

REVIVING THE SCHOLARLY TRADITION: A STUDY OF THE BOOK AL-GHĀYAH WA AT-TAQRĪB BY THE ASSOCIATION OF FEMALE ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL CAREGIVERS AND WOMEN PREACHERS OF LAMPUNG

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Abstract

This study examines the revitalization of the kitab kuning learning tradition through the practice of studying Al-Ghoyah wa at-Taqrīb conducted by the Association of Female Islamic Boarding School Caregivers and Women Preachers (JPPPM) of Lampung. Employing a participatory ethnographic approach, data were collected through five observation sessions (90–120 minutes each), five interviews, and analysis of study-related documents. The findings show that the study sessions integrate the bandongan, sorogan, and muzakarah methods, leading to three main outcomes: (1) the strengthening of kitab kuning literacy, indicated by improved fluency in reading unvowelled texts among beginner participants who had previously struggled with nahwu–sharaf structures; (2) the formation of collective female authority through muzakarah forums that consistently address practical fiqh issues such as thaharah, family zakat, and women's ritual practices; and (3) instructional innovation in the form of rotating instructors and simple digital documentation, which helps sustain the continuity of the study despite participants' dual responsibilities as pesantren caregivers and preachers. The main challenges include disparities in participants' reading abilities, limited access to supporting literature, and a culture of seniority that constrains the participation of younger members. Overall, the findings affirm that JPPPM Lampung has successfully developed an adaptive learning model that strengthens the scholarly capacity of women in pesantren and contributes to the sustainability of Islamic intellectual traditions.

Keywords: *kitab kuning, women in pesantren, scholarly tradition, participatory learning, empowerment*

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INTRODUCTION

The tradition of Islamic scholarship is one of the main pillars in the formation of a sustainable Islamic civilisation. In Indonesia, Islamic boarding schools have become the

educational institutions that most consistently preserve this tradition through a system of teaching classical Islamic texts that has been passed down from generation to generation. These classical texts do not merely contain fiqh laws, but also reflect the intellectual wealth of classical scholars and serve as a medium for the transmission of religious knowledge from one generation to the next (Bruinessen 1990). The yellow book is also the main reference for learning in Islamic boarding schools (neliwati et al. 2024, 99). One of the basic fiqh books that continues to be taught today is Al-Ghoyah wat-Taqrīb, which, in its commentary version by Abi Sujak, is widely studied in Salafi Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia.

In the context of social change and technological development, Islamic boarding schools are faced with the challenge of adapting without losing their traditional identity. This is also related to how Islamic boarding schools address issues of gender equality and women's empowerment. Islamic education, especially in Islamic boarding schools, has shown flexibility in maintaining classical values while responding to the needs of the times. The role of women in the world of Islamic boarding schools, which was previously marginalised, is now beginning to gain more space. The transmission of Islamic knowledge does not only take place in mosques and madrasas, but also in informal institutions managed by women (Mahmudah 2021). This situation emphasises that women are no longer merely recipients of knowledge, but also important actors in the preservation of intellectual traditions.

Communities such as *Jam'iyyah Perempuan Pengasuh Pesantren dan Mubalighah* (JPPPM) exist as part of efforts to regenerate Islamic scholarship through the study of classical texts. Through these activities, women not only pass on the intellectual traditions of Islamic boarding schools but also create spaces for empowerment and critical awareness of their position in society. The empowerment of women in Islamic boarding schools should not only be directed towards spiritual strengthening, but also social transformation through the enhancement of intellectual capacity and leadership. (Ratnasari, 2016). In this context, the study of Al-Ghoyah wat-Taqrīb by JPPPM Lampung is relevant for academic analysis.

The revitalisation of the tradition of studying classical Islamic texts among women in Islamic boarding schools is not without its fundamental problems. First, there is a lack of formal space for women to appear as teachers of classical texts, so that their scholarly authority is poorly documented and lacks institutional legitimacy. Second, variations in the participants' literacy skills in classical texts mean that the learning process is not always uniform, especially when the bandongan and sorogan methods are applied without intensive guidance. Third, limitations in time, access to literature, and learning resources often hinder the continuity of studies, especially for female teachers who bear a double burden in the domestic and socio-religious spheres.

In spite of these challenges, the results of the study show that JPPPM Lampung has successfully developed an adaptive collective learning model that combines bandongan, sorogan, and muzakarah with a rotation system for instructors. This model gradually strengthens the capacity of participants and reduces dependence on a single figure. Empirical findings show an increase in the ability to read classical texts, mastery of fiqh material, and participants' confidence in da'wah activities. In addition, participants are able to independently produce summaries of material and practical fiqh notes. The use of simple digital media, such as study recordings and online discussion forums, also helps to maintain the continuity of activities despite time constraints.

This study utilises Paulo Freire's dialogical education framework to explain the participatory interaction patterns that emerge in book studies, as well as Kabeer's empowerment theory, which views empowerment as a process of increasing capacity, access to resources, and the ability to take on social roles. These two frameworks provide a conceptual basis for assessing how pesantren women build scholarly authority through the practice of classical book studies (Freire 1970; Kabeer 1999). These two frameworks provide a conceptual basis for assessing how female pesantren students build scholarly authority through the practice of studying classical texts.

Based on this context, this study formulates three main questions: (1) how is the Al-Ghoyah wat-Taqrīb study conducted by JPPPM Lampung; (2) what is the role of women in Islamic boarding schools in revitalising Islamic scholarly traditions through this study; and (3) what challenges and contributions have resulted from this study for strengthening the scholarly traditions of Islamic boarding schools?

This study offers a novel approach by focusing on the role of women in Islamic boarding schools in reviving the study of classical Islamic texts, particularly through the activities of JPPPM Lampung, which specifically examines Al-Ghoyah wat-Taqrīb by Abi Sujak. This study not only combines the themes of Islamic scholarly tradition and women's empowerment, but also presents an empirical analysis of the actual practice of classical Islamic text study at the level of women's Islamic boarding school communities—something that has rarely been studied in depth. Unlike other studies, such as Sholihah and Haidar (2015) which focuses on Nyai and Ning's personal interpretations of classical texts, or research by Erman (2019) which focuses on the transmission of post-independence scriptural traditions, as well as Prasetyawan and Lis (2019) examining the leadership style of female Islamic boarding school leaders, this study presents an integrative approach that combines perspectives from scientific tradition, women's empowerment, and collective learning dynamics.

This study offers an important contribution by documenting a model of revitalising the tradition of the yellow book led by women—a theme that is still under-researched in pesantren studies. These findings enrich the literature on the transmission of Islamic scholarship through a female perspective and present methodological innovations in the form of adaptive collective learning patterns that can potentially be replicated by other pesantren communities. Thus, this study affirms women as strategic actors in maintaining the continuity of Islamic intellectual sanad while expanding the academic discourse on the dynamics of classical Islamic texts learning amid social change and technological developments.

METHOD

This study employs an ethnographic approach—participatory case study—which enables researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of the practice of Al-Ghoyah wat-Taqrīb through direct involvement in the JPPPM Lampung community. This approach was chosen because the research focuses on understanding the patterns of interaction, construction of meaning, and socio-religious dynamics that exist within the tradition of female Islamic boarding school scholarship (Hammersley and Atkinson 2019; Spradley 1980). By participating as a participant observer, researchers gained access to empirical experiences, text reading practices, and pedagogical strategies used by female religious teachers in managing book studies.

1. Location and Subject of Research

The researcher conducted a study on the Al-Ghoyah wat-Taqrīb book study programme, which was attended by 125 participants from the Lampung JPPPM during the research period. Informants were selected using purposive and snowball sampling, taking into account their active involvement in the study, their ability to read classical texts, and their role in the community. The informants consisted of: 5 instructors who taught on a rotational basis, 10 JPPPM administrators as organisers, and 10 students as participants. This selection was designed to provide a broad representation of experiences. (Patton 2015).

2. Data Collection Techniques

Data was collected using three main techniques:

a. Participatory Observation

Observations were conducted in five study sessions (each lasting 90–120 minutes), with field notes, photo documentation, mapping of classroom interactions, and audio recordings of lessons. Observations focused on teaching methods, including bandongan, sorogan, and muzakarah; participants' responses during the learning process; Ibu Nyai's strategies for simplifying Abi Sujak's texts; and the use of digital media and collective dynamics in the classroom, with observation instruments referring to (Spradley 1980) model: descriptive, focused, and selective observation.

b. Semi-structured interviews

A total of five interviews were conducted with 25 informants using a guide that had been evaluated beforehand through pilot interviews. The interviews explored participants' understanding of the book's content, their learning experiences and the literacy challenges they faced, their perceptions of the role of women in the chain of knowledge transmission, and the impact of the study on religious preaching and practices. These topics were interrelated and formed a complete picture of how the religious learning process took place and influenced the way participants practised and disseminated the knowledge they had acquired.

c. Document Analysis

The documents analysed include: the text of Al-Ghoyah wat-Taqrīb along with Abi Sujak's commentary, study minutes, participants' practical fiqh notes, the organisational structure of JPPPM, and digital activity archives, which together form a complementary set of sources documenting the learning process, organisational dynamics, and records of religious activities that took place. This analysis helps to examine the consistency of understanding of the material and teaching practices.

d. Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted thematically and descriptively, following the qualitative approach of (Miles and Huberman 1994; Umar, Zumaro, and Afifah 2025, 21), namely through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data validity was maintained through triangulation of methods and sources, as well as periodic member checks with key informants. The participatory approach enabled researchers to capture the social, spiritual, and intellectual dimensions in their entirety, as well as providing a reflective space for researchers in interpreting the ongoing study practices.

3. Data Validity and Reliability

Data validity is ensured through triangulation of methods, including observation, interviews, and document analysis; triangulation of sources, including nyai mothers, administrators, and participants; member checking with eight key informants; peer debriefing with administrators who have expertise in pesantren education; and systematic documentation to improve dependability and confirmability (Denzin and Lincoln 2000).

4. Researcher Position

As participants, researchers are aware of the potential for experiential bias and engage in regular reflection through reflexive journals (Haryoko, Bahartiar, and Arwadi 2020), particularly in relation to the interpretation of scientific dynamics and power relations in the study of classical texts. This participatory ethnographic approach enables researchers to capture intellectual, social, and spiritual dimensions more holistically, thereby providing a rich understanding of how pesantren women build scholarly authority in the context of classical scripture studies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Intellectual Sphere of Yellow Book Studies among Pesantren Women

The implementation of Al-Ghayah wat-Taqrīb studies in the JPPPM Lampung environment takes place in a format that combines traditional Islamic boarding school methods with adaptations relevant to the community of women who run Islamic boarding schools. Based on five observation sessions, regular studies are conducted quarterly at the Islamic boarding school of one of the administrators in turn, with an average of 125-130 participants attending consistently. Participants consist of boarding school caregivers, female preachers, and several adult students who have received special permission. The study routine begins with a prayer and a pledge to study, followed by the reading of fiqh texts using the bandongan method. In this bandongan session, the female instructor reads the Arabic text, explains the literal meaning, and provides a legal context relevant to the religious practices of women in the boarding school.

To strengthen the participants' understanding, JPPPM implemented a sorogan session. Sorogan was conducted with the students after the main session, with participants reading a paragraph—usually from the chapter on thaharah or practical worship—and the nyai then provided corrections on i'rāb and accuracy of meaning. Based on field notes, around 10 santri participants showed difficulty reading texts without harakat, while the other participants were generally able to follow the reading and interpretation fluently. This model has proven effective in identifying variations in the participants' literacy skills in reading classical Islamic texts, as well as accelerating the process of improving their text reading skills.

In addition to these two main methods, JPPPM developed a muzakarah forum as a platform for collective interpretation. In this forum, participants discussed actual fiqh cases such as menstruation and worship issues, pesantren business agreements, or family waqf management. Based on observations, discussions on women's fiqh arose in five muzakarah sessions, indicating the participants' consistent need for practical themes that they encounter in the field. Muzakarah not only provides a space for

dialogue but also serves as a forum for strengthening the authority of women as holders of fiqh legal knowledge in their communities. This dialogical approach is in line with Freire's pedagogical principles, which emphasise equality, participation, and the formation of critical awareness among fellow learners.

Outside of face-to-face meetings, JPPPM uses simple digital media such as WhatsApp groups to upload summaries of materials, photos of the ustazah's notes, and clarifications of certain legal issues that arise after discussions. This practice indirectly creates a community-based digital repository, which helps participants maintain continuity of learning despite their busy schedules with family and pesantren responsibilities.

To clarify the pattern of activities, the following table summarises the main components of the study's implementation:

Table 1 Structure and Mechanism of Al-Ghayah wat-Taqrīb Study at JPPPM Lampung

Component	Field practice	Academic Function
Bandongan Method	Ibu Nyai reads the text and provides commentary	Authoritative transmission of classical fiqh knowledge
Limited Sorogan	Participants read one paragraph, and immediately corrected	Trengthening of classical Islamic book literacy; evaluation of abilities
Muzakarah	Discussion of actual fiqh cases	Integration of classical and contextual knowledge; critical participation
Teacher rotation	Senior teachers take turns teaching	Regeneration of authority and equalization of teaching quality
Digital Documentation	Summary of material shared via WhatsApp	Archiving of knowledge; flexible access to learning
Relocating Location	Held in rotation at Islamic Boarding Schools	Forming social bonds and community, reducing logistics costs

Overall, the study implementation pattern shows a harmonious blend of pesantren tradition and women's community innovation. Initiatives such as rotation of tutors and digital documentation confirm that strengthening scientific tradition does not stop at preserving old methods, but also through creative adaptation in line with the needs of the current generation of female caregivers. It is this flexible, dialogical, and community-based approach that makes the Al-Ghayah wat-Taqrīb study at JPPPM Lampung not just a learning space, but also an arena for knowledge production and strengthening the religious leadership capacity of women.

2. Revitalization of Scientific Traditions by Female Islamic Boarding School Scholars

The revitalization of scientific traditions at JPPPM Lampung does not only take place through the teaching of religious texts, but also through a socio-intellectual process that strengthens the position of women as inheritors and transmitters of classical fiqh knowledge. The female teachers involved in the study of Al-Ghayah wat-Taqrīb collectively build a learning space that functions as a community-based knowledge circle, where scholarly authority is not monopolized hierarchically but grows

through active participation and collaboration among members. Based on interviews with five female Nyai teachers, the rotation of teachers is carried out periodically—every two sessions—so that no single figure dominates. This pattern is in line with Freire's dialogical education, which rejects rigid teacher-student relationships and places each participant as a subject of knowledge.

Revitalization occurs through three main strategies. First, strengthening the competence of female boarding school caregivers in reading classical Islamic texts. Many participants admitted that before joining the study group, they rarely had a special mentoring space to read fiqh texts directly with female teachers. The presence of this forum provides a safe, equal, and pressure-free learning opportunity. Interview findings show that 9 out of 25 informants felt a significant improvement in their ability to read Arabic texts after attending at least 4 study sessions. Through bandongan and sorogan, participants—especially young female preachers—experienced a process of skill upgrading in their ability to read Arabic texts and understand Shafi'i fiqh arguments.

Second, JPPPM builds collective authority among women through scientific deliberation. In the muzakarah sessions, senior nyai invite participants to reinterpret fiqh laws based on the context of their respective da'wah. Questions that arise during the discussion—such as calculating irregular menstrual cycles, managing family zakat, and the procedures for pesantren business contracts—become recurring topics of study. Based on observation notes, women's fiqh themes emerged in five muzakarah sessions, indicating that participants actively linked classical texts to real-world problems. This process fostered collective reasoning, a form of scientific revitalization that not only studies texts but also produces new contextual meanings. This tradition indirectly mirrors the bahtsul masail mechanism in male Islamic boarding schools, but on a female community scale.

Third, revitalization is evident in the formation of a network of scientific authorities. The rotation of senior female teachers expands the distribution of teaching competencies. This system reduces dependence on specific figures and ensures the regeneration of scientific leaders. This is in line with Kabeer's empowerment framework, which emphasizes the importance of improving resources, agency, and achievements. In the context of JPPPM, women's agency is manifested through their ability to lead studies, answer fiqh questions, and guide quality discussions.

Empirically, this revitalization process reflects five significant changes, namely increased confidence among young female teachers in their role as educators, the formation of more uniform standards of fiqh understanding among pesantren branches, the emergence of practical fiqh summaries as new knowledge products, the expansion of intellectual support networks among pesantren leaders, and the increased legitimacy of women as fiqh authorities within the Lampung pesantren community.

Thus, the revitalization of the scholarly tradition at JPPPM Lampung is not merely about preserving classical pesantren methods, but about creating innovations based on women's needs. This model shows that pesantren women are no longer merely recipients of Islamic intellectual heritage, but also active actors in shaping, interpreting, and continuing this scholarly tradition in a modern context.

3. Academic and Practical Challenges and Implications of the Study on Strengthening the Scientific Tradition of Islamic Boarding Schools

One of the main challenges apparent in the Al-Ghoyah wat-Taqrīb study is the uneven level of classical text literacy among participants. Based on field notes, around 10 participants were classified as beginners who had difficulty understanding nahwu-sharaf structures and fiqh terms. This condition caused several sessions to proceed more slowly, particularly in two of the five observation sessions, when the instructor had to repeat certain parts so that all participants could follow. This imbalance also affected the dynamics of the class, as more proficient participants often held back while other participants struggled to grasp the basics.

These variations in competency not only affect the smoothness of learning, but also hinder the process of collective deepening of material. The interview results show that around 10 informants admitted that even though it was not their first time reading fiqh texts without complete harakat, they still needed the help of peer tutors to break down sentence structures. This condition shows that the process of knowledge transmission requires differentiated learning strategies so that all participants obtain proportional capacity building.

The next challenge is the absence of systematic scientific documentation, whether in the form of standard modules, official summary notes, or measurable evaluation mechanisms. Although participants often take personal notes, the formats are very diverse and cannot be used as shared reference materials. Based on interviews, 13 of 25 informants stated that the absence of structured documentation made it difficult to consistently map participants' understanding. This caused some concepts that had been discussed previously to be repeated in subsequent sessions because there was no well-organized learning record.

In field observations, this lack of documentation also had an impact on the continuity of the study. When the instructor was unable to attend or the session was conducted by a substitute teacher, differences in presentation style and emphasis on the material often led to inconsistent interpretations. Academically, this shows the need for a learning framework that supports the continuity of the material without relying on a single instructor.

Limited access to supporting literature is also a significant obstacle to enriching the discussion. Participants generally rely only on primary texts and direct explanations from the ustazah, while works of syarah, hashiyah, or contemporary fiqh references are not always available. This limitation means that discussions often focus on a literal reading of the text, without broader analysis to connect the contents of the book with modern fiqh issues that they often encounter in their da'wah activities.

Ethnographically, internal social dynamics also influence the quality of intellectual interaction. The strong culture of seniority in the pesantren environment makes younger participants tend to be passive in asking questions, even though they have difficulty understanding certain parts. In several sessions, the researcher observed

moments when young participants only whispered to each other to confirm the meaning of certain words, but were reluctant to convey these questions to the instructor. This condition shows that social relationship patterns can limit the process of critical knowledge construction.

In addition, almost all participants have dual responsibilities as teachers, boarding school administrators, or active preachers. These busy schedules often cause absences or tardiness, resulting in an unstable study rhythm. Irregular schedules mean that some sessions have to be condensed or shortened, which then affects the depth of the discussion. This time challenge shows that the revitalization of scientific traditions must take into account the reality of the very busy work of female boarding school preachers.

These various challenges have significant academic and practical implications. Academically, this condition encourages the need for adaptive learning strategies that are able to bridge the differences in participants' capacities, strengthen scientific documentation, and open access to richer supporting literature. Practically, time constraints and social dynamics highlight the importance of flexible study models that maintain the quality of scholarly lineage without neglecting the participants' context as educators and da'wah activists. By critically understanding these challenges, study activities can continue to evolve as a sustainable and meaningful learning space for pesantren women.

CONCLUSIONS

This study shows that the Al-Ghoyah wat-Taqrib study program organized by the Lampung Association of Female Islamic Boarding School Caretakers and Preachers (JPPPM) has become a strategic space for revitalizing the scientific traditions of Islamic boarding schools within the female community. Through a combination of bandongan, limited sorogan, and muzakarah methods, participants successfully developed a dialogical, collaborative, and adaptive learning pattern that meets contemporary needs. This process not only strengthens classical Islamic text literacy and fiqh understanding but also builds collective authority among women as inheritors and transmitters of Islamic knowledge.

The research findings reveal that innovations such as instructor rotation, community-based mentoring, and simple digital documentation play an important role in maintaining the continuity of studies amid time constraints, varying literacy skills, and the double burden faced by participants. However, challenges such as disparities in the ability to read classical texts, lack of access to supporting literature, and a culture of seniority that limits the participation of young participants still require attention in the development of a more inclusive learning model.

Theoretically, this study enriches the literature on the classical Islamic texts tradition by presenting the perspective of female Islamic boarding school students, which has been under-documented. Practically, this research offers a model for learning the yellow book that can be replicated by other pesantren communities, particularly in efforts to strengthen the intellectual capacity and religious leadership of women. Thus, this study confirms that pesantren women play an important role in maintaining the

sustainability of Islamic intellectual sanad and in reviving scholarly traditions that are relevant to the socio-religious dynamics of today.

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