



## DE-RADICALIZING ISLAMIC CONCEPTS: *MAFAHIM YAJIBU AN TUSAHHAH* AND THE CADREIZATION OF NEO-TRADITIONALIST *ULAMA*

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**Abstract:** This study aims to examine how the teaching of *Mafahim Yajibu an-Tushahhah* in a pesantren context contributes to the formation of *Aswaja*-oriented *ulama* cadres. The study is grounded in the urgent need to strengthen moderate Islamic education in Indonesia amid increasing ideological polarization, religious exclusivism, and digital exposure to intolerant narratives. Pesantren are strategically positioned as educational ecosystems that integrate classical scholarship, moral formation, and community-based religious leadership. This research employed a qualitative approach using a single instrumental case study. Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis, and were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The findings reveal three main results. First, the instructional design of *Mafahim* learning is systematically structured through prerequisite-based curriculum placement, textual literacy, and the formation of *manhajul fikr*. Second, its implementation is characterized by dialogical-critical pedagogy, five pedagogical principles, comparative textual analysis, and reflective student outputs. Third, the learning process produces integrated graduate competencies, including theological reasoning, moderation, tolerance, mentoring capacity, and socially responsive religious communication. This study contributes to Islamic education scholarship by proposing a classical text-based moderation pedagogy and recommends that pesantren strengthen progressive curriculum design, dialogical instruction, and competency-based evaluation.

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## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia faces an urgent need to strengthen moderate religious education as social harmony is determined not only by political stability but also by the quality of religious understanding permeating public life (Bahri et al., 2025; Nurkholish & Faqih, 2025). As a nation with a large Muslim population and diverse ethnic, cultural, and doctrinal backgrounds, Indonesia is challenged to sustain an Islam that embodies *rahmatan lil 'alamin* without narrowing it into exclusive identities prone to division. This research is vital to developing educational models that nurture critical, balanced religious reasoning grounded in legitimate scholarly traditions. Empirically, the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT, 2024) continues to monitor radicalism potential, while Chaplin (2025) and Margiansyah et al. (2025) indicate that concerns over Islamic extremism are significant in Muslim-majority societies, including Indonesia. Gainous & Wagner (2023) and Loru et al. (2025) emphasize that exposure to digital media can accelerate ideological polarization. Hence, research on promoting moderation through *pesantren* is critical to safeguard societal cohesion, prevent polarization, and strengthen the ideological resilience of younger generations, ensuring that moderate Islamic education remains both socially relevant and academically grounded.

A pervasive societal problem motivating this study is the intensification of rigid, exclusionary, and uncompromising religious interpretations. Such challenges do not always manifest as overt violence but often emerge through narratives promoting *takfir*, rejection of local religious traditions, delegitimization of established religious authorities, and narrowing of Islamic understanding (Charafi, 2024; Taufiki & Rozi, 2025). The complexity of this issue is compounded by digital platforms that amplify exposure to intolerant content, as demonstrated by Rifat et al. (2024) and Saeed et al. (2023) in analyses of online religious video recommendations. Consequently, there is a pressing need for educational instruments that transcend doctrinal instruction, equipping communities with the capacity to differentiate between matters of creed, *ijtihad*, tradition, and legitimate differences in opinion, thereby promoting rational, inclusive, and contextually grounded religious reasoning.

In the realm of Islamic education, *pesantren* hold a strategic position as institutions that shape not only religious knowledge but also habitus, ethical conduct, scholarly authority, and social networks among students. *Pondok Pesantren* represents a critical locus for study, integrating classical text-based learning to reinforce *Aswaja's* understanding and prevent doctrinal narrowing. Saleh, (2025) highlight *pesantren's* role in deradicalization through curriculum, leadership, and value habituation, while Mala & Hunaida (2023) underscores Islamic education as an instrument for maintaining equilibrium between radicalism prevention and freedom of religious expression. Therefore, *pesantren* can be conceptualized as educational ecosystems that cultivate ideological resilience by structuring knowledge acquisition around established scholarly traditions, providing a living laboratory for moderate pedagogy.

Previous literature has extensively addressed religious moderation, deradicalization, and the role of *pesantren* in shaping inclusive Islamic character. Mukaromah et al. (2025) demonstrates a rapid increase in moderation research post-2020, predominantly focused on education, local wisdom, and challenges in the digital era. (Prasetyo et al., 2025) maps religious moderation strategies in Islamic education, emphasizing policy, curriculum, pedagogy, and institutional ecosystems, while (Shawmi et al., 2025) asserts that educational moderation is integral to social harmony and inclusive national identity. Nonetheless, these studies largely remain at policy, conceptual mapping, or general institutional practice levels, leaving a gap regarding the operationalization of specific classical texts as pedagogical instruments for shaping student cognitive frameworks. This research addresses this gap by linking classical texts with practical education, providing a model for systematically developing *Aswaja*-oriented students and prospective scholars.

More targeted studies on *pesantren* have explored leadership, curriculum, and value habituation for promoting moderation. Saleh (2025) investigates *pesantren* leadership strategies to counter radicalism, while Hanif et al. (2025) emphasizes the role of Islamic education in advancing moderation amid challenges from radicalism, intolerance, globalization, and digitalization. Alaydrus et al. (2024) specifically demonstrates that teaching *Mafahim Yajibu an-Tushahhah* can prevent radical influence in *pesantren*. However, prior research has yet to examine in detail the instructional design, internalization processes, and competencies produced through this text. Accordingly, this study positions itself at the intersection of classical text-based pedagogy, deradicalization strategies, and *Aswaja* cadre formation, offering a conceptual framework that evaluates both the operational and educational outcomes of classical Islamic instruction.

The novelty of this research lies in shifting the focus from textual analysis to operationalizing classical texts as strategic instruments for shaping students' ideological immunity. *Mafahim Yajibu an-Tushahhah* is treated not merely as doctrinal content but as an argumentative device, training students to discern essential principles, areas of divergence, traditions, and cognitive deviations in religious reasoning. This approach is crucial because preventing radicalism requires more than general campaigns promoting moderation; it necessitates pedagogical tools embedded in students' cognitive structures. By positioning the classical text as the foundation for critical reasoning, the study offers both practical and conceptual innovations, establishing *pesantren* as not only custodians of tradition but also as centers producing contextually relevant, moderate Islamic arguments.

The central research problem addresses how instructional design, implementation processes, and graduate competencies from teaching *Mafahim Yajibu an-Tushahhah* at *Pondok Pesantren* contribute to forming *Aswaja*-oriented scholars. The primary argument posits that systematically organized, dialogical, and tradition-based classical text instruction serves as an effective deradicalization mechanism, surpassing ceremonial or generic moderation initiatives. Preliminary findings suggest that successful scholar formation depends not only on content

mastery but also on internalizing cognitive methodologies that weigh evidences, contextual factors, scholarly authority, and boundaries of interpretive differences. The study's contribution includes a model for assessing classical text-based learning effectiveness and policy recommendations to strengthen religious moderation, ensuring *pesantren* remain resilient against ideological extremism while fostering *rahmatan lil 'alamin* in practice.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research approach with a single instrumental case study design (Lim, 2025; Mtisi, 2022). This design was selected because the study aimed to obtain an in-depth understanding of how *Mafahim Yajibu an Tushahhah* is implemented as a classical Islamic text in the formation of *Aswaja*-oriented *ulama* cadres. The case study approach was considered appropriate because the research focused on a contemporary educational phenomenon situated within a specific institutional and cultural context (Miller et al., 2023; Mtisi, 2022). Rather than testing predetermined variables, this study explored the learning design, implementation process, and graduate competencies generated through the teaching of the *kitab*. The single instrumental case study design allowed Pondok *Pesantren* Nurul Huda Situbondo to be examined as a strategic case through which broader insights into classical text-based pedagogy, *Aswaja* cadre formation, and *pesantren*-based religious moderation could be developed.

The research was conducted at Pondok *Pesantren* Nurul Huda Situbondo, East Java, Indonesia. This site was selected purposively because of its relevance to the focus of the study. The *pesantren* represents an Islamic educational institution that combines traditional *pesantren* scholarship with modern educational management and places strong emphasis on *Aswaja* values, classical Islamic learning, moral formation, and community-oriented religious leadership. Its use of *Mafahim Yajibu an Tushahhah* as part of the learning process makes it a suitable setting for examining how a classical Islamic text is operationalized in curriculum, pedagogy, and student formation. The *pesantren* context also provides a rich empirical setting for understanding how religious moderation is cultivated through institutional culture, teacher-student interaction, and the internalization of *pesantren* values.

Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation study (Almusaed et al., 2025; Mbanaso et al., 2023). Participatory observation was used to examine the actual learning process, classroom interaction, *pesantren* routines, and the ways in which *Aswaja* values were practiced in daily life. In-depth interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format with purposively selected informants, including the *pesantren* leader, teachers of *Mafahim Yajibu an Tushahhah*, curriculum administrators, senior students, alumni, and dormitory administrators. These interviews explored the rationale, design, implementation, challenges, and perceived outcomes of the learning process. Documentation study was conducted by reviewing institutional profiles, curriculum documents, learning schedules, syllabi, teaching materials,

the text of *Mafahim Yajibu an Tushahhah*, student works, and other relevant institutional records. The combination of these techniques enabled methodological triangulation and strengthened the depth of the qualitative data.

The data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification (Li & Zhang, 2022; Salmona & Kaczynski, 2024). Data condensation was conducted by selecting, coding, simplifying, and categorizing data relevant to the three research focuses: the design of *Mafahim Yajibu an Tushahhah* learning, its implementation, and the competencies of graduates. Data display was carried out through descriptive narratives, thematic categories, and analytical matrices to identify patterns across observations, interviews, and documents. Conclusion drawing and verification were conducted continuously throughout the research process by comparing findings across data sources, techniques, and time. To ensure trustworthiness, the study applied triangulation, prolonged engagement, persistent observation, peer debriefing, member checking, and audit trail procedures. These steps were used to ensure that the findings were credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable (Asipi et al., 2022).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Result

#### Instructional Design of *Mafahim* Learning

Operationally, the instructional design of *Mafahim Yajibu an Tushahhah* refers to the systematic arrangement of curriculum structure, learning sequence, pedagogical orientation, and *pesantren*-based cultural practices through which the *kitab* is taught to form *Aswaja*-oriented ulama cadres. In the field, this design was not understood merely as a technical teaching plan, but as an integrated educational framework that connects textual mastery, theological clarification, critical reasoning, and character formation. The *kitab* was positioned at the final stage of students' education, indicating that it was intended for learners who had already acquired foundational competencies in Arabic grammar, basic theology, and classical Islamic reasoning. This placement shows that *Mafahim* was treated as an advanced intellectual instrument, not an introductory religious text. Its instructional design emphasized the formation of *manhajul fikr*, namely a structured way of thinking that enables students to distinguish creed from interpretive matters, textual evidence from opinion, and moderation from theological excess.

An interview with a curriculum administrator revealed that the placement of *Mafahim* in the final stage of *pesantren* learning was based on pedagogical consideration rather than administrative convenience. The informant explained, "This *kitab* is not given to beginners because students must first understand the tools of reading classical texts and the foundations of creed. When they reach this stage, they are expected not only to read the text, but also to understand the logic behind the author's argument." This statement indicates that the curriculum was designed progressively. The researcher interprets this as evidence that the

*pesantren* applied a readiness-based curriculum model, in which advanced theological materials were introduced only after students had sufficient linguistic, doctrinal, and methodological preparation. Such a design reduces the risk of textual misunderstanding and strengthens students' ability to engage with sensitive theological issues, including takfir, bid'ah, tawassul, tabarruk, and religious difference.

A second interview with a teacher of *Mafahim Yajibu an Tushahhah* confirmed that the learning design was oriented toward reasoning formation rather than doctrinal memorization. The teacher stated, "In teaching this *kitab*, we do not only explain what is right and wrong. We guide students to see the argument, the context, and the scholarly method used in correcting mistaken concepts. The aim is that they can answer religious confusion in society with knowledge and *adab*." This excerpt shows that the instructional design combined textual explanation with argumentative training. The researcher interprets this as a dialogical-critical model of classical text pedagogy. The *kitab* functioned as a medium for building theological literacy, but its deeper purpose was to train students to reason proportionally, avoid excessive judgment, and respond to contested religious practices through scholarly evidence rather than emotional reaction. Therefore, the design reflects a shift from transmission-based learning to reasoning-based cadre formation.

**Table 1. Key Indicators of Mafahim Learning Design Based on Informant Interviews**

Informant Position	Interview Excerpt	Indicator
Curriculum Administrator	"This <i>kitab</i> is not given to beginners because students must first understand the tools of reading classical texts and the foundations of creed. When they reach this stage, they are expected not only to read the text, but also to understand the logic behind the author's argument."	Strategic curriculum placement; prerequisite-based learning; advanced theological literacy
Teacher of <i>Mafahim Yajibu an Tushahhah</i>	"In teaching this <i>kitab</i> , we do not only explain what is right and wrong. We guide students to see the argument, the context, and the scholarly method used in correcting mistaken concepts."	Dialogical-critical pedagogy; reasoning formation; contextual interpretation
Senior Student	"The lessons help us understand why certain practices should not be judged hastily. We are trained to ask for the basis, context, and explanation before making conclusions."	Internalization of <i>manhajul fikr</i> ; moderation in judgment; reflective learning
Dormitory Supervisor	"The values taught in the <i>kitab</i> are visible in daily <i>pesantren</i> life, especially in how students join <i>tahlilan</i> , <i>maulid</i> , and respect the kiai without excessive attitudes."	Hidden curriculum; embodied <i>Aswaja</i> values; moderation in religious practice

Observation data strengthened the interview findings. During the learning process, the researcher observed that the *kitab* was taught through a structured weekly pattern: two meetings per week, with two materials discussed in each meeting, allowing four materials to be completed weekly. Through this

arrangement, the fifty materials of the *kitab* could be completed within twenty-seven weeks, followed by synthesis and final evaluation. The learning process involved reading the text, explaining key terms, discussing theological concepts, connecting the material with other disciplines such as *Ushul Fiqh* and Islamic intellectual history, and applying the concepts to contemporary religious issues. Outside the classroom, the values of the *kitab* were reinforced through *pesantren* rituals such as *tahlilan*, *manakiban*, *burdah*, and *maulid*, which were performed in an orderly, solemn, and non-excessive manner. The researcher interprets this as a form of hidden curriculum in which *Aswaja* moderation was not only taught verbally but also embodied in daily religious culture.

Restating the data, the first finding demonstrates that the instructional design of *Mafahim Yajibu an Tushahhah* at *Pesantren* was structured as an advanced, systematic, and value-integrated model for *Aswaja* cadre formation. The *kitab* was placed at the final educational stage, delivered through a fixed weekly structure, supported by prerequisite knowledge, and oriented toward the formation of theological reasoning. The pattern emerging from the data shows three interrelated layers. First, there was a curricular layer, marked by systematic sequencing and prerequisite-based placement. Second, there was a pedagogical layer, marked by dialogical-critical teaching and contextual explanation. Third, there was a cultural layer, marked by the internalization of *kitab* values through daily *pesantren* practices. These three layers indicate that the design of *Mafahim* learning was not merely instructional, but formative, ideological, and character-oriented.

The table indicates that the ideal influence of *Mafahim* learning design operates through three connected mechanisms: curriculum positioning, pedagogical interaction, and cultural embodiment. The curriculum administrator's statement shows that the *kitab* was intentionally positioned for advanced students, meaning that the *pesantren* viewed theological correction as requiring prior intellectual readiness. The teacher's statement confirms that the teaching process did not rely on one-way doctrinal transmission, but emphasized argument, context, and scholarly method. Meanwhile, the student's response illustrates the internal effect of the learning design: students became more cautious, reflective, and evidence-oriented in religious judgment. This suggests that the ideal influence of the design was not limited to knowledge acquisition but extended to the formation of intellectual discipline.

The dormitory supervisor's statement further expands the finding by showing that the influence of the learning design continued beyond the classroom. The values of *Mafahim* were embedded in *pesantren* life through rituals, manners, and teacher-student relations. This pattern is significant because it shows that the *Aswaja* cadre formation cannot be reduced to formal instruction. It requires a learning ecology in which text, teacher, curriculum, and daily practice reinforce one another. The table, therefore, reveals a consistent pattern: institutional actors define the design, teachers translate it into pedagogical practice, students internalize it as reasoning competence, and the *pesantren* environment embodies it as religious culture. This pattern confirms that *Mafahim* functions as both an

instructional text and a formative framework for producing moderate, disciplined, and socially responsible *Aswaja* cadres.

The overall pattern of the data shows that the instructional design of *Mafahim Yajibu an Tushahhah* is built on the integration of textual authority, pedagogical intentionality, and institutional culture. Textual authority appears in the use of a classical *kitab* rooted in *Aswaja* scholarship. Pedagogical intentionality appears in the structured curriculum, dialogical-critical method, and emphasis on *manhajul fikr*. Institutional culture appears in the hidden curriculum that normalizes moderation, respect for *ulama*, and non-excessive religious practice. These elements form a coherent pattern in which the *pesantren* does not merely teach students to understand a text, but trains them to think, behave, and lead as future *Aswaja* *ulama*. Thus, the first finding suggests that the strength of the learning design lies in its ability to transform classical text learning into a systematic model of religious moderation and *ulama* cadre formation.

### **Implementation of *Mafahim Yajibu an Tushahhah* Learning**

Operationally, the implementation of *Mafahim Yajibu an Tushahhah* learning refers to the actual enactment of the designed curriculum, pedagogical strategies, and educational principles in the daily activities of the *pesantren*. In the field, implementation was observed as a dynamic interaction between teachers and students, guided by a dialogical-critical approach. It involved structured discussion, contextual application, and active engagement with classical text content. The operational definition emphasizes both fidelity to the instructional design and responsiveness to students' intellectual development, ensuring that theoretical principles are effectively translated into practical understanding.

An interview with the head of curriculum revealed that teachers consistently applied five pedagogical principles: (1) clear definitions to distinguish between *bid'ah* and *takfir*, (2) separating creed (*akidah*) and interpretive matters (*ijtihadiah*), (3) using real-life examples from society, (4) referencing established scholarly rules, and (5) providing concise and comprehensible conclusions. The informant stated, "Our teaching is never about indoctrination. We guide students to analyze arguments, consider contexts, and refer to scholarly evidence before concluding." The researcher interprets this as evidence of a dialogical-critical learning model where students are trained to reason rigorously and independently rather than passively receiving dogma.

A second interview with a senior teacher highlighted the use of comparative strategies. The teacher explained, "Students are encouraged to compare passages in *Mafahim* with classical texts, such as the works of Ibn Taymiyyah, to understand historical context and objective reasoning." This statement indicates that the pedagogical strategy integrated historical-textual comparison, fostering analytical skills and critical thinking. The researcher interprets this as deliberate scaffolding that strengthens students' ability to evaluate theological claims objectively and apply them in contemporary contexts, including responses to misinformation and ideological biases in social media.



Figure 1. Implementation Flow of *Mafahim* Learning

The implementation flow of *Mafahim Yajibu an Tushahhah* learning demonstrates a cyclical pedagogical process. The process begins with the scheduled presentation of *kitab* materials, followed by teacher-led dialogical-critical discussion. During the discussion, teachers apply five pedagogical principles: clarifying key definitions, distinguishing between creed and interpretive matters, connecting the material with real social cases, referring to established scholarly rules, and formulating accessible conclusions. Students are then guided to conduct comparative textual analysis by relating the arguments in *Mafahim* to other classical sources. This stage strengthens their ability to understand religious concepts contextually and objectively. The process continues with student synthesis through reflection, essays, bulletins, or responses to contemporary religious issues. Teacher feedback and iterative correction complete the cycle by refining students' reasoning and returning them to deeper engagement with the text. This flow shows that implementation is not a one-way transmission of knowledge, but a reflective cycle of explanation, dialogue, comparison, production, and correction.

Observational data confirmed that students were highly engaged and productive. During class, students frequently raised questions, debated concepts, and produced outputs linking *kitab* content to contemporary religious issues, including countering religious hoaxes online. The researcher interprets these observations as evidence that the implementation fosters active learning, critical engagement, and the practical application of *Aswaja* principles in society.

Restating the data, the implementation demonstrates that the design was not only theoretically sound but also consistently operationalized through dialogical discussion, principled teaching, and comparative analysis. Students responded to these strategies by actively participating, producing intellectual work, and internalizing moderate theological reasoning. The data indicate a robust

alignment between curriculum intention and classroom execution, confirming the effectiveness of the implementation strategy.

The overall pattern observed from the data shows that the ideal implementation mechanism integrates dialogical-critical methods, principled pedagogy, and comparative strategies. These elements interact to produce engaged, analytically competent, and socially aware students. The implementation is reinforced by feedback loops in discussion and output review, which help internalize knowledge and values.

**Table 2. Informant-Based Evidence on the Application of *Mafahim Yajibu an Tushahhah* Learning**

Informant Position	Interview Excerpt	Indicator
Head of Curriculum	"Our teaching is never about indoctrination. We guide students to analyze arguments, consider contexts, and refer to scholarly evidence before concluding."	Dialogical-critical pedagogy; analytical reasoning; evidence-based learning
Senior Teacher	"Students are encouraged to compare passages in <i>Mafahim</i> with classical texts, such as the works of Ibn Taymiyyah, to understand historical context and objective reasoning."	Comparative strategy; contextual understanding; critical thinking
Student	"We discuss, debate, and produce bulletins linking what we learn to contemporary issues, including online religious hoaxes."	Intellectual productivity; application of knowledge; critical engagement
Teacher Assistant	"The five pedagogical principles guide each discussion and ensure students can differentiate creed from interpretation."	Pedagogical fidelity; moderation in reasoning; structured analytical framework

The table indicates a coherent implementation pattern: the head of curriculum sets dialogical-critical norms, teachers apply comparative methods, and students produce outputs that demonstrate understanding and moderation. The interaction between curriculum guidance, teaching strategy, and student output confirms the consistency of pedagogical execution. The indicators show that ideal implementation requires the simultaneous activation of principle-guided discussion, textual comparison, and reflective student practice.

Across the data, a recurring pattern emerges: implementation fidelity is maintained through a triadic interaction of teacher guidance, critical-comparative methods, and student intellectual engagement. Students' outputs demonstrate the internalization of *Aswaja's* reasoning principles, while the hidden reinforcement through structured discussion and comparative analysis ensures moderation is embedded in both cognitive and behavioral domains. This confirms that effective implementation translates the designed curriculum into observable, productive, and reflective learning outcomes.

### Graduate Competencies

Operationally, graduate competencies refer to the observable capacities developed by students after participating in the learning of *Mafahim Yajibu an Tushahhah*. In this study, competencies were not limited to mastery of theological

concepts, but included three interrelated dimensions: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. The cognitive dimension refers to students' ability to understand, analyze, and explain complex theological issues, particularly those related to *takfir*, *bid'ah*, *tawassul*, *tabarruk*, and differences in religious interpretation. The affective dimension refers to the formation of moderate, tolerant, calm, and ethically responsible attitudes when facing religious differences. The psychomotor dimension refers to students' ability to apply their knowledge in social and religious practices, especially through *dakwah bil-hikmah*, persuasive communication, mentoring, and community-based religious leadership. Thus, graduate competencies were understood as the integration of knowledge, attitude, and practice in forming *Aswaja*-oriented ulama cadres.

An interview with a teacher of *Mafahim Yajibu an Tushahhah* indicated that students developed sharper theological reasoning after completing the learning process. The informant stated, "After studying this *kitab*, students become more careful in using religious judgments. They can distinguish between matters of creed and matters of interpretation, and they are more capable of explaining sensitive issues without creating hostility." This statement shows that the learning process strengthened students' cognitive competence, particularly their ability to articulate theological concepts in a measured and accessible manner. The researcher interprets this as evidence that *Mafahim* learning does not merely produce textual understanding, but also develops analytical discipline. Students are trained to examine arguments, identify the scope of disagreement, and avoid hasty conclusions in contested religious matters. Such competence is central to the formation of *Aswaja* cadres because future ulama are expected to clarify religious confusion without reproducing exclusivist or confrontational narratives.

A second interview with an alumnus revealed that the learning process shaped not only intellectual capacity but also religious attitude and social conduct. The alumnus explained, "The most important lesson I gained was not to judge people easily. When facing different practices in society, I learned to respond calmly, explain with evidence, and maintain respect." This excerpt demonstrates the affective and practical outcomes of the learning process. The researcher interprets this as evidence that *Mafahim* learning contributes to the internalization of moderation as a lived disposition. The competence developed by graduates is not simply the ability to debate, but the ability to guide society with empathy, patience, and scholarly responsibility. In this sense, the *kitab* functions as a formative text that shapes both the intellectual and moral profile of graduates, enabling them to act as mediators, educators, and community-oriented religious actors.



Figure 2. The Journey to Aswaja Ulama Cadre Formation

This flow indicates that competence formation does not occur instantly. It begins with systematic engagement with the classical text, through which students clarify contested theological concepts. This clarification then develops critical reasoning, particularly the ability to distinguish between essential belief and interpretive disagreement. Over time, this reasoning shapes students' affective orientation, making them more cautious, tolerant, and ethically responsible. Finally, these internal competencies are expressed in social practice through preaching, mentoring, writing, and community engagement. The researcher interprets this flow as a gradual transformation from textual literacy into religious leadership capacity.

Observation data confirmed that students and graduates displayed competencies consistent with the intended outcomes of the learning process. In classroom discussions, students were able to respond to complex theological questions by referring to textual evidence, scholarly principles, and contextual explanations. In *pesantren* life, senior students played a mentoring role for juniors, helping them understand religious practices without excessive judgment. Some students also demonstrated intellectual productivity by producing short writings, bulletins, or reflective discussions that connected the content of *Mafahim* with contemporary issues, including religious misinformation and intolerance in digital spaces. The researcher interprets these observations as evidence that the competencies produced were not confined to classroom performance. They were embodied in students' reasoning, communication, leadership, and everyday religious behavior.

Restating the data, the third finding shows that the learning of *Mafahim Yajibu an Tushahhah* produced graduates with integrated competencies. Cognitively, students became more capable of analyzing theological issues and explaining them in clear, balanced language. Affectively, they developed moderation, tolerance, patience, and restraint in responding to religious differences. Psychomotorically, they were able to apply their knowledge through preaching, mentoring, writing, and social interaction. The data suggest that the learning process transformed students from passive recipients of doctrine into reflective religious actors who could articulate *Aswaja* values in both intellectual and practical domains. Therefore, graduate competence in this context should be

understood as the synthesis of textual mastery, ethical disposition, and social-religious agency.

The pattern emerging from the data shows that graduate competencies were formed through the integration of three domains. First, the cognitive domain was developed through textual study, argument analysis, and conceptual clarification. Second, the affective domain was shaped through *pesantren* values, teacher modeling, and repeated exposure to moderate *Aswaja* reasoning. Third, the psychomotor domain emerged through practical engagement, including discussion, mentoring, preaching, and written production. These three domains did not operate separately; rather, they reinforced one another. Students' knowledge influenced their attitudes, their attitudes shaped their communication style, and their communication practices demonstrated the extent to which *Aswaja's* values had been internalized. This pattern confirms that the outcome of *Mafahim* learning was not merely academic achievement, but the formation of prospective ulama who are intellectually grounded, morally composed, and socially responsive.

**Table 3. Graduate Competency Indicators Based on Informant Interviews**

Informant Position	Interview Excerpt	Indicator
Teacher of <i>Mafahim Yajibu an Tushahhah</i>	"After studying this <i>kitab</i> , students become more careful in using religious judgments. They can distinguish between matters of creed and matters of interpretation, and they are more capable of explaining sensitive issues without creating hostility."	Cognitive competence; theological reasoning; ability to distinguish creed and interpretive matters
Alumnus	"The most important lesson I gained was not to judge people easily. When facing different practices in society, I learned to respond calmly, explain with evidence, and maintain respect."	Affective competence; moderation; tolerance; ethical, religious attitude
Senior Student	"We are trained not only to understand the text, but also to explain it to younger students and relate it to problems people face in society."	Psychomotor competence; mentoring capacity; contextual communication
Dormitory Administrator	"Senior students often guide juniors in daily religious practices, especially when they ask about <i>tahlilan</i> , <i>maulid</i> , or practices that are often debated outside <i>pesantren</i> ."	Practical application; peer guidance; embodiment of <i>Aswaja</i> values

The table demonstrates that the ideal influence of *Mafahim* learning appears across three competency domains. The teacher's statement highlights the cognitive outcome of the learning process: students become more careful, analytical, and conceptually precise in making religious judgments. This is important because one of the central problems addressed by the *kitab* is the misuse of religious categories such as *kufr*, *bid'ah*, and *shirk*. The alumnus' statement expands this finding by showing that theological clarity is accompanied by affective transformation. Graduates do not merely know how to argue; they also learn how to respond with calmness, respect, and ethical awareness. This indicates

that the learning process successfully connects intellectual formation with moral formation.

The statements from the senior student and the dormitory administrator further show that competence is expressed in practice. Students are not only expected to master the *kitab* individually, but also to transmit its values through mentoring, explanation, and daily religious guidance. This suggests that the influence of *Mafahim* learning extends from personal understanding to communal responsibility. The table, therefore, reveals a consistent pattern: teachers cultivate theological reasoning, graduates embody moderation, senior students practice peer mentoring, and the *pesantren* environment provides space for applying *Aswaja* values. This pattern confirms that graduate competence is not a single learning outcome, but a layered formation of knowledge, attitude, and social action.

Overall, the data show that the competencies of graduates are shaped by a coherent relationship between text, pedagogy, and *pesantren* culture. The text provides theological clarification, the pedagogy develops critical and dialogical reasoning, and the *pesantren* culture reinforces moderation through everyday practice. This creates a distinctive model of *Aswaja* cadre formation in which graduates are prepared not only to understand religious doctrine, but also to guide society wisely. The pattern indicates that *Mafahim Yajibu an Tushahhah* functions as a formative instrument that produces graduates who are intellectually capable, affectively moderate, and practically ready to serve as future religious leaders. In this sense, the learning outcome is not merely the production of knowledgeable students, but the formation of *ulama* cadres who can preserve *Aswaja* traditions while responding constructively to contemporary religious challenges.

## Discussion

The findings demonstrate that the instructional design of *Mafahim Yajibu An Tushahhah* learning is not merely a curriculum arrangement but a structured model of *Aswaja* cadre formation. This study found that the *kitab* is positioned at the final stage of students' education, supported by prerequisite mastery of Arabic grammatical tools, basic theology, and classical Islamic reasoning. This finding is consistent with studies emphasizing that *pesantren*-based moderation is strengthened through curriculum, *kiyai* exemplarity, institutional culture, and *santri* activities (Baharun et al., 2025; Burga & Damopolii, 2022). However, this study extends the existing literature by showing that moderation is not only produced through general *pesantren* culture or leadership, but through the strategic sequencing of a specific classical text. While previous studies tend to discuss Islamic moderation in *pesantren* as a broad institutional value, this research identifies a more precise pedagogical mechanism: the transformation of *Mafahim* from a theological text into an advanced learning instrument for forming *manhajul fikr*. This is the first contribution of the study, namely demonstrating that classical text-based learning can operate as a systematic curriculum design for producing intellectually disciplined, moderate, and socially responsible *Aswaja ulama* cadres.

The second finding shows that the implementation of *Mafahim* learning is characterized by dialogical-critical pedagogy, five pedagogical principles, comparative textual analysis, and student intellectual productivity. This confirms previous research arguing that religious moderation in Islamic education requires not only doctrinal content but also pedagogical methods that cultivate critical understanding, tolerance, and contextual reasoning (Ayuba Olaniyi Jibril et al., 2025; Muis, 2026). It also resonates with studies showing that digital-era radicalism and religious intolerance require educational responses that strengthen students' ability to evaluate religious claims critically rather than consume them passively (Abdullah & Bello, 2026; Mukhlis et al., 2026). Nevertheless, the present study differs from earlier works because it reveals how critical reasoning is cultivated through a classical *pesantren* learning cycle: scheduled material presentation, guided discussion, application of pedagogical principles, comparison with other classical texts, student synthesis, and teacher feedback. The novelty lies in showing that *pesantren* pedagogy can combine traditional textual authority with reflective, comparative, and evidence-based learning. Therefore, the implementation of *Mafahim* learning contributes to the literature by offering a model of counter-radicalization that is not reactive or campaign-based, but embedded in everyday scholarly practice.

The third finding reveals that *Mafahim* learning produces integrated graduate competencies across cognitive, affective, and practical domains. Cognitively, students become more capable of distinguishing creed from interpretive matters and explaining contested theological issues with conceptual clarity. Affectively, they develop moderation, patience, and restraint in responding to religious differences. Practically, they are able to apply *Aswaja* reasoning through mentoring, preaching, writing, and community engagement. This finding supports literature indicating that *pesantren* education contributes to character formation, religious moderation, and the prevention of radicalism through habituation, teacher modeling, and institutional culture (Ihsan et al., 2024; Munif et al., 2026). However, this study goes further by demonstrating that graduate competence is not simply the result of moral habituation or institutional exposure; it emerges from the integration of text, pedagogy, and *pesantren* culture. In this sense, *Mafahim* functions as a formative text that links theological clarification with ethical disposition and social agency. This provides an important theoretical contribution to Islamic education by conceptualizing graduate competence as a layered outcome of classical text learning: textual literacy, theological reasoning, moral moderation, and public religious leadership.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of a classical text-based moderation pedagogy within Islamic education. Existing literature has widely discussed deradicalization, *pesantren* leadership, religious moderation policy, and the internalization of moderate values, but fewer studies have explained how a particular *kitab* is pedagogically operationalized to produce moderation-oriented reasoning. Studies on *pesantren* deradicalization have shown that Islamic boarding schools can function as preventive institutions against radicalism and terrorism (Azizah et al., 2023; Saleh, 2025), while broader literature

on Islamic moderation emphasizes leadership, curriculum, and institutional values. The present study adds a more specific theoretical proposition: moderation can be formed through a triadic framework consisting of textual authority, dialogical-critical pedagogy, and embodied *pesantren* culture. This framework is the main novelty of the research. It shifts the discussion from “*pesantren* as a moderate institution” to “classical text learning as a mechanism of moderation formation.” The impact of this theoretical contribution is significant because it provides a conceptual bridge between traditional Islamic scholarship and contemporary counter-radicalization discourse, showing that indigenous *pesantren* knowledge can generate a rigorous, context-sensitive, and academically defensible model of religious moderation.

Practically, the findings offer implications for *pesantren* leaders, curriculum developers, Islamic education policymakers, and teachers of classical Islamic texts. For *pesantren* leaders, this study suggests that *kitab* learning should be designed progressively, placing advanced theological texts after students have acquired sufficient linguistic and doctrinal foundations. For teachers, the study highlights the importance of dialogical-critical methods, comparative textual analysis, and structured feedback to prevent classical text learning from becoming rote memorization. For curriculum developers, the findings provide a practical model for integrating formal curriculum, hidden curriculum, and graduate competency standards. For policymakers, this research shows that deradicalization efforts in Islamic education should not rely only on external programs or generic moderation campaigns; they can be strengthened through existing *pesantren* traditions when those traditions are designed, implemented, and evaluated systematically. The broader impact is that *Mafahim* learning can become a replicable model for other *pesantren* seeking to form ulama cadres who are intellectually grounded, ethically moderate, and socially responsive. Therefore, the study’s central contribution lies in demonstrating that classical Islamic scholarship is not a relic of the past, but a living pedagogical resource capable of responding to contemporary religious polarization, misinformation, and ideological extremism.

## CONCLUSION

The most important finding of this study is that the learning of *Mafahim Yajibu an Tushahhah* functions not only as the transmission of a classical Islamic text but also as a systematic pedagogical instrument for forming Aswaja-oriented ulama cadres. Its effectiveness is reflected in the integration of instructional design, learning implementation, and graduate competency development, where the *kitab* is positioned at an advanced stage of *pesantren* education, taught through dialogical-critical and comparative approaches, and reinforced through both formal instruction and *pesantren* culture. The study demonstrates that religious moderation is best cultivated through a combination of authoritative texts, reflective pedagogy, and lived religious practice rather than through abstract discourse alone. As a result, students develop critical thinking, ethical responses to religious differences, and the ability to articulate Aswaja values

within society. This research contributes to the fields of Islamic education, pesantren studies, and religious moderation by proposing a classical text-based moderation pedagogy that links textual authority, dialogical-critical learning, hidden curriculum, and leadership formation. However, since the study focuses on a single pesantren and one kitab, its findings should be interpreted contextually. Future studies are encouraged to examine similar models across different pesantren settings, compare the role of other classical texts in Aswaja cadre formation, and explore how graduates apply these competencies in broader social, digital, and community contexts.

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