

## A TRANSFORMATIVE MODEL INTEGRATING ASWAJA AND LOCAL WISDOM TO STRENGTHEN RELIGIOUS MODERATION AMONG GENERATION Z IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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### Abstrak

Artikel ini merumuskan model konseptual pendidikan Aswaja berbasis kearifan lokal untuk memperkuat karakter moderasi beragama Generasi Z di era digital. Penelitian menggunakan tinjauan literatur integratif dengan analisis isi tematik. Audit dimulai dari 40 referensi pada naskah awal dan 14 sumber tambahan yang ditelusuri melalui Google Scholar, Crossref, SINTA, dan laman penerbit pada 7 April 2026. Setelah deduplikasi, pemeriksaan metadata, serta seleksi relevansi, 30 sumber dipertahankan sebagai korpus sintesis. Hasil kajian menunjukkan empat temuan. Pertama, prinsip tawassuth, tasamuh, tawazun, dan i'tidal memiliki titik temu dengan musyawarah, gotong royong, tepa selira, dan praktik budaya komunal. Kedua, transformasi nilai memerlukan refleksi kritis-dialogis, pembelajaran kontekstual, literasi agama-digital, dan proyek sosial-budaya. Ketiga, model usulan menghubungkan dimensi kognitif, afektif, dan praksis dengan empat indikator moderasi beragama: komitmen kebangsaan, toleransi, anti-kekerasan, dan akomodatif terhadap budaya lokal. Keempat, keteladanan pendidik, kemitraan komunitas, dan evaluasi reflektif merupakan prasyarat implementasi. Karena tidak menggunakan data lapangan, model ini diposisikan sebagai konstruksi konseptual yang perlu divalidasi melalui studi ahli, uji terbatas, dan penelitian empiris.

**Keywords:** Aswaja; local  
wisdom; religious  
moderation; Generation Z;  
transformative education

### Abstract

*This article develops a conceptual model of Aswaja education grounded in local wisdom to strengthen religious moderation among Generation Z in the digital era. It employs an integrative literature review and thematic content analysis. The audit began with 40 references in the initial manuscript and 14 additional sources identified through Google Scholar, Crossref, SINTA and official publisher websites on 7 April 2026. Following deduplication, metadata verification and relevance screening, 30 sources were retained for synthesis. Four findings emerged. First, the Aswaja principles of tawassuth, tasamuh, tawazun and i'tidal converge with deliberation, mutual cooperation, tepa selira and communal cultural practices. Secondly, value transformation requires critical-dialogic reflection, contextual learning, religious and digital literacy, and socio-cultural projects. Thirdly, the proposed model links cognitive, affective and practical dimensions to four indicators of religious moderation: national commitment, tolerance, non-violence and accommodation of local culture. Fourthly, educator role-modelling, community partnership and reflective evaluation are necessary implementation conditions. As the study contains no field data, the model is presented as a conceptual construction requiring expert validation, small-scale trials and subsequent empirical testing.*



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## INTRODUCTION

Generation Z has grown up in an environment characterised by high connectivity, visual culture, rapid information flows, and intensive encounters with diverse religious authorities. These conditions create wide-ranging opportunities for learning, but they also increase the risks of exposure to decontextualised information, polarisation, and the oversimplification of religious teachings. Seemiller and Grace (2016) and Chicca and Shellenbarger (2018) emphasise that learners from this generation require concise, interactive, collaborative, and meaningful learning experiences. In the Indonesian context, digital spaces may also create algorithmic enclaves and reinforce exclusive identities when critical literacy is insufficiently developed (Lim, 2017; Slama, 2018).

These challenges are particularly significant for religious education. Digital preaching and religious organisations can provide spaces for moral formation, yet they may also disseminate immoderate narratives when the sources, contexts, and social consequences of religious claims are not critically examined (Arifianto, 2019; Hefni, 2020; Zuhdi, 2018). Religious moderation education therefore cannot be reduced to the transmission of definitions. It must enable learners to evaluate authority, understand difference, manage conflict, and translate religious values into socially responsible action.

Within the Nahdlatul Ulama tradition, Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah (Aswaja) offers a relevant ethical orientation through tawassuth (the middle way), tasamuh (tolerance), tawazun (balance), and i'tidal (justice and proportionality). These principles do not imply indecision; rather, they guide the balanced positioning of textual evidence, tradition, change, and diversity. Studies of NU moderation indicate that Aswaja values can provide an ethical framework for social and national life when they are embedded in educational culture rather than treated merely as an organisational identity (Burhani, 2012; Hilmy, 2013). Research in pesantren settings likewise shows that moderate character develops through the integration of curriculum, role-modelling, routine, and community experience (Anam et al., 2021; Mujahid, 2021).

Local wisdom provides a social context for the internalisation of these values. From a cultural perspective, meaning is produced through symbols, habits, and shared practices understood by members of a community (Geertz, 1973). Mutual cooperation, deliberation, *tepa selira*, communal traditions, and respect for difference constitute pedagogical resources because they connect abstract values with observable experience. Fajarini (2014) demonstrates the role of local wisdom in character education, while Harahap et al. (2024) show that revitalising local traditions can support religious moderation. Studies of pesantren communities and plural societies further indicate that tolerance is strengthened when learners encounter difference directly and participate in practices of coexistence (Aryati & Suradi, 2022; Parker, 2014; Raihani, 2012).

Pedagogically, the integration of Aswaja and local wisdom intersects with transformative education. Freire (2000) rejects learning that positions students as passive recipients, whereas Mezirow (1997) emphasises critical reflection on frames of reference. Kolb (1984) conceptualises experience, reflection, conceptualisation, and experimentation as a learning cycle. Hoggan (2016) extends transformation to meaningful changes in ways of knowing, identity, relationships, and action. In plural societies, this framework should be combined with multicultural education that connects knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and social action (Banks, 2015). Project-based learning can operationalise these principles through authentic problems, collaboration, public products, and reflection (Kokotsaki et al., 2016).

Although the literature on Aswaja, local wisdom, religious moderation, Generation Z, and transformative education continues to expand, these five domains are frequently discussed in isolation. Some studies emphasise the normative values of Aswaja, others describe local traditions, while research on Generation Z tends to focus on technological preferences. Few studies provide a transparent derivation pathway from the literature to an educational model that links value foundations, learning mechanisms, dimensions of transformation, outcome indicators, and

implementation requirements.

This article addresses three questions: (1) How are Aswaja values and local wisdom conceptually aligned within a religious moderation framework? (2) Which pedagogical mechanisms are most appropriate to the characteristics of Generation Z in the digital era? and (3) How can a conceptual model be developed through a traceable synthesis of the literature? The article contributes an explicit mapping of the value-mechanism-dimension-outcome pathway, a clear distinction between literature-based findings and empirical claims, and a conceptual model that can be tested in subsequent research.

## METHODS

This study employed an integrative literature review with an exploratory-constructive orientation. This approach was selected because the purpose was not to measure the effectiveness of an intervention, but to integrate concepts from different research traditions into a coherent model. An integrative review allows theoretical literature, empirical studies, policy documents, and foundational books to be combined, provided that the processes of selection and interpretation are transparently reported (Snyder, 2019). As a qualitative study, the design also requires traceability of sources, analytical decisions, and the researcher's interpretative position (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Documentary sources were treated as research data whose context, purpose, and quality required critical examination (Bowen, 2009).

The literature audit was conducted on 7 April 2026. Sources were identified through Google Scholar, Crossref, SINTA, and the official websites of publishers and journals. The article search focused on publications from 2012 to 2026, while classic books that remained foundational to the theoretical framework were retained without a date restriction. The search string combined the following terms: (Aswaja OR Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah OR religious moderation) AND (local wisdom OR kearifan lokal OR cultural practice) AND (Generation Z OR digital native OR digital religion) AND (transformative learning OR contextual learning OR project-based learning). Additional searches used Indonesian equivalents to broaden coverage of national scholarship.

The audit began with 40 references from the initial manuscript and 14 additional sources identified through structured searching, producing 54 records for the selection matrix. Four duplicate entries or repeated versions were removed. A further 20 records were excluded because their metadata were incomplete, their links could not be verified, their relevance was only marginal, or they did not contribute to the construction of the model. The final corpus comprised 30 sources, including academic books, policy documents, SINTA 1-2 journal articles, and reputable international journal articles indexed in Scopus.

The inclusion criteria were: (1) direct relevance to Aswaja, religious moderation, local wisdom, Generation Z, digital religion, transformative education, contextual learning, or project-based learning; (2) verifiable bibliographic identities and publisher or DOI links; (3) a clear contribution to the research questions; and (4) peer-reviewed articles or books published by academic presses. Sources were excluded when they were popular writings without an academic procedure, duplicates, records with inconsistent metadata, or publications containing claims that could not be traced.

The analysis followed the logic of reflexive thematic analysis. First, each source was read to identify meaning units relating to values, cultural practices, learner characteristics, pedagogical strategies, and indicators of moderation. Secondly, these units were assigned initial codes and then grouped into higher-order themes. Thirdly, the themes were compared with the four indicators of religious moderation formulated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (2019): national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and accommodation of local culture. Fourthly, the themes were organised in a derivation matrix so that the relationship between the sources and each component of the model could be audited. This procedure followed the principles of familiarisation, coding, theme development, review, definition, and reporting (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Analytical consistency was supported through code-recode procedures, decision memos, examination of sources that did not fully support the initial assumptions, and comparison between normative literature and empirical findings. The study was explicitly positioned as a conceptual construction. Accordingly, expressions such as "has the potential to", "may be used", and "requires testing" were employed to avoid claims of effectiveness unsupported by field data.

**Table 1. Literature audit and selection process**

| Stage                             | Number | Decision                                                              |
|-----------------------------------|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Initial manuscript reference list | 40     | Re-audited for duplication, relevance, and metadata completeness      |
| Additional verified sources       | 14     | Identified through structured searching and publisher websites        |
| Duplicate or repeated versions    | 4      | Removed                                                               |
| Did not meet eligibility criteria | 20     | Excluded owing to weak metadata, low relevance, or unverifiable links |
| Final synthesis corpus            | 30     | Coded and used to construct the model                                 |

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Characteristics of Generation Z and the digital religious ecology

The synthesis indicates that the term digital native should be approached critically. Familiarity with devices does not necessarily entail an ability to verify sources or manage attention. Generation Z tends to respond positively to visual materials, rapid feedback, flexible access, and collaborative activities, yet still requires learning structures, guidance, and opportunities for reflection (Seemiller & Grace, 2016; Chicca & Shellenbarger, 2018). Aswaja education should therefore do more than transfer lectures to social media; it should transform learners from consumers of information into critical evaluators of sources and responsible producers of religious messages.

The digital ecology exposes learners to fragments of sermons, memes, short videos, and comments circulated without methodological context. Algorithms may reinforce repeated exposure to similar viewpoints, while religious authority becomes dispersed and easily claimed (Lim, 2017; Slama, 2018). Under these conditions, religious-digital literacy includes the ability to verify an author's identity, the sources of textual evidence, the context of a debate, the rhetorical purpose of content, and its social consequences. This dimension is essential if moderation is to be understood not merely as a slogan, but as a discipline of knowing, communicating, and acting.

### 2. Alignment between Aswaja values and local wisdom

The four Aswaja principles have functional correspondences with local cultural practices. Tawassuth intersects with deliberation because decisions are reached by considering multiple interests rather than allowing one party to dominate. Tasamuh acquires a social medium through mutual cooperation, *tepa selira*, and encounters across groups. Tawazun is evident in efforts to preserve tradition while accepting beneficial innovation. I'tidal requires proportional treatment, a fair distribution of responsibilities, and the rejection of violence. This alignment does not mean that every local tradition automatically conforms to Aswaja; cultural practices must still be critically examined in relation to human dignity, justice, and public benefit (Burhani, 2012; Hilmy, 2013).

Empirical literature shows that local culture can become a learning space when learners participate directly, engage in dialogue with cultural practitioners, and reflect on its meaning. Fajarini (2014) positions local wisdom as a resource for character formation, while Harahap et al. (2024) demonstrate the role of local tradition in negotiating social harmony. Aryati and Suradi (2022) document practices of tolerance in a pesantren that interacts with Hindu communities. Parker (2014) and Raihani (2012) further emphasise that education for peaceful coexistence requires experiences across difference, institutional support, and spaces in which tensions can be discussed openly.

### 3. Derivation matrix for the conceptual model

The following matrix presents the synthesis pathway from clusters of literature to the components of the model. It distinguishes the conceptual foundations, pedagogical mechanisms, dimensions of change, and intended outcomes, thereby ensuring that Figure 1 is not merely an intuitive illustration.

**Table 2. Synthesis matrix for constructing the model**

| Literature base                                                  | Value/practice                            | Pedagogical mechanism                                                                       | Dimension           | Religious moderation outcome                |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Burhani (2012); Hilmy (2013); Anam et al. (2021); Mujahid (2021) | tawassuth, tawazun, i'tidal; deliberation | case-based dialogue, comparison of perspectives, reflection on textual evidence and context | Cognitive-affective | proportional reasoning, national commitment |

| Literature base                                                                                | Value/practice                                                   | Pedagogical mechanism                                                                | Dimension                     | Religious moderation outcome                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| Hefni (2020); Lim (2017); Slama (2018); Arifianto (2019); Zuhdi (2018)                         | tasamuh and communicative responsibility                         | religious-digital literacy, source verification, digital-media ethics                | Cognitive-affective           | tolerance, non-violence, resilience to polarisation |
| Geertz (1973); Fajarini (2014); Harahap et al. (2024); Aryati & Suradi (2022)                  | mutual cooperation, tepa selira, communal traditions             | contextual learning and cultural experience                                          | Affective-practical           | accommodation of local culture, social empathy      |
| Freire (2000); Mezirow (1997); Kolb (1984); Hoggan (2016)                                      | critical consciousness and transformation of frames of reference | reflection on experience, problem-posing dialogue, social action                     | Cognitive-affective-practical | moral agency and consistency of action              |
| Banks (2015); Kokotsaki et al. (2016); Seemiller & Grace (2016); Chicca & Shellenbarger (2018) | plurality and participation                                      | collaborative projects, digital products, public presentation, reflective evaluation | Cognitive-affective-practical | collaboration, responsibility, civic participation  |

#### 4. A transformative Aswaja-local wisdom education model

The proposed conceptual model comprises four layers. The first is the foundational layer: Aswaja values, local wisdom, and the Generation Z context. All three must be present simultaneously. Aswaja provides the normative orientation, local wisdom supplies social experience and symbols, and the Generation Z context determines the forms of communication and learning media. This integrative approach is consistent with applied Islamic education that connects values with social realities (Halid, 2023a) and with the cultivation of tasamuh in multicultural societies (Halid, 2023b).

The second layer comprises the learning mechanisms: critical-dialogic reflection, contextual learning, religious-digital literacy, and socio-cultural projects. These four mechanisms prevent the model from falling into either of two extremes: indoctrination that leaves no room for thought, or cultural activity that loses its ethical orientation. Reflection tests assumptions; context connects values with experience; digital literacy safeguards the quality of knowledge; and social projects transform understanding into contribution.

The third layer comprises the dimensions of transformation. The cognitive dimension includes an understanding of Aswaja, the analysis of difference, and source verification. The affective dimension includes tolerance, empathy, a sense of justice, and national awareness. The practical dimension includes social participation, engagement with local culture, and the production of moderation initiatives. These dimensions are not linear: practical experience can generate new reflection, while affective change may encourage a deeper search for knowledge.

The fourth layer comprises outcomes aligned with the indicators of religious moderation: national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and accommodation of local culture (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019). The model does not assume that these outcomes will emerge automatically. Implementation requires educator role-modelling, community partnerships, digital ethics, and reflective evaluation.

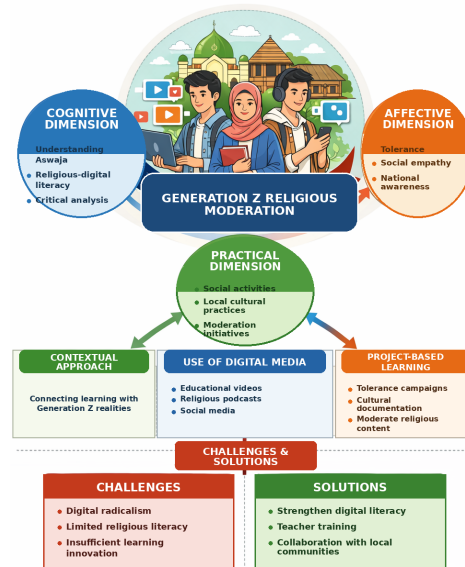


Figure 1. Transformative conceptual model of Aswaja education (author's synthesis).

## 5. Implementation and evaluation strategies

Implementation may begin with a four-stage learning unit. The orientation stage introduces an authentic problem, such as conflict in social-media comments or a debate concerning a local tradition. During exploration, learners investigate sources, compare perspectives, and interview community figures. The action stage produces projects such as documenting inclusive traditions, conducting digital-ethics campaigns, organising student deliberation forums, or delivering cross-community social services. The reflection stage evaluates changes in ways of understanding, feeling, and acting. This structure integrates Kolb's (1984) experiential cycle, Mezirow's (1997) transformative reflection, and the principles of authentic and collaborative projects (Kokotsaki et al., 2016).

Digital media are positioned as a learning environment rather than merely a presentation tool. Learners may compare the credibility of religious videos, annotate sources, construct argument maps, and produce concise content that identifies its sources and the limits of its conclusions. Educators should model how to correct misinformation without humiliating others. These practices connect *tasamuh* with communication ethics and *i'tidal* with fairness in representing different viewpoints.

The model should be evaluated through a multidimensional rubric. The cognitive dimension may be assessed through learners' ability to explain Aswaja values, distinguish fact from opinion, and verify sources. The affective dimension may be observed through willingness to listen, empathy, and the ability to manage disagreement. The practical dimension may be evaluated through the quality of collaboration, the benefits of the project, consistency of action, and ethical reflection. Multiple-choice tests alone are insufficient because transformation involves changes in frames of reference and action (Hoggan, 2016).

The next stage of validation should involve Aswaja scholars, education specialists, cultural practitioners, teachers, and representatives of Generation Z. Following content validation, the model may be subjected to small-scale testing through a design-and-development or mixed-methods study. Indicators of moderation should be translated into observable behaviours while remaining sensitive to local context. Through these steps, the model can progress from conceptual synthesis to implementation evidence without making premature claims of effectiveness.

## 6. Implications, limitations, and research agenda

Theoretically, the model brings together Aswaja ethical traditions, transformative learning theory, multicultural education, and digital pedagogy. Practically, it provides a structure that may be adapted by schools, madrasahs, pesantren, student organisations, and community groups. Adaptation, however, must not standardise local wisdom. Each region should identify practices that remain socially meaningful, the persons authorised to explain their significance, and any inequalities or exclusions embedded within those traditions.

This study has three limitations. First, the corpus comprises 30 sources and was not intended as a census of all publications. Secondly, the construction of the model depends on the interpretation of the literature and has not yet been tested with learner data. Thirdly, Generation Z is not homogeneous; access to technology, educational background, social class, gender, and geographical location may shape learning experiences. Further research should examine construct validity, feasibility, user acceptability, and the model's effects on the four indicators of religious moderation.

## CONCLUSION

The literature synthesis indicates that the integration of Aswaja and local wisdom provides a strong conceptual foundation for religious moderation education among Generation Z. *Tawassuth*, *tasamuh*, *tawazun*, and *i'tidal* acquire experiential contexts through deliberation, mutual cooperation, *tepa selira*, and communal practices. To prevent these values from remaining at the level of declarative knowledge, the proposed model connects them with critical-dialogic reflection, contextual learning, religious-digital literacy, and socio-cultural projects.

The model integrates cognitive, affective, and practical dimensions in pursuit of national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and accommodation of local culture. The article's principal contribution is a traceable derivation pathway from the literature to the model components, together with a clear distinction between conceptual potential and empirical evidence. The model cannot yet be regarded as effective; expert validation, feasibility testing, and field research are required before it can inform policy or support broader generalisation.

## ETHICAL STATEMENT

This study analysed published and publicly accessible literature and did not involve human participants, personal data, animals, or clinical materials. Ethical approval and informed consent were therefore not required. The author remains responsible for accurate reporting, appropriate limits to interpretation, and due acknowledgement of all sources.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that there are no financial, professional, or personal conflicts of interest that could have influenced the preparation or reporting of this article.

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