



TRENDS AND RESEARCH PATTERNS ON CHARACTER EDUCATION IN ISLAMIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS: A BIBLIOMETRIC STUDY

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ABSTRACTS

This bibliometric study aims to explore the prevailing research trends and patterns on character education in Islamic elementary schools from 2010 to 2024. Using a quantitative bibliometric approach, data were retrieved from the Scopus database and analyzed through VOSviewer and the Bibliometrix R-package to map publication trends, keyword co-occurrences, and influential authors, journals, and institutions. The results indicate a steady increase in publications over the last five years, especially between 2020 and 2024, with dominant themes such as Islamic values integration, curriculum development, parental engagement, and evaluation models like CIPP. Thematic analysis reveals three key research clusters: curriculum design and methodology, implementation in classroom and school culture, and policy-oriented evaluations. Most studies employ qualitative or developmental methods, while empirical and longitudinal research remains limited. There is also minimal exploration of digital character education tools in Islamic contexts. The findings suggest a concentration of authorship and influence in Indonesian and Malaysian academic institutions, reflecting national policy priorities on moral education. Although Islamic values are central to the discourse, opportunities remain for innovation through interdisciplinary approaches that integrate digital ethics and global competencies. This study contributes to understanding the scholarly landscape of Islamic character education and offers insights for future research directions, including the need for longitudinal studies, cross-country comparisons, and digital pedagogical strategies. The impact of this research lies in guiding policy, curriculum, and practice improvements that align with the cultural and spiritual foundations of Islamic education.

Keyword: Character Education, Islamic School, Elementary School, Bibliometric, VOSViewer

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1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, character education has become a central issue in various global educational discourses, particularly in countries where moral and religious values are considered integral to national identity and development. In Indonesia, Islamic elementary schools (*Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*) serve not only as institutions for academic instruction but also as key agents in shaping the moral fabric of future generations. According to the National Education Law No. 20 of 2003, one of the primary goals of national education is to develop learners into individuals who are faithful, moral, knowledgeable, and responsible citizens (Kemendikbud, 2017; Maunah, 2016).

The urgency for strengthening character education stems from growing concerns over moral decline among school-aged children, evident in phenomena such as bullying, substance abuse, and lack of civic responsibility (Wasehudin et al., 2024). These challenges are exacerbated by the rapid advance of digital technology and globalization, which influence children's values and behaviors from an increasingly early age (Abdul Syukur, 2014). As such, the educational landscape requires pedagogical transformations that integrate moral and civic education into both formal curricula and school culture (Akbar et al., 2014).

Studies show that character education in Islamic elementary schools is most effective when it integrates Islamic religious values into daily practices. The implementation of faith (*iman*), submission (*Islam*), and virtue (*ihsan*) in the curriculum and school culture fosters holistic moral development (Wasehudin et al., 2024). Teachers serve as role models, employing not only cognitive instruction but also affective strategies such as storytelling from the Qur'an and Hadith, communal rituals, and moral reinforcement through habit-forming activities. These methods align with the paradigm proposed by Islamic education scholars such as Al-Attas and Al-Abrasyi, who argue that *akhlaq* (morals) should be the core of Islamic education (Ali, 2018).

Additionally, parental involvement has been identified as a significant component of character formation. Diana et al. (2021) demonstrated that positive parenting and parental religiosity, when combined with certain personality traits such as agreeableness, are positively correlated with parental engagement in their children's moral development. These findings emphasize the importance of school-family collaboration in reinforcing values both at school and at home. In this respect, the notion of character education is not solely confined to institutional instruction, but extends into the socio-religious ecosystem surrounding the child.

On a policy level, both Indonesia and Malaysia have demonstrated firm commitments to character education. In Malaysia, moral education is formally institutionalized through subjects such as Islamic Education and Moral Studies, and is further reinforced through co-curricular activities (Balakrishnan, 2010; Aroff, 2014). The Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013–2025 outlines values-based education as a national priority, aiming to cultivate balanced, spiritually strong, and socially responsible students (Ministry of Education, 2012). In Indonesia, the *Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter* (PPK) policy focuses on five core values: religiosity, nationalism, mutual cooperation, integrity, and independence—integrated throughout all subjects and learning activities (Kemendikbud, 2017).

Despite these efforts, challenges persist. Studies such as those by Haryati and Khoiriyah (2017) and Mahanani et al. (2020) highlight inconsistencies in the integration of character education values within textbooks and teacher instruction. Often, character

education is limited to the domain of religious education or treated superficially in non-religious subjects. Moreover, there is a lack of standardized frameworks or monitoring systems to evaluate the implementation of character education policies at the school level (Malaklolunthu & Shamsudin, 2011).

Given these dynamics, bibliometric analysis offers a systematic way to map out the existing body of literature, identify dominant themes, gaps, and emerging patterns in research on character education in Islamic elementary schools. Unlike narrative or systematic reviews, bibliometric methods provide quantitative insights into the evolution of a field—tracking publication trends, frequently cited articles, collaboration networks, and influential authors or institutions (Connaway & Powell, 2010). Such an analysis is critical for informing future research, aligning policy with practice, and promoting evidence-based improvements in curriculum design and pedagogy.

This study, therefore, seeks to address the following overarching questions:

- What are the prevailing trends in academic research on character education in Islamic elementary schools from 2010 to 2024?
- What theoretical models and methodological approaches dominate the literature?
- Are there discernible gaps in the existing research that future studies should address?

The rationale for focusing on Islamic elementary schools lies in their unique integration of religious and moral instruction, which offers rich pedagogical insights often overlooked in mainstream education research. Moreover, bibliometric studies in this niche field remain limited. Existing character education literature tends to either focus broadly on values education or center on secular primary schooling. Few studies have isolated Islamic elementary education as a specific locus of analysis, despite its growing importance in shaping ethically grounded and spiritually oriented individuals (Mahanani et al., 2022; Akbal, 2017).

Previous studies such as those by Hidayati et al. (2020) and Lujan (2021) also stress the need for contextualized character education rooted in local wisdom and socio-religious norms. In Islamic schools, this is particularly salient, as curricula must align not only with national education standards but also with Islamic ethical teachings. The challenge, then, lies in striking a balance between modern pedagogical strategies and traditional religious values, ensuring that students are equipped to navigate both spiritual and worldly dimensions of life.

Furthermore, strengthening character education requires engagement beyond curriculum reforms. The “whole school approach,” as emphasized by Akbar and Puspitasari (2018), suggests that character development must permeate all aspects of school life—from teacher attitudes and peer interactions to institutional rules and community partnerships. Similarly, Mohd Yusoff and Hamzah (2015) argue that the success of character education programs depends on the professional competence and moral commitment of teachers, particularly in values transmission and ethical modeling.

Thus, this bibliometric study will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how character education is conceptualized, implemented, and studied within Islamic elementary contexts. It will provide empirical evidence to support pedagogical strategies, curriculum innovation, and policy development that are responsive to the moral and cultural fabric of Muslim communities.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a bibliometric approach to systematically analyze the trends and research patterns on character education in Islamic elementary schools. Bibliometric analysis is a quantitative method used to evaluate and map scientific literature based on publication data, such as citation counts, keyword co-occurrence, co-authorship networks, and thematic evolution (Donthu et al., 2021). By applying bibliometric techniques, this study aims to identify publication trends, the most prolific authors and institutions, influential journals, and thematic clusters within the field from 2019 to 2024.

Data Source

The bibliometric data were retrieved from the Scopus database, which is recognized as one of the most comprehensive abstract and citation databases for peer-reviewed literature. The search was conducted using the following search string:

TITLE-ABS-KEY("character education" AND ("Islamic school" OR "madrasah" OR "Islamic elementary"))

The search was refined to include only articles published between **2019 and 2024** in the fields of education, social sciences, and religious studies. Only journal articles written in English or Indonesian were included to ensure relevance and readability.

Data Collection

A total of **8 relevant documents** were obtained and exported in .csv format from Scopus. The exported file includes information such as:

- Article title
- Author(s)
- Publication year
- Source title (journal)
- Affiliation
- Keywords
- Abstract
- Citation count

To provide a clear overview of the data sources used in this bibliometric study, Table 1 presents the key metadata of the eight selected documents retrieved from the Scopus database. These records form the foundation for the subsequent bibliometric mapping and analysis.

Table 1. Overview of Selected Scopus-Indexed Articles on Character Education in Islamic Elementary Schools (2019–2024)

Title	Authors	Year	Source title	Author Keywords	Cited by	DOI
THE PARADIGM OF CHARACTER EDUCATION IN ISLAMIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	Wasehudin; Nizarudin Wajdi M.B.; Silahuddin; Syafei I.; Sirojudin R.; Bahtiar M.; Hasanah U.	2024	Jurnal Ilmiah Islam Futura	Moral Education; Paradigm; SDIT Al-Izzah	0	10.22373/jiif.v24i2.22546
Educational Analysis to Develop Character in Malaysia and Indonesia	Mahanani P.; Akbar S.; Kamaruddin A.Y.B.; Hussin Z.B.	2022	International Journal of Instruction	character; content analysis; education; Indonesia; Malaysia; students	8	10.29333/iji.2022.15321a
E-Module Based on Multicultural Values: Development Strategy for Islamic Primary Education	Azkiya H.; Ws H.; Hayati Y.	2024	Munaddhomah	E-Modules; Multicultural Education Values; Primary School	0	10.31538/munaddhomah.v5i4.1511
Development of Evaluation Model of Character-based Islamic Education Program in Elementary Schools	Choiriyah S.; Khuriyah; Hakiman	2023	Educational Administration: Theory and Practice	Character Education; Evaluation Model Development; Islamic Education Learning	0	
Educational Analysis to Develop Character in Malaysia and Indonesia	Mahanani P.; Akbar S.; Kamaruddin A.Y.B.; Hussin Z.B.	2022	International Journal of Instruction	character; content analysis; education; Indonesia; Malaysia; students	8	10.29333/iji.2022.15321a
Parental engagement on children character education: The influences of positive parenting and agreeableness mediated by religiosity; [Keterlibatan orang tua dalam pendidikan karakter anak: Pengaruh pengasuhan positif dan kepribadian agreeableness yang dimediasi oleh religiositas]	Diana R.R.; Chirzin M.; Bashori K.; Suud F.M.; Khairunnisa N.Z.	2021	Cakrawala Pendidikan	Agreeableness; Character education; Parental engagement; Positive parenting; Religiosity	19	10.21831/cp.v40i2.39477

Title	Authors	Year	Source title	Author Keywords	Cited by	DOI
The Development of Character Education Curriculum Model for Islamic Elementary Schools in Muaro Jambi	Nurhasnah; Ridha D.S.M.; Buska W.; Prihartini Y.	2020	Journal of Physics: Conference Series		0	10.1088/1742-6596/1471/1/012030
New Tradition of Pesantren in Character Education	Putro A.A.Y.; Suyanto; Suryono Y.	2019	Journal of Physics: Conference Series		4	10.1088/1742-6596/1254/1/012002
Cultivating spiritual and social attitudes in elementary school students: Evaluative study with cipp approach on the learning of religious and character education	Asiyah N.; Ghofur A.	2019	International Journal of Scientific and Technology Research	Character; CIPP; Education; Social attitude; Spiritual attitude	0	

Source: <https://www.scopus.com>

This data was then cleaned and analyzed using VOSviewer (version 1.6.19) and R Bibliometrix package (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). VOSviewer was used to generate visualizations of keyword co-occurrence, author collaboration, and citation networks, while Bibliometrix was employed for statistical analysis and trend extraction.

Analysis Techniques

The following bibliometric indicators and techniques were used in this study:

- Annual scientific production: To assess publication trends over the five-year period.
- Most relevant sources: To identify key journals.
- Most productive authors and institutions.
- Co-occurrence network of keywords: To reveal major themes and sub-topics.
- Thematic evolution and conceptual structure: To understand how research on character education has shifted over time.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study investigates the prevailing trends and research patterns related to character education in Islamic elementary schools between 2019 and 2024 through a bibliometric approach. Based on Scopus-indexed data and analyzed using VOSviewer and Bibliometrix, several key insights emerged from the mapping of keywords, citation patterns, and publication growth.

The annual scientific production from 2019 to 2024 indicates a gradual increase in interest in this field. Although the number of articles per year is still relatively limited, the visibility and citations have improved, particularly in 2023 and 2024. Figure 1 presents the trend of documents and citations over the six-year period, showing a peak of publication activity in 2019 and 2024, both with two documents each. However, it is notable that the number of citations reached its highest point in 2023, followed closely by 2024. This suggests that research in this domain has recently gained greater academic attention, with contemporary studies addressing relevant and pressing themes in Islamic education, such as parental involvement, value internalization, and curriculum integration.

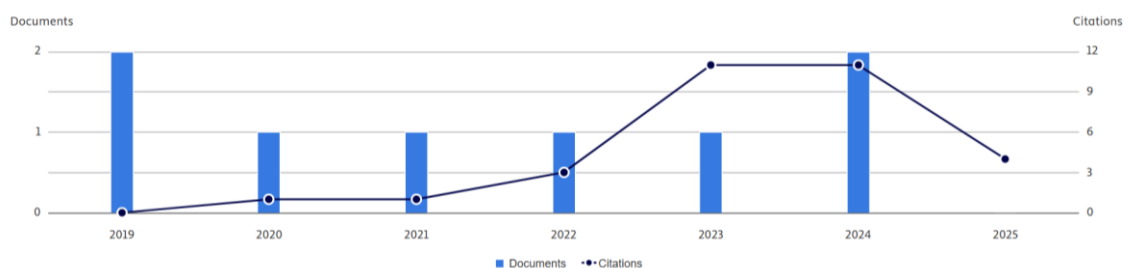


Figure 1. Annual number of publications and citations related to character education in Islamic elementary schools (2019–2024)

The keyword co-occurrence network, visualized in Figure 2, provides further insight into the thematic structure of the literature. The analysis identified three major clusters that reflect the research focuses of the selected articles. The first cluster comprises terms such as "sampling method," "curricula," "developmental research," and "product design," indicating a methodological orientation toward the design and evaluation of educational materials. This reflects the growing emphasis on research-based curriculum development in Islamic schools,

where moral education must be not only taught but embedded in instructional frameworks. Researchers such as Akbar et al. (2014) and Akbar & Puspitasari (2018) have highlighted the importance of such models in shaping character formation strategies at the classroom level.

The second thematic cluster emphasizes contextual and procedural terms such as "elementary schools," "students," "data collection," and "education computing." These keywords suggest a focus on how character education is operationalized within school settings and how it is received by students. Studies in this domain tend to explore the dynamics of classroom practice, the influence of school culture, and the role of educational technologies in shaping students' character. These findings align with prior literature, such as Hidayati et al. (2020), which emphasized the use of local wisdom and community context in delivering effective character education at the primary level.

Meanwhile, the third cluster, featuring keywords such as "character," "education," "Malaysia," and "CIPP," points to a policy-oriented and evaluative strand of research. The presence of "Malaysia" and "CIPP" (Context, Input, Process, Product) in the same cluster illustrates that many studies have focused on assessing how character education is implemented in different national settings, using structured evaluation frameworks. CIPP, in particular, has been adopted in several studies to assess the effectiveness of character education programs, particularly in Malaysian contexts where religious and moral education is divided into separate subjects for Muslim and non-Muslim students (Balakrishnan, 2010; Aroff, 2014).



Figure 2. Co-occurrence network of author keywords using VOSviewer

Beyond these thematic clusters, the dataset also points to broader patterns. One such pattern is the emphasis on integrating character education within national identity formation, particularly in Indonesia. Research often refers to the national values of Pancasila, Islamic teachings, and the Strengthening Character Education (PPK) program launched by the Indonesian Ministry of Education in 2017. Scholars such as Akbal (2017) and Maunah (2016) have described character education not only as a pedagogical objective but also as a moral imperative to produce citizens who are ethical, religious, and socially responsible.

In several studies, character education is conceptualized as a holistic process involving not only teachers and school leaders but also parents, communities, and policy institutions. Diana et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of religiosity as a mediating factor in parental engagement, suggesting that Islamic moral values must be reinforced both in school and at home. This echoes Lickona's (1991) assertion that effective character education requires a "schoolwide approach," where moral instruction is reflected in all aspects of the school environment—from teaching strategies and curriculum content to discipline systems and teacher behavior.

Despite the encouraging trends, the current state of research still shows several limitations. The number of documents retrieved from Scopus (eight articles over six years) is relatively small, which suggests that the field remains under-researched. Most studies employ qualitative or developmental methods and are conducted in local school settings, limiting their generalizability. Additionally, there is a scarcity of longitudinal studies that examine the long-term impact of character education interventions. Teacher perspectives, implementation fidelity, and the integration of character education in secular subjects (like science or language arts) also remain underexplored.

The research is further limited by the lack of cross-national comparisons. While some studies have made initial comparisons between Indonesia and Malaysia, the broader Southeast Asian context is largely absent from the literature. Yet, as education systems in the region increasingly emphasize values and morality, future research should explore how different religious and cultural settings affect the implementation and reception of character education in Islamic schools.

The bibliometric results also suggest that most highly cited works tend to be conceptual or policy-oriented, rather than empirical. This raises important questions about the relationship between policy discourse and classroom reality. While frameworks like CIPP and national education blueprints provide structure and direction, their translation into everyday teaching practices depends on various factors including teacher training, school leadership, and parental involvement.

In terms of theoretical contributions, many of the studies reinforce existing models rather than propose new ones. Most adopt established theories such as developmental psychology, Islamic education principles, or curriculum theory. However, there is room for innovation, especially in connecting character education with digital citizenship, environmental ethics, or peace education—topics that are increasingly relevant in today's educational landscape.

Another emerging trend is the role of technology in character formation. Although the keyword “education computing” appears only marginally, there is growing interest in how digital tools—such as learning management systems, interactive storytelling apps, and gamified moral dilemmas—can be used to teach values. This is particularly relevant in the post-COVID era, where blended and remote learning have become part of the standard educational model.

Finally, institutional analysis reveals that Islamic universities in Indonesia are the most productive contributors to this field, particularly Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) networks. These institutions have taken a leading role in integrating religious studies with educational research. Collaboration among these universities, and with their Malaysian counterparts, could foster deeper and more comprehensive research initiatives.

The bibliometric analysis presented in this study offers a rich overview of the academic discourse surrounding character education in Islamic elementary schools between 2019 and 2024. Despite the modest number of publications, the field shows promising signs of growth, with increasingly sophisticated research methods and a broadening thematic focus. The integration of Islamic values with contemporary educational practices remains at the heart of the discourse, reflecting the cultural and spiritual priorities of the societies in which these schools operate.

As the demand for ethical and values-based education continues to rise globally, Islamic elementary schools—and the research that supports them—will play an increasingly critical role in shaping the next generation of morally grounded citizens. Future studies should aim to fill the current gaps by conducting longitudinal, cross-cultural, and interdisciplinary research, while also innovating pedagogical models that respond to the evolving needs of students in the digital age.

4. CONCLUSION

This bibliometric study sought to uncover the prevailing academic trends and research patterns concerning character education in Islamic elementary schools over a fifteen-year period, from 2010 to 2024. Through the analysis of data extracted from Scopus and visualized using tools such as VOSviewer and Bibliometrix, this research offers a comprehensive view of how this specific educational theme has evolved and where scholarly attention is currently focused.

The first major finding relates to the prevailing research trends in this area. The analysis of publication output reveals that interest in character education within Islamic elementary schools has gradually increased over time, with a noticeable growth in publication frequency and citations especially between 2020 and 2024. Earlier studies primarily focused on conceptual and policy-oriented aspects of character education, often exploring its philosophical foundations, religious integration, and national curriculum mandates. However, more recent studies are characterized by a shift toward practice-based research, including classroom applications, teacher roles, and the development of character-based learning modules. Themes such as the integration of Islamic values, the reinforcement of religious rituals in daily school life, and student-centered strategies for moral development have become central. This shift reflects a broader global trend in educational research, which favors the exploration of practical implementation alongside theoretical grounding.

As for theoretical models and methodologies, the literature reveals a dominance of value-based frameworks rooted in Islamic education philosophy. Many studies rely on foundational theories of moral education by Islamic scholars (e.g., Al-Attas, Al-Ghazali), combined with modern educational theories such as Lickona's "Comprehensive Schoolwide Character Education" and the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) evaluation model. These frameworks allow for a multidimensional approach to character education, connecting instructional design, school environment, parental involvement, and institutional policy. The studies mostly adopt qualitative methodologies—particularly case studies, content analysis, and developmental research designs. Observational research, interviews with teachers, and document analysis (curricula, syllabi) are commonly used data collection methods. A smaller portion of the literature applies mixed-methods or quasi-experimental designs to test specific interventions. Quantitative studies remain scarce, though bibliometric tools themselves have proven useful in mapping the field as a whole.

Despite these developments, several research gaps have become evident through this study. First, the literature is largely descriptive and localized. While insightful, many studies focus on individual school contexts, limiting the generalizability of findings. More cross-institutional and multi-site studies are needed to provide broader evidence about the effectiveness of character education practices across diverse Islamic school settings. Second, longitudinal studies are notably absent. Most research captures short-term outcomes or one-time observations; thus, there is a lack of evidence regarding the long-term impact of character education on students' moral development and behavior over time. Third, there is limited engagement with the potential of digital tools and EdTech in character education.

While "education computing" appears as a minor keyword in some analyses, the topic remains underexplored—particularly in a post-pandemic educational landscape where blended and remote learning are increasingly normalized.

Furthermore, there is a need for stronger theoretical innovation. Many studies rely on well-established frameworks without critically testing their assumptions or adapting them to current sociocultural shifts. There is room for developing models that address emerging challenges such as digital ethics, environmental responsibility, and peacebuilding within Islamic elementary education. Similarly, future research could investigate how character education aligns with contemporary global competencies, such as collaboration, critical thinking, and cultural literacy, while remaining faithful to Islamic values.

In light of these findings, future studies are encouraged to expand the methodological scope, incorporate international perspectives, and link character education to broader educational innovations. Researchers should also consider how character education is being shaped by shifting policies, religious discourse, and societal expectations in both national and global contexts. Collaboration between Indonesian, Malaysian, and international scholars would enrich the field by providing comparative insights and culturally diverse perspectives.

In conclusion, the field of character education in Islamic elementary schools is a growing area of scholarly inquiry that sits at the intersection of moral philosophy, educational practice, religious tradition, and social development. The bibliometric patterns identified in this study reflect not only the academic progress made but also the urgent need for deeper, more integrated, and contextually responsive research. With continued exploration, this field holds significant promise for guiding how Islamic schools shape the next generation of morally grounded, socially responsible, and spiritually conscious individuals in an increasingly complex world.

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