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# Strengthening Sex Education to Prevent Sexual Violence in Islamic Boarding Schools: Lessons from *Ummi* on Lombok Island, Indonesia

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**Abstract.** Sexual violence is a critical issue in Indonesia, with 7,842 reported cases from January to June 2024, including 5,552 female and 1,930 male victims, highlighting the urgent need for preventive measures, especially within educational institutions like Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). This study examines the strategy for strengthening sex education as proposed by *Ummi*—a title traditionally used to refer to the wife of a *Tuan Guru*, a respected Islamic scholar who has completed the Hajj pilgrimage and typically leads a *pesantren* on Lombok Island, Indonesia. Using a qualitative case study design, data were collected through in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation. The findings highlight a new culturally sensitive framework for delivering sex education in Islamic boarding schools, referred to as the *Pesantren*-Based Holistic Sex Education Strategy (PBHSE Strategy). By integrating seven interconnected components—contextualising within Islamic teachings, preventing sexual violence, embedding moral values, engaging families, empowering female leadership, promoting responsible use of technology, and collaborating with healthcare practitioners—the framework offers a thorough value-based approach aligned with Islamic principles and local cultural practices. This study contributes to developing an Islamic sex education framework that aligns with local cultural and moral values, focusing on the perspectives and roles of *Ummi*. Its novelty lies in

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mapping female-centered approaches to strengthening sex education, offering a timely response to the pressing issue of child sexual violence in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** sex education; sexual violence; Ummi; woman ulama; pesantren

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

Sex education plays a crucial role in equipping children and adolescents with a sound understanding of reproduction (Goldfarb & Lieberman, 2021; Lameiras-Fernández et al., 2021; Leung et al., 2019), the prevention of sexual violence (Goldfarb & Lieberman, 2021; Schneider & Hirsch, 2020), and the development of healthy relationships (Breuner et al., 2016; Goldfarb & Lieberman, 2021). Research indicates that comprehensive sex education can reduce the incidence of sexual violence (Fine & McClelland, 2023; Vanwesenbeeck et al., 2015). Raising awareness of individual rights, promoting open communication about healthy relationships, and respecting boundaries in interpersonal interactions are all part of this form of sex education (Breuner et al., 2016; Willis et al., 2019). Therefore, sex education not only supports reproductive health but also serves as an effective tool in efforts to prevent sexual violence among children and adolescents. Sexual violence is a serious issue in Indonesia. In 2023, the Indonesian Child Protection Commission recorded over 252 cases (KPAI, 2023). The Federation of Indonesian Teachers' Unions reported 22 cases of sexual violence involving 202 victims within educational institutions from January to May 2023, averaging one case per week (Madrim, 2023). Additionally, data from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection indicated 7,842 cases of violence against children from January to June 2024, with 5,552 female and 1,930 male victims (Kementerian-PPPA, 2024).

According to data from the Federation of Indonesian Teachers' Unions (FSGI), the majority of perpetrators of sexual violence in educational institutions are teachers, accounting for 31.8% of total cases. Additionally, owners or leaders of *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) were involved in 18.2% of cases, while headteachers were implicated in 13.63% of cases. Other perpetrators include informal religious instructors and heads of madrasahs, each representing 13.63% and 4.5% of cases, respectively, as well as dormitory supervisors and school guards, who each contributed to 4.5% of total cases (Madrim, 2023). This data highlights that sexual violence within educational settings is a widespread and serious issue, particularly in the education sector, including Islamic education. Ironically, the majority of offenders are individuals in positions of authority within these institutions, such as teachers and *pesantren* leaders.

*Pesantren* plays a key role in shaping the morals and ethics of its students (Ma'arif, 2018; Mujahid, 2021; Puspitarini et al., 2023). However, *pesantren* also face significant challenges, as they can be vulnerable to sexual predators, as evidenced by the data previously presented. This duality necessitates that *pesantren* remain vigilant and proactive in protecting students from the threat of sexual harassment

(Fuadi et al., 2024; Sriyanti et al., 2023). Although *pesantren* is known as an educational institution grounded in religious values, the reinforcement of sex education should be provided as a preventive measure against sexual harassment.

Sex education from an Islamic educational perspective is a crucial aspect encompassing various dimensions of human life, including physical, spiritual, and intellectual balance. The Qur'an and Hadith serve as the primary foundations of Islamic sex education, emphasising responsibility, self-respect, and ethics in sexual interactions. This education not only imparts knowledge about sexual anatomy and physiology but also fosters self-control and instils strong moral values. The ultimate aim is to nurture individuals who are capable of living in balance and harmony with themselves and society while adhering to religious principles (Fahs & Kanso, 2022; Shirbaigy et al., 2020).

Sex education grounded in Islamic values is essential in efforts to prevent sexual violence. This education not only provides knowledge about sexuality but also instils strong moral and ethical values. With a solid understanding of sex education that aligns with Islamic teachings, individuals are expected to respect themselves and others, thereby avoiding deviant behaviours that could lead to sexual violence (Bennett, 2007; Ihwani, Muhtar, Musa, et al., 2017; Nadeem et al., 2020; Shirbaigy et al., 2020).

An important step in addressing the challenges of sex education within *pesantren* is to integrate a female perspective. Involving women, particularly women *ulama*, in strengthening sex education is considered more responsive to the needs of female students, as research highlights the importance of women's roles in creating inclusive and responsive educational environments (Parker, 2015). This approach empowers women with the necessary knowledge and skills, as evidenced by female-focused leadership training programmes that have successfully improved women's skills and protection in various contexts (Kraft et al., 2020). In this way, *pesantren* can foster an inclusive and safe educational environment that aligns with Islamic values and remains relevant in a modern context, underscoring the importance of creating a secure and relevant environment through the involvement of women in educational leadership (Kraft et al., 2020; Parker, 2015).

The urgency of this study encompasses several critical reasons. First, there has been a significant increase in reports of sexual violence within various educational institutions, including *pesantren*, which are intended to be safe spaces for students. Second, students in *pesantren* lack adequate access to sex education, as it is often considered taboo (Nasution et al., 2019; Pebriaisyah et al., 2022; Sriyanti et al., 2023). Third, *pesantren* represent one of the main pillars of Islamic education in Indonesia (Azizah et al., 2023). *Pesantren* bear a moral and ethical responsibility to ensure a safe environment that is free from sexual violence and to support Islamic-based sex education. Fourth, the perspective of *Umami* as a wife of *Tuan Guru* as well as a woman *ulama* in Lombok is essential to understand the social and cultural dynamics that influence the implementation of sex education in *pesantren*. Fifth, robust sex education within *pesantren* contributes to broader efforts towards

gender equality and social justice in society, which are integral aspects of Islamic teachings.

## 1.2. Research Question, Contribution, and Novelty

This study centres on a single research question: How is the strategy of strengthening sex education proposed by *Ummi* in Lombok? This research contributes to the development of an Islamic sex education strategy that is contextualised with local culture and values, focusing on the perspective of *Ummi*, as the wife of *Tuan Guru*, as well as a woman *ulama* in Lombok Island. The novelty of this study lies in mapping concepts that strengthen sex education based on the needs of women. Previous literature reviewed indicates a significant lack of research focusing on sexual education strategies from a female perspective. Towaf (2007), for example, discusses gender-sensitive sexual and reproductive education among *Nyai* in Javanese *pesantren*. However, the study places greater emphasis on content development rather than strategic implementation. Therefore, by positioning women as agents of change, this research provides an applicable strategy that can be implemented in the Islamic educational institutions' settings.

## 2. Methods

This study adopts a qualitative approach utilising a case study method to explore sex education materials and methods within *pesantren* in depth. Participants were selected based on specific criteria, focusing on seven *Ummis*, who are actively involved in managing *pesantren*, particularly in areas related to women's affairs. Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews with these seven informants (see table 1). Structured interview was designed to examine their perspectives and experiences regarding sex education in *pesantren*. The interview process included the development of an interview guide, face-to-face interviews lasting 60–90 minutes, and the compilation of field notes to capture contextual details and nuances. Additional data were gathered through documentation and field observations. Thematic analysis was employed for data analysis, encompassing initial coding, theme development, and theme interpretation. To ensure the validity of the findings, data triangulation was conducted by cross-referencing interview results with documentation and field observations.

**Table 1: Names of informants interviewed**

<b>Name of <i>Ummi</i></b>	<b>Name of <i>Pesantren</i></b>
Ummi N	Pondok Pesantren NH, BS, West Lombok.
Ummi S	Pondok Pesantren YNW, P, Central Lombok.
Ummi SR	Pondok Pesantren DH, TB, West Lombok.
Ummi M alias Ummi S	Pondok Pesantren DA NW, GR, East Lombok
Ummi MM	Pondok Pesantren NNW, G, Central Lombok.
Ummi WJ	Lembaga Pendidikan BH Mataram, Lombok
Ummi ISR	Pondok Pesantren DMNW, K, West Lombok.

## 3. Results

This study shows that the strategies of strengthening sex education proposed by *Ummi* encompass seven main themes. First, an Islamic and contextual approach to sex education; second, the prevention of sexual violence as a central focus of

sex education; third, the integration of sex education with teachings on morality and ethics; fourth, the empowerment of the family's role in sex education; fifth, the enhancement of female leadership within *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools); sixth, education on the prudent use of social media; and seventh, the involvement of healthcare professionals.

### 3.1 Islamic and Contextual Approach to Sex Education

All of the informants interviewed emphasised the importance of sex education tailored to the teachings of Islam and the local cultural context of *pesantren*. They strove to link this material to *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and *akhlāq* (ethics) to better align it with religious values. Umami MM (Interview, 2024), for example, suggested the use of more Islamic terms such as *fiqh al-muslimah* (jurisprudence for Muslim women) to replace "sex education" term to make it more acceptable. Meanwhile, Umami N (Interview, 2024) employed the *muhimmat al-nisā'* (important matters concerning women), which educated women on menstruation, postpartum bleeding, obligatory bathing, and 'awrah (bodily privacy) from the perspective of Islamic jurisprudence and reproductive health. Umami SR and Umami WJ (Interview, 2024) underscored the importance of *fiqh al-nisā'* (jurisprudence for women), which included social conduct etiquette and maintaining physical and mental well-being to ensure that sex education remained integrated with religious teachings.

### 3.2 The Prevention of Sexual Violence as A Central Focus of Sex Education

Sex education in *pesantren* functions as a fundamental mechanism for preventing sexual violence, emphasizing the understanding of bodily privacy, social boundaries, and the risks associated with unsafe sexual behaviour. Umami SR (Interview, 2024; Observation, 2024) emphasised the necessity of structural reform, particularly in the rigorous screening of *pesantren* leaders to ensure they were free from psychological issues that could predispose them to sexual harassment. Furthermore, Umami N (Interview, 2024; Observation, 2024) highlighted the critical importance of implementing stringent regulations governing interactions between male and female students. Equally vital was the education of students regarding the risks of abuse, which served as a key component in fostering a secure and supportive environment. Through this multifaceted approach, *pesantren* evolved into a safer and more nurturing space for students, aligning with both ethical and educational objectives.

### 3.3 The Integration of Sex Education with Teachings on Morality and Ethics

The integration of sex education with the teaching of ethics and morality in *pesantren* serves as a fundamental component in shaping students' character. Sex education extends beyond biological aspects, functioning as a means to instil robust moral values. Students are guided to exercise self-restraint, act respectfully, and avoid inappropriate conduct in social interactions. All of informants, such as Umami MM, Umami S, and Umami Sy (Interview, 2024) accentuated the critical importance of aligning sex education with the reinforcement of moral principles. Typically, sex education is integrated into *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and *akhlāq* (ethics) lessons, delivered both in the classroom and within the boarding school environment (Observation, 2024). Core teachings emphasised values such as maintaining self-respect and understanding

the ethical consequences of deviant sexual behaviour, ensuring a holistic approach to character development.

### **3.4 The Empowerment of The Family's Role in Sex Education**

The family, particularly the mother, plays a vital role in providing sex education to children from an early age, before they enter *pesantren*. Although parents are aware of the importance of sex education at home, Ummi WJ, Ummi ISR, Ummi N, and Ummi Sy (Interview, 2024) highlighted that many mothers struggled to fulfil this role due to their daily responsibilities. Sex education is delivered through structured religious studies (*pengajian*) conducted within the framework of *pesantren* (Observation, 2024). As a result, synergy between the family and *pesantren* was essential to strengthen children's sex education. This collaboration aims to equip mothers with a deeper understanding of critical aspects of their children's sexual development, ensuring alignment with local religious and cultural values. Furthermore, this partnership aims to establish a cohesive and consistent educational framework between home and *pesantren*, thereby fostering a unified and supportive environment for children's holistic development.

### **3.5 The Enhancement of Female Leadership Within Pesantren**

The role of Ummi in *pesantren* is essential. *Ummi* served not only as the wife of the *Tuan Guru* but also as a teacher, mentor, caregiver, and counsellor, particularly in sensitive areas such as sexuality and reproductive health (Observation, 2024). The presence of *Ummi* provided a sense of comfort for female students, enabling them to discuss these topics more openly. In addition to educating, *Ummi* acted as supervisor, ensuring that interactions among students adhered to religious norms. The strong emotional bond between *Ummi* and female students fostered greater openness in discussing issues that were often considered taboo. Typically, *Ummi* becomes a point of reference and advice, especially regarding *fiqh al-nisā'* (jurisprudence for women) or *muhimmāt al-nisā'* (issues of importance for women). This role was reflected in the activities of *Ummi* in the *pesantren*. For instance, Ummi SR, Ummi N, Ummi Sy, and Ummi MM not only taught but also supervised and guided female students, particularly in issues related to sex education (Interview, 2024; Observation, 2024).

### **3.6 Education on the Prudent Use of Technology**

This study revealed that technology, particularly social media, played a crucial role in providing access to information about sexuality for *pesantren* students. However, the unsupervised use of technology often led to the dissemination of information that contradicted the religious and moral values of the *pesantren*. Ummi SR, Ummi N, and Ummi Sy emphasised the need for stricter supervision of mobile phone and social media use outside the *pesantren* (Interview, 2024; Observation, 2024). A lack of such oversight exposed students to content that was inconsistent with religious teachings. Effective supervision was essential to prevent deviations in students' understanding.

### **3.7 The Involvement of Healthcare Professionals**

*Ummi*, organised initiatives to bring in healthcare professionals from nearby health centres. For example, Ummi SR, Ummi Sy, Ummi S, and Ummi N (Interview, 2024) play a crucial role in bridging students' informational needs by

introducing medical professionals into reproductive health education. They emphasised that reproductive health education involving medical personnel did not contradict religious teachings but aligned with the aim of protecting the community's health (Observation, 2024). With this support, students became more receptive to sensitive medical information as it was presented within a context that respected religious values.

#### 4. Discussion

Sex education is a taboo issue within the *pesantren* community, making it difficult to gain acceptance. To address this issue, sex education in *pesantren* should be aligned with Islamic values (Uyun et al., 2024) and local culture to ensure acceptance by students and the wider community (Musiimenta, 2013). The integration of sex education into value-based religious instruction is crucial to facilitate understanding and acceptance among students (Fuadi et al., 2024). Previous studies indicate that sex education incorporated into the *pesantren* curriculum provides students with a more profound understanding (Fuadi & Irdalisa, 2024; Maryati et al., 2021). Thus, an approach that combines Islamic values with local context is essential for the successful acceptance of sex education within *pesantren* settings.

To support the acceptance of sex education in *pesantren*, the use of terms such as *fiqh al-nisā'* (jurisprudence for women), *fiqh al-muslimah* (jurisprudence for Muslim women), or *muhimmāt al-nisā'* (important matters concerning women) should be considered as solutions for contextualising sex education within *pesantren*. These terms more accurately reflect religious and ethical values, making the material more readily acceptable to the *pesantren* community. If the term "sex education" is used, it remains rejected and considered taboo within *pesantren*. Therefore, a shift in terminology is a crucial step in supporting the contextualisation of sex education alongside religious teachings.

Terminology within *fiqh*, which refers to the interpretation of Islamic law based on the Qur'an and Hadith, provides an essential foundation for contextualising sex education (Samah, 2024). In relation to sex education, *fiqh* offers clear guidance on menstruation, ritual purification, and marital relations (Samah, 2024). *Fiqh* also encompasses social ethics, bodily privacy, and the etiquette governing interactions between genders, allowing sex education to be aligned with Islamic moral and ethical principles (Sanjakdar, 2022). This approach ensures that knowledge regarding reproductive health and self-protection is imparted responsibly while respecting religious norms (Nurkhamidi et al., 2023).

In addition, structural reform within *pesantren* is crucial to establishing a secure and principled educational environment, particularly in preventing sexual violence. Rigorous selection of *pesantren* leaders is necessary to ensure that only those with integrity and sound psychological health hold leadership positions (Manap & Nazarudin, 2023; Wakid et al., 2024). Leaders with psychological and moral maturity are better equipped to maintain safety and order within educational institutions, including *pesantren*. The power imbalance often present in *pesantren* can lead to exploitation, where leaders misuse their authority over

students (Fuadi et al., 2024; Kurniawan & Derajat, 2022). This abuse of authority contributes to incidents of sexual violence, particularly when leaders lacking integrity hold complete control. Furthermore, the patriarchal culture embedded in the curriculum and religious narratives exacerbates female students' vulnerability to abuse.

Reforms at the leadership level, along with strict regulations on male-female student interactions, are key strategies to prevent sexual harassment. As Ummi Hidayah suggests, clear boundaries in daily interactions and classroom settings align with Islamic teachings and help maintain discipline, reducing the risk of harassment in *pesantren* (Mohamed & Baig, 2014). Additionally, education on the dangers of sexual harassment must be intensified to raise awareness. Research indicates that while many female students recognize sexual harassment, their perceptions remain negative, underscoring the need for better education ((Shrestha & Bajracharya, 2023). A study in Nepal found that 82% of secondary students understood sexual harassment, proving that awareness campaigns and clear regulations are effective (Dawadi et al., 2022). Thus, sex education in *pesantren* should focus on preventing harassment through leadership reforms, strict rules, and comprehensive education.

Moreover, the integration of sex education is of paramount importance. Sex education in *pesantren* combines biological, ethical, and religious dimensions to holistically prepare students to address moral and social challenges in a manner consistent with Islamic teachings (Alfredo et al., 2022). Religious values play a central role, with a Qur'anic approach emphasising the importance of managing desires appropriately to prevent behaviours such as adultery (Alfredo et al., 2022; Ihwani, Muhtar, Jaafar, et al., 2017). This programme focuses not only on biological understanding but also on propriety, respect, and responsibility in decision-making (Alfredo et al., 2022). This ethics-based curriculum educates students to respect others and prioritise moral responsibility, thereby aligning their understanding of sexuality with high social and religious standards (Lamb, 2015).

Nevertheless, it is believed that sex education integrated with moral teaching in *pesantren* needs to be reviewed to remain relevant to the challenges of the modern world. If the education focuses solely on moral rules without providing a broader understanding, students may struggle to navigate a more open and complex external world. Sex education in *pesantren* should not only emphasise normative rules but also encourage critical understanding. With knowledge of sexual health, anatomy, and sexual development, students will gain a fuller understanding of their bodies and identities (Maqbool & Jan, 2019). Balancing moral instruction with comprehensive knowledge is a crucial step in preparing students to face diverse social realities with wisdom.

In addition, sex education must receive support from students' families. The role of the family, particularly the mother, is crucial in initiating sex education from an early age before children continue their education in *pesantren*. The family serves as the first and foremost environment in introducing fundamental concepts

of sexuality, bodily privacy, etiquette, and interactions aligned with religious values (Jayne et al., 2021; Rakhmawati et al., 2021; Yu, 2010). The mother, as a central figure within the family, holds significant responsibility in conveying this knowledge through an approach consistent with the family's values and culture (Jayne et al., 2021). If sex education begins at home, children will have a stronger foundation of understanding and better preparation to receive further instruction at *pesantren*. This initial preparation is essential, as without family guidance, children may struggle to grasp the more complex moral roles and norms in the *pesantren* environment.

Daily responsibilities often pose a barrier for parents, particularly mothers, in providing adequate sex education at home. The findings of this study corroborate those of Sara et al. (2024) and Rudoe & Ponsford (2023), which highlight that one of the main obstacles to family-based sex education is the limited time mothers have to teach their children about this topic. Collaboration between the family and *pesantren* is essential to ensure consistent and ongoing sex education for children. This partnership provides aligned instruction on sexuality, supports healthy sexual development, prevents early sexual activity, and encourages responsible behaviour (Grossman et al., 2013; Yu, 2010), such as abstaining from sexual relations until marriage. Such collaboration ensures that children gain a comprehensive understanding of religious values related to sexuality, equipping them to face challenges encountered in their personal development.

However, attributing the deficiency of sex education at home primarily to mothers' busy schedules may overlook deeper issues, such as limited knowledge and cultural stigma. Sex education should not solely be the responsibility of *pesantren* as an additional solution. Instead, effective educational programmes need to equip mothers with the appropriate skills and information so they can take an active role. These findings support several studies. For instance Majdpour et al. (2021) found that educational programmes increase mothers' awareness of sexual issues and positively change their attitudes towards sexuality education. Additionally, Mostofi et al. (2018) identified the effectiveness of a structured educational approach in preparing mothers for their role in their children's sexual education. Therefore, synergy between the family and *pesantren* must be strategically and systematically designed to ensure that the provision of sex education is effective.

Strengthening understanding of digital technology usage is also highly necessary. Strengthening skills in the use of technology has become an integral part of the curriculum in *pesantren*, including within the context of sex education. Beyond supervision, it is essential to teach ethical practices in technology use, fostering students' awareness to correctly interpret information and uphold morality in the digital sphere (Musaddad, 2024). Critical skills in filtering information are equally vital, enabling students to discern information that aligns with religious values from that which does not (Lundeto et al., 2021). Strong digital literacy empowers individuals to critically evaluate digital content, a skill of paramount importance amidst the vast and potentially misleading flow of information. Effective digital literacy supports the ability to distinguish valid and relevant information aligned

with cultural and religious values, particularly in an educational context (Zuhri & Arif, 2024).

We contend that strengthening digital literacy is essential to support effective sex education. Digital literacy enables students to differentiate credible sexual health information from unreliable sources, thereby preventing the spread of misinformation and fostering informed decision-making (Oosterhoff et al., 2017). Digital literacy also plays a role in empowering individuals to recognise and counter harmful behaviours, including gender-based violence (Buenestado-Fernández, 2024). In this regard, students should be equipped with critical filtering skills to avoid exposure to misinformation that conflicts with religious values. Consequently, technology can serve as a responsible medium for sex education, while students must also be educated to use technology wisely and ethically.

Nevertheless, we remain concerned that strict supervision may trigger resistance among students. Excessive restrictions on technology use risk prompting students to seek information access covertly. Students often employ tactics such as simple hacking, device reconfiguration, or using personal digital media to access blocked content (Selwyn & Bulfin, 2016). When faced with restrictions, they may also turn to personal devices or seek access outside the school environment (Meyers, 2012). This, in turn, increases the risk of exposure to misinformation that contradicts religious teachings. A balanced approach to supervision, combined with relevant educational methods, is necessary to prevent students from seeking information outside the *pesantren*. This approach ultimately fosters a safe learning environment aligned with religious values, supporting students in understanding sexuality and the responsible use of technology.

Sex education should also incorporate the involvement of healthcare professionals to ensure a comprehensive and scientifically informed approach. The involvement of healthcare professionals in sex education within *pesantren* introduces a scientific understanding that aligns with religious values. Healthcare professionals correct misinformation and provide accurate data on reproductive health, which is crucial in environments with cultural and religious limitations (Biswakarma et al., 2024). Furthermore, collaboration between healthcare professionals, educators, and religious leaders can create a supportive environment for reproductive health education. This partnership helps tailor educational content to align with religious values while ensuring scientific accuracy (Walker et al., 2022). Therefore, the presence of healthcare professionals in *pesantren* aims to ensure that sex education is scientifically informed.

We argue that an integrative approach to sex education within *pesantren* is essential for developing an adaptive health education model that meets contemporary needs. By combining religious teachings with modern health principles, *pesantren* can deliver health education that aligns with Islamic values. Students are taught the importance of reproductive health as part of religious teachings that promote a healthy and balanced lifestyle. Islamic teachings that emphasise respect for women's reproductive rights increasingly resonate with

modern health principles (Masykuroh & Effendi, 2022). In this regard, *pesantren* play a role in safeguarding women's reproductive health rights in accordance with religious teachings and advancements in health science.

The integration of religious and health education also helps to address cultural barriers that often limit access to reproductive health information among students. Many *pesantren* communities still regard reproductive health topics as taboo, resulting in limited information reaching students. With support from religious leaders and institutions, community acceptance of such programmes can be enhanced, ultimately making educational efforts more effective (Adediran et al., 2024). This approach provides students with a balanced understanding of health and religious values, ensuring that health education does not conflict with their beliefs. Consequently, students can view reproductive health as an essential aspect of life, aligned with religious teachings.

Furthermore, the involvement of medical professionals in sex education within *pesantren* contributes not only personally to the students but also to all members of the *pesantren* community. This involvement encourages students to disseminate accurate information within their communities, creating a broader and more sustainable impact. Students who receive comprehensive sex education are more likely to share accurate information with their peers and families, thereby reducing the spread of myths and misconceptions about sexual health (Berutich et al., 2022; Thelma et al., 2024). Comprehensive sex education helps foster a supportive environment where community members can discuss sexual health issues without stigma (Adediran et al., 2024; Mbizvo et al., 2023). Therefore, the involvement of medical professionals, initiated by *Bu Nyai*, contributes significantly to strengthening sex education within *pesantren*.

Overall, the seven themes identified in this study do not function in isolation but form an interconnected system that constitutes a holistic and culturally grounded strategy of sex education in *pesantren*. This strategy is rooted in Islamic teachings, reinforced by moral education, strengthened by family involvement and female leadership, safeguarded by preventive efforts against sexual violence and digital threats, and supported by professional health collaboration. Collectively, these elements construct an indigenous framework—termed here as the *Pesantren-Based Holistic Sex Education Strategy (PBHSE Strategy)*—that is both theologically sound and socially responsive.

## 5. Conclusion

This study introduces a novel and culturally grounded framework for sex education within Islamic boarding schools, conceptualised as the *Pesantren-Based Holistic Sex Education Strategy (PBHSE Strategy)*. Synthesising seven interrelated themes—Islamic contextualisation, prevention of sexual violence, moral integration, family engagement, female leadership, prudent technology use, and involvement of healthcare professionals—the study provides a comprehensive model rooted in Islamic values and local norms.

The research successfully addresses the central question of how sex education can be implemented in *pesantren* in a way that is religiously acceptable, ethically robust, and contextually relevant. By highlighting the voices and roles of *Ummi* as the wife of *Tuan Guru* as well as a woman *ulama*, this study emphasises the critical function of women as both educators and protectors within the *pesantren* system.

The findings advance scholarly understanding by bridging theological principles with contemporary health education. Practically, they offer *pesantren* leaders, educators, and policymakers a clear, integrative roadmap to deliver sex education that promotes student wellbeing while upholding religious tenets. Furthermore, this model holds potential as a replicable strategy for other faith-based educational institutions facing similar cultural and doctrinal challenges.

This study is limited to traditional *pesantren* with a strong leadership structure, and it may therefore be less relevant to modern *pesantren* or Islamic schools that are more open to sex education. The focus on *Ummi*'s perspective also means that the views of students and other *pesantren* leaders may not be fully represented. Collaboration with medical professionals has shown positive outcomes, but challenges remain in building trust between the *pesantren* community and healthcare providers. Furthermore, cultural barriers and stigma within the *pesantren* community may hinder the programme's effectiveness. These limitations should be considered in further development efforts.

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