

## Research Trends in Project-Based Learning in Inclusive Islamic Education: A Bibliometric Analysis Based on Scopus Data

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### Abstrac

This study aims to map publication trends, author and country productivity, journal distribution, and the conceptual structure of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) research within inclusive Islamic education through a bibliometric analysis of Scopus data covering 2015–2025. Using a quantitative approach with VOSviewer and R-Biblioshiny instruments, the study analyzed 252 articles meeting the inclusion criteria. Results indicate significant publication growth peaking at 82 articles in 2025, with Indonesia ranking second globally with 75 affiliations (11.3%), and 174 unique journals distributing articles consistent with Bradford's Law. Co-word analysis identified seven thematic clusters, with Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and Islamic values as the most underexplored area (3.9%). Only 7 of 252 articles explicitly integrated Project-Based Learning (PjBL), inclusion, and Islamic Religious Education (PAI) simultaneously, confirming a genuine academic white space. This study recommends developing an integrative Project-Based Learning (PjBL), inclusion, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) framework as a national and global research priority agenda.

**Keywords:** Project-Based Learning; Inclusive Islamic Education; Bibliometric Analysis; Scopus; Co-word Analysis

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memetakan tren publikasi, produktivitas penulis dan negara, distribusi jurnal, serta struktur konseptual penelitian Project-Based Learning (PjBL) dalam pendidikan Islam inklusif melalui analisis bibliometrik terhadap data Scopus yang mencakup periode 2015–2025. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif melalui instrumen VOSviewer dan R-Biblioshiny, penelitian ini menganalisis 252 artikel yang memenuhi kriteria inklusi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan pertumbuhan publikasi yang signifikan dengan puncak sebanyak 82 artikel pada tahun 2025, dengan Indonesia menempati peringkat kedua secara global dengan 75 afiliasi (11,3%), serta 174 jurnal unik yang mendistribusikan artikel sesuai dengan Hukum Bradford. Analisis co-word mengidentifikasi tujuh kluster tematik, dengan Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) dan nilai-nilai Islam sebagai area yang paling sedikit dieksplorasi (3,9%). Hanya 7 dari 252 artikel yang secara eksplisit mengintegrasikan Project-Based Learning (PjBL), inklusi, dan Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) secara bersamaan, yang mengonfirmasi adanya kesenjangan akademik yang nyata (academic white space). Penelitian ini merekomendasikan pengembangan kerangka integratif Project-Based Learning (PjBL), inklusi, dan Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) sebagai agenda prioritas penelitian di tingkat nasional dan global.

**Kata kunci:** Project-Based Learning; Pendidikan Islam Inklusif; Analisis Bibliometrik; Scopus; Analisis Co-word.

## INTRODUCTION

Inclusive Islamic education, as a paradigm that integrates the value of “rahmatan lil ‘alamin” into a learning system that accommodates all students, has attracted growing global academic attention. Bibliometric studies indicate consistent growth in Islamic education publications in Scopus since 2000, with themes of inclusivity and technology beginning to dominate current scholarly discourse (Judijanto, 2026). Concurrently, Project-Based Learning (PjBL) has seen an 800% surge in global publications between 2014 and 2023, solidifying its position as the most effective active learning model for building 21st-century competencies (Mota et al., 2025). The relevance of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) to Islamic pedagogical principles, which emphasize contextual learning and character development, makes the intersection of these two fields worthy of systematic and in-depth study (Amarullah et al., 2026).

Although these two research streams are growing rapidly, they are developing in parallel without any integrative studies. Bibliometric analysis of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in vocational education identifies Indonesia as the largest contributor to Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in Scopus (Ahmad et al., 2023), while a bibliometric map of contemporary learning confirms a surge in publications from 2020 to 2024 but does not address the intersection of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) and Islamic inclusivity (Ahmad et al., 2023). Three major gaps have been identified: there is currently no bibliometric study that simultaneously integrates Project -Based Learning (PjBL), Islamic education, and inclusivity simultaneously, inclusivity remains an emergent theme in Islamic education bibliometrics (Elihami et al., 2025), and existing studies are micro-empirical in nature, lacking a comprehensive macro-level map of geographic distribution and global collaboration.

The novelty of this study encompasses three aspects: first, it is the first bibliometric study to integrate Project-Based Learning (PjBL), Islamic education, and inclusivity into a single Scopus-based analysis, it applies the multi-tool VOSviewer approach to map co-authorship and keyword co-occurrence, and the use of R-Biblioshiny for temporal trend analysis that has proven to generate a comprehensive intellectual map (Abdi et al., 2024), as well as data-driven recommendations serving as strategic references for researchers and policymakers. This study aims to map publication trends, geographic distribution, collaboration patterns, thematic clusters, and to identify gaps and opportunities for interdisciplinary research on Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in inclusive Islamic education in Scopus (Kusumawati, 2024).

The problem-solving approach was designed in three stages based on a review of relevant literature. In the first stage, data was selected from Scopus using the PRISMA protocol with the keywords “project-based learning,” “Islamic education,”

and “inclusive education,” based on the finding that Project-Based Learning (PjBL) builds critical and collaborative competencies that are essential in an inclusive context, leading to H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant upward trend in publications on Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in inclusive Islamic education from 2015 to 2024. In the second stage, VOSviewer analysis drew on a Scopus study on blended learning (Mastuang et al., 2025), forming the basis for H<sub>2</sub>: There is a clear thematic cluster reflecting the convergence of Project-Based Learning (PjBL), Islamic values, and inclusive practices. In the third stage, R-Bibliometrix measures scientific growth and Bradford distribution (Ridho & Lismawati, 2026), underpinning H<sub>3</sub>: The identified research gaps represent the priority scientific agenda for the coming decade. These three stages yield prospective contributions to the development of inclusive and equitable Islamic education (Yuliyanti et al., 2024).

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a quantitative bibliometric analysis approach to map the development of scientific publications related to Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in the context of inclusive Islamic education (Wahyudi et al., 2024). This approach was chosen because it provides an objective and comprehensive overview of research trends through a systematic analysis of the scientific literature (Chasanah et al., 2024). The theoretical foundation is based on the co-word analysis framework by Callon et al. (1983), which views keywords as conceptual representations of a discipline’s knowledge structure, thereby enabling the mapping of relationships between concepts, the tracking of paradigm shifts, and the identification of thematic clusters based on data (Lee & Lee, 2025).

The data was sourced from the Scopus database, which was selected for its broad coverage (over 25,000 interdisciplinary journals), consistent indexing, comprehensive bibliometric metadata, and the availability of an Application Programming Interface (API) for large-scale data extraction (Himayatillah & Lismawati, 2025). A Boolean search engine was used to retrieve the required data from the Scopus database spanning the years 2015 to 2025. This timeframe was determined based on Scopus data retrieved after conducting a search using the keywords Project-Based Learning (PjBL), Islamic Religious Education (IRE), and Inclusive Education (Amri et al., 2024). The researcher began the search on October 26, 2025, at 8:51 PM WIB and used R and RStudio, VOSViewer, and Microsoft Excel to analyze the content of the collected documents, citations, and networks.

This study was conducted by applying the following inclusion criteria: (1) articles that discuss Project-Based Learning (PjBL) as the primary variable or research method, and address inclusive education and/or Islamic values/Islamic Religious Education (IRE) (at least one of these) as the research focus, (2) articles published

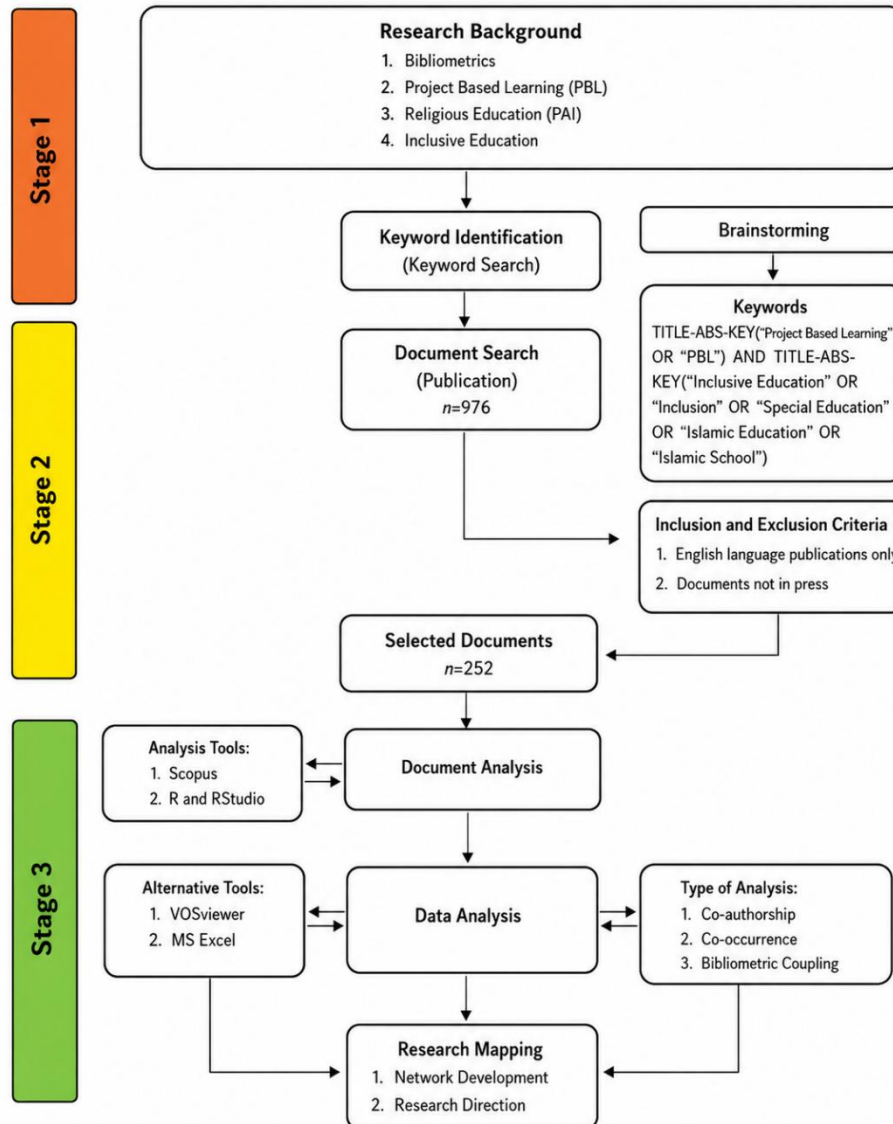
between 2015 and 2025, (3) articles in English, (4) articles in the format of a scientific journal article; other documents such as editorials, book chapters, reviews, and conference papers are excluded, (5) articles accessible on Scopus (Lestari et al., 2024). The exclusion criteria include: (1) articles that do not discuss Project-Based Learning (PjBL) at all, or where Project-Based Learning (PjBL) is only briefly mentioned without in-depth analysis, and have a research context outside of education (Salsabila & Lismawati, 2022), (2) articles that are not full-text, (3) articles not in English, (4) national and international databases other than Scopus, (5) articles published outside the 2015–2025 timeframe (Rodiah & Dani, 2025). Of the 252 initial documents, 151 articles were excluded in the first stage because they did not meet the thematic relevance criteria, resulting in a final dataset of 80 articles ready for analysis.

The researcher's framework is based on several existing studies that have utilized bibliometric analysis to map research themes and topics across various fields, as done by Khumayroh et al. (2025). The following are the steps undertaken by the researcher: First Stage. The researcher will conduct a literature review because it is crucial for them to establish a solid foundation for selecting references relevant to their research field (Robbaniyah et al., 2025). The literature review also aids in identifying the appropriate keywords that represent the overall scope of the research (Saibudin & Lismawati, 2026).

Stage Two. This advanced stage involves the researcher using the Boolean operator TITLE-ABS-KEY("Project-Based Learning" OR 'PBL') AND TITLE-ABS-KEY("Inclusive Education" OR "Inclusion" OR "Special Education" OR "Islamic Education" OR "Islamic School") to search for documents available in Scopus, which yielded a total of 976 documents. This was followed by a filtering process using the Boolean operators LIMIT-TO(LANGUAGE, "English") and LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "ar") to limit the search to English-language documents of the article type, as well as PUBYEAR > 2014 AND PUBYEAR < 2026 to restrict the publication year range to 2015–2025, resulting in a final set of 252 documents ready for processing in the next selection stage.

Stage Three. The researcher analyzed the final results of the identified documents using Scopus Analyzer, R, and RStudio to obtain information on the number of documents per year, the most relevant documents by author, documents by affiliation, documents by country, and documents by source (Abdi et al., 2024). Subsequently, a document network analysis was conducted in the form of visualizations using VOSviewer, and the data was then processed using Microsoft Excel (Khumayroh & Lismawati, 2025).

Figure 1. Stages of the Research Methodology



## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Overview of Bibliometric Data and Publication Characteristics

In the initial stage, publication data was collected from the Scopus database using keywords related to Project-Based Learning, inclusive education, and Islamic education for the period 2015–2025. The search yielded a number of documents, which were then analyzed using the Biblioshiny and VOSviewer software. The analysis was conducted to map the development of publications, the productivity of authors, institutions, countries, journal sources, as well as the conceptual structure of research emerging in this field (Mitha & Omarsaub, 2025).

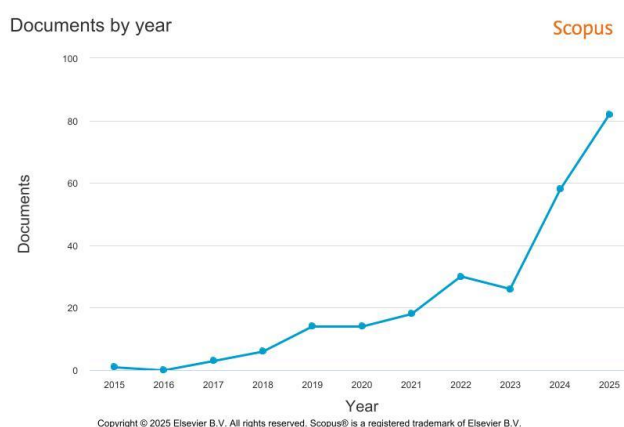
A bibliometric analysis of the Scopus database identified 252 articles that met the inclusion criteria between 2015 and 2025. All articles were peer-reviewed, in

English, in the final published status, and 100% available via open access. Total citations reached 1,560 with a dataset h-index of 18, an average of 6.19 citations per article, and a median of 2.0.

The high proportion of Gold Open Access (94%) reflects strong funding support from various institutions. No duplicates were found in the dataset because Scopus applies automatic deduplication. All articles have complete metadata, such as a DOI, abstract, and valid keywords, thereby meeting the quality standards for further bibliometric analysis (Aryadi et al., 2025).

### Trends in Research Publication Growth

**Figure 2. Analysis of research publications**



The number of research publications related to Project-Based Learning (PjBL), inclusive education, and Islamic Religious Education (PAI) during the 2015–2025 period shows a steadily increasing trend. At the beginning of the study period (2015–2018), the number of publications was still relatively low, ranging from 1 to 6 documents per year. This indicates that studies linking Project-Based Learning (PjBL), inclusive education, and Islamic Religious Education (IRE) have not yet received much attention in the international literature. Entering the 2019–2021 period, there was a more stable increase, with the number of publications reaching 14 documents in 2019 and 2020, and rising to 18 documents in 2021.

This growth reflects the growing interest among researchers in the implementation of project-based learning within the context of inclusive education. During this phase, issues related to active learning, student diversity, and pedagogical innovation began to become the focus of broader research. A more significant increase was observed during the 2022–2025 period. The number of publications increased from 30 documents in 2022, although it experienced a slight decline to 26 documents in 2023. However, the trend rose sharply again in 2024 with 58 documents and peaked in 2025 with 82 documents. This surge indicates that the topics of Project-Based

Learning (PjBL) and inclusive education have become increasingly relevant issues in global educational research.

Overall, the growth pattern of these publications indicates that research on Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in inclusive education, including that related to Islamic Religious Education (IRE), is in the growth stage (Saleekongchai et al., 2024). The increasing number of publications in recent years indicates growing attention toward the development of learning models that are not only student-centered but also capable of accommodating diverse learning needs (Yuliasari, 2023). These findings demonstrate that the integration of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) and inclusive education is a continuously evolving field of research with significant potential for further study, particularly within the context of Islamic education, which remains relatively underrepresented in the international literature (Sikana et al., 2025).

## Global Productivity and Collaboration

### Author and Institutional Productivity

The dataset includes 1,056 unique authors, with an average of 4.24 authors per article. A total of 219 articles (86.9%) were multi-author collaborations. The most productive authors each had only 2 articles, and there were no prolific authors with three or more articles. This condition is characteristic of a field still in the pre-paradigmatic phase: authorship is widely dispersed, and no central figure dominates knowledge production. From Indonesia, Wilujeng, I. of Yogyakarta State University (UNY) and Idawati, I. are active representatives of local researchers. In terms of institutions, Yogyakarta State University (UNY) is the most productive Indonesian institution, supported by the Department of Islamic Education, which appeared five times as the most active academic unit.

**Table 1. Productivity by author and institution**

No.	Year	Title	Citation	Journal
1	2017	Problem-based learning and student interest in STEM careers	144	Frontiers in Education
2	2023	Using Service-Learning to bridge the gap between theory and practice	108	Teaching in HE
3	2020	Energetic Students, Stressed Parents, Nervous Teachers (COVID-19)	71	European J. Spec. Ed.
4	2020	Inclusive school leaders – their role in raising achievement of all students	65	Int. J. Includ. Ed.
5	2022	Citizen Science as an Ecosystem of Engagement: Implications for Learning	49	Frontiers in Educ.

The five most-cited articles are listed in Table 1. The articles by LaForce et al. (2017, 144 citations) and Resch & Schritteser (2023, 108 citations) stand out as the most influential foundational works, reflecting the importance of cross-contextual

empirical evidence in shaping the research agenda for Project-Based Learning (PjBL) and global inclusion.

### Distribution of Publications by Country

The distribution of authors' affiliations spans 71 countries out of a total of 665 affiliations. The United States dominates with 114 affiliations (17.1%), but the most significant finding is Indonesia's ranking as the second-largest contributor globally with 75 affiliations (11.3%), surpassing Spain, the United Kingdom, and Australia—countries known as global hubs for inclusion research.

**Table 2. Productivity by country**

No.	Negara	Afiliasi	%	Karakteristik Riset
1	Amerika Serikat	114	17.1%	Global leader in Project-Based Learning (PjBL) & inclusion
2	Indonesia	75	11.3%	Leading contributor to Islamic Religious Education (PAI), madrasahs, and inclusion
3	Spanyol	64	9.6%	Strongest research on inclusion in Europe
4	Inggris	51	7.7%	Disability studies & inclusion policies
5	Australia	42	6.3%	Indigenous & multicultural inclusion
6	Kanada	21	3.2%	Multicultural inclusive education
7	Jerman	18	2.7%	Special education & inclusion
8	Italia	18	2.7%	Inclusive pedagogy

Indonesia's position has two implications: the Indonesian research community has been actively contributing to the global discourse, and the majority of these contributions are published in English-language international journals, rather than in national journals. The presence of Malaysia (13 affiliations) and the Philippines (10 affiliations) indicates that Southeast Asia is becoming an active region, yet the absence of Pakistan, Egypt, and Turkey from the top 15 suggests that inclusive Islamic Education (PAI) research remains heavily concentrated in Southeast Asia.

### Publication Sources and Core Journals

A total of 174 unique journals published articles in this dataset; however, the distribution is highly uneven, with 138 journals (79.3%) appearing only once, in accordance with Bradford's Law. Only 6 journals have five or more articles, and none of them are journals specifically focused on Project-Based Learning (PjBL), Inclusive Education, or Islamic Religious Education (IRE).

The dominance of multidisciplinary journals (Education Sciences, Sustainability, Frontiers in Education) indicates that this field has not yet found a specific journal home. Most significant is the appearance of the Journal of Islamic Religious Education in 6th place with 5 articles, it is the only Islam-based and Indonesian-language journal on the list. This demonstrates that the Indonesian Islamic

Religious Education (IRE) community is beginning to respond to inclusion and Project-Based Learning (PjBL), although the volume remains small compared to Western journals.

### Analysis of the Conceptual Framework and Research Hotspots

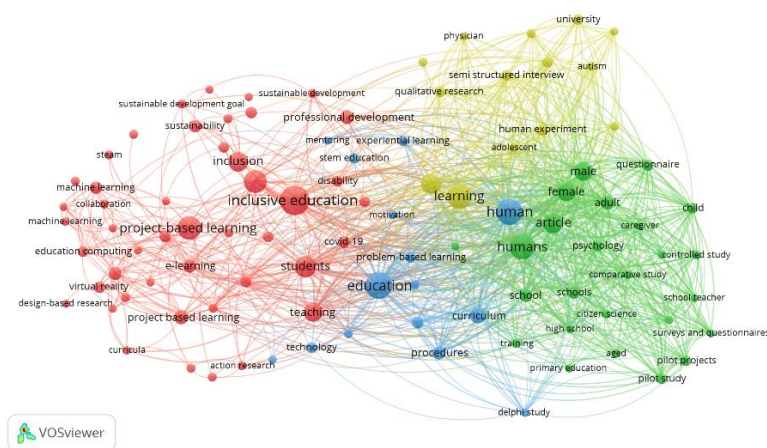
Based on cluster analysis and citation patterns, three thematic categories can be identified. The “Established” theme encompasses general inclusion in STEM and higher education, supported by the foundational articles by LaForce et al. (2017, 144 citations) and Resch & Schrittester (2023, 108 citations). Research in this area is relatively saturated and requires contextual differentiation.

**Table 7. Conceptual Clusters Based on Keyword Co-occurrence Analysis**

No.	Thematic Clusters	Total KK	Primary Keywords
1	Inclusive Education	69	<i>inclusive education (37×), inclusion (17×), disability (4×), inclusive pedagogy (5×), diversity (3×)</i>
2	PjBL & Active Pedagogy	40	<i>project-based learning (25×), project based learning (4×), collaboration (4×), experiential learning (3×), service learning (4×)</i>
3	Technology & Digital	27	<i>machine learning (6×), virtual reality (6×), artificial intelligence (4×), e-learning (4×), educational technology (3×)</i>
4	Teacher Development	27	<i>professional development (7×), teacher education (6×), teacher training (5×), teachers (5×)</i>
5	STEM & Learning Innovation	15	<i>STEM education (5×), STEM (4×), STEAM (4×), STEAM education (2×)</i>
6	Student Learning Outcomes	10	<i>critical thinking (4×), student engagement (4×), motivation (2×)</i>
7	Islamic Education & Islamic Values	5	<i>islamic education (2×), religious education (2×), madrasah (1×)</i>

This Emerging Theme explores the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Virtual Reality (VR) into inclusive Project-Based Learning (PjBL), service learning as a diversity-sensitive variant of Project-Based Learning (PjBL), Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in the context of the SDGs, and cross-cultural Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in Southeast Asia. This theme offers open opportunities but requires a stronger empirical foundation. The most strategic themes are the integration of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) into Islamic Religious Education (IRE), inclusion grounded in Islamic values (equality, cooperation), and inclusive Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in Indonesia. Of the 252 articles, only 7 explicitly addressed the intersection of all three (Project-Based Learning (PjBL) + inclusion + Islamic Religious Education (IRE)), confirming that this gap is real and well-documented.

**Figure 3. Keyword Analysis**



The figure above shows a keyword co-occurrence analysis using VOSviewer, which identified several major clusters representing the direction of research development.

Cluster 1 (Red) centers on the keywords inclusive education, project-based learning, students, teaching, inclusion, and e-learning. This cluster indicates that much of the research focuses on the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) as a learning strategy that supports inclusive education. Additionally, the emergence of keywords such as “virtual reality,” “machine learning,” and “educational computing” indicates the integration of technology into learning to enhance student participation and accessibility.

Cluster 2 (Green) is dominated by the keywords human, humans, school, psychology, adult, child, and school teacher. This cluster describes research oriented toward psychological aspects, student characteristics, and the implementation of education within the school environment. The primary focus of this cluster is how human factors and the school environment influence the success of inclusive education.

Cluster 3 (Blue) consists of the keywords “education,” “curriculum,” “procedures,” and “technology.” This cluster indicates a focus on curriculum development, educational systems, and the use of technology to support the learning process. The keyword “education” serves as a central hub connecting various research themes.

Cluster 4 (Yellow) includes the keywords learning, qualitative research, semi-structured interview, autism, university, and experiential learning. This cluster indicates a predominance of research using qualitative approaches to understand students’ learning experiences, particularly in the context of inclusive education and special needs.

## CONCLUSION

This study makes a unique contribution as the first bibliometric analysis to simultaneously map the intersection between Project-Based Learning (PjBL), inclusive education, and Islamic Religious Education (IRE) within a single integrated analytical framework based on Scopus data. This uniqueness is not merely a methodological claim but is empirically proven by the fact that, out of 252 identified articles, only 7 explicitly address all three dimensions simultaneously. This highlights a significant academic gap and opens up vast opportunities for scientific contributions within the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) research community in Indonesia and globally (Wahyudi et al., 2024).

The most significant implication of these research findings is that the field remains in a pre-paradigmatic phase, characterized by terminological fragmentation, the absence of a specific core journal, and the lack of a consolidated collaborative network. This situation calls for the development of an integrative conceptual framework that brings together social constructivism, the principle of universal inclusion, and value-based Islamic pedagogy with an urgent and strategic theoretical agenda. Indonesia's ranking as the world's second-highest in research productivity (75 affiliations, 11.3%) represents significant social capital that must be leveraged through three priority policies fostering more structured collaboration among authors via a national inclusive Islamic Religious Education (IRE) research consortium, developing an inclusive Islamic Religious Education (IRE) journal indexed in Scopus as a core journal for the global Islamic community, and establishing the integration of inclusive Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) as a priority research agenda within the Ministry of Religion's policies (Efendi et al., 2025). These findings also underscore that madrasah teachers and practitioners who implement inclusive Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) instruction are, in fact, directly contributing to the global SDG 4 agenda, which urgently requires empirical evidence from the context of Southeast Asian Islam (Sarbin et al., 2025).

This study has several limitations that should be noted: Indonesian-language national journals indexed in SINTA may lose their value if the Scopus database is used separately; keyword analysis is limited to author keywords without involving full-text analysis, so relevant articles that do not include specific keywords may not be captured (Fahmi et al., 2023). Consequently, relevant articles that do not include certain keywords may be missed. Furthermore, the 2015–2025 timeframe does not encompass foundational literature prior to 2015 that may be historically relevant.

Given these limitations, future research should explore the contributions of Indonesian researchers published in Indonesian, by developing an empirical study on the implementation of inclusive Project-Based Learning (PjBL) as a follow-up to the

research gap map that has been created and conducting a meta-analysis on how Project-Based Learning (PjBL) becomes effective learning (Maemunatun, 2022).

### AI USE DECLARATION

During the preparation of this article, the author used **Claude.AI (Anthropic)** and **Quilbot** to assist with text paraphrasing, bibliometric data processing and visualization, literature search, and the refinement of grammar and scientific narrative coherence. After using these tools/services, the author thoroughly reviewed and edited all content as needed, verified the accuracy of the references and generated data, and assumes full responsibility for the entire content of the publication.

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