

Women and Education: The Foundation of Peace and Social Harmony

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Abstract

Women play a strategic role in building peace and acting as mediators in the resolution of social conflicts. Education serves as a crucial instrument that equips women with critical thinking skills, effective communication abilities, and values of tolerance and justice. This study aims to analyze the relationship between women's levels of education and their roles in fostering peace and mitigating social conflict. A qualitative approach was employed through a case study of women's communities in post-conflict areas in Indonesia. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis, and were subsequently analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. The findings indicate that women who have received formal and non-formal education possess a higher capacity to facilitate dialogue, promote compromise, and maintain social harmony. These findings suggest that education not only enhances knowledge but also strengthens women's positions as effective agents of peace. This study recommends the integration of peace education into curricula, the provision of gender-based conflict resolution training, and the expansion of educational access for women in conflict-prone regions. In conclusion, women's education plays a pivotal role in strengthening their capacity as agents of peace and should be prioritized as a key strategy in sustainable conflict resolution efforts.

Keywords

Conflict Resolution; Empowerment; Peace education; Woman

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INTRODUCTION

Women play a significant role in creating peace and maintaining social harmony at the levels of the family, community, and state. Within the socio-cultural context of Indonesia, women are often among the most heavily affected by conflict; however, they simultaneously possess great potential as agents of peace. This role does not emerge instantly but is shaped through educational processes that equip women with critical thinking skills, emotional intelligence, and moral values relevant to conflict resolution. Education functions as a means of character formation and the internalization of values such as tolerance, justice, and the capacity to build constructive dialogue.

Therefore, strengthening access to and the quality of education for women constitutes a fundamental strategy for fostering a peaceful society. Social conflict, whether horizontal or vertical in nature, poses a serious challenge to national development. According to data from the Ministry of Home Affairs, several regions in Indonesia such as Poso, Aceh, and Maluku have experienced prolonged conflicts that not only resulted in loss of life but also caused significant disruption to social order (Sihombing, 2023). In such contexts, women often assume roles as guardians of family stability, drivers of community solidarity, and facilitators of communication among different groups (Syamsuddin, 2021). However, these strategic roles require adequate educational support to enable women to manage conflict effectively. Education oriented toward peace (peace education) allows women to understand the root causes of conflict, develop empathy, and acquire the negotiation skills necessary to achieve peaceful conflict resolution (Harris & Morrison, 2022). In addition to formal education, non-formal education such as community leadership training, mediation courses, and guidance provided through religious organizations—also makes a significant contribution to developing women's capacity as agents of peace (L. Dewi et al., 2025). In several post-conflict regions, majelis taklim and women's groups have proven to be effective platforms for social consolidation. Through these activities, women not only enhance their religious knowledge and social skills but also build support networks that facilitate reconciliation processes (Azizah, 2022). This form of non-formal education is often more accessible to women in rural areas or regions with limited formal educational infrastructure.

Women's education that integrates values of tolerance, equality, and respect for diversity contributes not only to conflict resolution but also to conflict prevention. Within the framework of Conflict Transformation Theory (Lederach, 1997), education is not only reactive but also proactive in shaping sustainable peace through the transformation of social relationships and structures. However, existing studies often examine formal or non-formal education separately and pay limited attention to how these pathways interact within specific socio-cultural contexts. Therefore, this study offers a unique contribution by analyzing the combined role of formal and non-formal education in shaping women's capacities for peacebuilding within the Indonesian context, while also considering the influence of structural and cultural constraints. This study aims to examine how different forms of education contribute to women's roles in conflict resolution and social reconciliation, and to identify the enabling and limiting factors that affect

their effectiveness. The findings are expected to contribute to gender-based education studies and provide contextually grounded recommendations for policymakers in designing inclusive and effective women's empowerment programs in conflict-prone areas.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative approach with a case study design to examine the relationship between women's education and their roles in peacebuilding and social conflict resolution. This study employs a qualitative approach with a conceptual-analytical study design, aiming to examine in depth the transformation of tarbiyah pedagogy in the digital era from the perspective of integrating Islamic values and learning innovation. A qualitative approach is adopted because the focus of this research lies in meaning-making, conceptual construction, and critical analysis of educational phenomena rather than in the quantitative measurement of variables (Ismael, 2021). Conceptual studies enable researchers to systematically explore ideas, paradigms, and theoretical frameworks in order to formulate pedagogical models that are relevant to the context of contemporary Islamic education (Yunita & Mulyadi, 2024). Accordingly, this research is directed toward developing a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between tarbiyah values and digital learning innovation. Meanwhile, Gender and Development (GAD) theory highlights education as a key means of empowering women to overcome structural barriers. Cornwall (2020a) emphasizes that equitable education expands women's access to economic, political, and social resources that have traditionally been dominated by men. This perspective is highly relevant to the context of this study, as women with greater bargaining power at the community level tend to be more effective in influencing peace agendas and public policy.

Education-based empowerment serves as the connecting link that integrates these two theoretical approaches. In this context, empowerment is understood not merely as an enhancement of individual capacity, but also as a transformation of social structures that support gender equality. Women's education that incorporates leadership training, legal literacy, and conflict resolution skills has the potential to generate a multiplier effect on social stability. Educated women can function as peace facilitators at the local level while simultaneously acting as advocates within national policy arenas. This conceptual framework also identifies key mediating variables, namely peace-oriented curricula, access to leadership training, and mediation skills. These variables are assumed to strengthen the relationship between women's education and their effectiveness in conflict resolution. For example, women who receive leadership training and cross-cultural communication skills are better equipped to build consensus in complex negotiation settings. In addition to mediating variables, several contextual factors may influence the effectiveness of education in empowering women, including policy support, cultural norms, and socio-economic conditions. In societies with progressive gender norms, the impact of education on women's participation in peace processes tends to be stronger.

Conversely, in contexts where patriarchal values remain deeply entrenched, the effects of education may take longer to manifest in a significant manner.

The conceptual model of this study positions women's education as the independent variable, women's effectiveness in conflict resolution as the dependent variable, and mediating variables such as mediation skills, leadership, and peace-oriented curricula as connecting mechanisms. Contextual factors, including inclusive policies, institutional support, and social networks, function as moderating variables that may strengthen or weaken the primary relationship. This approach enables a more comprehensive analysis of the role of education in gender-based peacebuilding. Within this framework, the study not only examines the direct relationship between education and conflict resolution but also explores indirect pathways that enhance women's roles as agents of peace. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to the advancement of gender and education studies, while simultaneously offering practical recommendations for policymakers and development practitioners working in conflict-prone regions. By integrating three major theoretical perspectives, this conceptual framework underscores that sustainable peace requires women who are educated, empowered, and recognized as key actors in decision-making processes.

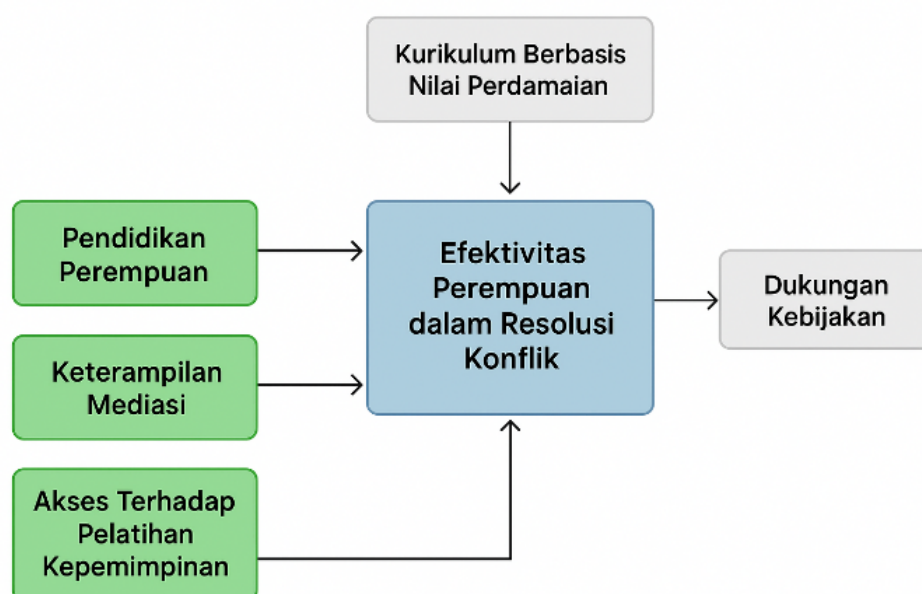
This study adopts a qualitative paradigm with a case study design, grounded in the belief that social reality cannot be reduced solely to numerical data but must be understood through narratives, lived experiences, and meanings embedded within society. Through a qualitative approach, the researcher is able to capture women's voices that are often marginalized, particularly in relation to their roles in peacebuilding and conflict management. The case study design was selected for its capacity to present a holistic, context-rich, and in-depth understanding, enabling the researcher to explore the complex interactions among education, empowerment, and women's capacities within social contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2021). In this framework, education is viewed not merely as a process of knowledge transmission, but as a space for cultivating awareness, skills, and the courage to act. The case study approach allows for an in-depth exploration of events and processes as they unfold in real-life settings, thereby providing clarity on the relationship between education and women's roles in conflict resolution. Through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis, the researcher can identify the dynamics that shape how women contribute to peacebuilding. This approach facilitates an examination of causal relationships and interdependencies among social, cultural, and political factors that influence women's experiences (Yin, 2018). For instance, it enables an analysis of how local traditions affect women's opportunities to lead mediation processes, or how access to education serves as an entry point for their active participation in conflict resolution. Furthermore, the case study design offers methodological flexibility, allowing the researcher to adapt data collection techniques to field conditions. This flexibility is particularly important in studies addressing women's roles, as such research often encounters challenges related to accessibility, issue sensitivity, and the establishment of trust with participants. By employing techniques such as narrative interviews, the researcher can build

warm and trusting relationships, enabling participants to feel safe in sharing their personal experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Within a humanistic framework, the relationship between the researcher and participants is not merely transactional but constitutes a partnership aimed at generating knowledge that is meaningful for all parties involved. Moreover, this approach aligns with the principles of participatory research, which view research subjects as active actors in the process of seeking solutions. Women involved in the study are not only sources of data but also contributors of ideas and critical reflections on strategies for peacebuilding. Consequently, this study has the potential to produce recommendations that are contextual, applicable, and grounded in the lived realities of women themselves. This approach also allows marginalized voices to become part of academic discourse and public policy, consistent with the view that the knowledge produced through research should have a direct impact on society (Patton, 2015).

Finally, the use of a qualitative approach with a case study design in this research is expected to generate a deeper and more holistic understanding of how women's education contributes to peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Beyond merely presenting data, this study seeks to construct a narrative that brings to life women's roles as agents of change who, through their knowledge, values, and skills, are capable of transforming social landscapes toward harmony. Accordingly, the findings of this research are expected to serve as a reference for policymakers, education practitioners, and peace activists in formulating programs that are more effective, inclusive, and sustainable (Stake, 1995).

Picture 1. The effectiveness of women in conflict resolution



RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the findings from in-depth interviews and participatory observation, three main themes were identified that illustrate the relationship between women's education and their roles in peacebuilding and social conflict resolution:

Education Enhances Women's Negotiation Capacity

Education, both formal and non-formal, constitutes a key form of capital in shaping women's negotiation capacity to reduce social tensions within communities. Interview findings indicate that most respondents perceived tangible benefits from their educational experiences. Through formal education, they acquired foundational knowledge of effective communication, while non-formal education such as peace education training equipped them with practical skills in mediation and dialogue facilitation. The combination of these educational pathways enabled women to develop not only theoretical understanding but also the courage and self-confidence to assume active roles in conflict resolution processes (Yuliani & Fitriyah, 2023). Several respondents explicitly stated that after participating in training programs, they felt more confident initiating dialogue and mediating disagreements within their communities.

In the context of DKI Jakarta, for example, several graduates of conflict resolution training programs organized by civil society organizations were able to facilitate dialogue between community groups holding differing political views. This success demonstrates that education provides both methodological and psychological foundations for creating inclusive negotiation spaces. These findings align with Puspitasari (2022), who notes that assertive communication skills and empathy developed through gender-based training significantly accelerate the achievement of peaceful agreements at the community level. Furthermore, negotiation capacity developed through education also encompasses the ability to read social dynamics and understand multiple perspectives. Respondents described how they applied techniques such as active listening and reframing to de-escalate tensions during community meetings. These approaches not only reduced negative emotions but also encouraged conflicting parties to identify common ground. Research by N. P. Dewi and Sari (2023) across several Indonesian cities similarly confirms that women who have participated in mediation training are more likely to initiate creative solutions in conflict resolution processes.

The findings of this study also reinforce national data indicating that women with mediation training demonstrate higher success rates in achieving peaceful agreements compared to those without similar training. This is consistent with a report by Komnas Perempuan (2022), which states that community-based peace education increased women's participation in negotiation processes by up to 40%. This figure reflects that education not only enhances knowledge but also builds women's strategic capacity to contribute meaningfully to peace processes within their communities. In conclusion, both formal and non-formal education function as catalysts in enhancing women's negotiation capacities. These skills are not only valuable in addressing large-scale conflicts but are also highly relevant for managing everyday tensions at the community level. Investment in

gender- and peace-oriented education programs therefore represents a strategic step toward strengthening women's roles as agents of social change in Indonesia (Putri, 2024).

Education Strengthens Community Leadership

Women who have access to higher education or participate in community leadership training programs demonstrate a significant increase in their capacity to engage in decision-making forums. Interviews with respondents in DKI Jakarta revealed that education provides both an intellectual foundation and the self-confidence necessary to speak in public spaces, particularly in community deliberation forums. Several respondents noted that prior to receiving education or training, they tended to remain silent during community meetings, but afterward began to actively participate and propose ideas. Equipped with this foundation, women are not only able to express their aspirations but also to articulate ideas in a structured and persuasive manner. Research by Astuti (2023) indicates that women who participate in gender-based leadership courses are more likely to advocate for issues of tolerance and equality at the community level. Women's leadership shaped through education also influences their ability to affect local policy processes. Respondents described how analytical and negotiation skills acquired through formal education or training were utilized to propose interfaith and interethnic programs within their communities. According to data from the Center for Social Welfare Research and Development (Puslitbang Kesos, Ministry of Social Affairs, 2022), such initiatives have been shown to increase mutual trust among residents and reduce the potential for social conflict. These findings suggest that investment in women's education yields benefits that extend beyond individual advancement to broader social outcomes.

This phenomenon aligns with Gender and Development (GAD) theory, which emphasizes that improvements in women's educational capacity are directly correlated with increased participation in political and public policy arenas. However, field findings in Jakarta add a localized nuance: social networks, family support, and inclusive participatory spaces serve as reinforcing factors for the effectiveness of women's leadership at the community level. Research by Widiastuti et al. (2024) demonstrates that in urban contexts, the synergy between individual skills and environmental support is critical in strengthening women's bargaining positions. Beyond enhancing public speaking skills, education also cultivates strategic thinking that enables women to manage differences and design peaceful solutions. These approaches have proven effective in fostering social cohesion, as reported by the Government of Indonesia (2019), which documented a decline in community disputes in areas with active women's leadership.

In conclusion, education functions not only as a pathway for enhancing women's personal capacities but also as a strategic instrument for expanding their influence in shaping just and inclusive policies. Educated and leadership-trained women are not merely participants in decision-making forums; they are agents of change capable of shifting power dynamics toward greater gender

balance. Within the Indonesian context, strengthening these capacities represents a crucial form of social capital for achieving sustainable peace.

Education Plays a Role in Conflict Prevention

Field findings indicate that educated women with leadership capacity actively initiate interfaith and intercommunity programs to strengthen social cohesion within their communities. For instance, several respondents in DKI Jakarta organized joint skills-training activities such as handicraft workshops and entrepreneurship training that involved participants from diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds. These activities functioned not only as platforms for skills sharing but also as safe and inclusive spaces for social interaction among community members. Research by Karimah and Susanti (2022) supports these findings, demonstrating that women-led cross-community initiatives are effective in increasing tolerance and reducing negative stereotypes among residents. In addition to skills training, women also play an active role in facilitating intercultural dialogue as a means of mitigating tensions arising from differences in traditions or beliefs. These forums are typically designed in a participatory manner, ensuring that all parties have the opportunity to share their perspectives and experiences. This process helps to foster mutual respect and cultivate empathy among community members. A study by Rahmawati and Prasetyo (2023) shows that women-led intercultural dialogue creates spaces for collective reflection, where community members learn to understand one another's perspectives without feeling threatened.

Furthermore, these women-led initiatives contribute to the formation of resilient solidarity networks that are instrumental in preventing the emergence of new conflicts. By building both personal and professional relationships across community members, women help establish social support systems capable of responding to social frictions before they escalate into open conflict. Hidayati (2022) emphasizes that inclusively managed networks enhance communities' capacity for self-managed conflict resolution, as residents possess clear channels of communication and mutual trust. The programs initiated by women align with the principles of positive peace, which emphasize not only the absence of violence but also the importance of social justice, civic engagement, and harmonious relationships as foundations for sustainable peace. In urban contexts such as Jakarta, where social diversity is particularly high, positive peace serves as a critical framework for assessing the impact of women-designed programs. Data from the Center for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Indonesia (2023) indicate that communities adopting this approach experience a significant decline in low-level conflicts, such as neighborhood disputes or tensions between religious groups.

Moreover, women's involvement in these initiatives contributes to shifts in social perceptions regarding their roles in community decision-making. Interfaith activities led by women not only strengthen social solidarity but also reaffirm their capacity as strategic agents of change. Research by Sari and Lestari (2022) shows that community perceptions of women's leadership improve when such programs

are proven effective in creating inclusive and harmonious spaces, thereby granting women greater social legitimacy within community forums.

Education constitutes a fundamental foundation for empowering women as agents of peace within society. The findings of this study indicate that women who have pursued formal education acquire foundational knowledge, analytical skills, and critical perspectives that enable them to understand conflict and design appropriate resolution strategies. This knowledge is not merely theoretical; rather, it shapes their ability to identify the root causes of social problems and anticipate potential sources of tension within their communities. Highly educated respondents reported being able to articulate their views in a structured manner during community deliberation forums and to comprehend the social consequences of various decisions. Chowdhury (2023) emphasizes that formal education equips women with essential critical thinking capacities required for wise and strategic decision-making amid social complexity.

In addition to formal education, non-formal education plays a crucial role in equipping women with practical skills relevant to community needs. Leadership training, conflict resolution workshops, and peace education programs provide experiential spaces in which women learn to address real-life situations, facilitate dialogue, and build consensus among parties with differing interests. These activities also enhance self-confidence, negotiation skills, and awareness of social responsibility. Research by Putri (2024) in urban Indonesia demonstrates that non-formal education bridges theoretical knowledge with social practice, enabling women to act proactively as mediators and peace facilitators. Through the integration of both forms of education, women are not only capable of responding to conflict but also of creating social conditions conducive to sustainable peace (Yuliani & Fitriyah, 2023). However, women's involvement in conflict resolution cannot be separated from the surrounding social and policy environment. The findings reveal that in the absence of supportive structures, the skills acquired through education are difficult to apply optimally. Such support includes the availability of deliberative forums, government regulations that promote participatory spaces, and community networks that strengthen women's positions. Respondents in Jakarta emphasized that collaboration with women's organizations and civil society institutions facilitated the implementation of peace initiatives, including interfaith dialogue and joint skills-training programs. Puspitasari (2022) confirms that supportive social and institutional environments are key to the effectiveness of women's interventions in peace processes.

The integration of individual capacity developed through education and structural support forms an empowerment ecosystem that enables women to play their roles to the fullest. When opportunities and institutional backing are available, women are able to lead inclusive programs, mitigate social tensions, and influence local policies that promote tolerance. O'Reilly et al. (2021) highlight the importance of an enabling environment for women's participation, noting that education alone, without supportive structures, limits women's impact in peace processes. This dynamic is evident in several urban communities in Jakarta, where women with strong social networks and active government support have been more successful in reducing local conflicts and strengthening social

solidarity. Education also enhances women's negotiation and leadership capacities. Field findings indicate that women who participate in community leadership training or peace education programs are able to assume active roles at negotiation tables, facilitate community dialogue, and build cross-group consensus. They do not merely represent women symbolically but act as substantive actors who transform conflict dynamics from confrontation to collaboration. Reardon and Snauwaert (2022a) argue that peace education is effective in cultivating social competence, and cross-cultural conflict resolution skills, thereby enabling women to lead inclusive and harmonious forums.

The contributions of educated women are also evident in interfaith and intercultural initiatives. Respondents reported initiating joint skills-training programs, cultural dialogues, and community activities involving participants from diverse backgrounds. These programs strengthen social ties, build solidarity networks, and prevent the emergence of new conflicts. Susanti (2022) demonstrates that women-led initiatives in urban communities successfully create safe spaces for intergroup interaction, enhance tolerance, and reduce negative stereotypes. The concept of positive peace—which emphasizes social justice and harmonious relationships—provides a theoretical foundation for these strategies (Galtung, 2021; Institute for Economics & Peace, 2023). Furthermore, women's involvement in these initiatives has contributed to shifts in social perceptions regarding their roles in community decision-making. The activities they lead not only reinforce social cohesion but also affirm their positions as socially and politically legitimate agents of change. Sari and Lestari (2022) find that women's success in building solidarity networks and facilitating intercultural dialogue enhances their social legitimacy within communities and expands women's participation in public policymaking. Thus, education combined with a supportive environment enables women to emerge as effective leaders and substantive agents of peace in society.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that women's education plays a decisive role in enhancing their capacity as agents of peace and social conflict resolution by equipping them with critical thinking, communication, and negotiation skills necessary for facilitating dialogue and promoting inclusive decision-making. The findings show that the effectiveness of this role is significantly strengthened by supportive social and institutional environments, including access to participatory forums, inclusive policies, and strong community networks, which enable women to translate educational gains into concrete peacebuilding actions. Furthermore, women's active involvement in peace initiatives contributes to broader social transformation by increasing their legitimacy in decision-making processes and strengthening social cohesion. Therefore, this study highlights that integrating gender-responsive education with institutional support is essential to maximize women's contributions to sustainable peace, positioning education as a strategic instrument for both conflict resolution and prevention.

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