

# Islamic Populism in Indonesia: A Systematic Literature Review

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## Abstract

Islamic populism is one of the most prominent occurrences in the development of populist politics around the world. It has become a significant political force in Indonesia and has been the subject of several studies. This paper presents a systematic literature review on Islamic Populism in Indonesia. It builds on previous studies.

The research uses a bibliometric analysis. It produces data collection through ‘Publish or Perish’ and data visualization using Vosviewer. Data is analyzed in Excel, resulting in a Citation Metric. It reduces and analyses data according to systematic rules and provides a reliable and reproducible summary.

The findings show that previous studies provide insights into the political, ideological, and social dimensions of Islamic populism in Indonesia. They also highlight the challenges and opportunities for countering it. A new perspective of it ‘as a rival in the life of democracy in Indonesia’ was found. Populism is considered a threat that can destroy Indonesia's unity. It is seen to also divide society into discriminatory groups that could allow violence, especially in elections. However, research gaps exist, such as a lack of in-depth studies on the historical roots, methodological limitations, regional variations, gender perspectives, public policy impact, and media influence of the movement.

**Keywords:** Islamic Populism, Indonesia, Democracy

## Introduction

Populism has been used to characterize many leaders and situations in various contexts, and the term is gaining popularity worldwide, especially in Indonesia. Perdana (2017) claims that the recent ascent of religious populist leaders in Indonesia is conceivable due to the absence of Marxist movements in Indonesia. The binary opposition populist leaders use in many examples of Populism is that of regular people versus political or commercial elites. The notion of elite exploitation of ordinary people is also a central subject of Leftist movements (Akmaliah & Nadzir, 2021). Populism becomes a crucial part of shaping the characteristics of leaders because the formation of a leader figure must be by crisis issues to attract majority sympathy.

Islamic Populism is a subset of the more significant phenomena of the global development of populist politics. It is a societal response to some of the most fundamental issues of social injustice in a globalized world where the left's difficulties have waned. Islamic Populism can be understood as the result of Cold War-era tensions in Muslim societies and the social contradictions of capitalist development (Populismstudies.org, 2020). Although Muslims comprise roughly one to eight per cent of the population in many Western countries, their presence has become one of the populist era's defining concerns, violently dividing left and right. The rise in anti-Muslim prejudice points to a broader change in the political system away from economic and toward "cultural" conflicts (Caiani, 2019).

The emergence of Islamic Populism is motivated by political differences mobilized through Islamic discourse and symbols as an electoral strategy (Adiwilaga et al., 2019). Islamic narratives attract more attention to populism conversations among scholars because they send powerful messages to Muslims and society (Sunardi, 2022). Islamic populism was most visible in Indonesia during the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election when it was used as a political tool. The campaign was marked using Islamic symbols and rhetoric and the mobilization of hardline Muslim groups against the incumbent non-Muslim Governor (Mudhoffir, 2020). This resulted in a 'butterfly effect,' where events such as the North Sumatra gubernatorial election were full of narratives of Islamic Populism as a spiritual movement that shifted into a political movement (Nasution et al., 2023a; Sembiring et al., 2023).

Indonesian Islamic populism is a political movement that combines Islamic values with populist rhetoric to appeal to the masses. Indonesia is the world's largest Muslim democracy, but it is not an "Islamic State" like Iran or Saudi Arabia. Instead, it is based on a national ideology called "Pancasila" (Five Principles) (Amin & Ritonga, 2023). The rise of Islamic populism in Indonesia has been attributed to the "conservative turn" in Indonesian Islam at the beginning of the 21st century. The movement has succeeded in Indonesia due to its ability to appeal to Islamists and pluralists. The aims and objectives of Indonesian Islamic populism are to promote Islamic values and principles in the political sphere, to address social and economic issues affecting society, and to challenge the existing political elite. However, some researchers argue that Islamic populism, along with other forces such as Islamism and democratic backsliding, is responsible for hindering democratic consolidation in Indonesia.

Islamic Populism has become a significant political force in Indonesia and has been the subject of several studies. A systematic literature review approach can help identify and analyze the existing literature on Indonesian Islamic Populism. The aim of this study is to explore the published literature on Indonesian Islamic Populism. Its objectives are:

1. To identify the key concepts and definitions of Islamic Populism in Indonesia.
2. To identify the historical and political context of Islamic Populism in Indonesia.
3. To identify the ideological and discursive features of Islamic Populism in Indonesia.
4. To identify the social and cultural factors that contribute to the rise of Islamic Populism in Indonesia.
5. To assess the impact of Islamic Populism on Indonesian politics, society, and culture.
6. To identify challenges and opportunities to counter Islamic Populism in Indonesia.

## Theoretical Framework

Ernesto Laclau developed a theory of Populism, which has been influential in the study of Populism. Laclau analyzes Populism as a political logic used by left, right, and center groups, representing a form of political discourse rather than a specific allegiance to a class, ideology, or type of society. He argues that the basis of Populism lies in creating "empty signifiers," which express universal ideas of justice and symbolically structure the political environment (Arditi, 2022; Amin & Ritonga, 2023). Laclau theory emphasizes the importance of affect in politics and the creation of popular hegemonic blocs, such as "the people." He considers Populism an

essential component of democracy, contrary to those who see it as a threat to democracy. In his work *"On Populist Reason,"* Laclau sought to counter the standard European use of the term "populist" and influence the understanding of Populism by referring to Latin American Populism and American history (Ballacci, 2017; Thomassen, 2020).

Islamic Populism is a political approach that aims to replace secular governments with religious people running the government. It is a subtype of Populism that uses political identity based on religious affiliation (Lestari, 2023). The development of Islamic Populism can be traced back to the last decade when it emerged as a response to the underlying problems of social inequality and political marginalization in various parts of the Muslim world (Fossati & Mietzner, 2019). Populism is the social basis of multi-class alliances articulated through identity as the basis of solidarity (Adiwilaga et al., 2019). The discourse of Islamic Populism revolves around individual skills, social excellence, respect for religious teachings and clerics, and fighting for the interests of Muslims (Hadiz, 2016).

Islamic Populism creates a categorization of supporters based on their religious identity and level of commitment to religious teachings. In addition, most Islamic political parties in Indonesia have used Islamic Populism to gain support, especially from conservative circles (Muhtadi & Muslim, 2020; Muhtadi & Muslim, 2021). In addition, the rise of Islamic Populism is linked to the era of neoliberal globalization, which has led to the death of the left-wing and created a vacuum that Islamic Populism has entered. Furthermore, Islamic Populism represents an emerging cross-class coalition with little attachment to the political liberalism often associated with leftist ideologies (Mudhoffir, 2020). As such, the development of Islamic Populism is influenced by a variety of factors, including the rise of neoliberal globalization, the decline of leftist ideologies, and the emergence of a renewed interest in Islamic politics (Widian et al., 2023). It responds to the underlying problems of social inequality and political marginalization in the Muslim world and has developed as a new form of political identity and mobilization (Hadiz, 2016).

## Research Methodology

This research uses the Systematic literature review method with bibliometric analysis to see the research development with the keywords *"Indonesia Islamic Populism"*. Bibliometric analysis helps assess the outcomes of scientific research, map the field of science, and follow or trace the evolution of new information on a specific topic (Muhammad *et al.*, 2022).

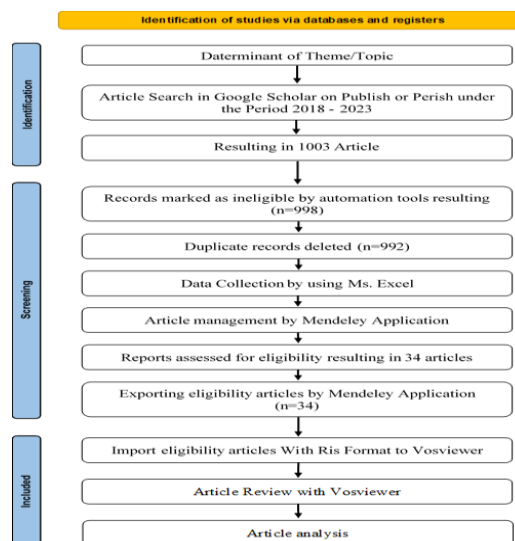


Fig. 1: Prisma Diagram Research Stages

It is an evidence-based set of reporting guidelines developed to improve the transparency and complete, and accurate reporting of systematic reviews, thus facilitating evidence-based decision making (Page et al., 2021).

The PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) flowchart visually represents the study selection process in a systematic review or meta-analysis. It is divided into four stages: identifying articles for review, screening articles for review, deciding which studies to include, and identifying studies to include in the final analysis (Page et al., 2021). The PRISMA flowchart visually represents the various stages in a systematic review or meta-analysis, including identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and study inclusion (See Figure 1). Data collection through the Publish or Perish (PoP) application by entering the keyword "Indonesian Islamic Populism" on Google Scholar searches with a vulnerable time in 2018-2023, which produced data as many as 998 articles, the next step is data collection on Ms. Excel by reducing data in excel form to facilitate data visualization, the following Citation Metric is generated as a consequence of data collection using the Publish or Perish (PoP) application with the keyword "*Indonesia Islamic Populism*".

**Table 1:** Citation Metric of the publication "*Indonesia Islamic Populism*"  
Source: Author, 2023

Query	Journal, Indonesia Islamic Populism from 2018 to 2023
Source	Google Scholar
Papers	998
Citations	6510
Years	5
Cites Year	1302.00
Cites Paper	6.52
Cites Author	4309.18
Papers Author	663.78
Authors Paper	1.99
H index	35
G index	61
Query Date	27/08/2023 11:08
Cites Author Year	861.83
HI annual	5.40
H coverage	46.9
G coverage	57.8
Star count	64
Year first	2018
Year last	2023
HA	20

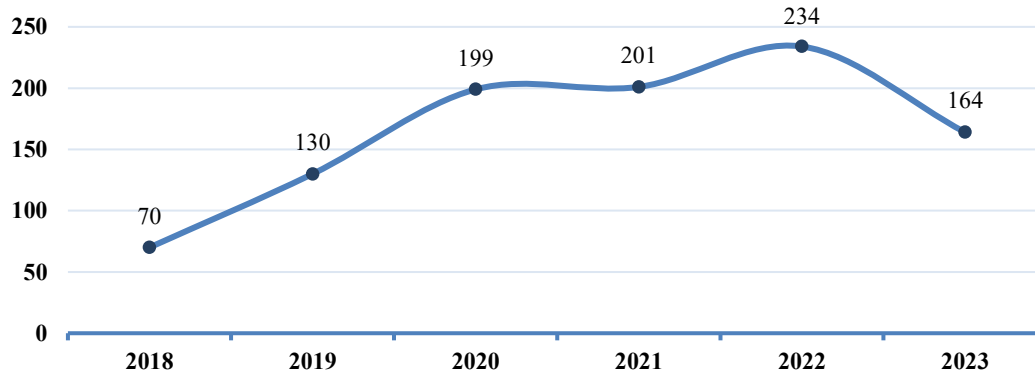
This systematic literature review provides a comprehensive and a general summary without favoritism. It records sufficiently to make the findings reliable and independently reproducible (Okoli & Schabram, 2012). The process in conducting the review forms a discursive structure, with the data results being reduced and analyzed according to systematic rules.

## Findings

### Publications of literature on "*Indonesia Islamic Populism*"

A lot of literature exist that study Islamic populism in Indonesia. Islamic populism in Indonesia has developed in such a way as to form pro-incumbent

communities to anti-government movements. Before delving into Islamic populism, it is important to highlight that, despite experts' pessimistic assessments, in the Indonesian context, Islamic populism has now become an alternative movement highly influential at the grassroots level (Adiwilaga et al., 2019). In the data search, researchers found more than 900 articles with the search “Indonesia Islamic Populism” on Google Scholar related to the phenomenon of Islamic populism in Indonesia in the search between 2018-2023.



**Fig. 2:** Number of Publications on “Indonesia Islamic Populism” from 2018-2023

Source: Data processed by the author, 2023

Several publications have been published on “Indonesia Islamic Populism” over the past five years, and the number is steadily rising. According to the Figure 2, there were 70 articles published in 2018, 130 articles published in 2019, 199 articles published in 2020, 201 articles published in 2021, and 234 articles published in 2022. As of August 2023, there were 164 articles published. The amount of papers about “Indonesia Islamic Populism” that have been published over the past five years indicates how interesting this issue is to examine, coupled with the evolution of Indonesian politics.

The significance of the increase in the publication of articles on “Indonesia Islamic Populism” illustrates the development of Islamic populism in Indonesia. As stated, (Susanto, 2019), Islam, as the religion of most Indonesians, has the potential to permeate the popular movement. This makes this topic an exciting branch of scholarship to research, along with the development of political phenomena that continue to roll in Indonesia.

### Top Article Rankings by Google Scholar Ranking

To create the findings using the data received through the Publish or Perish (PoP) program, this paper examined the publications on “Indonesia Islamic Populism,” resulting in 998 articles. Researchers mapped the top 10 articles based on the GS Ranking rating out of the entire number of publications published on this subject. A bibliographic study on the most popular articles was performed to determine the influence of publications by counting the number of citations. certain phenomena were frequently used as examples of research efforts on a specific topic can be measured by mapping the most popular publications.

**Table 2:** Citation Ranks “Indonesia Islamic Populism” by Google Scholar from 2018-2023

Source: Author, 2023

Cites	Authors	Title	Year	GS Rank	Cites Per Year	Cites Per Author
146	VR Hadiz	Imagine all the people? Mobilising Islamic populism for right-wing politics in Indonesia.	2018	1	29.20	146
189	M Mietzner	Populist anti-scientism, religious polarisation, and institutionalised	2020	2	63.00	189

		corruption: How Indonesia democratic decline shaped its COVID-19 response.				
8	S Nurjannah, D Khudzaifah, S Bambang...	The resurgence of islamic populist: Purification understanding of usury banking in X-banker community-Indonesia.	2019	3	2.00	2
40	M Mietzner	Rival populisms and the democratic crisis in Indonesia: Chauvinists, Islamists and technocrats.	2020	4	13.33	40
25	NH Susanto	Politicization of religion and the future of democracy in Indonesia in populism theory.	2019	5	6.25	25
14	R Adiwilaga, MU Mustofa, MRT Rahman	Quo Vadis Islamic Populism? An Electoral Strategy.	2019	6	3.50	5
14	I Rakhmani, MS Saraswati	Authoritarian populism in Indonesia: The role of the political campaign industry in engineering consent and coercion.	2021	7	7.00	7
7	F Aidulsyah, Y Mizuno	The Entanglement Between Anti-Liberalism and Conservatism: The INSISTS and MIUMI Effect within the "212 Movement" in Indonesia.	2020	8	2.33	4
7	B White, C Graham, L Savitri	Agrarian movements and rural populism in Indonesia.	2023	9	7.00	2
5	N Ahmad	Populist political ideation and communication of gubernatorial candidates in Indonesia's 2018 gubernatorial elections: Anti-establishment views, secular nationalism and Islamism as ideational-populist elements.	2022	10	5.00	5

Based on the Table 2 above, there are ten prominent articles on “*Indonesia Islamic Populism*” that discuss the impact of populism on democratic life in Indonesia. These articles include findings (Mietzner, 2020b) that contrast with the assertions of populist and other anti-democratic players who have been at the forefront of Indonesia's democratic slide over the last ten years. In various ways, they assert that Indonesia's onerous democratic decision-making process renders governance difficult and ineffective. More substantial and less constrained leadership is needed to reduce bureaucracy, lessen corruption, and enhance public services. In this regard, the structural faults of the governments that confident leaders of failed democracies have established prevent them from acting as Jokowi has.

Furthermore, according to the findings of Mietzner (2020a), Indonesia's populist currents are growing more radicalized in competition, making Indonesia a more religiously divided, chauvinistic, and generally less liberal country. This tendency is mirrored in Indonesia's precipitous decrease in the Democracy Index in 2017 - by 20 places, the most of any country that year. This is because, while Indonesia's party system looks stable and inclusive on the surface, it suffers from under-representation, which populists have exploited. To fill the hole left by a party system regarded as incapable of channeling the interests of “*the people*,” populists have hijacked the topic of representation, a traditional fundamental element of party-based democracy (Nasution et al., 2023b).

Rakhmani and Saraswati (2021) corroborate some of the preceding material. This article looks at Indonesian elections, specifically the 2019 presidential election,

and shows how campaigns used authoritarian populist narratives to convince a diverse and undecided audience. They portrayed a strong leader capable of ensuring Indonesia's future. In this scenario, the populist movement is an essential aspect of shaping the qualities of political actors, which influences people's opinions, which are more oriented toward charismatic actors than the political ideals and missions of the candidates.

Following on from the impact of populism on democratic life in Indonesia, various publications of essays on the subject address how populism works as a political instrument in winning the battle for power. As Hadiz (2018) explains, rigid orthodox interpretations of Islamic religious teachings have been compelling in conflicts where certain elites mobilize piety to support their desires to monopolize the levers of state power and the attendant opportunities for private wealth accumulation. A recent example was the intense battle for Jakarta's governorship in 2016-2017, which involved the core of the New Order-era nobility in the form of the Soeharto family (Hadiz, 2018).

Findings of Aidulsyah and Mizuno (2020) are consistent with the preceding literature. Establishing these organizations is part of Indonesia's *"conservative turn"* in Islam. In some ways, this symbolizes an inflow of global Islamic discourse that adds authenticity. Chaplin contends that the *"212 movement"* represents the emergence of broader global Islamic ideologies in the political and public spheres over the last decade. The study of *"Indonesia Islamic Populism"* becomes a crucial segmentation based on Indonesia's multi-religious and multi-racial composition, which makes the literature on this topic continue to grow in line with the phenomena that continue to unfold in Indonesia.

### Top Keywords on "Indonesia Islamic Populism"

The presence of journal articles, particularly in the context of search results on this topic, alludes to their publication and availability in academic journals where keywords in the article describe the topic or content of the paper. Keywords are frequently chosen depending on the frequency with which the term appears in the article, or the subject addressed in the paper. These can also be utilized as search recommendations by information seekers across several publications. The existence of journal articles in search results on this topic refers to their publication and availability in academic journals where keywords in the article describe the topic or content of the paper. Keywords are typically picked based on how frequently the term appears in the article or the topic discussed in the document. Information seekers can also use these as search recommendations across many publications.

As significant stakeholders in the production of this study, the top most common terms in publications on *"Indonesia Islamic Populism"* were identified. The study's keywords are the most often mentioned subjects in studying Islamic populism in Indonesia. Using keywords for analysis can summarize what phenomena occur each year, allowing the publication to become a debate point. In the data processing performed on Vosviewer, the frequency of the most frequent terms (occurrences) in the search for publications on *"Indonesia Islamic Populism"* is 21.

**Table 3:** Verified Selected Terms on data processing in Vosviewer  
Source: Author, 2023

keyword	occurrences	total link strength
Indonesia	94	64
Populism	38	31
Islam	24	28

Social Media	15	7
Democracy	14	22
Islamism	14	17
Religion	14	18
Nationalism	13	11
Culture	9	9
Islamophobia	9	7
Pancasila	9	4
Radicalism	9	4
Human Rights	8	9
Islamic Populism	8	2
Politics	7	12
Democratization	6	6
Ideology	6	9
Illiberalism	6	9
Multiculturalism	6	1
Democratisation	5	8
Inequality	5	8

Based on the Table 3. above, the most frequent keyword in the search for publications about “*Indonesia Islamic Populism*” after the keywords “*Indonesia*”, “*Islamic*”, and “*Populism*” as a key player is “social media” as many as 15 occurrences that discuss the most used platforms in implementing and implementing Islamic populism in Indonesia. They were followed by “*democracy*” (15), “*nationalism*” (13), “*Pancasila*” (9), “*human rights*” (8), “*politics*” (7), “*democratization*” (6), and “*ideology*” (6), “*illiberalism*” (6), “*democratization*” (5), and “*inequality*” (5) which discusses the impact of the development of Islamic populism that has a rivalry with democracy in Indonesia. As said by Hamid (2019), In this context, populism is a threat to democracy because the use of majority identity (indigenous-Muslim) will threaten minorities and encourage divisions in the order of social and state life in Indonesia, which has been built on unity and integrity, and harm the democratic system in Indonesia (Hamid, 2019). Searches on this topic also yielded keywords such as “*Islamism*” (14), “*religion*” (14), “*culture*” (9), “*islamophobia*” (9), “*radicalism*” (9), “*Islamic Populism*” (8), and “*multiculturalism*” (6) The emergence of Islamic populism cannot be separated from socio-political developments. As assessed by Zyumardi Azra, Islamic populism can only flourish, grow and develop if the socio-political situation is favorable (Amal, 2020). In other words, Islamic populism can emerge to resist the ruling regime because of the availability of political opportunities. The literature on “*Indonesia Islamic Populism*” is quite diverse regarding “*term occurrences*” or keywords that often come out, and most discuss socio-political phenomena.

### Visual Analysis of Publications on Research Topics

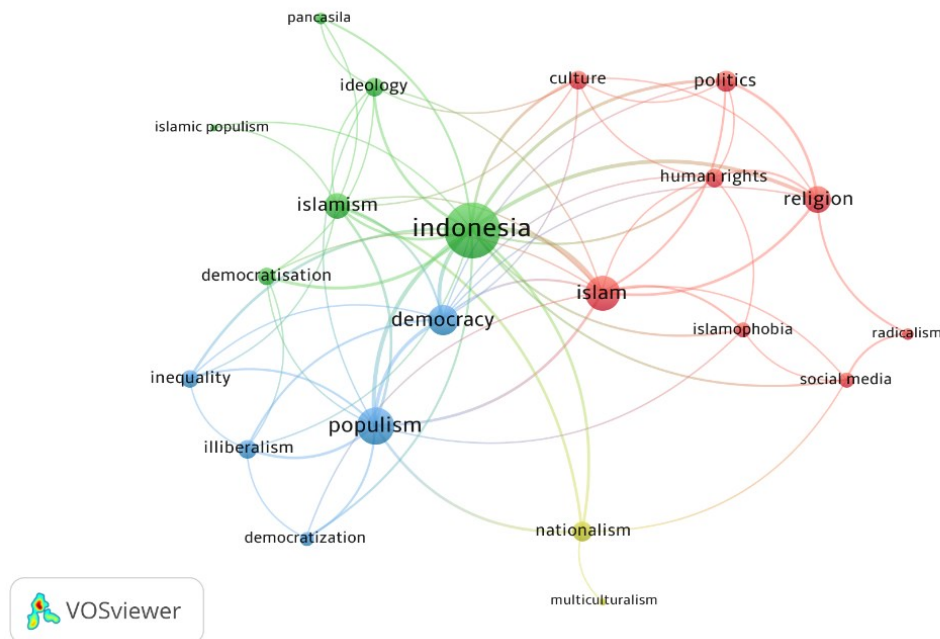
The researchers in this study are interested in the phenomena that occurred in the growth of Islamic populism in Indonesia between 2018 and 2023. The Vosviewer data processing yields four cluster divisions that depict the interactive network between the most connected keywords in this publication.



**Table 4:** Cluster map of Publications on “Indonesia Islamic Populism”  
Source: Author, 2023

Cluster 1 (8 items)	Cluster 2 (5 items)	Cluster 3 (5 items)	Cluster 4 (2 items)
Culture	Democratisation	Democracy	Multiculturalism
Human Rights	Ideology	Democratization	Nationalism
Islam	Indonesia	Illiberalism	
Islamophobia	Islamic Populism	Inequality	
Politics	Islamism	Populism	
Radicalism	Pancasila		
Religion			
Social Media			

Based on the Table 4, clusters between items appear on this research topic. Eight items in Cluster 1, 6 in Cluster 2, 5 in Cluster 3, and 2 in Cluster 4 illustrate the interaction between items and the correlation between clusters that discuss Islamic populism in Indonesia. In the table, it can be seen that cluster 1, as the dominant cluster, has eight items that relate to groups with the power to form populism entities. Cluster 2 has six items with keywords related to ideologies or ideas that form patterns in the populist movement. In cluster 3, there are five items with keywords related to the impact and consequences that can arise from populism itself. In cluster 4, only two items related to subjects have a major role in the formation of populism.

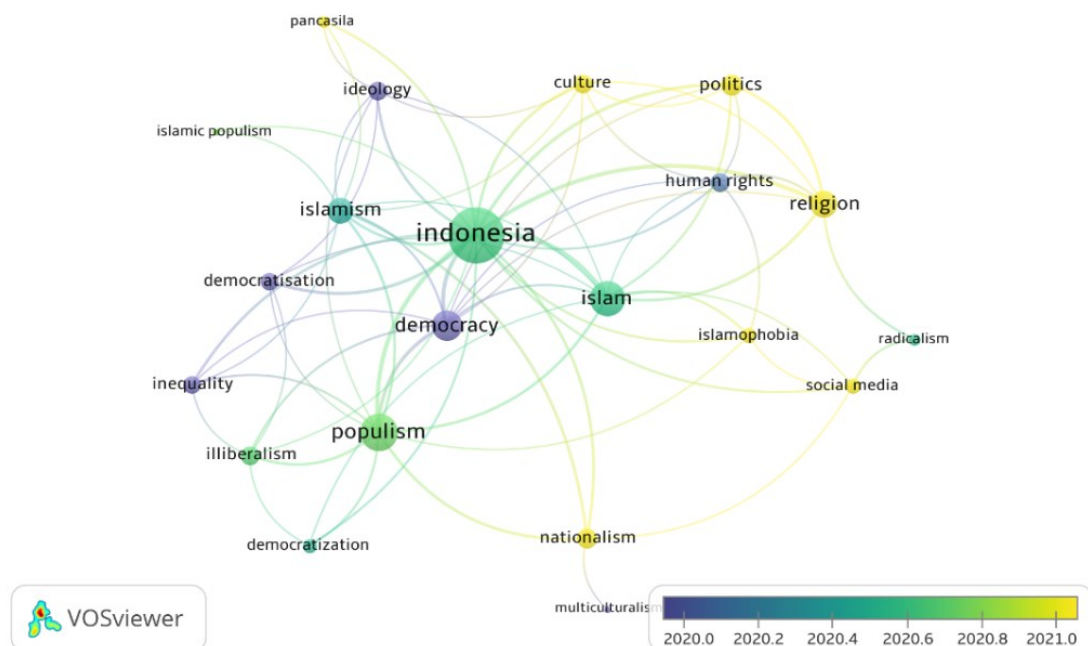


**Fig. 3:** Network Visualization of the publication “Indonesia Islamic Populism”  
Source: Author, 2023

The network visualization of the publication “Indonesia Islamic Populism” depicts the correlation lines between related items or interactive networks by examining the total link strength or link strength dominated in cluster 3 (green color) with the interactive network between the most extensive items correlated (dashes) with cluster 1 (red color), cluster 2 (blue color), and cluster 4 (yellow color). It is clear from Figure 3 that this is the case. Cluster 3 (the impact and consequences of

populism) produces much literature related to “Indonesia Islamic Populism” in terms of the problems and impacts produced by Islamic populism, followed by cluster 2 (ideology and ideas), which contributes to this literature by discussing the rise of populism taken from theoretical and empirical studies, as well as cluster 1 (red color) which discusses the power in shaping the entity of populism and in cluster 4 which contributes to this literature by discussing.

In the data visualization, many keywords lack link strength with other clusters but have a big role in fellow articles that make the article's focus on the topic be examined in depth. There are several keywords such as “Radicalism”, “social media”, “multiculturalism”, and several other keywords that can be seen from the position of keywords in the visualization at the edge of the cluster. However, in this visualization, these items appear in many articles as part of the terms that strengthen an article's deepening.



**Fig. 4:** Overlay Visualization of the publication “Indonesia Islamic Populism”  
Source: Author, 2023

Based on the Overlay Visualization in Figure 4, publications on “Indonesia Islamic Populism” for 2018-2023 are the publication trends that occurred during the specified period. In the upper figure, it can be concluded that the research trend at the beginning of 2020 on this topic is about democracy, inequality, and ideology, which has a strong link to the keywords Indonesia and populism, which can be concluded that the literature discussed is about the development and problems of ideology and political systems in that year. Studies on this topic are also trending in late 2020 to early 2021, where many discuss culture, politics, and religion, which have strong links to human rights and interactive networks to Indonesian keywords. The literature discussed the intersection of culture, politics, and religion in Indonesia, which supports the development of studies on this topic.



**Fig. 4:** Network Visualization of the publication "*Indonesia Islamic Populism*"  
Source: Author, 2023

Literature on Islamic populism in Indonesia provides a new view of the phenomenon of Islamic populism that has occurred in Indonesia in the last five years. As can be seen from Figure 5, it can be explained that the colour contrast describes the most influenced and influenced where outside of the words "*Indonesia*", "*Islam*", and "*Populism*", there are keywords "*Democracy*" and "*religion*" which have the brightest colour contrast and can be defined that the topic of democracy and religion in the literature on the entity of Islamic populism in Indonesia has a major contribution to the publication of this research "*Indonesia Islamic Populism*". There is also the word "*Islamism*", which has a bright colour contrast, which is defined as a set of ideologies that believe that Islam should be a guideline in every human life, whether social, political, cultural, or personal life, which is a topic that is quite often used in research on "*Indonesia Islamic Populism*". In this case, the trend of publications on "*Indonesia Islamic Populism*" has key players that relevantly attract scientists to study by looking at the trend of keywords that most often come out to make discussions about the development of Islamic populism in Indonesia as a form of literature that can be a reference or consideration in conducting studies related to this topic.

## Discussion

### Islamic Populism in Indonesia

Populism is a term used in politics to describe leaders using political behaviour, attitudes, and rhetoric to appeal to the masses (Penrose, 2019). Populism is often used to describe the phenomenon where leaders appeal to the people through their actions, attitudes, and political language. Defined populism is the mobilization of the masses by influencing movements to pursue a goal, such as political power. Religious ideologies that promise redemption and eternal life are frequently the source of populist movements. These philosophies connect individuals around religious symbols. In this way, religion and populist movements have a tight link because religion might potentially give birth to populist activities (Susanto, 2019).

As a modern worldwide phenomenon, populism is one of the defining motifs of twenty-first-century politics and probably the central motif of international politics for the last decade (Wajner, 2022). Populism is frequently used as a political weapon to achieve power because it effectively generates public sympathy. Several similar studies on Islamic populism in Indonesia reveal that the phenomenon is rooted in a crisis of representation due to the lack of a progressive political

organization that serves as a platform for marginalized classes (Pratama, 2021). This has ramifications for populism in Indonesia, which tends to focus solely on election mobilization, harming democratic life in the country.

Populism has grown prevalent in Indonesia as a political approach for attracting the masses and gaining power through democratic elections. This may be seen in the populist tendency in Indonesia, particularly during the 2019 elections between the two Indonesian presidential contenders, both of whom began with a spirit of nationalism. They did, however, demonstrate the exclusivity of two different manifestations of Islam, such as traditionalist Islam and conservative Islam (Santoso *et al.*, 2020). Events highlight the entity of populism, with linked populist patterns immediately forming pro and con factions. It is possible to say that popular religious politics are a sister of populist national socialist inclinations because religion plays a vital role in mobilizing mass politics (Esenbel, 2021).

This phenomenon occurs not just at the national level but also at the local level, according to Hamid (Hamid, 2019). Populism was present in the 2017 DKI Jakarta gubernatorial election but in a different form. Religion, race, and poverty were commoditized to create and sustain an identity opposed to the incumbent. Since 2014, Islamic groups that felt they were the majority but lacked access to power and resources have demonstrated their resistance and opposition to Ahok's leadership. There are also findings from Djuyandi *et al.* (2019) quoted from the news media *Liputan 6* regarding the West Java governor election in 2018 from the Sudrajat-Syaikh pair utilizing their popularity by exploiting the support network of pro-Islamic parties.

In its development, Islamic Populism has become a more powerful narrative of political contestation, and populist candidates use identity politics to appeal to voters. Populism grows when social and political institutions become dysfunctional, and the rise of charismatic political players becomes an unavoidable alternative. Changes in the political landscape encouraged the advent of populism in Indonesia, as did the rise of Islamic mass mobilization and the emergence of charismatic political figures. Although specific contexts and conditions are required for the birth or strengthening of Islamic populism, the presence of charismatic characters, actors, or leaders significantly impacts the consolidation of populist movements (Basya, 2021).

Looking at the above phenomena, as a political and leadership tactic, populism is defined by resentment, representation, and relationships. It attempts to denounce the elites by establishing a direct link with the masses, which may eventually undermine democracy (Triwibowo & Martha, 2021). If we want to investigate the potential harm to democracy, we need to rethink our critique of populism, especially the figures of "leaders" and "crowds" (Hoyng, 2020).

### **Islamic Populism as a Challenge to Democracy in Indonesia**

In the literature review in this research with the results of data reduction conducted, many studies were obtained regarding the impact of Islamic populism in Indonesia on democratic life. Islamic populism in Indonesia has been scientifically criticized because Indonesia is filled with racially and religiously diverse people. The existence of populism is a threat to democracy in Indonesia because it will lead to discrimination against opposing groups, and even worse, authoritarianism can easily form. Because if a country has an undemocratic government, it can make the country an authoritarian state. If a democratic country is run without rules, it can become violent (Saputri & Samsuri, 2020).

Indonesia faces its challenges as a democracy with a highly heterogeneous society (Sembiring & Nasution, 2024). Ideological divisions in Indonesia's party system are still largely determined by sectarian subcultures inherited from Indonesia's early years as a democracy. Several analysts have pointed out that

relatively large variations occur in vote share between parties within the same subcultural block (Gyene, 2019; Christopher et al., 2024). Based on these facts, political parties are very important in upholding democracy (Malik, 2020). Islamic populism can threaten democracy in Indonesia because it can lead to discrimination against minority groups and create differences in views and interests that can threaten the sustainability of democracy in Indonesia.

The public discourse space must be widened so that religious beliefs, frequently utilized as propaganda weapons by populists, and the various realities of Indonesian society can be brought together. Furthermore, considerable access to economic resources must be broadened efficiently and equitably to better the nation's future (Susanto, 2019). Indonesia should collaborate to create such a framework so that the process of strengthening democracy can proceed smoothly. Given the religious aspect of Indonesian society, the government and all Indonesians should exercise caution when responding to populist movements claiming to be Islamic.

### **The Research Gap on Islamic Populism in Indonesia**

In conducting a systematic literature review on Islamic populism in Indonesia, several gaps in the literature can be identified. First, the literature may not have provided a sufficiently in-depth study of the historical roots of Islamic populism in Indonesia. Therefore, more detailed research on the historical development of the social and political context that shaped the movement is needed to provide a more comprehensive understanding. In addition, gaps exist in the research methods used in the existing literature. Research that focuses on evaluating and comparing research methods applied by different researchers can help identify strengths and weaknesses in methodological approaches, advancing the quality of research in this area.

Regional or local variations in Islamic populism in Indonesia may also not be sufficiently covered in the literature. More in-depth research is needed to understand how Islamic populism may manifest differently in different regions of Indonesia, thus providing richer insights. Gender aspects in the context of Islamic populism often receive less attention in the literature. Therefore, an analysis that considers how Islamic populism affects and is affected by gender roles could be an exciting research area. The concrete impact of Islamic populism on public policymaking in Indonesia is also an aspect that is not fully understood in the literature. More in-depth research focusing on the policy consequences of Islamic populism could significantly contribute to the literature in this area.

Furthermore, a gap exists in the need for comparative studies in an international context. A literature review that includes international comparisons could provide a global perspective on Islamic populism in Indonesia. Finally, an understanding of the role of the media in shaping the opinions and identities of Islamic populism in Indonesia may also be inadequate. Therefore, research that pays attention to the role of the media in presenting and shaping narratives could be a valuable contribution to further understanding this phenomenon. By capturing and filling these gaps, systematic literature research is expected to make a more meaningful contribution to understanding Islamic populism in Indonesia.

### **Conclusions**

Islamic populism in Indonesia has evolved from a pro-incumbent community to an anti-government movement, with more than 900 articles related to the topic over the past five years. The top ten articles discuss the impact of populism on democratic life in Indonesia, arguing that democratic decision-making processes in Indonesia make governance difficult and ineffective. The increasingly radical currents of populism are making Indonesia a more religiously divided, chauvinistic,

and less liberal country. This is reflected in the decline of Indonesia's Democracy Index in 2017 due to the lack of representation exploited by populists. The literature on Indonesian Islamic Populism is diverse, with most addressing socio-political phenomena. This study shows that the research area focuses on the growth of Islamic populism in Indonesia between 2018 and 2023 using Vosviewer data processing. Most to the least produced literature related to this topic are as follows

- Cluster 3: impacts and consequences of populism
- Cluster 2: ideology and ideas and
- Cluster 1: power in shaping populist entities.

Research trends for "Indonesian Islamic Populism" from 2018-2023 are influenced by democracy, inequality, ideology, culture, politics, and religion, with strong links to human rights and Indonesia.

Despite 900 papers having been published, research on Islamic populism in Indonesia faces research gaps such as the following.

1. lack of in-depth study of the historical roots of this movement,
2. limitations in methodological approaches,
3. lack of focus on regional or local variations,
4. lack of attention to gender perspectives,
5. inability to analyze the impact of Islamic populism on public policy,
6. lack of comparative studies with international contexts, and
7. lack of understanding of the role of the media in shaping Islamic populism opinions and identities.

Future research recommendations are needed to address these gaps, and researchers can contribute to a better understanding of Islamic populism in Indonesia.

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