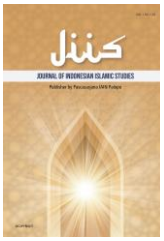
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# The Transformation of Hadith Education in Indonesia: A Historical-Comparative Synthesis of Surau, Pesantren, and Higher Education Traditions

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**Abstract**

Hadith education in Indonesia did not originate in the academy; it grew out of community-based Islamic educational institutions that later underwent institutional and epistemological transformation. This article maps the transformation of hadith education in Indonesia across three institutional phases surau, pesantren, and higher education and analyzes the patterns of continuity and change among them. It is a library research study using a historical-descriptive approach and comparative analysis of journal articles published between 2020 and 2026. The findings show that (1) the surau laid the foundation of hadith transmission that was oral, personal, and oriented toward moral formation and religious practice; (2) the pesantren strengthened this transmission through Haramain sanad networks, graded hadith texts, and the sorogan, bandongan, and memorization methods, although hadith often served to support jurisprudence and ethics; and (3) universities academized hadith studies through independent study programs, methodological curricula, and scholarly outputs, yet research remains largely dominated by textual approaches. The transformation is evolutionary and selective rather than substitutive, making the three institutions better understood as complementary links within a continuous tradition of hadith education. Based on a comparative synthesis of the literature, this article outlines a tentative conceptual framework for the future development of hadith education.

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## Introduction

Islamic education in the Indonesian archipelago has a long history, developing through diverse community-based religious institutions within distinct social, cultural, and geographical contexts. In Minangkabau, the surau emerged as a centre of education, religious formation, and communal life. In Java and Madura, the langgar or musala served both as a place of worship and as a setting for elementary Islamic instruction, while Aceh developed the meunasah, which fulfilled similar functions within local social structures. Meanwhile, pesantren developed in various regions as Islamic educational institutions characterized by teaching systems, the leadership of the kiai, and more structured scholarly traditions. These institutions did not follow a single linear evolutionary trajectory; rather, they developed in parallel, each with its own characteristics and dynamics, while interacting in the broader development of Islamic education in the archipelago. Beyond their religious functions, they facilitated the transmission of religious knowledge, character formation, and the organization of communal religious life, including the transmission of Islamic disciplines such as hadith through traditional methods, notably sorogan, bandongan, and memorization.

This trajectory was not straightforward. In this context, the term 'delay' does not imply that hadith was absent from the religious life of Muslims in the archipelago. Rather, it refers to the relatively slow emergence of hadith as an independent scholarly discipline compared with other Islamic fields, such as jurisprudence, Qur'anic exegesis, and Sufism, which were shaped by religious-political developments and theological disputes (Ridwan & R, 2026). The strong reliance on Shafi'i jurisprudential literature, limited access to primary hadith sources, and shortage of specialists also contributed to this situation (Masruhan & Hasyim, 2024). Only in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as intellectual connections between scholars from the archipelago and the Haramain intensified, did more systematic attention emerge toward hadith literature and hadith sciences. This development continued through pesantren, madrasahs, and Islamic higher education until hadith became an academic field with its own degree programs, curricula, and research methodologies.

Recent studies have examined particular aspects of this trajectory. Yuliharti et al. (2024), for example, compared tendencies in hadith instruction in pesantren and Islamic higher education, emphasizing differences in educational orientation between these settings. Alwi and Nurita (2024) compared hadith instruction at the Islamic University of Madinah and UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, thereby focusing on differences between models of hadith education in international and Indonesian Islamic institutions.

Within Islamic higher education, several studies have addressed the development of hadith scholarship in specific institutional contexts. Yuslem et al. (2022) mapped the development of hadith studies at UIN Sumatera Utara, emphasizing academic dynamics within a single university, whereas Fatkhi and Firdausy (2026) examined the epistemological orientation of hadith scholarship at five state Islamic universities. Other research has explored the institutional transformation of pesantren, including 'Umar et al. (2026), who examined the transformation of a pesantren as a process of institutional adaptation. Further studies have investigated the academic culture of pesantren-based higher education and hadith transmission at Tebuireng (Khasani, 2023), as well as

undergraduate theses and Hadith Studies curricula at Islamic universities (Thohari et al., 2024).

Although these studies make important contributions, they have several limitations in scope. First, most previous studies employ partial units of analysis, such as particular pesantren, individual universities, or comparisons between degree programs, and therefore do not adequately explain the historical relationships among traditions of hadith education over an extended period. Second, they focus primarily on contemporary conditions, leaving the transition from community-based Islamic educational institutions to modern academic institutions relatively underexplored. Third, few studies analytically distinguish elements that have changed from those that have persisted within hadith transmission.

Unlike previous research, this article does not merely juxtapose surau, pesantren, and higher education as three distinct institutional forms. Instead, it examines them as institutional configurations marked by both continuity and epistemological change. Employing a historical-comparative approach, the study investigates how the functions of hadith transmission, teaching methods, scholarly authority, and research orientations have been transformed from community-based traditions into modern academic practices without severing their connections to earlier intellectual legacies.

To address this gap, the article asks three questions: (1) What factors shaped hadith transmission, changes in educational systems, and the contribution of pesantren to the development of hadith studies? (2) How have academic institutionalization, paradigms, approaches, and educational outputs in hadith studies changed within higher education? (3) How can the overall pattern of transformation in Indonesian hadith education be analyzed? The study seeks to answer these questions to provide a coherent account of continuity and change in hadith education in Indonesia.

## Method

This study employs library research using a structured comparative synthesis situated within a historical perspective. This design was chosen because the objective is not merely to describe previous findings but to synthesize scholarship and compare the transformation of hadith education across three institutional settings: surau, pesantren, and Islamic higher education.

The data comprise scholarly journal articles published between 2020 and 2026 and retrieved from several academic portals. Searches combined Indonesian and English keywords, including 'pendidikan hadis', 'studi hadis Indonesia', 'kajian hadis pesantren', 'pembelajaran hadis perguruan tinggi', 'hadith education', 'hadith studies in Indonesia', 'pesantren', and 'Islamic higher education'. The initial search identified articles that were subsequently screened using inclusion and exclusion criteria.

The inclusion criteria were as follows: (1) scholarly journal articles published between 2020 and 2026; (2) articles directly addressing the development of Islamic education, hadith transmission, hadith instruction, or the institutionalization of hadith studies in Indonesia; (3) publications with complete bibliographic information accessible through official journal websites; and (4) relevance to at least one of the three institutional foci—surau, pesantren, or Islamic higher education. The exclusion criteria covered (1) articles dealing exclusively with normative aspects of hadith without educational or

institutional dimensions; (2) popular writing, opinion pieces, or publications lacking a clear academic review process; and (3) articles providing no data or analysis relevant to the research focus.

Of the 20 articles identified, six were selected as the primary sources of analysis after screening their titles and abstracts and examining the full texts. Purposive selection was based on thematic relevance, informational quality, and contributions to understanding the transformation of hadith education. The selected data were then classified by institutional configuration and examined through comparative synthesis to identify continuity and change in Indonesian hadith education.

Data collection involved searching for, reading in full, and recording pertinent information from each selected article. The extracted material was classified according to the research focus to facilitate cross-source analysis. Data analysis proceeded in three stages. First, the evidence was grouped into three institutional configurations of hadith education—surau, pesantren, and higher education—using a periodization informed by previous scholarship on the intellectual history of hadith in Indonesia. Second, each configuration was examined in relation to four principal categories derived from the research questions: historical background, characteristics and teaching systems, educational orientation, and resulting outputs. Third, the findings across configurations were compared to identify patterns of continuity and change in the transformation of Indonesian hadith education. On this basis, a conceptual synthesis was developed to explain the dynamics of hadith education from surau to higher education. Because the analysis relies entirely on secondary evidence, its findings are conceptual and require further empirical testing across different institutions of hadith education.

# Results

## *The Transformation of Hadith Education: From Surau and Pesantren to Higher Education*

The transformation of hadith education in Indonesia does not follow a linear sequence in which one institution replaces another. Rather, it reflects gradual, overlapping, and context-dependent changes in institutional configurations. Surau, pesantren, madrasahs, and Islamic universities developed in different periods and regions, yet some continued to exist and perform educational functions simultaneously. They are therefore better understood as institutional types with distinct modes of knowledge transmission than as universal stages in a single evolutionary sequence. What changed was not simply the movement from one model to the next but the differentiation and expansion of settings for hadith education. Religious-authority-based transmission continued to shape pesantren, while modern academic approaches developed in universities without entirely severing ties to earlier scholarly traditions. Table 1 compares the characteristics of these institutional configurations as a basis for analyzing continuity and change in Indonesian hadith education.

*Table 1. Comparison of Hadith Education across Three Institutional Configurations*

| Aspect | Surau | Pesantren | Higher Education |
|---|---|---|---|
| Institutional structure | Communal, scholar-based; a place of worship and instruction | Residential system (pondok), mosque, santri, text-based curriculum, and central leadership of the kiai; graded instruction | Degree programs, faculties, and postgraduate programs with academic curricula and standards |
| Mode of transmission | Oral and personal instruction; memorization | Sorogan, bandongan, and memorization; sanad and ijazah | Lectures, presentations, and research; scholarly verification |
| Position of hadith | Integrated into preaching, ethics, jurisprudence, and Sufism | Hadith texts taught progressively; support for jurisprudence and ethics | Independent discipline (Hadith Studies) with its own methodology |
| Orientation | Moral formation and religious practice (practical–devotional) | Preservation of sanad, comprehension of matn, and religious practice | Sanad and matn criticism, contextual interpretation, and living-hadith studies |
| Outputs | Basic religious habituation and memorization; foundations for madrasahs | Scholars with sanad, ijazah, bahtsul masail decisions, and hadith commentaries | Undergraduate theses, master's theses, dissertations, journal articles, and textbooks |
| Limitations | Methodological criticism not yet developed; hadith not established as an independent discipline | Emphasis on matn; limited depth of sanad criticism and takhrij at foundational levels | Predominance of textualism; need to strengthen memorization and Arabic competence; limited human resources |

This transformation illustrates a shift from communal spaces grounded in the authority of religious scholars in the surau context, to residential educational systems emphasizing chains of transmission, classical texts, and character formation in pesantren, and subsequently to the development of hadith as a distinct academic discipline with its own methodology in higher education. In surau, hadith formed part of preaching, moral education, jurisprudence, and Sufism, transmitted through personal teacher–student relationships with an emphasis on memorization and exemplary conduct. In pesantren, transmission became more systematic through sorogan, bandongan, memorization, and the traditions of sanad and ijazah. In higher education, hadith developed as an independent field through lectures, research, criticism of chains and texts, contextual approaches, and living-hadith studies.

Nevertheless, this transformation should not be understood as wholesale replacement. Several elements demonstrate continuity across institutional contexts. Teacher–student relationships remain foundational to the transmission of knowledge, although their forms have been adapted to institutional circumstances. Such continuity does not mean, however, that educational relationships perform identical functions everywhere. In surau, teacher–student interaction is the primary medium of religious knowledge transmission through personal engagement, exemplary conduct, and direct instruction. In pesantren, this relationship is organized more systematically through sorogan, bandongan, textual instruction, and the sanad and ijazah traditions, which provide forms of authorization for scholarly transmission.

In Islamic higher education, lecturer–student relationships likewise sustain intellectual mentorship and the development of scholarly capacity, but they do not serve

the same function as talaqqī or transmission-based ijazah. Rather, they focus on academic competence, research, and mastery of scholarly methodology. What persists, therefore, is not an identical form of authority but mentorship as a mechanism for transferring and developing knowledge, adapted to different institutional settings.

Memorization also remains an important component of hadith education. Alwi and Nurita (2024), for example, identify memorization as a key distinction between the Islamic University of Madinah and UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya. Moreover, an orientation toward religious practice continues to characterize all three contexts. Whereas in surau and pesantren it is expressed through moral formation and the practice of religious teachings, in higher education it reappears in living-hadith scholarship, which seeks to connect hadith with social practices (Fatkhi & Firdausy, 2026). Pesantren, meanwhile, continue to regard character formation and the internalization of Islamic values as central to their educational processes (Ridwan & R, 2026).

At the same time, the transformation involves substantial changes. First, the orientation of hadith scholarship has shifted from its predominant use for normative legitimation and religious preaching toward more critical, contextual, and interdisciplinary methodological inquiry (Ridwan & R, 2026). Second, the mechanisms through which scholarly authority is established have changed. In surau and pesantren, authority has largely rested on teacher–student relationships, continuity of scholarly transmission, sanad, and communal recognition of an ulama's competence. Yet these traditions have also long incorporated scholarly evaluation through the examination of transmission chains, narrator reliability, and hadith texts. Universities introduced different forms of legitimation through formal academic institutions, educational qualifications, research procedures, scholarly methodologies, and publications. Thus, the change is not a simple transition from traditional authority to scientific verification, but a shift in the predominant means of legitimation—from community-based scholarly transmission toward more formalized and documented academic systems. Whereas earlier educational outcomes centred on transmission skills, memorization, mastery of classical texts, and the internalization of religious values, higher education has also expanded knowledge production through undergraduate theses, master's theses, dissertations, journal articles, and other academic publications.

The transformation of hadith education in Indonesia is also evolutionary, nonlinear, and selective. The development of hadith scholarship reflects an intellectual transformation from normative traditions toward an academic discipline characterized by methodological, contextual, and interdisciplinary approaches (Ridwan & R, 2026). Nevertheless, this process has not been uniform across the archipelago. Muslim communities have developed distinct institutions, scholarly networks, and educational traditions shaped by their social and historical contexts. The period of methodological stagnation in the eighteenth century, followed by renewed activity through the Haramain scholarly networks in the nineteenth century, suggests that hadith scholarship has been shaped by interactions among networks of scholars, sociopolitical conditions, educational institutions, and community needs.

This interpretation is supported by findings indicating that transformation has been selective (Fatkhi & Firdausy, 2026). Institutional expansion does not necessarily entail comprehensive epistemological change. A study of five state Islamic universities by Fatkhi

and Firdausy (2026) identified a persistent emphasis on textual approaches, transmission, and mastery of classical sources (Khasani, 2023). Universities have thus not entirely abandoned classical educational characteristics; instead, they have incorporated them into more systematic academic formats. Conversely, pesantren have demonstrated adaptability through the establishment of higher education programs and the use of digital technology in teaching (Munawara et al., 2020), while preserving their distinctive classical scholarly identities. Live streaming has widened access to sanad-based instruction (Niam & Ramadhan, 2025), although direct talaqqi is still regarded as providing a quality of transmission and spiritual blessing that digital media cannot fully replace.

Across these three institutional settings, hadith education in Indonesia has therefore developed in different forms. Community-based institutions such as surau emphasize personal relationships and the formation of religious practice; pesantren strengthen textual traditions, sanad, and more structured systems of instruction; and higher education advances hadith studies through disciplinary specialization, academic curricula, and scholarly research. These findings reveal variations in hadith education according to the institutional contexts in which it is practiced.

# Discussion

## *Hadith Education in Surau: Foundations of Scholarly Transmission*

Islamic education in the Indonesian archipelago initially took relatively simple forms as Islam spread throughout the region. Instruction took place in mosques and surau as well as in the homes of religious scholars. The surau in Minangkabau, langgar in Java and Madura, and meunasah and rangkang in Aceh are regarded as indigenous forms of traditional Islamic education because they emerged in response to local needs rather than through the direct adoption of external institutional models (Silvia, 2023). In Minangkabau, the surau was not only a place for elementary Qur'anic instruction but also a centre for Sufi orders and spiritual retreats (suluk), within the broader development of Islamic educational institutions (Azra, 2017). These institutions did not constitute a single evolutionary sequence in which one directly gave rise to another; rather, they were local forms of Islamic education that developed in parallel and performed overlapping functions.

From the thirteenth century onward, as maritime trading networks connected the archipelago with the Middle East, India, and Southeast Asia, merchants who were also religious scholars became agents of Islamic knowledge transmission. Hadith circulated through preaching, teaching in surau, mosques, and early pesantren, and direct encounters with religious teachers. During this period, hadith was familiar to communities but had not yet become a separate discipline; it was integrated into works on jurisprudence, Qur'anic exegesis, and Sufism. In the seventeenth century, links between scholars from the archipelago and the Haramain stimulated the production of Malay-language hadith literature. Nuruddin al-Raniri compiled hadith on faith, worship, and ethics in Hidāyat al-Ḥabīb fī al-Targhīb wa al-Tarhīb as a medium of education and preaching. This work indicates that hadith had become part of Malay religious literature, although its orientation remained normative transmission rather than the development of hadith studies as a discipline of sanad and matn criticism. Similarly, Abd al-Rauf al-Singkili used hadith in Mir'āt al-Ṭullāb as a normative foundation for jurisprudence, Sufism, and ethics (Ridwan & R, 2026). In the eighteenth century, intellectual conflict following the wujūdiyyah

controversy redirected scholarly attention toward doctrinal debates. As a result, hadith transmission more frequently involved the communication of normative teachings, the internalization of moral values through memorization, and the reading of texts believed to confer spiritual blessing.

The influence of the surau on hadith education became particularly visible in the early twentieth century, when some surau were transformed into madrasahs. Historical studies of Islamic education in West Sumatra show that this institutional change responded to social transformation, the expansion of modern education, and demands for reform in Islamic teaching. The process did not eliminate the surau's scholarly traditions; rather, it reorganized them by introducing classroom instruction, more structured curricula, and more systematic use of Islamic texts (Masruhan & Hasyim, 2024). Works such as al-Arbaʿīn, Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, and al-Bayqūniyyah were subsequently used at Madrasah Ṭawālib in 1921, while Fatḥ al-Bārī was also employed in instruction.

These developments were closely associated with networks of Minangkabau and other Indonesian scholars connected to centres of Islamic learning in the Middle East. Figures such as Maḥmūd Yūnus contributed to the modernization of Islamic education by developing curricula and modern Islamic educational systems. Muḥammad Yāsīn al-Fadānī (1916–1990), although originally from Padang, became better known as a hadith scholar based in Mecca and participated in international networks of hadith transmission through works on sanad and ijazah, academic writing, the incorporation of hadith sciences into curricula, and the dissemination of hadith scholarship (Ilham et al., 2023). Meanwhile, institutional reform, colonial influences, and Islamic modernist movements gradually reduced some surau functions to worship and basic Qur'anic instruction, alongside the transformation of other surau into madrasahs in the early twentieth century (Masruhan & Hasyim, 2024).

Surau and langgar possess several distinctive features. They developed from the community level and combined worship, instruction, and socioreligious activities in a shared setting (Silvia, 2023). Hadith education in surau was primarily oriented toward practical religious observance. During the initial spread of Islam, hadith formed part of religious teaching, preaching, and the formation of social norms, rather than constituting an independent scholarly discipline. The principal concern was therefore the practical, moral, and ritual understanding of religious teachings rather than the systematic development of methods for criticizing transmission chains and texts.

This educational orientation can be described as applied, integrative, and responsive to the sociocultural contexts of the archipelago. The Sufi character of local religious life also helped shape this orientation: hadith was used to communicate moral, ethical, and spiritual values and to legitimate practices of worship and Sufism (Ridwan & R, 2026). From these patterns, three foundations for subsequent hadith education can be identified. First was the practice of face-to-face learning from teachers and texts. Second was a culture of memorization as a means of preserving and internalizing texts. Third was a practice-oriented understanding of hadith as guidance for conduct. These foundations help explain the strong continuity of transmission practices in pesantren and why critical methodological approaches developed more extensively only later.

### *The Transformation of Hadith Education in the Pesantren Context*

A major factor in hadith transmission within pesantren was the intellectual network linking scholars from the Indonesian archipelago with the Haramain. From the mid-seventeenth century, scholars traveled to Mecca and Medina to study, attend the teaching circles of local scholars, and obtain scholarly authorization through teacher–student relationships and chains of transmission. Within these networks, hadith received attention through the study of hadith collections and established traditions of transmission in the Haramain (Masruhan & Hasyim, 2024).

However, the influence of Haramain networks must be distinguished from the emergence of pesantren as local educational institutions in Java. Pesantren developed through relationships among kiai, students (santri), mosques, and residential facilities, forming a distinctive institutional structure. Middle Eastern scholarly networks reinforced the religious authority of scholars and enriched the literature used in teaching, but they were not the sole factor shaping pesantren. Their development was also influenced by Javanese social dynamics, the need to transmit Islamic teachings, and the institutionalization of community-based education.

During the nineteenth century, scholarly mobility intensified with improvements in maritime transportation, increasing numbers of pilgrims, and expanded opportunities to study in the two holy cities. Through these networks, scholars from the archipelago studied hadith with prominent muhaddiths and acquired chains of transmission that they subsequently brought home. These connections continued into the twentieth century: Imawan's (2024) study of Yāsīn al-Fadānī's manuscript al-'Iqdu al-Farid min Jawahir al-Asanid demonstrates connections between the transmission chains of Indonesian scholars and those of scholars in the Haramain and the wider Middle East.

One prominent figure in this network was Shaykh Maḥfūẓ al-Tarmasī. Several studies recognize his substantial contribution to hadith scholarship, particularly to dirāyah, through his Manhaj Dhawī al-Naẓar fī Sharḥ Manẓūmah 'Ilm al-Athar, a commentary on al-Suyuti's didactic poem on hadith sciences. Through this work and his teaching in Mecca, al-Tarmasī strengthened methodological instruction among scholars from the archipelago (Masruhan & Hasyim, 2024). His work was widely studied in pesantren in the early twentieth century and circulated through students, including Hasyim Asy'ari, as well as relatives, publishers, and pilgrims. His instruction of Indonesian students at the Grand Mosque in Mecca and intensive mentorship combining intellectual and spiritual dimensions further contributed to the intellectual and spiritual development of pesantren (Ridwan & R, 2026).

Beyond the transmission of sanad, scholars from the archipelago, including al-Tarmasī and Hasyim Asy'ari, also composed arba'īn-style hadith collections. This indicates that hadith traditions were not concerned solely with preserving classical literature but were also mobilized to address the needs of Muslim communities in particular contexts. Studies of these works demonstrate how Indonesian hadith traditions were adapted to emerging social and religious issues (Muqtada et al., 2022).

Pesantren and scholars' study circles (halaqah) became important settings for the continuity of hadith transmission in the archipelago. Nevertheless, two processes must be distinguished: the existence of hadith transmission and its incorporation into the pesantren educational system. From the nineteenth century, stronger intellectual connections with the Haramain brought greater attention to hadith through the study of hadith collections,

hadith terminology (muṣṭalaḥ), sanad analysis, and scholarly ijazah. Syifana (2021) identifies 1900–1960 as a period in which hadith studies entered pesantren more systematically, linking this development to the growth of Islamic boarding schools.

In the institutional history of Islamic education in the archipelago, surau and pesantren shared functions as sites for transmitting religious knowledge, but they did not necessarily have a direct genealogical relationship. In certain regions, particularly Minangkabau, some surau developed into more structured educational institutions resembling pesantren or madrasahs. This transition can be seen in institutions such as Sumatera Thawalib, which developed from the surau tradition into a more modern and organized educational system (Silvia, 2023). Pesantren in Java, however, have a distinct institutional history, emerging through a community-based structure of kiai, santri, mosques, and residential facilities. The relationship between surau and pesantren is therefore better understood as institutional transformation or convergence in particular regional contexts than as a universal developmental sequence from surau to pesantren.

Within pesantren, scholarly transmission occurs through various teaching methods that reflect institutional characteristics. Three common methods are sorogan, bandongan, and memorization (muḥāfaẓah). Sorogan involves individual interaction between a santri and a kiai: the student reads or recites a passage, which the teacher then corrects. Bandongan is a collective learning format in which the kiai reads and explains a classical text while students listen and take notes. Both methods are widely established in pesantren, although their implementation varies according to institutional systems and educational traditions.

Memorization is another important instructional method in pesantren, especially for mastering particular texts, such as the Qur'an, hadith texts (matn), didactic poems, or abridged manuals. However, its position and intensity are not uniform across pesantren; they depend on each institution's educational orientation and scholarly tradition.

Epistemologically, these methods resemble classical Islamic learning practices emphasizing direct teacher–student interaction. This similarity, however, should not be equated with the validation of hadith transmission. Sorogan and bandongan are established instructional models that play crucial roles in pesantren education (Kamal, 2026). Their primary functions are to facilitate learning, textual comprehension, and the ability to read classical works, whereas hadith authorization is linked to sanad networks, ijazah, and more specific scholarly procedures. Pesantren teaching methods can thus be understood as vehicles for the continuity of knowledge transmission, without being identical to the full range of critical and legitimating mechanisms in hadith sciences.

In the twentieth century, the emergence of modern Islamic organizations, the expansion of madrasahs and modern pesantren, and post-independence government attention to Islamic education encouraged the institutionalization of hadith studies through formal curricula (Ridwan & R, 2026). Pesantren responded in different ways. A study by Ridwan and R (2026) of Darussalam Pesantren in Kersamanah, Garut, during 1986–2021 illustrates a broader pattern: institutional change occurred through governance reform, educational innovation, infrastructural development, digital adaptation, and economic strengthening, while core commitments to Islamic values, discipline, classical learning, and character formation were maintained. A similar adaptation can be observed at Tebuireng,

where Munawara et al. (2020) documented the use of the tebuireng.online social media platform for preaching.

Through their educational systems, pesantren have made substantial contributions to hadith scholarship. One contribution is the preservation of continuity in sanad and ijazah traditions. Since the nineteenth century, pesantren and scholarly halaqah have provided settings for studying hadith collections, commentaries, and hadith terminology, and for conferring ijazah as a form of scholarly authorization. These traditions continue today. For example, the teaching of the Ṣaḥīḥayn at Pesantren Tebuireng during 2020–2025 demonstrates the continued practice of hadith transmission through taḥammul wa al-adā', involving textual reading, the receipt of transmission chains, and the conferral of ijazah upon participants.

In addition to preserving scholarly transmission, pesantren have helped train religious scholars and extend hadith networks. The works of Shaykh Maḥfūẓ al-Tarmasī remain important references for hadith scholarship among Indonesian scholars. Through teacher–student networks, including his scholarly relationship with K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari, hadith traditions developed in the Haramain gained continuity in Indonesian pesantren. Pesantren have consequently been described as centres of excellence for hadith studies in Indonesia (Rofii, 2021).

Third, pesantren provide a setting in which hadith informs legal deliberation. Masruhan and Hasyim (2024) examined the bahtsul masail forum of Nahdlatul Ulama, an organization closely connected to pesantren. Of 458 decisions issued between 1926 and 2004, 75 hadith were cited. The comparative (muqārin) method was the most common (41 instances), followed by the summary (ijmālī) method (20) and analytical (taḥlīlī) method (14). Contextual interpretation was used for only two of the 75 hadith. Reliance on primary sources increased after the 1991 congress, which opened opportunities for ijtihad when answers could not be found in jurisprudential literature. These findings suggest that hadith became part of pesantren-based legal deliberation while remaining subordinate to the authority of fiqh literature.

These contributions have also been accompanied by limitations. In pesantren, hadith has often been taught in support of jurisprudential and ethical arguments, while methodological areas such as sanad criticism, matn criticism, and takhrij have remained relatively less autonomous and less extensively developed than jurisprudence, Qur'anic exegesis, or Arabic studies. Yuliharti et al. (2024) identify two different emphases: pesantren prioritize understanding the matn, whereas Islamic higher education stresses mastery of methods for analyzing sanad and matn. They suggest that these orientations should be mapped to develop a comprehensive model of Prophetic hadith education. Pesantren may therefore provide a foundation for value formation and memorization, while universities develop critical methodological skills; the two are complementary. Nevertheless, methodological limitations also appear in pesantren-based higher education: a mapping of final research projects at Ma'had Aly Hasyim Asy'ari Tebuireng found that approximately 70% were monodisciplinary, while fewer than 10% employed multi- or interdisciplinary approaches (Yahya, 2024). These findings describe a particular institution and research period and should not be generalized to all pesantren or pesantren-based higher education institutions in Indonesia.

### *The Transformation of Hadith Education in Higher Education*

The academic institutionalization of hadith studies in Indonesia cannot be understood simply as a transition from scholarly religious traditions to an academic model, because classical elements—including textual study, sanad, and scholarly transmission—remain present in many Islamic universities. Rather, this transformation involves changes in institutional structures, curricula, academic outputs, and mechanisms of scholarly legitimation (Gaffar & Akbar, 2024; Adriansyah & Hendro, 2020).

Institutionally, hadith studies evolved from a component of faculties of Ushuluddin and combined Tafsir–Hadith programs into more specialized Hadith Studies programs (Gaffar & Akbar, 2024). Curricula expanded beyond reading classical works to include hadith sciences, takhrij, sanad and matn criticism, research methodology, and contemporary approaches. These developments were accompanied by increased production of undergraduate theses, master's theses, dissertations, journal articles, and studies connecting hadith with historical, social, cultural, and other disciplinary perspectives.

Change is also evident in the mechanisms for legitimating scholarship. While continuing to recognize teacher–student traditions, sanad, and ijazah, universities have added academic standards—including formal qualifications, research competence, scholarly publications, and academic assessment—as criteria of scholarly authority. Academic institutionalization therefore represents an expansion and adaptation of hadith traditions rather than their replacement.

Authors and academics have been important to this process by providing Indonesian-language literature and developing research methodologies. Among the early figures who made major contributions to hadith teaching resources for Islamic higher education was T.M. Hasbi ash-Shiddieqy (Haris, 2021; Zuhri et al., 2022). Between the 1950s and 1970s, he published works on hadith and hadith sciences, including Sejarah dan Pengantar Ilmu Hadis (1954), Pokok-Pokok Ilmu Dirayah Hadis (1958), Problematika Hadis sebagai Dasar Pembinaan Hukum Islam (1964), Koleksi Hadis-Hadis Hukum (1970–1976), and Sejarah Perkembangan Hadis (1973). These works helped establish Indonesian-language hadith literature used in modern Islamic education, particularly in Islamic higher education.

Fatchur Rahman also contributed to Indonesian methodological literature through Ikhtiṣār Muṣṭalaḥ al-Ḥadīth, which introduced key concepts of hadith sciences to Indonesian readers (Faisal & Hazaa, 2024). Muhammad Syuhudi Ismail, meanwhile, strengthened methodological hadith research through his academic work at IAIN Jakarta. His dissertation, subsequently published as Kaedah Kesahihan Sanad Hadis: Telaah Kritis dengan Pendekatan Ilmu Sejarah, became an important contribution to the development of sanad criticism in Indonesia (Langaji et al., 2026).

At the institutional level, the academic development of hadith studies is evident in the specialization of degree programs, curriculum design, and increased research output within Islamic higher education. These changes have not occurred uniformly across Indonesia; each institution has developed in response to its academic policies, faculty resources, and disciplinary needs (Alwi & Nurita, 2024). At UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Hadith Studies was originally part of the Tafsir–Hadith program. In 2013, the latter was divided into Qur'anic Sciences and Exegesis and Hadith Studies, enabling greater

specialization. Faculty members reviewed and redesigned the curriculum. Similar developments have been reported at UIN Sumatera Utara, where hadith scholarship expanded and contributed to the field locally and nationally, despite limitations in human resources and facilities (Yuslem et al., 2022). At UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, a survey covering 2010–2019 recorded 157 undergraduate hadith theses addressing 19 topics under four successive curricula (Isbaria, 2022).

Evidence from these universities indicates a tendency toward academic institutionalization through the creation of degree programs, curricular specialization, and increased research production. However, these findings cannot be taken as a single representation of Islamic higher education throughout Indonesia, because institutions differ in their histories, policies, and academic capacities. UIN Sunan Ampel, UIN Sumatera Utara, and UIN Sunan Kalijaga are therefore best understood as illustrations of institutional variation in the development of Indonesian hadith studies.

Academic institutionalization has encouraged a paradigmatic shift from the transmission of texts toward research on texts. Whereas nineteenth-century scholarship emphasized the transmission of sanad and the reinforcement of scholarly authority, twentieth-century scholarship increasingly treated hadith not only as a practice of transmission (riwāyah) but also as an object of inquiry employing historical, linguistic, legal, social, and hermeneutical approaches. This distinction can be seen in comparisons between pesantren, which emphasize understanding the matn, and Islamic universities, which prioritize methodological competence in sanad and matn investigation, including the use of tārīkh al-ruwāt, al-jarḥ wa al-ta‘dīl, and rijāl al-ḥadīth.

The comparison by Alwi and Nurita (2024) further clarifies these paradigmatic orientations. The Hadith Studies program at UIN Sunan Ampel emphasizes methodological understanding and reasoning through courses such as ulūm al-ḥadīth, takhrij, jarḥ wa ta‘dīl, rijāl al-ḥadīth, mukhtalif hadith, hermeneutics, and living-hadith studies. By contrast, the Islamic University of Madinah places considerable emphasis on memorization, requiring undergraduate students to memorize 150 hadith for each semester-level progression. Nevertheless, memorization has not disappeared from the UIN Sunan Ampel curriculum: Hifdhul Hadis is offered in the second undergraduate semester, although it is not the primary focus.

Approaches to hadith scholarship in universities can be grouped into four categories. The first comprises sanad and matn criticism based on takhrij, jarḥ wa ta‘dīl, and narrator studies (rijāl). These form a core component of Hadith Studies curricula at both UIN Sunan Ampel and the Islamic University of Madinah. The second comprises textual and contextual approaches, distinguished by how they interpret the relationship between hadith texts and the circumstances in which they emerged. Textual approaches emphasize linguistic structures, literal meanings, and interpretations grounded in the wording of hadith, whereas contextual approaches take account of historical and social circumstances and the normative purposes of the traditions.

The third category is living-hadith research, which investigates how hadith is understood and enacted in everyday social practices. The fourth comprises interdisciplinary and digital approaches. At the undergraduate level, UIN Sunan Ampel offers courses in Hermeneutics, Western Studies of Hadith, Hadith and Orientalism, Contemporary Hadith Studies, and Thematic Hadith and Science. At the master's level, the

curriculum includes Hadith Hermeneutics, Methods of Understanding Prophetic Hadith, and Orientalist Studies of Hadith, alongside Digital Hadith Libraries. Contemporary hadith scholarship has increasingly embraced digital humanities, manuscript studies, historical criticism, thematic analysis, and integration with the social sciences and humanities. A curriculum comparison involving five Hadith Studies programs (at state Islamic universities in Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Bandung, Surabaya, and Makassar) found that all sought to integrate hadith sciences with the social sciences, while differing in contemporary course offerings. The Surabaya program was distinguished by sociological, regional, and interpretative approaches (Thohari et al., 2024). From a technological perspective, Rosyad and Alif (2023) identified both opportunities and challenges associated with digital applications and platforms, which improve access to hadith collections but require careful and informed use.

Taken together, these accounts of surau, pesantren, and higher education indicate that the transformation of hadith education in Indonesia has not followed a linear pattern of institutional replacement. Instead, scholarly traditions have been maintained and adapted in different contexts. Transmission practices, textual mastery, and character formation developed within classical institutions remain influential, while universities have strengthened methodologies, critical approaches, and the use of technology in hadith research. Relations among these institutions are therefore best viewed as an integration of complementary elements.

Accordingly, this article proposes an integrative model comprising four principal elements. First, it preserves sanad-based transmission and memorization traditions cultivated in surau and pesantren (Kharis, 2025). Second, it develops competence in sanad and matn criticism through the scholarly methodologies practiced in higher education. Third, it strengthens contextual interpretation through living-hadith studies to sustain the relevance of hadith to contemporary social life. Fourth, it optimizes digital technology to broaden access to literature, primary sources, and research activities (Rosyad & Alif, 2023). As a conceptual proposal, the model requires further testing through empirical research. The relationships among its components, intended learning outcomes, and limits of application are presented in the following matrix.

*Table 2. Matrix of Relationships among Model Components*

| Model component | Scholarly foundation | Development strategy | Learning outcomes | Limits of application |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sanad-based transmission and memorization | Established in surau and pesantren through teacher–student relations, talaqqi, textual mastery, sanad, and ijazah | Maintain direct instruction, mastery of hadith texts, memorization of matn, and continuity of intellectual mentorship | Ability to read hadith sources, basic textual comprehension, and continuity of scholarly traditions | Transmission traditions cannot serve as the sole criterion of scholarly validity; hadith studies also require methodological analysis |
| Methodologically grounded sanad and matn criticism | Rooted in classical hadith sciences and further developed in university settings | Strengthen takhrij, narrator studies, jarḥ wa ta'dīl, sanad and matn criticism, and | Capacity to verify, analyze, and investigate hadith systematically | Methodological approaches still require an understanding of historical contexts and |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | hadith research methodology | | social religious practices |
| Contextual approaches through living-hadith studies | Developed in contemporary research linking hadith texts with social realities | Integrate historical, social, cultural, and humanities approaches to understand the functions of hadith in society | Understanding of hadith that considers not only texts but also their contexts of use and interpretation | Contextualization does not entail disregarding fundamental principles of hadith authenticity and textual analysis |
| Use of digital technology | Associated with digital sources, online libraries, and contemporary research methods | Use hadith databases, digitized manuscripts, research applications, and online learning platforms | Broader access to primary sources, improved research efficiency, and increased digital hadith literacy | Technology provides support rather than replacing direct scholarly interaction between teachers and students |

The model suggests that hadith education need not be framed as a dichotomy between classical traditions and modern academic approaches. Sanad-based transmission and memorization remain important for sustaining continuity in hadith knowledge, while sanad and matn criticism provide methodological tools for scholarly verification. At the same time, living-hadith approaches broaden the field by examining hadith within changing social contexts, and digital technology offers new means of accessing sources and advancing research. The four elements are therefore interconnected and complementary components of a more comprehensive approach to hadith education.

The implications of this model extend to the development of hadith education across institutional levels. In universities, greater emphasis on critical reasoning, interdisciplinary approaches, and research grounded in social realities can ensure that hadith instruction moves beyond textual reproduction toward contextual interpretation (Fatkhi & Firdausy, 2026). In pesantren, methodological competence in hadith criticism may be strengthened through pesantren-based higher education and academic collaboration with universities. The finding that fewer than 10% of studies at Ma'had Aly Tebuireng used multi- or interdisciplinary approaches further highlights the need to broaden research perspectives beyond hadith studies alone (Yahya, 2024). This finding nevertheless pertains to one institution and should not be taken as representative of all pesantren or hadith educational institutions in Indonesia.

Moreover, mapping the two principal tendencies in hadith studies can provide a starting point for designing a more comprehensive and integrative instructional model (Yuliharti et al., 2024). However, this article is limited by its reliance on library-based research. Field studies involving different hadith education institutions across Indonesia are therefore necessary to test and refine the proposed integrative model.

## Conclusion

This study demonstrates that hadith education in Indonesia has developed through diverse institutional forms with distinct characteristics, functions, and historical contexts. In community-based institutions such as surau, hadith was transmitted orally and personally, with an emphasis on moral formation and religious practice. In certain settings, particularly Minangkabau, some surau subsequently developed into madrasahs, while other regions evolved different forms of Islamic education. In pesantren, hadith education was reinforced through sanad, ijazah, textual instruction, and the methods of sorogan, bandongan, and memorization. These traditions helped preserve scholarly transmission and train religious scholars, although hadith instruction generally remained integrated with jurisprudence and ethics.

In Islamic higher education, by contrast, hadith studies underwent academic institutionalization through the establishment of degree programs, the development of methodological curricula, and the expansion of scholarly research and publication. These developments broadened the field through sanad and matn criticism, living-hadith studies, hermeneutics, and digital technologies, even though textual and riwāyah-oriented approaches remain dominant in some institutions.

Overall, the findings suggest that the relationship among surau, pesantren, and higher education should not be interpreted as a linear sequence of national institutional development. Rather, these are institutional configurations that interact, influence one another, and frequently develop in parallel. Continuity is evident in scholarly transmission, teacher–student relationships, memorization practices, and the practical application of hadith, whereas change is apparent in institutional structures, curricula, research methods, mechanisms of scholarly legitimation, and academic outputs.

On the basis of this synthesis, the article proposes an integrative conceptual framework combining sanad-based transmission, methodological criticism, contextual interpretation, and digital technology. This theoretical contribution is derived from a synthesis of existing literature and requires empirical assessment through field research across hadith educational institutions with diverse characteristics.

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