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FROM THE PULPIT TO THE ALGORITHM: THE TRANSFORMATION OF ISLAMIC FATWA AUTHORITY IN THE ERA OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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Abstract

The development of artificial intelligence (AI) has changed the way Muslims access Islamic legal knowledge and obtain answers to religious issues. This change raises questions about the legitimacy and authority of fatwa in the digital era. This study aims to analyze the transformation of fatwa authority through the perspective of religious and digital religious mediation. The research employs a qualitative method that relies on literature studies and adopts a socio-legal approach. The data is analyzed thematically to identify changes in epistemic, institutional, and socio-digital authority. The results of the study show that AI expands access to Islamic legal information, but the speed and ability to produce answers do not automatically guarantee legal validity and legitimacy as a fatwa issuer. Fatwa authorities still require scientific competence, source verification, context understanding, and institutional accountability. This research offers a conceptual framework that integrates the three dimensions of authority to explain the change in the legitimacy of fatwas. Thus, AI needs to be placed as a supporting instrument, not a substitute for scholars and fatwa institutions.

INTRODUCTION

Artificial intelligence (AI) development, especially generative technology based on large language models, has changed how Muslims access, understand, and practice Islamic law. Religious issues that were previously consulted scholars, mufti, or fatwa institutions can now be submitted through chatbots that provide answers in seconds. These changes are not only related to the ease of obtaining information but also concern the fundamental issues of authority in explaining Islamic law, the legitimacy of fatwa issuers, and trust in the answers generated by machines. The ability of AI to generate convincing answers does not always guarantee the accuracy of legal reasoning, the validity of the evidence, or the suitability of the context of the problem.

In the Islamic legal tradition, the authority of fatwa rests on the mufti's scientific competence, mastery of legal sources, the methodology *of istinbāṭ al-aḥkām*, and the ability to consider the circumstances of the person requesting the fatwa (*mustaftī*). Fatwas are not just normative answers but the result of reasoning that connects sharia postulates with concrete societal problems. The legitimacy of the mufti is built through education, scientific reputation, community recognition, and, in certain contexts, institutional endorsement. However, the development of digital technology has also changed the way religious authorities are formed and received. Hjarvard (2008) explains that religious mediatization influences religious practices and representations in social life, while Campbell (2013) emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between religious practices and digital technology. Thus, technology not only becomes a channel for the delivery of fatwas but also influences the formation and acceptance of religious authorities.

These changes are increasingly complex when digital media develops into an AI system that is able to produce answers that resemble legal arguments. Chatbots can summarize fiqh opinions, explain differences in sects, identify postulates, and respond to religious questions personally. This ability expands access to Islamic legal

knowledge, especially for people who face geographical limitations or difficulty consulting directly with scholars. However, the presentation of systematic answers can create the impression that AI has competence and authority equivalent to mufti. In fact, AI output is influenced by data, model design, and user instructions, so it does not automatically guarantee the validity of the evidence or the accuracy of the application of the law.

Contemporary studies are beginning to highlight these opportunities and limitations. Ahmed (2024) discusses the use of chatbots to expand access to religious guidance while highlighting their limitations in understanding the complexity of fiqh and personal context. Hakim and Azizi (2023) also raised the issue of fatwa authority in the use of AI and stressed the importance of consulting sources beyond machine answers. The study shows that the relationship between AI and Islamic law is not solely a matter of technological sophistication but also concerns the validity of knowledge, accountability, and the legitimacy of legal answerers.

In the Indonesian context, this issue is increasingly relevant because religious authorities are present through Islamic boarding school scholars, religious organizations, fatwa institutions, and preachers on social media. AI adds new actors in the ecosystem through non-human systems that are able to provide personalized answers but do not always explain the source and reasoning process in a transparent manner. In 2025, the Indonesian Ulema Council through its official news raises the question of whether AI can be made a mufti and highlights the absence of human awareness as a fundamental problem in issuing fatwas (MUI, 2025). This attention confirms that the use of AI in religious affairs has become an institutional problem. Therefore, the discussion needs to go beyond the question of whether or not AI can be used by examining the formation of trust, the relationship between AI and the authority of scholars, and accountability for erroneous answers.

This study uses the perspective of religious mediatization (Hjarvard, 2008) and Campbell's (2013) digital religious studies, which are combined with the conception

of Islamic legal authority based on the competence of the mufti, *istinbāṭ methodology*, validity of evidence, and context considerations. This framework views fatwa authority as a relationship between scientific capacity, social legitimacy, reasoning process, and normative responsibility. Therefore, we must distinguish between AI's ability to process information and its authority to establish legal opinions that can serve as guidelines.

Although previous studies have addressed the limitations of AI and the role of mufti, there is still a need for analysis linking the production of legal answers to the formation of legitimacy among users. These gaps include the reasons why people trust AI answers, the comparison of their authority with scholars and fatwa institutions, and changes in the relationship between mufti and *mustaftī* in the digital environment. Aspects of speed, ease of access, communication style, and user perception also have the potential to influence the acceptance of religious answers.

The novelty *of* this research lies in the analysis of the transformation of fatwa authority through the relationship of Islamic legal epistemology, technological mediation, and social legitimacy. The research distinguishes three dimensions, namely epistemic authority related to the source and validity of knowledge; institutional authority derived from the recognition of scholars and fatwa institutions; and socio-digital authority formed through user interaction with AI. This research aims to analyze changes in the formation, spread, and acceptance of fatwa authority due to AI, identify the tension between technical capabilities and religious legitimacy, and formulate a conceptual framework for the use of AI as a supporting instrument for fatwa services without obscuring the responsibilities of scholars and authorities. The results are expected to enrich the study of contemporary Islamic law, especially regarding the relationship between technology, religious authority, and the practice of Islamic law in the digital era.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. The Concept of Fatwa and Islamic Legal Authority

A fatwa is a legal opinion given by Islamic legal experts in response to a problem raised by an individual or society. In the fiqh tradition, fatwa functions to connect the principles of sharia with the concrete needs of social life. Unlike court decisions that have binding power in certain cases, fatwas are generally not judicially binding but can have a strong normative and social influence when accepted as guidelines by society or religious institutions.

Fatwa authority is not only determined by the ability to provide answers regarding the provisions of halal, haram, mandatory, sunnah, makruh, or mubah. The authority is related to scientific competence, mastery of legal sources, the ability to perform *istinbāṭ al-aḥkām*, understanding the context of the problem, and public recognition of the fatwa giver. Thus, Islamic legal authority has three main dimensions, namely epistemic, institutional, and social. The epistemic dimension is related to the validity of legal knowledge and reasoning methods; the institutional dimension is related to the recognition of scientific institutions or communities; while the social dimension includes public trust and acceptance of legal opinions.

A mufti is not enough to just mention the evidence but also needs to understand the relationship between the evidence, legal rules, the circumstances of the fatwa applicant (*mustaftī*), and the consequences of the application of an opinion. Thus, the fatwa's quality must be judged by the source's accuracy, the reasoning's validity, the context's suitability, and the fatwa giver's accountability. In the context of artificial *intelligence* (AI), this distinction is important because the ability to produce convincing answers does not automatically prove mastery of Islamic legal methodology or provide legitimacy as a mufti.

2. Religious Mediation and Transformation of Religious Authority

This study uses the theory of *mediatization of religion* developed by Hjarvard

(2008) to explain the changing relationship between religion and communication technology. This perspective views the media not only as a channel for conveying messages but also as a factor that influences the practice, representation, and meaning of religion. Through the media, religious knowledge is produced, packaged, disseminated, and received in a social environment that is also shaped by the characteristics of technology and communication logic.

In the context of fatwas, religious mediatization helps explain the shift from direct consultation with scholars to searching for answers through websites, social media, search engines, and AI chatbots. In traditional consultations, the applicant submits the issue to Islamic legal experts, then the mufti assesses the relevant information before providing an answer. In contrast, digital services allow people to search for and obtain answers independently without having to interact directly with the fatwa issuer.

These changes expand access to religious information but at the same time affect the way people assess the credibility of sources. Answers that are quick, concise, personalized, and available at all times can be more engaging than consultations that require time and lengthy explanations. However, certain issues of Islamic law, such as family conflicts, financial transactions, or worship in special circumstances, require contextual information that cannot always be obtained from a brief question.

Generative AI presents further changes because this system not only channels the information that is available but also compiles answers based on training data and user input. Therefore, AI can be understood as an intermediary that helps shape the representation of religious knowledge without automatically having the normative authority to establish laws. The theory of religious mediatization is used in this study to analyze how technology changes the relationship between scholars, fatwa institutions, knowledge sources, and the society seeking legal answers.

3. Digital Religion and Authority Negotiation

The study of digital *religion* developed by Campbell (2013) provides an

additional perspective to understand religious practices in the communication technology environment. The relationship between religion and digital media includes the dissemination of knowledge, community formation, ethical issues, and changes in the relationship between religious identity and the digital space. Technology is not only a means of conveying information but also a space where religious practices and authorities are negotiated.

In the context of fatwa, people can compare the opinions of scholars, access the decisions of fatwa institutions, participate in religious discussions, and ask questions of AI systems without having to rely on one institution. This condition expands the choice of reference sources but also increases the need to assess the credibility of the information and its suitability to the context of the issue.

Authority negotiations take place when legitimacy that previously rested on education, scientific reputation, and institutional recognition interacts with the characteristics of the digital environment, such as response speed, ease of access, personalization, and communication style. AI can gain user trust because it is able to provide direct and systematic explanations. However, trusting the system does not mean that users recognize it as competent in the role of a mufti.

The difference between perceived authority and accountable authority is an important issue. Users may consider AI answers to be correct because they are delivered in firm language, even though the answers may contain misreferences, confuse the opinions of the sect, or ignore facts that determine the application of the law. Thus, the perspective of digital religion is used to explain the formation of trust in AI answers, not to equate its position with scholars or fatwa institutions.

4. Generative Artificial Intelligence and the Production of Islamic Legal Knowledge

Generative artificial intelligence, especially *large language models*, is able to produce text based on patterns learned from data and input contexts. In the field of Islamic law, this technology can help summarize literature, point out fiqh terms,

compare opinions, find references, and compile initial explanations of religious issues. Its use has the potential to expand public access to knowledge and help researchers and practitioners manage legal materials.

However, the ability to produce coherent text is not the same as the ability to guarantee the truth of every claim. AI systems can provide seemingly complete explanations but are wrong in identifying sources, mentioning the opinions of scholars, or applying legal provisions to specific cases. Therefore, AI cannot simply be understood as a machine that performs ijtihad like an Islamic legal expert.

Ahmed (2024), through a study of fatwa and AI, discusses opportunities to expand access and accelerate religious services as well as technological limitations in understanding the personal context and complexity of fiqh reasoning. The study emphasizes the importance of maintaining human judgment in the fatwa granting process. AI is more appropriately placed as a supporting instrument than a substitute for mufti.

Based on these issues, the use of AI in fatwa services needs to be assessed through three questions. First, can the sources and postulates presented be verified? Second, does the reasoning take into account differences of opinion, the condition of the applicant, and relevant facts? Third, who is responsible if the answers given are wrong and cause harm? These questions relate the technical capabilities of AI to the issues of epistemology, ethics, and the institution of Islamic law.

5. Previous Research on Fatwa and Artificial Intelligence

Research on the relationship between fatwa and AI has begun to move from discussing the possible use of technology to an analysis of its epistemic and institutional consequences. Ahmed (2024), in a research entitled *Fatwa and AI: A Literature-Based Assessment on How AI Impacts the Role of the Muftī*, examines the opportunities and challenges of using chatbots in the issuance of fatwas. The research highlights the benefits in the form of accessibility and the ability to handle many questions, as well as the limitations of chatbots in understanding the nuances of the

problem and the context needed to produce the right legal answers. Ahmed emphasized the importance of combining technological capabilities with human judgment.

Ahmed's research contribution lies in the placement of the role of the mufti as a central issue in the use of AI for fatwas. However, the literature-based approach still leaves room for further analysis of the relationship between the type of authority, the formation of trust, and the public's acceptance of AI answers. Issues that need to be examined include whether users trust answers because of the accuracy of the evidence, platform reputation, ease of access, or style of language used.

Jan's (2026) research, titled *Digital Authority and Islamic Legal Reasoning: A Comparative Study of AI-Generated and Human-Issued Fatāwā*, compares ChatGPT's answers to fatwas issued by Islamic scholars and institutions in contemporary issues. His focus on Islamic legal reasoning helps shift the discussion from AI's ability to generate answers to questions about the quality of legal argumentation and accountability.

However, we must distinguish between comparing the content of AI answers with human fatwas and researching the formation of social authority. The similarity of legal conclusions has not sufficiently explained why people choose an answer, how trust is formed, and whether the use of AI affects the user's relationship with scholars or fatwa institutions.

Meanwhile, Hjarvard (2008) and Campbell (2013) provide a theoretical basis for understanding the changing relationship between religion and media. Hjarvard explains the role of media in the transformation of religion, while Campbell examines religious practices in the new media environment. Although neither specifically discusses generative AI as an answerer of Islamic law, their thinking is relevant to explain the changing environment of religious communication and the formation of digital authority.

In general, previous research shows three trends. First, the study of fatwa and

AI examines the benefits, risks, and implications for the role of the mufti. Second, comparative research assesses the relationship between AI answers and legal reasoning generated by humans or Islamic institutions. Third, the study of religious and religious mediatization explains the changing relationship between technology, religious practices, and authority. These three trends complement each other, but a framework that integrates the validity of legal knowledge, institutional legitimacy, and social trust is still needed.

6. Theoretical Synthesis, Research Gap, and Novelty

Based on the literature review, the transformation of fatwa authority in the AI era is not enough to be explained as a shift from direct consultation to digital services. These changes also concern the way legal knowledge is produced, how answers gain credibility, and how responsibility for legal opinions is determined. To explain these issues, this study synthesizes three perspectives: Islamic legal authority, religious mediatization, and digital religion.

The perspective of Islamic legal authority is used to assess normative legitimacy based on scientific competence, reasoning methods, legal sources, and accountability. The theory of religious mediatization explains changes in the process of conveying and receiving religious information, while the perspective of digital religion helps analyze user interaction with reference sources and the formation of trust in the digital environment.

The synthesis produces three analytical dimensions. First, epistemic authority, namely the validity of sources, the accuracy of postulates, and the quality of legal reasoning presented by AI. Second, institutional authority, which is the relationship between legal answers and the recognition of scholars, fatwa institutions, and accountability mechanisms. Third, social-digital authority, which is trust formed through ease of access, speed of response, personalization, and user perception of AI systems.

These three dimensions do not always go in the same direction. AI answers can

be trusted by users, but they do not necessarily have a valid legal basis or institutional recognition. In contrast, institutional fatwas that have formal legitimacy are not necessarily the first source that the public accesses when they need answers quickly. These differences allow research to shed light on the tension between perceived credibility, legal validity, and institutional legitimacy.

The research gap lies in the need to connect the technical capabilities and limitations of AI with the process of authority formation in Muslim societies. Studies on the role of mufti and comparison of AI answers have provided an important foundation, while the theory of religious mediatization and digital religion explains the changing environment of religious communication. This research integrates these perspectives to analyze how AI can gain a position as a legal reference in the eyes of users without automatically gaining legitimacy as a mufti.

Thus, the *novelty* of this research does not lie in the claim that the relationship between AI and fatwa has never been studied, but in the development of a three-dimensional framework that connects epistemic, institutional, and social-digital authorities. This framework distinguishes the technical ability of AI in generating information, the legitimacy required to issue fatwas, and the trust formed in social practice.

This research departs from the proposition that the easier AI is to use to obtain religious answers, the more important it is to differentiate access to information from authorities to establish legal opinions. AI can expand information services and support the work of scholars, but the use of the results still requires source verification, reasoning checks, understanding of context, and clear accountability. Through this framework, the research is expected to explain how AI influences the formation and acceptance of fatwa authorities and how technology can be used as a supporting instrument without obscuring the position of scholars and fatwa institutions.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative method with the type of library *research* and a socio-legal approach. This approach connects the normative principles of Islamic law, the development of digital technology, and changes in the relationship between scholars, fatwa institutions, artificial intelligence (AI), and society. Normative analysis is used to examine the concept of fatwa, the authority of the mufti, and the methodology of Islamic legal reasoning, while the socio-legal approach explains the transformation of the production, dissemination, and acceptance of religious knowledge in the digital space.

The research data included primary data in the form of fatwa documents, institutional guidelines, and AI system outputs related to Islamic legal issues, as well as secondary data in the form of academic books, journal articles, and research results on religious authority, religious mediatization, digital religion, generative AI, and Islamic legal epistemology. The literature was searched through Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and Islamic law journal portals using the keywords *"AI" and "fatwa," "artificial intelligence" and "Islamic law*," and "digital *religious authority."* Publications in the past ten years were prioritized while still considering relevant previous theoretical works.

Data collection was carried out through documentation and search of directed literature, then classified based on three dimensions: epistemic, institutional, and social-digital authority. The analysis used qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis through data reduction, coding, thematic grouping, comparison of findings, and drawing conclusions. The validity of the interpretation was maintained through triangulation of sources and examination of primary references. This procedure was used to explain the transformation of fatwa authority as well as formulate the limits of the use of AI as an instrument to support contemporary Islamic legal practice.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Shifting Access to Religious Knowledge: From Scholarly Consultation to Interaction with AI

The results of the literature review show that the development of digital technology has changed the way Muslims acquire knowledge of Islamic law. If previously religious issues were generally consulted with scholars, religious teachers, Islamic boarding schools, or fatwa institutions, now people can access information through websites, social media, search engines, and artificial intelligence (AI). These changes expand access to religious knowledge while changing the mechanisms of society in seeking and receiving answers to Islamic law.

Generative AI presents more significant changes than conventional digital media. Search engines present various sources that must be chosen and judged by users, while AI chatbots can compile direct answers in the form of descriptions that resemble an expert's explanation. This system is able to summarize fiqh opinions, explain legal terms, compare arguments, and provide initial explanations on religious issues. This convenience makes AI potentially one of the entrances for society to understand Islamic law.

These changes in the access mechanism do not necessarily indicate that technology has replaced the authority of the ulama. The public still needs an assessment of the accuracy of the evidence, the validity of the argument, and the suitability of the answers to the situation at hand. Thus, the main change lies in how we obtain and convey religious knowledge, rather than in the diminishing need for Islamic legal expertise.

This conceptual finding can be explained through Hjarvard's (2008) theory of *mediatization of religion*, which views the media not just as a communication channel but as a factor that also shapes the process of production, dissemination, and reception of religious messages. In the context of AI, technology not only facilitates access to available information but also compiles a representation of knowledge based on

questions and the context of user input.

The perspective of digital religion, Campbell (2013), strengthens this analysis by showing that technology becomes a space for interaction between religious practices and the characteristics of digital media. When people use AI to obtain explanations of Islamic law, the relationship between the questioner and the source of knowledge changes. Answers can be obtained without direct interaction with the mufti, while the process of compiling it takes place through a system that does not have an institutional position like ulama or fatwa institutions.

This change has two implications. First, access to Islamic legal information becomes more open, especially for people who face limited time, distance, or consultation opportunities. Second, the verification process can be ignored if users receive AI answers without checking the original source. Therefore, we must distinguish between the ease of obtaining information and the accuracy of understanding the law. The speed of response is not always in line with the validity of the underlying reasoning.

2. Epistemic Authority: The Ability to Generate Answers and the Validity of Legal Knowledge

The second finding is related to the difference between the ability of AI to produce convincing answers and the ability to account for those answers based on Islamic legal methodology. Generative AI can formulate explanations systematically, use fiqh terminology, and mention the postulates and opinions of scholars. However, structured presentation does not automatically guarantee the correctness of the information or the accuracy of the arguments presented.

In the Islamic legal tradition, the determination of legal opinions requires mastery of the sources of sharia, the methodology of *istinbāṭ al-aḥkām*, the rules of fiqh proposals, differences of opinion of scholars, and facts relevant to the issue. Legal reasoning may also involve the sharia's purpose, the fatwa applicant's (mustaftī) status, and the opinion's consequences. Therefore, the quality of the answer is not

enough to be assessed based on the fluency of the language, the length of the description, or the number of references listed.

Ahmed (2024) highlights the limitations of AI in comprehending the complexities of fiqh and personal context as one of the challenges of using chatbots for fatwa services. Technology does have the potential to expand access to religious information, but the issuance of fatwas requires an assessment that goes beyond the ability to compile texts. On that basis, AI is more appropriately placed as a supporting instrument whose output needs to be verified rather than as a substitute for mufti.

The validity of AI answers can be examined through three aspects. First, the factual aspect, namely the accuracy of the evidence, the references to the book, the opinions of scholars, and the legal provisions put forward. Second, the methodological aspect, namely the accuracy of the use of postulates and legal principles as well as consideration of relevant differences of opinion. Third, the contextual aspect, namely the suitability of the answer to the facts of the problem, the circumstances of the applicant, and the applicable positive legal provisions.

These three aspects are important because an explanation can be correct as a general rule, but it is not necessarily appropriate to solve a specific case. Financial transactions can depend on the contract, payment method, parties' willingness, and the transaction's object. Similarly, family law issues may require information about the marital status, the circumstances of the parties, and the provisions of relevant laws and regulations. If the information is not available or misinterpreted, the answers produced may not be in accordance with the actual problem.

From the epistemological perspective of Islamic law, these conditions show that the production of answers and the legitimacy of knowledge are two different things. AI can generate texts about Islamic law, but its validity must be tested based on accountable sources and methodologies. The ability to summarize postulates or compare opinions alone does not prove that AI performs ijtihad in the scientific sense of Islamic law. Thus, the distinction between the processing of legal information and

intellectual responsibility in the determination of opinions becomes an important basis for understanding the limits of AI's epistemic authority.

3. Institutional Authority: The Position of Muftis and Fatwa Institutions in the AI Era

The third finding shows that the development of AI raises questions about the relationship between technological capabilities and institutional legitimacy. In the Islamic legal tradition, the authority of the mufti is not only related to the mastery of knowledge but also to the recognition of the scientific community and, in certain contexts, institutional mandates. Fatwa institutions have mechanisms to examine issues, examine evidence, consider differences of opinion, and formulate legal opinions for the public.

This position cannot be simply equated with a generative AI system. The ability to answer religious questions does not automatically make AI a mufti. The system does not automatically have a position in the institutional structure of Islamic law, and its output does not automatically constitute an official fatwa. Therefore, the use of the term *"AI fatwa"* needs to be done carefully. In many circumstances, the term "religious information," "fiqh explanation," or "AI response to Islamic legal questions" is more appropriate, unless there is an institutional mechanism that clearly justifies the results.

Ahmed's (2024) discussion of the role of mufti reinforces the importance of maintaining human judgment in the use of AI for fatwa services. The issue is not just whether the system can generate answers, but also who verifies the truth and who is accountable for the public's legal opinions. The integration of AI in religious services therefore requires transparent checking, correction, and ratification mechanisms.

In the Indonesian context, society has various sources of religious authority, ranging from Islamic boarding school scholars to fatwa organizations and institutions. Each has its characteristics, scientific traditions, and mechanisms for expressing opinions. The presence of AI adds new sources of reference but does not erase the difference in status between the answers generated by the system and the opinions

formulated through institutional procedures.

The relationship can be explained through three levels of authority. First, the ability to provide information relevant to the user's questions. Second, the scientific competence to assess postulates and formulate legal arguments. Third, the institutional legitimacy to issue or validate opinions within the scope of a particular authority. The three are interrelated, but not identical. AI can help provide information and support the analysis process, but these capabilities do not automatically provide the authority to issue fatwas.

In line with Hjarvard's (2008) theory of religious mediatization, technology can change the way religious authority is accessed and perceived without having to replace the entire institutional structure of religion. AI can expand the reach of information and assist in the preparation of study materials, while scholars and fatwa institutions continue to play a role in maintaining methodological accuracy, consistency of argumentation, and accountability of legal opinions. The transformation of fatwa authority is thus more appropriately understood as a process of adjusting the relationship between technology and institutions, rather than a total transfer of authority from humans to machines.

4. Social-Digital Authority: User Trust and AI Credibility

The next dimension is the formation of public trust in AI answers. In a digital environment, the credibility of sources is not always assessed based on scientific competence or institutional standing. Speed of response, ease of use, easy-to-understand language, ability to provide personalized answers, and availability of services can affect the user experience. These characteristics have the potential to make AI an attractive reference in the search for Islamic legal information.

However, social acceptance does not always demonstrate epistemic validity. A firm and systematic answer can be perceived as true even if the source has not been checked. This situation shows a possible gap between perceived credibility and the

actual quality of knowledge. Users can trust the answer because it feels relevant and easy to understand, not because it has examined the postulate or tested the reasoning.

Campbell's (2013) digital religious perspective helps explain how technology becomes a space for interaction between users, sources of information, and religious practices. AI facilitates interaction through tailored questions and answers based on user input. The experience can resemble a personal consultation, even if the user does not interact directly with a mufti. This condition has the potential to change the way people understand the relationship between access to information and religious authority.

However, without systematically collected user data, it cannot be concluded that Muslim societies in general trust AI more than scholars or fatwa institutions. Such conclusions require empirical research through interviews, surveys, or usage observations. Based on literature research, a more proportionate conclusion is that the characteristics of AI open up the possibility of the formation of new belief patterns that need to be studied further.

The social-digital authority in this study is therefore understood as an analytical dimension to explain how acceptance of AI answers can be formed through technological characteristics and user experiences. Such acceptance does not prove that AI has gained legitimacy as a mufti. Rather, it suggests that social acceptance and scientific legitimacy can be formed through different mechanisms.

The implication is the importance of digital Islamic legal literacy. Users need to be able to examine sources, compare answers, understand differences of opinion, and recognize issues that require direct consultation with scholars or authorized experts. This literacy is not only the ability to use technology but also the awareness that easy-to-obtain answers are not always adequate as a basis for religious decision-making.

5. The Tension between Accessibility, Accuracy, and Responsibility

The literature synthesis shows three main interests in the use of AI for Islamic legal information, namely accessibility, accuracy, and responsibility. Accessibility is

related to the ability of technology to provide information quickly and widely. Accuracy concerns the accuracy of sources, reasoning, and the application of the law. Meanwhile, responsibility is related to the clarity of the party who examines, validates, and is responsible for the use of the answers.

Accessibility is one of the main potentials of AI. People can ask questions at any time, obtain initial explanations, and learn difficult fiqh terms. This technology can also help users identify topics that need to be studied further. From the perspective of religious information services, these benefits can support expanded access to Islamic legal knowledge.

However, improving accessibility must be accompanied by efforts to maintain accuracy. Mistakes in explaining simple issues can lead to misunderstandings, while mistakes regarding marriage, divorce, inheritance, financial transactions, or religious obligations can have more serious consequences. Therefore, the level of examination must be adjusted to the complexity and risk of the problem in question.

Responsibility becomes an important issue when AI answers are used as the basis for action. If the technology only helps to search for evidence or summarize the literature, the results can be examined by competent users or Islamic law experts. However, when automated answers are treated as a final legal decision, the boundaries of responsibility can become blurred. Users may not know if the answers have been verified, whereas technology providers do not necessarily have the function or authority as a fatwa institution.

Therefore, the use of AI needs to distinguish the function of tools from normative authority. AI can support information searching, preparation of study materials, and comparison of opinions. However, its use must be accompanied by source verification, context checks, and explanations of the status of the answers provided. If AI is integrated into the services of fatwa institutions, the mechanisms of human supervision and institutional ratification need to be explained in a transparent manner.

Therefore, we can address the issues of accessibility, accuracy, and responsibility without completely rejecting the use of AI. A more proportionate approach is to utilize technology according to its capacity, strengthen verification mechanisms, and maintain human responsibility and institutions that have relevant competencies and authority.

6. Synthesis of Findings and Transformation Model of Fatwa Authority

Based on the overall discussion, the transformation of fatwa authority in the AI era can be analyzed through three interrelated dimensions, namely epistemic authority, institutional authority, and social-digital authority. These three form a framework to understand how AI changes the process of obtaining and receiving Islamic legal information without assuming that technology has replaced the position of the mufti.

Epistemic authority is concerned with the validity of the knowledge produced, including the accuracy of the source, the use of postulates, and the suitability of reasoning with Islamic legal methodology. Institutional authority concerns the recognition of those who give or validate legal opinions, including the position of muftis and fatwa institutions. Social-digital authority is related to the way users obtain, assess, and trust answers as well as factors that affect acceptance of AI systems.

These three dimensions do not always develop in unison. AI can provide answers quickly, but its validity still needs to be tested. The right answer to a problem also does not automatically make the system a mufti. On the contrary, institutions that have formal legitimacy still need to express their opinions in a way that can be understood by the public. Thus, technology and religious authorities have different functions, but they can support each other.

Conceptually, the interdimensional relationship can be formulated as follows: the development of AI expands access and changes the pattern of interaction; changes in interactions have the potential to affect the perception of credibility; then, these perceptions interact with epistemic validity and institutional legitimacy in

determining whether an answer is accepted as a reference. This formulation is an analytical model of the results of literature synthesis, not a causal relationship that has been proven through field testing.

The model makes two main contributions. First, it distinguishes the ability to generate answers from the authority to issue fatwas. Second, it directs the study of Islamic law beyond the debate about whether AI can be used to analyze the quality of answers, verification procedures, user acceptance, and institutional responsibility.

Ultimately, the transformation of fatwa authority in the AI era is a negotiation process between the scientific tradition of Islamic law, institutional structures, and patterns of digital interaction. AI has the potential to expand access to religious knowledge, but its use must be accompanied by source verification, accuracy of reasoning, transparency, and accountability. In this framework, the position of AI that can be accounted for is as an instrument to support access and processing information, while the assessment and ratification of fatwas still require human competence and relevant institutional mechanisms.

CONCLUSION

Artificial intelligence has changed the way Muslims access Islamic legal knowledge while presenting challenges to fatwa authority. These changes are not only about the ease of obtaining answers but also about the validity of knowledge, institutional legitimacy, and public trust. The analysis shows three important dimensions in this transformation, namely epistemic authority, institutional authority, and social-digital authority. The ability of AI to generate convincing answers does not automatically guarantee legal accuracy or provide a position as a mufti.

Therefore, AI is more appropriately positioned as an instrument to support access and processing of religious information, not a substitute for scholars or fatwa institutions. Its use needs to be accompanied by source verification, accuracy of

reasoning, understanding of context, and clear accountability. The novelty of this research lies in the three-dimensional integration of these authorities to explain changes in the legitimacy of fatwas in the digital era. Further research needs to use field data to test how the use of AI affects public beliefs and Islamic law search practices.

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