

## A GLOBAL BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS OF FATWA STUDIES (1990–2024): THEMES, TRENDS AND RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

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### Abstract

Fatwa scholarship has expanded considerably in response to increasingly diverse religious, social, economic, ethical, and technological issues. Despite this development, the intellectual structure and long-term evolution of fatwa research remain insufficiently mapped, as previous studies have largely focused on normative, thematic, or systematic reviews rather than comprehensive bibliometric assessment. This study therefore examines the global development of fatwa scholarship from 1990 to 2024 by analysing publication growth, major publication outlets, disciplinary distribution, citation influence, institutional and geographical productivity, and dominant thematic patterns. Bibliographic data were retrieved from Scopus and Web of Science (WoS), yielding 884 initial records. Following document screening, duplicate removal, and data cleaning, 596 publications were retained for analysis. ScientoPy, OpenRefine, and VOSviewer were employed to process bibliographic data and analyse publication trends and thematic structures. The findings demonstrate a marked increase in fatwa-related publications after 2010, with Indonesia accounting for 31.21% of the publications and Malaysia for 15.60%. Religion remains the dominant subject area, although contributions from law, social sciences, business and economics, and other disciplines demonstrate the broader interdisciplinary character of the field. Ahkam: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah and the Journal of Fatwa Management and Research emerged as major publication outlets. Citation and keyword analyses further reveal scholarly engagement with legal and institutional foundations alongside Islamic finance, minority issues, contemporary crises, social media, and online fatwas. The study provides a global mapping of the development of fatwa scholarship and identifies areas in which Islamic legal studies increasingly intersect with contemporary social and interdisciplinary concerns. These findings offer a reference for researchers, educational institutions, and fatwa-related institutions in identifying established research concentrations and potential directions for future inquiry.

**Keywords:** *Fatwa Studies; Bibliometric Analysis; Islamic Law; Islamic Legal Scholarship; Research Trends.*



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## INTRODUCTION

A fatwa is a legal opinion or interpretation of Islamic law issued by a qualified mufti or an authorised fatwa institution in response to a particular question or circumstance. Fatwa-making draws upon the recognised sources and methods of Shariah reasoning, including the Qur'an, Hadith, *ijma'*, and *qiyas*. Although the legal status of a fatwa may vary across jurisdictions and institutional settings, fatwas remain an important mechanism through which Muslim communities obtain religious guidance on changing social circumstances (Ibrahim et al., 2015; Khairuldin et al., 2018; Asni and Sulong, 2021). The tradition of *ifta'* therefore illustrates the responsiveness of Islamic law to particular questions, contexts, and emerging realities (Kaptein, 2005; Azhar et al., 2022; Asni et al., 2021).

The scope of contemporary fatwa discourse has expanded substantially. Fatwas now address issues extending beyond conventional ritual and personal religious matters to areas such as Islamic finance, medical ethics, environmental concerns, and the circumstances of Muslim minorities (Dalvi et al., 2025; Iqbal et al., 2016). Technological development has further transformed the dissemination of fatwas through official websites, mobile applications, and social media, enabling religious opinions to circulate more rapidly and across geographical boundaries (Khairuldin et al., 2018; Ismail & Baharuddin, 2023). These developments suggest that fatwa scholarship itself has become increasingly diverse in terms of subject matter, disciplinary engagement, institutional participation, and geographical coverage.

Despite this expansion, the development of fatwa scholarship as an academic field has not been mapped comprehensively. Previous studies have primarily examined particular fatwa issues through normative *fiqh* analysis, thematic studies, or systematic literature reviews (Salisu & Saniff, 2023; Zainudin et al., 2024; Wahid, 2024). A bibliometric study by Hussain et al. (2024) represents an important development, but its scope was confined to Malaysian online theses. Consequently, there remains limited understanding of how internationally indexed fatwa scholarship has developed over time, which journals, disciplines, institutions, and countries have shaped the field, which publications have exerted substantial scholarly influence, and which thematic areas characterise its contemporary development.

Bibliometric analysis is particularly appropriate for addressing this gap because it enables a large body of scholarly literature to be examined systematically through publication output, citation performance, disciplinary distribution, geographical and institutional productivity, and keyword relationships (Donthu et al., 2021; Abdullah, 2022). Rather than evaluating the substantive validity of individual fatwas, the present study examines the scholarly landscape surrounding fatwa research. It analyses publications indexed in Scopus and Web of Science between 1990 and 2024 in order to map the development and structure of this body of scholarship.

Accordingly, this study aims to provide a global bibliometric assessment of fatwa scholarship by examining its publication development, major publication outlets and subject areas, citation influence, leading institutions and countries, and thematic structure. The study contributes to the literature in three respects. First, at the knowledge level, it provides a longitudinal mapping of fatwa scholarship and demonstrates the extent to which the field has expanded beyond predominantly religious and legal discussions into broader interdisciplinary areas. Second, at the methodological level, it employs bibliometric performance analysis and science-mapping techniques to organise a fragmented body of literature into identifiable publication, disciplinary, geographical, and thematic patterns. Third, at the institutional and

research level, the findings provide researchers, universities, and fatwa-related institutions with evidence regarding established areas of scholarship, research concentrations, and themes that may warrant further interdisciplinary investigation.

Based on these objectives, the study addresses the seven research questions summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Research questions

| No. | RQ  | Research Question                                                                                                                | Justification / Motivation                                                                                              |
|-----|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | RQ1 | How has the volume of fatwa-related scholarship evolved between 1990 and 2024?                                                   | Identifies the longitudinal development and major periods of publication growth.                                        |
| 2   | RQ2 | Which journals and publication outlets have contributed most significantly to the development of fatwa scholarship?              | Identifies the principal scholarly outlets through which fatwa research has developed.                                  |
| 3   | RQ3 | Which subject areas dominate fatwa studies, and to what extent does the field demonstrate interdisciplinary development?         | Evaluates the disciplinary structure and expansion of the field beyond its traditional religious and legal foundations. |
| 4   | RQ4 | Which publications have exerted the greatest scholarly influence based on citation performance?                                  | Identifies influential works within the literature.                                                                     |
| 5   | RQ5 | Which institutions and countries are the most productive contributors to fatwa scholarship?                                      | Maps the institutional and geographical concentration of research activity.                                             |
| 6   | RQ6 | What substantive areas are represented among the most highly cited publications in fatwa studies?                                | Examines the intellectual areas associated with influential scholarship.                                                |
| 7   | RQ7 | What major thematic clusters characterise fatwa scholarship, and which themes indicate potential directions for future research? | Identifies the thematic structure of the field and areas for further investigation.                                     |

Source: Compiled by the authors

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Fatwa as a Contemporary Instrument of Islamic Legal Guidance

Fatwa represents an important mechanism through which Islamic legal reasoning engages with changing circumstances. While grounded in recognised Shariah sources and methods, fatwa-making also requires attention to the context in which a question arises and to the practical implications of the ruling issued. Previous studies have therefore approached fatwa not merely as a doctrinal legal opinion, but as an institutional and interpretive process involving issue identification, contextual assessment, legal reasoning, and final determination (Hassan & Khairuldin, 2020; Asni, 2021).

The contemporary relevance of fatwa has expanded alongside the growing complexity of Muslim social and institutional life. Existing studies demonstrate its application across areas such as Islamic finance, medical ethics, environmental concerns, and broader socio-economic issues (Al Hakim, 2019; Harnowo & Habib, 2024; Asni and Sulung, 2017). This expansion

reflects the continuing role of fatwa in mediating between established principles of Islamic law and new circumstances that require legal and ethical guidance. In some jurisdictions, fatwa institutions also interact closely with regulatory and administrative structures, further extending the institutional significance of fatwa beyond individual religious consultation.

### **Expansion of Fatwa Scholarship into Contemporary Domains**

The diversification of fatwa practice has been accompanied by a corresponding expansion of fatwa scholarship. Research increasingly addresses contemporary issues that extend beyond conventional discussions of Islamic jurisprudence. Studies have examined fatwas relating to Islamic finance, climate change, medical and bioethical questions, and the conditions faced by Muslim minorities (Al Hakim, 2019; Harnowo & Habib, 2024; Dalvi et al., 2025; Ghaly, 2012). This literature demonstrates that fatwa studies have become connected with broader discussions in economics, public policy, ethics, social relations, and minority studies.

Muslim minority contexts provide a particularly important example of such contextualisation. Research on Muslim communities in non-Muslim-majority societies illustrates how considerations such as *darurah* and practical necessity may shape discussions concerning mortgages, insurance, banking arrangements, and medical issues (Dalvi et al., 2025; Ghaly, 2012). These studies highlight how fatwa discourse is frequently embedded within wider questions of socio-legal adaptation and the application of Islamic norms in different political and institutional environments.

Questions of authority and participation have also emerged within contemporary fatwa scholarship. For example, Ismah (2023) examines women's participation in fatwa-making in Indonesia, drawing attention to the relationship between gender, religious authority, and everyday legal practice. Rather than constituting an independent dominant field of fatwa studies, such work may be understood as part of a broader scholarly concern with authority, participation, and the institutional structures through which fatwas are produced and communicated.

### **Digital Transformation and Dissemination of Fatwas**

Digital technology represents another important development in contemporary fatwa scholarship. Religious institutions increasingly disseminate fatwas through official websites, mobile applications, and other digital platforms, making religious guidance more accessible across geographical boundaries (Khairuldin et al., 2018). The emergence of online fatwas has consequently generated new questions concerning accessibility, authority, dissemination, and the relationship between religious institutions and digital audiences.

This development is particularly relevant to the present study because digital transformation is not only a change in the mode through which fatwas are communicated but also an expanding subject of academic inquiry. Previous systematic work on online fatwas, including Wahid (2024), indicates scholarly attention to the interaction between Islamic legal guidance and digital communication. The inclusion of digital themes in the literature therefore provides an important basis for examining whether similar patterns emerge in the bibliometric structure of fatwa scholarship.

## Existing Reviews and Bibliometric Research

Despite the widening range of subjects addressed in fatwa scholarship, attempts to synthesise the field remain comparatively limited. Existing review studies have generally concentrated on specific dimensions of fatwa research. Salisu and Saniff (2023), for example, conducted a systematic review concerning the relationship between Shariah regulatory frameworks and Islamic fatwa, while Zainudin et al. (2024) reviewed research designs associated with fatwa methods. Wahid (2024), meanwhile, focused specifically on the literature concerning online fatwas. These studies provide valuable thematic insights, but their objectives are narrower than a field-wide assessment of the development of fatwa scholarship.

Bibliometric analysis has been applied more directly by Hussain et al. (2024), who examined Malaysian online theses related to fatwa. However, the scope of that study was limited to thesis-based research within Malaysia rather than internationally indexed scholarly publications. Consequently, the existing literature does not yet provide a comprehensive bibliometric account of how fatwa scholarship has developed across major international databases in terms of publication growth, disciplinary distribution, citation influence, institutional and geographical productivity, and thematic structure.

This limitation is significant because the literature reviewed above suggests that fatwa studies are no longer confined to a single doctrinal or disciplinary domain. Instead, the field increasingly intersects with finance, ethics, minority studies, environmental concerns, institutional authority, and digital communication. A bibliometric analysis is therefore necessary not merely to quantify publication output, but to determine how these different strands are represented within the broader structure of fatwa scholarship and how the field has developed over time.

## Synthesis of the Literature and Research Gap

Taken together, the literature reveals three broad developments in fatwa scholarship. First, fatwa research has expanded from predominantly jurisprudential concerns into a wider range of economic, social, ethical, institutional, and environmental issues. Second, changing contexts have generated scholarly interest in questions of minority adaptation, institutional authority, participation, and digital dissemination. Third, although systematic reviews and topic-specific studies have increased, comprehensive bibliometric mapping of internationally indexed fatwa scholarship remains limited. The present study addresses this gap by examining the longitudinal, disciplinary, citation-based, institutional, geographical, and thematic development of fatwa research between 1990 and 2024.

**Figure 1:** Concept map of the literature review



Source: Compiled by the authors

Figure 1 summarises the principal strands identified in the literature on fatwa studies. It highlights the functions and applications of fatwas, questions of gender and participation, fatwas in Muslim minority contexts, digital transformation, and the research gaps that provide the foundation for the bibliometric analysis undertaken in this study.

## METHODOLOGY

This section describes the methodological procedures employed to map the development of fatwa-related scholarship between 1990 and 2024. It explains the bibliometric approach adopted in the study, the selection of bibliographic databases, the search strategy, the data-cleaning procedure, and the composition of the final dataset. These procedures were designed to ensure that the data collected were systematically retrieved, organised, and analysed in accordance with the objectives of the study.

## Bibliometric Analysis

Bibliometric analysis refers to the quantitative examination of bibliographic data to identify patterns of scholarly production, citation influence, research development, and thematic relationships within a particular field of study. It provides a systematic means of examining a large body of academic literature through indicators such as publication counts, citations, keyword analysis, and research networks (Donthu et al., 2021; Zupic & Cater, 2015). Bibliometric analysis was employed in this study to evaluate publication patterns, scholarly influence, and thematic clusters in fatwa-related research. The approach was selected because it is particularly suitable for addressing the objectives of this study, which seek to examine the development of fatwa scholarship over time, identify influential publication outlets, authors, institutions and countries, and map the dominant themes within the literature. By applying quantitative bibliometric indicators, the study is able to provide a systematic overview of the development and structure of fatwa research over more than three decades. The analysis integrates quantitative indicators such as publication counts, citations, keyword analysis, and collaboration networks, enabling researchers to map the evolution of a given body of knowledge (Donthu et al., 2021; Zupic & Cater, 2015). In this study, bibliometrics was therefore considered appropriate for providing a comprehensive overview of the development of fatwa research from 1990 to 2024.

## Data Sources and Search Strategy

This study utilised two major bibliographic databases, namely Scopus and Web of Science (WoS). These databases were selected because both provide broad multidisciplinary coverage, internationally recognised indexing standards, structured bibliographic information, and citation data suitable for bibliometric analysis (Abdullah, 2022; Pranckute, 2021). The use of both databases also provides complementary coverage and reduces reliance on a single indexing source, thereby strengthening the representation of internationally indexed scholarship included in the analysis. The study was limited to Scopus and WoS because its primary objective is to map internationally indexed fatwa scholarship using databases that provide sufficiently standardised bibliographic and citation metadata for comparative bibliometric analysis. The restriction also enables more consistent data integration, duplicate identification, citation analysis, and keyword mapping across the selected records. Nevertheless, the use of these two databases means that publications indexed exclusively in regional databases, local repositories, or other non-indexed sources may not be represented in the dataset; this limitation is acknowledged in the study.

*“fatwa” OR “religious decree” OR “Islamic legal opinion” OR “Islamic rule” OR “religious rule\*” OR “Shariah judgement\*” OR “Islamic opinion\*” OR “Shariah opinion\*”*

The title-based search was conducted between 6 May and 17 June 2025. A total of 884 documents were retrieved, consisting of 588 from Scopus and 296 from WoS. The dataset was analysed using ScientoPy, OpenRefine, and VOSviewer, which are commonly employed tools in bibliometric research (Moral-Munoz et al., 2020).

**Table 2:** Dataset search strategy in Scopus and WoS

| Database     | Search String                                                                                                                                                                | Total      | Date         |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|--------------|
| Scopus       | TITLE (“fatwa” OR “religious decree” OR “Islamic legal opinion” OR “Islamic rule*” OR “religious rule*” OR “Shariah judgement*” OR “Islamic opinion*” OR “Shariah opinion*”) | 588        | 17 June 2025 |
| WoS          | TITLE (“fatwa” OR “religious decree” OR “Islamic legal opinion” OR “Islamic rule*” OR “religious rule*” OR “Shariah judgement*” OR “Islamic opinion*” OR “Shariah opinion*”) | 296        | 6 May 2025   |
| <b>Total</b> | –                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>884</b> | –            |

Source: Compiled by the researchers

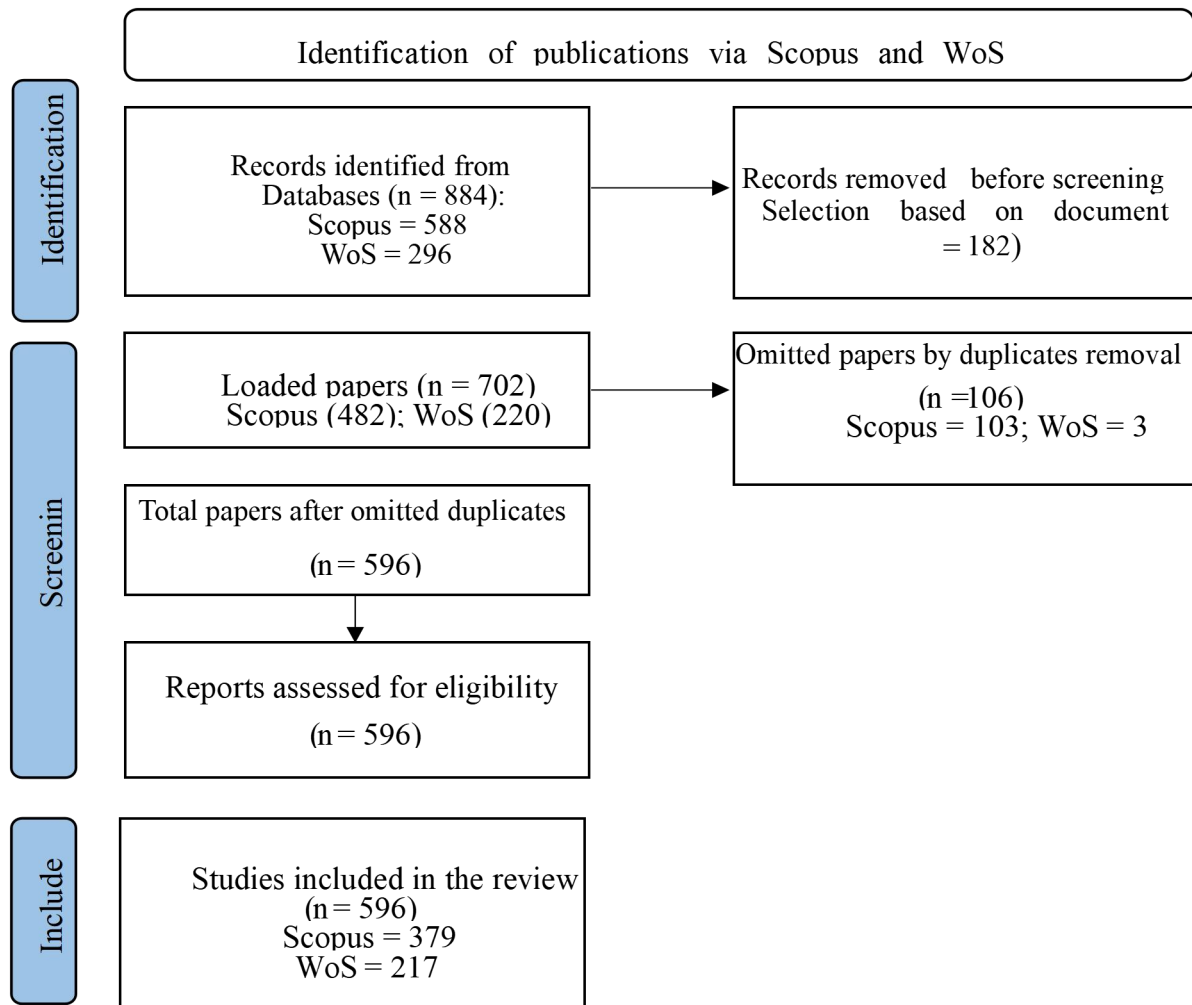
### Data Cleaning Process

Data cleaning refers to the process of reviewing, standardising, and refining bibliographic records before analysis in order to minimise duplication and inconsistencies within the dataset. This process is particularly important when combining records from more than one bibliographic database because differences may occur in author names, publication information, titles, and other metadata. Data cleaning therefore helps improve the consistency and reliability of the bibliometric dataset before further analysis is conducted. Data from Scopus and WoS were merged using ScientoPy, while duplicate records were identified through titles, author names, publication years, and DOIs. A total of 106 records (15.1%) were identified as duplicates, with 103 from Scopus and 3 from WoS. Additional cleaning was performed using OpenRefine to standardise author spellings and publication details, thereby ensuring the integrity of the dataset (Donthu et al., 2021; Linnenluecke et al., 2020).

### Overview of the Final Dataset

Out of the initial 884 documents, 182 (20.6%) were excluded as they did not meet the criteria for academic articles. The final dataset comprised 596 publications, with 379 (63.6%) from Scopus and 217 (36.4%) from WoS. The document types analyzed consisted of articles (90.5%), reviews (6.7%), and proceedings (1.3%). Figure 2 illustrates the screening process, beginning with the initial search, filtering, and ending with the final dataset. This procedure was crucial to ensure that only high-quality and relevant documents were included in the analysis.

**Figure 2:** Flow diagram of database and register research



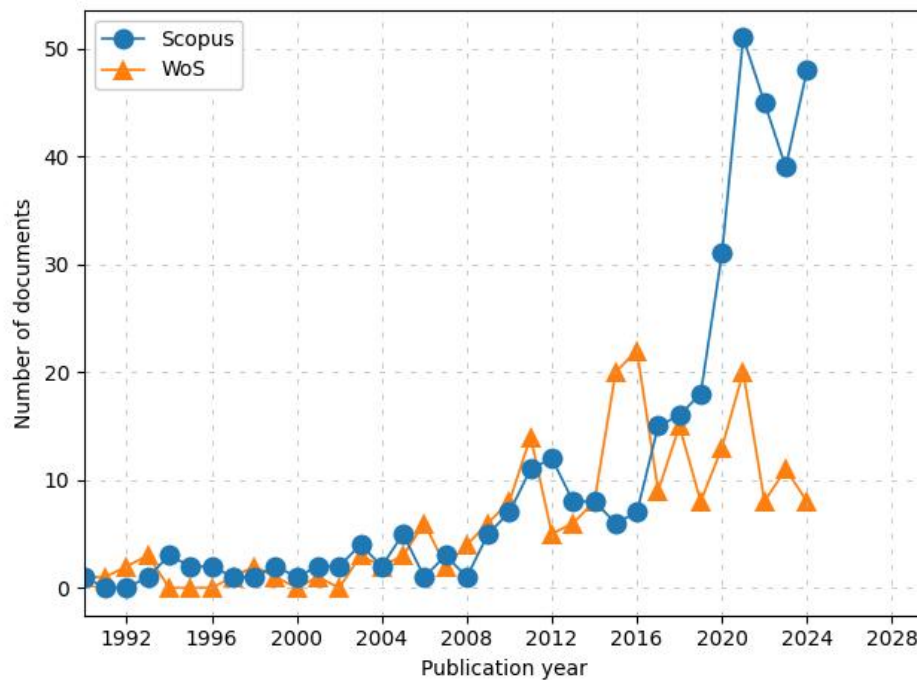
## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the main findings of the bibliometric analysis of fatwa studies from 1990 to 2024. The findings are organised according to the principal dimensions examined in the study, namely publication growth, major scientific journals, dominant subject areas, highly cited publications, productive institutions and countries, and thematic patterns identified through keyword co-occurrence analysis. Together, these findings provide an overview of the development, scholarly influence, geographical distribution, and thematic characteristics of fatwa research during the period under review.

### Publication Growth Trends

Figure 3 shows the development of fatwa-related publications between 1990 and 2024. During the 1990s and early 2000s, publication output remained relatively limited, generally recording fewer than five publications per year. After 2010, however, the number of publications increased significantly. Scopus-indexed articles reached their highest level in 2021 with 51 publications, while WoS recorded 22 publications in the same year. Overall, Scopus accumulated 361 articles, compared with 213 articles recorded in WoS. These findings indicate a marked expansion of scholarly attention to fatwa studies, particularly during the later years of the period examined.

**Figure 3: Publication growth trends**

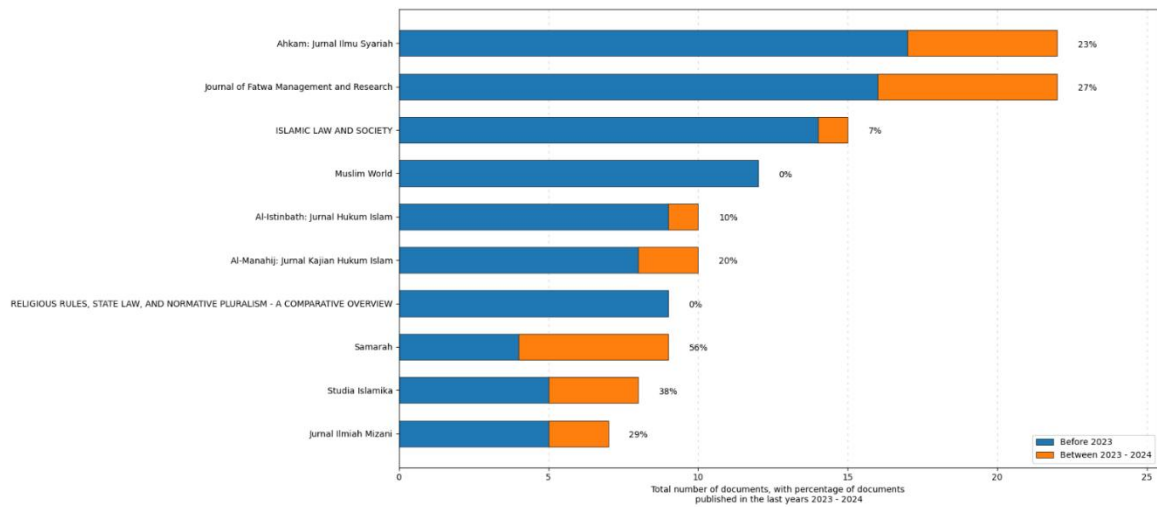


*Source: Scopus and WoS databases*

### Major Scientific Publishers and Fields of Research

Figure 4 illustrates the diversity of publication outlets contributing to fatwa scholarship. Two journals, *Ahkam: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* and the *Journal of Fatwa Management and Research*, recorded the highest publication output, with 22 articles each. Established journals such as *Islamic Law and Society* and *Muslim World* also remain important publication outlets, while journals such as *Samarah* and *Studia Islamika* have become increasingly visible in recent years. The findings demonstrate that fatwa research is published across a range of scholarly outlets, with particularly strong representation in journals related to Islamic law and Islamic studies.

**Figure 4: The top ten scientific journals**

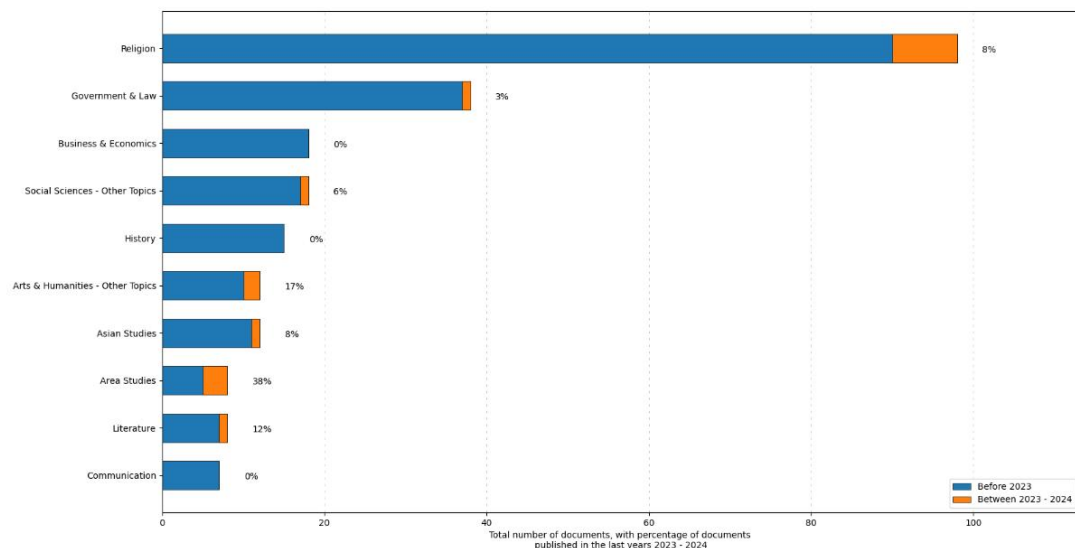


Source: Scopus and WoS databases

## Dominant Subject Areas

Figure 5 presents the major subject areas associated with fatwa research. Religion emerged as the dominant field, with 98 articles and an h-index of 10. Government and Law ranked second with 38 articles, followed by Social Sciences and Business and Economics, with 18 articles each. Other represented fields include History, Arts, Humanities, and Regional Studies. These findings indicate that although fatwa research remains strongly rooted in religious and legal scholarship, it also extends into a range of social, economic, historical, and cultural disciplines.

**Figure 5: Most Dominants Subject Area**



Source: Scopus and WoS databases

## Highly Cited Publications

Table 3 presents the ten most highly cited publications within the dataset. Hallaq's (1994) article received the highest number of citations, with 165 citations, followed by Agrama (2010) with 150 citations, and Meyersson (2014) with 112 citations. Anshelm and Hultman (2014) recorded 105 citations. Other highly cited publications address a range of subjects, including the Ottoman institutional legacy, medical ethics, Islamic finance, digital fatwas and extremism, and Muslim minority contexts. Collectively, these publications reflect the disciplinary diversity of highly cited fatwa-related scholarship, spanning law, history, anthropology, economics, ethics, finance, and public policy.

**Table 3:** List of top ten highly cited publications

| No | Author & Year            | Title                                                                                                                                             | Source title                                 | Cited Count | Document Type |
|----|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-------------|---------------|
| 1  | Hallaq (1994)            | From Fatwās to Furū: growth and change in Islamic substantive law                                                                                 | Islamic Law and Society                      | 165         | Article       |
| 2  | Ali Agrama (2010)        | Ethics, tradition, authority: Toward an anthropology of the fatwa                                                                                 | American Ethnologist                         | 150         | Article       |
| 3  | Meyersson (2014)         | Islamic rule and the empowerment of the poor and pious                                                                                            | Econometrica                                 | 112         | Article       |
| 4  | Anshelm & Hultman (2014) | A green fatwa? Climate change as a threat to the masculinity of industrial modernity                                                              | NORMA                                        | 105         | Article       |
| 5  | Grosjean (2011)          | The institutional legacy of the Ottoman Empire: Islamic rule and financial development in South Eastern Europe                                    | Journal of Comparative Economics             | 81          | Article       |
| 6  | Alkuraya & Kilani (2001) | Attitude of Saudi families affected with hemoglobinopathies towards prenatal screening and abortion and the influence of religious ruling (Fatwa) | Prenatal Diagnosis                           | 75          | Article       |
| 7  | Ullah et al. (2018)      | Fatwa repositioning: the hidden struggle for Shari'a compliance within Islamic financial institutions                                             | Journal of Business Ethics                   | 53          | Article       |
| 8  | Weimann (2011)           | Cyber-fatwas and terrorism                                                                                                                        | Studies in Conflict and Terrorism            | 51          | Article       |
| 9  | Caeiro (2010)            | The power of European fatwas: the minority fiqh project and the making of an Islamic counterpublic                                                | International Journal of Middle East Studies | 51          | Article       |
| 10 | Miller (2000)            | Muslim minorities and the                                                                                                                         | Islamic Law and                              | 49          | Article       |

obligation to emigrate to Society  
Islamic territory: two  
Fatwās from fifteenth-  
century Granada

Source: Scopus and WoS databases

### Most Productive Institutions

Table 4 shows the institutions with the highest publication output in fatwa research. The University of Malaya ranked first with eight publications, followed by the International Islamic University Malaysia with seven publications, and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia with six publications. Istanbul University, Kolej Universiti Islam Perlis, the University of Exeter, Universiti Sains Malaysia, and Universiti Utara Malaysia each recorded three publications. Tel Aviv University and Universiti Teknologi MARA recorded two publications each. The findings demonstrate the strong representation of Malaysian institutions among the leading contributors to fatwa research, alongside contributions from institutions outside Malaysia.

**Table 4:** The top ten productive institutions

| <b>Institution</b>                               | <b>Number of Documents</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Universiti Malaya</b>                         | 8                          |
| <b>International Islamic University Malaysia</b> | 7                          |
| <b>Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia</b>            | 6                          |
| <b>Istanbul University</b>                       | 3                          |
| <b>Kolej Universiti Islam Perlis</b>             | 3                          |
| <b>University of Exeter</b>                      | 3                          |
| <b>Universiti Sains Malaysia</b>                 | 3                          |
| <b>Universiti Utara Malaysia</b>                 | 3                          |
| <b>Tel Aviv University</b>                       | 2                          |
| <b>Universiti Teknologi MARA</b>                 | 2                          |

Source: Scopus and WoS databases

### Publications by Country

Figure 6 and Table 5 present the geographical distribution of fatwa research. Indonesia recorded the highest number of publications with 186 articles (31.21%), followed by Malaysia with 93 articles (15.60%). The United States ranked third with 55 publications (9.23%), followed by the United Kingdom with 34 publications (5.70%) and Turkey with 21 publications (3.52%). Other countries represented among the ten leading contributors include the Netherlands, Israel, Australia, Saudi Arabia, and Germany. These findings demonstrate the strong representation of Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia and Malaysia, while also showing that fatwa research has attracted scholarly attention across a wider range of international contexts.

**Figure 6: Publication by countries**

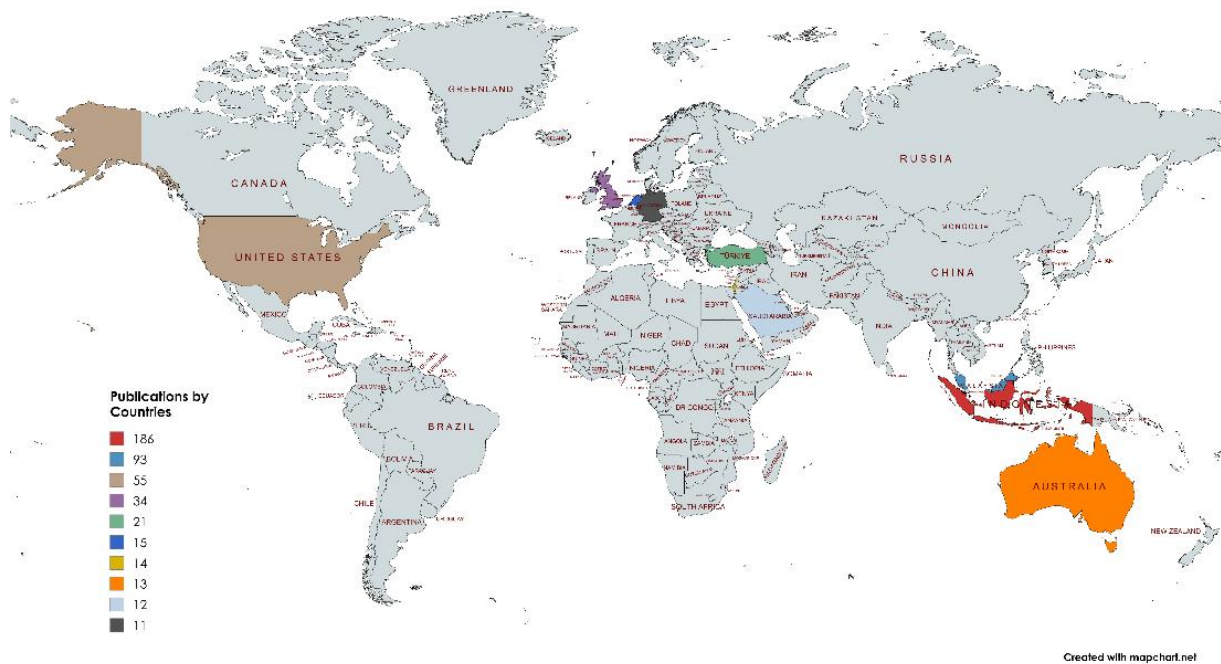


**Table 5: Publications by countries**

| No | Country        | Total Publication | Percentage % |
|----|----------------|-------------------|--------------|
| 1  | Indonesia      | 186               | 31.21%       |
| 2  | Malaysia       | 93                | 15.60%       |
| 3  | United States  | 55                | 9.23%        |
| 4  | United Kingdom | 34                | 5.70%        |
| 5  | Turkey         | 21                | 3.52%        |
| 6  | Netherlands    | 15                | 2.52%        |
| 7  | Israel         | 14                | 2.35%        |
| 8  | Australia      | 13                | 2.18%        |
| 9  | Saudi Arabia   | 12                | 2.01%        |
| 10 | Germany        | 11                | 1.85%        |

Source: Compiled by the researchers

## Themes and Trends in Fatwa Studies

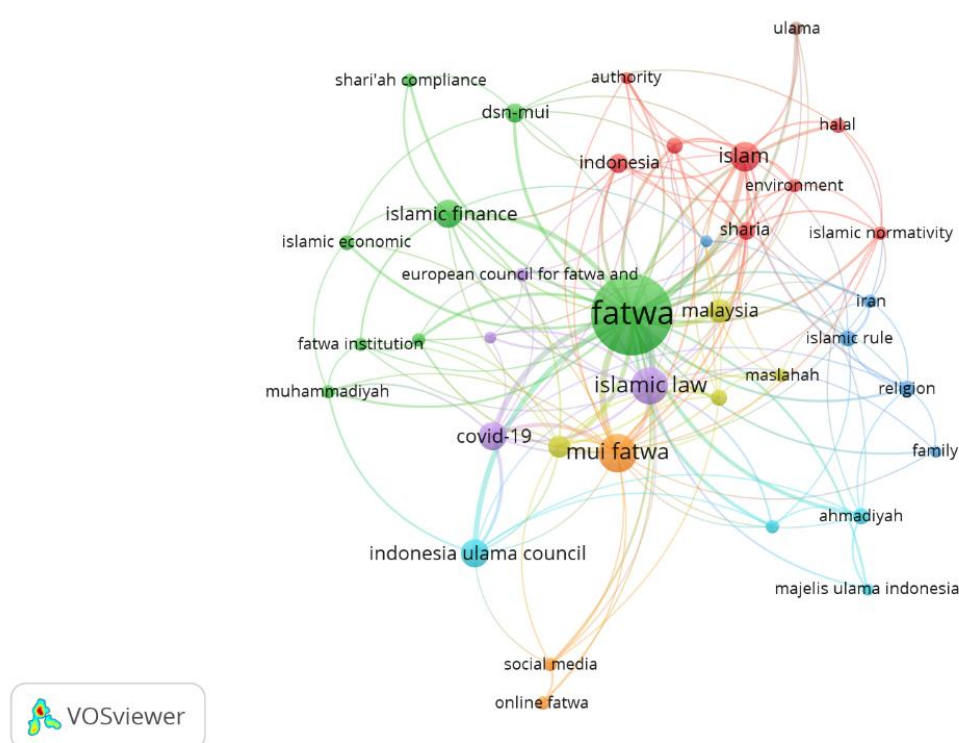
Figure 7 presents the keyword co-occurrence analysis generated using VOSviewer. The keyword “fatwa” recorded the highest frequency with 218 occurrences, followed by “MUI fatwa” (50), “Islamic law” (46), and “Indonesia Ulama Council” (27). The keyword “COVID-19” (26) also emerged prominently, illustrating scholarly engagement with fatwa-related responses to contemporary crises. Other keywords, including *maqasid al-shari’ah*, *ijtihad*, Islamic finance, ethics, and halal, reflect the presence of methodological, economic, and lifestyle-related dimensions within fatwa scholarship.

Other terms such as Ahmadiyah, non-Muslim, and Muslim minorities indicate scholarly attention to socio-political issues, pluralism, and intergroup relations. The presence of institutional terms such as the Majelis Ulama Indonesia, the European Council for Fatwa and

Research, and DSN-MUI further reflects the institutional dimension of fatwa scholarship. In addition, keywords such as social media and online fatwas demonstrate the growing relevance of digital platforms in the study and dissemination of fatwas, while concepts such as *maslahah*, authority, and Islamic normativity highlight continuing scholarly discussions concerning the legitimacy, application, and adaptability of fatwas in contemporary contexts.

Taken together, the findings show that fatwa scholarship evolved from a relatively limited publication base during the earlier part of the 1990–2024 period into a substantially larger and more diversified body of literature after 2010. The distribution across subject areas, countries, publication outlets, and keywords further indicates that contemporary fatwa research is represented across religious, legal, social, economic, institutional, and digital domains.

**Figure 7: A keyword co-occurrence map**



Source: Scopus and WoS databases and VOSviewer

Table 6 summarises the principal findings derived from the bibliometric analysis across the major dimensions examined in this study.

**Table 6:** Summary of main findings of the bibliometric study on fatwa

| Focus of Analysis         | Key Findings                                                                        | Implications                                                                   |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Publication Trends</b> | Significant surge after 2010; peak in 2021 (Scopus: 51 articles; WoS: 22 articles). | Marked increase in academic interest in fatwa studies in the contemporary era. |
| <b>Key Journals</b>       | <i>Ahkam: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah</i> (22), <i>Journal of Fatwa Management and</i>      | Dominance of Islamic law journals; emergence of new outlets                    |

|                                |                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                         |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                | <i>Research</i> (22), <i>Islamic Law and Society</i> (15), <i>Muslim World</i> (12).                               | such as <i>Samarah</i> and <i>Studia Islamika</i> .                                                     |
| <b>Subject Areas</b>           | Religion (98, h-index 10), Law & Government (38), Social Sciences & Economics (18).                                | Rooted in religious frameworks but increasingly interdisciplinary.                                      |
| <b>Most Cited Articles</b>     | Hallaq (1994, 165 citations), Agrama (2010, 150), Meyersson (2014, 112), Anshelm & Hultman (2014, 105).            | Influential works span history, anthropology, economics, ethics, and environment.                       |
| <b>Productive Institutions</b> | University of Malaya (8), IIUM (7), UKM (6), followed by University of Exeter, KUIPs, and Istanbul Univ. (3).      | Malaysia emerges as a major hub, supported by global collaboration networks.                            |
| <b>Productive Countries</b>    | Indonesia (186, 31.21%), Malaysia (93, 15.60%), USA (55), UK (34).                                                 | Southeast Asia dominates fatwa research but attracts global attention.                                  |
| <b>Themes &amp; Trends</b>     | “Fatwa” (218), “MUI fatwa” (50), “Islamic law” (46), “COVID-19” (26), minority issues, social media, online fatwa. | Core focus on legal frameworks; expansion to contemporary issues (pandemic, digitalisation, pluralism). |

Source: Compiled by the researchers

## DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate a clear expansion of fatwa scholarship over the period from 1990 to 2024. Publication output remained relatively limited during the earlier years but increased substantially after 2010, reaching its highest level in 2021. This pattern suggests that fatwa studies have developed from a relatively specialised area of Islamic legal scholarship into a more visible field of academic inquiry. The expansion in publication output is also accompanied by broader disciplinary participation. Although Religion remains the dominant subject area, the presence of Government and Law, Social Sciences, Business and Economics, History, Arts and Humanities, and other disciplines indicates that contemporary fatwa scholarship is no longer confined exclusively to conventional jurisprudential discussions.

This disciplinary diversification is also reflected in the thematic findings. The prominence of keywords such as *fatwa*, “MUI fatwa”, “Islamic law”, *maqasid al-shari‘ah*, *ijtihad*, Islamic finance, ethics, halal, COVID-19, Muslim minorities, social media, and online fatwas demonstrates the breadth of issues addressed within contemporary fatwa scholarship. These patterns indicate that the academic study of fatwa increasingly intersects with institutional authority, socio-economic concerns, minority contexts, contemporary crises, and digital communication. Rather than replacing traditional *fiqh*-oriented scholarship, these areas extend the contexts in which Islamic legal reasoning is studied and applied.

Viewed longitudinally, the 1990–2024 publication pattern can be understood as a movement from relatively limited scholarly output during the earlier period toward substantially greater academic engagement after 2010. The bibliometric evidence does not by itself establish the social or institutional causes of this increase; however, the thematic diversity observed in the dataset shows that the later development of the field coincides with scholarly engagement across a wider range of contemporary issues. These include Islamic finance, bioethical questions, environmental concerns, Muslim minority contexts, responses to COVID-19, and digital forms of fatwa dissemination. The findings therefore suggest that the growth of fatwa

scholarship is associated with an increasingly diversified research agenda responding to contemporary legal, social, economic, and technological questions.

A particularly notable geographical pattern is the strong concentration of publications in Southeast Asia. Indonesia accounted for 31.21% of the publications and Malaysia for 15.60%, meaning that the two countries together contributed almost half of the publications represented in the dataset. This concentration corresponds with the prominent appearance of terms associated with Indonesian fatwa institutions, particularly the MUI, in the keyword analysis. At the institutional level, Malaysian universities were also strongly represented, with the University of Malaya, International Islamic University Malaysia, and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia among the most productive institutions. These findings position Indonesia and Malaysia as important centres of internationally indexed fatwa scholarship within the period examined.

At the same time, the geographical landscape extends beyond Southeast Asia. The United States and the United Kingdom ranked among the leading contributing countries, while Turkey, the Netherlands, Israel, Australia, Saudi Arabia, and Germany were also represented among the ten most productive countries. This wider geographical distribution is significant because the highly cited literature includes themes relating to Muslim minorities, European fatwas, medical and ethical questions, institutional history, and socio-political contexts. The international distribution therefore demonstrates that fatwa scholarship is not limited to Muslim-majority settings but has also developed in academic environments concerned with minority Muslim experiences, comparative Islamic law, ethics, and contemporary social issues.

The publication and citation patterns further demonstrate the coexistence of specialised Islamic studies scholarship with broader interdisciplinary engagement. *Ahkam: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* and the *Journal of Fatwa Management and Research* recorded the highest publication output, highlighting the role of specialised Islamic law and fatwa journals in consolidating the field. However, the most highly cited publications appeared across a wider variety of outlets and disciplinary contexts. Highly cited works addressed Islamic substantive law, anthropology, economics, environmental concerns, medical ethics, Islamic finance, cyber-fatwas, and Muslim minority issues. This distribution reinforces the finding that the intellectual development of fatwa scholarship extends beyond a single disciplinary tradition.

The presence of social media and online fatwas in the keyword network also points to an important contemporary dimension of fatwa scholarship. Digital platforms have expanded the channels through which religious opinions are disseminated and accessed, while simultaneously creating new questions regarding religious authority, accessibility, institutional legitimacy, and societal reception. Within the bibliometric landscape identified in this study, digitalisation therefore represents not merely a technological development but also an area connecting Islamic legal scholarship with communication studies and contemporary forms of religious engagement.

## **Contributions of the Study**

This study contributes to the development of fatwa scholarship at three interconnected levels. At the knowledge level, it provides a bibliometric mapping of fatwa research from 1990 to 2024 and demonstrates the development of the field in terms of publication output, disciplinary distribution, citation influence, institutional and geographical productivity, and

thematic concentration. The findings show that fatwa studies remain firmly connected to Islamic legal scholarship while simultaneously engaging with wider fields such as economics, social sciences, ethics, minority studies, and digital communication.

At the research level, the study organises a fragmented body of internationally indexed literature into identifiable patterns of publication, influence, geographical concentration, and thematic development. This provides researchers with a clearer understanding of areas that have received substantial scholarly attention as well as areas that may warrant further investigation. In particular, the findings highlight the value of interdisciplinary approaches in examining contemporary fatwa-related questions.

At the institutional and societal level, the study demonstrates how scholarly attention to fatwa has extended to areas directly connected with contemporary Muslim life, including finance, bioethics, environmental concerns, minority contexts, crises such as COVID-19, and digital communication. For fatwa institutions and educational bodies, this mapping provides evidence of the expanding range of issues within which contemporary fatwa discourse is being studied, thereby offering a basis for identifying research priorities, strengthening institutional knowledge, and encouraging closer engagement between Islamic legal scholarship and emerging societal concerns.

### **Practical Implications**

The findings carry several practical implications for fatwa institutions, universities, researchers, and related policy bodies. For fatwa institutions, the thematic mapping provides an overview of the areas receiving considerable scholarly attention, including Islamic finance, ethical and medical issues, minority contexts, contemporary crises, and digital fatwa dissemination. Such information may assist institutions in identifying areas where further research, specialist expertise, or interdisciplinary engagement is required.

For universities and educational institutions, the disciplinary diversity of the literature suggests that the teaching of fatwa and Islamic legal studies may benefit from greater engagement with fields such as economics, social sciences, ethics, public policy, and digital communication. The findings can therefore inform curriculum development by exposing students to the wider contemporary contexts in which fatwa scholarship operates.

For researchers and research-funding institutions, the concentration of publications in particular countries, institutions, journals, and thematic areas provides a basis for identifying established research centres and potential opportunities for wider scholarly engagement. The geographical findings also demonstrate the value of examining fatwa scholarship beyond Southeast Asian contexts, particularly in relation to Muslim minority communities and cross-jurisdictional Islamic legal issues.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the data coverage was limited to Scopus and Web of Science, which may exclude relevant publications indexed in regional databases such as MyCite or Garuda, as well as literature published in local or regional languages, including Arabic, Malay, and Turkish. Second, the study primarily focuses on internationally indexed academic literature and therefore does not comprehensively capture grey literature such as institutional reports and dissertations, despite their potential relevance

to fatwa scholarship. Third, the quantitative nature of bibliometric analysis is effective for identifying publication patterns, citation influence, and thematic relationships but cannot fully capture the methodological, jurisprudential, and epistemological nuances of individual fatwa studies. Accordingly, the findings should be interpreted as a mapping of the scholarly landscape rather than an assessment of the substantive quality or validity of individual fatwas.

## Recommendations for Future Research

Future research may extend the present study by incorporating regional databases and a wider range of multilingual publications in order to capture scholarship that remains underrepresented in Scopus and WoS. Longitudinal and comparative studies may also examine the social reception and impact of fatwas across different periods and jurisdictions, particularly between Muslim-majority and non-Muslim-majority contexts. Qualitative analysis could complement bibliometric mapping by examining the jurisprudential reasoning, methodological approaches, and institutional contexts underlying the thematic patterns identified in this study. Greater attention should also be given to the development, authority, dissemination, and societal reception of digital and online fatwas, which represent an increasingly visible area of contemporary scholarship.

## CONCLUSION

This study provides a bibliometric overview of the development of fatwa scholarship between 1990 and 2024 using publications indexed in Scopus and Web of Science. The findings demonstrate a substantial expansion in publication output after 2010, with Indonesia and Malaysia emerging as the leading contributing countries and Malaysian universities featuring prominently among the most productive institutions. Religion remains the dominant disciplinary area, but the presence of law, social sciences, business and economics, history, humanities, and related fields demonstrates the broader interdisciplinary character of contemporary fatwa research.

The citation and thematic findings further show that fatwa scholarship encompasses a wide range of issues, from Islamic legal foundations and institutional authority to Islamic finance, ethics, minority contexts, environmental concerns, contemporary crises, and digital forms of fatwa dissemination. This diversity illustrates the continuing relevance of fatwa as both an Islamic legal institution and an expanding field of scholarly inquiry.

The principal contribution of this study lies in providing a systematic mapping of internationally indexed fatwa scholarship and identifying its major publication, disciplinary, geographical, citation, and thematic patterns. At the same time, the findings should be interpreted within the limitations of Scopus and WoS coverage and the quantitative nature of bibliometric analysis. Future studies can extend this mapping through multilingual and regional databases, qualitative analysis, comparative jurisdictional research, and closer examination of digital fatwa practices. Overall, the study provides a foundation for further interdisciplinary research and for stronger engagement between researchers, fatwa institutions, and educational bodies in addressing emerging issues in contemporary Islamic legal scholarship.

## DECLARATIONS

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### Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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#### Authors' contributions

Muhamad Husni Hasbulah: Conceptualization, methodology, data curation, formal analysis, visualization, and writing – original draft. Fathullah Asni: Conceptualization, methodology, supervision, validation, and writing – review and editing. Afiffudin Mohammed Noor: Formal analysis, validation, investigation, and writing – review and editing. Mohd Akram Dahaman@Dahlan: Validation, interpretation of findings, visualization, and writing – review and editing. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

#### Ethics Approval

Ethics approval was not required for this study because it employed bibliometric analysis of publicly available bibliographic and publication metadata and did not involve human participants, animals, interventions, or identifiable personal data.

#### Data Availability

The bibliographic data analysed in this study were retrieved from the Scopus and Web of Science databases. The processed data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request, subject to the terms and conditions of the respective database providers.

#### Use of Artificial Intelligence

ChatGPT (OpenAI) was used solely to assist with language editing, structural refinement, and improving the clarity and readability of the manuscript during the revision process. The tool was not used to generate or alter the bibliometric dataset or to independently determine the study findings. All data, analyses, interpretations, references, arguments, and conclusions were reviewed, verified, and approved by the authors, who remain fully responsible for the final manuscript.

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