

The Reconfiguration of Contemporary Islamic Sufism: Global Scholarly Trends and Their Relevance to Sufi Da'wah in Indonesia

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Abstrak

Sufisme Islam kontemporer mengalami penyesuaian struktural yang dinamis seiring meningkatnya perhatian akademik terhadap kapasitasnya dalam merespons dilema spiritual dan sosio-etis modern. Meskipun literturnya luas, pemetaan komprehensif mengenai trajektori keilmuan global serta translasi analitisnya ke dalam model dakwah lokal masih belum tersedia secara kritis. Penelitian ini menganalisis tren riset global dalam Sufisme Islam kontemporer, mengidentifikasi arsitektur intelektual, evolusi tematik, serta relevansi strategisnya bagi dakwah berorientasi Sufi di Indonesia. Menggunakan pendekatan hibrida bibliometrik yang diintegrasikan dengan analisis isi kualitatif, studi ini mengevaluasi 96 publikasi terindeks Scopus sepanjang periode 2015–2024. Kecuali dinyatakan lain, istilah “global” sepanjang studi ini merujuk pada korpus terindeks Scopus berbahasa Inggris tersebut, bukan keseluruhan literatur Sufisme dunia. Indikator bibliometrik, termasuk jaringan ko-sitasi dan pemetaan tematis, dianalisis melalui paket Biblioshiny dalam R. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan pergeseran paradigma yang signifikan dalam sarjana Sufi kontemporer, bergerak dari dimensi esoterik-mistik yang terisolasi menuju diskursus aktif yang sangat interdisipliner. Arsitektur intelektual tersebut telah direkonfigurasi di sekitar tema moderasi beragama, spiritualitas etis, ketahanan sosial, dan keterlibatan publik. Studi ini menawarkan kontribusi konseptual awal dengan menjembatani wawasan bibliometrik dengan praktik lokal, mengajukan kerangka kerja tentatif "Sufisme Aktif" (*Engaged Sufism*). Kerangka kerja ini menyediakan landasan yang inklusif, kontekstual, dan transformatif bagi model dakwah kontemporer di tengah masyarakat plural Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: *Sufisme Kontemporer, Analisis Bibliometrik, Arsitektur Intelektual, Dakwah Sufi, Engaged Sufism.*

Abstract

Contemporary Islamic Sufism is experiencing dynamic structural adjustments as academic scrutiny increases regarding its capacity to address modern spiritual and socio-ethical dilemmas. Despite extensive literature, a comprehensive mapping of global scholarly trajectories and their analytical translation into localized Islamic propagation (*da'wah*) models remains critically absent. This study examines global research trends in contemporary Islamic Sufism, identifying its intellectual architecture, thematic evolutions, and strategic relevance to Sufi-oriented *da'wah* in Indonesia. Utilizing a hybrid bibliometric approach integrated with qualitative content analysis, this study evaluates 96 Scopus-indexed publications spanning 2015–2024. Unless otherwise specified, references to “global” scholarship throughout this study denote this Scopus-indexed, English-language corpus rather than the full body of worldwide Sufism literature. Bibliometric indicators, including co-citation networks and thematic mapping, were analyzed via the Biblioshiny package in R. The findings reveal a significant paradigm shift in contemporary Sufi scholarship, moving from isolated esoteric-mystical dimensions toward an active, highly interdisciplinary discourse. The intellectual structure has reconfigured around themes of religious moderation, ethical spirituality, social resilience, and public engagement. This study offers a preliminary conceptual contribution by bridging bibliometric insights with localized practices, proposing a tentative framework for “engaged Sufism”—built on the recurring thematic clusters of religious moderation, ethical spirituality, social resilience, and public engagement identified in the bibliometric mapping. This framework provides an inclusive, contextual, and transformative foundation for contemporary *da'wah* models within Indonesia’s pluralistic society.

Keywords: Contemporary Sufism, Bibliometric Analysis, Intellectual Architecture, Sufi Da'wah, Engaged Sufism.

Introduction

Contemporary scholarship examines Sufism from diverse perspectives, including theology, spirituality, history, culture, politics, education, and *da'wah* (Islamic outreach). By prioritizing inner piety (*ihsān*) and moral refinement, Sufism cultivates sincerity, humility, and compassion, qualities that are essential for effective and persuasive *da'wah*. In this sense, the transformative spiritual experiences fostered through Sufi practices function as lived testimonies that embody Islamic values, thereby enhancing the appeal of *da'wah* to broader audiences. Beyond its spiritual dimension, Sufism also articulates a universal ethos grounded in love, tolerance, and human solidarity, enabling it to transcend cultural and religious boundaries. This inclusive character has historically facilitated the spread of Islam across diverse regions, particularly through the networks of Sufi orders (*ṭuruq*) and their charismatic spiritual authorities (Al-Haramain, 2011). These networks functioned not only as religious institutions but also as socio-cultural agents that mediated Islamic teachings within local contexts through gradual and adaptive processes of Islamization. Furthermore, Sufism communicates its

teachings through aesthetic and affective forms such as poetry, music, and ritual performance, while practices such as *dhikr* (remembrance of God), *samāʿ* (spiritual audition), and *murāqabah* (meditative contemplation) reinforce experiential religiosity by emphasizing lived spirituality rather than merely doctrinal transmission (Abdul-Hamid & Hughes, 2015).

The expanding body of scholarship reflects increasing academic interest in understanding the multifaceted role of Sufism in both historical and contemporary Muslim societies. Beyond its classical association with spirituality and mysticism, Sufism is increasingly recognized as a social, cultural, historical, and intellectual phenomenon that has shaped Muslim societies across diverse regions and historical periods (Knysh, 2017). Its influence extends beyond religious education and ethical formation to cultural production, community organization, and the transmission of Islamic knowledge (Sedgwick, 2017). Consequently, Sufism has evolved into a multidisciplinary field of inquiry attracting scholars from religious studies, history, sociology, anthropology, political science, and other related disciplines. As scholarly interest continues to expand across these disciplines, the volume and diversity of publications on Sufism have increased substantially, creating the need for more systematic approaches to understanding its intellectual development.

The increasing volume and diversity of Sufism scholarship have created a growing need for more systematic approaches to understanding the intellectual development of the field. In response to this development, bibliometric analysis has become an increasingly important method for mapping scientific knowledge by identifying publication trends, influential authors, collaboration networks, thematic evolution, intellectual structures, and emerging research directions (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017; Donthu et al., 2021; Moral-Muñoz et al., 2020). Recent bibliometric studies have successfully examined various areas of Islamic scholarship, including Islamic studies (Latuconsina, 2023), Islamic da'wah (Choirin et al., 2025), Islamic education (Machali & Suhendro, 2022), Islamic accounting (Wahyudi et al., 2022), zakat research (Apriliyah & Arifianto, 2022), and Islamic banking and finance (Hassanein & Mostafa, 2023). These studies demonstrate the effectiveness of bibliometric approaches in revealing research trajectories, thematic evolution, intellectual structures, and knowledge gaps within rapidly developing academic fields (Donthu et al., 2021).

Despite these methodological advances, bibliometric investigations specifically focusing on contemporary Islamic Sufism remain relatively limited. Existing studies on Sufism have expanded across diverse geographical regions, disciplinary traditions, and methodological approaches, exploring topics such as Sufi orders, mystical experience, religious authority,

spiritual practices, Islamic education, gender issues, interfaith relations, cultural adaptation, social movements, and socio-cultural transformation (Green, 2012; Ridgeon, 2015). Recent scholarship has also examined Sufism's contribution to identity formation, religious moderation, community resilience, and the socio-cultural dynamics of Muslim societies, particularly in Southeast Asia (Sahri & Hali, 2023). Nevertheless, these studies remain largely descriptive and fragmented, providing limited understanding of the global intellectual structure and development of contemporary Sufism scholarship.

Consequently, significant gaps remain in understanding how contemporary Islamic Sufism has evolved as a global field of scholarship, including its publication trends, thematic evolution, citation networks, scholarly collaboration, and intellectual structure. Likewise, relatively little attention has been devoted to examining how these global scholarly developments contribute to the advancement of Sufi-oriented da'wah in Indonesia. Addressing these gaps is essential for providing a comprehensive overview of the intellectual evolution of contemporary Islamic Sufism while identifying promising directions for future research.

To address these limitations, this study employs a bibliometric approach combined with qualitative interpretation to analyze global scholarship on contemporary Islamic Sufism published between 2015 and 2024. Unlike previous studies that primarily adopted conceptual, historical, or regional perspectives, this research systematically maps publication trends, intellectual structures, thematic evolution, and scholarly collaboration. More importantly, it seeks to show how global scholarly developments may contribute to the conceptual development of Sufi-oriented da'wah in Indonesia. Conceptually, this study proposes to position contemporary Islamic Sufism not merely as a mystical tradition but as a dynamic intellectual and socio-religious discourse that continues to shape Islamic thought, ethical engagement, and transformative religious practices.

Based on the identified research gaps, this study addresses the following research questions: (1) How has global scholarship on contemporary Islamic Sufism developed between 2015 and 2024? (2) What thematic, intellectual, and methodological trends characterize contemporary Islamic Sufism research? (3) How do these global scholarly developments contribute to the conceptual development of Sufi-oriented da'wah in Indonesia?

Accordingly, this study aims to: (1) systematically map the development of global scholarship on contemporary Islamic Sufism between 2015 and 2024; (2) identify its dominant themes, intellectual structure, and methodological orientations; and (3) examine the relevance of these global scholarly developments for the conceptual development of Sufi-oriented da'wah in Indonesia. To provide the conceptual foundation for addressing these questions, the

following section reviews the major theoretical perspectives on Sufism and contemporary Sufism studies.

From the perspective of existing literature, Sufism has been extensively conceptualized as the inner dimension of Islam grounded in the doctrine of *al-iḥsān*, which emphasizes spiritual consciousness and experiential knowledge of the Divine. Classical and contemporary scholars such as Annemarie Schimmel, J. Spencer Trimingham, and A. J. Arberry describe Sufism as the experiential and esoteric dimension of Islam that focuses on inner transformation and spiritual realization (Arberry, 2007; Schimmel, 1975; Trimingham, 1998). In contemporary discourse, this understanding is expanded through socio- cultural and political analyses that situate Sufism within broader institutional and historical frameworks (Farrar, 2022; Parciack, 2022). Furthermore, William Chittick conceptualizes Sufism as privileging inwardness over outwardness, contemplation over action, and spiritual development over formal legalism (Chittick, 2016).

Key ethical and spiritual concepts such as *zuhd* (asceticism), *tafakkur* (contemplation), *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul), and structured practices within *ṭarīqa* traditions (*dhikr*, *wird*, and spiritual guidance) further demonstrate the multidimensional character of Sufism (Al-Ghazālī, 1992; Michon, 2008; Thohri & Hadisaputra, 2022). Historically, Sufism has also been institutionalized within Islamic education systems, particularly from the 13th century onward, when it became integrated into Sunni scholarly curricula alongside *fiqh* (Cornell, 1999; Safi, 2006). However, this integration was not without contestation, as reformist movements such as Salafism later criticized Sufi practices as deviations from normative Islam (Mandaville, 2022; Meijer, 2009).

Despite the richness of existing scholarship, a significant gap remains in the systematic global mapping of contemporary Islamic Sufism research. Most previous studies have focused on doctrinal interpretations, historical developments, specific Sufi orders, or localized ethnographic analyses, without providing a comprehensive overview of global publication trends, thematic evolution, intellectual structures, methodological developments, and scholarly collaboration. Consequently, the intellectual trajectory of contemporary Islamic Sufism remains fragmented, while its broader implications for *da'wah* studies, particularly the development of Sufi-oriented *da'wah* in contemporary Muslim societies and Indonesia, have received limited scholarly attention. These limitations underscore the need for a comprehensive bibliometric investigation capable of providing a macro-level understanding of the development of contemporary Islamic Sufism scholarship.

To address these gaps, the present study employs a bibliometric approach combined with qualitative interpretation to systematically analyze global scholarship on contemporary Islamic Sufism published between 2015 and 2024. The novelty of this study lies in integrating bibliometric mapping with qualitative analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of publication trends, thematic evolution, intellectual structures, methodological orientations, and scholarly collaboration within contemporary Sufism research. Unlike previous studies that primarily adopted conceptual, historical, or regional perspectives, this research offers a macro-level intellectual mapping that connects global scholarly developments with the conceptual development of Sufi-oriented *da'wah* in Indonesia. Through this approach, contemporary Islamic Sufism is repositioned not merely as a mystical tradition but as a dynamic field of knowledge production that continues to shape Islamic thought, ethical engagement, and transformative religious practices in a global context.

Research Method

1. Research Design

This study employed a bibliometric research design complemented by qualitative descriptive interpretation to examine the intellectual development of contemporary Islamic Sufism scholarship and its implications for Sufi-oriented *da'wah* in Indonesia. Bibliometric analysis was selected because it enables the systematic mapping of scientific knowledge by identifying publication trends, citation structures, collaboration networks, and thematic developments within a particular research field. To complement the quantitative mapping, qualitative descriptive interpretation was employed to explain the emerging research themes and discuss their relevance to the development of spiritual, ethical, and culturally inclusive *da'wah* in Indonesia. The analysis focused on publications indexed in the Scopus database between 2015 and 2024. Figure 1 illustrates the systematic stages of the research process, including data retrieval, screening, bibliometric analysis, visualization, and qualitative interpretation.

2. Research Objects and Data Sources

The research objects consisted of peer-reviewed journal articles on contemporary Islamic Sufism indexed in the Scopus database. Scopus was selected because it is one of the largest multidisciplinary citation databases, offering comprehensive bibliographic metadata, standardized indexing, and high-quality international publications suitable for bibliometric research. The final dataset comprised **96 peer-reviewed journal articles** that met the

predefined eligibility criteria and served as the basis for subsequent bibliometric mapping and qualitative descriptive interpretation.

3. Research Procedure

The research was conducted through six sequential stages. First, publications were systematically retrieved from the Scopus database using the predefined search strategy. Second, the retrieved records were screened based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure data relevance and consistency. Third, bibliographic metadata—including authors, affiliations, publication years, countries, keywords, citations, and publication sources—were exported in CSV format and cleaned before analysis. Fourth, bibliometric analyses were performed to examine annual publication trends, source productivity, citation patterns, author productivity, country collaboration networks, keyword co-occurrence, thematic mapping, thematic evolution, and conceptual structures. Fifth, bibliometric visualizations were generated to illustrate the intellectual structure and thematic evolution of contemporary Islamic Sufism research. Finally, qualitative descriptive interpretation was undertaken to explain the identified bibliometric patterns and explore their implications for the development of Sufi-oriented *da'wah* in Indonesia. The overall research procedure is presented in

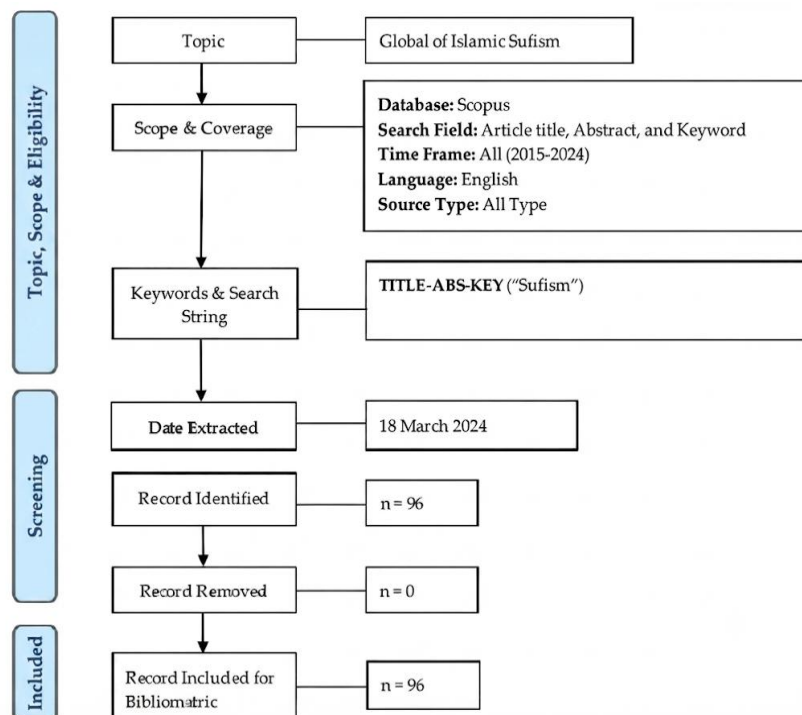


Figure 1. Systematic Flow of Research Methodology

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

4. Data Collection

Data were collected through a systematic search of the Scopus database using the keyword "Sufism" in the TITLE-ABS-KEY field. The search was restricted to English-language journal articles published between 2015 and 2024 that had reached final publication status. The complete search strategy is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Search Strategy Used for Data Collection

Search Criteria	Specification
Database	Scopus
Search field	TITLE-ABS-KEY
Search keyword	"Sufism"
Document type	Article
Source type	Journal
Language	English
Publication period	2015–2024
Publication stage	Final
Search query	TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Sufism") AND LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "ar") AND LIMIT-TO (PUBSTAGE, "final") AND LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE, "j") AND LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, "English") AND PUBYEAR = 2015–2024*
Date of access	March 2024

Source: Authors' compilation.

As shown in Table 1, the search relied on a single keyword, "Sufism," and did not include related terms such as "Sufi," "tariqa," or "tasawuf"; this scope is revisited in the study's limitations. The retrieved records were subsequently screened according to predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria covering publication period, language, document type, publication stage, subject area, and duplicate records. The screening criteria are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Data Selection

Selection Criterion	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Language	English	Non-English
Publication Period	2015–2024	Before 2015

Document Type	Journal articles	Conference papers, books, book chapters, reviews, editorials, notes, letters, and other document types
Publication Stage	Final	Article in Press
Subject Area	Social Sciences; Arts and Humanities	Subject areas other than Social Sciences and Arts and Humanities
Duplicate Records	Unique records retained	Duplicate records removed manually

Source: Authors' compilation.

Following the application of the inclusion and exclusion criteria presented in Table 1, 96 peer-reviewed journal articles were retained for bibliometric analysis. Restricting the dataset to English-language journal articles published between 2015 and 2024 ensured the inclusion of recent, high-quality, and internationally accessible scholarship relevant to contemporary Islamic Sufism. The resulting dataset provides a reliable foundation for bibliometric mapping and qualitative descriptive interpretation, enabling the identification of publication trends, citation patterns, scholarly collaboration networks, thematic structures, and research trajectories. Furthermore, this combined methodological approach facilitates a deeper understanding of how contemporary Sufi scholarship contributes to the development of spiritual, ethical, and inclusive Sufi-oriented *da'wah* discourse.

5. Data Analysis

The bibliometric analysis was conducted using the Bibliometrix package implemented through the Biblioshiny interface in R. The analysis examined annual publication trends, source productivity, citation performance, author productivity, country collaboration networks, keyword co-occurrence, thematic mapping, thematic evolution, and conceptual structures. Network visualization techniques were employed to reveal relationships among authors, countries, and research themes. Subsequently, qualitative descriptive analysis was applied to interpret the bibliometric findings by identifying dominant research topics, emerging themes, and intellectual trajectories within contemporary Islamic Sufism studies. Integrating bibliometric mapping with qualitative interpretation enabled a comprehensive understanding of both the quantitative evolution of the literature and its implications for the development of spiritual, ethical, and inclusive Sufi-oriented *da'wah* in Indonesia.

Research Findings

Based on a decade-long examination of literature covering the evolution of Islamic Sufism from 2015 to 2024, the research reveals a fluctuating yet progressively increasing trend. In 2015, there were four publications on Sufism, followed by a notable rise to 11 in 2016, and a subsequent decline to three in 2017, marking the lowest point in the past decade. The year 2022 witnessed a substantial surge with 22 publications on Sufism. These findings indicate a fluctuating but generally increasing trend of academic publication on Sufism over the observed decade, suggesting continued and possibly growing scholarly interest in the topic in the coming years.

It should be noted that the count for 2024 reflects only a partial year, as the dataset was retrieved in March 2024; consequently, the apparent figure for 2024 should not be directly compared with earlier, complete calendar years, and any perceived decline relative to 2022–2023 may simply reflect this incomplete coverage rather than an actual decrease in scholarly output.

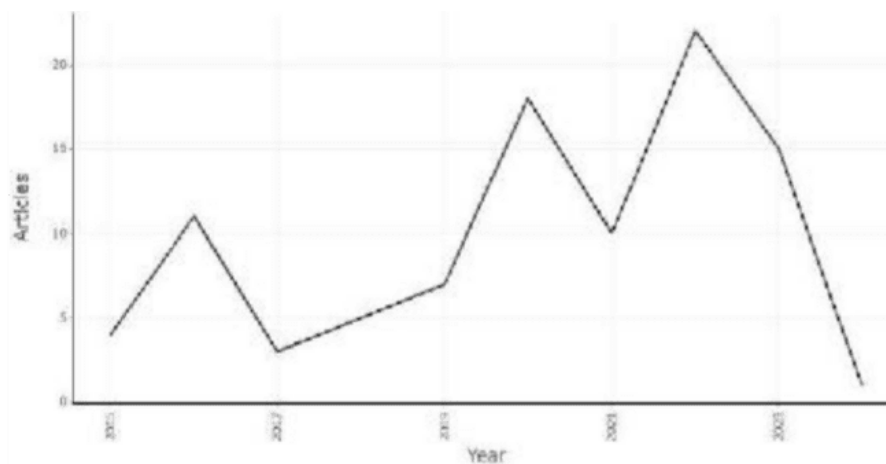


Figure 2. Annual Scientific Production

1. Productivity of Journals

Based on the productivity of journals publishing studies on Islamic Sufism within the analyzed dataset, several journals have demonstrated consistent productivity in generating and advancing this field of study. The most productive journal in producing Sufi studies is the *Journal of Sufi Studies* (Netherlands), indexed in Q2-Scopus, which specifically focuses on global Sufi studies, with a production of six articles. Following closely is *Religions* (Switzerland), indexed in Q1-Scopus, which produced five articles, along with *Contemporary Islam* (Netherlands), also indexed in Q1-Scopus, and the *International Journal of Asia-Pacific Studies* (Malaysia), indexed in Q2-Scopus, each producing three articles on Sufism.

Additionally, the Journal of Islamic and Muslim Studies and Social Compass (United Kingdom), both indexed in Q1-Scopus, each contributed three articles on Sufism.

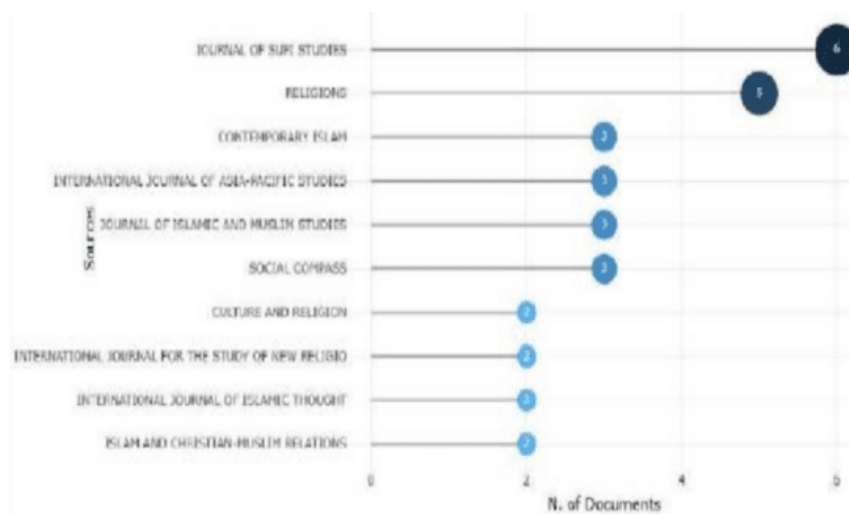


Figure 3. Most Relevant Sources

2. Country Scientific Production

Based on the production of scientific articles generated by each country represented in the dataset, Indonesia predominantly publishes the most studies on Sufism within the analyzed dataset, with 36 articles, corresponding to 32.72% of the total country-level contributions (N = 110; this total exceeds the 96 articles in the dataset because several articles involve authors affiliated with more than one country). This indicates that Indonesia is the most productive in producing and examining the development of Sufism among the countries represented in this dataset. Subsequently, the United States contributed 17 articles (15.45% of the total articles) on Sufi studies. Following them, Malaysia and Turkey each produced 10 articles examining the development of Sufi Islam. Then, articles from Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom published eight articles. For Iran, there were five articles that produced studies on Sufi Islam. Finally, the relatively smallest number of articles that examined Sufi studies came from Germany and Italy, with four articles each.

Table 3. Country Scientific Production Based on Authors

No.	Country	Number of Articles
1	Indonesia	36
2	United States of America	17

3	Malaysia	10
4	Turkey	10
5	Australia	8
6	Canada	8
7	United Kingdom	8
8	Iran	5
9	Germany	4
10	Italy	4
	Total	110

Based on the annual scientific production of each country during the period 2015–2024, Indonesia exhibited the most substantial increase in the number of publications on Sufi studies, particularly between 2022 and 2023. In contrast, publication outputs from the United States, Malaysia, Turkey, Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, Iran, Germany, and Italy showed relatively stable or more gradual growth over the same period. These findings indicate that Indonesia experienced the highest publication growth among the leading contributing countries during the observation period.

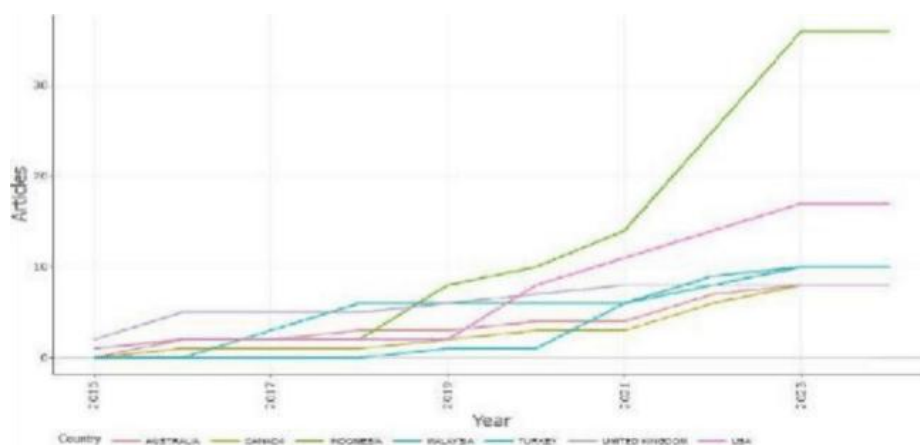


Figure 4. Country Production Over Time

Figure 4 further illustrates the contrasting publication trajectories among the leading countries. Indonesia demonstrates the steepest upward trend, particularly after 2020, whereas the remaining countries exhibit relatively gradual increases with lower publication volumes. Overall, the figure highlights the unequal distribution of scientific production in global Sufi

studies, with Indonesia emerging as the dominant contributor during the study period.

3. Most Cited Countries

Based on the findings, the United Kingdom recorded the highest citation impact within the analyzed dataset, with 39 citations, followed by Germany and Italy with 17 citations each, Brazil and Indonesia with 14 citations each, and Canada with 12 citations. Although Indonesia produced the largest number of publications during the study period, the United Kingdom achieved the highest citation count. These findings indicate that publication productivity and citation impact do not necessarily correspond, reflecting differences in the scholarly influence of research outputs across countries.

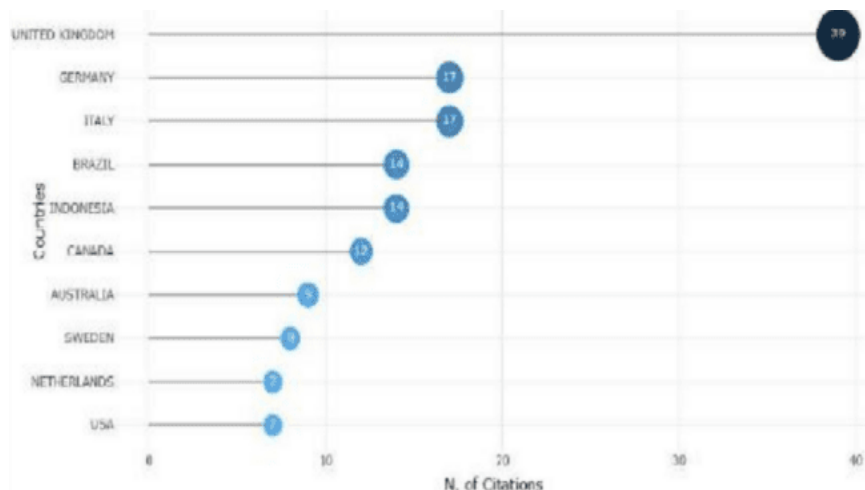


Figure 5. Most Cited Countries

Figure 5 presents the distribution of the most cited countries in global Sufi studies. The United Kingdom recorded the highest citation impact with 39 citations, followed by Germany and Italy, each receiving 17 citations. Brazil and Indonesia ranked next with 14 citations each, while Canada received 12 citations. Australia obtained nine citations, followed by Sweden with eight citations, and both the Netherlands and the United States with seven citations each. These findings indicate that citation impact is distributed across several countries and does not necessarily correspond to publication productivity, suggesting differences between research output and scholarly influence in global Sufi studies.

4. Productivity Authors

Author productivity analysis was conducted to identify the most active researchers contributing to the development of global Sufi studies during the 2015–2024 period. This

analysis measures the number of publications produced by individual authors, thereby illustrating the distribution of scholarly contributions and identifying researchers who have played a prominent role in advancing the contemporary Sufi literature.

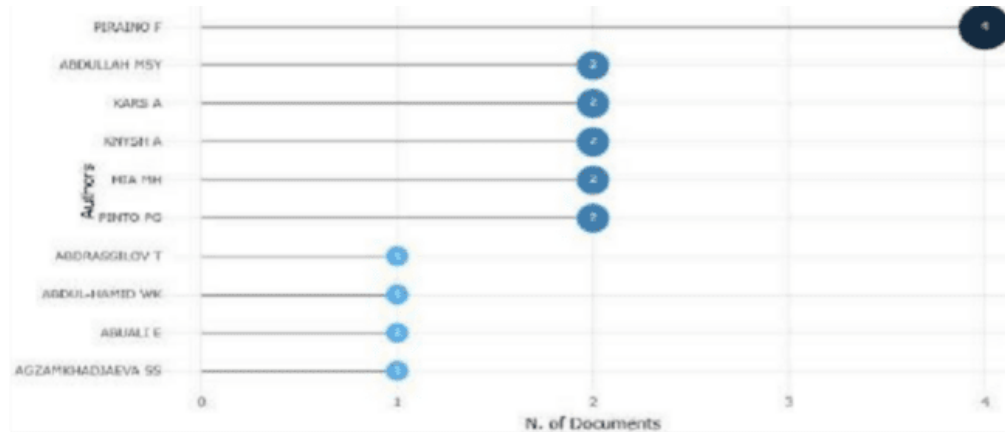


Figure 6. Most Relevant Authors

Figure 6 shows that Piraino F is the most productive author, contributing four publications during the study period. Meanwhile, Abdullah MSY, Kars A, Knysh A, Mia MH, and Pinto PG each contributed two publications. Overall, the distribution of author productivity indicates that no single researcher overwhelmingly dominates the field, suggesting that contemporary Sufi studies are characterized by relatively dispersed scholarly contributions from multiple researchers.

5. Affiliation Productivity

Affiliation productivity analysis was conducted to identify the institutions that have contributed most actively to global Sufi studies during the 2015–2024 period. By examining institutional publication output, this analysis provides an overview of the geographical distribution of research and highlights the universities and research institutions that have played important roles in advancing contemporary Sufi scholarship.

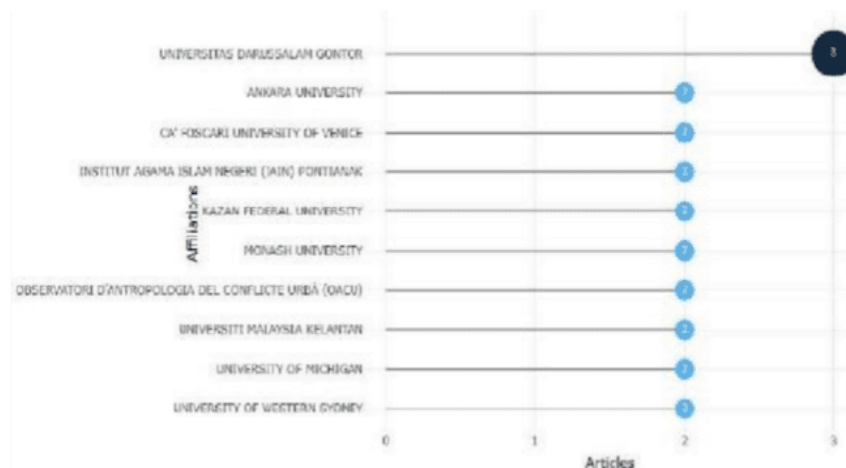


Figure 7. Most Relevant Affiliations

Figure 7 presents the most productive institutional affiliations in global Sufi studies during the 2015–2024 period. The findings show that research on Sufism has been produced by institutions from several countries, including Indonesia, Turkey, Italy, Russia, Australia, Malaysia, and the United States. Among the institutions identified, Universitas Darussalam Gontor, Ankara University, Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Pontianak, Kazan Federal University, Monash University, Observatori d'Antropologia del Conflicte Urbà (OACU), Universiti Malaysia Kelantan, the University of Michigan, and the University of Western Sydney each contributed two publications. These findings indicate that institutional contributions to global Sufi studies are geographically diverse, with no single institution demonstrating substantial dominance in publication output during the study period.

6. Keyword Frequency Analysis

The dataset consists of 96 publications examining various dimensions of Islamic Sufism. Figure 8 presents the most relevant words extracted from the bibliometric dataset based on keyword frequency. The analysis shows that *Islam* is the most frequently occurring keyword (15 occurrences), followed by *mysticism* (8 occurrences). Other frequently occurring keywords include *esotericism* and *ritual* (4 occurrences each), as well as *music*, *new age*, *poetry*, and *traditionalism* (3 occurrences each). In addition, *Aceh* and *al-Andalus* each appear twice, indicating the presence of geographically specific themes within the dataset. These findings show that contemporary Sufi studies encompass a wide range of keywords related to religious concepts, mystical traditions, cultural practices, and regional contexts.

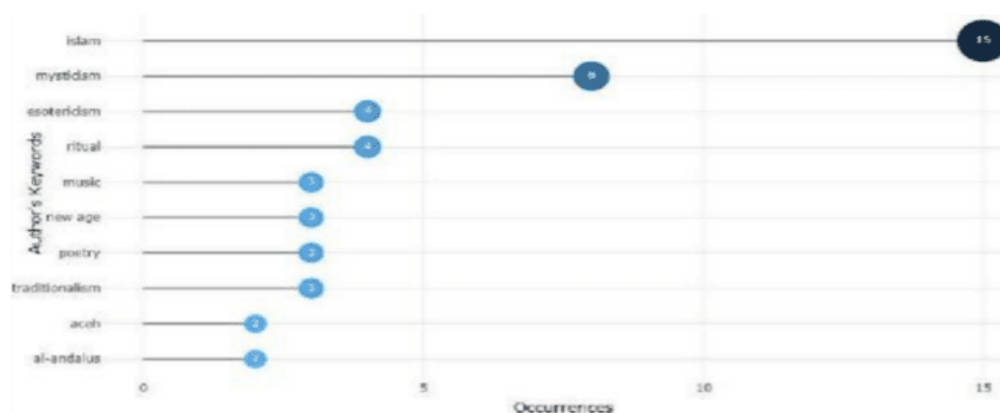


Figure 8. Most Relevant Word

Figure 8 illustrates the frequency distribution of the most relevant words extracted from the dataset. The keyword *Islam* is the most frequently occurring term (15 occurrences),

followed by *mysticism* (8 occurrences). Other frequently occurring keywords include *esotericism*, *ritual*, *music*, *new age*, *poetry*, *traditionalism*, *Aceh*, and *al-Andalus*, indicating the diversity of topics represented in contemporary Sufi studies.

7. Keyword Analysis

Keyword analysis was conducted using a word cloud generated from the article titles of the 96 publications included in the dataset. In the word cloud, word size represents the frequency of occurrence, with larger words indicating higher frequencies across the dataset. Different colors are used to distinguish keywords visually but do not represent differences in thematic importance. Notably, the emergence of 'communism' within the dataset highlights a significant body of literature examining Sufism through the lens of political history. Rather than suggesting any ideological alignment, these studies investigate the resilience of Sufi orders as sites of socio-religious resistance against anti-religious policies in post-communist states and secular regimes. This demonstrates that contemporary Sufi scholarship frequently intersects with political sociology, exploring how mystical networks maintain public authority under adverse ideological conditions..

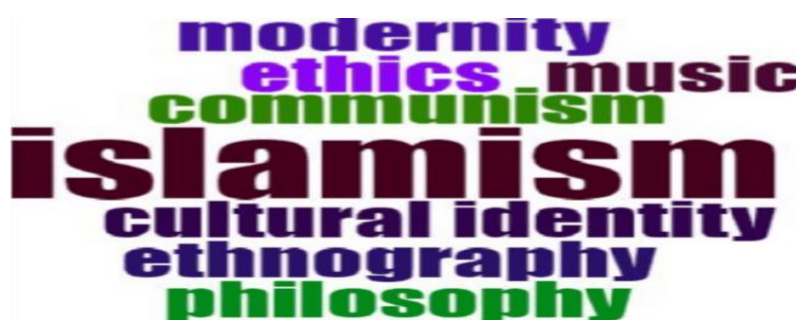


Figure 9. Word Cloud

Figure 9 presents the word cloud generated from the titles of the 96 publications included in the dataset. The visualization shows that *Islamism* is the most prominent keyword, indicating its highest frequency of occurrence among the analyzed article titles. Other frequently occurring keywords include *cultural identity*, *ethnography*, *philosophy*, *communism*, *modernity*, *ethics*, and *music*, although they appear with lower frequencies than *Islamism*. The variation in word size reflects differences in keyword frequency, demonstrating that contemporary Sufi studies encompass a wide range of themes extending from religious and philosophical issues to cultural, social, and political contexts.

8. Co-occurrence Network

Co-occurrence network analysis was conducted to examine the relationships among author keywords and to identify the conceptual structure of global Sufi studies. By visualizing keyword co-occurrences, this analysis reveals thematic clusters that represent major research areas and illustrates how different topics are interconnected within the literatur.

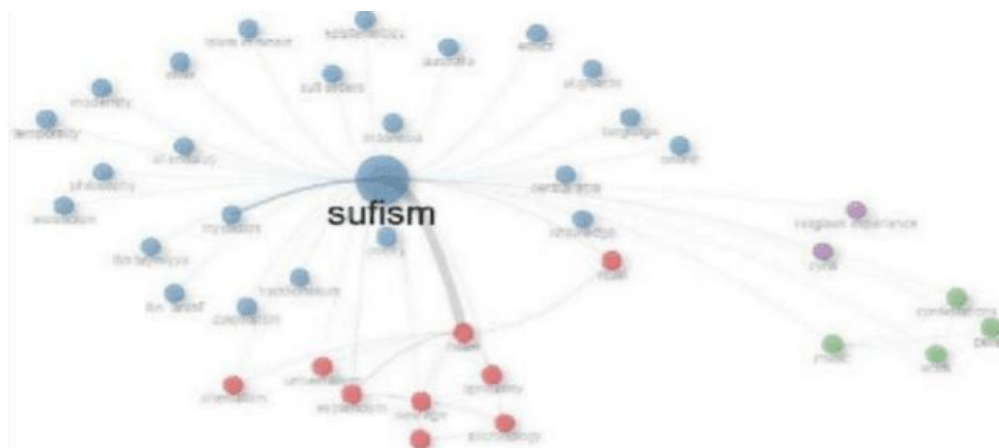


Figure 10. Co-occurrence Network

Figure 10 presents the co-occurrence network of author keywords extracted from the 96 publications. The network is organized into four thematic clusters, each represented by a different color. The largest cluster (blue) is centered on the keyword *Sufism* and includes related terms such as *mysticism*, *traditionalism*, *Indonesia*, *poetry*, *colonialism*, *Ibn Taymiyyah*, *Ibn Arabi*, *Al-Andalus*, *philosophy*, *asceticism*, *modernity*, *dhikr*, *Sufi orders*, *Central Asia*, *epistemology*, *ethics*, *Al-Ghazali*, and *online*. The second cluster (red) is centered on *Islam* and connects with keywords including *ritual*, *spirituality*, *eschatology*, *new age*, *esotericism*, *universalism*, and *orientalism*. The third cluster (purple) consists primarily of *religious experience* and *Syria*, while the fourth cluster (green) includes *Aceh*, *music*, *silver*, and *contestations*. Overall, the network demonstrates that contemporary Sufi studies are organized into several interconnected thematic domains encompassing theology, spirituality, regional studies, philosophy, and socio-cultural issues.

9. Thematic Map

Thematic map analysis was conducted to identify the conceptual structure of global Sufi studies by examining the centrality and density of research themes. Centrality reflects the degree of interaction between a theme and other research topics, whereas density indicates the internal development and maturity of a theme. Based on these two dimensions, the thematic map classifies research topics into four quadrants representing different levels of thematic development.

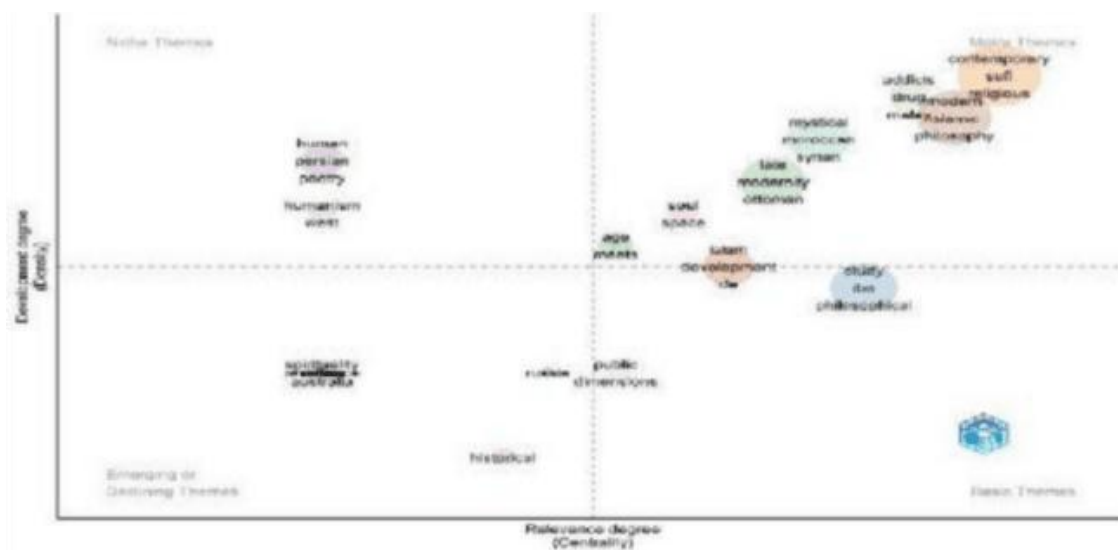


Figure 11. Thematic Map

Figure 11 presents the thematic map of global Sufi studies based on the co-occurrence of author keywords. The upper-right quadrant (motor themes) contains highly developed and central topics, including *contemporary*, *Sufi*, *religious*, *modern*, *Islamic*, *philosophy*, *modernity*, *Moroccan*, *Syrian*, *Ottoman*, *soul*, *space*, *Malay*, *mystical*, *addict*, *drug*, *Islam*, *development*, *age*, and *meets*. These themes occupy a central position within the conceptual structure of contemporary Sufi research.

The upper-left quadrant (niche themes) includes topics such as *human*, *Persian*, *poetry*, *humanism*, and *west*. These themes exhibit relatively high internal development but lower connections with other research themes. The lower-right quadrant (basic themes) contains *study*, *philosophical*, *public*, and *dimensions*. These topics demonstrate high centrality but comparatively lower density, indicating that they remain fundamental themes within the literature while offering opportunities for further conceptual development.

Finally, the lower-left quadrant (emerging or declining themes) consists of *Russia*, *historical*, *spirituality*, *resistance*, and *Australia*. These themes display relatively low centrality and density compared with the other thematic groups, indicating a more limited presence within the current bibliometric dataset.

a. Trend Topics

Trend topic analysis was conducted to identify the temporal evolution of research themes in global Sufi studies. This analysis illustrates the emergence, persistence, and decline of specific research topics over time based on the frequency of author keywords. By mapping keywords according to their year of prominence, the analysis provides insights into shifting scholarly interests and highlights themes that have become increasingly influential in the development of contemporary Sufi research.

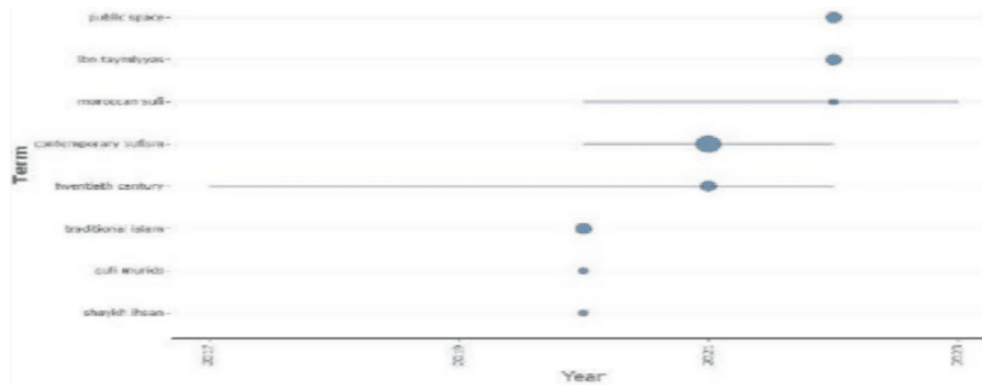


Figure 12. Trend Topics

Figure 12 illustrates the temporal evolution of research themes in global Sufi studies. Several topics remained prominent across multiple years, particularly "twentieth century" (2017–2022), "contemporary Sufism" (2020–2022), and "Moroccan Sufi" (2020–2023), indicating sustained scholarly attention over time. In contrast, "traditional Islam," "Sufi Murids," and "Shaykh Ihsan" appeared only in 2020, whereas "Ibn Taymiyya" and "public space" emerged in 2022. The varying durations of these topics indicate differences in their continuity within the literature, with some themes demonstrating long-term relevance while others represent more recent or short-lived research interests. Overall, the trend analysis shows that research on Sufism has evolved from historically oriented themes toward contemporary issues related to society, public life, and religious thought.

b. Three-Fields Plot

Three-fields plot analysis was conducted to visualize the relationships among publication sources (journals), authors, and author keywords in global Sufi studies. This analysis illustrates how journals, researchers, and research topics are interconnected, thereby providing an overview of the intellectual structure of the field.

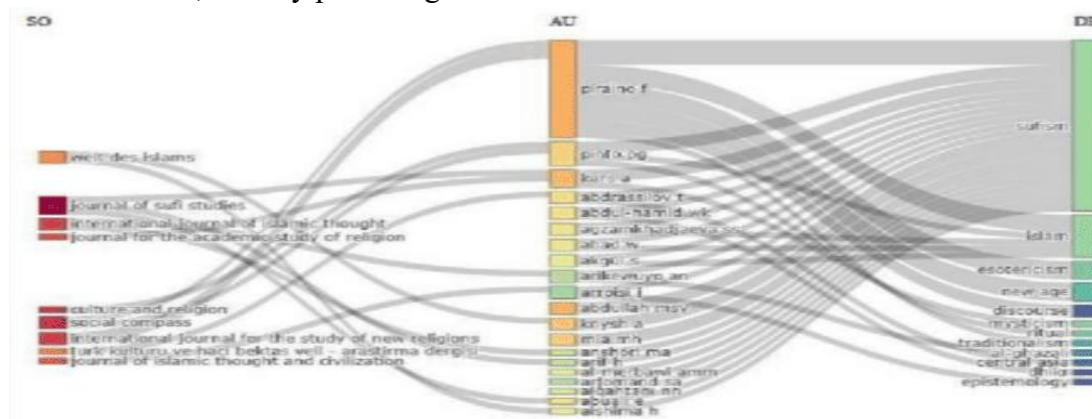


Figure 13. Three Field Plot

Figure 13 presents the relationships among journals, authors, and author keywords in global Sufi studies. The left field represents the publication sources, the middle field displays the contributing authors, and the right field shows the author keywords. The connections between these three fields are represented by gray lines, where thicker lines indicate stronger or more frequent associations.

The visualization includes nine major journals, twenty authors, and twelve author keywords. Among the publication sources, *Welt des Islam* is connected to authors such as Knysh A and Aishima H, while other journals—including *Journal of Sufi Studies*, *International Journal of Islamic Thought*, *Journal for the Academic Study of Religion*, *Culture and Religion*, *Social Compass*, *International Journal for the Study of New Religions*, *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırma Dergisi*, and *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization*—also contribute to the network of authors and research topics.

The visualization further shows that several authors are not directly linked to the major journals displayed in the figure, indicating that their publications are associated with other publication sources within the dataset. Among the author keywords, "Sufism" is the most frequently connected term, appearing across multiple authors and journals, indicating its central role in the conceptual structure of the literature.

Discussion

The Reconfiguration of Contemporary Sufi Studies and Its Implications for Sufi-Oriented Da'wah

Synthesizing evidence from the keyword analysis, co-occurrence network, thematic map, and trend topic analysis, this study argues that contemporary Sufi scholarship is undergoing an intellectual reconfiguration rather than merely experiencing thematic diversification. The findings demonstrate a clear shift from predominantly doctrinal and mystical discussions toward interdisciplinary perspectives that position Sufism within broader debates on social engagement, cultural identity, political authority, historical transformation, and public religious life. This reconfiguration suggests that contemporary Sufi studies increasingly conceptualize Sufism as a dynamic religious tradition capable of responding to the complex challenges of modern societies.

One notable aspect of this reconfiguration is the growing emphasis on regional and socio-political contexts. The sustained prominence of the keyword “Moroccan Sufi” demonstrates increasing scholarly interest in understanding how Sufi traditions function within modern Muslim societies beyond their spiritual dimensions. Werenfels (2014) argues that Sufi orders in the Maghreb, particularly in Morocco, have re-emerged as influential actors in promoting religious legitimacy, social cohesion, and political stability. This finding suggests that contemporary scholarship increasingly recognizes Sufi institutions as contributors to public religious life and community resilience rather than merely custodians of mystical traditions.

Another important transformation is reflected in the renewed attention given to classical Islamic scholars such as Ibn Taymiyya. Rather than presenting him simply as an opponent of Sufism, recent scholarship reinterprets his intellectual position through a more balanced historical perspective. Studies by Assef (2012) and Ali (2014) demonstrate that Ibn Taymiyya distinguished between philosophical forms of Sufism that he criticized and ethical or ascetic forms of spirituality that remained compatible with Islamic teachings. This shift illustrates a broader trend within contemporary Islamic studies toward contextualizing classical intellectual debates instead of maintaining rigid dichotomies between orthodoxy and mysticism.

The bibliometric evidence also indicates that contemporary Sufism has become one of the most persistent themes in recent scholarship. This reflects the transition of Sufi studies from narrowly theological discussions toward broader interdisciplinary investigations involving globalization, modernity, identity, education, digital religion, and social transformation. As argued by Van Bruinessen and Howell (2007), Sufi traditions have demonstrated remarkable

adaptability by responding creatively to changing political, cultural, and intellectual environments. Consequently, contemporary Sufism is increasingly understood as a living tradition capable of reconstructing its institutional forms and social functions while preserving its spiritual foundations.

Furthermore, the bibliometric evidence reveals a compelling paradox between institutional research productivity and global citation impact that warrants critical discussion. While Indonesia emerges as the undisputed global leader in publication volume—contributing 36 articles, or 32.72% of total country-level contributions—its citation impact remains relatively modest (14 citations), significantly trailing behind the United Kingdom, which commands the highest citation influence (39 citations). This quantitative-qualitative divergence may reflect several contributing factors, such as journal visibility, citation network effects, publication language, and the extent to which local research engages with broader theoretical debates; content-level analysis of the Indonesian publications would be needed to determine which of these factors is most influential. Nonetheless, this gap points to an opportunity for Indonesian scholarship on Sufi-oriented da'wah to more actively engage with global theoretical debates, complementing its strong empirical and descriptive contributions with frameworks that can shape international academic discourse.

The continued prominence of the keyword “twentieth century” further indicates that historical perspectives remain central to explaining contemporary developments in Sufi traditions. During this period, Sufi institutions experienced profound organizational and intellectual transformations in response to colonialism, nationalism, modernization, and the restructuring of religious authority. Trimingham (1998) emphasized that Sufi orders evolved from localized mystical communities into organized religious institutions actively interacting with broader political and social structures. The persistence of this historical theme suggests that understanding present-day Sufism requires careful examination of the historical processes that shaped its institutional resilience and contemporary relevance.

Collectively, these findings illustrate three major dimensions of the reconfiguration of contemporary Sufi scholarship. First, Sufi studies have expanded from a primary concern with mystical theology toward broader analyses of public religion, social engagement, and political authority. Second, contemporary scholarship increasingly integrates historical traditions with present-day social, cultural, and political issues, demonstrating that the historical evolution of Sufism remains essential for understanding its contemporary relevance. Third, the growing prominence of themes such as public space, cultural identity, modernity, and ethics indicates that Sufi values are increasingly interpreted within the context of contemporary religious

communication and societal transformation. Together, these dimensions demonstrate that Sufism is no longer examined solely as a mystical tradition but as a dynamic framework for understanding religion in contemporary society.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that global Sufi scholarship is undergoing an intellectual transition from studying Sufism primarily as mystical theology toward understanding it as a multidimensional phenomenon closely connected with social, cultural, historical, and political developments. The emergence of themes such as *public space*, *cultural identity*, *modernity*, *ethics*, and *Islamism* further confirms that contemporary researchers increasingly examine how Sufi values operate within public life and respond to contemporary societal challenges. This evolution reflects a broader tendency in Islamic studies to position Sufism as an active participant in addressing issues of religious moderation, intercultural dialogue, peacebuilding, and community development.

This study therefore suggests that the current evolution of global Sufi scholarship represents a broader epistemological shift rather than merely an expansion of research topics. The convergence of keyword evolution, thematic structures, collaboration patterns, and trend topics indicates that Sufism is increasingly conceptualized as a framework for addressing social transformation, religious moderation, intercultural engagement, and public religious communication. Rather than functioning solely as a tradition of Islamic mysticism, contemporary Sufi scholarship increasingly situates Sufism within broader interdisciplinary debates concerning society, culture, politics, and communication. This finding extends previous bibliometric studies by demonstrating not only how research themes have evolved but also how this evolution reshapes the conceptual role of Sufism in contemporary Islamic studies and provides a theoretical foundation for the development of Sufi-oriented da'wah

Theoretically, these findings broaden the analytical scope of Sufi studies by demonstrating that Sufism can no longer be understood exclusively within the framework of Islamic mysticism. Instead, the bibliometric evidence positions Sufism as an interdisciplinary field intersecting with sociology of religion, communication studies, political Islam, cultural studies, and peacebuilding. This conceptual expansion is further reflected in the growing scholarly attention to the role of Sufism in digital religious communication, educational institutions, interfaith dialogue, youth engagement, community empowerment, and transnational Muslim networks. These dimensions indicate that Sufism operates not only as a spiritual tradition but also as a dynamic social and cultural force shaping Muslim identities and public engagement in the contemporary era.

From the perspective of Sufi-oriented da'wah, these developments carry important implications. The findings suggest that contemporary da'wah inspired by Sufi values should no longer be confined to traditional spiritual instruction within *tarekat* communities. Instead, Sufi-oriented da'wah increasingly requires engagement with public discourse, educational institutions, digital media, intercultural communication, and community empowerment. Such an approach enables Sufi teachings to remain relevant in responding to religious polarization, identity conflicts, moral crises, and the challenges of globalization while preserving their emphasis on compassion, ethical conduct, and spiritual purification.

Despite the growing body of literature on Sufism, this bibliometric analysis identifies an important research gap. Although previous studies have extensively examined the historical, theological, and socio-political dimensions of Sufism, limited attention has been devoted to explaining how the intellectual transformation of Sufi scholarship informs contemporary Sufi-oriented da'wah. Consequently, the relationship between thematic evolution and emerging models of religious communication remains insufficiently understood, particularly within digital and transnational contexts. By establishing a conceptual linkage between the reconfiguration of Sufi studies and contemporary da'wah, this study extends previous bibliometric research beyond descriptive mapping and provides a foundation for future empirical investigations.

Accordingly, this study not only maps the evolution of global Sufi scholarship but also repositions Sufi-oriented da'wah as an emerging analytical framework through which the contemporary relevance of Sufism can be examined in increasingly pluralistic and digitally connected societies.

Drawing these threads together, "engaged Sufism" is proposed here as a framework built on four dimensions that recurred across the bibliometric mapping: (1) religious moderation, reflecting Sufism's role in tempering religious polarization; (2) ethical spirituality, grounded in the classical emphasis on inner piety and moral refinement; (3) social resilience, evident in the persistence of Sufi orders as sites of community cohesion under adverse political conditions; and (4) public engagement, reflected in the field's growing intersection with education, digital media, and civic life. This framework is intended as an initial conceptual synthesis rather than a fully validated model; future empirical research grounded in Indonesian da'wah practice is needed to test and refine it.

Conclusion

This study advances the understanding of contemporary Sufi scholarship by demonstrating that Sufism is undergoing an intellectual reconfiguration rather than merely experiencing thematic diversification. Based on Scopus-indexed publications from 2015 to 2024, the findings reveal a decisive shift from conventional mystical theology toward dynamic interdisciplinary engagements with public authority, cultural identity, religious moderation, and social transformation. The persistent prominence of themes like Moroccan Sufism and public space dynamics reflects how modern Sufi orders successfully adapt their institutional forms to negotiate modernity, repositioning Sufism as a living tradition and a dynamic framework through which Muslim communities negotiate public engagement.

The primary contribution of this study lies in conceptualizing "engaged Sufism" as a theoretical foundation for contemporary Sufi-oriented da'wah, transitioning it from isolated spiritual instruction into an active mechanism for social action. Furthermore, the identified paradox between Indonesia's high publication volume and low global citation impact highlights a critical structural gap, emphasizing the urgent need for local scholars to elevate empirical documentation into globally communicative theoretical frameworks. This study is subject to several limitations. First, it relies exclusively on the Scopus database. Second, the data were retrieved in March 2024, meaning the 2024 publication count reflects only a partial year and should be interpreted with caution relative to earlier, complete years. Third, the search strategy used a single keyword ("Sufism") in the TITLE-ABS-KEY field, which may have excluded relevant publications using related terms such as "Sufi," "tariqa," or "tasawuf," particularly from non-Western or non-English-adjacent scholarly traditions. Future research should expand comparative analyses using Web of Science or Dimensions, employ broader search strings, and conduct empirical fieldwork on digital da'wah models across diverse Muslim societies.

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