

The Role of Nahdlatul Ulama in the Transmission of Hadith in Indonesia: Literature Analysis and Scientific Contributions

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Nahdlatul Ulama;
Transmisi;
Hadis

Article history:

Received 2026-02-13

Revised 2026-03-15

Accepted 2026-04-17

ABSTRACT

This research aims to examine the role of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) in the process of transmitting hadith in Indonesia and its contribution in maintaining the sustainability of Islamic science. This research is based on the importance of understanding how hadith is not only transmitted as a text, but also as a practice of life in society through the role of scholars. This research applies the library research method by trying to review relevant literature to be used as a source of information, both in the form of books, journals, hadith books, and other scientific sources related to the NU scientific tradition and hadith studies. The results of the study show that the transmission of hadith in the NU tradition has a distinctive character, namely based on scientific sanad, oriented to Islamic boarding schools, mediated by kiai, and integrated with the social life of the community. This pattern emphasizes not only the textual aspect, but also the contextual and practical dimension of the hadith. Thus, hadith is maintained in its authority as well as relevant in people's lives. This transmission contributes to grounding moderate, adaptive, and sustainable Islamic teachings in Indonesia.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The study of hadith in Indonesia has gone through a long variety of dynamics, this process has started since the first emergence of Islam in the archipelago until now. This long process includes the dynamics of understanding hadith texts to adaptation to the interpretation of hadith in accordance with the social reality present (Ulya & Ghifari, 2024). The involvement of Islamic intellectual scholars also plays an important role in the development of hadith studies. They are not only the driving force in the spiritual and educational fields, but also the main driving force in providing a holistic understanding of the hadiths of the Prophet (Umar, Hidayat, Qomarullah, & Mutmainnah, 2025).

Talking about the efforts of Islamic intellectual scholars in Indonesia in providing a holistic understanding of hadith, it is inseparable from the central role of one of the community organizations (CSOs) Nahdlatul Ulama which is one of the largest Islamic organizations and has an important role in

the religious life of people in Indonesia. This can be seen from various hadith study activities in the NU community which are generally carried out through educational institutions such as pesantren and madrasah diniyyah, where hadith knowledge is part of the learning curriculum (Siregar, 2025). In addition, the study of hadith books is also often held in various religious activities. Not only that, in various religious decision-making, NU often takes hadith as one of the argumentative foundations that strengthen religious understanding (Suja'i & Baihaqi, 2022).

Nasikhin and Raaharjo's Research (2022) shows that Nahdlatul Ulama views hadith as the main source of Islamic teachings after the Qur'an and develops it through a moderate approach that combines traditional and contemporary methods. The understanding of hadith is carried out by paying attention to sanad, matan, social context, and ijihad, so that it remains relevant to the conditions of Indonesian society. Despite criticism of the consistency of methodology and the use of takwil, NU still made a significant contribution to the development of hadith studies in Indonesia. Farida's Research (2020) It also shows that the thoughts of Hasyim Asy'ari, who is the founder of the NU organization in the field of hadith, play an important role in connecting the teachings of hadith with the social reality of Indonesian society. He emphasized the use of maqashid al-shari'ah and social context in understanding hadith, so that it is not only normative, but also applicative. His contribution can be seen in the formation of a generation of scholars who are able to integrate hadith knowledge with social life, as well as provide a sustainable influence on the development of Islamic education in Indonesia. In addition, research conducted by Putra (2016) shows that Hasyim Ash'ari's thought contributes to the development of Islamic education through the integration of hadith values into the curriculum. This approach is considered to be able to create a learning system that is holistic, contextual, and relevant to the needs of modern society.

Departing from the research above, the role of Nahdlatul Ulama is interesting to study. Considering that this organization has a central role in the process of transmission of hadith in Indonesia. However, the question arises, how exactly is the typology of the role of Nahdlatul Ulama in the transmission of hadith in Indonesia so that the existence and learning of hadith can exist until now. For this reason, this research will review the literature on the role of scholars in the Nahdlatul Ulama organization on the transmission of hadith in Indonesia, and trace the characteristics of Nahdlatul Ulama's understanding in interpreting the meaning of hadith as one of the organizations that adheres to the understanding of Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah.

2. METHODS

The research in this article uses a descriptive qualitative approach through the library research method. This approach was chosen because it is considered appropriate to study in depth the thoughts, history, and dynamics of the transmission of hadith in Nahdlatul Ulama from time to time. The data sources used include primary literature, such as official documents of the NU organization, as well as secondary sources in the form of scientific journals, academic books, and contemporary research articles related to Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah, pesantren traditions, and NU's response to the times.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

History of the Establishment of the Nahdlatul Ulama Organization

In the language, Nahdlatul Ulama refers to the meaning of "the awakening of ulama". Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) is one of the largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia. This organization was founded by KH Hasyim Asy'ari, KH Abdul Wahab Hasbullah, and KH Bisri Syansuri on January 31, 1926 in Surabaya. NU emerged as a response to the challenges of modernization and the threat of colonialism to Muslims at that time (Najib, 2020). In addition, NU also appears as an organization that seeks to maintain and preserve the religious traditions of the people who understand Ahlussunnah Wa al-Jama'ah in the midst of the increasingly dynamic dynamics of the challenges of the times (Ratminingtyas, 2024).

In terms of faith, the NU organization adheres to the understanding of ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah. The understanding of Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah is a creed that uses a moderate approach and is among

the rationalist tendencies (*aqli*) dan skripturalis (*Naqli*) (Hasanah & Sofa, 2025). Therefore, the source of NU's thought is not only limited to the Qur'an and Hadith, but also involves the role of reason and considering empirical reality. This pattern of thinking refers to the intellectual tradition of classical scholars, such as Abu Hasan al-Ash'ari and Abu Mansur al-Maturidi in the field of theology (Indah, Choirunnisak, Yusman, Arifin, & Ashani, 2025). Meanwhile, in the field of jurisprudence, NU adheres to four schools of jurisprudence, namely the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali schools, although in practice NU is more inclined to follow the Shafi'i school (Wijaya, 2025). Considering that the majority of Indonesian Muslims adhere to this sect. As for the field of Sufism, NU developed an approach that refers to the thought of Junaid al-Baghdadi and al-Ghazali, which emphasizes the integration between the spiritual and sharia dimensions (Fuadi, 2022).

As a movement that aims to bring the people closer to God, NU's activities include various aspects of life that are directed at the realization of it *baladun thayyibatun wa robbun ghafur* (a prosperous, safe, and forgiving society of Allah) and able to achieve *'Izzul Islam wa al-Muslimin* (the success of Islam and Muslims). To realize this goal, NU formed organizational apparatus such as *lajnah*, institutions, and autonomous bodies. *Lajnah* itself is an organizational unit that is in charge of handling programs in certain fields, among which the most important is *Lajnah Bahtsul Masail ad-Diniyah*, which is an institution that focuses on the study of various religious issues. Activities *Bahtsul Masa'il* It itself has a special procedure, where scholars and jurists in this activity will review classical texts, then discuss their application to Indonesian social life. The output of this activity then produces *ijtihad* *jama'i* which is not only limited to religious texts, but also prioritizes the benefit of the *ummah* and prioritizes the benefits of the people *maqasid al-Syari'ah* (Hasbiyallah, Sulhan, & Khoiruddin, 2017).

Momentum returns to *khittah* in 1984 became an important point in the effort to reinterpret the teachings of Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah, as well as to reformulate the methodology of thinking, both in the realm of *fiqh* and social. In addition, this momentum also marks the rearrangement of NU's relationship with the state. This step has proven to be able to revive intellectual and social dynamics in the NU body (Maskumi, M. Bahren, & Ihsan Mustofa, 2024). The establishment of NU is inseparable from three main principles that are the philosophical foundation. First, the NU committee to always adhere to the understanding of Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah. In this principle, NU makes the thinking of Abu Hasan al-Ash'ari and Abu Mansur al-Maturidi as the basis of thought in the field of faith, and likewise in the field of jurisprudence to the four imams of the *madhhab*, and the understanding of *tasauf* to Imam al-Ghazali as explained earlier. Second, NU upholds local traditions and culture. NU views customs as an element that does not need to be separated from religion as long as it does not contradict *shari'a*. This can be seen from practices such as *tahlilan*, *maulid* events, the tradition of grave pilgrimage, and *manaqiban*. Thus, it appears that NU emphasizes the incorporation of cultural and contextual aspects rather than confrontational. Third, the principle of independence and the awakening of *ulama* and the Islamic boarding school education system. Considering that NU was formed, one of them was to strengthen the role of the *ulama* to direct the *ummah* and become a guide to the community in the religious field and free themselves from political pressure and colonialism at that time (Sofyullah, 2022).

The Tradition of Understanding Hadith in Nahdlatul Ulama

In line with the understanding of Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah, Nahdlatul Ulama recognizes that hadith has authority as the second source of Islamic law. Zul Asyri L.A mentioned in his dissertation entitled "Nahdlatul Ulama: a study of religious understanding and preservation efforts through Islamic Boarding School Educational Institutions" Nahdlatul Ulama acknowledged the existence of two forms of *sunnah*, namely *sunnah* which refers to the *sunnah* of the prophet and *sunnah* which refers to the *sunnah* of companions. Because if traced from its historical roots, the practice of understanding hadith has been going on since the time of the Prophet. By the time the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) interacted and delivered his words to the Companions, the process of understanding had already begun to take place. As for the *sunnah* of the Prophet, it is intended as the words, deeds and

approval of the Prophet (peace be upon him), and this is what is called the second source of Islamic law. While the sunnah of the companions refers to the opinions or practices that are not rejected by the other companions. This practice is believed to be a practice based on the information conveyed by the Prophet or in the form of the results of the *ijtihad* of the Companions themselves.

Zul Asyri also mentioned that in the view of Nahdlatul Ulama, the sunnah of the companions is very important to be practiced, especially the sunnah of *khulafaur rasyidin*. This is based on the words of the Prophet PBUH:

فَعَلَيْكُمْ بِسُنَّتِي وَسُنَّةِ الْخُلَفَاءِ الرَّاشِدِينَ الْمَهْدِيِّينَ.

It means: "Hold fast to my Sunnah and the Sunnah of al-Khulafaur Rasyidun who have been guided." (Stuart, 2014).

In responding to the hadith *Düsseldorf*, Nahdlatul Ulama looks at the hadith *Düsseldorf* can be used in the case of *fadhail al-a'mal*. Meanwhile, in the realm of legal evidence and creed, the hadith *Düsseldorf* unacceptable. In addition, the use of hadith *Düsseldorf* in the case of *fadhail al-a'mal* must also meet several conditions set by the scholars, namely: The hadith is not *mutasyaddid*; Hadith *Düsseldorf* is still a general postulate; Hadith *Düsseldorf* is practiced based on the context of prudence. From this it can be seen that the amaliyah of fiqh in Nahdlatul Ulama is basically very rich in the recommended sunnahs. The amaliyah is based on Sunday hadiths, among which are punished by *dhaif* but related to the context *fadhail al-a'mal* (Wahid, 2016).

The existence and role of hadith in the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) environment can be traced through the mechanism of determining the law and the products of *Lajnah Bahtsul Masail ad-Diniyah*. In the book *Religious Problems: The Results of the First Congress and Munas Ulama of Nahdlatul Ulama 1926 to Twenty-Nine 1994* edited by K.H.A. Aziz Mashuri, it is explained that NU is a *jam'iyah* that upholds the teachings of the Prophet (peace be upon him), follows the practices of the Companions, and adheres to the *ijtihad* of the four schools. The decision of *Bahtsul Masail* was compiled in the framework of *madhhab* to one of the four *madhhabs*, with an emphasis on the *qauli* approach, which is to follow the opinion of the scholars, not just the method of legal *istinbath*. This *qauli* approach is emphasized in practice that if a problem has a clear answer in the worship of the book and there is only one *qaul* or *face*, then the opinion is immediately followed as stated in the text. What is meant by "book" is *Al-Kutub Al-Mu'tabarah*, namely Islamic literature that is in harmony with the faith of *Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah*. Explicitly, NU also emphasized the obligation for Muslims today to follow one of the established and codified sects. The mechanism for selecting *qaul* or *face* also shows NU's strong tendency towards the *Shafi'i madhhab* (Milad, Pribadiyono, & Raharjo, 2024).

Considering that the Nahdlatul Ulama organization adheres to *madhhab*, this organization does not place direct verification of postulates as the main priority in every legal determination. This can be seen from the decisions of the congress which generally do not explicitly include verses of the Qur'an or hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him). On the other hand, the main reference comes from the opinions of scholars in the books of the *Shafi'i madhhab*, such as *I'alah ath-Talibin* by Abu Bakr Syatha, *al-Asybah wa an-Nazair* The Work of As-Suyuti, *Tuhfat al-Muhtaj* by Ibn Hajar, and *al-Majmu'* By An-Nawawi. Therefore, NU legal products are not categorized as the result of *istinbath* or *tarijih*, but as the result of selective study in the form of the selection of scholars' opinions that are considered the most relevant (Maulana & Damanik, 2023). Thus, the role of scholars in this context functions more as a selection of opinions than as a direct digging of postulates. Consequently, NU does not intensely conduct a study of the *sanad* and the validity of the hadith that underlies these opinions. On that basis, it can be concluded that NU's contribution to the development of hadith studies in Indonesia is considered not too prominent, especially in the aspect of criticism and verification of hadith as a source of law.

The understanding of hadith in the perspective of Nahdlatul Ulama can be seen from the interpretation of the hadith of the Prophet PBUH about praying in the following Friday sermon:

حَدَّثَنَا مُؤَمَّلُ بْنُ الْفَضْلِ الْحَرَّانِيُّ، نَا عَيْسَى بَعْنِي ابْنَ يُونُسَ ، نَا جَعْفَرُ بَعْنِي ابْنَ مَيْمُونِ صَاحِبِ الْأَمَّاطِ ، حَدَّثَنِي أَبُو عَثْمَانَ ، عَنْ سَلْمَانَ، قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: «إِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ حَيِّيٌّ كَرِيمٌ، يَسْتَحْيِي مَنْ عَبَدَهُ إِذَا رَفَعَ يَدَيْهِ إِلَيْهِ أَنْ يَرُدَّهُمَا صِفْرًا.

It means: "Mu'ammal bin al-Fadhl al-Harrani narrated to us Isa i.e. Ibn Yunus narrated to us Ja'far i.e. Ibn Maimun, known as Shahib al-Anmath narrated to me Abu Uthman, from Salman, he said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: 'Verily your Lord is Shy and Exalted. He was ashamed of His servant when he raised his hands to Him (prayed), and He returned them empty.'" (Al-Sijistānī, 1993).

The hadith that is used as the basis by the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) community regarding the practice of raising one's hands when praying on the pulpit is narrated by Imam Bukhari, Muslim, and Tirmidhi. In the hadith, it is explained that when praying, the Prophet faced the qibla and raised his hands until his armpits were white. This hadith is considered authentic. In its use, NU shows accuracy by referring to credible narration paths, although it is acknowledged that there are editorial differences (matan) among the narrators. According to NU, differences in matan are not a problem as long as the meaning and purpose of the hadith remain the same. Therefore, other hadiths are needed as a comparison to avoid misunderstandings in understanding their contents.

NU's view also emphasizes that there is no contradiction between the hadiths related to the practice of raising hands when praying on the pulpit. In fact, NU does not discuss it specifically because it believes that raising both hands is a common part of the manners of praying, both in the pulpit and elsewhere. This practice is not explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an, but is explained in the hadiths of the Prophet about the encouragement to pray and supplication to Allah. Rationally, such actions are understood as a form of servitude and humility before Allah. The evidence used by NU, as found in the hadith *Sahih* Muslim narration with the words "or the FRG, which Yadain", showing that the Prophet raised his hands until his armpits were white, not just with one finger (Maulana & Damanik, 2023).

In the view of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), prayer is understood as a form of supplication by a servant to Allah SWT. The practice of praying is generally carried out by raising both hands as part of the recommended adab. In practice, the position of the hands is raised at the same level as the shoulders, although there are other opinions among NU that allow raising the hands above the shoulders. As for looking at the sky when praying, it is considered makruh, because it can reduce solemnity in worship. Thus, raising both hands is one of the important ethics in praying. This view is also strengthened by referring to the opinion of Imam al-Ghazali who stated that in prayer it is recommended to face the qibla and raise both hands until the armpits appear white, as exemplified by the Prophet (Maulana & Damanik, 2023).

Transmission of Hadith in the Tradition of Nahdlatul Ulama in Indonesia

Transmission in the Great Dictionary of Indonesian Language (2018) translated as the process of conveying or forwarding messages from a person to another party, either to an individual or through a certain media. While hadith etymologically means new, near and news. As for the terminology of hadith, it is all words, deeds, consents and attributes that are attributed to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) (S. H. Kusuma, Akhyar, Multazam, Imran, & Jamardi, 2026). On the other hand, etymologically the word sanad comes from the Arabic word which means a backbone or support (Ayu, Syahira, Maulida, Daulay, & Siregar, 2026). Meanwhile, in the terminology of hadith science, sanad is interpreted as a path or series of narrators who narrate the hadith to the matan (text or content of the hadith) (Surya, Pransetia, Harahap, & Uzmanarati, 2026). The existence of sanad aims to preserve the originality and truth of Islamic law. The process of transmitting this knowledge is not limited to the delivery of the yellow book material alone, but also involves the inheritance of knowledge and values from teachers to students. The sustainability of this sanad is the main foundation in maintaining and developing the tradition of pesantren as the center of Islamic civilization (Z. Kusuma, Handayani, Aslam, & Salleh, 2025).

Practically, the scientific sanad system in the archipelago relies on the central role of the kiai as the main figure in the transmission of knowledge. Kiai functions as a link in the chain of knowledge

delivery, especially in the teaching of certain books in Islamic boarding schools. The relationship between teachers and students (kiai and students) is a crucial element in maintaining the continuity of sanad, where scientific legitimacy is often related to lineage (nasab). In many kiai in Java, the relationship between scientific sanad and nasab has a strong influence in shaping the vision, character, and orientation of the next generation. In addition to the domestic relationship between kiai and students, the scientific tradition of Nusantara scholars is also connected to scientific centers in the Middle East, especially Makkah and Medina (Amir, Harahap, Rahmi, & Nazmi, 2024). This connection gave birth to a network of international scholars who strengthened the continuity of sanad to the classical tradition of Islam. The significance of sanad is not only limited to the religious dimension, but also includes institutional and social aspects.

In the institutional realm, the concept of sanad plays an important role in the development of Islamic boarding schools, because it helps kiai align the vision of the institution with educational goals, as well as expand its influence from the development of individual students to broader social transformation. From the social side, the sanad tradition is a cultural capital for Islamic boarding schools in building public trust. The relationship between teachers and students based on sanad also contributes to forming the character of students who are adaptive to the development of the times. These values are the foundation of pesantren culture in facing modern challenges, including in counteracting radical ideas, because the process of transmitting knowledge is always accompanied by moral development and strengthening moderate religious attitudes. This also applies in the transmission of hadith that occurs in Indonesia through the intermediary of scholars who play an important role as figures who pass on scientific sanad both in the field of hadith and other fields (Indah et al., 2025). So in order to maintain the process of scientific transmission, the Nahdhatul Ulama scholars established Islamic Boarding Schools as an institution that would maintain the transmission process.

Pesantren is an Islamic educational institution that has existed for centuries, so it has a significant role in the development and preservation of Islamic culture, as well as contributing to the development of the nation. This role is inseparable from the strong tradition inherent in the life of the pesantren (Yusuf, Siregar, & Harahap, 2024). Islamic boarding schools have a rich tradition, especially in the scientific field. The scientific tradition in the pesantren presents a different pattern compared to the tradition outside the pesantren. This is rooted in an education system that emphasizes the importance of the credibility of scientific sanad. By adhering to the sanad, students are equipped with the ability to master the yellow book (classical), which is then followed by the granting of a diploma directly from the kiai as legitimacy to convey the knowledge to the community (Amir et al., 2024). Scientific sanad is the main element in the formation of the ulema network, so that it is possible to trace the source of authenticity of knowledge owned by scholars (Indah et al., 2025). The scholars also emphasized that the tradition of sanad is a distinguishing feature between Muslims and other Ummah, and is even considered a special feature in Islam. As stated by Sufyan Ats-Tsauri, the sanad is likened to a "weapon" for Muslims (Al-Nawawī, 1976).

The existence of the sanad tradition makes it easier for Muslims to show the authenticity of their religious teachings, so that Islamic teachings appear clear, valid, and accountable. In the pesantren environment, the process of acquiring knowledge is carried out selectively and not arbitrarily, namely through institutions that have continuous scientific transmission standards (muttashil) to the Prophet (Suswita, 2025). This view is in line with the opinion of al-Tahhan (1991) which states that scientific sanad is a continuous network, genealogy, or genealogy. The goal is to assess the quality of a person's knowledge, as well as to be a characteristic that distinguishes the tradition of Islamic boarding schools from other Islamic educational institutions, where a teacher is assessed based on the clarity of the origin and process of acquiring knowledge. Pesantren is the main basis for hadith transmission in the NU environment. In this institution, hadith is taught not only as a normative text, but also as part of the Islamic scientific system that is integrated with fiqh, ushul fiqh, and Sufism. Learning methods such as bandongan and sorogan allow students to understand the hadith gradually, with direct guidance from the kiai.

In the NU tradition, kiai plays a central role as a hadith mediator. Kiai not only conveys hadith texts, but also interprets, contextualises, and applies them in daily life. The authority of the kiai based on scientific sanad makes them trusted figures in bridging the gap between hadith texts and social reality. NU plays an important role in maintaining the authority of hadith through a madhhab approach and respect for classical scholars. By referring to the books *mu'tabarah*, NU ensures that the use of hadith remains within the valid scientific corridor. This approach also prevents the emergence of arbitrary interpretations of hadith or detachment from scientific tradition. Classic hadith books such as *Saheeh Bukhari*, *Saheeh Muslim*, and his sharia books are the main references in the NU tradition. The recitation of the hadith book is usually carried out regularly in Islamic boarding schools and taklim assemblies, with an emphasis on contextual understanding through the explanations of classical scholars (Sofyullah, 2022). This tradition not only maintains the continuity of hadith studies, but also ensures that the meaning of hadith remains within the framework of Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah.

One of NU's strengths is its ability to ground hadith in daily religious practice. Traditions such as tahlilan, maulidan, grave pilgrimage, and various other practices are understood as the implementation of hadith values in the context of local culture. Thus, hadith not only becomes a normative text, but also lives in the social practices of society. Overall, the transmission of hadith in the NU tradition in Indonesia shows a distinctive character, namely sanad-based, pesantren-oriented, mediated by kiai, and integrated with social life. This model makes hadith not only maintain its authority, but also remain relevant and alive in society.

4. CONCLUSION

This study shows that the transmission of hadith in the tradition of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) in Indonesia shows a distinctive and unique character, namely based on the continuity of scientific sanad, strongly oriented towards Islamic boarding school institutions, mediated by kiai authorities, and closely integrated with the social life of the community. This pattern of transmission not only emphasizes the textual aspect of the hadith, but also pays attention to its contextual and practical dimensions in everyday life. Through the role of pesantren as an educational center, as well as kiai as an authoritative figure who bridges the gap between text and reality, hadith is not understood rigidly, but adaptively according to the needs of the times without abandoning established scientific principles. Such a transmission model makes the hadith maintain its authority and validity because it relies on clear and continuous scientific traditions. On the other hand, hadith also remains relevant and lives in society, because it continues to be actualized in various religious practices, social traditions, and cultural values that develop in the environment of Indonesian Muslims. Thus, the transmission of hadith in the NU tradition not only serves as an effort to preserve scientific heritage, but also as a means to ground Islamic teachings so that they are always contextual, moderate, and able to answer the challenges of the times.

Acknowledgments: In this section, you can acknowledge any support given, which is not covered by the author's contribution or funding sections. This may include administrative and technical support, or donations in kind (e.g., materials used for experiments).

Conflicts of Interest: Declare conflicts of interest or state "The authors declare no conflict of interest." Authors must identify and declare any personal circumstances or interests that may be perceived as inappropriately influencing the representation or interpretation of reported research results.

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