



**Modernizing Islamic Higher Education: Strategic Challenges and Innovations at  
Ma'had Aly Lirboyo Kediri**

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**Abstract**

The rapid development of technology and globalization significantly affects the quality of educational institutions, particularly the quality of education at Ma'had Aly, which is steeped in the *salaf* traditions. To ensure the quality of education at Ma'had Aly can keep pace with the needs of the times, educational modernization is necessary by adapting and integrating technology with tradition. Every new change will inevitably face various challenges and problems. This article aims to describe the various challenges and innovations in modernizing education. This study uses a descriptive qualitative research method at Ma'had Aly Lirboyo Kediri. This study found that Ma'had Aly Lirboyo has endeavored to modernize its education despite facing various challenges. In addition to challenges, the educational modernization at Ma'had Aly Lirboyo also creates opportunities to improve its quality and relevance to societal needs and contemporary challenges. Forms of modernization and innovation include the use of technology during lectures, innovative curriculum development, the use of active learning strategies, collaboration with other universities both domestically and internationally, development of research and community service, the use of social media and digital platforms, and the development of information systems. It can be concluded that by utilizing challenges and opportunities and efforts to overcome them, Ma'had Aly Lirboyo can improve the quality of education following current developments and increase the relevance of education for students.

**Keywords:** Ma'had Aly; Modernization of Islamic Education; Quality of Education.

**Abstrak**

*Perkembangan teknologi dan globalisasi yang begitu cepat sangat berpengaruh terhadap mutu suatu lembaga pendidikan, terutama mutu pendidikan di Ma'had Aly yang kental akan tradisi salafnya. Agar mutu pendidikan di Ma'had Aly dapat mengikuti kebutuhan zaman, perlu adanya modernisasi pendidikan dengan melakukan adaptasi dan integrasi antara teknologi dengan tradisi. Setiap perubahan baru yang dilakukan pasti akan dihadapkan berbagai tantangan dan problematika yang ada. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan berbagai tantangan dan inovasi dalam memodernisasi pendidikan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif deskriptif di Ma'had Aly Lirboyo. Hasil penelitian ini menemukan bahwa Ma'had Aly Lirboyo telah melakukan upaya modernisasi pendidikan meskipun harus menghadapi berbagai tantangan yang ada. Selain tantangan, modernisasi pendidikan di Ma'had Aly Lirboyo juga menumbuhkan peluang meningkatkan kualitas serta relevansinya dengan kebutuhan masyarakat dan tantangan kontemporer. Bentuk modernisasi dan inovasi yang dilakukan meliputi penggunaan teknologi selama perkuliahan, pengembangan kurikulum yang inovatif, penggunaan metode pembelajaran yang aktif, melakukan kerja sama dengan perguruan tinggi lain baik dalam negeri ataupun luar negeri, pengembangan penelitian dan pengabdian masyarakat, penggunaan media sosial dan platform digital, serta pengembangan sistem informasi. Dapat disimpulkan bahwa dengan memanfaatkan tantangan dan peluang serta upaya menanggulangnya, Ma'had Aly Lirboyo dapat meningkatkan kualitas pendidikan sesuai dengan perkembangan zaman serta meningkatkan relevansi pendidikan mahasiswa.*

**Kata Kunci:** Ma'had Aly; Modernisasi Pendidikan Islam; Mutu Pendidikan.

## INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of globalization has impacted various aspects of people's lives.<sup>1</sup> Social, political, cultural, economic, and educational elements must keep pace with globalization to keep up with the times. In the educational context, globalization significantly impacts the continuity of the teaching and learning process, making it more modern.<sup>2</sup> It contrasts with Islamic education in traditional Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) that maintain traditional learning through studying classical texts (*kitab kuning*) and are considered out of step with technological developments. That presents a unique challenge in facing the changing times without eliminating the *pesantren's* scholarly traditions.<sup>3</sup>

However, *pesantren* are not completely rejecting educational modernization, as many traditional Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) are adapting, integrating, and utilizing technology in their education and learning processes. Fakhurrozi's research reveals that these efforts are evident in the emergence of virtual *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) and the numerous websites that provide information about the *pesantren*, its activities, programs, and registration for new students. The results of the study also identified several traditional Islamic boarding schools that are currently making efforts to adapt technology, such as Pesantren Tebuireng, Pesantren Darul Ulum, Pesantren Lirboyo, Pesantren Sidogiri, and other traditional Islamic boarding schools.<sup>4</sup>

Over time, Islamic boarding schools have been mandated to provide formal higher education, known as Ma'had Aly. As a higher education institution, Ma'had Aly is tasked with implementing the *Tridharma* Ma'had Aly and utilizing technology.<sup>5</sup> In response to these developments, various academic studies have demonstrated the dynamics of Ma'had Aly from multiple perspectives. Previous studies have highlighted various focuses, such as integrating traditional and modern learning,<sup>6</sup> improving competency through computer skills training, streaming media, e-books, and online da'wah.<sup>7</sup> These studies demonstrate Ma'had Aly's efforts to adapt to current developments, particularly in learning innovation and using the latest technology.

Meanwhile, several previous studies conducted at Ma'had Aly Lirboyo demonstrate a consistent focus on strengthening nationalism insight and values through fiqh education and teaching. For example, several studies highlight Ma'had Aly's role in instilling multicultural values in nationalism fiqh learning,<sup>8</sup> examining the depth of integration between *turath* (classical

<sup>1</sup> Ali Mufron, "Transformasi Pondok Pesantren (Upaya Merawat Tradisi Dan Modernisasi Sistem Pesantren Di Era Disrupsi)," *Tarbawi Ngabar: Jurnal of Education* 1, no. 2 (2020): 1, 2, <https://doi.org/10.55380/tarbawi.v1i02.55>.

<sup>2</sup> Hatta Fakhurrozi, "Pesantren Virtual: Dinamisasi Atau Disrupsi Pesantren?," *Paedagogia: Jurnal Pendidikan* 10, no. 1 (2021): 1, <https://doi.org/10.24239/pgd.Vol10.Iss1.154>.

<sup>3</sup> Muhamamd Ikbal et al., *Pergumulan Sistem Pesantren : Transformasi Menuju Identitas Baru* (Madina Publisher, 2021), 24.

<sup>4</sup> Fakhurrozi, "Pesantren Virtual."

<sup>5</sup> Menteri Agama, "Peraturan Menteri Agama Republik Indonesia Nomor 32 Tahun 2020 Tentang Ma'had Aly," Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2020, 3–4, [https://ijoppdma.kemenag.go.id/storage/regulasi/pma-tentang-mahad-aly\\_20210922115009.pdf](https://ijoppdma.kemenag.go.id/storage/regulasi/pma-tentang-mahad-aly_20210922115009.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Mohammad Firmansyah et al., "When Traditional Meets Modern Pedagogies: A Case Study of Ma'had Aly Situbondo," *EDUKASI: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama Dan Keagamaan* 23, no. 1 (2025): 1, <https://doi.org/10.32729/edukasi.v23i1.2143>.

<sup>7</sup> Mafiyah Tukhfatan Nafi and Ahmad Suyanto, "Adaptasi Mahad Aly Al Hasaniyah Sendang Senori Tuban Dalam Menghadapi Era Revolusi Industri 4.0," *Mudir: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan* 4, no. 2 (2022): 65–87, <https://doi.org/10.55352/mudir.v4i2.190>.

<sup>8</sup> Muhammad Zainal Abidin, "Nilai Multikulturalisme Fikih Kebangsaan Ma'had Aly Lirboyo Kediri," *Proceeding of ICoPIS* 1, no. 1 (2024): 1.

Islamic literature) and Indonesian national values,<sup>9</sup> and Ma'had Aly's contribution to building national awareness through educational approaches.<sup>10</sup> Other research explores the application of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) learning model in Islamic jurisprudence learning.<sup>11</sup>

These findings underscore that Ma'had Aly Lirboyo consistently maintains its scholarly identity by concentrating on nationalism fiqh. However, these studies have not explicitly addressed how educational modernization is implemented within the framework of national fiqh, particularly concerning the strategies, challenges, and opportunities faced in institutional transformation, technological integration, and evolving socio-religious dynamics. This aspect indicates an area of study that has not been widely explored in previous research and could become a significant focus for further analysis.

Considering the academic focus of Ma'had Aly Lirboyo, which is based on nationalism fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), it is necessary to examine further how this institution responds to the demands of the times through educational modernization efforts. This research is relevant because it offers a new perspective in understanding the direction of Ma'had Aly's development, not only in terms of substance and scientific concentration, but also from a managerial, pedagogical, and technological adaptation perspective. By exploring the challenges and opportunities faced in the modernization process, this research is expected to provide conceptual and practical contributions to developing a model of Islamic higher education based on Islamic boarding schools that maintains its scientific identity while being responsive to changing times. It also fills the gap in previous studies that focused more on the normative and pedagogical aspects of nationalism fiqh learning.

The practice of accommodating technological advances in educational modernization has been pursued at Ma'had Aly Lirboyo. That is evident in its experience using fingerprint technology for general lecture attendance. However, implementing any new change or adapting to a particular technology will inevitably face various challenges. The problem Ma'had Aly Lirboyo faced when implementing fingerprint technology was errors in attendance data input. Since this error occurred, fingerprint technology has been discontinued due to its inefficiency in Ma'had Aly Lirboyo, which has a huge student population.<sup>12</sup> Another issue is the concern of one student who stated that the use of technology during lectures has the potential to make students experience academic indolence about checking original references, thus leading to a lack of *tabqiq* (exploration) in understanding and validating the original reference sources of the book.<sup>13</sup>

This information relates to research findings that identified threats, challenges, and disruptions to the modernization of education at Ma'had Aly. This problem concerns aspects

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<sup>9</sup> Ahmad Khoirul Mustamir, "Integrasi Turots Dan Nilai-Nilai Kebangsaan Indonesia: Studi Pembelajaran Fikih Kebangsaan Di Ma'had Aly Pondok Pesantren Lirboyo Kediri," *Indonesian Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 5, no. 4 (2024): 10–11, 4, <https://doi.org/10.33367/ijhass.v5i4.6477>.

<sup>10</sup> Sahal Mahfud et al., "Pendidikan Wawasan Kebangsaan di Pondok Pesantren Lirboyo dalam Upaya Menangkal Radikalisme," *PINUS: Jurnal Penelitian Inovasi Pembelajaran* 7, no. 2 (2022): 2, <https://doi.org/10.29407/pn.v7i2.18493>; Muhammad Zainal Abidin and Reza Ahmad Zahid, "Kontruksi Nasionalisme dalam Pendidikan Fikih Kebangsaan," *Al-Mada: Jurnal Agama, Sosial, dan Budaya* 7, no. 1 (2024): 1, <https://doi.org/10.31538/almada.v7i1.4610>.

<sup>11</sup> Izzah Wahyunisfah and Basiran Basiran, "Pengembangan Kegiatan Musyawarah melalui Model Problem Based Learning (PBL) dalam Pembelajaran Ilmu Fikih di Ma'had Aly Pondok Pesantren Lirboyo," *Jurnal Studi Pesantren* 4, no. 1 (2024): 29–50, <https://doi.org/10.35897/studipesantren.v4i1.1195>.

<sup>12</sup> ARL, "Interview with Mahasantri Marhalah Ula Lulusan, Alumni of 2023," Mei 2025.

<sup>13</sup> MZH, "Interview with Mahasantri Marhalah Tsaniyah," Mei 2025.

of Ma'had Aly's services that are inconsistent with changing times. Changes in services at Ma'had Aly are also influenced by internal factors within the institution to preserve the traditional Salaf culture. If Salaf culture is completely removed and replaced with modern culture, it will result in radical change, and the distinctive characteristics of Salaf education will be lost. Furthermore, the societal demand that Ma'had Aly graduates be prepared for the workforce is also a challenge that Ma'had Aly must address.<sup>14</sup> In this context, the challenge of adapting to technology transforms challenges into opportunities, as failure to do so raises concerns that the educational institution will decline.<sup>15</sup>

## METHODS

This research is a systematic field study that seeks to understand the data collected. The researcher employed a descriptive qualitative method based on actual information about the challenges and opportunities of Ma'had Aly Lirboyo in modernizing education. This research is necessary to improve the quality and relevance of Islamic boarding school education in the modern era and keep pace with modernization without eliminating the traditions of the Salaf.<sup>16</sup> This research was conducted at Ma'had Aly Lirboyo, Kediri City. The data sources obtained by the researcher were based on field facts, interviews, and documents.

It aligns with Carol A. Bailey's explanation that field research data is obtained through observation, interview transcriptions, and paraphrasing.<sup>17</sup> The data obtained about educational modernization at Ma'had Aly Lirboyo were then critically analyzed using descriptive narrative and logical analysis techniques.<sup>18</sup> Data analysis continued until the researcher identified commonalities. Analysis of the data obtained was carried out from the beginning of the study on April 19, 2025, until the end of the study on May 17, 2025.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Education at Ma'had Aly Lirboyo has become one of Indonesia's leading Islamic higher education institutions. Ma'had Aly Lirboyo focuses on developing Islamic knowledge based on the yellow books (*kitab kuning*). Ma'had Aly Lirboyo offers a *Marhalah Ula* (Bachelor's Degree) program, earning a S.Ag degree, and received an establishment permit through letter number 7111 from the Director General of Islamic Education on December 22, 2017. Ma'had Aly Lirboyo also offers a *Marhalah Tsaniyah* (Master's Degree) program, earning an M.Ag degree, and received an establishment permit through letter number 1442 from the Director General of Islamic Education in 2021.<sup>19</sup> Ma'had Aly Lirboyo integrates the Salaf-based Islamic boarding school education system with the university system.<sup>20</sup> It is stated in the vision and mission of Ma'had Aly Lirboyo.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Ali Wafa, "Kontestasi Ma'had Aly Antara Kualitas Dan Formalitas," *MANAGIERE: Journal of Islamic Educational Management* 1, no. 1 (2022): 1, <https://doi.org/10.35719/managiere.v1i1.1428>.

<sup>15</sup> Ngimadudin Ngimadudin et al., "Sistem Pesantren Yang Telah Diterapkan Di Kalangan Pondok Pesantren Yang Sudah Ada Di Indonesia," *Edification Journal: Pendidikan Agama Islam* 7, no. 1 (2024): 3, 1, <https://doi.org/10.37092/ej.v7i1.857>.

<sup>16</sup> Nurul Husna et al., "Pengembangan Kurikulum Ma'had Aly," *Innovative: Journal Of Social Science Research* 4, no. 2 (2024): 3–6, 2, <https://doi.org/10.31004/innovative.v4i2.8364>.

<sup>17</sup> Carol A. Bailey, *A Guide to Qualitative Field Research* (SAGE Publications, 2017).

<sup>18</sup> Endang Widi Winarni, *Teori dan Praktik Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, PTK, R & D* (Bumi Aksara, 2021), 10.

<sup>19</sup> Mahad Aly Lirboyo, *Profil Mahad Aly Lirboyo*, March 17, 2025, <https://mahadalylirboyo.ac.id/profil/>.

<sup>20</sup> Mustamir, "Integrasi Turots Dan Nilai-Nilai Kebangsaan Indonesia," 6.

<sup>21</sup> Lirboyo, *Profil Mahad Aly Lirboyo*.

In today's modern era, Ma'had Aly Lirboyo faces the challenge of improving the quality of Islamic education. Given the increasingly complex challenges facing Islamic education, Ma'had Aly Lirboyo offers a solution to produce scholars capable of addressing Islamic issues while remaining in tune with current developments. Compared to other universities, Ma'had Aly Lirboyo has unique characteristics: a learning environment that focuses more on Islamic boarding school-based education while still integrating with ever-evolving technology. The curriculum taught is also more comprehensive, covering the science of tafsir, hadith, fiqh, usul fiqh, and Arabic using classical texts, so that students can master the foundations of Islamic knowledge well. Classical texts can maintain the purity of Islamic teachings that could potentially experience deviations. That enhances the quality of education at Ma'had Aly Lirboyo because the teaching staff there is undoubtedly of high quality.<sup>22</sup> The state recognizes Ma'had Aly Lirboyo's diploma, allowing them to continue their education to a higher level and have the same job opportunities as other university graduates.<sup>23</sup> In the era of educational modernization, Ma'had Aly Lirboyo faces the challenge of improving the quality and relevance of its Islamic boarding school-based education.

### **Modernizing Ma'had Aly Lirboyo Education: Challenges and Solutions**

This study identifies three significant challenges faced by Ma'had Aly in enhancing the quality of Islamic education while supporting its *pesantren* traditions. First, integrating technology into traditional teaching methods presents a dual-edged challenge, as educators must balance modern educational tools with time-honored practices. Second, the quality of teaching is crucial; educators must be adequately trained to deliver content that is both engaging and informative, thereby fostering a conducive learning environment. Lastly, maintaining Islamic values amidst the pressures of modernization calls for a deliberate effort to ensure that core principles remain at the forefront of educational practices, creating a harmonious blend of tradition and innovation.

#### ***Integrating Technology***

Improving the quality and accessibility of Ma'had Aly Lirboyo can be achieved by integrating modern technology and science with Islamic science.<sup>24</sup> It is not an easy task to implement at Ma'had Aly Lirboyo, as it is under the auspices of the Lirboyo Islamic boarding school, which is known for its traditional education and strong traditional values.<sup>25</sup> The efforts made by Ma'had Aly Lirboyo include adapting its learning system to other universities. Students are also taught to write about events and articles to express their creativity with a scientific nuance.

It can be seen on the official website of Ma'had Aly Lirboyo, which contains profiles of Ma'had Aly, news of student activities, and student articles. The website has the slogan "rooted in tradition, developing with innovation". Recently, Ma'had Aly Lirboyo held a socialization and coordination meeting with students from semesters I to V as active contributors to Ma'had Aly

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<sup>22</sup> Mustamir, "Integrasi Turots Dan Nilai-Nilai Kebangsaan Indonesia," 3–9.

<sup>23</sup> A. Zaeini Misbaahuddin Asyuari, "Dari Ma'had Aly Lirboyo Ke Yordania: Perjalanan Arif Rahman Hakim Meraih Studi Doktorat," *Mahad Aly Lirboyo - Mengakar Dalam Tradisi Berkembang Dengan Inovasi*, July 10, 2025, <https://mahadalylirboyo.ac.id/dari-mahad-aly-lirboyo-ke-yordania-perjalanan-arif-rahman-hakim-meraih-studi-doktoral/>.

<sup>24</sup> Husna et al., "Pengembangan Kurikulum Ma'had Aly," 4–5.

<sup>25</sup> Muhammad Haris Maulana, "Implementasi Metode Pembelajaran Active Learning Dalam Pembelajaran Fiqih (Studi Kasus Di Ma'had Aly Lirboyo Kediri)," *Mujalawat: Multidisciplinary Journal of Islamic Studies* 2, no. 2 (2024): 2.

Lirboyo media. The meeting, held on May 4, 2025, discussed procedures for digital publication and management of the website and media of Ma'had Aly Lirboyo.<sup>26</sup> This activity can improve the quality of student writing on social media to be more qualified, scientific, and in line with current developments.

Ma'had Aly Lirboyo also provides computer and laptop rentals. Currently, there are approximately 20 computers and laptops available.<sup>27</sup> Although the current number of computers and laptops is still insufficient for all students, this initiative represents a revolutionary step toward modernization in educational institutions. It can support global access to information, improve technological skills, and broaden students' horizons.

Lectures at Ma'had Aly Lirboyo combine traditional and modern traditions while still studying the *kitab kuning*, but are supported by projectors for additional explanations to enhance understanding. *Marhalah Ula* uses projectors only occasionally, while *Marhalah Tsaniyah* consistently uses projectors to support learning during lectures.<sup>28</sup> That indicates that Ma'had Aly Lirboyo maintains traditional values while remaining open to modern developments. One of *Marhalah Tsaniyah's* students, said that using technology during lectures can support understanding.<sup>29</sup>

Ma'had Aly Lirboyo has also published a journal called "*At-Tahbir: Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir*". The journal was just published in March 2025 and contains studies of the Quran and Tafsir. Journal publication frequency is done thrice yearly, in March, July, and November. Article publication is also free of charge.<sup>30</sup> In addition to the journal, Ma'had Aly Lirboyo also utilizes Instagram social media to increase the visibility and reputation of Ma'had Aly Lirboyo and build relationships with the community and with alums. Ma'had Aly Lirboyo's Instagram name is mahadalylirboyo.

The New Student Admissions (PMB) has also utilized technological advancements by implementing PMB online through the link [lirboyo.id](http://lirboyo.id), while re-registration is conducted offline. The exams include written and oral exams. The written exam covers the *Marhalah Ula*, which provides for *Balaghah*, *Nabwu Sharaf*, *Usul Fiqh*, and *Imla*. The written exam covers the *Marhalah Tsaniyah*, which includes Nationalism Fiqh. Meanwhile, the oral exam for *Marhalah Ula*, namely reading the book *Fathul Mu'in*, memorizing the Al-Quran juz 1 and 25 hadiths *Jami'ul 'Ulum Wal Hikam*, *fashalatan*, and *Aqaid* 50. Meanwhile, the oral exam for *Marhalah Tsaniyah*, namely reading the books *Kanzurroghibin* and *Jam'ul Jawami'*, *munaqasah*, psychological test, memorizing 3 Juz and 150 hadiths.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> BP2KI Ma'had Aly Lirboyo, "Dorong Publikasi Digital, Pengelola Website Dan Media Ma'had Aly Gelar Sosialisasi Bersama Mahasantri," *Mahad Aly Lirboyo*, May 5, 2025, <https://mahadalylirboyo.ac.id/dorong-publikasi-digital-pengelola-website-dan-media-mahad-aly-gelar-sosialisasi-bersama-mahasantri/>.

<sup>27</sup> USF, "Interview with Mahasantri Marhalah Ula," April 2025.

<sup>28</sup> ARL, "Interview with Mahasantri Marhalah Ula Lulusan, Alumni of 2023," Mei 2025.

<sup>29</sup> MZH, "Interview with Mahasantri Marhalah Tsaniyah," Mei 2025.

<sup>30</sup> BP2KI Ma'had Aly Lirboyo, "Telah Terbit! Edisi Maret 2025 At-Tahbir: Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir," *Mahad Aly Lirboyo - Mengakar Dalam Tradisi Berkembang Dengan Inovasi*, March 25, 2025, <https://mahadalylirboyo.ac.id/telah-terbit-edisi-maret-2025-at-tahbir-jurnal-studi-al-quran-dan-tafsir/>.

<sup>31</sup> Ma'had Aly Lirboyo, "Penerimaan Mahasantri Baru (PMB) Mahad Aly Lirboyo 2025," *Mahad Aly Lirboyo - Mengakar Dalam Tradisi Berkembang Dengan Inovasi*, April 11, 2025, <https://mahadalylirboyo.ac.id/pendaftaran-mahasantri-baru-pmb-mahad-aly-lirboyo-2025/>.

### **Teacher Quality**

The development of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*)-based higher education institutions can be achieved by improving the quality of their lecturers.<sup>32</sup> Teachers are a key factor in the success of the learning process. Furthermore, lecturers must consider the students' character to ensure the material delivered is relevant and easily understood. Recruiting qualified lecturers with the ability to use modern technology is extremely difficult. The ability and quality of lecturers in teaching are crucial for learning. In this era of modernization, lecturers must be able to integrate the general and traditional education systems to adapt to current developments and the characteristics of Ma'had Aly Lirboyo, a *pesantren*-based higher education institution.<sup>33</sup>

Ma'had Aly Lirboyo is a *pesantren*-based higher education institution under the auspices of the Lirboyo Islamic boarding school, renowned for its *babtsul masail*. Therefore, lecturers at Ma'had Aly Lirboyo begin each lesson with a discussion or deliberation to reflect on previous material before receiving new material. To achieve learning objectives, lecturers at Ma'had Aly Lirboyo are also given the freedom to choose methods while still considering the characteristics of the students.<sup>34</sup> In addition, lecturers at Ma'had Aly Lirboyo are mainly from the Lirboyo Islamic Boarding School family and are qualified to teach at Ma'had Aly. It aims to maintain the *pesantren* scientific tradition.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, lecturers at Ma'had Aly also come from Tribakti Islamic University, a university under the auspices of the Lirboyo Islamic boarding school.<sup>36</sup> It is done to support the quality of Ma'had Aly Lirboyo through teachers who have adequate competence and understand the currents of modernization.

### **Maintaining Islamic Values**

Maintaining Islamic values is one of the challenges faced by education in traditional Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) in the face of modernization. The goal is to preserve the richness of Islamic knowledge and traditional Islamic education as the primary foundation of education at Ma'had Aly Lirboyo, while remaining abreast of current developments.<sup>37</sup> Efforts to maintain Islamic values can be seen in the learning at Ma'had Aly Lirboyo, which continues to use *kitab kuning* as an academic standard at Ma'had Aly Lirboyo.<sup>38</sup>

In addition, Ma'had Aly Lirboyo persists to teach general science, social sciences, and technology. Efforts to combine modernization with traditional Islamic education aim to preserve the legacy of early Islamic scholars and scientists while adhering to modern developments. Furthermore, the use of traditional Islamic texts also seeks to maintain the authenticity of Islamic science to prevent deviations and misinterpretations.<sup>39</sup> Using *Kitab Kuning* as a foundation for learning at Ma'had Aly Lirboyo signifies a commitment to preserving the authenticity of Islamic scholarly traditions. Furthermore, studying the *Kitab Kuning* can provide a foundation for students to navigate the rapid flow of modernization.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Nafi and Suyanto, "Adaptasi Mahad Aly Al Hasaniyah Sendang Senori Tuban Dalam Menghadapi Era Revolusi Industri 4.0"; Nihayatut Tasliyah and Khoirul Anwar, "Reformulasi Pendidikan Ulama Ahli Hadits Di Ma'had Aly Hasyim Asy'ari Tebuireng Jombang Jawa Timur," *Edukais: Jurnal Pemikiran Keislaman* 6, no. 2 (2022): 17–38, <https://doi.org/10.61595/edukais.2022.6.2.17-38>.

<sup>33</sup> Ngimadudin et al., "Sistem Pesantren," 8.

<sup>34</sup> Maulana, "Implementasi Metode Pembelajaran."

<sup>35</sup> Wafa, "Kontestasi Ma'had Aly Antara Kualitas Dan Formalitas."

<sup>36</sup> ARL, "Interview with Mahasantri Marhalah Ula Lulusan, Alumni of 2023," Mei 2025.

<sup>37</sup> Mustamir, "Integrasi Turots Dan Nilai-Nilai Kebangsaan Indonesia," 7–8.

<sup>38</sup> Maulana, "Implementasi Metode Pembelajaran."

<sup>39</sup> Mustamir, "Integrasi Turots Dan Nilai-Nilai Kebangsaan Indonesia," 8.

<sup>40</sup> Mustamir, "Integrasi Turots Dan Nilai-Nilai Kebangsaan Indonesia," 8–9.

There are a lot of Kitab Kuning studies in the *Marhalah Ula* and *Tsaniyah* curriculum and courses. The *Kitab Kuning Marhalah Ula*, namely Tafsir (*Mubtashar Tafsir Ayati Abkam*), Science of Tafsir (*Al-Tabbir*), Hadith (*Alfiyah Suyuthi*), Science of Hadith (*'Umdatul Abkam*), Hadith Ahkam, Science of Tawhid, Science of Fiqh (*Syarbu Al-Maballi Alal Minhaj*), Fiqh Muwathanah (*Fiqbul Muwathanah*), Usul Fiqh (*Syarbu Jam'il Jawami'*), Qaidah Fiqh (*Mubtashar min Qawa'idil' Alla'I wa Kallamil Asnawi*), Science of Morals (*Mauidbatul Mu'minin* and *Salalimul Fudlala*), Aswaja (*Risalah Aswaja* and *Kawakibul Lama'ah*), Science of Balaghah (*'Uqudul Juman*), Science of Astronomy (*Tashilul Amtsilab*), *Mubafadhab* (Al-Quran and Hadith *Jami'ul' Ulum wal Hikam*). Meanwhile, the *Kitab Kuning* in the curriculum and courses of *Marhalah Tsaniyah*, namely Tafsir (*Rawa'iul Bayan*), Science of Tafsir (*Al-Itqan fi Ulum Al-Quran*), Hadith (*Syarab' Umdatul Abkam*), Science of Hadith (*Muqaddimah Ibn Shalah*), Fiqh Muwathanah (*Fiqbul Muwathanah* 3 versions), Usul Fiqh (*Jam'il Jawami'*), Qaidah Fiqh (*Qawaidul Abkam* and *Dlawibatul Maslabat*), Sufism (*Ihya' 'Ulumuddin*), History of Islamic Civilization (*Muqaddimah Ibn Khaldun*), Research Methods, and Islamic Psychology.<sup>41</sup>

### **Opportunities for Modernizing Ma'had Aly Lirboyo Education**

The challenges presented by educational modernization for Ma'had Aly Lirboyo also bring valuable growth opportunities. One significant opportunity lies in enhancing academic quality, allowing for more effective teaching methods and improved student outcomes. Additionally, there is a chance to adapt the curriculum to remain relevant to contemporary societal needs and workforce demands. This alignment can foster greater community engagement and ensure that graduates are well-prepared for the complexities of modern life.

#### ***Enhancing Educational Quality***

In response to the current modernization, the government is paying special attention to education at Ma'had Aly by issuing "Regulation of the Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia Number 32 of 2020 concerning Ma'had Aly." This regulation signifies the government's efforts to maintain the existence of Ma'had Aly by maintaining the *pesantren* scientific tradition, advances in science and technology, and societal needs. Ma'had Aly continues to carry out various innovations to carry out this mandate and has the opportunity to produce graduates with high intellectual abilities who are ready to enter society and are not blind to technology.<sup>42</sup>

The efforts made by Ma'had Aly Lirboyo to improve the quality of education, namely integrating modern technology with Islamic scientific learning, have made it popular in today's modernization era.<sup>43</sup> In its lectures, Ma'had Aly Lirboyo used laptops as a support system, and there are also computer rentals that all students can access.<sup>44</sup> To improve the quality of students, Ma'had Aly Lirboyo conducts learning evaluations. Learning evaluations include exams and an in-depth study of specific areas (*takhasbus*). *Takhasbus* covers the science of the Al-Quran and Hadith, Fiqh and Usul Fiqh, Aqidah and Islamic Philosophy, Sufism and Sufi Order, Astronomy, Islamic Cultural History, Arabic Language and Literature.

Learning evaluation at Ma'had Aly is conducted to assess and develop learning outcomes. Evaluation examines students' cognitive, psychomotor, and affective aspects through

<sup>41</sup> Lirboyo, "Penerimaan Mahasantri Baru."

<sup>42</sup> Wafa, "Kontestasi Ma'had Aly Antara Kualitas Dan Formalitas."

<sup>43</sup> Ngimadudin et al., "Sistem Pesantren," 3.

<sup>44</sup> USF, "Interview with Mahasantri Marhalah Ula," April 2025.

deliberations or discussions, *sorogan*, and exams.<sup>45</sup> In addition, Ma'had Aly Lirboyo also collaborates with international partners, such as Turkey, Uzbekistan, and with Ibn Tofail University and Markaz Inma Morocco, intending to strengthen and improve the quality of scientific works and journal publications. This collaboration also aims to improve the scientific quality of Ma'had Aly Lirboyo and expand its international academic network.<sup>46</sup>

Ma'had Aly Lirboyo also closely connects Islamic and nationalist ideas by strengthening national insight and patriotism. This strengthening is realized in a mandatory activity for sixth-semester students, namely the *Nahdlatul Ulama* Cadre Mobilization Training (PKPNU). In addition to PKPNU, a special Ma'had Aly wall magazine (*mading*) aims to strengthen national insight and patriotism. Ma'had Aly Lirboyo also includes lessons on national insight and nationalism in the curriculum, such as a three-volume national curriculum book.<sup>47</sup> That is accomplished as a manifestation of the integration of national values and to produce graduates who have national awareness and patriotism.

Seeing the quality of Ma'had Aly Lirboyo graduates who are highly maintained, Ma'had Aly Lirboyo graduates have great potential to compete with graduates of other universities.<sup>48</sup> Currently, there are many scholarships specifically for Ma'had Aly graduates, including scholarships organized by the East Java Province Islamic Boarding School and Diniyah Institute (LPPD), including the Islamic Boarding School Student Scholarship (BSPP), the Ma'had Aly scholarship program, the Undergraduate Scholarship Program for Islamic Religious Universities, and the doctoral program.<sup>49</sup> There is also a scholarship held between the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag) and the Education Fund Management Institute (LPDP), namely the Outstanding *Santri* Scholarship Program (PBSB).<sup>50</sup> It shows that the government provides opportunities for Ma'had Aly graduates to have good qualities and contribute to society.

### ***Curriculum Relevance and Adaptation***

The curriculum is a learning plan that comprises objectives, materials, methods, and evaluations used in the learning process.<sup>51</sup> The curriculum at Ma'had Aly Lirboyo focuses on studying Islamic texts with a chain of knowledge that traces back to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The Ma'had Aly curriculum combines Islamic tradition with the teaching of national values. It aims to ensure that students at Ma'had Aly Lirboyo are not blind to national insight and are not eroded by the currents of contemporary development. The values taught in nationalism include tolerance and balanced understanding. It is implemented because most

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<sup>45</sup> Maulana, "Implementasi Metode Pembelajaran."

<sup>46</sup> A. Zaeini Misbaahuddin Asyuari, "Perkuat Karya Tulis Ilmiah Dan Publikasi Jurnal: Ma'had Aly Lirboyo Jalin Kerjasama Dengan Universitas Ibn Tofail Dan Markaz Inma Maroko," *Mahad Aly Lirboyo*, May 17, 2025, <https://mahadalylirboyo.ac.id/perkuat-karya-tulis-ilmiah-dan-publikasi-jurnal-mahad-aly-lirboyo-jalin-kerjasama-dengan-universitas-ibn-tofail-dan-markaz-inma-maroko/>.

<sup>47</sup> Abidin and Zahid, "Kontruksi Nasionalisme dalam Pendidikan Fikih Kebangsaan."

<sup>48</sup> ARL, "Interview with Mahasantri Marhalah Ula Lulusan, Alumni of 2023," Mei 2025.

<sup>49</sup> TIM IT LPPD Jatim, "LPPD JATIM | Lembaga Pengembangan Pesantren Dan Diniyah Provinsi Jawa Timur," LPPD Jatim, accessed May 16, 2025, <https://lppdjatim.org>.

<sup>50</sup> Admin Web, "Pendaftaran PBSB," accessed May 16, 2025, <https://pendaftaran-beasiswa.kemenag.go.id/pbsb/konten/tentang-epsi/Tentang>.

<sup>51</sup> Mohammed El-Astal, "What Is Curriculum? Building a Broader Understanding of the Term," *Journal of Curriculum and Teaching* 12, no. 6 (2023): 6, <https://doi.org/10.5430/jct.v12n6p188>; Asep Zidan Bulkini, "Evaluasi Kurikulum Ma'had Aly Menggunakan Model Evaluasi Countenance Stake Di Pondok Pesantren Lirboyo Kota Kediri" (Master Thesis, IAIN Kediri, 2022); Fathurrahman Fathurrahman et al., "Building Religious Values in Students: The Role of Extracurricular Programs at Islamic Middle School," *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Education Studies (IJIES)* 7, no. 1 (2024): 1, <https://doi.org/10.33367/ijies.v7i1.4434>.

Lirboyo Islamic boarding school students come from various regions, ethnicities, and cultures, and some even come from outside Indonesia with diverse customs.<sup>52</sup>

The curriculum and courses at Ma'had Aly Lirboyo align with Ma'had Aly Lirboyo's vision and mission. It provides study programs based on traditional Islamic boarding schools and universities. Ma'had Aly Lirboyo is also required to be responsive to societal issues. That is realized through deliberation. Through deliberation, students can think critically and respond to current problems by expressing opinions based on Islamic jurisprudence and principles. In addition to discussing societal issues, deliberation is held to address or resolve difficult-to-understand material. It is shown that engaging students in active learning strategies enhances their critical thinking skills; consequently, deliberation can be developed through the problem-based learning (PBL) model.<sup>53</sup>

### ***Expanding Relevance in Society and the Contemporary Developments***

Opportunities for modernizing education at Ma'had Aly Lirboyo can significantly enhance its relevance in today's context. Modernization efforts may include integrating contemporary educational practices and technologies that align with societal needs. By fostering an adaptive learning environment, the institution can better prepare students for the challenges they will face in their professional and personal lives. Ultimately, such enhancements would contribute to a more effective and pertinent educational experience at Ma'had Aly Lirboyo.

#### 1. Ensuring Agreement with Community Needs and Goals

The Ma'had Aly Lirboyo curriculum is designed to produce graduates with knowledge tailored to the needs of society. Graduates of Ma'had Aly Lirboyo are expected to be proficient in fiqh and usul fiqh, which are in line with current developments.<sup>54</sup> Within its curriculum, Ma'had Aly Lirboyo has a program that directly engages with the community, namely community service in remote areas throughout Indonesia, better known as the Ramadan safari. This program is a mandatory agenda that students must attend in semesters III to IV.<sup>55</sup> Activities carried out during the month of Ramadan can serve as a medium for building relationships and improving the quality of social life in the community. This Ramadan safari can also convey information and education regarding religious issues in remote areas that require special attention regarding religious values.

In addition to the Ramadan Safari, to address the many problems of sharia law and fiqh in society, students of Ma'had Aly Liboyo published the results of *Bathsul Masail* entitled "*Sangu Urip*". This book was compiled by the TA'LIF Bookkeeping Team of Ma'had Aly Lirboyo Students of 2020 Graduates and contains questions and answers about issues of worship, life, marriage, as well as problems in daily life, and also socio-political issues based on classical Islamic books.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Mustamir, "Integrasi Turots Dan Nilai-Nilai Kebangsaan Indonesia," 7.

<sup>53</sup> Izzah Wahyunisfah and Basiran, "Pengembangan Kegiatan Musyawarah melalui Model Problem Based Learning (PBL) dalam Pembelajaran Ilmu Fikih di Ma'had Aly Pondok Pesantren Lirboyo Kediri," *Jurnal Studi Pesantren* 4, no. 1 (2024): 12–13, <https://doi.org/10.35897/studipesantren.v4i1.1195>.

<sup>54</sup> Abidin and Zahid, "Kontruksi Nasionalisme dalam Pendidikan Fikih Kebangsaan."

<sup>55</sup> Lembaga Ittihadul Muballighin, "Safari Ramadan: Wujud Pengabdian Mahasantri Ma'had Aly Lirboyo Untuk Masyarakat," *Mahad Aly Lirboyo - Mengakar Dalam Tradisi Berkembang Dengan Inovasi*, March 18, 2025, <https://mahadalylirboyo.ac.id/safari-ramadhan-wujud-pengabdian-mahasantri-mahad-aly-lirboyo-untuk-masyarakat/>.

<sup>56</sup> Raden Muhammad Rifqi, "Sangu Urip: Menjawab Dinamika Kehidupan Dengan Cahaya Syariat," *Mahad Aly Lirboyo - Mengakar Dalam Tradisi Berkembang Dengan Inovasi*, July 6, 2025, <https://mahadalylirboyo.ac.id/sangu-urip-menjawab-dinamika-kehidupan-dengan-cahaya-syariat/>.

## 2. Exploring Relevance in the Context of Contemporary Developments and Muslim Students' Character

Responding to the modernization of the times, Ma'had Aly Lirboyo prepares graduates with critical, analytical, and creative thinking skills through the scientific work of its students.<sup>57</sup> As is generally the case, universities will certainly accommodate the scientific work of their students. Ma'had Aly Lirboyo also accommodates the scientific work of its students by publishing scientific journals. Ma'had Aly Lirboyo has scientific journals: *At-Tabbir*, which discusses the study of the Qur'an and Tafsir, *Jurnal Syariah*, *Jurnal Hidayah*, and *Jurnal Al-Mabsul*, which examines the science of Usul Fiqh.

In addition to scientific papers, students at Ma'had Aly Lirboyo also write books. The Lirboyo Alumni Association (HIMASAL) also supports the publication of books written by students by providing facilities for publishing books and conducting book reviews. The published books cover multicultural values. The books already published include National Fiqh I, II, III, and Critique of Radical Ideology. The instillation of multiculturalism from an Islamic perspective is realized through the *Batsbul Masa'il* program to deliberate on fiqh, social, and cultural issues.<sup>58</sup>

An adaptive curriculum and scientific character development are necessary to improve the quality of students. The character development of students at Ma'had Aly Lirboyo can be seen in the curriculum, which examines the yellow books. The Ma'had Aly Lirboyo curriculum includes books that discuss morality in the *Marhalah Ula* and *Marhalah Tsaniyah* courses. Therefore, Ma'had Aly Lirboyo graduates are expected to possess good morals, discipline, and responsibility, following the books they study.<sup>59</sup>

Based on the description of these challenges and opportunities, Ma'had Aly Lirboyo can adapt to the challenges of educational modernization by capitalizing on existing opportunities. Several strategies can be implemented to overcome these challenges. First, lecturers and staff are trained to utilize modern technology effectively. Second, collaborate with other institutions to improve the quality of education at Ma'had Aly Lirboyo. Third, facilitate technology to support curriculum programs that align with current developments.

## CONCLUSION

Modernizing education at Ma'had Aly Lirboyo presents both challenges and opportunities. The challenges faced include integrating technology, developing a relevant curriculum, upholding teacher quality, and upholding Islamic values. Each challenge can be managed adaptively to transform it into an opportunity for progress and improve the quality and relevance of education for students. The research implications highlight the need to comprehensively understand how technology integration and curriculum development can be effectively implemented in Islamic educational contexts. Future research should explore successful case studies of modernization in similar institutions and examine the long-term impacts of these changes on student outcomes and community engagement.

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<sup>57</sup> Asyuari, "Perkuat Karya Tulis Ilmiah."

<sup>58</sup> Abidin, "Nilai Multikulturalisme Fikih Kebangsaan Ma'had Aly Lirboyo Kediri."

<sup>59</sup> Mustamir, "Integrasi Turots Dan Nilai-Nilai Kebangsaan Indonesia," 8.

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