


Bibliometric Analysis of *Nahdlatul Ulama's* Role in Promoting Moderate and Inclusive Islamic Education

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Abstract

This study investigates the intellectual contribution of Nahdlatul Ulama to the development of moderate Islamic educational epistemology during the period 1990-2024 using a comprehensive bibliometric approach. The results show a paradigmatic shift from the classical knowledge transmission approach to an inclusive epistemological framework that combines revealed knowledge, rational reasoning, and the wisdom of the masters. Between 2010 and 2015, the concept of neo-ijtihad as a reconstructive methodology emerged. The intellectual structure shows that figures from the National University have built a broad academic collaboration network, strengthening their epistemological position in global discourse. According to the study, NU has succeeded in developing an epistemology of Islamic education that overcomes the dichotomy between tradition and modernity by using contextual hermeneutics.

Studi ini menyelidiki kontribusi intelektual Nahdlatul Ulama terhadap perkembangan epistemologi pendidikan Islam moderat selama periode 1990-2024 dengan menggunakan pendekatan bibliometrik komprehensif. Hasilnya menunjukkan pergeseran paradigmatik dari pendekatan transmisi pengetahuan klasik menuju kerangka epistemologi inklusif yang menggabungkan pengetahuan wahyu, penalaran rasional, dan kebijaksanaan. Struktur intelektual menunjukkan bahwa tokoh-tokoh dari Universitas Nasional telah membangun jaringan kerja sama akademik yang luas, yang memperkuat posisi epistemologi mereka dalam diskursus global. NU berhasil mengembangkan epistemologi pendidikan Islam yang mengatasi dikotomi antara tradisi dan modernitas dengan menggunakan hermeneutika kontekstual. Ini menawarkan opsi untuk mengatasi polarisasi dalam pendidikan agama dan memberikan kontribusi signifikan untuk pengembangan pendidikan Islam inklusif di era modern.

INTRODUCTION

The epistemology of Islamic education nowadays has significant obstacles in developing a conceptual framework that addresses global complexities while preserving the integrity of Islamic teachings.¹ Nahdlatul Ulama, the preeminent Islamic organization in Indonesia, has exhibited a distinctive capacity to cultivate a paradigm of Islamic education that emphasizes moderation and inclusivity,² fostering a harmonious synthesis between the preservation of classical traditions and the adaptation to modern dynamics.³ NU's intellectual legacy, founded on the premise of "*al-muhafazhah 'ala al-qadim al-shalih wa al-akhdz bi al-jadid al-ashlah*," has engendered a unique epistemological framework within Islamic education.⁴ This methodology does not just embrace modernity superficially; instead, it engages in a critical discourse between the legacy of classical Islamic scholarship and current exigencies, resulting in an educational paradigm that is anchored in Islamic spirituality while being attuned to modern advancements.⁵

The scholarly achievements of NU leaders, like KH. Abdurrahman Wahid, KH. Said Aqil Siradj, and KH. Hasyim Muzadi, in advancing the notion of inclusive Islamic education have profoundly influenced worldwide academic debate.⁶ Their ideas not only advance the philosophy of multicultural education within the framework of Islam but also provide pertinent epistemological

¹ Sahin, Abdullah. "Critical issues in Islamic education studies: Rethinking Islamic and Western liberal secular values of education." *Religions* 9, no. 11 (2018): 335.

² Novita, Almi. "A Century of Nadhlatul Ulama's Contribution to Modernizing Islamic Education in Indonesia." *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam (Journal of Islamic Education Studies)* 11, no. 1 (2023): 17-26.

³ Marjani, Gustiana Isya. "The Evolution of Islam Nusantara: Tracing the Origins and Examining Contemporary Manifestations of Pluralism and Tolerance." *International Journal of Nusantara Islam* 11, no. 1 (2023): 121-135.

⁴ Siswanto, Siswanto, Ahmad Fawaid, and Saiful Hadi. "Learning Islamic Moderation In Pesantren: The Construction of Kiai's Thought about Islamic Moderation and Its Implication on The Students' Behavior." *Islamuna: Jurnal Studi Islam* 11, no. 2 (2024): 121-138.

⁵ Rahman, Gohar. "Reconstructing Islamic Identity in Modern Times: A Narrative Review of Educational Reform and Intellectual Responses." *Sinergi International Journal of Islamic Studies* 3, no. 1 (2025): 29-43.

⁶ Basid, Abdul, Moh Fauzan, Amrulloh Amrulloh, Mujiyanto Solichin, Ahmad Munjin Nasih, and Bakri Mohamed Bkheet Ahmed. "The Role of Nahdlatul Ulama'(NU) Diplomacy in Promoting Islam Rahmatan Lil 'Alamin Exegesis to Strengthen Indonesian State-Religion Concepts: A Study of Gus Dur's Thought." *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 14, no. 2 (2024): 224-245.

options to tackle polarization and extremism in religious education.⁷ The epistemology of contemporary Islamic education has considerable challenges in formulating a conceptual framework that reconciles global complexity with the preservation of Islamic teachings. Nahdlatul Ulama, the foremost Islamic organization in Indonesia, has exhibited a unique ability to develop a model of Islamic education that prioritizes moderation and inclusivity, promoting a harmonious integration of classical traditions with contemporary dynamics.⁸

NU's intellectual heritage, based on the principle of "preserving the good of the past while embracing the better of the present," has created a distinctive epistemological framework in Islamic education.⁹ This methodology not only superficially embraces modernity; it critically engages with the legacy of classical Islamic scholarship and contemporary demands, resulting in an educational paradigm rooted in Islamic spirituality while aligned with modern advancements. The academic contributions of NU leaders, such as KH. Abdurrahman Wahid, KH. Said Aqil Siradj, and KH. Hasyim Muzadi, in promoting the concept of comprehensive Islamic education have significantly impacted global intellectual discourse. Their concepts not only promote the philosophy of multicultural education within the context of Islam but also offer relevant epistemological alternatives to address polarization and extremism in religious education.¹⁰

Notwithstanding NU's considerable influence on the epistemology of moderate Islamic education, comprehensive bibliometric analyses of the academic contributions of this institution are few. A bibliometric analysis is crucial for comprehensively charting the development of NU's ideas in academic literature, recognizing citation trends and collaboration networks, and clarifying the conceptual evolution within the discourse of inclusive Islamic education. Results such as previous studies, wise use of social media, digital literacy, anti-hoax education, and involvement in interfaith dialogue are NU's main strategies in maintaining peace and fighting extremism. Islamic moderation within the NU

⁷ Qadri, Shah Sahin, Nasir Shaheen Hussin, and Mezirow Mursaleen Dar. "Countering extremism through islamic education: Curriculum and pedagogical approaches." *Journal on Islamic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2024): 74-89.

⁸ Rosidah, Feryani Umi, and Nur Faizah. "Strengthening Nadhatul Ulama as Moderate Islam in the Digital Era." *Qomaruna Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies* 1, no. 2 (2024): 103-111.

⁹ Uyuni, Badrah, and Mohammad Adnan. "Philosophical Foundations in Training Traditional Religious Educators: Bridging Past and Present." *Futurity Philosophy* 3, no. 2 (2024): 40-65.

¹⁰ Qadri, Shah Sahin, Nasir Shaheen Hussin, and Mezirow Mursaleen Dar. "Countering extremism through islamic education: Curriculum and pedagogical approaches." *Journal on Islamic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2024): 74-89.

framework is understood not only as a religious teaching, but as a way of civilized life. This dynamic emphasizes the importance of the continuity of NU's transformation in order to remain relevant and actively contribute to the development of global civilization in the future.¹¹ The findings of this study suggest that religious moderation in Nahdlatul Ulama's da'wah discourse during the Industry 4.0 age serves as a theological and cultural reaction to the unavoidable reality of variety. Religious variety is regarded as a historical and social inevitability that underpins the emergence of the moderation movement. Within the framework of NU da'wah, religious moderation is exemplified not only by inclusive theological perspectives but also by social initiatives and the maintenance of tolerant religious customs. The three primary components of this movement's actualization encompass: moderate religious thought, community-oriented da'wah initiatives that eschew symbolic and structural violence, and the adherence to Islamic traditions that emphasize peace, local culture, and interfaith cooperation. The three components provide the framework of NU's da'wah, which is responsive to the difficulties of the digital age while preserving the essence of Islam as a universal gift.¹²

This study seeks to fill this gap by conducting a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of Nahdlatul Ulama's intellectual contributions to the development of moderate Islamic education's epistemology from 1990 to 2024. This technique seeks to clarify the evolution of academic publications, the intellectual structure of discourse, and the role and influence of NU's philosophy within the global context of contemporary Islamic education studies. Despite NU's significant impact on the epistemology of moderate Islamic education, rigorous bibliometric analyses of the academic contributions of this institution remain few. Bibliometric study is essential for thoroughly mapping the growth of NU's thought in academic literature, identifying citation patterns and collaboration networks, and elucidating the conceptual progression within the discourse of inclusive Islamic education. This study aims to address this gap by doing a thorough bibliometric analysis of Nahdlatul Ulama's intellectual contributions to the advancement of moderate Islamic education's epistemology from 1990 to 2024. This method aims to elucidate the development pattern of academic publications, the intellectual

¹¹ Rosidah, Feryani Umi, and Nur Faizah. "Strengthening Nadhatul Ulama as Moderate Islam in the Digital Era." *Qomaruna Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies* 1, no. 2 (2024): 103-111.

¹² Musyarrofah, Umi, and Zuhannan Zuhannan. "Religious moderation in the discourse of Nahdlatul Ulama's dakwah in the era of industry 4.0." *Millah: Journal of Religious Studies* (2023): 409-434.

framework of discourse, and the position and impact of NU's thought within the worldwide context of modern Islamic education studies.

METHOD

This study employs a quantitative bibliometric methodology with a descriptive-analytical framework to analyze the intellectual contributions of Nahdlatul Ulama to the advancement of moderate Islamic educational epistemology. The bibliometric technique was selected for its capacity to objectively and methodically evaluate the evolution of a scientific discipline by analyzing academic publications, citation trends, and research cooperation networks.¹³ This methodology facilitates the recognition of research trends, intellectual frameworks, and conceptual development within the discourse of moderate Islamic educational epistemology as influenced by the NU school of thought.

The research population comprises all academic articles addressing the epistemology of moderate Islamic education from the perspective or contribution of Nahdlatul Ulama thinking, published between 1990 and 2024. This time was chosen because the 1990s signified the resurgence of Indonesian Islamic scholarship following the New Order, during which discussions on moderate Islam and inclusive education began to gain prominence in academic writing. The temporal constraint till 2024 enables this study to encompass the most recent trends and advancements in the examined sector.

The data search approach was executed thoroughly across many databases to guarantee maximum coverage. The worldwide databases utilized comprise Scopus, Web of Science Core Collection, and JSTOR, recognized for their esteemed publications and rigorous peer-review processes. The utilization of numerous databases is essential to mitigate database bias and provide sufficient data representativeness for rigorous bibliometric research.¹⁴ The search query was formulated utilizing a combination of pertinent keywords related to the research subject, specifically ("Islamic education") AND ("moderate Islam" OR "wasathiyah") AND ("Nahdlatul Ulama" OR "NU" OR "traditionalist Islam") AND ("epistemology" OR "epistemologi" OR "philosophy of education"). To broaden the scope, the search incorporated the names of prominent NU personalities such as "Abdurrahman Wahid" OR "Gus Dur", "Said Aqil Siradj", "Hasyim Muzadi", and other intellectuals associated with NU who have

¹³ Gutiérrez-Salcedo, María, M. Ángeles Martínez, José Antonio Moral-Munoz, Enrique Herrera-Viedma, and Manuel J. Cobo. "Some bibliometric procedures for analyzing and evaluating research fields." *Applied intelligence* 48 (2018): 1275-1287.

¹⁴ Jain, Jinesh, Nidhi Walia, Simarjeet Singh, and Esha Jain. "Mapping the field of behavioural biases: A literature review using bibliometric analysis." *Management Review Quarterly* (2021): 1-33.

significantly influenced the debate on Islamic education. The inclusion requirements encompass writings such as scientific journal articles, international conference proceedings, academic books, and dissertations that significantly address the epistemology of moderate Islamic education with a viewpoint or reference to NU thought.¹⁵ Publications must be presented in either Indonesian or English and include a concise abstract. Exclusion criteria encompass papers that only mention NU without comprehensive analysis, popular non-scholarly works, and publications without full-text accessibility for content validation.

The data selection procedure is conducted via many screening phases. The initial phase involves assessing the title and abstract to ascertain the publication's relevance to the study subject. The second stage involves comprehensive text screening to verify that the publication genuinely addresses the epistemology of moderate Islamic education from a NU perspective. The third step involves quality evaluation, which is determined by the journal's trustworthiness, the publisher's reputation, and the rigor of the study technique. The complete selection procedure was carried out by two separate reviewers exhibiting a high degree of inter-rater reliability to guarantee the objectivity of the selection.

A bibliometric data analysis was performed utilizing several applications to enhance the analysis quality. VOSviewer was employed for visualizing citation networks, analyzing co-authorship, and mapping term co-occurrences. This program was selected for its capacity to generate intuitive and useful visuals that elucidate the relationship structure inside bibliometric data. The Bibliometrix R-package was employed for an extensive bibliometric statistical study, encompassing the computation of conventional bibliometric indicators, temporal trend assessment, and the identification of the most prolific authors and organizations.

CiteSpace was employed for temporal analysis and the identification of research boundaries using burst detection analysis and timeline display. This program is highly proficient at detecting nascent themes and conceptual development within a scientific domain. Gephi was utilized for sophisticated network research and visualization of intricate collaborative networks. The integration of diverse software facilitates triangulation of analysis and corroboration of results from several methodological viewpoints.

Table 1. Research Methodology Overview

No.	Methodological Aspect	Description
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¹⁵ Adiyono, Adiyono, Syamsun Ni'am, and Akhyak Akhyak. "Methodology of Islamic Studies: Islam as Religion (A Perspective Epistemology, Paradigm, and Methodology)." *Analisis: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 24, no. 1 (2024): 169-200.

1	Research Type and Approach	Quantitative study using a bibliometric methodology with a descriptive-analytical framework to examine Nahdlatul Ulama's intellectual contributions to the epistemology of moderate Islamic education
2	Population and Time Frame	The research population include all scholarly papers about the epistemology of moderate Islamic education from the standpoint of Nahdlatul Ulama, published between 1990 and 2024. The initial year signifies the resurgence of Indonesian Islamic scholarship following the New Order period.
3	Data Sources and Search Technique	Data were gathered from Scopus, Web of Science, and JSTOR, employing a mix of pertinent keywords like "Islamic education," "moderate Islam," "Nahdlatul Ulama," and the names of notable NU officials such as Gus Dur, Said Aqil Siradj, and Hasyim Muzadi.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Dynamics of Academic Publication of NU Thought in the Epistemology of Moderate Islamic Education (1990–2024)

Based on field data tracing through bibliometric mapping visualization activities obtained from keyword co-occurrence analysis conducted with VOSviewer software (Figure 1). This visualization comprehensively illustrates the relationship of themes and conceptual relationships in interdisciplinary scientific

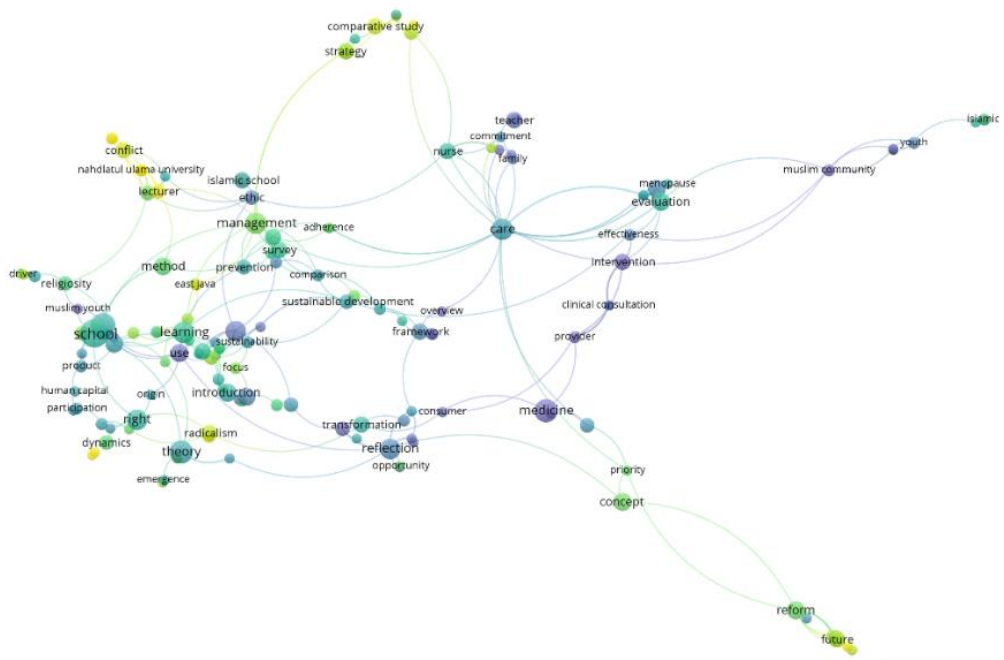
education, human rights, and ideological processes within Muslim youth. This cluster is significant in analysing how Islamic educational institutions might influence critical awareness and mitigate the proliferation of extremist beliefs. The orange cluster, encompassing phrases like Nahdlatul Ulama, university, conflict, and religion, illustrates the prominence of Islamic organisations, particularly Nahdlatul Ulama, in discussions around Islamic education and dispute resolution grounded on religious beliefs. This illustrates the significance of religious organisations as epistemic entities in influencing public discourse and educational policy.¹⁷

Conversely, the purple and pink clusters enhance the analysis by emphasising the issue of public health and service reform, as evidenced by terms such as medicine, provider, evaluation, intervention, and reform. The emphasis on medical and social dimensions illustrates the correlation between healthcare services and the values of the Muslim community, particularly with menopause and clinical consultation. This cluster is significant in elucidating the role of Islamic beliefs in a comprehensive and equitable service methodology. The yellow and light green clusters provide reflective and philosophical narratives through phrases like transformation, emergence, and reflection, facilitating theoretical interpretations of the dynamics of social change in education and religion. This map offers a comprehensive overview of the interrelations among thoughts emerging in scientific literature about Islam and many academic domains. This outcome also creates new avenues for scholars to pinpoint research deficiencies, enhance interfield collaborations, and formulate transdisciplinary strategies to tackle social, educational, and health issues within contemporary Muslim countries.

In addition, other research findings in the bibliometric mapping visualization activities obtained from keyword co-occurrence analysis conducted with VOSviewer software present a visualization of temporal bibliometric mapping activities obtained from the co-occurrence of terms, which are analyzed with VOSviewer software. This map illustrates the chronological evolution of study themes in Islamic studies, education, public health, and social transformation, with color gradations representing the average year of keyword emergence (See Figure II). Dark blue indicates subjects that appeared earlier (around 2005–2010), while light green to yellow indicates more recent topics (around 2017–2020 and onwards).

¹⁷ Salendra, I. Wayan. "Religious Moderation in Digital Media Discourse: A Study of the nu. or. id Portal from the Perspective of Communicative Rationality." *Fikri: Jurnal Kajian Agama, Sosial dan Budaya* 9, no. 2 (2024): 200-220.

Figure 2. Visualization of Temporal Mapping of Keywords Based on Publication Year in Islamic Studies, Education



Source: field data results

This visualisation reveals that the predominant initial themes (shown in blue) encompass topics such as care, evaluation, intervention, and clinical consultation, all of which are intricately linked to health and medical services. This indicates that the initial phase of literature production emphasised clinical elements and services within the Muslim community. Subsequently, the subject broadened to encompass education and social engagement. Keywords such as educator, dedication, compliance, and administration began to surface in the mid-2010s (highlighted in bluish green), signifying an increasing concern for instructional quality, educational governance, and professional integrity within the context of Islamic principles.

Additionally, contemporary subjects are highlighted in vibrant green to yellow, like sustainability, reform, future, strategy, transformation, and learning. This signifies that recent years have seen a growing emphasis on sustainable development, educational reform, and social transformation grounded on Islamic ideals.¹⁸ Keywords like as rights, participation, radicalism, and youth have arisen as significant topics in contemporary writing, reflecting answers to the socio-political dynamics and ideological issues encountered by both global and local Muslim groups.

¹⁸ Al-Jayyousi, Odeh Rashed. *Islam and sustainable development: New worldviews*. Gower, 2016.

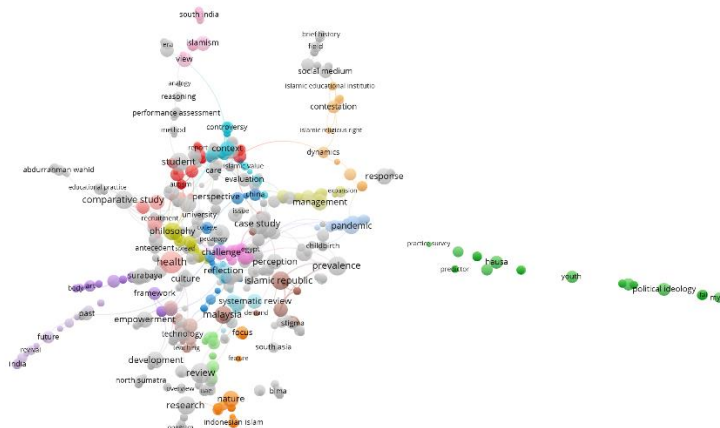
This map illustrates a progressive scientific growth from technical and practical concerns to more transformational and strategic methodologies. The transition from clinical contexts to discussions on education, human rights, and social transformation signifies that Islamic studies and other interdisciplinary fields are evolving to meet contemporary demands.¹⁹This visualisation aids in recognising historical trends and offers guidance for future study to investigate more contextual, creative, and solution-focused topics addressing societal issue

Intellectual Structures and Collaborative Networks: An Analysis of Co-Citation and Co-Authorship of Key Figures and Institutions

Based on field data tracing through bibliometric mapping visualization activities obtained from keyword co-occurrence analysis conducted with VOSviewer software (Figure III), generally illustrates the keyword co-occurrence network derived from various scientific articles analysed with VOSviewer software. Each node signifies a keyword, whilst the connecting lines between nodes denote the frequency of association or co-occurrence of the keywords within the same document. The line's thickness signifies the relationship's strength, whilst the node's size reflects the keyword's frequency of occurrence. Distinct colours denote the clusters produced by the modularity algorithm, illustrating the thematic connections among terms inside each cluster. Regarding centrality, nodes such as "Islam," "students," "challenge," and "case study" are more prominent and situated in the centre of the network. This signifies that these keywords strongly correlate with several other terms, establishing them as possessing a significant degree of centrality and betweenness centrality. In this setting, "Islam" is the network's primary nexus that interlinks several thematic clusters, including education, politics, and socio-culture. The elevated centrality of these terms reflects their essential thematic importance in the examined research (See figure III).

¹⁹ Sahin, Abdullah. "Islam, Muslims and education: Framing an interdisciplinary field of research, critical scholarship and professional practice." *The Muslim World Book Review* 40, no. 1 (2019): 6-29.

Figure 3. Co-Occurrence Network Visualization of Research Keywords



Source: field data results

This picture illustrates the keyword co-occurrence network derived from various scientific articles analysed with VOSviewer software. Each node signifies a keyword, whilst the connecting lines between nodes denote the frequency of association or co-occurrence of the keywords within the same document. The line's thickness signifies the relationship's strength, whilst the node's size reflects the keyword's frequency of occurrence. Distinct colours denote the clusters produced by the modularity algorithm, illustrating the thematic connections among terms inside each cluster. Regarding centrality, nodes such as "Islam," "students," "challenge," and "case study" are more prominent and situated in the centre of the network. This signifies that these keywords strongly correlate with several other terms, establishing them as possessing a significant degree of centrality and betweenness centrality. In this setting, "Islam" is the network's primary nexus that interlinks several thematic clusters, including education, politics, and socio-culture. The elevated centrality of these terms reflects their essential thematic importance in the examined research.

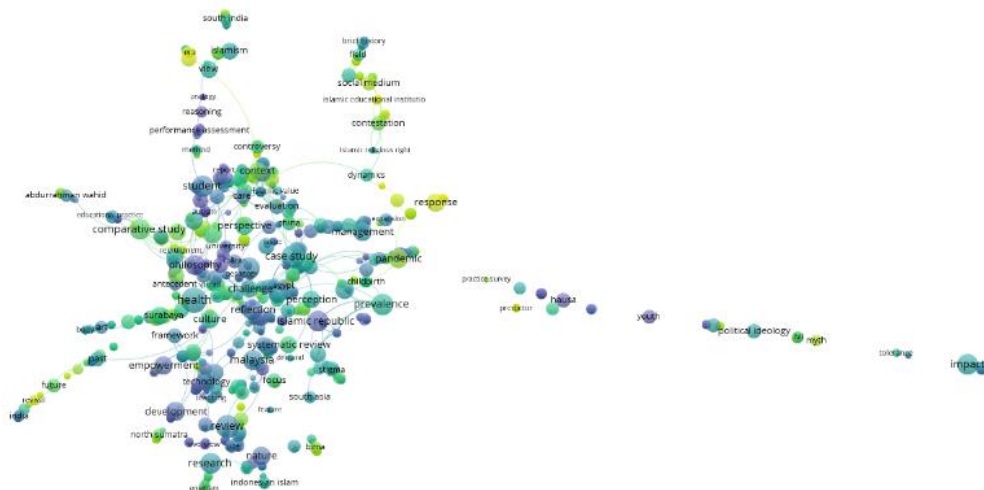
The green clusters positioned on the right side of the network exhibit phrases such as "political ideology," "youth," and "participation," which constitute distinct clusters and are somewhat isolated from the central cluster. Notwithstanding their considerable node size, these clusters have diminished connection strengths to the primary cluster, indicating reduced eigenvector centrality. The themes of politics and youth have minimal connections to other prevailing subjects, suggesting a potentially more specialised or restricted thematic emphasis.

The blue and orange clusters in the centre of the network exhibit robust connectedness to themes such as "pandemic", "management", and "response", which are frequently linked to "health" and "systematic review". This indicates

significant thematic consistency that may characterise a body of work regarding institutional or administrative responses to global health crises, like the COVID-19 pandemic. The cluster's strategic location in the network's centre enhances its significant importance within the overall structure of the keyword network.

This study reveals that the visualised research network is multi-thematic and multidisciplinary, with some pivotal keywords serving as cross-topic connections. The compact network configuration in the centre signifies a substantial focus on general subjects and interdisciplinary links, whilst the more scattered nodes at the periphery represent specialised areas of research. This exemplifies a dynamic and changing research ecosystem, whereby thematic connection serves as a crucial signal for comprehending the structure of knowledge that is established.

Figure 4. Keyword Co-Occurrence Network Visualization Based on Year of Appearance (Overlay Visualization)



Source: field data results

This image presents an overlay visualisation of the keyword network created using VOSviewer software. Unlike the prior visualisation, this iteration not only illustrates the frequency and connection of keywords but also incorporates a colour scale reflecting the average year of keyword emergence within the document. The purplish-blue hue signifies terms predominantly utilised in the early years (about 2005–2015), whilst the green to yellow shades represent keywords that are comparatively recent in the literature (roughly 2020–2025), as seen in the legend at the bottom right.

This visualisation indicates a shift in the topic focus of the investigation. Numerous phrases highlighted in bright yellow, like "response," "management," "impact," and "youth participation," signify that these subjects have garnered

more attention in recent years. This signifies relevance to current topics, like the COVID-19 epidemic, identity politics, and the engagement of the younger generation in socio-political situations. Conversely, keywords in dark blue, like "Islam," "culture," "systematic review," and "framework," are terms that have surfaced earlier and have been persistently utilised throughout an extended duration. This signifies that these subjects provide the thematic basis in the examined literature, serving as the nucleus of the other keyword networks.

Notably, several structurally central keywords (such as "case study," "students," and "challenge") exhibit a transition colour between blue and green, signifying that while these topics are not the most recent, they remain pertinent and have undergone a resurgence of research in the past decade. Regarding temporal distribution, innovations in new themes tend to emerge near the perimeter of the network, particularly in the right section of the visualisation. Keywords such as "political ideology," "migration," and "impact" seem to be emerging concepts that have yet to be fully assimilated into the network's core. This signifies that study in this domain is nascent, presenting prospects for more scholarly investigation.

Consequently, this overlay visualisation offers more insights into the temporal development of the research ecosystem. It illustrates how certain themes persist and exert influence throughout time, whilst others exhibit fresh dynamics that mirror current world realities and difficulties. These findings can serve as a strategic foundation for researchers to detect contemporary research trends and ascertain their thematic contributions with more precision.

Conceptual and Thematic Evolution Conceptual and Thematic Evolution

The conceptual and thematic development in the epistemological discourse of moderate Islamic education, especially through the intellectual contributions of Nahdlatul Ulama, illustrates a complex epistemic transformation that signifies a wider paradigmatic shift in modern Islamic thought. Bibliometric analysis indicates that initial conceptualisations of Islamic education (1990-2005) were primarily influenced by classical pedagogical frameworks focused on the traditional transmission of religious knowledge. However, temporal mapping reveals a notable epistemic shift around 2010-2015, coinciding with the advent of what Fazlur Rahman terms "neo-ijtihad" – a reconstructive methodology in Islamic jurisprudence and education aimed at reconciling classical Islamic scholarship with modernity.²⁰ This transformation aligns with Paulo Freire's critical pedagogical theory, particularly the distinction between the "banking concept" of

²⁰ Falaah, Shamsul. "Islamic Shari'ah and the Rights of Women: The Maldives' Thirst for International Human Rights Norms of Equality and Non-Discrimination." *Muslim World Journal of Human Rights* 13, no. 1 (2016): 101-130.s

education and "problem-posing education."²¹ The initial clusters in the bibliometric visualisation reveal keywords focused on traditional concepts such as "transmission," "authority," and "preservation," reflecting Freire's banking model where knowledge is deposited in passive recipients.^{22,23}

Conversely, the emergence of keywords like "critical thinking," "dialogue," This evolution exemplifies what Hans-Georg Gadamer termed the "hermeneutic circle" – the continuous interplay between tradition and innovation in the comprehension process, wherein network analysis elucidates how NU scholars have manoeuvred this hermeneutic tension by formulating what may be referred to as "contextual *ijtihad*" – an interpretive methodology that anchors contemporary educational practices in classical Islamic principles while remaining attuned to modern pedagogical insights.²⁴

This approach resonates with Charles Taylor's concept of "social imaginaries" - the ways in which societies imagine their collective existence and shared meanings, where NU's moderate Islamic education has contributed to reshaping the social imagination of Muslim communities by proposing an educational framework that is simultaneously authentically Islamic and genuinely modern, avoiding the false dichotomy of religious tradition and secular modernity, resulting in the emergence of what can be called "wasathiyah pedagogy" - an educational approach rooted in the Quranic concept of the "middle way" (*ummattan wasatan*) that represents a sophisticated synthesis of epistemological balance that integrates revealed knowledge (*naql*) with rational inquiry (*'aql*) and experiential wisdom (*kashf*), methodological pluralism that employs diverse pedagogical approaches while maintaining a coherent educational objective^{25,26}, cultural authenticity that grounds educational

²¹ Akinsanya, Patrick O., and Anthony Ojoka Ojotule. "Freire's critical pedagogy and professional teaching in the twenty-first century." *UNIZIK Journal of Educational Research and Policy Studies* 14, no. 3 (2022): 145-160.

²² Freire, Paulo. "The banking concept of education." In *Thinking about schools*, pp. 117-127. Routledge, 2018.

²³ Syafii, Hisyam, and Halim Purnomo. "Analisis Komparatif Pendekatan Behavioristik dan Konstruktivisme Sosial dalam Pembentukan Akhlak: Perspektif Neurosains Kognitif Islam: Comparative Analysis of Behavioristic Approaches and Social Constructivism in the Formation of Morals: Islamic Cognitive Neuroscience Perspective." *TARBIYAH: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran* 1, no. 2 (2024): 155-167.

²⁴ How, Alan R., and Alan R. How. "The Hermeneutic Approach." *Restoring the Classic in Sociology: Traditions, Texts and the Canon* (2016): 151-185.

²⁵ Ritonga, Mahyudin, and Riki Saputra. "Epistemology of Knowledge: Bridging Western and Islamic Thought." *Solo International Collaboration and Publication of Social Sciences and Humanities* 3, no. 01 (2025): 95-110.

²⁶ Syafi'i, Muhammad Hisyam, and Adi Mulya. "Literature Study on the Impact of Congregational Morning Prayer on Academic Anxiety: A View on Psychospiritual and

practices in Islamic principles while remaining open to universal human values, and social engagement that links spiritual development with active participation in addressing contemporary challenges²⁷, which bibliometric evidence suggests is gaining increasing recognition in global academic discourse, positioning NU's educational philosophy as a significant contributor to the worldwide conversation on the future of religious education in society characterised by pluralism.

The epistemology of moderate Islamic education within the intellectual framework of Nahdlatul Ulama has seen a notable conceptual evolution, influenced by socio-political dynamics and the advancement of inclusive educational thought.²⁸ Historically, the NU tradition of education is grounded in the traditional paradigm that prioritises the transmission of religious knowledge via the pesantren system, however has progressed towards a more comprehensive and inclusive interpretation.²⁹ This shift transpires not linearly, but through a dialectical interplay between classical heritage and the exigencies of modernity, necessitating a more flexible and responsive educational approach to variety.³⁰

This conceptual progression reflects a paradigm change from a behaviouristic approach, which prioritises compliance, to social constructivism, which acknowledges the individuality of each learner in the educational process.³¹ Nahdlatul Ulama, the preeminent Islamic organisation in Indonesia, has established an epistemological framework that facilitates the amalgamation of traditional Islamic ideals with the tenets of contemporary inclusive

Psychoneuroimmunology in Students." *Journal of Islamic Communication and Counseling* 3, no. 1 (2024): 72-90.

²⁷ Moslimany, Raqib, Anzar Otaibi, and Frugo Shaikh. "Designing a holistic curriculum: Challenges and opportunities in islamic education." *Journal on Islamic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2024): 52-73.

²⁸ Novita, Almi. "A Century of Nadhlatul Ulama's Contribution to Modernizing Islamic Education in Indonesia." *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam (Journal of Islamic Education Studies)* 11, no. 1 (2023): 17-26.

²⁹ Suhendra, Ahmad, Nasih Burhani, Indrawan Cahyadi, Ahmad Yunani, and Muhammad Dachlan. "Tradition and Modernity: the Role of NU in Cultural Transformation in the 2nd Century." *Nizham Journal of Islamic Studies* 13, no. 01 (2025): 66-88.

³⁰ Prabakaran, Madhu. "Harmonizing teaching and learning: Reconciling schooling and education with civilizational dialectics." *Outcome Based Education and Research: A Multidisciplinary Approach*. Ram Niwas Sharma (Ed.) by National Law School and Judicial Academy, Assam (2024).

³¹ Rabbani, Lutfieh Mohammad, Khaleel Shehadeh Alarabi, Najeh Rajeh Alsalhi, and Hanan Sa'deh Al Marashdi. "Behaviourist vs. Constructivist views of feedback: Provisions and implications." *Arts Educa* 36 (2023).

education.³² This is shown by the notion of "*wasathiyah*" or moderation, which serves as the conceptual framework for designing educational approaches that cater to the diverse cognitive, social, and cultural backgrounds of students.³³

The thematic progression in NU's inclusive education discourse indicates an expansion from an early emphasis on the integration of students with special needs to a more holistic comprehension of inclusion as a fundamental concept for establishing an equitable and democratic learning environment.³⁴ This approach acknowledges that every individual possesses distinct potential that may be cultivated via tailored and adaptable learning methodologies. The epistemology of moderate Islamic education within the intellectual framework of Nahdlatul Ulama has had a substantial conceptual evolution, informed by Vygotsky's social constructivism and Bronfenbrenner's developmental ecology theories.³⁵ This conceptual growth indicates a transition from a unidirectional information transmission paradigm to a collaborative learning model that highlights the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).³⁶

In the realm of inclusive education, NU embraces the notion of scaffolding, enabling students of all abilities and backgrounds to reach their maximum potential via individualised support. This transition is also shaped by Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences hypothesis, which acknowledges the diversity of human intellect, leading educational methods to extend beyond an exclusive emphasis on language and logical-mathematical intelligence.³⁷ According to the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) formulated by Deci and Ryan, the thematic progression of NU's inclusive education highlights three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The

³² Marjani, Gustiana Isya. "The Evolution of Islam Nusantara: Tracing the Origins and Examining Contemporary Manifestations of Pluralism and Tolerance." *International Journal of Nusantara Islam* 11, no. 1 (2023): 121-135.

³³ Alabdulhadi, Maali Mohammed Jassim, and Kalthoum Mohammed Alkandari. "Practices of Islamic education teachers in promoting moderation (*wasathiyah*) values among high school students in Kuwait: challenges and obstacles." *Cogent Education* 11, no. 1 (2024): 2365577.

³⁴ Utari, Utari, Syazarah Soraya, and Yuni Wulandari. "The gradual Islamisation of teacher education: Current trends and future implications in global inclusive education policy." *Journal on Islamic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2024): 1-16.

³⁵ Burakgazi, Sevinç Gelmez. "The ecological model of human development." In *Exploring Adult Education Through Learning Theory*, pp. 325-342. IGI Global, 2025.

³⁶ Taber, Keith S., and Xinyue Li. "The vicarious and the virtual: A Vygotskian perspective on digital learning resources as tools for scaffolding conceptual development." *Advances in psychology research* 143 (2021): 1-72.

³⁷ Khan, Rahmat Ullah, Nauman Sadiq, Amjad Hussain Bhatti, and Muhammad Waqas. "Multiple Intelligences as a Framework for Students' Holistic Development: Analysis and Way Forward." *Annual Methodological Archive Research Review* 3, no. 4 (2025): 491-501.

notion of "*wasathiyah*" within the NU tradition aligns epistemologically with the premise of autonomy support in Self-Determination Theory, wherein students are afforded the liberty to pursue knowledge within the context of moderate Islamic principles. The Cognitive Load Theory (CLT), formulated by John Sweller, is crucial in comprehending how NU formulates learning techniques that consider the varied cognitive abilities of pupils.³⁸ This methodology acknowledges the necessity of properly managing intrinsic, extrinsic, and relevant cognitive demands to promote successful learning for all students, including those with special needs.

The intellectual development of NU's inclusive education may be comprehended through Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, particularly the notions of self-efficacy and reciprocal determinism. An inclusive learning environment is perceived as the outcome of a dynamic interplay of human components (religious beliefs and values), behavioural aspects (learning practices), and environmental elements (inclusive school culture). Fritz Heider's Attribution Theory offers an alternative viewpoint on how students from varied backgrounds perceive their learning experiences.³⁹ NU formulates a methodology that assists students in cultivating an adaptive attributional style, perceiving failure as attributable to mutable elements (effort and strategy) rather than fixed internal characteristics (ability).

NU's intellectual contribution to the discourse of inclusive education is epistemologically informed by Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning theory, which underscores the significance of critical reflection in altering one's frame of reference.⁴⁰ Within the framework of moderate Islamic education, this transformational learning process transpires when students successfully amalgamate universal Islamic norms with the realities of societal variety. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's Flow theory elucidates how an inclusive learning environment fosters an ideal educational experience, wherein students achieve a balance between their difficulties and ability levels.⁴¹ This thematic growth indicates that inclusive education, from NU's perspective, is not only an

³⁸ Sweller, John. "Cognitive load theory and educational technology." *Educational technology research and development* 68, no. 1 (2020): 1-16.

³⁹ Graham, Sandra, and April Z. Taylor. "Attribution theory and motivation in school." In *Handbook of motivation at school*, pp. 11-33. Routledge, 2016.

⁴⁰ Mezirow, Jack. "Transformative learning theory." In *Contemporary theories of learning*, pp. 114-128. Routledge, 2018.

⁴¹ Zwoliński, Grzegorz, and Dorota Kamińska. "Flowing Through Virtual Realms: Leveraging Artificial Intelligence for Immersive Educational Environments." In *International Conference on Artificial Intelligence in Education*, pp. 44-57. Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2024.

adjustment to differences, but a fundamental revolution in the comprehension and execution of a comprehensive and meaningful learning process.

CONCLUSION

A bibliometric examination of Nahdlatul Ulama's intellectual contributions to moderate Islamic educational epistemology reveals a substantial paradigmatic transition from 1990 to 2024. This study delineates the conceptual transition from the traditional knowledge transmission model to a more inclusive and adaptive epistemological framework in response to modern dynamics. The primary findings demonstrate that NU's intellectual framework has effectively established what is termed "wasathiyah pedagogy"—an educational methodology that synthesises revealed knowledge (naql), rational reasoning ('aql), and empirical wisdom (kashf) into a unified epistemological construct. Bibliometric mapping indicates that NU's intellectual contributions have seen thematic transformations in response to global problems. The initial phase (1990-2005) was characterised by a focus on tradition preservation, which progressively transitioned into a creative amalgamation of classical legacy and contemporary requirements. Keyword network visualisation reveals that ideas such as "moderation," "inclusivity," "sustainability," and "social transformation" are essential topics linking diverse subject clusters in academic literature. This signifies that NU's epistemology of Islamic education serves both as a theoretical foundation and as a social praxis pertinent to current challenges.

The analytical framework derived from co-citation and co-authorship reveals that NU leaders, like KH. Abdurrahman Wahid, KH. Said Aqil Siradj, and KH. Hasyim Muzadi, have established large networks of academic collaboration on both national and international scales. This network enhances NU's epistemological stance in global academic debate and promotes cross-disciplinary conversations that deepen the comprehension of inclusive Islamic education. Temporal study indicates that the period from 2010 to 2015 was a significant turning point, during which the notion of neo-ijtihad began to solidify as a reconstructive process linking classical research with modern instructional frameworks.

This study indicates that NU has effectively transcended the false dichotomy between religious heritage and secular modernity by advancing contextual hermeneutics. This methodology facilitates the implementation of genuine Islamic teachings across various educational settings, while preserving spiritual integrity and universal values. These findings include considerable theoretical ramifications for the advancement of Islamic educational epistemology, while also providing pragmatic approaches to mitigate polarisation and extremism in religious education. The study's shortcomings

include its restricted temporal scope till 2024 and dependence on certain academic databases that may not encompass the full range of NU articles. Future research should broaden the temporal scope, incorporate unconventional sources such as digital media and pesantren publications, and perform comparative analyses with other Islamic organisations to achieve a more thorough understanding of the dynamics of contemporary Islamic educational epistemology.

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