



Sahnun's Religious-Conservative Educational Thought and Its Relevance to Contemporary Pesantren Education: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

Sahnun's religious-conservative thought, as articulated by a prominent ninth-century Maliki jurist, made a significant contribution to preserving Islamic orthodoxy through his monumental work *al-Mudawwanah al-Kubrā*. This intellectual orientation emphasizes strong adherence to authoritative religious texts, the authority of the ulama, and the strict implementation of Islamic legal practices. Meanwhile, *pesantren* in Indonesia are widely recognized as traditional Islamic educational institutions that prioritize discipline, obedience to scholarly authority, and the embedding religious character. The intersection between Sahnun's conservatism and the pesantren tradition therefore warrants closer scholarly examination. The central research question of this study concerns how Sahnun's religious-conservative thought is understood and the extent to which it is relevant to the pesantren educational system. This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach following the PRISMA guidelines. Data were drawn from 21 Scopus-indexed journal articles published between 2015 and 2025. The selection process involved identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and the synthesis of relevant findings. The results indicate that key elements of Sahnun's religious conservatism, such as textual authority, *fiqh* discipline, and a firm commitment to preserving tradition, exhibit strong resonance with contemporary pesantren education. This study affirms that Sahnun's conservatism not only played a crucial role in the historical development of Islamic law but also provides a normative and epistemological foundation for the continuity of pesantren as Islamic educational institutions in the contemporary era.

Keywords: *Sahnun; Religious Conservatism; Pesantren; Islamic Education.*

Introduction

Within the historical landscape of Islamic legal thought, the name Abū Sa‘īd ‘Abd al-Salām ibn Sa‘īd ibn Ḥabīb al-Tanūkhī al-Qayrawānī, more widely known as Sahnūn (160–240 AH / 776–854 CE), occupies a central position, particularly in the development of the Mālikī school of law in the Maghrib (North Africa).¹ The appellation “Sahnūn” emerged as a distinctive societal designation, reflecting the considerable social, moral, and intellectual influence he exercised during his

¹ Suud Sarim Karimullah and Arif Sugitanata, “The Hanafi School of Islamic Jurisprudence Literature: A Historical Account,” *Journal of Islamic History and Manuscript* 2, no. 1 (May 9, 2023): 1–20, <https://doi.org/10.24090/jihm.v2i1.7788>.



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lifetime.² Sahnūn lived in a period marked by intense political, social, and religious dynamics. Qayrawān, where he devoted much of his scholarly life, was one of the major centers of Islamic civilization after Medina and al-Andalus. The city developed into a hub of learning and a stronghold of Mālikī jurisprudence. Sahnūn's presence within this context exerted a profound influence on the consolidation of Islamic legal authority in the Maghrib region.³

His monumental work, *al-Mudawwanah al-Kubrā*, stands as enduring evidence of his intellectual contribution. This text represents a comprehensive codification of Islamic law within the Mālikī tradition, compiled through intensive scholarly dialogue with ‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn al-Qāsim, one of the principal disciples of Imām Mālik. *Al-Mudawwanah* contains a systematic compilation of legal opinions (*fatāwā*), doctrinal positions, and juridical debates derived not only from Imām Mālik but also from the interpretive elaborations of his students. Owing to its structured organization, the work functions as an encyclopedic reference for Mālikī jurisprudence, guiding Muslims in the implementation of Islamic law.⁴

Within the Mālikī school, Sahnūn is widely regarded as the “guardian of orthodoxy.” While Imām Mālik is recognized as the founder of the school, Sahnūn is understood as the figure who safeguarded its doctrinal integrity and ensured its fidelity to foundational teachings.⁵ He was known for his firm rejection of legal practices deemed deviant or excessively permissive, even when such positions brought him into conflict with political authorities. Notably, he refused legal compromises that could weaken the authority of the shari‘a for political expediency. This stance reflects a religious-conservative orientation, an intellectual and practical posture that emphasizes obedience to revealed texts and the preservation of scholarly tradition against excessive rationalism and political pressure.⁶

² Helmi Imran and Karimuddin Abdulllah Lawang, “Development of the Shafi‘iyyah Fiqh Thought Pattern and the Role of Al-Nawawī as a Unifier,” *Al-Istinbath: Jurnal Hukum Islam* 7, no. 1 (May 30, 2022): 141, <https://doi.org/10.29240/jhi.v7i1.4233>.

³ Oukil Mustapha Badi and Rafaa Reda, “Education in Islamic Maghreb During the Middle Age Between Ibn Sahnoun And Ibn Khaldoun,” *RIMAK International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 05, no. 03 (May 1, 2023): 686–95, <https://doi.org/10.47832/2717-8293.23.35>.

⁴ Rachid Berrada, “The Mālikī School of Law in Andalusia and Its Impact on the Development of European Legal Systems,” *Journal of College of Sharia and Islamic Studies* 42, no. 2 (July 7, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.29117/jcsis.2024.0388>.

⁵ Alyaa al-Mashhadani, “The Interest of Imam Malik in His Moroccan Students,” *College Of Basic Education Research Journal* 18, no. 4.1 (December 1, 2022): 782–95, <https://doi.org/10.33899/berj.2023.177107>.

⁶ Delfina Serrano-Ruano, “Coping with External and Internal Disintegration Forces: Qāḍī ‘Iyād and the Stabilization of Mālikīsm in the Maghrib,” *Asiatische Studien - Études Asiatiques* 78, no. 1 (March 25, 2024): 61–101, <https://doi.org/10.1515/asia-2024-0009>.



In contemporary Islamic studies, the term *religious conservatism* is used to describe a mode of thought that prioritizes doctrinal stability, reverence for textual authority, and commitment to established scholarly traditions. Epistemologically, religious conservatism does not necessarily imply rigidity or resistance to change; rather, it functions as a strategy to safeguard the purity of revelation from interpretations that may distort Islamic values.⁷ In the context of Islamic education, religious-conservative approaches emphasize textual and traditional modes of instruction, with a primary focus on moral formation and character development, although they tend to exhibit limited adaptability to innovation.⁸

Generally, religious conservatism is characterized by several key features: (1) the primacy of *naṣṣ* (the Qur'an and Sunnah) as the ultimate and definitive sources of law; (2) respect for the legacy of classical scholars as custodians of scholarly authority; (3) prudence (*iḥtiyāt*) in the exercise of *ijtihād*, thereby limiting excessive rational speculation; and (4) a normative orientation emphasizing obedience, discipline, and social stability.⁹ Historically, this orientation often emerged as a response to waves of rationalism, Greek philosophical influence, and external intellectual currents perceived as threatening the centrality of revelation as the source of truth. Conservative scholars sought to draw clear boundaries between knowledge grounded in sacred texts and speculative forms of reasoning.¹⁰

Sahnūn represents a concrete embodiment of this religious conservatism. Through *al-Mudawwanah*, he reaffirmed the importance of scholarly transmission (*sanad*), rejected overly liberal legal interpretations, and emphasized *fiqh* as the foundation of socio-religious life. The conservatism he advanced was not merely a product of his historical context but a methodological legacy aimed at preserving Islamic orthodoxy across generations.¹¹

In the Indonesian context, *pesantren* constitute traditional Islamic educational institutions with deep historical roots. These institutions are believed to have emerged between the fifteenth and

⁷ Alif Rizky Ramadhan and Ai Fatimah Nur Fuad, "Religious Authority in Islamic Law: A Debate on Conservative and Progressive Methods," *Afkaruna: Indonesian Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Studies* 19, no. 1 (July 1, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.18196/afkaruna.v19i1.18507>.

⁸ Muhamad Syafiq Mughni and M. Yunus Abu Bakar, "Studi Aliran Filsafat Pendidikan Islam Serta Implikasinya Terhadap Pengembangan Pendidikan Islam," *Dirasah : Jurnal Studi Ilmu Dan Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 5, no. 1 SE-Articles (February 6, 2022): 81–99, <https://doi.org/10.29062/dirasah.v5i1.456>.

⁹ Siti Nashrah Binti Tamsir, Mohammad Kafabihi, and Zaini Zaini, "Ijtihad as A Method of Legal Discovery In The Islamic Legal System," *Trunojoyo Law Review* 5, no. 2 (August 28, 2023): 129–43, <https://doi.org/10.21107/tlr.v5i2.21051>.

¹⁰ Mufiqur Rahman and Nasiba Mirzayeva Bakhtiyar Kizi, "Patterns of Strengthening Conservative Muslims in the Middle of Culture WasathiyahMadurese Society: PAI Approach to Religious Moderation," *FIKROTUNA: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Manajemen Islam* 12, no. 02 (December 31, 2023): 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.32806/jf.v12i02.7284>.

¹¹ Norbert Oberauer, "Canonization in Islamic Law: A Case Study Based on Shāfi'i Literature," *Islamic Law and Society* 29, no. 1–2 (March 31, 2022): 123–208, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685195-bja10021>.

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sixteenth centuries alongside the spread of Islam in the archipelago.¹² Pesantren developed as localized adaptations of Middle Eastern Islamic educational systems, possessing distinctive characteristics that differentiate them from other educational institutions.¹³ The core elements of pesantren include: (1) the *kiai* as an authoritative figure and spiritual leader; (2) *santri* who reside in dormitories to pursue religious knowledge; (3) the *kitab kuning* (classical Islamic texts) as primary learning materials encompassing *fiqh*, Qur'anic exegesis, *hadīth*, theology, and Sufism; and (4) traditional instructional methods such as *bandongan* (teacher-centered reading) and *sorogan* (individual student recitation before the teacher).¹⁴

Pesantren education has proven effective in cultivating moral character, discipline, responsibility, and spirituality through religious instruction, ritual practice, and a communal boarding-based lifestyle grounded in Islamic values.¹⁵ Beyond their educational function, pesantren have historically served as moral and social fortresses within society. During the colonial period, they acted as centers of resistance, while in the modern era they have expanded by adopting formal curricula, integrating technology, and engaging in community economic empowerment initiatives.^{16 17} Contemporary pesantren curricula are expected to be holistic, integrative, and comprehensive, encompassing not only religious and spiritual dimensions but also general knowledge, practical skills, and character formation.¹⁸

Despite these developments, pesantren continue to preserve their conservative identity, manifested in reverence for *kiai* authority, the centrality of classical texts, and a strong emphasis on

¹² M. Falikul Isbah, "Pesantren in the Changing Indonesian Context: History and Current Developments," *QIJIS (Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies)* 8, no. 1 (June 22, 2020): 65, <https://doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v8i1.5629>.

¹³ Djuwairiyah Djuwairiyah, Asyraf Isyrafi Jamil, and Fakhrul Adabi Abd Kadir, "The Existence of Pesantren Culture as an Indonesian Islamic Educational Institution," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Indonesia* 8, no. 1 (December 26, 2023): 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.35316/jpii.v8i2.512>.

¹⁴ Muhammad Syaifudin et al., "The Principle of Education on Islamic Boarding School; Multimedia of Yellow Book (Kitab Kuning) as the System of Islamic Boarding School in Indonesia," in *Proceedings of the 2nd EAI Bukittinggi International Conference on Education, BICED 2020, 14 September, 2020, Bukittinggi, West Sumatera, Indonesia* (EAI, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.4108/eai.14-9-2020.2305697>.

¹⁵ Mustain Mustain and M Yunus Abu Bakar, "The Role of Islamic Boarding School Education in Shaping Students' Religious Character Amid the Challenges of Globalization," *Hikmah* 22, no. 1 SE-Articles (July 1, 2025): 83–100, <https://doi.org/10.53802/hikmah.v22i1.455>.

¹⁶ Muhammad Sholeh and M. Misbah M. Misbah, "Contribution of University Partner Islamic Boarding Schools in Maintaining Moral Values in Banyumas Indonesia," *International Journal of Social Science and Human Research* 07, no. 11 (November 25, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.47191/ijsshr/v7-i11-43>.

¹⁷ Moh. Kusno, "Inovasi dan Tantangan Pengembangan Kurikulum Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia dalam Menghadapi Transformasi Digital," *Madinah: Jurnal Studi Islam* 11, no. 2 SE-Articles text (n.d.): 208–25, <https://doi.org/10.58518/madinah.v11i2.2961>.

¹⁸ Ahmad Chafidut Tamam and M Yunus Abu Bakar, "Konstruksi Kurikulum Islam Dalam Perspektif Filsafat Pendidikan Islam," *Tafāqquh: Jurnal Penelitian Dan Kajian Keislaman* 10, no. 1 (June 7, 2022): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.52431/tafaqquh.v10i1.622>.



moral embedding. It is precisely this identity that sustains the relevance of pesantren in contemporary society. The conservative values upheld by pesantren closely align with Sahnūn's intellectual orientation, particularly in terms of knowledge transmission through *sanad*, adherence to *fiqh*, and respect for scholars as heirs of prophetic authority.¹⁹ To achieve institutional excellence, pesantren must implement policy reforms that allow for the integration of knowledge, skills, and innovation without abandoning their religious-conservative character.²⁰ Their continued relevance depends on their ability to preserve classical Islamic traditions while responding constructively to the challenges of modernity. In this sense, pesantren exemplify how religious conservatism need not entail stagnation but can function as a source of identity preservation and social cohesion.²¹

While numerous studies have examined Sahnūn, particularly within the fields of Islamic law and Mālikī legal history,²² and extensive scholarship has explored pesantren in Indonesia from historical, curricular, political, and social perspectives,^{23 24 25} this study introduces a distinct contribution. Its primary novelty lies in reformulating Sahnūn's religious-conservative thought as a normative educational framework that is structural and functional, rather than merely a classical juridical doctrine confined to the third-century Hijri context of North Africa.

Conceptually, this study identifies four core dimensions of Sahnūn's religious conservatism, scholarly authority, the normativity of the *sharī'a*, education as a mechanism for transmitting orthodoxy, and social stability, as the architectural foundation of classical Islamic conservative education. This approach moves beyond textual description by demonstrating that Sahnūn's conservatism operates as a regulatory mechanism linking law, education, and social order simultaneously.

A further contribution of this study lies in its analysis of the structural-normative relevance of Sahnūn's thought within contemporary pesantren education, an area that has received limited

¹⁹ Ahmad Wahib Maulana and Moh. Heru Sunarko, "The Role of the Pesantren Law in Strengthening the Values of the Boarding School Tradition," *Tadibia Islamiqa* 4, no. 2 (January 4, 2025): 101–9, <https://doi.org/10.28918/tadibia.v4i2.8389>.

²⁰ Yeyen Afista and M. Yunus Abu Bakar, "Islamic Boarding School-Based Madrasah: Policy Efforts to Reform the Superior Education Model," *Al-Hayat: Journal of Islamic Education* 4, no. 2 (March 13, 2021): 199, <https://doi.org/10.35723/ajie.v4i2.144>.

²¹ M. Ali Sibram Malisi, Sulisman Sulasman, and Abd Hakim Mohad, "Institutionalizing Educational Reform: Balancing Tradition And Modernity At Pesantren," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 10, no. 2 (December 10, 2024): 363–74, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v10i2.24636>.

²² Berrada, "The Mālikī School of Law in Andalusia and Its Impact on the Development of European Legal Systems."

²³ Ridhwan, Abidin Nurdin, and Sri Astuti A Samad, "Dynamics of Islamic Education in the Land of Bugis: Growth, Development and Typology Pesantren in Bone," in *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science*, vol. 175, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1088/1755-1315/175/1/012158>.

²⁴ Muh. Hanif et al., "Pesantren Resistance to Indonesia's National Curriculum to Defend Its Curriculum Model," *Revista de Gestão Social e Ambiental* 18, no. 7 (April 9, 2024): e05473, <https://doi.org/10.24857/rgsa.v18n7-049>.

²⁵ Nadhif Muhammad Mumtaz, Evi Muafiah Alghani, and Doli Witro, "Educational Policy Analysis: Examining Pesantren Policies and Their Implications on the Independence of Kyai and Pesantren in the Contemporary Era," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 21, no. 2 (December 31, 2024): 287–306, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.v21i2.9612>.

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explicit scholarly attention. The study demonstrates that the continuity of Sahnūn's intellectual legacy in pesantren is neither literal nor ahistorical but manifests as a deep structure shaping *kiai* leadership patterns, *turāth*-based curricular orientations, and pedagogical practices emphasizing *adab*, discipline, and collective morality.

The global theoretical contribution of this research is its positioning of pesantren as sites for the actualization of reflective classical Islamic conservatism, wherein fidelity to orthodoxy coexists with adaptive engagement in social change. This perspective challenges dominant assumptions in Islamic education studies that portray conservatism as an obstacle to modernization and instead demonstrates that religious conservatism can function as pedagogical capital for sustaining moral stability, social cohesion, and the continuity of scholarly tradition.

Accordingly, this study addresses two central research questions: (1) What are the defining characteristics of Sahnūn's religious-conservative thought? and (2) How is Sahnūn's religious-conservative thought relevant to contemporary pesantren education? The objective of this research is not only to enrich the study of Sahnūn from the perspective of classical Islamic jurisprudence but also to open a dialogue between classical Islamic intellectual heritage and the contemporary realities of pesantren education in Indonesia. Through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, this study seeks to make a conceptual contribution to pesantren studies while reaffirming Sahnūn's position as a foundational figure in Islamic conservatism whose thought remains relevant today.

Method

1. Type and Research Design (SLR-PRISMA)

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) as its research type and design.²⁶ The SLR approach was selected to systematically identify, evaluate, and synthesize scholarly findings relevant to Sahnun's religious-conservative thought and its relevance to contemporary pesantren education. This approach enables the development of a comprehensive, structured, and evidence-based conceptual overview derived from up-to-date academic literature.²⁷

In its implementation, this study adopts the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework²⁸ to ensure transparency, accountability, and replicability in the literature selection process. PRISMA guidelines were applied at each stage, including

²⁶ Debjayoti Pati and Lesa N. Lorusso, "How to Write a Systematic Review of the Literature," *HERD: Health Environments Research & Design Journal* 11, no. 1 (January 28, 2018): 15–30, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1937586717747384>.

²⁷ Ntombiyokusa Nyoni, Annlizé L Marnewick, and Carl Marnewick, "Improving Systematic Literature Reviews: A Narrative Guideline to Structure the Analysis Stage," *Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods* 23, no. 2 (October 2, 2025): 70–87, <https://doi.org/10.34190/ejbrm.23.2.4033>.

²⁸ D Moher, D G Altman, and J Tetzlaff, "PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses)," in *Guidelines for Reporting Health Research: A User's Manual*, 2014, 250–61, 74 | **International Journal of Islamic Education (IJIE)**, Vol. 4 No. 2 (July - December 2025)

identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion of the articles analyzed.²⁹ The SLR-PRISMA workflow is illustrated in Figure 1 to clarify the research stages and to strengthen methodological validity.



Figure 1. Stages of the Systematic Literature Review

2. Data Sources and Characteristics

The data sources for this study consist of scholarly journal articles indexed in Scopus. Scopus was selected due to its academic quality standards, source credibility, and rigorous peer-review process. The literature reviewed was limited to publications from 2015 to 2025 to ensure relevance to contemporary scholarly developments.

The characteristics of the analyzed data include articles that address: (1) religious conservatism in Islam; (2) classical juristic figures and traditions, particularly the Mālikī school and Sahnun; (3) traditional Islamic education; and (4) pesantren education and religious character formation.

All included articles are peer-reviewed publications written in English, thereby meeting international standards of academic publication.

3. Data Collection Procedures

Data collection followed four main stages in accordance with the PRISMA framework: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion.³⁰

a. Identification

At this stage, the researchers formulated the research questions (RQ1 and RQ2) as the basis for the literature search. The search was conducted using the Scopus database with relevant keywords, including *religious-conservative*, *Sabnun*, *Islamic conservatism*, *classical fiqh*, *traditional Islamic education*, and *pesantren education*. This initial search yielded 186 articles.

b. Screening

The collected articles were screened based on their titles, abstracts, and keywords. This process aimed to eliminate studies that were not aligned with the focus of the research. Language and publication-year restrictions were also applied at this stage.

<https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85178329658&partnerID=40&md5=9f5d0e12fab5decab7d997e7451124e9>

²⁹ Matthew J. Page et al., “A Declaração PRISMA 2020: Diretriz Atualizada Para Relatar Revisões Sistemáticas,” *Revista Panamericana de Salud Pública* 46 (December 30, 2022): 1, <https://doi.org/10.26633/RPSP.2022.112>.

³⁰ Melissa L. Rethlefsen et al., “PRISMA-S: An Extension to the PRISMA Statement for Reporting Literature Searches in Systematic Reviews,” *Systematic Reviews* 10, no. 1 (January 26, 2021): 39, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13643-020-01542-z>.

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c. Eligibility

Articles that passed the initial screening were then assessed for eligibility through full-text reading. The evaluation was conducted using predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria, including year of publication, Scopus indexation, publication type, topical relevance, and language quality.

d. Inclusion

From the initial pool of 186 articles, following the screening and eligibility assessment processes, 21 Scopus-indexed articles met all criteria and were deemed the most relevant for in-depth analysis in this study.

4. Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis techniques employed in this study include qualitative thematic analysis and conceptual synthesis.³¹ Each included article was analyzed to identify key themes, patterns of argumentation, and conceptual frameworks related to religious conservatism and Islamic educational practices.

The analysis was conducted through several stages: (1) thematic coding of key concepts; (2) thematic categorization based on similarities and differences in arguments; (3) critical interpretation to identify relationships between Sahnun's thought and contemporary pesantren education; and (4) conceptual synthesis to formulate patterns of continuity and normative-structural relevance.

Through this approach, the study not only maps existing literature findings but also develops an integrative theoretical understanding of the position of Sahnun's religious-conservative thought within the tradition and contemporary practice of pesantren education.

Results and Discussion

From the literature search and selection process, a total of 21 articles met the inclusion criteria, namely publications released between 2015 and 2025, indexed in Scopus, and directly relevant to the focus of this study. All selected articles underwent rigorous screening to ensure their alignment with the two primary research questions: (1) What are the defining characteristics of Sahnun's religious-conservative thought? and (2) How is Sahnun's religious-conservative thought relevant to contemporary pesantren education in Indonesia? The selected articles were drawn from a range of international journals spanning interconnected disciplines, including Islamic legal studies, theolog-

³¹ Veerasamy Sandhiya and Mohanraj Bhuvaneswari, "Qualitative Research Analysis," 2024, 289–310, <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-1135-6.ch014>.



ical philosophy, the history of Islamic thought, and contemporary Islamic education. This multi-disciplinary coverage strengthens the validity of the findings by providing diverse yet complementary analytical perspectives.

RQ1. What Are the Characteristics of Sahnun's Religious-Conservative Thought?

1. Representation of Sahnun's Religious-Conservative Thought in Classical Islamic Literature

In classical Islamic literature, Sahnun ibn Sa‘īd al-Tanūkhī is consistently represented as a scholar who positioned religious conservatism as a normative principle in both law and education.³² His role as the principal codifier of *al-Mudawwanah al-Kubrā* places him not merely as a compiler of Mālikī juridical opinions but as a guardian of Islamic legal orthodoxy.^{33 34} Both classical sources and contemporary studies indicate that Sahnun's conservatism emerged from the need to maintain normative stability within the Muslim community amid the plurality of theological and legal views that characterized the third century Hijri.³⁵

From the historiographical perspective of Islamic thought, this representation is consistent with the core features of religious conservatism, which prioritizes revealed texts and scholarly tradition as the primary sources of legitimacy.³⁶ Cross-disciplinary studies reviewed in this research, spanning jurisprudence, sociology of religion, and education, demonstrate that religious conservatism, whether classical or modern, exhibits relatively similar patterns: textual orientation, caution toward innovation, and a strong emphasis on normative enforcement.³⁷ Accordingly, Sahnun may be positioned as an archetypal representative of classical Islamic conservatism whose intellectual legacy continues to be reproduced across historical contexts, including contemporary Islamic education.³⁸

³² Jonathan Brockopp, “Contradictory Evidence and the Exemplary Scholar: The Lives Of Sahnun B. Sa‘īd (D. 854),” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43, no. 1 (February 24, 2011): 115–32, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743810001224>.

³³ L Zakariyah, “Codification of Islamic Law in the Muslim World: Political Intrusion and Professional Egoism,” *Islamic Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (2017): 299–324, <https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85042521371&partnerID=40&md5=3b89d7a1f720044ee7d6765567058b50>.

³⁴ H Y Sonafist, Y Ef'yanti, and A Hamzah, “Ibn Al-Muqaffa’s Proposal for Taqnīn and Its Synchronization with Islamic Law Codification in Indonesia,” *Samarah* 4, no. 2 (2020): 504–27, <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v4i2.7864>.

³⁵ Nasruddin Yusuf et al., “Examining The Basis Of Maqashid Syariah In Renewal Of Islamic Law In Indonesia,” *Petita: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Hukum Dan Syariah* 9, no. 1 (March 2, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.22373/petita.v9i1.258>.

³⁶ Mahiz Spawi and Norfadhilah Mohamad Ali, “Exploring the Naql and ŅAql Approach in Developing Historical Thinking,” *Advanced Science Letters* 23, no. 5 (May 1, 2017): 4839–42, <https://doi.org/10.1166/asl.2017.8923>.

³⁷ Büşra YURTALAN, “Ashābu'l-Hadīs'in Dışlayıcı Söyleminin Somutlaşlığı Kavramlar ve Analizi: 3./9. Asır Reddiye Literatürü Örneği,” *Hıtit İlahiyat Dergisi* 21, no. 1 (June 30, 2022): 717–48, <https://doi.org/10.14395/hid.1052474>.

³⁸ E Ayyad, “Re-Evaluating Early Memorization of the Qur’ān in Medieval Muslim Cultures,” *Religions* 13, no. 2 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13020179>.

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2. Core Characteristics of Sahnun's Religious-Conservative Thought

The literature analysis reveals that Sahnun's religious-conservative thought encompasses several interrelated core characteristics. First, *fiqh* textualism as an epistemological foundation.³⁹ Sahnun's strong commitment to the authoritative texts of the *shari'a* underscores his position that Islamic law should not be determined solely by social considerations but must be grounded in revealed texts and established *uṣūl al-fiqh* methodologies. This finding aligns with studies on classical jurists who regarded textual authority as the primary boundary of legal interpretation.^{40 41}

Second, firmness in the enforcement of law. Sahnun's strict stance toward violations of the *shari'a* reflects the view that law functions as an instrument for moral formation and social order. This pattern parallels the findings of Schwadel and Anderson, who identify a tendency among modern religious-conservative groups to support punitive measures as expressions of moral justice.⁴² Within Islamic education, disciplinary practices grounded in legal norms, as identified by Damopolii et al., further demonstrate the continuity between classical conservatism and contemporary pedagogical practices.⁴³

Third, the protection of communal identity and orthodoxy. Sahnun's rejection of theological compromise with groups deemed deviant mirrors, from a sociological perspective, the exclusivist tendencies observed in modern conservative groups.^{44 45} This exclusivism functions not merely as a social attitude but as a strategic mechanism for safeguarding normative purity and religious identity.

Fourth, an educational orientation toward the transmission of orthodoxy rather than ideological experimentation. In Sahnun's perspective, education is directed toward preserving the continuity of Islamic legal and moral traditions. This orientation resonates with the findings of Casey

³⁹ Rüdiger Seesemann, "Islamic Intellectual Traditions in the Sahel," in *The Oxford Handbook of the African Sahel* (Oxford University Press, 2021), 533–50, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198816959.013.31>.

⁴⁰ Ramazan KORKUT, "Classical and Contemporary Views on Kin Marriage in Terms of Fiqh," *Cumhuriyet İlahiyat Dergisi* 25, no. 1 (June 15, 2021): 409–36, <https://doi.org/10.18505/cuid.887597>.

⁴¹ Youcef L. Soufi, "Why Study *Uṣūl Al-Fiqh*? The Problem of *Taqlīd* and Tough Cases in 4th-5th /10th-11th Century Iraq," *Islamic Law and Society* 28, no. 1–2 (January 4, 2021): 1–31, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685195-BJA10006>.

⁴² Philip Schwadel and Amy L. Anderson, "College-Educated Religious Conservatives' Support for Capital Punishment," *Sociology of Religion* 86, no. 1 (March 11, 2025): 104–29, <https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/srae030>.

⁴³ Muljono Damopolii, Muhammad Shabir U, and Muhammad Alqadri Burga, "The Phenomenon of Punishment at Pesantren in South Sulawesi: An Islamic Law and Islamic Education Approaches," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 7, no. 3 (October 14, 2023): 1643, <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v7i3.18207>.

⁴⁴ Joseph Yi and Christopher Graziul, "Religious Conservatives and Outsiders: Determinants of Cross-Racial Ties among White Christians," *Review of Religious Research* 59, no. 2 (June 1, 2017): 231–50, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13644-016-0280-3>.

⁴⁵ Kerem Morgül and Osman Savaşkan, "Erratum to: Identity or Interests? Religious Conservatives' Attitudes toward Syrian Refugees in Turkey," *Migration Studies* 10, no. 2 (July 29, 2022): 425–425, <https://doi.org/10.1093/migration/mnab043>.



and Brow, which indicate that conservative education primarily aims to maintain values, stability, and normative compliance.⁴⁶ ⁴⁷

Fifth, an emphasis on morality and social regulation. Sahnun viewed violations of the *sharī'a* as threats to the collective social order rather than as purely individual failings. This perspective aligns with Silver's assertion that, within religious conservatism, law functions as a binding moral force that sustains collective cohesion.⁴⁸

Table 1. Characteristics of Sahnun's Thought

No.	Characteristics of Sahnun's Religious Conservatism	Conceptual Description
1	<i>Fiqh</i> textualism as an epistemological foundation	Sahnun's legal thought is firmly grounded in revealed texts and classical <i>uṣūl al-fiqh</i> methodology. Islamic law is understood as a normative system autonomous from socio-pragmatic considerations, with revelation serving as the ultimate boundary of interpretive legitimacy.
2	Firmness in legal enforcement	Sahnun's strictness reflects the view that law functions as an instrument of moral formation and social order. Severe sanctions are normatively justified to preserve moral justice and collective discipline.
3	Protection of communal identity and orthodoxy	The rejection of theological compromise serves as a strategy to safeguard doctrinal purity and the boundaries of orthodoxy. This exclusivism functions as a mechanism for protecting religious identity.
4	Educational orientation toward orthodoxy transmission	Education is positioned as a means of reproducing Islamic legal and moral traditions rather than as a space for ideological experimentation. The primary objectives are value continuity, normative stability, and religious obedience.
5	Emphasis on morality and social regulation	Violations of the <i>sharī'a</i> are perceived as threats to the collective social order rather than merely individual errors. Law functions as a moral bond that maintains communal order and stability.

3. The Conceptual Framework of Educational Conservatism in Sahnun's Thought

Based on the synthesis of findings, educational conservatism in Sahnun's thought may be conceptualized as a framework comprising three principal dimensions. First, the epistemological–normative dimension, which emphasizes the supremacy of revealed texts and *fiqh* tradition as

⁴⁶ Patrick J. Casey, "Politics by Other Means? Rawls, Feminists, Religious Conservatives, and Public Education," *Res Publica* 27, no. 3 (August 29, 2021): 369–86, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11158-020-09485-x>.

⁴⁷ Mark V. Brow, "Perceptions of Intellectual Diversity Among Religious/Conservative Undergraduate Seniors at Highly Selective US Universities: Is the University a Liberal Hegemony?," *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 26, no. 3 (September 2, 2017): 251–70, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10656219.2017.1384708>.

⁴⁸ J R Silver, "Binding Morality and Perceived Harm as Sources of Moral Regulation Law Support among Political and Religious Conservatives," *Law & Society Review*, 2020, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/law-and-society-review/article/binding-morality-and-perceived-harm-as-sources-of-moral-regulation-law-support-among-political-and-religious-conservatives/12446FB1CEA85E54F3E6783D63F5113F>.

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sources of educational legitimacy.⁴⁹ ⁵⁰ Within this dimension, education functions as a mechanism for transmitting valid and normatively bounded knowledge.

Second, the juridical-disciplinary dimension, in which education serves as a means of internalizing law and cultivating normative compliance.⁵¹ Legal firmness is not understood as symbolic violence but as a pedagogical mechanism for shaping moral and social discipline.⁵² This dimension explains why conservative education is often associated with strict regulations and hierarchical authority structures.

Third, the moral-social dimension, which focuses on the formation of orthodox character to sustain socio-religious order. Education is not merely aimed at producing knowledgeable individuals but at shaping moral subjects capable of maintaining communal stability.⁵³ Mujahid's findings on orthodoxy-based character education in modern pesantren demonstrate the continued relevance and adaptability of this framework in contemporary contexts.⁵⁴

Accordingly, Sahnun's religious-conservative thought should be understood not as a historical residue but as a normative educational model with transhistorical relevance. This conceptual framework elucidates why educational conservatism persists across Islamic educational institutions, particularly pesantren, as a mechanism for preserving tradition, morality, and social stability.

Table 2. Conceptual Framework of Sahnun's Educational Conservatism

No.	Conceptual Dimension	Conceptual Formulation	Pedagogical Implications
1	Epistemological-Normative Dimension	Education is grounded in the supremacy of revealed texts and <i>fiqh</i> tradition as primary sources of knowledge legitimacy. Knowledge is understood as normatively	Education functions as a mechanism for transmitting valid knowledge, maintaining

⁴⁹ Muhammad Mustaqim Mohd Zarif, "The Significance of the 'Ten Fundamentals' (Al-Mabādī) Al- 'Asharah) in Conceptualizing the Epistemic Aims of Learning in Islam," *Jurnal Akidah & Pemikiran Islam*, October 30, 2020, 45–78, <https://doi.org/10.22452/afkar.sp2020no2.2>.

⁵⁰ Lazuardi muhammad Latif and Faisal Bin Ahmad Shah, "The Understanding of Wasl Al-Fiqh Bi Al-Hadith at Traditional Dayah Aceh," *AL-IHKAM: Jurnal Hukum & Pranata Sosial* 16, no. 1 (June 21, 2021): 96–120, <https://doi.org/10.19105/al-lhkam.v16i1.3911>.

⁵¹ Pamela B Andreatta and Larry D Gruppen, "Conceptualising and Classifying Validity Evidence for Simulation," *Medical Education* 43, no. 11 (November 20, 2009): 1028–35, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2923.2009.03454.x>.

⁵² Freda Grealy, "Widening the Approach to Ethics Teaching and Positively Affecting the Ethical Professional Identity of Trainee Solicitors in Ireland," in *Educating for Well-Being in Law* (Routledge, 2019), 89–102, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351104401-7>.

⁵³ Paul Rehren and Hanno Sauer, "Another Brick in the Wall? Moral Education, Social Learning, and Moral Progress," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 27, no. 1 (March 15, 2024): 25–40, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10677-022-10351-3>.

⁵⁴ Imam Mujahid, "Islamic Orthodoxy-Based Character Education: Creating Moderate Muslim in a Modern Pesantren in Indonesia," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 11, no. 2 (December 8, 2021): 185–212, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijjims.v11i2.185-212>.



		bounded by textual authority and classical scholarly methodology.	scholarly continuity, and limiting epistemic plurality outside orthodox frameworks.
2	Juridical-Disciplinary Dimension	Education is positioned as a means of internalizing law and cultivating normative compliance. Legal firmness is understood as a pedagogical instrument for building moral and social discipline rather than mere coercion.	Educational systems characterized by strict regulations, strong authority hierarchies, and an emphasis on obedience and discipline as core learning values.
3	Moral-Social Dimension	Education is directed toward forming orthodox character that sustains stability and social cohesion within religious communities. Learners are projected as moral subjects rather than merely cognitive agents.	Education produces individuals committed to collective norms, functioning as guardians of socio-religious order and agents of moral reproduction within the community.

RQ2. How Is Sahnun's Religious-Conservative Thought Relevant to Contemporary Pesantren Education?

1. Patterns of Relevance of Sahnun's Religious-Conservative Thought in Contemporary Pesantren Education

The findings indicate that the relevance of Sahnun's religious-conservative thought to contemporary pesantren education is not literal or historical in nature but rather structural and normative. This relevance operates across three principal levels.

First, the level of religious authority and leadership. Sahnun's thought positions the *ulama* as the central agents of normative and moral control within the community. This pattern finds strong resonance in pesantren leadership, where the *kiai* functions as the guardian of orthodoxy, the architect of institutional culture, and the regulator of values.⁵⁵ The findings of Kusumaningrum et al. further affirm that pesantren leadership is not ideologically neutral but actively shapes cultures of discipline and obedience, aligning closely with Sahnun's paradigm of authoritative leadership as a mechanism for maintaining social order.⁵⁶

Second, the level of curriculum and epistemic orientation. Pesantren continue to position *turath* texts as their primary epistemological foundation, reflecting Sahnun's textual conservatism. However, as demonstrated by Bukhori Muslim et al., pesantren openness to global educational orientations does not negate this conservative foundation but rather reframes it within a universal

⁵⁵ Yuli Supriani, Hasan Basri, and Andewi Suhartini, "Leadership Role in the Formation of Students' Morals," *Munaddhomah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 4, no. 3 (June 13, 2023): 528–38, <https://doi.org/10.31538/munaddhomah.v4i3.296>.

⁵⁶ Desi Eri Kusumaningrum et al., "Exploring How Change Leadership Influences Instructional Leadership Effects on School Culture and Teachers' Teaching Performance in Pesantren Education Settings in Indonesia: A Moderated-Mediation Analysis," *Journal on Efficiency and Responsibility in Education and Science* 18, no. 2 (June 30, 2025): 100–111, <https://doi.org/10.7160/eriesj.2025.180204>.

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Islamic horizon.⁵⁷ In this context, Sahnun's conservatism functions as an anchoring framework that enables adaptation without the loss of normative legitimacy.⁵⁸

Third, the level of social and moral praxis. The relevance of Sahnun's thought is evident in how pesantren conceptualize education as an instrument of collective moral regulation. Practices of discipline, corrective sanctions, and the inculcation of *adab*, as documented by Damopolii et al., demonstrate that religious conservatism continues to be understood as a pedagogical strategy rather than merely a doctrinal inheritance.⁵⁹ Accordingly, Sahnun's relevance is functional in nature, serving to preserve social cohesion and moral stability amid ongoing social change.

Table 3. The Relevance of Religious Conservatism to Contemporary Pesantren

Level of Relevance	Core Aspect	Analytical Description	Manifestation in Contemporary Pesantren
1	Religious Authority and Leadership	Sahnun's thought positions <i>ulama</i> as the center of normative and moral control within the community. Religious authority functions to preserve orthodoxy, social order, and normative compliance. This relevance is structural rather than a literal historical imitation.	The <i>kiai</i> serves as a central leadership figure who shapes institutional culture, regulates student discipline, and reproduces religious values. Pesantren leadership is inherently ideological and normative.
2	Curriculum and Epistemic Orientation	Sahnun's textual conservatism is reflected in the supremacy of <i>turāth</i> texts as the epistemological foundation. This conservatism operates as an anchoring framework that allows adaptation without forfeiting normative legitimacy.	Classical texts (<i>kitab kuning</i>) remain central to the curriculum, while modern and global knowledge is selectively integrated within a universal Islamic framework.
3	Social and Moral Praxis	Education is understood as an instrument of collective moral regulation. Religious conservatism functions pedagogically to maintain social cohesion and moral stability rather than merely as a historical doctrine.	The application of discipline, educational sanctions, and the embedding <i>adab</i> as strategies for character formation and social order among students.

⁵⁷ Ahmad Bukhori Muslim et al., "Indonesian Pesantren -Affiliated Higher Education: Universal Islamic Values to Develop Locally Engaged but Globally Oriented Multilingual Graduates," *Research in Post-Compulsory Education* 29, no. 1 (January 2, 2024): 138–57, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13596748.2023.2285633>.

⁵⁸ Glenn Diesen, "Greater Eurasia as a Conservative Initiative," in *The Return of Eurasia* (Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2021), 99–118, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-2179-6_4.

⁵⁹ Damopolii, Shabir U, and Burga, "The Phenomenon of Punishment at Pesantren in South Sulawesi: An Islamic Law and Islamic Education Approaches."



2. The Continuity of Sahnun's Thought in Pesantren Educational Practices and Systems

The continuity of Sahnun's thought in pesantren education is not static but dialectical, involving an ongoing negotiation between conservation and transformation. The findings demonstrate that pesantren reproduce Sahnun's conservative principles while simultaneously engaging in contextual adaptation.

At the level of institutional structure, pesantren continue to maintain hierarchical patterns grounded in religious authority, as documented by Fatmawati et al.⁶⁰ This structure can be genealogically traced to Sahnun's emphasis on obedience to scholars as guardians of social order.⁶¹ However, contemporary managerial challenges reveal the ambivalent implications of this continuity: while it safeguards institutional identity, it may also constrain administrative flexibility.⁶²

At the pedagogical level, continuity is evident in the orientation of education toward value transmission rather than purely cognitive development. Nevertheless, the implementation of Problem-Based Learning⁶³ illustrates that pesantren are capable of adopting innovative pedagogical methods without departing from a conservative framework. This reflects a mode of practical *ijtibād* also observable in Sahnun's approach, conservative in principle yet adaptive in application.⁶⁴

In the domain of social and ecological ethics, the continuity of Sahnun's thought undergoes an expansion in scope. Studies on *eco-pesantren* indicate that religious conservatism now extends beyond regulating the human–divine relationship to encompass the human–environment relationship.⁶⁵ ⁶⁶ The concern for social order that characterized Sahnun's thought is thus recontextualized as ecological order, demonstrating the continuity of values across an expanded field of praxis.⁶⁷

⁶⁰ Erma Fatmawati et al., "Challenges of Educational Management in the Islamic Higher Education Sector Based on Pesantren," *Journal of Educational and Social Research* 13, no. 6 (November 5, 2023): 105, <https://doi.org/10.36941/jesr-2023-0151>.

⁶¹ Ja'far Ja'far et al., "Discovering the Legacy of Mandailing Ulama: Education, Intellectuals, and Politics in North Sumatra in the Early 20th Century," *Ulumuna* 26, no. 2 (December 28, 2022): 296–336, <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v26i2.502>.

⁶² Muhammad Jauhari Sofi, Sofwan Manaf, and Jauhar Ali, "Pesantren In Dynamic Transformation: Harmonizing Classical Roots and Modern Practices," *MIQOT: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 49, no. 2 (October 7, 2025): 333, <https://doi.org/10.30821/miqot.v49i2.1459>.

⁶³ Fathur Rohman, "Problem Based Learning in Islamic Religious Education: The Case of the Indonesian Pesantren," *Global Journal Al Thaqafah* 12, no. 1 (July 31, 2022): 82–97, <https://doi.org/10.7187/GJAT072022-5>.

⁶⁴ John Kekes, "Conservatism," in *The Routledge Companion to Social and Political Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2024), 249–58, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003411598-25>.

⁶⁵ Subaidi et al., "Eco-Pesantren: Islamic Education in Forest Conservation Landscapes," *Fudan Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences* 16, no. 4 (December 24, 2023): 541–67, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40647-023-00386-w>.

⁶⁶ Joko Purnomo et al., "Prophetic Approach in Environmental Education and Community Empowerment: A Case Study of Sustainable Pesantren Development," *Revista de Gestão Social e Ambiental* 18, no. 8 (April 18, 2024): e06259, <https://doi.org/10.24857/rgsa.v18n8-047>.

⁶⁷ A V Bokhan, "Scientific Concept of Ecological Security within International Economic Relations," *Actual Problems of Economics* 162, no. 12 (2014): 78–83, <https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-84938870758&partnerID=40&md5=53c6675a15a67f95cf669ef25f743b2c>.

3. The Position of Sahnun's Intellectual Legacy within the Pesantren Educational Tradition

In synthesis, the findings position Sahnun's religious-conservative legacy as a normative-structural foundation within the pesantren educational tradition rather than as a rigid doctrine replicated ahistorically. Sahnun's conservatism functions as a deep structure shaping how pesantren conceptualize authority, knowledge, morality, and education.⁶⁸

First, Sahnun's legacy provides a framework for legitimizing orthodoxy, enabling pesantren to preserve their Islamic identity amid processes of modernization. Mujahid's findings suggest that orthodoxy-based character education can foster moderation rather than radicalism when managed institutionally.⁶⁹

Second, this legacy operates as a mechanism of social stabilization. Within the context of multicultural education and radicalism prevention,⁷⁰ Sahnun's conservatism is practiced as a filtering mechanism against extremist interpretations rather than as a catalyst for exclusivism. This reflects a transformation of conservatism from rigidity into a form of moderated normative regulation.⁷¹

Third, conceptually, Sahnun's position within the pesantren tradition may be understood as a model of reflective conservatism, faithful to foundational principles while responsive to contextual demands.⁷² Pesantren do not treat Sahnun as an authoritarian figure who fossilizes tradition but as an ethical reference for maintaining equilibrium between the continuity of *turāth* and the imperatives of social change.

Accordingly, the legacy of Sahnun's religious-conservative thought in pesantren education should not be regarded as a historical burden but as an intellectual and moral resource that continues to be negotiated and reinterpreted. In this context, conservatism functions not as a rejection of modernity but as a guiding framework that directs change while keeping it within the orbit of Islamic orthodoxy and collective *maṣlaha*.

⁶⁸ Julian Millie, “‘Talaqqi’ in the Age of Bureaucracy; Symbiosis of Pedagogical Cultures in West Javanese Pesantren,” *Wacana, Journal of the Humanities of Indonesia* 26, no. 2 (April 30, 2025), <https://doi.org/10.17510/wacana.v26i2.1799>.

⁶⁹ Mujahid, “Islamic Orthodoxy-Based Character Education: Creating Moderate Muslim in a Modern Pesantren in Indonesia.”

⁷⁰ Marzuki Marzuki, Miftahuddin Miftahuddin, and Mukhamad Murdiono, “Multicultural Education In Salaf Pesantren And Prevention Of Religious Radicalism In Indonesia,” *Jurnal Cakrawala Pendidikan* 39, no. 1 (February 2, 2020): 12–25, <https://doi.org/10.21831/cp.v39i1.22900>.

⁷¹ Thomas H. Costello et al., “Revisiting the Rigidity-of-the-Right Hypothesis: A Meta-Analytic Review,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 124, no. 5 (May 2023): 1025–52, <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspp0000446>.

⁷² Mujahid, “Islamic Orthodoxy-Based Character Education: Creating Moderate Muslim in a Modern Pesantren in Indonesia.”



Conclusion

This study concludes that Sahnun bin Sa‘id al-Tanūkhī’s religious-conservative educational thought remains structurally and normatively relevant to contemporary pesantren education. His emphasis on textual authority, juridical discipline, moral regulation, and the transmission of normative tradition is reflected in the central role of *kiai*, the dominance of *turāth* as an epistemological foundation, and the function of pesantren as institutions for preserving orthodoxy and social cohesion. In this sense, Sahnun’s conservatism operates not merely as a historical legacy but as a transhistorical educational framework shaping authority, curriculum orientation, and moral praxis within pesantren.

The findings further demonstrate that the continuity of Sahnun’s thought in pesantren is dialectical and adaptive rather than literal or rigid. While pesantren conserve core epistemological and normative principles rooted in classical *fiqh* and scholarly tradition, they simultaneously engage in contextual transformation through pedagogical, managerial, and socio-ethical innovations. This reflective conservatism enables pesantren to regulate change so that it remains aligned with collective moral order and communal *maṣlaḥa*, positioning conservatism as a regulative resource rather than an obstacle to educational development.

Overall, this study contributes to the discourse on Islamic education by conceptualizing Sahnun as a model of reflective religious conservatism that integrates tradition, authority, and moral stability with contextual adaptation. Within the pesantren context, his educational thought provides a coherent normative reference for negotiating continuity and change, demonstrating how classical Islamic intellectual legacies continue to inform and legitimize contemporary educational practice.

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