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Critical Digital Literacy, Critical Thinking, and Religious Moderation: A Bibliometric-Analytical Synthesis of Islamic Education Reorientation

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to analyze the transformation of multicultural Islamic education in the digital era and its role in shaping a moderate, inclusive, and globally competitive generation. This study employs a qualitative approach using a systematic literature review (SLR) combined with bibliometric analysis through the VOSviewer application. Research data were obtained from 200 scientific articles indexed in Scopus and supported by various reputable academic publications from Google Scholar, Crossref, and other scientific databases published between 2020 and 2026. The analysis process was conducted through thematic analysis, bibliometric mapping, co-occurrence analysis, interpretation, and conceptual synthesis to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the transformation of multicultural Islamic education in Indonesia. The findings indicate that the transformation of multicultural Islamic education requires a paradigm shift from conventional learning systems toward adaptive, transformative, and digitally integrated educational models. The integration of digital literacy, religious moderation, multicultural values, and global competencies becomes the primary foundation in building an Islamic educational system that is relevant to contemporary global challenges. In addition, Islamic educational institutions capable of integrating multicultural values with technological innovation are more effective in shaping students who are tolerant, critical, collaborative, and globally competitive. This study concludes that the transformation of multicultural Islamic education must be directed toward strengthening moderate Islamic values, developing critical digital literacy, improving technology-based educational quality, and fostering inclusive and globally oriented student character without neglecting Islamic moral and spiritual identity.

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis transformasi pendidikan Islam multikultural di era digital serta perannya dalam membentuk generasi yang moderat, inklusif, dan berdaya saing global. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode *systematic literature review* melalui kajian terhadap berbagai artikel ilmiah, prosiding internasional, dan publikasi akademik bereputasi yang terindeks Scopus, Google Scholar, Crossref, dan database ilmiah lainnya pada rentang tahun 2020–2026. Analisis data dilakukan dengan teknik analisis tematik melalui proses reduksi data, kategorisasi tema, interpretasi, dan sintesis konseptual untuk memperoleh pemahaman yang komprehensif mengenai transformasi pendidikan Islam multikultural di era digital. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa transformasi pendidikan Islam multikultural memerlukan perubahan paradigma dari sistem pembelajaran konvensional menuju model pendidikan yang adaptif, transformatif, dan terintegrasi dengan teknologi digital. Integrasi literasi digital, moderasi beragama, kompetensi lintas budaya, dan nilai kewargaan global menjadi fondasi utama dalam membangun sistem pendidikan Islam yang relevan dengan tantangan global kontemporer. Selain itu, lembaga pendidikan Islam yang mampu mengintegrasikan nilai multikultural dengan inovasi teknologi terbukti lebih efektif dalam membentuk peserta didik yang toleran, kritis, kolaboratif, dan kompetitif di tingkat internasional. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa transformasi pendidikan Islam multikultural harus diarahkan pada penguatan nilai Islam moderat, pengembangan literasi digital kritis, peningkatan kualitas pendidikan berbasis teknologi, serta pembentukan karakter peserta didik yang inklusif dan berorientasi global tanpa meninggalkan identitas moral dan spiritual Islam.

PRELIMINARY

The development of digital civilization in the twenty-first century has significantly transformed the structure of global society, including the fields of education, social interaction, and religious practices. Digital transformation has not only influenced the way people communicate and access information but has also reshaped learning paradigms and the construction of knowledge within the educational sphere (ÖZDEMİR et al., 2023; UNESCO, 2021). In this framework, Islamic education faces major challenges in maintaining Islamic theological and moral values while simultaneously adapting to technological modernization and the realities of multicultural societies (Nata, 2021). The interconnectedness of global communities through digital media has intensified interactions among cultures, ideologies, and diverse religious perspectives, thereby necessitating a model of Islamic education that is more inclusive, moderate, and adaptive to social diversity (Suhendi, 2020).

Multicultural Islamic education has emerged as a strategic approach to addressing the challenges of social plurality, cultural diversity, and the dynamics of modern society. This educational concept emphasizes the integration of Islamic teachings with the values of tolerance, social justice, respect for differences, and the promotion of harmony among human beings (Banks & Banks, 2019; Saepudin, 2023). In the Indonesian context as a multicultural nation, Islamic educational institutions function not only as centers for the transmission of religious knowledge but also as agents of social cohesion and the reinforcement of democratic values (Rosyada, 2020). Nevertheless, the development of digital media has also generated serious challenges, including the spread of misinformation, hate speech, digital radicalism, and ideological polarization, all of which have the potential to threaten social integration within society (Kossowska et al., 2023).

Numerous recent studies have demonstrated that the integration of digital literacy into multicultural Islamic education has become an urgent necessity. Digital literacy is no longer understood merely as the technical ability to operate technological devices; rather, it encompasses critical thinking skills, ethical awareness, intercultural communication competence, and responsible participation in digital spaces (Kayyali, 2024). Setiyo et al. (2025) further emphasized that digital ethics grounded in Islamic values constitute an essential factor in responding to the rapid development of artificial intelligence and digital media. Religious moderation has also become a strategic issue in the reform of contemporary Islamic education. Moderate Islamic values such as *wasathiyah*, tolerance, inclusiveness, and non-violence are increasingly emphasized as primary objectives of Islamic education in order to counter digital extremism and social conflict (Prasetyo et al., 2025).

Despite these developments, there remains a significant research gap regarding how multicultural Islamic education can systematically transform itself in the digital era to produce globally competitive generations without losing Islamic identity and ethical values. Most previous studies have tended to discuss digital technology, religious moderation, or multicultural education separately, resulting in a limited number of comprehensive studies that integrate these aspects through bibliometric and thematic approaches in the Indonesian context (Zamroni, 2025).

Therefore, this article offers an integrative perspective by combining systematic literature review and bibliometric analysis using VOSviewer to map the development of multicultural Islamic education studies in the digital era. The novelty of this study lies in its effort to connect digital transformation, religious moderation, digital literacy, and global competitiveness within a unified analytical framework focusing on the development of moderate, inclusive, and globally adaptive Muslim generations in Indonesia.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using a systematic literature review (SLR) combined with bibliometric analysis using the VOSviewer application. The approach was intended to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the transformation of multicultural Islamic education in the digital era, particularly within the Indonesian context (Suresman et al., 2025). Research data were obtained from reputable international journal articles indexed in Scopus and exported into RIS format. Based on the identification process, 200 scientific articles relevant to Islamic education, digital transformation, religious moderation, multicultural education, digital literacy, and global competitiveness were identified. Additional references were obtained from Google Scholar, Crossref, and other reputable academic publications.

The bibliometric analysis process involved metadata collection, keyword normalization, network visualization, co-occurrence analysis, and cluster interpretation using VOSviewer. Dominant themes identified included religious moderation, digital literacy, critical thinking, global citizenship, curriculum transformation, and Islamic education perspective. Thematic analysis was then conducted through data reduction, theme categorization, interpretation, and conceptual synthesis to construct a systematic understanding of the transformation of multicultural Islamic education in the digital era.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

The bibliometric analysis conducted using the VOSviewer application demonstrates that studies on Multicultural Islamic Education in the digital era have developed into several interconnected thematic clusters that collectively form a dynamic research landscape. Based on the *network visualization* and *overlay visualization*, several dominant keywords appear to have strong interrelationships, including *perspective*, *critical thinking*, *disruption*, *performance*, *analysis*, and *challenge*. Among these terms, *perspective* emerges as the central theme linking various issues related to the transformation of contemporary Islamic education. This finding indicates that the paradigm of Islamic education in the digital era is no longer limited to theological and normative dimensions, but is increasingly oriented toward critical, adaptive, and multidimensional approaches in responding to global societal changes.

The first cluster reveals a strong connection between *critical thinking* and *perspective*, indicating that the development of critical thinking skills has become a major concern in the transformation of multicultural Islamic education. This trend suggests that Islamic education in Indonesia is gradually shifting from doctrinal learning patterns toward more reflective and dialogical approaches that encourage students to critically examine social, cultural, and religious phenomena. From the standpoint of Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy, education should not merely function as a process of knowledge transmission, but also as a means of fostering critical consciousness toward social realities and changing circumstances (Shih, 2018). In this regard, strengthening critical thinking within multicultural Islamic education is essential for nurturing Muslim generations that are tolerant, open-minded, and capable of navigating the complexities of digital society.

The second cluster highlights the relationship between *disruption* and *perspective*, reflecting the significant impact of digital disruption on Islamic educational systems. Advances in information technology, artificial intelligence, and digital media have reshaped learning practices, social interactions, and religious engagement among young Muslims. Such developments require Islamic educational institutions to undertake curriculum reform, strengthen digital literacy, and adopt innovative pedagogical approaches to remain relevant within a rapidly changing global environment (Suhendi, 2025). These findings further indicate that digital transformation in Islamic education extends beyond technological adoption, involving broader shifts toward flexible, collaborative, and competency-based educational paradigms aligned with twenty-first century learning demands.

Meanwhile, the third cluster illustrates the connection between *performance* and *analysis*, emphasizing the importance of evaluative and data-driven approaches in improving the quality of Islamic education. This theme suggests that educational transformation in the digital era increasingly prioritizes systematic analysis, evidence-based policy development, and institutional quality enhancement through measurable academic approaches. In this context, Islamic education is expected not only to cultivate students' religiosity but also to strengthen intellectual capacity, global competencies, and international competitiveness. This orientation aligns with UNESCO's concept of *global citizenship education*, which emphasizes the importance of global competence, digital literacy, intercultural communication, and social responsibility within contemporary educational systems (Helm et al., 2024; UNESCO, 2021).

Furthermore, the *overlay visualization* reveals that the theme of *challenge* has emerged as a prominent issue in recent studies. This finding indicates that the transformation of Islamic education in the digital era is increasingly confronted with complex challenges, including social polarization, digital radicalism, ethical degradation, and unequal access to educational technology. At the same time, the growing prominence of *analysis* and *performance* in recent research trends reflects a shift toward strengthening data-based educational evaluation and improving institutional quality through more strategic and research-oriented approaches.

Accordingly, the bibliometric visualization demonstrates that Multicultural Islamic Education in Indonesia is evolving toward a more moderate, inclusive, technology-oriented, and globally responsive educational paradigm. Overall, the VOSviewer bibliometric visualization confirms that the transformation of Multicultural Islamic Education in the digital era is not solely concerned with integrating technology into learning processes. Rather, it also involves strengthening religious moderation, developing critical digital literacy, fostering inclusive character formation, and enhancing the global competitiveness of Indonesian Muslim generations. These findings reinforce the argument that contemporary Islamic education must integrate Islamic values, technological advancement, and global perspectives in a balanced manner to produce adaptive, humane, and civilized generations capable of responding to the dynamics of global digital society. The VOSviewer visualization results of this study are presented in the following figure.

VISUALISASI BIBLIOMETRIK PENDIDIKAN ISLAM MULTIKULTURAL DI ERA DIGITAL

Berdasarkan Analisis VOSviewer (Co-occurrence Keyword)

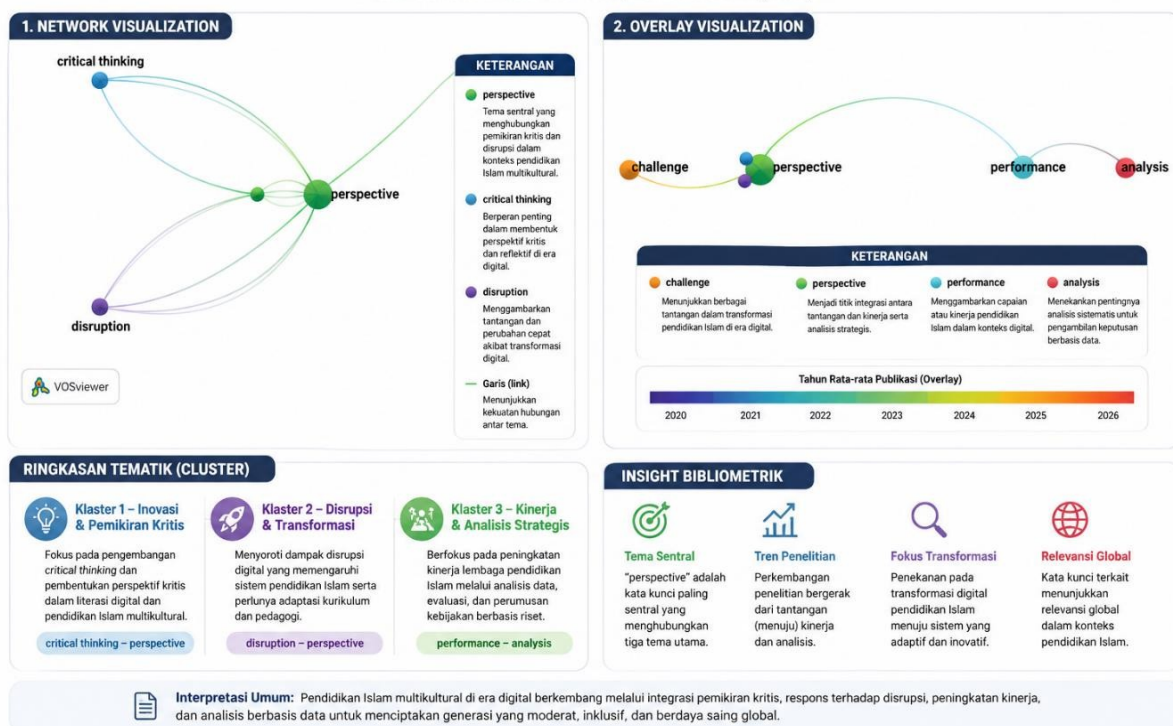


Figure 1. Vosviewer Visualisation Result

DISCUSSION

The Urgency of Transforming Multicultural Islamic Education

The findings indicate that multicultural Islamic education in Indonesia is moving toward a more integrative paradigm combining Islamic values, digital technology, and global perspectives. This transformation is closely related to the concept of *wasathiyah*, which emphasizes balance, tolerance, and respect for social plurality as the foundation of moderate Islamic education (Prasetyo et al., 2025). Ibn Khaldun's theory of *'umran* further explains that educational transformation is always connected to broader civilizational and social changes (Arifin et al., 2026; Mubin et al., 2024).

The bibliometric analysis also demonstrates that critical thinking, digital literacy, and disruption are dominant themes in contemporary Islamic education studies. Paulo Freire's concept of critical pedagogy is relevant in explaining that education should encourage students to become critical subjects capable of responding to intolerance, identity polarization, and digital propaganda in contemporary society (Sulaiman et al., 2023; Taufiqurrohman et al., 2024).

Integration of Digital Literacy and Islamic Values

Technological development has transformed learning patterns, social interaction, and access to knowledge in Islamic education. Digital literacy is now understood not only as technical competence but also as analytical capability, ethical awareness, and critical information filtering (Sharma et al., 2025). The VOSviewer visualization demonstrates that digital literacy has strong interconnectedness with analysis and perspective, indicating the importance of strengthening critical thinking in multicultural Islamic education.

George Siemens' theory of connectivism explains that learning in the digital era occurs through information networks that enable more flexible and collaborative learning processes (Siemens, 2005). Within this framework, Islamic educational institutions are required to develop technology-based learning models grounded in Islamic ethics such as honesty, justice, responsibility, and moderation (Yusuf & Prasetyo, 2023).

Religious Moderation and Inclusive Education

The findings reveal that religious moderation has become a central issue in the transformation of Islamic education in Indonesia. Religious moderation is considered essential in addressing increasing identity polarization, intolerance, and digital radicalism in multicultural societies (Hanif et al., 2025). In Islamic thought, moderation is closely related to *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, which positions human welfare as the primary objective of Islamic teachings (Miftahuljannah, 2026). This conceptual foundation facilitates an inclusive educational environment where students are encouraged to engage with diverse perspectives without compromising their core spiritual identity (Judijanto, 2025).

In multicultural education, religious moderation is not only a theological concept but also a pedagogical approach for fostering peace, tolerance, and respect for diversity (Dabutar et al., 2025; Syahbudin, 2023). (Agustin & Shobahiya, 2026; Farouq et al., 2025).

Global Competitiveness in Islamic Education

Global competitiveness has become an important orientation in the transformation of Islamic education in the digital era. Islamic educational institutions are expected to produce graduates who possess intercultural communication skills, creativity, collaboration, digital literacy, and leadership abilities (Eraku et al., 2021; UNESCO, 2021; Zubairi et al., 2022). Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas emphasized that the goal of Islamic education is *ta'dib*, namely the formation of knowledgeable individuals with strong moral integrity. Likewise, Azyumardi Azra highlighted the importance of integrating religious sciences, technology, and global perspectives within Islamic educational systems (Azra, 2019; Prasetyo et al., 2025; Saepudin, 2023). Consequently, multicultural Islamic education in Indonesia should focus on developing intellectually competent, moderate, globally adaptive, and ethically responsible Muslim generations.

CONCLUSION

The transformation of multicultural Islamic education in the digital era demonstrates that Islamic education in Indonesia is moving toward a more adaptive, inclusive, and technology-based educational paradigm. The integration of digital literacy, religious moderation, multicultural values, and global competencies has become essential in developing educational systems that are relevant to contemporary global challenges. The findings also indicate that multicultural Islamic education plays a strategic role in shaping Muslim generations who are critical, tolerant, adaptive, and globally competitive while maintaining Islamic moral and spiritual identity. Furthermore, bibliometric analysis reveals that contemporary Islamic education studies increasingly emphasize critical thinking, digital literacy, and religious moderation as the foundations of inclusive and civilized societies.

This study has limitations because the bibliometric analysis primarily focused on Scopus-indexed publications and selected academic databases, which may not fully represent the broader development of Islamic education studies globally. Future studies are therefore recommended to employ empirical approaches, field studies, or mixed methods in order to gain deeper insights into the practical implementation of multicultural Islamic education in digital contexts.

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