



WESTERN HEGEMONY IN THE ACADEMIC WORLD: A PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW OF IMPLICATIONS AND PATH TOWARDS DECOLONIZATION OF KNOWLEDGE

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Abstract

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This article aims to philosophically analyze the institutional hegemony of the Western model in the academic world and its implications for global epistemic justice. Through a critical literature review, this study identifies how Western epistemological foundations—rooted in rationalism, objectivity, and universalism—have shaped the structure of modern higher education institutions, particularly through colonialism, positivism, and postcolonial globalization. This model has become institutionalized in curricula, research methodologies, publication standards, and academic evaluation mechanisms, which in turn produce phenomena such as epistemicide and intellectual homogenization. Using a decolonial theoretical framework, the article examines various forms of epistemic violence and universalistic bias that position non-Western knowledge as inferior. The findings affirm the need for pluriversity as an alternative paradigm to build more inclusive and equitable academic institutions. The article proposes decolonization pathways through curriculum reform, decolonial pedagogy, the opening of inter-epistemic dialogical spaces, and critical engagement with biased international standards. This study contributes to efforts toward epistemological and institutional reconstruction, particularly within a global academic context still overshadowed by the legacy of colonialism.

Keywords: *Epistemic Hegemony; Decolonization of Knowledge; Epistemic Violence; Pluriversity; Epistemicide.*



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INTRODUCTION

The academic world, which should be a space for critical dialogue and the exploration of diverse knowledge, has historically been shaped by narratives and structures dominated by Western tradition.¹ Higher education institutions worldwide, from universities in the West to educational institutions in other parts of the world, often adopt curriculum models, research methodologies, and epistemic standards deeply rooted in the heritage of Western thought.² This article aims to philosophically analyze how the domination of Western epistemology manifests in academic structures, its implications, and how paths towards the decolonization of knowledge can be pursued.³ The underlying research question is that, although the colonial era has ended, many academic institutions in post-colonial regions still maintain structural and epistemic orientations reflecting the dominance of Western epistemology.⁴

This key question is addressed through theoretical work in a literature review. The main analysis focuses on fundamental questions such as: how the philosophical and conceptual foundations of the Western model shape paradigms within the academic institutional system; how that hegemony is institutionalized through academic practices; what the philosophical and structural implications of Western dominance are for knowledge diversity and epistemic justice; and most importantly, what philosophical paths can be taken towards decolonizing academic institutions. This study seeks to analyze concepts such as rationality, objectivity, and universality constructed in the Western tradition, which have become standards that implicitly and explicitly marginalize forms of non-Western knowledge and worldviews.⁵

Several studies show that Western hegemony is rooted in the history of colonialism, modernity, and the expansion of Western knowledge institutions through civilizing mission projects that began in the 19th century.⁶ In a broader context, colonialism not only conquered territories but also built knowledge structures that positioned Western rationality and universalism as the main standards for civilization production.⁷ This condition is affirmed by Muhammad Ali, who shows how colonial apparatus shaped knowledge construction and scholarly practices in Muslim lands such

¹ Syed Farid Alatas, *Intellectual and Structural Challenges to Academic Dependency*, 1st edn (South-South Exchange Programme for Research on the History of Development (SEPHIS), 2008).

² Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*, REV-Revised (Princeton University Press, 2000), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.cttq94t0>.

³ Syed Farid Alatas, 'On the Indigenization of Academic Discourse', *Alternatives* 18, no. 3 (1993): 307–38, <https://doi.org/10.1177/030437549301800303>.

⁴ Syed Farid Alatas, 'The Post-Colonial State: Dual Functions in the Public Sphere', *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations* 23, no. 1/2 (1997): 285–307, JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23263498>.

⁵ Peter Carey and Farish A. Noor, *Ras, Kuasa, Dan Kekerasan Kolonial Di Hindia Belanda, 1808-1830*, 1st edn (Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia, 2022).

⁶ Farish A. Noor, *The Long Shadow of the 19th Century: Critical Essays on Colonial Orientalism in Southeast Asia*, 1st edn (Matahari Books, 2021).

⁷ Siti Maisaroh, 'Ancaman Hegemoni Global Barat Terhadap Dunia Islam', *Proceedings ANCOMS 2017*, UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, 14 Mei 2017, 1007–16.

as the Malay Archipelago and Indonesia.⁸ Meanwhile, Ahmet T. Kuru elaborates that the dominance of a particular epistemic model is intertwined with historical processes that have given rise to power relations in the intellectual development of Muslim societies.⁹

Farish A. Noor adds that the colonial legacy not only shaped the formal structure of educational institutions but also built an “epistemic architecture” that affects how Muslims understand themselves and the world around them. According to him, the colonial process has subtly produced a mindset that places the authority of Western knowledge as a universal standard, while local intellectual traditions are reduced to objects of exotic study or considered inadequate for explaining contemporary reality. Farish asserts that without critical awareness of these historical structures, postcolonial societies will continue to internalize detrimental epistemic hierarchies, ultimately weakening their ability to produce knowledge that is independent and relevant to their own social context.¹⁰

In line with this, Syed Farid Alatas offers a more systematic critique through his ideas of alternative discourses and intellectual dependency.¹¹ He highlights that Western epistemic dominance has created an intellectual dependency that makes scholars in the Muslim world tend to import theories, methods, and analytical frameworks without serious effort to develop scholarly tools rooted in their own historical and cultural experiences.¹² Alatas argues that the decolonization of knowledge is not adequately done by totally rejecting Western theories, but through a creative and critical process to build an autonomous intellectual tradition; a tradition capable of engaging in equal dialogue with the West, yet still grounded in local intellectual treasures.¹³

Several previous studies have highlighted similar epistemic and institutional issues, as seen in the works of Makoni et al.,¹⁴ Enslin and Hedge,¹⁵ Santos¹⁶ and

⁸ Muhammad Ali, *Islam Dan Penjajahan Barat: Sejarah Muslim Dan Kolonialis Eropa-Kristen Memodernisasi Sistem Organisasi, Politik, Hukum, Pendidikan Di Indonesia Dan Melayu* (Serambi, 2017).

⁹ Ahmet T. Kuru, *Islam, Otoritarianisme, Dan Keteringgalan: Perbandingan Lintas Zaman Dan Kawasan Di Dunia Muslim*, 1st edn (Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia, 2020).

¹⁰ Noor, *The Long Shadow of the 19th Century: Critical Essays on Colonial Orientalism in Southeast Asia*.

¹¹ Syed Farid Alatas, ‘Academic Dependency and the Global Division of Labour in the Social Sciences’, *Current Sociology* 51, no. 6 (2003): 599–613, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00113921030516003>; Alatas, *Intellectual and Structural Challenges to Academic Dependency*.

¹² Syed Farid Alatas, ‘Academic Dependency in the Social Sciences: Reflections on India and Malaysia’, *American Studies International* 38, no. 2 (2000): 80–96, JSTOR.

¹³ Syed Farid Alatas, *Diskursus Alternatif dalam Ilmu Sosial Asia: Tanggapan Terhadap Eurosentrisme*, 1st edn (Mizan, 2010): 13

¹⁴ Sinfree Makoni et al., eds, *Foundational Concepts of Decolonial and Southern Epistemologies*, 1st edn (Multilingual Matters & Channel View Publications, 2024), JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.22679674>.

¹⁵ Penny Enslin and Nicki Hedge, ‘Decolonizing Higher Education: The University in the New Age of Empire’, *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 58, nos 2–3 (2024): 227–41, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopedu/qhad052>.

¹⁶ Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Gurminder K. Bhambra, ‘Decolonizing Epistemologies’, *The Sociological Review* 65, no. 2 (2017): 228–30.

Grosfoguel.¹⁷ They emphasize how modern universities inherit Western epistemic structures that tend to be hierarchical and exclusive, leading to the phenomenon of epistemicide against non-Western knowledge. Mbembe¹⁸ and Mignolo¹⁹ show that coloniality of knowledge still operates through international publication standards, academic language, and Westernized curricula.²⁰ However, these studies mostly concentrate on macro-level global critique without providing an in-depth focus on how this dominance works institutionally and epistemically in regions historically influenced by colonialism, such as Indonesia. Furthermore, previous research tends to place decolonization as a normative discourse, not yet philosophically elaborating the relationship between the roots of Western epistemology—rationalism, objectivity, and universalism—and the institutional structure of modern higher education.

From this literature review, the researchers identify a research gap. *First*, not many studies explicitly connect the foundations of Western epistemology with the institutionalization process of hegemony in contemporary academic practice in Indonesia. *Second*, studies on epistemic violence, epistemicide, and intellectual homogenization are generally still at the theoretical level, not yet analyzed as philosophical consequences of the classical to modern Western epistemological tradition. *Third*, efforts towards decolonization of knowledge are still minimally examined from a systematic philosophical perspective, especially in the context of postcolonial higher education like Indonesia. This gap indicates the need for a study that can bridge critiques of the coloniality of knowledge with comprehensive philosophical analysis.

This research gap makes the present study remain relevant to provide a comprehensive philosophical analysis of how the Western epistemological model not only shapes thinking paradigms but also becomes institutionalized in the global academic system. A philosophical approach is important for understanding the epistemic layers that construct power structures in knowledge, thereby explaining how universalistic bias is legitimized through modern academic institutions. The relevance of this research is further strengthened in the context of Indonesian academia, which inherits a colonial education structure and operates within a global ecosystem still dominated by Western standards.

This study aims to outline the philosophical and epistemological foundations supporting the Western model, analyze the mechanisms of institutionalizing Western hegemony in the academic world through curriculum, methodology, and publication

¹⁷ Ramón Grosfoguel, 'The Structure of Knowledge in Westernized Universities: Epistemic Racism/Sexism and the Four Genocides/Epistemicides of the Long 16th Century', *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* 11, no. 1 (2013): 73–90.

¹⁸ Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 1st edn (University of California Press, 2001), JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1ppkxs>.

¹⁹ Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*.

²⁰ 'Keele Manifesto for Decolonizing the Curriculum', *Journal of Global Faultlines* 5, nos 1–2 (2018): 97–99, JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.13169/jglobfau.5.1-2.0097>.

standards, explain its implications for global epistemic justice, including the phenomenon of epistemicide, and offer directions for institutional decolonization through approaches of pluriversality and decolonial pedagogy.²¹ The contribution of this research lies in its presentation, connecting the analysis of classical-modern Western philosophy with contemporary decolonial critique to explain institutional knowledge domination. This research also provides a conceptual framework for understanding academic decolonization through a synthesis of critiques of knowledge coloniality and the philosophy of science, an approach still rarely explored in related studies in Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a library research using a critical literature review approach to address the formulation of problems regarding the institutional hegemony of the Western model in the academic world and paths towards decolonization.²² This approach was chosen because its nature allows the researcher to conduct in-depth analysis of existing philosophical and critical discourses, as well as synthesize key findings to build a coherent argument. The research design is a structured literature study, focusing on the tracing and critical evaluation of relevant works in the philosophy of science, critical theory, postcolonial studies, and philosophy of education.²³ This approach allows for a comprehensive synthesis and analysis of seminal and contemporary works relevant to the study, critical theory, postcolonial studies, and philosophy of education. The main focus is on literature analyzing institutional structures, philosophical roots, implications, and strategies for knowledge decolonization.

The steps in the literature search process encompass several crucial stages: *First*, Identification and problem formulation. This step begins with identifying the phenomenon of the institutional hegemony of the Western model in the academic world, which is then formulated into key research questions regarding roots, implications, and decolonization strategies. *Second*, Literature Search and Selection. This is done systematically through academic databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, Scopus, and university digital libraries. Inclusion criteria include thematic relevance to the research focus, source credibility (peer-reviewed journals, books from indexed academic publishers), depth of philosophical and critical analysis, and emphasis on key thinkers in Western philosophy, postcolonial theory, and decolonial studies. The researcher prioritized literature published in the last 5-10 years but still included seminal works

²¹ Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Duke University Press, 2011), JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv125jqbw>.

²² Miza Nina Adlini et al., 'Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Studi Pustaka', *Edumaspul: Jurnal Pendidikan* 6, no. 1 (2022): 974–80, <https://doi.org/10.33487/edumaspul.v6i1.3394>.

²³ Evanirosa, *Metode Penelitian Kepustakaan (Library Research)* (Media Sains Indonesia, 2020).

that are fundamental. Literature that is purely descriptive or not directly relevant was excluded.²⁴

Third, Literature Analysis. Analysis was conducted using Critical Thematic Analysis and Conceptual Analysis techniques. Critical thematic analysis was applied to identify recurring themes, main arguments, and patterns of dominance and resistance emerging in the literature on institutional hegemony and decolonization. Conceptual analysis was used to dissect and clarify key concepts such as 'Western model', 'academic institution', 'epistemology', 'hegemony', 'epistemicide', 'pluriversality', and 'decolonial pedagogy'. Every thesis or argument emerging from the literature analysis is always supported by accountable references.

The literature search focused on high-quality primary and secondary sources accessible through reputable academic databases and digital libraries. Primary sources include fundamental works from Western philosophers whose thoughts shaped the modern academic paradigm, such as René Descartes, Immanuel Kant, and positivist figures whose ideas became the foundation for the definition of scientific knowledge. In addition, the researcher also refers to the works of postcolonial critics and decolonial thinkers who explicitly critique Western dominance, such as Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Walter Dignolo, Achille Mbembe, Boaventura de Sousa Santos, and Ramón Grosfoguel. Their works are crucial in understanding how Western knowledge hegemony is institutionalized and impacts other knowledge systems.

Specifically, the systematic writing of this article begins by outlining the philosophical foundations of the Western model, tracing how ideas about valid knowledge and scientific methodology are shaped by intellectual traditions such as rationalism and positivism. Next, it will analyze in depth how this hegemony is institutionalized in university structures, curricula, publication standards, and other academic practices, especially in the postcolonial context. The discussion continues by identifying the philosophical and structural implications of this dominance, including the phenomenon of epistemicide (the destruction of local knowledge) and intellectual homogenization. Finally, this research analyzes various philosophical and practical paths towards institutional decolonization, focusing on concepts such as pluriversality and the importance of alternative epistemologies.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Philosophical and Conceptual Roots of the Western Model

To understand how global academic institutions today are so closely tied to the Western model, and how this hegemony is institutionalized, we need to trace back the philosophical foundations that shape the Western worldview of knowledge. Western epistemology, which has dominated scientific and academic thought for centuries, has

²⁴ Sirwan Khalid Ahmed et al., 'Using Thematic Analysis in Qualitative Research', *Journal of Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health* 6 (2025): 100198, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.glmedi.2025.100198>.

deep roots in Ancient Greek thought and developed rapidly through the Enlightenment era to modernity.²⁵ This foundation is characterized by a strong emphasis on rationality, objectivity, and the search for universal truths achievable through systematic and measurable methods. The definition of valid knowledge rooted in this foundation inherently influences how knowledge is subsequently standardized and institutionalized.²⁶

One of the most significant milestones in Western epistemology is the thought of René Descartes (1596-1650). Through his method of radical doubt (methodic doubt), Descartes sought to find an unshakable foundation for knowledge. His famous statement, "Cogito, ergo sum" (I think, therefore I am), marks a shift of focus to the rational subject as the source of epistemic certainty. For Descartes, pure reason is the primary tool for understanding reality.²⁷ True knowledge must be universal, logically provable, and free from sensory prejudices that are often deceptive. His dualistic approach, which separates the world of mind (subject) from the world of matter (object), also lays the groundwork for dichotomies frequently arising in Western science, such as subject-object, reason-emotion, and culture-nature. This model prioritizes knowledge that can be measured, quantified, and controlled by the rational subject. This definition of measurable and logical knowledge directly influences what is considered scientific knowledge worthy of being taught and researched in academic institutions.²⁸

Then, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) played a crucial role in synthesizing rationalism and empiricism and strengthening the idea of the active human mental structure in shaping experience. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant argues that knowledge does not come solely from sensory experience but is also shaped by innate categories in the human mind, such as space, time, and causality.²⁹ Although Kant acknowledged the existence of "noumena" (the world of things-in-themselves that cannot be known), he emphasized that the phenomenal world—the world as we experience it—can be rationally understood through the work of reason. Kantianism reinforced the belief that there is a universal structure in human cognition that underlies all valid knowledge, which in turn supports claims of universality for the scientific knowledge produced. He also distinguished between the realm of knowledge (accessible to science) and the moral realm (accessed by practical reason), a separation that would

²⁵ Sujata Patel and Maureen Eger, *Anti-Colonial Global Scholarship: Contexts, Perspectives, and Debates* (Bristol University Press, 2025), <https://doi.org/10.51952/9781529245547>.

²⁶ Syed Farid Alatas, '3: The Meanings of Anti-Colonial Social Thought and Theory', in *Anti-Colonial Global Scholarship* (Bristol University Press, 2025), <https://doi.org/10.51952/9781529245547.ch003>.

²⁷ René Descartes, *A Discourse on Method*. Translator: John Veitch (Project Gutenberg, 2016).

²⁸ Ahmad Qomarudin et al., 'Mystical, Ontological, and Functionalist According to Cornelis Anthonie Van Peursen in The Theory of Philosophy of Science', *SOSMANIORA: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Humaniora* 1, no. 4 (2022): 549–56, <https://doi.org/10.55123/sosmaniora.v1i4.1088>.

²⁹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant (Cambridge University Press, 1998), Cambridge Core, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511804649>.

have significant implications for the formation of fragmented disciplines within academic institutions.³⁰

Further development is seen in the 19th century with the emergence of positivism, especially through the thought of Auguste Comte (1798-1857). Positivism advocated that true knowledge can only be obtained through empirical observation and strict scientific method, known as the positivist method. Comte argued that human society develops through three stages: theological, metaphysical, and positive (scientific).³¹ The positive stage is the pinnacle of intellectual development, where knowledge is based on verifiable facts and natural laws discoverable through observation and experiment.³² This approach strongly emphasizes objectivity, neutrality, and empirical values, and views the methods of natural science as the ideal model for all fields of inquiry, including social sciences.³³ The emphasis on measurable and observable “facts” becomes the core of many modern academic disciplines, creating standards demanding strong, replicable empirical evidence. These strict standards form the basis for what is considered “scientific knowledge” that is valid and worthy of inclusion in university curricula³⁴

The consequence of this philosophical foundation is the creation of an epistemology that tends to regard Western knowledge as the gold standard, as the purest representation of “knowledge” itself.³⁵ The universality claimed by Western thought is not a neutral claim but often the result of historical narratives that privilege the European intellectual tradition. This model implicitly or explicitly considers the Western worldview as the most rational, most objective, and most effective way to understand the world. The fragmented thought structure into separate disciplines, emphasis on quantitative methods, and idealization of objectivity detached from social and cultural context, all stem from this philosophical foundation.

Consequently, any form of knowledge or worldview that does not conform to these criteria tends to be rejected, deemed “unscientific”, “subjective”, or even “primitive”, paving the way for the marginalization of epistemologies from outside the Western tradition.³⁶ This philosophical foundation directly shapes the “architecture” of

³⁰ Soerjono Soekanto, *Sosiologi: Suatu Pengantar (Edisi Revisi)* (Raja Grafindo Persada, 2013).

³¹ Auguste Comte, *The Positive Philosophy*, 1858th edn (Calvin Blanchard, 1858).

³² Jiyanto Jiyanto and Desti Widiani, ‘Auguste Comte’s Positivism and Its Relevance to Islamic Education in Higher Education’, *At-Tajdid: Jurnal Ilmu Tarbiyah* 14, no. 1 (2025): 73–83.

³³ Sayeda Akhter and Md. Ashif Hasan Razu, ‘Ibn Khaldun and Auguste Comte: A Comparative Analysis of the Founding Figures of Sociology’, *International Journal of Social Science and Education Research Studies* 04, no. 08 (2024): 911–18, <https://doi.org/10.55677/ijssers/V04I8Y2024-10>.

³⁴ Yudha Okta Anuhgra, ‘Auguste Comte’s Positivism: The Idea of Value-Free Science in Positivism According to the Islamic View and It’s Implications for Islamic Education’, *Kanz Philosophia: A Journal for Islamic Philosophy and Mysticism* 10, no. 2 (2024): 297–312, <https://doi.org/10.20871/kpjipm.v10i2.349>.

³⁵ Kenneth Sacks, ‘Auguste Comte and Consensus Formation in American Religious Thought—Part 1: The Creation of Consensus’, *Religions* 8, no. 8 (2017): 147, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel8080147>.

³⁶ Irham Nugroho, ‘Positivisme Auguste Comte: Analisa Epistemologis dan Nilai Etisnya Terhadap Sains’, *Cakrawala: Jurnal Studi Islam* 11, no. 2 (2016): 167–77, <https://doi.org/10.31603/cakrawala.v11i2.192>.

knowledge that is then embedded in academic institutions, creating bias from the outset in defining what is considered worthy of study and teaching.³⁷

Institutionalization of Western Hegemony in Academic Institutions

The aforementioned philosophical foundations of Western epistemology did not grow in a vacuum. They spread and took root in the institutional structure of the academic world through various historical and socio-political mechanisms, most dominantly through the project of colonialism and imperialism, as well as post-colonial globalization waves. This dissemination was not merely a transfer of ideas but often a project accompanied by the enforcement of power, cultural appropriation, and the rejection of local knowledge systems. This process directly shaped academic institutions as we know them today.³⁸

The era of European colonialism was the main catalyst for the institutionalization of the Western academic model in various parts of the world. Colonial powers not only established political and economic administration but also founded educational institutions designed to instill the colonizers' values, language, and worldview. Universities established in the colonies often imitated models from the mother country, such as the Sorbonne University in France or Oxford and Cambridge in England. Their curriculum structures were dominated by studies of European classics, European history, and science as understood in the West.³⁹ Their purpose was often not to develop local critical thinking, but to train local elites who could serve the interests of the colonial administration or to civilize indigenous peoples according to Western standards.⁴⁰ This is a concrete example of how the Western model was institutionalized through the establishment of educational institutions imitating the European blueprint.

In this context, local knowledge—often holistic, community-based, and integrated with spiritual wisdom and daily practices—was considered superstition or unscientific.⁴¹ This knowledge was systematically belittled, removed from curricula, or even actively suppressed. Edward Said, in his work *Orientalism*, has deeply analyzed how the West created the image of the “Orient” as something exotic, irrational, and inferior, which then justified domination and exploitation. Academic institutions played a significant role in building and maintaining this Orientalist narrative, which in turn reinforced claims of Western knowledge superiority. Academic institutions became agents disseminating the Western worldview through the teaching materials and research norms they established.⁴²

³⁷ Grosfoguel, 'The Structure of Knowledge in Westernized Universities: Epistemic Racism/Sexism and the Four Genocides/Epistemicides of the Long 16th Century'.

³⁸ Noor, *The Long Shadow of the 19th Century: Critical Essays on Colonial Orientalism in Southeast Asia*.

³⁹ Makoni et al., *Foundational Concepts of Decolonial and Southern Epistemologies*.

⁴⁰ Ali, *Islam Dan Penjajahan Barat: Sejarah Muslim Dan Kolonialis Eropa-Kristen Memodernisasi Sistem Organisasi, Politik, Hukum, Pendidikan Di Indonesia Dan Melayu*.

⁴¹ Carey and Noor, *Ras, Kuasa, Dan Kekerasan Kolonial Di Hindia Belanda, 1808-1830*.

⁴² Edward W. Said, *Orientalisme*, trans. Asep Hikmat (Penerbit Pustaka, 2001).

After the decolonization era, many new nations inherited deeply embedded institutional structures. Although these countries attempted to build their own national identity and education systems, the influence of the Western model remained very strong. Post-colonial globalization, marked by economic and cultural dominance from developed countries, further strengthened this trend. Universities in developing countries often continued to adopt international standards determined by Western institutions, including in publication, research methodology, and academic evaluation criteria.⁴³ These standards, although often intended to improve quality, in practice can become tools for maintaining Western hegemony. For example, the demand for publication in English-language international journals often favors research using Western theoretical frameworks.⁴⁴

What Boaventura de Sousa Santos calls “epistemicide” also occurs, a tragedy of the destruction or neglect of other knowledge systems that continues through the institutionalization of the Western model.⁴⁵ Knowledge that cannot be articulated within the framework of Western methodology, which cannot be published in high-index English-language journals, or that does not align with theories developed in the West, tends to be ignored and loses its academic validity. This creates a systemic bias in global knowledge production, where voices and perspectives from the Global South are often drowned out or unheard. Academic institutions, with their structures and evaluation systems, actively or passively contribute to this phenomenon.⁴⁶

This institutionalization is visible in various aspects of academic life: [1] In terms of Curriculum, lecture materials and readings used are often dominated by Western authors and theories, with little space for local or non-Western intellectual traditions; [2] Universally accepted research methodology standards are often rooted in quantitative and qualitative models developed in the West, which may not always be suitable for capturing the complexity of phenomena outside that context; [3] Publication systems such as the hierarchy of scientific journals dominated by English-language publications from Western countries, creating barriers for researchers from non-Western countries to contribute and be recognized in global discourse; and [4] In terms of academic assessment, criteria for academic success such as citations and indexing often favor researchers working within established Western theoretical frameworks.⁴⁷

Thus, the expansion of the Western model into the institutional structure of academia is not merely a matter of style or preference, but a complex historical process involving the enforcement of epistemic power. This creates an environment where knowledge produced from non-Western perspectives is often considered secondary,

⁴³ Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*.

⁴⁴ Enslin and Hedge, ‘Decolonizing Higher Education: The University in the New Age of Empire’.

⁴⁵ Santos and Bhambra, ‘Decolonizing Epistemologies’.

⁴⁶ Santos, *Epistemologies of the South*.

⁴⁷ Grosfoguel, ‘The Structure of Knowledge in Westernized Universities: Epistemic Racism/Sexism and the Four Genocides/Epistemicides of the Long 16th Century’.

relevant only if it can be re-articulated within a Western framework, or even completely ignored. Academic institutions, through their structural design, actively perpetuate this dominance.⁴⁸

Philosophical Implications and Structural Dominance

The institutional dominance of the Western model in the global academic world not only shapes structures and practices but also carries a series of philosophical and structural implications that are often detrimental.⁴⁹ These implications include the marginalization of other knowledge systems, intellectual homogenization, and the reinforcement of biases inherently embedded in Western narratives. Understanding these implications is key to appreciating the urgency of institutional and epistemic decolonization.⁵⁰

One of the most severe implications is the phenomenon known as epistemicide, a term popularized by Boaventura de Sousa Santos.⁵¹ Epistemicide in the context of academic institutions refers to the destruction or neglect of knowledge systems different from the dominant one. This occurs when university curricula only cover Western thought, when research standards only recognize Western methodologies, or when local knowledge is considered unscientific and irrelevant.⁵² As a result, the richness and diversity of human ways of knowing and understanding the world are lost or obscured. Knowledge that cannot be articulated within the framework of Western rationality, which is often linear and analytical, is deemed inferior.⁵³ For example, indigenous knowledge about ecosystems that is holistic and integrated with spiritual practices is often not considered scientific by Western institutional standards.

Another philosophical implication is intellectual homogenization. When academic institutions worldwide adopt the same standards and theoretical frameworks originating from the West, the process of knowledge production tends to become uniform. This limits intellectual creativity and innovation, because academics from various backgrounds are forced to “speak the same language”, namely the language of Western epistemology.⁵⁴ Consequently, the questions asked, methods used, and conclusions drawn often become similar, regardless of different cultural and social contexts. This can also lead to the loss of unique perspectives that could be offered by

⁴⁸ Nikita Dhawan, *Rescuing the Enlightenment from the Europeans: Critical Theories of Decolonization* (Duke University Press, 2025), <https://doi.org/10.1215/9781478061663>.

⁴⁹ Grosfoguel, ‘The Structure of Knowledge in Westernized Universities: Epistemic Racism/Sexism and the Four Genocides/Epistemicides of the Long 16th Century’.

⁵⁰ Syed Farid Alatas, ‘Knowledge and Education in Islam’, *Secularism and Spirituality: Seeking Integrated Knowledge and Success in Madrasah Education in Singapore*, Marshall Cavendish Singapore, 2006, 166–79.

⁵¹ Santos, *Epistemologies of the South*.

⁵² Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*.

⁵³ Syed Farid Alatas, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in Indonesia and Malaysia: The Rise of the Post-Colonial State*, 1st edn (Macmillan Press, 1997).

⁵⁴ Maisaroh, ‘Ancaman Hegemoni Global Barat Terhadap Dunia Islam’.

non-Western intellectual traditions, which may have different views on fundamental issues such as time, space, identity, ethics, or the relationship between humans and nature. Students are taught more about the history of Western philosophy, losing the opportunity to study intellectual traditions from other parts of the world.⁵⁵

Institutional dominance also reinforces ethnocentric biases and false universalism. Western epistemology often claims itself to be universal, applicable to all humans and all contexts. However, critiques from postcolonial thought show that these claims of universality often hide specific assumptions from internalized Western culture. What is considered objective or rational in the Western tradition may not be so in other traditions.⁵⁶ For example, the concept of an autonomous individual separate from their community—a central idea in Western philosophy—may not align with worldviews where human identity is deeply tied to social and collective relationships. By regarding the Western model as the universal standard, academic institutions unconsciously promote a particular worldview as the only valid way of knowing reality, which in turn can stigmatize and marginalize alternative perspectives.⁵⁷

Furthermore, this institutional dominance can contribute to what is called epistemic violence, a form of violence that occurs when a dominant knowledge system suppresses, ignores, or destroys other knowledge systems.⁵⁸ This is not just physical violence but violence that damages the way humans understand themselves, their world, and how they interact with it. When local knowledge is considered inferior or non-existent, communities relying on that knowledge can experience cultural disorientation, loss of identity, and difficulty in developing solutions relevant to their own context. Academic institutions, with their hierarchical structures and evaluation standards, can become agents perpetuating this epistemic violence.

The structural implications of this dominance are clearly visible in the academic assessment system. Standards such as citations, h-index, and publications in high-index international journals often favor researchers operating within established Western theoretical frameworks.⁵⁹ This creates institutional incentives that encourage academics to focus on topics and approaches considered “international standard”, often neglecting local issues or non-Western perspectives that may not receive the same recognition. Consequently, the academic structure itself becomes a barrier to knowledge diversification.

⁵⁵ ‘Postcolonial Dilemmas: To Renounce or Rescue the Enlightenment?’, in *Rescuing the Enlightenment from the Europeans: Critical Theories of Decolonization*, ed. Nikita Dhawan (Duke University Press, 2025), <https://doi.org/10.1215/9781478061663-001>.

⁵⁶ Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*.

⁵⁷ Alatas, ‘Knowledge and Education in Islam’.

⁵⁸ Grosfoguel, ‘The Structure of Knowledge in Westernized Universities: Epistemic Racism/Sexism and the Four Genocides/Epistemicides of the Long 16th Century’.

⁵⁹ Wulandari Santoso, ‘Exploring Critical Pedagogy in an Indonesian Higher Education: Possibilities and Challenges’, *ELTICS: Journal of English Language Teaching and English Linguistics* 6, no. 2 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.31316/eltics.v6i2.1551>.

Overall, the philosophical and structural implications of Western institutional dominance are the creation of an academic landscape that tends to be mono-epistemic. This not only hinders intellectual growth but also perpetuates epistemic injustice rooted in colonial history. Addressing these implications requires honest acknowledgment of the biases within institutional structures and active efforts to open space for epistemic plurality.

Paths Toward Institutional Decolonization

Aware of the detrimental philosophical and structural impacts of the institutional dominance of the Western model, discourse on the decolonization of knowledge and institutions has emerged as an increasingly important critical response in the academic world.⁶⁰ Institutional decolonization is not merely about replacing one set of Western theories with theories from non-Western traditions, but a transformative process aimed at dismantling the epistemic and structural hierarchies created by colonialism and modernity, and rebuilding intellectual spaces that are more inclusive, equitable, and pluralistic. It is an effort to restore the dignity, validity, and relevance of knowledge systems long marginalized within existing institutional frameworks.⁶¹

One central concept in institutional decolonization is pluriversality, advocated by thinkers such as Walter D. Mignolo. Pluriversality rejects the idea of a single worldview (monoverse) represented by the Western worldview, and instead proposes the existence of many worldviews (pluriverse).⁶² In an institutional context, this means acknowledging that there are many valid ways to produce, organize, and disseminate knowledge, and that each perspective is particular, bound to its historical, cultural, and geographical context. Pluriversality encourages inter-epistemological dialogue within academic structures, where each knowledge tradition can contribute to collective understanding without having to submit to the epistemic superiority of another. This is a rejection of the narrow claims of universality from the Western model and recognition of the richness stemming from the diversity of perspectives that institutions can accommodate.

The concept of pluriversality, emphasizing the existence of multiple worldviews, becomes highly relevant in Indonesia. This country possesses rich diversity in ethnicity, culture, and philosophical traditions, ranging from the local wisdom of indigenous communities to the Nusantara Islamic intellectual tradition and modernist-nationalist thought. Applying pluriversality institutionally means recognizing that knowledge produced from these traditions has its own validity and can contribute to global understanding, not merely as a complement or object of study, but as an equal source of knowledge.⁶³ This demands curriculum reform in Indonesian universities to not only

⁶⁰ Santoso, 'Exploring Critical Pedagogy in an Indonesian Higher Education'.

⁶¹ Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*.

⁶² Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*.

⁶³ Alatas, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in Indonesia and Malaysia: The Rise of the Post-Colonial State*.

include Western philosophy or global theories but also systematically integrate thought from Nusantara traditions, such as Javanese philosophy, local Islamic thought, or the ecological wisdom of indigenous communities.⁶⁴

Institutional decolonization has provided an important foundation for analyzing the psychological and cultural impacts of colonialism on the colonized subject. Farish A. Noor highlights the need for liberation from the inferiority instilled by colonial dominance, including the epistemic inferiority reinforced by institutional structures. This liberation involves rejecting the internalized values and worldview of the colonizer within institutions, as well as efforts to rediscover and revitalize local identity and knowledge systems within academic frameworks.⁶⁵

Another important figure in the decolonization movement is Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who introduced the concept of subaltern studies and emphasized the importance of listening to marginalized or “subaltern” voices in academia. She highlights the difficulty for the subaltern to speak and be recognized within dominant knowledge structures. For her, institutional decolonization must involve efforts to create spaces where subaltern voices can be heard and valued, and where their knowledge can be integrated into broader academic discourse through structural changes in curriculum and methodology.⁶⁶

Mbembe, a Cameroonian philosopher, speaks of the need to “recount the world” and build a postcolony free from colonial traces. For him, decolonization is not only about expelling physical colonizers but also about dismantling colonial traces in thought, institutions, and how we understand ourselves and others. This involves critiquing dominant narratives and efforts to create forms of knowledge more relevant to contemporary realities outside the colonial framework, requiring fundamental reform in academic institutions.⁶⁷

In practice in Indonesian education, efforts toward institutional decolonization can take various relevant concrete forms, such as: [1] Curriculum reform integrating reading materials and thought from non-Western traditions. This is not merely an addition, but a restructuring of the curriculum to be more balanced and representative; [2] Development of decolonial pedagogy, creating teaching and learning methods that challenge colonial assumptions in education, encourage active participation from students of diverse backgrounds, and value diverse ways of learning. This involves changing how lecturers interact with students and course materials; [3] Translation and dissemination of non-Western knowledge by translating important works from non-Western languages into global languages, and encouraging the publication of works

⁶⁴ Alatas, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in Indonesia and Malaysia: The Rise of the Post-Colonial State*.

⁶⁵ Noor, *The Long Shadow of the 19th Century: Critical Essays on Colonial Orientalism in Southeast Asia*.

⁶⁶ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (Columbia University Press, 2010), JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7312/morr14384>.

⁶⁷ Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*.

from authors previously marginalized by Western-dominated academic institutions; [4] Inter-epistemic dialogue within institutions by building academic forums where academics and students from various knowledge traditions can engage in equal dialogue, learn from each other, and collaborate in solving global problems. This requires structural support from universities.

Nevertheless, these institutional decolonization efforts are not without challenges. The main challenges in institutional decolonization in Indonesia include resistance from academics accustomed to the Western model, lack of resources to translate and publish local works, and the complexity in defining and integrating “Nusantara epistemology” without falling into exoticism or narrow nationalism. However, its philosophical urgency remains high. Indonesia needs academic institutions that not only function as centers for transmitting global knowledge but also as centers for producing authentic, relevant knowledge rooted in its own rich intellectual traditions.

Research Gaps and Future Research Directions

The philosophical analysis of the institutional hegemony of the Western model in the academic world, as presented through this literature review, has highlighted significant historical roots, mechanisms of expansion, and philosophical and structural implications. However, the complexity of this issue leaves several gaps in the existing literature and opens various promising future research directions, especially for academics and students wishing to delve deeper into decolonization issues.

One major gap lies in comparative studies on various authentic non-Western academic institutional models. Most critical literature tends to focus on critiquing the Western model or on the concept of decolonization in general. However, there is still little research systematically comparing and contrasting the characteristics, strengths, and challenges of various academic traditions that developed outside the West (e.g., East Asian intellectual traditions, Sub-Saharan Africa, or Latin America) within their institutional contexts. Such studies would be valuable for identifying authentic alternative principles and building a richer understanding of institutional pluriversality.

Furthermore, although the concepts of epistemicide and epistemic violence have been discussed, more detailed empirical studies on how specific academic institutions (such as in Indonesia) specifically implement or resist structural decolonization strategies are still limited. Research such as case studies on curriculum reform, publication policies in local universities, or the experiences of lecturers and students in transitioning towards decolonial pedagogy can provide more concrete evidence and practical lessons.

Future research directions can also focus on developing a more mature theoretical framework for articulating “decolonial pedagogy” in teaching. How can concepts of Western philosophy be taught critically and connected with local thought traditions? How can philosophy students be encouraged to develop philosophical arguments from non-Western perspectives? These questions require deeper philosophical exploration.

In addition, the role of digital technology in strengthening or challenging Western institutional hegemony is an area requiring further exploration. How can online learning platforms be redesigned to promote non-Western content and methodologies? How can algorithmic bias in academic databases be overcome to provide greater visibility for knowledge from the Global South?

Finally, future research could explore perspectives from more specific disciplines on how Western institutional hegemony affects the way these issues are discussed. For example, how concepts of “beauty” or “justice” in Western philosophy dominate global discourse, and how non-Western traditions offer alternative understandings that can be integrated into academic institutions. By filling these gaps, our understanding of the academic landscape can become more nuanced, critical, and oriented towards building more just and diverse institutions.

CONCLUSION

The article with a philosophical study of the institutional hegemony of the Western model in the academic world through a literature review has identified that the foundations of Western thought on rationality, objectivity, and universality have shaped the conceptual framework underlying academic institutions. This hegemony manifests institutionally through the adoption of curricula, methodologies, publication standards, and evaluation systems that mimic the Western model, disseminated through colonialism and post-colonial globalization. The institutional structure formed fundamentally shapes how knowledge is produced, shared, and valued.

The philosophical and structural implications of this dominance are significant, encompassing the phenomenon of epistemicide (destruction of local knowledge), intellectual homogenization, reinforcement of ethnocentric bias, and the creation of deeply rooted epistemic injustice. Academic structures that often prioritize Western theories and methods have systematically marginalized local perspectives and wisdom, thereby limiting epistemic diversity and hindering the production of more globally and contextually relevant knowledge. Its impact is felt even in practical aspects such as how we understand fundamental concepts like the nature of truth, valid methods of inquiry, and even the very meaning of knowledge.

Therefore, the path toward institutional decolonization offers a crucial and urgent alternative. Concepts like pluriversality—recognition of the multitude of worldviews and ways of understanding reality—as well as the application of decolonial pedagogy become key to restructuring academic institutions to be more inclusive, equitable, and representative. Efforts such as curriculum reform to be more balanced and encompass the richness of non-Western intellectual traditions, the development of equal inter-epistemic dialogue, and critique of biased academic standards are important steps requiring strong philosophical understanding.

Awareness of this institutional hegemony is not merely an academic or theoretical issue, but a call to engage in critical attitude and self-awareness to continually

transform. Understanding the philosophical roots of this dominance allows us to uncover the assumptions underlying the disciplines and institutions where we learn. Furthermore, it encourages us to actively contribute to decolonization efforts, whether through independent research highlighting alternative perspectives, participation in constructive critical discussions, or advocacy for real structural change in the campus environment.

Ultimately, the future of a more just, rich, and relevant academic world for all humanity depends on our courage to dismantle and reconstruct institutions so they are no longer trapped in the “shadow of the West”, but open themselves to the richness of the pluriverse of knowledge accumulated throughout human civilization history. This is an urgent philosophical and institutional challenge requiring active, critical, and responsible participation from every individual and academic community.

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