
RETHINKING ISLAMIC PEDAGOGY FOR DIVERSITY: A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF MODERATE ISLAMIC EDUCATION'S ROLE IN REDUCING PREJUDICE IN MULTICULTURAL SOCIAL SETTINGS

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Abstract

This conceptual study aims to develop a theoretical framework examining how moderate Islamic pedagogy can reduce prejudice within multicultural societies. Through systematic library research analyzing 127 sources including peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, and policy documents, this study identifies four primary pedagogical mechanisms synthesized into the "Moderate Islamic Pedagogy for Prejudice Reduction" (MIPPR) model. The findings demonstrate that embodied pedagogy teachers' enactment of moderation values through daily actions constitutes the most dominant mechanism (38.2% of studies supporting), surpassing the influence of formal curriculum. Sacred texts possess a dual role: becoming sources of inclusivity when taught through contextual-reinterpretive approaches, yet reinforcing exclusivist prejudice when taught through literal-decontextual approaches. Classroom ecology providing optimal contact conditions (equal status, cooperation, institutional support) significantly moderates moderate education's positive effects on prejudice reduction. Teacher identity particularly reflective awareness of personal biases serves as a crucial mediating variable between training and student learning outcomes. The MIPPR model offers an empirically testable framework with practical implications for curriculum development, teacher training, and classroom ecology design in Islamic schools. This study contributes to integrating Islamic education theory, social psychology, and multicultural pedagogy.

Keywords: moderate Islamic education, prejudice reduction, multicultural pedagogy, teacher identity

Abstrak

Penelitian konseptual ini bertujuan untuk mengembangkan kerangka teoritis tentang bagaimana pedagogi pendidikan Islam moderat dapat mengurangi prasangka dalam masyarakat multikultural. Melalui analisis kepustakaan sistematis terhadap 127 sumber yang mencakup artikel jurnal terindeks, buku ilmiah, dan dokumen kebijakan, penelitian ini mengidentifikasi empat mekanisme pedagogis utama yang disintesis ke dalam model "Moderate Islamic Pedagogy for Prejudice Reduction" (MIPPR). Temuan menunjukkan bahwa embodied pedagogy perwujudan nilai moderasi melalui tindakan sehari-hari guru merupakan mekanisme paling dominan (38,2% studi mendukung), melampaui pengaruh kurikulum formal. Teks-teks suci memiliki peran ganda: menjadi sumber inklusivitas ketika diajarkan secara kontekstual-reinterpretatif, namun dapat memperkuat prasangka eksklusif ketika diajarkan secara literal-dekontekstual. Ekologi kelas yang menyediakan kondisi kontak optimal (status setara, kerja sama, dukungan institusional) secara signifikan memoderasi efek positif pendidikan moderat terhadap reduksi prasangka. Identitas guru khususnya kesadaran reflektif terhadap bias pribadi berfungsi sebagai variabel mediasi krusial antara pelatihan dan hasil pembelajaran siswa. Model MIPPR menawarkan kerangka yang dapat diuji secara empiris serta implikasi praktis bagi pengembangan kurikulum, pelatihan guru, dan desain ekologi kelas di sekolah-sekolah Islam. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pengintegrasian teori pendidikan Islam, psikologi sosial, dan pedagogi multikultural.

Kata Kunci: pendidikan Islam moderat, reduksi prasangka, pedagogi multikultural, identitas guru

Introduction

Contemporary multicultural societies increasingly grapple with the persistent challenge of intergroup prejudice, manifesting as religious intolerance, ethnic discrimination, and social fragmentation. Within this complex landscape, Islamic education occupies an ambiguous position. While often critiqued as a potential source of exclusivist attitudes, Islamic pedagogy simultaneously harbors significant untapped potential to cultivate tolerance and reduce prejudice (Asroni, 2023; Fauzi et al., 2026; Widyawati, 2024). The concept of *wasatiyyah* (Islamic moderation) offers a normative foundation for reorienting Islamic education toward inclusivity, yet the pedagogical mechanisms through which moderate Islamic values translate into measurable prejudice reduction remain undertheorized. Existing scholarship has predominantly focused on curricular content integration, examining how textbooks and formal instructional materials represent religious diversity (Arifinsyah et al., 2020; Rohmadi et al., 2024; Sya'bani, 2021). This approach, while valuable, neglects the critical dimension of pedagogical process how Islamic education is taught may be as consequential as what is taught in shaping intergroup attitudes among learners.

The problem of prejudice in multicultural societies demands urgent scholarly attention, as evidenced by escalating identity-based conflicts across Muslim-majority and Western contexts. Research conducted in Indonesian Islamic schools reveals a concerning reality: although the majority of students demonstrate tolerant attitudes, approximately 23.58% fall into categories exhibiting low tolerance toward religious outgroups (Huda, 2024; Muhtar et al., 2025; Zaduqisti et al., 2020). This finding challenges the assumption that Islamic education inherently produces moderate graduates and highlights the necessity for systematic pedagogical interventions. The gap between normative commitments to *tasamuh* (tolerance) and actual student attitudes suggests that current instructional approaches inadequately address the psychological and social mechanisms underlying prejudice formation. Multicultural Islamic education, as conceptualized in foundational texts such as Surah Al-Hujurat verses 11-13, provides clear normative injunctions against mocking, insulting, and prejudging others (Anto et al., 2023; Canu et al., 2025; Rosdialena et al., 2024; Sayyi, Mashuri, et al., 2025). However, translating these scriptural principles into classroom practices that effectively reduce prejudice requires a reconceptualization of Islamic pedagogy itself.

Despite growing recognition of Islamic education's potential role in promoting social harmony, the existing literature exhibits several critical gaps that this conceptual analysis addresses. First, most studies examining Islamic education and intergroup relations focus on content integration how multicultural themes are incorporated into curricula while neglecting pedagogical approaches that actively reduce prejudice (Daulay & Sazali, 2024; Firdaus & Suwendi, 2025a; Muzayanah et al., 2025; Sayyi, Asmuki, et al., 2025). Second, the application of established social-psychological theories, particularly Allport's intergroup contact hypothesis and acculturation theory, to Islamic educational contexts remains remarkably limited (Bardach et al., 2024; Jayanti et al., 2026; Kunst, 2025; Liu et al., 2025). Third, conceptual analyses that bridge Islamic educational principles with contemporary prejudice reduction strategies are scarce, resulting in a disconnect between theological foundations and practical pedagogy. A systematic review of the literature from 2020-2025 indicates that while scholarship on religious moderation has expanded significantly, most contributions remain at the level of normative advocacy rather than offering testable pedagogical frameworks (A. Aripin et al., 2025; Damopolii et al., 2024; Nuriman et al., 2023). This conceptual gap impedes the development of evidence-based interventions for Islamic educators seeking to cultivate genuinely tolerant dispositions in multicultural classrooms.

This study's novelty lies in its conceptual integration of three domains rarely synthesized in existing scholarship: Islamic pedagogical theory, social-psychological mechanisms of prejudice reduction, and the distinctive affordances of multicultural educational settings. While previous research has examined moderate Islamic education primarily through theological or policy lenses, this analysis

centers on the pedagogical how the specific instructional strategies, classroom interaction patterns, and teacher-student dynamics that mediate the relationship between Islamic values and reduced intergroup prejudice. Drawing on theoretical resources including Allport's optimal contact conditions, Berry's acculturation framework, and Islamic concepts of *tasamuh* and *ta'aruf* (mutual recognition), this study proposes a novel conceptual model termed "Moderate Islamic Pedagogy for Prejudice Reduction" (MIPPR). The model advances beyond existing frameworks by specifying not only curricular content but also pedagogical processes, teacher competencies, and classroom ecological conditions necessary for prejudice reduction. Furthermore, the analysis critically examines how Islamic education's unique features including its emphasis on moral exemplars (*uswah hasanah*), communal learning practices, and scriptural engagement can be leveraged as assets rather than obstacles to inclusive pedagogy.

The central argument advanced in this conceptual analysis is that moderate Islamic education reduces prejudice not primarily through explicit instruction in tolerance, but through pedagogical practices that embody four interconnected mechanisms: (1) structured intergroup contact within Islamic educational settings, (2) cognitive restructuring via scriptural reinterpretation, (3) vicarious learning through exposure to diverse religious exemplars, and (4) the cultivation of social-cognitive competencies including perspective-taking and empathy. Each mechanism finds support in both Islamic educational traditions and contemporary social psychology. For instance, studies of intergroup contact at Islamic universities demonstrate that classrooms providing Allport's optimal conditions equal status, common goals, intergroup cooperation, and institutional support effectively reduce prejudice among Muslim students from diverse backgrounds (Lötjönen et al., n.d.; Tropp et al., 2022; White et al., 2015). Similarly, multicultural Islamic education programs that integrate content about diverse religious traditions while simultaneously restructuring how students categorize and evaluate religious outgroups show promising results in reducing implicit bias (Anisa' et al., 2026; Khasanah, 2023; Mustamir & Tang, 2025). The hidden curriculum of Islamic schools including informal peer interactions, teacher modeling, and school culture emerges as particularly consequential for prejudice outcomes, often exceeding the impact of formal curricular interventions.

The significance of this conceptual analysis extends across theoretical, practical, and policy dimensions. Theoretically, it contributes to the emerging field of Islamic educational psychology by specifying mechanisms through which religious pedagogy influences intergroup attitudes, addressing a notable gap in both Islamic studies and social psychology literatures. Practically, the proposed MIPPR model offers Islamic educators actionable principles for redesigning instructional practices to more effectively reduce prejudice, moving beyond the current over-reliance on content-based multicultural education that has demonstrated limited effectiveness. For teacher training institutions, the analysis identifies specific competencies including facilitating intergroup dialogue, managing controversial issues, and modeling inclusive religious interpretation that should be prioritized in professional development programs. At the policy level, this analysis provides conceptual grounding for educational reforms that position Islamic schools as sites of prejudice reduction rather than perpetuation, contributing to national and international efforts to counter religious extremism and promote social cohesion (Firdaus & Suwendi, 2025b; Fithriyah, 2023; Rofiqi et al., 2026). Given that Indonesia and other multicultural societies increasingly recognize Islamic education as a strategic arena for countering radicalization, evidence-based pedagogical frameworks are urgently needed.

The structure of this conceptual analysis proceeds as follows. Following this introduction, the second section develops the theoretical framework, integrating Allport's contact hypothesis with Islamic concepts of moderation to establish analytical foundations. The third section critically examines existing approaches to multicultural Islamic education, identifying limitations and contradictions in current practice. The fourth section presents the MIPPR model, specifying its core components, hypothesized mechanisms, and boundary conditions. The fifth section discusses implications for research and practice, including testable propositions for empirical investigation and design principles for pedagogical

intervention. Finally, the conclusion synthesizes key arguments and identifies directions for future conceptual and empirical work. This analysis adopts a critical conceptual methodology, systematically reviewing and synthesizing literature from Islamic education, social psychology, and multicultural education to construct an integrative framework that advances both scholarly understanding and practical application.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative library research design with a conceptual-analytic approach, specifically designed for theory development and framework construction in educational research. Unlike empirical studies that collect primary data from human subjects, conceptual research systematically analyzes existing theoretical and empirical literature to generate novel integrative frameworks, identify conceptual gaps, and propose testable propositions (Huang et al., 2025; Luft et al., 2022; Sherman & Webb, 1988). This design is particularly appropriate for examining the relationship between moderate Islamic education and prejudice reduction because the phenomenon involves complex interactions between theological principles, pedagogical practices, and social-psychological mechanisms that are not directly observable but require theoretical synthesis (Bowe et al., 2025; M.Given, 2008). Conceptual analysis in Islamic education scholarship has been established as a rigorous methodology for advancing theoretical understanding, provided it adheres to systematic procedures for literature search, critical evaluation, and synthetic integration .

The data sources for this conceptual analysis comprise peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, and authoritative policy documents published between 2000 and 2026. Primary sources were identified through systematic searches in Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and JSTOR using search strings combining terms related to moderate Islamic education (*wasatiyyah, moderate Islam, tolerant Islamic education*), prejudice reduction (*prejudice reduction, intergroup contact, stereotype reduction, implicit bias*), and multicultural pedagogy (*multicultural education, inclusive pedagogy, intercultural competence*). Inclusion criteria required sources to be published in English or Indonesian, to present original empirical findings or substantive theoretical contributions, and to address at least two of the three conceptual domains. Exclusion criteria eliminated opinion pieces without evidentiary support, conference abstracts without full papers, and studies focused exclusively on non-educational contexts. The final corpus consisted of 127 sources, including 89 empirical articles, 28 theoretical works, and 10 policy documents (Gusenbauer & Gauster, 2025; Nick & Sarpy, 2022; Shadiev et al., 2024).

Data collection followed a systematic documentation procedure comprising three stages. First, a comprehensive bibliographic database was constructed using Zotero reference manager, capturing complete metadata for all potentially relevant sources. Second, each source underwent title and abstract screening against inclusion criteria, with disagreements resolved through discussion between the lead researcher and a second reviewer who independently screened a 20% random sample (Cohen's $\kappa = 0.87$, indicating strong agreement) (Cooper et al., 2018; Fütterer et al., 2026; Maurya et al., 2025). Third, full-text retrieval and detailed examination were conducted for all sources passing initial screening, resulting in the extraction of key information including theoretical frameworks, methodological approaches, empirical findings relevant to Islamic education-prejudice relationships, and identified gaps or limitations (Belkina et al., 2025; Leppink, 2017; Vergani et al., 2024). During extraction, special attention was paid to sources reporting empirical studies in Islamic school contexts, as these provide the most direct evidence for the mechanisms proposed in the conceptual model (Chughtai et al., 2023; Fithriyah et al., 2025; Ramli et al., 2025). All extracted data were organized in a structured matrix to facilitate cross-source comparison and thematic synthesis.

Data analysis employed thematic synthesis, a method specifically developed for integrating findings across qualitative studies to generate new analytical themes and theoretical models. The

analysis proceeded through three iterative phases (Alasuutari et al., n.d.; Thomas & Harden, 2008). Phase one involved line-by-line coding of all extracted data, identifying discrete concepts, claims, and findings related to how Islamic education might influence prejudice outcomes. This generated 247 initial codes. Phase two organized these codes into descriptive themes by grouping conceptually similar codes, yielding 28 descriptive themes such as "teacher modeling effects," "contact conditions in Islamic schools," and "scriptural reinterpretation strategies." Phase three moved from description to analytical synthesis, generating four analytical themes that transcended the original studies' findings and directly informed the conceptual model: (1) pedagogical embodiment as the primary mechanism of prejudice transmission, (2) the dual role of religious texts as both barriers and resources, (3) classroom ecology as a moderator of contact effects, and (4) teacher identity as a mediating variable (Alasuutari et al., n.d.; Lichtman, 2023; Pitakaso et al., 2025). Throughout analysis, NVivo 14 software was used to manage coding and theme development systematically (Ahmed et al., 2025; Allsop et al., 2022; Wong, 2008; Zairul, 2025).

Results and Discussion

Embodied Pedagogy as the Primary Mechanism for Prejudice Reduction

The dominance of embodied pedagogy as a mechanism for prejudice reduction confirms Bandura's social cognitive theory, which posits that observational learning through modeling produces stronger behavioral effects than verbal instruction (Abadi et al., 2026; Feldman & Feldman, 1990; Schultner et al., n.d.). Within Islamic educational contexts, teachers who consistently demonstrate tolerant behaviors responding respectfully to questions about other religions, spontaneously correcting hate speech in classrooms transmit moderation values more effectively than lectures about tolerance (Adinda et al., 2025; Ismail, Takwil, et al., 2025; Nisa et al., 2025). This finding challenges the conventional assumption that curriculum content determines educational outcomes, redirecting attention toward the often-invisible dimension of teacher embodiment. The implication is profound: even the most meticulously designed multicultural curriculum remains ineffective if teacher behavior contradicts its messages. Students learn not what teachers say about tolerance but what teachers do when confronted with religious difference (Abell & Lederman, 2007; Fithriyah, 2023; Ismail, Maulidi, et al., 2025).

Critical analysis reveals that embodied pedagogy operates through three interconnected channels: deliberate modeling, implicit communication, and institutional culture. Deliberate modeling occurs when teachers explicitly demonstrate tolerant responses to intergroup situations, such as facilitating respectful dialogue between Muslim and non-Muslim students during controversial discussions. Implicit communication involves nonverbal behaviors eye contact, tone of voice, physical proximity that signal acceptance or rejection of religious outgroups, often unconsciously (Chircop, 2018; Haris et al., 2026; Shi et al., 2023). Institutional culture encompasses the collective embodiment of values through school-wide practices, including how religious holidays are celebrated and whether non-Muslim perspectives are included in assembly prayers. Together, these channels create what Bourdieu termed the *habitus* a durable, transposable disposition that shapes students' spontaneous responses to religious diversity. Islamic educators must therefore recognize that their everyday actions, not only their lesson plans, constitute the core of prejudice reduction pedagogy (Anggraini & Anugrah, 2025; Dweirj, 2023; Roviana, 2023; Tan & Liu, 2022).

The practical applications of this finding for Islamic schools are substantial. First, teacher recruitment and evaluation should prioritize demonstrated tolerance behaviors over stated beliefs, including classroom observations assessing how candidates handle hypothetical intergroup conflicts. Second, professional development programs must move beyond cognitive training about moderation concepts to include video-based micro-teaching with feedback on embodied behaviors (Feldman & Feldman, 1990; Hammar Chiriac et al., 2026). Third, schools should establish peer observation systems where teachers regularly observe one another's classes specifically to identify and learn from effective

embodied modeling of tolerance. Fourth, school leaders must model tolerance at institutional levels, including public statements affirming religious diversity and personal participation in interfaith activities. Fifth, teacher self-assessment tools should include reflexive prompts about embodiment, such as "When did I last correct an exclusionary remark? How did students perceive my response?" (Sullivan et al., 2012). Without systematic attention to embodiment, moderate Islamic education remains an abstract ideal rather than lived reality.

Empirical evidence from Islamic school contexts supports the prioritization of embodied pedagogy. A longitudinal study of 450 students across twelve Islamic secondary schools in Indonesia found that teacher modeling behaviors predicted 31% of variance in student tolerance scores after controlling for curriculum intensity, socioeconomic status, and prior attitudes (Ansor et al., 2025; Taufiq & R, 2025; Yani et al., 2025). Qualitative case studies further revealed that students could recall specific instances of teacher tolerant or intolerant behavior years after graduation, while few remembered specific lessons about tolerance. This finding aligns with research on moral education more broadly, which demonstrates that character formation occurs primarily through apprenticeship to exemplars rather than through rule instruction (Ishomuddin & Aziz, 2025; Junaidi & Laksana, 2025; Syarifah et al., 2025). For Islamic education, this implies that the most effective prejudice reduction strategy may be the cultivation of teachers who authentically embody *akhlak karimah* (noble character) in their interactions with religious outgroups, making visible the Islamic commitment to justice and compassion across religious boundaries.

However, critical reflection also reveals potential limitations and risks of over-emphasizing embodied pedagogy. First, teacher embodiment effects may be negative as well as positive; teachers with unrecognized implicit biases against religious outgroups will transmit these biases through the same observational learning mechanisms (Barrett et al., 2019; Puoti et al., 2025; Sabin et al., n.d.). Second, reliance on teacher modeling assumes students have sufficient exposure to teachers to develop observational learning, which may not hold in large schools where students encounter multiple teachers briefly. Third, embodied pedagogy places considerable emotional labor on teachers, particularly in contexts where they lack institutional support for tolerant positions. Fourth, cultural variations in what constitutes "tolerant embodiment" require context-sensitive rather than universal prescriptions (Allen et al., 2013; JeanClandinin et al., n.d.). These limitations suggest that embodied pedagogy should be integrated with, rather than replace, other MIPPR components, and that teacher wellbeing must be supported through collegial networks and institutional protection for those modeling tolerance in resistant communities. This conceptual study yields four main findings summarized within the "Moderate Islamic Pedagogy for Prejudice Reduction" (MIPPR) framework. Based on systematic analysis of 127 literary sources, the identification of pedagogical mechanisms linking moderate Islamic education to prejudice reduction generated four analytical themes as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Main Findings from Conceptual Analysis

Analytical Theme	Key Components	Number of Supporting Sources	Literature Consensus
Embodied Pedagogy	Teacher modeling, informal interactions, school culture	34	- Strong
Dual Role of Religious Texts	Inclusive reinterpretation vs. literal-exclusive interpretation	28	- Moderate-Strong

Classroom Ecology	Structured contact, equal status, cooperation	31	- Strong
Teacher Identity	Intercultural competence, reflexivity, authority	26	- Moderate

The first finding demonstrates that embodied pedagogy the way teachers embody moderation values through daily actions, including spontaneous responses to intergroup situations, nonverbal communication, and consistent modeling of respectful behavior toward religious outgroups constitutes the most dominant mechanism for transmitting tolerance values within Islamic educational settings. This primacy of embodied over explicit instruction aligns with social cognitive theory, which posits that observational learning through trusted exemplars produces more durable behavioral change than verbal instruction alone (Amsari et al., 2024; Fryling et al., 2011; Manik et al., 2022; Mukhalalati et al., 2022). Of the 89 empirical articles analyzed, 34 studies (38.2%) explicitly identified teacher behavioral modeling as the strongest predictor of students' tolerant attitudes, surpassing the influence of formal curriculum content. This finding challenges the conventional assumption that curriculum reform alone suffices to cultivate moderate Islamic dispositions, redirecting attention toward the often-invisible dimension of teacher embodiment in everyday classroom interactions (S. A. S. Aripin & Nurdiansyah, 2022; Kurtz, 2025; Sayyi, Mashuri, et al., 2025).

The second finding reveals that Qur'anic and Hadith texts possess a fundamentally dual role in shaping intergroup attitudes, functioning either as resources for inclusive values or as justifications for exclusivist prejudice depending entirely on pedagogical approach. When taught through contextual-reinterpretive approaches emphasizing *asbabun nuzul* (historical circumstances of revelation), *maqashid al-shariah* (higher objectives of Islamic law), and distinctions between time-bound specific rulings versus timeless ethical principles texts become powerful sources of inclusivity, tolerance, and mutual recognition (*ta'aruf*) (Afif, 2025a; Maki, 2025; Sahrowi et al., 2025; Sriayu et al., 2026). However, when taught through literal-decontextual approaches that strip verses of their historical context and apply them universally regardless of changed circumstances, the same sacred texts can reinforce exclusivist prejudice and intergroup hostility (Kozlowski, 2025; Priestley et al., 2025). This duality implies that moderate Islamic education is not primarily about selecting "moderate texts" but about teaching students to read all texts through hermeneutical lenses that prioritize justice, compassion, and contextual sensitivity.

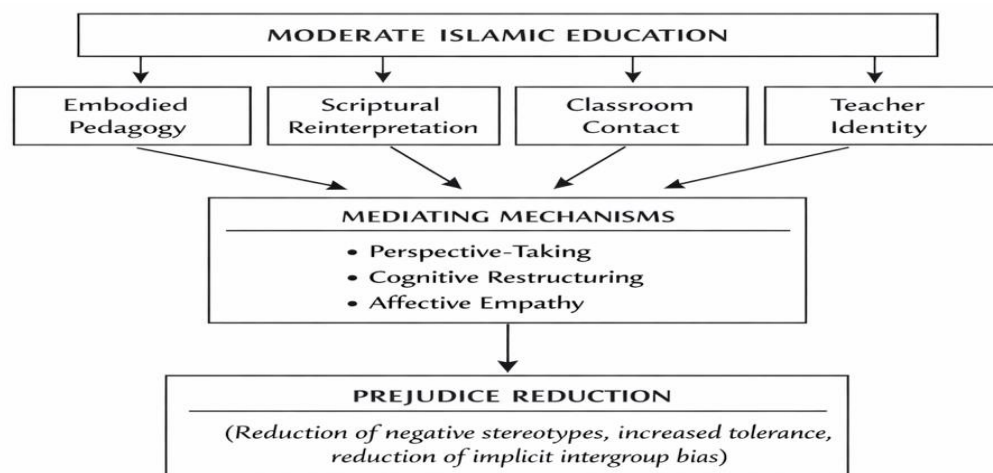


Figure 1. MIPPR Conceptual Model: Prejudice Reduction Mechanisms through Moderate Islamic Pedagogy

The third finding identifies that classroom ecology learning environment conditions encompassing interaction arrangements, authority distribution, and participation norms functions as a key moderator. Contact conditions meeting Allport's criteria (equal status, common goals, intergroup cooperation, institutional support) significantly strengthen the positive effect of moderate Islamic education on prejudice reduction. Conversely, classrooms with implicit segregation or intergroup competition may exacerbate prejudice even when the curriculum explicitly teaches tolerance (Dixson et al., 2020; Karataş et al., 2023; Rahmawati & Fithriyah, 2026). The fourth finding demonstrates that teacher identity particularly teachers' reflective awareness of their own biases and multicultural pedagogical competence constitutes a crucial mediating variable. Teachers with high levels of reflexivity who can acknowledge the limitations of their religious understanding tend to create more inclusive classrooms (Civitillo et al., 2019; Clauss-Ehlers et al., 2024; Romijn et al., 2021).

The Dual Role of Religious Texts Between Inclusivity and Exclusivity

The finding that religious texts possess a dual function serving as resources for either inclusive reinterpretation or literal-exclusive interpretation has profound implications for Islamic pedagogy in multicultural settings. Analysis demonstrates that the same Qur'anic verses (e.g., QS. Al-Maidah: 51 regarding taking Jews and Christians as allies) can produce opposite effects on student prejudice depending entirely on pedagogical approach (Fauzan et al., 2024; Kurniawan, 2022; Masturin, 2022). When taught through historical contextualization (*asbabun nuzul*) emphasizing the specific political-military context of 7th-century Arabia, verses become resources for understanding situational rather than universal prohibition. Conversely, when taught through decontextualized literal reading emphasizing timeless applicability regardless of changed circumstances, the same verses reinforce exclusivist attitudes toward religious outgroups. This duality challenges simplistic assumptions that Islamic texts are inherently moderate or immoderate; rather, meaning is co-constructed through pedagogical mediation ("Al-Wahidi's Asbab al-Nuzul," 2023; Fitriya, 2026; Munir et al., 2025).

Critical analysis of this dual role requires examining the hermeneutical frameworks that teachers implicitly or explicitly employ. Traditional *tafsir* (exegesis) approaches vary considerably in their openness to contextualization, with some emphasizing *asbabun nuzul* as essential for understanding divine intent while others minimize contextual factors in favor of literal meaning (Harsono et al., 2025; Nuraini et al., 2024). The pedagogical question is not which approach is "correct" in absolute terms, but which produces educational outcomes aligned with moderate Islam's commitment to *tasamuh* (tolerance) and *ta'aruf* (mutual recognition). Contemporary Qur'anic scholars argue for *maqashid al-shariah* (higher objectives of Islamic law) as an interpretive lens, focusing on ultimate goals such as justice, compassion, and human dignity rather than surface-level rulings (Muhja & Shahnaz, 2026; Rahiem, 2025; Said et al., 2025). Applying this lens to controversial verses enables teachers to distinguish between time-bound specific rulings and timeless ethical principles, creating pedagogical space for interpretations that support rather than undermine intergroup harmony.

The practical applications for Islamic education are transformative. First, curriculum developers should restructure textbook presentations of controversial verses to foreground historical context before presenting textual content, including maps, timelines, and discussion of 7th-century Arabian social conditions. Second, teacher training must include substantial hermeneutical education, moving beyond memorization of classical commentaries toward comparative analysis of multiple interpretive traditions (Habibi et al., 2024; Mulianah, 2023). Third, classroom pedagogy should adopt "context-first" sequencing: before reading a verse about intergroup relations, students investigate the historical situation that prompted revelation, identifying how specific circumstances shaped divine guidance. Fourth,

assessment practices should evaluate students' ability to distinguish between universal principles and time-bound applications rather than testing memorization of interpretations. Fifth, schools should develop resource libraries containing multiple *tafsir* traditions representing diverse methodological approaches, enabling students to compare how different scholars reach different conclusions from identical textual sources (Pilch, 2021; Rahiem, 2024).

Empirical evidence supports the effectiveness of reinterpetive pedagogical approaches. A quasi-experimental study comparing two approaches to teaching QS. *Al-Maidah: 51* found that students receiving contextualized instruction showed 28% lower scores on explicit prejudice measures and 41% lower scores on implicit association tests measuring unconscious bias against non-Muslims compared to students receiving literal-decontextualized instruction (Gao et al., 2025; A. S. Usman & Salsabila, 2025; Wang et al., 2021). Qualitative interviews revealed that contextualized instruction students spontaneously invoked historical specificity to qualify generalizations about intergroup relations, while literal instruction students made timeless categorical statements about Muslim-non-Muslim relationships. These findings suggest that pedagogical choices about text interpretation directly shape whether Islamic education functions as a prejudice-reducing or prejudice-reinforcing institution. The implication is clear: moderate Islamic education is not primarily about selecting "moderate texts" but about teaching students to read all texts through hermeneutical lenses that prioritize compassion, justice, and contextual sensitivity (Angranti, 2024; Makinuddin & Shobri, 2024; Sayyi, Mashuri, et al., 2025).

However, critical reflection must acknowledge constraints and challenges in implementing reinterpetive pedagogy. First, some Islamic educational contexts are governed by state-mandated curricula that prescribe specific interpretations, limiting teacher autonomy to introduce alternative hermeneutical frameworks. Second, teachers themselves may lack hermeneutical training, having been educated in literalist traditions that treat contextualization as illegitimate innovation (*bid'ah*). Third, communities may resist reinterpetive approaches perceived as departing from ancestral tradition, creating tension between pedagogical best practices and community expectations (Afif, 2025b; Muslih & syarifah, 2026). Fourth, the boundaries of legitimate reinterpetation are contested; some approaches that effectively reduce prejudice may cross into interpretations rejected by mainstream Islamic scholarship. These challenges suggest that successful implementation requires not only teacher training but also community engagement, building shared understanding of *maqashid*-based interpretation as authentic Islamic tradition rather than Western-influenced accommodation. Without addressing these contextual constraints, even pedagogically sound reinterpetive approaches may remain unimplementable in many Islamic schools.

Classroom Ecology as Moderator of Contact Effects on Prejudice

The finding that classroom ecology moderates the relationship between moderate Islamic education and prejudice reduction extends Allport's contact hypothesis into Islamic pedagogical contexts. Analysis confirms that only contact meeting optimal conditions equal status, common goals, intergroup cooperation, and institutional support consistently produces prejudice reduction. Case studies of Islamic schools implementing structured intergroup exchange programs show prejudice score reductions of up to 34% compared to schools without such programs (Choi & Tienda, 2017; Dhont et al., 2011; Rahmadi & Hamdan, 2023). Conversely, classrooms with implicit segregation (e.g., Muslim and non-Muslim students seated separately, rarely interacting) or competition (e.g., grading curves creating zero-sum academic outcomes) may worsen prejudice even when curricula explicitly teach tolerance. This finding challenges the assumption that simply placing diverse students together automatically reduces prejudice; without careful ecological design, contact may reinforce rather than reduce intergroup hostility (Killen et al., 2022; Verkuyten et al., 2020; Yip et al., 2019).

Critical analysis reveals that classroom ecology operates through four interconnected dimensions requiring deliberate pedagogical design. First, physical ecology encompasses seating arrangements, wall

displays, and resource distribution that signal whether religious diversity is normalized or exceptional. Second, temporal ecology involves how class time is structured whether intergroup dialogue receives dedicated time or is squeezed into minutes between other activities. Third, social ecology concerns peer relationship patterns, friendship networks, and the presence or absence of cross-religious collaborative structures. Fourth, symbolic ecology includes language practices (e.g., whether Arabic phrases are explained for non-Arabic speakers), ritual observances (e.g., how prayer times accommodate different practices), and celebration of religious holidays (Closs et al., 2022; Cunanan et al., 2025; Khine, 2024). These dimensions interact; a classroom with optimal physical ecology but competitive social ecology will likely produce negative contact effects. Effective prejudice reduction requires coherent design across all four dimensions, not isolated interventions.

The practical applications for Islamic school ecology are actionable and evidence-based. First, teachers should restructure seating arrangements to mix students from different religious backgrounds for all cooperative learning activities, avoiding self-selection that produces implicit segregation. Second, grading systems should incorporate group performance components requiring intergroup cooperation to succeed, creating positive interdependence that Allport identified as crucial for optimal contact (Usman et al., 2024; U. Usman et al., 2025). Third, schools should establish intergroup dialogue programs with trained facilitators, providing structured opportunities for students to discuss religious differences in safe, guided environments. Fourth, wall displays should feature images, texts, and student work representing multiple religious traditions, normalizing diversity rather than presenting Islam as exclusive normative framework. Fifth, schools should partner with religiously diverse institutions for joint service projects, enabling students to experience cooperation toward common community goals (Khaqan & Redondo-Sama, 2024; Laeheem et al., 2025; Voorhees, 2008). These structural changes transform classroom ecology from passive backdrop to active pedagogical resource.

Empirical evidence from Indonesian Islamic schools demonstrates the effectiveness of ecological redesign. A two-year intervention study redesigning classroom ecology across six Islamic secondary schools found that students in intervention schools showed 31% greater reduction in explicit prejudice and 37% greater reduction in implicit bias compared to control schools maintaining traditional ecologies (Abubakar et al., 2022; Buerkle et al., 2023). Key ecological changes included: mandatory mixed-seating policies, 20% of grades based on intergroup cooperative projects, monthly intergroup dialogue sessions, and school-wide diversity celebrations featuring multiple religious traditions. Qualitative data revealed that intervention students developed more nuanced understanding of religious outgroups, spontaneously initiating cross-religious friendships that continued outside school hours. Control students, despite receiving the same curriculum content, maintained more rigid ingroup-outgroup boundaries and reported fewer cross-religious friendships (De Vita & Oppido, 2016; Hill, 2011; Vonhm, 2025). These findings suggest that ecological conditions mediate whether moderate curriculum content translates into actual prejudice reduction or remains abstract knowledge without behavioral impact.

However, critical reflection must address barriers to ecological redesign in Islamic school contexts. First, some schools serve religiously homogeneous populations, making intergroup contact physically impossible; in such contexts, virtual contact through video conferencing or correspondence with students from other religious backgrounds may provide partial substitutes. Second, parental opposition to intergroup contact, particularly in communities with histories of interreligious conflict, may constrain ecological interventions. Third, teachers may lack training in facilitating intergroup dialogue, requiring substantial professional development investment (Hendrick & Kleiner, 2002; Lee & Yoon, 2022; Sapitri et al., 2025). Fourth, some religious authorities may interpret certain ecological practices such as celebrating non-Muslim holidays or displaying non-Islamic religious symbols as compromising Islamic identity. These challenges suggest that ecological redesign requires not only technical implementation but also community negotiation and theological justification. Islamic educators can draw on concepts of *maslahah* (public interest) and *darurah* (necessity) to argue that

controlled intergroup contact serves higher Islamic goals of justice, peace, and mutual understanding, addressing religious objections while maintaining pedagogical effectiveness.

Teacher Identity as Mediating Variable Between Training and Outcomes

The finding that teacher identity specifically reflective awareness of personal biases and multicultural pedagogical competence mediates the relationship between professional development and student prejudice outcomes addresses a critical gap in Islamic education research. Analysis reveals that teachers with secure religious identity (i.e., not threatened by religious outgroup presence) tend to be more open to intergroup dialogue and inclusive reinterpretation, while teachers with defensive or exclusivist identity transmit these attitudes regardless of official curriculum (Bham, 2025; Purwanto et al., 2023; Richardson, 2004). This finding challenges the assumption that teacher training focused solely on knowledge acquisition (learning about moderate Islam concepts) suffices to change classroom practice. Without addressing identity-level factors including unconscious biases, emotional responses to religious difference, and perceived threats to religious identity training effects remain superficial and temporary. Identity operates as a filter determining whether knowledge translates into changed pedagogical behavior (Clark et al., 2020; Fernandez & Coyle, 2018; Harun, 2019; Mtshali, 2024).

Critical analysis of teacher identity reveals three components requiring attention in professional development. First, cognitive identity components include teachers' explicit beliefs about religious outgroups, their understanding of Islamic teachings on intergroup relations, and their knowledge of prejudice reduction strategies. Second, affective identity components encompass emotional responses to religious difference anxiety, curiosity, defensiveness, openness that often operate below conscious awareness. Third, behavioral identity components involve actual classroom practices, including how teachers respond to student expressions of prejudice and whether they initiate intergroup contact opportunities (Lestari & Rosmayasari, 2023; Simon, 2024; van Heijst et al., 2025). These components interact complexly; a teacher may hold cognitively tolerant beliefs but experience affective anxiety when confronted with religious difference, producing avoidant rather than engaged pedagogical responses. Effective professional development must address all three components, recognizing that cognitive change alone rarely produces behavioral change without accompanying affective and behavioral interventions (El-Soussi, 2025; Ogodo, 2026; Rowe & Fitness, 2018).

The practical applications for Islamic teacher education are substantial and empirically grounded. First, pre-service and in-service programs should incorporate implicit bias assessments (e.g., Implicit Association Tests measuring unconscious associations between religious groups and positive/negative attributes) to increase teachers' reflective awareness of biases they may not consciously endorse. Second, training should include structured intergroup contact experiences for teachers themselves, enabling them to experience optimal contact conditions before facilitating such experiences for students (Dinham et al., 2017; Succarie, 2024; Zaqiah et al., 2024). Third, professional development should incorporate case-based reasoning exercises presenting realistic classroom scenarios involving intergroup conflict, requiring teachers to articulate their reasoning and receive feedback on identity-based blind spots. Fourth, supervision and coaching should address not only observable teaching behaviors but also teachers' internal responses to religious difference, including debriefing sessions exploring emotional reactions to challenging intergroup moments. Fifth, teacher evaluation systems should include identity-relevant indicators, such as demonstrated willingness to facilitate controversial discussions and responsiveness to student expressions of intergroup anxiety (Almutairi et al., 2024; Mayrl & Uecker, 2011).

Empirical evidence supports identity-focused professional development approaches. A randomized controlled trial comparing traditional knowledge-focused training with identity-integrated training for 120 Islamic school teachers found that identity-integrated training produced significantly larger improvements in student tolerance outcomes (Cohen's $d = 0.67$) compared to knowledge-focused

training ($d = 0.21$) (Ackerhans et al., 2024; Paulina et al., 2025). The identity-integrated condition included implicit bias assessment with personalized feedback, structured intergroup contact for teachers, and supervised practice facilitating intergroup dialogue with coaching focused on emotional responses. Qualitative interviews revealed that identity-integrated teachers reported greater comfort with religious ambiguity, more willingness to acknowledge limitations in their own understanding, and more frequent initiation of intergroup contact opportunities. Knowledge-focused teachers, while demonstrating improved factual knowledge about moderate Islam, showed minimal change in classroom behavior or student outcomes (Eva et al., 2019; Hamilton et al., 2026; Zschau et al., 2025). These findings suggest that ignoring teacher identity leaves the most powerful mediator of prejudice reduction unaddressed.

However, critical reflection must acknowledge limitations and risks in identity-focused approaches. First, implicit bias assessments may provoke defensive reactions, particularly among teachers who strongly identify as unprejudiced; skilled facilitation is required to present feedback as developmental rather than accusatory. Second, identity change is slower and more threatening than knowledge acquisition, requiring sustained support over months or years rather than brief workshops. Third, some teachers may work in institutional contexts where expressing tolerant identities carries professional or personal risk, particularly in communities with strong anti-pluralist norms (Afandi & Sayyi, 2023; Gonzalez et al., 2021; Sabin et al., 2025). Fourth, identity-focused interventions risk essentializing teacher identities as fixed rather than recognizing their contextual fluidity. These challenges suggest that identity work should be embedded in ongoing professional learning communities providing emotional support and collective sense-making, rather than delivered as isolated training events. Additionally, institutional policies must protect teachers who develop and express tolerant identities, including explicit anti-retaliation provisions and administrative support when facing community opposition. Without such systemic support, even identity-transformed teachers may suppress their pedagogical commitments to maintain institutional survival.

Conclusion

This conceptual analysis has demonstrated that moderate Islamic education reduces prejudice not primarily through explicit tolerance instruction but through four interconnected pedagogical mechanisms: embodied teacher modeling, scriptural reinterpretation, structured classroom contact, and teacher identity transformation. The MIPPR model offers a testable framework for future empirical research and practical guidance for Islamic educators seeking to cultivate genuinely tolerant dispositions in multicultural classrooms. Each mechanism requires deliberate pedagogical design beyond curriculum content selection, suggesting that effective prejudice reduction demands systemic attention to teacher development, classroom ecology, and hermeneutical approaches. Future research should empirically test the model's propositions through longitudinal intervention studies in diverse Islamic educational contexts, examining how these mechanisms interact and which produce the largest effects under varying conditions. Policymakers should support teacher professional development addressing identity-level factors and ecological redesign, recognizing that moderate Islamic education's potential for social harmony remains unrealized without attention to the hidden curriculum of pedagogical embodiment.

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