



ASWAJA AS A PARADIGM FOR SANTRI CHARACTER FORMATION: A LITERATURE REVIEW OF HUJJATU AHLISSUNNAH WAL JAMA'AH

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Article Information	Abstrak
<i>Submitted: January 24, 2026</i> <i>Accepted: July 7, 2026</i> <i>Published: July 7, 2026</i> Kata kunci: Aswaja, pendidikan karakter, santri, pesantren, Hujjatu Ahlissunnah wal Jama'ah Keywords: Aswaja, character education, santri, pesantren, Hujjatu Ahlissunnah wal Jama'ah	Penelitian ini menganalisis potensi pedagogis Ahlissunnah wal Jama'ah (Aswaja) bagi pembentukan karakter santri melalui pembacaan kritis terhadap karya KH. Ali Maksum yang tersedia dalam edisi terjemahan Argumentasi Ahlissunnah Wal Jamaah. Penelitian menggunakan studi kepustakaan kualitatif dengan analisis isi tematik. Unit analisis berupa kalimat dan paragraf yang memuat rujukan kepada otoritas ulama, etika menyikapi ikhtilaf furu', perbandingan pendapat mazhab, serta pembelaan terhadap amaliah sosial-keagamaan. Proses analisis dilakukan melalui familiarisasi teks, penyusunan kode awal, pengembangan codebook, pengelompokan subtema, peninjauan tema, dan interpretasi pedagogis. Hasil analisis menghasilkan empat tema interpretatif: (1) otoritas keilmuan yang membentuk kerendahan hati epistemik; (2) etika ikhtilaf yang mendukung sikap tasamuh; (3) penalaran komparatif yang merepresentasikan tawasuth dan tawazun; dan (4) kontinuitas amaliah komunal sebagai medium habituasi religius dan solidaritas sosial. Temuan tersebut tidak diposisikan sebagai implikasi pedagogis yang diperoleh dari dialog antara teks primer dan literatur pendidikan pesantren. Kebaruan penelitian terletak pada pemetaan transparan dari unit makna, kode, subtema, hingga tema, sekaligus pembedaan tegas antara temuan tekstual dan inferensi pendidikan. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa karya Ali Maksum dapat digunakan sebagai sumber tekstual pendidikan karakter Aswaja apabila diajarkan secara kontekstual, dialogis, dan disertai pengujian empiris pada praktik pesantren.
	Abstract

This study examines the pedagogical potential of Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah (Aswaja) for santri character formation through a critical reading of KH Ali Maksum's work, available in translation as Argumentasi Ahlussunnah Wal Jamaah. It employs qualitative library research and thematic content analysis. The units of analysis comprise sentences and paragraphs addressing scholarly authority, ethical responses to disagreement in subsidiary religious matters, comparative madhhab reasoning, and the defence of communal religious practices. Analysis involved textual familiarisation, initial coding, codebook development, subtheme construction, theme review, and pedagogical interpretation. Four interpretative themes were identified: (1) scholarly authority that cultivates epistemic humility; (2) an ethics of disagreement conducive to tolerance; (3) comparative reasoning embodying moderation and balance; and (4) the continuity of communal religious practices as a medium for religious habituation and social solidarity. These findings are not presented as direct empirical effects on santri; rather, they are pedagogical implications derived from a dialogue between the primary text and scholarship on pesantren education. The study's novelty lies in its transparent mapping from meaning units to codes, subthemes, and themes, as well as its explicit distinction between textual findings and educational inference. The study concludes that Ali Maksum's work can serve as a textual resource for Aswaja-based character education when taught contextually and dialogically and subsequently tested through empirical research in pesantren settings.



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INTRODUCTION

1. Historical and Theological Contexts of Aswaja in Islam in the Indonesian Archipelago

In Indonesia, Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah (Aswaja) denotes not only a theological position but also a tradition of knowledge, networks of religious scholars, and socio-religious practices that have developed through the encounter between Islamic sources and the context of the Indonesian archipelago. This tradition took shape through transregional scholarly transmission, the consolidation of legal schools, and negotiation with local cultures, thereby producing a religious orientation that is rooted in tradition yet sufficiently flexible to respond to change (Azra, 2004; Burhani, 2012; Hilmy, 2013).

Within pesantren (Islamic boarding schools), Aswaja functions both as a normative orientation and as an educational culture. Classical Islamic texts (kitab kuning), kiai-santri relationships, habituated worship, deliberation, and service create a learning environment that integrates knowledge, practice, and exemplarity. Scholarship on pesantren indicates that character formation occurs not only through formal subjects but through the entire structure of pesantren life and the continuity of its scholarly tradition (Dhofier, 2011; van Bruinessen, 2012; Pohl, 2006; Lukens-Bull, 2001).

2. Contemporary Challenges and the Urgency of Aswaja-Based Character Education

Young Muslims currently face the fragmentation of religious authority, the oversimplification of texts, identity polarisation, and the circulation of exclusionary narratives in digital spaces. Research on campus Islamic preaching organisations, conservatism in Islamic schools, and religious moderation in digital environments shows that broad access to information is not always accompanied by the capacity to assess the authority, context, and

social consequences of a religious claim (Arifianto, 2019; Zuhdi, 2018; Hefni, 2020).

Under these conditions, character education requires more than the communication of moral concepts. Values must be enacted through exemplarity, repeated practice, reflection, and participation in a community. The concept of habitus explains how dispositions are formed through recurrent social practices, whereas character education emphasises the interrelationship between moral knowledge, affective commitment, and action. Studies of pesantren likewise demonstrate that community life, teacher authority, and religious routines can serve as media for cultivating moderate character (Bourdieu, 1977; Lickona, 1991; Nilan, 2009; Mujahid, 2021).

3. Hujjatu Ahlissunnah wal Jama'ah as an Authentic Representation of Pesantren Aswaja

One important text within this tradition is the work of KH Ali Maksum, now available in an Indonesian translation entitled *Argumentasi Ahlussunnah Wal Jamaah*. The text assembles arguments concerning a range of contested religious practices, including charity on behalf of the deceased, supererogatory prayer before the Friday prayer, talqin, tarawih, the determination of the beginning of the lunar month, grave visitation, life in the barzakh, visiting the Prophet, and tawassul. Scholarship on Ali Maksum's educational thought portrays him as a scholar-educator who combined mastery of the classical Islamic heritage (turath), institutional renewal, and attentiveness to social needs (Maksum, 2020; Mustolehudin & Muawanah, 2018).

Because the book centres on an argumentative defence of religious practices, this study does not treat it as an explicit theory of character education. Its pedagogical potential is interpreted through the ways in which the text constructs epistemic authority, manages disagreement in subsidiary matters (*furu'*), compares scholarly positions, and defends communal practices. Accordingly, *tawasuth*, *tasamuh*, *tawazun*, and *i'tidal* are employed as interpretative lenses rather than as claims that the primary text systematically formulates all four concepts (Maksum, 2020).

4. Research Gap and Contribution of the Study

The literature can be organised into four principal clusters. First, studies of pesantren as educational environments and moral communities explain the relationships among tradition, modernity, kiai authority, and social participation (Pohl, 2006; Lukens-Bull, 2001; Nilan, 2009; Raihani, 2012; Parker, 2014). Second, research on Nahdlatul Ulama moderation and Aswaja character addresses *tawasuth*, *tasamuh*, and the formation of moderate Muslims at both organisational and pesantren levels (Burhani, 2012; Hilmy, 2013; Amir et al., 2020; Anam et al., 2021; Mujahid, 2021). Third, studies of tolerance demonstrate the importance of direct engagement with social diversity (Aryati & Suradi, 2022). Fourth, research on Ali Maksum has largely concentrated on his biography and educational thought (Mustolehudin & Muawanah, 2018).

The research gap lies in the limited number of close readings of *Hujjatu Ahlissunnah wal Jama'ah* as a source of pedagogical argumentation that make the analytical progression from meaning units to themes transparent and clearly distinguish textual content from inferences about character education. This study addresses that gap through a documented thematic content analysis and a critical dialogue with empirical scholarship on pesantren education.

On this basis, the study aims to: (1) identify the principal patterns of argumentation in Ali Maksum's work; (2) map the character values that may be interpreted from those patterns; (3) explain the pedagogical mechanisms through which such values may be internalised in pesantren education; and (4) evaluate the limitations and contemporary relevance of this paradigm for character education.

RESEARCH METHOD

1. Research Approach and Design

This study employed a qualitative, descriptive-interpretative library research design. The design was selected because the object of inquiry is a religious text that requires analysis of its context, argumentative structure, and pedagogical meaning. In qualitative research, transparency regarding the corpus, units of analysis, coding decisions, and researcher positionality is essential if readers are to evaluate the traceability of interpretations (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Krippendorff, 2018).

The analysis was not designed to demonstrate the book's direct effects on santri behaviour. Rather, it established a dialogue between the horizon of the primary text and knowledge generated by studies of pesantren education. Each claim was therefore classified either as a textual finding, meaning a pattern demonstrable within the corpus, or as a pedagogical implication, meaning an interpretation supported by educational scholarship and empirical research.

2. Data Sources and Data Collection Procedures

The data sources were classified into three categories:

a. Primary Source

The primary source was KH Ali Maksum's *Argumentasi Ahlussunnah Wal Jamaah*, translated by Ikmaluddin Fikri and published by Penerbit Kalam in 2020. This edition was selected because its bibliographic information is verifiable and its structure is accessible for systematic examination. The corpus comprised the muqaddimah and nine principal discussions of disputed religious practices (Maksum, 2020).

b. Secondary Sources

Secondary sources comprised books on scholarly networks, pesantren traditions, classical Islamic texts, character education, and content-analysis methodology, together with national and international journal articles on Aswaja, moderation, tolerance, pesantren education, and Ali Maksum's thought.

Secondary sources were included when they were directly relevant to Aswaja, pesantren, character education, tolerance, or analytical methodology; were published by an academic publisher or reputable journal; had traceable bibliographic identities; and contributed to the interpretation of textual findings without replacing them.

Sources were excluded when they lacked a clearly identifiable publisher, consisted of popular articles without an academic basis, duplicated another publication, or referred to Aswaja or pesantren only incidentally.

The primary units of analysis were meaning units in the form of sentences or paragraphs containing a complete argumentative proposition concerning: (1) scholarly authority; (2) the ethics of disagreement; (3) comparison among scholarly opinions; or (4) the socio-spiritual function of a religious practice.

Passages that merely reproduced extended chains of hadith transmission, technical quotations without authorial commentary, translators' additions that could not be distinguished from the primary text, and jurisprudential discussions unrelated to the research focus were excluded from coding.

c. Tertiary Sources

Dictionaries, indexes, and bibliographic catalogues were used selectively to verify transliteration, metadata, and the traceability of editions; they did not constitute the principal basis for theme development.

Data were collected in three stages:

1. Documentary exploration: identifying the primary edition and constructing a matrix of secondary sources according to theme, publication type, and relevance to the research questions.

2. Close reading: reading the primary text repeatedly, delimiting meaning units, recording the context of each discussion, and maintaining analytical memos for every coding decision.
3. Cross-document examination: comparing textual interpretations with scholarship on pesantren and Aswaja to assess contextual adequacy without converting the findings of a library study into empirical claims.

3. Data Analysis

The study employed thematic content analysis. Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework was combined with principles of qualitative content analysis that require clearly defined categories, traceable decisions, and an explicit relationship between data and interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2022; Mayring, 2014). Coding was undertaken in a structured matrix. Software was not treated as a guarantor of analytical quality, because quality ultimately depends on code definitions and the consistency of researchers' decisions.

Stage 1: Familiarisation with the Data

The researchers repeatedly read the muqaddimah and the nine discussions in the primary text. Initial notes focused on forms of evidence, the positioning of scholars, responses to disagreement, and the relationship between religious practices and communal life.

Stage 2: Initial Coding

Each meaning unit was assigned a descriptive code. The codebook specified the code name, operational definition, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and an illustrative meaning unit. Codes were developed to be sufficiently specific to distinguish concepts without detaching them from the context of the paragraph (Saldaña, 2021).

Stage 3: Theme Development

Conceptually related codes were grouped into subthemes and then into interpretative themes. Table 1 illustrates the analytical progression from meaning units to themes. Frequency was not used as a measure of importance; themes were assessed according to interpretative depth, contextual breadth, and their contribution to the research questions.

Table 1. Illustrative Coding Pathway and Theme Development

No.	Selected Meaning Unit	Initial Code	Subtheme	Interpretative Theme
1.	Recommendation to consult qualified scholars when one lacks knowledge (muqaddimah)	Reference to scholars	Scholarly authority	Tawadhu' and epistemic responsibility
2.	Subsidiary matters should not become grounds for excessive condemnation	Limiting condemnation	Ethics of disagreement	Tasamuh
3.	Compilation of scholarly opinions from multiple texts to address religious practices	Argumentation based on turath	Continuity of tradition	Intellectual chain of transmission
4.	Comparison of opinions on tarawih, grave visitation, and tawassul	Comparison among legal schools	Proportional reasoning	Tawasuth and tawazun
5.	Defence of communal practices such as charity, grave visitation, and tawassul	Socio-spiritual practice	Communal habituation	Collective religious character

Stage 4: Theme Review

Themes were checked against the entire corpus to ensure internal coherence, distinctiveness from other themes, and support from more than a single isolated quotation.

Stage 5: Theme Definition and Naming

Each theme was assigned a definition, a scope, a relationship to the research questions, and a status as either a textual finding or a pedagogical inference.

Stage 6: Report Production

The report linked textual patterns, researchers' interpretations, and comparative scholarship. Direct quotations whose page numbers could not be verified were avoided; the analysis instead used paraphrases referenced to the primary edition.

4. Trustworthiness and Analytical Rigour

Several strategies were employed to enhance the trustworthiness of the study:

a. Source Triangulation

The thematic interpretations were compared with research on Aswaja and pesantren. Triangulation was used to broaden the context and identify plausible counter-readings, rather than to assume that all sources served an identical analytical function.

b. Conceptual Peer Debriefing

The two authors discussed code definitions, thematic boundaries, ambiguous examples, and discrepant cases. Revisions to the codebook were recorded so that the development of the analysis remained traceable.

c. Audit Trail

The meaning-unit matrix, successive versions of the codebook, analytical memos, and decisions to merge or separate themes were documented. This audit trail enables readers to understand how the interpretations were developed from the text.

d. Reflexivity

The researchers acknowledged their normative proximity to the pesantren tradition, which could encourage idealisation. To mitigate this risk, the analysis actively examined polemical language, the boundaries of tolerance, and passages that did not directly support assumptions about character education.

The study does not report Cohen's kappa because no independently frozen double-coded matrix was available before reconciliation. A numerical coefficient without documented units, category distributions, and calculation procedures would be difficult to audit. Consistency was instead supported through the codebook, recoding, discussion between coders, an audit trail, and examination of negative cases. This decision reflects the view that intercoder reliability must be aligned with the epistemological position of the analysis; kappa is appropriate only when category design and units of assessment are adequately documented (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020; McHugh, 2012).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. KH Ali Maksum's Intellectual Biography and the Context in Which the Book Was Written

1.1. Life and Education

KH Ali Maksum is recognised as a Krapyak scholar-educator who was formed within the pesantren tradition and possessed a strong command of classical Islamic literature. His intellectual biography reflects scholarly mobility, close engagement with networks of ulama, and sustained attention to institutional educational reform. Academic work devoted specifically to his thought emphasises the integration of mastery of religious texts, disciplined study, linguistic proficiency, and the adaptation of education to contemporary needs (Mustolehudin & Muawanah, 2018).

This position is important for interpreting the book. Ali Maksum was not merely compiling evidence; he was also an educator seeking to provide the pesantren community with an argumentative framework. The text should therefore be read in relation to the teaching of classical texts and the formation of scholarly authority, rather than treated as an isolated collection of proofs.

1.2. Socio-Intellectual Context of the Book

The work emerged in a context in which religious practices commonly observed within Nahdlatul Ulama were contested through debates concerning bid'ah, textual evidence, and the legitimacy of legal schools. The content reveals a defensive-apologetic purpose: to assemble references demonstrating that the practices under discussion were grounded in the scholarly tradition (Maksum, 2020).

This context accounts for the text's firm language in several passages. Such firmness must be read historically and should not be equated uncritically with unlimited tolerance. Its potential for moderation is most evident in its extensive use of references, acknowledgement of disagreement in subsidiary matters, and refusal to turn differences in branches of law into grounds for excessive condemnation. This pattern is consistent with scholarship on Nahdlatul Ulama moderatism, although it still requires critical interpretation (Burhani, 2012; Hilmy, 2013).

1.3. Structure and Methodology of the Book

Substantively, the book is not organised into three sections on theology and doctrine; rather, it comprises a muqaddimah followed by a series of discussions of contested religious practices. Correcting this structural description is essential to avoid attributing material to the corpus that it does not contain.

1. The first cluster addresses charity or the transfer of spiritual reward to the deceased, the supererogatory prayer before the Friday prayer, and talqin. The arguments in these discussions are developed through collections of hadith, juristic opinions, and scholarly explanations.
2. The second cluster concerns the number of raka'at in the tarawih prayer and the determination of the beginnings of Ramadan and Shawwal. The text presents variations in practice and underscores the importance of scholarly reference in decision-making.
3. The third cluster covers grave visitation, life and punishment in the grave, visiting the Prophet, and tawassul. These discussions portray religious practice as situated within a continuity of textual evidence, scholarly tradition, and the spiritual life of the community.

The book's argumentative method primarily consists of compiling and comparing references from the classical Islamic heritage. Its defensible contribution is therefore not the claim that it explicitly formulates a theory of reason and revelation or a theory of character, but that its handling of evidence and disagreement provides pedagogical material for cultivating epistemic responsibility (Maksum, 2020).

2. Patterns of Moderate Argumentation in Hujjatu Ahlissunnah wal Jama'ah

2.1. The Relationship among Evidence, Scholarly Authority, and Jurisprudential Reasoning

The first theme indicates that religious truth in the book is constructed through a relationship between normative sources and scholarly explanation. Evidence is not presented as a self-contained slogan; it is situated within networks of interpretation, legal schools, and works that can be consulted and verified.

The muqaddimah emphasises the importance of consulting qualified scholars when one lacks knowledge and of referring to scholarly opinions in disputed matters. Pedagogically, this pattern can cultivate epistemic humility: learners recognise the limits of their knowledge, verify sources, and refrain from prematurely claiming authority (Maksum, 2020).

Respect for scholars, however, does not entail the suspension of reasoning. The comparison of opinions and the examination of their argumentative foundations indicate that the pesantren tradition provides space for disciplined reasoning. Scholarship on kitab kuning emphasises that the transmission of tradition always involves reading, glossing, explaining,

and adapting understanding to context (van Bruinessen, 2012).

2.2. The Ethics of Disagreement in Subsidiary Religious Matters

The second theme arises from the way the text limits condemnation in matters of subsidiary jurisprudence. Its purpose is not to treat every opinion as equivalent, but to situate disagreements according to the level of the issue and to require a scholarly basis before judging the practices of another group.

From the perspective of character education, distinguishing between *usul* and *furu'* helps *santri* develop proportional judgement. Technical differences are not automatically converted into comprehensive moral judgements of other people. This orientation is closely related to *tasamuh*: a willingness to coexist with difference without abandoning methodological commitments.

The limits of this finding must nevertheless be stated. The book remains a defence of a particular position and does not always employ neutral language. Tolerance is therefore inferred not directly from every expression, but from an argumentative structure that acknowledges a plurality of opinions and the importance of scholarly authority.

This interpretation is supported by studies showing that Aswaja education can strengthen tolerance when the value of moderation is translated into dialogic learning and social practice rather than confined to the assertion of group identity (Amir et al., 2020; Anam et al., 2021).

2.3. Balancing Fidelity to Tradition with Argumentative Justification

The third theme concerns the balance between fidelity to tradition and the obligation to provide reasons. The book defends communal religious practices, yet it does so by presenting references across multiple classical works and scholarly opinions.

1. This balance may be understood as epistemic *tawazun*: tradition is not accepted solely because it has been inherited, while innovation is not accepted merely because it is new. The validity of an argument is assessed through its sources, method, and relationship to the religious practices of the community.
2. At the pedagogical level, this balance can be enacted through comparative study of scholarly opinions, exercises in tracing references, and discussions that distinguish criticism of an argument from rejection of a person's identity.
3. The *kitab kuning* tradition remains relevant in digital environments when *santri* do not merely access texts in new formats but also learn to verify authorship, editions, context, and interpretative authority. Research on classical Islamic texts in the digital era shows that technology broadens access to learning resources while simultaneously increasing the need for source literacy (Meriza et al., 2022).

Moderation, as interpreted from this book, is therefore not a position devoid of principle, but a discipline of situating evidence, tradition, and disagreement proportionately.

3. Scholarly Authority and the Formation of Tawadhu'

3.1. Scholarly Reference and the Continuity of Tradition

The book's pattern of citation presents religious knowledge as the product of transmission and a sustained intergenerational conversation. Ali Maksum arranges scholarly opinions to demonstrate that communal practices possess an intellectual genealogy rather than constituting unsupported customs (Maksum, 2020).

Genealogical awareness may cultivate *tawadhu'*: *santri* recognise that their knowledge depends on the work of numerous scholars, teachers, copyists, translators, and learning communities. Individual claims must therefore be tested against the scholarly tradition.

Within *pesantren*, this continuity is enacted through the study of classical texts, permission to teach, correction by teachers, and ethical use of sources. *Pesantren* scholarship identifies the teacher-student relationship as a medium both for transmitting knowledge and for cultivating moral responsibility (Dhofier, 2011; Pohl, 2006).

3.2. Adab as a Prerequisite for Knowledge

This study does not present 'adab before knowledge' as an explicit quotation from the book, because that formulation could not be verified in the corpus examined. Instead, adab is inferred from the requirements to consult specialists, ground opinions in sources, and avoid careless condemnation in subsidiary matters.

1. Adab towards sources: reading texts in their entirety, citing references accurately, and not extracting scholarly opinions selectively to justify a predetermined conclusion.
2. Adab towards teachers and scholars: respecting their competence while understanding the reasoning and limitations of the opinions they advance.
3. Adab in disagreement: criticising arguments without diminishing the dignity of individuals or groups who hold different views.
4. Adab in practice: connecting knowledge with social responsibility rather than using it as an instrument of symbolic domination.

The everyday life of a pesantren enables adab to be learned through exemplarity, routine, and khidmah. Research on pesantren education suggests that self-formation occurs through a combination of formal instruction and participation in the daily life of the community (Lukens-Bull, 2001; Nilan, 2009).

This library study does not, however, test whether all pesantren or Krapyak alumni display these characteristics. The relationship among text, pedagogy, and behaviour requires investigation through observation, interviews, or longitudinal research designs.

3.3. Ta'zim lil Ulama and the Democratisation of Knowledge

Ta'zim towards scholars should be understood as respect grounded in competence and responsibility, not as obedience that eliminates evaluation. The primary text itself demonstrates the work of comparing sources and situating opinions within an argumentative structure.

The pedagogical implication is a form of learning in which santri are required to explain the basis of an opinion, recognise the diversity of legal schools, and indicate the degree of certainty attached to a conclusion. The teacher acts as a methodological guide, while santri are trained to assume responsibility for their use of sources.

The desired intellectual character is critical without arrogance, loyal to tradition without closing down dialogue, and receptive to technology without relinquishing verification. This framework is particularly relevant when religious authority in digital spaces is dispersed and can readily be claimed by anyone.

4. Aswaja Character Values and the Pedagogical Mechanisms of Their Internalisation

4.1. Tawasuth (Moderation) as a Character Disposition

The following four values emerge from an interpretative dialogue between patterns in the primary text and the Aswaja literature; they are not a list of concepts systematically formulated in the book. Scholarship on Nahdlatul Ulama moderatism positions tawasuth, tasamuh, tawazun, and i'tidal as interrelated principles (Burhani, 2012; Hilmy, 2013).

1. Moderation in thought: considering more than one reference and avoiding conclusions based on a single fragment of evidence.
2. Moderation in action: situating religious practices according to their legal status and refusing to transform subsidiary disagreement into identity conflict.
3. Moderation in communication: articulating a reasoned position while preserving space for dialogue.

In this context, tawasuth is manifested in proportional reasoning, not in the claim that all positions are equivalent. Moderate character education requires learners to assess evidence, context, and the social consequences of a position (Anam et al., 2021; Mujahid, 2021).

Pedagogical mechanisms for internalising tawasuth may include:

1. Exemplarity: teachers demonstrate how to express disagreement without humiliation

- and remain willing to revise an argument when stronger evidence is identified.
2. Academic habituation: santri are routinely required to identify sources, compare opinions, and distinguish data from evaluation.
 3. Critical reflection: discussion of religious practices is connected to questions about their consequences for social relationships and personal integrity.
 4. Dialogic correction: errors are addressed through reasons and evidence rather than through identity labelling.

4.2. Tasamuh (Tolerance) across Diverse Interpretations

Tasamuh, as interpreted from the text, has at least three domains:

1. Intra-school tolerance: recognising diversity within the Sunni tradition and understanding that disagreement may arise from legitimate methods of legal reasoning.
2. Inter-school tolerance: distinguishing scholarly disagreement from social rejection of adherents of another legal school.
3. Civic tolerance: cultivating respect and cooperation with communities of different religions in social affairs without obscuring the convictions of any party.

The primary text most strongly supports the first two domains, namely an ethics of disagreement within Islam. Interreligious tolerance is a pedagogical development that must be supported by empirical literature rather than attributed directly to the book.

Within pesantren education, tasamuh may be developed through:

1. Comparative study of legal schools: santri examine the reasoning, context, and limits of each position.
2. Dialogic bahtsul masail: participants distinguish the strength of an argument from the social status of the speaker and formulate conclusions collectively.
3. Intercommunity engagement: shared experience creates opportunities to practise respect, cooperation, and constructive resolution of differences.

Studies of multicultural pesantren and religious education in Indonesia indicate that tolerance is stronger when learners experience meaningful interaction, have access to dialogic spaces, and observe institutional exemplarity (Aryati & Suradi, 2022; Raihani, 2012; Parker, 2014). These findings support the pedagogical possibility but do not demonstrate a specific effect of Ali Maksum's book.

4.3. Tawazun (Balance) between Worldly and Spiritual Responsibilities

In this study, tawazun refers to balance between text and context, tradition and argumentative evaluation, and spiritual formation and social responsibility.

The book demonstrates that the defence of tradition can be conducted through scholarly work. Fidelity to religious practices need not therefore conflict with the examination of evidence and comparison of opinions (Maksum, 2020).

Within pesantren education, tawazun may be enacted through:

1. An integrated curriculum: the study of the classical Islamic heritage is connected to the capacity to interpret social issues and developments in contemporary knowledge.
2. Source literacy: santri verify the authenticity of editions, the context of quotations, and the credibility of digital sites before using information.
3. Social service: religious learning is translated into service to society and cooperation across social groups.

Scholarship on pesantren modernisation shows that tradition and change do not necessarily negate one another; pesantren can maintain their identities while developing curricula, organisational structures, and public engagement (Lukens-Bull, 2001; Pohl, 2006).

4.4. I'tidal (Justice) as a Universal Ethical Principle

I'tidal is understood as the requirement to evaluate opinions fairly: neither rejecting a practice merely because it differs from one's own custom nor accepting a claim solely because

it originates within one's own group.

In textual analysis, methodological justice entails presenting the context of an opinion, retaining disconfirming evidence, and limiting conclusions to what the corpus can support.

Within character education, i'tidal may be developed through:

1. Deliberation: decisions are based on examinable reasons and provide space for divergent voices.
2. Proportionate evaluation: academic errors are distinguished from personal attacks, while educational sanctions are directed towards improvement.
3. Leadership with integrity: authority is exercised consistently, remains open to correction, and accepts responsibility for the consequences of decisions.

5. Pesantren Culture as a Moral Ecology

5.1. The Hidden Curriculum in Character Education

Pesantren possess both a formal curriculum and a hidden curriculum constituted through structures of authority, routines, social relationships, forms of respectful address, and the distribution of responsibilities. Scholarship emphasises that this entire environment contributes to the formation of dispositions rather than merely declarative knowledge (Dhofier, 2011; Bourdieu, 1977).

A synthesis of the literature suggests that the moral ecology of pesantren includes:

1. Relational authority: kiai and teachers hold scholarly authority, but educational effectiveness depends on trust, exemplarity, and pedagogical closeness.
2. Meaningful routines: schedules of worship, study, and khidmah cultivate discipline when participants understand their purposes and observe consistency among institutional leaders.
3. A community connected to wider society: pesantren maintain an internal identity while also developing social and civic participation.

These statements represent a synthesis of pesantren scholarship rather than field findings from the present study. Research on pesantren and civil society indicates that educational environments can support social agency when tradition is connected to participation and public responsibility (Pohl, 2006).

5.2. Ritual and Symbol as Media of Learning

Rituals and symbols can operate as media of learning when accompanied by explanation, exemplarity, and reflection. Without these processes, ritual may become a mechanical routine.

a. Study of Classical Islamic Texts

Textual study connects the text, the teacher, and the community of readers. Bandongan, sorogan, and discussion can cultivate careful reading, patience, and respect for scholarly processes. The kitab serves not merely as an object of memorisation but as a space for intergenerational conversation (van Bruinessen, 2012).

b. Communal Religious Practices

Charity, tahlil, grave visitation, and tawassul are defended in the primary text through religious references. In educational settings, these practices may foster collective memory and solidarity when undertaken without coercion and accompanied by explanations of their socio-spiritual significance (Maksum, 2020).

c. Khidmah

Service within the community can cultivate humility and responsibility, but it must be organised within clear ethical boundaries, a reasonable distribution of work, and protection of santri dignity.

5.3. The Moral Community as a Context for Habituation

A pesantren can function as a moral community because values are learned through shared knowledge, affect, and action. Character-education frameworks emphasise that

consistency among the curriculum, adult exemplarity, and institutional culture determines whether values become habitual dispositions (Lickona, 1991).

Relevant features of a moral community include:

1. Shared values: institutional principles are stated clearly and applied consistently to administrators and santri alike.
2. Mutual accountability: members remind one another through procedures that protect dignity and prevent the abuse of authority.
3. Collective practices: shared activities strengthen a sense of belonging when they remain open to evaluation and responsive to participants' needs.
4. Shared narratives: accounts of scholars and traditions are used as resources for reflection rather than as substitutes for critical examination.

Internalisation may occur through observing role models, participating in practices, engaging in dialogue, and undertaking personal reflection. Empirical studies of pesantren education support the importance of communal experience while also demonstrating variation across institutions; generalisations must therefore be made cautiously (Nilan, 2009; Mujahid, 2021).

6. Contemporary Relevance of the Aswaja Paradigm

6.1. Responding to Radicalism and Extremism

In responding to radicalism, the potential contribution of the Aswaja paradigm lies less in a security-oriented approach than in strengthening religious literacy, the ethics of disagreement, and social connectedness. Studies of campus Islamic preaching organisations and Islamic schools show that exclusivism can develop when texts are detached from context, scholarly authority is weakened, and opportunities for dialogue narrow (Arifianto, 2019; Zuhdi, 2018).

A synthesis of the literature suggests that extremist narratives are frequently characterised by exclusive claims to truth, the delegitimisation of other traditions, and comprehensive judgements of identity. Ali Maksum's book can be used to teach that a religious practice should be assessed through references and the history of debate rather than through reductive labels.

Aswaja-based education may cultivate intellectual resilience through:

1. Contextual understanding: situating evidence within the issue under discussion, the tradition of interpretation, and its social setting.
2. Critical respect for tradition: recognising the contributions of earlier scholars while examining the contemporary relevance of their applications.
3. Ethics of argumentation: expressing disagreement with evidence, proportionality, and social responsibility.
4. Civic inclusiveness: cooperating for the common good without erasing religious identity.

This study does not contain evidence that would justify a claim that Krapyak alumni are more resistant to radicalism. The conclusion is necessarily inferential: education combining scholarly authority, contextual reasoning, and tolerance may reduce the appeal of exclusionary narratives. Although this inference is supported by studies of Aswaja character and moderate education, it requires dedicated empirical testing among alumni (Anam et al., 2021; Mujahid, 2021).

6.2. Responding to Digital Challenges and Value Disruption

The digital era expands access to religious texts and lectures, but it also fragments authority and accelerates the circulation of decontextualised quotations. Mainstreaming moderation in digital environments must therefore be accompanied by verification literacy, communication ethics, and the capacity to recognise the rhetorical purposes of content (Hefni, 2020).

Realistic pesantren responses may include:

1. Responsible digitisation of sources: providing clearly identified editions, complete metadata, and contextual explanations.
2. A digital-literacy curriculum: training students to trace DOIs, catalogues, author identities, and comparative sources before disseminating information.
3. Production of dialogic content: explaining differences among legal schools proportionately and avoiding communication that humiliates other groups.

Research on classical Islamic texts in the digital era shows that technology does not eliminate the need for teachers and interpretative traditions. On the contrary, wider access demands a more rigorous capacity to assess source credibility (Meriza et al., 2022).

6.3. Contribution to National Character Education

The paradigm interpreted from the text and the pesantren tradition may contribute to national character education when its values are translated inclusively and articulated in an accountable manner. This contribution does not replace other theories of character education; rather, it adds an indigenous intellectual resource that can be brought into dialogue with universal frameworks.

Potential contributions include:

1. A holistic model: connecting intellectual integrity, spiritual habituation, and social responsibility.
2. A moral community: treating institutional culture and exemplarity as integral components of the curriculum.
3. Local-universal integration: translating adab, deliberation, khidmah, tolerance, and justice into observable behavioural indicators.

Adaptation to mainstream schools must avoid the indoctrination of group identity. The literature on multicultural education shows that religious education supports peaceful coexistence when it provides opportunities for dialogue, experience across difference, and critical reflection (Raihani, 2012; Parker, 2014; Aryati & Suradi, 2022).

CONCLUSION

Drawing on the analysis of *Argumentasi Ahlussunnah Wal Jamaah* and its dialogue with pesantren scholarship, this study reaches five conclusions.

First, Ali Maksum's work is neither a theory of character education nor a systematic account of the relationship between reason and revelation. The corpus is an argumentative defence of selected religious practices through references to hadith, jurisprudence, and scholarly opinion (Maksum, 2020).

Second, the four values of *tawasuth*, *tasamuh*, *tawazun*, and *i'tidal* can be used to interpret the text's pedagogical potential, particularly in its patterns of scholarly reference, its limitation of condemnation in subsidiary matters, its comparison of opinions, and its maintenance of communal practices. These values are interpretative constructions supported by Aswaja scholarship rather than an explicit list provided by the book.

Third, the most plausible mechanisms of internalisation include contextual teaching of classical texts, teacher exemplarity, exercises in comparing scholarly opinions, reflective communal practices, and lived experience within a moral community.

Fourth, the study distinguishes textual findings from pedagogical inferences. Because it did not employ field data, it does not conclude that the book directly causes character change or that the alumni of any particular institution are necessarily more moderate.

Fifth, the text's contemporary relevance lies in its potential to strengthen epistemic humility, source literacy, and the ethics of disagreement. This potential can become effective character education only when translated into a coherent learning design and subjected to empirical evaluation.

ETHICAL STATEMENT

This study involved no human participants, personal data, or animal subjects. It was based exclusively on publicly available published texts; therefore, formal ethical approval and informed consent were not required. The authors conducted the study in accordance with principles of research integrity, accurate attribution, respect for intellectual property, and responsible interpretation.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no financial, professional, or personal conflicts of interest that could have influenced the design, analysis, interpretation, or reporting of this study.

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