



Educating with Love: Compassion-Based Education as a New Path to Developing Religious Tolerance

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ABSTRACT

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This article discusses the practice of compassion-based education as a relatively new approach to developing religious tolerance at Peacesantren (pesantren, Islamic boarding school) Welas Asih Garut, West Java, Indonesia. Departing from criticism of tolerance education models that tend to be normative, cognitive, and based on formal doctrine, this study offers a new perspective that affection, in the form of love, compassion, and empathy, is a more effective pedagogical foundation for shaping tolerant attitudes. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design, through participatory observation techniques, in-depth interviews with administrators, educators, and students, as well as analysis of institutional documents and pedagogical practices. The results show that compassion-based education at Peacesantren Welas Asih is not only taught as a normative value but is internalised and implemented through humanistic educational interactions, interfaith coexistence experiences, and daily practices that foster empathy and appreciation for religious identity differences. This approach has proven capable of transcending the boundaries of formal tolerance, from merely accepting differences to nurturing togetherness and celebrating diversity. This article contributes to the development of a theory of affection-based religious tolerance education, enriches studies on Islamic boarding schools as laboratories of peace, and offers a model of peaceful education practices that is relevant and contextual for Indonesia's multicultural society.

KEYWORDS:

Compassion-based education, religious tolerance, affective pedagogy, tolerance education

INTRODUCTION

Religious tolerance is one of the important pillars in maintaining social cohesion in a multicultural society, especially in countries with high religious and cultural diversity such as Indonesia. In the global context, the rise of identity-based conflicts, religious extremism, and identity politics shows that the problem of intolerance does not stem solely from differences in belief, but from the failure of the education system to foster ethical sensitivity and social empathy. Education, especially religious education, is in a strategic position to shape the perspectives, attitudes, and religious practices of the younger generation.

However, various studies show that religious education in many contexts is still dominated by a doctrinal approach that tends to emphasise mastery of texts, normative compliance, and awareness of the boundaries of different religious identities (1). This approach is relatively successful in transmitting religious teachings and identity, but it is less effective in fostering students' ability to live peacefully and with dignity alongside those of different beliefs. As a result, tolerance is often reduced to a passive attitude of simply "not disturbing" others, without being balanced by a deeper and more egalitarian awareness and capacity for empathy, dialogue, and human solidarity (2).

In the Indonesian context, the issue of religious tolerance has become a serious concern both in state policy and academic discourse. Various perspectives and approaches have been developed, including through multicultural education, religious moderation, character education, and interfaith dialogue, which have been pioneered by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. A number of studies emphasise the

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importance of integrating noble national values, pluralism, and religious harmony into the education curriculum (3).

However, most of these studies still focus on normative and structural aspects, such as curriculum, regulations, and policy discourse, and have not yet examined the pedagogical processes at the practical level that concretely shape the empathetic attitudes of students in educational institutions (4).

Meanwhile, global educational literature shows significant developments in the study of *compassion-based education*. This approach is based on humanistic psychology, critical pedagogy, and peace education, which position relationships, empathy, and caring as the core of learning. Compassion-based education not only positions students as cognitive subjects, but also as moral and emotional subjects who learn through relational experiences. A number of studies show that this approach is effective in reducing prejudice, increasing empathy, and building open attitudes in a diverse society (5).

However, in the context of religious education in Indonesia, particularly Islamic education based on Islamic boarding schools, empirical studies linking compassion-based education with the development of religious tolerance are still relatively limited. Until now, pesantren have been perceived more as educational institutions that are strong in the transmission of religious doctrine and tradition, but have been less explored as potential spaces for the development of empathetic pedagogy and interfaith relations.

The research gap in this study lies in the limited number of studies that specifically examine how compassion-based education is operationalised in the context of Islamic boarding schools and how these pedagogical mechanisms contribute to the development of active and relational religious tolerance. Some studies on religious tolerance even stop at the conceptual level, while studies on Islamic boarding schools focus more on aspects of religious curriculum, scientific traditions, or their socio-political role in the community (6). The integration of compassion-based education and the development of religious tolerance in Islamic boarding school educational practices has not yet received much attention.

Based on this gap, this article aims to examine the development of religious tolerance through compassion-based education by taking a case study at Peacesantren Welas Asih. This Islamic boarding school was chosen because it clearly promotes a vision of making compassion the foundation of education and developing pedagogical practices that emphasise empathy, dialogue, and openness in social relations. Through a qualitative approach with a case study design, this research seeks to reveal the strategies, mechanisms, and dynamics of implementing compassion-based education and its implications for the formation of religious tolerance among students or pupils in the pesantren environment. Thus, this article is expected to contribute

theoretically and empirically to the development of studies on religious tolerance education, while offering a relevant alternative model for Islamic education in Indonesia. Furthermore, the findings of this study can be used as a reference for policy makers and Islamic education practitioners in formulating an approach to religious education that is not only doctrinally strong but also ethically mature.

RELATED STUDY

1. Religious Education and Religious Tolerance

Religious tolerance in educational studies is generally understood as the ability of individuals and groups to accept, respect, and coexist peacefully with followers of other religions. In classical literature, tolerance is often defined as a stance of restraint towards differences in belief. However, this definition has been criticised for positioning tolerance as a passive and hierarchical attitude, as if the party that "tolerates" is in a superior position to the one that is "tolerated". In other words, religious tolerance is understood as a passive acceptance of differences. In theory, tolerance is the second step after acceptance and before cooperation.

Recent developments in research have shifted the understanding of tolerance towards a more active and relational approach. Tolerance is no longer interpreted merely as passive peaceful coexistence, but as the ability to build social relations that are fair, dialogical, and based on recognition of human dignity (7). In the context of education, religious tolerance is seen as the result of a long-term learning process involving cognitive, affective, and social praxis dimensions.

A number of studies confirm that religious education has an ambivalent role in shaping religious tolerance. On the one hand, religious education can foster moral values and social cohesion; on the other hand, if delivered in an exclusive and dogmatic manner, it has the potential to reinforce prejudice and social segregation. Studies conducted by Ade (8), Zulvan (9) and Immanuel (10) show that a religious education approach oriented towards dialogue and the life experiences of students tends to be more effective in fostering mutual understanding than a conventional approach that emphasises a single truth. Similar findings are also shown by Setiawan (4), who emphasises the importance of reflective pedagogy in religious education in a multicultural society.

In the Indonesian context, research by Buchori (11) and Gazali and Malik (12) shows that religious education is often still oriented towards strengthening internal group identity, while the interfaith relational dimension has not been systematically integrated. These studies confirm that religious tolerance is not enough to be taught as a social norm, but needs to be internalised through a pedagogical process that touches on the affective and ethical dimensions of students. In other words, religious tolerance is not enough to be provided as knowledge but must be translated into

experience.

2. Multicultural Education and Religious Moderation

In the Indonesian context, the development of religious tolerance through education is largely carried out through cross-cultural education and religious moderation approaches. Conceptually, multicultural education emphasises recognition of cultural, ethnic and religious diversity as a social reality that must be managed fairly, with an emphasis on recognition of minority groups. Meanwhile, religious moderation is developed as a normative framework to encourage religious attitudes that are not extreme and are in line with national values that uphold equality. Although important, a number of studies note that these two approaches tend to be normative and structural in nature. Multicultural education and religious moderation often stop at introducing diversity and cultural symbols, without touching deeply on the emotional and relational dimensions, let alone the exploratory dimension related to the direct experiences of students (13).

Until now, multicultural education has often been positioned as the main approach to managing diversity. Wahyono (14) emphasises that multicultural education contributes to increasing awareness of plurality, but its effectiveness is highly dependent on pedagogical transformation, not merely the addition of curriculum content related to religious tolerance. Without a dialogical, honest and open approach, multicultural education risks becoming merely symbolic and formalistic. In Indonesia, the discourse on religious moderation has grown rapidly in response to rising extremism (15). Research by Fadhila (16) shows that religious moderation is important as a normative framework for policy, but its implementation in educational institutions often does not touch on everyday learning practices. Religious moderation is more often present as reinforcement of knowledge and institutional slogans rather than as a pedagogical experience that shapes students' empathy and openness.

3. Compassion-Based Education

Compassion-based education has developed in global education literature in response to the crisis of dehumanisation in modern education systems. This approach is rooted in humanistic psychology, which emphasises the importance of empathy, unconditional acceptance, and authentic relationships between educators and students. In addition, this approach is also influenced by critical pedagogy, which views education as a process of humanisation and liberation. However, some literature also reminds us that compassion in education should not be reduced to sentimentality or permissiveness. Compassion must be understood as a critical and reflective pedagogical principle, which in fact demands moral maturity, social responsibility, and the courage to face differences openly (17).

Studies on compassion-based education show the

significant contribution of this approach in building inclusive social relations (18). Kelly's research (19) shows that education that emphasises empathy and social concern contributes to a reduction in prejudice and an increase in prosocial attitudes among students. However, most of this research has been conducted in a secular and Western educational context. Meanwhile, studies linking compassion-based education with religious education are still relatively limited.

4. Pesantren, Islamic Education, and Tolerance

In Islamic tradition, compassion is a fundamental theological and ethical value. Love and compassion are even two core values of Islamic teachings. The concept of *rahmah* refers not only to interpersonal relationships, but also to a universal vision of human relationships with one another and with nature. In the context of Islamic education, *rahmah* becomes the normative foundation for teacher-student relationships, the learning process, and the goals of education itself.

Pesantren, as a traditional Islamic educational institution, has great potential in developing compassion-based education. Values such as manners, the exemplary behaviour of *kiai*, the collective life of *santri*, and the tradition of living simply are social capital that supports the formation of empathy and solidarity. However, studies on pesantren have so far focused more on the aspects of knowledge transmission, religious authority, and the socio-political role of pesantren, while the pedagogical dimension of compassion as a strategy for developing religious tolerance has been relatively rarely studied by scholars.

Several studies note that pesantren educational practices can be ambivalent: on the one hand, they foster strong internal solidarity, but on the other hand, they have the potential to create exclusive boundaries towards outside groups if not managed reflectively (20). This highlights the importance of studies that specifically explore how the value of compassion is operationalised in pesantren educational practices and how it impacts the formation of religious tolerance among students (*santri*).

Research on Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia generally highlights their role in character building and Islamic moderation. Dian (21) emphasises that Islamic boarding schools have a strong tradition of manners, exemplary behaviour, and communal life. Meanwhile, a study conducted by Fadhila (22) shows that Islamic boarding schools have the potential to be agents of tolerance and peace. In other words, Islamic boarding schools have great potential to be agents for the development of a culture of religious tolerance in the midst of Indonesia's multicultural society.

However, most of these studies are still descriptive and institutional in nature. In-depth analysis of compassion-based pedagogical mechanisms as a conscious and institutionalised strategy in building religious tolerance is

Emma H. et al, Educating with Love: Compassion-Based Education as a New Path to Developing Religious Tolerance

still relatively rare. Islamic boarding schools are often assumed to be tolerant because of their traditions, rather than because of systematic research into how religious tolerance is formed through daily educational practices.

Based on this literature review, it can be concluded that there are three main gaps in the study of religious tolerance and education. First, the dominance of normative and structural approaches in the study of religious tolerance has not been balanced with an in-depth analysis of affective pedagogical processes. The study of religious tolerance is still dominated by normative and cognitive approaches. Second, studies of compassion-based education are still rarely integrated systematically with the issue of religious tolerance, especially in the context of religious education. Third, empirical studies on pesantren as spaces for developing religious tolerance through the pedagogy of compassion are still very limited.

This study aims to fill this gap by empirically examining the practice of compassion-based education at the Welas Kasih Islamic boarding school in Garut and its contribution to the development of religious tolerance. Thus, this study not only enriches the theoretical discourse but also provides practical evidence of the possibility of transforming Islamic boarding school pedagogy towards a more empathetic and inclusive religious education. Therefore, this research occupies a strategic position to fill this void through a case study at the Peacesantren Welas Kasih Garut in West Java Province, Indonesia.

Research Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to deeply understand the process, meaning, and dynamics of developing religious tolerance through compassion-based education in a natural context. The case study design was used to comprehensively explore educational practices in one specific location, namely Peacesantren Welas Asih, as a representation of Indonesia's unique social and cultural context.

This research was conducted at Peacesantren Welas Kasih Garut, an Islamic boarding school that explicitly develops the value of compassion as the foundation for the education and guidance of its students. The research subjects were determined purposively, including pesantren caregivers, educators (*ustaz/ustazah*), institutional managers, and the santri themselves. The selection of subjects was based on their direct involvement in the pesantren's educational and social practices related to the development of religious tolerance within the pesantren environment.

Research data was collected through three main techniques. First, participatory observation was conducted to

directly observe learning practices, social interactions, and everyday culture in the pesantren environment. Second, in-depth interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to explore the views, experiences, and reflections of research subjects regarding compassion-based education and the development of religious tolerance. Third, documentation studies, including analysis of the curriculum, pesantren rules, learning materials, and other institutional documents relevant to the research objectives.

Data analysis was conducted thematically by following the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data obtained from observation, interviews, and documentation were systematically organised to identify key themes related to the implementation of compassion-based education and the development of religious tolerance.

Findings

Based on the results of participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation analysis, this study found that the development of religious tolerance at the Peacesantren Welas Asih took place through the implementation of compassion-based education, which was institutionalised in the pedagogical practices and daily culture of the boarding school (23). The name "Welas Asih" itself is taken from Sundanese cultural heritage, which emphasises the importance of a peaceful and compassionate attitude in daily life (24). In fact, the name "Peacesantren" itself is actually a combination of two words, namely "peace" in English and "pesantren" in Indonesian language, thus becoming "Peacesantren", which refers to a pesantren that is oriented towards fostering a culture of peace and love or compassion.

Peacesantren Welas Asih is located in Sukarasa Village, Samarang District, Garut Regency, West Java Province, Indonesia. This pesantren is located in the Griya Sanding Indah residential area. Buses cannot access the location. Buses stop not far from the boarding school, and visitors will be picked up by small cars belonging to the boarding school. This boarding school, which is more like a nature school, is very green in many corners. It has a large garden and agricultural land that provides many of the kitchen's needs, including kale, spinach, long beans, kitchen spices and other vegetables. There are also fruit trees, chicken, goat and duck farms, and fish ponds. In addition to the fish being used for the students' meals, the ponds also serve as a place to dispose of the students' food waste. In general, Peacesantren Welas Asih is similar to Pesantren Al Ittifaq Bandung in its focus on raising environmental awareness (25).



Fig 1: Peacesantren Welas Asih Campus

This pesantren also has a planetarium that is used for learning. The pesantren also has a large sports field, with wide walls displaying the students' paintings. Next to the field is a stadium-like field, with seats like those in a stadium,

and in the middle there are performances, whether musical, classical or other. From the stadium seats, the view of the green mountains is very refreshing to the eyes.



Fig 2: The environmentally friendly atmosphere of the Peacesantren Welas Asih

In addition, this pesantren is also clean and has waste management facilities that handle not only pesantren waste, but also waste from the surrounding community. There are separate bins for different types of waste. Organic waste is turned into fertiliser and maggots for gardens and livestock, while non-organic waste is sold back to the Waste Bank. This pesantren promotes an eco-campus, which embodies a circular economy, preserves the earth as a trust, and brings harmony between nature, humans and God (21).

The boarding school is located in the middle of a residential area, so it is not separated by high fences or walls. Access to and from the boarding school is also open to residents. Separate from the boarding school complex, the boarding school has a café that serves a variety of food and drinks, with a signature spot: a view of green mountains and a very peaceful village atmosphere. It is not just a place to drink coffee, but also a refreshing place for the eyes.

In terms of daily life, the students' lives are the same as in other Islamic boarding schools, from waking up to going back to sleep. The school and boarding school schedules are integrated. The students are accustomed to

positive discipline (following the rules of the boarding school out of awareness), not punishment. When visitors come, it is not only the school and teachers who provide explanations or describe the lives or activities of the students. The high school students themselves do this. From welcoming visitors, presenting their daily lives from waking up to going back to sleep, providing explanations in the plantations, gardens and ponds, guiding visitors in the planetarium, music class, and world class.

In terms of facilities, Peacesantren Welas Asih has a meeting room at the front, with brightly lit rooms surrounded by glass, offering a view of the garden and the green surroundings of the pesantren, which is very pleasing to the eye, especially for visitors from big cities. Peacesantren Welas Asih has separate dormitories for boys and girls. The boys' dormitory is located on the upper floor of the junior high school building, which is open plan. Classes at the pesantren are moving classes, based on need. Each classroom has a different theme on the walls. There are world themes, music themes, or other themes.



Fig 3: Moving Class

Learning activities are carried out by all teachers based on the unique characteristics of the participants. As a result, many extracurricular activities are provided. Children who like to write can join a writing class. Those who like music can join a music class, taught by musicians. The children also do not use laundry or cleaning services in the classrooms or dormitories; everything is done by the students themselves.

At this Islamic boarding school, learning is not theory-based. Instead, it is based on experience and awareness. Students are first accustomed to activities that generate experiences, then label those activities after reflecting on each activity and the values they have learned. This boarding school has a number of advantages, such as no punishment, rules and regulations that are formulated and agreed upon by the students, the application of a growth mindset, differentiated learning (giving students the freedom to apply learning styles that suit them), theory that begins with "experience", and upholding the balance of nature (green school, gardens, parks, ponds, self-sufficiency in vegetables).

Based on observations of the daily lives of students, it was found that religious tolerance in this pesantren is not only formed through the classroom, but mainly through the habit of social practices in the daily lives of students (26). The pesantren actively encourages students to participate in social activities involving groups with diverse religious and cultural backgrounds, such as community service, humanitarian activities, and informal dialogue forums at the local level. These social interactions become an important space for students to learn empathy.

The final finding shows a shift in the orientation of religious tolerance among santri. Tolerance is no longer understood as merely an attitude of "not being hostile" or "not disturbing" others, but as the ability to build fair and empathetic social relationships. Santri demonstrate an awareness that diversity is part of social reality that must be managed through compassion and moral responsibility (27). This shift in orientation is evident in the way santri narrate their experiences of interacting with groups of different

religions. They tend to emphasise the importance of mutual understanding and consideration for the feelings of others, without feeling that their religious identity is threatened.

DISCUSSION

Research findings indicate that compassion-based education at Peacesantren Welas Kasih is able to shift the orientation of religious education from merely transmitting doctrine to fostering empathy and tolerance through direct experiences felt by the students. In this context, compassion serves as a value base that enables students to understand religious teachings not only as a set of teachings, but also as a source of noble values that are useful for human life. Unlike some religious education practices that tend to be defensive towards differences, the approach at Peacesantren Welas Asih emphasises that steadfastness towards one's own beliefs does not have to be manifested through the affirmation of rigid identity boundaries. This finding reinforces the argument that places Islamic boarding schools as potential agents for the development of religious tolerance, by showing that this potential is only realised when the value of compassion is operationalised pedagogically, not merely normatively.

The findings of the research at Peacesantren Welas Asih also show that the development of religious tolerance through compassion-based education does not take place in a space. It is not merely normative and discursive, but is shaped through ecological design, social relations, and pedagogical practices that are directly experienced in daily life by the students. This is in line with the view that religious tolerance is more effectively developed through real experiences in daily life and empathetic pedagogy than through a cognitive approach to doctrine transmission (21).

The conditions at Peacesantren Welas Asih, which resemble a nature school, characterised by gardens, pets, fish ponds, and circular economy-based waste management, show that the education of compassion implemented here is not only directed at human relations, but also at human relations with nature. This finding reinforces eco-pedagogy and eco-theology studies that emphasise that empathy,

ethical awareness, and social responsibility develop through holistic and integrated practices of caring for life (28). Thus, this finding broadens the spectrum of religious tolerance, which has mostly focused on interfaith relations, by adding an ecological dimension as the basis for forming empathy towards the environment. Meanwhile, the absence of high fences and the openness of access to the pesantren from the residential environment indicates inclusive and open institutional practices. This finding is consistent with the view that intense, equal, and sustainable social interaction can reduce prejudice and increase social capital in the form of trust that is far from suspicion (29).

Meanwhile, the existence of a café at Peacesantren Welas Asih as a meeting place also functions as a public space that allows for informal cultural dialogue. This practice is in line with previous research findings which show that religious tolerance is more effectively built through informal coexistence practices than through normative, formal and ceremonial approaches (30). The application of positive discipline among santri, without punishment and based on mutual compromise, indicates a shift in the educational paradigm from rigid control to a more inclusive moral awareness. This affirms the care-based education approach that emphasises relationships, empathy, and trust as the foundation for character building in students (31). In the context of religious tolerance, this approach enables santri as students to internalise mutual respect as an ethical commitment, rather than merely obedience to the rules imposed by the pesantren. These findings support the argument that tolerance built through reflective awareness is more sustainable than tolerance that is formal or instrumental in nature.

The learning method that prioritises experience over theory, as practised at Peacesantren Welas Asih, reinforces the framework of *experiential learning* and critical pedagogy. Students first engage in real activities, such as collective work, waste management, and social services to residents, then reflect on these experiences to make sense of them. These findings confirm that religious tolerance develops more authentically when students are directly involved in the practice of communal life, rather than simply accepting normative concepts of diversity that are not balanced with real experiences in everyday life. This reinforces the criticism of religious education that is too cognitively oriented and lacks affective and social praxis dimensions (32).

Regarding teacher role modelling, the application of *a growth mindset*, and differentiated learning, Peacesantren Welas Asih views students as unique and special subjects with different potentials. This approach is in line with multicultural education, which emphasises recognition of diversity in talents, identities, learning styles, and social backgrounds as prerequisites for inclusive education (1). In the context of religious tolerance, this approach helps santri

understand differences as a normal, natural, and meaningful social reality, rather than a threat to religious identity.

The involvement of Peacesantren Welas Asih in community waste management and its support for local government programmes in environmental management demonstrates that compassion-based education is manifested in tangible social contributions. This finding is in line with the view of religious moderation, which emphasises the importance of social praxis as an important indicator of inclusive, open and responsible religiosity. Thus, religious tolerance does not stop at individual attitudes, but is manifested in civic praxis that strengthens social cohesion and environmental sustainability. This is seen as further emphasising the position of Islamic boarding schools as strategic educational actors in religious-based social development that is friendly and inclusive (20). The application of a dialogical and reflective approach in religious learning in these boarding schools reinforces the argument that tolerance education is ineffective if it is only based on a curriculum or symbolic discourse that is often meaningless.

One important contribution of this research is the finding regarding the transformation of the meaning of religious tolerance among santri living in pesantren environments. Tolerance is no longer understood as a passive, rigid and formal attitude, but as an active relationship that demands social involvement and genuine empathy towards others. This finding reinforces the criticism of top-down, formal and normative approaches to religious moderation. Peacesantren Welas Asih shows that moderation and tolerance will only have meaning when experienced directly in everyday social relations. Thus, compassion-based education acts as a bridge between the normative discourse of religious tolerance and the concrete experience of living together in diversity. These findings enrich the literature on religious tolerance by emphasising the importance of the affective and practical dimensions, which have received little attention in religious education studies.

The findings of this study also contribute to pesantren studies by challenging the assumption that tolerance in pesantren is automatic due to their religious traditions. Peacesantren Welas Asih shows that the value of *rahmah* can be an institutionalised pedagogical strategy through rules, learning, and social habits. In this context, this study expands the study of compassion-based education, which has been dominated by Western and secular contexts, by demonstrating its relevance in traditional Islamic education, which is strongly rooted in local values. These findings confirm that compassion is not a foreign concept in Islamic education, but rather has strong theological and practical roots through the concept of *rahmah*.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the integration of three areas of study that have tended to be separate: religious education, religious tolerance, and

Emma H. et al, Educating with Love: Compassion-Based Education as a New Path to Developing Religious Tolerance

compassion-based education. This study shows that religious tolerance is most effectively developed not through a normative approach alone, but through empathetic pedagogy that places compassion as the foundation of educational relationships.

The academic implication of this finding is the need to shift the focus of religious tolerance studies from the question of "what should be taught" to "how tolerance is experienced and practised in the educational process". Thus, this study opens up space for further studies exploring models of compassion pedagogy in various other religious education contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the development of religious tolerance through compassion-based education at Peacesantren Welas Asih takes place as a pedagogical process that is planned, institutionalised, and experienced in real life by the santri. Compassion-based education not only functions as an individual moral value but also serves as a value base that frames the relationship between educators and santri, religious learning practices, and social interactions in daily life in the pesantren environment.

Research findings confirm that integrating the value of compassion into religious education can shift the orientation of religious tolerance from a normative, formal and passive attitude towards one that is relational and empathetic. Through dialogical pedagogy, the habit of inclusive social practices, and an educational ecosystem that provides emotional comfort, students develop the ability to understand differences in beliefs without feeling that their religious identity is threatened or compromised. Thus, this research reinforces the argument that steadfast faith and tolerant attitudes are not mutually exclusive, but can reinforce each other through a pedagogical approach that favours human values.

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