

**EMBEDDED SEX EDUCATION IN PESANTREN:
STUDENTS' MEANING-MAKING AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS**

*Mainuddin¹ Syamsul Arifin² M. Nurul Humaidi³ Romelah⁴, Saiful Anwar⁵

¹⁻⁵Muhammadiyah University of Malang, East Java, Indonesia

*maindinnw84@gmail.com¹

syamsarifin@umm.ac.id²

mnhumaidi@umm.ac.id³

romlah@umm.ac.id⁴

saipulanwar090@gmail.com⁵

Abstract: This study examines how students interpret sex education integrated into pesantren learning and its pedagogical implications for the learning process at Pondok Pesantren NH West. This study uses a qualitative case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with six students, observations, and documentation, and analyzed 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 understood as a moral guideline for maintaining *awrah* (parts of the body that should be covered according to Islamic teachings), personal hygiene, honor, and social boundaries, as well as practical knowledge 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 the formalization of terms does not determine sex education in pesantren, but rather that it is determined 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*

Introduction

Sex education is now understood as an integral part of education aimed at protecting, promoting, and strengthening the well-being and decision-making capacity of 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. Still, it includes cognitive, emotional, social, ethical, and relational dimensions that help students better understand the body, relationships, safety, and self-responsibility. 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 well-designed sex education tends to increase knowledge, strengthen protective attitudes, and reduce a range of risky behaviors among 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 breadth of the material strongly influences the effectiveness of sex education, 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. Thus, contemporary academic debates are no longer centered primarily on whether sex education should be provided, but rather on how it is formulated, framed, and taught in a valid, meaningful, and contextually appropriate way. 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). Several 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 a framing sensitive to moral language, religious authority, and local value structures 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. Pesantren has a comprehensive educational character because the learning process takes place in a boarding environment, which allows teaching, habituation, supervision, and the 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 through the learning of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), manners (*adab*), and 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. However, it is not always recognized as an independent curricular category.

These *embedded* characters raise an important conceptual problem: the possibility of a gap 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 acceptance of the material's content is not always directly proportional to 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 should 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 major factor in determining 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 emerged in the *scoping review* by Kabelka et al. (2025), which showed that many school programs still overemphasize biological and hazard aspects, while the emotional, social, and real needs 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. However, students, teachers, and school leaders alike recognize the importance of the material (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 material's sensitivity aligns with 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 align with religious teachings—while students' own learning experiences lack adequate space (Oraby, 2024; Smerecnik et al., 2010). In fact, students' perceptions can more clearly show how the relationship between the content of the material, the delivery method, 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; Lafontan et al., 2024). Therefore, students' perspective opens the way to reading sex education in pesantren as a living social-pedagogical process, not solely as a set of doctrines completed at the textual 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. At the same time, 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 sexual 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 revolves around two poles: first, emphasizing the normative legitimacy of sex education in Islam; second, describing the presence of material in the curriculum or text. What has not been studied in depth is how students themselves interpret the material they receive when the formal term 'sex education' is unfamiliar 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 aims to address one problem formulation: How do students interpret sex education integrated into pesantren learning, and what are its pedagogical implications

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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 substantively present through the integration of *fiqh*, *adab*, and biological knowledge, without first appearing 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. In contrast, 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 and sex education while providing a conceptual basis for the development of more sensitive, participatory, and contextually responsive learning in the pesantren environment.

Method

This research uses a qualitative case study design to examine in depth how materials related to sex education are interpreted, accepted, and taught within 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 and 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 issues of *awrah*, personal hygiene, social boundaries, and honor guard part of students' learning and daily practice. The main participants in this study were six santri (students) selected through purposive sampling based on their direct experience with materials related to sex education and their ability to reflect on these experiences adequately. 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 this material in daily life, the comfortable or uncomfortable experiences they have during learning, and their assessment of teaching methods. Observations were conducted to capture patterns in material delivery, class dynamics, teacher-student interaction, and students' responses to sensitive topics. Documentation is used to study the lesson schedules of madrasahs and pesantrens, as well as pesantren rules, as supporting data to understand the position of the material within the learning structure and institutional life.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify, organize, and interpret systematically recurring patterns of meaning (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 by using direct quotes from informants in the findings section, so that the relationship between the researcher's interpretation and empirical data remains traceable. Ethically, this research ensures the voluntary nature of participation, the right of informants to refuse to answer certain questions, and the confidentiality of their identities in publications. The entire data collection process is carried out with language and situational sensitivity, as the topics studied are socially, morally, and religiously sensitive.

Result and Discussion

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Results: The meaning of integrated sex education in pesantren learning from the perspective of students

Based on interviews, observations, and documentation, this study's findings show that students' interpretation of sex education at the Nurul Hakim Islamic Boarding School is shaped by learning experiences integrated into religious learning and daily life in the Islamic boarding school. 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 meaning is not only related to the content of the material but also to how it is delivered and experienced in the learning process. To understand how students interpret integrated sex education in pesantren learning, the following analysis is arranged thematically, starting with how they recognize the substance of the material before moving on to its moral meaning, practical relevance, and pedagogical implications.

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 was explained through themes such as maintaining *awrah*, observing social boundaries, maintaining self-respect, and avoiding adultery, the students stated that the material had indeed been taught in the pesantren. Thus, sex education is interpreted not by its formal label but by the content of the teachings 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 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. Informants 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 the material in students' eyes arises from its being 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 sex education materials as knowledge relevant to daily life. Informants 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 lodge's rules. This condition shows that sex education is

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understood as applicable knowledge that governs students' daily behavior. 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 responded positively to sex education materials and considered them 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 the material taught to be important and necessary. These findings show that student acceptance is positive, but not completely ambivalent. They acknowledge the urgency of the substance but still bring shame and the limits of politeness to 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 Islamic boarding school's religious teachings and life practices. 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 acceptance of the new term emerged after he associated it with familiar teachings, such as maintaining *awrah*, maintaining self-respect, and avoiding adultery. This shows that religious framing functions as an important pedagogical bridge in the learning of sensitive material in pesantren.

The 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 at conveying norms and rules, data show that it is not fully adequate for helping students understand sensitive material comfortably and deeply. The researcher also noted that some students expressed dissatisfaction with the method. This shows that the main limitation of learning does not lie in the material itself, but in the delivery strategy. Therefore, these findings indicate the need for a more varied, dialogical, and sensitive approach to students' learning experience.

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 generally elicits a positive response, though it remains limited by embarrassment and discomfort when the discussion becomes too direct. From a pedagogical perspective, these findings confirm that learning effectiveness 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 integrated into 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

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term “sex education” or *tarbiyah jinsiyyah* is not synonymous with the absence of substantive sex education. In this context, this article expands on previous literature that tends to assess the existence of sex education based on the explicitness of terms, curriculum, or formal programs, by showing that, in pesantren, the material actually operates 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: the theory of cognitive development (Piaget, 1952, 1965) and 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 outcome of the interaction between the construction of students' meaning 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 framework and set of manners that have long been part of students' learning experience. Therefore, they are more likely to accept the content of the material than the academic nomenclature. This reading aligns with the study by Kosar Altinyelken et al. (2022), which shows that young Muslims navigate the issue of sexuality through norms they have acquired through non-formal religious education, and then interpret new messages by referring to the moral framework 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 of view, 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, honor, 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 align with a 30-year study of comprehensive sex education, which confirms that programs are more effective when they do not stop at presenting 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 occurs through *observational learning* and *reciprocal determinism*, a reciprocal relationship among 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 rules modeled, supervised, and met with 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 serve as sources of *social modeling*

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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 align with school intervention research, which shows that sex education tends to be more effective when delivered through participatory and innovative techniques and reinforced by trained school actors. Research by Ramírez-Villalobos et al. (2021) found that teacher training is closely associated with increased teacher knowledge, delayed sexual debut, and better protective behaviors among 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*, in which new information meets an existing schema but cannot be comfortably integrated. From the perspective of Bandura (1982, 1989, 1999), 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 those of 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 the results of this study as best understood as a position between the pros and cons. It aligns with studies that affirm the benefits of broad, contextual, and real-life sex education, while also confirming that acceptance of sensitive material remains limited by shyness, politeness norms, and the social environment's readiness. 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* by Loureiro et al. (2021), which showed that more impactful interventions tend to be multi-interventional, socio-emotional, and sustainable rather than one-way information transfer. The implication is that the superiority of pesantren lies in its strong value integration. Still, the weak point arises when the learning strategy does not sufficiently open up space for students' clarification, reflection, and affective processing.

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 students' opportunities to reorganize new knowledge actively. From Bandura's (1982, 1989, 1999) perspective, the one-way pattern also hinders the *development of communicative self-efficacy* because learners are not given enough space to ask questions, engage in dialogue, or negotiate the meaning of sensitive material. Therefore, the main problem identified by this study is not the weakness of sex education in Islamic boarding schools, but the lack of optimal pedagogical strategies 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 Piaget and Bandura shows that sex education integrated into 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 by replacing the moral framework students have received, but by 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).

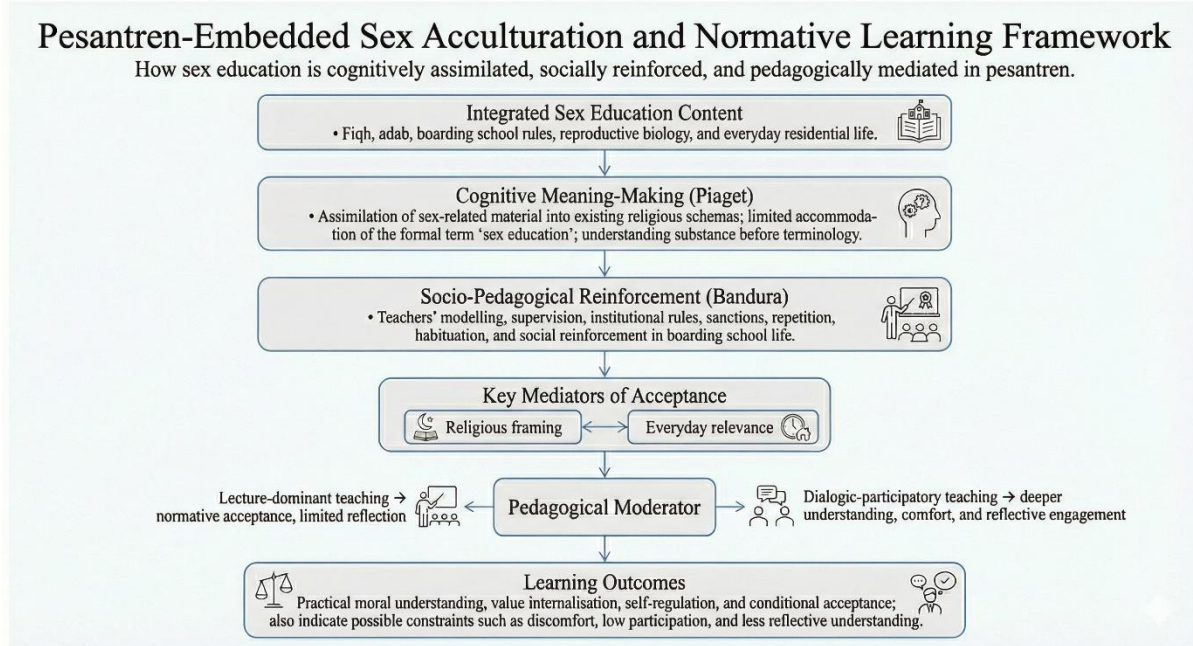


Figure 1. The framework of acculturation of sexuality and normative learning

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 affirming that the effectiveness of sex education in pesantren depends on the institution's ability to maintain the moral-religious basis accepted by students and to improve the quality of its pedagogy. Thus, the future of sex education in pesantren does not lie in simply formalizing terms, but in strengthening learning models that are contextual, participatory, and in line with students' life experiences.

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 for maintaining *awrah*, personal hygiene, honor, and social boundaries, as well as practical knowledge 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 to the structure of

religious meaning that has lived in the students' learning experience. In reading Piaget and Bandura, the effectiveness of sex education in pesantren is shaped by two interrelated processes: cognitive assimilation of material into students' religious schema and social strengthening through teachers' example, 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 students' values, rules, and life experiences into a 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 cannot be explained solely by the content of the teachings, but by the interaction among students' construction of meaning, 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: it is based on a single case study with a limited number of participants and focuses mainly on the perspectives of six students, so it does not fully capture 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 should focus on multisite comparative studies across 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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