

***Madhhab* as an Epistemic-Institutional System: A Literature Review of The History of Islamic Legal Thought and Ijtihad Methodology**

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Abstract

Studies on Islamic legal schools are often narrowly understood as differences among juristic opinions or as normative identities of the four major madhhabs. In fact, madhhabs emerged through complex historical, methodological, and institutional processes. This study aims to analyze research trends, dominant themes, methodological tendencies, and the transformation of authority in the literature on the history of Islamic legal thought and the ijtihad methods of madhhab imams. This study employs a systematic literature review approach based on narrative-thematic synthesis of 30 selected articles, identified through stages of record identification, deduplication, screening, and eligibility assessment using inclusion and exclusion criteria. The findings show that the literature is dominated by themes of Usul Fiqh and legal derivation methodology, the historical formation of madhhabs, al-Shafi'i's qiyas, later madhhab theorists, as well as taqlid, tarjih, and non-dominant legal schools. The main finding confirms that a madhhab is not merely a collection of legal doctrines, but an epistemic-institutional system that produces, validates, selects, and reproduces legal authority through ijtihad methods, textual transmission, scholarly networks, and educational-legal institutions. This article implies the need for a more historical, comparative, and institutional reading of madhhabs, tarjih-takhrij practices, and classical and contemporary networks of legal knowledge transmission.

Keywords: Islamic legal schools, epistemic-institutional system, ijtihad methodology, history of islamic law.



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Abstrak

Kajian tentang mazhab fikih sering kali masih dipahami secara terbatas sebagai perbedaan pendapat imam atau identitas normatif empat mazhab, padahal mazhab terbentuk melalui proses historis, metodologis, dan institusional yang kompleks. Artikel ini bertujuan menganalisis tren, tema dominan, kecenderungan metodologis, serta transformasi otoritas dalam literatur tentang sejarah pemikiran hukum Islam dan metode ijtihad imam mazhab. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan literature review sistematis berbasis sintesis naratif-tematik terhadap 30 artikel yang diseleksi melalui tahapan identifikasi, deduplikasi, penyaringan, dan penilaian berdasarkan kriteria inklusi-eksklusi. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa literatur didominasi oleh tema ushul fikih dan metodologi istinbat, sejarah formasi mazhab, metode qiyas al-Syafi'i, tokoh pengembang mazhab, serta isu taqlid, tarjih, dan mazhab non-dominan. Temuan utama menegaskan bahwa mazhab tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai kumpulan doktrin hukum, tetapi sebagai sistem epistemik-institusional yang memproduksi, memvalidasi, menyeleksi, dan mereproduksi otoritas hukum melalui metode ijtihad, transmisi kitab, jaringan murid, dan lembaga keilmuan. Artikel ini berimplikasi pada perlunya pembacaan mazhab secara lebih historis, komparatif, praktik tarjih-takhrij, serta jaringan transmisi keilmuan klasik dan kontemporer.

Kata Kunci: Mazhab fikih, sistem epistemik-institusional, metode ijtihad, sejarah hukum islam.

Introduction

The study of fiqh *madhhabs* remains a central issue in contemporary Islamic legal studies because it intersects with three major concerns: scholarly authority, methods of legal derivation (*istinbath*), and the continuity of legal tradition. In the global context, debates on *madhhabs* are no longer confined to the classical question of juristic disagreement among the fuqaha. Rather, they have expanded toward broader inquiries into how Islamic legal traditions construct authority, manage *ikhtilaf*, and respond to social change without losing their normative foundations. In the Indonesian context, the study of *madhhabs* also has practical relevance, as *fiqh* is taught in Islamic educational institutions, used in fatwa-making, influences religious practice, and contributes to discourses on family law, Islamic economics, and Islamic legal reform. However, public understanding and some academic studies still tend to reduce *madhhabs* to the normative identity of the four legal schools, rather than viewing them as systems of knowledge formed through historical, methodological, and institutional processes. In fact, the formation of Islamic law since the time of

Prophet Muhammad SAW has demonstrated a complex relationship between revelation, *Sunnah*, and social reality. Therefore, the history of *madhhabs* should be read as a continuation of the theo-prophetic process toward a more structured legal system.¹

The need to examine *madhhabs* more critically, historically, and systematically constitutes the main point of departure for this study. A madhhab cannot be adequately understood merely as a collection of opinions attributed to its founding imam, since its existence was shaped through a far more complex process. Within it, there are networks of students, the continuity of textual transmission, methodological debates, the scholarly authority of teachers, the role of educational institutions, and mechanisms of *tarjih* and *takbrij* operating across specific historical periods. Melchert shows that classical Sunni *madhhabs* did not initially appear as formal institutions during the lifetime of their founding imams, but underwent gradual formation, particularly during the ninth and tenth centuries CE.² In line with this, Hurvitz argues that the formation of the Hanbali madhhab cannot be separated from the historical and social context that contributed to the construction of Ahmad ibn Hanbal's authority and that of his later followers.³ On this basis, *madhhabs* should be situated as products of interaction among scholarly figures, regional centers, legal methods, and institutions of knowledge transmission. Such a perspective is important because it avoids two equally problematic simplifications: on the one hand, viewing *madhhabs* as sacred legacies that had already been finalized in the early period; and, on the other, reducing them merely to causes of legal stagnation due to the practice of *taqlid*.

Previous studies show that scholarship on *madhhabs* has developed across several major clusters. The first cluster discusses the historical formation of *madhhabs* and regional centers such as Kufah, Madinah, Baghdad, Syria, Egypt, and Andalusia. Melchert, for instance, demonstrates that early Hanafism was closely connected to the Kufan milieu and cannot be detached from its regional tradition of legal reasoning.⁴ Abdullah explains that Maliki legal reasoning in the formative period was closely related to the authority of Madinah as a social space that preserved the practices of the early Muslim generations.⁵ The second cluster discusses the methods of *ijtihad* employed by madhhab imams, particularly al-Shafi'i's *qiyas*, Hanafi *istihsan*, Maliki *'amal ahl al-*

¹ Moh Anas Kholish and Andi Muhammad Galib, "Theo-Prophetic Jurisprudence: Tracing the Genealogy of the Islamic Law's Formation and Growth in Rasulullah Era," *Arena Hukum* 16, no. 2 (2023): 211–31, <https://doi.org/10.21776/ub.arenahukum.2023.01602.1>.

² Christopher Melchert, *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law, 9th-10th Centuries C.E.* (Leiden: Brill, 1997).

³ Nimrod Hurvitz, "Schools Of Law And Historical Context: Re-Examining The Formation Of The Hanbali Madhhab," *Islamic Law and Society* 7, no. 1 (2000): 37–64, <https://doi.org/10.1163/156851900507562>.

⁴ Christopher Melchert, "The Early Hanafiyya and Kufa," *Journal of Abbasid Studies* 1, no. 1 (June 10, 2014): 23–45, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22142371-12340004>.

⁵ U F Abd-Allah, *Malik and Medina: Islamic Legal Reasoning in the Formative Period*, 2013.

Madinah, Hanbali *atsar*, *maslahah*, and other instruments of *istinbath*. Bedong shows that the leading mujtahid imams developed different modes of *ijtihad* according to their intellectual environments, legal sources, and structures of argumentation.⁶ The third cluster examines *Usul Fiqh*, *ikhtilaf*, and internal authority within *madhhabs*. Kamali positions *ikhtilaf* as a legitimate part of the Sharia tradition as long as it is grounded in proper argumentation and methodological competence.⁷ Meanwhile, Sanusi demonstrates that legal maxims developed gradually as instruments of legal generalization that helped the fuqaha manage new cases.⁸

Although the literature on *madhhabs* and *ijtihad* is relatively extensive, several important academic gaps remain. First, many studies remain descriptive, presenting the history of *madhhabs* or the methods of individual imams separately without constructing an integrative model capable of explaining the transformation from personal-regional authority to madhhab as an epistemic and institutional system. Second, the literature often pays greater attention to the four surviving *madhhabs*, while non-dominant *madhhabs* such as al-Zahiri, al-Awza'i, al-Laytsi, al-Tsauri, and al-Jariri have not been sufficiently positioned as comparative variables for understanding historical processes of selection. Sánchez and colleagues' study of the Zahiri madhhab shows that non-dominant legal traditions can offer new perspectives on literalism, transmission, and the shifting of intellectual centers from the eastern to the western Islamic world.⁹ Third, discussions of *ijtihad* methods still tend to focus heavily on al-Shafi'i's *qiyas*, whereas *istihsan*, *'amal abl al-Madinah*, *atsar*, *sadd al-dhara'i*, *maslahah*, *tarjih*, and *takhrir* have not always been analyzed proportionally as instruments that shape madhhab authority. Fourth, institutional aspects such as madrasahs, qadis, fatwas, patronage, and textual networks remain less examined than doctrinal aspects. Yet Makdisi has shown that the madrasah played an important role in the transmission of Islamic disciplines in the medieval period, including *fiqh*.¹⁰

This study offers a new perspective by positioning madhhab as an epistemic-institutional system. Within this framework, a madhhab is not read merely as a school of *fiqh* or an identity of its followers, but as a system of knowledge that organizes *ijtihad*, selects authority, manages *ikhtilaf*, and reproduces doctrine through texts, teachers, students, and institutions. This scholarly contribution is important because it bridges the debate between *ijtihad*

⁶ M A R Bedong, "Metodologi Ijtihad Imam Mujtahidin (Corak Pemikiran Dan Aliran)," *Al-'Adl*, 2018, <https://ejournal.iainkendari.ac.id/al-adl/article/view/1243>.

⁷ Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "The Scope of Diversity and Ikhtilāf (Juristic Disagreement) in the Sharī'ah," *Islamic Studies* 37, no. 3 (1998): 315–37.

⁸ Sandy Rizki Febriadi Sanusi, "Kaidah Fikih: Sejarah Dan Pemikiran Empat Mazhab," *Tabkīm: Jurnal Peradaban Dan Hukum Islam* 4, no. 2 (2021): 23–46.

⁹ O G Sanchez, K R Perez, and Y F Ruiz, "The Zahiri School between East and West: Tracing the Development of Islamic Legal Literalism from Baghdad to Cordoba," *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Law*, 2025.

¹⁰ George Makdisi, "Madrasa and University in the Middle Ages," *Studia Islamica* 32 (1970): 255–64, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1595223>.

and taqlid. Hallaq criticizes the thesis of the closure of the gate of ijtihad as a historical narrative that oversimplifies the dynamics of Islamic law, since ijtihad continued to operate in the forms of *tarjih*, *takbrij*, and internal *madhhab* development.¹¹ In another study, Hallaq also shows that taqlid is not always synonymous with intellectual rigidity, but may function as a mechanism of authority and hermeneutic continuity.¹² Makhlouf strengthens this argument by showing that *tarjih* serves as one method of adaptation and doctrinal development in the Islamic legal tradition.¹³ Therefore, this study does not position madhhab as the opposite of ijtihad, but rather as a methodological space that regulates ijtihad through a particular structure of authority.

Based on this background, this study aims to conduct a literature review that analyzes trends, dominant themes, and methodological tendencies in studies on the history of Islamic legal thought and the ijtihad methods of madhhab imams; explains how the literature portrays the transition from the personal-regional authority of imams to the formation of madhhab as an epistemic and institutional system; and examines how ijtihad methods such as *qiyas*, *istihsan*, *'amal ahl al-Madinah*, *atsar*, *maslahah*, *tarjih*, and *takbrij* shape legal authority within the *fiqh* madhhab tradition. Through these objectives, this study contributes conceptually to the study of Islamic legal history, particularly in understanding madhhab as an intellectual formation that not only preserves the continuity of tradition but also provides methodological mechanisms for managing change. It also seeks to affirm that the trajectory of ijtihad in the development of *fiqh* has always been connected to historical dynamics and the legal needs of the Muslim community.¹⁴ Therefore, reading madhhab as an epistemic-institutional system is an important step in developing a literature review that does not stop at historical description, but produces an academic synthesis relevant to contemporary Islamic legal reform.

This study employs a systematic literature review approach based on narrative-thematic synthesis to map the development of scholarship on the history of Islamic legal thought and the ijtihad methods of madhhab imams. This approach was selected because the object of analysis does not consist merely of empirical findings, but also of concepts, historical arguments, methodological constructions, and patterns of scholarly development. In Islamic legal studies, this review model is relevant for organizing a body of literature

¹¹ Wael B Hallaq, "On the Origins of the Controversy about the Existence of Mujtahids and the Gate of Ijtihad," *Studia Islamica* 63 (1986): 129–42, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1595569>.

¹² Wael B Hallaq, "Taqlid: Authority, Hermeneutics, and Function," in *Authority, Continuity, and Change in Islamic Law* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 86–120, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511495557.005>.

¹³ A G Makhlouf, "Continuity and Change of Traditional Islamic Law in Modern Times: Tarjih as a Method of Adaptation and Development of Legal Doctrines," *Oxford Journal of Law & Religion*, 2023.

¹⁴ Fathurrahman Azhari, "Perjalanan Ijtihad Dalam Perkembangan Fikih," *Syariah: Jurnal Hukum Dan Pemikiran* 14, no. 1 (2014), <https://doi.org/10.18592/SYARIAH.V14I1.69>.

scattered across themes such as *Usul Fiqh*, the history of *madhhabs*, imam authority, methods of *istinbath*, and the institutionalization of legal tradition. Methodologically, literature review is understood as a scholarly procedure for identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing previous studies in a directed manner in order to generate a mapping of knowledge and research gaps that can be further developed.¹⁵

The data were obtained through searches of relevant academic databases and indexes, particularly Google Scholar/Publish or Perish, national journal portals, academic repositories, and publisher or journal websites that provide DOI, url, or full-text indications. The main search string used was: ("Islamic law" or fiqh or "Islamic jurisprudence" or "usul al-fiqh" or "uṣūl al-fiqh" or "Islamic legal thought" or "sejarah hukum Islam" or "sejarah fiqh") and (ijtihad or "legal reasoning" or "juristic reasoning" or "legal method" or "legal methodology" or istinbat or istinbath or "istinbat al-ahkam" or "metode ijtihad") and (madhhab or madhab or mazhab or madzhab or "Islamic legal school" or "school of Islamic law") and (imam or jurist or faqih or fuqaha or ulama or "Muslim legal scholar"). The use of bilingual keywords and transliteration variants was intended to capture both international and Indonesian literature employing different terminologies.

The selection process was conducted in four stages. First, the initial identification produced 150 records. Second, deduplication was carried out based on title, author, publication, URL, and metadata similarity, resulting in the removal of 12 duplicate records. Third, 138 unique records were screened based on title, abstract/snippet, publication type, URL/DOI, and indication of full text. Fourth, the articles were assessed using inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria covered scholarly articles relevant to the history of Islamic legal thought, fiqh *madhhabs*, ijtihad methods of madhhab imams, *Usul Fiqh*, *qiyas*, *istinbath*, *taqlid*, *tarjih*, or *madhhab*-developing figures; articles available or indicated as full text; and articles published in academic journals or conference proceedings. The exclusion criteria included popular articles, books/book chapters, citation-only records, inadequate metadata, substantively irrelevant studies, or studies that discussed contemporary-applied issues without a direct connection to the history and methods of madhhab ijtihad.

From this process, 30 articles were established as the review corpus, consisting of 14 core articles and 16 priority supporting articles, while 108 articles were eliminated due to low relevance, merely secondary coverage, unsuitable document type, absence of full-text indication, inadequate metadata, or overlap with stronger articles. The 30 articles are as follows:

Table 1, 30 articles were established as the review corpus.

¹⁵ Hannah Snyder, "Literature Review as a Research Methodology: An Overview and Guidelines," *Journal of Business Research* 104 (November 2019): 333–39, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.07.039>.

No.	Author(s) and Year	Title
1	AY Anshori; LT Abdurrahman (2025)	History of the development of mazhab, fiqh and uşul al-fiqh: Reasoning methodology in Islamic law
2	MR Purwanto; H Marazi; ... (2024)	Application Impact of Imam al-Shafi'i's Qiyas on the Development of Islamic Legal Thought
3	E Hidayat (2023)	Induction and Its Relevance to the Transformation of Sharia Economic Law in Indonesia: A Study of Four Madhhabs
4	M Hasyim; L Channa AW; IA Jaelani; ... (2020)	The process of Al Bukhari Fiqh methodology development in Islamic law
5	S Supani; A Yaqin; M Sukron; ... (2025)	From Classical Shafi'i Jurisprudence to Diverse Madhhab Perspectives: Shifting Literatures and Practices of Sharia Economic Law in Islamic Pesantren
6	M Lamallam (2025)	Al-Māwardī's (d. 450AH/1058CE) Jurisprudential Thought in Classical Islam: An Integrated and Responsive System of Ijtihād and Taqlīd
7	MI Tanzilulloh; A Mun'im Saleh (2022)	The Conceptualization of Religious Moderation in Islamic Economic Jurisprudence: A Study of Al-Risalah by Imam Al-Shafi'i
8	D Saifullin; A Adilbayev (2025)	Basis of The Formation of Islamic Law.
9	MH Suhaib (2025)	The Rationality and Necessity of the Classical Conditions for Ijtihad and Their Fulfillment in the Modern Era: A Cross-Madhhab Perspective
10	K Umami; M Puspita (2024)	Social Dynamics in The Evaluation of Tashri'during Period of The Mazdhab Scholars: Factor that Triggered The Development of ...
11	A Daharis; M Bahar (2025)	Legal Schools in Islam, History of the Emergence of Legal Schools, Differences of Opinion About the Position of Legal Sources
12	S Ridha (2025)	Al-Ghazali's Theory of Islamic Law and Its Relevance in the Development of Usul Fiqh
13	MH Muzakki; M Rozi; Y Yusuf; AAAMR Lubis (2025)	Al-Juwaini's Ideas and the Development of Islamic Law: A Shifting Paradigm from the Inadequacy of Qiyas as a Method of Ijtihad to Mashlahah
14	R Yuhani'ah; IN Hidayat; M Lutfi; ... (2025)	Logical Inspiration of Ijtihad Methods In The Legal Thought of The Four Madhhab Imams
15	A Syauky; W Walidin (2025)	Rekonstruksi Pemikiran Fikih Imam al-Haramain Melalui Kitab Nihayah al-Matlab
16	OG Sánchez; KR Pérez; YF Ruiz; ... (2025)	The Ṣāḥirī School between East and West: Tracing the Development of Islamic Legal Literalism from Baghdad to Cordoba

1 7	M Jefry; M Mujahidin; ... (2025)	Convergence of Usul Fiqh Methodology in the Dynamics of Law, Tempo Development and Context Sensitivity
1 8	AG Makhoulouf (2023)	Continuity and Change of Traditional Islamic Law in Modern Times: <i>tariḥ</i> as a Method of Adaptation and Development of Legal Doctrines.
1 9	ZA Nashrullah; A Hafidzi (2025)	Pluralitas Mazhab dan Metodologi Istimbāt Hukum dalam Konteks Indonesia
2 0	M Mappasessu; AM Akmal (2025)	Studying Fiqh Based on the Quran and Hadith in the Modern Era by Revisiting the Methodology of Legal Istinbat
2 1	N Sodik; R Setyawan; K Khairuddin; ... (2025)	Reconstruction of Legal Subjects in Ushul Al-fiqh: Development and Interconnectivity Analysis in the Contemporary Era
2 2	A Islamy (2020)	Paradigm Shift and Scientific Revolution in the Development of Contemporary Ushul Fiqh
2 3	CDB Putri; Z Karimah (2026)	The Division of Madzhab and the Importance of the Role of Usul Fiqh in Uniting Differences
2 4	MA Khan; SA Siddiqui (2021)	The Evolution of Fiqh: Tracing the Development of Islamic Jurisprudence from the Classical to the Contemporary Era
2 5	SMH Ritonga; F Arifzapni (2026)	Rethinking the Historical Development of Fiqh: An Educational Perspective on Ijtihad, Taqlid, and Legal Adaptability
2 6	MAR Bedong (2018)	Metodologi Ijtihad Imam Muḥtāhidin (Corak Pemikiran dan Aliran)
2 7	F Jannah; N Fauziyah; MA Syahrin (2025)	Metodologi Istinbat Dalam Penetapan Hukum Islam: Analisis Prinsip Dan Metode Dalam Ushul Fiqih
2 8	AHM Uddin; A Hira (2025)	Evaluating the Legal Authority of? a? ābi Opinions: A Methodological Framework for Islamic Jurisprudence.
2 9	MB Khan; S Qureshi (2021)	The Evolution of Islamic Jurisprudence: From Classical Fiqh to Contemporary Legal Systems
3 0	AZC Age; S Man (2024)	Metodologi hukum Islam menurut aliran Deobandi di Malaysia: Islamic jurisprudence methodology: An analysis of Deobandi school in Malaysia

The data were analyzed using narrative-thematic synthesis by coding the articles based on themes, subthemes, methods, research focus, key findings, limitations, and research gaps. This technique follows the principles of thematic analysis, which enables researchers to identify dominant patterns, tensions within the literature, and underexplored areas.¹⁶ The coding results were then organized into several major themes: *Ushul Fiqh* and *istinbath* methodology; the historical formation of *madhhabs*; al-Shafi'i's *ijtihad* method and *qiyas*; *madhhab-*

¹⁶ Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 77–101, <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a>.

developing figures; *taqlid*, *tarjih*, and internal authority; and non-dominant *madhhabs* and legal literalism. Through this procedure, the review does not merely summarize individual articles, but is directed toward constructing a conceptual synthesis of madhhab as an epistemic-institutional system.

Discussion

Trends, Dominant Themes, and Methodological Tendencies in the Literature

The mapping of 30 selected articles, hereafter referred to as studies, shows that scholarship on the history of Islamic legal thought and the *ijtihad* methods of madhhab imams develops across six major clusters. The most dominant cluster is *Ushul Fiqh* and *istinbat* methodology, covering 11 studies or approximately 36.7% of the entire corpus. This dominance indicates that recent literature still positions *Ushul Fiqh* as the primary entry point for examining *madhhabs*, both in the classical sense as a set of instruments for legal derivation and in the contemporary sense as a methodological framework for responding to social change. Studies on the classical requirements of *ijtihad*, the convergence of *Ushul Fiqh* methodology, madhhab plurality in Indonesia, the reconstruction of legal subjects, and paradigm shifts in *Ushul Fiqh* reinforce this tendency. However, the dominance of *Ushul Fiqh* also reveals a limitation: many studies remain confined to normative explanations of principles, requirements, or the status of legal proofs, while the historical processes that made these principles authoritative within *madhhabs* are not always adequately explained.

The second cluster concerns the historical formation of *madhhabs* and legal schools, comprising 6 studies or 20%. Studies in this group examine the development of *fiqh*, *usul al-fiqh*, legal sources, regional centers, and the transformation of Islamic jurisprudence from the classical to the modern period. The visible tendency is the use of a historical-descriptive approach to explain how *madhhabs* emerged in response to differences in legal sources, social environments, regional practices, and authoritative figures. Anshori and Abdurrahman, for instance, emphasize that the formation of *madhhabs* cannot be separated from regional centers such as Madinah and Kufah, as well as the intellectual environments of the imams. Meanwhile, Daharis and Bahar show that the meaning of madhhab developed from a tendency of legal opinion into a legal system.¹⁷ This finding is important because it shifts the reading of madhhab from merely a set of legal outcomes to a process of authority formation. Nevertheless, most studies in this cluster remain macro-oriented; they explain the “development” of *madhhabs* in general terms but do not always examine micro-mechanisms such as student networks, textual transmission, patronage, the role of qadis, or the institutionalization of madrasahs.

¹⁷ Ahmad Yani Anshori and Landy Trisna Abdurrahman, “History of the Development of Mazhab, Fiqh and Uşul Al-Fiqh: Reasoning Methodology in Islamic Law,” *Samarah* 9, no. 1 (2025): 273–98, <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjkh.v9i1.25355>.

The third cluster focuses on al-Shafi'i's *ijtihād* method, *qiyas*, and doctrinal change, also comprising 6 studies or 20%. The strong attention to *qiyas* and al-Shafi'i indicates that the literature continues to regard al-Risalah and the systematization of analogical reasoning as key points in the history of Islamic legal methodology. Purwanto and colleagues position *qiyas* as an instrument that connects textual sources with new cases; Tanzilulloh and Saleh read al-Risalah as a methodological framework that can be associated with legal moderation; while Muzakki and colleagues demonstrate a shift from the limitations of *qiyas* toward the need for *maslahah* in al-Juwayni's thought.¹⁸ The common ground among these studies lies in their recognition that *qiyas* serves as an instrument of legal rationalization. Their differences lie in emphasis: some studies view *qiyas* as the foundation of methodological stability, while others highlight its limitations and the need for expansion through *maslahah*. This tension is productive because it shows that *ijtihād* methods are not static. Rather, they move from formal analogy toward modes of reasoning that are more sensitive to the objectives of law.

The fourth cluster concerns madhhab-developing figures and classical legal theory, comprising 4 studies or 13.3%. Studies on al-Bukhari, al-Mawardi, al-Ghazali, al-Juwayni, and Imam al-Haramain show that a madhhab did not end with its founding imam. Instead, madhhab consolidation was significantly shaped by later generations who wrote, selected, commented on, and reorganized legal opinions. Hasyim and colleagues show that al-Bukhari's *fiqh* reflects a mode of *istinbat* associated with the tradition of *hadith* scholars that is not always identical to formal madhhab structures. Lamallam positions al-Mawardi as a figure who integrated *ijtihād* and *taqlid* within the system of classical jurisprudence. Ridha reads al-Ghazali as an important theorist in the maturation of *usul al-fiqh*, while Syauky and Walidin demonstrate the significance of *Nihayat al-Matlab* in reconstructing the *fiqh* of Imam al-Haramain.¹⁹ Thus, madhhab should be read as a layered tradition. The founding imam provides the foundation, but later scholars construct the epistemic architecture that enables that foundation to endure.

The fifth cluster is *taqlid*, *tarjih*, and internal madhhab authority, consisting of only 2 studies or 6.7%. This small number itself indicates an important gap. Makhlof argues that *tarjih* can be understood as a method of doctrinal adaptation and development, not merely as a passive act of selecting opinions.²⁰ Ritonga and Arifzapni reinforce this point from the perspective of

¹⁸ M R Purwanto and H Marazi, "Application Impact of Imam Al-Shafi'i's Qiyas on the Development of Islamic Legal Thought," *Madania: Jurnal Kajian ...*, 2024, <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/cd72/1bb34d27f7cc7d98742dbc47f77545b262af.pdf>.

¹⁹ M Hasyim, L Channa AW, and I A Jaelani, "The Process of Al Bukhari Fiqh Methodology Development in Islamic Law," *International ...*, 2020, <http://repository.uinsa.ac.id/id/eprint/808/>.

²⁰ Makhlof, "Continuity and Change of Traditional Islamic Law in Modern Times: *Tarjih* as a Method of Adaptation and Development of Legal Doctrines."

Islamic legal education: *ijtihād* and *taqlid* should be understood as part of learning, transmission, and legal adaptability, rather than as absolute opposites.²¹ The literature in this cluster helps correct the overly simplistic narrative of the “closure of the gate of *ijtihād*.” At this point, *taqlid* does not always signify intellectual stagnation; it may function as a mechanism of authoritative discipline, provided that it is connected to *tarjih*, *takebrij*, and internal renewal. The weakness, however, is that the number of studies addressing this issue remains very limited, making it insufficient for constructing a comprehensive theory of internal *madhhab* dynamics.

The sixth cluster is non-dominant *madhhabs* and legal literalism, represented by only 1 study or 3.3%. Sánchez, Pérez, and Ruiz examine the Zahiri *madhhab* from Baghdad to Cordoba and show that legal literalism constitutes an important part of Islamic legal diversity, even though it did not become consolidated like the four major Sunni *madhhabs*.²² The presence of only one study in this cluster reveals a strong bias in the literature: the history of *fiqh* is often read as though it naturally culminated in the four surviving *madhhabs*. In fact, the existence of the Zahiri, Awza'i, Laytsi, Tsa'uri, Jariri, and other traditions opens sharper historical questions: why did some *madhhabs* survive as institutions of knowledge, while others declined or were absorbed into other currents? In other words, non-dominant *madhhabs* are not merely peripheral themes, but comparative variables for understanding historical selection, textual transmission, and social authority.

Table 2. Mapping of Main Themes/Subthemes and Relevant Studies

Main Theme	Main Theme	Main Theme	Main Theme
<i>Ushul Fiqh</i> and <i>istinbat</i> methodology	Requirements of <i>ijtihād</i> , convergence of <i>usul</i> , <i>madhhab</i> plurality, reconstruction of legal subjects, opinions of the Companions	<i>Ushul Fiqh</i> is positioned as an instrument of legal validation and management of <i>ikhtilaf</i>	Normatively strong, but often lacking historical grounding and primary-source analysis
Historical formation of <i>madhhabs</i> and legal schools	Regional centers, legal sources, changes in the meaning of <i>madhhab</i> , transformation of jurisprudence	<i>Madhhabs</i> emerged through the interaction of cities, teachers, legal proofs, social practices, and legal needs	Many studies remain descriptive and insufficiently map networks of transmission
Al-Shafi'i's <i>ijtihād</i> method, <i>qiyas</i> , and doctrinal change	<i>Qiyas</i> , al-Risalah, critique of <i>qiyas</i> , <i>maslahah</i> ,	<i>Qiyas</i> becomes a symbol of <i>ijtihād</i> systematization,	Studies on methods other than <i>qiyas</i> remain uneven

²¹ S M H Ritonga and F Arifzapni, “Rethinking the Historical Development of *Fiqh*: An Educational Perspective on *Ijtihād*, *Taqlid*, and Legal Adaptability,” *Al-Afkar: Jurnal Pemikiran* ..., 2026, <https://jurnal.stiq.assyifa.ac.id/alafkar/article/view/1028>.

²² Sanchez, Perez, and Ruiz, “The Zahiri School between East and West: Tracing the Development of Islamic Legal Literalism from Baghdad to Cordoba.”

	reconstruction of <i>istinbat</i>	while the literature begins to highlight its limits and the expansion of <i>maslahab</i>	
<i>Madhhab</i> - developing figures and classical legal theory	al-Bukhari, al- Mawardi, al- Ghazali, Imam al- Haramain	Later scholars played a role in organizing methods, strengthening doctrine, and maintaining madhhab coherence	Comparative studies across figures and <i>madhhabs</i> remain necessary
Taqlid, <i>tarjih</i> , and internal madhhab authority	<i>Tarjih</i> , taqlid, education, legal adaptability	Madhhab tradition continues to provide space for change through internal mechanisms	The number of studies remains very small compared to normative usul studies
Non-dominant <i>madhhabs</i> and legal literalism	Zahiri, legal literalism, Baghdad, Cordoba	Literalist traditions reveal methodological alternatives beyond the four major <i>madhhabs</i>	This topic is rarely studied, although it is important for avoiding teleological historiography

From the methodological perspective, the strongest tendency is normative *Ushul Fiqh* analysis, represented by 11 studies or 36.7%. This method has the advantage of examining concepts, legal proofs, requirements of *ijtihad*, hierarchy of legal sources, and principles of *istinbath* in depth. However, its main weakness lies in the risk of abstraction: legal methods are read as ideal formulations that seem to stand outside history. The second tendency is studies of classical figures/texts, comprising 5 studies or 16.7%, followed by historical-descriptive studies with 4 studies or 13.3%, qualitative-contextual studies with 3 studies or 10%, comparative studies of *madhhabs*/imams with 2 studies or 6.7%, and several single approaches such as historical-conceptual, historical-sociological, historical-comparative, historical-doctrinal, and historical-pedagogical approaches, each represented by 1 study. This distribution indicates that the literature is conceptually rich but methodologically limited. Few studies have employed systematic literature review, bibliometrics, network analysis, primary manuscript criticism, or institutional mapping.

Table 3. Methodological Tendencies and Analytical Implications

Methodo- logical Category	Number of Articles	%	Strengths	Weaknesses	Implications for This Study
Normative <i>Ushul Fiqh</i> analysis	11	36.7%	Strong in explaining concepts, legal	Prone to being ahistorical and lacking	Needs to be connected with the history of

			proofs, and principles of <i>istinbat</i>	institutional evidence	formation and networks of authority
Studies of classical figures/texts	5	16.7%	Provides in-depth analysis of particular figures and works	Often partial and not yet comparative across <i>madhhabs</i>	Used to show the role of later madhhab-developing scholars
Historical-descriptive studies	4	13.3%	Helps establish periodization and general context	Prone to generalization if not supported by primary sources	Used as a chronological basis, but critically examined institutionally
Qualitative-contextual studies	3	10%	Connects madhhab with education, Islamic economics, or modern communities	Does not always discuss the classical formative period	Used to read the contemporary reception of madhhab
Comparative studies of <i>madhhabs</i> /imans	2	6.7%	Directly relevant for distinguishing methods across <i>madhhabs</i>	Still limited in number and uneven in coverage	Needs to be expanded into a matrix of methods across <i>madhhabs</i>
Historical-sociological, historical-comparative.	5	16.6%	Opens social, institutional, and educational readings	Each approach remains sporadic	Serves as the basis for an epistemic-institutional model

The table above shows that the main trends in the literature can be formulated into two tendencies. First, the literature moves from historical descriptions of *madhhabs* toward methodological readings of *Ushul Fiqh* and *istinbat*. Second, some studies have begun to connect madhhab with contemporary contexts, such as pesantren, Islamic economics, madhhab plurality in Indonesia, the Deobandi tradition in Malaysia, and the reconstruction of legal subjects. However, these two tendencies have not yet been fully integrated. Historical studies are often insufficiently methodological; methodological studies are often insufficiently historical; while contemporary studies frequently use madhhab as a normative reference without explaining its epistemic and institutional genealogy. It is at this point that madhhab needs to be read as an epistemic-institutional system, namely a system that simultaneously produces legal knowledge, selects authority, manages *ikehtilaf*, and reproduces doctrine through texts, teachers, students, institutions, and internal mechanisms such as *tarjih* and *takbrij*.

The Transition from the Personal-Regional Authority of Imams to Madhhab as an Epistemic-Institutional System

The literature reviewed indicates that *madhhabs* did not initially emerge as formal institutions already completed during the lifetime of their founding imams. Rather, they are more appropriately understood as processes of consolidation that moved from personal and regional authority toward more stable structures of knowledge. In the early stage, legal authority depended heavily on scholarly figures, urban environments, and local intellectual traditions. Abu Hanifah cannot be separated from Kufah and the tradition of *ra'y*; Malik was closely associated with the authority of Madinan practice; al-Shafi'i became known for his systematization of legal proofs and *qiyas*; while Ahmad ibn Hanbal was deeply rooted in the authority of hadith and *atsr*. Anshori and Abdurrahman show that the formation of *madhhabs* was connected to regional centers, scholarly authority, local practices, transmitted reports, and legal reasoning.²³ This means that differences among *madhhabs* were not merely differences in fiqh rulings, but also differences in epistemic ecologies.

However, personal authority alone is insufficient to explain why a madhhab endured. An imam may possess a strong scholarly reputation, but that reputation must be translated into continuous transmission. It is here that student networks, textual codification, methodological formulation, and teaching played a crucial role. Madhhab transformed from "the opinion of an imam" into a "tradition of interpretation" when such opinions were collected, systematized, selected, taught, and debated by later generations. Studies on al-Mawardi, al-Ghazali, al-Juwayni, and Imam al-Haramain demonstrate that later madhhab-developing figures occupied a key position in this process. Lamallam shows that al-Mawardi maintained madhhab coherence through the relationship between *ijtihad* and *taqlid*,²⁴ Ridha positions al-Ghazali as a major figure in the formation of a mature theory of law,²⁵ while Syauky and Walidin demonstrate that Nihayat al-Matlab became a systematic space for reconstructing Imam al-Haramain's fiqh methodology.²⁶ Thus, a madhhab is not identical with its founder; rather, it represents the continuity of collective intellectual labor.

The transition from personal-regional authority to an epistemic-institutional system can be read through four layers. The first is the normative layer, namely legal sources and methods of *istinbat*. At this level, a madhhab

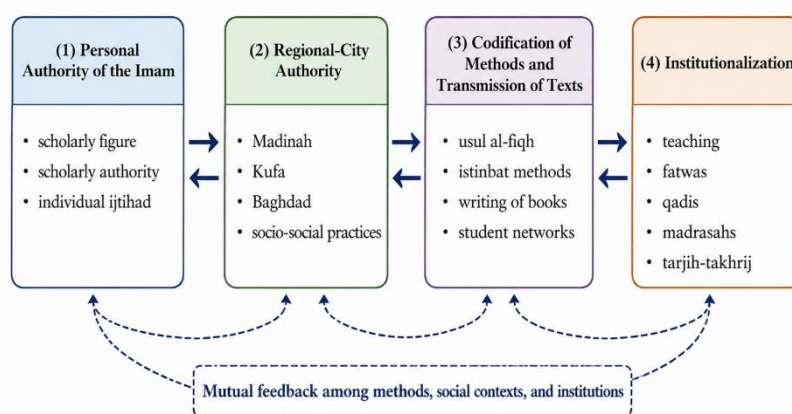
²³ Anshori and Abdurrahman, "History of the Development of Mazhab, Fiqh and Uṣūl Al-Fiqh: Reasoning Methodology in Islamic Law."

²⁴ M Lamallam, "Al-Māwardī's (d. 450AH/1058CE) Jurisprudential Thought in Classical Islam: An Integrated and Responsive System of Ijtihād and Taqlīd," *Nama Journal of Islamic Sciences and Humanities*, 2025, <https://namajournal.com/index.php/nj/article/view/447>.

²⁵ S Ridha, "Al-Ghazali's Theory of Islamic Law and Its Relevance in the Development of Usul Fiqh," *Al-Wadh'iyyah: Journal of Sharia Law and Legal ...*, 2025, <https://journal.zmsadra.or.id/index.php/jslls/article/view/265>.

²⁶ Ahmad Syauky and Warul Walidin, "Rekonstruksi Pemikiran Fikih Imam Al-Haramain Melalui Kitab Nihayah Al-Matlab," *NIHAYAH: Journal of Islamic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2025): 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.65802/nihayah.v1i1.6>.

builds legitimacy through the Qur'an, Sunnah, *ijma'*, *qiyas*, *qaul sababi*, *istisban*, *'amal abl al-Madinah*, *maslahah*, *atsr*, and other methodological instruments. Saifullin and Adilbayev affirm that the formation of Islamic law took place through a combination of textual sources, consensus, analogy, and methodological instruments that differed across *madhhabs*.²⁷ The second is the epistemic layer, namely the way a madhhab determines which legal proofs are stronger, how textual sources are understood, how conflicts between proofs are managed, and how new cases are connected to established principles. The third is the socio-regional layer, which includes cities, teacher-student networks, local practices, and communal legal needs. Umami and Puspita show that social dynamics during the period of madhhab scholars became a driving factor in the use of *ijtihad* and the formation of legal responses.²⁸ The fourth is the institutional layer, comprising madrasahs, texts, teaching authority, qadis, fatwas, patronage, and curricula.



A madhhab is formed through a gradual transition from the personal-regional authority of the imam to an epistemic-institutional system supported by methods of istinbat, transmission of texts, student networks, and legal institutions.

Figure 1. The Epistemic-Institutional Transition Model of Madhhab

This synthesis helps avoid two forms of reduction. The first reduction is viewing madhhab as a final legacy of the founding imam. Such a view overlooks the fact that many madhhab structures were actually developed by later generations. The second reduction is viewing madhhab as a cause of stagnation due to *taqlid*. This view is also overly simplistic because it fails to distinguish between *taqlid* as fanaticism and *taqlid* as a mechanism for transmitting authority. Makhlof shows that *tarjih* enables both continuity and

²⁷ D Saifullin and A Adilbayev, "BASIS OF THE FORMATION OF ISLAMIC LAW.," *Eurasian Journal of Religions* ..., 2025.

²⁸ Khairul Umami and Mega Puspita, "Social Dynamics in the Evolution of Tashri ' during the Period of the Madhhab Scholars: Factors That Triggered the Development of Islamic Law," *Moefy: Jurnal Perbandingan Mazhab Dan Hukum* 13, no. 1 (2024): 65–73.

change within traditional Islamic law.²⁹ Ritonga and Arifzapni also position *ijtihad*, *taqlid*, and education as part of legal adaptability.³⁰ In other words, *madhhab* is not the opposite of *ijtihad*, but a space that regulates *ijtihad* through hierarchies of competence, standards of legal proof, and mechanisms for selecting opinions.

At this point, the distinction between *madhhabs* that survived and those that did not becomes significant. The study of the *Zahiri madhhab* shows that legal literalism possessed methodological strength and a history of transmission from Baghdad to Cordoba, yet it did not become consolidated in the same way as the four major *madhhabs*. This indicates that methodological coherence alone is not sufficient. A *madhhab* requires social networks, authoritative texts, continuing students, institutional support, and adaptive capacity. Therefore, the study of non-dominant *madhhabs* opens new questions: did a *madhhab* decline because of methodological weakness, institutional limitation, political change, insufficient textual transmission, or defeat in the competition for social authority? This question has not been adequately answered by the reviewed corpus, since most studies remain centered on the four *madhhabs* and al-Shafi'i.

The epistemic-institutional transition is also visible in contemporary contexts. Supani and colleagues show a shift in *pesantren* literature from the dominance of classical Shafi'i jurisprudence toward more plural *madhhab* perspectives in the practice of Islamic economic law.³¹ Age and Man demonstrate the continuity of Deobandi methodology in Malaysia, which is linked to scholarly authority and *madhhab* tradition.³² These two studies show that *madhhab* continues to operate as a system of knowledge in modern education and practice. However, contemporary literature still needs to distinguish between "using *madhhab* opinions" and "understanding the epistemic structure of *madhhab*." The use of *madhhab* opinions may be practical, whereas epistemic understanding requires an examination of the methods, authority, and mechanisms of legal production behind those opinions.

²⁹ Makhoul, "Continuity and Change of Traditional Islamic Law in Modern Times: *Tarjih* as a Method of Adaptation and Development of Legal Doctrines."

³⁰ Ritonga and Arifzapni, "Rethinking the Historical Development of *Fiqh*: An Educational Perspective on *Ijtihad*, *Taqlid*, and Legal Adaptability."

³¹ S Supani, A Yaqin, and M Sukron, "From Classical Shafi'i Jurisprudence to Diverse *Madhhab* Perspectives: Shifting Literatures and Practices of Sharia Economic Law in Islamic *Pesantren*," *JURIS (Jurnal ...)*, 2025, <https://ejournal.uinmybatusangkar.ac.id/ojs/index.php/Juris/article/view/13419>.

³² Ahmad Zulkernain Che Age and Saadan Man, "METODOLOGI HUKUM ISLAM MENURUT ALIRAN DEOBANDI DI MALAYSIA Islamic Jurisprudence Methodology: An Analysis of Deobandi School in Malaysia," *Jurnal Fiqh* 21, no. 1 (June 30, 2024): 65–122, <https://doi.org/10.22452/fiqh.vol21no1.3>.

Ijtihad Methods and the Formation of Legal Authority in the Madhhab Tradition

The literature reviewed shows that ijtihad methods are not merely techniques of argumentation, but instruments for the formation of authority. A legal opinion becomes authoritative not only because it corresponds to legal evidence, but also because it emerges from procedures of *istinbath* recognized by the madhhab community. Thus, method functions as a set of “epistemic rules of the game”: it determines what may be accepted as a legal argument, who is authorized to perform ijtihad, how legal proofs are prioritized, and how conflicting opinions are selected.

Table 4. Ijtihad Methods and Their Functions in the Formation of Madhhab Authority

Method / Instrument	Epistemic Function	Institutional Function	Tendency in the Literature	Remaining Gap
<i>Qiyas</i>	Connecting textual sources with new cases through analogy	Serving as a standard of legal rationalization, especially in the Shafi'i tradition	Most dominantly discussed	Needs to be compared with <i>istihsan</i> , 'amal, <i>atsr</i> , and <i>maslahah</i>
Istihsan	Correcting apparent <i>qiyas</i> when it leads to hardship or an inappropriate outcome	Providing flexibility within the Hanafi madhhab	Still insufficiently treated as a main object of study	Requires specific studies on the logic of <i>istihsan</i> and classical legal cases
'amal ahl al-Madinah	Treating the practice of Madinah as a collective legal memory	Strengthening Maliki regional authority	More frequently mentioned than analyzed	Requires mapping of the relationship between local practice, hadith, and madhhab authority
<i>Atsr</i>	Positioning reports from the Companions and Successors as limits to speculative reasoning	Strengthening the tradition of hadith scholars, especially within Hanbalism	Appears in general discussions of imam methodologies	Requires analysis of the use of <i>atsr</i> in conflicts of legal proofs
<i>Maslahah</i>	Directing law toward benefit and the objectives of Sharia	Opening space for legal adaptation when <i>qiyas</i> is insufficient	Gains prominence in studies of al-Juwayni and contemporary legal thought	Needs to distinguish between classical <i>maslahah</i> and modern rhetoric of public interest
<i>Tarjih</i>	Selecting the stronger opinion within internal disagreement	Maintaining the hierarchy of authority and doctrinal coherence	Beginning to appear as an important theme	Requires mapping of <i>tarjih</i> practices in each madhhab

<i>Takbrij</i>	Developing new legal rulings from established madhhab principles	Functioning as an internal mechanism of madhhab-based ijihad	Still implicit and rarely discussed	Requires specific study of <i>takbrij</i> as a bridge between ijihad and taqlid
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Qiyas receives the greatest attention in the corpus, particularly through studies on al-Shafi'i. Purwanto and colleagues view *qiyas* as an instrument that connects textual sources with new cases, thereby making it a foundation for the systematization of ijihad.³³ Tanzilulloh and Saleh position al-Risalah as a framework that regulates the relationship between textual sources, reasoning, and legal moderation.³⁴ However, studies on al-Juwayni show that *qiyas* is not always sufficient to address legal complexity. Muzakki and colleagues read al-Juwayni's thought as a shift from the insufficiency of *qiyas* toward *maslahah*.³⁵ The common point among these studies is their recognition that analogical reasoning is important for maintaining the connection between textual sources and reality. Their difference lies in the degree of confidence placed in *qiyas*: whether *qiyas* is sufficient as a basis for rationalization, or whether it needs to be supplemented by *maslahah* when cases cannot be resolved analogically.

Istihsan, '*amal ahl al-Madinah*', and *atsr*, by contrast, appear more frequently as part of general comparative discussions rather than as main objects of analysis. Bedong shows that each mujtahid imam developed a distinct methodological character influenced by social environment, sources of legal evidence, and instruments of istinbat.³⁶ Yuhani'ah and colleagues also emphasize the flexibility of the ijihad methods of the four imams, although their discussion still requires a more detailed matrix concerning the epistemology of legal proofs, the hierarchy of sources, and examples of legal cases.³⁷ This limitation is significant. If al-Shafi'i's *qiyas* remains too dominant in the literature, Hanafi *istihsan* risks being read superficially as a "subjective exception," '*amal ahl al-Madinah*' may be understood merely as local practice, and Hanbali *atsr* may be reduced to hadith conservatism. In fact, each method possesses its own epistemic logic. *istihsan* may be understood as a correction to apparent *qiyas* when such analogy produces hardship or injustice; '*amal ahl al-*

³³ Purwanto and Marazi, "Application Impact of Imam Al-Shafi'i's Qiyas on the Development of Islamic Legal Thought."

³⁴ M I Tanzilulloh and A Mun'im Saleh, "The Conceptualization of Religious Moderation in Islamic Economic Jurisprudence: A Study of Al-Risalah by Imam Al-Shafi'i," *Invest Journal of Sharia* ..., 2022, <https://jurnal.iainponorogo.ac.id/index.php/invest/article/view/10379>.

³⁵ M H Muzakki et al., "Al-Juwayni's Ideas and the Development of Islamic Law: A Shifting Paradigm from the Inadequacy of Qiyas as a Method of Ijtihad to Mashlahah," *Ulumuna*, 2025, <http://www.ulumuna.or.id/index.php/ujs/article/view/1185>.

³⁶ Bedong, "Metodologi Ijtihad Imam Mujtahidin (Corak Pemikiran Dan Aliran)."

³⁷ R Yuhani'ah, I N Hidayat, and M Lutfi, "Logical Inspiration Of Ijtihad Methods In The Legal Thought Of The Four Madhhab Imams," *Nawa Islamia: Islamic* ..., 2025, <https://ejournal.tarqi.or.id/index.php/nawaislamia/article/download/3/13>.

Madīnah links law to the social memory of the early Muslim generations; *atsr* affirms the authority of transmitted reports as a restraint on speculative reasoning; while *maslahah* opens a space for orientation toward the objectives of law.

Tarjih and *takbrij* are mechanisms that demonstrate that madhhab is not merely a collection of opinions, but a system of selection and development. *Tarjih* functions to select the stronger opinion within internal disagreement, while *takbrij* develops new legal answers based on the established principles, maxims, or opinions of the imam. Although the term *takbrij* is not explicitly central in many studies, its logic is present in discussions of doctrinal adaptation, reconstruction of *istinbath*, and *fiqh* education. Makhlouf directly shows that *tarjih* serves as a means of continuity and change in traditional Islamic law.³⁸ The study by Jannah, Fauziyah, and Syahrin also emphasizes that *istinbath* requires systematic Ushul principles so that responses to new problems remain methodologically valid.³⁹ Therefore, *tarjih* and *takbrij* may be understood as forms of “internal *ijtihad*” that preserve madhhab continuity without severing its connection to earlier authority.

From this synthesis, the contribution of this study lies in shifting the focus from “what the imam’s opinion is” to “how madhhab becomes an authoritative system.” Previous literature has provided an important foundation, but it remains dispersed. Historical studies explain madhhab formation, usul studies explain method, studies of figures explain theoretical maturation, contemporary studies explain reception, and studies on *tarjih* show internal adaptation. However, few studies have integrated all these dimensions within a single framework. The concept of madhhab as an epistemic-institutional system addresses this gap by bringing together four elements: first, the epistemology of legal proofs; second, *ijtihad* methods; third, networks of transmission; and fourth, institutions of authority.

Conclusion

This study affirms that *fiqh madhhabs* are more appropriately understood as epistemic-institutional systems rather than merely as collections of opinions attributed to founding imams or as normative identities of their followers. The review findings show that research trends on the history of Islamic legal thought and *ijtihad* methods remain dominated by studies on usul al-*fiqh*, *istinbat* methodology, the historical formation of *madhhabs*, and discussions of al-Shafi’i’s *qiyas*. This tendency reflects strong scholarly attention to normative-methodological aspects, while at the same time revealing a limitation: the historical, social, and institutional processes that shaped madhhab

³⁸ Makhlouf, “Continuity and Change of Traditional Islamic Law in Modern Times: *Tarjih* as a Method of Adaptation and Development of Legal Doctrines.”

³⁹ F Jannah, N Fauziyah, and M A Syahrin, “Metodologi *Istinbat* Dalam Penetapan Hukum Islam: Analisis Prinsip Dan Metode Dalam Ushul Fiqih,” *TASHDIQ: Jurnal Kajian ...*, 2025, <https://cibangsa.com/index.php/tashdiq/article/view/1724>.

authority have not yet been analyzed in an integrated manner. This study contributes to the formulation of a conceptual synthesis that connects the personal authority of imams, regional-urban contexts, codification of methods, transmission of texts, and legal-religious institutionalization within a single epistemic-institutional framework. Through this framework, madhhab is understood as a mechanism for producing, validating, selecting, and reproducing legal knowledge. Methods such as *qiyas*, *istihsan*, *'amal ahl al-Madinah*, *atsr*, *maslahah*, *tarjih*, and *takbrij* function not only as techniques of *istinbat*, but also as instruments for shaping the internal authority of the madhhab tradition.

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