

## WHERE IS ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL RESEARCH HEADING? A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS OF TRENDS IN 2014–2024

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### **Abstract**

*This study employs a bibliometric approach to analyze scientific research trends on Islamic boarding schools (pondok pesantren). Data were collected from Google Scholar using the Publish or Perish software, with the keyword “pondok pesantren” and its variations. The analyzed publication period spans from 2014 to 2024. The inclusion criteria cover relevant scholarly publications written in English and containing complete metadata, while non-scholarly, irrelevant, or incomplete publications were excluded from the analysis. The bibliometric search was conducted using Publish or Perish to extract publication metadata from the Google Scholar database, based on specified keywords and timeframes. The collected data were then analyzed with VOSviewer to visualize bibliometric relationships such as co-authorship, co-citation, and keyword analysis. The findings indicate that the dominant themes in pondok pesantren research include character education as the foundation of moral development for students (santri), adaptive pesantren management in response to contemporary challenges, digitalization in learning and administration, and gender issues concerning the roles and participation of women within pesantren environments.*

**Keywords:** *Islamic Boarding School; Indonesia; Bibliometric Analysis*

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## **A. Introduction**

The discussion of topics related to *pondok pesantren* from 2014 to 2024 shows a growing academic interest, with a primary focus on strengthening character education, innovations in institutional management, the integration of digital technology in learning, and social issues such as gender equality and the economic empowerment of students (*santri*). These studies reflect the dynamic role of *pesantren* in responding to modern challenges while maintaining their traditional values. Islamic boarding schools (*pondok pesantren*) are Islamic educational institutions that play a vital role in nurturing morally upright, knowledgeable, and self-reliant generations. Deeply rooted in Indonesian society, *pesantren* serve not only as centers of religious education but also as agents of social change and the preservation of local wisdom (Junaidi et al., 2024). As organizations, *pesantren* possess distinctive cultures and traditions unique to each institution (Malihah, et. al, 2022). In the context of national development and the challenges of globalization, *pesantren* have begun to undergo significant transformations in management practices, curriculum design, and social engagement (Latif & Hafid, 2021). As a result, *pesantren* have attracted the attention of researchers from diverse disciplines, including education, management, sociology, and economics (Machali et al., 2023).

With changing times, *pesantren* are no longer viewed as merely traditional institutions but as adaptive Islamic education systems responsive to social dynamics and technological advancements (Wardiana et al., 2024). Various innovations have been introduced, such as curriculum digitalization, enhancement of students' entrepreneurial skills, and the integration of religious moderation into teaching (Samad et al., 2023). These developments make *pesantren* a rich and multidimensional subject of study. Research on *pesantren* now extends beyond normative and historical aspects to include managerial studies, leadership, economic empowerment, and their role in sustainable development (Ridwan et al., 2022).

Although *pondok pesantren* have continued to develop in terms of institutional practices and their contributions to society, these advancements have yet to be fully documented through comprehensive and sustained academic research (Syarif, 2020). Numerous innovations are occurring on the ground—such as strengthening the role of *pesantren* in character education, promoting student entrepreneurship, and digitalizing *pesantren* management—but these have not been accompanied by systematic research nor adequately captured in the academic literature (Arif et al., 2024). As a result, a gap remains between actual *pesantren* practices and scholarly mapping that reflects their current dynamics.

Scientific studies on *pesantren* still face several challenges, including limited databases, a concentration on certain dominant themes, and a lack of quantitative approaches or systematic literature mapping. Few studies have examined the evolution of *pesantren*-related research from a meta-analytical perspective such as bibliometrics. Yet bibliometric mapping is essential for understanding the patterns, directions, and gaps in research over a given period. Therefore, a comprehensive bibliometric review is needed to address a key question: What has been the direction of research on *pondok pesantren* over the past decade?

Currently, there is no bibliometric analysis specifically focused on mapping the development of research on *pondok pesantren* over an extended period. However, a bibliometric approach holds significant value in identifying dominant research themes, temporal trends, keyword co-occurrences, and areas that remain underexplored. This type of analysis is essential not only for scholars by helping to avoid topic redundancy and increase the relevance of future research but also for policymakers and *pesantren*.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the trends, thematic landscape, and evolution of research on *pondok pesantren* from 2014 to 2024 using a bibliometric approach. The study seeks to contribute original insights by mapping clusters of both dominant and underrepresented keywords, visualizing shifts in research focus over time, and offering recommendations for future research directions based on identified gaps in the literature. As such, the findings of this research are expected to serve as an academic reference for scholars, educators, *pesantren* administrators, and policymakers who are committed to the evidence-based and future-oriented development of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. There are two historical approaches that can be applied in the governance of Islamic education. The first involves fully integrating Islamic educational institutions into the national education system, with regulation and funding provided by the government. The second approach seeks to standardize Islamic education in accordance with national standards while preserving the autonomy of management under Muslim organizations and communities (Azra, 2018). The application of appropriate managerial strategies can significantly enhance the competitiveness of *pondok pesantren* in responding to social change (Da'i, et al., 2023). *Pesantren* that establish responsive and flexible management systems tend to excel in maintaining student enrollment and educational quality (Rodliyah, 2016). At the same time, the organizational culture of *pesantren* grounded in traditional and Islamic values plays a crucial role in shaping students' character (Rohman & Suyatno, 2018). A strong organizational culture is often associated with institutional success in achieving educational objectives, particularly in character development (Rosidi, 2018). The Islamic and tradition-rich atmosphere of *pesantren* provides a solid foundation for cultivating a conducive organizational culture that supports character education (Fauzi, 2012).

## **B. Method**

This study employs a bibliometric approach to analyze scientific publications on *pondok pesantren* during the period 2014–2024. Data were collected from the Google Scholar database using the Publish or Perish application. The keywords used in the search included: "*pondok pesantren*," "*pesantren management*," "*Islamic education*," and "*Islamic educational institutions*." The search process was limited to publications between 2014 and 2024. A total of 200 articles were initially retrieved, which were then screened and reduced to 177 publications based on the following inclusion criteria: (1) the article is relevant to the topic of *pondok pesantren*, (2) written in English, and (3) categorized as a journal article or conference proceeding. The exclusion criteria included: (1) duplicate articles, (2) lack of full-text availability, and (3) absence of substantive information about *pondok pesantren*. Screening was carried out manually by reading titles and abstracts, as well as using duplication detection features in reference management software. The selected data were

then analyzed using VOSviewer to identify trends, dominant keywords, and author collaborations.

Data analysis was conducted using VOSviewer, a bibliometric visualization software that facilitates keyword network mapping (*co-occurrence*), temporal analysis (*overlay visualization*), and thematic density mapping (*density visualization*). This study focuses on three main types of visual outputs: (1) Network visualization, which reveals the relationships and groupings of frequently co-occurring keywords; (2) Overlay visualization, which highlights the temporal progression of research topics; and (3) Density visualization, which identifies areas of research that are well-developed as well as those that remain underexplored (Kurniadi et al., 2023).

This study employs a bibliometric approach to analyze the trends, developments, and research directions related to *pondok pesantren* in Indonesia over the period 2014–2024. The bibliometric method was selected due to its ability to provide a comprehensive overview of the knowledge structure, dominant themes, conceptual relationships, and future research opportunities based on statistically measurable data from scientific publications (Donthu et al., 2021). The data for this research were obtained from Google Scholar, chosen for its broad coverage of scholarly works, including national journal articles, conference proceedings, and other relevant academic literature. The keywords used in the data search process included: "*pondok pesantren*", "*pesantren management*", "*Islamic education*", and "*Islamic educational institutions*."

Data analysis was conducted using VOSviewer, a bibliometric visualization software that facilitates keyword network mapping (*co-occurrence*), temporal analysis (*overlay visualization*), and thematic density mapping (*density visualization*). This study focuses on three main types of visual outputs: (1) Network visualization, which reveals the relationships and groupings of frequently co-occurring keywords; (2) Overlay visualization, which highlights the temporal progression of research topics; and (3) Density visualization, which identifies areas of research that are well-developed as well as those that remain underexplored (Kurniadi et al., 2023).

## **C. Finding and Discussion**

### **1. Finding**

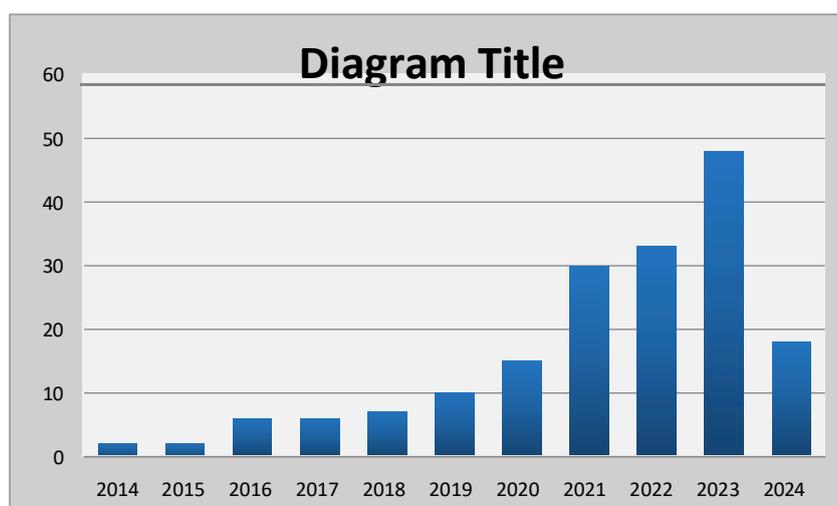
A total of 177 documents that met the inclusion criteria were collected as the primary data for bibliometric analysis. These data were analyzed to identify dominant themes based on clusters of frequently co-occurring keywords, as well as to track research trends over time. Table 1 presents the number of publications per year; however, to better illustrate thematic dynamics, it should be complemented with the distribution of dominant themes across each period. The decline in the number of publications in 2024 requires further explanation, as it may be due to the incomplete data collection period. Therefore, it is necessary to compare this with broader publication trends in the field of Islamic education to ensure the validity of the findings. This analysis provides a more focused and critical overview of research developments on *pondok pesantren*, while also opening opportunities for the exploration of underrepresented topics.

A total of 177 documents that met the predefined inclusion criteria were carefully

collected and served as the primary data set for the bibliometric analysis. These documents formed the foundation for a comprehensive examination of the research landscape related to pondok pesantren. The data were systematically processed to uncover clusters of frequently co-occurring keywords, which helped to identify the main thematic areas within the literature. Additionally, the analysis tracked trends over time, highlighting shifts in research focus from year to year. This temporal insight allowed for the detection of emerging topics and novel themes that are gaining attention in the field. By identifying these patterns, the study provides valuable guidance for future academic inquiries, pointing to areas where further research could expand understanding and contribute new knowledge. This approach not only maps the current state of the literature but also anticipates potential developments in the study of pesantren, encouraging scholars to explore underrepresented topics and build on existing foundations.

**Table 1. Research on Pondok Pesantren from 2014 to 2024**

Year of Publication	Number of Studies	Percentage
2014	2	1%
2015	2	1%
2016	6	3%
2017	6	3%
2018	7	4%
2019	10	6%
2020	15	8%
2021	30	17%
2022	33	19%
2023	48	27%
2024	18	10%
Total	177	100%



**Figure 1. Research Growth on Islamic Boarding Schools in Indonesia (2014–2024)**

Based on the table and graph above, a total of 177 publications related to the theme of *Pondok Pesantren* were identified, spanning the years 2014 to 2024. In 2014 and 2015, there

were only 2 publications each year. This number increased slightly in 2016 and 2017, with 6 publications recorded in each of those years. From 2018 onward, research on *Pondok Pesantren* showed steady growth, with a significant increase in publication volume. The highest number of publications occurred in 2023, with a total of 48 studies. However, in 2024, the number of publications declined to 18, possibly due to the time of data collection or ongoing publication processes.

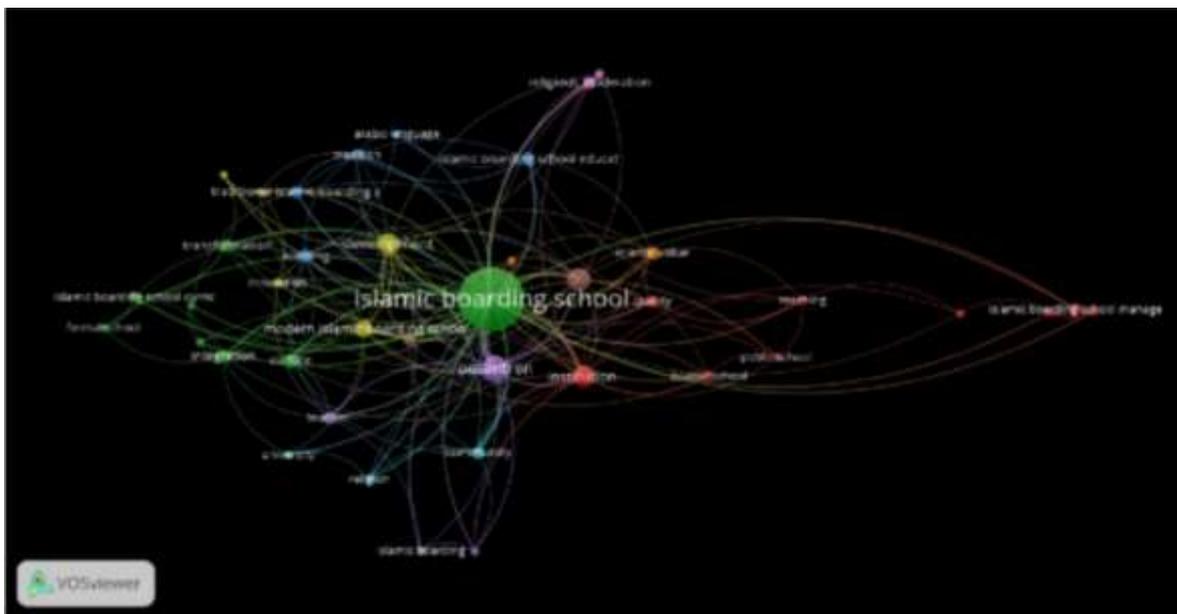


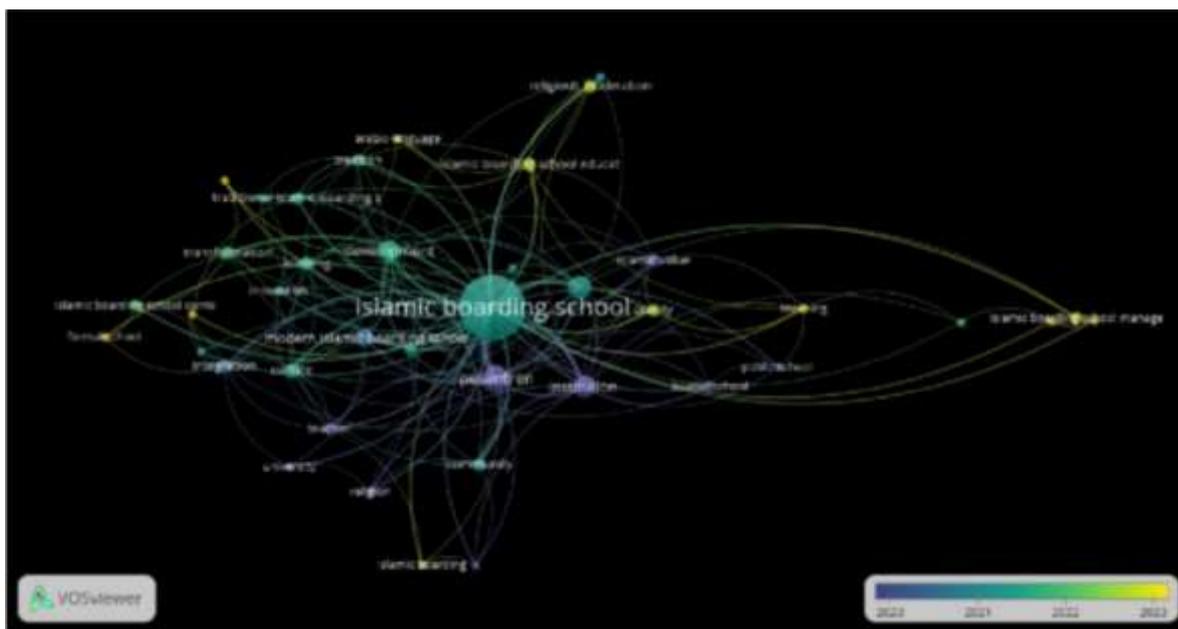
Figure 2. Network Visualization of *Pondok Pesantren* Research

In the network visualization presented above, the relationships among various keywords in *pondok pesantren* research are clearly illustrated. Different colors indicate distinct clusters, each representing a group of keywords that frequently appear together in the academic literature. These clusters provide a thematic map of the research landscape, helping to identify dominant topics, conceptual linkages, and areas of overlap between different studies (Judijanto et al., 2024).

The visualization reveals a total of 9 keyword clusters, connected by 170 links, with 40 keyword items distributed across the network. One of the prominent clusters, shown in red, includes keywords such as *institution*, *Islamic boarding school management*, *Islamic boarding school system*, *madrasah ibtidaiyah*, and *religious character*, reflecting themes related to educational quality, institutional structure, and religious values. Another cluster, shown in green, centers around terms like *culture*, *integration*, *Islamic boarding school curriculum*, and *technology*, suggesting a strong focus on how pesantren are adapting to formal education standards and technological change. The blue cluster includes keywords such as *Arabic language*, *learning*, *tradition*, and *traditional Islamic boarding school*, indicating sustained interest in classical educational practices and language instruction within pesantren. Meanwhile, the yellow cluster highlights themes of *development*, *modernization*, and *Islamic religious education*, pointing to how pesantren have been transforming in response to societal changes. Other clusters reveal additional dimensions of the research. Keywords like *pesantren*, *religious school*, and *teacher* emphasize the foundational identity and human resources of these institutions. Terms such as *community*, *religion*, and *university* show

connections between pesantren and broader societal structures. Smaller clusters include terms like *Islamic values, character education, moral education, and religious moderation*, reflecting recent scholarly interest in the ethical, spiritual, and civic roles pesantren play in contemporary Indonesia.

Altogether, this network visualization offers a rich picture of how research on *pondok pesantren* has evolved over the past decade. It not only identifies the dominant themes that have shaped the field but also highlights underexplored areas that present opportunities for future inquiry.



**Figure 3. Overlay Visualization of Pondok Pesantren Research**

The next stage of analysis presents the data through overlay visualization, which is used to examine research trends or thematic shifts over time by observing differences in color coding based on publication year (Muafi, 2021). In the figure above, the color scale at the bottom ranges from dark blue (2020 and earlier) to bright yellow (2023 and beyond). Keywords marked in bright yellow—representing the most recent years—indicate that concepts such as “Islamic boarding,” “formal school,” “teaching,” “Islamic boarding school management,” “quality,” “Arabic language,” “Islamic boarding school education,” and “religious moderation” continue to be relevant in current studies.

Keywords shaded in green, which represent research conducted around 2021 to 2022, are prominently associated with terms such as “Islamic boarding school,” “tradition,” “traditional Islamic boarding school,” “development,” “transformation,” “learning,” “culture,” and “community.” This concentration suggests an increased focus during this period on the cultural and developmental dimensions of *pondok pesantren*. Meanwhile, keywords appearing in dark blue, indicating publications from 2020 and earlier, tend to revolve around terms like “Islamic value,” “modern Islamic boarding school,” “pesantren,” “institution,” “Islamic school,” “public school,” “integration,” and “teacher.” This pattern shows that earlier research within the analyzed timeframe predominantly addressed institutional, structural, and value-based issues related to *pondok pesantren*. Overall, the overlay visualization

highlights how the focus of pesantren-related research has gradually shifted over time, from foundational and institutional themes to more contemporary concerns involving quality, management, and religious moderation.

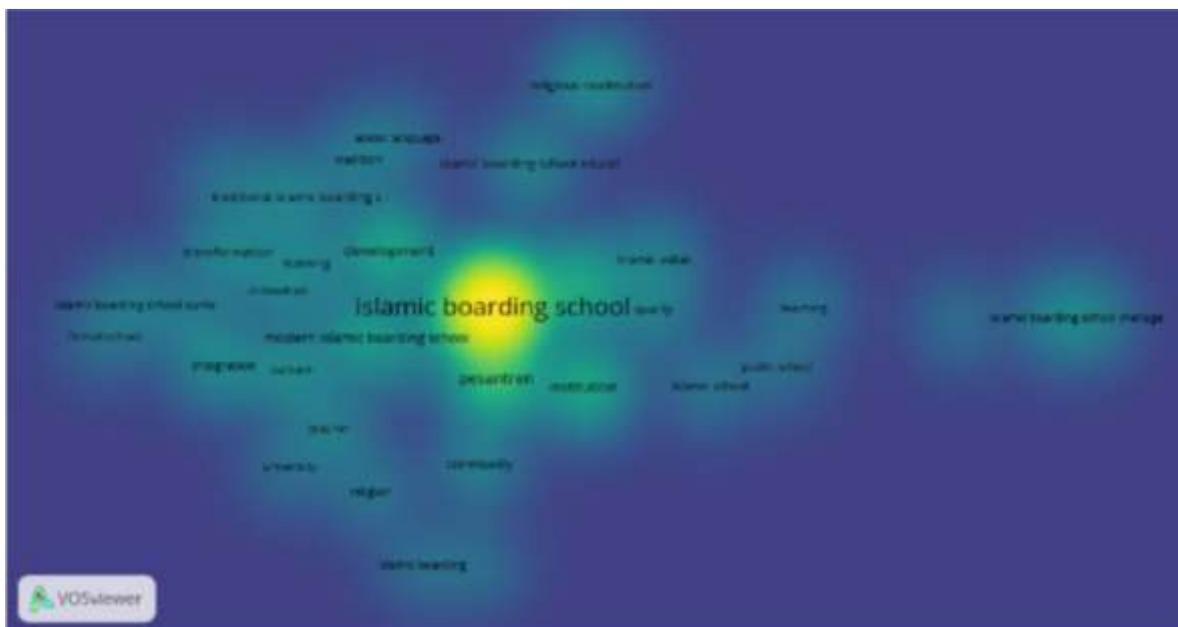


Figure 4. Density Visualization of *Pondok Pesantren* Research

Density Visualization illustrates the concentration of elements within the network (Abrar & Ihza, 2024). This type of visualization uses color brightness to indicate research frequency: the brighter the color on a keyword, the more frequently it has been studied, while a dimmer color indicates that the keyword has received less research attention. In the visualization shown above, the brightest keyword is “Islamic boarding school,” signaling that this topic has been extensively researched with a wide variety of studies related to *pondok pesantren*. In contrast, keywords such as “Islamic boarding school management,” “teaching,” “public school,” “Islamic school,” “religion,” “Islamic boarding,” “university,” and “community” appear with dimmer colors, suggesting that these topics have been less frequently explored. This indicates that research involving these keywords remains limited and less diverse. Consequently, these underexplored areas present valuable opportunities for future studies and could serve as important references or starting points for researchers interested in advancing *pondok pesantren* scholarship.

## 2. Discussion

Based on an analysis of 177 publications on Islamic boarding schools (*pondok pesantren*) during the period 2014–2024, significant fluctuations were observed in research intensity. The number of publications progressively increased from 2017, peaking in 2023 with 48 publications, then experienced a notable decline in 2024, with only 18 publications recorded. This phenomenon indicates that academic interest in pesantren studies has shown inconsistent dynamics. The recent decline in publications may be attributed to a shift in research focus toward new themes within Islamic education or a lack of collaborative research initiatives that support the continuity of pesantren studies. Using network

visualization with VOSviewer, the topics formed nine distinct clusters, each represented by a unique color. A total of 170 links connect 40 keywords distributed across these clusters. The first cluster, colored red, contains nine keywords, while the second cluster, in green, consists of eight keywords. Other clusters contain between two and five keywords, illustrating themes commonly addressed in literature on pesantren management and Islamic education.

Overlay visualization was employed to analyze the development of research trends over time, with a color scale ranging from 2020 (dark blue) to 2023 (bright yellow). Keywords in bright yellow, such as "islamic boarding" and "religious moderation," indicate topics that remain relevant in recent studies. Keywords in green, including "islamic boarding school" and "community," show concentrated research activity between 2021 and 2022, focusing on interrelated terms connected to pesantren. Meanwhile, dark blue keywords, dating back to 2020 and earlier, tend to center around issues like "islamic value" and "integration," suggesting that early research emphasized these aspects in relation to pesantren.

Density visualization illustrates the concentration of elements within the network. In this visualization, brighter colors denote higher research frequency, whereas dimmer colors suggest less explored topics. The brightest keyword, "islamic boarding school," signifies extensive research on pesantren issues. Conversely, keywords such as "islamic boarding school management," "teaching," and "public school" appear dimmer, indicating these areas have been less diversified in research. This gap presents opportunities for future studies to explore these underrepresented topics related to pesantren.

This study reinforces several findings from previous research but also reveals systematic gaps in academic documentation. For example, Dhofier 2011 and Ziemek 1986 long emphasized the importance of traditional pesantren structures and the social role of kyai (religious leaders). Similarly, Asy'ari 1996 and Madjid 1997 highlighted the integration of Islamic values and educational orientation crises within pesantren. However, these studies remained largely descriptive and did not reveal longitudinal trends. Between 2000 and 2010, Arief 2004 and Qomar 2005 introduced managerial and modernization perspectives on pesantren, stressing curriculum reform, community involvement, and institutional democratization, although their research mainly relied on local case studies or qualitative approaches. Systematic efforts to map research landscapes nationally using bibliometric methods have yet to emerge.

Fahrurrozi, (2022) emphasized pesantren's role in strengthening character education based on Islamic values but did not examine the longitudinal development of this theme in the literature. Similarly, studies by Purwanto et al., (2020) and Anggung et al., (2020) explored pesantren transformation in the digital era but focused on local case studies without identifying national thematic trends. Laksana, (2021) examined pesantren's role in social resilience and character education within multicultural societies, reflecting pesantren's growing appeal as an interdisciplinary subject. However, these studies did not present data on research trends over time or keyword mapping within academic publications. Nurkhin et al., (2024) linked pesantren to sustainable development goals (SDGs) but lacked bibliometric analysis on the evolution of these issues in the literature.

Other studies report that traditional pesantren can cultivate entrepreneurial spirit based on values through daily religious practices, instilling inner sincerity, reliance on God (*tawakal*), leadership, and social responsibility, even without formal curricula (Sabarudin et al., 2024). Despite challenges like the absence of formal curricula, pesantren have potential to integrate ethical economic empowerment into religious education, highlighting the role of local educational traditions in spiritual and socio-economic transformation (Abubakar et al., 2025). This aligns with research showing that hidden curricula in pesantren foster moderate character in students through habituation to values such as balance, tolerance, openness, and peaceful coexistence in diversity (Salim et al., 2024).

Muiz et al., (2024) found that integrating religious education with general education and implementing madrasah and multicultural education systems have established pesantren as leading Islamic educational institutions. Furthermore, Teguh Ciptadi & Khozin, (2025) emphasized the importance of adaptation and transformation to align Islamic education with evolving global demands. Maghfiroh et al., (2024) discussed the green pesantren movement addressing environmental and ecological issues in Indonesia. Through educational programs, community engagement, and advocacy, this initiative connects Islamic teachings with current environmental challenges, highlighting the multifaceted role of kyai and students in driving meaningful change for a sustainable future (Salim et al., 2021). Pesantren also adapt to contemporary needs and technology to create safe learning environments via child-friendly pesantren programs, where kyai, ustadz, and students collaborate to optimize curriculum, management, and infrastructure, although approaches vary depending on each pesantren's characteristics (Muafiah et al., 2022). However, research scope related to pesantren remains limited to certain keywords and has yet to incorporate overlay and density visualizations crucial for understanding temporal dynamics and research gaps. This indicates a scarcity of comprehensive bibliometric studies mapping research directions and trends of pesantren on a national scale. Consequently, this study occupies a strategic position to fill this gap by providing a bibliometric-based quantitative visual analysis that captures the dynamics of pesantren research over the past decade.

This research identifies not only dominant themes but also underexplored topics, offering structured guidance for future research agendas, such as the development of pesantren management systems, participatory kyai leadership models, and digital transformation within pesantren environments.

## **E. Conclusion**

This study conducts a bibliometric analysis of research developments on *pondok pesantren* over the period 2014 to 2024. A total of 177 publications were analyzed, revealing a significant increase in research output, peaking in 2023. Although various innovations have been implemented in pesantren practices, academic documentation has not yet fully captured the dynamics of these transformations. Through network, overlay, and density visualizations, this study identifies dominant themes as well as underexplored areas, such as pesantren management and character education. The findings provide directions for future research and strategies for pesantren development based on scientific data.

Furthermore, the results of this study can be practically utilized by academics to strengthen thematic research, by education practitioners to innovate curricula, and by policymakers to design regulations that are more contextual and responsive to the needs of pesantren. Through network, overlay, and density visualizations, the study identifies dominant themes as well as underexplored areas such as pesantren management and character education. These findings provide guidance for future research and development strategies based on scientific data, while emphasizing the importance of collaboration among researchers to address existing gaps.

This study conducts a bibliometric analysis of the development of research on Islamic boarding schools (pondok pesantren) from 2014 to 2024. The analysis reveals a significant increase in publications, peaking in 2023. Despite numerous innovations in pesantren practices, academic documentation remains insufficient to fully represent the dynamic changes occurring. Through network, overlay, and density visualizations, the study identifies dominant themes as well as underexplored areas such as pesantren management and character education. These findings provide guidance for future research and development strategies based on scientific data, while emphasizing the importance of collaboration among researchers to address existing gaps.

## **F. Acknowledgment**

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to all parties who have provided support and assistance, enabling the completion and publication of this article. It is hoped that this article will be beneficial to a wide audience

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