

## **Embedded Sex Education in Pesantren: Students' Meaning-Making and Pedagogical Implications**

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**Abstract:** This study examines how students interpret sex education that is integrated in pesantren learning and its pedagogical implications on the learning process at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Hakim West. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with six students, observations, and documentation, then analysed using thematic analysis. The findings show that students generally do not know the formal term “sex education” or *tarbiyah jinsiyyah*, but understand the substance of the material through learning of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), manners (*adab*), pesantren rules, and biological material related to reproduction. For students, sex education is interpreted as a moral guideline to maintain *awrah* (parts of the body that should be covered according to Islamic teachings), personal hygiene, honor, and social boundaries, as well as practical knowledge that is relevant to daily life in the pesantren environment. Analysis through Piaget's theory of cognitive development and Bandura's social cognitive theory shows that the effectiveness of sex education in pesantren is formed by two interrelated processes, namely the cognitive assimilation of material into the religious scheme that students already have and social strengthening through teacher example, discipline, supervision, and habituation in boarding life. The findings also show that student admissions are conditional: material is more readily accepted when framed in familiar moral-religious language, but learning comfort decreases when topics are conveyed too directly and through dominant lecture methods. This study concludes that sex education in pesantren is not determined by the formalization of terms, but by the integration of substance, religious framing, daily relevance, and pedagogical strategies. On that basis, this study offers *the Pesantren-Embedded Sexuality Acculturation and Normative Learning Framework* as a

conceptual contribution to understanding value-based sex education in pesantren.

**Keywords:** *Sex Education; Pesantren; Santri; Pedagogy; Religious Framing*

**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana siswa menafsirkan pendidikan seks yang terintegrasi dalam pembelajaran pesantren dan implikasi pedagogisnya pada proses pembelajaran di Pondok Pesantren Nurul Hakim Barat. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dengan enam siswa, observasi, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa siswa umumnya tidak mengetahui istilah formal “pendidikan seks” atau tarbiyah jinsiyyah, tetapi memahami substansi materi melalui pembelajaran fiqh Islam, adab, peraturan pesantren, dan materi biologi yang berkaitan dengan reproduksi. Bagi siswa, pendidikan seks ditafsirkan sebagai pedoman moral untuk menjaga aurat (bagian tubuh yang harus ditutupi menurut ajaran Islam), kebersihan pribadi, kehormatan, dan batasan sosial, serta pengetahuan praktis yang relevan dengan kehidupan sehari-hari di lingkungan pesantren. Analisis melalui teori perkembangan kognitif Piaget dan teori kognitif sosial Bandura menunjukkan bahwa efektivitas pendidikan seks di pesantren dibentuk oleh dua proses yang saling terkait, yaitu asimilasi kognitif materi ke dalam skema keagamaan yang sudah dimiliki siswa dan penguatan sosial melalui teladan guru, disiplin, pengawasan, dan pembiasaan dalam kehidupan asrama. Temuan juga menunjukkan bahwa penerimaan siswa bersifat kondisional: materi lebih mudah diterima ketika dibingkai dalam bahasa moral-religius yang familiar, tetapi kenyamanan belajar menurun ketika topik disampaikan terlalu langsung dan melalui metode ceramah yang dominan. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa pendidikan seks di pesantren tidak ditentukan oleh formalisasi istilah, tetapi oleh integrasi substansi, kerangka keagamaan, relevansi sehari-hari, dan strategi pedagogis. Atas dasar itu, studi ini menawarkan Kerangka Akulturasi Seksualitas dan Pembelajaran Normatif yang Tertanam dalam Pesantren sebagai kontribusi konseptual untuk memahami pendidikan seks berbasis nilai di pesantren.

**Kata Kunci:** *Pendidikan Sex; Pesantren; Santri; Pedagogi; Bingkai Keagamaan*

## Introduction

Sex education is now understood as an integral part of education oriented towards the protection, well-being, and strengthening of decision-making capacity in children

and adolescents (van Leent et al., 2023; WHO, 2026). In the international literature, sex education is no longer limited to the delivery of biological information about reproduction, but includes cognitive, emotional, social, ethical, and relational dimensions that help students understand the body, relationships, safety, and self-responsibility more fully (WHO, 2026). This framework places the body, relationships, consent, respect, and self-protection as interrelated elements in the adolescent education process (WHO, 2026). In line with that, cutting-edge systematic reviews show that comprehensively designed sex education tends to contribute to increased knowledge, strengthening protective attitudes, and a reduction in a number of risky behaviors in learners (van Leent et al., 2023). Therefore, sex education needs to be read as a serious pedagogical agenda, not just an additional issue that is discussed reactively when moral or health issues arise.

Policy literature and synthesis studies confirm that the effectiveness of sex education is strongly influenced by the breadth of the material, the suitability to the developmental stage of the learner, the quality of the pedagogy, and sensitivity to the socio-cultural context in which the education takes place (van Leent et al., 2023; WHO, 2026). Thus, contemporary academic debates are no longer centered primarily on the question of whether sex education needs to be provided, but rather how it is formulated, framed, and taught in a valid, meaningful, and contextual way (WHO, 2026). This shift is important because approaches that are too narrow, too biological, or too prohibition-based often fail to fully address learners' needs (Kabelka et al., 2025; van Leent et al., 2023). Within this framework, the study of sex education in religious institutions becomes relevant because it shows how global pedagogical demands are negotiated with local value systems.

However, in religious societies, sex education is rarely present as a completely neutral discourse. In many Muslim contexts, conversations about sexuality move between the need for accurate knowledge and concerns about the loosening of moral norms, modesty, and gender order (Oraby, 2024; Smerecnik et al., 2010). A number of studies have shown that resistance to sex education in Muslim societies cannot be explained solely by religious doctrine, but also by a culture of silence, shame, and social

interpretations that place sexuality as taboo territory to be discussed openly (Smerecnik et al., 2010). Therefore, sex education in the Islamic context requires framing that is sensitive to moral language, religious authority, and local value structures in order to be acceptable without losing its educational substance (Oraby, 2024).

In the Indonesian context, pesantren (Islamic boarding school) is a very important arena to study this issue because it not only functions as an institution for the transmission of Islamic knowledge, but also as a space for the formation of manners, social discipline, and moral habitus of students (Isbah, 2020). Pesantren has a comprehensive educational character because the learning process takes place in boarding life which allows teaching, habituation, supervision, and internalization of values to run simultaneously (Izfanna & Hisyam, 2012; Jusubaidi et al., 2024). At the same time, research on pesantren shows that these institutions are adaptive and continue to transform, including through the integration of non-religious lessons into their education system (Darwanto et al., 2024). This adaptive nature makes pesantren not a static institution, but a pedagogical space that continues to negotiate the relationship between tradition, modernity, and new social needs (Isbah, 2020). Therefore, the discussion of sex education in pesantren cannot be reduced to a question of the existence or absence of material, but must be read in the context of moral authority, the structure of collective life, and typical institutional dynamics. Within this framework, pesantren provide a highly relevant terrain for understanding how knowledge of the body, *awrah* (parts of the body that should be covered according to Islamic teachings), intersex relations, and reproductive health is negotiated in a living religious language.

One of the main peculiarities of pesantren is that material related to sexuality is generally not present as a separate subject with an explicit formal label. On the contrary, the substance is spread in the learning of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), manners (*adab*), morals, and in certain situations is strengthened by biological knowledge or reproductive health through formal schools in the pesantren environment (NisaMairo et al., 2024; Pakpahan et al., 2025). Mahmudah's study (2015) shows that pesantren actually have quite a lot of teaching materials for the socialization of sex education values, even though these materials often appear in the form of *awrah* norms, male-

female relations, reproductive health, and responsible sexual behavior. This kind of pattern shows that sex education in pesantren is *embedded*, that is, it is present substantively in the knowledge network and the rules of student life, although it is not always recognized as an independent curricular category.

These *embedded* characters raise an important conceptual problem, namely the possibility of a distance between the learning substance and the term used to name it. A student can accept teachings about *istinja'* (ritual cleansing of the private parts after urination or defecation), *awrah* (parts of the body that should be covered according to Islamic teachings), the prohibition of adultery, social manners, and the maintenance of personal honor as an important part of religious education, but still not familiar with the term "sex education" or "*tarbiyah jinsiyyah*" as a formal label (Mahmudah, 2015). This situation shows that the acceptance of the content of the material is not always directly proportional to the acceptance of its conceptual nomenclature. In the study of education, this phenomenon is important because it emphasizes that language is not only a medium of transmitting knowledge, but also a determinant of the social legitimacy of a field of teaching (Parmegiani, 2010; Reagan, 2016). Therefore, the analysis of sex education in Islamic boarding schools needs to examine not only what is taught, but also how the material is framed, named, and recognized by students as a meaningful learning experience.

In addition to conceptual issues, the pedagogical dimension is a factor that greatly determines the quality of students' acceptance of sensitive material. The qualitative synthesis of Pound et al. (2016) shows that young people tend to assess sex education as inadequate when it is too risk-centered, too normative, less participatory, or taught in an environment that makes them embarrassed to ask. Similar findings also emerged in the *scoping review* of Kabelka et al. (2025), which showed that many school programs still overemphasize biological and hazard aspects, while the emotional, social, and real needs dimensions of adolescents are poorly accommodated. Qualitative studies in Nepal further show that awkwardness, social norms, gender dynamics, and structural barriers can weaken the learning process, although students, teachers, and school leaders alike recognize the importance of the material (Rivenes Lafontan et al., 2024). These findings

confirm that the quality of sex education is not only determined by the existence of the topic, but also by the delivery method, teacher-student relationship, and learning climate that allows students to understand sensitive material comfortably and with dignity. In the context of pesantren, pedagogical issues become increasingly important because the sensitivity of the material meets the structure of religious authority and a strong culture of politeness.

On that basis, placing students as the center of analysis is an important methodological and theoretical step. Many discussions about sex education in Islamic institutions tend to focus on normative legitimacy—whether certain themes are in accordance with religious teachings or not—while the students' own learning experiences lack adequate space (Oraby, 2024; Smerecnik et al., 2010). In fact, students' perceptions can show more sharply how the relationship between the content of the material, the way of delivery, and practical relevance is built in their daily lives (Kabelka et al., 2025; Pound et al., 2016). The voice of the students also allows researchers to capture ambivalence that often escapes normative reading, for example when a material is considered very morally important but still causes discomfort because the way it is delivered is too direct or too one-way (Pound et al., 2016; Rivenes Lafontan et al., 2024). Therefore, the perspective of students opens the way to reading sex education in pesantren as a living social-pedagogical process, not solely as a set of doctrines that are completed at the text level.

The existing literature has provided an important basis, but it still leaves a clear gap. Global guidelines and systematic reviews have confirmed the general principles of effective sex education, while studies of Muslim societies show the importance of religious and cultural adaptation in addressing sensitive themes. On the other hand, studies of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia have shown that sexuality material is indeed present in the Islamic learning tradition, especially through *fiqh* and *adab*, and that pesantren are institutions that are adaptive to changes in the social context. However, much of the research still moves on two poles: first, emphasizing the normative legitimacy of sex education in Islam; Second, describing the existence of material in the curriculum or text. What has not been studied in depth is how the

students themselves interpret the material they receive when the formal term sex education is not familiar to them, how they assess the practical relevance of the material in the life of the boarding school, and how they experience the pedagogical aspect of its delivery. In other words, there is still a gap at the meeting point between the *substance of embedded education*, student reception, and pedagogical implications in the pesantren environment.

Departing from this gap, this article is directed to answer one problem formulation, namely: How do students interpret sex education that is integrated in pesantren learning, and what are its pedagogical implications for the learning process at the West Lombok NH Islamic Boarding School? By focusing on the experience of students at the NH West Lombok Islamic Boarding School, this article argues that sex education in Islamic institutions can be present substantively through the integration of *fiqh*, *adab*, and biological knowledge without having to first be present as an explicit curricular label. The theoretical contribution of this article lies in sharpening the concept of embedded sex education in the context of pesantren, while its empirical contribution lies in the presence of student voices as a basis for assessing the effectiveness of acceptance and pedagogical limitations of learning. Thus, this article is expected to enrich the study of Islamic education and sex education while offering a conceptual basis for the development of more sensitive, participatory, and contextual learning in the pesantren environment.

### **Research Method**

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to understand in depth how materials related to sex education are interpreted, accepted, and taught in the institutional context of Islamic boarding schools. This design was chosen because the phenomenon studied is contextual and holistic, namely sex education that is present embedded in the learning of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), manners (*adab*), and biological knowledge at the NH West Lombok Islamic Boarding School, so that it cannot be explicitly separated from the pedagogical and moral context of the pesantren. The research location was chosen purposively because this pesantren integrates religious education and formal education, and makes the issues of *awrah*, personal

hygiene, social boundaries, and honor guard as part of the learning as well as the daily practice of students. The main participants of this study were six santri (students) who were selected through purposive sampling on the basis of their direct experience of materials related to sex education and their ability to adequately reflect on these experiences. To maintain confidentiality, all informants are disguised with letter codes. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. Interviews are used to explore students' understanding of the terms and substance of sex education, the material they receive, the relevance of the material in daily life, comfortable or uncomfortable experiences during learning, and their assessment of teaching methods. Observations were carried out to capture the pattern of material delivery, class dynamics, teacher-student interaction, and students' responses to sensitive topics. Documentation is used to study the lesson schedule of madrasah and pesantren as well as pesantren rules as supporting data to read the position of the material in the learning structure and institutional life.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify, organize, and interpret patterns of meaning that are repeated in the data systematically (Braun & Clarke, 2019, 2021). The analysis was carried out through repeated reading of interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents, followed by open coding, grouping codes into temporary themes, re-examining the theme on the overall data, and defining the theme analytically to produce a thematic narrative that explains the students' perception, the practical relevance of the material, and the pedagogical limitations of the learning. To maintain trustworthiness, this study applies triangulation of sources and techniques by comparing interview, observation, and documentation data, and documenting the analysis process in stages so that the flow of interpretation can be clearly traced. Credibility is also strengthened through the use of direct quotes from informants in the findings section so that the relationship between the researcher's interpretation and empirical data remains traced. Ethically, this research guarantees the voluntary nature of participation, the right of informants to refuse to answer certain questions, as well as the confidentiality of their identities in publications. The entire data collection process is

carried out by maintaining language and situational sensitivity because the topics studied are related to socially, morally, and religiously sensitive issues.

### **The meaning of integrated sex education in pesantren learning in the perspective of students**

Based on the analysis of interview, observation, and documentation data, the findings of this study show that students' interpretation of sex education at the Nurul Hakim Islamic Boarding School is formed through learning experiences that are integrated into religious learning and daily Islamic boarding school life. Although the students generally do not know the formal terms “*sex education*” or “*tarbiyah jinsiyyah*”, they can identify the material substance through themes such as *awrah*, *istinja*, social manners, the prohibition of adultery, and the protection of self-honor. The findings also show that the meaning is not only related to the content of the material, but also to the way the material is delivered and experienced in the learning process. To understand how students interpret integrated sex education in pesantren learning, the following findings analysis is arranged thematically, starting from how they recognize the substance of the material before moving on to the moral meaning, practical relevance, and pedagogical implications that accompany it.

#### ***Substance understood, Formal Terms Unknown***

The findings show that students generally do not know the terms “sex education” or “*tarbiyah jinsiyyah*”, but understand the substance of the material. When the term is explained through themes such as maintaining *awrah*, social boundaries, maintaining self-respect, and staying away from adultery, the students stated that the material had indeed been taught in the pesantren. Thus, sex education is interpreted not through its formal label, but through the content of the teachings that they have received in daily learning.

For example, Informant B stated:

“I think I just heard this term (*tarbiyyah jinsiyyah* or sex education). But, if what is meant is a discussion about the obligation to maintain the *awrah*, the limits of the *awrah*, association with others and other kinds, the obligation to maintain self-respect, to distance oneself from adultery and the like, yes... that's what we were

taught. In my opinion, of course it is very important to be taught in this Islamic boarding school.”

These findings show that there is a gap between terms and substantive understanding. For students, the main thing is not the conceptual name, but the practical-moral teachings that they have known in the language of *fiqh* and *adab*.

### ***Sex Education is Interpreted As A Moral Guideline***

Students interpret sex education primarily as a moral and religious guideline to maintain *awrah*, personal hygiene, honor, and social boundaries. Informant A, B, C, and D explained that materials such as *istinja'*, *awrah* limits, sleep manners, manners of associating with others and the opposite sex, the prohibition of adultery, and the prohibition of deviant behavior are taught through *fiqh* books and manners in Islamic boarding schools. Thus, the material is not understood simply as biological information, but as part of moral formation and self-protection. This interpretation shows that the body and social relations are placed within the moral horizon of Islam. Therefore, the legitimacy of material in the eyes of students arises because it is understood as part of religious teachings, not as a stand-alone discourse on sexuality.

### ***Sex Education is Interpreted As Practical Knowledge***

The findings also show that students view materials related to sex education as knowledge that is relevant to daily life. Informant A, C, D, E, and F consider that the material is directly related to the practice of living in Islamic boarding schools, such as the prohibition of sleeping in one blanket, the prohibition of bathing together in one bathroom, the prohibition of dating, the rules of interaction with the opposite sex, and the obligation to maintain the *awrah*. The material is not only taught, but also practiced and strengthened through the rules of the lodge. This condition shows that sex education is interpreted as applicable knowledge that regulates the daily behavior of students. Their understanding is shaped through a blend of teaching, institutional discipline, and the experience of boarding life.

### ***Positive Acceptance, But Not Entirely Comfortable***

The majority of students received material related to sex education positively and considered it important. They consider the material relevant, useful, and quite complete.

However, the findings also show that some students feel uncomfortable when the discussion directly touches the reproductive organs, reproductive function, or how to maintain the health of the reproductive organs. Informant D said that some of his friends felt uncomfortable with some parts of the material. However, the students still consider that the material taught is important and necessary. These findings show that the acceptance of students is positive, but not completely ambivalence. They accept the urgency of the substance, but still bring shame and the limits of politeness in the learning process.

### ***Religious Framing Facilitates The Reception of Material***

From the pedagogical side, the findings show that sex education materials are more acceptable when delivered within the framework of Islamic law (*fiqh*), manners (*adab*), and the protection of self-respect. The students received the material because it was understood as part of the religious teachings and life practices of the Islamic boarding school. Thus, the pedagogical legitimacy of the material does not rest on the term “sex education”, but on the accompanying religious framing. Informant B’s quote shows that the acceptance of the new term emerged after he associated it with teachings that were familiar to him, such as maintaining *awrah*, maintaining self-respect, and staying away from adultery. This shows that religious framing functions as an important pedagogical bridge in the learning of sensitive material in pesantren.

### ***Lecture Method Limits Student Participation***

Another prominent finding is the dominance of lecture methods in learning these materials. Informant A, C, D, and E stated that the *ustaz* (teacher) generally used the lecture method. The researcher's observations also confirm that learning is still dominated by one-way delivery. Although this method is effective in conveying norms and rules, data shows that it is not fully adequate to help students understand sensitive material comfortably and deeply. The researcher also noted that there was a gesture of dissatisfaction from some students towards the method. This shows that the main limitation of learning does not lie in the substance of the material, but in the delivery strategy. Therefore, these findings indicate the need for a more varied, dialogical, and sensitive method to the learning experience of students.

Overall, students interpret sex education that is integrated in Islamic boarding school learning as a religious teaching that they have received through *fiqh*, *adab*, cottage rules, and biological materials related to reproduction. They do not know the formal terms, but understand their substance as moral guidelines and practical knowledge relevant to daily life. This interpretation forms a generally positive acceptance, although it is still limited by embarrassment and comfort when the discussion becomes too direct. From a pedagogical perspective, these findings confirm that the effectiveness of learning is determined by the strength of religious framing and the need for more participatory methods.

### Discussion

The findings of this study show that students interpret sex education that is integrated in Islamic boarding school learning not as a stand-alone terminological category, but as normative-practical knowledge that has long been present in the learning of *fiqh*, *adab*, discipline, and biological materials related to reproduction. This finding is important because it confirms that the absence of the formal term “sex education” or *tarbiyah jinsiyyah* is not synonymous with the absence of substance sex education. In this context, this article expands on previous literature that tends to assess the existence of sex education from the explicitness of terms, curriculum, or formal programs; by showing that in pesantren the material actually works in *an embedded manner*, namely embedded in the moral-religious language and daily practices of students. These findings are also in line with studies that emphasize that sex education in the Muslim context is more acceptable when framed within the framework of ethics, self-protection, and moral responsibility, rather than merely as a technical discourse on sexuality.

The findings of this research are read through two complementary theoretical frameworks, namely the theory of cognitive development (Piaget, 1952, 1965) and the social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1971, 2001). Piaget helps explain how students build an understanding of sex education through the process of assimilation, accommodation, and cognitive balance, while Bandura explains how that understanding is strengthened through example, supervision, rules, and habituation in the social environment of the

pesantren. With these two lenses, the results of the research are not understood only as a matter of material content, but as the result of the interaction between the construction of the meaning of the students and the socio-pedagogical ecology that overshadows their learning process.

The finding that students do not know the term sex education or *tarbiyah jinsiyyah*, but recognize its material substance through *awrah*, *istinja'*, social manners, the prohibition of adultery, and the protection of self-honor, can be most clearly explained through (Piaget, 1932, 1952). Within this framework, new information does not always present as an instantly recognizable autonomous concept, but is often first assimilated into an established scheme. In the context of pesantren, the scheme is a religious scheme and manners that has long lived in the learning experience of students. Therefore, they are more likely to accept the content of the material than the academic nomenclature. This reading is in line with the study of Kosar Altinyelken et al. (2022) which shows that young Muslims navigate the issue of sexuality through norms that they have already acquired from non-formal religious education, and then interpret new messages by referring to the moral framework that is already available.

At the same time, these results show that sex education in pesantren is accepted primarily when it is positioned as a moral guideline, not just biological knowledge. From Piaget's (1952, 1965) point out, these findings show that students' understanding is built through concrete experiences that continue to encounter the religious mental structure they already have. They do not understand the body, cleanliness, honour, and social relations as abstract issues, but as part of the obligations of daily life. Thus, the material becomes meaningful because it is directly connected to practices, rules, and values that have been internalized. These findings are in line with a three-decade study of comprehensive sex education that confirms that programs are more effective when they do not stop at the presentation of facts, but link knowledge to relationships, values, and real decision-making (Goldfarb & Lieberman, 2021).

However, cognitive reading alone is not enough. The finding that students interpret sex education as knowledge relevant to cottage life—for example, through the prohibition of sleeping in one blanket, the prohibition of bathing together, the

prohibition of dating, and the restriction of certain interactions with the opposite sex—was more strongly explained by Bandura. In social cognitive theory, learning takes place through *observational learning* and *reciprocal determinism*, which is the reciprocal relationship between personal, behavioral, and environmental factors (Bandura, 1986, 1989, 2004; Bussey & Bandura, 1999; Wood & Bandura, 1989). In Islamic boarding schools, students do not just listen to the rules; They see the rule being modeled, supervised, and given social consequences. Therefore, the meaning of sex education is formed not only from what the teacher explains, but from the collective life that constantly affirms which behavior is considered right.

This Bandura-based reading also helps explain why the material is understood in a very practical way. Discipline, teacher example, and dormitory culture function as a source of *social modeling* and social strengthening. Students learn not only from verbal instructions, but from the rhythm of life that demands self-control every day. In Bandura's (1978, 1982) terms, the pesantren environment forms *self-regulation* by making norms observable, repeatable, and institutionalized. These results are in line with school intervention research showing that sex education tends to be more effective when delivered through participatory and innovative techniques and reinforced by trained school actors. Research conducted by Ramírez-Villalobos et al. (2021) found that teacher training is closely related to increased teacher knowledge, delayed sexual debut, and better protective behaviors in students.

However, the results of this study do not support an overly optimistic reading. Some students still feel uncomfortable when the discussion touches on reproductive organs, reproductive function, or reproductive health directly. From Piaget's point of view (1952, 1965, 1976), this condition can be read as *disequilibrium*, which is when new information meets an existing schema but cannot be integrated comfortably. From the angle (Bandura, 1982, 1989, 1999), the discomfort is also related to the social situation of learning: learners may recognize the importance of the material, but do not feel safe enough to ask questions or express confusion. At this point, the results of the study are closer to studies that show social and cultural resistance to sex education in conservative Muslim settings. Ahmed et al. (2022) found that community resistance in

Pakistan is fueled by misconceptions, a culture of silence, and organized rejection, while a *community readiness* study in Islamabad shows communities are at the stage of denial or resistance to the implementation of school-based sex education.

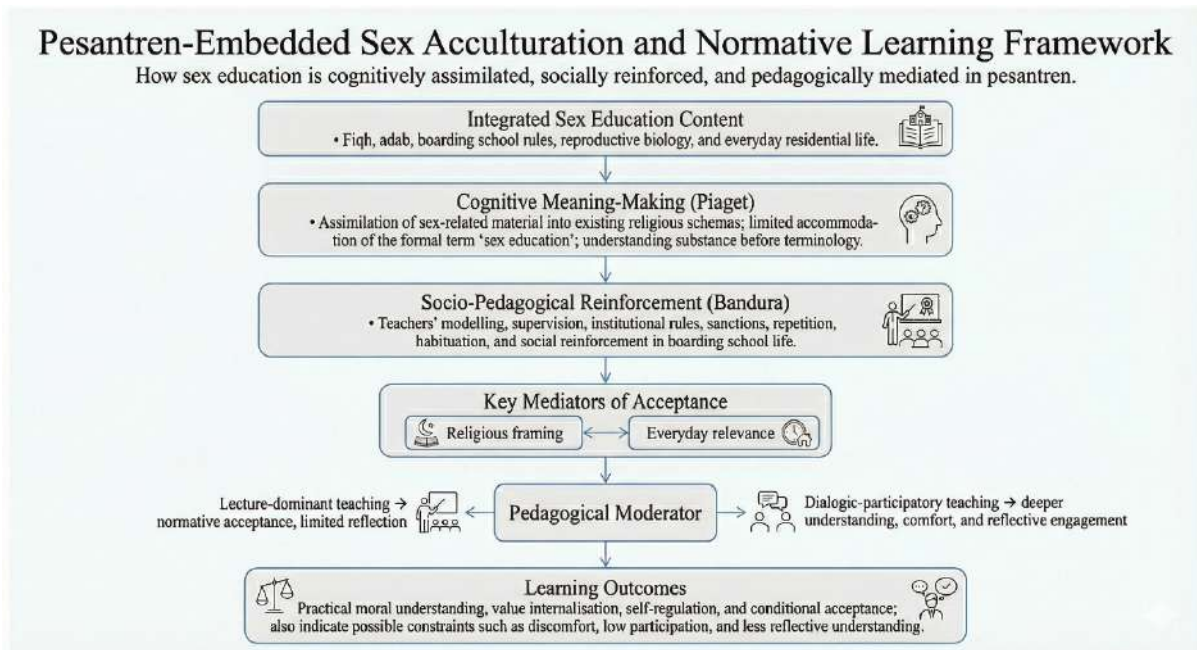
We view that the results of this study are more accurately understood as a position between the pros and cons of the study. It is in line with studies that affirm the benefits of broad, contextual, and real-life sex education, but also confirm that acceptance of sensitive material remains limited by shyness, norms of politeness, and the readiness of the social environment. In other words, the substance of the material is acceptable, but the acceptance is conditional: it depends on the framing, the context, and the way of delivery. These findings are also in line with a *scoping review* conducted by Loureiro et al. (2021) which showed that more impactful interventions tend to be multi-interventional, socio-emotional, and sustainable, rather than just one-way information transfer. The implication is that the superiority of pesantren lies in the strength of value integration, but the weak point arises when the learning strategy does not sufficiently open up space for clarification, reflection, and affective processing of students.

The findings regarding the dominance of the lecture method clarify this point. From the perspective of Piaget (1952, 1965, 1976), lectures that are too dominant limit the opportunity for students to actively reorganize new knowledge. From the perspective of Bandura (1982, 1989, 1999), the one-way pattern also hinders the formation of *communicative self-efficacy* because learners are not given enough space to ask questions, dialogue, or try to negotiate the meaning of sensitive material. Therefore, the main problem shown by this study is not the weak substance of sex education in Islamic boarding schools, but the lack of optimal pedagogical strategies used to help students move from normative compliance to reflective understanding. At this point, this research is closer to studies that support an active, participatory, and contextual approach, while reminding that pedagogical innovation in pesantren must remain based on the moral-religious framework that has become the basis for student admission.

Overall, reading through Piaget and Bandura shows that sex education that is integrated in pesantren learning is understood by students through two interconnected

processes. Cognitively, students assimilate the material into the religious scheme they already have. Socially, this understanding is strengthened through modeling, discipline, supervision, and habituation in dormitory life. Thus, the results of this study confirm that the effectiveness of sex education in pesantren is not sufficiently explained by the content of the teachings, but must be understood through the encounter between the construction of students' meaning and the social ecosystem in which they study. The implication is that strengthening sex education in Islamic boarding schools should not start from replacing the moral framework that students have received, but from developing a pedagogy that is more dialogical, participatory, and sensitive to their cognitive and affective experiences.

Based on the findings and discussions presented, this study offers, This study offers *the Pesantren-Embedded Sexuality Acculturation and Normative Learning Framework* as a conceptual framework to explain how sex education in pesantren works through the integration of material substance into *fiqh*, *adab*, discipline, biological knowledge, and boarding life, then assimilated by students into the religious scheme that they have have, and strengthened through modeling, supervision, habituation, and social strengthening in the pedagogical ecology of Islamic boarding schools. This framework emphasizes that the effectiveness of sex education in pesantren is not primarily determined by the explicitness of terms or curriculum formalization, but by the power of religious framing, the relevance of the material to daily life, and pedagogical strategies that mediate the depth of understanding, learning comfort, and internalization of values in students (see figure 1).



This study implies that pesantren should not be positioned as a space opposite to sex education, but as a space that has a distinctive potential to develop a value-based model of sex education. The main contribution of this study lies in the affirmation that the effectiveness of sex education in pesantren depends on the ability of the institution to maintain the moral-religious basis that has been accepted by students, as well as improve the quality of its pedagogy. Thus, the future of sex education in pesantren does not lie in simply the formalization of terms, but in strengthening learning models that are contextual, participatory, and in accordance with the life experiences of students.

## Conclusion

This study shows that sex education at the NH West Lombok Islamic Boarding School operates not primarily as a formal subject recognized through the term “sex education” or *tarbiyah jinsiyyah*, but as normative-practical knowledge embedded in the learning of *fiqh*, *adab*, pesantren rules, and biological materials related to reproduction. Students interpret the material as a moral guideline to maintain *awrah*, personal hygiene, honor, and social boundaries, as well as practical knowledge that is relevant to daily life. These findings confirm that the absence of formal labels does not mean the absence of substance; What determines is precisely the connection of the material with

the structure of religious meaning that has lived in the learning experience of the students. In reading through Piaget and Bandura, the effectiveness of sex education in pesantren is formed through two interrelated processes: cognitive assimilation of material into the religious scheme of students and social strengthening through the example of teachers, discipline, supervision, and habituation in boarding life.

This study also shows that the main strength of sex education in pesantren lies in its ability to integrate the values, rules, and life experiences of students into one coherent learning ecology. However, the admission of students remains conditional: the material is more acceptable when framed in familiar moral-religious language, but the comfort of learning decreases when the topic is presented too directly and through methods that are too one-way. Therefore, the effectiveness of sex education is not enough to be explained by the content of the teachings alone, but by the interaction between the construction of the meaning of the students, religious framing, daily relevance, and the quality of pedagogical strategies. On that basis, the main contribution of this study lies in the affirmation that pesantren can be a productive space for value-based sex education, as well as in the conceptual offer in the form of *Pesantren-Embedded Sexuality Acculturation and Normative Learning Framework*, which explains that the effectiveness of learning is determined by substance integration, cognitive assimilation, social reinforcement, and pedagogical moderation.

However, this study has limitations because it is based on one case study with a limited number of participants and focuses mainly on the perspective of six students, so it does not fully cover the views of *ustaz* (teachers), pesantren leaders, parents, or curriculum managers. In addition, the qualitative-contextual design used has not allowed longitudinal tracing of changes in students' understanding over time. Therefore, further research needs to be directed to multisite comparative studies in various types of Islamic boarding schools, the involvement of more diverse actors, and pedagogical intervention research to test the effectiveness of more dialogical, participatory, and sensitive methods. With this step, the development of sex education in Islamic boarding schools can move from normative acceptance to more reflective, safe, and meaningful learning.

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