

Article Title	RECONFIGURING RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION: A PEDAGOGICAL FRAMEWORK.
Abstract in English	This article examines the reconfiguration of religious authority in Islamic education by conceptualizing authority as a pedagogical formation rather than merely as a sociological or media-related phenomenon. The study responds to the tension between classical sources of authority grounded in ‘ilm, adab, sanad, teacher-student relations, and scholarly recognition, and contemporary sources mediated by formal institutions, academic credentials, bureaucratic certification, public communication, and algorithmic visibility. Employing library research with a historical-conceptual approach, this article analyzes selected scholarly works on Islamic intellectual tradition, educational institutions, pesantren, modern Islamic education, and digital Islam. The findings indicate that religious authority in Islamic education is formed through four interrelated dimensions: epistemic depth, ethical formation, institutional credibility, and digital literacy. The article concludes that Islamic education should cultivate critical religious literacy by enabling students so they can distinguish scholarly legitimacy from popularity, credentials from competence, and digital visibility from epistemic accountability.
Keywords	Adab; digital literacy; Islamic education; religious authority; ulama.
Abstract in Indonesia	Artikel ini mengkaji rekonfigurasi otoritas agama dalam pendidikan Islam dengan menempatkan otoritas sebagai formasi pedagogis, bukan semata-mata fenomena sosiologis atau media. Kajian ini berangkat dari ketegangan antara sumber otoritas klasik yang bertumpu pada ‘ilm, adab, sanad, relasi guru-murid, dan pengakuan komunitas keilmuan, dengan sumber otoritas kontemporer yang dimediasi oleh institusi formal, gelar akademik, sertifikasi birokratis, komunikasi publik, dan visibilitas algoritmik. Dengan metode studi pustaka dan pendekatan historis-konseptual, artikel ini menganalisis karya-karya akademik terpilih tentang tradisi intelektual Islam, institusi pendidikan, pesantren, pendidikan Islam modern, dan Islam digital. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa otoritas agama dalam pendidikan Islam terbentuk melalui empat dimensi yang saling terkait: kedalaman epistemik, pembentukan etis, kredibilitas institusional, dan literasi digital. Artikel ini menyimpulkan bahwa pendidikan Islam perlu mengajarkan otoritas sebagai objek literasi keagamaan kritis agar peserta didik mampu membedakan legitimasi keilmuan dari popularitas, kredensial dari kompetensi, dan visibilitas digital dari akuntabilitas epistemik.
Kata Kunci	Adab; literasi digital; otoritas agama; pendidikan Islam; ulama.

INTRODUCTION

Religious authority has always been central to Islamic education because Islamic learning is concerns ~~not only the~~ transmission of knowledge ~~but also~~ the formation of legitimate religious actors ~~who are authorized to teach, interpret, and guide~~. In this article, religious authority refers to the socially recognized capacity of religious actors to interpret religious knowledge, guide religious practice, and shape normative understanding within specific

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communities of learning. This authority is not merely possessed by individuals; **rather**, it is claimed, exercised, **negotiated**, and recognized within particular epistemic, ethical, institutional, and social contexts (Krämer & Schmidtke, 2006; Zaman, 2002). In the Islamic intellectual tradition, this legitimacy is cultivated through disciplined engagement with texts, proximity to recognized teachers, ethical formation, participation in scholarly networks, and recognition by a community of learning. Religious authority therefore does not emerge from a single source. It is produced through the relationship among knowledge, teachers, students, institutions, and publics.

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This issue has become increasingly important in contemporary Islamic education. Muslim students today encounter religious knowledge **across** multiple **educational and digital environments**: pesantren, madrasah, Islamic schools, universities, mosques, study circles, social media accounts, video platforms, podcasts, online courses, and religious applications. The classroom is no longer the only organized space of religious learning. Students may receive a fatwa through a short video, learn Qur'anic interpretation through a podcast, follow a preacher through Instagram, and evaluate religious claims through the visibility and affective appeal of digital content. This **evolving learning** ecology **reshapes how** religious knowledge is received and the ways religious authority is recognized (Hew, 2018; Husein & Slama, 2018; Nisa, 2018b; Slama, 2018).

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The classical structure of religious authority in Islamic education was grounded in the centrality of knowledge. Rosenthal shows that *'ilm* occupied a decisive place in Islamic civilization and shaped religious, social, intellectual, and ethical life (Rosenthal, 2007). Al-Attas connects education with adab, namely the proper ordering of knowledge, action, and moral responsibility (Al-Attas, 1999). Berkey explains that the transmission of knowledge in medieval Muslim societies took place through networks of teachers, students, patrons, texts, and institutions (P. Berkey, 1992). Makdisi demonstrates that institutions such as the madrasa organized learning, teaching posts, endowments, and scholarly recognition (Makdisi, 1981). These works indicate that Islamic education has historically produced authority through a dense configuration of epistemic, ethical, social, and institutional elements.

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Contemporary Islamic education **has transformed** this **traditional** configuration. Formal schooling, state regulation, accreditation, academic degrees, teacher certification, university-based research, and professional standards introduce new mechanisms of legitimacy. These mechanisms can expand access, strengthen accountability, and connect Islamic education with wider academic systems. At the same time, they can also reduce authority to formal credentials when detached from scholarly depth, ethical discipline, and pedagogical accountability. The problem is not the presence of modern institutions. The problem lies in the disconnection between institutional recognition and the older epistemic-ethical foundations of authority.

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Digital media **further** intensifies this transformation. Studies on digital Islam in Indonesia show that religious authority is increasingly shaped by visibility, affect, circulation, audience engagement, and platform architecture. Akmaliah shows how new media has generated contestation over moderate Islam and religious authority (Akmaliah, 2020, 2022). Arifianto links post-Reformasi struggles over Islamic authority to the marketplace of ideas, new preaching actors, and media circulation (Arifianto, 2020). Beta, Lengauer, Nisa, and

Muttaqin show that digital spaces reshape piety, gendered religious subjectivity, and the production of new religious influencers (Beta, 2019; Lengauer, 2018; Muttaqin, 2020; Nisa, 2018b). Hannan and Mursyidi further describe social media as a site of fragmentation of religious authority among contemporary Indonesian Muslims (Abd Hannan & Ach Fatayillah Mursyidi, 2023).

These studies have advanced the discussion of religious authority in sociology of religion, digital religion, gender studies, and Indonesian Islam. However, their implications for Islamic educational theory remain insufficiently explored. Much of the literature explains how authority is contested in public and digital spaces, but gives less sustained attention to Islamic education as the arena where criteria of authority are taught, embodied, institutionalized, and evaluated. The gap is therefore not the absence of studies on religious authority. The gap lies in the limited conceptualization of religious authority as a pedagogical problem within Islamic education.

This article addresses that gap by arguing that religious authority in Islamic education should be understood as a pedagogical configuration. This configuration is formed through four interrelated dimensions: epistemic depth, ethical formation, institutional credibility, and digital literacy. Epistemic depth refers to mastery of Islamic sources, scholarly traditions, interpretive discipline, and contemporary knowledge. Ethical formation refers to adab, integrity, humility, and responsibility in using religious knowledge. Institutional credibility refers to the capacity of pesantren, madrasah, Islamic schools, universities, and digital learning platforms to provide learning through transparent and accountable educational standards. Digital literacy refers to the capacity to evaluate online religious content, algorithmic visibility, rhetorical persuasion, and the credibility of religious speakers.

The novelty of this article lies in shifting the discussion of religious authority from a predominantly sociological or media-centered issue to a core problem of Islamic education. Rather than treating digital authority as a phenomenon external to education, not does it romanticize classical authority as a complete solution to contemporary challenges. Instead, it proposes an integrated framework that explains how classical, modern, and digital sources of authority interact. Accordingly, this article aims to analyze how religious authority is formed, institutionalized, and reconfigured with in Islamic education, and to formulate a pedagogical framework for evaluating legitimate religious authority in contemporary Muslim learning environments.

METHOD

This study employs library research with a historical-conceptual approach. The method is appropriate because the article seeks to construct an interpretive framework rather than to report field findings. The analysis is based on selected core conceptual works and recent peer-reviewed journal articles related to Islamic intellectual tradition, Islamic education, pesantren, religious authority, and digital Islam. The corpus was selected to represent three layers of discussion: classical foundations of authority, modern institutional transformation, and digital mediation of religious knowledge.

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The first layer consists of core works that provide the conceptual and historical basis for understanding authority in Islamic education. Krämer and Schmidtke and Zaman are used to define religious authority as a socially recognized and historically situated form of legitimacy (Krämer & Schmidtke, 2006; Zaman, 2002). Rosenthal, Al-Attas, Berkey, Makdisi, and Sirry are then used to explain the relationship among *'ilm*, adab, sanad, scholarly networks, institutions, and the changing sources of religious authority (Al-Attas, 1999; Makdisi, 1981; Rosenthal, 2007; Sirry, 2015). The second layer consists of recent studies on Islamic education and pesantren. Isbah, Mustofa et al., Khoiriyah and Riyadi, Jusubaidi et al., and Nasir and Rijal are used to examine pesantren continuity, institutional adaptation, digital transformation, and Islamic higher education (Isbah, 2020; Jusubaidi et al., 2024; Khoiriyah & Riyadi, 2023; Nasir & Rijal, 2021; Yunus Mustofa et al., 2023). The third layer consists of studies on religious authority and digital Islam, including studies on digital Islam, religious authority, online piety, digital da'wa, and platform-mediated religious publics (Akmaliah, 2020, 2022; Arifianto, 2020; Beta, 2019; Hew, 2018; Husein & Slama, 2018; Nisa, 2018b; Slama, 2018; Solahudin & Fakhruroji, 2019). The sources were selected based on their conceptual relevance to religious authority, their contribution to Islamic education or digital Islam studies, and their usefulness for explaining the shift from scholarly transmission to institutional and platform-mediated recognition.

The literature was analyzed through content analysis and historical interpretation. Content analysis was used to identify key concepts, recurring categories, and patterns of argument across the selected works. Historical interpretation was used to trace shifts in authority from teacher-centered transmission, to institutional recognition, to digitally mediated visibility. The analysis proceeded in four stages. First, the study identified epistemic and ethical foundations of authority in Islamic intellectual tradition. Second, it examined the role of ulama, teacher-student relations, and educational institutions in legitimizing authority. Third, it analyzed the effects of modern credentials and bureaucratic governance. Fourth, it interpreted digital visibility as a new condition that requires pedagogical evaluation.

As a library-based conceptual study, this article does not involve human participants, interviews, surveys, or personally identifiable data. Ethical responsibility is maintained through accurate citation, careful paraphrase, responsible interpretation of sources, and the exclusion of uncited claims.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Epistemic-Ethical Foundations of Religious Authority

The first finding is that religious authority in Islamic education is grounded in an epistemic-ethical structure. Knowledge is the epistemic basis, while adab gives knowledge its ethical direction. This structure distinguishes scholarly authority from mere opinion, rhetorical performance, or social influence. A person becomes authoritative in Islamic education by entering a process of learning that requires textual mastery, disciplined interpretation, ethical formation, and recognition by a community of knowledge.

Rosenthal's account of *'ilm* provides the starting point for this argument. In Islamic civilization, knowledge was not only a cognitive category but also a civilizational value that

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shaped religion, law, ethics, literature, politics, and social life (Rosenthal, 2007). The scholar's authority emerged from the capacity to preserve, interpret, and transmit knowledge responsibly. This means that authority was inseparable from learning. It was produced through sustained engagement with inherited sources and through the ability to make those sources meaningful for religious life.

Al-Attas deepens this epistemic foundation by linking education to *adab* (Al-Attas, 1999). In this framework, knowledge must be ordered by moral discernment, proper recognition, and ethical responsibility. Authority is therefore not reducible to mastery of information. It requires the formation of the person who bears knowledge. This point is crucial for Islamic education because it shows that the legitimacy of a religious teacher is formed by the integration of competence and character. The teacher is authoritative not only because he or she knows, but because knowledge is carried with responsibility.

Sanad and *ijazah* extend this epistemic-ethical structure into a pedagogy of accountability. Sanad connects a learner to teachers and to a recognized genealogy of transmission. *Ijazah* indicates that a teacher recognizes a student's competence to transmit a text, discipline, or body of knowledge (Arjmand, 2018). These practices do not simply certify knowledge in a bureaucratic sense. They locate knowledge in a chain of responsibility. The student receives knowledge from a teacher, learns the discipline of transmission, and becomes accountable to the tradition that grants legitimacy.

This structure differs from modern forms of recognition, but it does not necessarily stand in opposition to them. Academic degrees, certification, and institutional accreditation can support religious authority when they are connected to intellectual rigor and ethical responsibility. They become problematic when they function as formal symbols detached from scholarly depth. The central issue for Islamic education is therefore the relation between knowledge, ethical formation, and recognition. Religious authority, in this sense, requires the integration of knowledge, *adab*, and recognition. Knowledge provides the epistemic basis of authority, *adab* gives knowledge its ethical orientation, and recognition situates authority within scholarly and institutional communities (Al-Attas, 1999; Berkey, 1992; Rosenthal, 2007). Without this integration, authority may be reduced to ideological persuasion, moralism without competence, or public visibility without epistemic accountability, especially in contexts where religious messages circulate through institutional credentials and digital media.

The implication is pedagogical. This requires Islamic education to treat the validation of religious knowledge as part of its curriculum. Students need to learn the difference between primary sources, interpretive traditions, scholarly debate, popular preaching, ideological messaging, motivational speech, and digital content. They should understand why a religious claim requires evidence, why interpretation requires training, and why ethical responsibility matters in speaking about religion. In this sense, the epistemic-ethical foundation of authority becomes an object of curriculum, not merely a background assumption.

Pedagogical Subjects and Institutional Recognition

The second finding is that religious authority is formed through pedagogical subjects and institutional spaces. Ulama, kiai, teachers, lecturers, and religious educators are not only

transmitters of information. They are pedagogical subjects whose authority is produced through learning, teaching, discipline, recognition, and institutional participation. Religious authority is therefore personal and institutional at the same time. It attaches to the formation of the teacher and to the structures that authorize teaching.

Berkey shows that in medieval Muslim societies knowledge circulated through networks of scholars, students, patrons, texts, and institutions. The teacher-student relationship functioned as the basic social unit of scholarly transmission. Students sought recognized teachers, attended lessons, read texts, received correction, and built reputations through participation in learned circles. Authority emerged from this social and pedagogical environment. It was never only an individual claim; it depended on recognition by others within a community of learning (Berkey, 1992). Makdisi's study of the madrasa clarifies the institutional dimension of this process. The madrasa did not merely provide a building for learning. It organized teaching posts, endowments, students, methods of instruction, and forms of scholarly recognition (Makdisi, 1981). Through institutionalization, knowledge acquired continuity and social form. Teachers taught within recognized spaces, students joined organized forms of learning, and communities identified certain institutions as credible sites of religious instruction.

In Indonesia, pesantren represents a distinctive institutional form of religious authority. Pesantren combines textual learning, communal discipline, moral formation, ritual practice, and kiai leadership. Isbah shows that pesantren remain important Islamic educational institutions while adapting to changing Indonesian contexts. Pesantren authority is not produced only through curriculum. It is formed through daily routines, proximity to kiai, communal life, discipline, and the social trust built around the institution. This is why pesantren authority has a strongly embodied and communal character (Isbah, 2020).

Recent studies show that pesantren continue to transform under modern conditions. Mustofa et al, describe how digital technology has changed pesantren learning through hybrid practices and online forms of religious instruction (Yunus Mustofa et al., 2023). Khoiriyah and Riyadi show changes in Islamic studies traditions at pesantren, including transformations in learning materials and curriculum (Khoiriyah & Riyadi, 2023). Jusubaidi et al. present Gontor as a model of transformative religious education in which institutional life, management, discipline, and public speaking activities contribute to student formation (Jusubaidi et al., 2024). These studies indicate that pesantren authority is not static. It is continuously reorganized through institutional adaptation.

Islamic higher education introduces another institutional configuration. Universities and Islamic higher education institutions produce authority through academic degrees, research, publication, professional standards, and bureaucratic recognition. Nasir and Rijal show that Islamic higher education institutions can become important sites for mainstreaming religious moderation through curriculum and institutional culture. In this context, a lecturer or researcher may gain authority through a combination of religious competence, academic literacy, publication, institutional position, and public engagement (Nasir & Rijal, 2021).

The coexistence of pesantren, madrasah, Islamic schools, universities, and digital platforms creates a plural ecology of authority. Each institution has its own mechanisms of

recognition. Pesantren emphasizes continuity with tradition, kiai authority, discipline, and communal trust. Universities emphasize research, academic training, publication, and credentials. Digital platforms emphasize reach, accessibility, and audience engagement. These institutions should be examined as distinct but interacting sites of legitimacy. It should clarify how each produces legitimacy, where each is strong, and where each requires correction.

Modern Credentials and Digital Visibility

The third finding is that modern and digital contexts reconfigure authority by introducing new mechanisms of recognition. In modern education, authority is mediated by curriculum, academic degrees, accreditation, certification, institutional governance, and professional standards. In digital environments, authority is mediated by visibility, audience response, platform circulation, content aesthetics, and algorithmic recommendation. These mechanisms expand the field of religious authority, but they also produce new ambiguities.

Modern credentials create formal pathways for recognition. A teacher may be recognized through pedagogical certification, a lecturer through doctoral education and publication, an institution through accreditation, and a curriculum through state regulation. These mechanisms are valuable because they provide standards, quality assurance, and public accountability. Yet they can also create a bureaucratic understanding of authority. When credentials become detached from knowledge and adab, authority is reduced to administrative status. The pedagogical challenge is to integrate formal recognition with epistemic depth and ethical responsibility.

Digital visibility creates a different mechanism. Social media platforms reward content that gains attention, emotional response, shareability, and recurring engagement. Hew (2018) shows how visual persuasion and social media aesthetics shaped the propagation of Felix Siauw. Nisa analyzes how ODOJ used social media to mobilize Qur'anic piety through WhatsApp-based networks (Nisa, 2018b). Nisa also shows how Instagram created creative and lucrative forms of da'wa among female Muslim youth (Nisa, 2018a). Husein and Slama demonstrate that online piety generates religious enthusiasm and anxiety, especially around the problem of *riya'* and the performance of piety (Husein & Slama, 2018). These studies show that digital religion is not only a new channel of communication; it is a new condition for the circulation and evaluation of religious messages.

Algorithmic visibility should be understood as a condition of authority rather than as a sufficient source of legitimacy. Algorithms organize attention by recommending, ranking, circulating, and amplifying content. They can help disseminate accurate knowledge, but they can also amplify simplification, controversy, affective certainty, and performative religiosity. Popularity may be mistaken for scholarly authority. Engagement may be mistaken for credibility. Short-form clarity may be mistaken for interpretive competence. These risks are not external to education because students already learn religion through these platforms. The digital field also pluralizes religious actors. Akmaliah argues that new media has contributed to contestation over religious authority and the weakening visibility of moderate Islamic organizations (Akmaliah, 2020). Akmaliah shows how Nahdlatul Ulama has attempted to reclaim moderate Islam in digital platforms (Akmaliah, 2022). Arifianto places the struggle for

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Islamic authority in post-Reformasi Indonesia within a wider marketplace of ideas, new preaching actors, and social media-based propagation (Arifianto, 2020). Jahroni and Bakti show that disruptive media generate new forms of contestation and representation (Jahroni & Faisal Bakti, 2023). Rosidi et al. demonstrate that religious authority can fragment even within institutional bodies such as the MUI in provincial towns (Rosidi et al., 2021). These studies indicate that authority is increasingly negotiated across institutions, publics, and platforms. Taken together, these studies show that digital religious authority is produced through the interaction between scholarly claims, platform visibility, affective persuasion, and audience participation.

Digital religious authority is also gendered and socially situated. Beta shows that young Muslim women's groups can function as religious influencers at the intersection of commerce, piety, and politics (Beta, 2019). Muttaqin demonstrates how social media preaching can reproduce gender bias under the authority of popular religious figures (Muttaqin, 2020). Fuad and Ramadhan show that feminist contestation of religious authority has implications for Islamic education (Nur Fuad & Rizky Ramadhan, 2023). These studies make clear that digital authority is not neutral. It involves bodies, gender, class, aesthetics, ideology, commerce, and public participation.

For Islamic education, the implication is precise. Students should be trained to evaluate how authority is constructed. They need to ask who speaks, from what educational background, with which sources, under what institutional affiliation, through what media logic, and with what ethical consequences. A preacher may be popular but weak in source-based reasoning. A scholar may be highly trained but unable to communicate publicly. An institution may be accredited but weak in ethical formation. A pesantren may preserve adab but require stronger digital literacy. Authority must therefore be evaluated through multiple criteria.

A Pedagogical Framework for Authority Reconfiguration

The fourth finding is that Islamic education requires a framework for evaluating reconfigured authority. This article proposes four dimensions: epistemic depth, ethical formation, institutional credibility, and digital literacy. These dimensions synthesize the classical concern with *'ilm* and adab, the institutional concern with credibility and accountability, and the contemporary concern with digital mediation.

Epistemic depth refers to serious engagement with Islamic sources, interpretive traditions, and contemporary knowledge. It protects students from fragmented learning and superficial religiosity. It also enables them to distinguish between evidence-based argument, personal opinion, ideological persuasion, and motivational rhetoric. Solahudin and Fakhruroji show that internet-based Islamic learning practices in Indonesia are connected to religious populism and authority. This reinforces the need for students to learn how arguments are produced and how sources are used (Solahudin & Fakhruroji, 2019). Ulya similarly emphasizes that digital da'wa reshapes preaching practices and religious authority, requiring more reflective approaches to online Islamic discourse (Ulya, 2023).

Ethical formation refers to adab, integrity, humility, and responsibility in producing and receiving religious knowledge. It prevents authority from becoming self-display, domination,

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or manipulation. The question is not only whether a claim is technically correct, but also whether it is delivered with responsibility, contextual awareness, and concern for social consequences. Islamic education should therefore evaluate authority through moral responsibility as well as knowledge competence.

Institutional credibility refers to accountable structures of learning. Pesantren, madrasah, Islamic schools, universities, and digital learning platforms need standards that connect teaching, curriculum, competence, and public trust. Institutions should not merely authorize teachers through administrative status. They should cultivate intellectual discipline, research literacy, pedagogical competence, and ethical accountability. In this sense, institutional credibility is not bureaucracy; it is the social organization of trust.

Digital literacy in Islamic education is not merely technical competence in using media; it is the ability to evaluate how platforms, algorithms, visual persuasion, and audience metrics shape the credibility of religious claims. Students need to evaluate recommendation systems, engagement metrics, visual persuasion, rhetorical style, emotional framing, source citation, and the difference between learning and consumption. Slama notes that practicing Islam through social media has become a significant feature of Indonesian Muslim life (Slama, 2018). Lengauer shows that digital Islamic socialities in Bandung involve the sharing of piety, moral aspiration, and communal belonging. These findings indicate that digital literacy must become part of religious literacy (Lengauer, 2018).

The following table synthesizes the proposed framework by connecting classical sources of authority, modern-digital conditions, and the pedagogical tasks required in contemporary Islamic education.

Table 1. Pedagogical Framework for Evaluating Reconfigured Religious Authority

Dimension	Classical Basis	Modern-Digital Condition	Pedagogical Task
Epistemic depth	<i>Ilm</i> , textual mastery, sanad, scholarly debate.	Information abundance, short-form content, populist claims.	Teach source evaluation, argument analysis, and interpretive discipline.
Ethical formation	Adab, humility, responsibility, teacherly example.	Self-display, controversy, affective persuasion, gendered authority.	Cultivate integrity, digital ethics, and responsible religious communication.
Institutional credibility	Halaqah, madrasa, pesantren, scholarly recognition.	Accreditation, certification, academic degrees, digital platforms.	Connect credentials with competence, quality assurance, and public trust.
Digital literacy	Pedagogical proximity and gradual learning.	Algorithmic visibility, metrics, influencer culture, fragmented learning.	Train students to distinguish scholarship, preaching, ideology, and popularity.

This framework clarifies the meaning of reconfiguration. As a synthesis, the framework shows that authority is neither inherited intact from tradition nor produced entirely by modern institutions or digital platforms. Reconfiguration does not mean that classical authority disappears and digital authority replaces it. It means that sources of legitimacy are rearranged. Sanad interacts with certification. Adab interacts with professional ethics. Kiai authority

interacts with institutional accreditation. Scholarly recognition interacts with public communication. Digital visibility interacts with source verification.

The framework also avoids false oppositions. Classical transmission and modern academic structures can support one another when both are grounded in knowledge and responsibility. Pesantren and universities can complement each other when pesantren contributes embodied adab and textual continuity, while universities contribute research discipline and critical inquiry. Digital platforms can support da'wa and learning when they are connected to verification, source-based reasoning, and ethical communication. The aim is not to reject digital religion, but to reconnect it with the epistemic and ethical foundations of Islamic education.

The contribution of this article lies in identifying religious authority as a central issue in Islamic education. Authority is not merely held by ulama, kiai, lecturers, or digital preachers. It is produced through educational processes: how knowledge is taught, how teachers are recognized, how institutions authorize learning, how students evaluate claims, and how publics respond to religious messages. Treating authority as a pedagogical configuration enables Islamic education to respond more critically to modern and digital changes.

This approach has practical implications. Islamic education curricula should include the history of Islamic knowledge transmission, the meaning of sanad and ijazah, the role of adab, the formation of institutions, the function of academic credentials, and the dynamics of digital religious authority. Teachers can invite students to compare religious arguments, trace sources, analyze online preaching, evaluate institutional credibility, and reflect on the ethics of religious communication. Such pedagogy prepares students to become responsible religious subjects who respect tradition, engage modern institutions, and navigate digital complexity critically.

CONCLUSION

This article has examined the reconfiguration of religious authority in Islamic education by placing authority within the relationship among knowledge, adab, ulama, institutions, modern credentials, and digital visibility. The analysis shows that religious authority in Islamic education is neither a fixed possession of particular actors nor a mere product of public popularity. It is a pedagogical configuration formed through the interaction of epistemic depth, ethical formation, institutional credibility, and digital literacy.

The study answers the research objective by showing that classical Islamic education produced authority through *'ilm*, adab, sanad, teacher-student relations, and scholarly recognition. Modern Islamic education adds formal institutions, curriculum, accreditation, academic degrees, certification, and bureaucratic governance. Digital media adds visibility, circulation, audience engagement, content aesthetics, and algorithmic recommendation. These sources do not operate separately. They interact, compete, and sometimes correct one another. The reconfiguration of authority therefore refers to the rearrangement of legitimacy across classical, modern, and digital mechanisms.

The main conceptual contribution of this article is the proposal to treat religious authority as an explicit object of Islamic educational literacy. Students should not only receive

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religious instruction; they should also learn how religious authority is formed, validated, contested, and mediated. This requires a curriculum that connects source criticism, interpretive discipline, adab, institutional accountability, and digital literacy. Such an approach allows Islamic education to distinguish scholarly legitimacy from popularity, credentials from competence, and digital visibility from epistemic accountability.

The article also shows that Islamic education should avoid two reductions. The first is reducing authority to inherited tradition alone, because contemporary Islamic education also requires academic rigor, institutional accountability, and public communication. The second is reducing authority to modern or digital recognition alone, because credentials and visibility require knowledge, adab, and scholarly responsibility. A constructive response lies in integrating classical transmission, modern institutional standards, and critical digital literacy within a coherent pedagogical framework.

This study is limited to conceptual and library-based analysis. It does not provide field data on how students, teachers, pesantren, universities, or digital preachers actually negotiate authority in specific educational settings. Future research may examine how Islamic education institutions teach students to evaluate digital religious content, how pesantren and universities combine sanad and academic credentials, and how young Muslims distinguish religious scholarship from algorithmic popularity. Even with this limitation, the article establishes a clear argument: the future of Islamic education depends partly on its ability to cultivate learners who can navigate plural sources of religious authority with knowledge, adab, critical reasoning, and social responsibility.

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Commented [A18]: Consider discussing how the proposed framework may be applicable beyond the Indonesian context. Highlighting its relevance to broader Islamic educational settings would enhance the manuscript's international significance.

Commented [A19]: The limitations section could be expanded by acknowledging that the proposed framework has not yet been empirically validated. This would provide a more balanced conclusion and strengthen the methodological transparency of the study.

Commented [A20]: The directions for future research could be made more specific by suggesting potential research designs (e.g., case studies, comparative studies, curriculum evaluation, or empirical validation of the proposed framework).

Commented [A21]: The concluding sentence would be more impactful if it explicitly highlighted the broader scholarly significance of the proposed pedagogical framework for future research and practice in Islamic education, rather than only restating the main argument.

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