role in fostering public understanding, promoting effective governance, and ensuring the sustainable development of waqf institutions. Despite this growing interest, the intellectual landscape and collaborative dynamics within waqf knowledge research remain underexplored. This study aims to map and visualise the research landscape of waqf knowledge through a bibliometric analysis, using data from the Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus databases, covering the period from 2008 to 2025. Using tools such as RStudio and Biblioshiny, the analysis examines thematic structures, research distribution via treemaps, identifies key sources and prolific authors, and explores collaboration networks among researchers. The findings show that waqf knowledge research focuses on themes such as “Malaysia”, “waqf”, and “developing countries”, while topics like “blockchain” are less explored. The Journal of Islamic Accounting and Business Research emerges as a key publication in this field, whereas journals such as *Belleten* and *Humanomics* contribute less frequently, reflecting a concentration of research in a few main outlets. Sukmana, R. and Mohamad, N. are identified as leading authors, while collaboration networks highlight strong clusters, particularly around Laila, N. and Mahphoth, M., with other groups being smaller and more isolated. Identifying influential authors and journals offers valuable guidance for researchers seeking collaboration and publication opportunities. Overall, this study provides a comprehensive map of waqf knowledge research, offering insights to inform future academic pursuits and practical strategies for advancing waqf knowledge. Future research should incorporate keyword co-occurrence and citation analyses to reveal deeper thematic connections and conceptual developments within the field.

Keywords: Waqf Knowledge, Waqf Education, Waqf Literacy, Waqf Awareness, Bibliometric Analysis.

1. INTRODUCTION

Waqf, an Islamic endowment system, has played a vital role in the socio-economic development of Muslim societies for centuries (Çizakça, 2000). Based on principles of charity and sustainability, waqf has been instrumental in funding education, healthcare, and public welfare (Sadeq, 2002). Academic interest in waqf has gradually increased, resulting in a diverse body of research that explores its historical significance, current applications, and future potential. This research also emphasises themes of sustainability, including financial viability, community empowerment, innovative models, environmental sustainability, and governance frameworks (Baharin et al., 2025). However, a comprehensive analysis of the intellectual landscape and collaboration networks within waqf research remains limited.

Bibliometric analysis is a quantitative research method that examines the impact and structure of scholarly literature using statistical and computational tools (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). By analysing publications, citations, and co-authorship networks, this approach helps identify the

most influential works, prolific researchers, and dominant research areas. In the context of waqf, bibliometric analysis can reveal how academic discourse has evolved, which regions contribute most actively to the field, and how interdisciplinary collaborations shape the understanding of waqf (Uluyol et al., 2021).

This study aims to conduct a bibliometric analysis of waqf knowledge to systematically map the research landscape and collaboration networks among authors. By evaluating these elements, the findings help identify research gaps, emerging trends, and opportunities for future exploration. Additionally, Abd Aziz et al. (2025) assert that understanding the dynamics of scholarly output can assist policymakers, academics, and practitioners in aligning their efforts to enhance waqf's role in sustainable development and socio-economic progress.

The findings of this study are intended to guide researchers, policymakers, and practitioners in understanding the trajectory of waqf research and its broader implications. As digital technologies and new financial tools reshape charitable giving, it is crucial to examine how waqf is addressed in contemporary academic discourse (Khalim et al., 2025). By mapping influential sources and key areas of focus, this study provides a foundation for scholars to build upon existing knowledge and develop new perspectives on waqf management, governance, and innovation.

In summary, this bibliometric analysis of waqf offers a roadmap for researchers, policymakers, and institutions engaged in Islamic philanthropy and socio-economic development. By systematically analysing the existing body of knowledge, the study highlights the progress made in waqf research and sets the stage for future advancements in the field. The insights derived from this analysis contribute to a deeper understanding of waqf's role in contemporary society and support its future development in both academic and practical contexts.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study extracted data from the Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus databases (Donthu et al., 2021). These databases were selected due to their credibility in providing a wide range of peer-reviewed articles, journals, and conference proceedings (Singh & Rejeb, 2024). Data were collected by searching for publications using the keyword waqf in combination with education, knowledge, awareness, and literacy. The search queries used to generate the results were as follows:

i) WoS database search query:

((TS=(waqf knowledge)) OR TS=(waqf education)) OR TS=(waqf literacy)) OR TS=(waqf awareness)

ii) Scopus database search query:

TITLE-ABS-KEY (waqf) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (knowledge) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (education) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (literacy) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (awareness)

From the search results, 205 published articles were retrieved from the WoS database and 293 from the Scopus database. The bibliometric data from all 498 articles were downloaded in BibTeX format and subsequently cleaned for analysis. To prepare the data, the datasets were merged and duplicate articles removed, resulting in a final dataset of 367 unique publications, as illustrated in Figure 1. The selected publications span the period from 2008 to 2025. The search

was limited to English-language publications to ensure consistency in textual analysis. Bibliometric analysis was conducted using the R Tool package (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017) and visualised using Biblioshiny in RStudio. The R Tool package is designed to work primarily with WoS and Scopus data. The web-based Biblioshiny application developed by Aria and Cuccurullo (2017) can be run directly from a browser, making it accessible for users without programming experience (Moral-Muñoz et al., 2020).

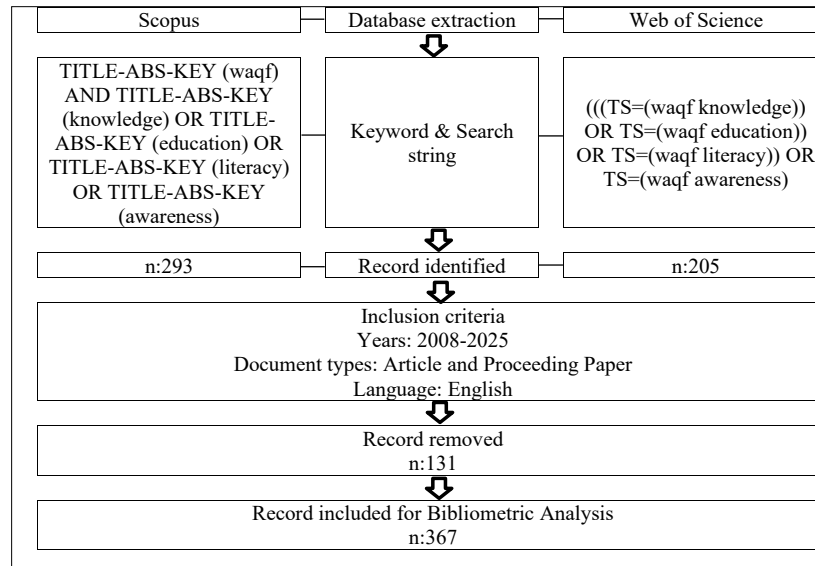


Figure 1. Flow diagram of the search strategy

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Thematic Map

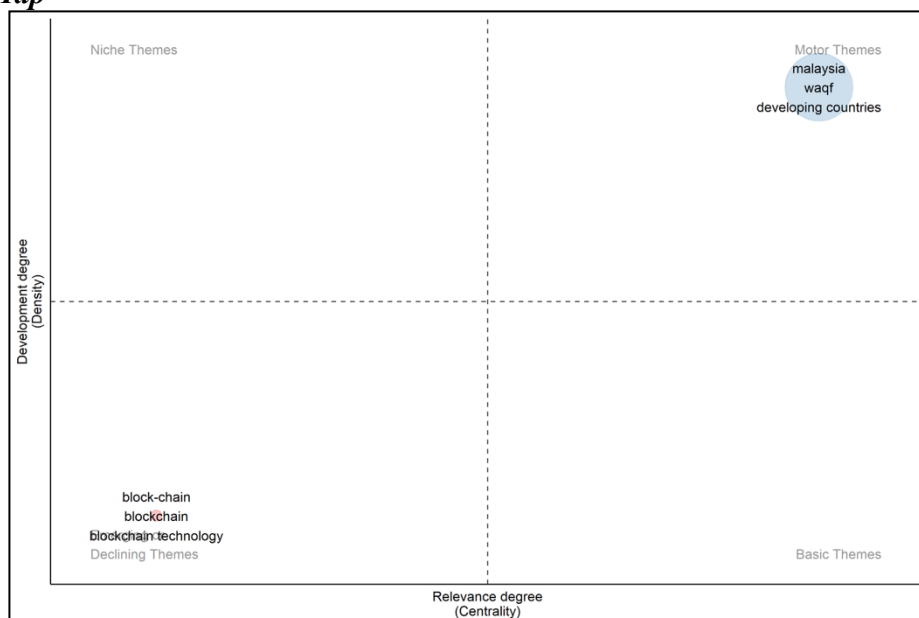


Figure 2. Thematic map

This thematic map presents an analysis of research themes based on two dimensions: degree of development (density) on the vertical axis and degree of relevance (centrality) on the horizontal axis. The plot is divided into four quadrants, each representing a different type of theme: motor themes (top-right), niche themes (top-left), basic themes (bottom-right), and declining themes

(bottom-left). The placement of keywords within these quadrants reflects their significance and maturity within the studied research field.

The Motor Themes quadrant (top-right) contains the most developed and influential topics in the research landscape. In this plot, the key themes in this quadrant are Malaysia, waqf, and developing countries, forming a cluster characterised by high density and centrality. This indicates that research related to waqf (Islamic endowment) in Malaysia and its role in developing countries is well-established, frequently studied, and interconnected with various research areas (Kalbani et al., 2025). The large size of the bubble further suggests strong academic engagement and substantial contributions to the field.

In contrast, the Declining Themes quadrant (bottom-left) includes topics such as blockchain, block-chain, and blockchain technology. These terms appear at the lowest levels of density and centrality, suggesting that their relevance within the research domain is minimal or diminishing. Despite global interest in blockchain technology, its representation in this thematic analysis appears weak, indicating either a lack of integration with dominant themes or a decline in research activity related to waqf and blockchain within this specific study (Abu-Husin et al., 2025). Abu-Husin et al. (2025) also conclude that this declining trend is influenced by the limited number of blockchain-related publications in Islamic finance indexed in the Scopus database.

Although blockchain technology offers considerable benefits to waqf management by enhancing transparency, security, and accountability, its adoption faces challenges such as regulatory hurdles, technological complexities, and limited collaboration between blockchain developers and Islamic finance experts (Mohaiyadin et al., 2022). Despite its potential to revolutionize waqf practices, blockchain integration in waqf management remains limited and requires more interdisciplinary research and supportive legal frameworks to achieve widespread implementation and maximize its impact. Existing studies are largely conceptual, with practical adoption in Islamic social finance still in the early stages.

Notably, no themes appear in the Niche Themes (top-left) or Basic Themes (bottom-right) quadrants. This suggests that the research field is primarily concentrated on the well-developed and influential themes of Malaysia and waqf, while other potential or emerging areas have yet to gain significant momentum. The absence of niche and basic themes may indicate a concentrated research landscape, where dominant topics overshadow exploratory or foundational studies.

Treemap

The treemap visualisation categorises various topics based on their frequency of occurrence, represented by the size of the boxes and the associated percentages. The largest categories, Malaysia and waqf, each account for 5% of the total, indicating their prominence in the dataset. This aligns with the findings of Misbah et al. (2022), who noted that Malaysia ranks as the most productive country in waqf research. Malaysia's prominence is consistent with its role as a global Islamic finance hub, hosting numerous academic centres, conferences, and policy initiatives that promote Shariah-compliant finance (Judijanto et al., 2024). Following these are other notable topics such as blockchain technology, developing countries, finance, blockchain, microfinance, and poverty, each representing 3% of the dataset. This reflects a strong research focus on themes related to regional development, financial systems, and socio-economic issues (Alaeddin et al., 2021).

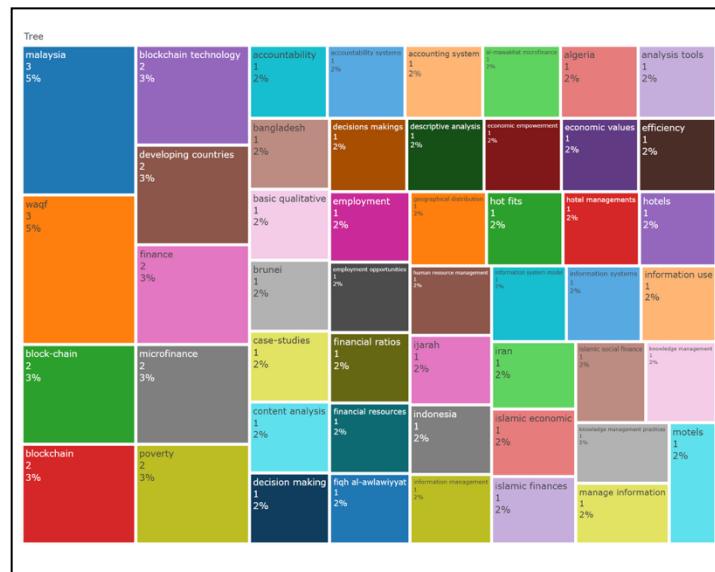


Figure 3. Treemap visualisation of thematic keywords

For the medium-sized categories, each accounting for 2%, a wide array of specific topics is represented, including accountability, economic values, Islamic finances, and hotel management. This suggests a nuanced exploration of sector-specific applications of waqf, particularly in areas such as hospitality and economic empowerment (Salleh et al., 2023). These subthemes offer a more detailed insight into niche areas of study. For instance, the inclusion of topics such as blockchain and Islamic social finance reflects a growing interest in innovative financial systems and their integration with traditional frameworks. According to Abu-Husin et al. (2025), the number of publications on blockchain in Islamic finance increased significantly in 2022.

Smaller, yet methodologically significant themes—such as knowledge management, content analysis, and decision-making (also at 2%)—highlight the analytical depth of recent waqf literature. These topics emphasise the role of structured knowledge processes, systematic review methods, and evidence-based policymaking in advancing waqf research (Laluddin et al., 2021). The geographic scope of the dataset, featuring countries such as Bangladesh, Brunei, and Iran, illustrates the regional diversification of waqf studies, echoing recent calls for more comparative and context-sensitive analyses across Muslim-majority countries (Manshor et al., 2025).

Overall, the treemap underscores a conceptual landscape that is both diverse and interconnected. With Malaysia and waqf as conceptual anchors, the dataset reveals strong thematic links to financial technology, poverty alleviation, and regional development. The integration of technological, socio-economic, and governance perspectives in waqf research demonstrates a dynamic shift towards interdisciplinary and collaborative inquiry, as supported by recent bibliometric studies (Salleh et al., 2023).

Most Relevant Sources

Figure 4 presents an analysis of the most relevant sources in the research field, ranked by the number of documents published. The x-axis represents the number of documents, while the y-axis lists various academic journals and sources. Each data point is displayed as a bubble, with larger and darker bubbles indicating a higher number of publications.

The Journal of Islamic Accounting and Business Research emerges as the most significant source, with 16 published documents, making it the leading contributor to the field. This is followed closely by the Global Journal Al-Thaqafah (15 documents) and the ISRA International Journal

of Islamic Finance (14 documents), both of which play a substantial role in the dissemination of waqf-related research. Other highly relevant journals include the Journal of Islamic Marketing (12 documents) and the International Journal of Islamic and Middle Eastern Finance and Management (10 documents).

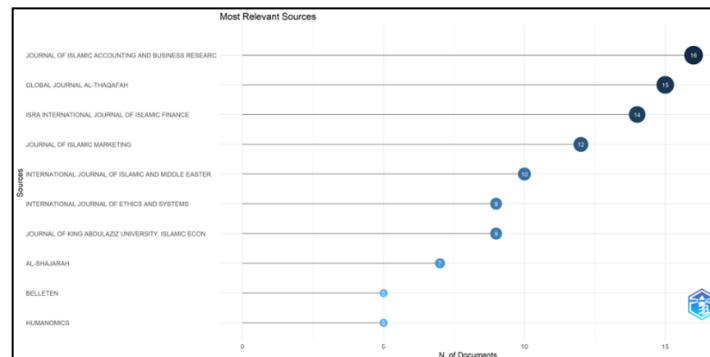


Figure 4. Most relevant sources

Mid-tier sources in terms of publication volume include the International Journal of Ethics and Systems and the Journal of King Abdulaziz University: Islamic Economics, each contributing nine documents. Additionally, Al-Shajarah (seven documents) provides a moderate contribution to the research field. These journals reflect sustained, albeit slightly lower, levels of academic activity compared to the top-tier sources.

At the lower end of the ranking, Belleten and Humanomics each contribute five documents. While these journals remain relevant to the research domain, their lower publication numbers suggest they are not primary outlets for waqf-related research. Overall, the plot highlights that journals focusing on Islamic finance, marketing, and ethics are central to the field, with a noticeable concentration of studies published in a few leading sources.

Most Relevant Authors

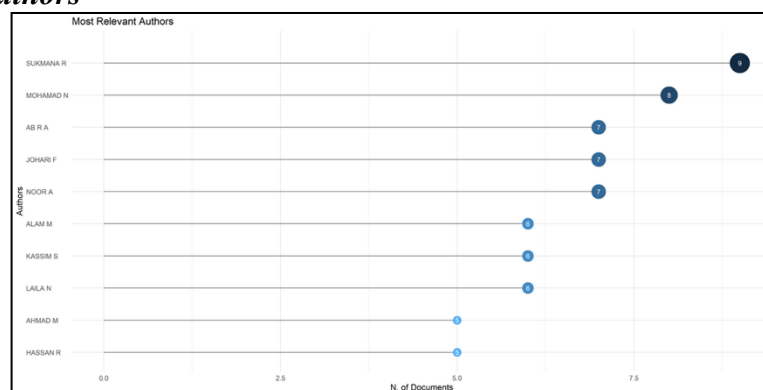


Figure 5. Most relevant authors

Figure 5 provides a visual representation of the most relevant authors based on the number of documents they have contributed. The horizontal axis shows the number of documents, while the vertical axis lists the authors, ranked in descending order of contributions. The plot highlights the dominance of certain authors, with contributions ranging from five to nine documents.

Sukmana R is the most prolific author, contributing nine documents and standing out significantly among the others. Mohamad N follows with eight documents, demonstrating a slightly lower but still notable level of output. AB R A, Johari F, and Noor A each contributed seven documents,

placing them jointly in third position. These authors collectively represent a significant portion of the total contributions, indicating their central role in the dataset.

Alam M, Kassim S, and Laila N each contributed six documents, forming the next tier of contributors. While their contributions are slightly lower than those of the top-tier authors, they remain substantial and reflect active involvement. Ahmad M and Hassan R, with five documents each, round out the list of relevant authors. Although their counts are the lowest on the chart, they still play a meaningful role in the dataset.

Overall, the chart reveals a clear hierarchy in the number of contributions among the authors, with Sukmana R and Mohamad N leading the group. The clustering of authors with similar document counts (seven and six documents) suggests a relatively balanced level of participation among contributors following the top two authors. This analysis helps identify key contributors and provides insights into the distribution of effort within the dataset.

Collaboration Network between Authors

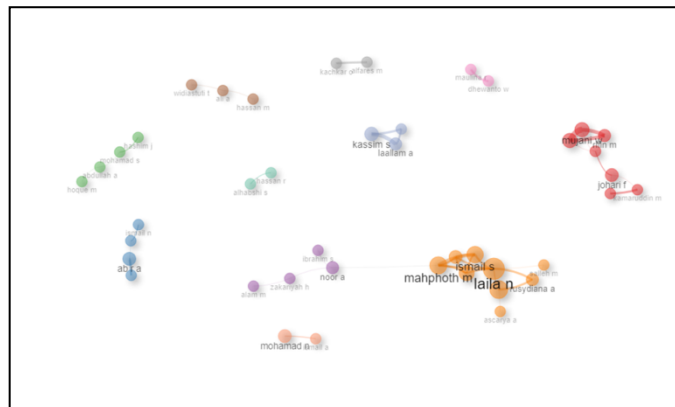


Figure 6. Collaboration network between authors

Figure 6 represents a collaboration network among researchers in the waqf knowledge research area. The network graph visualises the relationships or collaborations between individuals, represented by nodes that are connected by edges. Each node signifies an individual author, and edges between the nodes indicate co-authorship relationships. The nodes are grouped into clusters, indicated by their geographical distances. Different clusters are colour-coded, suggesting distinct research groups or thematic collaborations within the academic field. This also indicates that individuals within each cluster are more closely related to each other. The size of the nodes varies, indicating the significance or centrality of a particular node in the network, with larger nodes denoting more prominent individuals in terms of connections or influence. It also shows that some authors have a higher degree of collaboration compared to others.

From the graph, the orange cluster is the most prominent in the network, centred around Laila N and Mahphoth M. The dense connections within this cluster suggest strong collaboration or interactions among these individuals, likely driving significant contributions to waqf knowledge research. Although Laila N is not classified as the most relevant author in this research area, she has a larger collaboration network with other authors than Sukmana R, who is the most relevant author. Additionally, the connections between this cluster and neighbouring nodes such as Rusydiana A, Ascarya A, and Saleh M suggest some level of interaction with other smaller groups.

Other clusters in the network, such as the red, green, and blue groups, are relatively smaller and more isolated. Each represents a group of researchers who collaborate primarily within their circle, with minimal interaction with other groups. This separation suggests specialised subfields or regional research collaborations. The red cluster, for example, revolves around Mujani W and Johari F, with fewer connections extending outward. The green and blue clusters are similarly compact, indicating smaller, possibly more specialised groups with fewer external interactions. These isolated clusters may represent subgroups or teams working independently or focusing on niche areas.

Finally, some nodes, such as those in the grey and pink clusters, have minimal connections, suggesting supplementary roles or limited interactions with the broader network. These nodes might represent individuals or subgroups that are less central to the overall structure. This could be due to niche research topics, early-stage collaborations, or regional research constraints. The overall visualisation highlights a hierarchical network, with certain nodes playing central roles in bridging connections between different groups, while others maintain isolated or specialised positions. Expanding intergroup collaborations could enhance the exchange of knowledge and innovation within this academic field.

4. IMPLICATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The study offers valuable insights into the current landscape of waqf research by mapping key thematic areas, leading authors, and collaboration networks. It reveals that research collaboration in waqf has grown steadily, yet it remains concentrated within certain regional hubs such as Malaysia and Indonesia (Rahman et al., 2025). Only a few prominent authors serve as essential connectors within the collaborative network, suggesting significant potential to expand and strengthen partnerships across countries and disciplines. Broadening collaboration would facilitate enhanced knowledge sharing and foster innovation in waqf literacy, ultimately benefiting policymakers and waqf institutions that strive to develop more effective literacy programmes and governance strategies.

For future research, expanding bibliometric analyses to include keyword co-occurrence and thematic evolution over time is recommended. These approaches would provide deeper insights into emerging research trends, identify knowledge gaps, and explore potential interdisciplinary linkages within waqf studies. Such comprehensive analyses could enrich the understanding of waqf's evolving role in socio-economic development and sustainable governance, supporting the design of targeted interventions that maximise its socio-economic and developmental benefits.

The study provides important insights into the current state of waqf research by mapping thematic areas, key authors, and collaboration networks. It shows that scholarly collaboration has grown but remains mainly concentrated within specific regions, with few prominent authors serving as key connectors. This highlights a significant opportunity to strengthen partnerships across countries and disciplines, which would enhance knowledge sharing and innovation in waqf literacy. For future research, expanding bibliometric analyses to include keyword co-occurrence and thematic evolution will offer a deeper understanding of emerging trends, identify knowledge gaps, and explore interdisciplinary links within waqf studies.

5. CONCLUSION

The bibliometric analysis of waqf research provides a comprehensive overview of the field's intellectual landscape, highlighting key thematic areas, prominent authors, and collaboration

networks shaping the discipline. By concentrating on English-language publications, the study effectively maps the development of waqf research across key regions, identifies influential authors, and visualises collaboration patterns, revealing how scholarly efforts are clustered predominantly in certain countries. Consequently, this methodological choice amplifies the accuracy and clarity of the bibliometric review, guiding future research directions and fostering enhanced global academic cooperation in waqf. The study reveals a growing academic interest in waqf, with research expanding across disciplines such as Islamic finance, governance, and socio-economic development (Mahadi & Yusuf, 2025). The increasing number of publications and citations demonstrates the relevance of waqf as a subject of scholarly inquiry, particularly in regions where Islamic philanthropy plays a crucial role in public welfare (Abd Aziz et al., 2025).

A key finding of this analysis is the identification of dominant research themes, including waqf governance, legal frameworks, economic contributions, and the integration of modern financial tools such as blockchain. Additionally, the study highlights collaborative networks among researchers, showcasing the global interest in waqf and the necessity for interdisciplinary approaches. These insights provide a foundation for future research, emphasising the need for innovative strategies to enhance the efficiency and sustainability of waqf institutions.

The analysis shows that while interest in waqf literacy has been growing, research efforts remain somewhat fragmented, with limited global collaboration and several underexplored topics. These insights not only help scholars navigate the existing body of knowledge but also highlight opportunities for future studies to bridge gaps, foster interdisciplinary collaborations, and advance practical applications in waqf management and literacy initiatives.

The analysis also underscores the role of academic journals and institutions in shaping waqf research, with certain sources emerging as key platforms for publishing influential studies. Understanding these publication patterns can help researchers navigate the field more effectively and identify opportunities for impactful contributions (Baharin et al., 2025). Moreover, the increasing application of digital tools and financial technologies in waqf management signals a new direction for research and practical implementation.

In conclusion, this bibliometric study serves as a valuable resource for academics, policymakers, and practitioners interested in waqf and Islamic philanthropy. By mapping the evolution of waqf research and identifying critical gaps, this study contributes to the ongoing discourse on improving waqf's role in sustainable development. Overall, this study provides a clearer understanding of the intellectual structure and development trends within waqf literacy research, serving as a valuable foundation for both academics and practitioners.

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