
Kyai, Platform Logic, and Digital Fatwas: Reconfiguring Islamic Legal Authority in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The rapid expansion of digital platforms has fundamentally transformed the production, circulation, and public reception of Islamic legal authority in contemporary Indonesia. Although previous studies have extensively examined digital religion and online religious communication, limited attention has been devoted to understanding how platform-mediated environments reshape competing claims to Islamic legal legitimacy. This study investigates the controversy surrounding the fatwa on *salam lintas agama* (interfaith greetings) issued following the Ijtima' Ulama Komisi Fatwa Se-Indonesia VIII in 2024 to explain how diverse actors negotiate religious authority within digital public spheres. Employing a qualitative interpretive approach, the research analyzes the official fatwa document together with purposively selected YouTube videos representing institutional Islamic organizations, independent *kyai*, state-affiliated actors, and cultural public intellectuals. The data were examined through non-participant digital document analysis, reflexive thematic analysis, and critical discourse analysis, informed by mediatization theory, Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital, and Actor-Network Theory. The findings demonstrate that the principal transformation of Indonesia's digital fatwa ecosystem lies not in replacing classical jurisprudential reasoning but in reconfiguring the mechanisms through which religious authority is recognized, negotiated, and publicly legitimized. Institutional organizations continue to rely on collective legal deliberation, whereas individual *kyai*, state actors, and cultural figures mobilize distinct forms of symbolic authority shaped by platform visibility and communicative affordances. The study proposes the concept of Hybrid Digital Islamic Legal Authority, arguing that contemporary Islamic legal legitimacy emerges through the interaction between classical jurisprudential foundations and platform logic, thereby extending theoretical debates in digital religion and Islamic legal authority.

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of digital media has fundamentally transformed religious life in the twenty-first century by reshaping how sacred texts, ritual guidance, and legal opinions are produced, circulated, and consumed. Within Muslim societies, one of the most significant manifestations of this transformation is the emergence of digital fatwa ecosystems, in which Islamic legal opinions are disseminated through websites, social media platforms, video-sharing services, and algorithmically mediated communication networks. Traditionally, fatwa production has been grounded in rigorous scholarly training, institutional legitimacy, and localized religious authority, with *kyai*, *mufti*, *pesantren*, and established Islamic organizations serving as custodians of jurisprudential knowledge and normative interpretation (Ismail & Seedat, 2017). In Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-majority country, these authority structures have historically shaped religious life through interconnected networks that integrate classical legal scholarship, organizational legitimacy, and communal religious practice (Azra, 2006; Fealy, 2008).

The proliferation of interactive digital platforms has substantially altered this ecology of religious authority. Indonesian Muslims increasingly consult YouTube lectures, online fatwa portals, social media content, and digital question-and-answer services when seeking guidance on contemporary religious issues, often encountering multiple and competing interpretations within a single platform environment (Setiawan, 2020). Rather than functioning merely as neutral channels of dissemination, these platforms actively reorganize the communicative conditions under which religious authority is recognized by privileging visibility, accessibility, personalization, and audience engagement alongside traditional scholarly credentials. Consequently, legitimacy is no longer derived exclusively from institutional endorsement or formal juristic expertise but is increasingly negotiated through socio-technical infrastructures in which platform logic and public interaction shape the circulation and reception of Islamic legal knowledge (Atallah, 2026; Kasdi et al., 2026).

Recent scholarship supports this observation by demonstrating that digital media significantly influence the production, distribution, and consumption of religious knowledge. Studies on YouTube, Instagram, and dedicated fatwa applications indicate that platform affordances frequently reward communicative accessibility, audiovisual presentation, and engagement metrics while simultaneously expanding the reach of individual preachers and religious organizations (La Harisi et al., 2025; Nahidlatul, 2025). Other research further reveals that Indonesian Muslims routinely navigate overlapping sources of authority, including state-affiliated institutions such as the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI), major Islamic organizations including Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, as well as independent digital preachers operating beyond conventional bureaucratic structures (Antasari et al., 2026; Syarifuddin, 2025). Meanwhile, institutional initiatives such as MUI Fatwa No. 24 of 2017 concerning ethics in social media illustrate that established religious bodies themselves increasingly recognize the need to respond to challenges emerging from digital communication through principles informed by *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (Syarif et al., 2026).

Recent research on Indonesian digital religious life further confirms that social media platforms do not simply distribute religious information, but also shape patterns of religious participation, identity expression, and community engagement among Muslim users. At the same time, studies on kiai and religious moderation show that religious authority remains socially grounded in the ability of religious leaders to promote tolerance, social harmony, and contextual da'wah in pluralistic communities (Chaerani et al., 2024; Hasyim & Chair, 2024).

Despite these important developments, existing scholarship remains fragmented in several respects. First, studies of digital religion have predominantly examined online religious practices, virtual communities, and digital participation without adequately explaining how platform architectures reshape the epistemological foundations and public legitimacy of Islamic legal authority (Eickelman & Anderson, 2003; Lim, 2013). Second, research on Islamic legal institutions has generally concentrated on organizational structures, classical methodologies, and offline fatwa production while paying comparatively limited attention to the ways in which socio-technical infrastructures influence the circulation and contestation of legal opinions within contemporary platform society (Bunt, 2009; Kloos, 2018). Although recent studies have explored digital *da'wah* and online religious communication, relatively few have integrated perspectives from Islamic jurisprudence, media studies, and digital sociology to explain how institutional organizations, individual *kyai*, state actors, and cultural public

intellectuals simultaneously negotiate authority within algorithmically mediated environments (La Harisi et al., 2025; Zaenuri, 2024).

A further limitation concerns empirical focus. Existing studies often examine digital fatwa dissemination in general or concentrate on issues related to ritual practice, economic transactions, or online preaching. Comparatively little attention has been devoted to highly contested socio-religious questions that generate simultaneous intervention from multiple authority holders and therefore provide a strategic lens through which authority transformation can be observed empirically. One such issue is the controversy surrounding *salam lintas agama* (interfaith greetings), which intensified following the collective decree of the Ijtima' Ulama Komisi Fatwa Se-Indonesia VIII in 2024 (Nomor 02/Ijtima' Ulama/VIII/2024). The fatwa declared that combining greetings from multiple religious traditions does not constitute legitimate religious tolerance and classified greetings containing devotional elements specific to other faiths as impermissible for Muslims except under limited circumstances justified by *hājah shar'iyah*. Rather than producing consensus, however, the decree generated extensive debate across digital platforms involving Islamic organizations, independent *kyai*, government officials, and influential cultural figures.

The controversy surrounding *salam lintas agama* provides a particularly valuable analytical case because it reveals not only disagreement over substantive legal conclusions but also competition over the very foundations of religious legitimacy. Institutional organizations invoke collective deliberation and classical jurisprudence, independent *kyai* emphasize textual expertise and personal scholarship, bureaucratic actors frame the issue through constitutional governance and social harmony, while cultural intellectuals employ ethical and philosophical reasoning rooted in accumulated public trust. These heterogeneous claims coexist and circulate through the same platform infrastructures, allowing audiences to encounter and compare multiple competing interpretations within integrated digital environments. Consequently, the case offers a unique opportunity to investigate how Islamic legal authority is reconfigured under conditions of platform-mediated communication.

Accordingly, this study examines how digital platforms reshape the representation, circulation, and negotiation of Islamic legal authority in Indonesia through the controversy over *salam lintas agama*. Specifically, the study addresses three interrelated questions: (1) how do institutional organizations, individual *kyai*, state actors, and cultural figures construct competing claims to legal authority within digital platforms; (2) how do platform affordances mediate the visibility and public reception of these competing claims; and (3) what broader implications do these dynamics have for understanding the transformation of Islamic legal authority in Indonesia's contemporary digital public sphere?

To answer these questions, the study integrates mediatization theory, Bourdieu's sociology of fields, and Actor-Network Theory (ANT) into a unified socio-technical analytical framework. Mediatization theory argues that media technologies actively reshape institutional practices and authority structures by embedding their own operational logic within social and cultural life (Hjarvard, 2008; Sbardelotto, 2016). Complementing this perspective, Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital explains how legitimacy is accumulated and recognized within the religious field through combinations of scholarly credentials, institutional affiliation, educational background, and public reputation (Bourdieu, 1991). In digital environments, these traditional forms of symbolic capital increasingly interact with platform-mediated indicators such as subscriber networks, recommendation systems, engagement metrics, and algorithmic visibility. Finally, Actor-Network Theory conceptualizes digital platforms, interfaces, algorithms, archived audiovisual materials, and users as active non-human actants participating alongside scholars and institutions in shaping the production, circulation, and recognition of religious knowledge (Latour, 2005; Gillespie, 2018).

This study contributes to the growing literature on digital religion in three important respects. First, it conceptualizes digital platforms not merely as channels for disseminating fatwas but as socio-technical environments that actively mediate and restructure Islamic legal authority. Second, it develops an interdisciplinary framework that connects Islamic jurisprudence with mediatization theory, symbolic capital, and Actor-Network Theory to explain how religious legitimacy is negotiated within contemporary platform society. Third, drawing upon empirical evidence from the *salam lintas agama* controversy, the study advances the concept of Hybrid Digital Islamic Legal Authority, arguing that authority in Indonesia's digital fatwa ecosystem increasingly emerges through the interaction of institutional legitimacy, platform-mediated *kyai* authority, bureaucratic governance, cultural capital,

and digital infrastructures. Rather than replacing classical scholarship, platform logic reorganizes the mechanisms through which Islamic legal legitimacy is publicly recognized, circulated, and contested in the digital age.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative interpretive research design to examine how Islamic legal authority is negotiated and reconfigured within Indonesia's digital public sphere through debates surrounding the *fatwa on salam lintas agama* (interfaith greetings). A qualitative interpretive approach is particularly appropriate because the research seeks to explore processes of meaning construction, authority formation, and discursive contestation rather than to establish causal relationships or statistical generalizations (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). The study is situated within the interdisciplinary field of digital religion, emphasizing the interaction between Islamic jurisprudence, media infrastructures, and socio-technical transformations in contemporary religious communication.

The research relies on non-participant digital document analysis combined with thematic analysis and critical discourse analysis. The primary corpus consists of publicly accessible audiovisual materials distributed through YouTube together with the official text of the *Fatwa Ijtima' Ulama Komisi Fatwa Se-Indonesia VIII* (Nomor 02/Ijtima' Ulama/VIII/2024). These materials are treated as documentary manifestations of religious authority through which Islamic legal reasoning and competing claims to legitimacy are publicly articulated, negotiated, and disseminated within platform-mediated environments.

The empirical corpus was established through purposive sampling to capture the diversity of authority configurations participating in the digital debate on *salam lintas agama*. Data collection was conducted during May 2026 by selecting materials that explicitly addressed the jurisprudential status of interfaith greetings, originated from identifiable religious or public authorities, were fully accessible through public digital platforms, and contained sufficiently developed legal reasoning for systematic analysis. Applying these criteria resulted in a corpus comprising the official MUI fatwa together with YouTube videos representing institutional Islamic organizations, individual *kyai*, state-affiliated actors, and cultural public intellectuals. Duplicate uploads, fragmentary excerpts, and videos lacking substantive legal argumentation were excluded from the analysis.

All selected materials were examined through non-participant digital observation and transcribed verbatim to facilitate systematic analysis. Data coding was conducted manually through repeated close reading and constant comparison across documents, allowing themes and analytical categories to emerge iteratively throughout the research process. Particular attention was given to patterns of authority construction, scriptural references, legal classifications, interpretive strategies, communicative styles, and platform-mediated expressions of legitimacy. Rather than emphasizing numerical frequency, the coding process focused on identifying conceptual relationships and recurring patterns across heterogeneous actors while preserving the contextual specificity of each source.

The analytical procedure integrated reflexive thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (Braun & Clarke, 2006) with Fairclough's three-dimensional critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2015). Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurrent patterns concerning the construction and negotiation of Islamic legal authority, while critical discourse analysis examined how different actors mobilized scriptural evidence, institutional legitimacy, constitutional reasoning, sociological arguments, and rhetorical strategies to justify competing legal positions. Interpretation of these findings was further informed by mediatization theory, Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital, and Actor-Network Theory, enabling the study to conceptualize digital platforms not merely as channels of communication but as socio-technical environments that actively participate in the circulation and recognition of religious authority (Bourdieu, 1991; Hjarvard, 2008; Latour, 2005).

To enhance analytical trustworthiness, the study employed an iterative coding process and constant comparison across the corpus, enabling emerging themes to be refined through repeated engagement with the data rather than predetermined categorization. This recursive procedure ensured that conceptual interpretations remained grounded in the empirical materials while accommodating the diversity of authority configurations represented in the dataset. The research deliberately focuses on the discursive manifestations of platform logic rather than computational measurements of algorithms or recommendation systems, examining instead how religious actors adapt legal communication to the

affordances of digital platforms and how these affordances shape the public negotiation of Islamic legal authority (Ardiansyah, et. al 2025).

The study presents minimal ethical risk because it relies exclusively on publicly available materials intentionally disseminated for open access. No private communications, restricted documents, or personally sensitive information were collected, and no interaction with human participants occurred during the research process. Through this methodological approach, the study provides a systematic basis for explaining how institutional organizations, *kyai*, state actors, and cultural figures negotiate Islamic legal authority within Indonesia's contemporary platform society and for developing the concept of Hybrid Digital Islamic Legal Authority as an analytical framework for understanding the transformation of religious legitimacy in the digital age.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Institutional Authority and the Fragmentation of Islamic Legal Positions in the Digital Sphere

One of the most significant findings emerging from the empirical corpus is that institutional Islamic authority in Indonesia no longer appears as a singular and uncontested source of legal interpretation within the digital public sphere. Instead, the circulation of discussions concerning *salam lintas agama* (interfaith greetings) across YouTube and related digital platforms reveals a fragmented institutional landscape in which major Islamic organizations articulate competing yet equally legitimate jurisprudential positions. Rather than generating a unified normative discourse, digital platforms expose multiple organizational interpretations simultaneously and make them directly comparable for public audiences. In this sense, the platform environment transforms institutional disagreement into a publicly observable process of legal negotiation, allowing users to navigate competing claims to Islamic authority through a shared communicative infrastructure (Bunt, 2009; Gillespie, 2018; Hjarvard, 2008).

This finding extends previous scholarship on digital religion, which has generally emphasized the expansion of online religious participation and digital da'wah while paying comparatively less attention to how platform infrastructures reshape relationships among established religious institutions (Bunt, 2009; Kloos, 2018). Recent studies on Indonesian digital Islam similarly suggest that Muslims increasingly consult multiple online authorities rather than relying exclusively on traditional organizations or local religious leaders (Antasari et al., 2026; Setiawan, 2020; Syarifuddin, 2025). The present corpus demonstrates that such multiplicity is not merely an individual pattern of media consumption but reflects a structural transformation in the visibility of institutional authority itself. Platform logic enables divergent organizational interpretations to coexist within the same digital arena, thereby rendering jurisprudential plurality immediately accessible to users.

Historically, institutional authority in Indonesian Islam has been closely associated with organizations possessing established scholarly traditions, bureaucratic structures, and broad social constituencies. Institutions such as the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI), Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, and Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah derive legitimacy from accumulated religious scholarship, collective deliberation, and organizational continuity developed over decades of engagement with Indonesian Muslim society (Azra, 2006; Fealy, 2008). Within Bourdieu's framework, these characteristics constitute forms of symbolic capital that enable institutions to claim recognized authority within the religious field (Bourdieu, 1991). Traditionally, however, these organizations disseminated legal positions through relatively separate institutional ecosystems including *pesantren* networks, organizational assemblies, printed publications, and official religious forums thereby limiting direct public comparison between competing interpretations.

The digital environment substantially modifies this communicative ecology. Through recommendation algorithms, searchable video archives, and cross-platform circulation, YouTube enables audiences to encounter institutional positions originating from different organizations within a single browsing session. Consequently, users are no longer confined to the legal interpretations dominant within their immediate organizational affiliation but may instead compare multiple fatwas and religious explanations before forming their own judgments. As mediatization theory suggests, media technologies do not merely transmit institutional messages but actively reorganize how authority is produced, circulated, and publicly recognized by embedding institutional actors within platform-specific communicative logics (Hjarvard, 2008; Sbardelotto, 2016).

Within the present corpus, the collective decree issued by the *Ijtima' Ulama Komisi Fatwa Se-*

Indonesia VIII concerning interfaith greetings serves as the principal institutional reference point against which other organizational positions can be comparatively analyzed. Importantly, the corpus intentionally incorporates materials published both before and after the issuance of Fatwa Nomor 02/Ijtima' Ulama/VIII/2024. This temporal design reflects the methodological objective of tracing the broader discursive evolution of the controversy rather than treating the MUI fatwa as its chronological origin. The resulting dataset therefore demonstrates that institutional debate concerning *salam lintas agama* was already circulating within Indonesia's digital religious sphere before its formal codification through the national collective fatwa.

The MUI fatwa adopts a generally restrictive legal position by concluding that combining greetings derived from multiple religions does not constitute legitimate religious tolerance and that utterances containing devotional elements specific to other faith traditions are prohibited for Muslims (MUI, 2024). At the same time, the decree explicitly permits neutral expressions such as "*selamat pagi*" or "*selamat siang*" that do not carry theological implications. More significantly, the fatwa constructs its legal reasoning through an extensive synthesis of Qur'anic verses, Prophetic traditions, and opinions drawn from classical jurists representing multiple periods of Islamic intellectual history.

From an analytical perspective, the internal structure of the fatwa itself reveals that legal plurality is deeply embedded within the Islamic jurisprudential tradition. Although the decree ultimately endorses a restrictive conclusion, its evidentiary framework reproduces classical disagreements concerning interactions with non-Muslims, including opinions that permitted initiating greetings under circumstances. Such internal diversity demonstrates that the contestation observed across the digital corpus should not be interpreted as a novel consequence of social media. Rather, digital platforms amplify pre-existing jurisprudential plurality by making historically dispersed scholarly disagreements simultaneously visible to contemporary audiences. Similar observations regarding the persistence of legal pluralism within Islamic authority structures have been noted in previous studies of Indonesian religious institutions.

The most explicit organizational challenge to the MUI position appears in discussions disseminated through PBNU's official media channel, TVNU. Rather than merely disagreeing with the substantive legal ruling, PBNU representatives emphasize that *fiqh* should not be understood as a singular and binding legal code comparable to statutory legislation but as a body of multiple scholarly opinions developed through historical juristic deliberation. This argument fundamentally reframes the status of fatwa itself. Instead of contesting one conclusion, PBNU contests the assumption that one institution may claim exclusive interpretive authority over a complex jurisprudential issue.

PBNU simultaneously grounds its alternative interpretation in Qur'anic references concerning peaceful coexistence, historical precedents such as the Charter of Medina, and considerations of *maslahah* and *ukhuwah wathaniyah*. Consequently, its disagreement with MUI does not reject textual authority but instead reflects a different methodology for balancing scriptural interpretation with contemporary social realities. This observation reinforces recent scholarship arguing that contestation within Indonesian Islam frequently concerns interpretive methodology rather than acceptance or rejection of religious sources themselves (Kloos, 2018; La Harisi et al., 2025). In the digital sphere, these methodological differences become highly visible because competing organizations present their arguments before overlapping rather than isolated audiences.

Muhammadiyah occupies a distinct position within this institutional spectrum. Unlike PBNU's direct epistemological critique or Al Washliyah's theological intensification, Muhammadiyah approaches the controversy through conceptual differentiation between *aqidah* and *muamalah*. The analyzed video, published in 2019 before the issuance of the 2024 MUI fatwa, argues that greetings intended solely as social interaction should not automatically be interpreted as affirmations of theological belief. The significance of this material lies not only in its substantive conclusion but also in its chronology. Its existence demonstrates that organizational reflection concerning interfaith greetings had already emerged within Indonesia's digital environment several years before formal institutional codification by MUI.

Methodologically, Muhammadiyah's approach illustrates an important strategy of authority construction. Rather than relying primarily upon explicit confrontation with competing institutions, the organization preserves its legitimacy by differentiating analytical domains and relocating the issue from theology to social interaction. Such reasoning enables accommodation of Indonesia's pluralistic social

context while maintaining doctrinal boundaries concerning matters of faith. In doing so, Muhammadiyah exemplifies how organizational authority may be sustained through conceptual refinement instead of categorical prohibition or unrestricted permissibility.

At the opposite end of the institutional spectrum stands Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah. Through publicly accessible webinars and organizational discussions, its representatives argue that interfaith greetings should not merely be classified as prohibited but may also threaten the integrity of Islamic belief itself. Unlike the MUI fatwa, which provides limited contextual accommodation under conditions of *hajah syar'iyah*, Al Washliyah rejects exceptions even for public officials acting within representative capacities. Religious obligations remain attached to the individual believer regardless of bureaucratic office or governmental responsibility.

The analytical importance of Al Washliyah's position lies in its escalation of theological consequences rather than its practical legal outcome alone. By framing mixed greetings as issues of creed and potential religious deviation, the organization extends discussion beyond ordinary jurisprudential regulation into questions concerning preservation of Islamic identity. Simultaneously, it challenges accommodationist narratives by portraying demands for interfaith greeting practices not as expressions of pluralism but as pressures potentially compromising religious integrity. Such framing demonstrates that institutional disagreement within Indonesian Islam extends across both jurisprudential methodology and theological emphasis.

The comparative analysis of these organizational positions reveals that institutional authority cannot be adequately described through binary classifications such as conservative versus moderate Islam. Instead, the empirical evidence demonstrates the coexistence of multiple interpretive strategies operating within shared commitments to Islamic legal reasoning while producing substantially different normative conclusions. Table 1 summarizes the comparative configurations of institutional authority, jurisprudential strategies, and dominant logics of religious legitimacy represented across the four major Islamic organizations analyzed in this study.

Table 1. Comparative Configurations of Institutional Authority

| Institution | General Position | Primary Jurisprudential Strategy | Dominant Authority Logic |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|---|
| MUI (Majelis Ulama Indonesia) | Restrictive, with limited contextual accommodation under <i>hajah shar'iyah</i> | Integration of Qur'anic verses, Prophetic traditions, classical <i>fiqh</i> , and collective <i>ijtihad</i> | Collective institutional <i>fatwa</i> grounded in formal jurisprudential deliberation |
| PBNU (Nahdlatul Ulama) | Rejects an exclusive prohibition and emphasizes interpretive plurality | Jurisprudential pluralism, <i>maslahah</i> , contextual interpretation, and <i>ukhuwah wataniiyyah</i> | Organizational deliberation based on collective scholarly reasoning |
| Muhammadiyah | Conditionally accommodative, distinguishing theological doctrine from social interaction | Functional differentiation between <i>'aqidah</i> and <i>mu'amalah</i> within a contextual legal framework | Rational-functional interpretation emphasizing social coexistence |
| Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah | Strongly prohibitive, rejecting exceptions beyond strict theological boundaries | Protection of <i>'aqidah</i> , doctrinal precaution (<i>sadd al-dharā'i'</i>), and preservation of religious identity | Doctrinal safeguarding through conservative theological interpretation |

Viewed through the perspective of mediatization theory, the significance of these competing institutional interpretations extends beyond their doctrinal differences. Digital platforms alter the conditions under which organizations communicate religious authority by privileging visibility, accessibility, and audience engagement alongside traditional scholarly credentials (Hjarvard, 2008;

Sbardelotto, 2016). Whereas institutional fatwas previously circulated primarily within relatively bounded organizational constituencies, YouTube recommendation systems and search functions now expose audiences to legal opinions originating from multiple institutions regardless of organizational affiliation.

This transformation also illustrates Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital operating within digitally mediated religious fields. Institutional legitimacy continues to depend upon accumulated scholarly reputation, organizational continuity, and recognized religious leadership; however, these traditional resources increasingly interact with platform-generated indicators such as subscriber communities, viewing statistics, algorithmic recommendation, and public engagement (Bourdieu, 1991). Symbolic capital therefore becomes relational rather than static, emerging through the interaction between inherited institutional prestige and digitally mediated public visibility.

The corpus further indicates that platform logic does not eliminate organizational authority but reorganizes its conditions of operation. Competing institutions remain influential precisely because they continue to command significant religious credibility, yet their authority is increasingly exercised within an environment characterized by immediate comparison and continuous public evaluation. Audiences can move seamlessly from PBNU discussions to Muhammadiyah lectures, MUI documents, or Al Washliyah webinars without leaving the same digital ecosystem. Consequently, legal plurality itself becomes a publicly observable phenomenon rather than an internal scholarly reality confined to specialized juristic circles.

These findings complement earlier studies suggesting that digital religion facilitates decentralization of religious knowledge production while preserving important elements of traditional authority (Antasari et al., 2026; Bunt, 2009; Kloos, 2018). However, the present analysis advances this literature by demonstrating that the principal transformation concerns not the disappearance of institutions but the reconfiguration of relationships among them. Digital platforms create a communicative environment in which multiple organizations simultaneously perform claims to jurisprudential legitimacy before overlapping audiences, thereby producing a polycentric landscape of institutional authority.

Therefore, the principal contribution of this section is not simply the observation that Indonesian Islamic organizations disagree over *salam lintas agama*. Jurisprudential disagreement has long existed within Islamic intellectual history. Rather, the empirical evidence demonstrates that platform-mediated communication fundamentally transforms how such disagreement is encountered, evaluated, and negotiated by contemporary Muslims. By collapsing organizational boundaries and facilitating direct comparison among competing legal interpretations, digital platforms amplify longstanding jurisprudential plurality and reshape institutional authority into an increasingly visible, interactive, and publicly contested process. In this respect, the digital public sphere does not replace institutional Islamic authority but reconfigures the conditions through which that authority is recognized and exercised in contemporary Indonesia.

Platform-Mediated *Kyai* Authority

Beyond the institutional contestation discussed in the previous section, the empirical corpus reveals another important dimension of Indonesia's digital fatwa ecosystem: the growing prominence of platform-mediated *kyai* authority. Whereas institutional organizations derive legitimacy from collective deliberation and bureaucratic structures, individual scholars construct authority through the public performance of textual competence, religious credentials, and communicative accessibility. The findings indicate that digital platforms do not diminish the importance of classical Islamic scholarship but transform the mechanisms through which scholarly legitimacy is displayed, circulated, and recognized. Consequently, legal authority increasingly emerges through the interaction between inherited religious capital and platform-specific modes of visibility, allowing individual scholars to compete directly with institutional actors in shaping public understandings of Islamic law (Bunt, 2009; Gillespie, 2018; Hjarvard, 2008).

This observation complements earlier studies suggesting that digital religion facilitates the decentralization of religious communication while simultaneously preserving traditional forms of legitimacy (Bunt, 2009; Kloos, 2018). Rather than replacing *ulama* with algorithms or social media influencers, the Indonesian case demonstrates that platforms reorganize the communicative

environment in which scholarly authority operates. Classical credentials—including pesantren education, mastery of Arabic sources, expertise in *uṣūl al-fiqh*, and familiarity with juristic traditions—remain fundamental resources of legitimacy, yet their effectiveness increasingly depends upon successful mediation through audiovisual presentation, audience engagement, and sustained digital presence. In Bourdieu’s terminology, inherited symbolic capital is converted into digitally recognizable forms through platform-mediated interaction (Bourdieu, 1991).

Across the analyzed corpus, five independent scholars—Muhammad Idrus Ramli, Ustadz Ammi Nur Baits, Ustadz Dr. Firanda Andirja, Ustadz Adi Hidayat, and KRT Nur Ikhyak Hadinegoro (Yai Ikhyah)—illustrate different strategies through which personal religious authority is established in the digital sphere. Despite substantial variation in legal conclusions, all rely upon direct engagement with scriptural and juristic sources rather than organizational endorsement as the principal basis of legitimacy. Their authority is therefore fundamentally personal, although deeply rooted in the epistemic traditions of Islamic scholarship.

Muhammad Idrus Ramli represents perhaps the clearest example of textual authority performed through specialized scholarly expertise. In rejecting the notion of *salam lintas agama*, he argues that such terminology lacks precedent within authoritative Islamic jurisprudence and supports his position through reference to classical Shafi’i legal literature rather than relying exclusively on frequently cited Qur’anic verses or Prophetic traditions. This strategy performs scholarly distinction before a digital audience by demonstrating familiarity with relatively specialized textual sources that remain inaccessible to most lay Muslims.

Equally significant is Idrus Ramli’s explicit rejection of bureaucratic intervention in matters of religious doctrine. His assertion that Islamic teachings derive exclusively from the Qur’an, Sunnah, *ijmā’*, and *qiyās* constitutes not merely a theological claim but an epistemological boundary separating legitimate religious scholarship from political authority. Such discourse reflects what Bourdieu characterizes as struggles over symbolic capital within a particular field, where actors compete to define the criteria through which authority itself should be recognized (Bourdieu, 1991). In this case, textual mastery is positioned as the exclusive source of legitimate Islamic legal interpretation, independent of governmental office or administrative responsibility.

A different communicative model appears in the lectures of Ustadz Ammi Nur Baits. Although his substantive legal conclusion likewise rejects interfaith greetings, his pedagogical strategy differs markedly from Idrus Ramli’s manuscript-oriented approach. Ammi Nur Baits frequently combines classical hadith citation with colloquial Indonesian expressions and memorable metaphors intended for broad public audiences. His characterization of mixed greetings as “*salam gado-gado*” exemplifies how complex jurisprudential distinctions are translated into everyday language that circulates effectively through digital media.

This rhetorical adaptation demonstrates that platform-mediated authority depends not only upon textual competence but also upon communicative accessibility. Rather than simplifying Islamic law by abandoning its textual foundations, Ammi Nur Baits reformulates classical reasoning into linguistically accessible narratives that resonate with ordinary users of digital platforms. Such adaptation reflects broader observations within mediatization theory that institutions and authority figures increasingly internalize media logic by adjusting presentation styles while preserving substantive doctrinal commitments (Hjarvard, 2008; Sbardelotto, 2016). Accordingly, the transformation concerns modes of communication rather than abandonment of jurisprudential methodology.

Ustadz Dr. Firanda Andirja offers another distinct model of digital legal authority through systematic classification rooted in classical *fiqh*. Instead of framing the issue solely through isolated textual citations, Firanda reconstructs the traditional categories distinguishing *kāfir ḥarbī*, *dhimmi*, *mu’āhad*, and *musta’man*, subsequently contextualizing Indonesia’s contemporary religious diversity within these inherited legal concepts. Through this framework, Indonesian non-Muslims are interpreted primarily as *mu’āhad*, thereby permitting extensive social interaction while maintaining theological distinctions concerning specifically Islamic greetings.

The significance of Firanda’s reasoning lies in its methodological continuity with classical jurisprudence. Rather than introducing novel legal principles, he demonstrates the capacity of existing Islamic legal categories to accommodate changing social conditions through reinterpretation and contextual application. Such findings challenge deterministic assumptions that digital media necessarily

encourage superficial or fragmented religious understanding. Instead, the platform provides opportunities for sophisticated legal reasoning to reach audiences far beyond traditional classroom settings, supporting previous research on the educational functions of online Islamic communication (Bunt, 2009; La Harisi et al., 2025).

Among the scholars included in the corpus, Ustadz Adi Hidayat presents the most comprehensive synthesis of textual and contextual reasoning. His discussion integrates Qur'anic exegesis, Prophetic traditions, constitutional provisions, Ministry of Religious Affairs regulations, and distinctions between ordinary Muslims and public officials into a layered analytical framework. Rather than producing a single categorical prohibition or permission, Adi Hidayat differentiates legal obligations according to institutional roles and practical circumstances, thereby constructing a graduated model of jurisprudential reasoning.

This approach illustrates that digital scholarship can preserve methodological complexity despite operating within media environments frequently associated with simplification and brevity. Adi Hidayat's lectures demonstrate that audiovisual platforms are capable of accommodating detailed legal analysis while simultaneously maintaining accessibility for broad audiences. His large subscriber base and consistently positive audience engagement further indicate that public recognition increasingly depends upon long-term perceptions of intellectual credibility and pedagogical consistency in addition to formal scholarly credentials.

Audience reception constitutes an important element of Adi Hidayat's digital authority. Available comment sections overwhelmingly emphasize trust in his knowledge, moderation, and explanatory clarity rather than engaging in detailed debate over specific legal arguments. Such patterns suggest that platform-mediated legitimacy develops cumulatively through repeated interaction between scholars and subscribers. Once established, reputational capital influences how subsequent legal opinions are received, creating a feedback mechanism through which digital visibility reinforces scholarly authority. This dynamic closely corresponds with Bourdieu's understanding of symbolic capital as socially recognized prestige that becomes increasingly self-reinforcing through repeated public acknowledgment (Bourdieu, 1991).

KRT Nur Ikhyak Hadinegoro (Yai Ikhya) represents a comparatively contextual approach to religious authority. Rather than emphasizing extensive textual citation, he interprets interfaith greetings primarily through their communicative intention, describing them as forms of *bahasa gaul* rather than theological affirmation. His well-known supermarket analogy portrays contemporary Muslims as individuals navigating diverse religious opinions within everyday social environments, implicitly recognizing that digital media have transformed patterns of religious consultation by exposing audiences to multiple competing fatwas.

Yai Ikhya's discourse therefore illustrates another consequence of platform logic: authority increasingly involves guiding audiences through plurality rather than merely issuing singular legal verdicts. His communicative style privileges contextual interpretation and practical reasoning while maintaining reference to broader Islamic ethical principles. This finding resonates with previous scholarship observing that digital religious communication often shifts emphasis from institutional prescription toward individualized processes of interpretation and negotiation (Bunt, 2009; Kloos, 2018).

Comparative analysis reveals that despite considerable variation in legal conclusions and rhetorical styles, all five scholars employ broadly similar mechanisms for constructing religious legitimacy. Rather than relying primarily on formal institutional positions, their authority is established through demonstrated mastery of scriptural traditions, command of juristic reasoning, and sustained communicative performance within platform-mediated environments. Table 2 summarizes the comparative configurations of charismatic authority, highlighting the principal sources of legitimacy, communicative strategies, and jurisprudential orientations adopted by the individual scholars examined in this study.

Table 2. Comparative Configurations of Charismatic Authority

| Scholar | Primary Source of Legitimacy | Communication Strategy | Jurisprudential Orientation |
|----------------------|--|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Muhammad Idrus Ramli | Classical manuscript expertise | Polemical textual exposition | Strong prohibition |
| Ammi Nur Baits | Hadith-based legal reasoning | Popular vernacular explanation | Restrictive textualism |
| Firanda Andirja | Classical fiqh classification | Educational legal exposition | Contextual restriction |
| Adi Hidayat | Integrated Qur'anic and constitutional reasoning | Didactic synthesis | Conditional accommodation |
| Yai Ikhya | Contextual interpretation | Informal analogical explanation | Accommodative contextualism |

The comparative evidence suggests that Weberian notions of charisma require refinement when applied to Indonesia's contemporary digital fatwa ecosystem. The authority exercised by these scholars is not based solely upon extraordinary personal appeal but is deeply anchored in demonstrable scholarly competence and sustained textual engagement. Charisma functions primarily as a communicative modality through which expertise becomes publicly persuasive rather than as an alternative source of legitimacy independent of scholarship. In other words, digital authority is simultaneously epistemic and performative.

This interpretation aligns with Actor-Network Theory, which conceptualizes authority as emerging through interactions among human and non-human actors within socio-technical networks (Latour, 2005). The legal opinions expressed by these scholars are shaped not only by individual reasoning but also by the technological infrastructures through which they circulate. YouTube interfaces, recommendation algorithms, search functions, comment sections, and subscriber communities actively participate in constructing visibility and influencing patterns of public recognition. Although these technological elements do not determine legal conclusions, they significantly affect which scholars become widely encountered and repeatedly consulted by digital audiences (Gillespie, 2018).

From the perspective of mediatization theory, the findings further indicate that platform logic encourages personalization without necessarily undermining traditional religious scholarship. Individual *kyai* increasingly cultivate recognizable public identities through consistent visual presentation, recurring educational formats, and direct engagement with subscribers. Nevertheless, their legitimacy continues to depend fundamentally upon successful demonstration of Islamic legal competence. Media logic therefore modifies the performance of authority rather than replacing its jurisprudential foundations (Hjarvard, 2008).

Taken together, the empirical evidence demonstrates that Indonesia's digital fatwa ecosystem has produced a polycentric configuration of personal religious authority. Independent *kyai* no longer depend exclusively upon formal institutions to disseminate legal reasoning but can establish direct relationships with audiences through sustained digital engagement. Yet this transformation should not be interpreted as the erosion of classical scholarship. On the contrary, the corpus indicates that textual mastery, juristic methodology, and religious education remain indispensable resources whose public influence is amplified through platform-mediated communication. Accordingly, platform logic reconfigures Islamic legal authority by personalizing its performance while preserving its epistemic foundations, creating a dynamic environment in which scholarly legitimacy is negotiated simultaneously through inherited religious capital and digitally mediated public recognition.

State Authority and Bureaucratic Religious Reasoning in the Digital Public Sphere

The empirical corpus reveals that debates concerning *salam lintas agama* are not confined to competition among Islamic organizations and individual *kyai*. Instead, state actors also emerge as influential participants in the digital fatwa ecosystem by articulating alternative interpretations of Islamic practice through bureaucratic and sociological reasoning. This finding expands conventional

understandings of religious authority in Indonesia by demonstrating that digital platforms facilitate direct interaction between governmental discourse and classical Islamic jurisprudence within a shared public arena. Consequently, legal authority becomes increasingly polycentric, involving not only institutional religious organizations and independent scholars but also state representatives who claim legitimacy based on constitutional responsibility, social harmony, and public administration.

Previous scholarship has generally examined the relationship between the Indonesian state and Islamic authority through institutional cooperation, legal regulation, or bureaucratic accommodation (Azra, 2006; Fealy, 2008). Studies of digital religion have likewise focused primarily on online *da'wah*, social media engagement, and virtual religious communities (Bunt, 2009; Kloos, 2018; Lim, 2013). Comparatively little attention has been devoted to how state officials themselves participate in digital religious debates and how their interventions reshape perceptions of Islamic legal legitimacy. The present findings indicate that digital platforms have significantly reduced the communicative distance between bureaucratic actors and traditional religious authorities, allowing both to compete directly for public recognition through the same technological infrastructure.

The most prominent state-affiliated actor within the corpus is the Minister of Religious Affairs, whose public statement was disseminated through the widely viewed Kompascom Terkini YouTube channel. Unlike institutional fatwas that derive legitimacy from collective scholarly deliberation or individual *kyai* who emphasize textual mastery, the Minister constructs authority through a bureaucratic discourse centered on practical governance and social cohesion. His central argument suggests that interfaith greetings should be understood within broader sociological realities rather than evaluated exclusively through theological categories, emphasizing that Indonesian society consists of diverse religious communities whose interactions require mutual accommodation.

This discursive strategy represents a notable shift in the basis of religious reasoning. Rather than rejecting scriptural authority altogether, the Minister invokes prophetic precedent to support his interpretation while simultaneously insisting that sociological considerations deserve equal attention. Such reasoning reflects a bureaucratic rationality in which public order and national integration become important interpretive principles alongside classical jurisprudence. Consequently, authority is derived not from superior juristic expertise but from institutional responsibility for managing religious diversity within a constitutional state.

The Minister's characterization of the MUI fatwa as a recommendation rather than an absolutely binding legal obligation further illustrates this bureaucratic orientation. By distinguishing advisory religious opinions from state policy, governmental discourse implicitly establishes a separate hierarchy of normative authority in which religious guidance informs but does not automatically determine public administration. This distinction is particularly significant in Indonesia's constitutional framework, where religious institutions maintain considerable influence without formally exercising legislative sovereignty. The digital public sphere amplifies these jurisdictional distinctions by exposing audiences to simultaneous claims from bureaucratic officials and religious scholars regarding the same legal issue.

From the perspective of mediatization theory, the Minister's intervention demonstrates how media environments facilitate institutional overlap between previously differentiated domains of authority. Bureaucratic actors increasingly participate in theological discussions, while religious institutions respond directly to governmental statements through the same digital platforms. The result is not institutional convergence but intensified visibility of competing jurisdictional claims. Rather than occupying separate communicative spaces, state officials and *ulama* become co-present participants within an integrated digital arena where audiences evaluate alternative interpretations in real time.

Perhaps the most revealing aspect of the corpus concerns the response generated by such bureaucratic interventions. Several independent scholars explicitly reject the state's claim to interpret religious doctrine, arguing that Islamic teachings derive exclusively from recognized juristic sources and therefore remain outside governmental competence. Muhammad Idrus Ramli, for example, asserts that matters of religious doctrine are not the responsibility of ministers but belong properly to the domains of the Qur'an, Sunnah, *ijmā'*, and *qiyās*. Although expressed as a theological statement, this argument functions primarily as a jurisdictional claim concerning who possesses legitimate authority to define Islamic legal meaning.

The conflict therefore extends beyond disagreement over whether interfaith greetings are permissible. At a deeper level, it concerns competing conceptions of epistemic authority itself.

Bureaucratic actors emphasize constitutional responsibility, social harmony, and public administration, whereas religious scholars privilege scriptural expertise and juristic methodology. Digital platforms expose these competing logics simultaneously, making questions of institutional competence as visible as questions of substantive legal interpretation.

This phenomenon corresponds closely with Actor-Network Theory, which conceptualizes authority as emerging from interactions among heterogeneous actors rather than residing exclusively within predefined institutional categories (Latour, 2005). In the digital fatwa ecosystem, state officials, Islamic organizations, independent scholars, media organizations, YouTube interfaces, recommendation algorithms, and audiences collectively participate in constructing public understandings of religious legitimacy. Technological infrastructures do not determine which interpretation prevails but actively shape which actors become visible, how arguments circulate, and what forms of authority receive sustained public attention (Gillespie, 2018).

The corpus also includes actors occupying intermediate positions between formal bureaucracy and traditional scholarship. KRT Nur Ikhyak Hadinegoro (Yai Ikhya), although not representing the state, advances reasoning that parallels bureaucratic discourse by emphasizing communicative intention and social convention rather than strict theological categorization. His characterization of interfaith greetings as *bahasa gaul* and his use of everyday analogies relocate the discussion from doctrinal orthodoxy toward practical interaction within Indonesia’s plural society. In doing so, his discourse complements state-oriented narratives that prioritize coexistence without necessarily relying upon formal governmental authority.

Importantly, neither the Minister nor contextual commentators such as Yai Ikhya reject Islamic tradition outright. Instead, they reinterpret religious practice through sociological frameworks emphasizing coexistence, civic responsibility, and national unity. This suggests that bureaucratic authority in Indonesia’s digital religious sphere does not seek to replace Islamic jurisprudence but rather to supplement it with considerations derived from constitutional governance and multicultural social realities. Such findings resonate with previous scholarship observing that Indonesian Islam has historically accommodated negotiation between religious norms and civic institutions rather than maintaining rigid separation between the two domains.

The preceding analysis demonstrates that the principal distinction between bureaucratic and religious authority does not lie simply in divergent legal conclusions but in their fundamentally different sources of legitimacy and interpretive frameworks. While state actors tend to frame *salam lintas agama* through constitutional responsibilities and sociological considerations, religious scholars primarily ground their positions in scriptural interpretation and classical jurisprudential traditions. Table 3 summarizes the comparative configurations of bureaucratic and religious-scholarly authority identified across the empirical corpus.

Table 3. Comparative Configurations of Bureaucratic and Religious-Scholarly Authority

| Dimension | Bureaucratic Authority | Religious-Scholarly Authority |
|---------------------------------|---|---|
| Primary source of legitimacy | Constitutional office and public administration | Islamic scholarship and juristic expertise |
| Dominant interpretive framework | Sociological and civic considerations | Qur’an, Hadith, and classical fiqh |
| Principal objective | Social harmony and national cohesion | Preservation of doctrinal and legal integrity |
| Institutional basis | Government ministries and public policy | Islamic organizations and independent <i>ulama</i> |
| Public performance | Administrative communication and policy discourse | Jurisprudential exposition and textual interpretation |

From Bourdieu’s perspective, these contrasting approaches reflect competition between different forms of symbolic capital operating within the same social field (Bourdieu, 1991). Religious organizations accumulate legitimacy through scholarly credentials and institutional continuity, whereas state officials derive authority from constitutional office and administrative responsibility. Digital

platforms create conditions in which these distinct forms of capital become publicly comparable, enabling audiences to evaluate religious and bureaucratic claims side by side despite their fundamentally different bases of legitimacy.

Moreover, the findings indicate that platform logic contributes to the erosion of clear boundaries separating religious and political communication. Government officials increasingly invoke religious narratives when addressing public issues, while religious scholars respond to administrative discourse using theological arguments distributed through social media. This reciprocal engagement illustrates how mediatization encourages cross-domain participation by reducing barriers to public communication and exposing institutional actors to shared digital audiences (Sbardelotto, 2016).

Unlike the institutional contestation examined before, where disagreements occur primarily among organizations sharing comparable jurisprudential foundations, state participation introduces an additional dimension centered on jurisdictional authority. The central question becomes not merely whether *salam lintas agama* is permissible but who possesses legitimate competence to define its legal status. The empirical evidence therefore suggests that Indonesia's digital fatwa ecosystem should be understood as a field of overlapping authority claims involving organizational legitimacy, personal scholarly expertise, and bureaucratic governance simultaneously.

These findings extend previous studies on digital Islam by demonstrating that platform-mediated religious debates increasingly involve actors whose legitimacy derives from different institutional logics rather than exclusively from Islamic scholarship. While organizations such as MUI (Majelis Ulama Indonesia), PBNU (Pengurus Besar Nahdlatul Ulama), Muhammadiyah, and Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah continue to exercise significant influence, governmental discourse has become an additional component shaping public understandings of Islamic law within digital environments. The coexistence of these competing claims reflects a broader transformation in which authority is negotiated through continuous interaction among heterogeneous institutions rather than monopolized by any single actor.

Accordingly, the principal contribution of this section lies in identifying bureaucratic reasoning as an independent modality of authority within Indonesia's digital fatwa ecosystem. State actors do not merely provide external political context for religious debates but actively participate in constructing legal meaning through constitutional, sociological, and administrative frameworks. Platform logic amplifies this participation by positioning governmental discourse alongside institutional fatwas and scholarly lectures within the same communicative space, thereby reconfiguring Islamic legal authority into an increasingly interconnected and contested field of public negotiation.

Hybrid and Cultural Authority Beyond Formal Religious Institutions

The preceding sections have demonstrated that Indonesia's digital fatwa ecosystem is characterized by contestation among institutional organizations, independent *kyai*, and state-affiliated actors. Nevertheless, the empirical corpus also contains a form of authority that cannot be adequately explained through these three categories alone. The lectures of Emha Ainun Nadjib (Cak Nun) reveal that religious legitimacy may also emerge through accumulated cultural prestige and intellectual influence rather than formal juristic credentials or organizational office. This finding suggests that platform-mediated Islamic legal authority extends beyond conventional institutional boundaries and increasingly incorporates actors whose legitimacy derives from broader forms of cultural capital circulating within Indonesia's digital public sphere.

The emergence of such authority reflects broader transformations documented within studies of digital religion. Online environments facilitate encounters between audiences and diverse public intellectuals whose influence is not necessarily grounded in formal religious institutions but in sustained cultural production, literary contribution, artistic engagement, and long-term public trust (Bunt, 2009; Kloos, 2018). Consequently, digital platforms expand the range of actors capable of participating in religious discourse while simultaneously enabling audiences to evaluate alternative perspectives through direct comparison. Rather than replacing traditional *ulama*, these developments create a more heterogeneous ecology in which multiple forms of legitimacy coexist and interact.

Cak Nun occupies a distinctive position within this landscape. Unlike institutional organizations that derive authority through collective deliberation or individual *kyai* who establish legitimacy through explicit textual demonstration, his discourse concerning *salam lintas agama* proceeds almost entirely through philosophical reflection and cultural analogy. The analyzed lecture contains no systematic

engagement with Qur'anic exegesis, Prophetic traditions, or classical *fiqh* manuals. Instead, religious reasoning is developed through metaphorical narratives emphasizing authenticity, coexistence, and mutual recognition among religious communities.

His frequently cited analogy that “sheep need not imitate wolves, and wolves need not imitate sheep” encapsulates this interpretive approach. The argument does not seek to establish legal permissibility through juristic deduction but instead advances an ethical principle of parallel authenticity, according to which each religious community should preserve its own symbolic identity while respecting the identities of others. Tolerance is therefore conceptualized not as linguistic uniformity or ritual convergence but as reciprocal acknowledgment of difference.

This model differs fundamentally from both restrictive and accommodationist interpretations presented elsewhere in the corpus. Whereas organizations such as MUI and Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah emphasize theological boundaries grounded in scriptural interpretation, and bureaucratic actors stress sociological integration, Cak Nun approaches the controversy through cultural philosophy and moral imagination. His proposal that Christians may say “*Shalom*” while Muslims respond with “*Wa'alaikumussalam*” exemplifies a logic of coexistence based upon distinctiveness rather than syncretism. The resulting position cannot easily be located on a simple continuum between prohibition and permission because its analytical framework differs from those employed by institutional jurists altogether.

Equally noteworthy is Cak Nun's criticism of public officials who sequentially recite greetings from multiple religions during official ceremonies. Rather than objecting on theological grounds, he argues that such performances represent artificial attempts to avoid accusations of intolerance and therefore fail to cultivate genuine social harmony. This practical conclusion partially converges with restrictive institutional actors despite emerging from an entirely different epistemological foundation. The convergence demonstrates that similar policy preferences may arise from substantially different justificatory frameworks, underscoring the importance of distinguishing legal outcomes from underlying modes of authority.

The significance of Cak Nun's discourse becomes clearer when examined through Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital. Unlike symbolic capital accumulated through formal religious scholarship, cultural capital derives from longstanding intellectual production, literary influence, artistic engagement, and public recognition extending across multiple social fields (Bourdieu, 1991). Decades of leadership within the Maiyah movement have established Cak Nun as a widely respected moral and cultural figure whose opinions attract attention despite the absence of formal institutional mandates to issue fatwas. His authority therefore emerges through accumulated social trust that is subsequently converted into religious influence within digital environments.

Digital platforms significantly amplify this conversion process. YouTube recommendation systems, searchable archives, and algorithmic circulation enable lectures delivered years earlier to remain continuously accessible and repeatedly encountered by new audiences. Unlike institutional fatwas that are typically associated with specific deliberative moments or administrative decisions, cultural authority acquires temporal durability through ongoing recirculation and reinterpretation. The analyzed lecture itself predates the 2024 MUI fatwa by several years yet continues to participate actively in contemporary debates because platform infrastructures preserve and redistribute earlier content independently of its original historical context.

From the perspective of mediatization theory, this persistence illustrates how media technologies reshape not merely communication but also temporal structures of authority (Hjarvard, 2008; Sbardelotto, 2016). Platform architectures collapse chronological distance by allowing older interventions to coexist with newly produced institutional statements within the same recommendation ecosystem. Audiences consequently encounter religious arguments detached from their original temporal settings, evaluating them according to present relevance rather than historical sequence. In the context of *salam lintas agama*, Cak Nun's lecture functions simultaneously as archival material and contemporary intervention.

Actor-Network Theory provides an additional perspective for interpreting this phenomenon. Authority is not located exclusively within individual speakers but emerges through interactions among human actors, technological infrastructures, audiovisual recordings, algorithms, interfaces, and audiences (Latour, 2005)). Cak Nun's continued relevance depends not only upon his personal

reputation but also upon the capacity of digital platforms to preserve, recommend, and circulate his lectures long after their initial delivery. In this sense, technological actants participate directly in sustaining cultural authority within Indonesia’s evolving digital religious ecosystem (Gillespie, 2018).

The empirical findings therefore indicate that Islamic legal discourse in the platform era increasingly accommodates hybrid configurations of legitimacy. Formal juristic credentials remain important but are no longer the exclusive basis through which public influence is established. Cultural prestige, literary authority, educational reputation, and intellectual leadership may also become convertible resources capable of shaping religious interpretation when mediated through digital infrastructures. This process does not eliminate classical scholarship; rather, it broadens the social field within which Islamic authority is negotiated (Ardiansyah & Tambunan, 2026).

The preceding analyses collectively demonstrate that the reconfiguration of Islamic legal authority in Indonesia’s digital public sphere extends beyond differences in legal opinion to encompass distinct modes of legitimacy, interpretive practice, and public performance. Rather than converging into a single authoritative model, the empirical corpus reveals the coexistence of multiple authority configurations that operate simultaneously within platform-mediated environments. Table 4 summarizes the comparative configurations of the four principal modes of authority identified throughout the study.

Table 4. Comparative Configurations of Digital Islamic Legal Authority

| Mode of Authority | Primary Source of Legitimacy | Representative Actors | Dominant Logic |
|------------------------------|---|---|----------------------------------|
| Institutional authority | Organizational deliberation and collective fatwa | MUI, PBNU, Muhammadiyah, Al Washliyah | Bureaucratic-juristic legitimacy |
| Personal scholarly authority | Classical textual expertise and juristic competence | Idrus Ramli, Ammi Nur Baits, Firanda Andirja, Adi Hidayat | Individual scholarly legitimacy |
| Bureaucratic authority | Constitutional office and administrative responsibility | Minister of Religious Affairs | Civic-governance legitimacy |
| Hybrid cultural authority | Cultural capital and public intellectual reputation | Cak Nun | Cultural-moral legitimacy |

Viewed collectively, these findings suggest that Indonesia’s digital fatwa ecosystem should not be conceptualized as a hierarchical structure in which one form of authority simply replaces another. Instead, digital platforms facilitate the coexistence of multiple legitimating logics operating simultaneously within a shared communicative environment. Institutional organizations continue to issue collective fatwas; independent *kyai* cultivate direct relationships with subscribers; state officials articulate bureaucratic interpretations; and cultural intellectuals contribute ethical perspectives grounded in accumulated public trust. Platform logic does not erase these distinctions but renders them immediately visible and continuously comparable.

This polycentric configuration also refines the theoretical framework proposed in this study. Mediatization theory explains how platform infrastructures restructure communicative practices (Hjarvard, 2008), Bourdieu’s sociology clarifies how different forms of capital compete for recognition within the religious field (Bourdieu, 1991), and Actor-Network Theory demonstrates that technological systems actively participate in producing authority rather than merely transmitting it (Latour, 2005). The convergence of these perspectives reveals that contemporary Islamic legal authority in Indonesia emerges through relational negotiation among heterogeneous actors linked by platform-mediated networks rather than through unilateral control exercised by any single institution.

Accordingly, the principal contribution of this section is to demonstrate that cultural authority constitutes an independent and analytically necessary component of Indonesia’s digital fatwa ecosystem. The inclusion of Cak Nun within the empirical corpus illustrates that public influence over Islamic legal debates may originate from cultural reputation as well as juristic expertise, particularly when platform infrastructures facilitate long-term circulation and sustained audience engagement. This

finding strengthens the broader argument of the article that digital platforms are reconfiguring Islamic legal authority not by replacing classical scholarship but by expanding the range of actors, resources, and legitimating logics participating in contemporary religious interpretation.

Toward a Hybrid Model of Digital Fatwa Ecosystems

The analyses presented in the preceding sections collectively demonstrate that the principal transformation observed within Indonesia's digital fatwa ecosystem does not concern the substantive content of Islamic legal reasoning alone. Rather, the more fundamental shift lies in the reconfiguration of authority itself. Across institutional organizations, independent *kyai*, state actors, and cultural intellectuals, the empirical evidence consistently indicates that digital platforms reshape the mechanisms through which religious legitimacy is recognized, circulated, contested, and reproduced. Accordingly, the most important contribution of this study is not the identification of divergent opinions regarding *salam lintas agama*, but the explanation of how platform logic reorganizes relationships among multiple claimants to Islamic legal authority (Ardiansyah et al., 2025).

Conventional discussions of Islamic authority have generally assumed relatively stable institutional structures in which legitimacy derives from recognized scholarly credentials, organizational affiliation, or established religious office. Even studies of digital Islam frequently conceptualize online media as alternative channels through which pre-existing authority is disseminated rather than as socio-technical environments actively participating in its reconstruction. The present findings challenge this assumption. The empirical corpus demonstrates that YouTube and related digital infrastructures do not merely transmit fatwas but transform the conditions under which authority becomes publicly meaningful.

Across all categories of actors examined in this study, visibility emerges as a crucial mediating mechanism. Institutional organizations continue to rely upon collective deliberation and formal jurisprudential procedures, yet their authority increasingly depends upon successful digital dissemination. Independent *kyai* maintain classical textual reasoning but cultivate direct relationships with subscribers through personalized audiovisual communication. Bureaucratic actors participate in theological debates by framing religious issues within constitutional and sociological narratives, while cultural figures such as Cak Nun convert accumulated intellectual prestige into influential religious commentary through sustained digital circulation. These developments indicate that authority is no longer exercised exclusively through institutional hierarchy but through platform-mediated interaction among heterogeneous actors (Lubis et al., 2026).

This transformation is best understood through mediatization theory. Hjarvard argues that media should not be regarded merely as neutral channels for communication but as institutions possessing their own operational logic capable of restructuring social practices (Hjarvard, 2008). The Indonesian digital fatwa ecosystem illustrates precisely this process. Platform architectures privilege searchability, recommendation systems, audiovisual accessibility, subscriber relationships, and continuous interaction, thereby modifying how religious discourse reaches audiences without necessarily altering its theological substance. Islamic legal authority consequently becomes increasingly dependent upon communicative performance in addition to scholarly competence.

However, mediatization alone does not fully explain why certain actors acquire greater influence than others. Bourdieu's sociology of fields provides an additional explanatory layer by conceptualizing authority as a product of accumulated symbolic capital recognized within a particular social arena (Bourdieu, 1991). Traditionally, symbolic capital in Indonesian Islamic scholarship has derived from pesantren education, mastery of classical texts, institutional office, and scholarly lineage. The present findings suggest that these forms of capital remain highly significant but increasingly interact with digitally generated resources such as subscriber networks, algorithmic visibility, audience engagement, and cross-platform circulation.

Importantly, digital indicators do not replace traditional symbolic capital. None of the influential actors identified within the corpus derives legitimacy solely from technological popularity. Institutional organizations continue to invoke collective scholarship; independent *kyai* consistently demonstrate textual expertise; bureaucratic officials rely upon constitutional authority; and cultural intellectuals draw upon decades of accumulated public trust. Platform infrastructures amplify, redistribute, and sometimes challenge these existing resources rather than creating legitimacy ex nihilo. Consequently,

authority emerges through the conversion of inherited capital into digitally recognizable forms rather than through technological substitution (Naomi et al., 2026).

Actor-Network Theory further strengthens this interpretation by emphasizing that social authority is produced through networks comprising both human and non-human actors (Latour, 2005). Within Indonesia's digital fatwa ecosystem, algorithms, recommendation systems, interfaces, search functions, archived videos, comment sections, and sharing mechanisms actively participate in shaping which legal opinions become visible and influential. The platform itself therefore functions as an important actant within the production of religious legitimacy. Although algorithms do not determine legal doctrine, they substantially influence patterns of exposure, repetition, and public recognition that contribute to authority formation (Gillespie, 2018).

The empirical findings also reveal that platform logic produces a polycentric rather than hierarchical configuration of Islamic legal authority. No single institution successfully monopolizes interpretation concerning *salam lintas agama*. Instead, audiences encounter multiple competing claims originating from collective fatwas, individual scholars, government officials, and cultural figures within the same digital environment. This coexistence reflects what may be described as a plural ecology of authority in which legitimacy is continuously negotiated through interaction rather than exclusively determined through organizational hierarchy.

Such polycentricity differs fundamentally from classical models of centralized religious authority. Under conventional institutional arrangements, differences among organizations often remained confined within distinct educational or organizational networks. Digital platforms collapse these communicative boundaries by presenting diverse interpretations through integrated search functions and recommendation systems. As a result, users can compare PBNU discussions, MUI fatwas, Muhammadiyah lectures, Adi Hidayat explanations, and Cak Nun reflections within a single browsing experience. Platform logic therefore transforms jurisprudential plurality from an internal scholarly phenomenon into a publicly accessible mode of religious engagement.

These observations support the formulation of what this study conceptualizes as Hybrid Digital Islamic Legal Authority. The model proposes that contemporary Islamic legal legitimacy in Indonesia is produced through the interaction of four interconnected dimensions: institutional authority grounded in collective scholarship, personal scholarly authority rooted in textual expertise, bureaucratic authority derived from constitutional responsibility, and cultural authority generated through accumulated intellectual prestige. None of these dimensions operates independently from digital infrastructures; rather, platform logic mediates their visibility, accessibility, and public reception.

The hybrid model departs from technologically deterministic accounts predicting that algorithms or influencers will replace traditional *ulama*. The evidence presented here suggests precisely the opposite. Classical jurisprudential reasoning remains remarkably resilient across the corpus. Whether articulated by MUI, PBNU, Muhammadiyah, independent *kyai*, or even restrictive commentators, legal arguments continue to rely heavily upon Qur'anic interpretation, Prophetic traditions, and established fiqh methodologies. What changes is not the epistemic foundation of Islamic law but the communicative ecology within which legal authority is performed and evaluated.

This distinction carries important implications for the study of digital religion more broadly. Existing scholarship often contrasts online authority with traditional scholarship as though the two represented mutually exclusive categories (Bunt, 2009; Lim, 2013). The Indonesian case instead demonstrates extensive continuity between offline and online religious legitimacy. Platform-mediated authority remains deeply embedded within inherited traditions of Islamic learning while simultaneously adapting to new technological conditions that privilege immediacy, audiovisual presentation, and audience interaction. Digital transformation should therefore be understood as institutional adaptation rather than institutional displacement.

The proposed model likewise contributes to understanding why actors possessing very different ideological positions can nevertheless achieve substantial influence within the same platform environment. MUI, PBNU, Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah, Adi Hidayat, and Cak Nun disagree significantly concerning the interpretation of *salam lintas agama*, yet all remain capable of attracting large audiences because platform logic primarily governs visibility rather than doctrinal content. Recommendation systems expose users to multiple perspectives, enabling competing authorities to coexist instead of producing a single dominant narrative. Authority thus becomes relational, negotiated continuously

through interaction among actors whose legitimacy derives from different combinations of symbolic resources.

The synthesis of the empirical findings demonstrates that Islamic legal authority in Indonesia’s digital public sphere no longer operates through a single institutional model but through multiple, interdependent configurations of legitimacy mediated by platform infrastructures. Rather than replacing traditional religious authority, digital platforms facilitate the coexistence and interaction of institutional, scholarly, bureaucratic, and cultural forms of legitimacy, each mobilizing distinct resources while adapting to the communicative affordances of the platform society. Table 5 summarizes the conceptual framework of Hybrid Digital Islamic Legal Authority proposed by this study.

Table 5. Conceptual Framework of Hybrid Digital Islamic Legal Authority

| Authority Type | Primary Source of Legitimacy | Platform Function | Dominant Logic |
|--|--|--|----------------------------------|
| Institutional Authority | Collective <i>fatwa</i> , organizational deliberation, and formal religious institutions | Organizational dissemination and official digital communication | Juristic legitimacy |
| Kyai (Personal Scholarly) Authority | Scholarly expertise, mastery of classical texts, and individual religious reputation | Personal branding, subscriber networks, and direct audience engagement | Textual-juristic legitimacy |
| State Authority | Constitutional office, administrative mandate, and public governance | Public communication and policy dissemination | Bureaucratic-civic legitimacy |
| Cultural Authority | Cultural capital, moral influence, and public intellectual reputation | Algorithmic persistence and long-term digital circulation | Ethical-philosophical legitimacy |

Taken together, these findings indicate that the defining characteristic of Indonesia’s contemporary digital fatwa ecosystem is not fragmentation but hybridization. Religious legitimacy increasingly emerges through interactions among multiple actors operating within technologically mediated environments that preserve classical jurisprudential traditions while simultaneously transforming their modes of circulation and recognition. Platform logic does not abolish the authority of *kyai*, Islamic organizations, or established scholarship. Instead, it reorganizes the mechanisms through which such authority is publicly negotiated, compared, and legitimized.

Accordingly, this study argues that Islamic legal authority in Indonesia has entered a hybrid digital configuration in which classical religious knowledge remains the primary epistemic foundation, yet its social effectiveness increasingly depends upon platform-mediated visibility, communicative performance, and networked public engagement. The concept of Hybrid Digital Islamic Legal Authority therefore provides a theoretical framework capable of explaining how traditional jurisprudential legitimacy persists while adapting to the socio-technical conditions of contemporary platform society. In doing so, it offers an integrative perspective that connects mediatization theory, Bourdieu’s sociology of symbolic capital, and Actor-Network Theory within a unified explanation of authority transformation in the digital age.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the digital transformation of Indonesia’s religious public sphere has fundamentally altered the mechanisms through which Islamic legal authority is communicated, recognized, and negotiated. Through the case of the *fatwa* on *salam lintas agama*, the findings reveal that contemporary digital platforms do not generate a single authoritative interpretation but instead facilitate the simultaneous circulation of multiple competing claims originating from institutional organizations, individual *kyai*, state-affiliated actors, and cultural public intellectuals. The controversy therefore illustrates that debates surrounding Islamic law increasingly involve not only disagreement over substantive legal conclusions but also contestation regarding the sources and legitimacy of

religious authority itself.

The analysis further shows that classical Islamic jurisprudence remains the principal epistemic foundation across the corpus despite substantial variation in legal conclusions. Institutional organizations continue to rely on collective deliberation and established juristic methodologies, while independent *kyai* derive legitimacy from mastery of scriptural sources and personal scholarly reputation. State actors introduce constitutional and sociological considerations into religious discourse, whereas cultural figures employ ethical and philosophical reasoning grounded in accumulated symbolic capital. Rather than displacing one another, these distinct configurations coexist within the same platform environment, enabling audiences to encounter and compare multiple forms of authority through shared digital infrastructures.

From a theoretical perspective, the study argues that the most significant transformation concerns the operation of platform logic. Digital platforms function not merely as channels for disseminating fatwas but as socio-technical environments that shape visibility, accessibility, and patterns of public engagement. Interpreted through mediatization theory, Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital, and Actor-Network Theory, the findings indicate that platform infrastructures actively participate in the circulation and recognition of Islamic legal authority while leaving the core epistemological foundations of Islamic jurisprudence largely intact. Accordingly, the study advances the concept of Hybrid Digital Islamic Legal Authority, proposing that contemporary religious legitimacy in Indonesia emerges through the interaction of classical juristic knowledge, institutional legitimacy, personal scholarly authority, bureaucratic governance, cultural capital, and platform-mediated communication.

These findings contribute to the growing literature on digital religion by challenging technologically deterministic assumptions that online media inevitably replace traditional religious institutions. Instead, the Indonesian case demonstrates a process of institutional adaptation in which inherited forms of Islamic authority are reconfigured and renegotiated within platform-based environments without abandoning their jurisprudential foundations. The study therefore provides an integrative analytical framework for understanding how religious legitimacy evolves under conditions of digital mediation while preserving continuity with classical traditions of Islamic legal reasoning.

Several limitations should nevertheless be acknowledged. The research focuses exclusively on publicly available documentary materials and does not investigate audience reception, algorithmic recommendation systems, or users' interpretive practices through interviews or digital ethnography. Future studies may extend this framework by incorporating cross-platform comparisons, computational analyses of platform infrastructures, or comparative investigations across different Muslim-majority societies to examine whether similar patterns of hybrid authority emerge in other socio-political contexts. Such research would further refine understanding of the dynamic relationship between Islamic legal authority and the rapidly evolving architecture of the digital public sphere.

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