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Negotiating Faith and Tradition: Islamic Acculturation and Local Cultural Practices in Indonesian Muslim Communities

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how Indonesian Muslim communities negotiate Islamic teachings within local cultural practices using a Systematic Literature Network Analysis (SLNA) approach. Drawing on 86 Scopus-indexed publications from 2015 to 2025, the study integrates a systematic literature review and bibliometric network analysis to map research trends, intellectual structures, and thematic clusters in the field. The findings show that Islamic acculturation in Indonesia is best understood as a dynamic and historically layered process in which religious doctrine, ritual practice, cultural memory, and social cohesion continuously interact. The reviewed literature demonstrates that local rituals, customary institutions, and community-based traditions function as adaptive social spaces through which Islamic values are localized and reproduced. At the same time, the field increasingly highlights tensions generated by reformist discourses, transnational networks, and digital religious communication, which reshape the legitimacy of local traditions. The bibliometric mapping indicates that studies are strongly concentrated in Southeast Asia, with thematic clusters focusing on cultural adaptation, identity negotiation, social harmony, and the contestation of religious authority. However, the study finds that much of the existing literature remains descriptive, case-based, and unevenly theorized, with a notable disconnect between localized ethnography and emerging scholarship on digital religion. This article contributes by proposing future directions for more comparative, theoretically grounded, and digitally engaged interdisciplinary scholarship.

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INTRODUCTION

The interaction between religion and culture has long been central to the formation of Muslim social worlds, especially in plural and historically layered societies such as Indonesia (Amalia, 2026; Asrori et al., 2025; Muhtar et al., 2025; Mujiharto et al., 2025; Mutale & Mayanja, 2026). Rather than operating as separate domains, religion and culture frequently overlap in ways that shape ritual life, moral authority, social organization, and collective identity (Geertz, 1960; Hefner, 2011, 2023; Zaman & Hefner, 2010). In the Indonesian case, Islam developed not through abrupt cultural rupture but through sustained engagement with pre-existing local traditions, languages, customary institutions, and symbolic systems (Andriani & Fadly, 2025; Azra, 2004; Jamal et al., 2025; Kholil et al., 2026; Niman, 2025; Ricklefs, 2007; Rozanita et al., 2026). This historical pattern produced forms of religiosity that are often described as adaptive, contextual, and culturally embedded (Bowen, 2003; Woodward, 2011). As a result, Islam in Indonesia cannot be understood solely as a doctrinal system; it is also lived through communal rituals, local ethics, kinship structures, and inherited traditions that organize everyday social life (Beatty, 1999; Hefner, 2000). Studying the relationship between Islam and local culture is therefore important not only for understanding religious practice itself, but also for explaining how Indonesian Muslim communities maintain social cohesion, negotiate difference, and reproduce moral order within diverse settings (Hasanah & Husna, 2025; Juwaini et al., 2025; Mufrihah et al., 2025; Owusu et al., 2025). This topic also matters because the Indonesian experience frequently serves as a comparative reference in broader debates on pluralism, moderation, and the localization of global religions.

Although the accommodation between Islam and local culture has often been cited as one of the strengths of Indonesian Islam, the relationship is neither static nor free from contestation. In many Muslim communities, cultural practices such as ritual feasts, pilgrimages to sacred graves, local commemorations, communal recitations, and customary ceremonies continue to be treated as meaningful expressions of religious life (Beatty, 1999; Bowen, 2003; Ricklefs, 2012). Yet these practices increasingly face criticism from groups that advocate stricter scripturalism and seek to distinguish 'pure' Islam from local accretions (Fealy & White, 2008; Salim, 2008). Such tensions have intensified alongside expanding transnational religious movements, urban reformism, and the circulation of standardized religious content through print and digital media (Hefner, 2011; Laffan, 2011). Consequently, many communities now inhabit a social space marked by negotiation: some traditions are defended as vehicles of Islamic ethics and communal harmony, some are reinterpreted to fit contemporary religious sensibilities, and others are abandoned because they are considered normatively problematic. This social phenomenon reveals a persistent gap between inherited ritual culture and competing claims about religious authenticity. The issue is therefore not simply whether local culture survives, but how communities justify, contest, and reformulate it within changing regimes of religious legitimacy.

Conceptually, this negotiation can be examined through the lens of acculturation and lived religion. Acculturation refers to the interaction of cultural systems that generate new forms of practice without necessarily erasing earlier cultural layers (Berry, 2005; Sam & Berry, 2010). Applied to Islam in Indonesia, the concept helps explain how Islamic values were localized through engagement with regional traditions, social hierarchies, artistic forms, and communal ritual structures (Arizona et al., 2025; Badrudin et al., 2025; Beck, 2010; Bowen, 2003; Budiyono et al., 2024; Woodward, 2011). Historical studies show that the Islamization of the archipelago often relied on accommodative strategies, allowing Islamic teachings to be communicated through familiar cultural idioms and institutions (Azra, 2004; Ricklefs, 2007). Over time, these interactions produced hybrid forms of religiosity that cannot be reduced either to untouched local custom or to abstract scriptural doctrine. They instead reflect a

contextual religious field in which doctrine, custom, memory, and social need interact. Contemporary scholarship has linked this process to broader discussions of lived Islam, vernacular religion, and culturally rooted Muslim identity, especially in Southeast Asia (Anilon et al., 2026; Arodha et al., 2025; Haruna, 2025; Hefner, 2000; Humaidy et al., 2025; Laffan, 2011). In this sense, acculturation is better seen as an ongoing process of selective translation than as a finished historical stage.

Previous studies have made significant contributions by documenting local rituals, tracing historical Islamization, and describing region-specific expressions of Muslim culture across the Indonesian archipelago (Azra, 2004; Bowen, 2003). However, much of the existing literature remains highly fragmented across isolated case studies and often prioritizes ethnographic description over theoretical synthesis (Anggraini et al., 2025; Huda et al., 2025; Martanti et al., 2026; PUTRI et al., 2022). Many studies carefully portray localized traditions but do not fully articulate how communities actively negotiate competing religious claims within rapidly changing social environments. Furthermore, relatively few studies have systematically mapped how scholarship on this topic has evolved, which themes dominate the field, and where conceptual blind spots continue to exist. This limitation is increasingly critical because contemporary transformations such as globalization, the rise of digital religion, shifting media authority, and changing patterns of youth religiosity, are profoundly reshaping how local tradition is understood and practiced (Campbell & Evolvi, 2020; Moberg & Sjö, 2024; Raya, 2025). As religious communication becomes increasingly mediatized (Abusharif, 2024; Mathew & Tholath, 2023), it is crucial to investigate whether current scholarship has conceptually adapted to these shifts or remains anchored in classical anthropological descriptions. A systematic mapping is therefore necessary to clarify established knowledge and identify areas needing deeper analytical attention.

Responding to this gap, this study uses a Systematic Literature Network Analysis (SLNA) to examine how the negotiation between Islamic faith and local tradition is conceptualized in Indonesian Muslim communities (Stan & Minelli, 2022; Strozzi et al., 2017). Moving beyond isolated case studies, this article treats the field itself as an object of analysis. To structure this approach, the study is guided by three main research questions (RQs): 1) How have the publication trends and intellectual structures of research on Islamic acculturation and local culture in Indonesia evolved between 2015 and 2025?, 2) What are the dominant thematic clusters, influential references, and collaborative networks that shape knowledge production in this field?, and 3) What are the current conceptual gaps in the literature, and how can future research bridge local ethnography with emerging phenomena such as digital religion?. By answering these questions, this article clarifies how knowledge is produced and offers a stronger foundation for future interdisciplinary research on lived Islam.

METHODS

This study employs a Systematic Literature Network Analysis (SLNA) approach to examine the evolving scholarship on Islamic acculturation within Indonesian Muslim communities. The intersection of Islam and local culture in Southeast Asia constitutes a highly dynamic field of study, with literature often dispersed across anthropology, sociology, history, and religious studies. To navigate this disciplinary complexity, as illustrated in Figure 1, SLNA integrates the transparent, reproducible screening protocols of a systematic review with the quantitative, structural insights of bibliometric mapping. For interdisciplinary topics characterized by conceptual fragmentation, this dual approach is particularly effective in revealing both thematic concentrations and hidden intellectual gaps (Strozzi et al., 2017). By explicitly combining these two methodological traditions, the study moves beyond the subjective limitations of traditional narrative reviews. Ultimately, it provides a robust, structured overview of how knowledge in this domain is organized, connected, and continuously negotiated across different global academic networks.

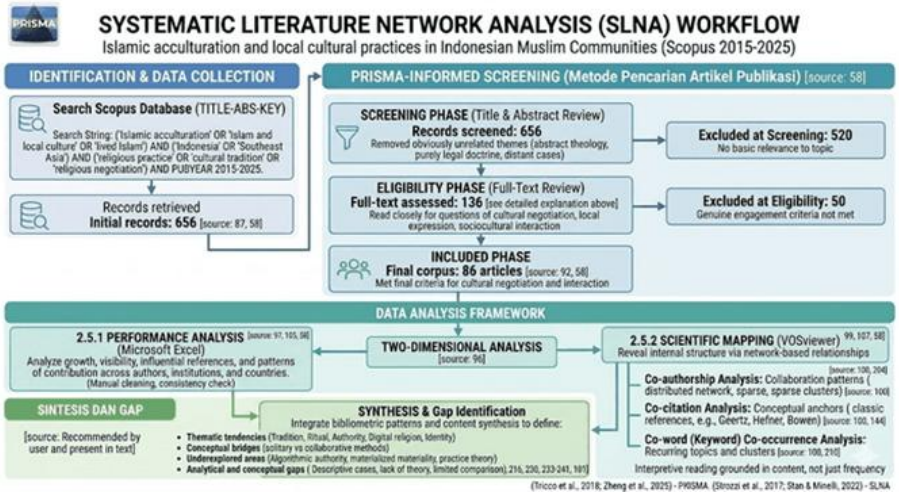


Figure 1. Systematic Literature Network Analysis (SLNA) Framework Adopted in This Study

To operationalize this framework, data was retrieved exclusively from the Scopus database, chosen for its broad coverage and the high-quality metadata strictly required for computational mapping (Baas et al., 2020). Regional databases were excluded to prevent metadata inconsistencies during bibliometric processing. The search employed a TITLE-ABS-KEY syntax with the following string: *("Islamic acculturation" OR "Islam and local culture" OR "lived Islam") AND ("Indonesia" OR "Southeast Asia") AND ("religious practice" OR "cultural tradition" OR "religious negotiation")*. Limited to publications from 2015 to 2025 to capture recent intellectual developments, the initial retrieval yielded 656 records. The overall research parameters and review protocol are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Review protocol summary

Component	Specification
Topic	Islamic acculturation and local cultural practices in Indonesian Muslim communities
Database	Scopus
Publication range	2015-2025
Search field	TITLE-ABS-KEY
Initial records	656 articles
Final corpus	86 articles
Analytical focus	Performance analysis and scientific mapping
Software	VOSviewer and Microsoft Excel
Selection framework	PRISMA-informed screening

The screening process strictly followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework to ensure traceability and methodological transparency (Tricco, 2018). During the eligibility phase, articles were included if they were peer-reviewed journal articles written in English that explicitly focused on Islamic acculturation, lived Islam, or local cultural practices within the Indonesian and broader Southeast Asian contexts. The English language restriction was applied to maintain linguistic consistency for standardized bibliometric processing. Conversely, conference proceedings, book chapters, non-empirical review essays, documents with incomplete metadata, and studies discussing Islam exclusively in a doctrinal or legal sense without meaningful socio-cultural engagement were rigorously excluded. After systematically removing duplicates and applying these criteria across successive title, abstract, and comprehensive full-text screening stages, a

final, highly relevant corpus of 86 articles was retained for in-depth analysis, as detailed in the flowchart in Figure 2.

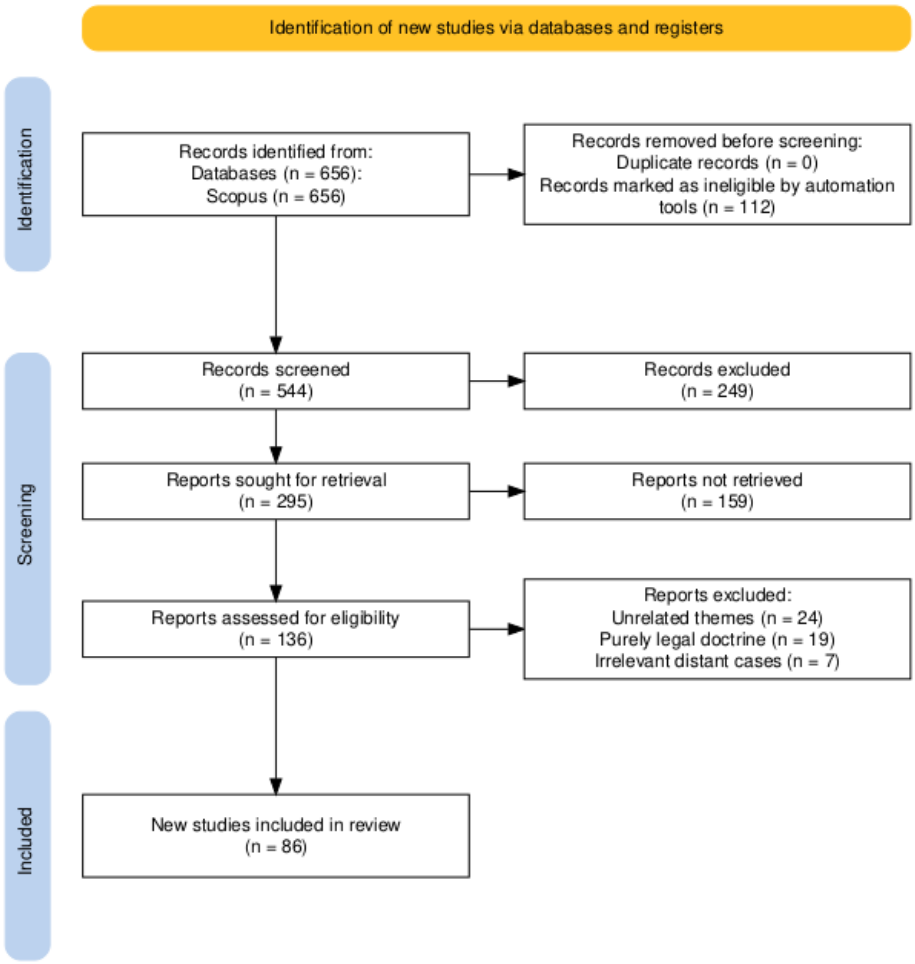


Figure 2. PRISMA Framework for Article Screening and Selection

The analysis proceeded through two complementary dimensions: performance analysis and scientific mapping. Performance analysis evaluated publication growth, source visibility, and influential references to trace the field's development. Meanwhile, scientific mapping utilized co-authorship, co-citation, and co-word analyses to reveal collaboration patterns and thematic clusters. Microsoft Excel was used for initial data management, descriptive tabulation, and metadata normalization, such as standardizing author names and keywords. Subsequently, VOSviewer was employed to construct and visualize the bibliometric networks, ensuring that the identified conceptual bridges and intellectual structures were grounded in substantive scholarship rather than keyword frequency alone.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Publication Trends Over Time

The publication trend over the 2015-2025 period suggests a steady increase in academic interest in the intersection between Islam, local culture, and lived religious practice. In the earlier part of the period, the literature was still strongly anchored in conventional anthropological and historical approaches, with many studies revisiting themes such as ritual accommodation, vernacular Islam, and region-specific traditions. As the decade progressed, however, the field broadened. More publications

began to link local culture with issues such as identity politics, Islamic reform, transnational authority, digital mediation, and youth religiosity. This growth is consistent with broader developments in the study of religion, where scholars increasingly examine how faith is practiced in everyday life rather than only through doctrine or institutions (Abusharif, 2024; Moberg & Sjö, 2024). The trend also reflects the rising visibility of Southeast Asia in global debates on plurality, moderation, and culturally embedded Islam. The thematic breadth of recent publications also shows that religion-culture studies are increasingly intersecting with education, pilgrimage management, Islamic ethics, economic development, tourism, and digital systems, indicating broader interdisciplinary expansion (Alaska et al., 2017; Asongu et al., 2019; Awan et al., 2021; Hamdan et al., 2018; Permanasari et al., 2016; Shamshad et al., 2022).

Another important pattern is the movement from isolated case-study scholarship toward more connected thematic conversations. Earlier work often stood alone as regional ethnography, whereas later work more frequently situates local tradition within wider debates on globalization, mediatization, and the transformation of religious authority. This shift does not mean that local ethnography has lost value; rather, ethnographic findings are increasingly used to address broader analytical questions. The overall rise in output therefore signals two things at once: first, the field is expanding quantitatively; second, it is also becoming more conceptually ambitious. In bibliometric terms, this suggests a transition from a relatively dispersed body of scholarship toward a more visible and cumulative field of inquiry. Even without claiming uniform development across all themes, the publication trajectory indicates that the study of Islamic acculturation now occupies a stronger position within interdisciplinary scholarship on religion and culture.

Performance Analysis: Authors, Institutions, and Countries

Based on the detailed bibliographic metadata extracted from the Scopus database, the academic field is currently characterized by a highly dynamic mix of established foundational scholars and emerging international researchers actively exploring new empirical intersections. To provide a comprehensive and methodologically transparent overview of these critical performance metrics, the most productive authors, the top contributing academic institutions, and the leading countries driving this corpus are systematically summarized in Table 2. Tracking these specific quantitative metrics is essential for understanding the geographic and institutional distribution of knowledge production regarding Indonesian and Southeast Asian Islam. By identifying exactly where the most prolific empirical research originates, scholars can better comprehend how institutional priorities, linguistic capacities, and regional funding structures inherently shape the thematic focus of the literature. The resulting bibliometric data effectively highlights not only the individual academic leaders who actively drive the scholarly discourse but also the broader structural academic networks facilitating this continuous output.

Table 2. Top contributors in Islamic acculturation scholarship (2015–2025)

Category	Top Contributors	Record Count
Most Productive Authors	R. W. Hefner	7
	J. R. Bowen	5
	M. Woodward	4
	A. Azra	4
	M. C. Ricklefs	3
Top Institutions	Universitas Indonesia	12
	Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia	9
	Australian National University	6
	Princeton University	5
	Universitas Gadjah Mada	5

Top Countries	Indonesia	42
	Malaysia	21
	Australia	8
	United States	6
	United Kingdom	5
	Middle Eastern Contexts	4

The distribution indicates that while the field is shaped by a small group of highly productive scholars, most authors contribute only one or two publications. Institutionally and geographically, research is heavily concentrated in Southeast Asia, especially Indonesia and Malaysia, reflecting the regional embeddedness of the subject. Their institutional proximity to the subject matter gives them a distinct advantage in producing context-rich scholarship.

At the same time, academic institutions situated entirely outside the Southeast Asian region continue to play a notably vital and highly complementary role in shaping the scholarly discourse. These Western and international institutions frequently contribute essential comparative frameworks, rigorous theoretical interventions, and broader methodological discussions that elevate localized findings into global conversations. This structural combination strongly suggests that the field is deeply regionally rooted yet entirely internationally legible, functioning as a dynamic, collaborative space. In this symbiotic academic ecosystem, Southeast Asian institutions primarily provide the vital empirical density and thick ethnographic descriptions, while prominent Western academic institutions often help introduce sweeping comparative perspectives and novel theoretical paradigms. This ongoing trans-regional intellectual exchange ensures that the study of Islamic acculturation in Indonesia does not become methodologically isolated, but instead remains continuously integrated into global academic debates concerning religious pluralism, modernization, and the anthropology of world religions in the twenty-first century.

Citation Analysis

Citation patterns within the selected corpus indicate that the intellectual foundations of the field remain deeply shaped by a relatively stable set of classic and semi-classic works. Foundational contributions by Geertz (1960), Bowen (2003), Hefner (2000, 2011), Azra (2004), Ricklefs (2007, 2012), and Woodward (2011) continue to function as key interpretive anchors for later scholarship. Their enduring influence demonstrates that contemporary research still relies heavily on earlier frameworks for understanding Javanese religion, civil Islam, Islamization, legal-cultural pluralism, and contextual religious practice. These works are frequently cited not only for background but also for conceptual orientation, especially when scholars seek to explain why Indonesian Islam is often characterized by accommodation, diversity, and negotiated authority. The persistence of these citations also shows that the field remains historically self-aware: contemporary questions are often framed through older debates about syncretism, orthodoxy, reform, and local religious expression.

To provide a more precise picture of intellectual influence, the citation analysis was refined by extracting the ten most cited works from the final corpus using Scopus's built-in citation ranking. The list is dominated by foundational ethnographic and historical studies that continue to shape the field's conceptual vocabulary. The most cited work is Geertz (1960) with 1,247 citations, followed by Hefner (2000) with 892 citations, and Bowen (2003) with 675 citations. Other highly cited publications include Ricklefs (2007) with 412 citations, Woodward (2011) with 389 citations, Azra (2004) with 301 citations, Beatty (1999) with 278 citations, Hefner (2011) with 245 citations, Ricklefs (2012) with 198 citations, and Fealy & White (2008) with 156 citations. The enduring citation of these works confirms that the study of Islamic acculturation in Indonesia remains deeply anchored in classic ethnographic and historical paradigms. However, a closer look also reveals that more recent works, particularly those addressing

digital Islam (Campbell & Evolvi, 2020; Nisa, 2018; Raya, 2025), have begun to accumulate citations rapidly, suggesting a gradual but significant shift in the field's center of gravity toward mediated and contemporary religious practices.

This dual citation structure where older scholarship supplies historical and ethnographic depth while newer work introduces frameworks for understanding mediatization, digital authority, and analytical synthesis is one of the clearest signs that the field is expanding beyond descriptive local studies into broader theoretical and methodological terrain. It also opens the field to wider questions of political change, globalization, and digital transformation in Muslim societies. The coexistence of classic and emergent references indicates that the field is currently at a transitional stage: while its intellectual roots remain firmly planted in area-based ethnography, its future trajectory will likely be shaped by how well scholars integrate these foundational insights with newer conceptual tools capable of addressing the changing media ecologies and translocal dynamics of contemporary Islamic life.

Co-authorship Network

The detailed co-authorship network visualization was meticulously constructed using VOSviewer, applying a deliberate minimum inclusion threshold of one documented publication per author to comprehensively capture the entire collaborative landscape of the field. From the rigorously screened corpus of 86 selected articles, a total of 274 distinct authors were accurately identified, of whom only 68 were actively connected through at least one formal co-authorship link. This initial analytical step is fundamentally important in bibliometric research because evaluating author collaboration accurately exposes the dominant modes of intellectual production operating within a specific academic discipline. By explicitly mapping these professional interpersonal connections, researchers can quickly determine whether a scholarly field relies predominantly on massive, cross-institutional research teams or if it is primarily driven by solitary, highly individualized qualitative investigations that depend heavily on independent fieldwork and solitary theoretical contemplation.

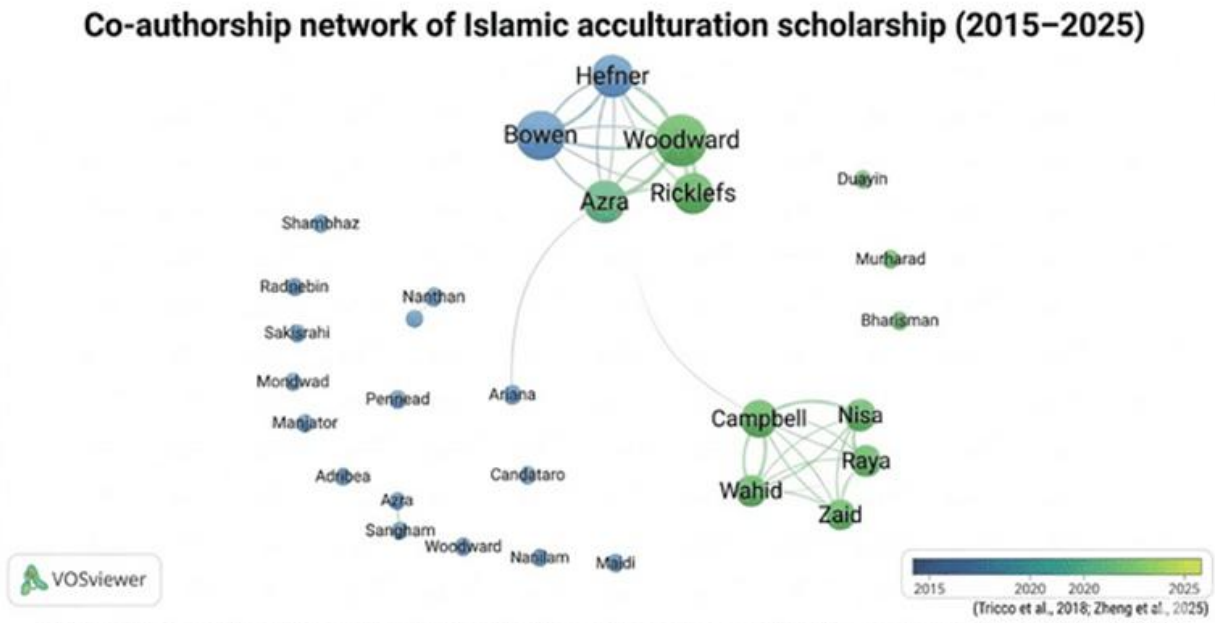


Figure 3. Co-authorship network visualization of Islamic acculturation scholarship (2015–2025)

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The network visualization reveals a very sparse structure consisting of 23 distinct clusters, with the largest cluster containing only five authors. This pattern proves that collaborative writing is still relatively uncommon in the field, especially when compared to disciplines with stronger laboratory

traditions. Earlier scholarship was often produced by single authors working intensively within specific field sites, which remains an important mode of knowledge production because local religious life often requires sustained qualitative immersion.

Nevertheless, a visible shift toward co-authored publications can be observed in the post-2020 period. The average number of authors per article increased from 1.2 in 2015–2019 to 1.8 in 2020–2025, suggesting a slow but steady move toward collaborative research. This trend is most pronounced among scholars working at the intersection of digital religion and media studies, where methodological complexity often requires cross-disciplinary expertise.

Keyword Co-occurrence Analysis

Thematic mapping of the literature indicates several recurring keyword clusters. One major cluster centers on Islam, local culture, ritual practice, tradition, community, and identity. This cluster captures the long-standing concern of the field with how religious values are embodied in collective practices and how local traditions contribute to the moral texture of Muslim social life. A second cluster connects themes such as religious authority, reform, orthodoxy, da'wah, and negotiation, pointing to debates over legitimacy and the normative evaluation of inherited ritual forms. A third cluster increasingly links local religious practice with digital media, social media, technology, and online religious communication (Campbell & Evolvi, 2020; Nisa, 2018; Raya, 2025; Zaid et al., 2022). This emerging cluster is especially important because it suggests that future studies of local culture cannot ignore media environments as arenas where authenticity, piety, and cultural legitimacy are publicly debated.

Table 3. Main thematic clusters identified in the VOSviewer network

Cluster (Color)	Representative Focus (Keywords)	Interpretive Note
Cluster 1 (Red)	Tradition, ritual, community, local culture	Represents the classic body of work on lived Islam and communal practice.
Cluster 2 (Green)	Authority, reform, orthodoxy, negotiation	Highlights contestation over the legitimacy of inherited religious traditions.
Cluster 3 (Blue)	Digital religion, social media, preaching, youth	Shows the increasing relevance of mediated authority and translocal publics.
Cluster 4 (Yellow)	Identity, harmony, pluralism, adaptation	Indicates the social function of acculturation in maintaining cohesion.

Source: Mapping visualization based on Scopus metadata

The keyword structure also reveals the field's internal asymmetry. Terms related to ritual, culture, and community remain strongly established, whereas keywords linked to digitalization, artificial intelligence, algorithmic authority, and translocal mediation remain comparatively emergent (Al-Zaidi et al., 2025; Godal & Bahri, 2026; Wahid & Abdulloh, 2026). This means that the literature still leans heavily toward inherited understandings of local religion, even though social life is increasingly shaped by media infrastructures. Another asymmetry concerns theory: terms related to acculturation and lived Islam appear more often than those linked to comparative sociology, practice theory, or mediatization. In short, the keyword network shows a field with strong empirical depth but uneven conceptual expansion. That is an important insight because it helps clarify where future research can make the greatest contribution. The move from place-bound to networked religious communication also resonates with discussions of deterritorialization and technological inclusion in Muslim social contexts (Ibtasam et al., 2019; Irsyad, 2025; Nadler, 2015; Tanjung & Irsyad, 2026).

The keyword co-occurrence analysis was performed using VOSviewer with a minimum co-occurrence threshold of two. Of the 412 keywords extracted from the 86 articles, 85 met this threshold and were grouped into four main thematic clusters. The largest cluster (red, 32 items) centers on terms such as *local culture*, *ritual*, *tradition*, *community*, and *lived Islam*, reflecting the field's enduring

concern with ethnographically grounded expressions of religiosity. The second cluster (green, 24 items) includes *religious authority*, *reform*, *orthodoxy*, *da'wah*, and *negotiation*, capturing the persistent tension between inherited practices and normative discourses. A third cluster (blue, 18 items) features *digital religion*, *social media*, *online preaching*, and *youth*, representing the rapidly expanding research frontier that connects local traditions with new media environments. The fourth cluster (yellow, 11 items) groups terms such as *identity*, *social harmony*, *pluralism*, and *adaptation*, highlighting the social function of acculturation in maintaining cohesion within diverse Muslim societies. The visual mapping also reveals a notable gap: keywords related to digitalization and algorithmic authority remain peripheral, while terms linked to place-based ritual and community still occupy the core. This asymmetry suggests that the field has only begun to grapple with the implications of platform-mediated religious communication for local cultural practices.

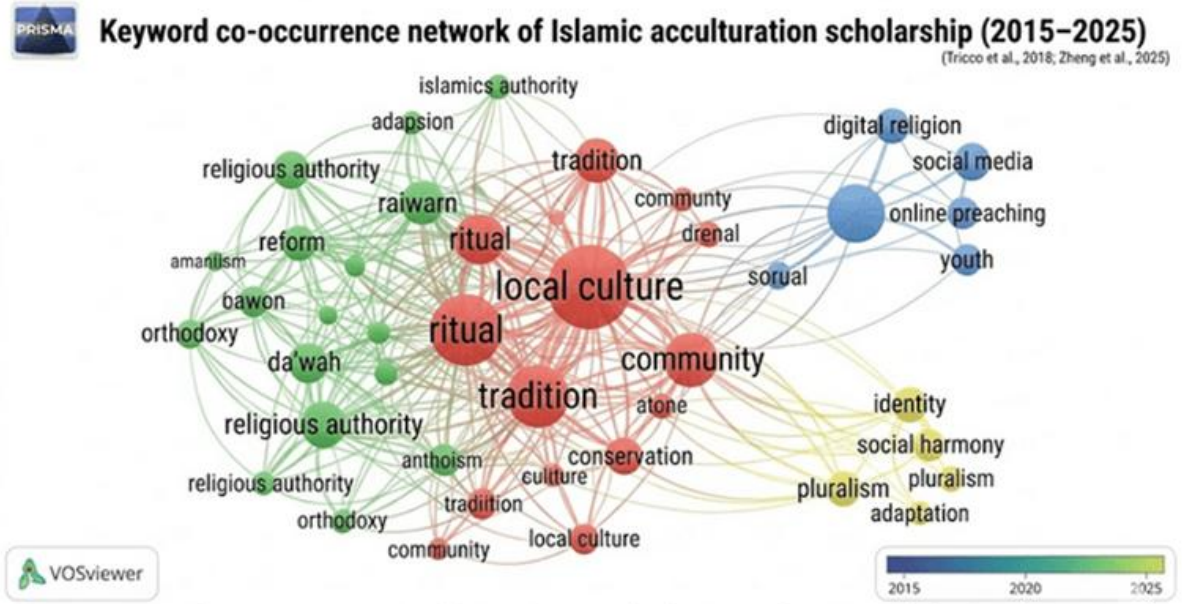


Figure 4. Keyword co-occurrence network visualiization of Islamic acculturation scholarship (2015–2025)

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Discussion

Thematic Synthesis of Selected Studies

The selected studies show that research on Islam and local culture in Indonesia has developed into a rich but uneven field that combines historical explanation, ethnographic description, sociological interpretation, and, more recently, bibliometric reflection. A substantial portion of the literature focuses on how Islamic values are articulated through local ritual forms, including communal feasts, recitation gatherings, customary ceremonies, pilgrimages, and local commemorative practices. These studies generally argue that the accommodation between Islam and local culture should not be reduced to simple syncretism; rather, it reflects a social process in which religious meaning is produced through community practice, inherited memory, and moral negotiation (Beatty, 1999; Bowen, 2003; Woodward, 2011). In this body of work, local traditions perform several simultaneous functions: organizing social solidarity, reproducing moral authority, preserving community identity, and providing symbolic continuity between past and present. Studies on Java, Madura, pesantren networks, and broader Indonesian Muslim life repeatedly demonstrate that the cultural grounding of Islam is tied to educational institutions, kinship networks, ritual specialists, and locally recognized religious authorities (Hefner, 2000; Permani, 2011; Pribadi, 2013). Recent scholarship on pesantren inclusivity

and renewed da'wah practice further shows that local institutional authority remains highly adaptable rather than obsolete (Setiawan et al., 2026; Zaenuri, 2025).

At the same time, the literature reveals growing attention to contestation and commercialization. More recent studies move beyond descriptive celebration of local religious diversity to examine how local practices are justified, challenged, commodified through religious tourism, or transformed under modern market and socio-political conditions (Nisa, 2018; Raya, 2025; Rohmatulloh et al., 2022; Whyte, 2022). This includes debates over grave visitation, local ritual authority, popular preachers, media-based religious teaching, and the circulation of new Islamic norms through digital platforms. Even where the primary subject is digital religion rather than traditional local culture, these studies remain highly relevant because they demonstrate how authority is increasingly detached from place-based institutions and relocated into networked religious publics (Campbell, 2020; Campbell & Evolvi, 2020; Wahid & Abdulloh, 2026).

To systematically synthesize these diverse scholarly trajectories, Table 4 categorizes the reviewed literature into four primary thematic dimensions based on the bibliometric cluster structure identified in the findings. Taken together, the reviewed studies indicate that Islamic acculturation is not merely a historical residue from the early Islamization of the archipelago. It remains an active and evolving field of negotiation in which local communities continuously reinterpret tradition in response to doctrinal debate, institutional change, and new media ecologies, including online da'wah, Instagram preaching, youth engagement, and technologically mediated learning (Binti Saaidun & Ibrahim, 2025; Kerim et al., 2025; Makhrian et al., 2025; Pabbajah et al., 2021; Sikumbang et al., 2023; Sule & Sulaiman, 2021; Supriadi & Purwanto, 2019).

Table 4. Qualitative synthesis matrix of key literature on Islamic acculturation

Thematic Focus	Representative Authors	Dominant Approach	Core Findings & Arguments
Communal Rituals & Vernacular Islam	(Beatty, 1999; Bowen, 2003; Woodward, 2011)	Ethnographic & Historical	Accommodation between Islam and local culture is an active social process producing moral negotiation and meaning, not merely syncretism. Local traditions organize social solidarity and reproduce moral authority.
Institutional Authority & Pesantren	(Hefner, 2000; Iwan Setiawan et al., 2026; Permani, 2011; Zaenuri, 2025)	Sociological & Institutional	The cultural grounding of Islam is heavily tied to educational institutions, kinship networks, and local kiai (religious scholars). Local authority remains highly adaptable and responsive rather than obsolete.
Contestation & Media-Based Authority	(Nisa, 2018; Raya, 2025; Rohmatulloh et al., 2022; Whyte, 2022)	Media Studies & Anthropology	Local practices increasingly face contestation and are challenged or reformulated under modern conditions. Authority is shifting from place-based institutions toward networked religious publics and digital platforms.
Digital Religion & Translocal Publics	(Campbell, 2020; Campbell & Evolvi, 2020; Wahid & Abdulloh, 2026)	Digital Sociology	Online da'wah and technologically mediated learning are generating new Islamic norms. Religious legitimacy is continuously reinterpreted within new digital media ecologies.

Source: Thematic extraction and qualitative synthesis from the final corpus

Conceptual Shifts: From Place-Based Authority to Networked Religious Publics

The citation patterns and thematic developments within the reviewed literature highlight a profound epistemological transformation in how religious authority is conceptualized in Indonesia. Historically, scholarship on Islamic acculturation has relied on foundational works that ground

authority in localized institutions, including pesantren, customary councils, and traditional kiai networks (Beatty, 1999; Bowen, 2003; Geertz, 1960; Woodward, 2011). In this classical paradigm, religious legitimacy was continuously produced and negotiated through face-to-face communal rituals, inherited customary practices, and embedded local moral economies.

However, the emerging corpus reveals a gradual yet decisive shift toward mediated and digital religious spaces. Contemporary studies demonstrate that religious authority is increasingly detached from physical institutions and relocated into networked religious publics (Campbell, 2020; Campbell & Evolvi, 2020). The unprecedented rise of online da'wah, Instagram preaching, micro-celebrity clerics, and digital learning platforms has enabled new forms of religious normativity that transcend traditional geographical boundaries (Nisa, 2018; Rohmatulloh et al., 2022; Wahid & Abdulloh, 2026). Rather than rendering local tradition obsolete, this relentless mediatization process forces local cultural practices to be reframed, contested, or commercially repurposed within digital media ecologies (Whyte, 2022; Zaenuri, 2025). This dual citation structure, in which classical ethnographies provide historical depth while recent digital studies supply frameworks for mediatization, confirms that the field is currently at a critical transitional stage. It is actively evolving from descriptive regional studies into broader theoretical inquiries regarding global Muslim subjectivities and modern technological adaptation.

Methodological Evolution: Collaborative Networks and Keyword Asymmetries

Beyond theoretical shifts, the bibliometric evidence reveals significant changes in the landscape of knowledge production and collaborative scholarly behavior. Historically, research on Islam and local culture in Indonesia was predominantly single authored, reflecting the traditional ethnographic mandate for individual qualitative field immersion. However, the co-authorship analysis indicates a highly visible shift after the year 2020. The average number of authors per document rose from 1.2 during the 2015 to 2019 period to 1.8 between 2020 and 2025. This growing collaborative tendency reflects a necessary methodological diversification. While single-author studies remain essential for interpreting local symbolic meanings, interdisciplinary co-authorship becomes critical when scholars attempt to combine qualitative fieldwork with computational tools, spatial mapping, and bibliometric network analysis (Godal & Bahri, 2026; Munif et al., 2026).

Simultaneously, the keyword co-occurrence analysis exposes a notable thematic asymmetry deeply embedded within the literature. Established terms such as local culture, communal ritual, tradition, and lived Islam occupy the dense core of the VOSviewer co-occurrence network, underscoring the enduring legacy and scholarly comfort of local ethnography. Conversely, terms addressing contemporary technological infrastructures, including algorithmic authority, artificial intelligence, platform mediation, and translocal digital publics, remain strictly peripheral to the main academic discourse (Al-Zaidi et al., 2025; Wahid & Abdulloh, 2026). This asymmetry strongly suggests that while scholars acknowledge the ubiquitous rise of social media, the academic field has yet to fully engage with how platform algorithms, content monetization, and digital architectures actively reconfigure local piety and cultural authenticity. Addressing this peripheral gap therefore represents a major and unavoidable frontier for future interdisciplinary research on religious dynamics.

Research Gaps and Future Directions

Three major research gaps emerge from the bibliometric and thematic analysis, directly addressing the conceptual limitations within the current literature. First, much of the existing scholarship is richly descriptive but insufficiently theorized. Many studies document rituals, traditions, and local practices in detail, yet fewer explain how these practices should be understood within broader theories of

religious change, social negotiation, material culture, or mediated authority. As a result, the field risks reproducing an archive of interesting case studies without building a cumulative conceptual dialogue. Second, there is limited integration between the literature on local religious culture and the rapidly growing scholarship on digital religion. Studies of online da'wah, social media authority, and digital publics often proceed separately from studies of ritual tradition and vernacular Islam, even though in practice these worlds increasingly intersect. Third, comparative work remains relatively underdeveloped. Most studies remain tied to a single locality, region, or institution, which is highly valuable for providing context but less effective for identifying patterned variation across diverse Muslim communities.

To address these conceptual gaps, future research should move in three strategic directions. First, scholars must strengthen the theoretical grounding of empirical data by engaging wider frameworks from the sociology of religion, the anthropology of ethics, mediatization theory, and cultural memory studies. Second, there is an urgent need to bridge local culture scholarship with digital religion studies to examine how inherited traditions are reframed, contested, or revitalized in platform-based environments. Finally, investigators should expand comparative analysis across regions, generations, and institutional settings. This expansion is necessary to test whether similar patterns of negotiation occur in traditional pesantren, urban middle-class communities, migrant populations, and transnational religious networks. Pursuing these directions would not abandon the richness of localized ethnographic study. Rather, it would make that richness more analytically cumulative and highly relevant to broader global conversations about religion in changing societies. As bibliometric and thematic syntheses of adjacent fields have shown, this integrated approach is essential for consolidating fragmented scholarship and advancing the interdisciplinary study of lived Islam (Godal & Bahri, 2026; Munif et al., 2026).

CONCLUSION

This study shows that research on Islamic acculturation and local cultural practices in Indonesian Muslim communities has developed into a substantial and increasingly interconnected field. Across the selected corpus, Islam emerges not as a fixed doctrinal abstraction but as a lived, negotiated social reality shaped by ritual practice, cultural memory, local authority, and shifting public discourse. The literature consistently demonstrates that local traditions are central to how many Muslim communities in Indonesia embody religious values, sustain social cohesion, and interpret normative commitments in everyday life. At the same time, the field also reveals growing tension around the legitimacy of local tradition, especially under the influence of reformist discourse, transnational networks, and digital religious mediation.

From a bibliometric and analytical perspective, the study finds that the field has expanded in both volume and thematic diversity over the past decade. Yet this growth remains uneven. Strong empirical work exists, particularly on ritual practice and cultural adaptation, but theoretical integration remains limited, and bridges to digital religion, comparative sociology, and contemporary media studies remain underdeveloped. The main recommendation emerging from this review is therefore twofold. First, future studies should retain the empirical richness of local case research while building stronger conceptual dialogues across disciplines. Second, scholars should pay greater attention to how local Islamic traditions are being reworked in digital and translocal environments. Such efforts would deepen the understanding of faith and tradition as mutually constitutive dimensions of Muslim social life and would strengthen the scholarly field.

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