



Dialectics of Normativity and Historicity in al-Maududi and al-Asymawi's Hijab Thought for Islamic Education

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ABSTRACT

Debates on Muslim women's dress are often taught as if they culminate in a binary verdict: obligatory or non-obligatory. This framing obscures the epistemic process through which different legal conclusions emerge from shared scriptural references. This article reconstructs the debate between Abu al-A'la al-Maududi and Muhammad Sa'id al-Asymawi and formulates its implications for Islamic education. The study employs qualitative library research with a comparative-hermeneutic design. Its primary corpus comprises al-Maududi's al-Hijab and al-Asymawi's writings on hijab, supported by recent scholarship on contextual Qur'anic interpretation, Islamic education, religious moderation, and controversial-issue pedagogy. The analysis maps textual sources, historical assumptions, legal reasoning, ethical objectives, and pedagogical consequences. The study finds that al-Maududi privileges normative continuity and textual authority, whereas al-Asymawi emphasizes historical causality, social context, and the ethics of modesty. Their disagreement is therefore primarily methodological rather than merely juridical. The article proposes a text-context dialectical pedagogy that teaches khilafiyah as a reasoned interpretive process and uses contested religious issues to cultivate critical religious literacy, argumentative ethics, and contextual judgment without dissolving normative commitment.

Keywords: Normativity; Historicity; Hijab; Islamic Education; Critical Religious Literacy

1. INTRODUCTION

The debate over hijab persists not because Muslims lack Qur'anic verses, hadith, or legal opinions, but because the same sources can be approached through different methodological assumptions. Q. al-Ahzab [33]: 59 ("Surah Al-Ahzab (33):59," n.d.) and Q. al-Nur [24]: 31 ("Surah Al-Nur (24):31," n.d.) appear in arguments that emphasize obligation, modesty, protection, identity, and the historical character of dress. In the undergraduate thesis that provides the initial textual basis for this article, al-Maududi and al-Asymawi are placed in direct comparison because both appeal to the Qur'an and hadith yet arrive at markedly different conclusions. Al-Maududi treats hijab as a binding obligation for Muslim women, whereas al-Asymawi questions the generalization of a legal form when the social circumstances underlying the ruling have changed. The academic unease behind the present study therefore concerns a simple but consequential question: what should students learn from such disagreement, the legal outcome or the reasoning that produces it?

This question matters for Islamic education because religious learning does not consist only of consensus. Fiqh, tafsir, and the history of Islamic thought are also shaped by khilafiyah. When disagreement is presented merely as a list of opinions, students may memorize positions without understanding how text, context, 'illah, authority, and ethical purpose operate in the formation of arguments. Yet if disagreement is taught as unrestricted relativism, religious norms lose their epistemic structure. The pedagogical challenge is to create a learning space in which commitment to religious sources can coexist with historical awareness and critical evaluation. Educational research suggests that controversial religious issues can strengthen critical thinking when divergent views are treated as objects of structured analysis rather than as threats to classroom order.



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Recent studies on hijab reveal a relevant shift in scholarly orientation. Faizin and colleagues employ Abdullah Saeed's contextual approach to distinguish hijab, jilbab, and khimar while tracing the social, economic, and political changes that shape Muslim women's dress in Indonesia. Zaman, Rakhman, and Mundzir integrate Gadamerian hermeneutics with 'ulum al-Qur'an and identify dignity, modesty, and protection as ethical meanings that should be read alongside historically situated forms of dress (Zaman et al., 2024). Maqasidi studies likewise redirect attention from a single sartorial form toward the purposes of safeguarding human dignity. Al Gifari and Salman go further by explicitly treating hijab as moral pedagogy and linking it with character formation. These studies enrich the interpretation of hijab, but they have not yet turned the methodological disagreement between al-Maududi and al-'Asymawi into a pedagogical resource for teaching khilafiyah in Islamic education.

Educational scholarship, meanwhile, increasingly favors contextual, dialogical, and critical approaches. Efendi, Risnawati, and Rizqa show that fiqh instruction becomes more meaningful when concepts are connected to learners' everyday experience. Jannah and colleagues identify a flexible repertoire of educational methods in hadith tarbawi, including discussion, questioning, al-hikmah, and al-mujadalah. Af'idah and colleagues position wasathiyah, balance, and tolerance as foundations for social harmony, while recent pesantren research interprets musyawarah as a form of critical and dialogical pedagogy. Taken together, these studies open a clear space for an article that no longer asks only, "What is the ruling on hijab?" but instead asks, "How can different ways of producing a ruling become epistemic learning material in Islamic education?"

This article pushes back against two common habits. First, the hijab debate is inadequately framed as a confrontation between "conservative" and "liberal" camps because such labels often conceal the architecture of argument. Second, Islamic education should not teach controversial issues merely to secure a uniform answer. A more productive approach is to use disagreement as an opportunity to examine the relationship between normative text and historical experience. Amin Abdullah's normativity-historicity framework helps map these orientations, yet this article does not treat them as mutually exclusive camps. Contemporary scholarship instead invites a more dialectical synthesis between normative value and historical consciousness.

On this basis, the study aims to analyze the structure of al-Maududi's and al-'Asymawi's legal reasoning on hijab, identify the tensions and possible intersections between normativity and historicity, and reconstruct their educational implications as a text-context dialectical pedagogy. The novelty does not lie in adding a third legal opinion on hijab. It lies in changing the unit of analysis from legal products to reasoning processes, and from intellectual comparison to pedagogical design. The new story proposed here is that khilafiyah can function as a resource for critical religious literacy when students learn to trace evidence, identify contextual assumptions, test 'illah, weigh ethical purposes, and articulate disagreement through disciplined argument.

2. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative library-research approach with a comparative-hermeneutic design. Library research is appropriate because the primary object is the construction of thought and argument rather than population behavior. The comparative dimension maps shared sources, divergent assumptions, patterns of legal reasoning, and the juridical consequences developed by al-Maududi and al-'Asymawi. The hermeneutic dimension examines the relationship among text, historical context, interpretive horizon, and ethical purpose in each argument. The literature review is treated as a research method with explicit procedures of selection and synthesis, not simply as a list of readings. (Snyder & H., 2019)

The primary corpus consists of Abu al-A'la al-Maududi's al-Hijab and Muhammad Sa'id al-'Asymawi's writings on hijab as available in the Indonesian translation Kritik Atas Jilbab. These works also constitute the principal sources of the earlier thesis from which this article is developed. Secondary materials were purposively selected from scholarship on hijab, contextual interpretation, maqasid, normativity-historicity,

Islamic educational thought, religious moderation, and controversial-issue pedagogy. Priority was given to publications from 2021 to 2026, while older works were retained when they functioned as foundational theories or primary intellectual sources.

The analysis proceeded in four stages. First, each argument was coded according to its normative sources, historical context, 'illah, conception of 'awrah, protective purpose, and form of obligation. Second, the codes were compared to identify how each thinker connected evidence to legal conclusions. Third, the comparison was interpreted through the normativity-historicity framework and brought into conversation with contextual interpretation and maqasid. Fourth, the findings were translated into pedagogical categories: source discipline, argument mapping, contextual judgment, ethical evaluation, argumentative dialogue, and position reflection. Reflexive thematic analysis was used to ensure that the categories remained traceable to the textual corpus rather than being imposed mechanically. (Braun & Clarke, 2021)

Secondary sources were selected using three criteria. First, a publication had to address hijab, normativity-historicity, contextual interpretation, or religious pedagogy in a way that directly informed the research questions. Second, preference was given to peer-reviewed work with verifiable bibliographic identities and clear methodological procedures. Third, studies that complicated rather than merely confirmed the emerging argument were retained to reduce confirmation bias. The study does not claim empirical effectiveness for the proposed educational model. Its contribution is conceptual: to reconstruct a pedagogical framework from intellectual comparison that can subsequently be tested through classroom-based research. (Braun & Clarke, 2021) (Snyder & H., 2019)

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings are presented as an argumentative synthesis rather than through a rigid separation between “results” and “discussion.” This choice reflects the nature of intellectual history and interpretive research, where findings take the form of argumentative patterns, conceptual relations, and theoretical implications. The discussion moves from the comparison of legal-reasoning structures toward pedagogical reconstruction so that the title, novelty, and conclusion remain analytically aligned.

Shared Sources, Divergent Logics

The comparison between al-Maududi and al-'Asymawi is particularly instructive because they do not begin from different religions or different scriptural canons. Both recognize the Qur'an and hadith as authoritative sources, yet they assign different weights to history, 'illah, inherited interpretive authority, and social change. At the textual level, Q. al-Ahzab [33]: 59 is central to discussions of jilbab, while Q. al-Nur [24]: 31 addresses khimar, adornment, and bodily visibility. At the level of hadith, the debate includes reports concerning Asma' and the limits of the female body that may be exposed. Because their sources overlap, the divergent outcomes cannot be explained by saying that one thinker simply “obeys the text” while the other “rejects it.” The difference lies in how each determines the relevance and extension of textual norms across changing times and societies.

Al-Maududi reads the verses and early Muslim practice as normative patterns with transhistorical force. He situates dress within a broader moral system involving social relations, the protection of women, and criticism of permissive culture. The source thesis maps this position as normativity because al-Maududi treats the practice of the Prophet, the Companions, and early exegetical authorities as strong grounds for maintaining the obligation of hijab. The internal logic is coherent: if the command is understood as general and no limiting evidence is accepted, continuity of the norm becomes a consistent conclusion. The harder problem emerges when an interpreter must distinguish enduring purpose from historically specific means and determine how social transformation affects the mode of implementation. (Al-Maududi, n.d.)

Al-'Asymawi begins from a different question. He places substantial weight on the social causes and historical setting in which the relevant rulings emerged. In his reading, distinctions between free and enslaved women, questions of public safety, and local conventions of dress are not peripheral information;

they shape the scope of the ruling itself. If the social ‘illah changes, the legal form need not be transferred identically. This explains why modesty and dignity remain ethically binding while clothing forms may remain negotiable. Al-‘Asymawi therefore does more than reach a different legal result. He changes the governing question from “What does the command say?” to “What social problem did the command address, and what value should remain operative after the context changes?” (Al-‘Asymawi, 2003) (Rahmi et al., 2023)

This difference in initial questions has direct pedagogical importance. Students often receive fiqh products without encountering the questions that precede them. They may therefore assume that disagreement results from disobedience or personal preference. In fact, disagreement may arise from determinations concerning ‘amm and khass, permanence and temporality, ‘illah, hadith authority, semantic range, or the relationship between purpose and legal form. Islamic education should reveal this argumentative structure so that khilafiyah does not become a mere catalogue of positions. Epistemic rationality is crucial because moderation is not an arithmetic midpoint between opinions; it is the capacity to understand and evaluate the reasons that make a position intellectually accountable. (Aziz et al., 2023)

Contemporary hijab research reinforces this reading. Faizin and colleagues show that the terms hijab, jilbab, and khimar have narrowed and shifted in Indonesian social usage. Zaman argues that dialogue between the horizons of text and reader can foreground protective, preventive, and dignity-centered functions. Zaman, Rakhman, and Mundzir further combine Gadamerian hermeneutics with ‘ulum al-Qur’an in order to avoid a false dichotomy between inherited interpretive tools and contextual awareness. The convergence of these approaches supports a key educational claim: the task is not to choose between text and context, but to teach how the two interact through disciplined reasoning. (Faizin et al., 2022) (Zaman et al., 2024) (Zaman, 2024)

Table 1. State of the Art and the Article’s Novel Position

Study	Primary Focus	Analytical Limitation	Position of This Article
Faizin et al. (2022)	Abdullah Saeed’s contextualization of hijab verses	Focused on tafsir and social phenomena	Uses interpretive difference as pedagogical material
Rahmi et al. (2023)	al-‘Asymawi’s thought on hijab	Single-thinker analysis	Compares the legal-reasoning structures of two thinkers
Zaman (2024); Zaman et al. (2024)	Jilbab and khimar through Gadamer and ‘ulum al-Qur’an	Contributes to contextual interpretation	Translates the text-context dialectic into education
Muslimin & Abidin (2023)	Controversial religious issues and critical thinking	Not specific to hijab thought	Uses hijab as a case for critical religious literacy
Efendi et al. (2025); Jannah et al. (2025)	Contextual fiqh learning and hadith-based teaching methods	Does not examine interpretive khilafiyah	Formulates a text-context dialectical pedagogy

Al-Maududi's Normativity and an Ethics of Protection

Normativity in al-Maududi's thought should not be reduced to literalism. It belongs to a wider moral project in which dress is embedded within a social order intended to prevent objectification, regulate sexual desire, and protect family life. Hijab therefore becomes part of a public moral system. This gives al-Maududi's argument a broader internal coherence: the norm is not derived from a single lexical item but from a relationship among scripture, inherited practice, and a vision of an Islamic society. Internal coherence, however, does not by itself resolve the modern pedagogical problem, especially when students inhabit social worlds significantly different from the society presupposed by al-Maududi's analysis.

In Islamic education classrooms, al-Maududi's position can easily be reduced to the formula "hijab is obligatory because the verse commands it." Such simplification actually weakens the intellectual quality of his argument. If students are required only to accept the conclusion, they do not learn how he establishes evidentiary authority, invokes the practice of the Companions, interprets the social function of dress, or connects religious rules with his critique of modernity. To teach al-Maududi academically is to help students distinguish evidence, interpretation, and the social assumptions that accompany interpretation. This process does not dissolve normativity; it makes the grounds of normative commitment more visible.

At this point, normativity functions as a first epistemic discipline. Islamic education requires the ability to recognize that sacred texts make normative claims that cannot be reduced to historical artifacts. Contextual change is not an automatic reason for canceling a norm. Baaly argues that contemporary interpretive epistemology becomes more productive when normativity and historicity are reconstructed dialectically rather than positioned as mutually destructive alternatives. Studies of pesantren education similarly show that continuity of tradition and modern adaptation need not be a zero-sum relationship. Al-Maududi's contribution can therefore be read pedagogically as a reminder that contextualization requires a normative anchor if it is not to become unlimited accommodation. (Baaly, 2026) (Novianti et al., 2024)

Normativity nevertheless carries risks when it becomes a mechanical transfer of historical forms. If every detail of early practice is equated with an eternal purpose, teachers struggle to explain cultural diversity in Muslim dress, transformed public spaces, and legitimate juristic disagreement. A second risk is moral judgment directed at individuals who do not embody a particular form. Here, research on hijab as moral pedagogy provides a useful correction. Al Gifari and Salman show that hijab discourse can be interpreted through obedience, modesty, dignity, self-discipline, and social responsibility, allowing education to move beyond formal symbolism. Normativity can thus be retained while pedagogical attention expands from compliance with form to the cultivation of moral reasoning. (Al Gifari & Salman, 2025)

A maqasidi perspective further clarifies both the strength and the limits of normativity. Zulfa and Fahim connect the command of hijab with the protection of dignity, while more recent maqasidi studies continue to defend legal obligation while engaging gender-equality debates. These directions demonstrate that maqasid is not a device for automatically dissolving legal forms; it is a framework for examining the relationship between form and purpose. In Islamic education, such an exercise is essential. Students should not merely name "the objective of the Sharia," but explain how the objective is established, whether one form is the only means of achieving it, and what ethical consequences follow from a particular interpretation. (Zulfa & Fahim, 2023) (Ramadhan et al., 2025)

Al-'Asymawi's Historicity and an Ethics of Context

Al-'Asymawi places history at the center of legal reasoning. Social context is not decorative information surrounding the text but part of the meaning of the ruling. In his discussion, hijab is related to status distinctions, women's security, conventions of dress, and the conditions of a particular society. From this emerges the proposition that practical rulings may be tied to historical causes. When those causes change, what remains binding is the ethical objective, especially modesty, dignity, and protection. The source thesis links this position with historicity because law is understood as a response to concrete social problems. (Al-'Asymawi, 2003) (Rahmi et al., 2023)

This approach has considerable pedagogical force because it requires students to ask about occasions of revelation, social structure, language, and the problem a ruling sought to address. It rejects a reading in which every social form appearing in scripture becomes a formula that requires no further reasoning. Abdullah Saeed's contextual interpretation moves in a similar direction by attending to the original context, linguistic analysis, meaning for the first audience, and contemporary relevance. Faizin and colleagues demonstrate how such a framework can be used to read the development of *syar'i* hijab in Indonesia. Historicity therefore enables students to see that religious values are always implemented within social realities rather than in an abstract vacuum. (Saeed, 2006) (Faizin et al., 2022)

A further strength of historicity is its ability to distinguish value from cultural medium. Jilbab, khimar, hijab, niqab, and other forms of dress do not emerge from a single cultural environment. El Guindi demonstrates that veiling has a complex social and symbolic history involving privacy, status, resistance, and identity. Contemporary studies similarly show that Muslim women's dress may carry economic and political dimensions that are not identical to the theological reasons found in early Islamic discourse. In Islamic education, this awareness prevents students from equating every inherited custom with a norm, while also preventing the opposite assumption that every cultural element necessarily contradicts religion. (El Guindi, 1999) (Faizin et al., 2022)

Historicity, however, carries a different risk. If every ruling is returned entirely to its original context, students may lose criteria for distinguishing enduring principles from changing forms. Historicity therefore requires normative and ethical controls. Fazlur Rahman proposes a movement from historical situation to general moral principle and then back to contemporary circumstances. Auda's systems approach to *maqasid* similarly prevents legal purpose from being reduced to a single causal factor. Both approaches show that strong contextualization requires a chain of argument rather than the simple assertion that "times have changed." (Rahman, 1982) (Auda, 2008)

A Gadamerian perspective is helpful at this point. Context is not merely past data that replaces the text; it is a horizon that enters into dialogue with the horizon of the reader. Zaman, Rakhman, and Mundzir show that integrating Gadamerian hermeneutics with *'ulum al-Qur'an* can preserve historical awareness while remaining close to traditional interpretive tools. The result is not unrestricted interpretive freedom, but a reading that recognizes the historical formation of understanding and submits it to dialogue. Pedagogically, this can be translated into reflective questions: What are my prior assumptions? What historical evidence corrects them? What values remain consistently visible? What reasons make one interpretation more defensible than its alternatives? (Zaman et al., 2024)

From Opposition to a Dialectic of Text, Context, and Ethical Purpose

If al-Maududi's normativity and al-'Asyawi's historicity are treated only as opposite poles, the article would merely reproduce an older comparison. A more productive move is to regard them as two epistemic demands that Islamic education must hold together: fidelity to authoritative sources and competence in reading context. The article's pushback lies precisely here. The hijab problem is not a shortage of answers but a shortage of pedagogy that teaches how answers are formed. A classroom that presents only one conclusion loses an opportunity to cultivate reasoning; a classroom that presents every conclusion without evaluative criteria also fails because plurality becomes a catalogue without judgment.

Dialectic means bringing two sets of questions into sustained relation. From the normative side, students should ask: What is the text? How does its language operate? How did early interpretive communities understand it? What boundaries are established by the sources? From the historical side, they should ask: What problem confronted the first audience? What social relations shaped that setting? Can an *'illah* be identified? What has changed in the present context? A further evaluative layer then follows: What ethical purpose remains relevant? What harms may result from a particular application? Which forms of action preserve the integrity of religious values? This sequence shifts learning from the transfer of rulings to the cultivation of judgment.

Contemporary scholarship indicates that this synthesis is not an isolated proposition. Baaly argues for a dialectical relationship between normative values and historicity in Qur'anic interpretation. Karman and colleagues position progressive interpretation as a pedagogical strategy for cultivating inclusive and contextual Islamic thought. Mutaqin connects Qur'anic interpretations of moderation with Islamic Religious Education in Indonesia. Together, these studies provide a basis for recognizing that methods of interpretation have pedagogical consequences. Tafsir education does not merely produce knowledge about verses; it forms epistemic habits for handling disagreement, evidence, context, and authority. (Baaly, 2026)(Karman et al., 2025)(Mutaqin, 2024)

The dialectical approach also prevents two caricatures of the thinkers. Al-Maududi should not be reduced to a “textualist without context,” because his criticism of modern social conditions shows that context is present in his reasoning; it simply functions to reinforce the perceived need for normative application. Al-‘Asymawi should not be reduced to a “historicist without norms,” because he retains modesty and dignity as ethical values. Both thinkers therefore use text and context, but assign them different hierarchical functions. This observation is pedagogically important: students can be asked not only whether context appears in an argument, but what work context performs within that argument.

Table 1 makes the research gap visible. Recent hijab studies have largely renewed interpretive methods, while Islamic education research has developed contextual, dialogical, and critical learning. The bridge between these conversations remains thin. This article addresses that gap by treating interpretive disagreement as material for pedagogical design. Its contribution therefore extends beyond hijab to the teaching of other contested issues such as music, banking, gender relations, local traditions, citizenship, and ritual practices marked by legitimate interpretive diversity.

The new story generated by this comparison lies in the change of analytical unit. The study no longer asks which opinion should be selected, but what competence is formed when students can reconstruct the path from text to conclusion. This shift turns *khilafiyah* into material for learning about source authority, the limits of context, the role of *‘illah*, and ethical responsibility in disagreement. Educational contribution no longer depends on achieving compromise. Even when two positions remain irreconcilable, comparing the structure of their reasons can produce a more mature religious literacy that is less vulnerable to simplification in public discourse.

Table 2. A Dialectical Matrix of Hijab Thought

Dimension	al-Maududi	al-‘Asymawi
Orientation	Normative continuity and authority of tradition	Historicity of law and changing context
Function of context	Reinforces the need to apply the norm	Determines scope and continuity of legal form
Ethical direction	Moral protection, order, and modesty	Modesty, dignity, and responsiveness to social conditions
Pedagogical risk	Formalism when forms are transferred mechanically	Relativism when context severs normative anchors
Educational potential	Source discipline and normative commitment	Historical awareness and contextual judgment

Conceptually, a text-context dialectic does not mean searching for compromise merely to satisfy all sides. After completing the analysis, students may still prefer al-Maududi's or al-‘Asymawi's position. Education need not force convergence. What must improve is the quality of reasons. A student should be

able to identify the text employed, the method of reasoning, the contextual evidence, objections to an alternative position, and the ethical consequences of the chosen view. Such a standard is more educationally demanding than simply asking, “Whose opinion is correct?”

Hijab as Material for Critical Religious Literacy

The principal implication for Islamic education is to move hijab from a one-directional lesson in compliance toward a lesson in critical religious literacy. “Critical” here does not mean skepticism toward religion. It refers to the ability to identify sources, distinguish text from interpretation, evaluate reasons, read contexts, and express disagreement responsibly. Muslimin and Abidin find that controversial religious issues can strengthen university students’ critical-thinking skills. The finding is relevant because hijab has the characteristics of a controversial issue: it touches identity, law, gender, piety, and personal experience. Precisely because it is sensitive, the topic requires a design that protects the safety of dialogue while preserving academic depth. (Muslimin & Abidin, 2023)

The first stage is source discipline. Teachers begin not with social-media commentary but with the texts under discussion, verifiable translations, and sufficiently complete statements from the thinkers. Students record what al-Maududi and al-‘Asymawi actually say and distinguish those claims from labels imposed by others. This practice matters because digital religious discourse easily compresses intellectual positions into slogans. Source discipline also trains students not to treat short video clips as sufficient grounds for judgment. In the context of hadith pedagogy, Jannah and colleagues show that discussion, questioning, al-hikmah, and al-mujadalah can be used flexibly as instructional methods. (Jannah et al., 2025)

The second stage is argument mapping. Teachers can ask students to complete a matrix identifying principal evidence, linguistic assumptions, historical context, ‘illah, ethical purpose, legal conclusion, and possible criticism. Such a matrix shifts discussion from identity conflict to structural analysis. Students who agree with al-Maududi should still be able to represent al-‘Asymawi’s argument fairly, and vice versa. The capacity to represent an opposing view accurately is part of intellectual ethics. It prevents straw-man reasoning and establishes the habit that disagreement does not authorize distortion.

The third stage is contextualization. Contextual fiqh learning is relevant because students need to connect concepts with lived realities. Efendi and colleagues show in a pesantren setting that discussion, inquiry, and modeling can connect fiqh material with everyday experience. In the hijab case, contextual material may include diverse dress cultures, school regulations, social pressure, the modest-fashion industry, bullying, or differences in public policy. Teachers should not treat a personal experience as legal evidence; rather, contemporary experience becomes a field for testing whether normative and historical arguments can adequately explain present realities. (Efendi et al., 2025)

The fourth stage is ethical evaluation. The question shifts from “Which clothing model is correct?” to “What value is being protected, and how can that value be implemented without humiliation, coercion, or the erosion of dignity?” Maqasidi readings connect Muslim dress with *hifz al-karamah*, while Gadamerian interpretations foreground protection and modesty. Wasathiyah-oriented Islamic education also offers a vocabulary of balance and tolerance that becomes important when students confront different practices. This stage prevents learning from stopping at a binary logic of correct and incorrect and draws attention to the moral consequences of how disagreement is handled. (Zulfa & Fahim, 2023) (Zaman et al., 2024) (R. et al., 2024)

The fifth stage is argumentative dialogue. Dialogue is not a free session in which every claim has equal weight. Teachers establish rules: positions must be grounded in sources; criticism targets arguments rather than persons; personal experience is respected but not used to silence analysis; and students may suspend judgment when evidence remains insufficient. Radino and Mubarak’s study of pesantren musyawarah demonstrates that discussion practices can contain elements of critical and dialogical pedagogy. Research in Religious Education likewise shows that controversial issues can be discussed openly and non-directively when the classroom has a clear structure. Such dialogue helps students distinguish personal conviction from the academic quality of an argument. (Radino & Mubarak, 2025) (Flensner, 2020)

The sixth stage is position reflection. After studying the two thinkers, students write a provisional position using a structure of claim, evidence, reasoning, objection, response to objection, and ethical implication. The word “provisional” matters because education recognizes that knowledge may develop. Students are not forced to abandon their beliefs; they are asked to explain why those beliefs are maintained. Recent Islamic education research increasingly treats critical thinking as necessary for moving beyond persistently teacher-centered learning. Position reflection is therefore not an optional addition but part of religious literacy itself.(Dalimunthe & Siregar, 2024)(Ramdhani & Astutik, 2025)

This approach also requires limits. For some students, hijab is not an abstract topic but a practice tied to identity and embodied experience. Poorly managed discussion can become moral judgment directed at female students. Classroom examples should therefore focus on the arguments of thinkers, not on inspection of students’ clothing. Teachers should avoid questions that pressure students to disclose personal experiences. Classroom ethics requires a separation between analyzing a norm and evaluating an individual. This is consistent with dialogical religious education, which values student voice while retaining curricular aims and institutional commitments.(Larkins & Owen, 2025)

From a curriculum perspective, the model can be incorporated into fiqh, Qur’an-Hadith, the history of Islamic thought, or Islamic Religious Education at university level. At secondary level, source texts can be simplified and attention directed to differences in reasoning. At university level, students can read excerpts from primary works, compare methodologies, and formulate criticism. Recent reform discourse in Islamic Religious Education is also moving from memorization toward agency, ethical judgment, moderation, and critical thinking, although the translation of these aims into classroom design remains uneven. The model offered here provides one concrete example of how such aims may be operationalized in learning activities.(Abdusshomad et al., 2026)

Such education does not turn khilafiyah into a threat to teacher authority. Rather, authority changes function from the provider of a single answer to the guardian of standards of reasoning. Teachers still determine credible sources, correct misinformation, and establish ethical boundaries for discussion, but they do not close the argumentative process before students understand the reasons at stake. Hadith tarbawi literature identifies gradual instruction, discussion, questioning, advice, hikmah, and mujadalah as a pedagogical repertoire that can support this function. Dialogue therefore does not mean the loss of authority; it requires epistemic authority capable of distinguishing freedom of thought from indiscipline in the use of evidence.(Jannah et al., 2025)

The concept of critical religious literacy proposed here has three dimensions. The first is source literacy: the ability to distinguish Qur’anic verses, hadith, tafsir, fatwa, and social opinion. The second is interpretive literacy: the ability to explain why different readers can reach different conclusions. The third is ethical literacy: the ability to connect interpretation with the treatment of people who practice religion differently. These dimensions are inseparable. A student who knows many scriptural proofs but humiliates others has not developed ethical literacy; a student who is tolerant but cannot evaluate the quality of arguments has not yet developed interpretive literacy.

This position aligns with contextual Islamic education, which does not separate religious values from social realities. Research on the social context of Qur’anic verses suggests that interpretation can generate broader educational orientations when scripture is connected to communal life. Progressive interpretation has likewise been identified as pedagogically useful for inclusive and contextual Islamic thought. This article adds a component that is often missing: comparative testing of arguments. “Contextual” should not merely mean “suitable for the times”; it must show an argumentative route from text to context and back to normative evaluation.(MZ et al., 2024)(Karman et al., 2025)

Hijab thus functions as an epistemic laboratory. One theme connects fiqh, tafsir, hadith, history, language, gender, culture, and education. This complexity becomes educationally valuable when it is structured rather than avoided. Students learn that the Islamic tradition contains not only answers but also methods for debating answers. In the long term, such competence is more transferable than memorizing

the outcome of one controversy because it can be applied to other religious issues that continually emerge in public and educational life.

Pedagogical Boundaries between Indoctrination and Relativism

Bringing the hijab debate into education requires clear pedagogical boundaries. Dialogue must not become a forum in which every view is automatically validated, but neither should it be reduced to a procedure for leading students toward an answer predetermined from the outset. Both failures undermine education. Indoctrination gives students conclusions without the architecture of reasons, while relativism erases differences in evidentiary quality. Research on controversial religious issues indicates that critical thinking grows when students are required to test reasons, evidence, and objections in a structured manner rather than merely witnessing controversy. (Muslimin & Abidin, 2023)

Teachers therefore need to distinguish three levels of learning. The first is normative data: verses, hadith, vocabulary, and authoritative excerpts. The second is interpretation: how thinkers connect data with principles, context, and purposes. The third is evaluation: judgment concerning argumentative consistency and relevance. The distinction is simple but fundamental. Without it, students may confuse revelation with an interpreter's commentary or, conversely, treat every interpretation as if it were free from evidentiary demands. Discussion, questioning, al-hikmah, and al-mujadalah in hadith tarbawi scholarship provide pedagogical support for argumentative learning so long as dialogue remains directed toward educational aims and scholarly adab. (Jannah et al., 2025)

A further boundary concerns personal experience. Hijab intersects with the body, family identity, religious authority, and social choice. Teachers do not need to ask students to disclose personal experiences in order to prove an argument. What is assessed is the ability to read sources and reason, not the clothing choice of an individual. This principle protects the classroom from symbolic pressure, especially where students come from different family backgrounds or religious practices. Dialogue in religious education is valuable precisely when difference can be articulated without sacrificing psychological safety or erasing an institution's religious commitment. Larkins and Owen emphasize that dialogical approaches can operate within religious curricula that retain normative orientations. (Larkins & Owen, 2025)

In Islamic education, this boundary can be formulated as epistemic adab. Students are free to ask questions but must distinguish primary and secondary evidence; they may disagree but must explain their grounds; they may criticize a thinker but cannot replace argument with labeling. Moderation, in this sense, does not mean automatically taking a middle position. It describes a way of handling difference through evidentiary discipline and proportionality. Studies on progressive interpretation and moderation in Islamic Religious Education show that contextual readings become pedagogically productive when they remain connected to sources, moral purposes, and social responsibility. (Mutaqin, 2024) (Karman et al., 2025)

Within these boundaries, the dialectic between al-Maududi and al-'Asyawi can be used for higher-order thinking without transforming the classroom into an ideological battleground. Teachers need not force a synthesis. In some issues, the two arguments may remain different even after they have been represented fairly. The intended learning outcome is the ability to explain why a disagreement arises, which parts are supported by stronger evidence, what values each position seeks to preserve, and how a position can be expressed without demeaning others. This orientation resonates with wasathiyah-based Islamic education, where balance and tolerance are social practices rather than rhetorical slogans. (R. et al., 2024)

A Text-Context Dialectical Pedagogy

Based on the preceding synthesis, this article formulates a text-context dialectical pedagogy. The model is not presented as an experimentally validated method but as a conceptual reconstruction that can guide subsequent field research. Figure 1 presents its logic: normative text and historical context are not arranged sequentially as if context enters only after the text. Instead, they meet within the analysis of legal reasoning and ethical purposes. The resulting interpretation is then tested through argumentative dialogue

and directed toward critical religious literacy. Students are therefore not taught that “context defeats text” or that “text eliminates context,” but that responsible interpretation requires an accountable relationship between the two.

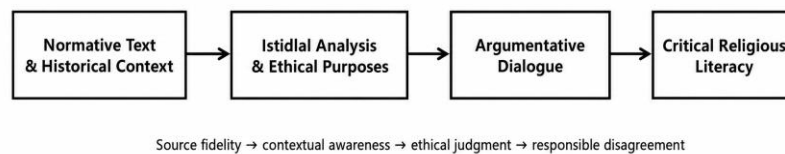


Figure 1. Text-Context Dialectical Pedagogy Model

The first component is normative text. Teachers provide relevant Qur’anic verses, hadith, and adequate excerpts from the primary thinkers. Students identify explicit claims before evaluating them. The second component is historical context, including occasions of revelation, social structure, dress conventions, women’s social position, and the intellectual circumstances of the thinkers. Context is used to test scope and relevance, not to cancel scripture automatically. The third component is the analysis of istidlal and ethical purpose. Here students trace the relationship among evidence, assumptions, ‘illah, and purposes such as dignity, modesty, protection, and social order.

The fourth component is argumentative dialogue. Groups may be asked to defend positions that do not necessarily match their personal preferences. This strategy forces students to understand an argument from within before criticizing it. Teachers can use a structured academic controversy format: one group presents al-Maududi’s reasoning, another presents al-‘Asymawi’s; the groups then exchange roles and identify both points of convergence and disagreements that remain unresolved. Research on controversial issues underscores the importance of structures that allow students to hear different perspectives without losing classroom norms. In Islamic educational settings, the practice of musyawarah offers a culturally familiar basis for such activity.(Flensner, 2020)(Radino & Mubarak, 2025)

The fifth component is ethical reflection. Students examine how modes of argument affect people who choose different religious practices. Wasathiyah is relevant here not as an instruction to always occupy a middle position, but as a discipline of balance, justice, and respect. Students may conclude that they continue to affirm an obligation while rejecting bullying toward others, or that they affirm flexibility in form while respecting those who choose stricter forms. The capacity to separate evaluation of an argument from humiliation of a person is a concrete educational outcome.(R. et al., 2024)

The model also has implications for assessment. Multiple-choice tests are insufficient for measuring dialectical competence. More appropriate forms include argument maps, comparative essays, presentations with responses to objections, and reflective portfolios. Rubrics can assess source accuracy, fair representation of alternative positions, contextual reasoning, coherence, response to objections, and ethics of language. These indicators give Islamic education a more concrete way to assess broad aims such as “critical thinking” and “moderation.” Recent critical-transformative research likewise shows that reform language such as critical thinking and religious moderation must be translated into observable pedagogical practices.(Abdusshomad et al., 2026)

Table 3. Learning Stages and Assessment Indicators

Stage	Core Activity	Assessment Indicator
Source discipline	Read verses, hadith, and primary texts	Accuracy in distinguishing source from interpretation
Argument mapping	Map evidence, assumptions, context, ‘illah, and conclusion	Coherence of argumentative structure

Contextualization	Examine social change and ethical purposes	Ability to connect context without logical leaps
Argumentative dialogue	Defend, critique, and exchange positions	Fair representation and response to objections
Position reflection	Write claim, evidence, reasons, and ethical implications	Quality of reasoning and ethics of language

An assessment rubric can be organized around four dimensions. Source accuracy measures whether students correctly distinguish primary texts, translations, and the opinions of thinkers. Argumentative coherence evaluates the relationship among claims, evidence, ‘illah, context, and conclusion. Response to objections assesses whether students can understand another position before answering it. Ethical reflection examines awareness of how language and conclusions affect people who practice differently. This scheme moves assessment away from memorizing legal conclusions toward evaluating reasoning processes. High achievement does not depend on whether a student agrees with al-Maududi or al-‘Asymawi, but on the quality of source use and consistency of reasoning. Teachers can therefore maintain an institution’s normative orientation while still allowing students to understand how a legal position is constructed.

The model can also help teachers manage the boundary between normative religious instruction and the academic study of religion. In institutions with a particular madhhab or theological orientation, teachers may state the institutional position transparently while still teaching how alternative positions are formed. Transparency is healthier than pretending to be neutral. At the same time, students are given space to examine the reasons. Religious education does not need to imitate a non-confessional religious-studies classroom in order to become dialogical. It can remain normatively committed while teaching epistemic skills.

The theoretical contribution of the model lies in integrating three conversations that are usually separated. The first concerns hijab interpretation as it moves from textualism toward contextualization and maqasid. The second concerns normativity and historicity in Islamic studies. The third concerns dialogical pedagogy and controversial issues. Integrating the three generates the proposition that interpretive disagreement can become material for forming religious reasoning, not merely an object of tolerance. Education should not only ask students to accept the existence of multiple opinions; it should train them to understand the structure that makes such plurality possible.

The practical contribution is a design that does not require sophisticated technology. Teachers need a short corpus of texts, an argument matrix, discussion rules, and an assessment rubric. Contextual learning published in TARBAWI demonstrates the importance of connecting fiqh with everyday experience, while another TARBAWI study on hadith-based teaching methods supports discussion and mujadalah as adaptive instructional strategies. By engaging directly with the target journal’s scholarly conversation, the present article positions itself at the intersection of Islamic educational thought and contextual learning.(Efendi et al., 2025)(Jannah et al., 2025)

The model has clear limitations. First, the article is text-based and does not test the responses of students or teachers. Second, the two thinkers do not represent the entire spectrum of Muslim thought on hijab. Third, the categories of normativity and historicity may oversimplify the thinkers if treated as final labels. The model should therefore be regarded as a pedagogical hypothesis. Future research should test its application through classroom design, observation of discussion, analysis of student essays, and measurement of argumentative development before and after instruction. Without such empirical work, the claims advanced here remain conceptual rather than causal.

These limitations do not reduce the model’s analytical value. Precisely because the article does not claim empirical effectiveness, it can offer a transparent framework for testing. The framework also keeps the article’s title and conclusion aligned: the dialectic of normativity and historicity does not remain a category of Islamic studies but is translated into a way of teaching. Hijab becomes a case through which to

demonstrate that normatively grounded Islamic education need not be hostile to history, and that historically conscious education need not lose its normative orientation.

Conclusion

This study shows that the divergence between al-Maududi and al-‘Asymawi on hijab arises primarily from different hierarchies of reasoning. Al-Maududi gives strong weight to normative continuity, textual authority, the practice of early Muslim generations, and the protective function of moral regulation. Al-‘Asymawi gives greater weight to historical ‘illah, changes in social structure, and the continuity of modesty and dignity as ethical values. Because both thinkers remain engaged with the relationship between text and reality, normativity and historicity should not be read as a binary struggle in which one must eliminate the other.

The article’s contribution lies in transforming this intellectual debate into a text-context dialectical pedagogy. The model directs the teaching of khilafiyah through source discipline, argument mapping, contextual reading, identification of ethical purposes, argumentative dialogue, and position reflection. In this way, Islamic education does not use hijab merely as a mechanism for demanding compliance or as an invitation to relativism, but as a laboratory for critical religious literacy. Students are expected to sustain normative commitments while understanding why different interpretations arise and how disagreement can be articulated ethically.

The model remains conceptual and does not yet demonstrate classroom effectiveness. Further research should therefore test the learning design in secondary schools, pesantren, and universities, paying attention to dialogical safety, teacher competence, and the development of students’ argumentative abilities. Such an agenda is important if the normativity-historicity framework is to move from methodological discourse into observable, assessable, and improvable practices of Islamic education.

DECLARATIONS

Author Contributions

Conceptualization: Sarifah St Fatimah; research design and methodology: Sarifah St Fatimah and Putri Regina; data identification and extraction: Sarifah St Fatimah, Ardiansyah, and Tri Novita Ramadina; data analysis and synthesis: Sarifah St Fatimah and Putri Regina; writing original draft preparation: Sarifah St Fatimah; writing review and editing: Sarifah St Fatimah, Putri Regina, Ardiansyah, Tri Novita Ramadina, and Sapitri Olifiya. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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Ethics Approval

This study followed ethical principles for educational research. Because this research analyzed and synthesized findings from previously conducted empirical studies, it involved no direct interaction with new research participants. The authors maintained academic integrity by appropriately acknowledging the original data sources and responsibly interpreting previous research findings.

Data Availability

The data analyzed in this study were obtained from previously published empirical studies and research reports. The extracted data supporting this study's findings are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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