

The Existence of Aswaja in Shaping Students' Religious Moderation Character Through the Concept of Education Sustainable Development (ESD) at Pakisaji Islamic Middle School

Yuliana Nur Mustaghfiroh^{1*}, Nur Milan Siregar^{2*}

¹IAI Asy-Syadzili Malang, Indonesia, ² STIT Padang Lawas Gunung Tua, Medan, Indonesia

e-mail: ^{1*} yuliananm934@gmail.com

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis peran nilai-nilai Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah (Aswaja) dalam membentuk karakter moderasi beragama peserta didik melalui pendekatan Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) di SMP Islam Pakisaji. Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh meningkatnya tantangan intoleransi, radikalisme, dan pengaruh media digital terhadap karakter generasi muda, sehingga diperlukan model pendidikan yang mampu mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai keislaman dengan prinsip pembangunan berkelanjutan. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus. Data diperoleh melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan dokumentasi yang melibatkan kepala sekolah, guru Pendidikan Agama Islam, serta peserta didik, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan teknik reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan melalui triangulasi sumber dan metode. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa nilai-nilai Aswaja yang meliputi tawasuth (moderasi), tasamuh (toleransi), tawazun (keseimbangan), dan i'tidal (keadilan) terintegrasi secara sistematis

dalam proses pembelajaran, kegiatan keagamaan, program sosial, dan aktivitas pelestarian lingkungan berbasis ESD. Integrasi tersebut berhasil memperkuat sikap moderat, toleran, adil, peduli lingkungan, serta meningkatkan kepedulian sosial peserta didik melalui pembiasaan dan keteladanan guru. Meskipun masih ditemukan pengaruh narasi intoleran dari media sosial pada sebagian kecil peserta didik, implementasi Aswaja berbasis ESD terbukti mampu membangun budaya sekolah yang religius, inklusif, dan berkelanjutan. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa sinergi antara nilai-nilai Aswaja dan konsep ESD merupakan model pendidikan Islam yang efektif dalam membentuk generasi yang moderat, berkeadilan, berwawasan lingkungan, serta memiliki tanggung jawab sosial yang tinggi dalam menghadapi tantangan masyarakat global.

ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the role of Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah (Aswaja) values in shaping students' religious moderation through the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) approach at Pakisaji Islamic Junior High School. The study is motivated by the growing challenges of intolerance, radicalism, and digital media influences that increasingly affect the character development of young generations, highlighting the need for an educational model that integrates Islamic values with sustainable development principles. A qualitative case study design was employed. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation involving the principal, Islamic Religious Education teachers, and students. The data were analyzed using data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing supported by source and method triangulation. The findings reveal that the core Aswaja values of tawasuth (moderation), tasamuh (tolerance), tawazun (balance), and i'tidal (justice) are systematically integrated into classroom instruction, religious activities, social engagement, and ESD-based environmental programs. This integration effectively strengthens students' religious moderation, tolerance, fairness, environmental awareness, and social responsibility through continuous habituation and teachers' role modelling. Although a small proportion of students remain influenced by intolerant narratives disseminated through social media, the implementation of Aswaja within the ESD framework has successfully fostered an Islamic, inclusive, and sustainable school culture. The study concludes that the synergy between Aswaja values and ESD provides an effective model of Islamic education for developing moderate, environmentally responsible, socially empathetic, and globally responsible students capable of responding to contemporary societal challenges.

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Introduction

The phenomena of intolerance, radicalism, and division among today's young generation are increasingly worrying. The rapid development of digital technology often serves as a conduit for the influx of ideologies that conflict with national values and moderate Islamic teachings. On the other hand,

* Corresponding Author: Yuliana et. al: yuliananm934@gmail.com

educational institutions have a strategic role in instilling the values of religious moderation from an early age (Hapsara et al., 2025) Through sustainability-oriented education (Education for Sustainable Development/ESD), students are expected to not only master academic aspects, but also develop character that is capable of maintaining harmony, tolerance, and peace in community life (Darmawan et al., 2023).

Theoretically, the ESD concept emphasizes three main dimensions: environmental, social, and economic sustainability. From a social perspective, one of the main goals of ESD is to build an inclusive, peaceful, and just society (Luthfatun Nisa' & Ma'arif, 2025) The values of Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah (Aswaja), such as tawasuth (moderation), tasamuh (tolerance), tawazun (balance), and i'tidal (justice), are highly relevant to this goal. Character education theory also emphasizes that integrating religious values with continuous learning can shape students with noble character, openness to differences, and the ability to contribute positively to society (Fekih Zguir et al., 2021).

Pakisaji Islamic Junior High School, as an Islamic-based educational institution, strives to implement Aswaja values in daily learning. However, challenges remain, including diverse student backgrounds, the influence of diverse social media platforms, and limited integration of ESD-based learning. This prevents some students from fully understanding the full meaning of religious moderation, especially in the context of a diverse social life. Therefore, an educational strategy is needed that combines Aswaja values with ESD concepts so that students can develop moderate character traits that align with the challenges of the times (Harmi, 2022).

As research conducted by (Hidayati et al., tt) Studies have shown that integrating Aswaja values into education can strengthen students' religious tolerance and moderation. For example, research conducted by academics at State Islamic Religious Colleges (PTKIN) found that implementing Aswaja principles can suppress exclusive attitudes and promote harmony. Furthermore, research on ESD in schools has also been conducted by (Khamid & Adib, 2021) demonstrated that continuing education can increase students' awareness of social diversity and the importance of maintaining peace. However, research specifically examining Aswaja's role in shaping students' religious moderation through an ESD approach at the junior high school level is still rare.

This study aims to describe and analyze the role of Aswaja in shaping students' religious moderation through the ESD concept at Pakisaji Islamic Junior High School. Specifically, this study aims to uncover how Aswaja values are integrated into ESD-based learning, how students respond to its implementation, and the extent to which this integration can shape students' religious moderation in their daily lives.

This research update lies in its effort to combine two important concepts: Aswaja values as the basis of moderate theology and ESD as a framework for sustainable global education. Previous research has primarily examined Aswaja within the context of Islamic boarding school traditions or Islamic education in general, and ESD within environmental and social contexts. This study, meanwhile, focuses on the synergy between Aswaja and ESD in shaping the character of religious moderation in secondary school students, thus contributing to the development of a more sustainable global education system. theoretical and practical for the development of a moderate and sustainable Islamic education model in the digital era.

Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study. The qualitative approach was chosen because this research focuses on an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of Aswaja's role in shaping students' religious moderation through the concept of *Education for Sustainable Development* (ESD) in the Pakisaji Islamic Middle School environment. Qualitative research allows researchers to collect comprehensive data related to the values, attitudes, and experiences of students and teachers in the educational process. (Arikunto, 2019).

The research subjects included Islamic Religious Education teachers, school administrators, and students from Pakisaji Islamic Middle School who participated in Aswaja value-based learning activities and integrated ESD concepts. Subjects were selected using a purposive sampling technique, selecting informants who were considered to be most knowledgeable and directly involved in the implementation of Aswaja values at the school (Adlini et al., 2022).

DataThe research data were obtained through several data collection techniques. First, in-depth interviews were conducted with teachers, students, and the principal to obtain information regarding the Aswaja value integration strategy and the application of the ESD concept in learning. Second, participatory observation was conducted by directly observing the classroom learning process, religious activities, and student interactions in daily school life. Third, documentation was used to collect data from school archives, curriculum, learning materials, and student activity records related to the implementation of Aswaja and ESD values (Firmansyah et al., 2021).

Data analysis was conducted descriptively and qualitatively, using the following steps: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was achieved by filtering data relevant to the research focus and then presenting it in a systematic narrative format for easy understanding. Next, the researcher drew conclusions based on the patterns, trends, and meanings found in the data (Arifin, 2020).

To ensure data validity, this study employed source and method triangulation techniques. Triangulation was conducted by comparing data from interviews, observations, and documentation to obtain a more accurate and reliable picture.

With this method, it is hoped that the research will be able to fully describe the role of Aswaja in forming the character of religious moderation of students at Pakisaji Islamic Middle School through the integration of the ESD concept, while also providing theoretical and practical contributions to the development of a sustainable Islamic education model (Sugiyono, 2018).

Result and Discussion

Result

Based on the results of interviews, observations, and documentation at Pakisaji Islamic Middle School, several important findings were found:

Aswaja Value in Learning

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at Pakisaji Islamic Junior High School not only convey religious material normatively, but also strive to internalize the values of Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah (Aswaja) into every learning activity. This is evident in the planning, process, and evaluation of learning, which emphasizes the development of religious moderation. 1) The Value of Tawasuth (Moderate). Moderate values are realized by instilling a balanced attitude in understanding Islamic teachings, namely not being extreme to the right (radical) or to the left (liberal). In learning practices, teachers encourage students not to interpret teachings rigidly and open up discussion spaces so that students are accustomed to critical, analytical, and contextual thinking. For example, in learning about the differences in Islamic jurisprudence schools, teachers emphasize that all schools have a strong foundation of evidence, so students are encouraged to respect the differences of opinion of scholars. 2) The Value of Tasamuh (Tolerance). PAI teachers place special emphasis on mutual respect among friends from different backgrounds, whether social, cultural, or religious traditions. In group discussions, for example, teachers encourage students to give all members the opportunity to express their opinions. In this way, students are trained not to dominate conversations and to be willing to accept differing points of view. This is important given the challenges of intolerance that are rife in the digital age. 3) The Value of Tawazun (Balance). The principle of tawazun is implemented in learning by emphasizing the balance between ritual worship obligations and social responsibility. Teachers teach that a Muslim is not only required to be devout, but also to maintain good relationships with others and care for the environment. For example, students are encouraged to get involved in school social activities such as community service, fundraising, or sharing with friends in need. Through this, they understand that religiosity is not only confined to the personal realm but must also be present in concrete social actions. 4) The Value of I'tidal (Justice). The value of justice is implemented by teachers by distributing opportunities equitably in the learning process. For example, in assigning group assignments, teachers emphasize that responsibilities be shared according to each student's abilities. Teachers also strive to be fair in their assessments, not favoring any particular student, and always basing evaluations on effort and achievement. In this way, students learn to practice justice in their daily social relationships.(Muharom et al., 2022).

The integration of Aswaja values is not merely theoretical but is consistently practiced in both classroom and extracurricular activities. Teachers act as role models, demonstrating moderate, tolerant,

balanced, and fair behavior, which students can directly imitate. This aligns with character education theory, which states that character formation is more effective through role models than mere verbal instruction.

In this way, learning at Pakisaji Islamic Middle School becomes an arena for instilling Aswaja values holistically, combining knowledge, attitudes, and life skills relevant to the challenges of diversity in society. This integration has been proven to foster students' growing awareness of the importance of religious moderation in everyday life. (Khamid & Adib, 2021).

Implementation of ESD Concepts in School Activities

The implementation of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) at Pakisaji Islamic Middle School is evident in various programs oriented towards environmental, social, and cultural sustainability of the school. This ESD concept is not just a slogan, but is practiced through routine and incidental activities involving the entire school community. 1) Environmental Dimension. The school instills concern for environmental sustainability through greening and environmental maintenance programs. Students regularly participate in tree planting activities, caring for ornamental plants, and maintaining the cleanliness of classrooms and the schoolyard. For example, each class is given the responsibility of maintaining a small garden in front of their classroom. This activity not only trains environmental awareness but also fosters a sense of collective responsibility. 2) The Social Dimension of ESD is also realized through social activities that foster solidarity among students and empathy for the surrounding community. Examples include community service activities such as fundraising for disaster victims, sharing basic necessities with underprivileged residents, and providing assistance to orphans. These activities provide students with direct experience of the importance of living side by side in harmony, helping each other, and building a sense of togetherness. 3) Dimension of Togetherness (School Culture). The school accustoms students to maintain a culture of cleanliness, discipline, and mutual respect. The "Clean Friday" program and the habit of disposing of trash properly are concrete examples of the formation of a sustainable culture. In addition, religious activities such as congregational prayer, Quran recitation, and prayer together before learning also integrate spiritual values with social togetherness. This shows that ESD at Pakisaji Islamic Middle School is not understood narrowly only on environmental aspects, but also includes the formation of a healthy, religious, and harmonious school culture. 4) Integration with Aswaja Values. The implementation of ESD at this school is inseparable from Aswaja values. For example, during reforestation activities, teachers emphasize the principle of tawazun (balance) between humans and nature, so that students understand that protecting the environment is part of worship. In social activities, the value of tasamuh (tolerance) is instilled so that students are able to share without discriminating against the background of the recipient of assistance. Thus, ESD-based activities directly strengthen the internalization of Aswaja values in students' real lives. The implementation of the ESD concept shows that the school is trying to build a sustainable educational ecosystem, where students not only learn theory in class, but are also equipped with real experiences that shape moderate, caring, and responsible personalities. (Matitaputty et al., 2022).

Integration of Aswaja and ESD

The results of interviews, observations, and documentation show that students' responses to the integration of Aswaja values with the ESD concept were generally positive, although there were several challenges that needed to be considered.

1) Understanding Religious Moderation

Most students were able to reiterate Aswaja values, such as tawasuth (moderation), tasamuh (tolerance), tawazun (balance), and i'tidal (justice), in the context of everyday life. They understood that being moderate means not being extreme in attitudes, both in religion and social interactions. A concrete example was students' increased ability to restrain themselves from mocking friends' differing opinions and choosing to discuss matters in a more polite manner.

2) Involvement in Social and Environmental Activities

The integration of ESD has resulted in increased student participation in social and environmental activities. Several students stated that they felt more motivated to participate in community service activities, mutual cooperation, and reforestation programs because they realized these activities were not only school obligations but also part of Islamic teachings that emphasize social awareness. This indicates a shift in awareness from simply being a "school activity" to being "part of moral and spiritual

responsibility." Student responses are also evident in the new habits that are beginning to form. For example, students are more disciplined in disposing of trash properly, are accustomed to greeting teachers and friends, and are more concerned about helping friends in need. These small habits reflect the practical internalization of Aswaja and ESD values in everyday life. Although the majority of student responses were positive, a small group of students still showed a tendency to be influenced by intolerant or exclusive social media content. For example, some students expressed the view that other religious groups should not be respected, influenced by narratives they consumed on digital platforms. This indicates that the internalization of Aswaja and ESD values has not fully overcome the strong external influences. Therefore, a digital literacy support strategy is needed so that students are more critical in filtering information (Harmi, 2022).

Most students considered teachers, especially Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, to be important role models in understanding the values of moderation and sustainability. Students stated that they learned from teachers' fairness in distributing grades, their friendliness to all students without discrimination, and their consistent emphasis on the importance of tolerance. This reinforces the theory that teacher role models have a significant influence in shaping students' character.(Khamid & Adib, 2021).

In general, student responses indicate that the integration of Aswaja and ESD is effective in forming awareness of religious moderation, although the influence of external environments such as social media remains a challenging factor that needs to be managed wisely.

Formation of a Moderate Religious Character

Observations at Pakisaji Islamic Junior High School show that the integration of Aswaja values with the ESD concept significantly contributes to the development of students' religious moderation. This process does not occur instantly, but rather through consistent practice, mentoring, and role models from teachers and the school environment. Students show an increase in respect for differences in their peers' backgrounds, both in terms of economics, culture, and religious practices. For example, in group discussions, students no longer tend to impose their opinions, but instead allow others to speak. This aligns with the Aswaja value of *tasamuh* (tolerance), which emphasizes the importance of an open attitude toward diversity.(Vioreza et al., 2023).

Before the integration program was implemented, teachers found that some students were reluctant to accept differing opinions and tended to be exclusive. However, after implementing Aswaja and ESD-based learning, students began to engage in polite dialogue, presenting arguments based on knowledge, and accepting that differences are a normal part of social and religious life. This demonstrates the internalization of the value of moderation in real life. Moderation is also evident through students' active participation in school activities with a sense of togetherness, such as community service, environmental volunteerism, and fundraising for disaster victims. This involvement fosters empathy and social solidarity, which aligns with the value of balance (*tawazun*) in human relationships.(Syakur et al., 2022).

Several teachers noted changes in student interactions, as they began to learn to be fair, for example, in group assignments or games outside of class. Students no longer refused to collaborate with peers they perceived as less intelligent but instead offered support so that all members felt they were contributing. This embodies the value of *i'tidal* (justice), one of the pillars of Aswaja.(Acosta Castellanos & Queiruga-Dios, 2022).

Integration with ESD strengthens the internalization of Aswaja values because students learn not only theory but also real-life practices that require concern for the environment, society, and sustainability. For example, through reforestation activities, students understand that preserving nature is part of worship, while through social activities, they learn that sharing without discrimination is part of moderate Islamic teachings. Overall, these findings demonstrate that the integration of Aswaja values with ESD concepts successfully forms a holistic character of religious moderation in students. They not only have a cognitive understanding of moderation but also demonstrate attitudes, behaviors, and social skills that align with the principles of religious moderation.(Novia Ulfa et al., 2024).

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the integration of Aswaja values with the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) concept at Pakisaji Islamic Middle School has a significant influence

on shaping students' religious moderation. The four aspects of the research—the integration of Aswaja values in learning, the application of the ESD concept in school activities, student responses, and the formation of religious moderation—are interrelated and form a unified whole.

First, The integration of Aswaja values in learning is the main foundation in building student character. Islamic Religious Education teachers not only convey material normatively, but also emphasize the internalization of the values of tawasuth (moderation), tasamuh (tolerance), tawazun (balance), and i'tidal (justice). This aligns with character education theory, which emphasizes that effective learning encompasses not only cognitive aspects but also affective and psychomotor aspects. Teachers' role models play a significant role in fostering students' awareness of the importance of moderation and tolerance. (Handayani et al., 2024).

Second The implementation of the ESD concept in school activities reinforces Aswaja values through real-life experiences. Reforestation programs, community service, clean Fridays, and community activities are not merely routine activities, but are interpreted by students as part of their moral and spiritual responsibilities. This aligns with the ESD concept, which emphasizes environmental, social, and cultural sustainability. Integrating ESD with Aswaja values helps students understand that preserving nature, caring for others, and building a harmonious school culture are forms of worship and the practice of moderate Islamic values. (Vioeza et al., 2023).

Third Students' responses to the integration of Aswaja and ESD showed positive acceptance. Most students understood the importance of moderation and practiced it in their daily interactions. They became more actively involved in social and environmental activities and cultivated positive behaviors such as discipline, maintaining cleanliness, and helping each other. However, the study also identified challenges in the form of social media's influence on the spread of intolerant narratives. This suggests that while the integration of Aswaja and ESD is effective, additional support in the form of digital literacy is needed to enable students to critically filter information.

Fourth, The development of a moderate religious character is clearly evident in changes in student behavior. They become more open to differing opinions, appreciate diversity, actively participate in community activities, and behave fairly in interactions. This demonstrates that the integration of Aswaja values with ESD not only fosters cognitive understanding but also results in tangible transformations in attitudes and behavior. Thus, students at Pakisaji Islamic Middle School are beginning to develop into moderate, tolerant, environmentally conscious individuals with high levels of social empathy.

Overall, the results of this study confirm that the integration of Aswaja and ESD creates a holistic educational ecosystem, where theological, moral, social, and environmental aspects are integrated into the learning process. This finding aligns with previous research that asserts that education based on moderate religious values can prevent radical attitudes, while continuing education (ESD) fosters social and environmental awareness. The contribution of this study lies in the synergy between the two, which has proven effective in shaping the moderate religious character of junior high school students. (Fischer et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the integration of Aswaja values with the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) concept at Pakisaji Islamic Junior High School plays a significant role in shaping students' religious moderation. The integration of Aswaja values into learning has proven to be the main foundation in instilling moderate, tolerant, balanced, and just attitudes. Teachers not only convey religious material normatively but also provide concrete examples in daily life. The implementation of the ESD concept in school activities provides space for students to practice the school's social, environmental, and cultural sustainability values. Reforestation activities, community service, and the habit of maintaining cleanliness are tangible means of strengthening Aswaja values in students' lives. Student responses to the integration of Aswaja and ESD are generally positive. Students demonstrate understanding, attitudes, and behaviors that support religious moderation. However, challenges remain, particularly the influence of intolerant social media content, requiring further guidance. The formation of religious moderation is evident in changes in student behavior, such as increased mutual respect, openness to differences, active involvement in social activities, and fair behavior in daily interactions. The integration of Aswaja and ESD has successfully created a holistic educational ecosystem, combining the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects of students. Thus, this study confirms that

the synergy between Aswaja values and ESD concepts can produce a generation that is moderate, tolerant, environmentally conscious, and highly empathetic.

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