

The Epistemology of Islamic Religious Education Grounded on Sufism: A Philosophical Reflection on the Thought of Abuya K.H. Dimiyati of Banten

JEMMY HARTO*, ILZAMUDIN MA'MUR, MUFTI ALI, RIDWAN ARIF¹

ABSTRACT

This study aims to reconstruct the epistemology of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) based on Sufism by examining the philosophical thought and educational practice of Abuya K.H. Dimiyati of Banten. The epistemological crisis in contemporary Islamic education, marked by the dominance of rationalism and cognitive formalism, has led to a disconnection between knowledge and spirituality. Employing a philosophical–hermeneutical approach, this research interprets Sufi epistemology as an alternative foundation for an integrative and transformative paradigm of Islamic education. The data are drawn from primary texts related to Abuya Dimiyati's teachings, the educational practices of Pesantren Cidahu, and scholarly literature on Islamic epistemology and Sufi pedagogy. The findings reveal three core principles shaping Abuya Dimiyati's epistemology of education; 'ilm al-ḥaqīqī (true knowledge as divine illumination), mursyid (the teacher as a mediator of barakah and revealer of ma'rifah, and qalb salīm (the purified heart as an epistemic organ). These principles constitute a holistic system of knowledge that harmonizes rationality, spirituality, and morality. The study contributes to the contemporary discourse on Islamic epistemology and offers a philosophical foundation for the renewal of Islamic education that unites reason, revelation, and inner consciousness.

Keywords: *Islamic epistemology, Islamic education, Sufism, Abuya Dimiyati, philosophical reflection*

INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) today faces a profound epistemological crisis (Hellen Tiara & Danu, 2021). Institutional growth, curricular innovation, and technological adaptation have yet to

¹ Jemmy Harto* (Corresponding author) Ph.D., Lecturer at Department of Akidah Filsafat, UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin, Banten, INDONESIA. Email: 253701202.jemmyharto@uinbanten.ac.id, Ilzamudin Ma'mur, Ph.D., Professor of Education at Fakultas Tarbiyah, UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin, Banten, INDONESIA. Email: ilzamudin@uinbanten.ac.id, ¹ Mufti Ali, Ph.D., Professor of history and Islamic culture at Fakultas Ushuluddin dan Adab, UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin, Banten, INDONESIA, Email: mufti.ali@uinbanten.ac.id, Ridwan Arif, Ph.D., Assistant professor at Department of Philosophy and Religion, Paramadina University, Jakarta, INDONESIA, email: ridwan.arif@paramadina.ac.id

restore its essential purpose as a vehicle for cultivating knowledgeable, ethical, and spiritually grounded human beings (Nasir et al., 2022). In many educational institutions particularly within formal settings religious knowledge is often reduced to a set of cognitive formulations detached from existential experience and moral consciousness (Akbar, Tobroni, & Faridi, 2023). As a consequence, religious education loses its transformative force, it teaches legal prescriptions yet fails to nurture wisdom; it instills dogma while neglecting the dimension of inner illumination (Ainuri & Wijaya, 2022).

This epistemological crisis stems from a structural imbalance between rationality and spirituality, rooted in the legacy of Western modernity (Asyibli et al., 2022). Modern paradigms of rationalism and empiricism elevate reason as the sole source of valid knowledge (Hellen Tiara & Danu, 2021). Knowledge is deemed true only insofar as it can be measured, observed, and objectively verified, whereas the spiritual dimension, intuition, and inner human experience are regarded as subjective and thus excluded from the scientific domain (Yasin, 2020). When such paradigms infiltrate Islamic educational systems, a secularization of epistemology occurs, displacing revelation and spirituality from their central roles within the architecture of knowledge (Nasir et al., 2022; Asyibli et al., 2022).

In contemporary Islamic education, this phenomenon manifests in the form of cognitive formalism. Religious knowledge is taught through curricula that prioritize cognitive outcomes and numerical assessments rather than the cultivation of the inner self (Jamaluddin, Hasib, & Ardiansyah, 2025; Fatimah, 2023). Teachers function as transmitters of concepts rather than spiritual mentors, while students become passive recipients of information rather than seekers of truth (Sahidah, 2022; Budiman, Anwar, Zarkasyi, & Lateh, 2023). Yet within the classical Islamic tradition, learning is inherently an act of worship aimed at *tazkiyah al-nafs* (purification of the soul) and *ta'dīb* (the cultivation of proper conduct and character) (Sahidah, 2022; Fadhilah, 2023).

According to Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (1993), the core crisis of Islamic education does not lie in methodology but in epistemology namely, a fundamental error in understanding the nature of knowledge and the purpose of its pursuit (Huringiin & Azfathir, 2018; Fadhilah, 2023). Al-Attas describes this crisis as a “loss of adab,” the erosion of awareness regarding the proper place of everything within the order of existence. When knowledge is acquired without adab, it loses its divine orientation and devolves into a form of power stripped of spiritual value (Haqq Al Haidary, Hutama Al Faruqi, Shofwan, & Maafi, 2023). In Nasr’s (1989) formulation, this is the consequence of the “de-sacralization of knowledge,” the severing of knowledge from its divine roots that ought to serve as its source of meaning (Huringiin & Azfathir, 2018; Nuryanti & Hakim, 2023).

This epistemological crisis is not merely a philosophical issue but also a civilizational one. Across the modern Muslim world, including Indonesia, religious education is often governed by the logic of state administration and market demands (Budiman, Anwar, Zarkasyi, & Lateh, 2023; Fatimah, 2023). Religious knowledge, which should elevate and humanize, is instead reduced to a moralistic

instrument or a tool for reproducing social norms (Sahidah, 2022; Al Qifari, 2023). As a result, Islamic education becomes trapped between two extreme poles: on one side, a form of dogmatism that closes itself to scientific development; on the other, a rationalism that marginalizes spiritual dimensions (Gaffar & Anees, 2023; Jamaluddin, Hasib, & Ardiansyah, 2025).

Amid this dilemma, an urgent need emerges to reconstruct an epistemology of Islamic Religious Education capable of harmonizing rationality and spirituality uniting ‘aql (reason) and qalb (heart), knowledge and self-purification (Ahmad, 2023; Fitriyani et al., 2024). Here, Sufism offers a significant philosophical and pedagogical foundation (Gani, 2023; Kuswandi & Asmoni, 2023). In the Sufi tradition, knowledge is not produced solely through logic; it is a light (*nūr*) bestowed upon a purified heart (Ahmad, 2023). Al-Ghazālī, in *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, insists that “true knowledge is that which leads one toward God” (Ahmad, 2023; Gani, 2023). Thus, Sufi epistemology does not reject rationality but situates it under the guidance of spirituality (Huringiin & Azfathir, 2018).

Sufism provides an integrative epistemological framework. It teaches that the sources of knowledge encompass three dimensions: revelation as the apex of truth, ‘aql as the instrument of reasoning, and qalb as the spiritual mirror (Haqq Al Haidary et al., 2023; Ahmad, 2023). These three form a hierarchical yet interconnected structure of knowledge (Gani, 2023; Kuswandi & Asmoni, 2023). When one is neglected, the epistemological balance of the human being collapses (Fitriyani et al., 2024). In educational practice, Sufism emphasizes that learning is not merely the filling of the mind but also the illumination of the heart (Ahmad, 2023; Sahidah, 2022).

In Indonesia, the pesantren remains one of the few institutions that continues to preserve this paradigm (Budiman et al., 2023; Fatimah, 2023). A pesantren is not merely a place for the transmission of religious sciences, but a center for moral and spiritual formation (Gaffar & Anees, 2023). The teacher–student relationship within the pesantren is not a technical one; it is a transcendent bond shaped by *barakah* and *khidmah* (Fitriyani et al., 2024; Kuswandi & Asmoni, 2023). The study of classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*), accompanied by spiritual disciplines such as *dhikr*, *mujāhadah*, and *riyādat al-naḥs*, reinforces the pesantren as a living expression of the Islamic epistemological tradition—a knowledge system in which learning is framed as an act of worship (Gani, 2023; Budiman et al., 2023; Sahidah, 2022). Thus, Sufi epistemology and pesantren practice continue to stand as an integrative model that harmonizes reason, heart, and spirituality within contemporary Islamic education (Haqq Al Haidary et al., 2023; Ahmad, 2023).

One of the central figures in the pesantren tradition of Banten who embodies this rational–spiritual integration is Abuya K.H. Dimiyati bin Muḥammad Amīn of Cidahu Islamic Boarding School in Pandeglang (Irfani, 2021). He is widely recognized as both a distinguished jurist and a Sufi guide (*mursyid*) who educated through personal example and sincerity. Under his guidance, the pesantren became not merely a site for textual instruction but an arena for inner transformation (Pribadi, 2013; Gazali & Malik, 2009). The educational system he developed emphasized that true knowledge is not the mastery of symbols, but the fruit of a purified heart and loyalty to one’s teacher (Fathurrohman & Arifi, 2025; Sholeh, 2005).

Abuya Dimiyati's educational epistemology rests on three foundational pillars: (1) *‘ilm al-ḥaqīqī* (true knowledge) as a divine illumination granted to a purified heart; (2) the teacher (*mursyid*) as the mediator between knowledge and *barakah*; and (3) the heart (*qalb*) as the epistemic organ in which knowledge becomes realized (Pribadi, 2013; Gazali & Malik, 2009). This epistemological model rejects the dichotomy between rational and spiritual knowledge. It offers an ontological unity in which intellect, heart, and action are integrated into a single process of self-purification oriented toward truth (Fitriyani et al., 2024; Haqq Al Haidary et al., 2023).

Such an epistemological framework becomes particularly relevant amidst the crisis of contemporary Islamic education, which increasingly emphasizes intellectual attainment while neglecting the formation of consciousness (Gazali & Malik, 2009; Fathurrohman & Arifi, 2025). In this context, Abuya Dimiyati's educational thought and practice provide an empirical foundation for the resacralization of knowledge (Fitriyani et al., 2024; Sholeh, 2005). He demonstrates that education is not merely the transfer of information but a process of *taḥqīq al-‘ilm* the realization of truth within the self (Pribadi, 2013; Gaffar & Anees, 2023).

Thus, the epistemological model inherited from Abuya Dimiyati is aligned with the Nusantara pesantren paradigm, which places the teacher at the spiritual as well as epistemological center (Irfani, 2021; Fathurrohman & Arifi, 2025). The relationship between student and teacher is not merely technical but transcendent, bound by *barakah* and *khidmah* (Gazali & Malik, 2009; Pribadi, 2013). Pesantren Cidahu represents a living Islamic knowledge system an integration of rationality, spirituality, and educational praxis that guides students toward divine truth (Sholeh, 2005; Gaffar & Anees, 2023).

Philosophically, the study of Abuya Dimiyati's educational epistemology is important because it opens a pathway for integrating the Sufi intellectual heritage with modern discourses on knowledge (Sulton, 2022). If modern Western philosophy of education separates epistemology from ethics and spirituality, Sufi epistemology unites all three. This perspective can enrich the discourse of Islamic education, which has long tended to adopt a positivistic orientation (Fathurrohman & Arifi, 2025).

From an academic standpoint, this study also addresses a gap in research on pesantren and epistemology. Previous works (Fauzi, 2017; Nasrullah & Saepudin, 2023) have examined the role of Banten's pesantren in shaping communal spirituality, yet these studies remain largely descriptive and sociological in nature (Irfani, 2021). No research has yet provided a systematic interpretation of the epistemological structure of pesantren education within a philosophical framework. This study therefore seeks to fill that research gap through a philosophical–hermeneutic approach, which allows the researcher to uncover the deeper meanings embedded in the knowledge system practiced by Abuya Dimiyati (Sulton, 2022).

Moreover, this research is relevant to the broader currents of epistemological renewal within contemporary Islamic thought. Scholars such as M. Amin Abdullah (2014) advocate for the integration of religious sciences with the social sciences and humanities through an interconnected

paradigm (Tajuddin & Awwaliyyah, 2021; Atika, 2024). This idea resonates with the Sufi view that truth is not methodologically singular but ontologically hierarchical. Within this context, Abuya Dimiyati's Sufi epistemology may be read as an ontological foundation for the development of integrative paradigms proposed by contemporary Muslim thinkers (Akmal, 2024).

In terms of educational praxis, the Sufi epistemological model carries strategic relevance. Islamic education today faces the pressures of globalized values, where knowledge is frequently treated as a commodity (Gazali & Malik, 2009). Under such conditions, education is prone to losing its moral and spiritual orientation. Sufism with its emphasis on purity of heart, sincerity, and divine awareness offers both an ethical and epistemic foundation for the renewal of Islamic education (Fitriyani et al., 2024; Gaffar & Anees, 2023).

This study aims to reconstruct the epistemology of Islamic Religious Education through Sufism by examining the educational thought and practice of Abuya K.H. Dimiyati bin Muḥammad Amīn of Pesantren Cidahu, Pandeglang. A philosophical–hermeneutic approach is employed because it enables a dialogical engagement between text, context, and spiritual experience (Haqq Al Haidary et al., 2023). Through this approach, the study does not merely describe but interprets Abuya Dimiyati's knowledge system as a living expression of an Islamic epistemology that unites intellect and heart, knowledge and devotion (Sulton, 2022; Fathurrohman & Arifi, 2025).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs an Islamic philosophy of education approach with a hermeneutic–Sufi orientation, aimed at interpreting the meaning and epistemological structure embedded in the thought of Abuya K.H. Dimiyati of Banten. The philosophical approach is used to examine the foundational concepts of knowledge from the perspective of Sufism, while hermeneutics functions as an interpretive framework for understanding the texts, practices, and spiritual symbols that shape the Cidahu pesantren tradition.

Ontologically, this study begins from the premise that knowledge in Islam is not solely rational and empirical but is also derived from the divine dimension through purification of the heart (*tazkiyah al-nafs*) and spiritual guidance under a *mursyid*. Accordingly, the analytical process is directed toward identifying the relational patterns between *'aql* (reason), *qalb* (heart), and revelation within the epistemic system established by Abuya Dimiyati.

Data Sources

The primary data for this research consists of:

1. Texts and manuscripts related to the teachings of Abuya Dimiyati, including counsel, *ijāzah*, and written notes preserved by his students.
2. Observations of the Cidahu pesantren tradition, particularly the practices of *dhikr*, *riyāḍat al-nafs*, and the teacher–student relationship as an epistemological context.

3. Interviews and testimonies from senior students who serve as his intellectual and spiritual heirs.

Secondary data are drawn from academic literature on Islamic epistemology, Sufi pedagogy, and contemporary philosophy of education. The classical sources include the works of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), Muḥyiddīn Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 1240), and ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 1166), which constitute foundational references for Sufi epistemology in Islam. Modern sources include the thought of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (b. 1931), Seyyed Hossein Nasr (b. 1933), and M. Amin Abdullah (b. 1953), who emphasize the integration of revelation, reason, and spiritual experience.

Analytical Techniques

The analysis is carried out through three hermeneutic stages:

1. Descriptive–textual, involving a literal reading of Abuya Dimiyati’s teachings to identify epistemological categories and Sufi principles.
2. Interpretive–conceptual, involving the interpretation of symbolic meanings embedded in spiritual terms and practices within the educational context.
3. Reflective–philosophical, linking the interpretive findings with modern Islamic epistemological theories to achieve an integrative synthesis.

These three stages form a recurring spiral of reflection a circular hermeneutic ensuring coherence between text, context, and the spiritual experiences under study.

Validity and Reliability of Data

Data validity is maintained through textual and conceptual triangulation, by comparing primary sources (the teachings and traditions of Abuya Dimiyati), empirical sources (students’ lived experiences), and theoretical sources (academic literature). The reflective–hermeneutic approach ensures that the interpretations generated are not merely subjective but constitute a scholarly dialogue between text, interpreter, and the spiritual reality of the pesantren.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several prior studies relevant to this topic are used to strengthen the empirical and conceptual context of this research, including:

1. Fauzi, Anis, & Koyah (2021). *Abuya Dimiyati’s Idea in the Development of Traditional Islamic Studies and Spiritualistic (Islamic Studies at Pondok Pesantren Cidahu Pandeglang)*. This study provides empirical grounding for the scientific and spiritual system developed by Abuya Dimiyati at Pesantren Cidahu, Pandeglang.

2. Sulton, Ahmad (2022). *The Educational Epistemology of Traditional Pesantren. Tadris: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*. This work examines the epistemological patterns of traditional pesantren education and its relevance to the formation of spiritual morality.
3. Gani, Ahmad (2023). *Sufism and the Integration of Knowledge in Contemporary Islamic Education. Teosofia: Indonesian Journal of Islamic Mysticism*. It analyzes the relevance of Sufi epistemology in modern Islamic education, particularly the integration of rationality and spirituality.
4. Fitriyani, F. N., Kurniawan, S., Suratman, B., Taufik, E. T., & Djusmalinar, D. (2024). *Santri's Spiritual Resilience at the Pesantren Mahasiswa of Institut Daarul Qur'an Jakarta: Capturing Living Sufism Amid Modern Society. Teosofia*. This research describes the spiritual resilience of students within the context of modern Sufism and the challenges of urban society.
5. Pribadi, Y. (2013). *Pesantren, Nahdlatul Ulama, and Kiai as the Core of Santri Culture. Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*. It explains the role of pesantren and kiai as centers of knowledge transmission and the formation of santri epistemology in Indonesia.
6. Fathurrohman, Rizal, & Arifi, Ahmad (2025). *Khidmah in Transition: Santri, Kiai, and Social Transformation in Pesantren. Nadwa: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*. This study explores the transformation of *khidmah* values and the spiritual relationship between *santri* and *kiai* as a form of social epistemology within pesantren education.

Collectively, these studies provide both empirical and conceptual foundations for reconstructing a Sufi-based epistemology of Islamic education while highlighting the continuity of the pesantren's intellectual tradition in synthesizing reason, revelation, and inner experience.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Sufi Framework of the Pesantren

The pesantren tradition in Indonesia cannot be separated from Sufism as its epistemological and spiritual foundation. Within the pesantren's scholarly system, Sufism is not merely a moral teaching or spiritual discipline but a mode of knowing (*epistemē*) a pathway through which humans attain truth by means of self-purification (*tazkiyah al-nafs*) and inner illumination (*tajallī*). The pesantren thus represents a distinctively Islamic knowledge system that integrates reason, revelation, and the heart into a unified structure of religious consciousness (Hamsyah, 2015; Nadhiroh, 2021).

This Sufi framework draws from the thought of eminent scholars such as Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), Muḥyiddīn Ibn 'Arabī (d. 1240), and 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 1166). Al-Ghazālī, in *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, asserts that true knowledge (*'ilm al-ḥaqīqī*) is not obtained through logic alone but through the purification of the heart, which unveils the divine light (*nūr al-'ilm*). Ibn 'Arabī deepens this through the concept of *ma'rifah*, intuitive knowledge born of an existential encounter between the human and the Divine. Meanwhile, 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī emphasizes that

knowledge devoid of *adab* becomes a veil that obscures truth rather than revealing it (Mawadati & Abu Bakar, 2025; Ma'arif, 2022).

This framework forms the core paradigm of education within the pesantren. Learning is seen not as the accumulation of information but as inner transformation. Students are taught not merely to read texts but to read themselves to recognize their desires, discipline them, and allow the light of knowledge to penetrate the heart. In pesantren epistemology, to know is to become, not merely to understand (Kuswandi & Asmoni, 2023; *Tsaqofah Journal*, 2025).

In the Indonesian–Malay world, this system is further strengthened by local figures such as Syekh Nawawi al-Bantani (d. 1897) and K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari (d. 1947). Syekh Nawawi, through *Nihāyah al-Zain* and *Mirqāt Şu'ūd al-Taşdıq*, establishes Sufism as an epistemic ethic: knowledge must lead to humility and divine consciousness. Hasyim Asy'ari, in *Adab al-Ālim wa al-Muta'allim*, formulates that the blessing (*barakah*) of knowledge depends on *adab* toward one's teacher, who serves as the mediator of spiritual grace and illumination. These two scholars bridge classical Middle Eastern Sufism with the realities of Islamic education in Java and Banten (Ainuri & Wijaya, 2021).

The Sufi framework of the pesantren resists secular models of knowledge that separate rational inquiry from moral and spiritual formation. In the logic of Sufism, truth is tested not only by formal reasoning but by the clarity of the *qalb*. The pursuit of knowledge is inseparable from the cleansing of the self, for a corrupted heart cannot reflect truth. Thus, in pesantren epistemology, knowledge is performative, it must transform one's way of life, not simply expand intellectual horizons (Hayat et al., 2024; Hamsyah, 2015).

Pesantren in Banten, including Pesantren Cidahu where Abuya Dimiyati taught, exemplify this framework in concrete form. Their educational practice emphasizes balance between rational study (*tafaqquh fi al-dīn*) and spiritual discipline (*riyādat al-nafs*). *Dhikr*, *khidmah*, and obedience to one's teacher are not merely ritual acts but epistemological structures that prepare the heart to receive divine knowledge (Kuswandi & Asmoni, 2023; Nadhiroh, 2021). The pesantren's Sufi tradition thus functions as a *living epistemology*, where learning becomes part of the journey toward God.

Within this framework, Abuya K.H. Dimiyati is not merely an inheritor of tradition but a refiner of it. He preserved the ethical Sufism of Syekh Nawawi and the gnoseological Sufism of Ibn 'Arabī, then implemented both within an educational system that integrates intellect, *adab*, and heart purification. Under his guidance, Pesantren Cidahu became a microcosm of a complete Islamic epistemology: knowledge arises from a purified heart, grows through the guidance of a teacher, and culminates in devotion to God (Fauzi & Koyah, 2021; Fitriyani et al., 2024).

2. The Three Pillars of Abuya K.H. Dimiyati Banten's Epistemology

A. 'Ilm al-Ḥaqīqī: True Knowledge as Divine Illumination

In Abuya Dimiyati's epistemological system, true knowledge (*'ilm al-ḥaqīqī*) is not the product of rational activity alone but a *nūr* a divine light bestowed upon a purified heart. This view is rooted in the concept of *'ilm ladunnī* articulated by al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) in *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, which maintains that knowledge is not only acquired through observation and reason but also through inner illumination born of *mujāhadah* and *tazkiyah al-naḥs* (al-Ghazālī, d. 1111; Mawadati & Abu Bakar, 2025).

Abuya Dimiyati applied this principle at Pesantren Cidahu by emphasizing that learning must be accompanied by *riyāḍah* and *dhikr*, because knowledge without purity of heart yields only intellectual arrogance. Within this framework, *'ilm al-ḥaqīqī* becomes a reflection of Ibn 'Arabī's (d. 1240) *ma'rifah* knowledge that does not merely comprehend truth but becomes united with it (Ibn 'Arabī, d. 1240; Nasr, 1989). Abuya's epistemology thus integrates reason, revelation, and the heart into a single illuminative process that transforms knowledge into spiritual experience (Nadhiroh, 2021; Hamsyah, 2015).

B. The Mursyid: The Teacher as Mediator of Barakah and Unveiler of Ma'rifah

For Abuya Dimiyati, the teacher is not simply a transmitter of concepts but a mediator between knowledge and *barakah*. The *mursyid* unveils the path of *ma'rifah* through exemplary conduct and the purification of the student. This view aligns with K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari's (d. 1947) teaching in *Adab al-'Ālim wa al-Muta'allim*, which states that the blessing of knowledge arises only through proper *adab* toward the teacher (Ainuri & Wijaya, 2021). In the Sufi tradition, this role is synonymous with the *murshid kāmil*, the perfected guide who serves as a conduit for divine light (al-Jīlānī, d. 1166).

At Pesantren Cidahu, Abuya actualized this relationship through practices of *khidmah* and *tawajjuh*: students serve their teacher not due to hierarchy but because they believe that *barakah* is the medium through which knowledge flows. This indicates that Abuya's epistemology is relational and transpersonal knowledge does not arise from an autonomous individual but emerges through a spiritual interaction between teacher and student (Fauzi & Koyah, 2017; Fitriyani et al., 2024). Such a model reflects Abuya's critique of modern education, which isolates knowledge from ethics and *barakah* (al-Attas, 1995; Kuswandi & Asmoni, 2023).

C. Qalb Salīm: The Purified Heart as an Epistemic Organ

The third pillar of Abuya Dimiyati's epistemology is *qalb salīm*, the purified heart as the vessel of divine knowledge. In Sufi thought, the *qalb* is not merely an emotional organ but a "cosmic mirror" that reflects the light of truth (Nasr, 1989). Seyyed Hossein Nasr describes it as "the locus of sacred knowledge," a place where knowledge is sanctified through *dhikr* and devotion. Abuya operationalized this concept in practice: *dhikr*, *mujāhadah*, and the emptying of the *naḥs* are not simply acts of worship but epistemic methods for receiving divine illumination (Gani, 2023; Hayat et al., 2024).

In practice, Abuya taught that knowledge devoid of a purified heart is knowledge without fruit. Knowledge attained through reason must be filtered through the heart so that it does not become arid or misleading. This view resonates with Osman Bakar's (1992) triadic structure: revelation as source, reason as instrument, and the heart as spiritual mirror. At Pesantren Cidahu, Abuya institutionalized *dhikr* and *riyāḍat al-naḥs* as a spiritual curriculum that guides knowledge toward wisdom (Ma'arif, 2022; Hamsyah, 2015).

D. The Unity of Reason, Revelation, and Qalb

These three pillars—*ilm al-ḥaqīqī*, the *mursyid*, and *qalb salīm*—form an integrative and transcendent epistemological structure in Abuya Dimiyati's thought. He rejects the dichotomy between rational and spiritual knowledge that emerged from the legacy of Western modernity (al-Attas, 1995; Nasr, 1989). In his system, *'aql* interprets revelation, revelation purifies reason, and the *qalb* unveils their inner reality. For Abuya, Islamic education must restore this epistemic trinity through *ta'dīb* and *tazkiyah al-naḥs*. Thus, Abuya's Sufi epistemology offers an alternative model for reconstructing Islamic Religious Education by uniting rationality and spirituality (Nadhiroh, 2021; Fauzi & Koyah, 2017).

3. The Relevance of Abuya Dimiyati's Epistemology in Contemporary Islamic Education

The epistemological crisis of Islamic education today stems from a dichotomy between scientific rationality and religious spirituality. Abuya K.H. Dimiyati of Banten rejects this dichotomy by affirming the unity of *'aql*, revelation, and *qalb* as the foundation of knowledge. His view resonates with M. Amin Abdullah's (2014) paradigm of integrative–interconnected knowledge, which argues that Islamic education must link religious epistemology with the sciences and culture in order to escape methodological positivism (Abdullah, 2014). Abuya's Sufi epistemology thus serves as a practical manifestation of this interconnected model, uniting scientific rationality with spiritual illumination through inner experience.

Within the framework of humanistic education, Abdurrahman Mas'ud (2020) emphasizes that Islamic education must position the human being as a complete subject one who reasons, feels, and possesses a spiritual essence. Education is not merely the transfer of knowledge but *tahdzīb al-naḥs* (the cultivation of the soul), which leads to the formation of the *insān kāmil*. This perspective reinforces Abuya Dimiyati's view that *ilm al-ḥaqīqī* is knowledge that guides toward spiritual humanity knowledge that nurtures *adab* and wisdom rather than merely cognitive intelligence (Mas'ud, 2020).

Meanwhile, Seyyed Hossein Nasr (1989) and Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (1995) have long warned that the crisis of modernity arises from the loss of the sacred dimension of knowledge. Nasr refers to this as the “desacralization of knowledge,” while al-Attas names it the “loss of adab,” the severing of knowledge from its divine root. Abuya Dimiyati's epistemology stands as an antithesis to this crisis. By placing *tazkiyah al-naḥs* and *barakah* at the center of epistemic processes, he restores the function of knowledge as a path toward God (Nasr, 1989; al-Attas, 1995).

In Indonesian educational practice, similar approaches appear in efforts to integrate spiritual values into modern scientific frameworks. Hapidin et al. (2022) assert that Islamic educational epistemology must offer solutions to the challenges of the 4.0 era through the integration of knowledge and faith. Junaidi et al. (2025) demonstrate that applying eco-Sufism in elementary learning cultivates ecological–spiritual awareness among students. Likewise, Badrudin (2022) highlights the role of pesantren in safeguarding national morality through *adab* and *khidmah*, in line with the *mursyid* pillar of Abuya’s epistemology. These findings illustrate the practical relevance of Sufi epistemology in responding to the moral crises of modern education.

Thus, Abuya Dimiyati’s epistemology can be read as a synthesis of four major intellectual currents: spiritual humanism (Mas’ud, 2020), integrative–interconnected knowledge (Abdullah, 2014), critiques of secularization (Nasr, 1989), and the pedagogy of *adab* (al-Attas, 1995). This paradigm affirms that authentic Islamic education must unite scientific reasoning with purification of the heart, and that learning itself is a path of self-transformation. Amid the fragmentation of modern knowledge, Abuya’s Sufi epistemology offers a transformative alternative that restores the Divine spirit to the academic realm.

4. Educational Implications and Value Transformation

Abuya K.H. Dimiyati Banten’s Sufi epistemology positions knowledge as a means of purifying the soul rather than merely a tool of rational inquiry. This principle carries broad implications for the direction and orientation of contemporary Islamic education. Education cannot be limited to the transmission of cognitive knowledge; it must cultivate the *hikmah* of knowledge an illumination that enlightens the heart and guides human action. In Abuya’s view, *‘ilm al-ḥaqīqī* can only be received by a purified heart, through *tazkiyah al-naḥs* and the guidance of a morally upright *mursyid*. This understanding aligns with al-Attas’s (1995) concept of *ta’dīb*, education as the process of placing everything in its proper order of existence, and with Mas’ud’s (2020) vision of a humanistic education grounded in moral and spiritual awareness.

The first implication concerns the philosophical dimension: Islamic education must be reconstructed by positioning the epistemology of revelation, reason, and *qalb* as the three fundamental pillars of knowledge. This approach rejects the secularization of knowledge that separates rationality from its divine value. In this context, Abuya’s integrative epistemology echoes Amin Abdullah’s (2014) interconnected paradigm, which bridges Islamic sciences with modern science and culture through spiritual ethics. By placing revelation as the source, reason as the instrument, and the heart as the interpreter of meaning, Islamic education is directed toward a balance between scientific objectivity and profundity of purpose.

The second implication is pedagogical. Within formal education systems, teachers must serve not only as instructors but as *mursyid* guides who lead students through example, compassion, and moral presence. Abuya Dimiyati exemplified a model of learning rooted in *barakah* and *khidmah*, in which the transmission of knowledge is inseparable from character formation and spiritual discipline. This principle resonates with Nasr’s (1989) call for an education that restores the sacred

dimension of knowledge. In classroom practice, this may take the form of reflective activities such as communal *dhikr*, spiritual mentoring, and the integration of Sufi values into thematic learning (Junaidi & Anwar, 2025). These practices cultivate epistemic *adab* a scholarly disposition grounded in sincerity and reverence toward the sources of knowledge.

The third implication extends to institutional and social dimensions. Pesantren, madrasah, and Islamic schools must reclaim their foundational role as spaces for cultivating spiritual and moral consciousness, rather than functioning solely as centers of doctrinal instruction. Badrudin (2022) emphasizes that pesantren play a crucial role in preserving national morality amid widespread value degradation. By adapting Abuya's epistemological model, pesantren can become institutions that harmonize *dhikr* and *fikr*, knowledge and practice, spirituality and social responsibility. Values such as sincerity, humility, and mutual assistance become the ethical foundations for students as they engage with society.

The fourth implication is transformational. Abuya's Sufi epistemology encourages Islamic education to function as a movement of spiritual liberation. It does not stop at teaching legal norms but nurtures existential awareness of the self and the Divine. Through this approach, Islamic education has the potential to produce individuals who are both knowledgeable and refined in character, rather than merely technically competent. In the broader framework of civilizational development, Abuya's epistemology offers a model for cultivating the complete human being, the *insān kāmil* capable of managing knowledge ethically and disseminating it as a light of civilization (*nūr al- 'ilm*).

CONCLUSION

This study finds that the educational epistemology of Abuya K.H. Dimiyati of Banten represents a practical expression of Sufi epistemology that affirms the unity of reason (*'aql*), revelation (*naql*), and the heart (*qalb*). In this system of knowledge, learning is not merely the product of rational activity but a divine light (*nūr al- 'ilm*) bestowed upon a purified heart through the process of *tazkiyah al-nafs*. This epistemology is firmly rooted in the classical Sufi tradition of al-Ghazālī, Ibn 'Arabī, and al-Jīlānī, yet it is actualized by Abuya Dimiyati within the pesantren tradition as a living educational system a *living epistemology*.

The main findings of this research highlight three pillars of Abuya's epistemology: *'ilm al-ḥaqīqī*, true knowledge emerging from divine illumination; the *mursyid*, or teacher, as mediator of *barakah* and revealer of *ma 'rifah*; and *qalb salīm*, the purified heart as an epistemic organ. Together, these pillars form an integrative structure in which rationality and spirituality do not compete but complement one another.

Abuya's Sufi epistemology is directly relevant to contemporary Islamic educational paradigms. Philosophically, it aligns with Amin Abdullah's (2014) paradigm of interconnected knowledge, which integrates religion, science, and culture; with Abdurrahman Mas'ud's (2020) humanistic education that positions the human being as a spiritual subject; and with Nasr's (1989) critique of

modern civilization and al-Attas's (1995) concept of *ta'dīb*, which affirms the primacy of *adab* as the foundation of knowledge. By integrating these values, Abuya's epistemology offers a holistic model of Islamic education scientific yet deeply spiritual.

Its implications provide a foundation for reconstructing Islamic education in Indonesia across four domains: first, curriculum philosophy that frames knowledge as a means of soul-purification and the cultivation of *adab*; second, pedagogical methods that revive the teacher–student relationship based on *barakah* and exemplary conduct; third, institutional development in which pesantren reinforce their spiritual and moral functions within society; and fourth, scholarly ethos that balances critical reasoning with divine awareness.

Thus, the epistemology of Abuya K.H. Dimiyati is not merely a local heritage but a paradigmatic contribution to global Islamic educational philosophy. It restores the divine spirit of knowledge, reconnects knowing with becoming, and reaffirms education as a path toward human perfection (*al-insān al-kāmil*). Amid the pressures of secularization and the commercialization of education, this Sufi epistemology offers a spiritual alternative that balances science and faith, reason and remembrance, knowledge and wisdom.

This research opens two pathways for further development: comparative studies between Abuya Dimiyati's Sufi epistemology and the educational thought of other Nusantara scholars such as Nawawi al-Bantani or K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari, and the practical formulation of Sufi epistemology within the curricula of formal Islamic education. Through such efforts, Islamic education in Indonesia may nurture individuals who are knowledgeable, refined in character, and Sufi-spirited learners who treat knowledge not merely as a tool for thinking but as a path leading toward God.

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