

The Role of Islamic Endowment in Sustainable Development and Social Enterprises: A Bibliometric Review of Research Insights and Future Directions in Oman

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Abstract

This study presents a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of global research on Islamic endowment (*waqf*) and its intersection with sustainable development and social enterprise. Utilizing Scopus-indexed documents published between 2006 and 2025, and guided by the PRISMA framework, we analyzed 200 records to map publication trends, key contributors, subject areas, and thematic developments. The findings reveal a significant rise in scholarly output since 2016, with Malaysia and Indonesia emerging as research leaders. Dominant themes include Islamic finance, SDGs, and social inclusion, while emerging areas highlight digital governance and sustainability integration. However, Oman's contribution remains minimal despite its rich *waqf* heritage and national sustainable development agenda. This underrepresentation underscores the need for targeted academic efforts and institutional collaboration to elevate Oman's role in shaping the future of Islamic endowment-driven development. The study concludes by calling for more inclusive and regionally grounded research to optimize *waqf*'s potential in addressing global and local sustainability challenges.

Keywords: Islamic Endowment (WAQF), Sustainable Development, Social Enterprise, Bibliometric Analysis, Oman

Introduction

In recent decades, sustainable development has emerged as a central theme in global policy discourse, aiming to balance economic growth, environmental protection, and social equity. The United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which introduced 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), has catalyzed worldwide efforts to address poverty, inequality, and climate change through inclusive and resilient development frameworks (UN,

2015). Within this context, faith-based financial instruments—particularly the Islamic endowment system known as *waqf*—have attracted growing interest as a means of promoting social justice and sustainability in Muslim-majority societies (Obaidullah & Shirazi, 2015; Sadeq, 2002).

Historically, *waqf* has functioned as a cornerstone of Islamic philanthropy, funding education, healthcare, infrastructure, and other public services across the Islamic world (Kuran, 2001). In recent years, scholars and policymakers alike have explored its potential to contribute to contemporary sustainable development initiatives, particularly in regions where formal welfare systems face constraints (Mohsin, 2013). By redirecting charitable assets toward long-term impact investments and social enterprises, *waqf* can serve as a vital enabler of inclusive economic systems (Abdul Karim, 2010; Lahsasna, 2010).

In the Sultanate of Oman, the role of *waqf* in development has received comparatively limited scholarly attention despite the nation's rich Islamic heritage and growing investment in sustainable policies (Al-Saidi & Elagib, 2017). While Oman has made significant strides toward environmental sustainability and economic diversification under Vision 2040, the integration of Islamic endowment frameworks into national development planning remains underexplored (United Nations ESCWA, 2020). Most available literature is either conceptual or focused on case studies from countries like Malaysia, Turkey, and Indonesia, leaving a knowledge gap regarding regional trends and institutional actors in Oman's context.

To address this gap, this study employs a bibliometric analysis to map the global research landscape on Islamic endowment and sustainable development, with particular attention to how Oman is represented—or underrepresented—in scholarly outputs. By examining publication trends, author influence, institutional affiliations, and keyword evolution, this paper offers evidence-based insights to inform future policy and research efforts in Oman and beyond.

This study also acknowledges a key limitation: while the bibliometric scope is global, the visibility of Omani contributions is limited by a lack of indexed research outputs from local scholars and institutions. As such, the findings call for increased scholarly investment and policy engagement with *waqf* as a tool for sustainable development in the Omani context.

Research Questions

1. What is the annual publication trend in research related to Islamic endowment (*waqf*) and sustainable development from 2006 to 2025?
2. Which countries have contributed the most to the body of research on Islamic endowment and sustainable development, and how is this contribution geographically distributed?
3. Which academic institutions are most active in publishing research on *waqf* and sustainable development, and what is the extent of their output?
4. Who are the most prolific and influential authors in this area of study, and what is the nature of their scholarly impact (e.g., citation count, h-index)?
5. What are the most common subject areas covered in the literature on Islamic endowment and sustainable development?

6. Which journals and publication sources are most frequently used to disseminate research on this topic?
7. What are the most frequently used keywords and emerging thematic trends in the literature on Islamic endowment, sustainability, and social enterprise?

Methods

This bibliometric review investigates the scholarly output on Islamic endowment (*waqf*) and its role in sustainable development. The methodology follows the **PRISMA 2020 guidelines** for systematic reviews (Page et al., 2021), while also building upon established procedures used in recent bibliometric studies in educational and social sciences (Alshehhi et al., 2022; Kiyomi et al., 2022; Yaarubi et al., 2022; Alshabibi et al., 2022; Abuhassna et al., 2022; Qi et al., 2024).

Data Source and Search Strategy

Scopus was selected as the core database due to its extensive indexing of high-quality, peer-reviewed content across multiple disciplines. This strategy ensured coverage of literature explicitly addressing *waqf*, sustainability, and development within the specified timeframe. The document types were restricted to articles, reviews, book chapters, conference proceedings, and books, in line with earlier bibliometric frameworks (Abuhassna et al., 2022; Qi et al., 2024). Only publications in English or Arabic were included to capture both international and regional contributions.

Screening and Selection

The PRISMA flow model guided the three-stage screening process: identification, screening, and inclusion (Page et al., 2021). Duplicates and irrelevant items were removed after reviewing titles and abstracts, followed by full-text validation.

Table 1

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Time Frame	2006–2025	Before 2006 or after 2025
Keywords	Contains <i>waqf</i> , <i>sustainable</i> , and <i>development</i>	Irrelevant or unrelated keyword combinations
Document Type	Articles, reviews, books, chapters, conference proceedings	Editorials, letters, errata, notes
Language	English or Arabic	Other languages
Thematic Fit	Focus on <i>waqf</i> within sustainable development or social enterprise frameworks	General Islamic finance or sustainability without <i>waqf</i> component
Metadata Access	Full metadata available via Scopus	Incomplete bibliographic information

Data Extraction and Analysis

The data fields extracted included authorship, publication year, affiliations, countries, source titles, keywords, and citation metrics. Tools such as **VOSviewer** and **Microsoft Excel** were used to analyze and visualize co-authorship networks, keyword co-occurrences, and thematic clusters—an approach similarly applied in recent bibliometric studies (Kiyomi et al., 2022; Almheiri & Abuhassna, 2024; Qi et al., 2024). PRISMA Framework is illustrated in figure 1.

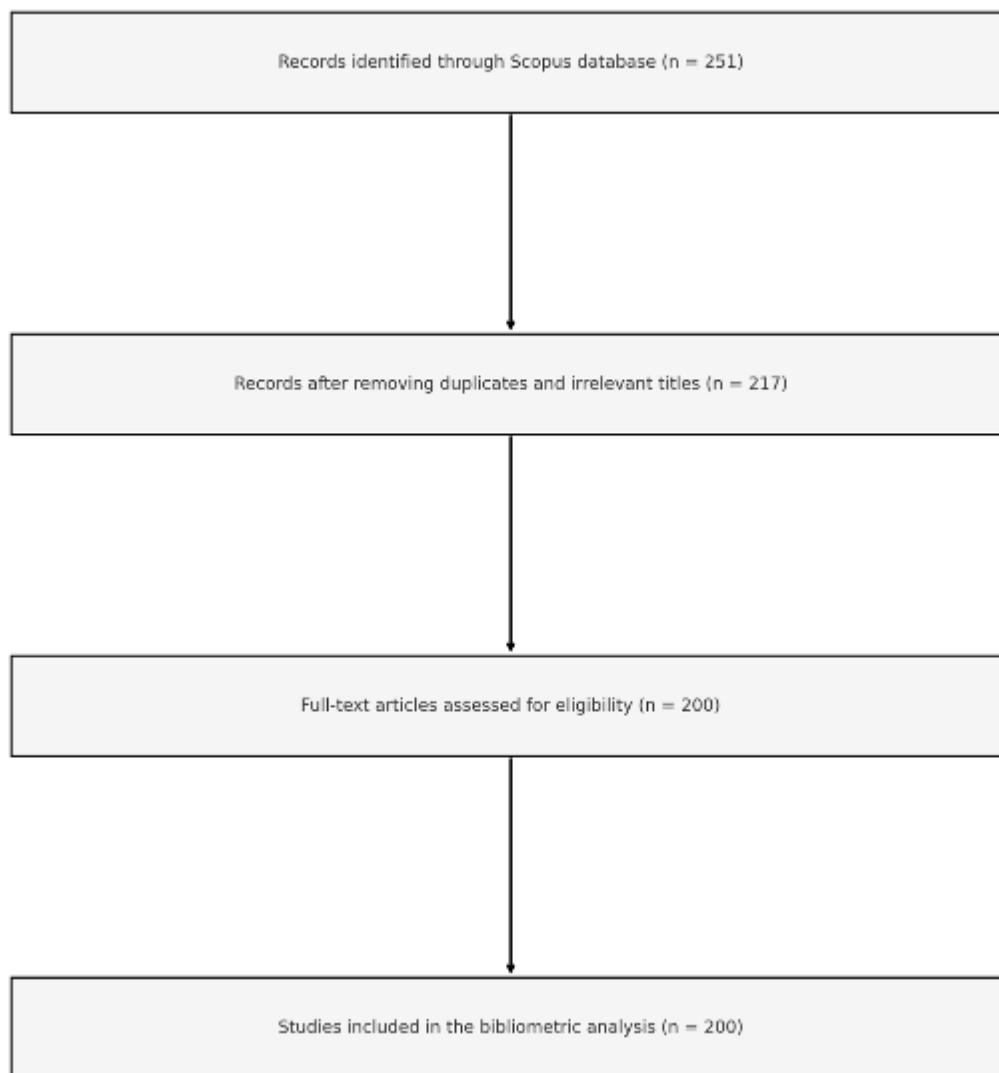


Figure 1: PRISMA Framework

Results

What is the annual publication trend in research related to Islamic endowment (waqf) and sustainable development from 2006 to 2025?

To assess the evolution of academic interest in Islamic endowment (*waqf*) and sustainable development, the annual distribution of related publications from 2006 to 2025 was analyzed. The trend reflects the dynamic progression of scholarly output in this interdisciplinary field over two decades. **Figure 2** below illustrates the number of documents published each year on this topic.

Documents by year

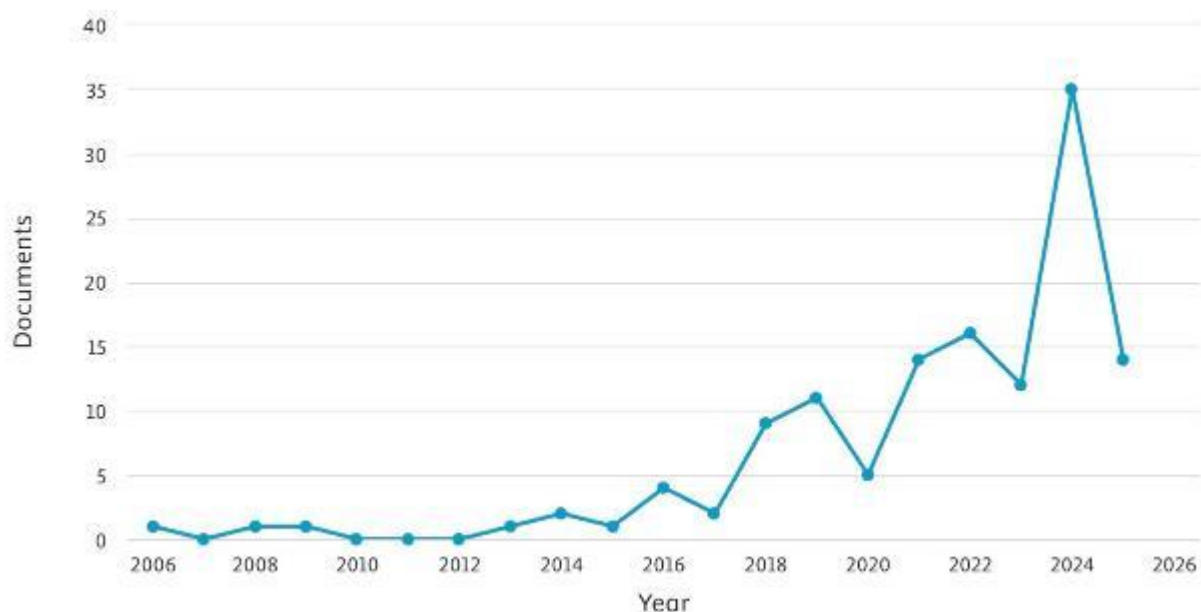


Figure 2: Documents by years

The data in Figure 2 indicates a gradual yet noticeable increase in research productivity beginning around 2016, followed by significant growth in subsequent years. From 2006 to 2015, publication levels remained relatively stagnant, with fewer than five documents annually. However, a turning point is observed around 2017–2018, suggesting a growing recognition of *waqf* as a viable mechanism for achieving sustainable development goals. A sharp increase is seen from 2020 onward, peaking in 2024 with **35 documents**—the highest number recorded within the time span. This surge may be attributed to intensified global efforts in sustainability and the integration of Islamic finance into development frameworks. Despite a drop in 2025, the number of documents (14) still exceeds earlier averages, reflecting continued scholarly engagement with the topic. This trend highlights the growing relevance of *waqf* in contemporary development discourses and suggests an emerging maturity in the field's literature base.

Which academic institutions are most active in publishing research on waqf and sustainable development, and what is the extent of their output?

To identify key academic contributors in the field, the study analyzed institutional affiliations of the authors publishing on Islamic endowment (*waqf*) and sustainable development. This metric provides insights into where research momentum is concentrated and which institutions are leading the discourse. **Figure 3** below displays the top institutions by number of documents published.

Documents by affiliation

Compare the document counts for up to 15 affiliations.

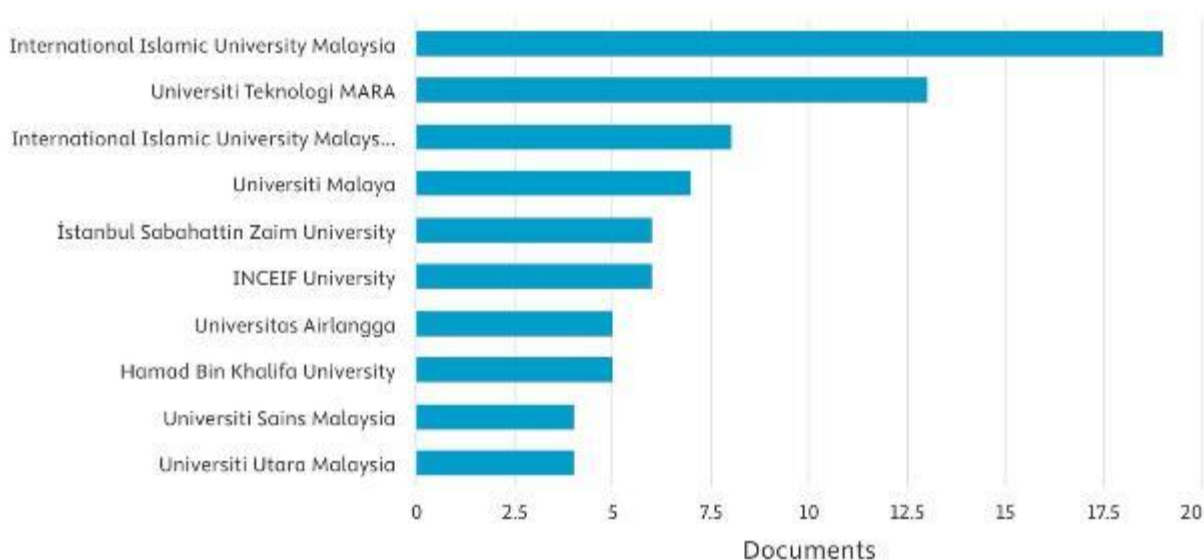


Figure 3: Documents by affiliations

As seen in Figure 3, **International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)** stands out as the most prolific institution, with nearly **20 publications** on *waqf* and sustainable development. This is followed by **Universiti Teknologi MARA**, which has produced approximately **15 documents**, showcasing Malaysia's strong academic focus on Islamic finance and social development. Other Malaysian institutions such as **Universiti Malaya**, **Universiti Sains Malaysia**, and **Universiti Utara Malaysia** also appear prominently, reinforcing the country's regional leadership in Islamic endowment research. Notably, **İstanbul Sabahattin Zaim University** in Turkey and **Universitas Airlangga** in Indonesia represent key contributors outside of Malaysia, indicating growing academic interest in *waqf* across the Muslim world. Institutions like **INCEIF University**, which specializes in Islamic finance, and **Hamad Bin Khalifa University** from Qatar also reflect the cross-national engagement in this topic, particularly within policy-relevant and applied research contexts. The distribution underscores a strong Malaysian academic dominance, possibly due to the country's structured Islamic finance ecosystem and proactive governmental support for integrating *waqf* into national development agendas.

Which countries have contributed the most to the body of research on Islamic endowment and sustainable development, and how is this contribution geographically distributed?

To examine the global spread of research efforts, the study analyzed publication contributions by country. This analysis highlights the regions with the highest academic engagement in the intersection of *waqf* and sustainable development. **Figure 4** below presents the distribution of documents by country or territory.

Documents by country or territory

Compare the document counts for up to 15 countries/territories.

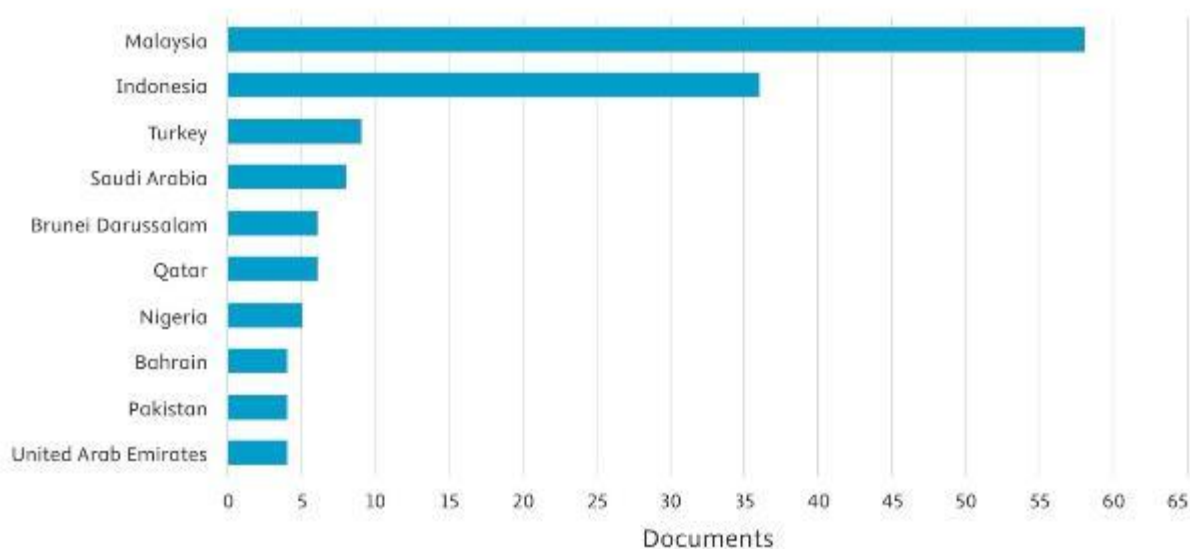


Figure 4: Documents by country or territory

As illustrated in Figure 4, **Malaysia** leads by a substantial margin, contributing more than **60 publications**—over half of the total output in this field. This reflects Malaysia's prominent role in advancing Islamic finance research and its commitment to integrating *waqf* into national sustainable development strategies. **Indonesia** ranks second with over **35 documents**, demonstrating a strong regional focus on leveraging Islamic endowments for socio-economic upliftment. **Turkey** also shows notable scholarly activity, contributing more than **10 publications**, while other contributors such as **Saudi Arabia**, **Brunei Darussalam**, and **Qatar** show moderate engagement. Interestingly, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries like **United Arab Emirates**, **Bahrain**, and **Qatar** appear in the lower tier despite their economic potential and Islamic finance infrastructure. This indicates either underrepresentation in Scopus-indexed literature or limited scholarly emphasis on the nexus between *waqf* and sustainable development in those contexts. The findings underscore the dominance of Southeast Asia in this research domain, particularly Malaysia and Indonesia, with emerging contributions from parts of the Middle East and South Asia.

What are the most common subject areas covered in the literature on Islamic endowment and sustainable development?

To understand the disciplinary distribution of research on Islamic endowment and sustainable development, an analysis of subject area classifications was conducted. This helps reveal the interdisciplinary nature of the field and its relevance across various domains. **Figure 4** presents the distribution of documents according to their subject areas.

Documents by subject area

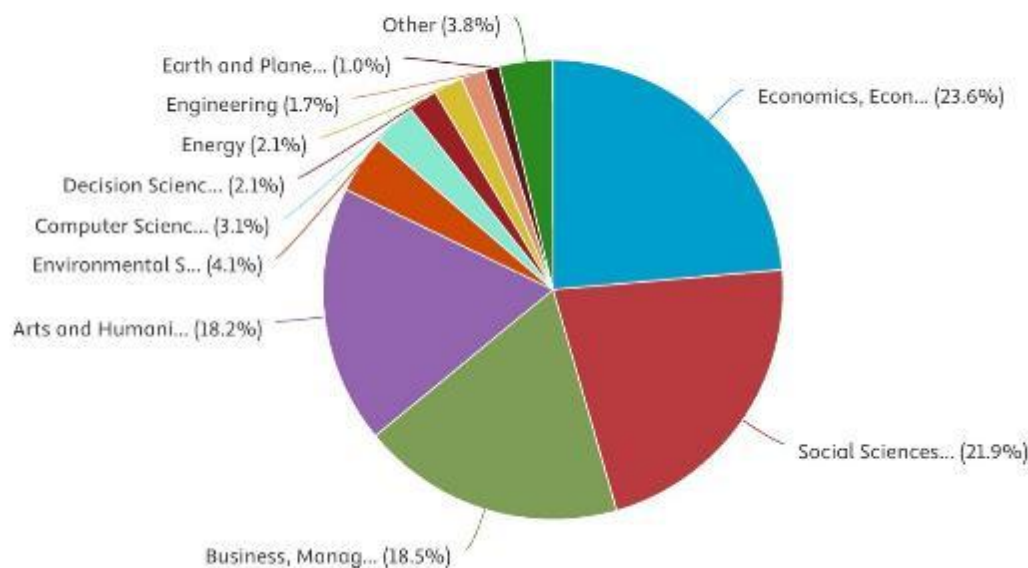


Figure 4: Documents by subject area

Which journals and publication sources are most frequently used to disseminate research on this topic?

Identifying the main journals and publication platforms is essential to understanding where scholarly discussions on *waqf* and sustainable development are being hosted. This can also inform future researchers about the most relevant and receptive outlets for publishing in this domain. **Figure 5** displays the annual output from the top journals contributing to this area of study between 2018 and 2025.

Documents per year by source

Compare the document counts for up to 10 sources.

Compare sources and view CiteScore, SJR, and SNIP data

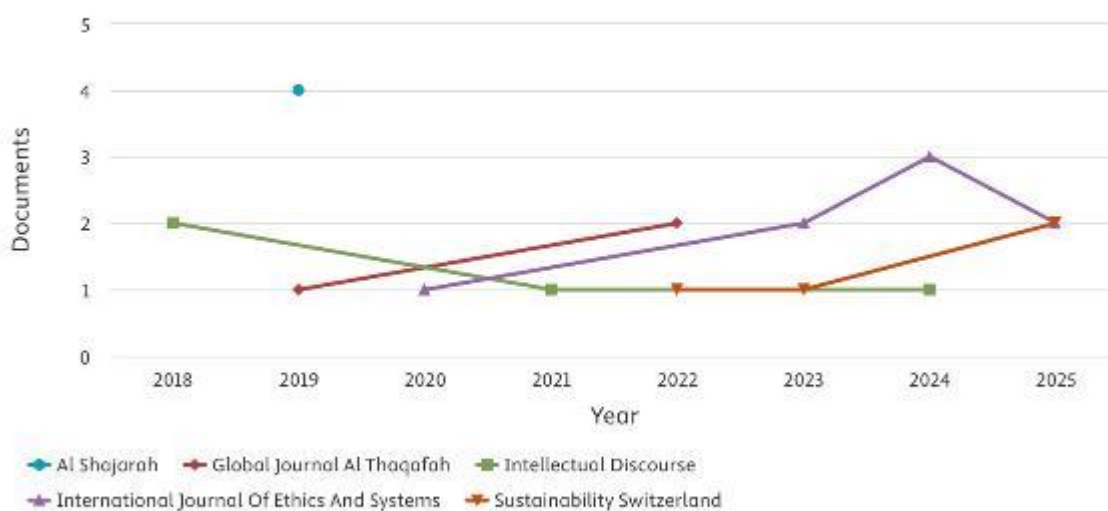


Figure 5: Documents by Source

The figure illustrates publication trends across six prominent journals. Among them, **Al Shajarah** appears as a consistent contributor, showing up to **four publications** in a single year. Similarly, **Global Journal Al Thaqafah** and **International Journal of Ethics and Systems** have shown steady and increasing activity, particularly peaking in **2024** and **2023**, respectively. **Intellectual Discourse** has maintained a regular publishing pattern with modest yearly outputs, while **Sustainability (Switzerland)** has begun featuring more research in recent years, reflecting the rising global interest in the environmental dimensions of Islamic finance and development. The presence of both Islamic studies-focused journals (e.g., Al Shajarah, Global Journal Al Thaqafah) and internationally recognized interdisciplinary outlets (e.g., Sustainability) suggests that research on *waqf* and sustainable development is gaining traction not only in niche academic circles but also in broader global sustainability and ethics discussions. Overall, this trend points to a healthy diversification of publication sources and indicates the potential for expanding research visibility across multidisciplinary platforms.

Who are the most prolific and influential authors in this area of study, and what is the nature of their scholarly impact (e.g., citation count, h-index)?

Identifying leading researchers in the field offers valuable insight into scholarly influence and collaborative networks within the domain of *waqf* and sustainable development. The analysis considered metrics such as total publications (TP), total citations (TC), and h-index to determine both productivity and impact. **Table 2** presents the top 10 most prolific and influential authors in this research area.

Table 2

Top 10 authors in The Role of Islamic Endowment in Sustainable Development and Social Enterprises

#	Authors	Scopus ID	TP*	TC*	H-index	Affiliation	Country
1	Ismail, Shafinar	56131323900	60	371	13	Universiti of Teknologi MARA, Alor Gajah.	Malaysia
2	Kachkar, Omar Ahmad	57203208300	12	96	4	İbn Haldun Üniversitesi, İstanbul,	Turkey
3	Alfares, Marwa	57427838800	4	4	1	İstanbul Sabahattin Zaim University, Kucukcekmece,	Turkey
4	Dirie, Khadar Ahmed	58308188000	8	66	4	Universiti Utara Malaysia , Sintok,	Malaysia
5	Haron, Razali Bin	23992283900	100	970	17	International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur	Malaysia
6	Hassan, Rusni Bt	55541623500	108	562	11	International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur	Malaysia
7	Mohammad, Mustafa Omar	56503163500	56	521	12	Al Qasimia University, Sharjah,	United Arab Emirates
8	Sukmana, Raditya	37015568700	71	635	13	Universitas Airlangga, Surabaya,	Indonesia
9	Abdullah, Rose	56430599800	14	151	6	Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali, Bandar Seri Begawan,	Brunei Darussalam
10	Akhter, Afaf	58767878700	2	5	1	Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh.	India

TP*= Total Publications, TC*= Total Citations

The data in Table 2 highlights several key contributors, with **Hassan, Rusni Bt** and **Haron, Razali Bin** standing out for their combination of high publication volume and citation impact. Hassan has authored **108 documents** with **562 citations** and an **h-index of 11**, while Haron has **100 publications**, **970 citations**, and an impressive **h-index of 17**. Both are affiliated with the **International Islamic University Malaysia**, reinforcing the institution's central role in the field. **Sukmana, Raditya** from **Universitas Airlangga (Indonesia)** also demonstrates high productivity and influence, with **71 publications**, **635 citations**, and an **h-index of 13**,

suggesting strong regional academic leadership outside Malaysia. Other notable contributors include **Ismail, Shafinar** from **Universiti Teknologi MARA**, with **60 publications**, and **Mohammad, Mustafa Omar** from **Al Qasimia University (UAE)**, with **56 publications** and **521 citations**—both reflecting strong research footprints in their respective countries. Several emerging scholars, such as **Alfares, Marwa** and **Akhter, Afaf**, show lower productivity and citation counts but represent diverse geographic participation from **Turkey** and **India**, respectively. Overall, this data illustrates a concentration of research leadership in Southeast Asia and the Middle East, particularly Malaysia, while also highlighting the growing contributions of scholars from Turkey, Indonesia, UAE, and Brunei.

What are the most frequently used keywords and emerging thematic trends in the literature on Islamic endowment, sustainability, and social enterprise?

To uncover the core themes and evolving directions in the literature, a co-occurrence analysis of keywords was conducted using VOSviewer. Keyword mapping enables the identification of research clusters and hotspots, revealing the conceptual structure of the field over time. **Figure 6** visualizes the most frequently used keywords and thematic linkages related to Islamic endowment (*waqf*), sustainability, and social enterprise.

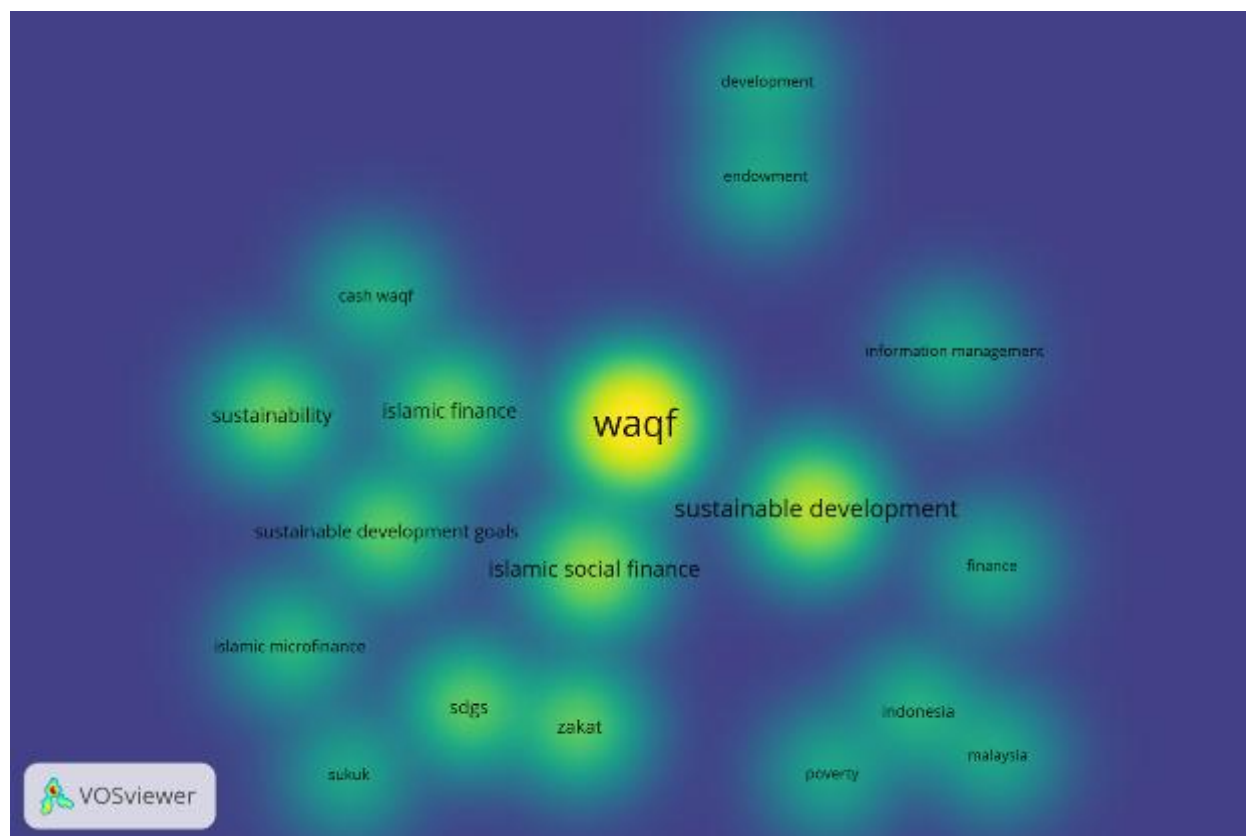


Figure 6: Documents by Trends and key words

The visual map clearly identifies "**waqf**" as the dominant keyword at the center of scholarly discussions, frequently appearing in connection with themes such as "**sustainable development**," "**Islamic finance**," and "**Islamic social finance**." This central cluster suggests a strong intersection between faith-based financial mechanisms and broader sustainability goals. Secondary but closely linked keywords include "**zakat**," "**sukuk**," and "**Islamic microfinance**," reflecting a growing interest in how various Islamic financial tools can support

inclusive development. The presence of **"SDGs"** (Sustainable Development Goals) and **"sustainable development goals"** further confirms the alignment of *waqf*-related studies with the global development agenda. Geographically contextual terms such as **"Malaysia,"** **"Indonesia,"** and **"poverty"** indicate a regional and practical application focus, particularly in Southeast Asia, where *waqf* is being mobilized to address socio-economic challenges. Emerging topics such as **"information management"** and **"endowment"** suggest that digitalization and institutional governance of *waqf* assets are gaining scholarly attention, possibly pointing to new directions in smart *waqf* management and transparency mechanisms. Overall, the keyword landscape highlights a well-established core of research centered on Islamic endowment as a sustainable financial model, while also signaling future opportunities in digital governance, cross-sector integration, and alignment with global sustainability frameworks.

Discussion

The findings of this bibliometric analysis reflect a growing global interest in Islamic endowment (*waqf*) as a tool for sustainable development and social enterprise, with pronounced scholarly activity emerging particularly after 2016. This aligns with increasing global advocacy for alternative development models that incorporate ethical, faith-based finance (Obaidullah & Shirazi, 2015; Sadeq, 2002).

The notable publication spike in 2024 underscores how the synergy between *waqf* and sustainability is being recognized as more than a theoretical construct—it is now a policy-relevant framework, particularly in countries with strong Islamic finance ecosystems (Al-Saidi & Elagib, 2017; Mohsin, 2013). The data shows that Malaysia is the undisputed leader in this field, which is consistent with earlier observations of its strategic integration of *waqf* into national development initiatives (Abdul Karim, 2010; Lahsasna, 2010). The strong presence of Malaysian universities and authors such as Rusni Hassan and Razali Haron further validates this positioning.

Subject-wise, the concentration in economics, social sciences, and management reveals the interdisciplinary appeal of *waqf*, intersecting areas such as financial inclusion, poverty alleviation, and ethical investment (Kuran, 2001; Abuhassna et al., 2022). Moreover, emerging themes like digital *waqf* management and sustainability reporting reflect the field's adaptation to the demands of modern governance and technological evolution.

Interestingly, the dominance of Southeast Asia, particularly Malaysia and Indonesia, contrasts with the relatively limited academic contribution from Gulf countries such as Qatar, UAE, and Oman—despite their significant historical and economic involvement with *waqf*. This discrepancy may be attributed to institutional underreporting, lack of local academic publication infrastructure, or a disconnection between *waqf* practice and research.

Oman, while rich in endowment tradition, remains underrepresented in Scopus-indexed literature. This calls for stronger integration of research and policy to unlock the full potential of *waqf* for sustainable development. A localized academic push could align well with Oman Vision 2040 and contribute to SDG progress by institutionalizing *waqf*-driven initiatives across sectors.

Conclusion

This study provides a systematic overview of the global research landscape concerning Islamic endowment (*waqf*) and its intersection with sustainable development and social enterprise. Using bibliometric techniques, we traced publication trends, identified leading authors and institutions, and mapped the conceptual structure of the field.

The findings confirm that the scholarly discourse is expanding rapidly, with Malaysia and Indonesia serving as academic hubs. Key research areas span from Islamic finance and social justice to environmental sustainability and governance. The diversity of publication sources and keywords suggests an interdisciplinary convergence, positioning *waqf* as a holistic framework for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. As the field continues to grow, it presents valuable opportunities for countries like Oman to enhance their academic contributions and policy integration, especially in ways that reflect their historical and cultural ties to Islamic endowment.

Limitations

A core limitation of this study lies in the underrepresentation of Oman within the bibliometric data. Despite its deep-rooted tradition of *waqf* and a national vision emphasizing sustainable development, Omani institutions and researchers appear marginal in international databases like Scopus. This may be due to a combination of factors, including a limited number of indexed journals, low research visibility, or gaps between practice and academic documentation. As such, this review may not fully capture the scope of *waqf*-related innovations or policy efforts occurring within Oman. Future research should include qualitative fieldwork, local Arabic databases, and partnerships with Omani endowment authorities to bridge this gap and ensure a more inclusive representation of regional efforts.

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