

Epistemology in Practice: A Compassion-Based Ecological Knowledge Formation System at Peacesantren Welas Asih

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Abstract:

Islamic education in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) is generally still based on a transmissive learning model that places text as the primary authoritative source and reinforces a hierarchical relationship between educators and students. This pattern often limits students' participation in the knowledge production process. Contrary to this tendency, Peacesantren Welas Asih in Garut presents an educational approach that integrates compassionate values, spiritual dimensions, and ecological awareness as the foundation for knowledge formation. This research views this approach as an epistemic practice within contemporary Islamic education. The research employed a qualitative case study design, using data collection techniques including participant observation; in-depth interviews with students, boarding school administrators, and learning facilitators; and a review of curriculum documents and learning projects. The data obtained were analyzed using thematic analysis, drawing on the frameworks of epistemic justice and critical Islamic pedagogy to understand the dynamics of knowledge development within the Islamic boarding school environment. The results indicate that students at Peacesantren Welas Asih are positioned not merely as recipients of knowledge but as active subjects and producers of knowledge through critical reflection, spiritual

practices, and direct involvement in various social and ecological activities. Knowledge is derived not only from religious texts but also from life experiences, social relationships, and interactions with nature, which are recognized as legitimate epistemic media. These findings indicate an epistemic shift in Islamic education that challenges the separation between religious and worldly knowledge. In this context, compassion emerges as an alternative epistemology that serves as a foundation for understanding religiosity, building social relationships, and living life in a more contextual, reflective, and transformative way.

Keywords: critical pedagogy; environmental awareness; epistemic practice; Islamic boarding school; knowledge formation.

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary Islamic education, particularly that provided in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), plays a strategic role in shaping society's character, identity, and patterns of religious and social understanding. Pesantren function not only as institutions for transmitting Islamic knowledge but also as spaces for fostering values, attitudes, and behaviors that influence how individuals interpret social life. Through an educational process that integrates religious teachings, social practices, and cultural traditions, pesantren contribute to building contextual religious awareness while strengthening social cohesion amidst the dynamics of changing times (Anwar & Ridlwan, 2024; Enhas et al., 2023; Gusli et al., 2024). Pesantren are widely known as educational institutions that focus on deepening Islamic knowledge and serve as spaces for developing ethics and morals rooted in the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith. In a pesantren environment, the learning process is directed not only at mastering religious knowledge but also at internalizing noble values in everyday life. Through exemplary behavior, traditions, and ongoing social practices, Islamic boarding schools shape the attitudes, behavior, and character of students to align with Islamic principles in the context of personal and social life (Manidhom et al., 2024; Triyono & Mediawati, 2023).

Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) have a strategic responsibility to improve the quality of human resources, both in intellectual, spiritual, and social dimensions. As Islamic educational institutions deeply rooted in religious values, pesantren play a role not only in transmitting religious knowledge but also in shaping the character, work ethic, and social sensitivity of their students. Amid the dynamics of social change and global challenges, pesantren are required to produce human resources who are faithful, knowledgeable, moral, and adaptive to current developments. By combining classical scientific traditions with contemporary needs, pesantren contribute significantly to producing a competent, responsible, and competitive generation (Amin, 2020). However, amidst the rapid development of globalization, ecological crises, and humanitarian crises, the extent to which pesantren are present in responding to these various problems remains to be seen (Aritonang et al., 2023; Romdloni & Djazilan, 2019; Syahraini et al., 2024).

The development of contemporary Islamic education demonstrates a significant transformation in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), particularly the shift from non-formal to formal religious education institutions. This transformation is marked by the recognition of the curriculum, the implementation of a standardized evaluation system, and institutional legality integrated with the national education system. Nevertheless, Islamic boarding schools maintain their traditional characteristics, such as the teaching of yellow books, the *kiai-santri*

relationship, and the values of simplicity and independence. Therefore, modernization of Islamic boarding schools is not interpreted as an erasure of tradition, but rather as an effort to strengthen the identity of the boarding school so that it remains relevant and adaptive to the dynamics of the times without losing its Islamic roots (Mansir, 2020).

Amidst the dynamics of social change and the development of contemporary Islamic education, various reform initiatives have emerged to redefine the relationship between religious texts, life experiences, and the authority of knowledge. These efforts emphasize the importance of understanding religion beyond mere textuality, but also contextually and reflectively reflecting social realities. One prominent initiative is Peacesantren Welas Asih in Garut, an educational institution that seeks to integrate spirituality, compassionate values, and ecological awareness into the learning process for students. Through this approach, Islamic teachings are understood holistically, not separating faith as inner conviction from righteous deeds as concrete practices in daily life. Thus, Islamic boarding school education is directed toward developing students who are religious, socially ethical, and concerned with environmental sustainability and humanity (Azhar et al., 2020; Utari et al., 2025). Therefore, Islamic education is both an education in faith and an education in charity, and also because Islamic teachings contain teachings on attitudes and personal behavior in society towards the well-being of individuals and the community (Bintang et al., 2023; Mahdiyyah et al., 2024; Musaddad & Fawaidi, 2023; Nahdliyah & Naelasari, 2024). Islam not only regulates people's relationships with God, but also with others and the world. These things also immediately influence the efforts of Islamic boarding schools to produce leaders in social life (Abidin, 2023; Asih, 2024; Cahyani et al., 2023; Herningrum et al., 2021; Salim et al., 2024).

Efforts at epistemic transformation in Islamic education are inextricably linked to various challenges, both structural and ideological. Although Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) are known for their high adaptability to changing times, in practice, these institutions still maintain a hierarchical pattern of knowledge relations. Scientific authority is often centered on the figure of the *kiai* (Islamic leader), while students (*santri*) are positioned as relatively passive recipients of knowledge. This pattern creates a learning structure that tends to be one-way and offers little room for critical dialogue or reflection on the students' personal experiences. On the one hand, this hierarchical system plays a crucial role in maintaining the transmission of classical Islamic scholarly traditions and the continuity of Islamic boarding school values. However, on the other hand, this structure can also limit the possibility of more participatory and contextual epistemological innovation. Therefore, epistemic transformation demands a critical effort to renegotiate the relationship between authority, tradition, and Islamic educational practice (Herningrum et al., 2021; Musaddad & Fawaidi, 2023; Rivaldi & Yulifar, 2025). Students are often positioned as passive recipients of knowledge from *kiai* or *ustadz*, with little room to voice experiences, interpretations, or alternative discourses (Achmadin et al., 2024; Rohani, 2024; Suwandi & Islam, 2025).

Based on these problems, this study aims to explore how the process of ecological knowledge formation takes place in a participatory and contextual manner at Peacesantren Welas Asih. The focus of the research is directed at how students interpret the learning process as a form of spiritual, social, and ecological involvement. This study proposes that Peacesantren Welas Asih presents an educational model. Islam views knowledge as something that is not solely constructed through religious texts and the authority of teachers, but also arises from life experiences, social relations, and human spiritual dialogue with the universe. Within this framework, compassion does not stop as a normative moral value, but functions as an

epistemological foundation that shapes how to understand reality, religiosity, and human responsibility. Compassion enables a more open, reflective, and contextual learning process, because knowledge is understood as the result of an encounter between texts, experiences, and ethical awareness. This study seeks to demonstrate that an alternative epistemology based on compassion is able to break down the classic dichotomy between religious knowledge and worldly knowledge that has often been reproduced in Islamic education. With this approach, the authority of knowledge is no longer understood in a singular and hierarchical manner, but rather opens up space for dialogue, reflection, and the active participation of students. Thus, students are not only formed into ritually devout individuals, but also trained to think critically, develop social sensitivity, love for fellow creatures, and care for the earth as an integral part of their spiritual and religious responsibilities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of epistemology in Islamic education has undergone significant developments with increasing attention to humanitarian, social, and ecological issues. In this context, education is no longer understood solely as a process of transmitting text-based and authoritative knowledge, but rather as a practical space where knowledge is formed through the interaction of values, experiences, social relations, and environmental realities. A practice-oriented epistemological approach opens up new possibilities for understanding how Islamic educational institutions, particularly Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), play a role in fostering ecological awareness grounded in the value of compassion. The literature discussing Islamic education and ecology demonstrates that Islamic boarding schools have strategic potential as alternative epistemic spaces. They not only reproduce religious knowledge but also produce meanings, values, and practices rooted in the daily lives of their students. Concepts such as ecotheology, ecopedagogy, and Green Islamic Education emphasize that the relationship between humans and nature is an integral part of Islamic spirituality and religiosity. Within this framework, compassion is understood not merely as a normative moral value, but as an epistemological foundation that influences how humans understand knowledge, social life, and ecological responsibility. Therefore, this literature review aims to critically examine various studies relevant to the formation of ecological knowledge in Islamic education. This review is crucial for establishing a theoretical foundation for understanding the system of compassion-based ecological knowledge formation, particularly in educational practices at *Peacesantren Welas Asih*.

First, research conducted by Muhammad Ali and Mahadi Bahtera (2024) on "Islam in Agricultural Islamic Boarding Schools to Promote Ecosophy (Ecological Philosophy) for Environmental Protection." This research examines how Islamic education in agricultural Islamic boarding schools can shape ecological awareness through the development of ecosophy (ecological philosophy) rooted in local values and Islamic teachings. This study shows how students are positioned as actors of socio-ecological change, not merely objects of learning, through the application of Islamic educational principles that instill local wisdom, agricultural practices, and sustainable spiritual values. This perspective aligns with the idea of ecological epistemology that knowledge is not merely textual but also practical and contextual because it is produced through experience and interaction with the environment (Ali & Bahtera, 2024).

Second, research conducted by Karman, Rosihon Anwar, and Lukman Hakim (2023) on "The Qur'anic Learning Based on Islamic Eco-Theology at Islamic Boarding Schools." This research shows that Qur'anic learning contextualized through eco-theology can transform the

ecological behavior of Islamic boarding school communities. The process involves local dialogue, study of sacred texts, and conservation actions that express ecotheological values in the lives of students. This approach emphasizes that ecological knowledge in Islamic education can emerge from the dynamic interaction between text lectures, social practices, and moral transformation (Karman et al., 2023).

Third, research conducted by Baso Syafaruddin (2025) on "Ecotheology in the Perspective of Islamic Education: A Conceptual Review." This research provides a theoretical framework for ecotheology in Islamic education, stating that Islamic education is not only morally responsible for environmental cleanliness but also has a transformative dimension capable of producing a generation with deep ecological awareness. This study emphasizes the integration of religious values, Islamic epistemology, and pedagogical practices that lead to the formation of holistic ecological knowledge (Syafaruddin, 2025).

Fourth, research conducted by Usman Yudi (2025) on "Green Islam Education: Instilling Ecotheological Awareness in the Islamic Education Curriculum." This research introduces Green Islam Education as an educational model that integrates ecological and spiritual values into the Islamic education curriculum. The author shows that the values of tawhid, amanah, and environmental justice are not only taught textually but are internalized through learning experiences that provide space for students to develop ecological awareness as part of religious life (Yudi, 2025).

Fifth, research conducted by Alip Kumaidin and Syaiful Hadi (2026) on "Islam and Ecopedagogy: Ideas for Developing an Islamic Religious Education Curriculum Based on Environmental Awareness." This research develops the concept of ecopedagogy in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) as a curriculum framework that integrates ecological principles and Islamic religious values. Its focus on the caliphate, mandate, and environmental ethics demonstrates how Islamic boarding schools and schools can become spaces for the formation of ecological knowledge through learning that is not only textual but also reflective and applicable. The findings indicate that an ecopedagogy-based PAI curriculum can strengthen students' understanding of ecological responsibility while internalizing moral values. This model is relevant because it supports the idea that ecological knowledge is not only drawn from scriptures but also from the meaning of Islamic values in contextual and transformative practices (Kumaidin & Hadi, 2026).

The above study concludes that the formation of ecological knowledge in Islamic education is an integrative, practical, and transformative process. The reviewed literature demonstrates a shared view that ecological knowledge is not born solely from the transmission of religious texts, but is formed through an encounter between Islamic spiritual values, social experiences, and direct engagement with environmental realities. Islamic boarding schools, in this regard, emerge as epistemic spaces that enable the production of practice-based knowledge and moral awareness. The ecotheology, ecopedagogy, and Green Islam Education approaches emphasize that the relationship between humans and nature is an inherent part of Islamic spirituality and religious responsibility. Compassion serves as an epistemological principle that bridges the theological and practical dimensions, so that ecological knowledge is not only cognitive but also ethical and transformative. However, most research still emphasizes conceptual and curricular aspects, resulting in relatively limited empirical studies exploring the concrete practices of ecological knowledge formation in Islamic boarding schools. Therefore, research on *Peacesantren Welas Asih* is relevant and strategic to fill this gap, especially in understanding how compassion-based epistemology is

operationalized in daily educational practices and forms the ecological awareness of students in a contextual and sustainable manner.

METHOD

This research was conducted through a qualitative approach with a case study design at Peacesantren Welas Asih Garut, West Java. Qualitative research is research conducted to explore problems and develop a detailed understanding of a phenomenon, stating the objectives and research questions in an open manner to capture the experiences of participants, collecting data based on words (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Data sources in this study include primary data and secondary data (Sugiyono, 2013). Primary data is the main data source obtained from interviews and the Peacesantren Welas Asih website. Meanwhile, secondary data is obtained from books, journal articles, and reports relevant to the research topic. The data collection process was carried out using three main techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation (Creswell, 2015; Maxwell, 2009; Mills & Birks, 2014; Patton, 2015). The interview process involved the Deputy Director of Peacesantren Welas Asih. The selection of informants was carried out using a purposive sampling technique considering that the informants came from important figures who knew about Peacesantren Welas Asih and had a strategic position because this was an important thing to obtain quality data (Suri, 2011).

During the interview process, many new narratives and insights emerged regarding Peacesantren Welas Asih, both in terms of history, meaning, and historical journey (Gudkova, 2018). To conduct the interview process, a number of questions were divided based on the points to be studied. Next, observations were conducted on the Peacesantren Welas Asih website and social media. Finally, the documentation instrument included supporting information obtained from various sources (Lim, 2025). The purpose of preparing the instrument for the documentation technique was to enrich the data and obtain more valid data than from interviews alone (Elangovan & Sundaravel, 2021). After the data was obtained, it was analyzed using the Miles and Huberman technique, namely data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions (Sugiyono, 2019). Data reduction is the initial stage in which raw data obtained from interviews is processed, selecting the most important or relevant data. Next, the data is presented. Finally, conclusions are drawn.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Concept and Characteristics of Peacesantren Welas Asih

Peacesantren Welas Asih (PWA), uses the name Peacesantren Welas Asih because the founder, Abah Irfan Amalee, aspired to establish a boarding school that has the values of compassion, the values of love, the values of affection which turned out to be in the function and role of the Prophet Muhammad as rahmatan lil'alamin. Peacesantren Welas Asih has a vision, namely the growth of compassionate individuals and become solutions to problems in society and the world. While the mission is to provide fitrah-based education by providing understanding and practice of compassionate religion as well as social change skills. The three focuses of Peacesantren Welas Asih are, fitrah: fitrah-based education to lead children to puberty. Understanding and experience: understanding and experience of compassionate Islamic values. Rahmatan lil 'alamiin: learning with-to-for the environment and nature.

Welas Asih became the name of the Islamic boarding school because it wants to be a boarding school whose students not only memorize the Quran, but also can speak Arabic and

English, not only master literacy, but also have a compassionate soul, can spread positive things in society. Peacesantren Welas Asih is not only limited to students who study at the boarding school, but wants to present students who are moral, active and impactful, this is the jargon of PWA. Moral means that students truly have good morals. Then, moving means students who are not only limited to Sami'na wa atho'na but he must innovate, must dare to ask, he must have work. Lastly, impactful means being able to be a solution for society in whatever form. From the three jargons, nine characters of Compassion are produced: having good morals (holy monotheism), having good morals (four), having good morals (independent), having good morals (brave), moving (physically healthy and mentally prosperous), having an impact (critical thinking), having an impact (creative), having an impact (collaboration), having an impact (communicative).

This Peacesantren presents one of the concepts of compassion, located in Garut, West Java and closely related to local culture. Therefore, the names of the santri-santriwati are aa (santri) and tetah (student). Then the reference to the ustadz-ustadzah becomes Abah-Ambu. This is done to be more familiar. The names aa and tetah for the santri-santriwati create a sense of comfort whether from East Java, Central Java, Sumatra are still called aa and tetah. Then, over time this has become one of the identities of Peacesantren Welas Asih. The value of Compassion in PWA has become a culture, starting from empathy, courage to become a solution for society, not only moral, but in the form of a broad reach and become a cultural character. PWA trains students to be brave, express opinions to Abah and Ambu, parents. Train empathy towards fellow students. The value of compassion is also presented to the environment and animals, some PWA students keep cats, snakes, pigeons. This is done while remaining within a shared responsibility. PWA trains students to cultivate the value of compassion in all aspects of their lives.

The PWA syllabus is divided into grades 7-8 (pre-puberty education), 9-10 (early puberty education), and 11-12 (puberty education). The principle of puberty is that students don't actually need to be told to pray, but it's a genuine awareness of their own right to pray because they've become mukallaf (Islamic believers). They've been given a direct burden from Allah, and they can't perform their religious duties for fear of failing to receive a grade. Here's the breakdown.

	Positive Discipline		Depth	
	Supervisory Assistance	Internal Awareness	Praktif dan Riyadho	Supervisory Assistance
Mubtadi' (Grades 7-8) Pre-Aqil Baligh	70%	30%	Mubtadi' (Grades 7-8) Pre-Aqil Baligh	70%
Mutawasith (Grades 9-10) Early Aqil Baligh	40%	60%	Mutawasith (Grades 9-10) Early Aqil Baligh	40%
Muta'addib (Grade 11-12) Aqil Baligh	20%	80%	Muta'addib (Grade 11-12) Aqil Baligh	20%

Table 1. Peacesantren Welas Asih Level Matrix (Peacesantren Welas Asih Document)

In daily life, PWA does not impose punishment; instead, there are logical consequences. If a student is five minutes late to class, they receive no punishment; they attend the lesson until it's finished. During break time, the student must use the five minutes they were late for for independent study. This is what is called a logical consequence. There is no punishment, but there are logical consequences. Internal awareness is prioritized. Furthermore, in PWA, rewards are never given, but always provide support. Furthermore, PWA is not taught to judge but learn to be smart and understanding. Models like this are implemented in PWA.

This PWA also presents a unique system, where there is no entrance selection for prospective new students but there is an assessment. Anyone can register at PWA, there is no selection process, there is suitability or unsuitability, both those who can read the Quran and those who cannot, both those with special needs, can be accepted at PWA, as long as they match the vision and mission and learning pattern. In the assessment, prospective new students are camped for 3 days, they are placed in a place where they will sleep, so they can imagine the atmosphere of sleeping with others, they will learn from waking up at half past four until they go back to sleep. After the camp is over, there are 2 things, first some return home, second some do not want to go home directly to the dormitory. Because during the camp, prospective new students are accompanied directly by their seniors, from picking them up, bringing their belongings to the dormitory, teaching them how to pray, eating together, teaching them tips and tricks for proper sleeping and about life at Peacesantren Welas Asih. Peacesantren Welas Asih (PWA) implements an open and inclusive human resource management system, where anyone can join as long as they are committed to the institution's vision and mission. The recruitment process is carried out professionally through stages of interviews and alignment of institutional vision. Ideologically, PWA is guided by the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah (Aswaja) school of thought and uses moderate Islamic jurisprudence principles that are accepted by various groups. After being declared successful, new human resources are required to participate in internal training that emphasizes character building, positive discipline, and strengthening compassionate values in educational practices.

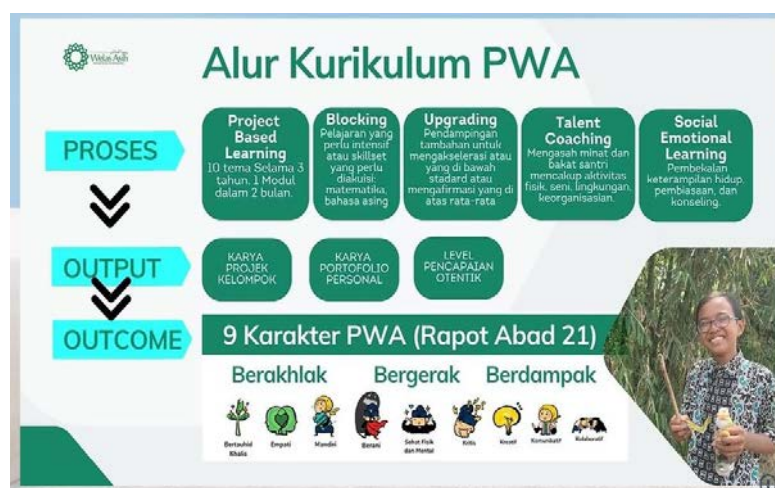


Figure 1. Curriculum Flow of Peacesantren Welas Asih

The Peacesantren Welas Asih (PWA) curriculum is designed based on the provisions of the Education Office, but is applied selectively and contextually. The main points of the national curriculum serve as a basic reference, while the development of learning modules is entirely designed by PWA in accordance with its educational vision. Ten learning modules are

used, ranging from the universe to myself, from my Indonesia to my family. Each module is designed holistically and integratively, combining elements of mathematics, literacy, monotheism, grammar, sharaf, as well as the values of faith, Islam, and ihsan, combined with science, the Qur'an, and Hadith in a single learning unit.

Formation Process and System

Peacesantren Welas Asih has 10 modules for junior high school. The 3-year junior high school level is divided into 10 modules. The first year must complete 3 modules, the second year completes 3 modules, and the third year completes 4 modules. Likewise, the high school level has its own or special module, even the high school level already uses laptops. PWA students are required to use cellphones, with Sundays called Gadget Time, starting from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., with the note that the students have completed various mandates for one week, such as tidying clothes, cupboards, beds, and congregational prayers. Then after completing the Amanah, students have the right to use their gadgets. That is the reason students are happy at PWA because they are allowed to use cellphones according to etiquette, namely to call parents, report memorization progress, usually they also play the online game Mobile Legends. Even at the high school level students have been taught entrepreneurship (Crypto, Bitcoin).

PWA also instills the principle of taming five animals, 1) Taming the Eagle. The eagle is like a picture of the mind that must be positive even though it is floating; 2) Taming the Chameleon, the Chameleon is like an emotional problem, sometimes sad, happy, cheerful and so on; 3) Taming the Cow, which means that the Cow is like an asset owned, such as stationery, cellphones, clothes and others. The students must count their assets, how many t-shirts, pants, shoes they have, then calculate it in Rupiah, after getting the total, then it must be looked after because all of it is a deposit from their parents. This teaches them to be grateful for the gifts from their parents, so they don't mess with their parents (Taufik et al., 2025).

Conquering/taming the Rooster. This Rooster is a depiction of time, how students must master good time management, from proper sleeping time. PWA has a principle that if they sleep properly, not staying up late, then they will wake up well, their studies and activities will be good. So, PWA has a science of sleep, namely 17 tips and tricks on how to sleep properly; 5) Taming the Tiger. This tiger is a depiction of each individual, how to control themselves. If students are kings then they must treat themselves well, the king must not throw rubbish carelessly, the king must not have a messy cupboard, the king must not have a messy bed and blanket, so as a king everything must be right.

Teachers/mentors in PWA must use four principles, namely ARKA. A is activity, R is reflection, K is concept, A is application or action. This principle must be applied in the learning process. In its implementation, first the teacher carries out activities such as storytelling or telling stories about mathematical figures or others, from the story arises reflection, what lessons or meanings can be captured from the story, then the concept emerges. Finally, action, starting to apply it in real life. So, students in PWA can learn Mathematics in the rice fields, in the mosque, in class but with the ARKA principle: activity, reflection, there is a concept, action. This principle must be mastered by the teachers. Before teaching, the teachers are trained first, must have 100 ice breakers, have jokes that are relevant to children, so the class is not empty so that children are happy and follow the learning.

The module has been modified to be very comfortable, making it easier for anyone who teaches, there is a guide, teachers only need to follow the guide in the module. The module

does not only contain text or material, but also includes instructions on what to do during the activity, what to do related to reflection, what then becomes the concept, then the action. PWA also gives teachers and mentors the opportunity to be creative in delivering fun material to children so that they are easy to absorb and focus, because in class not all students can sit still for a long time, some are restless, some like to disturb their friends, and many other things. This creation still uses the ARKA system.

Students studying Mathematics are actually learning about Tawhid (the Oneness of God). This means that when children understand that everything multiplied by zero equals zero, they are actually learning about Qul huwallahu ahad (the One who is the Most High). This is called holistic learning. The integration of science, the Quran, and the Hadith into one module is carried out directly by experts in their respective fields. PWA has independent learning, meaning there are no punishments or exams; instead, there are pilot projects. Students all have specific projects, some are creating projects on solar-powered lamps, solar-powered plant watering devices, windmills, chemical-free soap, and so on. These projects will be assessed through portfolio exams, so it's like a bachelor's thesis defense. They wear suits, create PowerPoint presentations, and present to examiners and parents.

PWA, with one of its principles, is to have an impact on the environment. PWA has a community of Santri Pencinta Alam (SaPaLa) and also an agricultural area. The agricultural area has produced several types of vegetables, avocados. Then there are also some sheep, chickens, and fish. This is part of utilizing the environment for positive activities. The target is for the students to consume the results of the cultivation they develop. Eat rice from their own rice fields, eat bananas, avocados, papaya obtained from their own gardens. The goal is to instill an extraordinary sense of gratitude in the students, appreciating each grain of rice. If they eat a little first and then add more than a lot and then waste the rest. PWA also presents activities for processing plastic waste, bottles, wet waste, and dry waste. PWA also has a bottle house, where used beverage bottles are housed in a cupboard. Coincidentally, PWA is in a natural setting with many bamboo trees and springs, very close to nature.

Students feel at home at PWA because there are no punishments. PWA trains internal awareness for junior high school students, still at the mentoring stage. At high school, they provide as much guidance as possible. So, if they are late to the mosque, late for congregational prayers, or if they wake up late at dawn, PWA doesn't punish them, but reminds them of their internal awareness. Ultimately, their internal awareness grows that waking up before dawn is due to self-awareness, not fear of the leadership. Thus, it further builds the students' awareness. For example, waking up before dawn, having to go to the prayer room, and reciting the Quran is due to self-awareness.

The subjects at PWA are the same as those at other schools. There's math, Indonesian, science, and others, exactly the same, but at PWA, they're blended with the aforementioned elements of Islamic boarding schools, such as Tahsin (Islamic teaching), Tahfiz (memorization of the teachings of Islam), and Aqidah (creed). When students learn math, one method they apply is not to study in class, but to go down to the rice fields. They directly calculate the area of the rice fields, how many rice seeds can be planted, and directly practice, not just theory. Another example is during the Qurban (sacrifice) ritual, students learn to weigh meat, the weight of bones or flesh, and how much meat a 350 kg live cow will contain. They then learn Islamic jurisprudence (Fiqh), about the proper procedures for slaughtering animals, including fish, chickens, goats, and cows. Furthermore, they are taught how to determine the direction of the Qibla, the start of Ramadan, the start of Shawwal, and so on.

They not only learn in the classroom, the mosque, and the rice fields, but also learn in leather factories or certain areas in Garut.

At the high school level, students only study for two years, namely in grades 10 and 11. In grade 12, they focus one year on college. If students want to enter UIN, they will be taken directly or visited to UIN, as well as UGM, ITB, UNPAD. This allows students to gauge what needs to be prepared for a year of college. If someone wants to study in the Middle East, they must prepare their Arabic language and memorization, thus making them focus on college preparation in class. This step is done so that they can truly achieve their dream of studying the college they want.

PWA also teaches them how to have a good mindset, manage good sleep time, be close to God, maintain night prayers and so on. Awareness like this was built before, then they began to set targets, such as what they want to do today, what to learn so that in grade 12 they are focused on college preparation. If there are students who choose to apply for scholarships abroad or domestically, they are directly guided by Abah Irfan, because Abah Irfan and PWA have relationships with universities in the Middle East, Europe, Asia, America and Australia. If students want to study in Japan, America, Europe, the Middle East, they must master the language, where they directly practice with people who speak the language so they are accustomed and trained to use a foreign language.

PWA also provides a kind of outside teacher, and that's the usual duty. So, there's a duty to monitor if there are teachers in the class who need a partner to help. But so far, with a class of 30 students handled by a single teacher, it's been effective. This is because each student has been equipped with independence in learning. Once they understand the concept, they will practice to continue the practice questions given. Once students have finished their work, they don't become noisy and disturb their friends, but instead help those who haven't finished, such as working in groups while still monitoring the teacher/mentor. This is what PWA has developed, because students' abilities vary.

In acquiring knowledge, students continue to follow the learning process as usual, but outside of that, they are equipped to be creative, a term used for free time. They are given free time to develop their respective passions; some enjoy being content creators or teachers. This is an example of the learning outcomes in class; it's not always written down and memorized. Then, some become trainers who can train or teach at other schools. High school students also learn about entrepreneurship, where 10th-grade students must submit business proposals. PWA has six companies or businesses managed by students, and these companies are still running. Investors come from parents and even external parties, so students begin to calculate profit and loss, calculate trading debits, and understand the difference between social and business areas. This is taught and practiced at the high school level.

Peacesantren Welas Asih Challenge

The first challenge, with limited facilities, is that enrollment of new students remains limited. By 2025, only two classes will be accepted, each with around 30-35 students. Those who have already registered will be on a waiting list until 2029. Fourth-grade students have already registered, but are on a waiting list, fearing they won't be able to secure a spot. Promotion is only done through word of mouth and social media. Therefore, PWA is striving to establish a second Welas Asih Islamic boarding school in Puncak, Cianjur. The next challenge is the presence of children with special needs, such as low memory and delayed thinking and processing. Furthermore, there are hyperactive students with endless energy and

always active. To address these challenges, PWA has the Welas Asih Health Center, a clinic that operates for both physical and psychological needs. This clinic handles children with special needs, such as how to train them to be normal standards with others, because these children are sensitive and easily bullied. Therefore, PWA safeguards and protects children with special needs to prevent them from becoming targets of bullying. Children with special needs usually have special notes from their parents. PWA accepts them because, as a new institution, it wants to learn how to handle people with disabilities or special needs, thus becoming an inclusive institution. So far, the development of children with special needs has skyrocketed, meaning they can thrive at PWA. Parents are both proud and saddened by their children's progress.

The last 9th grade graduate was considered to have Down syndrome, he has certain limitations, but he became a star because he could appear confidently and then present his work and even he has skills that others do not have. He knows the international and local (Indonesian) football clubs by heart. Behind those imperfections, there is something that makes him perfect. Behind those shortcomings, there must be a specialness that God has prepared. This is a challenge, how to be patient in dealing with them, where PWA has the responsibility to shape them into responsible individuals, understanding logical consequences, independent and empathetic. They are not special, but we teach and instill the values of Compassion, just like other students. PWA is worried that many parents are now willing to send their children with needs to the boarding school.

PWA produced its first batch of graduates who were accepted into various universities, such as those who graduated from UGM, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati, UPI, UNPAD, Muhammadiyah University of Bandung, some graduated in Canada, Japan, as well as other talented students. Like student Z who mastered 17 tips about sleeping, he has been invited by several universities, high schools, and junior high schools to talk about sleep. PWA trains students like this, develops them and then practices them. In addition, there is a new student S in grade 11 who was accepted at Tetr College of Business to study in seven countries, even though he has not graduated, does not have a diploma, but the university passed him, from thousands of participants who registered. Furthermore, students S and P were among those who passed Ashoka Changemakers. Asoka Changemakers is a prestigious event for creative Indonesian youth. This activity applies a very strict selection, where participants who pass have been tested for their language, thoughts and concepts that they bring. This will become PWA's culture to always prepare students who can break through to Ahsoka Changemaker or other meaningful activities in the future (AD, 2025).

Knowledge Formation Patterns

Peacesantren Welas Asih uses a holistic approach in delivering its modules. The curriculum at PWA still refers to the Ministry of Elementary and Secondary Education, with the modules created by PWA itself. The module content combines several subject materials into one so that they are interconnected. They are integrated, such as one module containing lessons in mathematics, monotheism, and literacy. The implementation of the learning modules uses the ARKA principle (Activity-Reflection-Concept-Action). The ARKA principle is the foundation for transferring knowledge, where learning does not begin with taking notes from several pages of textbooks, but begins with telling stories or storytelling about a topic of material being studied, then reflecting on the story and what is learned. Then, they discover

concepts, and finally, action. This principle allows students to immediately put their learning outcomes into practice, not just limited to theory.

In addition to the ARKA principle above, one of the teaching methods is contextual learning. For example, learning mathematics in the rice fields so that what is learned can be directly implemented, measuring the length and width of the rice fields, learning jurisprudence through the practice of slaughtering fish, goats, and cows, this makes the learning experience in the field a source of knowledge. Because learning does not have to be in the classroom, but can be in an open space or the wild. In addition, in PWA there is no punishment for students, whether they wake up late, do not pray in congregation, or are late to class, they will not be punished. However, PWA emphasizes logical consequences. The point is, if a student is 10 minutes late to class, then he automatically has to study an additional 10 minutes during break time. Cultivating internal awareness for students, if he draws on the wall, then he must erase it, and so on. Internal awareness is very important for students to have, so that they can do something without coercion or fear from the leader, but from themselves.

Knowledge Formation Process

Welas Asih, as the name of the Islamic boarding school, is not just a name. But it also serves as a moral value and values or principles of knowledge guided by compassion, namely rahmatan lil'alam (blessing for all the universe), where students have the value of compassion for the ustadz, fellow students, and the environment. Furthermore, the students' spiritual and socio-ecological knowledge is formed. This means having self-awareness, awareness of nature, time, and social responsibility, which are formed through interactions, both with students and with nature. Furthermore, students also develop knowledge of entrepreneurship and technology. In the field of entrepreneurship, students have learned about business, where students in grade 10 or grade 1 high school are asked to create business proposals. In the field of technology, some students often use their cellphones to create educational videos on good sleep tips, educational materials about education, and others (Abidin, 2023). It was continued that PWA students also learn to understand 12 basic values of differences including accepting oneself, eliminating prejudice, ethnic diversity, religious differences, gender differences, social status differences, group differences, celebrating diversity, understanding conflict, rejecting violence, admitting mistakes and forgiving.

Implications for Students

The educational implications of Peacesantren Welas Asih (PWA) for students are clearly visible in the formation of a strong internal awareness. This awareness is marked by a change in students' behavioral motivation, from being external—due to rules, supervision, or authority—of the dormitory, to an awareness born of personal understanding and responsibility. Students are accustomed to waking up before dawn not because of fear of leaders or sanctions, but because of an awareness of the meaning of time, spiritual obligations, and their own responsibilities as individuals who have reached the mukallaf phase. In grades XI–XII, students are positioned as subjects who are fully responsible for their worship and learning activities, so that the implementation of prayer, study, and daily activities is carried out as a form of devotion to God and a commitment to self-development. This pattern is in line with the concept of self-regulated learning, which emphasizes the importance of self-regulation in the learning process (Reed, 2006). In addition to spiritual and academic aspects,

PWA also instills ecological awareness and independence through direct practice, such as managing the Islamic boarding school garden, independently producing vegetables and fruits, and sorting organic and inorganic waste. This activity not only builds practical skills but also fosters a sense of environmental responsibility as part of religious ethics. This approach aligns with sustainable education, which integrates values, knowledge, and action (Charmondusit & Keartpakpraek, 2011).

Another impact is seen in the development of students' potential and self-confidence. Several PWA students have been able to speak at schools and universities and even receive scholarships to study abroad. This achievement is supported by a structured mentoring system and ample space for students to develop their passions according to their interests and talents. This learning environment, which supports autonomy and intrinsic motivation, aligns with the theory of self-determination, which emphasizes the importance of autonomy, competence, and connectedness in individual development. Thus, PWA plays a significant role in shaping students who are self-aware, independent, empowered, and responsible spiritually, socially, and ecologically.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis and discussion presented, this study concludes that educational practices at Peacesantren Welas Asih demonstrate an Islamic learning model that transcends conventional transmissive patterns. Students are not positioned merely as passive recipients of knowledge, but rather as active subjects directly involved in the knowledge production process. This process occurs through critical reflection, ongoing spiritual practices, and concrete involvement in various social and ecological activities. Thus, knowledge is understood to originate not only from religious texts but also from life experiences, social relations, and interactions with nature, which are positioned as legitimate and meaningful epistemic media. These findings indicate an epistemic shift in the context of Islamic education, particularly in how we understand the sources, processes, and authority of knowledge. Islamic education at Peacesantren Welas Asih no longer reproduces the dichotomy between religious knowledge and worldly knowledge, but rather integrates both within a contextual framework of religious praxis. The concept of compassion plays a role not merely as a normative moral value, but as an alternative epistemology that shapes how students understand their relationships with God, fellow human beings, and nature. This epistemology of compassion fosters ethical awareness, social responsibility, and ecological sensitivity that are transformative. However, this study still has limitations, particularly in the data collection aspect, which involved only one informant, thus not fully representing the complexity of educational dynamics at Peacesantren Welas Asih. Therefore, future research is expected to involve more informants, such as pesantren leaders, students, and facilitators, and supplemented with direct field observations. This approach is expected to provide a more comprehensive picture of the epistemic practices and transformation of compassion-based Islamic education.

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