Research Article

The Dissemination of Aswaja Teachings Through the Study of *Risâlah Ahlissunnah Waljama'Ah* Book

Moh. Ilyas[1]

[1]*The Universituy of Kiai Abdullah Faqih Gresik, Indonesia*

Article Info	Abstract
	This journal examined various strategies for disseminating Aswaja as an effort to strengthen faith amid the rise of sects perceived as deviant. This study utilized a qualitative approach with a case study design, utilizing interviews, observations, and documentation as data collection techniques. The findings indicated that the dissemination of Aswaja is conducted through educational institutions by integrating Aswaja values from the *Risālah Ahlussunnah waljamā'ah* into the curriculum. The learning process involves both supporting and inhibiting factors, following structured stages of internalizing Aswaja values. The study's implications suggest that students develop the ability to apply Aswaja principles, adhere to scholarly teachings, practice Islam within the Indonesian context, and cultivate a moderate, balanced, and tolerant attitude.

INTRODUCTION

The discourse and issues surrounding religious understanding in the Reform Era, particularly in relation to socio-religious aspects and Islamic education, continue to persist today (*PPIM Jakarta and UNDP Indonesia* 1, no. 4 2018). This era of democracy has provided an open space for the emergence and growth of various religious movements, each with its own ideological identity, whether conservative, pragmatic, or democratic. Alongside this, transnational Islamic movements such as Salafi-Wahhabism, Jama'ah Islamiyah, and the Muslim Brotherhood have expanded. The Salafi-Wahhabi movement, in particular, has been known to challenge and discredit the worship practices of *Ahlusunnah* through various means, including social media, community engagement, and penetration into Islamic educational institutions under the guise of Salafism (Quintan Wiktorowicz 2000). As a result, many within society experience confusion, caught between fulfilling socio-religious expectations and striving for an ideal religious identity.

Various religious ideologies, such as *Shi'ism*, *Ahlusunnah*, *Ahmadiyya*, the Muslim Brotherhood, and Salafi-Wahhabism, have historically played significant roles in shaping religious diversity and the dynamics of Islamic education. These ideologies influence religious identity and the role of Islamic educational institutions as

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[1] Corresponding Author: iamilyas@gmail.com

platforms for disseminating religious understanding (*PPIM Jakarta and UNDP Indonesia* 1, no. 3 2018). Ideally, these religious ideologies should coexist peacefully. However, in recent times, Salafi-Wahhabism has been particularly critical of *Ahlusunnah*, which is the majority belief system among Indonesian Muslims, especially those within Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). This criticism primarily targets theological beliefs and religious practices *(PPIM Jakarta and UNDP Indonesia* 1, no. 2 2018).

Salafi-Wahhabism often accuses *Ahlusunnah* adherents of heresy and even disbelief, leading the majority of Indonesian Muslims to be cautious of doctrines that contradict the *Ahlusunnah* traditions upheld by NU. The NU tradition integrates religious teachings with local culture while emphasizing moderation, tolerance, and balance. This dynamic has created a space not only for traditionalist (NU) and modernist (Muhammadiyah) groups but also for transnational Islamic movements, including the exclusivist Salafi-Wahhabism, which strongly promotes Islamism and distinct religious identities (Policy Brief-Salafisme). The indoctrination of religious ideology significantly influences the mindset of the younger generation, particularly students in Islamic educational institutions, who are highly susceptible to exclusive viewpoints. As a result, students may struggle to accept religious differences and become quick to judge other religious practices as incorrect. For instance, exposure to social media content depicting Aswaja (*Ahlusunnah waljamā'ah*) rituals as acts of shirk (polytheism) and bid'ah (religious innovation) can lead students to perceive such practices as deviant and to be avoided, in accordance with Salafi-Wahhabi interpretations (Saparudin 2017).

Similarly, the inculcation of religious understanding—whether conservative, pragmatic, or otherwise—is often consumed and constructed without critical reflection. Therefore, students should be taught not only general knowledge but also religious knowledge that aligns with both Islamic principles and the diverse cultural realities of the Nusantara. Many transnational Islamic groups, particularly Salafi-Wahhabism, have revived a culture of denunciation, labeling the Aswaja tradition as afflicted with TBC (*Tahayyul, Bid'ah*, and *Khurafat*) in various sermons directed at Indonesian Muslims. Consequently, many followers of Nahdlatul Ulama (Nahḍiyin) are accused of blending misguided religious practices with Islamic teachings by the Salafi-Wahhabi movement, which frequently labels their practices as *bid'ah*, misguidance, or even heresy. However, not all *bid'ah* are necessarily misguided (Saparudin, page 13).

From a historical perspective, Islam entered Indonesia through cultural and religious acculturation, as evidenced by the legacy of Walisongo (1474 CE), whose heritage remains preserved and continues to be a site of pilgrimage for the Nahḍiyin community (Susmihara 2018). However, the Salafi-Wahhabi perspective, which diverges from *Ahlusunnah*, considers such religious practices as deviant, *bid'ah*, or even *shirk*. In contrast, preserving and nurturing traditions has been an integral part of rooting Sunni Islam (*Ahlusunnah*) in the Nusantara. The *risālah Ahlusunnah* text has become a widely recognized reference (*mu`tabarah*) in *pesantren* and serves as a foundational text for the development of Aswaja-based religious understanding in educational institutions under the Nahḍiyin framework (Ali Mutakin, 2018). Students, as the future generation of this nation, are still in the process of intellectual and personal development, making them central subjects in Islamic education. This is particularly relevant at MTs Miftahul Jinan, Deket, Lamongan, where students are taught and instilled with *Ahlusunnah* theological principles through the study of *risālah Ahlusunnah waljamā`ah* text. This education aims to strengthen their theological foundation, ensuring that they remain steadfast amid various doctrines that contradict Aswaja teachings. Through this book, students gain an understanding of the theological foundations behind their religious practices and those of their community, fostering a sense of confidence in their faith and traditions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of *Ahlusunnah Waljamā'ah*

Ahlusunnah Waljamā'ah, commonly abbreviated as Aswaja, derives from the etymological root *Ahlun*, meaning family, followers, or a group (Subaidi, 2019). The term *Ahlusunnah* refers to those who adhere to the Sunnah (comprising the sayings, actions, and tacit approvals of Prophet Muhammad). Meanwhile, *Al Jamā'ah* denotes the consensus established by the Prophet's companions during the era of the *Khulafaur Rasyidin* (Rightly Guided Caliphs). The term *Al Jamā'ah* carries multiple interpretations, including: (1) scholars (intellectuals), (2) a collective group within a government led by an *amir* (leader), and (3) the majority of the Muslim community, including the Prophet's companions (Subaidi, 2019).

Terminologically, Aswaja refers to a group or followers who adhere to the teachings of Prophet Muhammad and his companions, maintaining strict adherence to the Qur'an, Sunnah, *ijma'*, and *qiyas* as

established by scholars. Scholars, as the inheritors of prophetic knowledge, have preserved these teachings from the time of the companions and *tabi'in* to the present (Subaidi, 2019). Historically, the Aswaja doctrine gained widespread recognition 400 years after the Hijrah. Specifically in Indonesia, *Ahlusunnah waljamā'ah* aligns with one of the four *Sunny* schools of jurisprudence (*Hanafiyah, Malikiyah, Syafi'iyah,* and *Hambaliyah*), with Syafi'i jurisprudence being the dominant school of thought. In matters of creed and theology, it follows the *Asy'ariyah* and *Maturidiyah* schools, while its spiritual and ethical teachings are influenced by Al-Ghazali and Imam Al-Junaid Al-Baghdadi (M. Ali Haidar 1994).

Ahlussunnah Waljamā'ah (Aswaja) as a Religious Understanding

In the Middle East, Aswaja is commonly referred to as *sunny*. It is not a newly formed sect but rather a response to deviant sects that diverged from true Islamic teachings. *Ahlusunnah* represents the pure and authentic understanding of Islam as taught by the Prophet and his companions. However, the term *Ahlusunnah waljamā'ah* as a specific theological label was not used during the Prophet's time, the era of the Khulafa al-Rasyidin, or even during the Umayyad Caliphate (41–133 H / 611–750 CE). The words *sunnah* and *jamā'ah* were known during the Prophet's time, but they were not yet used to define a distinct theological school (Said Aqiel Siradj, 2008).

The historical trajectory of Aswaja, within the socio-political landscape of Islamic civilization, has not always been smooth. While Aswaja is widely recognized as the most authentic and legitimate interpretation of Islam, its journey has faced various challenges, especially in the face of competing ideologies (Imam Baehaqi, 2000).

Concept of Dissemination

The term dissemination is equivalent to several concepts, including propagation, internalization, and indoctrination. Dissemination refers to any process, at any time and place, aimed at transferring knowledge to individuals or groups so that they become aware of, accept, and eventually apply the transmitted information (Muhammad nurul muflihin, 2018).

In analyzing the ideological construction of religious beliefs, Louis Althusser's theory of ideological apparatuses is relevant for examining how educational institutions function as tools for religious ideological dissemination. His theory serves as a grand framework for observing how religious ideologies operate within educational settings. Additionally, Terry Eagleton's modus operandi of ideology provides an operational perspective on how ideologies function and persist. Meanwhile, Antje Wiener's contestation theory is useful in analyzing how religious groups justify and reinforce their ideological positions within educational institutions. According to Althusser, ideology must reproduce the conditions of its own existence, positioning individuals as both products and producers of ideology (Louis Althusser, 2014).

METHOD

This study was a case study, which is a field study employing a qualitative approach. This case study belonged to the qualitative study paradigm, where a particular case is examined and described in depth, drawing from various sources of information and multiple informants. In summary, a case study investigates specific phenomena to analyze, understand, and explain them based on as much data as possible, focusing on individuals, groups, communities, or organizations (Morrisan, 2019).

Qualitative study with an explanatory model is an effort undertaken by researchers to gather detailed and factual data regarding a particular case. This study method involved direct interaction with participants and informants in a natural setting, aiming to investigate everyday events occurring within individuals, groups, communities, and specific organizations (Zainal Arifin, 2012).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The dissemination of *Ahlusunnah waljamā'ah* teachings through value-based learning must be consistently maintained. This process involves strengthening students' understanding by teaching *kutub aturaṣ* as references, particularly in the fields of *aqidah, fiqh,* and taṣawuf. This dissemination is carried out both through classroom learning and discussion methods, always facilitated by educators (Muhaimin, 1996). The process of disseminating Aswaja teachings through classical texts follows several stages;

    a. First stage: The educator reads and explains each Arabic text word by word and instructs students to write and translate the text using the Javanese Pegon script, ensuring they grasp the linguistic meaning (*bilma'na al-lughawy*)

    b. Second stage: The educator provides a literal interpretation of the text, focusing on its direct meaning (*bilma'na al-murad)* to ensure students understand the intended message of the text.

    c. Third stage: The educator applies a textual and contextual approach, offering explanations related to the text's meaning within contemporary realities (*bima'na al-waqi'iy*)

    d. Fourth stage: The educator stimulates discussion and facilitates students in critical thinking through dialogues, debates, and group discussions about the content and context of the text. This process encourages balanced thinking between religious texts and real-world conditions (*al-istifkar watawāzun baina al-nash walwaqi'*).

At the same time, to help students develop a comprehensive perspective on Islam according to *Ahlusunnah*, educators connect students with contemporary religious phenomena and various theological arguments. This approach enables students to identify significant similarities and differences between *Ahlusunnah* teachings and *Salafi* doctrine, which often labels Aswaja practices as deviant, *bid'ah*, or *shirk* (Mukaffa, 2018).

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study on the dissemination of the Aswaja ideology through the teaching of the *Risalah Ahlusunnah waljamā'ah* text at MTs Miftahul Jinan can be summarized as follows: First, the dissemination of Aswaja teachings at MTs Miftahul Jinan was carried out through an educational approach, integrating Aswaja values from the *risālah Ahlussunnah waljamā'ah* text into the curriculum. This process involves planning, implementation, and evaluation, engaging all components of the madrasah.

Second, the learning process of the *risālah Ahlussunnah waljamā'ah* text consists of supporting factors (such as the environment and relevant classical texts) and obstructing factors (including the diverse backgrounds of students and the limited publication of Aswaja-related books). Strategies involve text comprehension methods, internalization of Aswaja values, and overcoming challenges in the learning process.

Third, the implementation of Aswaja teachings through the study of *risālah Ahlussunnah waljamā'ah* text aims to achieve key success indicators, including applying Aswaja values, adhering to the teachings of scholars, following a recognized *mazhab*, and embodying the principles of *tawassut* (moderation), *tawazun* (balance), and *tasamuh* (tolerance). This implementation significantly influences both the cognitive and affective aspects of students. By adopting these developmental processes, it is expected that religious literacy in Islamic education in the digital era can effectively contribute to achieving national development goals, such as protecting all citizens, improving welfare, enriching national knowledge, and actively promoting global peace.

RECOMMENDATION

This study aimed to provide guidance and systematic insights for Islamic educational institutions, including *pesantren*, foundations, and madrasahs, on the strategic dissemination of Aswaja teachings through the study of *risālah Ahlussunnah waljamā'ah* text at MTs Miftahul Jinan, Lamongan. The objective was to comprehensively understand this dissemination process within the educational framework, from the study of classical texts to its broader implications, with the ultimate goal of enhancing the overall quality of education on a continuous basis. The study suggests improving graduate quality by strengthening Aswaja-based education. It also recommends conducting comparative studies with other *madrasahs* to exchange best practices. Furthermore, it encourages further studies in other Islamic educational institutions that focus on the dissemination strategies of Aswaja ideology through classical Islamic texts at the madrasah level.

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