
Quality Education in Practice: How Muhammadiyah's Role in Realizing SDG-4 in Kendari

Yusuf¹*, Muallimah², Asman³

^{1,2,3} Universitas Muhammadiyah Kendari, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This research is motivated by the existing disparities in access to and quality of Islamic education in Kendari City. In this context, the establishment of Muhammadiyah educational institutions becomes crucial to support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education). This study employs a descriptive qualitative design, with research sites located in several Muhammadiyah schools and madrasahs in Kendari City. The participants include school principals, teachers, administrators of the Muhammadiyah regional boards, and students. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. The findings reveal that the existence of Muhammadiyah in the field of Islamic education in Kendari contributes to the realization of SDG 4 on Quality Education through four key aspects: (1) the establishment of educational institutions, (2) the improvement of community education, (3) the promotion of moderate and progressive Islamic education through inclusive Muhammadiyah schools, and (4) the integration of Muhammadiyah education with the objectives of SDG 4. This suggests that strengthening the quality of Muhammadiyah education in Kendari requires a collaborative approach involving the organization, the government, and the community. Such collaboration should be accompanied by innovations in financing, management, and human resource development to ensure the sustainable achievement of the goals of providing equitable and high-quality Islamic education.

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Correspondence Address:

yusuf@umkendari.ac.id

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1. INTRODUCTION

The existence of Islamic education today has become a compelling subject of discussion in Indonesia. This is due to the absence of a comprehensive concept of Islamic education, both in terms of ontology and epistemology (Ilham, 2021). Such a condition is concerning and represents a serious issue, as Islamic education possesses distinctive characteristics in fostering an enlightened nation through the development of pious individuals (Irawan, 2023). A similar view is expressed by (Sabtina, 2023), who emphasizes that Islamic education elevates human dignity and worth. Other research (Rahmadania & Khoiri, 2023). further asserts that Islamic education must be able to guide humankind toward prosperity and ultimate happiness in both worldly and spiritual dimensions. Therefore, Islamic education should be able to sustain itself in the context of modern life.

Numerous studies have mapped the issue of Muhammadiyah's existence in the field of Islamic education. (Muktaruddin et al., 2023), examined the existence of Muhammadiyah educational institutions from the perspective of Al-Washliyah. Through a literature study employing a qualitative approach, Muktaruddin's research concluded that the educational programs initiated by Muhammadiyah consistently receive support from various parties, including other religious organizations. This is because Muhammadiyah is regarded as capable of enhancing both competitiveness and the knowledge of highly competent human resources. In a similar study (Khosin, 2023) investigated educational reform within Muhammadiyah in Indonesia. The findings indicate that Muhammadiyah is a socio-religious organization that places significant emphasis on education. Consequently, there is a need for educational institutions that can establish religious values as their primary foundation.

Three previous studies indicate that the existing research tends to neglect a comprehensive overview of Muhammadiyah's educational aspects, even though the existence of Muhammadiyah in Islamic education should be implemented holistically. This includes the curriculum, school planning in accordance with contemporary contexts, and the quality of human resources. (Sangian et al., 2018) argue that the existence of Muhammadiyah in the field of education will continue to advance if Islamic education is applied in ways that remain relevant to the times and are capable of integrating technology to strengthen educational sustainability. However, the aforementioned studies have not yet addressed Muhammadiyah education in its entirety. Certain contexts remain unexplored, such as the role of Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyahan courses, which are crucial in developing Islamic education within Muhammadiyah schools (Asman & Yusuf, 2023).

This study highlights the existence of Muhammadiyah in the administration of Islamic education in Kendari City and its contribution to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: Quality Education. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the regional context, as most previous studies have predominantly emphasized Muhammadiyah's role at the national level without examining local dynamics. The findings are expected to underscore that Muhammadiyah functions not only as an educational provider but also as a catalyst for social transformation, bridging the mission of Islamic propagation (dakwah) with the pursuit of sustainable development targets at the local level.

Many studies have focused only on the national level and the general history of Muhammadiyah. However, research that specifically examines the regional context, particularly in Kendari City, remains limited, especially studies that explore the contribution of

Muhammadiyah to the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on quality education. Furthermore, existing studies have rarely discussed how Muhammadiyah's presence in the field of education in Kendari is manifested, nor the extent to which this presence aligns with the SDG on quality education. The contribution of this study lies in strengthening the position of Muhammadiyah educational institutions in Kendari City and in providing recommendations to enhance the alignment between Muhammadiyah's educational initiatives and SDG 4. Therefore, research on the presence of Muhammadiyah's presence in Kendari, in relation to achieving the goal of quality education, remains highly relevant and fills an academic gap that has not been extensively explored.

2. METHODS

The method employed in this study is field research with a qualitative descriptive approach (Sugiyono, 2013). Field research was selected because the study was conducted in Kendari City, which necessitated direct data collection at the research site (Sugiyono, 2013). The study was carried out in Muhammadiyah schools/madrasahs in Kendari City, which operate under the auspices of the Muhammadiyah Regional Leadership (PDM) and the Council for Primary and Secondary Education (Majelis Dikdasmen). The data sources for this research consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data refer to information obtained directly by the researcher through direct observation of respondents. In contrast, secondary data were collected indirectly through intermediary sources, such as institutional documents from the schools. The research involved a total of 15 informants, comprising five *ISMUBA/AIK* teachers, two representatives of the Muhammadiyah Regional Leadership, two school principals, and six students (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

The selection of informants in this study was based on the consideration that they possess the knowledge, experience, and direct involvement with the phenomenon under investigation. Informants were purposively selected to ensure that the data obtained would be highly relevant, comprehensive, and aligned with the focus of the research. Moreover, the informants were deemed capable of providing authentic information due to their roles as practitioners, policymakers, or affected parties. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews and participant observation. In this study, three techniques of data analysis were employed: the inductive method, the deductive method, and the comparative method. In addition, the validity of the data was tested through source triangulation.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The existence of education within a region plays a crucial role in preparing the younger generation. Muhammadiyah education possesses its own distinct characteristics and sustains the integration between general and religious education. Thus, although it is classified as general education, the curriculum implemented is the Ismuba curriculum (Al-Islam, Muhammadiyah Studies, and Arabic Language). The existence of Muhammadiyah Islamic educational institutions in Kendari encompasses several key aspects of development, namely the establishment of educational institutions and the implementation of an integrated curriculum.

3.1 The Establishment of Educational Institutions

The establishment of Muhammadiyah educational institutions in Kendari City is rooted in the founding of Muhammadiyah schools and universities, which serve as instruments of cultural da'wah (Islamic propagation). These institutions aim to expand access to quality education for the Muslim community, in line with Muhammadiyah's mission to enlighten the ummah. The integration of religious education and general knowledge has given rise to Islamic boarding schools (pondok pesantren) that successfully harmonize the two fields into a unified educational framework (Syaifuddin et al., 2019). Muhammadiyah has undertaken practical initiatives by establishing madrasahs and Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) that integrate modern and general science curricula. It has also developed a public education system that incorporates religious studies and established government-funded schools that offer Islamic-based and Muhammadiyah-oriented curricula. These educational institutions operate as Muhammadiyah's charitable enterprises under the management of the Council for Primary and Secondary Education (Majelis Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah, or Dikdasmen), organized hierarchically from the Central Board to the Branch level. Sasmita, one of the teachers, conveyed this.

"the establishment of Muhammadiyah schools constitutes a form of charitable endeavor. In addition to serving as educators, we are also required to regard our professional duties as integral to righteous deeds. These charitable undertakings are managed in accordance with the hierarchical leadership structure within Muhammadiyah. One such example is the Muhammadiyah school in Kendari City, which is supervised by the Regional Leadership of Muhammadiyah (Pimpinan Daerah Muhammadiyah, PDM) of Kendari City."

The education organized by Muhammadiyah places a strong emphasis on character formation and moral integrity, in line with the organization's mission to cultivate a society grounded in noble values. As stated by Marbito, an Ismuba teacher, that

"The establishment of Muhammadiyah educational institutions is not merely intended to increase the number of schools; rather, it is aimed at providing an education that integrates Islamic values with modern scientific knowledge. Our aspiration is for children to excel not only in academic achievement but also to embody strong moral character, social responsibility, and preparedness to confront global challenges."

In the early stages of the Muhammadiyah movement in Kendari, its contributions in the field of education began during the pre-independence era. According to the research conducted by Alifuddin (2020), Muhammadiyah established its presence in Kendari as early as 1930 through socio-political da'wah (Islamic outreach), which played a significant role in fostering educational awareness among the local community (Alifuddin, 2020). This spirit subsequently laid the foundation for the initiation of formal educational institutions, in line with the Muhammadiyah movement's commitment to *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*, enjoining good and forbidding evil as a driving force for social and educational transformation in the city of Kendari. Officially, the stages of Muhammadiyah's formal education in Kendari began to take shape with the establishment of elementary, secondary, and higher education institutions. Nurfidin (2024) notes that the first Muhammadiyah elementary school was founded in 1970, followed by the junior high school in 1966, the senior high school in 1968, and, later in 2001, the establishment of Universitas Muhammadiyah Kendari (UM Kendari) (Alifuddin, 2020).

Muhammadiyah universities play a vital role in expanding the impact of Islamic education. The University of Muhammadiyah Kendari (UM Kendari) officially obtained its operational permit on August 30, 2001, and has consistently broadened its range of study programs across various faculties, including the Faculty of Islamic Studies, which has offered a program in Islamic Education since 2004. In recent years, Muhammadiyah Kendari has not only focused on establishing educational institutions but has also pursued innovative developments, such as the establishment of the Muhammadiyah Education Centre (MEC) and the Tahfidz Building at UM Kendari, both of which were inaugurated by the General Chairman of Muhammadiyah Central Board, Haedar Nashir, in May 2022.(Syifa, 2022). Furthermore, in June 2024, UM Kendari initiated the establishment of SD Islam Labschool, located at the MEC Tahfidz boarding facility, as a manifestation of an educational laboratory and a platform for community service conducted by students of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP) (DAKA UM Kendari, 2024).

In several regions of Southeast Sulawesi, including Kendari, the number of formal educational institutions (elementary schools/Islamic elementary schools, junior high schools/Islamic junior high schools, and senior high schools/Islamic senior high schools) is sometimes not proportional to the population's educational needs. The establishment of Muhammadiyah educational institutions serves to broaden access for communities that have not been optimally served. Muhammadiyah education is characterized by a holistic, integrative approach that combines general and religious knowledge with the values of Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyah (AIK). The establishment of Muhammadiyah institutions in Kendari offers an opportunity to enhance the quality of Islamic education, character development, moral integrity, and religious commitment in harmony with student character formation. SDG 4 emphasizes equitable access to quality primary and secondary education for all children. The establishment of Muhammadiyah schools in Kendari contributes to expanding access to Islamic education, particularly in areas where educational institutions remain limited. This initiative aligns with the no one left behind principle of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This is in accordance with the statement of H. Jurumia, Principal of Muhammadiyah Senior High School Kendari:

"Since its establishment, Muhammadiyah has carried the mission of dakwah (Islamic propagation) through education. In Kendari, we have observed a persistent gap in access to high-quality Islamic schools; thus, the establishment of this institution responds to that need. We hope that Muhammadiyah schools will become a driving force in realizing SDG 4, namely inclusive, equitable, and high-quality education."

The enhancement of educator quality, curriculum innovation, and the integration of Islamic values with technology support this strategic effort. The role of Muhammadiyah in Kendari exemplifies a transformative educational model that not only transfers knowledge but also instills spiritual values and moral character, as highlighted by Damayanti et al. in the national context. Grounded in historical foundations, institutional vision, and modern educational innovations, the presence of Muhammadiyah in Kendari continues to grow. It contributes significantly to the development of Islamic education in eastern Indonesia (Damayanti et al., 2021).

3.2 Enhancing the Education of the Muslim Community

The presence of Muhammadiyah education in Kendari City represents an effort to strengthen the existence of Islamic education within the Muslim community. Although

Muhammadiyah educational institutions in Kendari do not explicitly use the term madrasah in their school names, in practice, they integrate elements of both religious (madrasah) and general education. In Kendari, Islamic education is often regarded as a secondary form of education, following general or public education. Therefore, Muhammadiyah seeks to provide a clearer understanding of the role of Islamic education in shaping future generations. According to Atmaja, in an interview.

"The presence of Muhammadiyah education in Kendari City aims to bring a new dimension to the educational landscape, ensuring that education in Kendari is not merely a matter of fulfilling obligations, but also a means of fostering transformative changes in both the behavior and mindset of the Muslim community".

According to Hasbi Indra, Islamic education serves as a gateway to cultivating a form of education that brings the Qur'an into lived reality (Indra, 2019). In the city of Kendari, Muhammadiyah has been actively involved in enhancing educational quality, inclusivity, and collaboration with local governments and other institutions through its educational institutions. Islamic education places strong emphasis on moral education (akhlak), which serves as its foundational principle. Muhammadiyah educational institutions in Kendari have undertaken various practical initiatives to improve the quality and inclusiveness of education for the Muslim community, ranging from teacher management and institutional collaboration to high accreditation standards and character education, research development, and broader access to learning opportunities. Islamic education, therefore, must pay particular attention to moral education, as it represents one of the Prophet's primary missions on earth. Moreover, it aligns with the objectives of national education and reflects the moral attitude expected of a good Muslim.

3.3 Moderate and Progressive Islamic Education

The Islamic education developed by Muhammadiyah in Kendari City has been directed toward transforming the attitudes and religious practices of the Muslim community. A moderate and progressive Islamic educational approach has been adopted within Muhammadiyah's educational institutions in Kendari, combining the principles of Islam rahmatan lil-'alamin (Islam as a mercy to all creation) with a spirit of renewal in the field of education. Muhammadiyah institutions in Kendari have received recognition from external parties for providing inclusive education and promoting interreligious tolerance. One example of such recognition comes from the Church of the Word of God Revival (Gereja Kebangunan Kalam Allah, KKKA) in Kendari, which expressed its appreciation for a book review and dialogue program held at the University of Muhammadiyah Kendari that focused on the theme of religious pluralism (Anardianto, 2024).

This approach is undertaken to cultivate a generation that excels not only in spiritual and moral dimensions but is also capable of adapting to the dynamic advancement of science and technology. It emphasizes the principles of diversity and tolerance in addressing differences of opinion and understanding. In this context, moderation serves as a bridge between Islamic values and the cultural and religious diversity within society.

Moderate Islamic education does not promote extremism; rather, it underscores the peaceful, open, and inclusive teachings of Islam that respect diversity. The vision and mission of Muhammadiyah in the field of education align with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on quality education. Muhammadiyah is committed to providing equitable, inclusive, and high-quality education through schools and universities. This effort expands educational access for all

groups, including underprivileged communities and those in remote areas. In doing so, Muhammadiyah contributes to sustainable development through its educational role. As stated by Atmaja, the Secretary of the Muhammadiyah Regional Board (PDM) of Kendari City:

"Muhammadiyah education is committed to ensuring equitable, high-quality, and inclusive access for all. This is in line with SDG 4, which underscores quality education for everyone."

Consequently, this form of education encourages learners not only to develop a profound understanding of religious teachings but also to cultivate readiness for harmonious interaction within a pluralistic society. According to Marsudi and Zayadi, to reconstruct a progressive educational paradigm, accountability must be a crucial consideration in the Muhammadiyah educational system (Marsudi & Zayadi, 2021). According to him, this matter has become increasingly urgent because Muhammadiyah education encompasses the following aspects: first, the vision of Muhammadiyah education; second, the mission of Muhammadiyah education; third, the objectives of Muhammadiyah education; fourth, the targets of Muhammadiyah education; fifth, the educational policies of Muhammadiyah; sixth, the educational programs of Muhammadiyah; seventh, the educational activities of Muhammadiyah; and eighth, the performance indicators.

Muhammadiyah education in Kendari emphasizes inclusive and equitable learning while promoting lifelong education. Its moderate and progressive approach to Islamic education directly contributes to the achievement of SDG 4 (Quality Education). The development of Islamic education must align with the dynamics of contemporary change to address intellectual disorientation. Current challenges must be met with determination and earnest effort (Putri et al., 2024). Therefore, the moderate and progressive educational approach implemented by Muhammadiyah encompasses inclusive education.

Inclusive education within Muhammadiyah Kendari represents a tangible manifestation of the organization's commitment to the principles of justice and equitable access to education for all members of society. As a socio-religious movement, Muhammadiyah positions education as a means of da'wah (propagation of Islamic values) and empowerment, non-discriminately, including for children with special needs. This inclusive approach emphasizes that every learner, regardless of physical, social, or economic conditions, has an equal right to receive quality educational services.

According to Wahid, a student of Governmental Studies at Muhammadiyah University of Kendari who has special needs,

"From the moment I registered at Muhammadiyah University of Kendari, I felt accepted without any distinction. The university provides accessible facilities, such as ramps and classrooms that are easily accessible. The lecturers are also very open; they always ask what they can do to support my learning process. I have never felt treated differently; in fact, I am given the same opportunities to participate actively in student organizations," said Wahid, a student with physical disabilities from the Faculty of Social Sciences.

Muhammadiyah, as a socio-religious movement, has long upheld the principles of justice and universal humanity in its educational practices. In the city of Kendari, Muhammadiyah schools have implemented an inclusive education model. This aligns with Irlhy Nuyanita's view that Muhammadiyah education provides learning opportunities for children with special needs

alongside regular students, thereby fostering a more humanistic and collaborative learning environment.

Inclusive education at Muhammadiyah educational institutions in Kendari is also supported by Islamic values that emphasize respect for diversity and social justice. The principles of tauhid (the oneness of God) and rahmatan lil' alamin (mercy for all creation) serve as the philosophical foundation for the belief that every individual possesses equal potential and rights to develop. Research indicates that an Islamic values-based approach to inclusive education is effective in fostering empathy and social solidarity among regular students toward their peers with different abilities.

This principle aligns with the Education for All initiative and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, which emphasizes quality and inclusive education for all. Muhammadiyah education in Kendari has developed and enhanced educational facilities that are child-friendly, disability- and gender-sensitive, and provide a safe, non-violent, inclusive, and effective learning environment for everyone. Based on an interview with the principal of SMAS Muhammadiyah Kendari, it was stated that.

"Based on quantitative data, SMA Muhammadiyah Kendari currently has no students with significant special needs, such as those requiring the assistance of a special education teacher. Nevertheless, the school has already provided facilities that are accessible and friendly to students with disabilities."

Although Muhammadiyah schools in Kendari have not yet fully enrolled students with disabilities, they have begun to adopt a universal learning environment design that ensures accessibility for all learners. Conceptually and infrastructurally, Muhammadiyah schools are thus preparing to offer equitable learning opportunities for every student. In this regard, the role of Muhammadiyah education and its alignment with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, which emphasizes equal access to quality education without discrimination and promotes the development of learners' competencies to face global challenges, is crucial in advancing the quality of Islamic education in Kendari City.

The construction of Islamic education within Muhammadiyah differs significantly from that of other Islamic educational institutions. Muhammadiyah's approach to Islamic education does not merely emphasize cognitive development but also seeks to nurture various aspects intrinsic to human nature. Riski Amelia, a teacher at a Muhammadiyah madrasa, stated:

"As teachers, we regularly receive training on innovative teaching methods, including the use of technology. The curriculum in Muhammadiyah schools integrates general subjects with AIK (Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyan), enabling students to excel academically while also developing strong Islamic character."

Muhammadiyah Islamic education aligns with Azyumardi Azra's concept, which posits that Islamic education rests upon three foundational principles. The foundation is the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The second is social and communal values that do not contradict the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah, guided by the principle of promoting benefit and preventing harm for humankind. The third foundation is the intellectual legacy of Islamic thought. In this regard, the ideas of Muslim scholars, theologians, and philosophers, particularly in the field of education, serve as essential references in the development of Islamic education. Based on this explanation,

it can be concluded that Muhammadiyah education is highly relevant to the objectives of SDG 4 (Quality Education).

The analysis indicates that Muhammadiyah educational institutions in Kendari maintain a strong and positive relationship with the objectives of SDG 4, particularly in the areas of education quality, social inclusion, and learning relevance. Although certain challenges and data limitations persist, the findings support the notion that Muhammadiyah in Kendari serves as a key actor in advancing quality, equitable, and relevant education in support of sustainable development.

From the discussion above, it can be concluded that Muhammadiyah Islamic education and the role of SDG 4 are closely interrelated in the process of human resource development. Based on the results of the analysis, a strong connection was found between SDG 4—quality education and the core pillars of Muhammadiyah education, which serve as the main reference for its development. This relationship between Muhammadiyah education and SDG 4 can be illustrated in the following figure.



Figure 2. SDGs 4 and the Pillars of Muhammadiyah Education

This image illustrates the interconnection between SDG 4 (Quality Education) and the Muhammadiyah Educational Pillars. SDG 4 emphasizes inclusive and equitable access to education, the enhancement of teacher and educator quality, and the mastery of literacy, numeracy, and 21st-century skills. Meanwhile, the Muhammadiyah Educational Pillars focus on strengthening an integrative curriculum through AIK/ISMUBA, improving teacher quality, fostering student and scouting movements such as IPM and Hizbul Wathan, and nurturing Islamic character formation centered on morality, leadership, and solidarity. Both frameworks converge on a shared vision of an Islamic education that is high-quality, inclusive, and modern—capable of producing a generation that is both competitive and virtuous.

3.4 Muhammadiyah Islamic Education in Kendari City and the SDGs Goal of Quality Education

This study finds that Muhammadiyah in Kendari has played a significant role in expanding access to Islamic education of establishing schools, madrasahs, and higher education institutions. This initiative aligns with the indicators of SDG 4, which emphasize the provision of inclusive and equitable quality education for all. When compared to other regions, such as Yogyakarta—where Muhammadiyah is widely recognized as a center for developing progressive educational models—the contribution in Kendari emphasizes expanding access to primary and secondary

education. This distinction illustrates that Muhammadiyah's strategies are highly contextual, adapting to the specific needs of local communities.

Accordingly, this study offers a new perspective by showing that Muhammadiyah's role is not uniform but varies across regions according to the sociocultural conditions of each region. In Java, Muhammadiyah places greater emphasis on curriculum innovation and the integration of learning technologies. In contrast, in Kendari, the focus is directed more toward ensuring equitable access to education, particularly for previously marginalized groups. This comparison demonstrates that Muhammadiyah's contribution to achieving SDG 4 encompasses a broad spectrum—from improving the quality of learning to promoting educational equity.

Findings in Kendari reveal a close interrelation between the Islamic values promoted by Muhammadiyah and the principles of sustainable development. For instance, the emphasis on a strong work ethic, discipline, and social concern is integrated into daily educational practices, supporting the SDG 4 indicator on education relevant to sustainable life skills. This demonstrates that Muhammadiyah's Islamic education is capable of contextualizing global agendas within local realities through a value-based approach. The transformative values serve as a vital foundation for developing a high-quality education system, in accordance with one of the key indicators of the SDGs. Muhammadiyah in Kendari City has shown a strong commitment to providing quality Islamic education aligned with SDG 4, particularly through the implementation of a 21st-century curriculum focused on character formation and student competency development.

According to Ulil Amri, a student at MA Indotec Muhammadiyah Kendari,

"Studying at Muhammadiyah schools allows me not only to focus on general academic subjects but also to internalize Islamic values. We are also trained to participate in organizations such as IPM and Hizbul Wathan actively. I believe that the education provided here fosters our self-confidence, cultivates leadership skills, and encourages respect for peers with diverse backgrounds, in alignment with the goals of quality education as outlined in the SDGs."

National research on efforts to improve the quality of Islamic education highlights the integration of Islamic values with innovative curricula, which has been shown to enhance learning experiences and produce competitive graduates as part of the SDGs framework (Khaidir Fadil et al., 2023). Within this context, Islamic education under Muhammadiyah in Kendari City has undertaken two important initiatives, namely. Muhammadiyah Islamic Education has undertaken two significant initiatives in Kendari City. First, Muhammadiyah's commitment to improving the quality of education in Kendari to keep pace with the changing times has been demonstrated through continuous enhancement of its educational human resources. Based on research findings dated January 31, 2025, Muhammadiyah, through the Council for Primary and Secondary Education (Majelis Dikdasmen) of the Muhammadiyah Regional Leadership of Southeast Sulawesi, organized a *Workshop on the Development of Muhammadiyah Schools and Madrasahs* across the province. Furthermore, from June 19 to 22, 2025, the Muhammadiyah Regional Leadership of Southeast Sulawesi held a *Special Training Program for School Principals (Diksuspala)*.

During the Diksuspala activities, upgrading sessions and evaluations of the Muhammadiyah education process were conducted. The discussions also addressed various challenges faced by Muhammadiyah educational institutions in Kendari. Many Muhammadiyah

schools—particularly those located outside Java, such as in Kendari and surrounding regencies—are still unable to provide adequate salaries for teachers due to limited financial resources. As a result, a number of teachers remain in honorary positions with incomes below the minimum wage, which affects both their job stability and motivation. The second issue concerns the operational costs of schools. Since most Muhammadiyah schools are private and self-managed, they do not receive regular government subsidies as public schools do. School administrators often rely on BOS funds (School Operational Assistance), community donations, and student fees, which are not always sufficient to cover the needs for facilities, teacher training, or educational innovation.

In addition, competition with madrasahs and public schools poses a significant challenge. Public schools tend to be more attractive to parents due to their lower tuition fees, better facilities, and the civil servant status of their teachers. State-run madrasahs also provide religious education with government support, which often makes them appear more stable in the eyes of the community compared to Muhammadiyah schools. In this context, Muhammadiyah schools must work diligently to build a positive image, enhance their quality, and offer distinctive advantages, such as the integration of Islamic values with modern knowledge. Consequently, the Diksuspala program recognizes these major challenges as strategic issues that need to be addressed effectively. The following image illustrates the implementation of the Diksuspala program.



Figure 3. Documentation of the DIKSUSPALA Activities

Furthermore, competition with both madrasahs and public schools presents a considerable challenge. Public schools are generally perceived as more appealing to parents because they offer lower tuition fees, superior facilities, and employ teachers with civil servant status. Similarly, state-run madrasahs provide religious education supported by the government, which often leads the community to view them as more stable and reliable than Muhammadiyah schools. Within this context, Muhammadiyah schools must exert significant effort to cultivate a

positive public image, enhance educational quality, and highlight distinctive advantages—particularly through the integration of Islamic values with modern knowledge. Accordingly, the Diksuspala program identifies these major challenges as strategic issues that must be addressed effectively. The following image illustrates the implementation of the Diksuspala program.

As stated by the Council for Primary and Secondary Education of Muhammadiyah:

"This workshop serves as a pivotal moment for Muhammadiyah schools and madrasahs in Southeast Sulawesi to strengthen the quality of education. We seek to ensure that the curriculum, school management, and institutional culture of Muhammadiyah are implemented in alignment with the vision of the organization, while simultaneously harmonizing with the objectives of national education and Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality education."

In a similar vein, Sarman, a teacher at a Muhammadiyah madrasah, remarked:

"This activity is carried out as a means to reflect upon and advance the transformation of Muhammadiyah education toward excellence and progress."

This reflects Muhammadiyah's commitment to enhancing the quality of Muhammadiyah education, particularly in Kendari, so that it can adapt to the demands of the 21st century. In this regard, Islamic education is fundamentally expected to serve as a new pathway for advancing education more broadly. Moreover, in the face of rapid societal progress, Islamic education must foster change in line with contemporary developments (Asman et al., 2024).

The integration between Muhammadiyah Islamic education and the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can be illustrated in the following figure

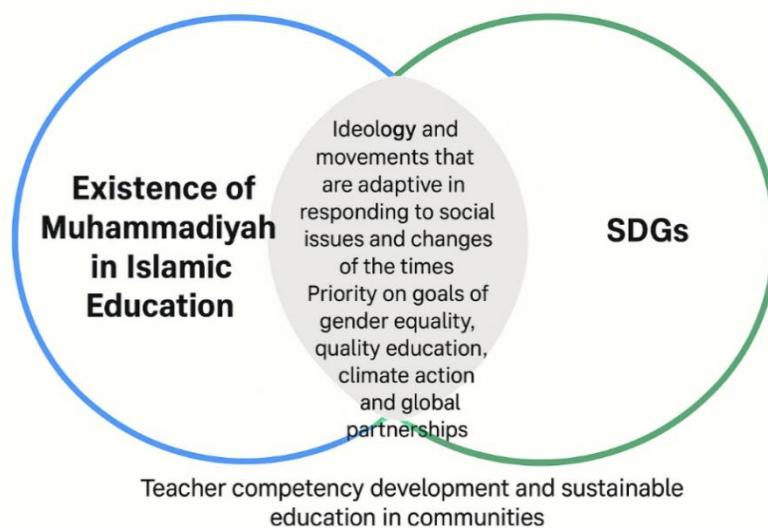


Figure 4. Integration of Muhammadiyah Islamic Education and the SDGs

The Venn diagram illustrates the relationship between Muhammadiyah's role in Islamic education and the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Muhammadiyah emphasizes the development of teacher competencies and the promotion of lifelong learning within communities. At the same time, the SDGs highlight global issues such as gender equality, quality education, climate action, and global partnerships. Their intersection lies in shared ideologies and movements that are adaptive to social challenges and the dynamics of change, while simultaneously prioritizing education and social justice. This demonstrates that the values

of Muhammadiyah's Islamic education align with the spirit of the SDGs, fostering a just, sustainable, and globally responsive society.

The intersection of these two circles illustrates that Muhammadiyah's existence is inherently adaptive in responding to social dynamics and the changing times, aligning with the universal values promoted by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). At the point of convergence with the SDGs, it becomes evident that Muhammadiyah and the SDGs share common missions: emphasizing quality education, gender equality, climate awareness, and the importance of global partnerships. As Atmaja has stated,

"Since its inception, Muhammadiyah has emphasized the centrality of education as a vehicle for da'wah and the empowerment of the Muslim community. In Kendari, the establishment of Muhammadiyah schools represents a manifestation of this commitment to providing education that is inclusive, equitable, and of high quality. This initiative is aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 4, as we seek to ensure that no child is left behind in accessing education, whether male or female, while upholding Islamic values and maintaining openness to the dynamics of contemporary developments."

This alignment indicates that the Islamic values carried by Muhammadiyah are consistent with the global sustainable development agenda. Muhammadiyah's responsive ideology and movement render Islamic education not merely a transfer of religious knowledge, but also an instrument for building a just and sustainable civilization. Beyond the intersection, Muhammadiyah places particular emphasis on teacher capacity-building and community-based lifelong education, highlighting its strong local role. By contrast, the SDGs operate on a broader global scale. Nevertheless, the two are complementary: Muhammadiyah's contextual, community-driven contributions reinforce the achievement of the SDGs' global objectives. Thus, Muhammadiyah's Islamic education may serve as a model of how religious values can synergize with global development agendas without compromising Islamic identity

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that Muhammadiyah plays a significant role in providing access to education rooted in Islamic values while remaining aligned with contemporary demands. Through the development of teacher competencies, the strengthening of educational institutions, and active engagement in social issues, Muhammadiyah has made tangible contributions to advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in advancing inclusive and sustainable quality education. Nevertheless, this study is limited in scope, as it focuses solely on the city of Kendari and therefore does not fully capture conditions in other regions that may face different challenges. Accordingly, future research is recommended to expand the geographical scope and incorporate additional variables, such as curriculum innovation and the role of educational technology. For Muhammadiyah, it is advised to strengthen collaboration with the government and international institutions, broaden community-based educational programs, and enhance adaptability to global issues such as digitalization and sustainability, in order further to optimize its contribution to the achievement of the SDGs.

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