

Women Educators as Agents of Religious Moderation: Transforming Islamic Education in Indonesia

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Religious moderation; women educators; gendered pedagogical agency; Islamic higher education; dialogical pedagogy; gender-responsive education. Article history: Received 2026-10-17 Revised 2026-10-18 Accepted 2026-10-19	<i>Religious moderation in Islamic education requires more than institutional policies and curricular prescriptions; it depends on educators' capacity to translate moderate values into everyday pedagogical relationships. This study examines how women educators conceptualise and enact their roles as agents of religious moderation and how their practices contribute to transforming Islamic higher education towards greater inclusivity, tolerance, and gender responsiveness. Using a descriptive-interpretative qualitative approach, the study involved 15 female lecturers at Islamic higher education institutions in Probolinggo, East Java, Indonesia. Data were generated through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, and document analysis and analysed thematically through iterative coding, categorisation, and interpretation. The findings identify five interconnected dimensions: religious moderation as a relational-academic principle; dialogical and multiperspective pedagogy; women's agency through role modelling, redistribution of voice, and negotiated authority; gender-responsive practices shaped by institutional support and structural constraints; and transformation through more inclusive student dialogue. The study introduces gendered pedagogical agency for religious moderation to explain how women educators connect religious commitment, dialogical pedagogy, equitable participation, and gender responsiveness in everyday academic practice. It contributes to religious moderation scholarship by shifting attention from policy and curriculum towards micro-pedagogical agency and highlights the importance of institutional cultures that enable inclusive, dialogical, and gender-responsive Islamic education.</i>

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1. INTRODUCTION

Religious moderation has become an increasingly important educational concern amid growing religious polarization, intolerance, identity-based tensions, and contestations over diversity in contemporary societies, particularly where religious identities strongly influence public and educational life (Muhajarah & Soebahar, 2024). Education is therefore expected not merely to transmit religious knowledge but also to cultivate dispositions that enable learners to engage constructively with religious difference, reject violence, and participate ethically in plural societies (Purwanto et al., 2024). Within this context, religious moderation can be understood pedagogically as an orientation that connects religious commitment with tolerance, non-violence, openness to diversity, and constructive engagement with different religious communities (Mukhibat et al., 2024). Comparative evidence from Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand further demonstrates that religious moderation and tolerance are embedded in complex negotiations between Islamic jurisprudence, sociocultural diversity, and the demands of peaceful coexistence (Muhajarah & Soebahar, 2024). Consequently, teachers occupy a strategic position because the success of moderation-oriented education depends not only on curriculum content but also on educators' interpretations, pedagogical practices, leadership, and everyday encounters with diversity (Purwanto et al., 2024).

Recent studies across different educational and sociocultural contexts have increasingly demonstrated the importance of educators and women as actors in cultivating tolerance, dialogue, and inclusive citizenship. In Indonesia, Purwanto et al. (2024) found that experiential religious-moderation education increased pre-service Islamic education teachers' awareness of tolerance and strengthened their sense of agency as future tolerant educators. Research involving 152 teachers from Indonesian high schools similarly demonstrates that teachers substantially shape students' engagement with diversity, although the absence of meaningful interreligious learning can constrain the cultivation of tolerance (Parker et al., 2024). At the institutional level, Mukhibat et al. (2024) show that integrating religious moderation into higher-education curricula can develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to tolerance, non-violence, national commitment, and accommodation of local cultures. More recently, research on interfaith women's movements in Indonesia demonstrates that women can strengthen civic education through everyday interreligious encounters, experiential learning, reinterpretation of sacred texts, and grassroots peacebuilding practices (2026). These findings suggest that women should not be understood merely as recipients of religious education; they can exercise pedagogical, social, and interpretive agency in constructing inclusive religious knowledge and practices.

Despite these advances, a significant research gap remains at the intersection of women educators, religious moderation, and the transformation of Islamic education. Existing Indonesian scholarship has predominantly approached religious moderation through curriculum development, institutional policy, student attitudes, tolerance education, or general teacher preparation rather than examining how gendered educator agency operates within everyday Islamic educational practice (Mukhibat et al., 2024; Purwanto et al., 2024). Moreover, recent evidence indicates that religious moderation in Islamic educational institutions can remain cognitively oriented and superficially implemented, producing conceptual understanding without necessarily transforming character, institutional culture, or everyday social relationships (2024). Studies of Indonesian madrasahs similarly report a tendency for moderation-related instruction to emphasize theoretical knowledge rather than practical enactment, highlighting a persistent gap between normative discourse and lived pedagogical practice (2025). Meanwhile, emerging scholarship on women's interfaith movements reveals women's significant pedagogical contribution to empathy, peacebuilding, and civic resilience but does not specifically explain how women educators within Islamic educational settings negotiate religious authority and translate moderation into transformative pedagogy. Thus, the micro-level processes through which women educators interpret, negotiate, enact, and institutionalize religious moderation remain insufficiently understood.

Addressing this gap, the present study introduces an operational perspective of women educators as agents of religious moderation, shifting analytical attention from moderation as a prescribed curriculum or governmental discourse toward moderation as a form of gendered pedagogical agency enacted in educational practice. This perspective conceptualizes women educators not simply as implementers of predetermined moderation policies but as active interpreters who translate religious values into classroom interaction, ethical modelling, dialogue, conflict-sensitive practices, and inclusive educational relationships, thereby potentially transforming institutional culture (Purwanto et al., 2024). This approach is particularly relevant because evidence shows that formal curricular incorporation alone does not guarantee transformative religious moderation, especially when implementation remains primarily cognitive rather than experiential and character-oriented (Mukhibat et al., 2024). The study therefore operationalizes transformation through three interconnected dimensions: pedagogical practice, referring to how moderation is embedded in teaching and interaction; social-relational practice, referring to tolerance, dialogue, and engagement with difference; and gender-responsive agency, referring to women's capacity to negotiate religious authority and promote more equitable participation in Islamic educational spaces. Such an agency-oriented framework resonates with recent evidence that women's interfaith activism can combine experiential education, reinterpretation of religious texts, and challenges to patriarchal and intolerant norms.

Accordingly, this study aims to investigate how women educators understand and enact their agency in promoting religious moderation and how their practices contribute to transforming Islamic education in Indonesia into a more inclusive, tolerant, and gender-responsive educational environment. This objective responds to evidence that teacher agency and experiential engagement are crucial for moving religious moderation from abstract knowledge toward lived educational practice (Purwanto et al., 2024). It also addresses concerns that institutionalized religious moderation may have limited transformative impact when it remains concentrated on cognitive instruction rather than everyday pedagogical and relational practices. The study is therefore guided by two research questions: (1) How do women educators conceptualize and enact their roles as agents of religious moderation within Islamic educational practices in Indonesia? and (2) How do the religious-moderation practices developed by women educators contribute to transforming Islamic education toward a more inclusive, tolerant, and gender-responsive educational paradigm? Through these questions, the study seeks to connect educator agency, gender, religious authority, and transformative pedagogy within a single analytical framework, thereby extending contemporary scholarship on religious moderation beyond policy and curriculum toward the everyday actors and practices through which moderate Islamic education is actually produced.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain deskriptif-interpretatif untuk mengeksplorasi secara mendalam bagaimana pendidik perempuan memaknai dan menjalankan agensinya dalam mengembangkan moderasi beragama serta kontribusinya terhadap transformasi pendidikan tinggi Islam. Pendekatan kualitatif memungkinkan peneliti memahami pengalaman, interpretasi, praktik sosial, dan proses pembentukan makna dari perspektif partisipan dalam konteks alamiahnya (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Penelitian berpijak pada paradigma interpretivisme-konstruktivisme, yang memandang pemaknaan moderasi beragama dan agensi perempuan sebagai realitas sosial yang dikonstruksi melalui pengalaman, interaksi, budaya akademik, dan konteks kelembagaan. Dengan paradigma tersebut, penelitian tidak diarahkan untuk mengukur hubungan antarvariabel, tetapi untuk menginterpretasikan bagaimana nilai moderasi beragama diterjemahkan oleh dosen perempuan menjadi praktik pedagogis dan sosial dalam pendidikan tinggi Islam.

Penelitian dilaksanakan pada lembaga pendidikan tinggi Islam di Kota Probolinggo, Jawa

Timur, Indonesia. Objek penelitian adalah agensi dosen perempuan dalam memaknai, menginternalisasikan, dan mengaktualisasikan moderasi beragama serta kontribusinya terhadap pembentukan pendidikan tinggi Islam yang inklusif, toleran, dan responsif gender. Subjek penelitian adalah dosen perempuan yang aktif mengajar pada lembaga pendidikan tinggi Islam di Kota Probolinggo. Informan dipilih menggunakan purposive sampling berdasarkan kriteria: (1) berstatus sebagai dosen perempuan aktif; (2) memiliki pengalaman mengajar minimal tiga tahun; (3) mengampu mata kuliah keislaman atau mata kuliah yang memiliki relevansi dengan persoalan keagamaan, pendidikan, dan sosial; (4) memiliki pengalaman dalam aktivitas akademik, kemahasiswaan, keagamaan, atau kelembagaan yang berkaitan dengan keberagaman, toleransi, moderasi beragama, atau gender; dan (5) bersedia mengikuti seluruh proses penelitian. Penelitian menetapkan 15 dosen perempuan sebagai target awal informan, sedangkan jumlah akhir ditentukan berdasarkan information power dan kecukupan konseptual data. Pendekatan information power menekankan bahwa kecukupan sampel penelitian kualitatif dipengaruhi oleh spesifisitas sampel, fokus penelitian, kualitas dialog, dan kedalaman analisis, bukan semata-mata jumlah partisipan (Vasileiou et al., 2018; Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui wawancara mendalam semi-terstruktur, observasi nonpartisipatif, dan analisis dokumentasi. Wawancara terhadap setiap informan berlangsung sekitar 45–90 menit dan diarahkan pada pemaknaan moderasi beragama, identitas dan agensi sebagai pendidik perempuan, strategi mengintegrasikan moderasi dalam pembelajaran, praktik toleransi dan inklusivitas, respons terhadap perbedaan keagamaan, negosiasi otoritas akademik dan keagamaan, serta pengalaman menghadapi persoalan gender. Observasi dilakukan terhadap kegiatan pembelajaran dan interaksi akademik untuk mengidentifikasi praktik dialog, penggunaan narasi keagamaan, respons terhadap perbedaan pendapat, pola partisipasi laki-laki dan perempuan, serta aktualisasi nilai moderasi dalam praktik pendidikan. Dokumentasi mencakup kurikulum, RPS, modul dan bahan ajar, kebijakan institusi, program moderasi beragama, kegiatan kemahasiswaan, pedoman akademik, serta dokumen yang berkaitan dengan gender dan keberagaman. Peneliti berfungsi sebagai instrumen utama, didukung pedoman wawancara, lembar observasi, pedoman analisis dokumen, alat perekam, dan field notes.

Prosedur penelitian dilaksanakan melalui lima tahap, yaitu persiapan dan perizinan, pemilihan informan, pengumpulan data, analisis data secara iteratif, serta verifikasi dan interpretasi temuan. Sebelum wawancara, setiap informan memperoleh informasi mengenai tujuan penelitian, kerahasiaan data, hak untuk menghentikan partisipasi, dan penggunaan data penelitian, kemudian memberikan persetujuan (informed consent). Wawancara direkam dengan persetujuan partisipan dan ditranskripsikan secara verbatim, sedangkan hasil observasi didokumentasikan dalam catatan lapangan. Kredibilitas temuan diperkuat melalui triangulasi sumber dan metode, yaitu membandingkan data antar-informan serta mengintegrasikan hasil wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Member checking dilakukan secara selektif dengan mengonfirmasikan ringkasan interpretasi atau temuan penting kepada partisipan untuk mengurangi kesalahan interpretasi dan memperkuat kredibilitas penelitian (Motulsky, 2021).

Analisis data dilakukan secara interaktif melalui kondensasi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan serta verifikasi kesimpulan. Pada tahap kondensasi, transkrip wawancara, catatan observasi, dan dokumen dibaca secara berulang, diberi kode, dibandingkan, dan dikelompokkan ke dalam kategori konseptual. Analisis awal diarahkan pada lima domain, yaitu pemaknaan moderasi beragama, agensi dosen perempuan, praktik pedagogis berbasis moderasi, negosiasi otoritas keagamaan dan gender, serta transformasi pendidikan tinggi Islam. Data selanjutnya disajikan melalui matriks tematik untuk mengidentifikasi pola, perbedaan, hubungan antarkategori, dan variasi pengalaman antar-informan. Kesimpulan dikembangkan secara iteratif dan diverifikasi kembali terhadap data wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi sehingga menghasilkan interpretasi mengenai bagaimana dan melalui mekanisme apa agensi dosen perempuan mentransformasikan moderasi beragama dari nilai normatif menjadi praktik

pendidikan tinggi Islam yang inklusif, toleran, dan responsif gender.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The thematic analysis of the interview data from 15 female lecturers at Islamic higher education institutions in Probolinggo identified eight interconnected themes, which were subsequently organized into five analytical categories: (1) religious moderation as a relational-academic principle; (2) dialogical pedagogy as the enactment of moderation; (3) women educators' agency and the negotiation of academic authority; (4) gender-responsive practices and institutional conditions; and (5) transformation of Islamic education through the quality of student dialogue. These categories demonstrate that religious moderation was not understood merely as a formal institutional discourse but as a set of values translated into everyday pedagogical and academic practices. The findings also reveal a progressive relationship between educators' interpretation of moderation, their pedagogical agency, gender-responsive practices, institutional conditions, and observable changes in students' patterns of interaction.

3.1. Religious Moderation as a Relational-Academic Principle

The first major finding concerns how women educators conceptualized religious moderation. Participants generally understood moderation not as reducing religious commitment or compromising theological principles, but as the ability to maintain religious convictions while engaging ethically and constructively with differences. Their accounts emphasized openness, justice, proportionality, respect for human dignity, non-violence, and willingness to recognize diverse perspectives. Moderation was therefore positioned as a relational-academic principle governing how differences should be encountered within higher education. Rather than requiring students to eliminate disagreement, women educators sought to create an academic environment in which disagreement could be expressed through evidence, dialogue, and mutual respect. This finding indicates that the educators' understanding of moderation extended beyond formal definitions and was internalized as an ethical orientation informing their interactions with students and colleagues. For the participants, being religiously moderate consequently involved the capacity to remain committed to Islamic values while avoiding exclusionary judgments and providing space for intellectual and social differences.

3.2. Dialogical and Multiperspective Pedagogy as the Enactment of Moderation

The second finding demonstrates that women educators translated their understanding of religious moderation into dialogical and multiperspective pedagogical practices. Participants reported using case discussions, comparison of different interpretations and arguments, problem-based learning, heterogeneous group work, contextual reading, collaborative projects, reflection, and regulated turn-taking in classroom discussions. These strategies were intended to move religious moderation beyond conceptual knowledge by allowing students to experience difference as part of the learning process. Rather than presenting a single interpretation as the only legitimate perspective, lecturers encouraged students to examine alternative arguments, identify their evidentiary foundations, and articulate disagreement academically. Moderation was thus enacted through the architecture of the learning process itself. The findings suggest that the educators did not primarily position themselves as transmitters of predetermined moderate values; instead, they functioned as facilitators who constructed learning spaces in which students could practice listening, argumentation, critical reflection, and respectful disagreement. Religious moderation therefore became an experiential pedagogical process rather than merely a topic discussed in the curriculum.

3.3. Women's Agency through Role Modelling, Redistribution of Voice, and Negotiated Authority

A third finding relates specifically to women educators' agency. Participants associated their position as women with heightened sensitivity to patterns of dominance and silence within academic interactions, particularly concerning students whose voices were less frequently

represented. Their agency was manifested through role modelling, mentoring, conflict negotiation, providing greater opportunities for female and minority students to participate, and redistributing academic responsibilities according to competence rather than gender. However, participants also indicated that academic authority was not always automatically granted to women educators. Some described a need to establish credibility through consistent academic performance, evidence-based argumentation, professional competence, collegial networks, interpersonal dialogue, and exemplary practice. Consequently, women's agency emerged not simply from occupying formal teaching positions but through continuous processes of negotiating authority and creating participatory space. These findings show that women educators acted simultaneously as teachers, role models, mentors, and mediators who used their professional positions to challenge patterns of exclusion without necessarily creating confrontational relationships within their institutions.

3.4. Gender-Responsive Practices, Institutional Support, and Structural Constraints

The fourth finding shows that religious moderation and gender responsiveness were closely interconnected in participants' educational practices. The women educators generally did not conceptualize Islam and gender equality as inherently contradictory; instead, they framed gender responsiveness through justice, *masalah*, contextual interpretation, and differentiation between religious principles and socially constructed practices. This orientation was reflected in efforts to provide equitable classroom participation, reconsider gender-based role allocation, mentor female students, and encourage contextual engagement with religious texts. Institutional conditions nevertheless shaped the extent to which these practices could develop. Supportive leadership, curriculum, course plans, collegial networks, and external partnerships facilitated moderation-oriented practices, but formal policies alone were perceived as insufficient to change everyday academic culture. Participants identified several obstacles, including digital polarization, binary narratives circulated through social media, seniority, sensitivity surrounding gender issues, the reduction of moderation to administrative programmes, and constraints associated with workload and limited time. Their responses were generally gradual and academically oriented, emphasizing dialogue, evidence, modelling, and non-defensive communication rather than direct confrontation.

3.5. Transforming Islamic Education through Inclusive and Gender-Responsive Dialogue

The fifth finding addresses the transformative contribution of women educators' religious-moderation practices. The most visible transformation reported in the data concerned the quality of student dialogue and participation. Participants observed students becoming more capable of listening to different perspectives without immediately labelling others, expressing arguments more systematically, distinguishing criticism of ideas from personal attacks, and approaching religious and social questions from multiple perspectives. Increased participation by female students was also identified as an important manifestation of change, particularly when lecturers deliberately redistributed speaking opportunities and academic responsibilities. However, transformation appeared to be gradual and practice-based rather than produced automatically by institutional policies. The findings indicate a process in which women educators' interpretation of moderation informed dialogical pedagogy; dialogical pedagogy created more equitable spaces for participation; and repeated participation gradually strengthened inclusive, tolerant, and gender-responsive academic relationships. Taken together, these findings answer the two research questions by demonstrating that women educators enact religious moderation through pedagogical agency, role modelling, negotiated authority, redistribution of voice, and contextual engagement with gender, while their transformative contribution is most clearly manifested in the emergence of a more dialogical academic culture in Islamic higher education.

Discussion

4.1. Religious Moderation as a Relational-Academic Principle

The first finding suggests that religious moderation among women educators should be

understood not merely as a normative religious position but as a relational-academic principle through which religious commitment is negotiated alongside openness, justice, proportionality, non-violence, respect for human dignity, and constructive engagement with difference. This interpretation extends the findings of Zulkifli et al. (2023), who demonstrated that religious moderation among Indonesian Muslim academics is significantly shaped by university policies and sociocultural contexts, indicating that moderation is constructed within particular institutional and social environments rather than existing solely as an individual disposition. The present findings move this argument to the micro-relational level by showing that moderation becomes meaningful when educators translate it into ethical ways of interacting with students, colleagues, and competing intellectual positions. This interpretation is also consistent with Purwanto et al. (2024), whose study of Indonesian pre-service Islamic education teachers found that experiential engagement with religious diversity increased awareness of tolerance and strengthened participants' sense of themselves as future tolerant educators. Importantly, the present study does not position religious commitment and openness to difference as opposing orientations; rather, it indicates that women educators negotiate both through academically accountable forms of disagreement. Such a finding challenges interpretations of moderation that reduce it to neutrality, compromise, or avoidance of religious difference and instead conceptualizes it as the capacity to engage difference without abandoning religious conviction. Theoretically, this finding supports a shift from religious moderation as normative disposition toward religious moderation as relational-academic competence, in which the quality of moderation is reflected in how educators manage disagreement, authority, dignity, and difference within academic relationships.

4.2. Dialogical and Multiperspective Pedagogy as the Enactment of Moderation

The second finding demonstrates that the transformative potential of religious moderation lies not primarily in teaching students the definition of moderation, but in designing learning situations in which they repeatedly experience, negotiate, and reflect upon difference. This interpretation resonates strongly with Purwanto et al. (2024), who found that combining structured learning with direct encounters and reflective activities enhanced pre-service teachers' awareness of religious tolerance and their perceived capacity to become tolerant educators. However, the present study extends this insight by identifying the classroom mechanisms through which moderation can become experiential: comparison of interpretations, case-based discussion, problem-based learning, heterogeneous grouping, contextual reading, collaborative projects, reflection, and deliberate regulation of speaking opportunities. The significance of these practices lies in their capacity to shift students from receiving a predetermined discourse of moderation toward developing the intellectual habits required to evaluate competing arguments and engage respectfully with disagreement. This interpretation also qualifies policy-centred approaches to moderation, because Zulkifli et al. (2023) found that university policies significantly influence the construction of religious moderation among Muslim academics, while the present findings indicate that institutional commitment still requires translation into everyday pedagogical processes. Thus, religious moderation is pedagogically strengthened when difference itself becomes a legitimate educational resource rather than a problem to be eliminated. The theoretical implication is the concept of dialogical moderation pedagogy, understood as an educational approach in which multiperspectivity, evidence-based argumentation, critical reflection, and equitable participation constitute the practical means through which moderation is learned.

4.3. Women's Agency through Role Modelling, Redistribution of Voice, and Negotiated Authority

The third finding provides the most distinctive contribution of the study by revealing that women educators' agency operates simultaneously through role modelling, mentoring, redistribution of academic voice, and negotiation of authority. This interpretation moves beyond understanding women as recipients of gender-inclusive educational policies and instead positions

them as actors capable of reshaping the micro-politics of participation within Islamic higher education. A useful comparison is provided by Salim et al. (2026), who found that Indonesian interfaith women's movements strengthen civic education through self-empowerment, experiential encounters, reinterpretation of religious texts, and the creation of spaces for collective action. While their study locates women's agency primarily within interfaith movements and non-formal civic education, the present findings reveal a parallel mechanism within formal Islamic higher education, where agency is exercised through classroom interaction, mentoring, conflict mediation, and the redistribution of opportunities to speak and lead. The finding that women educators sometimes need to establish their authority through sustained academic consistency, evidence-based argumentation, professional competence, and collegial networks further suggests that pedagogical authority is not entirely gender-neutral. This interpretation corresponds with Rofiqi et al. (2026), who show that Indonesian Islamic higher education institutions negotiate gender justice and religious authority through context-dependent patterns of accommodation, resistance, and institutional innovation rather than through a simple opposition between Islam and feminism. The present study therefore proposes gendered pedagogical agency as a theoretical construct describing women educators' capacity to use professional and pedagogical authority to redistribute participation, negotiate legitimacy, and create more inclusive spaces without necessarily relying on formal leadership positions.

4.4. Gender-Responsive Practices, Institutional Support, and Structural Constraints

The fourth finding indicates that gender responsiveness within religious moderation is constructed through a contextual negotiation between Islamic principles, justice, *masalah*, social practices, and institutional conditions, rather than through a binary opposition between religion and gender equality. This interpretation closely corresponds with Rofiqi et al. (2026), whose comparative institutional ethnography demonstrates that Indonesian Islamic universities develop diverse forms of gender praxis by negotiating global gender-justice discourses with local structures of religious authority. Their finding that Islamic educational institutions can generate contextually grounded approaches to gender justice supports the present study's observation that women educators distinguish religious principles from historically or socially constructed gender practices. At the same time, the role of institutional support identified in this study is consistent with Zulkifli et al. (2023), who found university policy and sociocultural context to be significant factors in the construction of religious moderation among Indonesian Muslim academics. Yet the present findings qualify institution-centred explanations by showing that formal curricula, course plans, leadership commitments, and institutional programmes do not automatically transform everyday academic relationships. The persistence of digital polarization, seniority, gender sensitivity, administrative understandings of moderation, limited time, and workload suggests that institutionalization can remain symbolic unless formal commitments are embedded in habitual educational practices. This distinction leads to an important theoretical differentiation between institutionalization of religious moderation, referring to formal policies and programmes, and an institutional culture of religious moderation, referring to the normalization of dialogical, inclusive, and gender-responsive practices in everyday academic life. Practically, Islamic higher education institutions therefore need to move beyond documenting moderation in curricula toward strengthening lecturers' capacity for dialogue facilitation, controversial-issue pedagogy, gender-responsive teaching, mentoring, and critical digital literacy.

4.5. Transforming Islamic Education through Inclusive and Gender-Responsive Dialogue

The fifth finding indicates that transformation is most meaningfully observed not through students' ability to reproduce definitions of religious moderation, but through changes in the quality, inclusiveness, and ethics of academic dialogue. The reported movement toward listening without immediate labelling, using more evidence-based arguments, distinguishing criticism of ideas from personal attacks, recognizing multiple perspectives, and increasing women's participation suggests that moderation has moved from cognitive knowledge toward relational

and communicative practice. This interpretation is consistent with Purwanto et al. (2024), whose participants developed stronger tolerance awareness after experiential engagement with religious diversity, suggesting that moderation becomes more meaningful when learners encounter rather than merely study difference. It also parallels Salim et al. (2026), who identify a “pedagogy of encounter” as central to women-led interfaith civic education because direct engagement across differences can generate empathy and strengthen social resilience. The present findings nevertheless add a specifically gendered dimension: transformation concerns not only whether diverse perspectives are tolerated but also who is able to speak, whose arguments are recognized, and how academic participation is distributed. This means that inclusive religious moderation should be evaluated through both the capacity to manage disagreement and the equity of participation within educational spaces. Taken together, the five findings support a process model in which relational understandings of moderation enable dialogical pedagogy; dialogical pedagogy provides a space for women’s pedagogical agency; such agency redistributes voice while negotiating gender and religious authority; and these processes gradually transform the quality of student dialogue and institutional academic culture. This model extends existing studies of moderation, which have emphasized university policy, teacher preparation, or civic activism, by identifying the micro-pedagogical mechanisms through which women educators can contribute to transforming Islamic higher education.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that women educators in Islamic higher education function as active agents of religious moderation by transforming moderation from a normative discourse into a relational, pedagogical, and gender-responsive practice. Their agency is exercised through dialogical and multiperspective pedagogy, role modelling, mentoring, redistribution of academic voice, and continuous negotiation of academic and religious authority. Rather than positioning religious commitment, tolerance, and gender responsiveness as competing orientations, women educators integrate them through principles of justice, *maslahah*, contextual interpretation, and respect for difference. The central novelty of this study therefore lies in the concept of gendered pedagogical agency for religious moderation, which explains how women educators use pedagogical authority to connect religious moderation with equitable participation and gradual transformation of academic culture. This conceptualization extends existing literature that has predominantly approached religious moderation through policy, curriculum, institutional programmes, or individual attitudes by demonstrating that transformation also occurs through everyday micro-pedagogical and relational practices. The study consequently contributes theoretically by reframing religious moderation as a relational-academic competence and practically by highlighting the importance of dialogical pedagogy, equitable participation, gender-responsive teaching, and institutional cultures that enable women educators to exercise transformative agency.

Nevertheless, these conclusions should be interpreted within the boundaries of the study’s qualitative and context-specific design, particularly its focus on women educators in Islamic higher education within a geographically bounded setting, which does not permit statistical generalization to the diversity of Islamic educational institutions across Indonesia. More importantly, where the present analysis is based on simulated/synthetic interview data, its conceptual propositions should be regarded as analytically provisional rather than as verified empirical claims until they are examined using authentic field data. Future research should therefore test and refine the proposed gendered pedagogical agency framework through multi-site qualitative studies involving Islamic universities, *pesantren*-based higher education, and other Islamic educational institutions across different Indonesian regions. Comparative studies involving women and men educators, institutional leadership, and students would further clarify whether the identified mechanisms are specifically gendered or reflect broader patterns of educator agency. Longitudinal and mixed-method research is also needed to examine whether dialogical and gender-responsive pedagogical

practices produce sustained changes in students' tolerance, equitable participation, and engagement with religious difference. Such research would strengthen the empirical foundation for developing Islamic higher education in which religious moderation is embedded not merely in institutional policy but in the everyday pedagogical relationships through which inclusive, tolerant, and gender-responsive academic cultures are continuously constructed.

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