

Teaching Palestine in Indonesian Islamic Schools: Religious Education, Humanitarian Values, and Global Citizenship

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Abstract

The Palestinian issue increasingly appears in Indonesian religious and educational discourse, particularly within Islamic schools and pesantren. Educational engagement with Palestine may contribute to students' understanding of humanitarianism, international affairs, and global citizenship, but it may also create challenges concerning political polarization and the presentation of contested historical narratives. This article examines how Palestine-related issues can be incorporated into Indonesian Islamic education. Using qualitative educational and policy analysis, the study examines curriculum content, teaching approaches, religious narratives, and civic education. The article argues that Palestine education should move beyond political mobilization toward comprehensive education concerning humanitarian principles, international law, historical context, civilian protection, and peaceful conflict resolution. The study proposes a pedagogical framework combining religious ethics with critical global citizenship education. Teachers should be encouraged to distinguish verified information from political propaganda and provide students with opportunities to engage with diverse perspectives while maintaining clear humanitarian principles. The article concludes that responsible Palestine education can strengthen students' awareness of global justice and humanitarian responsibility without undermining critical thinking or educational neutrality.

[Isu Palestina semakin sering muncul dalam wacana keagamaan dan pendidikan di Indonesia, khususnya di sekolah-sekolah Islam dan pesantren. Keterlibatan pendidikan dengan isu Palestina dapat berkontribusi pada pemahaman siswa tentang humanisme, urusan internasional, dan kewarganegaraan global, tetapi juga dapat menimbulkan tantangan terkait polarisasi politik dan penyajian narasi sejarah yang diperdebatkan. Artikel ini mengkaji bagaimana isu-isu terkait Palestina dapat diintegrasikan ke dalam pendidikan Islam di Indonesia. Dengan menggunakan analisis pendidikan dan kebijakan kualitatif, studi ini meneliti isi kurikulum, pendekatan

pengajaran, narasi keagamaan, dan pendidikan kewarganegaraan. Artikel ini berpendapat bahwa pendidikan Palestina harus melampaui mobilisasi politik menuju pendidikan komprehensif mengenai prinsip-prinsip kemanusiaan, hukum internasional, konteks sejarah, perlindungan warga sipil, dan penyelesaian konflik secara damai. Studi ini mengusulkan kerangka kerja pedagogis yang menggabungkan etika keagamaan dengan pendidikan kewarganegaraan global yang kritis. Guru harus didorong untuk membedakan informasi yang terverifikasi dari propaganda politik dan memberi siswa kesempatan untuk terlibat dengan beragam perspektif sambil tetap mempertahankan prinsip-prinsip kemanusiaan yang jelas. Artikel ini menyimpulkan bahwa pendidikan Palestina yang bertanggung jawab dapat memperkuat kesadaran siswa tentang keadilan global dan tanggung jawab kemanusiaan tanpa merusak pemikiran kritis atau netralitas pendidikan.]

Keywords: Palestine, Islamic education, pesantren, global citizenship, humanitarian education

Introduction

The Palestinian question has become an increasingly visible subject within Indonesian Muslim communities, including schools, madrasahs, pesantren, universities, mosques, and digital religious spaces. Its prominence is not surprising given Indonesia's longstanding diplomatic support for Palestinian self-determination and the strong humanitarian and religious sentiments associated with the issue. For young Muslims, however, Palestine is encountered through a highly mediated environment in which religious narratives, social media content, news reporting, fundraising campaigns, historical accounts, and political commentary overlap. This environment creates an educational opportunity but also a pedagogical risk. Students may develop strong moral concern for Palestinian civilians while simultaneously encountering misinformation, simplified historical narratives, emotionally charged imagery, and claims whose evidentiary basis is difficult to establish. Education must therefore do more than reproduce solidarity; it must provide students with the intellectual capacity to understand why solidarity is ethically meaningful and how it can be expressed responsibly.

The literature on global citizenship education provides an important starting point for addressing this challenge. Goren and Yemini's systematic review demonstrates that global citizenship education has developed into a broad field encompassing political participation, human rights, intercultural competence, social justice, and global awareness, but that the concept remains contested and unevenly implemented (Goren and Yemini 2017). Hou similarly finds that comparative research on global citizenship education has often concentrated on curriculum frameworks while paying insufficient attention to learners' experiences

and the diverse sociocultural contexts in which global citizenship is constructed (Hou 2020). This observation is especially relevant to Indonesia because Palestine cannot simply be inserted into an imported model of global citizenship education. Its educational meaning must be interpreted through Indonesian Islamic educational traditions, national civic values, religious ethics, and the realities of contemporary digital communication.

Previous studies concerning Islamic education in Indonesia indicate that religious education can contribute to moderation, tolerance, social responsibility, and engagement with wider societal questions. Parker's study of religious education in Indonesia demonstrates that schools can become important spaces for cultivating peaceful coexistence when religious learning is connected to interfaith understanding and social tolerance (Parker 2014). Research on religious moderation in Indonesian higher education similarly emphasizes the institutional role of Islamic education in developing attitudes that resist exclusivism and encourage peaceful engagement (Afwadzi and Miski 2021; Nasir and Rijal 2021). Other studies emphasize that moderation cannot be reduced to a doctrinal slogan because it requires epistemic rationality, dialogue, and pedagogical practices capable of dealing with disagreement (Prasetia et al. 2021). These findings suggest that Palestine education should not be separated from the broader pedagogical objective of cultivating students who can hold strong moral convictions while remaining capable of critical reasoning.

Research on peace education strengthens this argument. Saifuddin's study of pesantren identifies the potential of Islamic boarding schools to cultivate peace through concepts of religious, national, and humanitarian brotherhood (Saifuddin 2021). Studies of religious moderation in Islamic schools likewise show that educational institutions can function as spaces for negotiating religious difference rather than simply transmitting predetermined positions (Islamy 2021; Bosra and Umiarso 2021). At the international level, Gaus argues that religious education can contribute to global citizenship when students encounter human dignity, diversity, social justice, and global interdependence as substantive educational questions rather than abstract values (Gaus 2021). More specifically, an Islamic perspective on global citizenship emphasizes justice, tolerance, ethical responsibility, and engagement with global problems while rejecting rigid oppositions between Islam and the wider world (Hamed 2023). These studies provide a conceptual basis for treating Palestine education as an educational problem concerning global justice rather than merely an extension of political campaigning.

The literature concerning education under conflict also demonstrates why Palestine should be taught through a human-centered framework. Research on Palestinian education has documented how political violence, occupation, restrictions on mobility, and attacks on educational infrastructure affect students' access to learning and the institutional continuity of education (Naser-Najjab 2020; Smith and Scott 2023). Recent research has further documented the severe consequences of the Gaza conflict for schools, universities, students, and educators,

describing the destruction of educational institutions as a threat not only to present educational access but also to future social and cultural reconstruction (Iriqat et al. 2025). Studies of conflict-affected education more broadly demonstrate that education can either mitigate or reproduce conflict depending on curriculum content, pedagogical practices, and institutional conditions (Burde et al. 2017; Higgins and Novelli 2020). The implication for Indonesian Islamic schools is significant: teaching Palestine can either cultivate informed humanitarian citizenship or intensify polarized identity formation. The pedagogical method therefore matters as much as the subject itself.

Despite this literature, an important gap remains. Existing research has extensively examined global citizenship education, Islamic religious moderation, peace education, and Palestinian education under conflict, but relatively limited attention has been given to how Palestine should be pedagogically framed within Indonesian Islamic schools and pesantren. The issue is not simply whether Palestine should be taught, but how it can be taught in a manner that preserves humanitarian commitment while avoiding historical reductionism, misinformation, and political indoctrination. This article addresses that gap by developing a framework that connects Islamic ethical education, global citizenship, peace education, critical historical literacy, and digital media literacy. It argues that responsible Palestine education should transform moral sympathy into informed ethical agency rather than treating political allegiance as the primary educational outcome.

Literature Review and Theoretical Frameworks

A. Global Citizenship Education and the Politics of Teaching Global Issues

Global citizenship education provides the first theoretical foundation for understanding Palestine as an educational subject. Its central premise is that students increasingly encounter problems whose causes and consequences extend beyond national borders. Climate change, migration, war, inequality, humanitarian crises, and international displacement cannot be adequately understood through exclusively national frameworks. Yet global citizenship education is not conceptually neutral. Goren and Yemini (2017) demonstrate that the field contains different approaches, ranging from skills-oriented models to more critical conceptions emphasizing justice, power, inequality, and political participation. Veugelers (2021) similarly distinguishes between forms of global citizenship emphasizing cultural openness, moral responsibility, and social-political transformation. The distinction matters because teaching Palestine as global citizenship education could either encourage students to become compassionate observers of distant suffering or equip them to critically analyze the structures, historical processes, and political responsibilities underlying that suffering.

A critical approach is particularly relevant because global citizenship education has been criticized for occasionally reproducing universalist assumptions without adequately examining power. Pashby et al. (2020) identify neoliberal,

liberal, and critical orientations within global citizenship education and emphasize that apparently universal educational goals can conceal unequal relations of knowledge and authority. Saito et al. (2023) similarly argue that global education frameworks can reproduce colonial assumptions when they privilege particular epistemologies while marginalizing alternative ways of understanding history and identity. These critiques suggest that Palestine education should not simply provide students with a standardized narrative about a distant conflict. Instead, students should be encouraged to examine how historical narratives are constructed, whose voices are represented, which sources are authoritative, and how political terminology shapes public understanding. Global citizenship in this context requires epistemic responsibility as much as humanitarian concern.

The Islamic dimension of global citizenship further complicates and enriches the framework. Hamed (2023) argues that Islamic global citizenship education can draw on Islamic ethical principles to address justice, tolerance, humanitarian responsibility, and global problems while resisting binary constructions of Islam versus the West. For Indonesian Islamic schools, this perspective provides an important bridge between religious identity and universal human dignity. Students can understand concern for Palestinians through Islamic concepts of justice and compassion while simultaneously recognizing that the dignity of civilians is not contingent upon religious affiliation. This prevents Palestine education from becoming an exclusively sectarian exercise. Instead, religious commitment becomes a motivation for universal ethical responsibility. Such an approach is consistent with the broader Indonesian discourse on religious moderation, which emphasizes peaceful coexistence, respect for difference, and responsible religious expression (Afwadzi and Miski 2021; Jati and Bachtiar 2024).

B. Peace Education, Conflict-Sensitive Learning, and Islamic Pedagogy

Peace education constitutes a second theoretical framework. Education in conflict-sensitive contexts cannot be understood simply as transmission of information because the content and method of education can influence how learners interpret social conflict. Burde et al. (2017) show that education in emergencies can support psychosocial well-being and peacebuilding but may also reproduce conflict when educational content reinforces exclusionary narratives. Higgins and Novelli (2020) further caution that peace education should be examined through political economy because seemingly neutral interventions can reproduce particular understandings of conflict, power, and social order. Zembylas and Loukaidis (2021) add that teachers' emotional experiences and dilemmas are central to peace education when they deal with difficult histories. These findings are directly applicable to Palestine education because teachers are likely to confront students who already possess strong emotional attachments to the subject.

Within Indonesian *pesantren*, peace education can be connected to established concepts of Islamic brotherhood and humanitarian responsibility.

Saifuddin (2021) identifies *ukhuwwah Islamiyyah*, *ukhuwwah wathaniyyah*, and *ukhuwwah basyariyyah* as complementary foundations for peace-oriented education. This conceptual structure is particularly valuable for Palestine education because it allows teachers to begin from religious solidarity while expanding the discussion toward national responsibility and universal humanity. Students may feel a particular emotional connection to Palestinian Muslims, but the pedagogical process can encourage them to recognize the broader humanitarian principle that civilians should be protected regardless of nationality, religion, or political identity. Such an approach transforms solidarity from identity-based sympathy into a more general ethical commitment.

Research on Indonesian religious moderation reinforces the importance of pedagogical context. Nasir and Rijal (2021) demonstrate that Islamic higher education institutions can play a substantial role in mainstreaming moderate religious discourse, while Jati and Bachtiar (2024) emphasize the importance of engaging Muslim youth rather than imposing moderation through purely hierarchical policy mechanisms. Kamaludin, Purnama, and Zirmansyah (2021) likewise show that the digital environment requires educational strategies capable of addressing exposure to extremist and exclusionary religious content. Palestine education should therefore not assume that students enter the classroom without prior knowledge. Many students already possess narratives obtained through TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp groups, sermons, family discussions, and online campaigns. The teacher's task is consequently less about supplying a single narrative and more about creating an environment in which existing narratives can be interrogated, compared, contextualized, and ethically evaluated.

C. Critical Media Literacy and Historical Knowledge

The third theoretical framework concerns critical media literacy. Palestine has become one of the most intensely mediated international conflicts, and young people frequently encounter it through short videos, graphic images, hashtags, influencer commentary, and algorithmically personalized feeds. Such content can generate empathy, but it can also collapse complex historical and political questions into highly emotional fragments. Research on critical global citizenship education indicates that students often have difficulty interpreting media representations of global problems and connecting information to questions of justice and responsibility (Bourn 2020; Santamagna-C6rdaba, Gajardo-Espinoza, and C6ceres-Iglesias 2024). The educational problem is therefore not simply access to information but the ability to evaluate information.

Critical media literacy requires students to ask who produced a particular claim, what evidence supports it, when the material was produced, what context has been omitted, and whether visual or textual material has been altered. Such practices should not be presented as a demand for false neutrality. Verification and contextualization do not require students to suspend moral judgment; rather, they make moral judgment more responsible. A student may condemn attacks on

civilians while still recognizing the need to verify claims about particular incidents. Similarly, a student may support Palestinian self-determination while learning that political and historical narratives surrounding Palestine have developed through complex and contested processes. This distinction between ethical commitment and evidentiary discipline is central to responsible Islamic education.

Historical education is equally important. Naser-Najjab (2020) shows that Palestinian education itself has been shaped by broader political structures and struggles over identity, curriculum, and resistance. Moed (2022) demonstrates that educational development in Palestinian rural communities has historically been connected to national aspirations and resistance to colonial educational policies. The history of Palestinian education therefore illustrates that education is not merely a passive institution during conflict; it can become a site where identity, memory, political authority, and resistance are negotiated. Indonesian students should be encouraged to understand this historical complexity without being required to adopt one predetermined interpretation. A historically informed classroom can distinguish between established historical evidence, competing interpretations, political claims, and contemporary humanitarian facts.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative normative-analytical approach combining literature analysis, educational policy analysis, and conceptual interpretation. The research does not attempt to measure the attitudes of Indonesian students through surveys or experiments. Instead, it examines how Palestine-related education can be theoretically and pedagogically constructed within Indonesian Islamic schools by synthesizing relevant scholarship concerning Islamic education, global citizenship education, peace education, conflict-sensitive education, media literacy, and Palestinian education. This approach is appropriate because the research question concerns the normative design and educational implications of teaching a contested international issue rather than the statistical measurement of student attitudes.

The literature was selected according to substantive relevance, academic credibility, and publication date. Priority was given to peer-reviewed journal articles published no later than 2025, particularly research addressing global citizenship education, religious education, peace education, Islamic education in Indonesia, education under conflict, and Palestinian educational experiences. The analysis also considered relevant Indonesian educational and religious-policy contexts to ensure that the theoretical discussion remained applicable to Islamic schools and pesantren rather than being derived exclusively from Western educational literature. The resulting body of literature was subjected to thematic interpretation around four interconnected dimensions: humanitarian ethics, historical and geopolitical literacy, critical media literacy, and peaceful civic engagement.

The analytical process was descriptive, argumentative, and interpretive. First, the study identified recurring conceptual assumptions in the literature concerning the relationship between education and global issues. Second, these assumptions were compared with the specific characteristics of Indonesian Islamic education, including religious moderation, pesantren traditions, and youth engagement. Third, the analysis examined the risks associated with teaching a politically sensitive issue through educational institutions, particularly the risks of indoctrination, misinformation, polarization, and exclusion. Finally, these findings were synthesized into a proposed pedagogical framework for Palestine education. The framework does not prescribe a single political position but establishes educational principles through which students can develop informed humanitarian concern, critical reasoning, and responsible civic agency.

Results and Discussion

A. Palestine Education as Humanitarian and Ethical Education

The first finding is that Palestine can legitimately be taught within Indonesian Islamic schools as a humanitarian and ethical issue rather than being reduced to political advocacy. This distinction is important because the educational legitimacy of the subject does not depend on requiring students to adopt identical political positions. What should constitute the common educational ground is the protection of human dignity, civilian life, access to education, justice, and peaceful coexistence. Research on education in emergencies demonstrates that conflict has profound effects on children's educational opportunities, psychosocial well-being, and future development (Burde et al. 2017). In the Palestinian context, recent research documents severe disruptions to schools and universities and the destruction of educational infrastructure, making education itself an important dimension of the humanitarian crisis (Smith and Scott 2023; Iriqat et al. 2025). Indonesian students can therefore approach Palestine through the question of what happens to education, children, families, and civilian life when prolonged conflict destroys the institutional conditions necessary for learning.

This humanitarian framing is particularly compatible with Islamic educational objectives. Islamic education traditionally connects knowledge with moral responsibility, and the teaching of justice, compassion, dignity, and protection of vulnerable persons can provide an ethical foundation for discussing international crises. The danger arises when religious education transforms humanitarian concern into an exclusive identity narrative in which empathy is reserved for one religious community. A more defensible pedagogy begins with particular solidarity but moves toward universal human dignity. Students may learn why Indonesian Muslims feel a special connection to Palestine while simultaneously examining the protection of civilians as a principle that applies beyond religious boundaries. Such a framework corresponds with the concept of *ukhuwwah basyariyyah* discussed in Indonesian peace education scholarship and allows Islamic identity to become a source of universal ethical responsibility rather than sectarian exclusion (Saifuddin

2021). The educational objective is therefore not to weaken solidarity but to deepen its moral meaning.

B. Teaching Historical Complexity without Producing False Equivalence

The second finding concerns historical complexity. A major pedagogical danger in teaching Palestine is the assumption that avoiding bias requires presenting all claims as equally credible. Such an approach can produce false equivalence. Historical literacy requires neither political indoctrination nor artificial neutrality; it requires distinguishing evidence from interpretation and acknowledging the existence of contested narratives while maintaining clear standards of historical verification. Research on Palestinian education demonstrates that schooling has itself been implicated in struggles over national identity, political authority, memory, and resistance (Naser-Najjab 2020; Moed 2022). This means that students should be taught not only historical events but also how historical knowledge is produced and contested. Teachers can introduce students to primary and secondary sources, timelines, demographic developments, political agreements, international legal concepts, and different historical interpretations. The purpose is to cultivate analytical competence rather than compel a predetermined conclusion.

This approach is particularly necessary because students may encounter highly compressed historical narratives outside school. Social media frequently reduces decades of political history into slogans, images, and short chronological claims. Such content can be emotionally powerful while remaining historically incomplete. Global citizenship scholarship warns against treating global issues as decontextualized moral stories because such approaches may produce passive sympathy without understanding structural causes (Goren and Yemini 2017; Pashby et al. 2020). Teaching Palestine therefore requires contextualization. Students should be encouraged to distinguish between historical facts, legal interpretations, political arguments, and moral judgments. They should also learn that acknowledging complexity does not mean denying asymmetries of power or the reality of civilian suffering. A historically rigorous classroom can recognize suffering and injustice while still insisting that claims be supported by evidence. In this sense, critical historical literacy becomes a form of ethical education because responsible solidarity depends on understanding what one is supporting and why.

C. Digital Literacy, Misinformation, and the Teacher's Changing Role

The third finding is that Palestine education cannot be separated from digital media literacy. Young Indonesians increasingly encounter international political issues through algorithmically mediated platforms rather than conventional textbooks. This changes the role of teachers. Teachers are no longer the only or even primary providers of information; instead, they increasingly function as facilitators of verification, contextualization, and critical discussion. Research on

global citizenship education indicates that students often struggle to interpret media representations of global issues critically, particularly when visual materials generate strong emotional reactions (Santamarina-C6rdaba, Gajardo-Espinoza, and C6ceres-Iglesias 2024). This challenge is intensified by the speed at which information circulates during conflict. Images from previous conflicts may be recirculated as contemporary evidence, claims may be presented without sources, and algorithmic systems may repeatedly expose students to material consistent with their existing preferences.

Islamic schools should respond by integrating media verification into religious and civic education. Students can be taught to identify original sources, distinguish eyewitness evidence from commentary, examine publication dates, compare multiple credible sources, and recognize emotionally manipulative techniques. These competencies should not be framed as suspicion toward humanitarian advocacy. On the contrary, accurate information protects humanitarian advocacy from being discredited by false or exaggerated claims. The importance of epistemic rationality within Islamic education is emphasized by Prasetia et al. (2021), who argue that religious moderation cannot be sustained without rational and responsible knowledge practices. Kamaludin, Purnama, and Zirmansyah (2021) similarly highlight the need for educational strategies that address the risks of online religious discourse. Palestine education therefore provides a concrete opportunity to connect Islamic ethics with contemporary information literacy. The student should leave the classroom not merely knowing what to think about Palestine, but knowing how to determine whether a claim deserves to be believed.

D. From Emotional Solidarity to Critical Global Citizenship

The fourth finding concerns the transformation of solidarity into civic competence. Emotional solidarity is not inherently problematic; indeed, empathy is an important foundation of humanitarian action. The problem emerges when emotion becomes the endpoint of education. Students may become highly motivated to share content, participate in fundraising, or express political opinions without understanding the institutional, historical, and ethical dimensions of the issue. Global citizenship education provides a framework for moving beyond this limited form of engagement. Veugelers (2021) distinguishes moral global citizenship from forms oriented toward social and political transformation, while Torres and Bosio (2020) emphasize the importance of critical consciousness in global citizenship education. The implication is that students should be encouraged to connect humanitarian concern with reflection on power, international law, media representation, political responsibility, and peaceful civic action.

In Indonesian Islamic schools, this transformation can take pedagogical forms that are appropriate to educational settings. Students might critically analyze competing news reports, conduct source-verification exercises, examine the humanitarian consequences of conflict, study the role of international organizations, compare historical narratives, or develop evidence-based

humanitarian campaigns. Such activities preserve the legitimacy of solidarity while requiring students to demonstrate intellectual responsibility. They also reduce the risk that Palestine education becomes an instrument of partisan mobilization. Research on teachers and global citizenship education shows that educators require sufficient conceptual and pedagogical preparation to navigate complex global issues (Yemini, Tibbitts, and Goren 2019; Estell s and Fischman 2021). Indonesian Islamic schools therefore need teacher development that combines Islamic pedagogy, conflict-sensitive education, media literacy, and global citizenship. The strongest form of Palestine education is consequently not one that produces uniform political responses but one that produces students capable of informed, peaceful, evidence-based, and ethically grounded participation in global affairs.

Conclusion

Teaching Palestine in Indonesian Islamic schools should be understood as an opportunity to strengthen humanitarian education, critical global citizenship, and responsible Islamic pedagogy rather than as an invitation to convert schools into spaces of political mobilization. The analysis demonstrates that Palestine education has legitimate educational value because it enables students to engage with questions of human dignity, civilian protection, justice, historical memory, international responsibility, and the consequences of conflict for education itself. Nevertheless, the pedagogical legitimacy of the subject depends on how it is taught. A classroom that reproduces simplified narratives, unverified claims, or exclusionary identities may intensify polarization rather than cultivate understanding. Conversely, an approach that integrates historical literacy, humanitarian ethics, critical media literacy, and peaceful civic participation can transform emotional solidarity into meaningful educational development.

The proposed framework therefore positions Indonesian Islamic schools and pesantren as spaces where religious commitment and critical inquiry can coexist. Students should be encouraged to maintain humanitarian concern while learning to verify information, examine historical complexity, distinguish evidence from political claims, and recognize the dignity of civilians across religious and national boundaries. Teachers require institutional support to manage controversial material without suppressing legitimate moral concerns or imposing a single political interpretation. In this model, Palestine education becomes an expression of Islamic ethical responsibility and global citizenship simultaneously. Its success should ultimately be measured not by the uniformity of students' political opinions, but by their ability to reason critically, reject misinformation, respect human dignity, and participate peacefully and responsibly in debates concerning global justice.

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