

Siti Walidah's Gender Vision and Islamic Feminist Pedagogy: Reconstructing Islamic Educational Epistemology in Mu'allimat Yogyakarta

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ABSTRACT

Women's education in Indonesia has progressed significantly, yet gender inequality within Islamic educational spaces remains a critical issue. **Purpose:** This study aims to re-examine the continuity of the gender justice vision initiated by Siti Walidah in founding Madrasah Mu'allimaat Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta within contemporary educational practices. **Method:** This study employed a qualitative case study design with a multi-source data triangulation strategy, including the analysis of official institutional documents such as the Curriculum and the Student Rules and Regulations, tracking institutional digital traces, and syntheses of previous field studies. The data were analyzed through the lens of bell hooks' feminist framework of engaged pedagogy to dissect the relationships between teachers, students, and social structures. **Findings:** The findings demonstrate that the implementation of feminist pedagogy within Madrasah Mu'allimaat has successfully transformed these relationships through three main dimensions: a participative-humanistic teacher-student relationship, experiential dialogic education that validates women's lived realities, and the strategic utilization of an all-female environment as an institutional safe space that provides absolute hierarchical autonomy for students' leadership agency. **Contribution:** Theoretically, this study develops a "Conceptual Model of Islamic Feminist Pedagogy" that integrates Ismail al-Faruqi's emancipatory *Tawhid* with bell hooks' critical approach. **Novelty:** This study concludes that Siti Walidah's emancipatory vision has been successfully codified into a modern institutional system to prepare Muslim women to transform and deconstruct patriarchal structures in wider society. **Future research:** While limited to a single institution, this research provides a blueprint for reconstructing an Islamic educational epistemology that is highly responsive to global gender issues.

Keywords: Feminist Pedagogy, Engaged Pedagogy, Siti Walidah, Madrasah Mu'allimaat, Tawhid.

Introduction

Women's education in Indonesia has experienced significant progress in the last decade. According to data from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek), in the first semester of the 2024/2025 academic year, there were approximately 3.19 million teachers in Indonesia, consisting of 2,185,396 female teachers (72%) and 834,384 male teachers (28%). (Siaran Pers Komnas Perempuan Memperingati Hari Guru Sedunia 2025 n.d.) This fact indicates that women have made a significant contribution to the national education sector, while also demonstrating their strategic role as key drivers in the learning process and human resource development in Indonesia. However, despite this increase, Islamic education still faces the challenge of glaring gender inequality. For example, there are reports from various sources indicating complaints regarding restrictions on access to leadership and recognition of women's contributions in educational institutions, although not specifically in Yogyakarta. (Pratama, Amrullah, and Vianty 2024) This phenomenon illustrates the gap between the quantitative and qualitative achievements of gender equality in education, creating an urgent need for a more in-depth study of the realities of contemporary educational practices.

Discussions on the deconstruction of gender bias in Islamic educational institutions have become a global concern following the adoption of the fifth point of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda on gender equality. (Malik et al. 2025) However, in practice, various Islamic educational institutions in the Muslim world still face tension between the preservation of dogmatic theological values and demands for emancipatory curriculum reform. (Ansar Khan and Zubair Ahmed 2025) On the one hand, the global mainstream demands the full integration of gender equity principles into the classroom. On the other hand, Islamic educational institutions are often criticized by Western critics as spaces that perpetuate the domestication of women resulting from partial and patriarchal readings of religious texts (Salim 2024) Consequently, an urgent global need has emerged to create an alternative pedagogical model that does not simply adopt Western secular feminist theories that are often incompatible with Islamic epistemology, but rather a transformative methodology firmly rooted in the values of monotheism but inherently capable of dismantling oppressive gender hierarchies within educational institutions. In responding to these global challenges, Indonesia actually has a rich historical precedent through local thought movements. Long before the global discourse of critical pedagogy emerged, the foundations of contemporary gender-responsive Islamic education in Indonesia were initiated by Siti Walidah.

Islamic education for women in Indonesia was initiated by Siti Walidah, the founder of Madrasah Mu'allimat, who established a vision of gender justice as the foundation of education for women. The pedagogical approach implemented at Mu'allimat aligns with Muhammadiyah values, which place the principle of gender equality as one of the goals of Islamic education. As stated by Hasan and Umiarso, teaching in Islamic-based educational institutions, including those managed by organizations like Muhammadiyah, is expected to strengthen the principle of balance between men and women. (Hasan and Umiarso 2023) However, challenges to achieving gender equality

remain, as patriarchal systems still dominate many aspects, including education.(Nasrudin, Sunan, and Yogyakarta 2023)

Many previous researchers have studied Siti Walidah and her contribution to women's emancipation. In general, the literature that studies Siti Walidah focuses on three main trends. First, a historical-biographical approach that traces Siti Walidah's role in establishing the Sapa Tresno movement and managing the women's dormitory in the early 20th century.(Ika Setiya Wati and Kuswono 2019) (Utami and Afiyanto 2022)(Khoirul Muthrofin 2023) Second, a sociological analysis that places its activities in the context of the institutional modernist Islamic movement through 'Aisyiyah.(Huda and Susanto 2023) (Fatimah, St. Nurhayati Ali, and Puspita Sari 2025) Third, a contextual-normative study that examines Siti Walidah's philosophical thoughts regarding women's educational rights..(Andriyani et al. 2025)(Aldira, Aguswan, and Hakim 2024)

The next trend is an epistemological approach to Islamic education that shifts the focus from purely historical or normative narratives to the structural and philosophical foundations of Islamic learning. Intellectuals within this trend analyze how core Islamic concepts, such as ta'dib (instilling good manners and justice) and tarbiyah (educational guidance), serve as the foundation for modern educational models.(Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas (Syed) 1980) (Halstead 2004)This perspective views Islamic educational epistemology not as a rigid or static dogma, but as a dynamic framework driven by values and grounded in tauhid (the oneness of God) that inherently promotes human dignity, intellectual liberation, and gender equality.(Halstead 2004)(Gaffar and Akhtar 2025)(Wadud 1999) Consequently, this trend opens new avenues for exploring how traditional Islamic values can critically engage with and recontextualize contemporary liberation pedagogies without losing their spiritual and metaphysical identity.

Siti Walidah's emancipatory vision was inextricably linked to the broader Islamic reformist agenda of Muhammadiyah. Her approach to women's empowerment was not derived from secular frameworks, but was rather a profound embodiment of core Islamic educational concepts such as tarbiyah (holistic nurturing and development) and ta'dib (the instillation of ethics, adab, and justice). By establishing dedicated educational spaces for women, she actively operationalized these epistemological concepts, transforming them from abstract theological ideals into practical instruments for social reform. This integration demonstrates that her movement was an authentic articulation of Islamic epistemology designed to dismantle patriarchal structures and promote women's intellectual liberation from within the religious tradition itself.

While these studies have successfully provided a strong historical and philosophical foundation, there are significant limitations in the existing literature. Most studies are mired in a romanticization of the historical past and normative textual analysis, leaving an empirical gap regarding how this vision of gender is embodied in the reality of contemporary Islamic education. Furthermore, no research has specifically examined these dynamics through the lens of bell hooks' feminist pedagogy, specifically examining the agency of female teachers as micro-actors in the classroom. Therefore, to address this gap, this study is guided by a central research question: How

can Siti Walidah's feminist pedagogy be reconstructed within the epistemology of Islamic education?

This study utilizes a qualitative case study design at Madrasah Mu'allimaat Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta to capture, at a micro level, how contemporary teachers negotiate, interpret, and implement Siti Walidah's vision of gender justice amidst the structural challenges of modern patriarchal culture. This article synthesizes bell hooks' critical framework of engaged pedagogy with Ismail Raji al-Faruqi's epistemology of *Tauhid*. Through this dual analytical lens, the study examines the concrete application of these egalitarian values within both the institutional curriculum and live classroom practices, evaluating their ultimate impact on women's empowerment. (Qibtiyah 2020) This study contends that while Madrasah Mu'allimaat successfully functions as a transformative platform for Muslim women's education, nuanced challenges remain in fully actualizing a *tauhid*-based feminist pedagogy. These challenges manifest primarily in the ongoing need to dismantle rigid teacher-student hierarchies and enrich educators' systemic comprehension of a gender-responsive curriculum to prevent inegalitarian learning experiences. (Hazim and Fihayati 2022)

Methods

This research employed a qualitative case study design with a descriptive-analytical approach to comprehensively investigate how Siti Walidah's historical vision is operationalized in contemporary institutional practices. The study was conducted at Madrasah Mu'allimaat Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, an all-female Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*) that integrates the national curriculum with the distinct Muhammadiyah-'Aisyiyah cadre-building system. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, focusing specifically on alumni who currently serve as active educators within the institution, thereby providing a deep, multi-generational, and reflective perspective on classroom pedagogical practices.

Data collection adopted a multi-source strategy to capture both institutional structures and subjective classroom experiences. This included semi-structured, in-depth interviews with the alumni-teachers; non-participant digital observation of school activities and student cadre development (such as the *Ikatan Pelajar Muhammadiyah* and *Hizbul Wathan*); and systematic textual analysis of official documents, including the curriculum framework and the 2024 Student Rules and Regulations. Ethical integrity was strictly maintained throughout the research cycle by obtaining formal institutional permission, ensuring informed consent, protecting participant privacy through anonymization, and guaranteeing voluntary participation.

Data analysis utilized qualitative thematic analysis interpreted through a synthesized theoretical framework. Operationally, the data were analyzed using bell hooks' feminist framework of *engaged pedagogy* to dissect the triadic relationships between teachers, students, and social structures, focusing on how participatory learning dismantles the patriarchal "banking education" system. Philosophically, this analysis was anchored in Ismail Raji al-Faruqi's epistemology of *Tauhid* through the principle of the "Islamization of Knowledge." This critical framework ensured that the pedagogical liberation of female students was not misinterpreted, but rather understood as a

tauhidic restoration of their spiritual agency and equal dignity as *khalifah* (vicegerents) of God. To guarantee the rigor and trustworthiness of the findings, this interpretive process was strictly controlled through multi-source data triangulation, member checking, and regular peer debriefing with external qualitative scholars.

Results

1. *Historical Gender Vision of Siti Walidah*

Siti Walidah, also known as Nyai Ahmad Dahlan, was a key figure in the women's education and empowerment movement in Indonesia. Born in 1884 in Yogyakarta, Siti Walidah was the wife of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan, the founder of the Muhammadiyah organization. With a strong educational background and the influence of her husband, Siti Walidah was committed to fighting for gender equality and education for women. (Utami and Afiyanto 2022)

From the beginning, Siti Walidah recognized the importance of education in empowering women. She believed that women needed to receive an education equal to that of men in order to make significant contributions to their families and communities. She founded "Sapa Tresna," an educational institution aimed at providing access to education for women and raising awareness of the importance of education in addressing the gender inequalities that existed at that time. (Nurul Izati Mardiah 2022)

Siti Walidah's approach to gender equality did not focus solely on formal education; she also advocated for women's involvement in various social and economic activities. In this context, she supported the establishment of the Aisyiyah organization in 1917, which served as a platform to advocate for women's rights and provide empowerment-oriented education, while also opposing discriminatory practices against women. (Wijayanti et al. 2024)

Siti Walidah believed that to achieve progress in society, women must play an active role and be adequately equipped with education. This aligns with her statement that "without women, the struggle for humanity will not succeed." She encouraged women to overcome restrictive customary constraints and pursue education as a way to improve their position and role in society. (Aldira, Aguswan, and Hakim 2024b)

Siti Walidah's historical vision of gender justice represents a systematic socio-religious intervention that fundamentally redefined the ontological and social status of Muslim women in early twentieth-century Indonesia. Rather than limiting her activism to mere moral advocacy, her vision was deeply structural, manifesting in the establishment of formal educational institutions and organized women's movements ('Aisyiyah) to dismantle the dual oppression of colonial-feudal patriarchy and pervasive female illiteracy. (Rozy et al. 2024) By constructing these autonomous, female-led spaces, she institutionalized a major shift in societal paradigms regarding women's intellectual capacity and public roles, effectively transforming education from a domestic privilege into Siti Walidah's framework for women's empowerment was authentically grounded in an Islamic emancipatory ethos, distinctly separate from Western individualistic paradigms. She posited that female education and societal engagement were theological imperatives necessary to fulfill the

broader objectives of religious reform (*tajdid*) and social justice. Her approach rejected the traditionalist marginalization of women while simultaneously avoiding secularization, arguing instead that true emancipation involves cultivating women's intellectual, spiritual, and leadership agency. Consequently, her historical vision laid the structural and ideological foundation for an inclusive, egalitarian modern Islamic educational landscape in Indonesia, cementing the concept that gender justice is inherently vital to Islamic advancement.

2. *Engaged Pedagogy Bell Hooks*

Bell hooks posits that education is never a neutral transfer of knowledge; rather, it is a profoundly political act of liberation from patriarchal and authoritarian social structures. In her foundational work, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, hooks emphasizes the necessity of *engaged pedagogy*, a framework that demands active student participation and continuous, critical dialogue. (Cartagena and Corple 2025) Within the conceptual model of this study, hooks' theory is deployed specifically as the *methodological dimension* to analyze micro-level classroom dynamics and the deconstruction of the traditional, hierarchical "banking concept" of education.

Central to this methodological analysis is the radical recalibration of the teacher-student relationship. Hooks' feminist pedagogy argues that authentic learning requires an egalitarian environment where the teacher's epistemological dominance is intentionally decentralized. This creates a pedagogical safe space where marginalized voices, particularly those of women, can be explicitly heard and validated. Furthermore, by integrating students' lived experiences into the academic discourse, the learning process allows female students to connect theoretical knowledge directly to the concrete social inequalities they navigate, rendering education highly relevant and inherently empowering. (Knowles-Davis et al. 2023)

In practice, the operationalization of this methodology in the classroom is evidenced through collaborative learning formats, research-based inquiries, and the critical exploration of gender-relevant literature. In this paradigm, teachers must transition from acting as absolute authorities to serving as critical facilitators. They guide students not only in absorbing information but also in interrogating gender dynamics, power imbalances, and historical injustices (Knowles-Davis et al. 2023). For instance, incorporating the narratives of female historical figures into the curriculum provides students with the critical tools necessary to challenge patriarchal norms that are often perpetuated within traditional educational systems. (Knowles-Davis et al. 2023)

Hooks' engaged pedagogy provides the essential methodological mechanics to cultivate critical consciousness and dismantle structural inequities at the classroom level. However, within the specific socio-religious landscape of Indonesian Islamic education, this liberating methodology requires a definitive philosophical anchor.

The pedagogy developed by bell hooks provides an essential framework for creating inclusive and gender-sensitive education in Indonesia. By focusing on liberation, active participation, and social justice, this approach can challenge patriarchal structures in education and promote women's

empowerment. Through the application of these principles, education can serve as an effective tool for creating a more equal and inclusive society.

3. *Curriculum Design and Learning Structure at Madrasah Mu'allimaat*

Madrasah Mu'allimaat Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta implements an integrative education system that combines the national curriculum with the unique Muhammadiyah-'Aisyiyah pesantren (cadre-building) curriculum. Based on a review of academic documents and its institutional history, the madrasah's curriculum structure is not designed solely to pursue cognitive academic achievement. Furthermore, the curriculum is structured to realize its initial vision: to produce empowered female ulama, educators, and leaders.

Operationally, the Madrasah Mu'allimaat curriculum centers on fulfilling five pillars of basic competency, or Graduate Competency Standards (SKL), which must be mastered holistically by every female student. The first pillar is scientific competency, which combines mastery of religious knowledge (dirasah islamiyah) with general knowledge and science and technology. The second pillar is social and humanitarian competency, which aims to develop students' sensitivity, empathy, and concern for community issues. Furthermore, the madrasah establishes personality competencies that require the internalization of noble morals and independence through a boarding system, as well as competency competencies that focus on mastering life skills, critical thinking, and literacy. The final, crucial pillar is movement competency, which fosters leadership skills so that students will be prepared to become cadres of movement in public spaces and for da'wah. (Irza Fathnurrohma and Dyah Kumalasari 2016)

Given that this institution is demographically 100% female, the implementation of this organizational curriculum places female students under complete hierarchical control without any external gender intervention. The success of this integrated curriculum is ultimately evaluated comprehensively. Student academic success is not only verified through written final exam scores but also assessed based on their accumulated behavioral track record, daily religious practices, and their level of participation in leadership roles while at the madrasah and in the dormitory.

Madrasah Mu'allimaat also enforces strict institutional regulations through the 2024 Student Regulations and Code of Conduct document. These regulations are not designed merely as a rigid disciplinary instrument, but rather function as a protection system and accelerator for the development of noble character (akhlaqul karimah). Within this code of conduct, the madrasah comprehensively regulates daily religious practices, social etiquette, and imposes strict sanctions against all forms of physical and psychological violence (bullying). These protective regulations are essentially the institution's effort to create a "safe space" for female students. By being free from the threat of violence and destructive environmental pressures, female students can focus more on developing their potential, spirituality, and avoid exploitative power relations while studying at the madrasa or in the dormitory. (Muallimat 2024)

The effectiveness of these protective rules of conduct has been confirmed through various empirical findings from previous research examining the moral development model at Mu'allimaat.

Field data shows that character development at this madrasah does not rely solely on a coercive approach (coercion and threats of sanctions), but rather emphasizes habituation and role modeling (uswah hasanah). Teachers and dormitory supervisors (musyrifah) do not position themselves as authoritarian supervisors, but rather as dialogical companions, guiding students to internalize the values of monotheism into everyday social behavior.

The synergy between the firm legal basis for student protection and the humanistic approach to moral development ultimately forms a robust educational ecosystem. Through this ecosystem, the madrasah has succeeded in producing graduates who are not only intellectually superior and possess leadership skills, but also possess a deeply rooted foundation in Islamic morality, in keeping with the original ideals of its founding. The character building of female students is concretely realized through a systematic habituation strategy, both in the Tahfidz and Non-Tahfidz dormitory programs. This moral development is not carried out coercively (forced), but rather through measured daily activities such as congregational prayer, Al-Qur'an recitation, tahsin activities, and direct role models (uswah hasanah) from the dormitory supervisors (musyrifah). The synergy between the holistic curriculum design, protective disciplinary instruments, and the implementation of moral habituation in this dormitory confirms that all structural elements at Mu'allimaat move simultaneously to shape the moral integrity and independence of the female students.(Mufydatu 2019)

4. Feminist Pedagogy in Mu'allimat in the Analysis of the Relationship between Teachers, Students, and Social Structure

Education at the Mu'allimat institution, founded by Siti Walidah (Nyai Ahmad Dahlan), reflects the application of feminist pedagogy, which is essential for women's education in Indonesia. Siti Walidah's vision of education emphasizes not only academic mastery but also empowers women to engage critically in the public sphere. In this context, analyzing the relationships between teachers (educators), students (female learners), and social structures is crucial for creating participatory, dialogical, and experiential learning. The feminist pedagogy that occurs at Mu'allimat Yogyakarta can be seen as follows:

a. Teacher-Student Relationship and Active Participation

The importance of egalitarian relationships between teachers and students can be exemplified in the implementation of pedagogical methods that encourage active participation. As bell hooks points out, education should be a liberating act where individual voices and experiences are respected throughout the process. This initiative is within a feminist pedagogical framework that ensures that female students' lived experiences are an integral part of the curriculum. By building strong, respectful relationships between teachers and students, Mu'allimat successfully creates an atmosphere that supports open dialogue.

For example, class sessions where students are encouraged to share personal experiences about challenges they face in a gender context lead to deeper understanding. This approach not only strengthens social bonds within the classroom but also enables teachers to be more adaptive and

responsive to their students' needs and concerns. Thus, this active engagement serves to foster a sense of ownership of the learning process and strengthen students' critical capacity to analyze the social structures around them.

Student engagement and active participation certainly do not occur automatically; they are influenced by various factors, one of which is the role of the teacher. Teachers, as educators, have a primary role in direct contact with students. Students who have a positive perception of their teachers tend to be more willing to participate in learning activities, whether by listening to explanations, asking questions, or completing assignments. (Sari, Jaryanto, and Muchsini 2024)

Learning is indeed encouraged to foster active student participation. To achieve this goal, teachers strive to make the learning process more enjoyable by using a variety of methods in the classroom. This approach focuses not only on delivering material but also on exploring students' experiences as a basis for learning. As Nadia Hasna, a Muallimat alumna, stated in an interview with the author, throughout her time as a student, numerous opportunities were provided for students to learn. Muallimat has long utilized out-of-class and project-based learning, equipping Muallimat alumni to become women who not only master theoretical material but also develop the skills to adapt to the world outside the classroom. (Nadiya Hasna 2025)

This adaptive learning approach makes the teacher-student relationship less rigid, more flexible, and more open in conveying information and carrying out the learning process. Students' enthusiasm isn't born of dogma or a need to understand the material; their desire to learn stems from the educational, collaborative learning atmosphere, which encourages students to learn because they feel involved.

This kind of learning experience provides girls with the confidence to be involved in every aspect of the classroom and educational process, as they feel their voices are heard, their perspectives are considered, and their learning challenges are understood. Supported by learning that values student participation, one of the foundations of thinking instilled in Muallimat students is that developing abilities is not just about being smart, but also about being active. This activeness refers not only to classroom performance but also to actively participating in extracurricular activities, organizations, and even the courage to participate in competitions according to their skills.

The encouragement and motivation provided by the various extracurricular activities, along with the engaging methods of teachers who foster positive relationships between teachers and students, serve as the foundation that ultimately shapes the students' mindset as independent individuals worthy of consideration, women who continually grow through the educational process and who can harness their potential. Increasing student participation isn't limited to classroom methods or active participation in various activities. In developing leadership skills, Muallimat students are directly taught to become women with the freedom to become leaders in the public sphere. Nadia explained that Muallimat students have ample opportunities to take on leadership roles. Even if they don't become organizational leaders, they still have opportunities to become class officers. There are also opportunities to become dormitory administrators, extracurricular activities, or institutions. There's minimal chance of students at Muallimat being denied space or

positions.(Nadiya Hasna 2025) The experiences gained at Muallimat emphasize that by considering the various aspects that shape the classroom environment, teachers can create conditions that support a healthy and long-term learning spirit.

b. Experience-Based Dialogic Education

Education at Mu'allimat also focuses on dialogue, where interactions between teachers and students are not simply one-way. Through group discussions, educators encourage students to collaborate, share perspectives, and exchange experiences. This process aligns with the principles of feminist pedagogy, which supports the development of relational and affective learning communities. Through open dialogue, students not only gain knowledge but also learn the values of empathy and mutual respect.

The dialogic tradition inherent in the learning process at Mu'allimat equips students with the ability to nurture knowledge through non-confrontational communication strategies. Starting with the tradition of asking questions, reading, and dialogue, it demonstrates that women can ultimately drive change from the most personal of spaces. As an educational institution, the learning process does not provide a clear picture of where they will be working, but students are provided with skills through dialogic learning that enable each student to be open and courageous in dialogue.

After the observation process, it was revealed that at Muallimat, learning does not focus on teachers explaining in front of the class or lecturing. Instead, the students' active participation in the learning process demonstrates that dialogue is a familiar method there. Active communication and interaction, aligned with the principles of dialogic learning, are incorporated into both formal and informal activities at Muallimat. As an Islamic boarding school-based educational institution and a modern school, Muallimat provides ample space for its students to actively participate in various activities, fostering a wealth of perspectives and a rich source of references.(Nadiya Hasna 2025)

Dialogue occurs when both teachers and students possess a wealth of knowledge, allowing students to freely express their opinions based on their experiences and contexts, and to critically reflect on their realities. This demonstrates that at Muallimat, there is an equal role, with teachers and students occupying equal positions in the learning process, while remaining constrained by ethical values. Neither teacher nor student explicitly teaches or is taught, but rather both parties are engaged in a process of mutual learning. During class, for example, teachers can use real-life situations or contexts faced by students as teaching materials, allowing them to connect theory to practical application. This could include case studies on gender issues within their community, which will help students understand and analyze the situations around them. This experiential learning is crucial for female students who may face stereotypes and challenges in their communities. (Nadiya Hasna 2025)

Although not all subject teachers engage in this process, critical dialogue is generally a common practice at Muallimat. The cycle of experience, critical reflection, and concrete action gradually teaches students how to liberate themselves from oppression and social injustice. Learning occurs through ongoing conversations based on the validity of arguments, not power.

This dialogic communication creates an open space for individuals involved in the process to interact and express their opinions safely and comfortably. The relationships thus developed foster an atmosphere of inclusive equality, thus fostering an environment where everyone feels respected, valued, and equal. The long-term impact is that the atmosphere created promotes the psychological well-being of each individual, encouraging them to make their best contribution to every aspect of life.

Recently, to equip educators with references on women's issues to facilitate the implementation of experiential, dialogic teaching skills in the learning process, educators are encouraged to actively write on media channels dedicated to gender issues and explore women's worlds in various contexts.(Nadiya Hasna 2025) Rewards are not only intended for active students; educators also have the opportunity to earn rewards for improving their skills. This initiative is a positive initiative to expose educational staff at Muallimat to information and gender issues, which can then be integrated into classroom learning.

c. Social Structure and Inclusive Learning

The educational structure within Mu'allimat is inseparable from the context of existing social structures. Facing the challenges of patriarchy and gender discrimination that persist in many aspects of social life, feminist education at Mu'allimat seeks to challenge and transform these structures. By instilling values of equality and justice in teaching, Mu'allimat contributes not only to individual change but also to broader social dynamics.

The interview results presented in the previous discussion demonstrate that learning at Mu'allimat strongly prioritizes the value of equality in social life, especially since the spirit of education is born from an organization that prioritizes social contribution. While learning about the challenges of patriarchy and gender discrimination is not systematically integrated into the curriculum, learning practices that foster active participation and dialogue indirectly demonstrate that Mu'allimat provides a space for women to grow and enhance their capacities as a foundation for social structures.(Nadiya Hasna 2025)

When teachers and students work together in a participatory and experience-based environment, they create a safe space for dialogue on issues of gender, power, and social justice. This aligns with the theory of social shift, which can stimulate positive changes in students' thinking about their role in society. In this way, education becomes not only a means of imparting knowledge but also a tool to empower and liberate individuals from the influence of oppressive social structures.

The educational concept developed by Muallimat has already contributed to women through its alumni. Muallimat was founded as a kweekschool, which later became qismul arqa, with the aim of producing female Muslim teachers, as previously the number of teachers was very limited, being filled only by the nobility or the Dutch.(Nadiya Hasna 2025) This mission remains maintained by Muallimat to this day, even though the curriculum specifically includes basic educational theory and practical lessons in lesson planning and microteaching.

According to Muallimat's website, many activities are carried out to improve the capacity of educators. This program certainly supports successful learning. This November, Muallimat held an international forum aimed at enhancing global perspectives. Attended by dozens of education experts and practitioners, this represents progress in providing inclusive education at Muallimat. (Madrasah Mu'allimaat Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta n.d.)

In line with these institutional advancements, the practical implication of this study demonstrates that various student activities and organizational programs implemented at Mu'allimaat are strategically designed to directly support and accelerate the quality of women's education. Practically, these programs provide a transferable blueprint for other Islamic educational institutions on how to move beyond theoretical gender discourse by systematically institutionalizing autonomous leadership spaces for female students. The school's operational model proves that giving female students full executive authority to independently organize democratic processes, public speaking platforms, and strategic leadership transitions effectively cultivates their political agency. Furthermore, the inclusion of structured field training and out-of-class governance managed entirely by female students serves to dismantle deeply entrenched patriarchal stereotypes regarding physical resilience and executive authority. Therefore, the synergy between global educator perspectives and absolute student autonomy in these extracurricular structures provides a highly effective operational model for creating a truly empowering and egalitarian Islamic educational ecosystem. (Madrasah Mu'allimaat Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta n.d.)

The study of gender ideology in Islamic education finds its ideal representation in Madrasah Mu'allimaat Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta in Indonesia, which consistently and openly implements a pure emancipation model. This six-year educational institution envisions producing female ulama and leaders with intellectual capacity based on Islamic foundations who are ready to enter broader social structures. Philosophically, Mu'allimaat demonstrates the application of a strong feminist pedagogy with an emphasis on egalitarian relationships between teachers, students, and social structures through a participatory, dialogical, and lived-experience-based approach.

This cadre system breaks the trap of domestication by forging its female students into assertive agents of change unfettered by their gender status. This is evidenced by the work of its graduates, such as Nabila Sofia Rani, who actively preaches in the digital public space, as well as the madrasah's proactive steps in organizing cross-border programs and international forums to build a non-exclusive society.

In the global Islamic intellectual discourse, the observed educational dynamics need to be compared with international trends related to Islamic education and the empowerment of Muslim women, particularly in countries with strong ideological contestations such as Turkey, Egypt, and Malaysia. In Turkey, the evolution of Muslim women's education has been deeply intertwined with the tension between state secularism rooted in Kemalist ideology and the rise of contemporary religious identities. (Thoriquttyas, Nasih, and Sulthoni 2025) Women's access to higher education and the public sphere has often been an arena of intense political contestation, particularly through

the historical debate surrounding the headscarf ban in academic institutions in the late 20th century. (Şimsek and Selçuk 2025) When this restriction was finally lifted in the last two decades, there has been a significant surge in the participation of hijab-wearing women in higher education and the professional sector; a transformation that has not only democratized access to education but also sparked new discourse on how urban Muslim women navigate secular public spaces without abandoning their pious identities. (Naheed, Ul-Zaman, and Zahoor 2023) (Karataş 2026)

Similar polarizing dynamics are evident in Egypt, where the education system is divided parallelly between orthodox religious education under Al-Azhar and secular public schools. Although Egypt's post-1953 nationalist movement attempted to use secular education to promote gender equality, (Megahed and Lack 2011) resistance from conservative groups created significant segregation; women's enrollment rates at the pre-university level are high, but their representation plummets at the university level particularly in science and engineering leading to high rates of poverty for young women and their vulnerability to social unrest. (Saeed and Ahmed 2021)

Meanwhile, Malaysia offers a different model of integration, but with unique challenges posed by the gender paradox. Unlike Egypt, which marginalizes religious curricula in public schools, Malaysia's Islamic curriculum is structurally integrated into the national system to strengthen national identity, morality, and cross-cultural tolerance. While this integration supports reform in the digital age, Muslim women in Malaysia continue to face conservative family norms. This creates an anomaly where female students dominate up to 70% of the university population, yet female workforce participation is held back at 53% due to the strong demands of domestic roles. (Ambya et al. 2025) In response, educational institutions in Malaysia have begun integrating leadership programs to equip women with "dual orientation" skills, enabling them to reinterpret religion not as a limitation but as an innovative bridge to align professional careers and family values. (Schleimer 2016) Overall, this cross-national comparison confirms that education for Muslim women globally is not simply a process of knowledge transfer, but rather a complex negotiation space between the pace of modernization, cultural hegemony, and demands for gender equality.

5. Conceptual Model of Islamic Feminist Pedagogy

Conceptual Model of Islamic Feminist Pedagogy" is proposed as an alternative theoretical framework within the discourse on Islamic education. This model does not emerge from a vacuum; rather, it represents the crystallization of an organic convergence between the philosophical foundations of Ismail al-Faruqi's Islamization of knowledge, the methodological strategies of bell hooks' *engaged pedagogy*, and the empirical articulation found at Madrasah Muallimat Yogyakarta. These three elements intertwine to form a circular educational ecosystem that deconstructs the view of religious values as dogmatic constraints, instead restoring them as emancipatory instruments that liberate Muslim women.

At the epistemological level, Ismail al-Faruqi's concept of the Islamization of knowledge serves as a theological anchor to unify revealed truth (*revelation*) with contemporary sciences. Within this framework, the principle of *Tawhid* (the oneness of God) is not understood rigidly or

restrictively; instead, it is reconstructed as a liberating analytical tool. Through the lens of a progressive *Tawhid*, this model is capable of dismantling the patriarchal biases that often infiltrate the interpretation of classical texts, while bridging the dichotomy between religious knowledge and secular sciences, all while nurturing the spirituality and authenticity of Muslim women's faith within academic spaces.

Methodologically, this emancipatory principle of *Tawhid* is operationalized within the classroom through bell hooks' *engaged pedagogy* approach, which positions education as a practice of freedom. The classroom is transformed into a democratic ecosystem where women's voices are granted equal recognition, the authoritarian hierarchy between educators and learners is deconstructed, and critical consciousness is fostered dialogically. Through this synthesis with hooks' ideas, Muslim female students transform from passive consumers of a curriculum into sovereign subjects reflecting their true role as *khalifah fil ardh* (vicegerents of God on earth) who actively reproduce knowledge and possess the critical capacity to challenge gender injustices in their social environments.

In the practical dimension, this entire theoretical and philosophical dialectic finds concrete expression within the "living laboratory" of Madrasah Muallimat Yogyakarta. Through a holistic boarding school ecosystem, a deep mastery of classical Islamic literature (*tafaquh fid-din*), and active engagement in scouting and community organizations. This empirical practice proves that Muslim women can be forged into leadership cadres who are intellectually independent, highly resilient in navigating today's digitalization wave, and socio-politically empowered, without ever being uprooted from the foundations of their cultural piety.

Conclusions

This study concludes that the implementation of feminist pedagogy at Madrasah Mu'allimaat Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta has succeeded in radically reconstructing the relationships between teachers, students, and the social structure within the Islamic educational institution. Based on the *engaged pedagogy* framework developed by bell hooks, this institutional transformation is harmoniously realized through three main interaction dimensions. First, regarding the teacher-student relationship, the institution has effectively dismantled the dominance of authoritarian "banking education" by positioning educators as dialogic mentoring partners and behavioral role models (*uswah hasanah*), thereby restoring students' voices as empowered subjects. Second, the application of experience-based dialogic education successfully transforms the learning process into an act of liberation, where a holistic five-pillar curriculum design allows female students to critique and connect abstract texts with their surrounding socio-religious realities. Third, in terms of its connection to social structures, the institution strategically utilizes a single-sex demographic environment and protective rules and regulations as an inclusive safe space to optimize students' independent leadership agency without external gender intervention.

Theoretically, the interconnectedness of these elements advances the discourse on contemporary Islamic education epistemology by developing a robust "Conceptual Model of Islamic

Feminist Pedagogy." This model provides concrete scientific evidence that Siti Walidah's historical vision of emancipation based on monotheism is not merely a historical romanticism. Instead, it can be successfully codified into a modern, institutional legal system that integrates Ismail Raji al-Faruqi's emancipatory *Tawhid* with Western critical pedagogical theories, demonstrating that religious frameworks can serve as vital instruments to deconstruct patriarchal social structures from within the Islamic tradition.

Practically, the findings of this study provide a transferable operational blueprint for other Islamic educational institutions to move beyond theoretical gender discourse by systematically institutionalizing autonomous leadership and capacity-building spaces. The school's administrative structure proves that various student activities and extracurricular organizational programs are strategically designed to directly support and accelerate the quality of women's education. By giving female students full executive authority to independently organize democratic processes, public speaking platforms, and strategic leadership transitions, schools can effectively cultivate women's political and intellectual agency. Furthermore, the inclusion of structured field training and out-of-class governance managed entirely by female students serves to dismantle deeply entrenched social stereotypes regarding physical resilience and executive authority. Combined with regular programs to enhance educators' global perspectives, this synergy offers a highly effective strategy for creating a truly empowering, gender-responsive, and egalitarian Islamic educational ecosystem.

However, this study has limitations due to its qualitative focus on only one specific and historically unique institution, which may limit the direct generalizability of the findings to the broader, highly diverse landscape of Islamic schools and boarding houses (*pesantren*). Therefore, future studies should examine the implementation, adaptation, and comparative dynamics of this Islamic feminist pedagogical framework across other Islamic educational institutions with different cultural backgrounds, geographical locations, and distinct institutional contexts to develop a more generalized theory of Islamic liberation education

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