

The Authority of Hadith in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: An Epistemological Analysis of AI-Based Religious Fatwas in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Digitalization has significantly changed the way humans interact through efficient mechanisms. For example, access to knowledge, which initially relied on classic books, scriptures, or live lectures, has now shifted to using social media. In Indonesia, this dynamic is becoming increasingly prevalent, as evidenced by the increasing number of religious figures appearing on social media. The purpose of this study is to collect and analyze as much data as possible to draw conclusions regarding the epistemology of AI-based religious fatwas in Indonesia. This study uses a literature study approach. This research was conducted by utilizing previous research relevant to this research topic. The results indicate that previous studies used as references for the current study agree that AI opens opportunities for increased efficiency and access to religious knowledge, but does not change the basic principle that fatwas are the result of human *ijtihad*, which is scientifically and morally responsible. The conclusion is that the development of AI-based fatwas must remain within the framework of Islamic epistemology, which places *ulama* as the primary actors in the law enforcement process. In addition, the position of *hadith* authority in Indonesia is in its proper position, namely after the *Qur'an* and above *ijma'* and *qiyas*, so there is no AI reference that can be followed without seeing complete *ijtihad* in accordance with the fatwa method used by official institutions.

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Introduction

The rapid development of information technology has fundamentally transformed the ways in which knowledge is produced, accessed, validated, and disseminated. In contemporary society, digital platforms have become an integral part of everyday life, providing unprecedented opportunities for individuals to obtain information across various fields, including religion. Religious knowledge that was traditionally accessed through classical Islamic texts, *kutub al-turāth*, scholarly circles, *halaqah*, pesantren education, and direct interaction with qualified *ulama* is increasingly encountered through websites, social media,

digital libraries, search engines, and, more recently, artificial intelligence (AI)-based systems. In Indonesia, this transformation is particularly visible in the increasing use of TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, websites, and other digital platforms as channels for Islamic learning. Such platforms are no longer used merely to disseminate religious messages but have increasingly become spaces in which Muslims seek explanations concerning Islamic beliefs, worship, ethics, and legal questions. Consequently, digital technology has not merely changed the medium through which Islamic knowledge is communicated; it has also begun to transform the structure of religious authority itself.

This transformation becomes more significant with the emergence of the algorithmic environment, in which algorithms increasingly influence what information individuals encounter, prioritize, and regard as relevant. Within such an environment, the authority of religious knowledge can gradually shift from scholarly competence toward accessibility, visibility, popularity, and algorithmic recommendation. Religious content that receives substantial engagement may become more visible than content produced through rigorous scholarly methodologies. This development creates an important epistemological problem because the popularity of religious information does not necessarily correspond to its scholarly validity. In the context of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), legal reasoning is not simply a process of retrieving information or matching a question with an existing answer. Rather, it involves complex methodological processes, including the interpretation of authoritative sources, evaluation of textual evidence, consideration of legal principles, understanding of context, and assessment of *maṣlaḥah* and *mafsadah*. Therefore, the digitalization of Islamic knowledge requires not only technological competence but also a critical examination of the epistemological principles through which religious knowledge acquires validity and authority.

This issue becomes even more consequential with the rapid development of Artificial Intelligence, particularly generative AI and Large Language Models (LLMs). AI systems are capable of processing enormous quantities of textual data and generating coherent responses to highly diverse questions within seconds. In the field of Islamic studies, such capabilities offer significant opportunities. AI can assist researchers in locating Qur'anic verses and Hadith, identifying textual similarities, mapping *isnād* networks, organizing large Hadith databases, detecting textual variations, and supporting preliminary classification of religious sources. In Hadith studies, computational methods may facilitate the analysis of transmission networks and accelerate the identification of narrators and textual patterns. In Qur'anic studies, AI may support thematic analysis, textual comparison, and the organization of exegetical materials. These technological capabilities demonstrate that AI can function as a valuable research instrument for Islamic scholarship.

Nevertheless, the ability of AI to process and reproduce Islamic texts should not be equated with the possession of Islamic epistemological authority. This distinction is fundamental. An AI system generates responses based on patterns learned from its training data and computational architecture; it does not possess *ijāzah*, *isnād*, scholarly formation, lived religious experience, or the normative responsibility traditionally associated with *ulama*. More importantly, AI does not independently establish the epistemological validity of the sources from which it generates an answer. A response may appear linguistically convincing and contain apparently relevant Qur'anic verses or Hadith while nevertheless being inaccurate, decontextualized, weakly sourced, or methodologically inappropriate. The phenomenon commonly referred to as AI hallucination further demonstrates that linguistic fluency cannot be treated as evidence of epistemic validity. Accordingly, the central question is not simply

whether AI can provide religious answers, but whether and under what conditions such answers can be regarded as legitimate forms of Islamic knowledge.

This question requires a theoretical foundation grounded in Islamic epistemology. Islamic epistemology does not construct knowledge solely upon empirical observation or rational calculation but recognizes an integrated relationship between *naql* (revealed/transmitted knowledge), *‘aql* (reason), and disciplined scholarly interpretation. In the Islamic intellectual tradition, the Qur'an and Sunnah constitute fundamental sources of normative guidance, while their interpretation requires methodological instruments developed through the Islamic sciences. In the case of Hadith, the authority of a narration cannot be established merely because its textual content appears consistent with Islamic teachings. Classical Hadith scholarship developed sophisticated mechanisms for determining authenticity through the examination of *isnād*, narrator reliability (*rijāl*), continuity of transmission (*ittiṣāl al-sanad*), textual criticism (*naqd al-matn*), and other criteria developed by Hadith scholars. Thus, the epistemological authority of Hadith is inseparable from a scholarly methodology that establishes the reliability, transmission, interpretation, and contextual relevance of a report.

The same principle applies to Islamic legal reasoning. A fatwa is not simply an answer to a religious question; it represents a form of normative knowledge produced through a particular methodology of *ijtihād*. The authority of a fatwa is therefore connected not only to its substantive conclusion but also to the qualifications of the person or institution issuing it, the sources employed, the methodology of legal reasoning, and the socio-religious context in which the ruling is applied. Classical and contemporary Islamic jurisprudence recognizes that legal judgments may vary because of differences in textual interpretation, legal schools, circumstances, customs (*‘urf*), and assessments of public benefit (*maṣlaḥah*). Consequently, an Islamic legal answer cannot be reduced to a computationally generated proposition detached from the epistemological and normative framework that makes the proposition religiously meaningful.

The emergence of AI-generated fatwas therefore introduces a fundamental distinction between information production and religious authority. AI may retrieve, summarize, compare, and formulate information, but these functions do not automatically confer the authority to establish a religious ruling. An AI-generated response may reproduce the language of a fatwa, cite Qur'anic verses or Hadith, and provide references to classical legal works, yet the presence of these elements does not necessarily guarantee methodological validity. There remains a crucial epistemological gap between *having information about Islamic law* and *possessing the authority to determine Islamic law*. This gap becomes particularly problematic when users perceive an AI-generated response as equivalent to a fatwa issued by a qualified *faqīh*, *mufti*, or recognized religious institution.

The need for special verification becomes even more urgent in the Indonesian context. Indonesia possesses a highly diverse Islamic intellectual and institutional landscape, characterized by different *madhāhib*, religious organizations, pesantren traditions, scholarly networks, and fatwa institutions. Islamic legal discourse in Indonesia has historically developed through the interaction of classical Islamic scholarship with local social, cultural, and institutional contexts. Institutions and organizations such as the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, and various pesantren and Islamic educational institutions contribute to the formation and dissemination of religious authority. Their legal opinions are produced through institutional mechanisms, scholarly deliberation, textual analysis, and contextual consideration. Therefore, an AI-generated answer that appears

universally applicable may overlook the methodological and contextual diversity characteristic of Indonesian Islam.

Furthermore, Indonesian Muslims do not constitute a homogeneous epistemic community. Differences in religious education, *madhhab* orientation, organizational affiliation, pesantren traditions, and levels of digital literacy may influence how individuals understand and apply religious information. A generalized AI response can therefore produce different consequences when introduced into diverse social settings. A legal answer that may be acceptable within one jurisprudential framework may be contested within another. Similarly, an AI system may combine opinions from different schools of Islamic law without clearly distinguishing their methodological foundations. Such synthesis may appear comprehensive from a computational perspective while creating epistemological ambiguity from the perspective of Islamic jurisprudence.

The Indonesian context also requires special attention because religious authority has already undergone significant transformation through social media. Before the emergence of generative AI, digital platforms had already contributed to the decentralization of religious authority. Traditional *ulama* and established religious institutions increasingly coexist with online preachers, influencers, content creators, and informal religious communities. The authority of religious figures in digital spaces may consequently be determined by visibility, follower counts, engagement, and communicative appeal rather than by scholarly qualifications. The emergence of generative AI potentially intensifies this process because the source of a religious answer can become even less visible. Unlike a human preacher whose educational background and institutional affiliation may be investigated, an AI system does not possess a conventional scholarly biography or a transparent chain of intellectual transmission. The user may therefore receive a religious answer without knowing precisely which sources, interpretations, or assumptions produced it.

This situation is particularly problematic in Hadith-based religious reasoning. The digital circulation of Hadith has already created challenges involving fabricated narrations, inaccurate translations, incomplete references, decontextualized quotations, and confusion between authentic and weak reports. AI can potentially amplify these problems because it can reproduce erroneous information at a much greater speed and scale. If a model generates a fabricated Hadith reference or incorrectly attributes a narration to a classical collection, the resulting statement may nevertheless appear credible because of its fluent language and apparently scholarly presentation. Therefore, the central problem is not merely the technical accuracy of AI but the epistemological accountability of the knowledge it produces.

For this reason, AI-generated fatwas require a verification mechanism that is more rigorous than ordinary information retrieval. Such verification should include at least the identification and authentication of the primary sources, examination of Hadith *isnād* and *matn* where relevant, assessment of the reliability and context of the cited evidence, comparison with established interpretations of Islamic jurisprudence, evaluation of the *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* dimension, and examination by qualified Islamic scholars. In this framework, AI should be positioned as an assistive technological instrument rather than an autonomous source of religious authority. AI may efficiently perform operational tasks such as searching, indexing, classification, textual comparison, and preliminary synthesis, while epistemically decisive processes—including Hadith authentication, *ijtihād*, contextual interpretation, and normative judgment—remain subject to qualified human scholarly oversight.

Such an approach can be conceptualized as controlled augmentation: AI augments the technical capacities of Islamic scholarship without replacing the epistemological authority of

scholars. This model recognizes that technological efficiency and religious authority belong to different epistemic domains. AI can enhance the speed and scope of information processing, but the determination of whether a particular narration is authentic, whether an interpretation is methodologically justified, and whether a legal ruling is appropriate for a particular social context requires forms of scholarly judgment that cannot simply be inferred from computational probability. Controlled augmentation therefore provides a conceptual framework for integrating technological innovation with the methodological integrity of Islamic scholarship.

The urgency of this issue is reinforced by the possibility that AI-generated religious answers may increasingly be perceived by the public as authoritative simply because they are immediate, articulate, and accessible. This creates a potential epistemic displacement in which computational fluency is mistaken for scholarly competence. If such a tendency remains insufficiently examined, AI could contribute to the further erosion of established mechanisms of religious accountability. The issue is therefore not whether Islamic scholarship should reject technological innovation, but how technological innovation can be incorporated without compromising the principles through which Islamic knowledge is authenticated and religious authority is established.

Despite the growing body of literature on digital Islam, AI, Hadith studies, and the transformation of religious authority, an important research gap remains. Existing studies have frequently examined AI from a technological perspective, emphasizing its capacity for information retrieval, textual analysis, or religious content generation. Other studies have discussed the digitalization of Hadith and the transformation of religious authority through social media. However, comparatively limited attention has been given to the intersection between Islamic epistemology, Hadith authority, AI-generated fatwas, and the institutional context of Indonesian religious authority. In particular, the question of how AI-generated religious answers should be epistemologically evaluated before being regarded as fatwas remains insufficiently developed.

This study therefore addresses the emerging problem by examining AI-based religious fatwas through the framework of Islamic epistemology, with particular attention to the authority of Hadith and the Indonesian religious context. It asks how the emergence of AI reshapes the production and dissemination of Islamic legal knowledge, how the epistemological authority of Hadith is preserved or challenged within AI-assisted religious reasoning, and why AI-generated fatwas require verification through established Islamic scholarly methodologies and Indonesian religious institutions. The study further examines the possibility of positioning AI within a controlled-augmentation framework in which technological systems support the operational dimensions of Islamic scholarship while qualified scholars retain responsibility for epistemic validation and normative judgment.

Accordingly, this research is entitled “The Authority of Hadith in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: An Epistemological Analysis of AI-Based Religious Fatwas in Indonesia.” The study contributes to the contemporary discourse on Islam and artificial intelligence by shifting the discussion from the question of whether AI can generate religious answers to the more fundamental question of what makes a religious answer epistemically authoritative within Islamic tradition. By placing AI-generated fatwas within the framework of Islamic epistemology, Hadith methodology, and Indonesia's plural religious authority structure, this research seeks to formulate a critical yet constructive model for integrating artificial intelligence into Islamic scholarship without allowing technological efficiency to replace the epistemological integrity and scholarly accountability of religious knowledge.

Research Method

This study This study employs a qualitative library research approach combined with a structured literature review and critical epistemological analysis. The study examines the authority of Hadith and the epistemological position of artificial intelligence (AI) in the production of religious fatwas, with particular attention to the Indonesian context.

The sources consist of primary and secondary literature. Primary sources include official fatwas, religious guidelines, and institutional publications from organizations such as the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and Muhammadiyah, as well as classical and contemporary works on Hadith and Islamic jurisprudence. Secondary sources include peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, conference proceedings, and research studies concerning Islamic epistemology, Hadith authority, fatwa, artificial intelligence, generative AI, digital religion, and religious authority.

The study utilizes both primary and secondary sources to identify, collect, and analyze relevant information. Primary sources include official fatwas, policy documents, and authoritative publications issued by recognized Islamic institutions, while secondary sources consist of academic books, journal articles, conference proceedings, and other scholarly publications discussing Artificial Intelligence, Islamic jurisprudence, Hadith studies, and digital religious authority. Data collection is conducted systematically to ensure the comprehensiveness and reliability of the evidence. The collected materials are subsequently organized, classified, and examined using a qualitative research approach, allowing the researcher to construct a coherent interpretation of the issues under investigation.

The qualitative analysis involves an in-depth examination of the collected data through critical reading, interpretation, reflection, and comparative analysis. Rather than relying on statistical measurement, the study emphasizes understanding the meanings, arguments, and epistemological assumptions underlying AI-generated religious fatwas. This interpretive process enables the researcher to formulate comprehensive conclusions that address the central research questions while maintaining the methodological rigor expected in qualitative Islamic studies.

Literature was primarily selected from publications between 2015 and 2026, while earlier classical works were included when they provided fundamental concepts concerning *isnād*, *matn*, *ijtihad*, and Islamic epistemology. The literature search focused on academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, DOAJ, Garuda, and Moraref, as well as relevant institutional repositories.

The selection of literature was based on four criteria: relevance, academic credibility, methodological quality, and epistemological significance. Sources that were irrelevant, duplicative, promotional, anonymous, or lacked adequate academic evidence were excluded.

The collected data were analyzed through thematic and critical epistemological analysis. The analysis focused on several themes: (1) sources of Islamic knowledge, (2) Hadith authentication and *isnād*, (3) *matn* criticism, (4) *ijtihad* and fatwa methodology, (5) AI-generated religious knowledge, and (6) religious authority in Indonesia.

Finally, the study applies the concept of controlled augmentation as an analytical framework. AI is positioned as a supporting instrument for searching, classifying, comparing, and organizing information, while the authentication of Hadith, contextual interpretation, *ijtihad*, and normative religious judgment remain under the responsibility of qualified Islamic

scholars. This approach enables the study to assess AI not simply as a technological innovation but as a new form of epistemic mediation within contemporary Islamic religious authority.

Result

Tabel 1. Penelitian Relevan

No.	Penulis	Tahun	Judul	Hasil
1.	Qurrota A'yun, Nurul Istiani	2021	The Epistemology of Islamic Jurisprudence on Social Media: The Epistemological Construction of the Indonesian Council of Ulama's Fatwa on <i>Mu'āmalah</i>	MUI fatwas are founded upon four principal epistemological bases. First, they are grounded in universal ethical and moral values (<i>ʿām</i>) derived from authoritative theological texts (<i>naṣṣ</i>). Second, they employ established principles of Islamic legal maxims (<i>qawā'id fiqhiyyah</i>), particularly the doctrines of <i>sadd al-dharā'i'</i> (blocking the means to harm as a preventive measure) and <i>maṣlaḥah mursalah</i> (consideration of the public interest). Third, they draw upon the opinions and scholarly legacy of classical Muslim jurists. Fourth, they incorporate the views of contemporary scholars and subject-matter experts, particularly regarding the use of social media and its implications for Islamic legal and ethical discourse.
2.	Lukman Hakim dan Muhamad Risqil Azizi	2023	The Authority of Religious Fatwas in the Context of the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Era	Accordingly, it is imperative that Muslims engaged in the development and utilization of Artificial Intelligence (AI) adopt an ethical framework rooted in Islamic principles to guide its design, implementation, and application. Such a framework ensures that AI serves the public good (<i>maṣlaḥah</i>), upholds universal ethical values, and safeguards fundamental human rights. Through this approach, Islam and AI can coexist in a reconciliatory and mutually reinforcing relationship, promoting technological innovation that contributes to the well-being of both individuals and society at large.
3.	Syarif Firdaus	2024	An Epistemological Study of Islamic Law in the Context of Fatwas Issued by the Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI)	The Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI) adopts an eclectic epistemological approach by integrating the <i>bayānī</i> , <i>burhānī</i> , and <i>ʿirfānī</i> methods in the process of

				issuing religious fatwas. This approach reflects a significant effort to contextualize Islamic law within the socio-cultural realities of Indonesian society, as evidenced by the application of the principles of <i>maṣlaḥah</i> (public interest) and <i>ʿurf</i> (local custom). Furthermore, MUI's practice of collective <i>ijtihād</i> enriches the epistemological foundations of its fatwas by incorporating diverse scholarly perspectives, although it also presents challenges in reconciling differing viewpoints within the deliberative process. The novelty of this study lies in its comprehensive analysis of the evolving epistemology of Islamic law as reflected in MUI fatwas in the digital era—an area that has received relatively limited scholarly attention.
4.	Muji, Salsabila Khairunnisa	2024	Artificial Intelligence and Ijmāʿ-Based Fatwas: An Islamic Perspective on Modern Innovation	The findings indicate that, based on the principle of <i>ijmāʿ</i> (scholarly consensus), Artificial Intelligence (AI) may be considered permissible provided that it does not contradict the fundamental principles and values of Islam or result in harm (<i>mafsadah</i>). Nevertheless, its implementation requires continuous human oversight to ensure that its development and application remain consistent with the objectives and principles of Islamic law (<i>Sharīʿah</i>).
5.	Hasmira Rahmadani, Suci Pratama Putri, Muhammad Idham Jamal, Muhammad Rusdi	2025	Comparative Analysis of Fatwas Among the Islamic Schools of Law: An Examination of Their Juristic Reasoning	The study demonstrates that differences in the application of the legal methodologies of <i>qiyās</i> (analogical reasoning), <i>istiḥsān</i> (juristic preference), and <i>istiṣlāḥ</i> (consideration of public interest) significantly influence the diversity of fatwas issued by the various Islamic schools of law. Although the resulting legal opinions vary, all schools are founded upon the same fundamental sources of Islamic law and remain committed to the objectives of the Sharīʿah (<i>Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah</i>). The findings underscore the importance of understanding these methodological differences not as

				sources of division, but as manifestations of the richness of Islamic intellectual tradition and as a foundation for fostering tolerance toward legal diversity within Islamic jurisprudence.
6.	Ahmad Fahrudin	2025	The Study of <i>‘Ulūm al-Qur’an</i> Amid the Contestation Between Artificial Intelligence and Religious Authority	Artificial Intelligence (AI) has inherent limitations in comprehending the historical, sociological, and theological contexts of divine revelation, thereby underscoring the indispensable role of human scholars, particularly <i>ulama</i> and Qur'anic exegetes (<i>mufasssirūn</i>). Consequently, the integration of AI into the study of <i>‘Ulūm al-Qur’an</i> should be pursued through a critical, ethical, and collaborative approach. Such an approach ensures that AI functions as a supportive tool that enhances the authenticity, rigor, and depth of Qur'anic scholarship rather than replacing the indispensable role of human interpretation.
7.	Ahmad Al Haitami, Hakami Mundziri Sastra	2025	Living Hadith in the Digital Era: Religious Continuity and Media Adaptation in the Prophetic Traditions of the Tablighi Jamaat	Hadith continues to be understood as a form of practical pedagogy that is internalized through collective religious practice rather than treated merely as an object of textual criticism. However, digital mediation has shifted the basis of religious authority from embodied interpersonal relationships to forms of authority grounded in visual representation, the legitimacy of digital platforms and communication channels, and the algorithmic logic that governs online media. Although this adaptation does not alter the theological substance of the tradition, it generates new dynamics between the preservation of Prophetic tradition and the rationality of digital media in contemporary religious practice.
8.	Nurkhalis Muchtar	2025	The Role of Ijtihād and Fatwa in Addressing Contemporary Religious Issues	Islamic jurists have exerted considerable scholarly effort in engaging in <i>ijtihād</i> and issuing fatwas, as reflected in their numerous academic contributions to the field of Islamic jurisprudence. This study

				further examines the endeavors of contemporary Muslim scholars to revitalize and contextualize <i>ijtihad</i> in response to present-day challenges, thereby demonstrating that Islam continues to offer relevant and practical solutions to the diverse issues confronting humanity across various aspects of life.
9.	Mahmud Renuat, Imanuel Inriyanto Ruslak Hammar, Emanuel Deporas Bukutubun	2025	The Problematics of Fatwas in the Digital Era: A Study of Ulama Authority and the Fragmentation of Religious Authority in Indonesia	The study finds that the authority to issue fatwas is no longer dominated by established religious institutions such as the Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI), Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and Muhammadiyah. Instead, it has increasingly been shared with popular figures on social media, many of whom do not employ recognized methodologies of <i>ijtihad</i> in formulating religious opinions. This fragmentation of religious authority is further exacerbated by the public's limited religious literacy and the absence of effective regulatory frameworks governing digital religious authority. As a consequence, it has contributed to religious disorientation, increased polarization within the Muslim community, and growing confusion in distinguishing between authoritative fatwas and personal opinions.
10.	Syafruddin Mahud	2025	Islamic Religious Education in the Age of Algorithms: Artificial Intelligence, Religious Authority, and the Crisis of Religious Literacy	The findings indicate that algorithms have emerged as new epistemic agents, shifting educational and religious authority from teachers to popular digital figures while simultaneously weakening religious literacy. At the same time, however, these technologies create opportunities for AI-driven pedagogical innovation that fosters critical reflection, ethical reasoning, and the cultivation of Islamic values.
11.	Riski Ari Wibowo, Irwan Triadi	2025	Fatwas in the Era of Digital Disruption: A Study of Religious Authority and the Influence of Social Media on Islamic Legal Rulings	While digital fatwas have become more participatory and accessible, they are also increasingly susceptible to epistemic fragmentation. The study further finds that <i>maqāṣid al-sharī'ah</i> can serve as a normative framework for assessing the quality

				of digital fatwas, ensuring that they remain valid, ethically grounded, and contextually relevant. Accordingly, this research aims to promote the epistemological reconstruction of Islamic law in the digital era and to propose evaluative parameters for algorithm-mediated religious authority.
12.	Lasmi Anisa Putri, Efendi, Muhammad Zalnur	2025	Reconstructing Islamic Epistemology: Integrating the <i>Bayānī</i> , <i>ʿIrfānī</i> , and <i>Burhānī</i> Approaches for Knowledge Resilience in the Digital Era	The Enduring Relevance of the Qur'an and the Sunnah: The Qur'an and the Sunnah promote critical inquiry, empirical observation, and reflective contemplation (<i>tafakkur</i>), thereby establishing an ethical and epistemological foundation for the pursuit of knowledge. At the same time, they offer normative guidance for addressing contemporary challenges, including misinformation, identity fragmentation, and mental health concerns in the digital age.
13.	Nur Ahmadi Akmal, Rasyad, Cut Intan Salasyiah, Fakhrurrazi M. Yunus, Khairiah Syahabuddin	2026	Artificial Intelligence in Islamic Fatwa: A Maqasid al-Shariah and Hadith Perspective	From the perspective of <i>Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah</i> , the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) may be regarded as permissible when employed as a supporting instrument (<i>wasīlah</i>), particularly for the retrieval of textual evidence, data processing, and the mapping of scholarly opinions, provided that the final legal determination remains under the authority of a qualified <i>mufti</i> . Accordingly, AI should not function as an independent issuer of fatwas; rather, it should serve as an assistive tool whose application is guided by the principles of prudence, Islamic ethics, and the higher objectives of the <i>Sharīʿah</i> (<i>Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah</i>).
14.	Imam Hendra Yani dan Ahmad Sulhan	2026	Deconstructing and Reconstructing the Epistemology of Islamic Religious Education in the Era of Globalization	For Muslim communities, particularly younger generations living in the digital age, these dynamics present a complex reality. They are growing up in an environment where the religious values transmitted through family, educational institutions, and society intersect with the diverse ideas and perspectives introduced by modernity.

15.	Muhammad Qomarullah, Nursita Rahman, Mutiara Salabilla, Fatlam Alqaustar, Muhammad Saepudin, M.Revaldy Exfriza	2026	Artificial Intelligence and the Transformation of Islamic Studies in Higher Education: A Critical Analysis of AI Implementation in Qur'anic Exegesis and Hadith Methodologies in the Digital Era	The development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Islamic Studies faces significant challenges related to research integrity, particularly concerning data bias and the use of insufficiently diverse or unreliable datasets, which may result in inherent biases and inaccurate outputs. When AI is employed for digital reconstruction in Islamic heritage studies, for example, its models must be trained on a broad and representative corpus of authentic sources to minimize bias, enhance reliability, and ensure the accuracy of the generated analyses.
16	Adila Umniati Aufa, Afikah Nur Fahrizah, Muhammad Fadhil, Arya Yudiawan	2026	Revitalizing the Teaching of Hadith Sciences in the Era of Artificial Intelligence through a Technology Integration Model Grounded in 'Ulamā' Authority	Through the concept of <i>controlled augmentation</i> , this model positions Artificial Intelligence (AI) within operational functions such as data retrieval and digital classification, while preserving the validation of <i>isnād</i> (chains of transmission), <i>matn</i> (textual) criticism, and normative interpretation under the supervision of qualified <i>ulama</i> . This approach contributes to strengthening digital Hadith literacy without compromising the integrity of Islamic epistemology in the digital era.

Discussion

The Epistemological Hierarchy of Islamic Legal Knowledge

The question of whether artificial intelligence can issue religious fatwas cannot be adequately answered by evaluating the technical sophistication of AI alone. It must first be examined within the epistemological structure of Islamic legal reasoning (*uṣūl al-fiqh*). Islamic legal knowledge is not constructed simply by collecting information and generating logical conclusions. It is structured through a hierarchy of sources, methods of authentication, interpretive principles, scholarly qualifications, and moral responsibility.

Within the dominant Sunni legal tradition, the Qur'an and Sunnah constitute the foundational revealed sources, while *ijmā'* and *qiyās* function as important forms of collective and rational legal reasoning. Classical legal theory therefore does not treat these four categories as epistemologically identical. The Qur'an represents revealed speech and occupies the highest normative position. The Sunnah provides Prophetic guidance that explains, specifies, qualifies, and supplements Qur'anic revelation. *Ijmā'* represents the authoritative agreement of qualified scholars, whereas *qiyās* extends established rulings to new cases through disciplined analogical reasoning based on an identifiable effective cause (*'illah*). Hallaq similarly describes the Qur'an and Sunnah as the primary sources from which jurists derive legal judgments through *ijmā'*, *qiyās*, and *ijtihād*.

This hierarchy should not, however, be understood as a simplistic linear sequence in which every legal question is mechanically answered by moving from one source to another. The relationship is methodological and interpretive. The Qur'an provides the foundational normative framework; the Sunnah clarifies and concretizes revelation; *ijmā'* establishes collective scholarly legitimacy under specific conditions; and *qiyās* provides a disciplined method for extending legal principles to circumstances not explicitly addressed in the revealed texts. Contemporary scholarship likewise emphasizes that *qiyās* derives its legitimacy by connecting new cases to an established textual case through a shared *'illah*.

This distinction is crucial for understanding the epistemological problem posed by AI. An AI system can process Qur'anic verses, Hadith collections, legal opinions, and jurisprudential texts, but access to sources does not automatically constitute epistemic authority. In other words, the availability of religious information is not equivalent to the authority to determine religious truth or legal obligation.

The distinction between *source*, *method*, and *agent* is therefore fundamental. The Qur'an and Sunnah are sources of religious normativity; *ijmā'* and *qiyās* are forms of legal reasoning and validation; whereas the *mujtahid* or *mufti* is the qualified human agent responsible for interpreting and applying these sources. Islamic legal authority therefore depends not merely on possessing information but on the competence and accountability of the person who performs *istinbāṭ al-aḥkām*. The legal tradition has historically placed considerable emphasis on the jurist's intellectual competence, methodological discipline, and responsibility in deriving a ruling from the sacred sources.

Hadith Authority Is Not Equivalent to Digital Retrieval

The special position of Hadith in this discussion requires further clarification. A major epistemological error in AI-generated religious answers occurs when Hadith is treated as a searchable database rather than as a body of transmitted knowledge requiring authentication and interpretation.

Hadith authority is historically constructed through a sophisticated system of transmission and criticism. The evaluation of a Hadith involves, among other things, the examination of the *isnād*, the reliability and integrity of transmitters, continuity of transmission, textual content (*matn*), and the relationship between individual reports and the broader corpus of Prophetic tradition. Al-Shāfi'ī's *al-Risālah*, for example, developed an important theoretical framework concerning the authority of the Sunnah, *khābar al-wāḥid*, transmitter reliability, *isnād*, conflicting traditions, *ijmā'*, *qiyās*, and *ijtihād*.

This means that a machine's ability to retrieve a Hadith does not establish the Hadith's authority in a particular legal argument. An AI system may correctly locate a narration but still fail to determine whether the narration is authentic, whether its meaning has been correctly understood, whether it has been abrogated or qualified by another text, whether it is context-specific, and whether it is legally applicable to the case under consideration.

The epistemological difference can therefore be formulated as follows:

retrieval is not authentication; authentication is not interpretation; interpretation is not legal derivation; and legal derivation is not automatically equivalent to a fatwa.

This distinction is particularly important because generative AI produces language that may appear authoritative even when its underlying evidentiary process is uncertain. Recent research on AI-based religious systems has identified problems involving inconsistent source

hierarchies, insufficient *tarjih* mechanisms, and the absence of reflective and ethical responsibility.

Consequently, the central epistemological problem is not whether AI can “know” a Hadith in the computational sense. It is whether AI can assume the normative responsibility associated with authenticating, interpreting, weighing, contextualizing, and applying Hadith within a recognized methodology of Islamic jurisprudence. At present, the answer remains negative.

The Authority of Hadith in Fatwas Issued by the Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI) and Islamic Organizations

Hadis Hadith constitutes the second primary source of Islamic law after the Qur'an and plays a central role in the formulation of religious fatwas. As the authoritative explanation (*bayān*) of the Qur'an, the Sunnah provides essential guidance for understanding matters of creed (*'aqīdah*), worship (*'ibādah*), social transactions (*mu'āmalah*), ethics, and other aspects of Muslim life. In Indonesia, the authority of Hadith in Islamic legal opinions is clearly reflected in the fatwa-making practices of the Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI), Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and Muhammadiyah (Hasmira Rahmadani et al., 2025).

1. The Authority of Hadith in MUI Fatwas

The Indonesian Council of Ulama (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia*—MUI) recognizes the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad as the primary sources of every fatwa it issues. According to the MUI Guidelines for Fatwa Formulation, every legal ruling must be supported by authoritative evidence derived from the Qur'an and the authentic Sunnah. These two sources constitute the highest normative foundation for determining the legitimacy of Islamic legal opinions. When no explicit ruling can be found in either the Qur'an or the Hadith, MUI resorts to established methods of *ijtihad*, including *ijmā'* (scholarly consensus), *qiyās* (analogical reasoning), *istihsān* (juristic preference), *maṣlaḥah mursalah* (consideration of public interest), and other principles recognized within the discipline of *uṣūl al-fiqh* (Islamic legal theory) (Renuat et al., 2025).

The process of issuing fatwas within MUI is conducted collectively through its Fatwa Commission, which consists of Muslim scholars, Islamic intellectuals, and experts from various academic and professional disciplines. This collective deliberative approach demonstrates that MUI fatwas are not merely the opinions of individual scholars but rather the outcome of rigorous scholarly consultation (*shūrā*) that considers both religious principles and contemporary social realities. The participation of experts from diverse fields enables MUI to address increasingly complex issues, including digital economics, genetic engineering, Artificial Intelligence (AI), modern financial transactions, biomedical ethics, and public health. Such interdisciplinary collaboration strengthens both the academic quality and the practical relevance of MUI's legal opinions.

With regard to Hadith, MUI accords the Sunnah a position of supreme legal authority immediately after the Qur'an. However, Hadith are not employed indiscriminately in the formulation of fatwas. Rather, each relevant narration undergoes a rigorous process of scholarly verification based on the established methodologies of *ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth* (the sciences of Hadith). The *isnād* (chain of transmission) is carefully examined to verify the continuity of transmission and the reliability of individual narrators, while the *matn* (text of the Hadith) is critically evaluated to ensure its consistency with the principles of Islam and its compatibility with the Qur'an as well as with stronger and more authentic Hadith. This methodological approach demonstrates MUI's commitment to the classical tradition of Hadith criticism and its

determination to preserve the authenticity of the Prophetic Sunnah in contemporary legal deliberation.

Furthermore, the authority of Hadith within MUI fatwas is reflected in its interpretive methodology, which combines both textual and contextual approaches. Rather than interpreting Hadith solely according to their literal wording, MUI seeks to understand each narration within its historical context (*asbāb al-wurūd*), the higher objectives of Islamic law (*maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*), and the contemporary social circumstances surrounding the issue under consideration. Through this contextual methodology, Hadith remain relevant as a living source of Islamic law capable of addressing new social realities and scientific developments without compromising their normative authority. Such an approach enables MUI to reconcile fidelity to the Prophetic tradition with the need to respond effectively to contemporary legal and ethical challenges.

From an epistemological perspective, the authority of Hadith in MUI fatwas reflects a synthesis of textual fidelity and contextual interpretation (A'yun & Istiani, 2021). This balanced methodology allows MUI to preserve the normative authority of the Sunnah while ensuring that Islamic legal rulings remain responsive to the evolving needs of Indonesian Muslim society. Consequently, within the epistemological framework of MUI, Hadith function not merely as supplementary legal evidence but as one of the principal foundations upon which Islamic legal reasoning, religious legitimacy, and the authority of every fatwa are constructed.

2. The Authority of Hadith in Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Fatwas

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) is one of the largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia and is widely recognized for its strong scholarly tradition rooted in the classical *madhhab* (school of law) system. In addressing religious and legal issues, NU employs the *Bahtsul Masail* mechanism, a scholarly deliberative forum in which *ulama* collectively discuss and formulate legal rulings on contemporary issues facing the Muslim community. Through this forum, scholars undertake a comprehensive examination of the sources of Islamic law while adhering to the methodological principles inherited from the tradition of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*. This collective process reflects NU's commitment to preserving the continuity of classical Islamic scholarship while responding to new legal and social challenges.

Within NU's intellectual tradition, the Hadith occupies a central position as the second primary source of Islamic law after the Qur'an. However, the use of Hadith in the process of legal derivation (*istinbāt al-aḥkām*) is generally not conducted through direct engagement with individual Hadith texts. Instead, NU typically approaches the Sunnah through the authoritative corpus of classical *fiqh* literature compiled by prominent jurists of the recognized Sunni legal schools. These legal manuals are regarded as the culmination of centuries of scholarly interpretation by experts who possessed profound expertise in Hadith, jurisprudence (*fiqh*), legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), and other Islamic sciences. Consequently, NU accords great respect to the intellectual heritage of earlier Muslim scholars, considering it an indispensable component of the Islamic scholarly tradition that has been refined and validated throughout history.

NU recognizes all four major Sunni schools of Islamic jurisprudence—the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali schools—while the Shafi'i school remains predominant in the religious life of Indonesian Muslims. Accordingly, when discussing legal questions in the *Bahtsul Masail* forum, scholars commonly consult authoritative classical legal works (*kutub al-fiqh al-mu'tabarah*), including *Fatḥ al-Wahhāb*, *Tuḥfat al-Muḥtāj*, *Nihāyat al-*

Muḥtāj, *Iʿānat al-Ṭālibīn*, *Al-Majmūʿ*, and numerous other classical juristic texts. These works contain systematic legal analyses in which Qur'anic verses and Hadith have already been critically examined and interpreted by distinguished jurists, thereby providing reliable foundations for legal decision-making.

Nevertheless, this reliance on classical jurisprudential literature does not imply that NU diminishes the authority of Hadith as a primary source of Islamic law. On the contrary, Hadith remain the fundamental basis underlying every juristic opinion contained within these classical texts. The legal manuals employed in *Bahtsul Masail* are themselves intellectual elaborations upon the Qur'an and the Sunnah. In other words, the authority of Hadith continues to permeate every legal ruling, although it is frequently mediated through the scholarly interpretations of recognized jurists. This methodological approach preserves the continuity of Islamic legal scholarship while minimizing the risk of misinterpreting scriptural evidence through isolated or unqualified readings.

One of the defining characteristics of NU's methodology is its rejection of an overly literal or purely textual interpretation of Hadith. NU maintains that authentic understanding of the Sunnah requires careful consideration of the historical context in which a Hadith was transmitted, the higher objectives of Islamic law (*maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*), prevailing social conditions, and the authoritative explanations provided by qualified scholars. Accordingly, Hadith are not interpreted in isolation but rather within the broader framework of the Islamic intellectual tradition, in which the various Islamic sciences complement and reinforce one another.

When confronting contemporary issues that are not explicitly addressed in the classical legal literature, NU employs the method of *ilhāq al-masā'il bi naẓā'irihā*, whereby new cases are analogically linked to previously established legal precedents. Alternatively, NU may adopt *istinbāṭ jamā'ī* (collective *ijtihād*), in which groups of scholars jointly deliberate upon emerging legal questions. In both approaches, Hadith continue to serve as a principal normative reference from which relevant legal principles are derived. Thus, the Sunnah remains the foundational source guiding the formulation of Islamic legal responses to modern developments.

When disagreements arise among jurists representing different legal schools, NU applies the process of *tarjīh*, selecting the opinion considered strongest based on the quality of its textual evidence and its capacity to realize public welfare (*maṣlaḥah*). This evaluative process considers not only the authenticity of the *isnād* and the reliability of the *matn* but also contemporary social conditions and the objectives of Islamic law. Such an approach demonstrates that NU's use of Hadith extends beyond literal textual interpretation to incorporate broader ethical, social, and humanitarian considerations.

The authority of Hadith within NU fatwas is evident across a wide range of legal issues, including acts of worship, commercial transactions (*muʿāmalah*), Islamic finance, healthcare, environmental ethics, and emerging technological challenges. In each of these areas, Hadith provide the normative legitimacy that strengthens the juristic reasoning underlying NU's legal decisions. Although legal rulings are frequently formulated through reference to classical *fiqh* literature, the ultimate foundations of the entire legal framework remain the Qur'an and the authentic Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad.

3. The Authority of Hadith in Muhammadiyah Fatwas

Muhammadiyah, through its *Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid* (Council for Tarjih and Renewal), likewise recognizes Hadith as the second primary source of Islamic law after

the Qur'an. Unlike NU, which places greater emphasis on the authority of the classical legal schools, Muhammadiyah encourages direct engagement with the Qur'an and the authentic Sunnah. This methodological orientation is rooted in the organization's commitment to *tajdīd* (renewal) and the purification of Islamic teachings by returning directly to their primary scriptural sources.

Within the *tarjih* methodology, Hadith are evaluated according to rigorous standards established in the science of Hadith. Muhammadiyah prioritizes *ṣaḥīḥ* (authentic) and *ḥasan* (sound) narrations as the principal basis for legal rulings while exercising considerable caution regarding the use of *ḍaʿīf* (weak) Hadith. Furthermore, Hadith are interpreted contextually by taking into account the objectives of Islamic law (*maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*), changing social circumstances, and contemporary developments. This contextual methodology enables Muhammadiyah to preserve fidelity to the Prophetic tradition while ensuring the continuing relevance of Islamic law in modern society.

The authority of Hadith within Muhammadiyah is reflected in numerous legal decisions concerning worship, education, healthcare, family law, and broader social issues. Rather than relying exclusively on literal readings of individual narrations, Muhammadiyah analyzes Hadith in relation to the overarching principles and objectives of Islam. This comprehensive approach allows the organization to formulate legal opinions that are responsive to contemporary challenges without compromising the normative authority of the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

Overall, the Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI), Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and Muhammadiyah all recognize Hadith as an authoritative and indispensable source of Islamic law in the formulation of religious fatwas. Their differences lie primarily in the methodologies through which the authority of Hadith is interpreted and applied. MUI adopts a collective and multidisciplinary approach that integrates textual evidence with contemporary expertise; NU emphasizes the *madhhab*-based tradition through reliance on authoritative classical *fiqh* literature; whereas Muhammadiyah advocates direct engagement with the Qur'an and authentic Hadith through its *tarjih* methodology.

These methodological differences illustrate the diversity of Islamic legal epistemology in Indonesia while simultaneously reaffirming the shared recognition of Hadith as one of the fundamental sources of Islamic teaching. Despite their distinct interpretive frameworks, all three institutions preserve the central authority of the Prophetic Sunnah as the normative foundation of Islamic legal reasoning and religious guidance in contemporary Indonesian Muslim society.

AI as an Epistemic Instrument: Legitimate Assistance Without Autonomous Authority

The distinction between AI as an instrument and AI as an authority is fundamental to the proposed model of controlled augmentation.

As an instrument, AI can substantially improve the technical efficiency of Islamic scholarship. It can assist researchers in locating Hadith references, comparing different textual versions, identifying recurring terminology, organizing large bodies of jurisprudential literature, mapping chains of transmission, translating texts, identifying related legal opinions, and producing preliminary literature syntheses. In this capacity, AI functions similarly to an advanced research assistant.

Such use is epistemologically defensible because the machine does not become the final source of normative judgment. Its output remains a provisional object that must be

examined against authoritative sources and validated by qualified scholars. Recent research similarly identifies AI's strengths in source retrieval, semantic analysis, textual mapping, and processing large amounts of interpretive data.

The problem emerges when this instrumental function is transformed into autonomous religious authority. AI-generated answers often have three characteristics that create an illusion of authority: linguistic fluency, rapid response, and apparent comprehensiveness. Yet none of these characteristics constitutes *ijtihad*.

A fatwa is not merely a linguistic answer to a question. It is the outcome of a normative process involving the identification of the problem, verification of relevant evidence, determination of the applicable legal principles, consideration of scholarly disagreement, assessment of circumstances, evaluation of consequences, and responsibility for the resulting ruling. The Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI), for example, has explicitly argued that AI may be used as an effective tool for jurisprudential research but cannot itself function as a *mujtahid* or *mufti*, emphasizing the importance of human consciousness, deep jurisprudential knowledge, and familiarity with reality.

Thus, the appropriate distinction is :

<u>Dimension</u>	<u>AI as Supporting Instrument</u>	<u>AI as Religious Authority</u>
<u>Source retrieval</u>	<u>Appropriate</u>	<u>Insufficient</u>
<u>Hadith identification</u>	<u>Appropriate with verification</u>	<u>Insufficient</u>
<u>Textual comparison</u>	<u>Appropriate</u>	<u>Insufficient</u>
<u>Data classification</u>	<u>Appropriate</u>	<u>Insufficient</u>
<u>Preliminary legal analysis</u>	<u>Possible under supervision</u>	<u>Not independently authoritative</u>
<u>Tarīh between conflicting evidence</u>	<u>Requires scholarly validation</u>	<u>Cannot be delegated automatically</u>
<u>Ijtihad</u>	<u>Assists the process</u>	<u>Cannot independently replace the mujtahid</u>
<u>Fatwa issuance</u>	<u>Supports qualified scholars</u>	<u>Lacks normative authority</u>
<u>Moral responsibility</u>	<u>Human scholar/institution</u>	<u>Cannot be transferred to an algorithm</u>
<u>Accountability</u>	<u>Traceable to human authority</u>	<u>Problematic because AI is non-personal and institutionally dependent</u>

The distinction is therefore not based on technological pessimism. Rather, it follows from a difference between computational capability and normative agency. AI can simulate reasoning, but simulation of reasoning is not identical to possessing the epistemic and moral status traditionally required for religious judgment.

Why AI Cannot Replace Ijtihād

The inability of AI to replace *ijtihād* becomes clearer when the concept of *ijtihād* is examined beyond its popular meaning of “reasoning.” *Ijtihād* is disciplined intellectual exertion undertaken by a qualified scholar to determine the most appropriate legal judgment from the recognized sources and methodologies of Islamic law.

The jurist does not merely search for textual similarity. He or she must determine which evidence is relevant, assess its strength, reconcile apparently conflicting evidence, identify the operative legal cause, understand linguistic and contextual implications, consider *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, and evaluate the consequences of applying a ruling in a specific social context.

This is precisely where AI faces an epistemological boundary. Large language models operate through statistical and computational processes derived from training data. They can reproduce patterns of legal reasoning found in their datasets, but this does not mean that they possess an internal normative commitment to the truth of a legal judgment. Their apparent reasoning remains dependent upon the data, model architecture, prompting, retrieval mechanisms, and system design.

This distinction becomes particularly important in situations involving disagreement among scholars. A qualified mufti can consciously acknowledge uncertainty, identify competing positions, explain the methodological grounds of disagreement, and assume responsibility for choosing one position. An AI system can generate an apparently balanced comparison, but the final act of *tarjīh* remains a normative decision. It cannot simply be reduced to selecting the statistically most probable sentence.

Therefore, the critical issue is not whether AI can perform increasingly sophisticated reasoning, but whether algorithmic reasoning can legitimately constitute Islamic legal agency. From the perspective of Islamic epistemology, the answer requires more than computational competence. It requires scholarly qualification, methodological accountability, moral agency, and responsibility before God and the community.

Why Ijmāʿ and Qiyās: The Human Dimension of Collective and Analogical Reasoning

The distinction between AI and human legal authority becomes even more apparent when examining *ijmāʿ* and *qiyās*.

Ijmāʿ is fundamentally a concept of scholarly consensus. It derives its authority from the agreement of qualified members of the scholarly community under particular methodological conditions. Classical and modern scholarship has debated the precise definition, scope, and historical possibility of *ijmāʿ*, demonstrating that it is itself a complex juridical concept rather than a simple database of opinions. The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Law notes that the concept of *ijmāʿ* has been interpreted through different historical, source-critical, phenomenological, and theological approaches.

AI therefore cannot create *ijmāʿ* merely by aggregating thousands of scholarly opinions. Aggregation is not consensus. A machine may identify that 90 percent of retrieved texts support one position, but numerical majority does not constitute *ijmāʿ*. Consensus in Islamic legal theory has normative and methodological conditions that cannot be reduced to statistical frequency.

Similarly, *qiyās* cannot be reduced to pattern matching. In *qiyās*, the jurist identifies an original case (*aṣl*), an established ruling (*ḥukm*), a new case (*farʿ*), and, crucially, the

effective legal cause (*'illah*) connecting the two. The identification of *'illah* is not always mechanically observable. It may require linguistic analysis, legal reasoning, contextual knowledge, and evaluation of competing interpretations. Contemporary scholarship continues to identify *qiyās* as an important method for extending revealed principles to new circumstances precisely because it links new cases to established textual foundations through an effective cause.

AI can certainly assist in identifying potential analogies. It can compare cases, locate similar rulings, and suggest possible *'ilal*. However, identifying a possible *'illah* is not equivalent to authoritatively determining the legally operative *'illah*. The latter remains a jurisprudential judgment.

The Indonesian Context: Algorithmic Authority and the Decentralization of Fatwa

The Indonesian context makes this epistemological distinction particularly significant. Religious authority in Indonesia is institutionally and intellectually plural, involving organizations and scholarly traditions such as MUI, Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, pesantren, universities, and various Islamic educational and religious institutions.

The emergence of AI introduces another layer into this already plural authority structure. A user can now ask an AI system a religious question without consulting a mosque scholar, *ustadz*, pesantren, *kyai*, or formal fatwa institution. This produces a new form of algorithmic mediation of religious knowledge.

The problem is not simply that users may receive an incorrect answer. More fundamentally, AI can obscure the identity of the authority behind the answer. In conventional Islamic scholarship, the question “Who issued this ruling?” is epistemologically significant. The identity, qualifications, school of thought, methodology, and institutional affiliation of the mufti enable users to evaluate the ruling.

With AI-generated fatwas, this chain of authority can disappear. The answer may appear to come from “knowledge itself,” even though it is actually generated through an algorithmic system designed and trained by particular institutions and datasets.

Recent Indonesian research has identified this problem as a disruption of the epistemological foundations of religious authority, particularly when generative AI is used to produce convincing religious content or simulate clerical voices.

This situation creates what may be termed epistemic flattening: differences between Qur'anic revelation, Prophetic tradition, classical jurisprudence, contemporary scholarly interpretation, popular religious opinion, and AI-generated synthesis can become blurred when they are presented through the same conversational interface.

The danger is therefore not only misinformation. It is the **equalization of unequal** epistemic sources.

From “AI Fatwa” to “AI-Assisted Fatwa”: A Normative Reconfiguration

The findings of this study suggest that the terminology itself requires reconsideration. The expression “AI-generated fatwa” can be misleading because it implies that the machine possesses independent legal authority.

A more epistemologically appropriate formulation is AI-assisted fatwa. Under this model, the process can be conceptualized as:

Revelation → Hadith authentication → Jurisprudential methodology → Scholarly reasoning → AI-assisted analysis → Human verification → Fatwa issuance → Institutional accountability.

AI therefore occupies a secondary and instrumental epistemic position, not a primary normative position.

The proposed model can be formulated through five principles:

1. Source Primacy – The Qur'an and authenticated Sunnah remain the foundational normative sources of Islamic law.
2. Methodological Mediation – *Ijmāʿ*, *qiyās*, *ijtihād*, *maqāṣid*, and other recognized methodologies remain human-led processes of legal reasoning.
3. AI Assistance – AI may support retrieval, classification, comparison, translation, and preliminary analysis.
4. Human Validation – Qualified scholars must verify Hadith, legal arguments, contextual relevance, and methodological conclusions.
5. Human Accountability – The final fatwa must be attributable to an identifiable scholar or authorized institution.

This model avoids two equally problematic extremes. The first is technological rejectionism, which refuses useful computational assistance altogether. The second is technological reductionism, which assumes that increased computational capacity automatically produces religious authority.

Critical Epistemological Implication: Authority Cannot Be Reduced to Accuracy

An important theoretical implication of this analysis is that religious authority cannot be reduced to the accuracy of an answer. Even if an AI system produces a fatwa that coincides with the ruling of a recognized scholar, the epistemological status of the two outputs is not necessarily identical. A correct conclusion does not automatically establish legitimate authority. In Islamic jurisprudence, the validity of a legal opinion is connected not only to its substantive conclusion but also to the process through which it is derived. This distinction can be expressed as:

Correctness of output ≠ legitimacy of authority.

An AI-generated answer may accidentally reach a correct legal conclusion while still lacking the qualifications necessary to function as a fatwa. Conversely, a qualified mufti may issue a reasoned ruling in a matter where legitimate disagreement exists, even though another qualified scholar reaches a different conclusion.

This is consistent with the broader character of Islamic jurisprudence, where legal authority is connected to juristic competence and methodological integrity rather than merely to the production of a linguistically convincing answer.

Therefore, the principal epistemological risk of AI in Islamic law is not simply *hallucination*. It is authority displacement: the possibility that users gradually treat computational fluency as a substitute for scholarly qualification.

Toward a Controlled Augmentation Model for Islamic Fatwa

Based on the preceding analysis, this study proposes **controlled augmentation** as a suitable framework for integrating AI into contemporary Islamic legal scholarship.

Controlled augmentation means that AI is permitted to extend the analytical capacity of scholars without replacing their epistemic and normative agency. AI can

accelerate information retrieval and analysis, but the final responsibility remains with qualified scholars.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into Islamic legal discourse represents an important epistemological development that requires a clear distinction between technological assistance and religious authority. AI has considerable potential to support *istinbāt al-aḥkām* by facilitating data retrieval, Hadith searching, textual comparison, classification, translation, and the organization of Islamic legal literature. However, these computational capabilities do not provide AI with the epistemic, normative, moral, and institutional authority required to independently issue a religious fatwa. The final responsibility for religious judgment must therefore remain with qualified *ulama*, *mujtahid*, *mufti*, and authorized Islamic institutions.

The study further finds that the authority of Islamic legal reasoning is inseparable from its established epistemological structure. The Qur'an and authenticated Sunnah constitute the foundational sources of Islamic law, while *ijmā'* and *qiyās* provide recognized mechanisms for collective and analogical legal reasoning. Within this framework, Hadith cannot be treated merely as retrievable digital information. Its use in legal reasoning requires authentication, examination of *isnād* and *matn*, contextual interpretation, reconciliation with other evidence, and methodological evaluation. Consequently, the ability of AI to identify or reproduce Hadith does not automatically constitute Hadith authentication or legitimate *ijtihād*. This distinction demonstrates that information retrieval, legal reasoning, and religious authority represent different epistemological levels.

The comparison of major Islamic institutions in Indonesia also demonstrates that the authority of Hadith is broadly recognized, although its interpretation and application may differ according to institutional methodology. MUI generally employs a collective and multidisciplinary approach; NU operates substantially within the *madhhab*-based tradition and classical *fiqh* scholarship; while Muhammadiyah emphasizes the Qur'an and authentic Hadith through its *tarjih* methodology. These differences should not be interpreted as a weakness of Islamic legal authority. Rather, they demonstrate the methodological plurality of Indonesian Islamic jurisprudence and reinforce the importance of qualified human interpretation in determining how authoritative sources should be applied to contemporary problems.

1. Contribution of the Study

The principal contribution of this study is the proposal of a **controlled augmentation** framework for positioning AI within contemporary Islamic legal reasoning. Rather than treating AI as either an inherently dangerous technology or a potential replacement for religious scholars, this framework places AI within a limited and supervised role. AI may operate at the operational level of Islamic scholarship—searching, organizing, comparing, and processing information—while qualified scholars retain authority at the normative level, including authentication, interpretation, *tarjih*, *ijtihād*, contextual assessment, and fatwa issuance.

This framework also contributes to the study of Hadith authority by demonstrating that computational access to religious texts does not eliminate the epistemological processes through which those texts acquire legal significance. The study therefore proposes a conceptual distinction between AI-generated religious information and scholarly validated

religious authority. This distinction is particularly relevant in Indonesia, where religious authority is distributed among diverse scholarly traditions, institutions, and communities.

2. Implications for Responsible AI Use

The findings have significant implications for the responsible development and use of AI in Islamic legal discourse. AI-based religious applications should be designed according to principles of human oversight, source transparency, Hadith verification, methodological accountability, and institutional responsibility. AI systems should clearly distinguish between primary Islamic sources, scholarly interpretations, and machine-generated synthesis. Their outputs should also be treated as provisional information requiring verification rather than as automatically authoritative fatwas.

For Islamic scholars and institutions, AI should be understood as an advanced research instrument that can enhance efficiency without transferring religious authority to an algorithm. For technology developers, responsible AI development requires mechanisms for source traceability, uncertainty disclosure, bias reduction, and human review. For users, particularly those seeking answers to consequential religious questions, AI-generated responses should not replace consultation with qualified scholars or recognized religious institutions.

The central principle emerging from this study is therefore that AI may augment Islamic legal scholarship, but it should not autonomously constitute Islamic legal authority. Responsible implementation requires preserving the chain of authority connecting the sources of revelation, established methodologies of Islamic jurisprudence, qualified scholarship, and accountable institutions.

3. Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations. First, it is primarily based on qualitative library research and epistemological analysis; therefore, it does not empirically measure how Indonesian Muslims perceive, trust, or act upon AI-generated religious answers. Second, the study does not technically evaluate the performance of particular AI models in Hadith authentication, *fiqh* reasoning, or fatwa generation. Third, the comparison of MUI, NU, and Muhammadiyah primarily examines their epistemological and methodological orientations rather than providing an exhaustive analysis of all Indonesian Islamic institutions.

Future research should therefore combine Islamic epistemology with empirical, computational, and comparative research. Further studies could test the accuracy of AI-generated Hadith references, compare AI-generated responses with fatwas issued by Indonesian Islamic institutions, examine users' perceptions of algorithmic religious authority, and develop human-in-the-loop models for AI-assisted *ijtihad*. Such research would provide stronger empirical foundations for determining the appropriate boundaries of AI in Islamic legal scholarship.

Ultimately, the responsible use of AI in Islamic legal discourse should not be framed as a choice between accepting or rejecting technology. The more appropriate approach is controlled and accountable integration, in which AI strengthens the analytical capabilities of Islamic scholarship while preserving the epistemological hierarchy of Islamic sources and the normative, moral, and institutional responsibility of qualified human authorities.

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