

Global research trends on teacher competence for religious moderation education in schools: A bibliometric analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to map the global research landscape on teacher competencies for religious moderation education in schools through a bibliometric analysis of publications over the past decade. The study employed a bibliometric design using the Scopus database, accessed on March 7, 2026. The search was conducted in the title, abstract, and keywords using terms related to teacher competence, religious moderation, and school contexts. Document selection followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines, resulting in 307 documents. The screening criteria included the publication period from 2016 to 2025 and document types consisting of articles, review papers, and conference papers. Data were analyzed using Biblioshiny and VOSviewer after metadata cleaning with OpenRefine and keyword standardization through a thesaurus file. The results showed a steady increase in publications on teacher competence for religious moderation education in schools over the last decade. The publication landscape indicated that this topic has developed mainly within journals focusing on religious education, multicultural education, and teacher education. Research contributions were largely driven by institutions in the United States and Europe, although participation from regions such as Asia and Australia has also increased. Thematic analysis revealed that the literature primarily focused on multicultural education, teacher education, and inclusive pedagogy. Recent studies also indicated a shift toward more contextual and practice-oriented educational research. Future studies should strengthen classroom-based empirical research, develop integrative teacher training models, and encourage cross-national collaboration to improve understanding of religious moderation education in diverse educational contexts.

Keywords: bibliometric analysis, multicultural education, religious moderation, schools, teacher competence

INTRODUCTION

In global education discourse, schools have been recognized as strategic spaces for promoting values such as mutual respect, peaceful coexistence, and religious moderation (Boehme, 2024; Welling & Roebben, 2018). Religious moderation education refers to educational efforts that promote balanced, inclusive, and non-extremist religious understanding while encouraging respect for religious differences and constructive interfaith engagement. Religious moderation education shares common goals with multicultural education, intercultural education, and peace education, particularly in promoting respect, dialogue, and social harmony (Jackson & O'Grady, 2019; Saleh et al., 2025; Triyanto, 2025). However, it places greater emphasis on developing moderate religious attitudes and practices grounded in religious values, which are expected to strengthen students' religious character and ethical behaviour (Boehme, 2024; Sa'adah & Putri, 2025). It also differs from religious education in general. While religious education primarily focuses on transmitting religious knowledge and beliefs (Jackson & Everington, 2017; O'Farrell, 2023), religious moderation education places greater emphasis on preparing students to engage constructively with religious diversity in contemporary societies. It explicitly promotes tolerance, peaceful coexistence, and the constructive management of religious differences through inclusive dialogue and engagement across diverse religious backgrounds (Boehme, 2024; Jackson & O'Grady, 2019; Nayab & Zarei, 2025). Through pedagogically managed religious learning, these values can contribute to students' character development and foster respect for differences in social life (Muzayaroh, 2021).

Given the important role of religious moderation education in promoting inclusive and harmonious school environments, teachers' competence in integrating these values into learning processes has become increasingly important. Teachers are expected not only to possess strong pedagogical and professional competence but also to be capable of facilitating dialogue, addressing religious diversity, and creating inclusive classroom environments. However, educational practice in schools continues to face several challenges. Teacher education and professional development programs often have not fully prepared teachers to teach in culturally and religiously diverse classrooms (Herzog-Punzenberger et al., 2023; Ji et al., 2025). In many countries,

prospective teachers have also reported limited practical experience and low confidence in managing classroom diversity (Roiha & Sommier, 2021). Similar challenges have been reported in multicultural education contexts, where teachers often demonstrate varying levels of understanding of diversity and face limitations in instructional resources and professional preparation (Martins & Reis, 2026). At the same time, scholarly research on teacher competence related to religious moderation education has expanded across multiple academic fields, including teacher education, multicultural education, religious education, and peace education (Saleh et al., 2025; Triyanto, 2025; Zembylas et al., 2018). However, this body of literature has remained fragmented across disciplines and publication outlets. Consequently, obtaining a comprehensive understanding of research directions, dominant themes, and emerging research opportunities has been difficult. A comprehensive bibliometric review is therefore needed to systematically map global research trends in this field, particularly over the last decade.

Several previous review studies have examined teachers' readiness to address cultural and religious diversity in educational settings. Ji et al. (2025) conducted a systematic review of early teacher education programs in Australia. Their findings indicated that the integration of multicultural education in teacher education curricula remained uneven, leaving many prospective teachers feeling unprepared to teach in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms. In the context of religious education, O'Farrell (2023) reviewed the implementation of religious education in early childhood education in Ireland. The study highlighted the need for reforms in teacher preparation programs and stronger support for teachers working in faith-based schools. Meanwhile, Ash and Wiggan (2018) examined the role of science education in addressing diversity in teacher preparation. They emphasized the importance of adopting a more inclusive and critical pedagogical approach in teacher education. In addition, Baumfield (2016) emphasized the importance of teacher professional development that integrates theoretical knowledge with practical experience in religious education. Overall, these studies indicated increasing scholarly attention to issues of diversity, religious education, and teacher competence development in educational contexts.

Nevertheless, most previous studies have focused on conceptual discussions or systematic reviews within specific national contexts. Some studies have also examined the implementation of multicultural education and religious education in schools. However, research that comprehensively maps the global development of studies on teacher competence for religious moderation education in schools remains limited. In particular, systematic mapping of the dynamics of scientific publications in this field over the last decade is still scarce. This limitation indicates a research gap that can be addressed through a bibliometric analysis approach. Bibliometric analysis enables researchers to obtain a macro-level understanding of the intellectual structure and development of a research field. Therefore, this study offers a novel contribution by presenting a global bibliometric mapping of research on teacher competence for religious moderation education in schools during the past decade. The analysis integrates publication trend analysis, identification of key research actors, and thematic analysis of keywords.

This study aimed to reveal trends and thematically map global research on teacher competencies for religious moderation education in schools through a bibliometric analysis approach. It focused on scientific publications from the last decade in order to identify recent developments in this research field. Specifically, the study analyzed annual publication trends, the most relevant journal sources, the most productive institutions, the countries of origin of the most contributing corresponding authors, and the most cited documents. In addition, keyword-based thematic analysis was conducted to identify dominant research themes, emerging topics, and potential future research directions. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of academic scholarship and to provide insights for educational policy aimed at strengthening teachers' competence in promoting religious moderation values in schools. To address these objectives, this study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What patterns and developments characterize global publications on teacher competence for religious moderation education in schools during the past decade?
2. What thematic structures characterize the literature on teacher competence for religious moderation education in schools during the past decade?
3. Which emerging themes indicate potential future research directions in this field over the past decade?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a bibliometric analysis design to map and analyze global scientific publications on teacher competence for religious moderation education in schools. Bibliometric analysis was selected because it enables a quantitative and systematic examination of a large body of scientific literature and provides a comprehensive overview of the intellectual structure of a research field (Donthu et al., 2021). This approach also allows researchers to identify publication trends, relevant journal sources, institutional and country contributions, influential documents, and the development of research themes over time (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). Through this approach, the study aimed to present a comprehensive overview of the development of global research on teacher competence for religious moderation education in schools during the past decade.

Data Collection

Data were collected from the Scopus database on March 7, 2026. This database was selected because it provides broad coverage of reputable international journals, conference proceedings, and multidisciplinary publications that have undergone a rigorous peer-review process (Meiliati et al., 2025; Sitepu et al., 2026). In addition, Scopus applies strict indexing standards and provides complete and standardized metadata, including author information, institutional affiliations, keywords, abstracts, and citation data that are essential for bibliometric analysis (Mongeon & Paul-Hus, 2016).

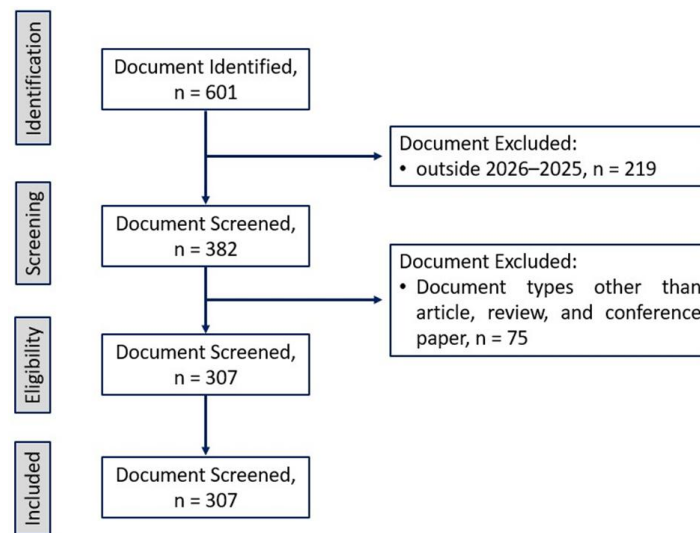


Figure 1. PRISMA flow chart (Adopted from Moher et al., 2015)

The search strategy was designed to capture literature related to teacher competence in the context of religious moderation education in schools. The search was conducted in the title, abstract, and keywords using a combination of relevant keywords and their synonyms. The search query was developed through an iterative process involving several rounds of discussion among the research team. To minimize search bias and improve content validity, the final query was reviewed and validated by three co-authors with expertise in religious education, multicultural education, and bibliometric research. Broad descriptors such as “multicultural education,” “intercultural education,” “peace education,” and “religious education” were intentionally included because the concept of religious moderation education is frequently discussed within these overlapping educational domains. Previous studies have shown that issues of religious diversity, interfaith dialogue, inclusion, and peaceful coexistence are often examined through these related frameworks, making the inclusion of broader descriptors necessary to capture the multidisciplinary nature of the field and avoid overlooking relevant publications. The search query was formulated as follows:

“teach* competenc*” OR “teacher professional” OR “teacher training” OR “teacher education” OR “teacher capacity building” OR “teacher capability” OR “teach* skills”) AND (“religious tolerance” OR “religious harmony” OR “religious moderation” OR “religious diversity” OR “religious pluralism” OR “interfaith dialogue” OR “interfaith understanding” OR “interfaith education” OR “tolerance education” OR “peace education” OR “religious education” OR “multicultural education” OR “intercultural education” OR “diversity education”) AND (school OR schools OR madrasa*).

The document selection process followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines, as presented in **Figure 1**. The use of PRISMA ensured transparency and replicability in the literature identification and screening process (Moher et al., 2015; Page et al., 2021). The initial search identified 601 documents. The dataset was then limited to publications from the last decade (2016–2025) to maintain temporal relevance and capture recent research developments. This filtering stage resulted in 382 documents.

The screening process was subsequently conducted based on document type. The analysis included only articles, review papers, and conference papers because these publication formats generally undergo formal peer-review processes and provide sufficient methodological, empirical, or conceptual detail for bibliometric analysis. Other publication types, such as editorials, notes, letters, book reviews, errata, and short communications, were excluded because they typically contain limited scholarly content, do not present original research findings, or provide insufficient metadata for meaningful bibliometric mapping. As illustrated in **Figure 1**, 219 documents published outside the 2016–2025 period were excluded during the temporal filtering stage. An additional 75 documents were excluded because they belonged to publication categories other than articles, review papers, or conference papers. After applying all inclusion and exclusion criteria, the final dataset consisted of 307 documents that were considered relevant to the study objectives and subsequently included in the bibliometric analysis.

Data Analysis

Before the analysis, the metadata were cleaned using OpenRefine to standardize variations in author names, institutional affiliations, and keyword spellings. This process improved metadata consistency and reduced fragmentation in the bibliometric analysis (Donthu et al., 2021). The analysis was conducted using two complementary bibliometric tools, namely Biblioshiny and VOSviewer. Biblioshiny, a web-based interface of the Bibliometrix package in R (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017), was used to analyze annual publication trends, identify the most relevant sources, productive institutions, leading countries, and the most influential documents based on citation counts. These indicators provided insights into research productivity, scientific influence, and the overall development of the field.

VOSviewer was used to visualize and explore the intellectual structure of the field through authors’ keyword co-occurrence networks (Melisa et al., 2025). The analysis identified major research domains, emerging themes, and potential future research directions (Nasrum et al., 2025; Salido et al., 2025). To improve analytical accuracy, a thesaurus file was manually developed to standardize keywords by merging synonymous terms, correcting spelling variations, and unifying singular and plural forms.

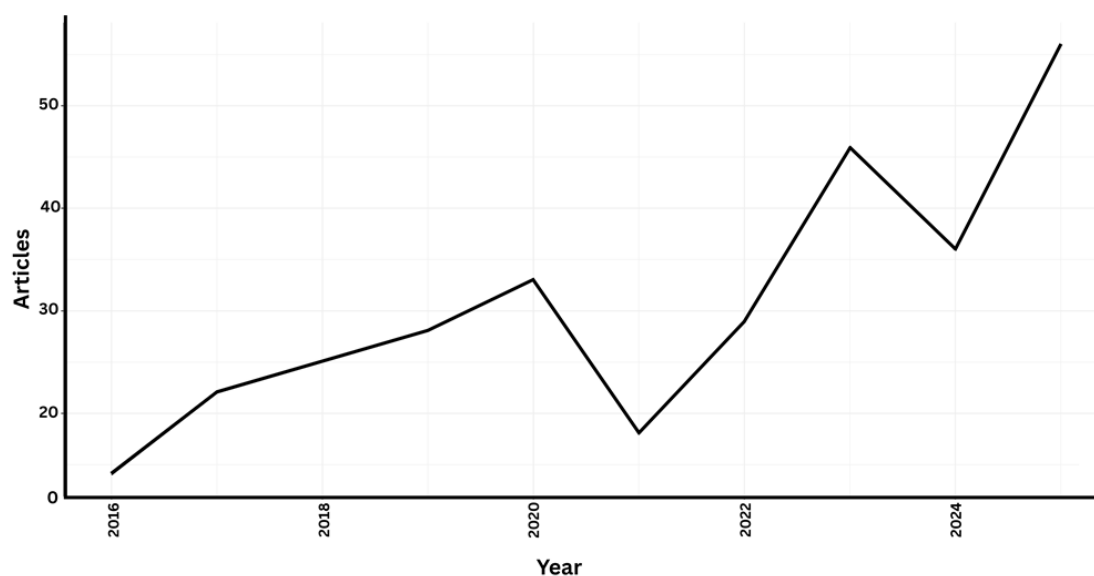


Figure 2. Annual publications on teacher competence for religious moderation education in schools (2016–2025) (Source: Authors' own elaboration, using Bibliometrix R)

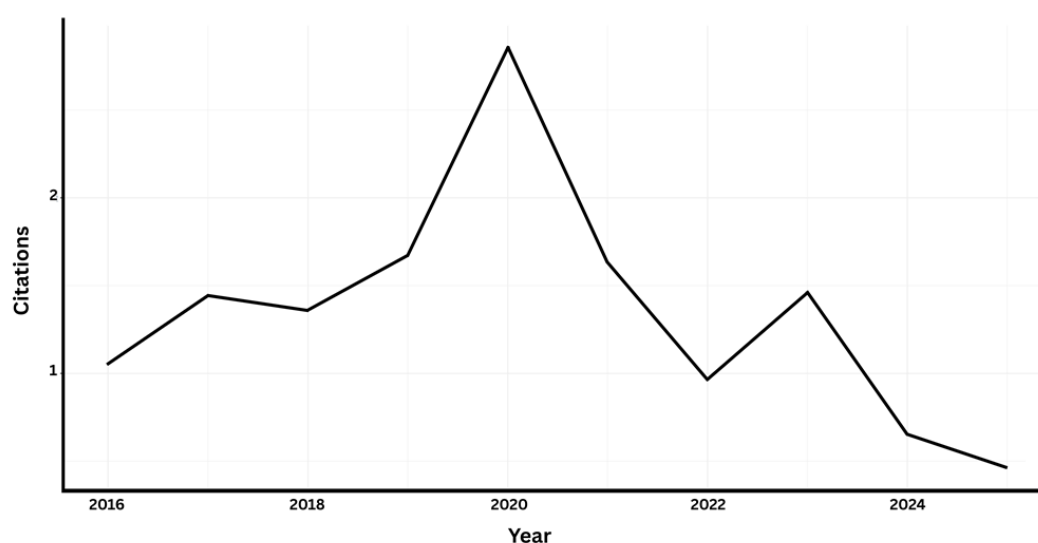


Figure 3. Average citations per year of publications (2016–2025) (Source: Authors' own elaboration, using Bibliometrix R)

General methodological terms, such as article, qualitative, quantitative, and questionnaire, were removed because they did not represent substantive research topics. The keyword-cleaning process was reviewed by all authors to ensure consistency. The interpretation of the findings was based on the combined examination of publication trends, citation indicators, and keyword networks generated by both software tools. Credibility was enhanced through cross-validation across these indicators and discussion among the authors until consensus was reached regarding the identification of dominant themes, research trends, and emerging topics.

RESULTS

Global Publication Landscape of Research on Teacher Competence for Religious Moderation Education in Schools

The analysis of annual scientific publication trends related to teacher competence for religious moderation education in schools during the period 2016–2025 is presented in **Figure 2**.

Figure 2 shows that the number of annual publications in this field increased over the past decade. At the beginning of the period, the number of publications was relatively low, with approximately 14 articles published in 2016. This number gradually increased and reached about 33 articles in 2020. However, a noticeable decline occurred in 2021, when the number dropped to around 18 articles. Despite this decrease, publication output increased again in the following years. A substantial rise appeared after 2022, with more than 40 articles published in 2023 and continuing to grow to more than 50 articles by 2025. This pattern indicates growing academic attention to teacher competence in religious moderation education in schools. The pattern of average citations per year during the same period is presented in **Figure 3**.

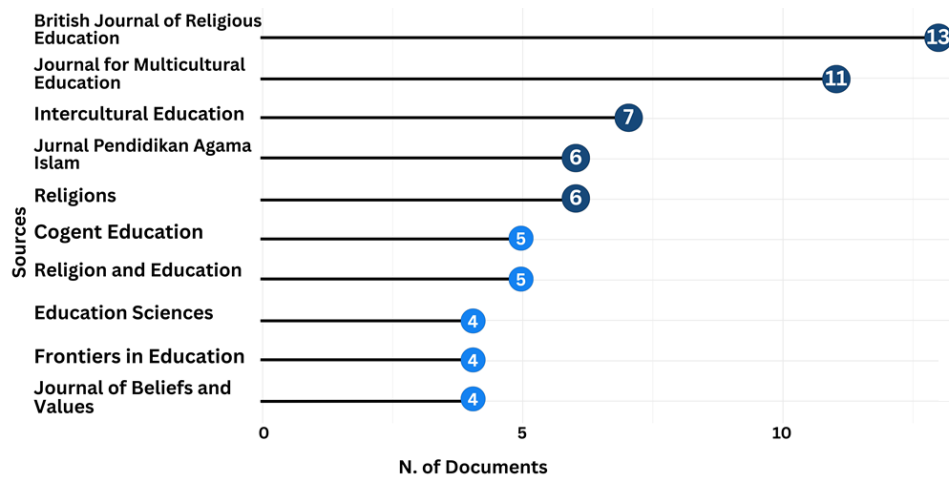


Figure 4. Top 10 journal sources publishing research on teacher competence for religious moderation education in schools (2016–2025) (Source: Authors' own elaboration, using Bibliometrix R)

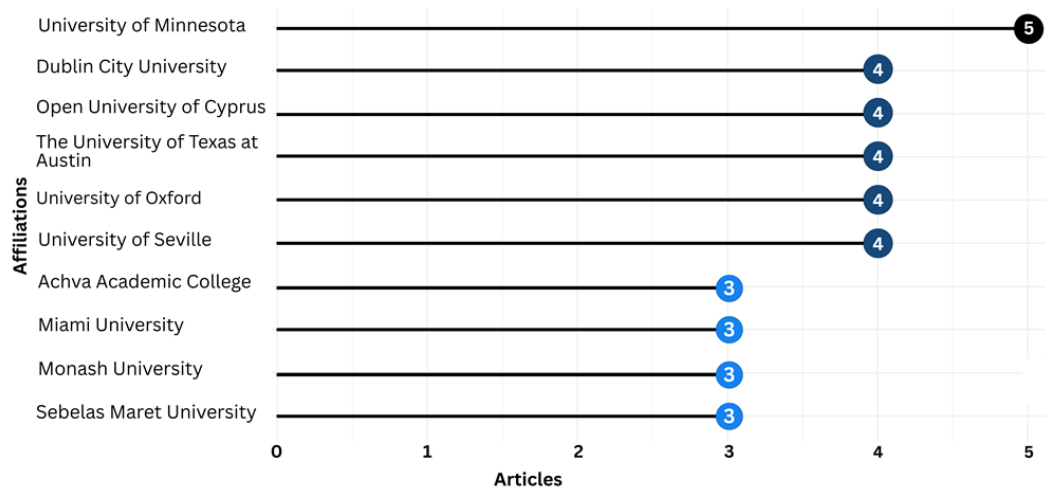


Figure 5. Top 10 most productive affiliations (2016–2025) (Source: Authors' own elaboration, using Bibliometrix R)

Figure 3 illustrates the annual citation pattern, which appears more fluctuating than the publication trend. The highest citation level occurred in 2020, with an average of more than two citations per article. After 2020, the average citation value declined, although a slight increase appeared in 2023. The lower citation rates in more recent publications are expected because newly published articles have had less time to accumulate citations. Overall, **Figure 2** and **Figure 3** indicate that although publication output has increased in recent years, the citation impact per article has varied throughout the analysis period.

Figure 4 presents the ten most relevant journal sources publishing research on teacher competence for religious moderation education in schools during 2016–2025. The *British Journal of Religious Education* ranks first with 13 publications. The *Journal for Multicultural Education* follows with 11 documents. *Intercultural Education* occupies the third position with 7 documents. Other journals with notable contributions include the *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* and *Religions*, each publishing 6 documents. *Cogent Education* and *Religion and Education* each published 5 documents. Meanwhile, *Education Sciences*, *Frontiers in Education*, and the *Journal of Beliefs and Values* each contributed 4 documents. These findings show that research on teacher competence for religious moderation education in schools is distributed across journals focusing on religious education, multicultural education, and general educational studies. The analysis of the ten most productive institutions is presented in **Figure 5**.

Figure 5 indicates that the *University of Minnesota* ranks first, with 5 publications during the past decade. Several institutions follow with four publications each, including *Dublin City University*, the *Open University of Cyprus*, the *University of Texas at Austin*, the *University of Oxford*, and the *University of Seville*. Other institutions in the top 10 include *Achva Academic College*, *Miami University*, *Monash University*, and *Sebelas Maret University*, each with 3 publications. These results indicate that research on teacher competence for religious moderation education in schools involves institutions from multiple regions, including Europe, North America, Australia, and Asia. The distribution of the top 10 countries of corresponding authors is presented in **Figure 6**.

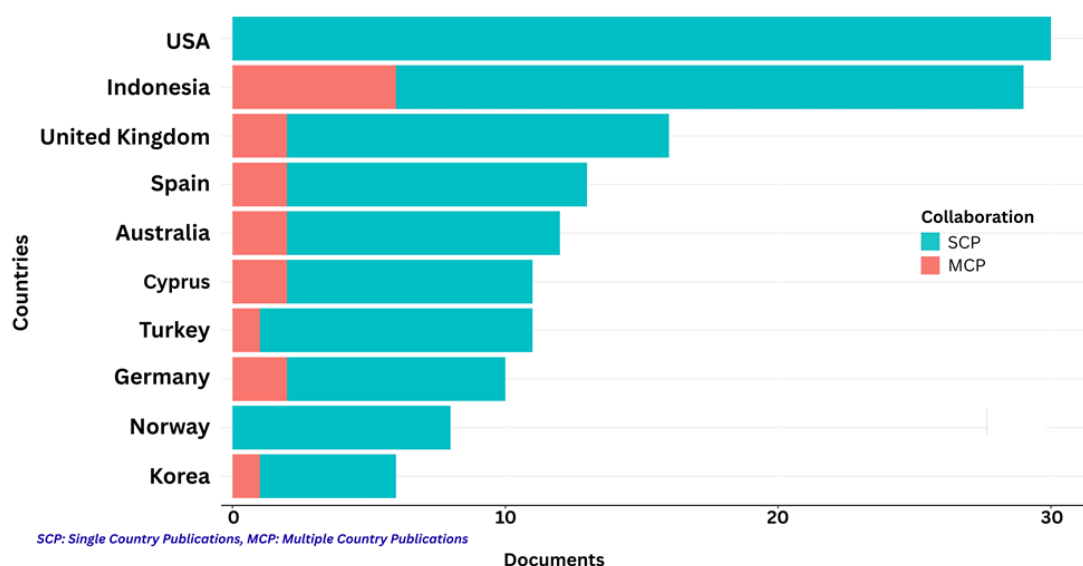


Figure 6. Top 10 corresponding author countries on teacher competence for religious moderation education in schools (2016–2025) (Source: Authors' own elaboration, using Bibliometrix R)

Table 1. Top 10 most influential documents in research on teacher competence for religious moderation education in schools (2016–2025)

Paper	DOI	TC	TC/Y	NTC
Abacioglu et al. (2020), Br J Educ Psychol	10.1111/bjep.12328	138	19.71	6.89
Gorski and Dalton (2020), J Teach Educ	10.1177/0022487119883545	126	18.00	6.29
Choi and Lee (2020), Aera Open	10.1177/2332858420973574	63	9.00	3.15
Jackson and Everington (2017), Br J Relig Educ	10.1080/01416200.2016.1165184	57	5.70	3.96
Pittman et al. (2020), J Multicult Educ	10.1108/JME-09-2020-0099	57	8.14	2.85
Karousiou et al. (2019), Teach Teach Theory Prac	10.1080/13540602.2018.1544121	52	6.50	3.88
Barrett (2020), Lond Rev Educ	10.18546/LRE.18.1.01	51	7.29	2.55
Lauritzen and Nodeland (2018), Educ Res Rev	10.1016/j.edurev.2018.04.002	47	5.22	3.84
Bartholomaeus et al. (2017), Teach Teach Educ	10.1016/j.tate.2017.03.006	43	4.30	2.98
Amtu et al. (2020), Int J Instr	10.29333/iji.2020.13454a	39	5.57	1.95

TC: Total Citations; TC/Y: TC per Year; NTC: Normalized TC

Figure 6 shows that the United States ranks first in terms of the number of documents, followed by Indonesia in second position. Other countries that contributed significantly to research in this field include the United Kingdom, Spain, Australia, Cyprus, Turkey, Germany, Norway, and Korea. In addition to publication counts, Figure 6 also presents patterns of research collaboration through two categories: Single Country Publications (SCP) and Multiple Country Publications (MCP). Among the leading countries, the United States and Norway show predominantly single-country publications, indicating limited international collaboration during the period. In contrast, the remaining countries demonstrate varying levels of international collaboration.

The findings also indicate that active research institutions support countries with high publication output. In the United States, contributing institutions include the *University of Minnesota*, the *University of Texas at Austin*, and *Miami University*. In Europe, notable institutions include *Dublin City University* and the *University of Oxford*. Additional contributions come from the *University of Seville* in Spain and the *Open University of Cyprus*. Indonesia also demonstrates a visible contribution through the involvement of *Sebelas Maret University*.

Table 1 shows the ten most influential documents in research on teacher competence for religious moderation education in schools based on the number of citations. The most cited article is a study by Abacioglu et al. (2020) published in the *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, with a total of 138 citations and an average of 19.71 citations per year. The second position is occupied by Gorski and Dalton's (2020) article in the *Journal of Teacher Education* with 126 citations and 18 citations per year. Furthermore, Choi and Lee's (2020) article published in the *AERA Open* ranks third with 63 citations. Other articles that also show significant influence are studies by Jackson and Everington (2017) in the *British Journal of Religious Education* and Pittman et al. (2020) in the *Journal for Multicultural Education*, which each obtained 57 citations.

In addition, several other publications that also have a fairly high citation impact include the work of Karousiou et al. (2019) in *Teaching and Teacher Education*, Barrett (2020) in the *London Review of Education*, and Lauritzen and Nodeland (2018) in the *Educational Research Review*. Two other articles that are included in the top 10 are research by Bartholomaeus et al. (2017) in *Teaching and Teacher Education* and Amtu et al. (2020) in the *International Journal of Instruction*. In general, the most cited documents come from reputable international journals that focus on teacher education, multicultural education, and religious education. These findings show that research on teacher competence for religious moderation education in schools has a strong relationship with the study of teacher education, cultural diversity, and inclusive learning in the educational environment.

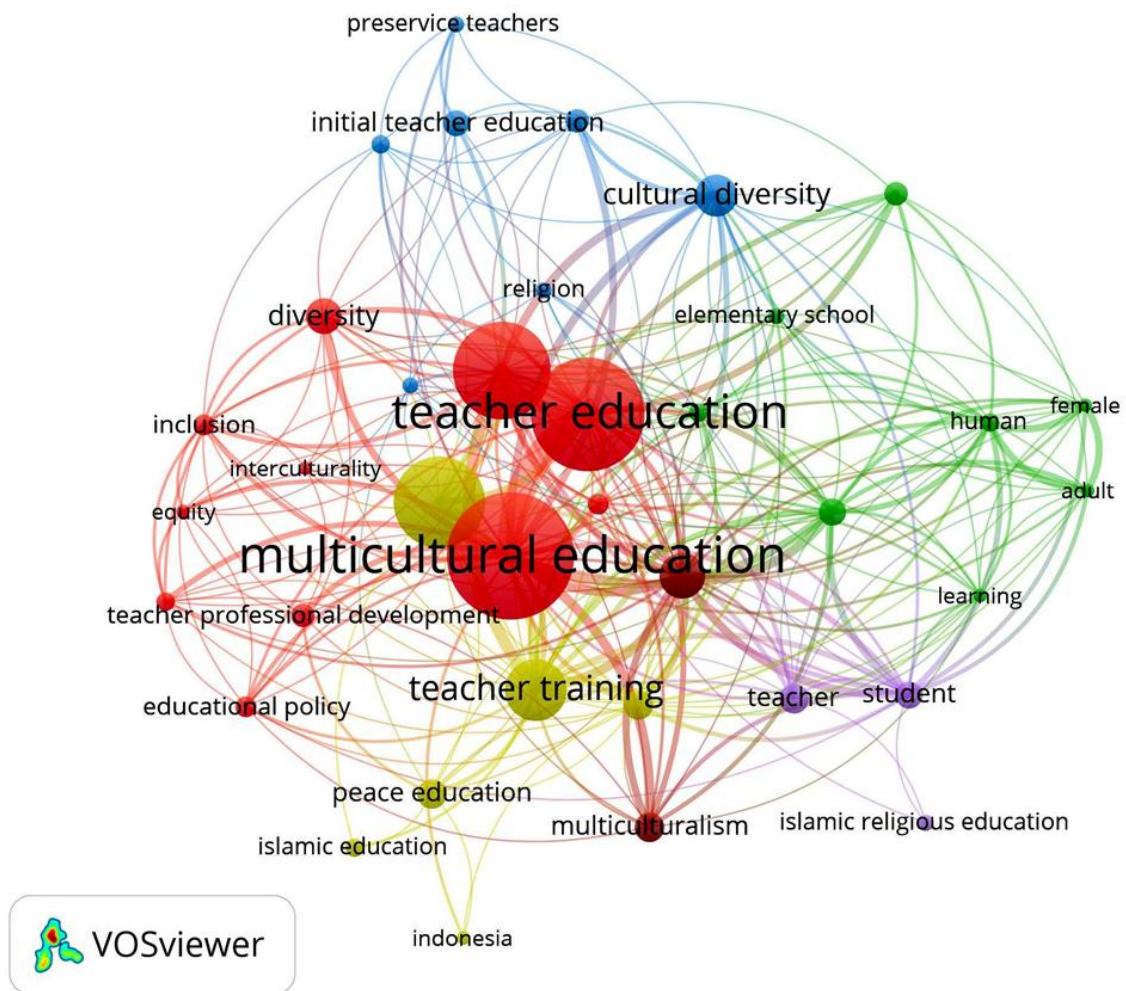


Figure 7. Keyword co-occurrence network in research on teacher competence for religious moderation education in schools (2016–2025) (Source: Authors' own elaboration, using VOSviewer)

Thematic Structure of Research on Teacher Competence for Religious Moderation Education in Schools

The results of the keyword co-occurrence analysis using network visualization generated through VOSviewer are presented in **Figure 7**. This analysis applied a minimum threshold of five keyword occurrences.

The visualization in **Figure 7** indicates that keywords in research on teacher competence for religious moderation education in schools form six interconnected clusters. Larger nodes represent higher keyword frequencies, while connecting lines indicate the strength of relationships between keywords in the analyzed literature. Overall, the keywords “teacher education”, “multicultural education”, and “teacher training” appear as central nodes linking various research themes. The first cluster (red) consists of eleven keywords related to multicultural education, social justice in education, and teacher professional development. These keywords include *diversity*, *educational policy*, *equity*, *inclusion*, *intercultural education*, *interculturality*, *multicultural education*, *professional development*, *social justice*, *teacher education*, and *teacher professional development*.

The second cluster (green) focuses on the school learning context and the characteristics of teaching and learning processes involving teachers and students. This cluster contains eight keywords, namely *adult culturally responsive teaching*, *elementary school*, *female*, *human*, *learning*, *school*, and *teaching*. The third cluster (blue) highlights aspects of initial teacher education and intercultural competence in addressing religious and cultural diversity in schools. This cluster includes seven keywords: *cultural diversity*, *inclusive education*, *initial teacher education*, *intercultural competence*, *pedagogy*, *preservice teachers*, and *religion*. The fourth cluster (yellow) consists of six keywords: *curriculum*, *Indonesia*, *Islamic education*, *peace education*, *religious education*, and *teacher training*. This cluster indicates the connection between religious moderation education, curriculum development, religious education, and teacher training in specific contexts, including Indonesia.

The fifth cluster (purple) includes three keywords: *Islamic religious education*, *student*, and *teacher*. This cluster reflects the relationship between teachers and students in the context of Islamic religious education in schools. Meanwhile, the sixth cluster (brown) consists of two keywords: *education* and *multiculturalism*. This cluster represents the linkage between general educational concepts and multicultural approaches in the analyzed literature. Overall, the visualization indicates that research on teacher competence for religious moderation education in schools has developed through the intersection of several fields. These include teacher education, multicultural education, religious education, and inclusive learning practices in school contexts.

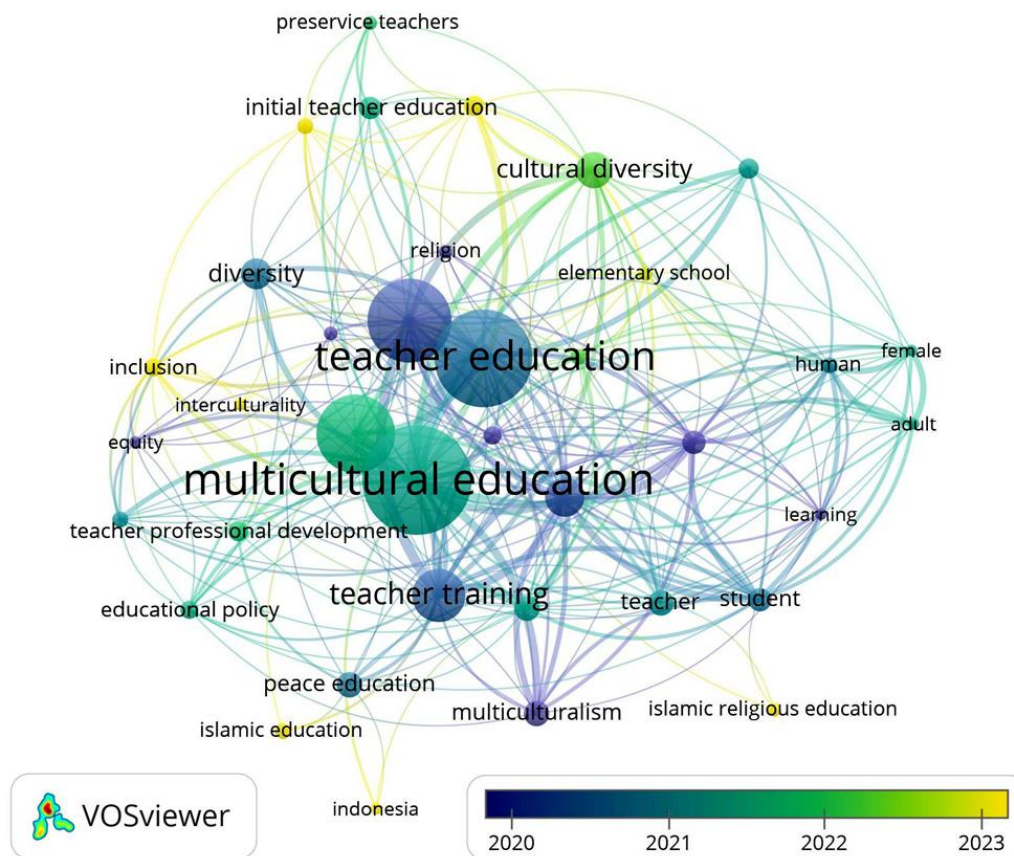


Figure 8. Overlay visualization of keyword co-occurrence in research on teacher competence for religious moderation education in schools (2016–2025) (Source: Authors' own elaboration, using VOSviewer)

Development and Future Direction of Research in Teacher Competence for Religious Moderation Education in Schools

Figure 8 presents the overlay visualization analysis that illustrates the development of research themes based on the time of keyword occurrence. The color of each node indicates the relative period of keyword appearance, ranging from dark blue (earlier period) to yellow (most recent period). In the early period, until around 2020, several prominent keywords emerged, including intercultural education, teacher education, multiculturalism, teacher training, education, teaching, diversity, professional development, learning, religion, and pedagogy. Among these, the most dominant keywords were intercultural education, teacher education, and teacher training, as indicated by their larger node sizes. These findings suggest that early research primarily focused on the development of teacher education and intercultural education approaches in the context of diversity.

During the middle period, around 2021–2022, several new keywords appeared and were marked in green, including multicultural education, religious education, initial teacher education, curriculum, educational policy, teacher, student, teacher professional development, social justice, culturally responsive teaching, human, female, and adult. In this phase, multicultural education and religious education emerged as the most prominent themes. In the most recent period, around 2023–2025, keywords marked in yellow became visible, such as cultural diversity, inclusive education, inclusion, intercultural competence, elementary school, school, Islamic education, Islamic religious education, and Indonesia. Compared with earlier periods, these recent keywords do not show a clear dominance, as their node sizes appear relatively small and similar. This pattern suggests that recent research has begun to diversify and expand toward more specific and context-oriented themes.

DISCUSSION

Global Publication Landscape of Research on Teacher Competence for Religious Moderation Education in Schools

The increase in publications over the past decade indicates growing scholarly attention to teacher competence in religious moderation education. This trend reflects the increasing complexity of religious and cultural diversity in school environments. Such conditions require teachers to possess adaptive pedagogical, social, and cultural competencies. Previous studies have shown that teachers play an important role in creating inclusive learning environments and facilitating interfaith dialogue in schools (Barrett, 2020; Jackson & Everington, 2017). Therefore, teacher education and professional development have become key strategies for equipping teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to manage diversity constructively (Karousiou et al., 2019).

The growth in publications also reflects increasing academic interest in the relationship between teacher education, multicultural education, and religious education. Teachers' competence in addressing diversity is not limited to religious

understanding. It also involves the pedagogical ability to apply inclusive and dialogical approaches in learning (Abacioglu et al., 2020; Gorski & Dalton, 2020). In response to this need, teacher education programs in several countries have begun to integrate perspectives on cultural awareness, social justice, and diversity-responsive pedagogy (Choi & Lee, 2020). This integration indicates that research in this field has developed through a cross-disciplinary perspective combining educational, religious, and sociocultural studies.

Although the number of publications has increased steadily, the scientific influence of articles does not always correspond directly to the annual publication output. Articles published earlier often receive more citations because they have had more time to be cited by subsequent studies. This pattern is common in bibliometric analysis because citation accumulation develops gradually over time (Donthu et al., 2021). In addition to the time factor, citation impact is also influenced by the relevance of research topics to global issues such as multicultural education, interfaith dialogue, and inclusive education (Lauritzen & Nodeland, 2018; Pittman et al., 2020).

Although the number of publications has increased steadily, the scientific influence of articles does not always correspond directly to annual publication output. Articles published earlier often receive more citations because they have had more time to be referenced by subsequent studies. This pattern is common in bibliometric analysis, as citation accumulation develops gradually over time (Donthu et al., 2021). However, citation impact is not determined solely by publication age. It is also influenced by the relevance of research topics to global issues such as multicultural education, interfaith dialogue, and inclusive education (Lauritzen & Nodeland, 2018; Pittman et al., 2020). Consequently, several recent studies on multicultural competence, social justice, and inclusive teacher education have already attracted considerable scholarly attention despite their shorter citation window (Choi & Lee, 2020; Gorski & Dalton, 2020).

The analysis of publication sources indicates that research on teacher competence for religious moderation education has been widely published in journals focusing on religious education, multicultural education, and teacher education. Articles in the *British Journal of Religious Education*, for instance, have frequently addressed teacher professional development, reflective pedagogy, and inclusive approaches to religious teaching (Baumfield, 2016; Jackson & Everington, 2017). Research in this journal has also emphasized the importance of understanding teachers' beliefs and the professionalization of religious education to strengthen pedagogical capacity in addressing religious diversity in schools (Madden et al., 2023; Penthin et al., 2022). The dominance of these journals reflects the interdisciplinary nature of religious moderation education, which has developed through the fields of religious education, multicultural education, intercultural education, and teacher education. This pattern suggests the need for greater theoretical integration across these domains to strengthen the conceptual foundation of future research.

Similarly, journals such as the *Journal for Multicultural Education* and *Intercultural Education* have emphasized the development of teachers' multicultural and intercultural competencies. Studies in these journals have shown that teacher education should equip prospective teachers with an understanding of cultural identity, social diversity, and principles of equity in education (Symeou & Karagiorgi, 2018; Williams & Glass, 2019). Additional research has highlighted the importance of cross-cultural experiences in teacher education programs to strengthen the transcultural competence of prospective teachers in increasingly diverse societies (Casinader & Clemans, 2018; Roiha & Sommier, 2021).

In more specific disciplinary contexts, several journals such as the *Journal of Islamic Religious Education* and *Religions* have examined the competence of religious education teachers and the challenges of implementing religious education in pluralistic societies. Studies in these journals have emphasized the importance of pedagogical competence, digital literacy, and learning innovation in religious education (Muhith, 2021; Reksiana et al., 2024). These studies have also explored the relationship between teachers' religious identities, interfaith dialogue, and interreligious education practices in schools (Boehme, 2024; O'Connell et al., 2023).

Beyond these specialized outlets, journals including *Cogent Education*, *Religion and Education*, *Education Sciences*, *Frontiers in Education*, and the *Journal of Beliefs and Values* have expanded the discussion by addressing broader social issues. Several studies have highlighted the role of peace education and social-emotional competence in creating inclusive learning environments (Saleh et al., 2025). Other research has examined the relationship between religious education, pluralism, and peacebuilding in religiously diverse societies (Zembylas et al., 2018). Some studies have also addressed issues of racism and inequality in Islamic education and their implications for teacher education (González-Doğan, 2023). In addition, hermeneutical approaches and interreligious dialogue in teacher education have been emphasized as important strategies for strengthening cross-faith understanding in schools (Welling & Roebben, 2018).

The distribution of productive institutions indicates that universities with strong traditions in teacher education, multicultural education, and diversity studies have largely driven the development of this research field. Universities in the United States, particularly the *University of Minnesota*, have made significant contributions to research on diversity-responsive pedagogy. Studies from this institution have emphasized the integration of multicultural perspectives in teacher education and the importance of strengthening social awareness in teaching practices (Grinage, 2020; Mensah et al., 2018; Tilsen et al., 2021). Other research has shown that culturally responsive curricula that reflect local community identities and experiences can strengthen students' sense of belonging in schools (Peters et al., 2024). The prominence of these institutions reflects their established research traditions in diversity, inclusion, and teacher education. Their sustained productivity is further supported by research centers and academic networks that facilitate scholarly collaboration and knowledge exchange at the international level. This finding highlights the importance of strong institutional support and research networks in advancing scholarship on teacher competence for religious moderation education.

Within the European context, important contributions have come from institutions such as *Dublin City University*, the *University of Oxford*, the *University of Seville*, and the *Open University of Cyprus*. Research from these institutions has widely explored the relationship between religious education, cultural diversity, and dialogical pedagogy. For instance, studies from *Dublin City*

University have shown that the religious identities of prospective teachers can influence their readiness to teach religious education in schools (O'Connell et al., 2023; O'Farrell, 2023). Meanwhile, research from the *University of Oxford* has highlighted the importance of professional development for teachers in addressing complex issues involving science, religion, and argumentation (Chan & Erduran, 2023; Erduran, 2020). Studies from the *Open University of Cyprus* have also emphasized that religious education in pluralistic societies requires supportive education policies and teacher training that integrate peace and intercultural perspectives (Zembylas et al., 2018, 2019).

The dominance of the United States, the United Kingdom, and several European countries reflects their longer experience in addressing cultural and religious diversity through educational policy and teacher education reform. At the same time, Indonesia's strong contribution highlights the growing importance of religious moderation as an educational agenda in Muslim-majority societies. Evidence from different regions further illustrates how this field has developed across diverse educational contexts. *Monash University* in Australia has emphasized the importance of developing transcultural competence among prospective teachers in response to educational globalization (Casinader & Clemans, 2018; Ji et al., 2025). *Achva Academic College* in Israel has highlighted the value of multicultural learning experiences in strengthening cultural sensitivity among prospective teachers (Hayak et al., 2024). Meanwhile, research from *Sebelas Maret University* demonstrates the growing integration of multicultural education and religious moderation within the Indonesian context, particularly in relation to character education, global citizenship, and the Sustainable Development Goals (Sumarlam et al., 2023; Triyanto, 2025).

The analysis of the ten most influential documents further confirms that research in this field has developed around three major themes: strengthening teachers' multicultural competence, developing inclusive pedagogy, and supporting education policy. Research has shown that multicultural attitudes and perspective-taking skills help teachers understand students' cultural and religious backgrounds more empathetically (Abacioglu et al., 2020). Other studies have emphasized the role of critical reflection in teacher education for developing awareness of social justice and diversity (Gorski & Dalton, 2020). In addition, research has shown that professional development programs in multicultural education can improve teachers' self-efficacy and contribute to a more inclusive school climate (Choi & Lee, 2020).

In addition to these pedagogical dimensions, several studies have emphasized the importance of pedagogy, professional identity, and education policy in supporting inclusive education in schools. Jackson and Everington (2017) demonstrated that dialogical approaches in religious education can help teachers manage differences in belief constructively in classroom discussions. In increasingly diverse schools, teachers' professional identities have also been identified as an important factor influencing the implementation of intercultural education. Teachers' perceptions, values, and experiences can shape how educational policies are interpreted and applied in school practices (Karousiou et al., 2019). In addition, policy frameworks such as the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture have guided integrating values of democracy, religious moderation, and intercultural dialogue into curricula and teacher education (Barrett, 2020). Other studies have also shown that teacher competence plays an important role in reducing educational inequality and improving the representation of minority groups in schools (Lauritzen & Nodeland, 2018).

Furthermore, several studies have addressed issues of social inclusion, equal access to education, and school culture. Bartholomaeus et al. (2017) emphasized the importance of teacher training in preparing educators to support students with diverse gender identities. Pittman et al. (2020) showed that inclusive education also depends on teachers' ability to use technology and adaptive learning strategies to reduce educational gaps, particularly in digital learning contexts. In addition, Amtu et al. (2020) highlighted that school culture and teacher motivation influence teacher performance and student learning outcomes. Therefore, strengthening professional competence should be supported by a conducive school environment. Overall, these influential studies demonstrate that teacher competence for religious moderation education extends beyond religious knowledge. It also includes multicultural competence, critical reflection, supportive policy frameworks, and inclusive pedagogical practices in diverse school contexts.

Thematic Structure of Research on Teacher Competence for Religious Moderation Education in Schools

The prominence of multicultural education within the keyword network suggests that religious moderation education is commonly discussed within broader diversity-related educational frameworks. This finding reinforces the close relationship between religious moderation, multicultural education, and intercultural education identified in the conceptual discussion. The findings on the main themes in research on teacher competence for religious moderation education in schools further show that this field has developed at the intersection of multicultural education, social justice, and education policy, as reflected in the first and sixth clusters. This relationship highlights the close connection between teacher competence development and efforts to create inclusive and equitable educational environments for students from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. Several studies have shown that multicultural and intercultural education provide an important foundation for promoting mutual respect and strengthening teachers' capacity to manage classroom diversity (Abacioglu et al., 2020; Aronson et al., 2016). However, the literature also indicates that the implementation of these values often faces structural challenges, particularly when educational policies do not adequately support the development of teachers' competencies in addressing social and cultural diversity (Aguado-Odina et al., 2017; Karanikola et al., 2025). Therefore, teacher education and continuous professional development remain essential for ensuring that the values of religious moderation are consistently translated into classroom practice.

The second and third clusters highlight the pedagogical dimension of teacher competence, particularly in relation to diversity-responsive learning practices. Research has shown that pedagogical approaches sensitive to students' cultural backgrounds help create inclusive and dialogical learning environments (Othman & Ruslan, 2020; Roiha & Sommer, 2021). In the context of initial teacher education, strengthening intercultural competence and critical reflection has become an important component of preparing prospective teachers to work in increasingly heterogeneous classrooms (Casinader & Clemans, 2018; Ji et al., 2025).

Nevertheless, several studies have identified a gap between the theoretical knowledge acquired in teacher education programs and its application in classroom practice. This gap has often been attributed to limited practical experience and insufficient institutional support for implementing diversity-oriented learning approaches (Agostinnetto & Bugno, 2020; Herzog-Punzenberger et al., 2023).

The fourth and fifth clusters emphasize the relationship between teacher competence, the religious education curriculum, and pedagogical interactions between teachers and students. The literature indicates that religious education has strong potential to promote values of moderation, peace, and interfaith dialogue when supported by inclusive curricula and reflective pedagogical approaches (Boehme & Petermann, 2022; Welling & Roebben, 2018). In certain contexts, such as Indonesia, religious education has increasingly been associated with the promotion of global peace and global citizenship values. This development requires teachers to possess adequate pedagogical, social, and digital competencies (Reksiana et al., 2024; Triyanto, 2025). Moreover, pedagogical interaction between teachers and students in religious learning plays an important role in fostering open dialogue. Through these interactions, students can develop more inclusive perspectives on religious diversity (Kistoro et al., 2022; Rymarz & Belmonte, 2020). These findings indicate that teacher competence for religious moderation education extends beyond religious knowledge to include intercultural competence, dialogical skills, and critical reflection. Therefore, teacher education programs should adopt more integrated approaches that combine religious literacy with diversity-responsive pedagogy. Overall, the literature suggests that teacher competence in religious moderation education involves pedagogical, intercultural, and reflective capacities in addition to religious knowledge.

Development and Future Direction of Research in Teacher Competence for Religious Moderation Education in Schools

Over the past decade, research on teacher competence for religious moderation education has demonstrated a clear shift in orientation. During the early phase (2016–2020), studies primarily focused on establishing conceptual foundations for preparing teachers to address religious and cultural diversity in schools. Teacher education became the main avenue for developing competencies that enable teachers to bridge differences in students' beliefs and social backgrounds. Dialogical and hermeneutical approaches in religious education received particular attention because they helped connect religious knowledge with students' lived experiences (Jackson & Everington, 2017). In addition, professional learning communities were recognized as important spaces for collective reflection and the translation of diversity-related theories into classroom practice (Baumfield, 2016). Consequently, research during this period mainly emphasized conceptual and pedagogical foundations for teacher preparation.

During the middle period (2021–2022), research shifted toward a more critical examination of educational practice. Studies increasingly explored how education systems respond to social inequality, discrimination, and identity-related tensions in diverse societies. Teacher competence was no longer viewed solely as a pedagogical issue but also as a matter of social justice and critical awareness (Daniel, 2022). Educational approaches oriented toward social transformation gained prominence through curricula that encourage critical reflection on cultural and religious differences (Adams & Rodriguez, 2019). At the same time, growing attention to initial teacher education reinforced the importance of preparing teachers to manage diversity from the earliest stages of professional development (Herzog-Punzenberger et al., 2023).

In the most recent period (2023–2025), research has become increasingly contextual and practice-oriented. Studies have examined how teacher competence is implemented across different social, cultural, and educational settings. In Indonesia, for example, research has linked teacher competence with global educational agendas such as peacebuilding, global citizenship, and religious moderation in pluralistic societies (Triyanto, 2025). New challenges have also emerged, particularly the integration of digital technology into religious learning and the need to strengthen teachers' digital literacy (Adiyono et al., 2025; Reksiana et al., 2024). From a practical perspective, teacher education and professional development programs should incorporate competencies related to religious moderation, intercultural communication, and inclusive pedagogy. Strengthening these competencies can help teachers respond more effectively to the challenges of religious diversity in contemporary classrooms. Future research should focus on classroom-based implementation of teacher competence, the development of training models that integrate pedagogical, intercultural, and digital competencies, and cross-cultural comparisons of religious moderation education across different educational contexts. Such efforts can enrich the literature while providing evidence to inform educational policy and practice.

CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to map the development of global research on teacher competence for religious moderation education in schools through a bibliometric analysis of scientific publications from the past decade. The findings indicate that academic attention to this topic has increased significantly during the last ten years. This growth reflects the increasing complexity of religious and cultural diversity in educational settings, which requires teachers to develop adaptive pedagogical, social, and cultural competencies. The publication landscape shows that research in this field has mainly developed in journals focusing on religious education, multicultural education, and teacher education. These include the *British Journal of Religious Education*, *Journal for Multicultural Education*, *Intercultural Education*, *Journal of Islamic Religious Education*, and *Religions*. The most productive institutions include the University of Minnesota, Dublin City University, and the University of Oxford. At the same time, the most contributing countries are the United States, Indonesia, and the United Kingdom. Furthermore, the analysis of the most influential documents indicates that the literature in this field centers on three main areas: strengthening teachers' multicultural competence, developing inclusive pedagogy, and supporting education policies that foster inclusive and dialogical learning environments.

The thematic analysis also shows that the intersection of multicultural education, teacher education, religious education, and inclusive learning practices in schools has shaped the research structure in this field. These themes evolved from an initial focus on strengthening the conceptual foundations of teacher education to more critical examinations of educational practices and social justice issues. In recent years, research has increasingly moved toward more contextual and practice-oriented perspectives, emphasizing the implementation of teacher competence in diverse social, cultural, and policy contexts. This development indicates that teacher competence for religious moderation education extends beyond religious knowledge. It also includes pedagogical, intercultural, reflective, and digital literacy competencies. Based on these findings, future research should expand empirical studies examining how teacher competence is implemented in classroom learning practices. Research should also develop teacher training models that integrate pedagogical, intercultural, and professional competencies more comprehensively. In addition, cross-national studies are necessary to explore different approaches to religious moderation education across diverse educational contexts.

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the bibliometric analysis relied exclusively on the Scopus database, which may have introduced indexing bias because relevant publications indexed in other databases were not included. This reliance may also have limited the representation of regional or locally published studies that are less visible in Scopus. Second, because Scopus predominantly indexes English-language publications, the dataset may be affected by language bias and may not fully capture scholarship published in other languages. Third, the thematic analysis was based on keyword metadata rather than full-text content, which may not entirely reflect the conceptual depth of individual publications. Future research can address these limitations by incorporating multiple databases and conducting complementary synthesis studies using systematic literature review approaches.

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