Research Article

Integrating Aswaja Values into The Merdeka Curriculum: Enhancing Character Education in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah for Achieving SDG's

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Introduction: This study addresses the fundamental issue of integrating Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah (ASWAJA) values—Tawasuth (moderation), Tasamuh (tolerance), Tawazun (balance), and I'tidal (justice)—into Indonesia's educational curriculum. The focus is on Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) in Malang Regency, aiming to support students' cognitive, moral, and spiritual development amid the pressures of globalization and technological advancement. **Objectives**: The research aims to analyze the implementation of ASWAJA values within the Merdeka Curriculum in three selected MI: MI Nahdlatul Ulama Bululawang, MI Mambaul Ulum Sepanjang Gondanglegi, and MI Miftahul Huda Turen. It particularly focuses on how these values influence character development, academic performance, and students' social behavior. **Methods**: This study employed a qualitative multisite research design. Data collection techniques included participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the integration process and its outcomes. **Results**: The findings reveal that ASWAJA values are effectively integrated into school practices through instructional strategies that encourage critical thinking and empathy, extracurricular programs that foster teamwork and social responsibility, and community involvement that enhances the practical application of these values. Each MI demonstrated distinct strengths: MI Nahdlatul Ulama Bululawang emphasized moderation in classroom discussions, MI Mambaul Ulum Gondanglegi promoted cultural appreciation, and MI Miftahul Huda Turen balanced academic and religious activities. **Conclusions**: The study concludes that the integration of ASWAJA values into the Merdeka Curriculum positively contributes to holistic character education without compromising academic excellence. This model is replicable and offers insights for broader educational reform. It highlights the crucial role of collaboration between educators, families, and policymakers in achieving value-based education aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 4: Quality Education. Future research should explore the long-term impacts of this integration on students' personal and professional development and expand the study across other regions for greater generalizability. **Keywords:** ASWAJA values, Character education, Merdeka Curriculum, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, Sustainable Development Goal

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in shaping human character and personality while preparing individuals to fulfill their future roles in society (Sanaky, 2003; Zainuddin, 2019). In Indonesia, the education system not only aims to enhance intellectual abilities but also strives to cultivate individuals with strong faith, noble character, and national identity (Maisyaroh et al., 2023). This objective aligns with the mission of Islamic education, particularly the teachings of Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah An-Nahdliyah (Aswaja), which emphasizes cognitive, moral, and spiritual development (Suleymanova, 2015). Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI), as an Islamic elementary school, plays a vital role in nurturing young generations with these values. Located in Southeast Asia, Indonesia is home to a large Muslim population,

with madrasahs serving as essential institutions for religious and character education (Bano, 2011). In Kabupaten Malang, East Java, where the majority of the population adheres to Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the integration of Aswaja values into the curriculum is particularly significant. These values include moderation (tawassuth), tolerance (tasamuh), balance (tawazun), and justice (i'tidal) (Aisyah et al., 2021), which are essential for developing individuals who respect religious and cultural diversity. However, the rapid advancement of technology and globalization presents challenges to preserving these values. The influx of diverse information and ideologies can lead to a decline in moral values among students, as evidenced by bullying, decreased empathy, and behavioral deviations (Yusuf & Ondeng, 2024; Asa, 2019). Consequently, education is expected to address these issues by strengthening students' character through appropriate strategies (Diggs & Akos, 2016; Fahrilyani et al., 2019). The implementation of character education strategies in schools significantly influences the formation of students' character (Raihani, 2011; Sukadari et al., 2019; Dasrimin et al., 2023), emphasizing the importance of both classroom and extracurricular learning experiences.

Despite the importance of integrating Aswaja values into the curriculum, several challenges hinder its effective implementation in MI. One major issue is the discrepancy between the national curriculum, which is general and universal, and the specific needs of local communities, particularly those with strong religious traditions. The national curriculum often provides limited space for developing local religious values, resulting in suboptimal internalization of these values among students (Maisyaroh et al., 2024). The introduction of the Merdeka Curriculum, which allows schools to design their curriculum according to local needs, presents an opportunity to integrate Aswaja values more effectively. The Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes essential competencies, student-centered learning, and character development aligned with Profil Pelajar Pancasila (Kemendikbud, 2020; Maisyaroh et al., 2021). This curriculum aligns well with Aswaja values, which emphasize moderate and inclusive Islamic teachings (Siradj, 1998). Therefore, integrating Aswaja values into the Merdeka Curriculum can provide a comprehensive educational experience that nurtures both academic competence and moral character.

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of character education in addressing moral degradation among students (Hu et al., 2017; Izfanna & Hisyam, 2012). Character education programs, supported by effective school management and teacher training, play a significant role in shaping students' behavior and values (Juharyanto et al., 2020; Arifin et al., 2018). In the context of Islamic education, integrating religious values into the curriculum has been shown to promote positive character traits, such as empathy, discipline, and respect for diversity (Parker & Raihani, 2011; Amir, 2013; Yani, 2016). In Kabupaten Malang, MI Nahdlatul Ulama' Bululawang, MI Mambaul Ulum Sepanjang Gondanglegi, and MI Miftahul Huda Turen have successfully integrated Aswaja values into their curriculum. These schools have demonstrated excellence in both academic and character development, gaining recognition from stakeholders and the local community. Their success is attributed to effective curriculum management, dedicated teachers, and strong community support. For example, MI Nahdlatul Ulama' Bululawang has received awards for its innovative curriculum and character-building programs, while MI Mambaul Ulum and MI Miftahul Huda have achieved outstanding results in academic competitions and extracurricular activities.

Although previous studies have explored character education and the integration of religious values in schools, limited research has specifically examined the integration of Aswaja values into the Merdeka Curriculum in MI. Most existing studies focus on general character education or religious instruction without addressing the unique challenges and strategies of integrating Aswaja values within the flexible framework of the Merdeka Curriculum. Furthermore, there is a lack of comprehensive research on how MI in Kabupaten Malang, as a region with a strong NU presence, implements Aswaja values in daily teaching and learning activities. This research seeks to fill this gap by investigating the integration of Aswaja values into the Merdeka Curriculum at three exemplary MI in Kabupaten Malang: MI Nahdlatul Ulama' Bululawang, MI Mambaul Ulum Sepanjang Gondanglegi, and MI Miftahul Huda Turen. By analyzing their curriculum management, teaching methods, and character-building practices, this study aims to provide insights into effective strategies for integrating religious values into formal education while addressing the challenges faced by educators and school administrators.

The primary objective of this study is to describe and analyze the integration of Aswaja values into the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) in Kabupaten Malang. Specifically, this study aims to describe the urgency of applying Aswaja values in MI education, identify the Aswaja values taught in MI, analyze the process of integrating these values into the Merdeka Curriculum, and evaluate the effectiveness of this integration in shaping students' character and academic performance. The novelty of this study lies in its specific focus on integrating Aswaja values

into the Merdeka Curriculum within the unique context of MI in Kabupaten Malang. Unlike previous research that primarily explored general character education or religious instruction, this study delves into how Aswaja values are systematically embedded into both academic subjects and extracurricular activities. Furthermore, the study highlights the role of school management, teacher competence, and community involvement in supporting this integration, offering a comprehensive understanding of best practices and challenges in implementing value-based education. The scope of this study is limited to three MI in Kabupaten Malang—MI Nahdlatul Ulama' Bululawang, MI Mambaul Ulum Sepanjang Gondanglegi, and MI Miftahul Huda Turen. These schools were chosen for their exemplary performance in integrating Aswaja values into the Merdeka Curriculum and their recognition as leading educational institutions in the region. The study primarily focuses on the management of curriculum and learning processes, including planning, implementation, and evaluation, as well as the impact of Aswaja values on students' character and academic achievements.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Values Of Aswaja

Values are concepts that guide human behavior and decision-making. According to Wening (2012), values are divided into means values (behavioral values) and end values (final goals). Kluckhohn defines values as standards that guide actions, including individual and social virtues and preferences (Mustari, 2014). Max Scheler and Immanuel Kant emphasize that values are independent of material aspects, while Kartini and Guno (2003) view them as beliefs that guide behavior. Poerwadarminta (1991) defines values as qualities beneficial to humanity, whereas Muhaimin and Mujib consider values as something institutionalized in human actions. Gazalba, as cited by Thoha, describes values as abstract and ideal. Aswaja (Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah) is a religious ideology founded by Abu Al-Hasan al-Asy'ari and Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi. Aswaja guides life with principles of moderation (tawassuth), justice (i'tidal), balance (tawazun), tolerance (tasamuh), and promoting good while preventing evil (amar ma'ruf nahi mungkar) (Nikmah, 2018). Said Agil Siradj (2001) highlights Aswaja as a manhaj al-fikr, a moderate and tolerant way of thinking. In the NU context, Aswaja thinking follows the theology of Asy'ari and Maturidi, jurisprudence from the four schools of thought, and Sufism from Junaid al-Bagdadi and Al-Ghazali (Muzadi, 2007). These values shape the identity of Indonesian Muslims as moderate and inclusive individuals (Syarifuddin, 2015). The principle of tawassuth (moderation) teaches Muslims to maintain balance and avoid extreme views. I'tidal (justice) refers to fair treatment and upholding equality in social interactions. Tawazun (balance) emphasizes maintaining harmony between different aspects of life, while tasamuh (tolerance) encourages respect for diversity and peaceful coexistence. Lastly, amar ma'ruf nahi mungkar serves as a moral guide to promote righteousness and prevent wrongdoing.

Independent Curriculum and Learning

The Independent Curriculum, introduced by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbud) in 2021, aims to provide flexibility for schools to design curricula that meet local needs. Its core principles include flexibility, developing 21st-century competencies such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication, as well as project-based learning. The assessment approach focuses on evaluating both the learning processes and outcomes authentically. The curriculum's main components include Learning Outcomes (Capaian Pembelajaran, CP), which specify the competencies students must achieve at each educational level, and Projects to Strengthen the Profile of Pancasila Students (P5), which are designed to instill Pancasila values through real-life experiences. Additionally, the curriculum emphasizes equitable education by ensuring equal access to quality learning and developing teachers' competencies through continuous professional training. At Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, the curriculum integrates general subjects such as Mathematics, Science, and Indonesian Language with religious subjects like Al-Qur'an Hadith, Aqidah Akhlak, and Fiqh. The teaching methods emphasize contextual learning, collaborative activities, and problem-solving to ensure holistic student development.

Value-Based Learning

Value-based learning aims to develop students' character and morals alongside academic achievements. Fullan (2001) emphasizes the importance of teaching values like integrity and responsibility, which are essential for building ethical individuals. Lickona (1991) asserts that values such as honesty and fairness shape a just personality, helping students understand the importance of treating others with respect. Flanagan (2009) highlights that value-based learning prepares students for both professional and personal success. By instilling values like empathy and social responsibility, students become more compassionate and resilient. However, Berkowitz & Bier (2007) warn that

focusing too much on values might detract from academic rigor. In contrast, Lieberman (2012) argues that value-based learning enhances motivation and academic performance by fostering a supportive and engaging learning environment. The application of value-based learning involves integrating ethical principles into all aspects of education, from classroom discussions to extracurricular activities. Teachers play a crucial role in modeling these values, creating a culture of respect and kindness that influences students' behavior both in and out of school.

Integration of Aswaja Values in The Independent Curriculum

Integrating Aswaja values into the Independent Curriculum involves both thematic and cross-disciplinary approaches, as suggested by Posner (2004). One effective method is the Value Clarification Method (VCM), which helps students identify and reflect on their personal values, while Experiential Learning enables them to internalize these values through direct, real-life experiences, making the learning process more meaningful and impactful. At Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, the integration of Aswaja values is embedded into various subjects and activities. For example, in Civics Education (PPKn), the principle of I'tidal (justice) is taught through lessons on fairness and social equality, encouraging students to apply these concepts in their interactions with others. In Social Studies (IPS), the concept of tawazun (balance) is illustrated by exploring topics like sustainable development and environmental stewardship, helping students understand the importance of maintaining harmony between human needs and environmental preservation. In Religious Education, the value of tasamuh (tolerance) is promoted through discussions on interfaith harmony and respect for diverse beliefs, fostering an inclusive mindset among students. Extracurricular activities also play a key role in reinforcing Aswaja values. Scouting programs, for instance, teach teamwork, discipline, and empathy, aligning with the principles of tawassuth (moderation) and amar ma'ruf nahi mungkar (promoting good and preventing evil). These activities provide students with practical experiences that help them internalize these values in their daily lives. A notable example of successful integration is found at MI Nahdlatul Ulama in Bululawang, where Aswaja values are incorporated into both academic subjects and daily school life. Teachers employ interactive methods such as group discussions and role-playing to help students grasp concepts like justice and tolerance. Additionally, the school organizes community service projects that allow students to practice amar ma'ruf nahi mungkar by contributing to society, reinforcing their sense of social responsibility and empathy. Through this holistic approach, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah not only equips students with academic knowledge but also cultivates their moral character, preparing them to become responsible and compassionate members of society who uphold the values of Aswaja in their everyday lives.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a multisite study design to provide an in-depth description of the integration of Aswaja values into the curriculum and learning processes at three private Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) in Malang Regency. The qualitative approach was chosen due to its naturalistic characteristics, which allow for a holistic analysis of phenomena (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). This approach is particularly sensitive to capturing descriptive qualitative information while maintaining the wholeness of the subject under study, aligning with Vredenberg's (1983) emphasis on the integrated nature of collected data. The multisite design was selected because the study involved multiple settings with relatively similar characteristics, namely, three private MI under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Data collection was conducted in three stages, following Faisal's (1990) cyclical process. The first stage involved comprehensive exploration at each site, followed by a focused exploration to gain detailed insights into specific aspects. The third stage comprised verification and confirmation of research findings. The study began at MI Nahdlatul Ulama Bululawang (Site 1), followed by MI Mamba'ul Ulum Sepanjang Gondanglegi (Site 2), and concluded at MI Miftahul Huda Turen (Site 3). Data analysis was conducted individually for each site before performing cross-site analysis to identify similarities and differences.

Research Sites

The research sites were selected purposively based on their reputation for integrating Aswaja values into their educational practices. MI Nahdlatul Ulama Bululawang is known for its "Berseri dan Ramah Anak" program, which emphasizes cleanliness, health, and a respectful environment. The school integrates Aswaja values such as Tawassuth (moderation), Tawazun (balance), Tasamuh (tolerance), and I'tidal (justice) into daily student activities. MI Mamba'ul Ulum Sepanjang Gondanglegi is recognized for its comprehensive "Sekolah Sehat" program, which focuses on students' physical, mental, and social well-being, promoting moderation and balance in lifestyle choices. MI Miftahul Huda Turen employs a unique approach by combining classroom learning with Outing Class and Ziarah

Wali activities, allowing students to experience Aswaja values in real-world contexts, such as historical site visits and religious practices.

Researcher's Presence and Ethical Considerations

As the primary instrument of data collection, the researcher played an active role in observing, interviewing, and analyzing data in the field (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). The research adhered to ethical principles, including respecting informants' rights, privacy, and interests, establishing good communication, confirming information with relevant parties, and maintaining the anonymity of informants and research sites upon request. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and ethical guidelines were followed to ensure the research did not harm the subjects.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Participant observation involved both passive and active participation, allowing the researcher to observe daily activities, classroom interactions, and religious practices while gradually becoming part of the social environment (Spradley, 1980). Observations were documented in field notes and photographs, covering physical settings, meetings, teaching processes, ceremonies, and extracurricular activities. In-depth interviews were conducted with school principals, curriculum coordinators, teachers, students, administrative staff, parents, and school committee members. The interviews followed the structured process outlined by Sonhadji (1994), including selecting interviewees, preparing interview guides, conducting interviews, and summarizing key findings. Interviews were recorded with the participants' consent, and when recording was not feasible, detailed notes were taken. Interviews explored topics such as the urgency and impact of integrating Aswaja values, teaching methods, curriculum integration, stakeholder involvement, and evaluation processes. Document analysis involved reviewing non-human data sources such as school profiles, curriculum documents, meeting minutes, lesson plans, and evaluation reports. This method provided insights into the schools' policies, curriculum structures, and teaching practices. As suggested by Sonhadji (1994), documents were selected based on their relevance, stability, accuracy, and contextual richness, ensuring they complemented data obtained from observations and interviews.

Data Sources and Informant Selection

Data sources were divided into human and non-human categories. Human sources included individuals with direct involvement in curriculum implementation, while non-human sources comprised institutional documents and environmental observations. Informants were selected using snowball sampling, as recommended by Bogdan and Biklen (1998), where each informant referred the researcher to additional relevant individuals. Selection criteria, based on Faisal (1990), included individuals with long-term involvement in the schools, active participation in educational activities, openness in providing information, availability for interviews, and prior unfamiliarity with the researcher.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the procedures outlined by Bogdan and Biklen (1998), involving systematic examination and organization of interview transcripts, field notes, and documents to enhance understanding and identify key themes. The process began with individual analysis for each site, followed by cross-site analysis to compare findings and identify patterns. Constant comparison techniques were used to ensure that data from different sources were integrated into a coherent narrative.

Data Trustworthiness

To ensure data credibility, the study employed prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation of data sources and methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Source triangulation involved comparing data from different informants, while method triangulation cross-checked information obtained through interviews, observations, and documents. Peer debriefing with colleagues helped maintain the researcher's objectivity and refine data interpretation. Referential adequacy was ensured by using audio recordings and photographs to support data analysis. Member checks were conducted by sharing interview transcripts and preliminary findings with informants to confirm accuracy and ensure that interpretations aligned with their perspectives. Transferability was addressed by providing detailed descriptions of the research sites, participants, and contexts, allowing readers to assess the applicability of findings to other settings. Dependability was ensured through an audit trail, where independent

experts reviewed the research process and findings. Confirmability was established by maintaining detailed records of data collection and analysis, ensuring that findings were grounded in the data rather than the researcher's biases.

Research Procedures

The research process consisted of three stages: preparation, data collection, and reporting. During the preparation stage, the researcher identified research issues, reviewed relevant literature, selected research sites, obtained permissions, and conducted preliminary studies. Data collection involved general exploration followed by focused data gathering at each site, with individual and cross-site analyses conducted concurrently. The final stage involved transcribing data, analyzing key themes, and preparing the research report. The research process was guided by input from academic supervisors and peer reviewers, ensuring the rigor and reliability of the study.

RESULTS

This study explored the integration of Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah (ASWAJA) values in three Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Malang Regency. The findings, derived from interviews, observations, and documentation, highlight the positive impact of ASWAJA values—Tawasuth (moderation), Tasamuh (tolerance), Tawazun (balance), and I'tidal (justice)—on students' character development, academic performance, and social behavior. The following are detailed explanations of the three main findings.

Classroom Dynamics

The integration of ASWAJA values in classroom activities created a holistic and inclusive learning environment. Teachers demonstrated Tawasuth through balanced communication and feedback, ensuring that students received constructive criticism without excessive praise or harsh remarks. This approach encouraged students to think critically and engage objectively with their lessons. For instance, at MI Nahdhatul Ulama Bululawang, teachers maintained a moderate tone while guiding students, promoting open dialogue without intimidation or excessive leniency. Students responded positively by participating actively in discussions, reflecting their understanding of moderation in expressing opinions. Students exhibited Tasamuh by showing respect and understanding toward peers from diverse backgrounds, promoting a culture of inclusivity and empathy (Arifin et al., 2018). At MI Mambaul Ulum Gondanglegi, the atmosphere in the classroom was inclusive, with students from various cultural and socio-economic backgrounds collaborating harmoniously. The curriculum included lessons that emphasized tolerance and respect for different perspectives, which helped students develop empathy and social awareness. Tawazun was observed in students' ability to balance academic, social, and religious activities. Teachers emphasized the importance of maintaining this balance through structured schedules that included time for study, play, and prayer. At MI Miftahul Huda Turen, students followed daily routines that allocated time for both academic learning and religious practices, such as communal prayers and Quran recitation. This structured approach helped students develop time management skills while maintaining their spiritual commitments. I'tidal was reinforced by promoting fair and just behavior in both academic assessments and interpersonal relationships. For example, teachers at all three schools ensured that assessments were conducted transparently, with clear criteria for grading. Students were encouraged to advocate for what is right while respecting differing opinions, fostering an environment where fairness and justice were valued.

Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular programs played a crucial role in internalizing ASWAJA values beyond the classroom. Sports activities fostered Tawasuth by promoting healthy competition and sportsmanship. At MI Nahdhatul Ulama Bululawang, students participated in various sports events where they were taught to compete fairly, celebrate victories modestly, and accept defeats gracefully. This approach helped students develop resilience and a balanced perspective on success and failure. Arts programs taught students to appreciate cultural diversity, aligning with Tasamuh. For example, MI Mambaul Ulum Gondanglegi organized art workshops that showcased traditional arts from different regions, encouraging students to respect and appreciate diverse cultural expressions. These activities fostered a sense of pride in their cultural heritage while promoting openness to other cultures. Social initiatives such as fundraising for orphans and community service projects exemplified Tawazun, encouraging students to balance personal achievements with social responsibility. At MI Miftahul Huda Turen, students regularly participated in charity drives and environmental clean-up campaigns, reinforcing the importance of contributing to the welfare of others. These activities helped students develop a sense of social responsibility and compassion for those in need.

I'tidal was instilled through discussions on ethics and justice, reinforcing the importance of standing up for truth and fairness in daily life. At MI Nahdhatul Ulama Bululawang, students engaged in role-playing activities that simulated real-life scenarios, allowing them to practice making ethical decisions. Teachers guided these discussions by emphasizing the importance of honesty, integrity, and fairness.

Community Engagement

Collaboration with parents and the local community strengthened the application of ASWAJA values outside the school environment. Regular communication between teachers and parents ensured that students received consistent guidance at home and school. At MI Mambaul Ulum Gondanglegi, parents were actively involved in school activities, such as organizing religious events and supporting extracurricular programs. This collaboration created a supportive environment where students felt encouraged to apply ASWAJA values in their daily lives. Community involvement in school events and religious ceremonies provided students with real-life examples of ASWAJA principles, reinforcing their understanding and practice of these values. For example, MI Miftahul Huda Turen organized field trips to historical Islamic sites, where students learned about the contributions of Islamic scholars and the importance of preserving cultural heritage. These experiences helped students connect their classroom learning with the broader social and cultural context, enhancing their appreciation for Islamic traditions. The study also found that community engagement contributed to a sense of belonging and collective responsibility among students. By participating in community service projects and religious activities, students developed a sense of empathy and compassion, aligning with the principles of Tasamuh and I'tidal. Teachers and parents collaborated to create a supportive environment where students were encouraged to apply these values in their interactions with others, both within and outside the school. In conclusion, the integration of ASWAJA values in classroom dynamics, extracurricular activities, and community engagement has significantly contributed to the development of students' character, academic performance, and social behavior. The findings highlight the importance of creating a balanced and inclusive learning environment that fosters respect, fairness, and social responsibility. These outcomes demonstrate the effectiveness of integrating ASWAJA values in shaping well-rounded individuals who are prepared to contribute positively to society.

DISCUSSION

Integration of ASWAJA Values for Holistic Education

The integration of ASWAJA values—Tawasuth (moderation), Tasamuh (tolerance), Tawazun (balance), and I'tidal (justice)—into educational curricula plays a pivotal role in shaping both intellectual and moral character. These values align with the broader educational goal of fostering individuals who are not only academically competent but also socially responsible and ethically grounded. As Fullan (2001) emphasizes, education should go beyond imparting knowledge to nurturing character. Similarly, Lickona (1991) highlights the importance of character education in fostering honesty, respect, and empathy. Embedding ASWAJA values in subjects like history, language, and religious studies enhances students' critical thinking skills and social awareness. For instance, the principle of Tawasuth promotes balanced reasoning, encouraging students to consider diverse perspectives before forming opinions (Siradj, 2001). This aligns with Dewey's (1938) experiential learning theory, which advocates for education that connects classroom knowledge to real-world contexts. Practical examples from Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Malang Regency illustrate the application of these values. At MI Nahdhatul Ulama Bululawang, teachers integrate Tawasuth by encouraging students to evaluate multiple viewpoints during discussions on social issues. This approach not only enhances critical thinking but also fosters respect for differing opinions, supporting the principle of Tasamuh (UNESCO, 2016). Furthermore, the concept of Tawazun is reinforced through structured daily routines that balance academic study, religious practice, and recreational activities (Flanagan, 2009). I'tidal is emphasized by promoting fairness in classroom interactions and assessments, ensuring that all students are treated equitably (Lickona, 1991). The integration of ASWAJA values thus creates a holistic educational environment where cognitive development and character formation go hand in hand. This approach aligns with Posner's (2004) cross-disciplinary model, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of knowledge and values.
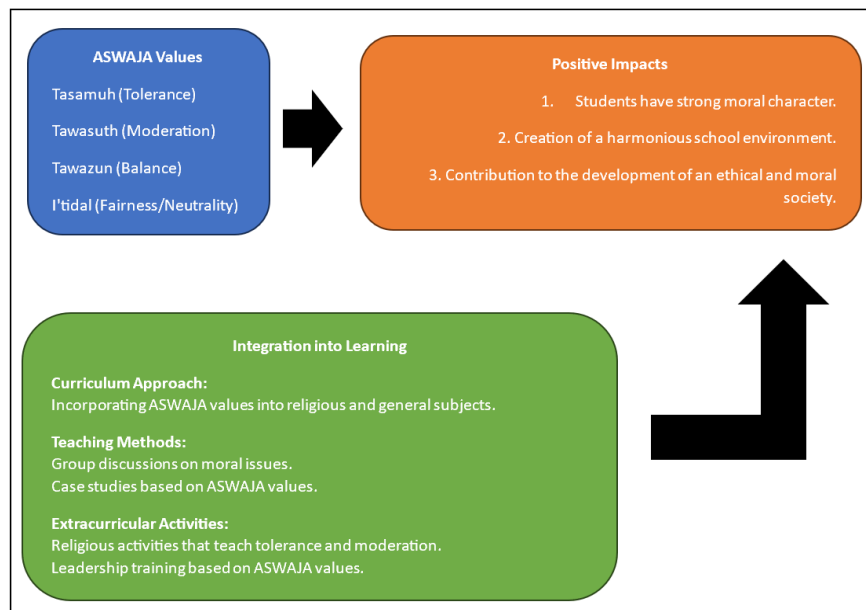
Figure 1. The Integration of Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jamaah An-Nahdliyah (ASWAJA) Values as an Effective Solution to Support Moral Learning

Cross-Disciplinary and Experiential Learning Approaches

Integrating ASWAJA values across different subjects enhances the relevance and applicability of these principles in students' lives. Posner (2004) advocates for a cross-disciplinary approach that connects concepts from various fields, fostering a comprehensive understanding of complex issues. Dewey's (1938) experiential learning theory further supports this approach by emphasizing the importance of real-life experiences in reinforcing classroom learning. In Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, this approach is evident in the integration of ASWAJA values into subjects such as history, language, and religious studies. For example, history lessons explore the contributions of diverse cultural and religious groups, promoting Tasamuh by fostering an appreciation for different traditions (UNESCO, 2016). Language classes incorporate texts that illustrate the principles of Tawasuth and I'tidal, encouraging students to analyze and interpret these values within literary contexts (Lieberman, 2012). Experiential learning activities further reinforce these values. Community service projects provide opportunities for students to practice I'tidal by promoting social justice and equity (Berkowitz & Bier, 2007). Sports competitions teach Tawazun by emphasizing fair play and teamwork, while art workshops encourage creative expression within the framework of cultural and religious values (Flanagan, 2009). These activities not only enhance students' social and emotional skills but also deepen their understanding of ASWAJA principles in real-world settings. The integration of cross-disciplinary and experiential learning approaches thus creates a dynamic educational environment where students can apply ASWAJA values in both academic and everyday contexts. This holistic approach aligns with Fullan's (2001) vision of education as a means of developing both intellectual competence and moral character.

Balancing Character Education with Academic Performance

While character education is essential, maintaining academic rigor is equally important. Berkowitz and Bier (2007) caution that an overemphasis on character development can sometimes detract from academic achievement. However, this study found that consistent teacher training and parental involvement can help students balance their cognitive and social-emotional development. At MI Miftahul Huda Turen, structured daily routines promote time management and balanced living, supporting Flanagan's (2009) & Riyadi et al. (2023) argument that balanced living contributes to both academic success and personal well-being. Teachers receive regular training on integrating ASWAJA values into their instructional practices, ensuring that character education complements rather than competes with academic learning (Lieberman, 2012). For example, math lessons incorporate the principle of I'tidal by emphasizing accuracy and fairness in problem-solving, while science experiments encourage Tawasuth by promoting critical inquiry and evidence-based reasoning (Posner, 2004). Parental involvement further reinforces this balance. Regular communication between teachers and parents ensures that students receive consistent guidance both at home and in school, fostering a supportive environment for academic and character development (Berkowitz

& Bier, 2007). Collaborative learning activities also help students develop empathy and social skills while enhancing their cognitive abilities (UNESCO, 2016). Maintaining this balance requires clear guidelines and consistent reinforcement of both academic and character-related expectations. By integrating ASWAJA values into the curriculum, teachers can create a learning environment that promotes intellectual growth without sacrificing the development of moral character. This approach aligns with Lickona's (1991) emphasis on the importance of fostering both cognitive and social-emotional skills in education.

Practical Implications for Sustainable Development Goal: Quality Education

Embedding ASWAJA values into educational curricula has significant implications for educators, families, and policymakers. By fostering critical thinking, social harmony, and fairness, this approach prepares students to become responsible and compassionate citizens. Practical examples from MI Nahdhatul Ulama Bululawang and MI Mambaul Ulum Gondanglegi illustrate the benefits of integrating these values into both classroom and extracurricular activities. At MI Nahdhatul Ulama Bululawang, teachers encourage students to express their opinions without fear of criticism, promoting Tawasuth and critical thinking (Siradj, 2001). Collaborative learning activities at MI Mambaul Ulum Gondanglegi foster empathy and respect for diverse perspectives, aligning with UNESCO's (2016) emphasis on promoting tolerance and cooperation. Transparent grading criteria and fair assessments reinforce the principle of I'tidal, creating an environment where honesty and integrity are valued (Lickona, 1991). Policymakers can support this approach by developing standardized guidelines for character education that align with ASWAJA values. Teacher training programs should include modules on integrating these values into various subjects, ensuring that educators have the skills and knowledge needed to effectively implement this approach (Lieberman, 2012). Additionally, collaborative initiatives between schools, families, and communities can help reinforce these values beyond the classroom (Berkowitz & Bier, 2007). For families, involvement in school activities and regular communication with teachers can help reinforce the principles of Tawasuth, Tasamuh, Tawazun, and I'tidal at home. By modeling these values in everyday interactions, parents can help their children internalize these principles and apply them in their daily lives (Fullan, 2001). Community engagement further strengthens this process, providing students with real-life examples of how ASWAJA values can be practiced in social and professional settings (UNESCO, 2016). In conclusion, the integration of ASWAJA values into educational curricula offers a holistic approach to student development, fostering both intellectual growth and moral character. By balancing character education with academic performance and promoting cross-disciplinary and experiential learning, this approach prepares students to become compassionate, responsible, and socially engaged citizens. The practical examples from Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Malang Regency illustrate the effectiveness of this approach, highlighting its potential for broader application in diverse educational settings. These findings have important implications for educators, families, and policymakers, emphasizing the need for collaborative efforts to sustain and enhance the integration of ASWAJA values in education.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to analyze the integration of Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah (ASWAJA) values—Tawasuth (moderation), Tasamuh (tolerance), Tawazun (balance), and I'tidal (justice)—into the curriculum and learning processes at three Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Malang Regency, focusing on their impact on students' character development, academic performance, and social behavior. The findings highlight that ASWAJA values are effectively integrated through classroom dynamics that foster critical thinking and empathy, extracurricular activities that reinforce teamwork and social responsibility, and community engagement that strengthens real-life applications of these values. Key examples include MI Nahdlatul Ulum Bululawang's emphasis on moderation in discussions, MI Mambaul Ulum Gondanglegi's promotion of cultural appreciation, and MI Miftahul Huda Turen's focus on balancing academic and religious practices. This research contributes to the field of educational management by demonstrating how character education aligned with religious values can coexist with academic excellence, offering a model for other schools aiming to foster well-rounded, socially responsible students. Furthermore, it provides practical insights for educators, families, and policymakers, emphasizing the importance of collaborative efforts in sustaining value-based education within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum, supporting the broader goal of promoting quality education aligned with Sustainable Development Goals.

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