Kharisma: Jurnal Administrasi dan Manajemen Pendidikan
Vol. 4, 2 (October, 2025), pp. 145-156
ISSN:2964-3996 , DOI: https://doi.org/10.59373/kharisma.v4i2.119

Ma'had Aly and the Future of Islamic Higher Education: Bridging Tradition and Modernity in Indonesia's Islamic Religious College System

Supriyanto[1*], Hendri Purbo Waseso[2], Mawi Husni Albar[3], Muhammad Fuad Zain[4], Faizul Husnayain[5]

[1-4] Universitas Islam Negeri Profesor Kiai Haji Saifuddin Zuhri Purwokerto, Indonesia
[5] Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Purwokerto, Indonesia

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Academic Quality and Competitiveness;
Islamic Higher Education;
Ma'had Aly;
Pesantren-based Education

Article history:

Received 2025-09-18
Revised 2025-11-12
Accepted 2025-12-01

ABSTRACT

The issuance of PMA No. 71 of 2015, later revised as PMA No. 32 of 2020, formally positioned Ma'had Aly within Indonesia's pesantren-based higher education system. This policy marked a significant transformation by integrating traditional Islamic scholarship with formal academic standards under the Islamic Religious Higher Education (PTKI) framework. The study aims to analyse the management dynamics, educational quality, and strategic role of Ma'had Aly in strengthening the national Islamic higher education ecosystem. Employing a qualitative phenomenological approach, data were collected through interviews, focus group discussions, and direct observations at three leading Ma'had Aly institutions: Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Situbondo, Hasyim Asy'ari Tebuireng, and Iqna Ath Tholibin Rembang. The findings indicate that Ma'had Aly remains structurally dependent on the traditional pesantren model, where kiai hold central authority in governance and academic orientation. Despite the strength of classical Islamic pedagogy, which uses methods such as sorogan and bandongan, graduates often face limitations in professional and research skills compared to PTKI students. The study highlights the strategic potential of Ma'had Aly as a bridge between classical Islamic learning and modern higher education. Integrating practical competencies, research capacity, and institutional collaboration with PTKI is essential to enhance its academic relevance and societal impact, ensuring Ma'had Aly contributes effectively to the development of Indonesia's Islamic intellectual landscape.

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Corresponding Author:
Supriyanto
Universitas Islam Negeri Profesor Kiai Haji Saifuddin Zuhri Purwokerto; supriyanto@uinsaizu.ac.id

INTRODUCTION

Education is a key element in shaping a nation's civilization, including in the context of Islamic education (Abbas et al., 2021; Adela & Ritonga, 2023; A. Effendi et al., 2025; M. N. Effendi et al., 2025). In Indonesia, Islamic higher education continues to experience significant institutional diversification, one of which is through the presence of Ma'had Aly. This pesantren-based higher education institution focuses on mastering Islamic sciences in depth through studying the yellow book (Arizona et al., 2025; Ikhsanudin et al., 2013; Za et al., 2024; Zainudin et al., 2025). Unlike Islamic Religious Colleges (PTKI), which are formal and open, Ma'had Aly grew from the tradition of an exclusive pesantren and became an advanced level for students who have mastered the science of tools (Amalia & Arifin, 2018; Usman et al., 2024).

Before being legally recognized, Ma'had Aly's diploma could not be used outside the pesantren for academic or professional purposes. This has changed since the issuance of the Regulation of the Minister of Religion (PMA) No. 71 of 2015, which was later revised to PMA No. 32 of 2020, which affirmed Ma'had Aly's position as part of the national higher education system (Fadila & Syaifuddin, 2025). Since then, Ma'had Aly has gained institutional recognition and academic legitimacy, allowing its graduates to pursue formal studies and enter the professional job market. Based on these regulations, Ma'had Aly aims to produce scholars with the depth of *tafaqquh fī al-dīn*, mastery of the yellow book, morals, global insights, and national commitment (Munifah et al., 2025; Rekan et al., 2025). Thus, Ma'had Aly plays a role as a formal institution that legitimizes the scholars' scientific authority, a role that was previously based on the transmission of non-formal knowledge in the pesantren environment (Baihaqi et al., 2023; Rofiq et al., 2024; S. Sabarudin et al., 2024; Yusrie et al., 2021).

Academically, Ma'had Aly offers various scientific concentrations such as the Qur'an and tafsir, hadith and hadith science, fiqh and ushul fiqh, Sufism and tarekat, Islamic faith and philosophy, history of Islamic civilization, Arabic language and literature, and astronomy (Fitriani et al., 2024; Hidayat et al., 2025; Wardi et al., 2024; Yamin, 2023). A number of these concentrations intersect directly with the study program at PTKI. In fact, in some cases, the combination of concentrations forms a nomenclature of its own study program, such as the Science of the Qur'an and Tafsir. This indicates that Ma'had Aly and PTKI have overlapping curriculum structures and scientific goals (Syarifah & Munandar, 2025).

This situation has created new competitive dynamics for PTKI, especially in the context of academic quality and the competitiveness of graduates. Ma'had Aly graduates with a deep understanding of classical Islamic texts are considered superior in epistemological aspects compared to PTKI graduates in similar fields of study. This advantage impacts public perception and requires PTKI to reposition its curriculum, graduate profiles, and student selection strategies to remain relevant in an increasingly complex Islamic education ecosystem. However, academic studies that comprehensively discuss Ma'had Aly regarding institutional management, educational quality assurance, and its implications for the position of PTKI are still minimal (Susilawati et al., 2025; Vrbanović Lisac et al., 2025). The lack of comparative research that examines the fundamental differences between Ma'had Aly and PTKI from the perspective of management, curriculum, and learning outcomes is a significant gap to be answered through scientific studies based on field data.

This research aims to fill this gap by in-depth analyzing three representative models of Ma'had Aly in Indonesia: Ma'had Aly Al-Anwar Sarang (*takhasus of Sufism and tarekat*), Ma'had Aly Hasyim Asy'ari Tebuireng (*hadith studies*), and Ma'had Aly Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Situbondo (*fiqh and ushul fiqh*). All three were chosen because of their strong pesantren characteristics, broad academic reputation, and central role in shaping the pesantren higher education paradigm. Through this approach, it is hoped that the research can provide research-based strategic recommendations for PTKI in strengthening academic quality, sharpening scientific distinction, and responding to the dynamics of the relationship

between the tradition of pesantren and the formal higher education system. This research will also identify the challenges faced by PTKI in responding to the quality improvement produced by Ma'had Aly, as well as formulate strategic steps to increase the competitiveness of PTKI graduates in the context of Islamic education in Indonesia.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative-descriptive research approach, aimed at providing an in-depth understanding of the implementation of education within *Ma'had Aly*, its academic quality, and the challenges it faces in the context of Islamic Religious Universities (PTKI). The qualitative approach was selected due to its ability to capture Islamic education's structural and cultural dimensions, which cannot be reduced to mere numerical data (Hasbiansyah, 2008). By adopting a phenomenological approach, this study explores the lived experiences of the key stakeholders involved in *Ma'had Aly* education, particularly in understanding the meanings, practices, and values embedded in the education process. The phenomenological approach emphasizes the researcher's role as a reflective instrument in data collection and interpretation (Neubauer et al., 2019), allowing for a contextual understanding of the *Ma'had Aly* system as it exists in real-world practice.

The research was conducted at three Ma'had Aly institutions with significant institutional influence: *Ma'had Aly Iqna Ath Tholibin* in Sarang Rembang, *Ma'had Aly Hasyim Asy'ari* in Tebuireng Jombang, and *Ma'had Aly Salafiyah Syafi'iyah* in Situbondo. These institutions were chosen for their strong pesantren foundations and relationship with PTKI, creating a representative sample of *Ma'had Aly* in the local educational ecosystem. The study's informants include key groups such as mudir (Ma'had Aly leaders), muhadlir (teachers), advanced students, and PTKI leaders with direct or indirect connections with *Ma'had Aly*. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, participatory observations, and document analysis. Interviews facilitated a deep understanding of academic policies and management practices, while observations focused on the learning process and academic life within *Ma'had Aly* environments. Documentation was used to collect curriculum structures, educational guidelines, and institutional development plans. Thematic data analysis followed (Miles & Huberman, 2014), interactive model, involving stages of data reduction, presentation, conclusion, and verification, with triangulation used to validate the data. This methodological design offers a descriptive account of the Ma'had Aly system and provides a critical perspective on its position within the broader Indonesian Islamic higher education framework.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Management of Ma'had Aly Education Implementation

Ma'had Aly's education management has characteristics that align with the pesantren overseeing it. This is because Ma'had Aly is managed directly by the community or kiai in the pesantren, so their control in terms of management and setting quality standards becomes stricter. In this sub-discussion, the researcher wants to describe the education management implemented by Ma'had Aly Al Anwar in Rembang.

First, Ma'had Aly Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Situbondo. Based on interviews with mudir and officials of Ma'had Aly Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Situbondo, educational planning at Ma'had Aly is carried out by involving the caretaker of the pesantren, who is responsible for setting academic policies. At the same time, the technical implementation is left to the mudir and officials of Ma'had Aly. The learning program consists of two main parts, namely intracurricular and extracurricular, both of which play an

essential role in achieving the educational goals that have been set. The curriculum includes 144 credits with 23 courses that mainly refer to the yellow book, such as fiqh, ushul fiqh, ulum al-hadith, and several thematic courses, such as philosophy and Indonesian. The following is the curriculum table used in Ma'had Aly Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Situbondo:

Table 1. Curriculum of Ma'had Aly Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Situbondo

No	Courses	The Yellow Book
1	Artificial Science	Thematic
2	Nahwu Sharaf	Sharh Alfiyah ibn Malik
3	Balaghah	Al-Balaghah al-Wadhihah
4	Filsafat	Thematic
5	Islam and the National Vision	Pancasila fi Mizani al-Sharia'ah
6	Indonesian Language	Thematic
7	Fiqh of Worship	Fathul Muin, I'anah al-Talibin
8	Fiqh Mu'amalah	Fathul Muin, I'anah al-Talibin
9	Fiqh Munakahat	Fathul Muin, I'anah al-Talibin
10	Fiqh Jinayat	Fathul Muin, I'anah al-Talibin, Tasyri' al-Jina'iy
11	Fiqh Zakat	Fiqh al-Zakat
12	Ulum al-Qur'an	Al-Itqan fi Ulum al-Qur'an, Mabahits fi Ulum al-Qur'an
13	Ulum al-Hadist	Manhal al-Lathif
14	Contemporary Fiqh Mu'amalah	Al-Mu'amalah al-Maliyah al- Mu'ashirah
15	Ushul Classical Fiqh	Ghayatul Wushul, Nuzhatul Uqul, Riyadhatul Uqul
16	Contemporary Jurisprudence	The Knowledge of Ushul Fiqh Abdul Wahhab Khallaf
17	Rules of Fiqh	Al-Madkhal ila al-Qawaid al- Fiqhiyyah
18	Musthalahat Fiqh - Ushul Fiqh	Al-Musthalahat al-Fiqhiyyah
19	Research Methodology	Thematic
20	Sufism	Mukhtshar Ihya
21	The Science of Kalam	Al-Ibanah 'an Ushul al-Diyanah, Mafahim Yajibu an Tushahhah
22	KKN	-
23	Final Project	-

Second, Ma'had Aly Hasyim Asy'ari Jombang. In educational planning at Ma'had Aly Hasyim Asy'ari Jombang, interviews with the mudir showed that education management involves social media and information technology in recruiting students. *"In terms of program planning, we are used to involving all elements of both lecturers, leaders, and even students represented by Dema to discuss issues related to*

developing the necessary programs. Our spirit continues the Hadrotus Sheik's struggle, so with that spirit, thank God the program can be planned well."

The curriculum at Ma'had Aly Hasyim Asy'ari Jombang focuses more on the study of hadith, with an adjustment in 2013 from 190 credits to 144-160 credits to be in accordance with the standards of Islamic universities. More technically, the learning planning process at Ma'had Aly Hasyim Asy'ari Jombang is carried out by dividing schedules or courses according to the package courses each semester.

The educational calendar used is the non-hijri calendar as conveyed by the informant:

"The Ministry of Religion is still given leeway. If I am here for one or two years, I will implement an educational calendar that does not use hijri standards. Why, because many of our students are coaches, coaches of junior high schools. It's time for them to take a break. We don't have a holiday. We keep coming in when they take a holiday. So we synchronize. Because we are still given leeway according to our respective local wisdom."

The educational calendar is planned in the leadership meeting and then decided based on the mudir decree. Several agendas or programs adjust to the pesantren education calendar when planning this calendar. In the calendar, the number of effective weeks that exist, the initial time plan for lectures, seminar proposals, haflah, UTS-UAS, munaqasyah sessions, general stadiums, comprehensive, and holidays or activities of Islamic holidays are written.

Third, Ma'had Aly Iqna Ath Tholibin Rembang. Educational planning at Ma'had Aly Iqna Ath Tholibin Rembang is carried out in a very integrated manner with the Al-Anwar Islamic Boarding School that oversees it. Based on an interview with the chairman of Ma'had Aly Iqna Ath Tholibin Rembang, they began planning by creating a registration brochure that included information on fees, courses, and lecturers involved. In the curriculum section, Ma'had Aly Iqna Ath Tholibin Rembang compiles 150 credits with 37 courses, of which 14 focus on Sufism and tariqat.

In planning learning activities, Ma'had Aly Iqna Ath Tholibin Rembang has prepared a schedule along with its instructors or lecturers for one semester. The schedule states that there are only two lecture hours: the first hour, which starts at 13.30-15.00, and the second hour, which begins at 15.15-16.45. This means that one course is taken within 90 minutes. The following is the lecture schedule at Ma'had Aly Iqna Ath Tholibin Rembang:

First, Ma'had Aly Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Situbondo. Learning at Ma'had Aly Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Situbondo combines the sorogan and bandongan methods, which have become part of the pesantren's tradition. Interviews with mudir show that sorogan is carried out in small groups, where each student is allowed to delve deeply into the text of the yellow book under the guidance of a caregiver. In the bandongan method, the students participated in the reading of the yellow book together to facilitate a collective understanding of the text. For example, in Bandongan, the book of Fathul Muin is used to study fiqh, while the book of al-Musthalahat is used to study ushul fiqh.

Second, Ma'had Aly Hasyim Asy'ari Jombang. Learning at Ma'had Aly Hasyim Asy'ari Jombang focuses more on the study of hadith, emphasizing writing scientific articles as a form of academic evaluation. The active learning method is applied by integrating discussion and writing scientific articles that encourage students to produce works that can be published in scientific journals. Interviews with lecturers explained that their orientation is to develop research skills in hadith and publish articles that can contribute to the scientific world.

Third, Ma'had Aly Iqna Ath Tholibin Rembang. Learning at Ma'had Aly Iqna Ath Tholibin Rembang still maintains the sorogan, bandongan, and bahstul masāil methods. The mudir from Ma'had Aly explained that their learning focuses more on Sufism and tarekat, which involves the study of the

book and in-depth spiritual discussions. The students are trained to apply their knowledge through intense discussions and develop a strong understanding of Sufism.

Ma'had Aly Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Situbondo. The selection of students is carried out through written tests and oral tests that test basic abilities in the fields of fiqh, nahwu, ushul fiqh, and fiqh rules. Mudir explained that the selection was carried out strictly, and the interviews showed a policy to hold internal exams for students who participated in the scholarship program.

> *"So in the past, we have accepted students who the Ministry of Religion directly tested in connection with the scholarship program for outstanding students. But after they passed, it turned out that the results were not up to standard, so we asked to continue to conduct the entrance exam internally, so if there are students who pass PBSB but do not pass the exam here, the results will not pass."*

Ma'had Aly Hasyim Asy'ari Jombang. The recruitment process for lecturers at Ma'had Aly Hasyim Asy'ari Jombang is based on interviews with mudirs, who stated that they prioritize the qualifications of scholars already competent in the science of the yellow book. The recognition of this ulama is based on the recommendation of the pesantren caregiver. Ma'had Aly Iqna Ath Tholibin Rembang. The selection of students at Ma'had Aly Iqna Ath Tholibin Rembang is carried out by distributing registration brochures, including basic tuition fees and schedules. Mudir explained that the choice was also based on students' ability to master the basic books.

Challenges for Islamic Religious Universities (PTKI)

Based on the description of the discussion related to the management process and previous academic quality standards at three Ma'had Aly institutions, namely Ma'had Aly Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Situbondo, Ma'had Aly Hasyim Asy'ari Jombang, and Ma'had Aly Iqna Ath Tholibin Rembang, the researcher then analyzed the challenges that arise for Islamic religious universities (PTKI) in terms of their academic quality. Before discussing the challenges against PTKI, researchers must review the outline or analysis of educational quality applied at Ma'had Aly. As a model, these three Ma'had Aly have distinctive advantages, especially in developing patterns of learning substance according to their superstitions.

Ma'had Aly Iqna Ath Tholibin Rembang, which focuses on the *tasawwuf* of Sufism and *tarekat*, uses yellow books that are more dominant with fiqh-tasawuf nuances, such as the Book of Ihya Ulumuddin, the Book of Rowa'ul Bayan As-Shobuni, the Book of Rohmatul Ummah, and others. Strengthening the field of contemporary Sufism is carried out in two ways, namely by bringing in Sufism expert speakers and explaining or relating the discussion of the book to the theme of Sufism by lecturers or *muhadlir* (Humaidi et al., 2024). This reflects the importance of integration between pesantren traditions and contemporary approaches that are more acceptable to today's generation (Hasan et al., 2024; Rosowulan et al., 2025; Rozaki & Izudin, 2025; Tamjidnor et al., 2025).

The curriculum at Ma'had Aly Hasyim Asy'ari Jombang prepares students to become hadith experts who can apply hadith methodologies in various other fields of religious science. Therefore, the courses used dominate the study of hadith, which intersects with fiqh and tafsir. Through the hadith methodology course, students conceptually analyze how the method used by *fuqoha or mufassir*, for example, uses hadith as a postulate (Dahlan et al., 2025; Sulthon et al., 2024).

Meanwhile, the curriculum at Ma'had Aly Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Situbondo is dominant mainly in three main areas, namely ushul fiqh, qawaid fiqh, and fiqh as a product of the previous two sciences. So it is not surprising that the graduates or alumni of the three Ma'had Aly become expert students according to their field of superstition because the curriculum used is intense and complete. And we cannot find this curriculum in the same study programs at Islamic religious universities, such as UIN/IAIN (Dahlan et al., 2025; Yaqin et al., 2022).

Of the three curriculum models Ma'had Aly uses, the strength or excellence lies in the depth and breadth of the lecture material delivered to students. The yellow book used as teaching material is the yellow book of baboon, which is the primary reference in the world of Islamic boarding schools, and is a yellow book that is included in the category of difficult to learn for ordinary students. This does not happen in Islamic religious universities such as UIN/Private, IAIN/Private, or STAIN/Private.

In addition, the qualifications of the teachers are also unquestionable. One of the informants stated:

> "The entrance test for students here is already difficult, the handbook is also unusual, so you can imagine what the teacher should be like. So sometimes we joke that a class of professors at UIN may not necessarily be able to teach at Ma'had Aly; students will teach them. Because here the students enter and must be able to read the yellow book, lafdzan wa ma'nan."

Therefore, it is unsurprising that most of the teaching staff in the three Ma'had Aly are from the kiai or alumni of Ma'had Aly. In simple terms, the standards of lecturers at Ma'had Aly can be identified as having mastered the science of tools, reading the yellow book, and mastering various references to the yellow book from different fields of science. Again, such competence is rare in lecturers who teach in Islamic universities, except for lecturers who have strong Islamic boarding school traditions.

In the context of the curriculum used by Ma'had Aly, Islamic universities that have a similar focus of study, such as the Qur'an and Tafsir Study Program, the Hadith Science Study Program, and the Faith and Philosophy Study Program, are seriously challenged in terms of the output of the graduates produced. This is because Ma'had Aly has been recognized as equal to universities, so the graduates produced have the same opportunities (Hannan et al., 2024). This is where the challenge comes into play. Although Ma'had Aly was established to create a cadre of scholars, the competition between Ma'had Aly graduates and Islamic boarding schools and Islamic universities is very likely to occur. If this happens, Islamic universities in Islamic study programs must improve the curriculum (Maunah, 2015).

As for strategic steps to respond to this challenge, PTKI needs to modify its curriculum to focus more on mastering the yellow book and strengthen the teaching of fiqh, hadith, and fiqh proposals at the basic level. This can be done by integrating traditional Islamic boarding school teaching approaches, such as sorogan and bandongan, into learning at PTKI. Thus, PTKI students can gain a deeper understanding of the yellow books as the primary reference in religious studies, which has been the main strength of Ma'had Aly. In addition, mapping students' abilities in mastering the yellow book before lectures start can be a strategic first step. Through this mapping, PTKI can clearly determine where students' strengths and weaknesses lie in inastering classical Islamic religious knowledge and adjust their learning programs (Huda & Musyarrof, 2023).

Integration of Islamic Boarding School Traditions in the Islamic Study Program of Islamic Religious Universities: An Alternative Offer

Dhofier (1994), in his book Pesantren Tradition, reveals clearly and completely how the pesantren tradition is built by Kiai's comprehensive view of life. Pesantren is the only place that is very authentic for true seekers of knowledge. Kiai is a genius in managing pesantren without any management knowledge. They walk from established to established tradition and remain open to change. Very rapid changes can still be understood by the kiai so that the substance of the pesantren tradition remains intact and maintained, so that we can see how the changes that occur in the pesantren are only in areas that are *juz'iyyat*, not *kulliyat* (Bruinessen, 1995).

From the challenges that arise due to the increasing strength of Ma'had Aly as a formal educational institution whose diploma is recognized by the state and can be used as a university diploma in general, the Islamic study program in Islamic universities must open their eyes, improve themselves, and think

about how students can have quality or qualified academic quality (Chabibi et al., 2025; Kurniailah & Bakar, 2023; Lastriyani et al., 2023; Nurdi & Ahmad, 2025). From these challenges, Islamic universities must learn from Ma'had Aly as a pesantren university that can produce qualified scholars and is ready to go down to the general public. In this position, the researcher does not intend to face each other between Ma'had Aly and UIN, but rather how to make the higher education institutions collaborate and focus on forming a high-quality generation of the nation and religion. The question is not about which is more important between a more established management in Islamic universities and a more perfect substance of religious learning in Islamic boarding schools, but how the two institutions can produce quality and multitalented graduates. Graduates of Ma'had Aly who can respond appropriately to modernity and graduates of Islamic universities who can strengthen themselves in their religious studies (Misdah et al., 2025; Salim et al., 2024). This is why some Islamic boarding school traditions applied at Ma'had Aly can be used as an alternative offer to improve the academic quality of Islamic study program students in universities. The tradition of the pesantren in question rests on two keywords, namely the yellow book as the primary source of reference and typical learning methods of pesantren such as sorogan and bandongan (Hamdanah et al., 2025).

First, conducting student mapping related to mastering basic skills in the yellow book. This mapping is carried out in one way so that student data or the percentage of students who need intensive guidance can be known. This is because students in Islamic universities are more varied, so, unsurprisingly, there are students of the Islamic study program who come from high school graduates who do not have basic skills like prospective students at Ma'had Aly. Therefore, it is necessary to map Islamic scientific mastery to ascertain how many students need matriculation. In addition, this mapping is carried out to cover the general selection system, which does not yet specify the abilities related to reading the yellow book or recognizing the classification of the yellow book references. More technically, this mapping can be done after the student is accepted or before lectures start. This is because if the mastery of the yellow book is used as an initial entrance test, as was done in Ma'had Aly, it can potentially decrease students' interest in choosing study programs in the field of ushuluddin. More concisely, mapping students' abilities in mastering the yellow book is the starting door in an effort to improve the academic quality of students. If this mapping can be done, efforts to integrate the tradition of Islamic boarding schools to masterthe yellow book in Islamic universities will be possible (Mustofa et al., 2025).

Second, holding activities in short courses or other forms specifically for students who are weak in terms of fundamental skills in mastering the yellow book. Matriculation in the form of short courses or others is carried out after data from student mapping related to the mastery of the yellow book is known. This matriculation contains basic materials of religious science, such as nahwu sharaf, to help readers read the yellow book, hadith, Qur'an, and others, according to the mapping results (Ghani et al., 2025; Kurniailah & Bakar, 2023; M. Sabarudin et al., 2023). This matriculation is very beneficial for students because it will make studying the following courses easier. These activities will also minimize the output of graduates who are not in accordance with the graduate profile formulated by the study program.

Third, the curriculum should be strengthened regarding the depth and breadth of material in courses based on the master yellow book. The strengthening of the curriculum in question is not to change or add new courses, but to develop a semester learning plan prepared by lecturers related to the primary reference source that focuses on one main yellow book as the main subject. At the same time, other supporting references are used flexibly or used as a comparison. Consequently,students must have the primary reference, the yellow book, as material in lectures. Of course, this is not done in all existing courses, but applied to special classes, for example, in the hadith science study program, there are courses in ma'ani hadith, matan hadith science, rijal hadith, and others. These courses can use

one yellow book, for example, the book Taysiru Mushthalahil Hadith by Mahmud Thahhan or the book Al-Kifayah fi Ilmir Riwayah by al-Khatib al-Baghdadi. Students will focus on one yellow book to explore the lecture material thoroughly.

Fourth, applying the *sorogan* or *bandongan* learning model as a variation in classroom learning. This model can be used to study program courses whose primary source is taken from the yellow book. Technically, sorogan or bandongan can be scheduled one-third or part of the existing schedule as a variation of the learning model that has been running (Haryanto et al., 2024; Iskamar et al., 2025). The advantage of this sorogan model is that it further hones the abilities of individual students, and lecturers can get to know the overall development of their students' abilities one by one in mastering the yellow book. If implemented, this integration can significantly change students' academic quality.

Fifth, adopting pesantren values in learning, such as loving science, teaching as the main activity, and the importance of proper religious knowledge. The main difference between lectures at Islamic universities and Ma'had Aly Islamic boarding schools is that students at Ma'had Aly understand lectures carried out as ngaji activities, not ordinary lectures. In contrast, Islamic universities The two almost identical activities have different weights. The term ngaji in pesantren has a content full of meanings, such as getting rewards, the value of worship, and even being part of the way of jihad fi sabilillah.

Meanwhile, even though the field of knowledge is religion, the term lecture does not have the same value as the term *ngaji*. Every kiai in the pesantren indoctrinates its students to make ngaji an activity full of blessings and barokah. Therefore, these values can be applied in lectures so that students do not only interpret their lecture activities as dry activities without meaning, but are full of blessings. The goal is not to get a job after college, but to study itself.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that the management of Ma'had Aly is deeply intertwined with the traditional structure of pesantren, where the kiai plays a central role in decision-making and the educational framework. The institution's academic and learning programs are executed by the mudir and its administrative ranks, with the curriculum firmly rooted in classical Islamic sciences, particularly through the use of the yellow book. The academic quality of Ma'had Aly is distinctively marked by its focus on traditional texts. At the same time, supplementary activities such as *bahtsul masāil* and regular recitations enhance both the intellectual and spiritual development of students. This approach has led to a notable academic rigor that challenges Islamic Religious Universities (PTKI), especially in comparable study programs. Ma'had Aly graduates possess a strong command of classical texts and deepened Islamic knowledge, which sets them apart from PTKI graduates, contributing to a potential gap in academic output. Moreover, the number of applicants to Ma'had Aly far exceeds those applying to PTKI's Islamic programs. To address these challenges, this study highlights the need for PTKI to integrate pesantren values, such as an emphasis on classical texts, and adopt traditional pedagogical methods like sorogan and bandongan into their curricula. By doing so, PTKI can bridge the gap and enrich its academic culture with values of knowledge, respect, and sincerity in seeking learning, ensuring a more holistic and robust Islamic education system in Indonesia.

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