

Research Trends in Islamic Work Ethics: A Bibliometric Analysis of Employee Performance Studies

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ABSTRACT

This study maps the research landscape linking Islamic work ethics (IWE) and employee performance through a bibliometric analysis of 155 Scopus-indexed documents published between 2000 and 2026. Using VOSviewer, keyword co-occurrence, overlay, and density visualizations were combined with co-authorship analyses at the author, institution, and country levels, followed by a citation analysis of the most influential works. The results show that the field is organized around seven thematic clusters connecting IWE with job satisfaction and commitment, leadership styles, organizational justice, knowledge sharing, organizational citizenship behavior, and destructive supervision. Earlier studies concentrated on Islam, commitment, and Middle Eastern settings, whereas recent studies emphasize ethical leadership, moral identity, organizational identification, workplace deviance, and task performance. Pakistan, Malaysia, and Indonesia dominate publication output and collaboration, while author networks remain concentrated in a few Pakistan-based groups with selected international partners. The most cited works are the early studies of Yousef and several Journal of Business Ethics articles on justice, citizenship, and helping behavior. The findings reveal a shift from treating IWE as an attitudinal antecedent toward positioning it as a personal resource and boundary condition within leadership and performance mechanisms, and they highlight the need for broader cross-regional collaboration, stronger performance measures, and longitudinal research designs.

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INTRODUCTION

Work ethics shape how employees interpret their duties, exert effort, and relate to colleagues and organizations. Within Muslim societies, Islamic work ethics (IWE) positions work as an act of worship grounded in the Qur'an and Sunnah, emphasizing dedication, honesty, fairness, cooperation, and social responsibility. Early empirical studies established IWE as a measurable

construct that shapes organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and attitudes toward change (Yousef, 2000, 2001). IWE is distinguished from secular and Protestant work ethics by its integration of spiritual accountability with economic activity, although a gap between Islamic ethical ideals and actual business practice has long been recognized (Abuznaid, 2009).

Over the past two decades, empirical studies have linked IWE with a broad range of employee outcomes. IWE has been associated with higher job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Gheitan et al., 2019; Nasution & Rafiki, 2020; Yousef, 2001), stronger organizational citizenship and knowledge-sharing behaviors (Kumar & Rose, 2012; Murtaza et al., 2016), and greater innovative work behavior and adaptive performance (Javed et al., 2017). More recent studies directly examine performance, showing that IWE enhances task performance through psychological capital and affective commitment (Ateeq et al., 2025; Qasim et al., 2022) and improves overall employee performance through intrinsic motivation, commitment, and satisfaction (Hassi et al., 2021; Udin et al., 2022).

Beyond its direct effects, IWE increasingly functions as a boundary condition in workplace relationships. Studies show that IWE moderates the effects of organizational justice on job outcomes (Khan et al., 2015), weakens the link between abusive supervision and knowledge hiding (Islam et al., 2021; Khalid et al., 2018), and shapes employee responses to despotic leadership (De Clercq et al., 2018; Raja et al., 2020). At the same time, scholars continue to debate how IWE should be measured and embedded in human resource management, as reflected in scale validation efforts and reviews of Islamic HRM (Aboramadan et al., 2022).

The rapid growth of this literature has produced studies dispersed across management, business ethics, psychology, and Islamic finance journals, making it difficult to see how themes, contexts, and collaboration patterns have developed. Bibliometric mapping offers a systematic way to identify influential works, thematic clusters, temporal trends, and research networks. While topic modeling has been used to describe drivers of IWE research (Zafar & Abu-Hussin, 2026), a science-mapping view that specifically focuses on employee performance, collaboration structures, and citation impact is still limited.

This study therefore aims to map the development of research on Islamic work ethics and employee performance through a bibliometric analysis of Scopus-indexed publications. Specifically, it addresses four questions: (1) what thematic clusters structure the field, (2) how research topics have evolved over time, (3) how authors, institutions, and countries collaborate, and (4) which publications have been most influential in shaping the field.

METHODS

This study adopts a descriptive bibliometric design that combines performance analysis and science mapping to examine research on Islamic work ethics and employee performance. Scopus was selected as the data source because it indexes a wide range of peer-reviewed management, business ethics, and Islamic economics journals and provides complete metadata on authors, affiliations, keywords, and citations that can be processed by VOSviewer. The search was applied to titles, abstracts, and keywords by combining the concept of Islamic work ethics ("Islamic work ethic*") with employee- and performance-related terms such as employee, job, work, and performance, and the records were exported in RIS format on 29 September 2026. Retrieved records were screened by title and abstract to retain publications that examine IWE in relation to employee attitudes, behaviors, or performance. The final dataset consists of 155 documents published between

2000 and 2026, comprising 141 journal articles, 6 reviews, 5 book chapters, and 3 conference papers, 152 of which are written in English, with a total of 4,115 citations. Publication output accelerated after 2018, with 110 documents (71%) published from 2019 onward and a peak of 24 documents in 2024.

The data were analyzed using VOSviewer version 1.6.20. Keyword co-occurrence analysis was conducted with full counting and presented in network, overlay, and density visualizations to reveal the conceptual structure, the temporal evolution of topics, and the concentration of research attention. Co-authorship analysis was conducted at the author, institution, and country levels to map the social structure of the field, while citation analysis ranked documents according to their Scopus citation counts to identify the most influential works. Minimum occurrence thresholds were applied to keep the maps focused on the most relevant items. In each map, node size represents the number of occurrences or documents, link thickness represents the strength of relationships, and colors represent clusters generated by VOSviewer's association-strength normalization. Keyword variants such as "islamic work ethic", "islamic work ethics", and "iwe" were left unmerged to show how authors label the construct.

RESULTS

Keyword Co-Occurrence Network Visualization

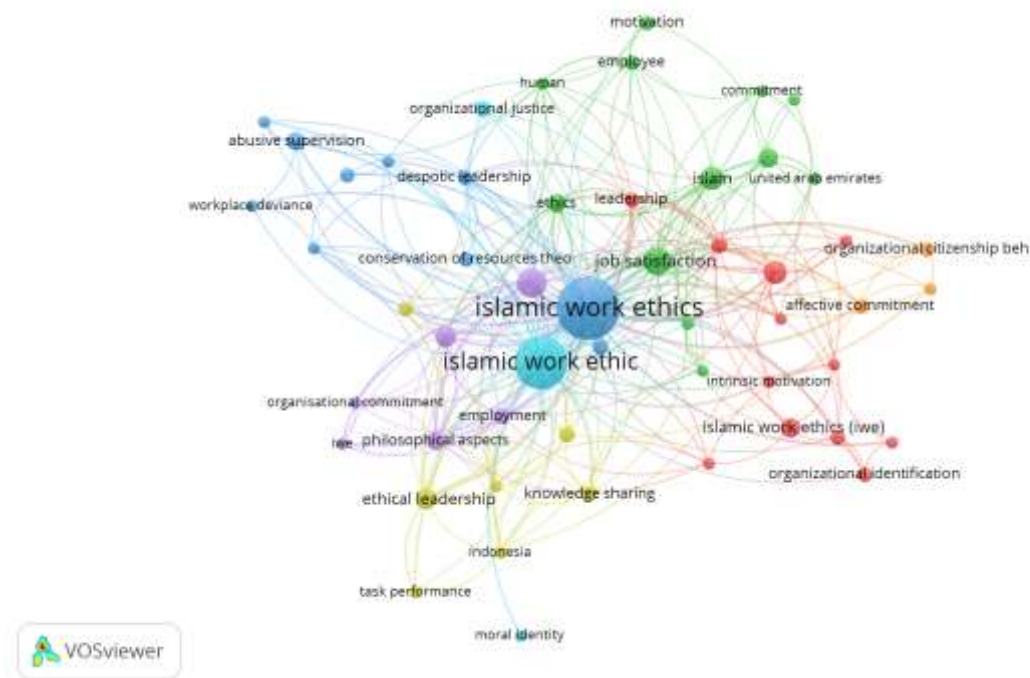


Figure 1. Network Visualization

Source: Data Analysis

Figure 1 displays the conceptual structure of the field. The two largest nodes, Islamic work ethics (69 occurrences) and Islamic work ethic (49 occurrences), are located at the center of the map and are connected to nearly every other keyword, confirming that IWE functions as the conceptual anchor through which all other themes are linked. The next most frequent concepts are job satisfaction (14), organizational commitment (10), islam (10), and ethical leadership (8), indicating

that employee attitudes and leadership are the main contexts in which IWE is examined. VOSviewer grouped the keywords into seven clusters, each representing a distinct research stream.

The blue cluster combines Islamic work ethics with abusive supervision, despotic leadership, workplace deviance, and conservation of resources theory. This cluster represents studies that treat IWE as a personal resource that helps employees preserve their energy and ethical conduct when facing harmful leaders (Javed et al., 2019; Khalid et al., 2018; Raja et al., 2020). The cyan cluster links islamic work ethic with organizational justice and moral identity, reflecting research on how fairness perceptions and moral self-concept interact with IWE to shape outcomes (Khan et al., 2015; Topcan et al., 2025). The green cluster, containing job satisfaction, islam, ethics, employee, human, motivation, commitment, and united arab emirates, forms the attitudinal and motivational foundation of the field, much of which originated in Gulf settings (Gheitani et al., 2019; Yousef, 2001).

The red cluster connects leadership, islamic work ethics (iwe), intrinsic motivation, and organizational identification, showing interest in the psychological processes through which leaders and shared values translate into employee behavior (Hassi et al., 2021; Hayati & Caniango, 2025). The orange cluster, consisting of organizational citizenship behavior and affective commitment, captures extra-role behavior and emotional attachment to the organization (Murtaza et al., 2016). The yellow cluster links ethical leadership, knowledge sharing, task performance, and indonesia, representing a performance-oriented stream in which Indonesian organizations are frequently studied (Udin, 2024). The purple cluster, containing philosophical aspects, employment, organisational commitment, and iwe, reflects the ethical and philosophical basis of work as well as early commitment studies. Overall, the network shows that IWE research is organized along a chain that runs from values and leadership, through attitudes and identification, to discretionary behavior and performance.

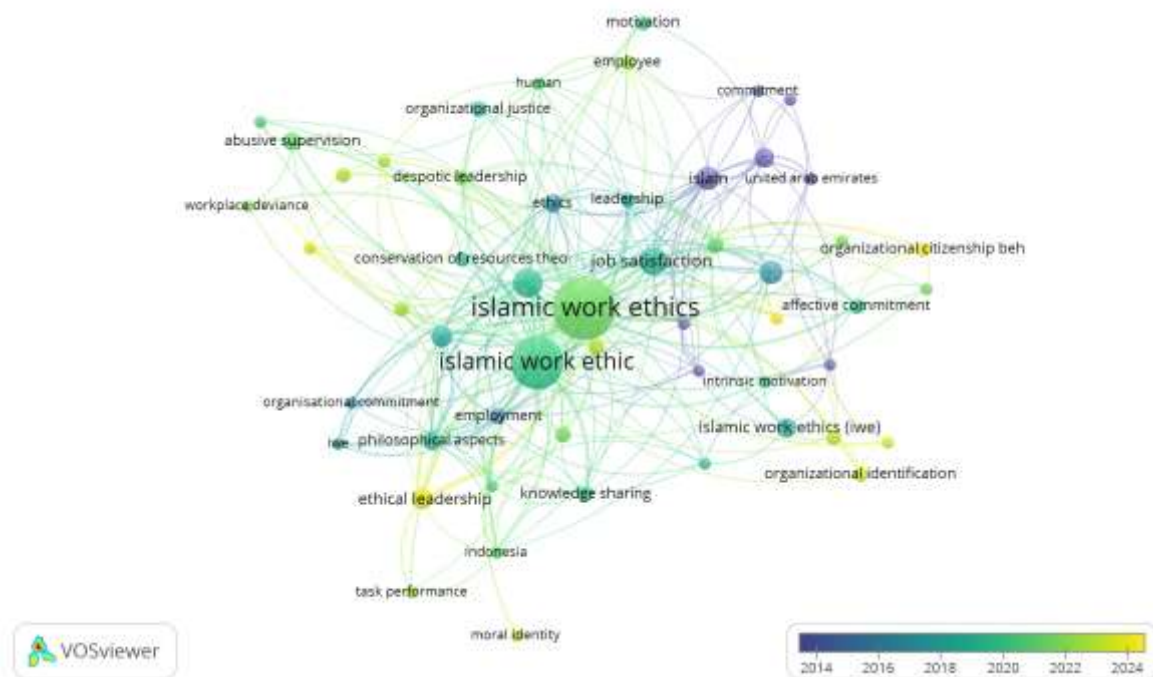


Figure 2. Overlay Visualization

Source: Data Analysis

Figure 2 shows the same network colored by the average publication year of each keyword, ranging from dark blue (around 2014) to yellow (around 2024). The earliest themes are located in the upper right of the map. Keywords such as united arab emirates (average year 2008), islam (2012), commitment (2015), and employment (2016) appear in purple and dark blue, showing that the first generation of studies focused on establishing the relationship between Islamic values, commitment, and work attitudes, largely in Gulf countries (Yousef, 2000, 2001).

The middle period, shown in teal, includes organizational commitment (2017), ethics (2017), leadership (2018), islamic work ethics (iwe) (2018), job satisfaction (2019), organizational justice (2019), affective commitment (2020), and knowledge sharing (2020). In this phase, researchers began testing IWE within broader models of justice, leadership, and knowledge behavior (Khan et al., 2015; Kumar & Rose, 2012; Murtaza et al., 2016). The most recent themes, shown in yellow and light green, include organizational citizenship behavior (2024), ethical leadership (2024), organizational identification (2023), moral identity (2023), task performance (2022), workplace deviance (2022), and despotic leadership (2022). This shift indicates that the field has moved from asking whether IWE matters toward explaining how and when it influences performance, particularly through leadership, identity, and moral mechanisms (Alqhaiwi et al., 2024; Hayati and Caniogo, 2025).

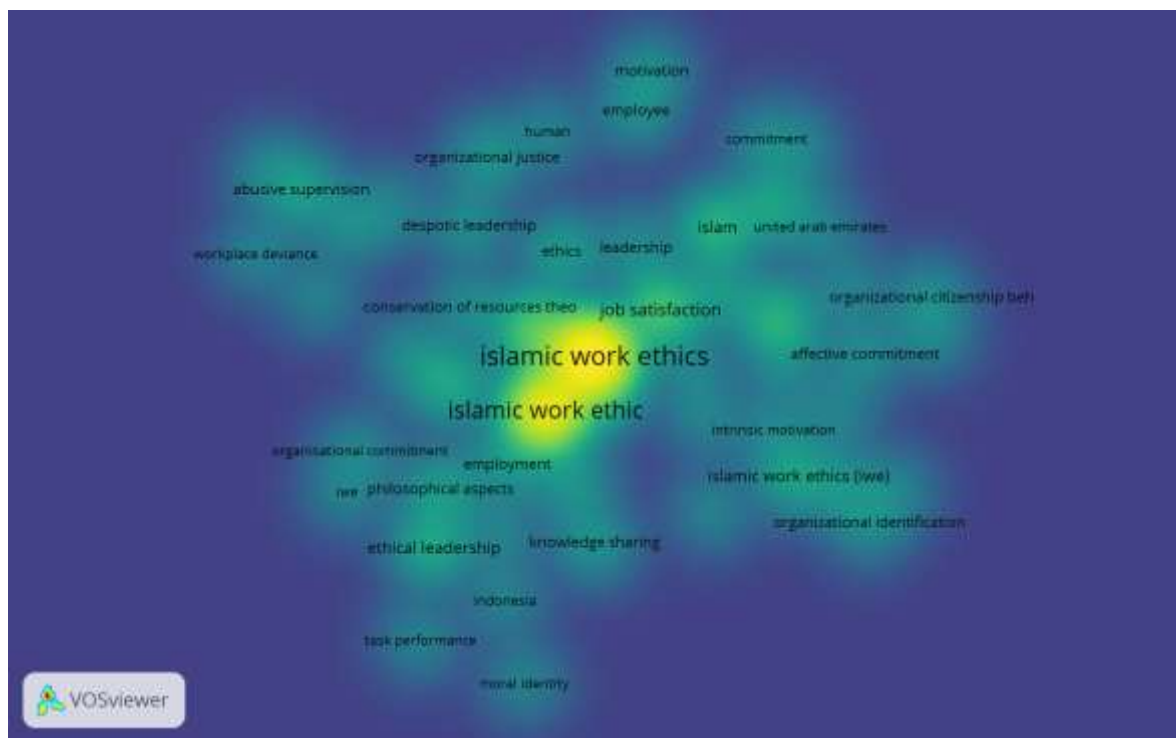


Figure 3. Density Visualization
Source: Data Analysis

Figure 2 shows the same network colored by the average publication year of each keyword, ranging from dark blue (around 2014) to yellow (around 2024). The earliest themes are located in the upper right of the map. Keywords such as united arab emirates (average year 2008), islam (2012), commitment (2015), and employment (2016) appear in purple and dark blue, showing that the first generation of studies focused on establishing the relationship between Islamic values, commitment, and work attitudes, largely in Gulf countries (Yousef, 2000).

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Co-Authorship Network

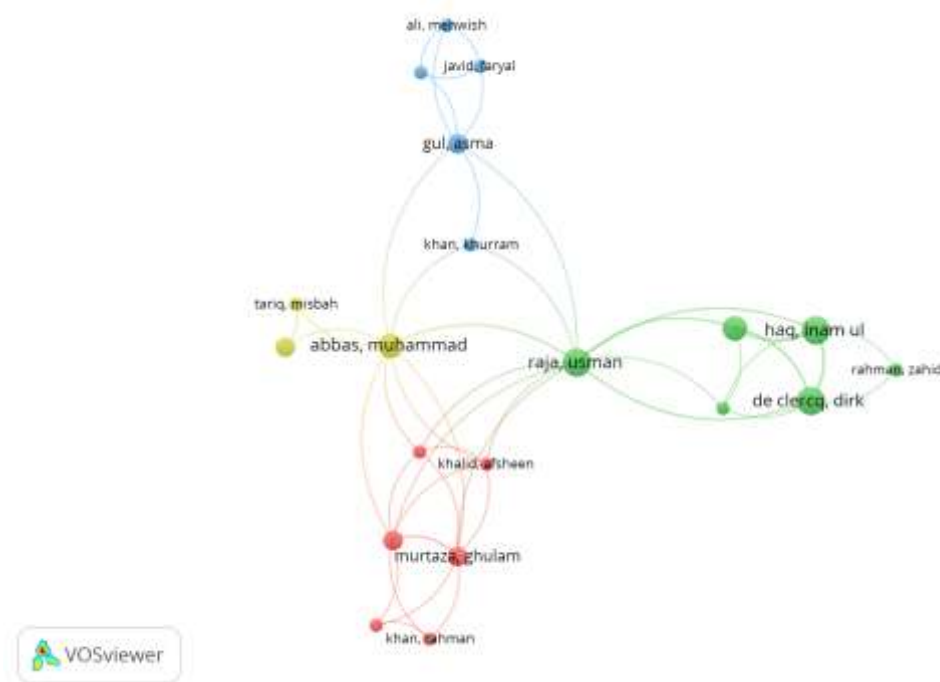


Figure 4. Author Visualization

Source: Data Analysis

Figure 4 shows the co-authorship network among authors. Four clusters are visible. The green cluster includes Raja Usman, Haq Inam Ul, De Clercq Dirk, and Rahman Zahid and is the most cohesive group. Raja Usman, De Clercq Dirk, and Haq Inam Ul each contributed four documents, and their joint works on helping behavior, despotic leadership, and job performance have attracted substantial citations (De Clercq et al., 2018, 2019; Raja et al., 2020). The yellow cluster is centered on Abbas Muhammad (three documents, 347 citations) together with Tariq Misbah, the blue cluster consists of Gul Asma, Ali Mehwish, Javid Faryal, and Khan Khurram, and the red cluster includes Murtaza Ghulam, Khalid Afsheen, and Khan Rahman.

Raja Usman occupies the most strategic position in the network because he links all four clusters. His co-authored works with Abbas, Gul, and Khan on organizational justice (Khan et al., 2015) and with Murtaza and Khalid on citizenship and knowledge sharing (Murtaza et al., 2016)

connect the yellow, blue, and red clusters, while his collaboration with De Clercq and Haq connects them to the green cluster. The network therefore relies heavily on a single bridging author, and most clusters involve researchers with Pakistani academic backgrounds working with a limited number of international partners.

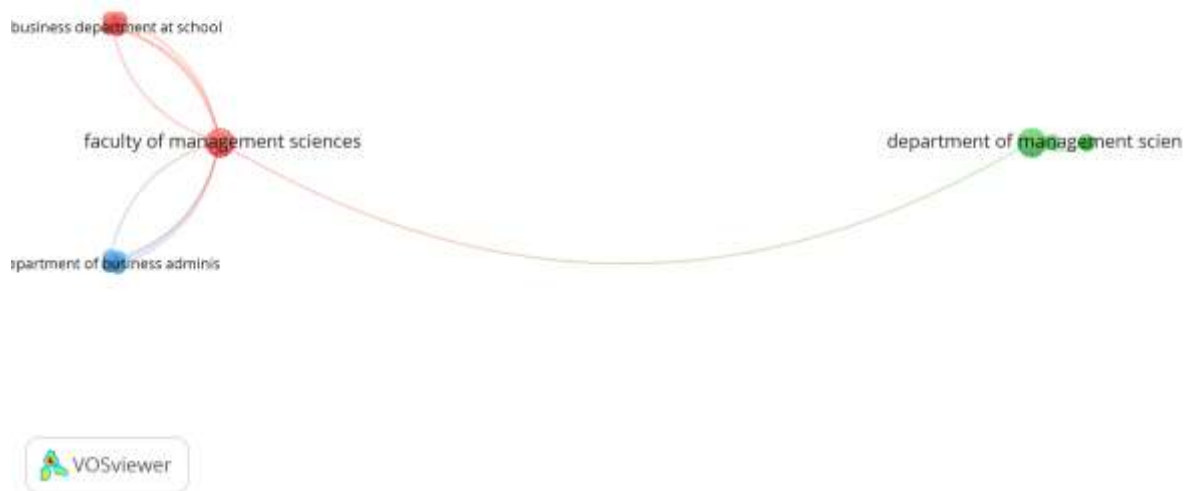


Figure 5. Institution Visualization
Source: Data Analysis

Figure 5 presents the institutional co-authorship network. Faculty of management sciences is the largest node and forms a red cluster with the business department at school of arts and social sciences. It is also linked to department of business administration (blue) and, through one long link, to department of management sciences (green). The affiliation data show that these labels are department-level units that belong mainly to Pakistani universities, such as the International Islamic University Islamabad, Riphah International University, COMSATS University Islamabad, and the National University of Modern Languages, while the business department at school corresponds to Memorial University (Grenfell Campus) in Canada.

Because Scopus records affiliations at faculty and department level, VOSviewer merges units with identical names from different universities into a single node. The map therefore does not show collaboration between named universities but between types of management units. Even so, the small number of nodes and the weak link between the red and green clusters indicate that institutional collaboration is sparse and concentrated in management and business faculties, with little involvement from psychology, religious studies, or public administration units.

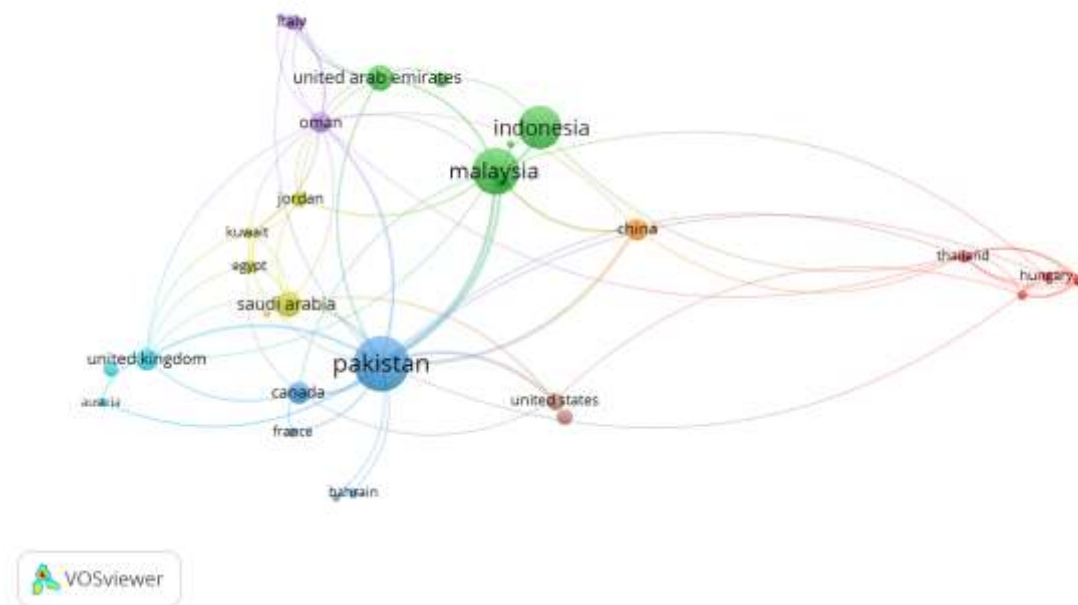


Figure 6. Country Visualization
Source: Data Analysis

Figure 6 shows the country co-authorship network. Pakistan is the largest and most central node, with 55 documents and 1,965 citations, followed by Malaysia (42 documents, 823 citations) and Indonesia (34 documents, 314 citations). The United Arab Emirates contributes only 12 documents but has 926 citations, reflecting the influence of the early foundational studies, while Canada (9 documents, 678 citations) and the United Kingdom (9 documents, 367 citations) also show high impact relative to their output. Saudi Arabia (12), China (9), Oman (8), and the United States (6) complete the group of main contributors.

Eight clusters can be identified. Malaysia, Indonesia, and the United Arab Emirates form a Southeast Asia Gulf cluster (green); Pakistan connects with Canada, France, and Bahrain (blue); Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Kuwait, and Egypt form a Middle Eastern cluster (yellow); Oman links with Italy (purple); the United Kingdom links with Austria (cyan); while China (orange), the United States (brown), and Thailand and Hungary (red) form smaller groups. The thick links between Pakistan and Malaysia and between Pakistan and China show that Pakistan acts as the main hub connecting South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia, whereas the Thailand–Hungary cluster remains peripheral. This pattern indicates that the topic is expanding beyond Muslim-majority countries, but collaboration is still led by a small number of Asian countries.

Citation Analysis

Table 1. Most Cited Article

Citations	Author and Year	Title
319	(Yousef, 2001)	Islamic work ethic: A moderator between organizational commitment and job satisfaction in a cross-cultural context
236	(Khalid et al., 2018)	When and how abusive supervision leads to knowledge hiding behaviors: An Islamic work ethics perspective

Citations	Author and Year	Title
184	(Khan et al., 2015)	Organizational Justice and Job Outcomes: Moderating Role of Islamic Work Ethic
182	(Yousef, 2000)	Organizational commitment as a mediator of the relationship between Islamic work ethic and attitudes toward organizational change
163	(Murtaza et al., 2016)	Impact of Islamic Work Ethics on Organizational Citizenship Behaviors and Knowledge-Sharing Behaviors
145	(Islam et al., 2021)	Abusive supervision and knowledge sharing: moderating roles of Islamic work ethic and learning goal orientation
125	(Abuznaid, 2009)	Business ethics in Islam: the glaring gap in practice
123	(Gheitani et al., 2019)	Mediating effect of intrinsic motivation on the relationship between Islamic work ethic, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment in banking sector
101	(Kumar & Rose, 2012)	The impact of knowledge sharing and Islamic work ethic on innovation capability
97	(De Clercq et al., 2019)	Explaining Helping Behavior in the Workplace: The Interactive Effect of Family-to-Work Conflict and Islamic Work Ethic

DISCUSSION

The results show that research on Islamic work ethics and employee performance has evolved from an attitudinal focus toward a performance-oriented and mechanism-based agenda. Early studies, visible in the purple and green areas of the overlay map, positioned IWE as an antecedent of commitment, satisfaction, and attitudes toward change (Yousef, 2000, 2001), before the field expanded to organizational citizenship behavior, knowledge sharing, and innovation (Javed et al., 2017; Kumar & Rose, 2012; Murtaza et al., 2016). Current studies explain how IWE is translated into performance through psychological capital, affective commitment, intrinsic motivation, and work engagement (Ateeq et al., 2025; Hassi et al., 2021; Qasim et al., 2022). At the same time, the blue cluster shows that IWE is increasingly treated as a personal resource that protects employees from abusive supervision and deviance (Islam et al., 2021; Javed et al., 2019; Khalid et al., 2018), although it may also create strain under despotic leaders (De Clercq et al., 2018; Raja et al., 2020), which explains the appearance of conservation of resources theory in the map. The most recent keywords, including ethical leadership, organizational identification, and moral identity, indicate a new emphasis on moral and identity-based pathways, in which ethical leadership improves performance through IWE (Hayati & Caniogo, 2025; Udin, 2024) and moral identity shapes how IWE guides employee behavior (Alqhaiwi et al., 2024; Topcan et al., 2025). However, task performance still appears in a low-density area, showing that direct performance outcomes remain less studied than attitudes.

The collaboration maps reveal that knowledge production is concentrated in a few Pakistan-based author groups, with Raja Usman acting as the main bridge between clusters, and in department-level management units, while institutional collaboration remains sparse. At the country level, Pakistan, Malaysia, and Indonesia dominate output, whereas the United Arab Emirates and Canada have high citation impact relative to their output, indicating that the most influential ideas originated from a small number of productive teams. Indonesia contributes many documents but receives relatively few citations, which suggests a need for stronger international collaboration and publication in higher-impact outlets (Nasution & Rafiki, 2020; Udin et al., 2022). These findings imply that future research should strengthen performance measurement through

supervisor ratings or objective indicators, adopt longitudinal and multilevel designs, and harmonize the measurement of IWE, as reflected in the inconsistent keyword labels (Aboramadan et al., 2022). Practically, Islamic banks, public institutions, and universities can integrate IWE into recruitment, training, leadership development, and performance appraisal to support employee commitment and performance (Udin et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

This bibliometric mapping contributes by clarifying the intellectual development and emerging directions of IWE research related to employee performance. This bibliometric study mapped research on Islamic work ethics and employee performance based on 155 Scopus-indexed documents published from 2000 to 2026. The analysis shows that IWE is the central concept of the field and is connected to seven clusters covering job satisfaction and commitment, leadership, organizational justice, knowledge sharing, citizenship behavior, and destructive supervision. Research has shifted from early attitudinal studies in Gulf contexts toward recent work on ethical leadership, moral identity, organizational identification, deviance, and task performance. Pakistan, Malaysia, and Indonesia are the leading contributors, while collaboration is concentrated in a few author groups and management units. The most cited studies consist of Yousef's foundational works and later studies on IWE as a moderator of justice and supervision. Future research should strengthen performance measurement, adopt longitudinal and multi-source designs, harmonize the measurement of IWE, and expand cross-regional collaboration.

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