



## Algorithmic Authority and Digital Fatwas Reconfiguring Islamic Knowledge in Southeast Asia and Europe

Muhammad Jaidi<sup>1</sup>, A. Hafiz Anshary AZ<sup>2</sup>, Muhammad Salis Ridwan<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Antasari State Islamic University, Banjarmasin

<sup>2</sup> Antasari State Islamic University, Banjarmasin

<sup>3</sup> Al-Azhar University, Cairo, Egypt

Correspondence: [mhmmjdjaidi@gmail.com](mailto:mhmmjdjaidi@gmail.com)

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### ABSTRACT

The proliferation of digital platforms has transformed the production, dissemination, and validation of Islamic knowledge, posing new challenges for traditional fatwa institutions in both Muslim-majority and minority contexts. This study examines the comparative dynamics of digital fatwa practices in Southeast Asia and Europe, focusing on how socio-political and institutional contexts shape configurations of religious authority. Using a qualitative analytical-comparative approach, the research analyzes fatwa production and dissemination across key institutions in Indonesia, Malaysia, and European settings. The findings reveal three main dimensions: (1) regional variations in digital fatwa formats and communication strategies; (2) the influence of institutional capacity, regulatory environments, and platform dynamics on authority; and (3) the emergence of hybrid models integrating classical jurisprudential legitimacy with digital visibility. The study concludes that sustainable digital fatwa governance depends on integrating Islamic ethical frameworks with platform literacy and institutional verification mechanisms. It argues for a reconceptualization of religious authority that accommodates algorithmic mediation while preserving normative foundations, offering strategic insights for fatwa institutions, policymakers, and Muslim communities navigating digital religious life.

### ABSTRAK

Proliferasi platform digital telah mentransformasi produksi, diseminasi, dan validasi pengetahuan Islam, sekaligus menimbulkan tantangan baru bagi lembaga fatwa tradisional di konteks mayoritas maupun minoritas Muslim. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis dinamika komparatif praktik fatwa digital di Asia Tenggara dan Eropa, dengan fokus pada bagaimana konteks sosial-politik dan kelembagaan memengaruhi konfigurasi otoritas keagamaan. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif analitis-komparatif, studi ini mengkaji produksi dan penyebaran fatwa pada institusi kunci di Indonesia, Malaysia, dan Eropa. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan tiga temuan utama: (1) variasi regional dalam format dan strategi komunikasi fatwa digital; (2) peran kapasitas institusi, lingkungan regulasi, dan dinamika platform dalam membentuk otoritas; serta (3) munculnya model hibrida yang menggabungkan legitimasi fikih tradisional dengan visibilitas digital. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa keberlanjutan tata kelola fatwa digital bergantung pada integrasi kerangka etika Islam dengan literasi platform dan mekanisme verifikasi kelembagaan. Penelitian ini menegaskan perlunya rekonseptualisasi otoritas keagamaan yang mampu mengakomodasi mediasi algoritmik tanpa mengabaikan fondasi normatif, serta menawarkan implikasi strategis bagi lembaga fatwa, pembuat kebijakan, dan komunitas Muslim dalam menghadapi kompleksitas kehidupan keagamaan digital.



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technology has fundamentally transformed the production, dissemination, and validation of religious knowledge, posing unprecedented challenges to traditional religious institutions worldwide (Fauzi et al., 2026). In contemporary Muslim societies, digital platforms, algorithmic infrastructures, and networked religious content have reshaped not only the

circulation of fatwas but also the conditions under which religious authority is constituted, recognized, and contested (Atallah, 2026). This phenomenon represents what scholars term a "digital schism"—an epistemic tension between the hierarchical logic of *sanad* (chains of transmission) and the distributed logic of algorithms, which gives rise to new knowledge elites whose legitimacy is constructed through digital performativity and symbolic capital (Rois & Yazdani, 2026).

The urgency of this issue cannot be overstated, as the digital space has democratized access to Islamic knowledge, enabling social media influencers, preachers, and informal online scholars to serve as alternative sources of fatwas and religious guidance for Muslims globally (Fauzi et al., 2026). The shift from traditional hierarchies dominated by scholars and religious institutions to popularity-based authority, where figures like celebrity preachers and Islamic influencers have become dominant, fundamentally challenges established mechanisms of religious knowledge verification (Rachman et al., 2025). This transformation has implications for religious literacy, doctrinal integrity, and social cohesion in both Muslim-majority societies and diaspora communities.

Globally, scholarship on digital religion has evolved through four distinct phases: descriptive, categorical, theoretical, and integrative, with prominent frameworks including media ecology, mediation, mediatization, and religious-social shaping of technology (Ergen, 2023). Research has extensively documented how digital platforms reconfigure religious authority through algorithmic visibility, audience engagement, and platform logics (Sulfikar & Yasmine, 2026). However, a significant gap persists in comparative studies that examine how digital fatwa practices manifest differently across regional contexts—particularly between Southeast Asian Muslim-majority societies with established religious bureaucracies and Western European Muslim minority contexts characterized by fragmented local authority (Abdullah, 2026).

At the national and regional level, studies have examined Indonesia's dynamic digital da'wah landscape, where platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram reshape public perceptions of piety by blending Islamic values with popular culture (Kheryadi & Chorbwhan, 2025). Similarly, research on European Muslim communities has explored the role of institutions like the European Council for Fatwa and Research in providing religious guidance to Muslims in minority contexts (Cascino, 2024). Nevertheless, systematic comparative analysis connecting these distinct contexts remains underdeveloped, leaving crucial questions about regional variations in algorithmic religious authority unanswered.

This research addresses the following questions: (1) How do digital fatwa practices and dissemination strategies differ between Southeast Asian and European Muslim communities? (2) What institutional, regulatory, and technological factors shape these regional variations? (3) What theoretical frameworks can explain the transformation of fatwa authority under algorithmic mediation, and what models can ensure authenticity and scholarly integrity in digital religious guidance?

Theoretically, this study integrates Islamic legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) with mediatization theory and digital religion scholarship to examine how digital mediation reconfigures fatwa authority (Atallah, 2026). The classical architecture of fatwa authority rooted in scholarly qualification, *isnād*-based transmission, contextual discernment, and institutional oversight serves as the normative baseline against which contemporary digitally mediated environments are analyzed. The framework evaluates digital fatwa practices through *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (objectives of Islamic law), particularly *ḥifẓ al-dīn* (protecting religion) and *ḥifẓ al-'aql* (protecting intellect) (Abdullah, 2026).

The primary objectives of this research are threefold: to provide systematic descriptive analysis of digital fatwa practices across Southeast Asian and European contexts; to identify and critically analyze factors shaping regional variations in algorithmic religious authority; and to propose a comprehensive framework for governing digital fatwas that preserves methodological rigor and moral responsibility while embracing technological accessibility.

This study makes significant scholarly contributions by developing an integrated analytical framework that brings Islamic legal theory into sustained dialogue with digital religion scholarship, addressing the underexplored intersection between fatwa authority and algorithmic systems across comparative regional contexts. The research advances understanding of how contemporary religious authority is constructed as a hybrid negotiation involving knowledge-based authority, charisma-based authority, and platform-based authority (Sulfikar & Yasmine, 2026). Practically, the findings offer guidance for fatwa institutions, policymakers, and Muslim communities seeking to navigate the challenges and opportunities of algorithmically mediated religious knowledge.

## 2. LITERATUR REVIEW

Over the past decade, scholarly attention to digital Islamic authority has increased substantially, with research documenting the proliferation of digital platforms as spaces where Muslims learn, debate, and live their faith online (Choirin et al., 2025). Studies have examined how digitalization expedites the disintermediation of religious authority, favoring popularity, emotional resonance, and engagement metrics over methodological rigor and scholarly validation (Siregar et al., 2025). The field has moved from early descriptive accounts of online Islamic content to more sophisticated theoretical engagement with questions of legitimacy, verification, and institutional adaptation. Thematic evolution analysis indicates a shift from initial focus on content production and media ethics toward recent concerns about algorithmic visibility, digital literacy, and da'wah effectiveness in virtual spaces (Choirin et al., 2025).

Research has identified multiple factors influencing the reconfiguration of Islamic authority in digital environments. Institutional factors include the capacity of traditional religious bodies to establish digital presence and maintain credibility in online spaces (Salem, 2025). Al-Azhar's Global Center for Electronic Fatwas exemplifies institutional adaptation, operating on a fully digital model with a "Fatwa Bank" containing over 1.77 million indexed rulings and serving Muslims globally in 13 languages (Salem, 2025). Regulatory factors vary significantly across jurisdictions; state regulation and political involvement in digital religious spheres shape both the autonomy and public perception of official religious institutions (Fauzi et al., 2026). Technological factors include platform affordances, algorithmic amplification, and the attention economy, which collectively determine which religious content achieves visibility (Samudra et al., 2024). The emergence of "religious digital creatives" influencers with significant digital communication skills but often lacking formal training has redefined how authority is constructed and perceived (Syarifudin et al., 2025).

The process through which religious authority is negotiated in digital environments involves complex interactions between human actors, digital media, and algorithmic systems (Lohlker & Wahid, 2026). Authority formation occurs through articulative work connecting sacred texts, intermediary religious scholars, and congregations, with public search data showing that digital spaces function as distribution media where authority is shaped by audience responses, message repetition, symbolic affiliation, and debate dynamics (Lohlker & Wahid, 2026). Social media algorithms significantly shape the visibility of da'wah content and influence everyday encounters with religious messages, producing an "authority paradox" wherein users continue valuing preachers with strong religious education while the content they encounter most frequently is determined by algorithmic visibility rather than scholarly depth (Harisi et al., 2026). This creates hybrid forms of religious authority where scholarship, communicative style, and platform performance increasingly intersect (Harisi et al., 2026).

The impact of digital religious authority on Muslim communities operates across multiple dimensions. Positive impacts include enhanced accessibility to religious knowledge and transnational connectivity, with digital platforms enabling Muslims in minority contexts to access guidance previously unavailable locally (Bano & Valarthodi, 2025). Studies indicate that while digital access democratizes religious learning, it also creates fragmented understanding and susceptibility to polarized discourses (Husni & Sahal, 2026). Negative impacts include epistemic fragmentation, erosion of institutional credibility, and diffusion of accountability (Atallah, 2026). The phenomenon of "instant fatwas" and oversimplification of religious teachings presents particular challenges for maintaining doctrinal integrity (Rachman et al., 2025). Research on Indonesian Muslim youth reveals variations in interpretive frameworks, ranging from textual-literal to contextual-progressive orientations, influenced by digital ecosystems (Husni & Sahal, 2026).

Critical evaluation of existing scholarship reveals several limitations. First, most studies focus on single national or regional contexts, limiting understanding of how digital religious authority manifests differently across diverse Muslim communities (Sunier & Buskens, 2022). Second, research has predominantly adopted descriptive approaches without sufficient theoretical integration between Islamic legal theory and digital media studies (Atallah, 2026). Third, the rapidly evolving nature of digital platforms means that studies quickly become dated as new technologies and platform features emerge. Fourth, limited attention has been given to Western European Muslim minority contexts, where translation needs, rapid access demands, fragmented local authority, and platform attention economies present distinctive challenges (Abdullah, 2026). Fifth, while studies document authority fragmentation, fewer propose systematic frameworks for governance and institutional adaptation.

This study addresses these gaps through several novel contributions. First, it employs systematic comparative analysis across Southeast Asian Muslim-majority and European Muslim minority contexts, enabling identification of context-specific and universal dynamics in digital fatwa authority. Second, it develops an integrated analytical framework bringing Islamic legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) into sustained dialogue with mediatization theory and digital religion scholarship (Atallah, 2026). Third, it proposes the concept of "Platformized Religious Authority" as a framework capturing how contemporary religious authority emerges through hybrid negotiation of knowledge-based, charisma-based, and platform-based authority dimensions (Sulfikar & Yasmine, 2026). Fourth, it offers practical *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*-based governance recommendations for fatwa institutions navigating algorithmic environments. This research direction responds to calls for more theoretically sophisticated and practically relevant scholarship on the transformation of Islamic authority in the digital age (Abusharif, 2023).

### 3. METHODS

#### 3.1 Research Design

This research employs a qualitative analytical-comparative methodology designed to examine how digital mediation reconfigures fatwa authority across distinct regional contexts (Atallah, 2026). The qualitative approach is appropriate for this study as it enables in-depth examination of complex phenomena involving meaning-making, authority construction, and interpretive practices that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative measures alone. The comparative design allows systematic identification of similarities and differences in digital fatwa practices between Southeast Asian Muslim-majority societies and Western European Muslim minority communities, generating insights about context-specific dynamics and potentially universal patterns in algorithmic religious authority.

#### 3.2 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis comprises digital fatwa content and institutional practices from four major fatwa-issuing bodies representing the two regional contexts under study. For Southeast Asia, the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) represents the most authoritative fatwa-issuing body in the world's largest Muslim-majority nation, while Malaysian religious authorities (including state-level fatwa councils and federal bodies) represent a system integrating Islamic law within constitutional governance. For Europe, the European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR) represents institutional efforts to provide religious guidance tailored to Muslim minority contexts, while Al-Azhar's Global Center for Electronic Fatwas represents traditional authority's adaptation to digital environments with global reach including European audiences (Salem, 2025). The selection ensures representation of both established religious bureaucracies in Muslim-majority contexts and institutions serving diaspora communities in Muslim-minority settings.

#### 3.3 Data Sources

Data Type	Source	Description	Region
Primary Digital Content	MUI official website and social media platforms	Fatwas, guidelines, and digital communications (2017-2025)	Southeast Asia (Indonesia)
Primary Digital Content	Malaysian State Fatwa Councils (e-Fatwa portal)	State-level fatwas and digital publications	Southeast Asia (Malaysia)
Primary Digital Content	ECFR publications and website	Fatwas and resolutions for European Muslims (1997-2025)	Europe
Primary Digital Content	Al-Azhar Global Center for Electronic Fatwas	Multi-platform digital fatwas and guidance	Global/Europe

Data Type	Source	Description	Region
Secondary Sources	Scopus-indexed scholarly articles	Peer-reviewed literature on digital fatwa and religious authority (2020-2025)	Global
Secondary Sources	Policy documents and regulatory frameworks	National regulations on religious digital content	Both regions

### 3.4 Data Collection Techniques

Data collection followed systematic protocols appropriate for digital research. Digital ethnographic observation was conducted across official websites and social media platforms (YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook) of the selected institutions over a six-month period (January-June 2025), documenting fatwa content formats, dissemination strategies, audience engagement patterns, and institutional communication styles (Lohlker & Wahid, 2026). Document analysis examined official fatwa texts, institutional guidelines, and regulatory frameworks governing religious digital content in each jurisdiction. Literature review systematically analyzed peer-reviewed scholarship from Scopus, Google Scholar, and DOAJ databases using keywords including "digital fatwa," "algorithmic authority," "Islamic religious authority," and "digital religion" (Ulyan, 2023). The review prioritized publications from 2020-2025 to capture current developments while including foundational works establishing theoretical frameworks.

### 3.5 Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis employed thematic analysis combined with comparative legal-discursive analysis. Following Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic analysis framework, the research proceeded through familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. Comparative analysis utilized the Critical Islamic Legal and Media-Theoretical Framework structured around three axes: epistemic (examining knowledge validation and scholarly credentials), institutional (analyzing gatekeeping mechanisms and organizational capacity), and communicative (evaluating message formats and audience engagement) (Atallah, 2026). The *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* framework served as normative criteria for evaluating how digital fatwa practices serve or undermine the objectives of Islamic law, particularly protection of religion and intellect (Abdullah, 2026). Data triangulation ensured reliability through cross-verification of findings across multiple source types and analytical perspectives, with theoretical saturation guiding the determination of adequate data collection.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. Digital Fatwa Landscape: Descriptive Patterns Across Regions

The analysis reveals significant variations in digital fatwa practices between Southeast Asian and European contexts. In Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia, the digital fatwa landscape is characterized by institutional presence on multiple social media platforms combined with emerging challenges from popular digital preachers (Rahman et al., 2024). The Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) has issued fatwas recognizing social media as a neutral tool (*mubāḥ*) whose moral value depends on usage, emphasizing ethical conduct and avoidance of harmful content (Rahman et al., 2024). However, practical enforcement of these fatwas is limited by users' digital habits, lack of awareness, and insufficient public dissemination (Rahman et al., 2024).

Digital preachers in Indonesia have acquired substantial followings through platforms like YouTube, where figures such as Ustadz Abdul Somad, Ustadz Adi Hidayat, and Ustadz Khalid Basalamah disseminate fatwas reaching millions (Hamdani, 2023). The phenomenon of "moving narratives" in cyberspace allows fatwas to reach internet-connected populations while creating discourse contestation only possible through the Muslim public sphere (Hamdani, 2023). This democratization of religious discourse has disrupted traditional authority structures while raising concerns about scholarly oversight and theological accuracy (Ulyan, 2023).

In contrast, European digital fatwa practices demonstrate different institutional configurations. Al-Azhar's Global Center for Electronic Fatwas represents comprehensive institutional adaptation, operating a fully digital model with a multi-platform strategy encompassing telephone hotlines, mobile applications, websites, and social media presence in 13 languages (Salem, 2025). The Center's "Fatwa Bank" contains over 1.77 million indexed and searchable rulings, representing significant digital infrastructure for religious guidance (Salem, 2025). Specialized units including "Lam Al-Shaml" (Family Reunification) have handled over 150,000 family dispute cases, demonstrating institutional capacity to address real-world concerns through digital means (Salem, 2025).

European Muslim communities also encounter digital fatwas through the European Council for Fatwa and Research, which interprets da'wah not primarily as conversion-focused proselytization but as a multipurpose tool shaping Muslim roles in Europe, interfaith relationships, and community cohesion (Cascino, 2024). This contextual adaptation reflects the distinct needs of Muslim minorities navigating secular legal frameworks while maintaining religious identity.

#### **4.2 Algorithmic Mediation Critical Factor Analysis**

Critical analysis identifies three primary factors shaping regional variations in digital fatwa authority. First, institutional capacity determines how traditional religious bodies engage digital environments. In Egypt, Al-Azhar has prioritized strengthening its academically grounded digital presence, while Dar al-Ifta' has pursued a more dynamic strategy by expanding online fatwa services, launching social media campaigns, and developing multilingual outreach programs (Fauzi et al., 2026). This institutional response pattern is replicated in Southeast Asia, where Nahdlatul Ulama activists and preachers work to maintain traditional values amidst substantial exposure to new online preachers, employing strategies including visual aesthetics, communication skills, and marketing tactics (Rohmatulloh et al., 2022).

Second, regulatory frameworks significantly influence digital religious authority configurations. State regulation and political involvement in Egypt's digital religious sphere shape both the autonomy and public perception of official religious institutions (Fauzi et al., 2026). In Indonesia, the MUI has established guidelines for preachers intended as codes of ethics for da'i conducting activities, emphasizing religious-humanist character formation and national commitment (Husaini & Islamy, 2022). However, regulatory approaches in European contexts tend toward non-interference in religious content, creating spaces where authority is less institutionally controlled and more subject to algorithmic determination.

Third, algorithmic systems themselves constitute significant factors in religious authority construction. YouTube's recommendation system, TikTok's algorithm-driven content surfacing, and Instagram's engagement-based visibility mechanisms collectively shape which religious content reaches audiences (Samudra et al., 2024). Research demonstrates that algorithms contribute to the formation of echo chambers and identity fragmentation, intensifying religiously infused polarization while potentially undermining religious moderation (Bukhari et al., 2026). The phenomenon of "algorithmic preachers" emerges when platform logic acts as a new gatekeeper, favoring content that is visually performative and affectively resonant, thereby commodifying theology and forming algorithmic enclaves (Sulfikar & Yasmine, 2026).

#### **4.3 Reconceptualizing Religious Authority Models**

The transformative implications of digital fatwa practices necessitate reconceptualizing religious authority models. The findings support the concept of "Platformized Religious Authority"—a framework recognizing that contemporary religious authority is not monolithic but a hybrid negotiation of three intersecting dimensions: knowledge-based authority (traditional scholarship), charisma-based authority (performative piety), and platform-based authority (algorithmic visibility and engagement metrics) (Sulfikar & Yasmine, 2026).

This hybridization carries significant implications for Islamic epistemology. Digital mediation does not merely expand access to religious guidance; it alters the balance between evidentiary reasoning and infrastructural prominence, reshapes the relationship between muftī and mustaftī, and introduces new ambiguities concerning authority, legitimacy, and moral agency (Atallah, 2026). The transformation signifies a profound reconfiguration wherein scholarly legitimacy is no longer solely

derived from traditional knowledge transmission but is also influenced by emotional appeal and platform visibility (Siregar et al., 2025).

In response to these dynamics, this research proposes an integrated governance model based on *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* principles. The model encompasses source-provenance and verification protocols for Qur'anic, hadith, and juristic citations; explicit communication of uncertainty; contestability and review mechanisms; qualified human-in-the-loop oversight for fatwa-like guidance; and community-facing digital and AI literacy programs (Abdullah, 2026). This framework provides implementable governance tools while preserving the integrity of Islamic legal methodology and moral responsibility in religious guidance.

## 5. DISCUSSION

This study demonstrates that digital platforms have fundamentally reconfigured fatwa authority across both Southeast Asian Muslim-majority and European Muslim minority contexts, though with significant regional variations. In Southeast Asia, digital fatwa practices are characterized by contestation between established religious institutions and emerging digital preachers, with algorithms shaping which content achieves visibility regardless of scholarly credentials (Harisi et al., 2026). In European contexts, institutional responses range from comprehensive digital infrastructure development (as exemplified by Al-Azhar's Global Center) to contextually adapted guidance addressing minority-specific concerns (as in ECFR's approach) (Cascino, 2024; Salem, 2025). Across both contexts, the emergence of hybrid authority models combining traditional scholarship, performative charisma, and algorithmic visibility represents a fundamental transformation in how religious legitimacy is constructed and perceived.

These findings must be understood within broader socio-technological transformations affecting religious practice globally. The shift from traditional to digital religious authority reflects wider patterns of mediatization, wherein media logic increasingly permeates and shapes social institutions including religion (Lohlker & Wahid, 2026). In Muslim contexts specifically, this transformation intersects with historical patterns of religious knowledge transmission that have always involved negotiation between centralized authority and distributed access. What distinguishes the digital era is the speed, scale, and algorithmic mediation of these processes, creating conditions where authority can be constructed and contested with unprecedented rapidity and reach (Abusharif, 2023).

The regional variations identified in this study reflect different historical relationships between religious institutions and state structures, varying levels of digital infrastructure development, and distinct demographic profiles of Muslim communities. Southeast Asian contexts feature established religious bureaucracies integrated within state governance structures, enabling institutional responses to digital challenges through regulatory and organizational mechanisms. European contexts, by contrast, feature Muslim communities navigating secular state frameworks without comparable institutional infrastructure, creating greater reliance on transnational authority sources and heightened vulnerability to algorithmic determination of religious content (Abdullah, 2026).

Theoretically, this study advances understanding of religious authority in digital environments through several contributions. The concept of "Platformized Religious Authority" integrates platform studies from communication science into the sociology of religion, offering a more robust model for understanding how religious legitimacy is produced, maintained, and contested in the attention economy (Sulfikar & Yasmine, 2026). This framework moves beyond earlier typologies that either romanticized digital democratization or lamented traditional authority decline, instead capturing the complex hybrid negotiations characterizing contemporary religious authority.

The findings also demonstrate the utility of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* as an evaluative framework for digital religious practice. The objectives of protecting religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*) and protecting intellect (*ḥifẓ al-'aql*) provide normative criteria for assessing whether digital fatwa practices serve or undermine core Islamic values (Abdullah, 2026). This integration of classical Islamic legal theory with digital religion scholarship represents methodological innovation enabling culturally grounded analysis of technologically mediated religious phenomena.

Understanding the transformation of fatwa authority requires recognizing that this change represents not merely a shift in medium but a fundamental epistemological reconstruction (Rois & Yazdani, 2026). The traditional *sanad*-based system of knowledge transmission established authority through traceable chains of scholarly qualification verified by personal relationships and institutional

recognition. Digital environments replace these mechanisms with platform-based verification systems that privilege engagement metrics, visual aesthetics, and algorithmic amplification (Akib et al., 2025).

This transformation generates what this study terms "epistemic tension" between hierarchical and distributed logics of authority. The hierarchical logic emphasizes specialized expertise, institutional gatekeeping, and methodological rigor, while the distributed logic emphasizes accessibility, emotional resonance, and democratic participation. Neither logic is inherently superior; rather, the challenge lies in developing hybrid models that preserve essential elements of scholarly integrity while embracing the accessibility and connectivity enabled by digital technologies (Husain et al., 2025).

These findings both confirm and extend previous research on digital Islamic authority. Consistent with earlier studies, this research documents the fragmentation of traditional authority structures and the emergence of new religious actors gaining legitimacy through digital performance rather than classical scholarly credentials ("Ulyan, 2023). However, this study extends previous work by demonstrating that institutional responses vary significantly across regional contexts, with some religious bodies developing sophisticated digital infrastructure while others remain marginally engaged with digital environments.

The comparative dimension of this research reveals patterns not apparent in single-context studies. The contrast between Southeast Asian institutional responses and European contextual constraints highlights how structural factors—including state-religion relationships, regulatory frameworks, and demographic configurations—shape possibilities for digital fatwa governance. This finding challenges approaches treating digital religious authority as a universal phenomenon, instead emphasizing the importance of context-specific analysis (Chakim et al., 2025).

The implications of this research extend across theoretical, practical, and policy domains. Theoretically, the study contributes to digital religion scholarship by demonstrating how Islamic legal theory can enrich understanding of technologically mediated religious practice. The integration of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* with platform studies provides a model applicable beyond Islamic contexts to other religious traditions navigating digital transformation.

Practically, the findings offer guidance for fatwa institutions seeking to establish effective digital presence while maintaining scholarly integrity. Key recommendations include developing institutional verification mechanisms for digital content, training religious scholars in digital communication competencies, and establishing clear protocols distinguishing official institutional guidance from individual scholarly opinions (Masruha et al., 2025). For Muslim communities, the findings emphasize the importance of digital religious literacy the capacity to critically evaluate online religious content, verify scholarly credentials, and navigate algorithmic environments thoughtfully (Husni & Sahal, 2026).

Policy implications address both religious institutions and governmental bodies. Religious institutions should develop comprehensive digital strategies that preserve core scholarly values while embracing technological affordances, including investment in digital infrastructure, content verification systems, and community education programs (Khusairi et al., 2025). Governmental bodies in both Muslim-majority and minority contexts should consider appropriate regulatory frameworks that protect against religious misinformation while respecting religious freedom and avoiding over-regulation that might drive religious discourse to less accountable spaces (Cahyono et al., 2025).

This study has examined the transformation of fatwa authority within digital environments through a comparative analysis of Southeast Asian Muslim-majority and European Muslim minority contexts. The findings demonstrate that digital platforms and algorithmic infrastructures have significantly reshaped how fatwas are produced, circulated, and contested, altering the conditions under which religious authority is established and recognized. While regional differences reflect variations in institutional capacity, regulatory frameworks, and community structures, a shared pattern emerges in the form of hybridized authority, where traditional scholarly legitimacy increasingly intersects with digital visibility and platform dynamics.

The study contributes theoretically by advancing an integrated framework that brings Islamic legal theory into dialogue with contemporary media and platform studies. It shows that *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* can function as a normative evaluative framework for assessing digital religious practices, particularly in safeguarding the integrity of religion and intellect in rapidly evolving technological contexts. The concept of platformized religious authority captures the complex negotiation between inherited epistemic traditions and digitally mediated forms of legitimacy, offering a more nuanced

understanding beyond narratives of either democratization or the decline of traditional authority. Methodologically, the research highlights the value of qualitative comparative approaches in capturing both contextual variation and broader structural patterns in digital religious life.

Practically, the study provides important implications for religious institutions, policymakers, and Muslim communities. Fatwa institutions are encouraged to strengthen digital infrastructures, establish verification mechanisms, and enhance scholars' digital competencies while maintaining methodological rigor. Muslim communities should develop critical digital literacy to navigate online religious content responsibly, while policymakers must balance regulatory interventions with the protection of religious freedom. Future research should explore longitudinal developments in digital fatwa practices, audience reception dynamics, and cross-regional comparisons, as well as emerging challenges posed by artificial intelligence in mediating religious knowledge and authority.

## 6. CRediT Author Statement

Muhammad Jaidi: Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Investigation, Writing – Original Draft, Visualization, Project administration. A. Hafiz Anshary AZ: Data Curation, Validation, Formal analysis, Writing – Review & Editing. Muhammad Salis Ridwan: Supervision, Resources, Writing – Review & Editing, Conceptualization.

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