

Mahmud Yunus's Credibility in Hadith Scholarship: A Study of His Contributions and Impact on Contemporary Hadith Literature

Nurul Afifah¹, Fikri Haekal Amdar²

¹Sekolah Pascasarjana UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia

²UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Correspondence: nrlpipi20@gmail.com

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Abstract. Hadith studies in Indonesia often face methodological and epistemological challenges, particularly regarding the limited availability of local literature that can bridge the gap between classical traditions and modern needs. Amidst this dynamic, Mahmud Yunus emerges as one of the Muslim scholars who made a significant contribution through his works on hadith. This article aims to examine the credibility of Mahmud Yunus in the study of hadith, focusing on his contributions and influence on contemporary hadith literature. This research employs a qualitative approach based on library research, analyzing Yunus' major works such as *Ilmu Musthalah al-Hadith* and *Akhlak Menurut al-Qur'an dan Hadis Nabi*. The findings reveal that Yunus' credibility is not solely grounded in his mastery of classical methodologies in sanad and matn criticism, but also in the pedagogical and structural dimensions he developed through the Islamic education system. His approach succeeded in presenting hadith in a simple, communicative, and applicable manner for Indonesian society. His works effectively bridged the academic tradition of hadith with the needs of national education, thereby making hadith more accessible to the broader Indonesian public. Furthermore, his influence is evident in the construction of contemporary hadith literature that is more applicable and responsive to the challenges of modern times. This article contributes to the development of hadith epistemology in Indonesia by offering an integrative perspective that connects classical tradition, national education, and contemporary discourse in hadith studies.

Keywords: Credibility, Mahmud Yunus, Hadith Scholarship, Contribution, Contemporary Hadith Literature.

Introduction

In the study of hadith in Indonesia, a gap exists between traditional academic approaches to sanad and matn criticism and the practical needs of education and public literacy. Mahmud Yunus emerged as an essential figure who filled this gap through his works that emphasized pedagogical and applicative aspects, even though he did not engage deeply in sanad criticism at an academic level. This raises epistemological issues regarding how hadith studies are conveyed in Indonesia, particularly in integrating formal hadith criticism with the demands of more inclusive and accessible basic education. Scholarly research on Mahmud Yunus' contributions remains limited. It tends to highlight his role as a general Islamic educator, while his contributions to the systematization of hadith knowledge have received relatively little attention. Moreover, there is a lack of critical and reflective studies on Yunus' works in the context of the development of hadith studies in Indonesia, especially his role in incorporating hadith sciences into the formal educational curriculum. Mahmud Yunus placed greater emphasis on teaching methods and the simplification of hadith materials, which expanded the reach of hadith knowledge among the public. However, these aspects have not yet been systematically examined from the perspective of modern hadith scholarship. This problem is crucial in constructing a comprehensive epistemology of hadith studies in Indonesia—one that accommodates both

traditional methodologies and the pedagogical innovations initiated by figures such as Mahmud Yunus.¹

In addition, scholarly studies on Mahmud Yunus have scarcely highlighted his role in the systematization and literacy of hadith in Indonesia, particularly his efforts in formulating curricula in the Indonesian language that accommodated the learning needs of Muslims outside the traditional pesantren environment. This indicates the need for more critical and comprehensive research to explore how Mahmud Yunus' works have become an influential intellectual legacy in the development of hadith studies in Indonesia. At the same time, this also presents a challenge in the development of hadith epistemology in Indonesia: to integrate the rigor of traditional methodology with contemporary pedagogical demands that require accessibility and comprehensibility. This article addresses the problem of integrating classical academic criticism with modern educational methods introduced by Mahmud Yunus, which emphasize transformative and structural aspects in hadith education. Such an approach is expected to serve as a foundation for renewing hadith studies in a way that is more holistic and relevant to the educational and social context of Indonesia, while also preserving the scholarly quality of hadith studies so that their authentic essence is not lost.²

In the historiography of the development of Hadith studies in Indonesia, Mahmud Yunus (1899–1982) holds a significant position as one of the pioneering figures who contributed to the modernization of Hadith methodology. As a prolific Minangkabau scholar, Mahmud Yunus produced more than 75 written works, including several key texts in the field of Hadith sciences that continue to serve as references in various Islamic educational institutions throughout Indonesia.³ Mahmud Yunus is a scholar from Minangkabau, West Sumatra, known as a leading figure in the fields of education, exegesis, and jurisprudence. He also has expertise in the science of hadith, evident in his profound insights into hadith and the science of hadith. Mahmud Yunus has written numerous works in this field, as well as in other disciplines such as exegesis, jurisprudence, creed, and ethics, where he frequently uses the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad as supporting evidence and explanations. In his hadith works, he also discusses various aspects of hadith studies.⁴

Mahmud Yunus has two works in the field of hadith science, both titled *Ilmu Musthalah al-Hadis*. The difference between the two works lies in the language and the author. The first work was written by Mahmud Yunus himself in Arabic, while the second work was co-authored with Mahmud Aziz in Indonesian. The book *Ilmu Musthalah al-Hadis*, which he wrote himself, is structured and practically, consisting of 96 pages, and covers the basic themes in the science of hadith. In his introduction, he states that this book is a summary of several books that discuss the science of *Mushthalah al-Hadith* in great detail. The aim is to make it easy for students to understand and to serve as a reference for teachers in Islamic boarding schools.⁵

Mahmud Yunus's presence in the constellation of Indonesian hadith scholars is unique, especially in the context of the transition from classical scholarship to early 20th-century Islamic modernism. Unlike most contemporary hadith scholars who tend to adopt a conservative approach, Mahmud Yunus demonstrated intellectual courage in integrating matan criticism into his works on

¹ Muhammad Fauzhan 'Azima, "Ulumul Hadis Dan Modernisme Islam: Analisis Pemikiran Hadis Mahmud Yunus," *Iktisari: Jurnal Pengetahuan Islam* 3, no. 1 (2023), 71–83. <https://doi.org/10.55062/2021/IJPI>; Munirah Munirah, "Mahmud Yunus dan Kontribusinya dalam Perkembangan Studi Hadis dan Ilmu Hadis di Indonesia," *Millati, Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 2, no. 2 (2017): 275–94. <https://doi.org/10.18326/millati.v2i2.275-294>.

² Ummi Kalsum Hasibuan, "Mahmud Yunus dan Kontribusi Pemikirannya Terhadap Hadis," *Istinarah: Riset Keagamaan, Sosial dan Budaya* 2, no. 1 (2020): 1, <https://doi.org/10.31958/istinarah.v2i1.2005>.

³ Mahmud Yunus, *Ilmu Musthalah al-Hadis* (Padang: Sa'adiyah Putra, 1971), iii–iv.

⁴ Yunus, *Ilmu Musthalah al-Hadis*, 2.

⁵ Yunus, *Ilmu Musthalah al-Hadits*, 3.

hadith science, an innovation rarely found in Indonesian hadith literature at the time.⁶ This signifies an epistemological transformation in the methodology of hadith studies, which not only focuses on the analysis of *sanad* but also pays serious attention to the evaluation of hadith content.

Amidst the limitations of the *hadith* scholarship infrastructure in the early days of Indonesian independence, Mahmud Yunus emerged as a reformer (*mujaddid*) who brought together the traditions of classical scholars with a modern educational approach. He successfully transformed the *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) into a *madrasah* (Islamic school) and university curriculum with a systematic, rational, and contextual approach.⁷ In terms of scholarly credibility, Mahmud Yunus emphasized the importance of the authenticity of the chain of transmission (*sanad*) and the text (*matan*), as applied by classical hadith scholars such as Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, al-Nawawi, Khatib al-Baghdadi, and others. Although he is not a *muhaddis* in the strict Middle Eastern tradition, his approach demonstrates caution and scientific responsibility toward hadith sources.

A study of Mahmud Yunus' credibility in hadith studies is vital, given his strategic position in the history of the development of hadith science in Indonesia. Previous studies have shown that although Mahmud Yunus did not develop new theories in hadith science, his contribution lies in the simplification and systematization of hadith science materials for educational purposes. However, a more in-depth evaluation of his methodology and critical approach in hadith studies still requires a more comprehensive study. This research aims to critically analyze Mahmud Yunus' credibility in hadith studies through an examination of his hadith works, particularly in terms of *sanad* selection, source authority, and the systematics of hadith presentation. Focusing on methodological aspects is essential to assess whether Mahmud Yunus merely reproduces classical traditions or offers reinterpretations relevant to modern realities. Additionally, this analysis positions Mahmud Yunus' contributions within contemporary Islamic hadith scholarship, particularly in efforts to Islamize knowledge and establish local religious authority.⁸

The urgency of this research increases with the growing discourse on scholarly authority and the credibility of scholars in the Indonesian Islamic tradition. In the context of contemporary hadith studies, questions about the credibility standards of a hadith scholar become increasingly relevant, especially when faced with the dynamics of modern methodology and increasingly stringent academic demands. Therefore, the research problem posed in this study is how Mahmud Yunus' credibility in hadith studies can be demonstrated through his scholarly contributions and the extent of his influence on the development of contemporary hadith literature in Indonesia. The findings show that Mahmud Yunus' credibility is not solely based on his reputation as a scholar, but also on his consistency in presenting a hadith methodology that is applicable, systematic, and aligned with the needs of Islamic education in Indonesia.

This article makes a significant scholarly contribution by offering a new understanding of the role of Indonesian intellectual figures in the development of hadith studies. Its primary contribution lies in uncovering the dimension of Mahmud Yunus' credibility, which is not limited to his mastery of the traditional academic approaches of *sanad* and *matn* criticism, but rather is rooted in pedagogical and structural aspects. By examining his works such as *Ilmu Musthalah al-Hadith* and *Akhlak Menurut al-Qur'an dan Hadis Nabi*, this study demonstrates how Yunus functioned as a bridge between academic disciplines and the needs of basic education, thereby making hadith more widely accessible and comprehensible to Indonesian society. The qualitative, library-based approach provides a solid

⁶ Engkus Kusnandar, "Studi Kritik Matan Hadis (Naqd Al-Matn): Kajian Sejarah dan Metodologi," *Jurnal Studi Hadis Nusantara* 2, no. 1 (2020): 10.

⁷ Azyumardi Azra, *The Origins of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia*. (University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 101.

⁸ Jajat Burhanudin, "Traditional Islam and Modernity: Some Notes on the Transmission of Islamic Learning in Indonesia," *Indonesian Islam* 1, no. 1 (2007).

analytical foundation for evaluating the relevance and application of his works within the context of national education.

Furthermore, the integrative approach applied in this study—which combines historical, pedagogical, and epistemological analyses of Yunus’ contributions to hadith studies—moves beyond merely assessing him through the lens of classical sanad criticism. Instead, this article emphasizes the structural transformation and systematization of hadith knowledge that Yunus advanced through the adaptation and simplification of hadith materials for basic and broad-based education. The integration of Mahmud Yunus’s educational approach with modern academic methods of hadith criticism offers a fresh perspective for the development of hadith epistemology in Indonesia. Thus, this research not only reconstructs Yunus’ position within the intellectual history of hadith studies in Indonesia but also opens up a constructive dialogue between tradition and modernity in hadith scholarship. This has significant implications for curriculum design and the advancement of hadith literacy that is more inclusive and adaptive to contemporary needs. By foregrounding its transformative dimension, this article broadens the horizon of hadith studies. It lays the groundwork for further research that harmonizes educational values with methodological rigor in the field of hadith.

The study of Mahmud Yunus’ credibility in hadith scholarship is both intriguing and significant due to his unique position as a bridge between traditional academic studies of hadith and formal Islamic education in Indonesia. Mahmud Yunus is widely recognized as an Islamic educator who successfully introduced hadith into school and madrasa curricula through a simplified and practical approach, thereby making hadith more easily understood by the wider public. Previous research by Fauzhan ’Azima (2023) affirmed that the spirit of Islamic modernism strongly influenced Yunus’s thought on hadith in the early twentieth century. Yet, it did not link his ideas to educational implications.⁹ Meanwhile, research conducted by Gusnanda et al. (2025) focused only on one of Yunus’ works on hadith, namely *Ilmu Musthalah al-Hadis*—its existence, typology, and uniqueness—as a handbook used in several educational institutions of its time.¹⁰ Furthermore, Munirah (2017) noted that although Mahmud Yunus did not develop sanad and matn criticism in depth, his contribution to the dissemination and systematization of hadith in the Indonesian language was a strategic step that strengthened hadith literacy within national and social education.¹¹

This study highlights the relevance of Mahmud Yunus in contemporary Indonesian hadith literature by comparing his methodology with the classical mainstream of hadith studies. It offers an analytical framework for understanding the transformation of hadith scholarship from traditional to modern. Such a contribution is crucial, as it demonstrates that the renewal of hadith studies in Indonesia was not solely initiated by global figures, but also by local scholars who worked within their own contexts. The examination of Yunus’ works—which present hadith materials in a systematic yet accessible manner—provides a new perspective on how religious knowledge can be mediated for broader impact.

This perspective is vital to fill the research gap concerning the relationship between academic methodologies of hadith and pedagogical approaches that directly engage with the general public. Moreover, this study is essential in the context of developing an inclusive and adaptive epistemology of hadith in Indonesia. By emphasizing the aspect of credibility, Yunus is positioned as a scholar who

⁹ Fauzhan ’Azima, “Ulumul Hadis Dan Modernisme Islam: Analisis Pemikiran Hadis Mahmud Yunus.”, 80.

¹⁰ Gusnanda dan Hanifatul Husna, “Mahmud Yunus’ Book of *Ilmu Musthalah al-Hadis*: Existence, Typology, and Uniqueness in Indonesian Hadith Studies,” *Jawahir Al-Ahadis* 1, no. 1 (2025): 42–54. <http://dx.doi.org/10.30983/jawahir>

¹¹ Munirah, “Mahmud Yunus dan Kontribusinya dalam Perkembangan Studi Hadis dan Ilmu Hadis di Indonesia.”, 280.

insisted on the strict verification of hadith before teaching them. This concept provides a critical foundation for future hadith research, especially in the context of religious literacy in the modern era.

Discussion

A Brief Overview of Mahmud Yunus

Mahmud Yunus was a 20th-century hadith scholar from West Sumatra. He was also an Islamic education figure who successfully fought for the inclusion of Islamic religious education in the public school curriculum and the establishment of Islamic Higher Education Institutions¹². He was born on 30 Ramadhan 1316 H or February 10, 1899, in Sungayang Village, Batusangkar, West Sumatra. He was born into a very humble family. His father, Yunus bin Incek, was a farmer, and his mother was Hafsa binti Imam Samiun. Despite being born into a humble family, the religious atmosphere in his household was powerful. Yunus bin Incek was a religious student (*urang surau*) and had deep spiritual knowledge, which led him to be appointed as the Imam Nagari in his region.¹³ In addition to his father, Mahmud Yunus' grandfather, Engku Gadang M. Tahir bin Ali, was the founder and caretaker of a *surau* in his hometown.¹⁴ Furthermore, his maternal great-grandfather was also a prominent religious scholar named Muhammad Ali, better known as Angku Kolok in Sungayang, Batusangkar.¹⁵

From a young age, Mahmud Yunus demonstrated a strong interest and inclination to deepen his religious knowledge. This was evident from his enjoyment of learning to read the Quran with his grandfather, Engku Gadan, from the age of seven, and his strong memory. After learning to read the Quran, Mahmud Yunus also taught Quranic recitation like an assistant teacher while studying Arabic with his grandfather.¹⁶ This was Mahmud Yunus's first level of education, namely reading while memorizing the Quran and Arabic with his grandfather at his grandfather's mosque.

Mahmud Yunus' formal education began at the People's School, which was opened by the residents of Nagari Sungayang in 1908, before moving to *Madras School* in 1917. In the mornings, Mahmud Yunus studied at the People's School, while in the evenings, he continued to teach at his grandfather's mosque. Mahmud Yunus demonstrated outstanding achievements in his first year at the People's School, completing the class within four months and earning a promotion to the next class. In fact, in third grade, he was still the best among his peers. However, when he reached fourth grade, he began to feel bored because of the repetition of material from previous lessons. When he heard the news that a prominent scholar named H.M. Thalib Umar had opened a madrasah at the Tanjung Pauh mosque in Sungayang, known as *Madras School*, Mahmud Yunus decided to transfer to that school.¹⁷

Between 1917 and 1923, when Mahmud Yunus was still studying at the madrasah, Minangkabau experienced significant development with the emergence of an Islamic revival

¹² M Zia Al-Ayyubi, "Pemikiran Mahmud Yunus Tentang Hadis Etika Dan Kontribusinya Terhadap Perkembangan Kajian Hadis Di Indonesia," *Jurnal Studi Hadis Nusantara* 4, no. 2 (2022), 152, <https://doi.org/10.24235/jshn.v4i2.12992>.

¹³ Muhammad Ilham, Dairina Yusri, and Itrayuni Itrayuni, "Tracking the Network of Hadith Ulama in The Archipelago: Contribution of Minangkabau Ulama in 20th Century Hadith Science Education," *Al-Fikru: Jurnal Ilmiah* 17, no. 1 (2023): 105, <https://doi.org/10.51672/alfikru.v17i1.177>.

¹⁴ Saiful Amin Ghofur, *Profil Para Mufassir* (Pustaka Insan Madani, 2008), 199.

¹⁵ Umami Kalsum Hasibuan, "Mahmud Yunus dan Kontribusi Pemikirannya Terhadap Hadis," *Istinarah: Riset Keagamaan, Sosial dan Budaya* 2, no. 1 (2020):3. <https://doi.org/10.31958/istinarah.v2i1.2005>.

¹⁶ Abudin Nata, *Tokoh-Tokoh Pembaharu Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia* (Raja Grafindo Persada, 2015), 35.

¹⁷ Ilham Abdul Jalil, "Islamic Education Perspective of Mahmud Yunus," *ATTAQWA: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam dan Anak Usia Dini* 3, no. 1 (2024): 9, <https://doi.org/10.58355/attaqwa.v3i1.59>.

movement introduced by alums who had recently returned from the Middle East. This movement was intellectually influenced by the ideas of several prominent Islamic figures, such as Ibn 'Taymīyah (d. 1328), Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1787), and the Islamic reformer Muhammad 'Abduh (d. 1905). The ideas of these figures were considered highly relevant to addressing the backwardness faced by Muslims at that time. The discourse on Islamic revivalism was divided into two strands: purification and modernization. Alums from the Middle East who returned to Minangkabau in the early 20th century generally supported the purification movement, which aimed to restore Islamic practices to their original form and eliminate all later additions, as practiced during the time of the Prophet, his companions, and the *tābi'īn*. However, these purification efforts were also accompanied by the mastery of general knowledge and modern languages.¹⁸

In 1924, Mahmud Yunus had the opportunity to study at Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt. There, he studied the principles of Islamic jurisprudence (Ushul Fiqh), Quranic exegesis (Ilmu Tafsir), Hanafi jurisprudence (Fiqh Hanafi), and other subjects. After completing his studies at Al-Azhar, Mahmud Yunus sought to gain a broader understanding of general knowledge and continued his education at Darul Ulum University. This university combined two curricula: religious and general studies. The spiritual curriculum included Quranic exegesis, hadith, Islamic jurisprudence, logic, Islamic studies, Arabic grammar, morphology, rhetoric, etiquette, composition, and memorization. For the general curriculum, there were more than seventy courses. Thanks to his dedication, Mahmud Yunus successfully graduated and completed his studies, outperforming his peers and earning a Tadris Takhsis (teaching specialist) degree from Darul Ulum University.¹⁹

Mahmud Yunus is better known as a figure of Islamic educational reform in Indonesia than as a hadith scholar, as his studies were specialized in education. The influence of his educational concepts can still be seen today. One example of this is the existence of the Gontor Islamic boarding school in Ponorogo, East Java. Until now, most people have believed that the founder of the boarding school was K.H. Imam Zarkasyi, and many are unaware that he was a student of Mahmud Yunus.²⁰

Mahmud's writings include; Kamus Arab-Indonesia, Ilmu Mustalah al-Hadis berbahasa Arab, Ilmu Mustalah al-Hadis, Akhlak Menurut al-Qur'an dan Hadis Nabi Saw, Metode Khusus Pendidikan Agama, Sejarah Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia, Terjemah al-Qur'an, dan lainnya.²¹

The spirit of reform promoted by Mahmud Yunus cannot be separated from the influence of prominent figures of his time. One such influential figure in shaping Mahmud's intellectual development was Thaib Umar. Through his works, such as *al-Munir*, Thaib Umar emphasized the importance of mastering both general sciences and European languages. In the educational institutions he led, students were required not only to study Islamic sciences but also to acquire knowledge of foreign languages and modern disciplines. This approach aimed to equip students with the tools necessary to contribute to the advancement of the Muslim community and to improve societal welfare.

In 1918, Mahmud Yunus took the initiative to revive the *Madras School*, which had been previously established. This effort reflected his commitment to educational reform, aligning with the broader reformist movements emerging in Minangkabau at the time—many of which were led by Middle Eastern-educated scholars such as Shaykh Thahir Jalaluddin, Abdullah Ahmad, Abdul Karim

¹⁸Ahmad Murtaza Mz et al., "In Defense of Rationality: Mahmud Yunus' Interpretation of The Qur'an on Religious Tolerance," *Mutawatir: Jurnal Keilmuan Tafsir Hadith* 14, no. 1 (2024): 26, <https://doi.org/10.15642/mutawatir.2024.14.1.21-40>.

¹⁹ Ilham, Yusri, and Itrayuni, "Tracking the Network of Hadith Ulama in The Archipelago, 106"

²⁰ Al-Ayyubi, "Pemikiran Mahmud Yunus Tentang Hadis Etika Dan Kontribusinya Terhadap Perkembangan Kajian Hadis Di Indonesia., 153. "

²¹ Munirah, "Mahmud Yunus dan Kontribusinya dalam Perkembangan Studi Hadis dan Ilmu Hadis di Indonesia," 283.

Amrullah, and Zainuddin Labay El Yunusi. Previously, Islamic instruction was conducted through Qur'anic recitation and classical text study held in homes, prayer halls, mosques, or traditional Islamic boarding schools. Over time, these conventional methods began to evolve in terms of institutional structures, curricula, pedagogical approaches, and organizational frameworks, giving rise to new forms of Islamic education.²²

Mahmud Yunus's engagement in reformist movements became more evident when he participated in a major congress of Minangkabau ulama held in 1919 in Padang Panjang. The primary agenda of the congress was the establishment of the Islamic Religious Teachers' Union (PGAI). His involvement in this forum signified his emerging role within the intellectual and religious discourse of the time, especially as he was entrusted to represent his teacher. Mahmud's participation in the meeting, alongside senior reformist scholars such as Abdullah Ahmad, had a direct and lasting impact on the development of his reformist thinking.²³

Mahmud Yunus's Thought in the Hadith Studies

One of Mahmud Yunus's works that presents a comprehensive study of Hadith science (*Ilm al-Hadith*) is his Arabic-language book *Ilmu Mushthalah al-Hadits*. In this book, Mahmud Yunus divides the material of Hadith studies into 73 sections. He stated that the book is intended as a summary of the major classical works of *Ulum al-Hadith* written by earlier Hadith scholars. It was also composed as a reference for both teachers and students in religious educational institutions.²⁴ This objective indicates that the writing of this book was aimed at expanding the scholarly tradition of Hadith in the Indonesian archipelago.

The structure and content of *Ilmu Mushthalah al-Hadits* cover a wide range of topics, including the classification of Hadith sciences, the status of Hadith, the history of Hadith transmission and compilation, the levels of Hadith collections, well-known (*masyhūr*) narrators, conditions for acceptable narrators, *tahammul wa al-ada'* (methods of receiving and transmitting Hadith), *nāsikh* and *mansūkh* (abrogating and abrogated traditions), and the types of Hadith such as *ṣaḥīḥ*, *ḥasan*, *ḍa'if*, *marfū'*, *mauqūf*, *maqtū'*, and others. Mahmud Yunus employs a descriptive-analytical method as reflected in *Ilmu Mushthalah al-Hadits*. He provides a basic overview of the structure of *sanad*, definitions of *ṣaḥīḥ* and *ḥasan*, and other Hadith classifications without delving into the technical criticism methods such as *jarḥ wa ta'dil*. This underscores that the work was designed as an introductory text, rather than as an in-depth scholarly or critical examination.²⁵

Several of Mahmud Yunus's key ideas presented in *Ilmu Mushthalah al-Hadits* are as follows:

a. The Position of Hadith in Relation to the Qur'an

Mahmud Yunus emphasizes that in Islamic law, Hadith occupies the second position after the Qur'an. This view aligns with the stance held by the majority of Hadith scholars. According to Mahmud Yunus, one of the main reasons Hadith is placed below the Qur'an is due to its level of authority and the strength of its transmission. The Qur'an is classified as *qat'i* (definitive) both in general and in detail, as it has been transmitted through *mutawātir* (mass-transmitted) reports, both in written and oral forms. In contrast, Hadith is considered *ẓhannī* (probabilistic) in its detailed content and *qat'i* only in general, because Hadith transmission during the first century of Islam was done orally.

²² Jajat Burhanuddin, *Ulama & Kekuasaan: Pergumulan Elite Muslim dalam Sejarah Indonesia* (Mizan Publika, 2012), 183. Lihat juga Munirah, "Mahmud Yunus dan Kontribusinya dalam Perkembangan Studi Hadis dan Ilmu Hadis di Indonesia," 285.

²³ Khazinatul Husna, "Analisis Buku Teks 'al-Muthala'ah al-Haditsah' Karangan K. H. Mahmud Yunus (Perspektif Metodologi Penyusunan Buku Teks Bahasa Arab)" (Skripsi, UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2013), 42.

²⁴ Yunus, *Ilmu Mushthalah al-Hadits*, 3.

²⁵ Yunus, 95; Hasibuan, "Mahmud Yunus dan Kontribusi Pemikirannya Terhadap Hadis," 10.

Therefore, from Mahmud Yunus's epistemological perspective, the *z̤hannī* nature of Hadith places it below the *qat'i* status of the Qur'an.

In the same book, Mahmud Yunus explains that Hadith serves two main functions: first, as *tabyīn* (clarification) of the Qur'anic verses, and second, as an independent source of law capable of establishing legal rulings on its own. He cites examples such as Hadiths prohibiting the consumption of domesticated donkeys (*ḥimār abliyyah*), predatory animals with fangs, and birds with claws. This view indicates that Mahmud Yunus acknowledges the independent legislative authority of Hadith, differing from the view of other scholars who consider Hadith as merely explanatory and subordinate to the Qur'an.²⁶

b. Hadiths Commonly Regarded as Mutawātir

In *Ilmu Mushthalah al-Hadits*, Mahmud Yunus not only presents the foundational theories of Hadith sciences but also clarifies what he considers to be common misconceptions—particularly regarding the classification of certain popular Hadiths as *mutawātir*. Mahmud Yunus rejects the claim made by some groups that the Hadith concerning the arrival of the Mahdi is *mutawātir*. He even cites the opinion of Ibn al-Jawzī, who classified the Hadith as *lā aṣla lah* (having no sound basis). He applies a similar critical stance to the Hadith about the descent of Jesus (*ʿĪsā*) at the end of time, asserting that it does not meet the criteria for *mutawātir* status.

Mahmud Yunus's critical attitude toward the status of such Hadiths reflects his active role in responding to and correcting prevailing religious understandings within society. Through this view, Mahmud Yunus demonstrates not only his competence in Hadith scholarship but also his modernist spirit in reexamining religious traditions with a rational and proportionate approach.²⁷

c. The Credibility of Narrators Whose Reports Are Acceptable

Like other Hadith scholars, Mahmud Yunus establishes *ʿadālah* (uprightness) and *ḍabt* (accuracy) as the essential criteria for a narrator whose Hadith is to be accepted. Furthermore, Mahmud Yunus provides a detailed explanation of these two qualities. According to him, *ʿadālah* encompasses several aspects: being a Muslim, having reached the age of maturity (*bāliḡh*), being of sound mind (*ʿāqil*), avoiding behavior that leads to *fisq* (moral corruption), and maintaining *murūʾah* (personal integrity and dignity). Meanwhile, *ḍabt*, according to Mahmud Yunus, includes the ability to accurately memorize the Hadith one narrates if transmitted from memory; strong comprehension of the written text if transmission is done through written sources; and sensitivity to textual changes or deviations. Additionally, a narrator must be able to recognize variations in wording that may alter the intended meaning if the narration is conveyed based on meaning (*bi al-maʿnā*).²⁸

Mahmud Yunus's detailed elaboration of *ʿadālah* and *ḍabt* aims to clarify the definitions and specific criteria of these qualities, ensuring a clear standard for determining the reliability of Hadith narrators.

d. *Dhai'f* Hadiths and the Law of Transmitting Them

Mahmud Yunus asserts that transmitting weak hadiths without elaborating on their weakness is a very significant harm. He identifies a consensus among leading scholars who condemn this practice, while tolerating the dissemination of weak hadiths accompanied by an explanation of their weak status.²⁹ From this perspective, it is clear that Mahmud Yunus prohibits the dissemination of

²⁶ Fauzhan 'Azima, "Ulumul Hadis Dan Modernisme Islam: Analisis Pemikiran Hadis Mahmud Yunus," 79.; Mahmud Yunus, *Ilmu Musthalah al-Hadits*, 4-5.

²⁷ Mahmud Yunus, *Ilmu Musthalah al-Hadits*, 24-27.

²⁸ Mahmud Yunus, 17.

²⁹ Yunus, 55.

weak hadiths without an explanation of their weak status, while at the same time permitting the dissemination of weak hadiths if accompanied by an explanation. The following is Mahmud Yunus' definition of *weak hadiths (dha'if)* in his book:

مَا فَقَدَ شَرْطًا أَوْ أَكْثَرَ مِنْ شُرُوطِ الصَّحِيحِ وَالْحَسَنِ

*Hadiths that do not meet one or more of the criteria for authentic or sound hadiths.*³⁰

In selecting hadith material, Mahmud Yunus also relied on classical Sunni sources such as Kutub al-Sittah and the additional works of Imam al-Suyuthi and al-Tabarani. He consistently chose hadiths classified as authentic or good, with ethical and moral quality as the primary consideration.³¹ His stance on avoiding weak or fabricated hadiths indicates caution, even without a systematic verification procedure for chains of transmission. He assigns quality labels without providing complete chains of transmission or critical explanations about the narrators, making his evaluation of hadith literature assumptive.

Based on this opinion, it can be understood that, according to Mahmud Yunus, the purpose of disseminating weak hadiths is merely to highlight their weaknesses, not to use them as legal evidence or guidelines for practice. In this regard, Mahmud Yunus can be categorized as a strict (*mutasyaddid*) scholar in his treatment of weak hadiths, both in terms of transmission and application.

e. Criticism of *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*

Mahmud Yunus devotes a specific chapter titled “*Intiqād ‘alā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*” (Critique of the Two Sahihs) in his work *Ilmu Mushthalab al-Hadits*. In this chapter, he presents various criticisms made by scholars such as al-Dāraquṭnī against *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*. Mahmud Yunus cites al-Dāraquṭnī's views, which question the authenticity of certain Hadiths found in both collections, deeming some of them weak (*dha'if*).³² Through this chapter, Yunus seeks to emphasize that even the two most revered Hadith compilations are not immune to scholarly critique. The inclusion of “*Intiqād ‘alā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*” reflects Mahmud Yunus's intellectual courage in scrutinizing and reassessing the content of these canonical works. This was a notably bold move, especially considering that during his time, the majority of scholars were content with the evaluations provided by Imams al-Bukhari and Muslim, and accepted their judgments without question.³³

Mahmud Yunus's stance—rejecting the notion that the authenticity of Hadiths in the two *ṣaḥīḥ* collections is absolute and final—illustrates his reformist spirit in the study of Hadith sciences. His approach reflects the principle that every scholarly work, no matter how authoritative, remains open to critical evaluation and review for the sake of advancing knowledge.

f. Matan Criticism of *Āḥād* Hadiths

In *Ilmu Mushthalab al-Hadits*, Mahmud Yunus also addresses the evaluation of the content (*matan*) of *āḥād* Hadiths—those transmitted by only one or a few narrators. Referring to the view of al-Shīrāzī in his work *al-Luma'*, he establishes that the content of an *āḥād* Hadith must fulfill four essential criteria: it must not contradict sound reason, scholarly consensus (*ijmā'*), Qur'anic verses, or *mutawātir* Hadiths. If an *āḥād* Hadith violates any of these conditions, it is to be rejected. Mahmud

³⁰ Yunus, 52.

³¹ Al-Ayyubi, “Pemikiran Mahmud Yunus Tentang Hadis Etika Dan Kontribusinya terhadap Perkembangan Kajian Hadis di Indonesia,” 150-151.

³² Yunus, *Ilmu Mushthalab al-Hadits*, 37.

³³ Hasibuan, “Mahmud Yunus dan Kontribusi Pemikirannya Terhadap Hadis,” 11.

Yunus also criticizes *ahād* reports that contain significant information which should have been widely known, yet were narrated by only one or two individuals.³⁴

The method of evaluating Hadith content developed by Mahmud Yunus shows strong parallels with the approach taken by Hanafi scholars, suggesting a possible influence of Hanafi legal and epistemological thought in his work. What is especially noteworthy is that Mahmud Yunus included a discussion on *matan* evaluation at a time when most Hadith scholars rarely addressed this topic. During that period, the study of Hadith sciences was primarily focused on *isnād* (chain of transmission) analysis, while the critical examination of Hadith content was often overlooked.³⁵

Mahmud Yunus's decision to include content evaluation in his work reflects intellectual progress and a reformist spirit within the field of Hadith studies. He emphasized that Hadith scholarship should not remain confined to *isnād* analysis alone. Still, he must also revive the critical research of Hadith content, as both *isnād* and *matan* are interrelated components that cannot be separated.³⁶

Although Mahmud Yunus does not explicitly engage in *matan* criticism within a technical framework, he can nonetheless be regarded as exhibiting intellectual courage by questioning Hadith narratives that are overly literal and lack rational justification. This approach illustrates that he did not accept all Hadiths uncritically, but rather exercised a selective process grounded in common sense—an orientation aligned with the spirit of Islamic modernism.³⁷ Yunus also demonstrated an awareness of the importance of *isnād* (chains of transmission), yet he did not adopt a critical approach toward narrators as typically found in classical Hadith scholarship. He did not employ principles of verification through biographical evaluation (*‘ilm al-rijāl*), nor did he engage in *sanad* reconstruction based on primary sources such as manuscripts and *sanad* catalogs.³⁸ This methodological stance is rooted in the view that overly comprehensive *isnād* criticism would complicate the instructional process. As such, Mahmud Yunus opted for a pragmatic and pedagogical approach over an entirely academic one, with the intent of simplifying the discipline for a broader, lay audience.³⁹

One of the significant strengths of Yunus's approach lies in its accessibility—he utilized the national language and presented a condensed summary of the fundamentals of Hadith sciences. He implicitly introduced the concept of *matan* criticism, infused rationalism into Hadith studies, and enhanced the moral clarity of religious education by rejecting weak (*da‘if*) Hadiths deemed questionable. However, his approach is not without limitations. The absence of a clear methodological structure to justify Hadith classifications reduces the scholarly credibility of *Ilmu Mushthalah al-Hadits* as a reference work in *‘ulūm al-ḥadīth*. His limited engagement with *isnād* techniques such as *jarḥ wa ta‘dīl* and *takbīrīj* could lead to the misperception that labels such as *ṣaḥīḥ* or *ḥasan* are sufficient without rigorous evaluation of both *sanad* and *matan*.

Nonetheless, Mahmud Yunus's methodology had a profound impact on Hadith education and scholarship in Indonesia. He opened the path for Hadith literacy among non-Arabic-speaking students and built a conceptual bridge between classical tradition and modern sensibilities. His approach fostered a critical attitude toward irrational Hadith narratives and helped align Islamic thought with

³⁴ Yunus, *Ilmu Musthalah al-Hadits*, 37.

³⁵ Kusnandar, “Studi Kritik Matan Hadis (Naqd Al-Matn): Kajian Sejarah dan Metodologi,” 6.

³⁶ Yunus, *Ilmu Musthalah al-Hadits*, 40; Fauzhan 'Azima, “Ulumul Hadis Dan Modernisme Islam: Analisis Pemikiran Hadis Mahmud Yunus,” 81.

³⁷ Azyumardi Azra, *Islam Substantif: Agar Umat Tidak Jadi Buib*, 1 ed. (Mizan, 2000), 110.

³⁸ Jonathan A.C. Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World*, 2nd ed. (Oneworld, 2017), 99.

³⁹ Zaitunah Subhan, “Rekonstruksi Pemikiran Hadis di Indonesia: Telaah atas Pendekatan Kontekstual Mahmud Yunus,” *Jurnal Studi Hadis* 5, no. 1 (2021): 43-65.

rational inquiry.⁴⁰ Although not fully adequate for advanced academic discourse, his pedagogical and epistemological contributions remain foundational in the development of Hadith studies in modern Indonesia.⁴¹

Mahmud Yunus' Position in Hadith Scholarship: Navigating Between Traditional Ulama and Modern Rationalism

The study of Mahmud Yunus' thought on hadith needs to be directed toward its substantive dimension, particularly regarding how he positioned hadith as an authoritative source in Islam. Mahmud Yunus came from a strong traditional Islamic educational background, yet in writing *Ilmu Musthalah al-Hadith*, he sought to present the principles of sanad and matn criticism in a systematic manner that could be accessible to madrasa students. This approach distinguished him from many classical scholars who emphasized transmission in a traditional sense. Instead, Yunus underscored the importance of sanad verification as a primary condition for the use of hadith, an emphasis that reflects a modernist perspective on the authority of religious texts.⁴²

One of the pivotal points in Yunus' methodology was his stance on *da'if* hadiths. In classical hadith literature, the majority of scholars permitted the use of weak hadiths in the context of *fada'il al-'amal*, provided that they did not contradict the principles of shari'ah. However, Mahmud Yunus adopted a more critical position. He tended not to give wide acceptance to weak hadiths in the construction of legal or moral arguments. However, he sometimes still acknowledged their existence as part of the transmission tradition. This stance illustrates that Yunus leaned more closely toward modern rationalism than toward traditionalism.⁴³

From the perspective of mainstream hadith scholarship, a strict rejection of *da'if* hadiths is not a common stance. The majority of classical hadith scholars acknowledged the limited use of weak hadiths within certain boundaries. Thus, Yunus' position could be considered divergent from the classical mainstream. However, in the context of the modernization of Islamic education, his stance provided methodological legitimacy for filtering hadiths to prevent confusion among students and the general public. Yunus' critical attitude toward weak hadiths was closely connected to his ideas on integrating hadith studies into the national education system. He sought to present hadiths in an authentic, valid, and morally relevant form for the nation's values. This can be observed in the structure of his book *Akhlak Menurut al-Qur'an dan Hadis Nabi*, where only reliable hadiths were cited to support character formation. This strategy indicates that the credibility of hadiths in education is not merely a matter of sanad, but also a matter of public trust in the validity of the text.⁴⁴

The practical implications of Yunus' stance are clearly reflected in the madrasa curriculum and Islamic education in Indonesia. By rejecting the broad use of *da'if* hadiths, he helped shape a more cautious academic tradition in compiling religious learning materials. This stands in contrast to practices in some pesantren, which still tolerate weak hadiths for purposes of spiritual motivation. Yunus's approach illustrates an epistemological shift from traditional frameworks toward a modern educational system that demands academic validity. The divergence between Yunus' orientation and that of mainstream classical hadith scholars does not necessarily indicate a direct influence of the

⁴⁰ Fauzhan 'Azima, "Ulumul Hadis Dan Modernisme Islam: Analisis Pemikiran Hadis Mahmud Yunus," 77.

⁴¹ Al-Ayyubi, "Pemikiran Mahmud Yunus Tentang Hadis Etika Dan Kontribusinya terhadap Perkembangan Kajian Hadis di Indonesia," 157; Munirah, "Mahmud Yunus dan Kontribusinya dalam Perkembangan Studi Hadis dan Ilmu Hadis di Indonesia," 292.

⁴² Munirah, "Mahmud Yunus dan Kontribusinya dalam Perkembangan Studi Hadis dan Ilmu Hadis di Indonesia," 288. Hasibuan, "Mahmud Yunus dan Kontribusi Pemikirannya Terhadap Hadis", 18.

⁴³ Hasibuan, "Mahmud Yunus dan Kontribusi Pemikirannya Terhadap Hadis", 18. Lihat juga Zulkifli, "Kritik Hadis Modern dan Implikasinya bagi Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 8, no. 2 (2020): 135-157.

⁴⁴ Mohamad Barmawi, *Perkembangan Pemikiran Hadis di Indonesia* (UIN Press, 2021), 210-224.

Mu'tazilite school. However, his rationalist and text-verifying mindset does resonate with the spirit of Islamic rationalism. Thus, Yunus' position can be understood as part of the character of Indonesian Islamic modernism, which adopts a critical spirit without completely abandoning tradition.⁴⁵

In the context of historiography, Yunus stands at the crossroads between the tradition of classical scholars and the modernity of Islamic education. His works emphasize that hadith should not merely be preserved as normative texts but must also function as an authoritative source of education. For this reason, the careful selection of high-quality hadiths becomes an essential requirement for maintaining their credibility in the eyes of students. This further reinforces the view that Yunus' position was to construct a new tradition in hadith studies in Indonesia.⁴⁶ Yunus' thought also contributes to the contemporary academic discourse on hadith. In recent decades, criticism of the use of *da'if* hadith has become increasingly prominent, both in Indonesia and across the wider Muslim world. His emphasis on the authenticity of transmissions makes his perspective relevant to modern currents that demand greater caution in the application of hadith. This position demonstrates the continuity of his ideas with modern hadith criticism as it has developed in both the Middle Eastern and Western scholarly contexts.

The influence of Yunus' thought on Islamic education is also transformative. By rejecting weak (*dha'if*) hadiths, he directed religious learning toward the foundation of sound (*ṣaḥīḥ*) and fair (*ḥasan*) hadiths, thereby making educational content epistemologically stronger. This is crucial in the context of shaping a critical and educated Muslim generation. Thus, Yunus' contribution in filtering hadiths can be seen as part of a broader strategy to improve the quality of Islamic education in Indonesia. In academic literature, Yunus' position can be categorized as a "moderate reformist." He was not as extreme as some Orientalists who tended to be skeptical toward all hadiths, but neither was he as conservative as the majority of classical scholars who still tolerated weak hadiths. With this moderate approach, Yunus sought to maintain a balance between the authority of tradition and the demands of modernity. This balance is an important legacy that distinguished him from other scholars of his time.⁴⁷

The overall stance and methodology of Yunus demonstrate his consistent credibility as a hadith scholar. He managed to preserve the integrity of the scholarly tradition while introducing a rational nuance that suited the Indonesian context. In the long run, his thought has inspired Indonesian Muslim scholars to develop a hadith methodology that is critical, contextual, and relevant to the needs of national education. Thus, the position of Mahmud Yunus' thought in hadith studies can be understood as a synthesis between the mainstream of classical hadith scholarship and modern rationalism. While still acknowledging the value of tradition, he refused to compromise on weak narrations. Through his works, Yunus steered hadith studies in Indonesia toward a more credible, applicative, and transformative orientation, which ultimately enriched contemporary hadith literature and the national Islamic education system.

Analysis of Mahmud Yunus' Major Contributions to Hadith Studies

Mahmud Yunus, as one of the central figures in the history of modern Islamic thought in Indonesia, is not only known as a pioneer of religious education and the author of a Qur'anic exegesis in the Indonesian language, but he also made a significant contribution to the development of Hadith studies. Although he did not pursue a formal academic path as a Hadith scholar like the classical *muhaddithin*, Yunus demonstrated deep concern for the transmission, understanding, and

⁴⁵ A Syarif, "Hadis Dha'if dan Pendidikan Islam: Sebuah Tinjauan Kritis," *Al-Risalah* 14, no. 1 (102M): 2018.

⁴⁶ Munawir, "Historiografi Ilmu Hadis di Indonesia: Pendekatan dan Perkembangannya," *Jurnal Sejarah Islam* 3, no. 2 (2018): 40-59.

⁴⁷ Muhammad Galih Kusuma Wardhana dan Baidi Baidi, "Reformasi Pendidikan Islam oleh Mahmud Yunus: Integrasi Ilmu Agama dan Umum dalam Kurikulum Modern," *TSAQOFAH* 5, no. 4 (2025): 3646-61, <https://doi.org/10.58578/tsaqofah.v5i4.6414>.

dissemination of Hadith through a pedagogical and populist approach. His works in the field of Hadith reflect a da'wah spirit grounded in enlightenment and rationality, as well as a strong orientation toward public religious education. An analysis of his writings reveals his methodological characteristics, scholarly quality, and strategic role in advancing Hadith understanding among students and the broader Muslim society in 20th-century Indonesia.

One of Mahmud Yunus's most important contributions to Hadith studies is his book titled *Ilmu Musthalah al-Hadits*, which was published in two versions: an Arabic version (published in 1941) and an Indonesian version (co-authored with Mahmud Aziz and published in 1974).⁴⁸ The book was written as a teaching resource for madrasahs and Islamic higher education institutions, providing a brief yet systematic introduction to the science of Hadith. In this work, Yunus outlines basic definitions of *sahih*, *hasan*, *da'if*, *mutawatir*, and *ahad* Hadiths, and explains the significance of *sanad* (chain of transmission) and *matan* (content)⁴⁹. The writing format reflects Mahmud Yunus's characteristic style: concise, clear, and accessible to students. Although he does not employ a philological or historical-critical approach like classical or contemporary Hadith scholars, the book makes a substantial contribution by introducing the fundamental tools of Hadith science to a broader Indonesian audience.

This book succeeded in becoming a primary reference in the madrasah curriculum from the 1970s to the early 2000s, due to its presentation style that matched the comprehension level of intermediate students.⁵⁰ Furthermore, according to Al-Ayyubi (2024), the book reflects Mahmud Yunus's bold initiative in localizing the science of Hadith through the translation of Arabic terminology and the use of contextual and applicable discussions⁵¹. Another influential work is *Akhlak Menurut al-Qur'an dan Hadis Nabi* ("Morality According to the Qur'an and the Prophet's Hadiths"), first published in 1978. In this book, Mahmud Yunus compiles Islamic moral teachings based on Qur'anic verses and Hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad, with the aim of serving as a moral education textbook in schools and madrasahs. The Hadiths cited are sourced from authoritative collections such as *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*, although Yunus does not include *takbrij* or detailed evaluations of the *sanad* quality. Nevertheless, the thematic arrangement of Hadiths on topics such as honesty, responsibility, patience, and reliance on God (*tawakkal*) demonstrates that the book was designed with a pragmatic and applicative orientation, in line with the spirit of Islamic character education. This book plays a significant role in educating students to use Hadiths as a foundation for ethical and moral formation in everyday life⁵². Yunus did not intend to analyze Hadiths from a technical perspective of *isnad* and *matn* criticism; instead, he focused on the educational function of Hadith as a tool for shaping Muslim character. This model has been widely adopted in Islamic education curricula in Indonesia, including contemporary madrasah textbooks.

Mahmud Yunus also frequently emphasized the importance of consistency in avoiding reliance on weak (*da'if*) hadiths as legal or theological evidence. As shown by studies that examined his reasoning, Yunus actively ensured that only *maqbul* (acceptable) hadiths were employed in his discussions, deliberately avoiding the misuse of weak isnads without clarification. This became one of

⁴⁸ Munirah, "Mahmud Yunus dan Kontribusinya dalam Perkembangan Studi Hadis dan Ilmu Hadis di Indonesia," 284.

⁴⁹ Yunus, *Ilmu Musthalah al-Hadits*, 2.

⁵⁰ Umami Kalsum Hasibuan, "Mahmud Yunus dan Kontribusi Pemikirannya Terhadap Hadis," *Istinarah: Riset Keagamaan, Sosial dan Budaya* 2, no. 1 (2020):7, <https://doi.org/10.31958/istinarah.v2i1.2005>.

⁵¹ M. Zia Al-Ayyubi, "Pemikiran Mahmud Yunus Tentang Hadis Etika Dan Kontribusinya terhadap Perkembangan Kajian Hadis di Indonesia, 151.

⁵² Fauzhan 'Azima, "Ulumul Hadis Dan Modernisme Islam: Analisis Pemikiran Hadis Mahmud Yunus," 7.

the key points of his scholarly credibility as well as his methodological moderation.⁵³ Another equally significant contribution was Yunus' commitment to incorporating hadith studies into Indonesia's formal educational curriculum. He was a pioneer of Islamic educational modernization, designing a classical learning structure that replaced the traditional *sorogan* system and establishing a tiered educational framework ranging from *ibtidaiyah* to *aliyah*. This reform strengthened the position of hadith studies as a systematic component of Islamic education. Beyond curriculum design, Mahmud Yunus also introduced pedagogical approaches such as the lecture method, question-and-answer sessions, assignments, demonstrations, and group work in the teaching of hadith and other Islamic disciplines. These methods enhanced interactivity and improved student comprehension, in contrast to the rote memorization methods that had previously dominated.⁵⁴

Viewed structurally, Mahmud Yunus's Hadith works can be categorized as employing a pedagogical approach with a descriptive character. He did not compose Hadith works for advanced academic purposes or as a theoretical contribution to the methodological development of Hadith sciences. Rather, he emphasized the educational function and the application of Islamic values in daily life. His writings do not present technical discussions of *isnad* criticism, such as those developed in *jarh wa ta'dil*, *takhrīj*, or *sanad* reconstruction. However, Mahmud Yunus consistently refers to authoritative Hadith collections and attempts to select Hadiths with *sahih* or *hasan* status, even though he does not explain the process of evaluation in detail.⁵⁵

Mahmud Yunus's Hadith writings also represent the spirit of Islamic modernism that emerged in the early 20th century, particularly within the Indonesian context. He positioned Hadith as a value source that must be contextualized, rather than simply memorized or treated as rigid doctrine. This spirit is also evident in his tendency to present Hadiths in the Indonesian language, making them more accessible to students and the general public. In line with this, scholars have noted that Mahmud Yunus's works successfully laid the foundation for Hadith literacy in Indonesia through a populist and rational approach⁵⁶. His choice to write in the form of textbooks also shows his effort to bridge the gap between classical Islamic scholarship and the needs of modern Indonesian Muslims, who yearn for Islamic literature in their national language.

Thus, the inventory of Mahmud Yunus's works on Hadith demonstrates that his intellectual contributions lie primarily in the realm of educational dissemination and public enlightenment, rather than in the academic-methodological domain of Hadith sciences. He approached Hadith as an instrument for ethics and *da'wah*, not as a subject of deep scientific criticism. Although his works do not offer innovations in Hadith theory or methodology, their historical and cultural value is substantial, as they served as pioneering efforts in the teaching of Hadith within the context of modern Indonesia. This contribution stands as a significant legacy for Islamic education in Indonesia and has paved the way for subsequent generations to develop more methodologically rigorous yet grounded approaches to Hadith studies. The main contributions of Mahmud Yunus to hadith studies in Indonesia lie in his presentation of hadith methodology in the local language, his consistency in employing only sound hadiths, his reform of Islamic educational curricula, his innovative pedagogical approaches, and his

⁵³ Imam Suhada dkk., "Analisis Konsistensi Mahmud Yunus Tentang Tidak Berhujjah dengan Hadis Dhaif," *Ulunnaba* 11, no. 2 (2022): 110–25.

⁵⁴ Ferdian Ferdian dan Weni Afriani, "Mahmud Yunus Dan Pemikirannya Dalam Ranah Pemikiran Islam," *Tarbany: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 11, no. 1 (2024): 11–21, <https://doi.org/10.32923/tarbawy.v11i1.3928>.

⁵⁵ Muhammad Abdullah, "Pembaharuan Pemikiran Mahmud Yunus Tentang Pendidikan Islam dan Relevansinya Dengan Pendidikan Modern," *Al Murabbi: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 5, no. 2 (2020): 25, <https://doi.org/10.35891/amb.v5i2.2109>.

⁵⁶ Munirah, "Mahmud Yunus dan Kontribusinya dalam Perkembangan Studi Hadis dan Ilmu Hadis di Indonesia," 289.

pioneering role in expanding hadith studies into the sphere of mass education. Thus, Yunus not only enriched the literature but also shaped the way subsequent generations learn and understand hadith.

The Impact of Mahmud Yunus' Hadith Books to Contemporary Hadith Literature in Indonesia

Mahmud Yunus stands as one of the pioneering figures in the indigenization of Islamic education in Indonesia through a systematic, modern, and source-based pedagogical approach. In the realm of Hadith studies, although his contribution does not directly engage in the reconstruction of *isnād* and *matn* criticism methodologies in the manner of contemporary international Hadith scholars, he successfully laid a strong foundational literacy for students and teachers in Indonesia's Islamic educational institutions. His contribution lies not only in the content of his works but also in their wide reach, sustained influence, and cultural penetration within the national Islamic education system. This distinguishes Mahmud Yunus from other Hadith thinkers of his time.

Mahmud Yunus has had a significant influence on the formation of contemporary hadith literature in Indonesia through the dissemination of his writings, which are easily accessible to both students and the wider community. From the beginning of his career, he authored a large number of books—more than seventy-five titles—including *Tafsir Qur'an Karim* and the Arabic–Indonesian dictionary, both of which remain in use today. This became the foundation for the integration of hadith terminology and concepts into the Indonesian language in a more popular form, no longer restricted solely to academic circles. In this way, his works have become fundamental references in modern hadith literature, both in madrasahs and in universities.⁵⁷ His work *Ilmu Musthalah al-Hadits* has long been a core text in the curriculum of madrasahs and Islamic educational institutions since the 1970s. The book was designed to present the basic concepts of Hadith sciences in an accessible and practical manner. Written in the Indonesian language and organized systematically according to key themes of classical Hadith science, the book enabled Indonesian students without an Arabic background to access Hadith studies directly.⁵⁸ This was particularly significant, considering that at the time, most Hadith literature remained available only in Arabic and had yet to be translated into local languages.

Mahmud Yunus also contributed to formulating a pedagogical approach to Hadith learning in schools. He treated Hadith as an integral component of moral and religious education. In his work *Akhlak Menurut al-Qur'an dan Hadis Nabi* (“Ethics According to the Qur'an and the Prophet's Hadith”), Yunus cited Prophetic traditions relevant to character formation, such as honesty, patience, and responsibility. While the book does not offer technical analysis of *isnād* or the authenticity of the Hadiths in an academic framework, the use of Hadiths sourced from canonical collections such as *sahih al-Bukhari* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* reflects Yunus's careful selection and awareness of textual credibility.⁵⁹

Another significant contribution of Mahmud Yunus lies in his success in integrating Hadith studies as an inseparable component of Indonesia's national Islamic education system. During his tenure at the Ministry of Religious Affairs and through his involvement in formulating the national madrasa curriculum, Mahmud Yunus advocated for Hadith to be taught as an independent discipline, alongside *fiqh*, *ʿaqidah*, and *tafsir*. This initiative was closely linked to his strategic role as the initiator of structured Islamic educational institutions such as *Sekolah Guru Agama* (Islamic Teacher Training

⁵⁷Gusnanda, Husna, “Mahmud Yunus' Book of 'Ilmu Mushthalah al-Hadith: Existence, Typology, and Uniqueness in Indonesian Hadith Studies.”, 47.

⁵⁸Hasibuan, “Mahmud Yunus dan Kontribusi Pemikirannya Terhadap Hadis,” 2020, 10.

⁵⁹Mahmud Yunus, *Akhlak Menurut al-Qur'an dan Hadis Nabi*, (Hida Karya Agung, 1978), 1978),vi.

Schools) and *Perguruan Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri* (State Islamic Higher Education Institutions).⁶⁰ The impact of this policy has been long-lasting, giving rise to generations of students who have acquired a foundational and systematic understanding of hadith. Its cumulative effect is reflected in the growing body of hadith literature in Indonesia, ranging from school textbooks to academic works.

Contemporary hadith literature in Indonesia no longer focuses solely on the disciplines of sanad and matn, but also incorporates pedagogical aspects such as morality and character. Mahmud Yunus' contributions, particularly through texts like *Akhlak Menurut al-Qur'an dan Hadis Nabi*, have inspired modern authors to present hadith not merely as a source of religious texts, but also as material for shaping the moral character of the nation. This reference has further enriched the pattern of hadith literature, making it not only theoretical but also contextual and applicable in the modern era. Moreover, Yunus' approach of prioritizing the local language as a medium for the study of hadith has fostered the emergence of a scholarly community that produces both popular and academic texts in Indonesian. Researchers and educators are now encouraged to write reviews, summaries, and teaching materials that are accessible to non-elite academic audiences. Thus, the local corpus of hadith literature has expanded beyond the classical tradition that was highly technical and limited to Arabic as its sole medium.⁶¹

In practical terms, Mahmud Yunus paved the way for a new generation of Hadith scholars to develop more advanced methods and critical tools. Through the foundational knowledge he compiled, students gained sufficient epistemic grounding to pursue Hadith studies at a higher level. According to M. Zia Al-Ayyubi (2022), Mahmud Yunus's contribution to Hadith textbooks significantly influenced the dissemination of Islamic education curricula across Southeast Asia, particularly due to the adoption of his works by institutions in Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam.⁶² Beyond regional boundaries, Mahmud Yunus's impact has also gained attention from international scholars. Greg Barton notes that the transformation of Islamic education in mid-20th-century Indonesia owes much to intellectual figures like Mahmud Yunus, who successfully bridged the gap between classical Islamic teachings and modern educational systems.⁶³ Barton regards Yunus's influence on Indonesian Islamic studies as extensive, highlighting his moderate approach to Hadith education as a sign of his intelligent adaptation to contemporary demands.

From a global academic perspective, Mahmud Yunus's model of Hadith instruction may be seen as a form of contextualizing Islamic sciences within the national education system. This aligns with John L. Esposito's notion that adapting Islamic teachings to modern educational structures is an urgent necessity for Muslims facing the challenges of modernity.⁶⁴ Mahmud Yunus's contribution in this regard represents a practical realization of this concept within the Indonesian context. Mahmud Yunus' approach bridges the gap between the classical *pesantren* tradition and the demands of modern education in Indonesia. Many contemporary works, such as student research and hadith journals, begin their studies with simple and applicative introductions—an epistemic tradition inspired by Yunus' writings. Thus, Yunus has become a model in translating complex theories into accessible understanding, which is now embedded in the methodology of hadith education and contemporary literature. For both foreign and local authors, Yunus' works are often taken as a point of reference in

⁶⁰Munirah, "Mahmud Yunus dan Kontribusinya dalam Perkembangan Studi Hadis dan Ilmu Hadis di Indonesia," 288.

⁶¹Andi Sahputra Harahap, "Mahmud Yunus Dan Kontribusinya Dalam Perkembangan Studi Hadis dan Ilmu Hadis di Indonesia," *Hukumah: Jurnal Hukum Islam* 2, no. 2 (2019): 18–33, <http://dx.doi.org/10.55403/hukumah.v2i2.149>.

⁶² Al-Ayyubi, "Pemikiran Mahmud Yunus Tentang Hadis Etika Dan Kontribusinya terhadap Perkembangan Kajian Hadis di Indonesia," 154.

⁶³ Greg Barton, *The Muhammadiyah and Islamic Modernism in Indonesia*. (Monash Asia Institute, 2002), 112.

⁶⁴John L. Esposito, *Islam and Politics*, 4 ed. (Syracuse University Press, 1998), 179.

examining the transformation of religious literature in Indonesia. For instance, studies on the history of Islamic education frequently highlight Yunus' role in modernizing the curriculum and the language of instruction as a foundation for the study of contemporary religious literature.⁶⁵

Moreover, the impact of his works on Hadith curriculum development in higher education became increasingly apparent in the 1990s. Many lecturers and researchers at Islamic State Universities (PTKIN) began using Mahmud Yunus's books as introductory references for courses on *Ulum al-Hadith*. Students were encouraged to understand Hadith classification and the role of *isnād* as prerequisites for advanced Hadith analysis. According to Nasaruddin Umar, figures like Mahmud Yunus played a pivotal role in introducing the academic world of Islam to generations previously confined to traditional *pesantren* education.⁶⁶ The emergence of various Hadith-focused academic journals in Indonesia in the early 21st century can also be traced back to the groundwork laid by Yunus. His educational approach established a systematic thinking framework that enabled the rise of interest in *matn* and *isnād* criticism, as well as more sophisticated transmission methodologies. Mahmud Yunus's works served as a bridge between the classical Islamic tradition and contemporary approaches, positioning him not only as an educator but also as a pioneer of Hadith epistemology in Indonesia. Furthermore, contemporary literature has become increasingly enriched with perspectives that balance methodological criticism and educational effectiveness—a synthesis initially introduced by Yunus.⁶⁷ It should also be acknowledged that Yunus' impact varies regionally. In West Sumatra, the development of contemporary hadith literature in the local language is particularly strong due to Yunus' Minangkabau-based intellectual tradition. This influence is evident in the emergence of local authors who adapt Yunus' approach to their specific social and cultural contexts. Such developments also enhance the pluralism of Indonesian hadith literature within the framework of the country's diverse national culture.

Mahmud Yunus also played a key role in shaping the public perception of Hadith as an accessible discipline, not exclusive to the elite circles of traditional scholars or Arab academics. In this regard, his vision parallels that of Fazlur Rahman, who emphasized the importance of granting access to primary Islamic sources for the general Muslim public in order to foster a critically aware Muslim intellectual society.⁶⁸ By opening such pathways, Mahmud Yunus laid the foundation for a democratization of Hadith studies in Indonesia—an approach that is inclusive and accessible. Therefore, Mahmud Yunus's contribution to Hadith scholarship must not be viewed in isolation. He was not merely a textbook author; he was a system builder, a curriculum designer, and a strategic architect of an Islamic education system deeply rooted in the Hadith tradition. His role extended far beyond textual compilation, as he established an epistemic infrastructure that enabled Hadith studies to flourish in the Indonesian context. Although he did not write academic Hadith works in the style of Orientalists or neo-traditionalists, Mahmud Yunus instilled the spirit of Hadith literacy and inclusivity among generations of Indonesian learners.

Mahmud Yunus has also left a comprehensive impact on contemporary hadith literature in Indonesia, spanning language, curriculum, popular methodologies, and academic historiography. Although there are critiques regarding the depth of his methodological rigor, his influence remains dominant, giving rise to a new tradition of hadith writing and teaching that is inclusive, applicative,

⁶⁵Ilham Abdul Jalil, "Islamic Education Perspective of Mahmud Yunus," *ATTAQWA: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam dan Anak Usia Dini* 3, no. 1 (2024): 15–26, <https://doi.org/10.58355/attaqwa.v3i1.59>.

⁶⁶Nasaruddin Umar, *Argumen Kesetaraan Gender Perspektif Al-Qur'an* (Paramadina, 1999), 26.

⁶⁷Al-Ayyubi, "Pemikiran Mahmud Yunus Tentang Hadis Etika Dan Kontribusinya terhadap Perkembangan Kajian Hadis di Indonesia.", 158.

⁶⁸Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (University of Chicago Press, 1982), 18.

and modern. Contemporary hadith literature has thus developed as a dynamic legacy, continually interacting with both traditional paradigms and the demands of the present era.

Credibility and Influence: Mahmud Yunus' Impact on Contemporary Hadith Literature

Assessing the credibility of a figure in Hadith studies requires a comprehensive approach encompassing epistemological, methodological, and practical dimensions. In this context, Mahmud Yunus occupies a unique position. Though not a *muhaddith* in the technical sense like classical scholars such as al-Bukhārī or Muslim, he succeeded in integrating Hadith science into Islamic education and intellectual discourse in modern Indonesia. Therefore, evaluating Mahmud Yunus's credibility in Hadith studies must consider his scholarly integrity, accuracy in source usage, methodological construction of works, and relevance to the development of contemporary Hadith studies.

One of the fundamental aspects in evaluating his credibility lies in his consistent treatment of Hadith as a primary reference within Islamic educational literature. For instance, in his book *Akhlak Menurut al-Qur'an dan Hadis Nabi* (Morality According to the Qur'an and the Prophet's Hadith), he not only selected popular traditions but also referred to authoritative collections such as *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. Although he did not conduct *takhrīj* or apply critical sanad analysis in the academic sense, his choice of sources reflects a preference for sound Hadiths that have been widely accepted by scholars throughout history.⁶⁹

Nevertheless, several important observations must be noted. In *Ilmu Musthalah al-Hadits*, although presented concisely and pedagogically, several definitions and classifications of Hadith are delivered normatively, without engaging with the broader scholarly debates—either classical or contemporary. This simplification tends to produce a basic understanding among students. Mahmud Yunus deliberately simplified the technical aspects of Hadith science to ensure effective delivery in the classroom setting.⁷⁰

From a methodological standpoint, Mahmud Yunus did not develop a systematic approach to the sociological context of Hadith or offer a critical re-reading of *matn* content. His use of Hadiths was primarily to support moral and jurisprudential themes, without questioning the social conditions surrounding the emergence of these texts. This differs from the approaches of scholars such as Fazlur Rahman, Amina Wadud, or Asma Barlas, who advocate for contextual reinterpretations of Hadith as part of reconstructing Islamic thought in response to contemporary issues⁷¹ In the author's view, this limitation does not diminish Mahmud Yunus's credibility but rather reflects the focus and historical context of his era. He wrote at a time when historical-critical approaches to Hadith were not yet widespread in Indonesia. He positioned Hadith within a framework of character building and moral education, and within that context, his contribution remains significant. As noted by Greg Fealy, figures such as Mahmud Yunus played a crucial role in shaping the structure of Islamic knowledge in post-colonial Indonesia, even though they had not yet transcended traditional methodological boundaries.⁷²

The evaluation of Mahmud Yunus' credibility cannot be separated from his institutional influence. As a figure in Islamic education bureaucracy, he has the authority to determine the direction of the religious education curriculum. This is where his credibility as an intellectual-bureaucratic actor lies, as he is able to integrate hadith science into the state structure. Furthermore, Mahmud Yunus also

⁶⁹ Mahmud Yunus, *Akhlak Menurut al-Qur'an dan Hadis Nabi*, 3.

⁷⁰ Yunus, *Ilmu Musthalah al-Hadits*, 23. Lihat juga Syeh Hawib Hamzah, "Pemikiran Mahmud Yunus dalam Pembaruan Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia," *Dinamika Ilmu* 14, no. 1 (2014): 123–47, <https://doi.org/10.21093/di.v14i1.18>.

⁷¹ Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, 39.

⁷² Greg Fealy, *Islamic Modernism in Indonesia: The Contribution of Educational Reformers, in Indonesia: The Making of a Modern Muslim State*, Robert Hefner (Brill, 2007), 215.

demonstrates sensitivity to the Islamic literacy needs of the general public. He recognizes the importance of providing hadith literature that is accessible to elementary and secondary school students. As a result, he has compiled books with a popular approach while still basing them on authentic sources. In this context, Mahmud Yunus' credibility lies in his ability to bridge the gap between the world of scholarship and the needs of the general public. Not all academics are able to perform this role in a balanced manner. According to Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi, the role of Muslim intellectuals is not only to produce knowledge, but also to disseminate and simplify it for the benefit of the ummah.⁷³

Mahmud Yunus' credibility can also be seen in the context of the continuity and influence of his work. To this day, the book *Ilmu Musthalah al-Hadith* is still used in many madrasahs and universities as introductory teaching material. This resilience demonstrates the relevance of its approach and content. In modern academic discourse, few classical or semi-classical works have managed to endure across decades without losing their educational function. This shows that despite its simplicity, Mahmud Yunus' work meets the basic educational needs of hadith studies in Indonesia. At the same time, contemporary Indonesian hadith scholars have built their academic foundations on what Mahmud Yunus pioneered. Names such as Ahmad Syafii Maarif, M. Quraish Shihab, and others began their studies within the educational system co-shaped by Mahmud Yunus. Therefore, Mahmud Yunus' credibility is structural; he is not merely an individual intellectual but also an institutional pillar in the architecture of Islamic education in Indonesia.

In the international discourse, Mahmud Yunus' credibility can be understood as part of the local adaptation of classical Islamic studies. As explained by William Shepard, one of the distinctive features of modernist Islamic thought is the transformation of classical ideas into more contextual and applicable ones in the midst of modernity. Mahmud Yunus did not seek to rival the classical hadith tradition, but rather reformulated it to suit the needs of the times and the realities of national education.⁷⁴

Therefore, Mahmud Yunus' credibility in hadith studies does not lie in the sharpness of his criticism of *sanad* and *matan*, as practiced by classical hadith scholars and contemporary academics. Instead, his credibility stems from his success in mainstreaming hadith studies in the national education system, compiling popular literature based on authentic sources, and reaching broad segments of society that were previously far from access to Islamic literature. In the context of 20th-century Indonesia, Mahmud Yunus was a driving force in hadith literacy who played a central role in shaping a modern, accessible, and contextual structure of Islamic scholarship.

Conclusion

The primary contribution of Mahmud Yunus to hadith studies lies in his effort to simplify *Ilmu Musthalah al-Hadis* so that it could be easily understood by students in madrasahs as well as by the wider community. Through his works, he not only taught the fundamental principles of *sanad* and *matan* criticism but also presented them in a communicative form. This addresses the second research question, namely how his contributions are realized in Indonesian hadith literature that is both pedagogical and structural. Moreover, Mahmud Yunus' credibility is evident in his position as a reformer of Islamic education, successfully integrating hadith into the national curriculum framework. He not only produced academic works but also designed formal learning systems that utilized hadith

⁷³ Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi, "Relasi Intelektual dan Umat: Antara Elitisme dan Populisme dalam Studi Islam," *Islamica: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 11, no. 1 (2016): 22.

⁷⁴ William Shepard, "Modern Interpretations of Islam," *Religion Compass* 1, no. 1 (2007): 115–35.

as an instrument for shaping the moral character of the nation. This demonstrates that his contributions extend beyond the theoretical realm, reaching into practical and institutional domains, thus addressing the needs of modern Islamic education.

In terms of his influence on contemporary hadith literature, Mahmud Yunus successfully paved the way for the emergence of more applicative works. Subsequent hadith literature in Indonesia no longer focused solely on the authenticity of the *sanad*, but also on ethical, social, and pedagogical relevance. Through works such as *Ilmu Musthalah al-Hadits* and *Akhlak Menurut al-Qur'an dan Hadis Nabi*, Yunus positioned hadith as a source of ethics, education, and moral values for Muslims, grounded in authentic literature. Although his approach did not yet involve rigorous *sanad-matan* criticism or textual contextualization, his contributions were highly significant in shaping the patterns of hadith literacy in postcolonial Indonesia. His books became an epistemic introduction for Indonesian Muslim generations, guiding them toward deeper hadith studies.

The impact of his works on contemporary hadith literature can be observed through the transformation of the literature's orientation toward greater responsiveness to the challenges of the times. This influence also demonstrates continuity between classical tradition and the demands of modernity. By positioning hadith as a source of moral and social values in education, Mahmud Yunus showed that hadith studies can play a vital role in shaping a modern society without losing its traditional roots. This confirms that his contributions are transformative while simultaneously enriching the epistemology of hadith studies in Indonesia.

However, this study also acknowledges limitations in Yunus' approach, which did not fully integrate contemporary interdisciplinary methodologies such as hermeneutics or modern historical criticism. Nevertheless, these limitations open opportunities for further development of hadith studies by continuing Yunus' legacy through synthesis with modern approaches. In this way, hadith studies in Indonesia can continue to evolve dynamically.

In conclusion, the final finding of this research is that Mahmud Yunus' credibility in hadith studies cannot be separated from two main dimensions: his academic contributions, which produced fundamental works, and his transformative influence, which steered contemporary hadith literature toward greater applicability. Through his writings and his role, Mahmud Yunus established himself as a figure who bridges tradition and modernity, ensuring that his legacy remains significant for the development of hadith studies and Islamic education in Indonesia, both now and in the future.

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