



Professionalism of Islamic Education Teachers: Strengthening Pedagogical Competence, Integrating Aswaja Values, and Academic Ethics

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Abstrak: Artikel ini membahas secara mendalam profesionalisme guru Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) melalui tiga pilar utama: penguatan kompetensi pedagogik, integrasi nilai-nilai Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah (Aswaja), dan penerapan etika akademik. Di era globalisasi dan Society 5.0, profesionalisme pendidik PAI memegang peranan yang sangat strategis dalam membentengi moral peserta didik serta membentuk generasi yang beriman, bertakwa, dan berakhlak mulia. Kompetensi pedagogik yang mutakhir sangat esensial untuk memastikan proses pembelajaran berlangsung secara efektif, inovatif, dan relevan dengan tantangan zaman. Sementara itu, internalisasi nilai-nilai Aswaja—yang mencakup tawassuth (moderat), tawazun (seimbang), tasamuh (toleran), dan i'tidal (adil)—berfungsi sebagai fondasi ideologis untuk menumbuhkan sikap keberagaman yang inklusif dan harmonis di tengah kemajemukan masyarakat. Selanjutnya, etika akademik menjamin bahwa seluruh praktik pendidikan dilaksanakan dengan integritas moral, objektivitas, dan tanggung jawab yang tinggi, menjadikan guru sebagai uswah hasanah (teladan yang baik). Penelitian ini menggunakan metode tinjauan pustaka kualitatif dengan menganalisis berbagai literatur, jurnal ilmiah, dan regulasi terkait. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa sinergi antara kompetensi pedagogik, nilai Aswaja, dan etika akademik merupakan kesatuan yang tidak dapat dipisahkan dalam upaya mencetak pendidik PAI yang profesional, adaptif, dan berintegritas tinggi.

Kata Kunci: Profesionalisme Guru, Pendidikan Islam, Kompetensi Pedagogik, Etika Akademik.

Abstract: This article thoroughly discusses the professionalism of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers through three main pillars: strengthening pedagogical competence, integrating the values of Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah (Aswaja), and applying academic ethics. In the era of globalization and Society 5.0, the professionalism of PAI educators plays a highly strategic role in fortifying the morals of students and shaping a generation that is faithful, pious, and possesses noble character. Cutting-edge pedagogical competence is essential to ensure that the learning process is effective, innovative, and relevant to contemporary challenges. Meanwhile, the internalization of Aswaja values—which include tawassuth (moderation), tawazun (balance), tasamuh (tolerance), and i'tidal (justice)—serves as an ideological foundation for fostering inclusive and harmonious religious attitudes amidst a pluralistic society. Furthermore, academic ethics guarantee that all educational practices are executed with moral integrity, objectivity, and high responsibility, positioning the teacher as an uswah hasanah (excellent role model). This study employs a qualitative literature review method by analyzing various literature, scientific journals, and relevant regulations. The findings indicate that the synergy between pedagogical competence, Aswaja values, and academic ethics

constitutes an inseparable unity in the effort to produce professional, adaptive, and highly integrated PAI educators.

Keywords: Teacher Professionalism, Islamic Education, Pedagogical Competence, Academic Ethics.

A. Introduction

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) occupies a remarkably strategic and foundational position within the broader national education system. Its primary objective transcends the mere cognitive transmission of religious dogma; rather, it aims to holistically shape the character, morality, and spiritual resilience of students, guiding them to become individuals who are deeply faithful, pious, and endowed with noble character (*akhlak mulia*). In the context of modern education, which is heavily characterized by the relentless tide of globalization, the rapid emergence of Society 5.0, and the pervasive threat of moral degradation among the youth, the responsibilities shouldered by PAI teachers have become increasingly complex and demanding. Today's educators are not merely expected to master the subject matter; they are required to demonstrate a profound level of professionalism that enables them to navigate the intricate socio-cultural and technological landscapes of the 21st century. The professionalism of a PAI educator is a multifaceted construct that encompasses pedagogical, personality, social, and professional competencies, as strictly mandated by the Republic of Indonesia's Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers. Among these, the pedagogical competence of PAI teachers requires immediate and continuous strengthening to ensure that educational methodologies remain effective, contextual, and engaging for a generation of digital natives.

The urgency of strengthening pedagogical competence cannot be

overstated. Traditional, teacher-centered instructional paradigms, which often rely heavily on rote memorization and passive reception, are no longer sufficient to equip students with the critical thinking and problem-solving skills necessitated by contemporary society. A professional PAI teacher must possess the sophisticated ability to design, execute, and meticulously evaluate learning processes that resonate with the psychological and intellectual development of modern students. This involves the integration of modern instructional technologies, the application of deep learning models, and the creation of an interactive classroom environment that stimulates intellectual curiosity while simultaneously nurturing spiritual depth. Transformative education, which emphasizes 21st-century skills within the framework of an independent learning curriculum, requires PAI teachers to transition from being mere transmitters of information to becoming facilitators of profound moral and intellectual growth (Anwar & Umam, 2020). Without a robust pedagogical foundation, the noble messages of Islamic teachings risk becoming obsolete or disconnected from the lived realities of the students.

In tandem with pedagogical advancement, the substantive content and ideological orientation of Islamic education must be carefully curated to counteract the rising tides of religious extremism, intolerance, and social polarization. Therefore, the integration of Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah (Aswaja) values into the PAI curriculum is of paramount importance. Aswaja is not merely a theological school of thought; it represents a comprehensive

worldview characterized by *tawassuth* (moderation), *tawazun* (balance), *tasamuh* (tolerance), and *i'tidal* (justice and fairness). By systematically embedding these values into the pedagogical framework, PAI teachers can effectively immunize students against radical ideologies and foster a culture of peaceful coexistence, mutual respect, and social harmony. The integration of Aswaja values ensures that the religious understanding imparted to students is inclusive and deeply respectful of the pluralistic nature of Indonesian society. This theological moderation acts as a critical counterbalance to the disruptive cultural influences of globalization, providing students with a stable moral compass that guides their interactions in both the physical and digital worlds.

Furthermore, the structural integrity of this educational endeavor is heavily reliant upon the strict adherence to academic ethics. Academic ethics form the moral and operational foundation of the educational profession. A professional PAI teacher is expected to embody the highest standards of scientific honesty, accountability, objectivity, and moral rectitude. This ethical imperative dictates that teachers must not only instruct but also continuously model the virtues they preach, serving as an *uswah hasanah* (exemplary role model) in every facet of their academic and personal lives. Implementing academic ethics means conducting fair and transparent evaluations, respecting intellectual property, fostering an equitable classroom environment free from discrimination, and demonstrating a lifelong commitment to the pursuit of truth. When educators compromise on academic ethics, the entire educational edifice crumbles, leading to a loss of trust from students, parents, and the broader community. Therefore, the implementation of kindness-based leadership and ethical management

within the classroom is crucial for sustaining the moral authority of the educator (Suherman et al., 2025).

Despite the clear theoretical articulation of these requirements, significant gaps remain in the actualization of teacher professionalism in the field. Many PAI educators continue to struggle with adapting their pedagogical strategies to the demands of the digital era, while the systematic integration of Aswaja values often remains superficial rather than deeply transformative. Additionally, the pressures of administrative burdens and shifting curriculum policies can sometimes compromise the rigorous application of academic ethics. Addressing these multifaceted challenges requires a holistic and integrated approach to teacher professional development.

This article, therefore, aims to critically analyze the professionalism of Islamic Religious Education teachers through the interconnected lenses of strengthening pedagogical competence, integrating Aswaja values, and applying academic ethics. By examining these three pillars as an indivisible unity, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how PAI teachers can elevate their professional practice to meet the profound challenges of modern education. The synthesis of advanced pedagogical skills, moderate theological grounding, and unwavering ethical integrity is hypothesized to be the ultimate catalyst for transforming Islamic education, ensuring that it remains a vibrant and relevant force in shaping a generation of Muslims who are intellectually adept, socially responsible, and spiritually profound.

B. Literature Review

The discourse surrounding the professionalism of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, particularly in

the face of contemporary global challenges, has generated a substantial body of academic literature. Recent studies consistently highlight the necessity for a paradigm shift in Islamic educational practices to remain relevant and effective. Manshur and Isroani (2023) critically examine the challenges faced by the PAI curriculum in the digital era, emphasizing that the rapid influx of unfiltered information necessitates educators who are not only technologically literate but profoundly skilled in digital pedagogy. They argue that traditional pedagogical methods are increasingly obsolete, requiring a robust enhancement of teachers' pedagogical competencies to engage students who are native to the digital landscape. Similarly, Fitrotunnisa et al. (2025) explore the relevance of the PAI curriculum in answering the challenges of Society 5.0, positing that Islamic education must transcend basic religious instruction to cultivate advanced problem-solving capabilities and social adaptability, thereby demanding a high degree of professional versatility from educators.

The integration of specific moral and theological values into the educational framework is another heavily researched domain. The crisis in Islamic education, exacerbated by globalization, requires a profound epistemological response, specifically the reconstruction of *adab*-based pedagogy (Anwar & Umam, 2025). This reconstruction is deeply aligned with the integration of Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah (Aswaja) values, which emphasize moderation and balance. Wulandari et al. (2024) provide a critical analysis of how PAI can shape the social attitudes of students, finding that curricula emphasizing tolerance (*tasamuh*) and moderation (*tawassuth*) are significantly more effective in producing socially cohesive individuals in pluralistic societies. Furthermore, the

application of these values is not limited to social interactions; Anwar et al. (2025) demonstrate how the integration of Tawhidic values and ecopedagogy in *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* curricula strengthens character concerning environmental care, showcasing the comprehensive applicability of moderate Islamic principles to modern global crises.

The role of leadership, ethics, and deep learning in educational settings further frames the current scholarly conversation. Bakar et al. (2025) highlight the essential role of institutional leadership (*Kiai's* leadership strategy) in improving educator competence, indicating that professional development is deeply tied to the ethical and visionary guidance provided by educational leaders. This is complemented by Suherman et al. (2025), who illustrate the positive impacts of implementing kindness-based leadership strategies in Islamic elementary education, which directly correlates with the ethical obligations of teachers to act as compassionate role models. Moreover, Sulastri et al. (2024) discuss the implementation of deep learning-based planning models for Islamic education, arguing that true pedagogical competence in the modern era requires educators to facilitate deep, reflective, and ethically grounded cognitive processes rather than superficial knowledge acquisition. Collectively, this literature underscores that enhancing PAI teacher professionalism is a complex, multi-dimensional endeavor requiring the simultaneous advancement of pedagogical techniques, the deliberate integration of moderate theological values, and strict adherence to ethical and moral leadership.

C. Methods

This research utilizes a qualitative approach grounded in the library

research method. This methodology was deliberately selected as it allows for an in-depth, comprehensive exploration and synthesis of existing theories, concepts, and empirical findings related to the multifaceted dimensions of teacher professionalism in Islamic education. By engaging in a systematic review of the literature, this study aims to construct a robust conceptual framework that interconnects pedagogical competence, the theological values of Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah (Aswaja), and academic ethics. The scope of the research is exploratory and descriptive-analytical, seeking to clarify how these three distinct pillars interact to fortify the professional identity and operational effectiveness of PAI educators in contemporary settings.

Data collection was executed through a rigorous and targeted search of secondary sources. The primary materials analyzed include academic books, peer-reviewed scientific journals, national educational regulations (such as the Teachers and Lecturers Law), and institutional policy documents relevant to Islamic education in Indonesia. The literature search was conducted across prominent academic databases, focusing on keywords such as "PAI teacher professionalism," "pedagogical competence," "Aswaja values integration," "academic ethics," and "transformative Islamic education." To ensure the contemporary relevance and scholarly rigor of the findings, the inclusion criteria prioritized publications from the last five to ten years, particularly those addressing the intersections of Islamic education with digitalization, globalization, and Society 5.0.

The data analysis process followed a systematic qualitative procedure involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Initially, the voluminous data extracted from the literature were critically filtered and

categorized based on the three core themes of the study. Irrelevant or redundant information was discarded during the data reduction phase. Subsequently, the data were organized and displayed narratively to identify patterns, theoretical consensus, and existing gaps in the literature. Finally, descriptive-analytical conclusions were drawn by synthesizing the categorized data, thereby generating a cohesive argument regarding the necessity of integrating pedagogical enhancement, moderate theological grounding, and strict ethical compliance in the professional development of Islamic Religious Education teachers.

D. Result and Discussion

1. Strengthening the Pedagogical Competence of Islamic Education Teachers

The professional identity of an Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher is fundamentally anchored in their pedagogical competence. In the context of modern educational demands, pedagogical competence transcends the traditional notion of merely standing before a classroom and delivering theological lectures. It represents a highly sophisticated, dynamic skill set that involves the profound understanding of student psychology, the mastery of advanced instructional design, the adept utilization of innovative teaching methodologies, and the capacity to conduct comprehensive and continuous evaluations. The rapid evolution of the educational landscape, heavily influenced by the digital revolution and the advent of Society 5.0, necessitates a radical transformation in how PAI is conceptualized and delivered. Teachers are no longer the sole gatekeepers of religious knowledge; students have unprecedented access to vast oceans of information online.

Consequently, the role of the PAI teacher must pivot from information transmission to the facilitation of meaning-making, critical thinking, and the contextualization of religious tenets within the complexities of modern life.

Strengthening pedagogical competence begins with a deep, empathetic understanding of the learners' diverse characteristics. Today's students, often referred to as digital natives, possess distinct cognitive habits, attention spans, and learning preferences compared to previous generations. A professional PAI teacher must be capable of diagnosing these diverse learning styles and tailoring their instructional strategies accordingly. This involves the application of differentiated learning models that accommodate the varying intellectual and emotional capacities within a single classroom. Furthermore, instructional design must be elevated to incorporate deep learning-based planning models (Sulastri et al., 2024). Deep learning in PAI requires teachers to design curricula that move beyond surface-level memorization of Arabic texts or historical dates, pushing students toward higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, and the application of Islamic jurisprudence and ethics to contemporary ethical dilemmas, such as environmental degradation or digital citizenship.

Moreover, the execution of the learning process demands the seamless integration of technology and innovative pedagogical frameworks. Transformative education emphasizes the necessity of embedding 21st-century skills—critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity—into the independent learning curriculum (Anwar & Umam, 2020). For PAI teachers, this implies utilizing interactive digital media, collaborative project-based learning, and inquiry-based approaches to explore Islamic history, ethics, and

theology. For example, instead of merely lecturing on the concept of *Zakat* (charity), a pedagogically competent teacher might organize a project where students research local poverty indices and design a digital campaign for equitable wealth distribution, thereby actualizing the religious concept in a tangible, socially relevant manner. This approach ensures that PAI remains a vibrant, applicable, and engaging subject.

Finally, strengthening pedagogical competence requires a revolution in evaluation and assessment. Traditional multiple-choice examinations are grossly inadequate for measuring a student's moral and spiritual development. PAI teachers must master authentic assessment techniques, which include observational rubrics, reflective journaling, peer assessments, and practical demonstrations of moral reasoning. Evaluating the internalization of religious values is notoriously difficult; thus, the educator must possess the pedagogical acumen to continuously monitor students' behavioral shifts and social attitudes, providing constructive, formative feedback that guides their spiritual trajectory. Ultimately, continuous professional development, supported by strong institutional leadership (Kuswanda et al., 2026), is non-negotiable for PAI teachers to maintain their pedagogical edge and fulfill their profound mandate as modern *murabbis* (educators).

2. Integrating Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah (Aswaja) Values in PAI

While pedagogical competence provides the operational framework for effective teaching, the substantive ideological and moral orientation of Islamic education must be meticulously curated to safeguard the spiritual integrity of the students. In an era marked by increasing global polarization, the rapid spread of

religious extremism, and the erosion of traditional moral boundaries, the integration of Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah (Aswaja) values into the PAI curriculum emerges as a critical professional imperative. Aswaja represents the mainstream, moderate paradigm of Islamic theology and jurisprudence, fundamentally characterized by four main pillars: *tawassuth* (moderation), *tawazun* (balance), *tasamuh* (tolerance), and *i'tidal* (justice and fairness). Integrating these values is not an abstract theological exercise; it is a vital, practical strategy for cultivating social harmony, preventing radicalization, and nurturing a generation of Muslims who are comfortable navigating the complexities of a pluralistic, multicultural society.

The principle of *tawassuth* (moderation) requires PAI teachers to actively dismantle binary, extremist interpretations of religious texts. In the classroom, this translates into teaching students to avoid rigid fanaticism and to understand the vast spectrum of legitimate scholarly opinions within the Islamic intellectual tradition. By promoting a moderate worldview, teachers equip students with the intellectual flexibility required to engage constructively with differing viewpoints without resorting to hostility or takfirism (the act of excommunicating other Muslims). Concurrently, the value of *tawazun* (balance) must be integrated to help students harmonize their worldly pursuits with their spiritual obligations. In a hyper-capitalist globalized culture, *tawazun* teaches the essential balance between material ambition and ethical constraint, between individual rights and communal responsibilities, and between technological advancement and environmental stewardship. This concept directly aligns with the integration of Tawhidic values and ecopedagogy, reinforcing a balanced

approach to environmental care and sustainable living (Anwar et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the explicit integration of *tasamuh* (tolerance) is arguably the most urgent requirement in modern Indonesian education. PAI teachers must transcend superficial definitions of tolerance, guiding students to develop a profound, empathetic respect for religious, cultural, and ethnic diversity. This involves utilizing case studies, historical narratives (such as the Constitution of Medina), and collaborative projects that require students to interact across diverse societal lines. When PAI successfully shapes positive social attitudes (Wulandari et al., 2024), it serves as the ultimate bulwark against social fragmentation. Finally, the value of *i'tidal* (justice) must permeate the curriculum, teaching students to stand firmly for truth, equity, and human rights, irrespective of personal biases or tribal affiliations.

The successful integration of Aswaja values heavily relies on the teacher acting as a living embodiment of these principles. A teacher cannot effectively teach *tasamuh* if they exhibit discriminatory behavior in the classroom. The internalization of these values transforms the PAI curriculum from a rigid set of dogmatic rules into a fluid, responsive ethical framework that guides students through the moral ambiguities of the modern world. It provides the epistemological response necessary to reconstruct an *adab*-based pedagogy that withstands the crises induced by uncontrolled globalization (Anwar & Umam, 2025). By weaving Aswaja values into every pedagogical interaction, the professional PAI teacher ensures that Islamic education functions as a beacon of peace, moderation, and intellectual enlightenment.

3. Implementing Academic Ethics and Moral Integrity

The third, and arguably most foundational, pillar of PAI teacher professionalism is the rigorous implementation and unwavering commitment to academic ethics and moral integrity. The domain of education is inherently a moral enterprise; it is built entirely upon a foundation of trust between the educator, the student, and society at large. For an Islamic Religious Education teacher, this ethical burden is exponentially heavier, as they are not merely seen as academic instructors but as spiritual guides (*murshid*) and moral exemplars (*uswah hasanah*). Academic ethics in this context refers to the strict adherence to principles of scientific honesty, professional responsibility, objectivity, fairness, and the continuous pursuit of truth. When a PAI teacher compromises on these ethical standards, the resulting damage extends beyond academic failure; it causes profound spiritual disillusionment and hypocrisy in the eyes of the learners.

The application of academic ethics manifests prominently in the realm of assessment and evaluation. A professional PAI teacher must demonstrate absolute objectivity and fairness when grading student performance. Favoritism, nepotism, or subjective biases must be entirely eradicated from the evaluative process. Grading must be based on transparent rubrics that accurately reflect the student's mastery of the material and their demonstrated behavioral growth. Furthermore, academic honesty must be fiercely protected. Teachers must hold themselves and their students accountable to the highest standards regarding plagiarism, cheating, and the misrepresentation of data. In the digital age, where information is easily copied and pasted, the PAI teacher must

actively teach and enforce the ethics of intellectual property and digital citizenship, framing these modern concepts within the traditional Islamic ethical framework of honesty (*shidiq*) and trustworthiness (*amanah*).

Moreover, academic ethics encompass the teacher's commitment to their own continuous professional and intellectual development. A truly ethical educator acknowledges the limitations of their own knowledge and actively seeks to expand their understanding to provide the best possible education for their students. This involves engaging in ongoing research, participating in academic discourse, and remaining open to constructive criticism. The stagnation of a teacher's intellectual growth is, in itself, an ethical failure, as it deprives students of the highest quality of instruction they deserve. This commitment to continuous improvement requires supportive, transformative leadership at the institutional level, where school principals foster a culture of academic rigor and ethical accountability (Bakar et al., 2025).

Perhaps most importantly, academic ethics dictate the nature of the interpersonal relationship between the teacher and the student. The PAI teacher must cultivate an environment of mutual respect, psychological safety, and emotional support. Implementing a kindness-based leadership strategy within the classroom (Suherman et al., 2025) is an ethical imperative. The teacher must refrain from any form of emotional, verbal, or physical abuse, recognizing the inherent dignity of every student as a creation of God. By managing student participation in non-academic activities equitably and encouraging holistic development (Riyanti et al., 2026), the teacher demonstrates a profound ethical commitment to the student's overall well-being. Ultimately, academic ethics ensure that the transmission of Islamic

knowledge is never divorced from the Islamic character. When a PAI teacher consistently acts with profound moral integrity, they validate the very religious truths they are attempting to teach, thereby cementing their status as true professionals in the highest, most sacred sense of the word.

E. Conclusion

The professionalism of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers is not a static endpoint but a dynamic, continuous journey that requires the intricate synthesis of advanced skills, moderate ideologies, and unwavering moral integrity. This article concludes that true professionalism in Islamic education rests inextricably upon three interconnected pillars: the relentless strengthening of pedagogical competence, the deep integration of Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah (Aswaja) values, and the rigorous application of academic ethics. Without modern pedagogical competence, PAI risks becoming an archaic, ineffective discipline, unable to engage the intellectual and psychological realities of 21st-century learners. However, pedagogical skill without the moderate, balancing theological compass of Aswaja—characterized by *tawassuth*, *tawazun*, *tasamuh*, and *i'tidal*—can easily lead to moral disorientation or susceptibility to radical ideologies in a rapidly globalizing world. Furthermore, both pedagogy and theology are ultimately rendered hollow if they are not firmly anchored in the bedrock of academic ethics. The teacher's absolute commitment to honesty, objectivity, fairness, and exemplary moral conduct (*uswah hasanah*) is the ultimate validation of the Islamic educational process. Therefore, these three elements cannot be treated in isolation; they must be developed simultaneously and synergistically. Educational institutions, policymakers, and stakeholders must prioritize holistic

professional development programs that nurture these three dimensions concurrently. By doing so, the educational system can successfully forge PAI educators who are not only intellectually formidable and adaptable but also serve as profound moral anchors, successfully guiding the next generation toward spiritual depth, social harmony, and comprehensive human excellence.

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