

BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS OF CHARACTER EDUCATION FROM AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE: PUBLICATION TRENDS, CITATIONS, AND GOOGLE SCHOLAR KEYWORD CLUSTERS

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Abstract. This study aims to map the scientific publication landscape on character education from an Islamic perspective using a Google Scholar–based bibliometric approach. Data were collected through Publish or Perish using the query (“character education” OR “moral education”) AND Islam for the 2015–2025 publication period, exported in RIS format, and analyzed in VOSviewer to generate keyword co-occurrence maps. The dataset consists of 500 documents with 18,309 total citations, averaging 1,664.45 citations per year and 36.62 citations per document. Citation impact indicators show an h-index of 62 and a g-index of 103, and most documents have received at least one citation (488 documents with ≥ 1 citation). VOSviewer visualizations position “character education” as the most dominant and central node, closely connected to conceptual and implementation-related themes such as “moral education,” “concept,” “school,” “Islamic boarding school/Islamic boarding school,” “management,” “character education program,” “family,” and “child,” while “digital era” emerges as a peripheral contemporary context. Overall, the mapping indicates that research on Islamic character education forms a thematic structure linking conceptual–normative foundations with institutional and programmatic dimensions of implementation. This study contributes a thematic roadmap that can inform more focused future research, particularly by strengthening connections across clusters and exploring still-peripheral topics.

Keywords: Character Education, Moral Education, Islam, Bibliometrics, Vosviewer

Abstract. Penelitian ini bertujuan memetakan lanskap publikasi ilmiah mengenai pendidikan karakter dalam perspektif Islam melalui analisis bibliometrik berbasis Google Scholar. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan Publish or Perish dengan kueri (“character education” OR “moral education”) AND Islam pada rentang tahun publikasi 2015–2025, kemudian diekspor dalam format RIS dan dianalisis menggunakan VOSviewer untuk pemetaan *co-occurrence* kata kunci. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa korpus terdiri atas 500 dokumen dengan total 18.309 sitasi, rerata 1.664,45 sitasi per tahun, dan rerata 36,62 sitasi per dokumen. Indikator dampak sitasi memperlihatkan h-index sebesar 62 dan g-index sebesar 103, serta mayoritas dokumen telah memperoleh sitasi (488 dokumen memiliki ≥ 1 sitasi). Visualisasi VOSviewer menempatkan “character education” sebagai simpul paling dominan dan sentral dalam jaringan, terhubung dengan tema konseptual dan implementatif seperti “moral education”, “concept”, “school”, “Islamic boarding school/pesantren”, “management”, “character education program”, “family”, dan “child”, serta kemunculan istilah “digital era” sebagai konteks kontemporer. Pemetaan ini menegaskan bahwa riset pendidikan karakter dalam perspektif Islam membentuk struktur tema yang menghubungkan fondasi konseptual-normatif dengan dimensi kelembagaan dan pengelolaan program pendidikan.

Keywords: Pendidikan Karakter, Pendidikan Moral, Islam, Bibliometrik, Vosviewer

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INTRODUCTION

Character education has once again occupied a central position in contemporary educational discourse due to its direct interconnectedness with the problems of moral crisis, value disorientation, and the weakening of public ethics that have emerged in various social spaces. Within an Islamic framework, this issue is not understood merely as a pedagogical "add-on," but rather as the core of educational teleology: the formation of faithful, civilized, and noble individuals manifested in habits (*habitus*) and action orientations. Several studies confirm that the terminology of character education from an Islamic perspective strongly intersects with the concepts of morality and etiquette, whose normative sources are based on the Qur'an, Hadith, and the example of the Prophet as a living ethical model. For example, character education is understood as a unity between knowledge, attitudes, and behavior that must be developed from an early age through the involvement of families, schools, and communities so that values do not stop at understanding but are transformed into character (Rakhmawati, 2013). This view aligns with the argument that national education also demands the presence of individuals with noble character, making character education both a constitutional and sociological necessity (Mulyani, 2018). In fact, the pressures of the digital era, which presents a limitless flow of information, push Islamic character education to not only maintain personal morality but also foster media ethics and value resilience in the virtual space (Riza, 2024). Therefore, character education from an Islamic perspective is a rich yet complex field of study, combining theological, pedagogical, social, and cultural dimensions.

Conceptually, Islamic literature positions character as a gradual process that moves from knowledge to habituation, then takes root in the realm of emotions and self-disposition. Character is not simply understood as "knowing good," because knowledge of goodness does not automatically produce good behavior without consistent practice and cultivation of values (Sirait, 2023). This framework emphasizes that morality in Islamic education is not merely normative rationality, but rather self-formation through spiritual management, role models, habits, and a healthy environment. Moral and character literature also shows differences and intersections between "moral education," which tends to emphasize moral reasoning, and "character education," which emphasizes the formation of habits and dispositions as prerequisites for moral human beings (Walker & Thoma, 2017). In the Indonesian context, Islamic character education is often articulated through religious values embodied in daily practices, including discipline, honesty, patience, and trustworthiness, and is strengthened through an educational ecosystem involving three educational centers. The concept of character at the elementary school level also emphasizes the internalization of values manifested in

thoughts, attitudes, and actions, so that character is understood as an operational value construct, not an abstract discourse (Ramadhani et al., 2020). Thus, the conceptual framework of Islamic character education demonstrates a close connection between theological foundations, psychological development, and pedagogical strategies.

Research on a character education model based on adab values in junior high schools also shows that the integration of adab values into the curriculum pillars, teacher role models, the habituation of daily rituals, and community collaboration are positioned as systemic designs, not sporadic actions (Komala & Sukandar, 2025). Within the framework of tarbiyah (Islamic education), the implementation of the concept of nurturing in the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum is presented as an integrative process through learning methods and daily activities that reflect Islamic values, despite the challenges of time and external environmental support (Zuraidah et al., 2024). Meanwhile, studies that exemplify the Prophet's behavior in character formation strengthen the argument that prophetic figures are not merely normative references, but rather pedagogical bases that guide ethical actions and moral habits (Hasanbasri & Roza, 2023). In other words, the implementation literature confirms that Islamic character education is effective when it is structured as a value system that operates across the curriculum, school culture, teacher-student relationships, and family and community participation.

However, the literature also indicates a recurring conceptual-operational problem, namely the gap between the discourse of values and the mechanisms for measuring/guaranteeing their success. From an Islamic character education perspective, indicators of success are not solely measured by cognitive achievement, but rather by the internalization of values in daily behavior, encompassing the spiritual, muamalah, syakhshiyah, and aqliyah dimensions. Books on Islamic character education emphasize the importance of specific, measurable, comprehensive indicators that are relevant to developmental stages and adaptable to changing times, so that character evaluation does not fall into rhetoric but becomes a reference for sustainable program development (Murdianto, 2024). Furthermore, discussions of character education from an Islamic perspective also demonstrate that the problem of national character is structural-cultural in nature, so that strengthening character requires the reconstruction of Islamic education, including its curriculum, to consistently prioritize noble religious and cultural values (Rakhmawati, 2013). In the conceptual realm of strengthening values, the discussion of character education from an Islamic perspective also shows the need for conceptual formulation that does not stop at definitions, but is embodied in habits, role models, and a healthy educational environment (Mulyani, 2018). At the elementary school level,

character formation also requires conscious efforts from educators to systematically internalize values so that students know, think, and act morally in every situation (Ramadhani et al., 2020). In fact, studies on character strategies through systematic literature reviews emphasize that implementation challenges often lie in teacher training, curriculum integration, and unstable character evaluation systems (Hadi et al., 2025). Thus, there is a scientific need to map how these issues develop in publications, what topics are dominant, and which spaces are still underexplored.

This is where the knowledge mapping approach becomes relevant, particularly when the field of study is rapidly evolving and diverse, but not yet comprehensively structured. Several articles use systematic literature reviews to organize the findings and major themes of character education from an Islamic perspective and in primary and secondary education. For example, a study of theology of Islamic education using the SLR approach shows that character formation is rooted in monotheism, natural disposition, and trustworthiness, and displays core values such as faith, piety, honesty, patience, and justice, which are then operationalized through learning strategies and role models (Irawan et al., 2025). Other SLRs also emphasize the emergence of key themes such as values-based learning approaches, teacher involvement, the role of the school environment, curriculum integration, and implementation barriers (Hadi et al., 2025). However, SLRs generally operate on smaller corpora and are manually selected based on specific criteria, so they do not always capture the broader structure of the publication field, including term networks, topic clusters, and keyword evolution. On the other hand, bibliometric studies in education have shown that keyword co-occurrence analysis can map conceptual focuses and emerging research trends more systematically, especially when supported by mapping tools such as VOSviewer (Kongpiwatana & Hallinger, 2023). Although the study focused on service learning, its methodological logic provides an important lesson: co-occurrence mapping can reveal the “knowledge architecture” of a field through the structure of themes and the interconnectedness of terms. Therefore, for the topic of character education from an Islamic perspective, which already has numerous publications across contexts, bibliometrics has the potential to fill a mapping need not yet met by conceptual studies and case studies alone.

The research gap in this research context lies in the lack of robust bibliometric mapping that specifically explores scientific publications on the theme of character education/moral education that intersect with Islam, especially when data is retrieved from the Google Scholar database through the Publish or Perish (PoP) tool and visualized using VOSviewer. The available literature shows a dominance of conceptual studies on Islamic character education

(Rakhmawati, 2013; Yunita & Mujib, 2021; Mulyani, 2018), implementation studies in the school/madrasah context (Riza, 2024; Komala & Sukandar, 2025; Zuraidah et al., 2024), and SLR-based synthesis studies (Irawan et al., 2025; Hadi et al., 2025; Uri & Nasrun, 2025). While rich, this diversity does not provide a comprehensive picture of the field's structure: what keywords are central, how theme clusters are formed (e.g., *adab*, *akhlak*, *tarbiyah*, digital ethics, or teacher exemplarity), and how connections between themes reflect scholarly trends. In fact, the global distinction between the traditions of "moral education" and "character education" raises conceptual challenges, assumptions about character education, and measurement issues that require a more structured, cross-traditional reading (Walker & Thoma, 2017). Therefore, the novelty of this research lies in presenting a bibliometric map that links the two major terms "character education/moral education" and "Islam" by reading the publication ecosystem as a network of themes, not simply a list of articles. Its originality also lies in the choice of Google Scholar data (via PoP), which tends to cover a broader spectrum of publications, thus potentially capturing the dynamics of discourse that are not always strictly indexed like certain databases. Thus, this research is expected to not only describe what has already been written, but also show how this field is structured and where it is moving.

Based on the background, gaps, and novelty, the main objective of this study is to analyze and map the intellectual structure of scientific publications on character education from an Islamic perspective through a bibliometric approach, by searching publication metadata from Google Scholar using Publish or Perish, saving the results in RIS format, then conducting co-occurrence mapping and theme clustering using VOSviewer. The focus of the analysis is directed at finding dominant keyword patterns, main theme clusters, and interconnections between themes that indicate discourse tendencies, for example the relationship between *adab* and exemplary behavior (Komala & Sukandar, 2025), between *tarbiyah* and the Islamic Religious Education curriculum (Zuraidah et al., 2024), or between educational theology and the foundation of *tauhid-fitrah-amanah* values (Irawan et al., 2025). This study also departs from the awareness that character implementation strategies often require a consistent ecosystem, involving families-schools-communities, as well as strengthening habituation and the environment as instruments of internalization (Uri & Nasrun, 2025; Mulyani, 2018). With the bibliometric map, research contributions are expected to be present at two levels: first, the academic level in the form of a reconstruction of the theme landscape that can become a "roadmap" for further research; second, the practical level in the form of identifying the most frequently discussed and relatively neglected issue areas, so that recommendations for strengthening Islamic character education can be based on evidence of the direction of the

discourse. This study aims to identify and map (1) the thematic structure, (2) keyword clustering patterns, and (3) publication trends related to (“character education” OR “moral education”) AND Islam within Google Scholar, through bibliometric analysis using VOSviewer, thereby providing a methodologically accountable overview of the research landscape.

Theoretically, this research positions Islamic character education as a field that intersects normative-theological foundations and operational pedagogical strategies. On the one hand, the literature emphasizes that character must be read as a value construct integrated into knowledge, attitudes, and behavior (Rakhmawati, 2013; Ramadhani et al., 2020), and in global traditions, it is also linked to the moral vs. character debate and measurement issues (Walker & Thoma, 2017).

METHOD

This research method uses a descriptive-quantitative bibliometric design with a knowledge mapping approach (science mapping) to describe publication trends, citation patterns, and thematic structures based on keyword networks in the study of "character education/moral education" that intersect with Islam. The main data source comes from Google Scholar accessed through Publish or Perish (PoP) software because it is able to quickly extract publication metadata from the Google Scholar index. The search process is carried out using the query: ("character education" OR "moral education") AND Islam, with a limitation of the publication year range according to the study period determined by the researcher (for example, the last 10-20 years for a more readable trend), and PoP settings to disable irrelevant results such as citations/patents if the option is available.

All findings in the initial stage are exported in RIS format to maintain compatibility with bibliometric mapping tools. The unit of analysis in this study was published documents (journal articles, proceedings, book chapters, or other scientific documents indexed by Google Scholar) that had substantive relevance to character education/moral education and contained explicit links to Islam (e.g., through titles, abstracts, keywords, or discussion contexts). Exclusion criteria were applied to filter out duplicate entries, entries without minimum metadata (e.g., without year/author), non-scholarly documents (e.g., promotional posters, non-academic web pages), and documents that only mentioned “Islam” incidentally without a conceptual connection to character education. A data cleaning stage was conducted before the network analysis, including removing duplicate titles, normalizing author name spelling (variations in initials/name order), correcting inconsistent keyword spellings, and unifying synonyms/term

variations (e.g., “character education” and “character-building”) through a thesaurus to avoid artificially fragmenting the cluster mapping.

Bibliometric analysis was conducted in two main groups according to the research objectives: (1) publication performance analysis to read citation trends and impacts, and (2) theme mapping analysis to identify keyword clusters. In the performance analysis, the metadata used included publication year, number of citations, and publication source; the main outputs were a graph of publication growth per year, a list of the most influential documents based on citations, and a summary of publication productivity during the study period. For theme mapping, the cleaned RIS file was imported into VOSviewer, then the Co-occurrence analysis menu was selected with the keyword analysis unit (prioritizing author keywords if available; otherwise, using all keywords with strict control through a thesaurus). The minimum keyword occurrence threshold was set adaptively according to the size of the data corpus so that the network formed was sufficiently dense but still representative; the calculation method used VOSviewer's standard settings to maintain replicability. The main results from VOSviewer included a network visualization, a density visualization, and an overlay visualization to read dominant themes as well as an indication of topic evolution based on the average year of keyword publication. Cluster interpretation was conducted by analyzing the most central keywords in each cluster, the proximity between keywords, and the position of themes on the overlay map, without conducting a normative assessment of the document content. All procedures, VOSviewer parameters (analysis type, threshold, calculation method, and thesaurus usage), and data cleaning decisions were documented so that the study could be replicated by other researchers with the same corpus and period.

RESULTS

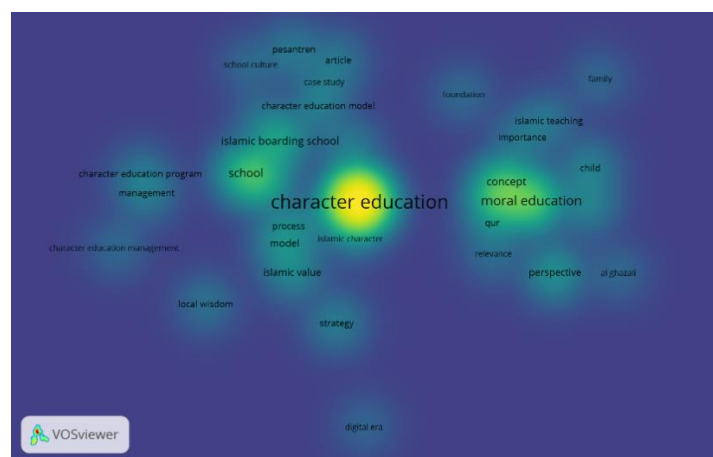
Summary of Citation Metrics and Publication Productivity (PoP)

Based on citation metrics output from Publish or Perish (PoP), the publication corpus for the 2015–2025 period demonstrates strong citation performance. The dataset consists of 500 documents with a total of 18,309 citations, an average of 1,664.45 citations per year, and an average of 36.62 citations per document. The h-index value = 62 and g-index = 103 indicate that a number of core publications in the corpus achieve high and consistent citations. The distribution of accumulated citations shows that 488 documents have ≥ 1 citation, 439 documents have ≥ 2 citations, 258 documents have ≥ 5 citations, 134 documents have ≥ 10 citations, and 52 documents have ≥ 20 citations. Details of the citation metrics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of dataset citation metrics (PoP – Google Scholar)

Indicator	Mark
Publication years	2015–2025
Citation years	11 (2015–2026)
Papers	500
Citations	18,309
Cites/year	1,664.45
Cites/paper	36.62
h-index	62
g-index	103
hI, norm	45
hI, annual	4.09
hA-index	28
Papers with $ACC \geq 1$	488
Papers with $ACC \geq 2$	439
Papers with $ACC \geq 5$	258
Papers with $ACC \geq 10$	134
Papers with $ACC \geq 20$	52

As a description of the output, the number 488 in "papers with $ACC \geq 1$ " indicates that almost all documents in the corpus have at least one citation. Furthermore, there are 134 documents that achieve ≥ 10 citations, and 52 documents that achieve ≥ 20 citations. In terms of index indicators, h-index = 62 and g-index = 103 represent that in this corpus there is a group of documents that have received high and consistent citations in several major publications. The data citations that form the basis of this presentation are the output of the PoP metric itself, for example: "Papers: 500", "Citations: 18309", "h-index: 62", and "g-index: 103".

**Figure 1.** Keyword density visualization

The density visualization results show that the keyword that is at the center of the network density is “character education” (appears to be the most dominant/dense), followed by other keywords that are near the center or in the medium density area such as “moral education,” “school,” and “concept.” This output indicates that the thematic network is built primarily by core terms that are the most frequently appearing and most connected nodes.

The descriptive justification in this section refers directly to the labels that appear on the VOSviewer density map, for example the label quotes: “character education,” “moral education,” “school,” and “concept.”

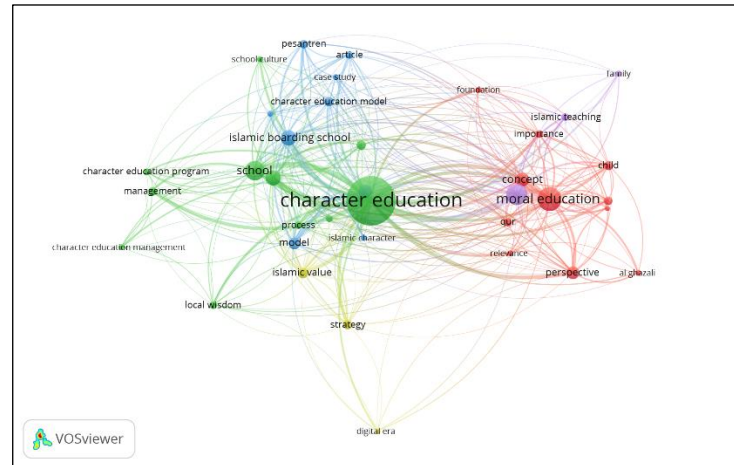


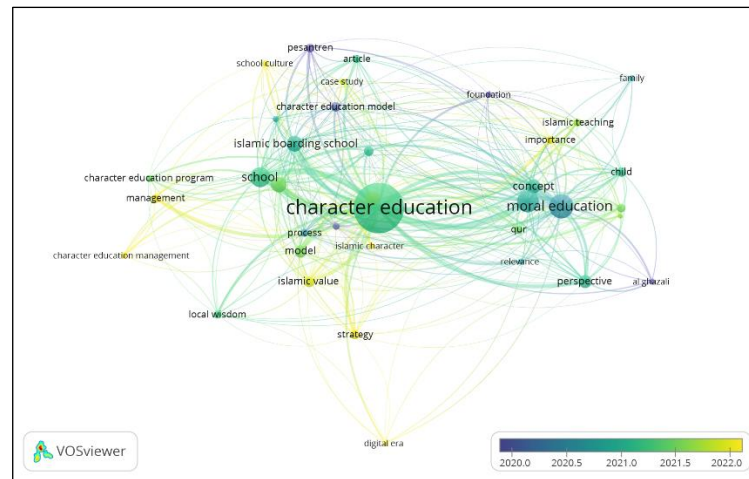
Figure 2. Network visualization and theme cluster formation

In the network visualization, the largest node is the keyword "character education," which acts as a central node and connects many other keywords. Visually, the network forms several colored groups (clusters), where each cluster contains keywords that tend to appear together and are more closely connected to each other. Because the data you are displaying is a network map, the following cluster presentation is presented as a description of the keyword composition visible on the map.

Table 2. Keyword clusters visible on the network map (based on labels in the visualization)

Cluster (code)	Examples of keywords that appear dominant/prominent in the cluster
K1 (core-general theme)	“character education”, “process”, “model”, “Islamic character”, “Islamic values”, “strategy”
K2 (institutional context & governance)	“school”, “Islamic boarding school”, “management”, “character education program”, “character education management”, “local wisdom”
K3 (conceptual-moral & perspective)	"moral education", "concept", "perspective", "relevance", "al ghazali", "qur"
K4 (actor & educational environment)	“child”, “family”, “Islamic teaching”, “importance”, “foundation”

In addition, the network map also displays more peripheral nodes (further from the center and smaller in size), such as “digital era,” as well as study context-based nodes such as “pesantren,” “school culture,” “case study,” and “article.” The existence of these terms is presented as visual facts on the map (not assessments), with literal label quotes: “digital era,” “pesantren,” “school culture,” and “case study.”



In the overlay visualization, VOSviewer displays a color gradient with a number range in the legend from approximately 2020.0 to 2022.0, indicating the average publication year of the keywords in the visualized network. Descriptively, some terms appear to be on the “newer” end of the legend range (closer to 2022), while others are on the earlier end (closer to 2020).

DISCUSSION

Bibliometric findings indicate that character education is the most dominant node in the keyword network, characterized by the largest node size and the highest density on the VOSviewer map. This dominance confirms the position of character education as an umbrella theme that integrates a number of intersecting subthemes, including moral education, school, concept, management, program, family, and child, as well as specific contexts such as Islamic boarding schools/pesantren and contemporary issues of the digital era. This network structure shows that the discourse of character education from an Islamic perspective is developing as a field of study that combines conceptual-normative dimensions with institutional-practical dimensions. The strong connection between the central node and operational terms indicates that character education is not positioned merely as a concept, but as a practice that requires a planned model, process, and implementation strategy.

Conceptually, the emergence of clusters containing moral education, concepts, perspectives, and terms referring to sources of values and thinkers indicates a literature orientation that links character education to the normative foundations of Islam. This pattern aligns with the literature that emphasizes that Islamic character education rests on strengthening *adab*/morals manifested in concrete behavior through exemplary behavior, habituation, and reflection of values in daily life. The character-strengthening framework that emphasizes *uswah hasanah* (exemplary behavior), *tikrar* (repetition/habituation), and *tafakkur*

(reflection) demonstrates that character is understood as the result of consistent internalization, not merely cognitive achievement or moral declaration. Thus, the network findings connecting conceptual nodes with operational nodes demonstrate consistency between the bibliometric map and the theoretical argument that Islamic character education requires the integration of values and practices within the educational ecosystem.

On the institutional side, the presence of keywords such as school, Islamic boarding school, and Islamic boarding school indicates that the context of educational institutions, especially schools and Islamic boarding schools, has become a dominant space in the production of knowledge. The empirical literature reviewed shows that schools/madrasahs are often treated as the main arena for implementing character values, whether through formal learning, habituation, school culture, or systematically designed programs. Studies on character education in elementary schools emphasize the importance of character formation as a process of internalizing values that encompasses thoughts, attitudes, and actions; therefore, schools are positioned as strategic environments for building structured moral routines from an early age. Bibliometric findings that place schools near the central node show consistency with the literature, namely that schools are seen not only as places for transferring knowledge, but as ecosystems for cultivating values. In addition to the institutional context, the cluster containing the terms management, character education program, and character education management indicates the literature's strong focus on the governance and programmatic dimensions. This pattern is important because the implementation literature emphasizes that character education is effective when managed as a system: with planning, measurable implementation, reinforcement mechanisms, and ongoing evaluation. The Prophet's exemplary character education framework emphasizes that character formation requires repeated, long-term reinforcement, environmental intervention, and evaluation that can be conducted through observation, portfolios, or behavioral development records. In other words, the presence of the managerial cluster in the VOSviewer map demonstrates that the discourse on Islamic character education is moving in a realm that demands accountability for implementation, not just normative legitimacy.

The presence of the keywords family and child indicates that the literature also places character formation within an ecological relationship that extends beyond schools. The network structure connecting the themes of family and children with the themes of school and concepts demonstrates the view that character development is a cross-area process: the family as the initial foundation for habituation, the school as a structured reinforcement institution, and the social environment as a space for consistent value practice. The literature on Islamic character

education emphasizes the role of the family and community as reinforcing elements that determine character stability, particularly in building moral resilience and self-control in children. Thus, the bibliometric map confirms that the discourse on Islamic character education tends to position education as an ecosystem, rather than a sectoral activity.

Another relevant finding is the emergence of the term "digital era" as a peripheral node in the network. The presence of this node indicates that character issues from an Islamic perspective are beginning to intersect with contemporary challenges related to technology and behavior in the digital space. Implementation studies in madrasas indicate that Islamic character education in the era of disruption requires the integration of values into learning and school culture, as well as the development of habits that adapt to behavioral changes resulting from technology use. Although digital era nodes have not yet become centers of density equivalent to "character education," their presence indicates an expansion of the research agenda toward digital ethics, media literacy, and value resilience in the virtual space. Overlay findings displaying specific year ranges on the map also indicate that terms related to contemporary issues emerged in a relatively recent period within the network, although this reading is descriptive at the level of keyword co-occurrence. The significance of this research lies in the bibliometric mapping's ability to more comprehensively demonstrate the structure of character education discourse from an Islamic perspective. First, the results confirm that the literature moves along two main axes: the conceptual-normative axis (values, moral concepts, Islamic references) and the implementative-institutional axis (schools/Islamic boarding schools, programs, management, strategies). Second, the results demonstrate the existence of thematic bridges through terms such as model, process, and strategy, which connect the foundation of values with educational practices. Third, the results demonstrate the expansion of issues to contemporary themes such as the digital era, which demands the adaptation of Islamic character development to new environments. With this network map, conceptual studies, implementation case studies, and literature syntheses can be positioned more clearly within the same scientific landscape, thus facilitating the establishment of a more focused further research agenda.

The implications of this research can be drawn at two levels. At the academic level, keyword mapping emphasizes the need for conceptual consolidation, for example, unifying the terminological equivalents of "character education/moral education" with "adab/akhlak/tarbiyah"—so that cross-context research can be more strongly connected and not fragmented by varying terms. At the practical level, school clusters, programs, and management demonstrate that Islamic character education needs to be supported by a

consistent institutional system through school policies, organizational culture, and measurable behavioral evaluations. Findings from the digital era periphery also indicate the need to strengthen the digital moral literacy dimension so that character development is not left behind by changes in students' social ecology.

The limitations of this study need to be explicitly stated. First, the data source used Google Scholar through PoP, which has broad coverage but potentially presents metadata variations and heterogeneity in document types, making the data cleaning and term normalization processes crucial for the stability of the mapping results. Second, the query (“character education” OR “moral education”) AND Islam tends to emphasize specific terminology, so the potential representativeness of studies using local equivalents (e.g., *akhlak/adab*) is highly dependent on their occurrence in the metadata. Third, VOSviewer mapping is influenced by analysis parameters such as keyword occurrence thresholds and counting models, so cluster structure can change if parameters are changed. Fourth, the overlay visualization represents the average year of occurrence of terms in the keyword network, not a substantial measure of conceptual novelty. However, these limitations do not diminish the study's primary role as a thematic structure mapping; rather, they point to the need for transparency in data collection procedures, cleaning, and mapping parameter settings in research reports.

CONCLUSION

This bibliometric research maps the landscape of scholarly publications on the theme of character education from an Islamic perspective on Google Scholar (via Publish or Perish) with the query (“character education” OR “moral education”) AND Islam in the publication year range of 2015–2025. The analyzed dataset consists of 500 documents with an accumulation of 18,309 citations, an average of 1,664.45 citations per year, and an average of 36.62 citations per document. Citation performance indicators show an h-index of 62 and a g-index of 103, which represents the presence of influential publication groups within the corpus. The citation distribution also shows that the majority of documents received citations (488 documents had ≥ 1 citation), while some subsets of the corpus achieved higher citation levels (134 documents had ≥ 10 citations and 52 documents had ≥ 20 citations). These findings indicate that the study of character education related to Islam during this period developed productively and had a strong citation impact on some core publications.

Keyword mapping using VOSviewer displays “character education” as the most dominant and central node in the network, connected to both conceptual and implementative terms. The co-occurrence network shows a grouping of themes that encompasses the conceptual domain

(e.g., “moral education,” “concept,” “perspective,” and terms referring to sources of values and thinkers), the institutional domain (e.g., “school,” “Islamic boarding school,” “pesantren,” “school culture”), the programmatic and governance domain (e.g., “management,” “character education program,” “character education management,” “strategy”), and the ecological domain of education that positions actors and environments (e.g., “family” and “child”) as part of the discourse structure. Furthermore, the emergence of the term “digital era” in the network indicates that some publications are beginning to link Islamic character education to the context of socio-technological change, although its position is not as dense as the core terms at the center of the network. Thus, the research results confirm that this field does not move within a single theme, but rather forms a discourse structure that connects the foundations of Islamic moral concepts with institutional practices and implementation strategies. In terms of scholarly contribution, this study provides a thematic map that helps readers understand the structure, proximity, and direction of development of character education studies from an Islamic perspective in the Google Scholar corpus. This map can serve as a basis for further research to sharpen the focus on still peripheral themes, strengthen inter-cluster connections (e.g., school-family-program relations), and develop more precise research designs on emerging issues, including the context of the digital era.

RECOMMENDATION

Future research is recommended to expand the search strategy by including terms that are closer to Islamic vocabulary (e.g., *adab/akhlak/tarbiyah*) to better represent local themes, and to conduct cross-database comparisons to test the stability of thematic structures. Furthermore, subsequent research could deepen the analysis of theme evolution periodically (e.g., dividing the intervals into 2015–2019 and 2020–2025) to more sharply examine changes in discourse direction, while increasing the transparency of data cleaning and term normalization procedures to strengthen the replicability of bibliometric studies on this topic.

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