

## Contesting Authority in Urban Islam: Mosque-Based Muslim Intellectuals and the Production of Religious Knowledge in Yogyakarta

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### Abstract

Academic discourse on Muslim intellectual authority shows a pessimistic tendency alongside the development of new media and the post-Reformasi 1998. Muslim intellectuals are often positioned as actors who possess scholarly capacity, yet lack authority in the production of Islamic knowledge in the public sphere. This study challenges this assumption through an examination of the appropriation of Muslim intellectual authority in producing Islamic knowledge through the mosque and its online media. A qualitative method is employed. Primary data derive from observations of Muslim intellectual activities at Jenderal Sudirman Mosque Yogyakarta and public responses on the mosque's online platforms. Additional data derive from interviews with mosque administrators and its audience. The study produces three findings. First, Muslim intellectuals build their scholarly authority in modern universities, while their public authority is consolidated through the mosque and its media. Second, they produce public Islamic discourse through critical approaches relevant to the challenges of urbanity and gain urban public support. Third, the mosque mediates the relationship between intellectual authority, the production of critical Islamic knowledge, and public religious commitment. These findings contribute to understanding the appropriation of Muslim intellectual authority in the production of Islamic knowledge through the everyday micro-practices of the mosque and its media in urban Yogyakarta.

### Abstrak

Diskursus akademik tentang otoritas intelektual Muslim menunjukkan kecenderungan pesimistik seiring perkembangan media baru dan pasca reformasi 1998. Mereka kerap diposisikan sebagai pihak yang memiliki kapasitas keilmuan (*authoritative*), namun tidak memiliki otoritas (*authority*) dalam produksi pengetahuan Islam di ruang publik. Studi ini menantang asumsi tersebut dengan menelaah apropeasi otoritas intelektual Muslim dalam memproduksi pengetahuan Islam melalui institusi masjid dan media daring. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif, data utama dikumpulkan melalui observasi pada aktivitas intelektual Muslim di Masjid Jenderal Sudirman Yogyakarta dan respons publik melalui platform daring masjid tersebut. Adapun data tambahan dikumpulkan melalui wawancara pada takmir dan jamaah. Penelitian ini menghasilkan tiga temuan. Pertama, intelektual Muslim membangun otoritas keilmuannya di universitas modern, sementara otoritas publiknya dikonsolidasikan melalui masjid dan mediana. Kedua, mereka memproduksi diskursus keislaman publik melalui pendekatan kritis yang relevan pada tantangan urbanitas dan mendapatkan dukungan publik urban. Ketiga, masjid memediasi antara otoritas intelektual, produksi pengetahuan keislaman kritis, dan komitmen keberagamaan publik. Temuan ini berkontribusi pada apropriasi otoritas intelektual Muslim dalam produksi pengetahuan Islam melalui praktik mikro-harian masjid dan mediana di ruang urban Yogyakarta.

### Keywords:

Authority;  
Jenderal  
Sudirman  
Mosque;  
Muslim  
Intellectual;  
Religious  
Knowledge

### Kata kunci:

Otoritas;  
Masjid  
Jenderal  
Sudirman;  
Intelektual  
Muslim;  
Pengetahuan  
keagamaan

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## Introduction

The authority of religious knowledge production has undergone two shifts: from personal to impersonal authority,<sup>1</sup> and from an expertise-based to a popularity-based foundation<sup>2</sup> This shift is evident in the transition of religious references from traditional intellectuals, religious leaders (such as kyai, tuan guru and *ustad*), teachers, and local religious figures to new popular figures through the emergence of new media platforms.<sup>3</sup> The proliferation of new media has facilitated the onlineization of religious normativity, enabling the public to access religious content quickly and conveniently, often bypassing the need to consult traditional religious experts.<sup>4</sup> This changing landscape has led scholars to engage in discourses on the death of expertise,<sup>5</sup> post-truth,<sup>6</sup> and the democratization of authority.<sup>7</sup> In this context, Muslim intellectual

<sup>1</sup> Pauline Hope Cheong, "Authority," in *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*, ed. H. Campbell (New York: Routledge, 2021), 72-87; Mutohharun Jinan, "New Media And The Shifting Of Muslim Religious Authority In Contemporary Indonesia," in *Proceeding 1 Conference Proceedings Annual International Conference on Islamic Studies XII, 5-8 November* (Surabaya: IAIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya Indonesia, 2012), 1011-32, <https://doi.org/ISBN: 978-602-9239-98-0>; D. Lehmann, "Religion and Globalization," in *Religions in the Modern World: Traditions and Transformations*, ed. Woodhead Linda, Kawanami Hiroko, and Partridge Christopher, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2009), 10-24, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040571X1011300630>; A. Syarifuddin, "Islamic Knowledge Authority in Disruptive Era," in *International Conference on Islamic Studies (ICIS)* (Ponorogo: IAIN Ponorogo, 2022), 379-89.

<sup>2</sup> Ahmad Najib Burhani, "Muslim Televangelists in the Making: Conversion Narratives and the Construction of Religious Authority," *Muslim World* 110, no. 2 (2020): 154-75, <https://doi.org/10.1111/muwo.12327>; Pauline Hope Cheong, "Religious Authority and Social Media Branding in a Culture of Religious Celebrification," in *The Media and Religious Authority*, ed. S. Hoover (Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 2016), 81-104, <https://doi.org/10.2752/9781474280051/schmidt0008>.

<sup>3</sup> Hew Wai Weng, "Packaging, Persuasion and Propaganda: Popular Preaching and Islamic Counter-Publics in Indonesia," *Asian Studies Review* 00, no. 00 (2022): 1-16, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2022.2052801>; Hew Wai Weng, "On-Offline Dakwah: Social Media and Islamic Preaching in Malaysia and Indonesia," in *Mediatized Religion in Asia*, ed. Kerstin Radde-Antweiler and Xenia Zeiler, 1st ed. (New York: Routledge, 2018), 89-104, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315170275>.

<sup>4</sup> Mahbub Ghozali, Achmad Yafik Mursyid, and Nita Fitriana, "Al-Qur'an (Re)Presentation in the Short Video App Tiktok: Reading, Teaching, and Interpretive," *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 30, no. 3 (2022): 1263-82, <https://doi.org/10.47836/pjssh.30.3.18>; Tim Hutchings, "Now the Bible Is an App: Digital Media and Changing Patterns of Religious Authority," *Religion, Media and Social Change* 10, no. August 2013 (2014): 143-61.

<sup>5</sup> Mirko S. Gilardino, Richard J. Warren, and Jugpal S. Arneja, "The Death of Expertise," *Plastic Surgery* 30, no. 4 (2022): 281-82, <https://doi.org/10.1177/22925503221126932>; Tom Nichols, *Matinya Kepakaran: Perlawanan Terhadap Pengetahuan Yang Telah Mapan Dan Mudaratnya*, Fourth Edi (Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia, 2020).

<sup>6</sup> Douglas Jacobsen and Rhonda Hustedt, "Faith and Learning in a Post-Truth World," *Journal of College and Character* 19, no. 2 (2018): 93-100; Saul Newman, "Post-Truth, Postmodernism and the Public Sphere," in *Europe in the Age of Post-Truth Politics*, ed. Maximilian Conrad et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 13-30, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-13694-8\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-13694-8_2).

<sup>7</sup> Cheong, "Authority." 50-52.

authority in Indonesia has faced challenges since the 1998 Reformasi, as public Islamic narratives shifted from intellectuals to populist figures amid the expansion of the public sphere after the fall of the New Order regime. The democratization of religious authority through digital media and the expansion of the public sphere in the post-New Order have reduced public acceptance of university-affiliated Muslim intellectuals, whose discourse is often perceived as elitist, inaccessible, and detached from orthodox teachings and public religious commitment.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, populist figures increasingly dominate public Islamic narratives. Recently, Muslim intellectuals have used mosque spaces and its media in Yogyakarta, such as the Jenderal Sudirman Mosque, to introduce philosophical, postcolonial, and Qur'anic studies, attracting broad public engagement.

In fact, Muslim intellectual authority has long been a subject of scholarly attention. Recent studies revisit this issue in the contexts of urban Islam and new media, generally focusing on three main trends. First, the democratization of religious authority has emerged as a prominent theme.<sup>9</sup> With the advent of new media, Islamic authorities have become more diverse, reshaping spiritual beliefs within urban societies.<sup>10</sup> However, this democratization has also been associated with the degradation of intellectual authority,<sup>11</sup> and the perceived demise of expertise.<sup>12</sup> Second, discussions among scholars regarding Muslim intellectual authority center around the growth and crisis of their influence. Various themes have been explored in this context, including the intersection of authority and gender,<sup>13</sup> the genealogical construction of authority,<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Azhar Ibrahim, "Being Authoritative But No Authority?" Muslim Religious Intellectuals in Shaping Indonesian Islam Discourse," in *The New Santri: Challenges to Traditional Religious Authority in Indonesia*, ed. Norshahril Saat and Ahmad Najib Burhani (Singapore: Lectures, Workshops, and Proceedings of International Conferences. ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, Cambridge University Press, 2020), 20-47.

<sup>9</sup> Cheong, "Authority." 40-44.

<sup>10</sup> Bouziane Zaid et al., "Digital Islam and Muslim Millennials: How Social Media Influencers Reimagine Religious Authority and Islamic Practices," *Religions* 13, no. 4 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13040335>. Saleh, "Menarasikan Islam, Pluralisme, Dan Keberagaman Di Indonesia," ed. Maufur Maufur and Mubaidi Sulaeman (Kota Kediri: Cakrawala Satria Mandiri, 2021).

<sup>11</sup> Azhar Ibrahim Alwee, "Asian Intellectuals for Cultural Resistance: Departures and Disruptions," *KnE Social Sciences* 1, no. 3 (2017): 32, <https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v1i3.723>.

<sup>12</sup> Nichols, *Matinya Kepakaran: Perlawanan Terhadap Pengetahuan Yang Telah Mapan Dan Mudaratnya*.

<sup>13</sup> Richard A. Nielsen, "Women's Authority in Patriarchal Social Movements: The Case of Female Salafi Preachers," *American Journal of Political Science* 64, no. 1 (2020): 52-66, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12459>; Eva Nisa, "Negotiating a Space in the Mosque: Women Claiming Religious Authority," in *Mosques and Imams: Everyday Islam in Eastern Indonesia*, ed. Kathryn M Robinson, 1st ed. (Singapore: NUS Press - National University of Singapore, 2020), 143-70; F. Eva Nisa, "Muslim Women in Contemporary Indonesia: Online Conflicting Narratives behind the Women Ulama Congress," *Asian Studies Review* 43, no. 3 (2019): 434-54, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2019.1632796>.

<sup>14</sup> Ismail Fajrie Alatas, *What Is Religious Authority?: Cultivating Islamic Communities in Indonesia* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2021), 5-6.

and the challenges and dynamics of changes in authority.<sup>15</sup> Thirdly, discussions about Islamic authority emphasize the institutional dynamics of authority,<sup>16</sup> such as the authority of Al-Azhar in Egypt,<sup>17</sup> Waliyat al-Faqih in Iran,<sup>18</sup> the Ulemā Council of Indonesia (MUI),<sup>19</sup> Nahdhatul Ulama (NU),<sup>20</sup> and Muhammadiyah in Indonesia.<sup>21</sup> Despite these trends, scholarly discussion on the appropriation of intellectual authority through mosques in shaping urban Islamic discourse remains limited, leaving room for further research on the evolving role of Muslim intellectuals in contemporary urban contexts. Based on previous studies, this article addresses the limits of earlier studies that often portray the decline of Muslim intellectual authority, reflected in narratives of the death of expertise,<sup>22</sup> the weakening of Muslim intellectual authority in Indonesia,<sup>23</sup> and the threat to organization-based authority.<sup>24</sup> It instead examines how Muslim intellectuals rearticulate their authority in urban mosque spaces in Yogyakarta.

<sup>15</sup> Wahyudi Akmaliah, "The Demise of Moderate Islam: New Media, Contestation, and Reclaiming Religious Authorities," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 10, no. 1 (2020): 1–24, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v10i1.1-24>.

<sup>16</sup> M. Amin Abdullah, "Religious Authority in Indonesian Islam: Mainstream Organizations under Threat?," in *The New Santri: Challenges to Traditional Religious Authority in Indonesia*, ed. Norshahril Saat and Ahmad Najib Burhani (Singapore: ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, 2020), 13–27.

<sup>17</sup> Asif Mohiuddin, "Islam, Religious Authority and The State: The Case of Egypt," *Asian Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies* 16, no. 2 (2022): 165–88, <https://doi.org/10.1080/25765949.2022.2097730>.

<sup>18</sup> Seyfeddin Kara and Mohammad Saeed Bahmanpour, "The Legal Authority of the Jurist and Its Scope in Modern Iran," *Journal of the Contemporary Study of Islam* 1, no. 1 (2020): 1–27, <https://doi.org/10.37264/jcsi.v1i1.3>; Sofi Mubarak, "Democracy in Iran? Genealogy of Wilayat al-Faqih as an Existing Political System in Iran," in *Review on Globalization: From An Islamic Perspective* (Ponorogo: UNIDA Gontor Press, 2021), 153–71.

<sup>19</sup> Alexander R. Arifianto, "Rising Islamism and the Struggle for Islamic Authority in Post-Reformasi Indonesia," *TRaNS: Trans -Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia* 8, no. 1 (2020): 37–50, <https://doi.org/10.1017/trn.2019.10>; Syafiq Hasyim, "New Contestation in Interpreting Religious Texts: Fatwa, Tafsir, and Shariah," in *The New Santri: Challenges to Traditional Religious Authority in Indonesia*, ed. Norshahril Saat and Ahmad Najib Burhani, 1st ed. (Singapore: ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, 2020); Jeremy Menchik, "The Politics of the Fatwa: Islamic Legal Authority in Modern Indonesia," *Cornell University Press* 114, no. 1 (2022): 75–97, <https://doi.org/10.1353/ind.2022.0012>.

<sup>20</sup> Imam Yahya and Akhmad Arif Junaidi, "Authority of Fatwa in Digital Era: Methodology and Transmission of Nahdlatul Ulama's Bahtsul Masail in Indonesia," *Webology* 18, no. 2 (2021), <https://doi.org/DOI:10.14704/WEB/V18I2/WEB18345>.

<sup>21</sup> Saskia Schäfer, "Democratic Decline in Indonesia: The Role of Religious Authorities," *Pacific Affairs* 92, no. 2 (2019): 235–55, <https://doi.org/10.5509/2019922235>.

<sup>22</sup> Nichols, *Matinya Kepakaran : Perlawanan Terhadap Pengetahuan Yang Telah Mapan dan Mudaratnya*, 12–13.

<sup>23</sup> Ibrahim, "Being Authoritative But No Authority?," 20–47; Mubaidi Sulaeman, Ahmad Muttaqien, and Jan A. Ali, "Hyperspirituality of Muslim Teens Learning Religion on The Internet Era," *Al-A'raf: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam dan Filsafat* 21, no. 1 (June 30, 2024): 1–29, <https://doi.org/10.22515/ajpif.v21i1.8558>.

<sup>24</sup> Abdullah, "Religious Authority in Indonesian Islam: Mainstream Organizations under Threat?"; Wahidul Anam and Mubaidi Sulaeman, "Law, Ethics, and Hadith Ahkam: An Analysis of Fatwa MUI in the Perspective of Progressive Interpretation," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 8, no. 2 (June 28, 2024): 1023–53, <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v8i2.21594>.

This article posits that the authority of Muslim intellectuals in shaping Islamic critical ideas continues to thrive within urban society. Despite the challenges posed by the democratization of ideas through new media and various urban Islamic movements, Muslim scholarship remains a driving force in asserting its authority within the marketplace of Islamic ideas.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, intellectual Muslims who have been nurtured within university settings are adapting their approach to articulating religion within modern spaces by appropriating urban environments. They are shifting Islamic discourse from the confines of higher education institutions to the sacred spaces of mosques. In urban communities, mosques serve as venues for sacred self-formation,<sup>26</sup> and as centers for the operation of Islamic authority.<sup>27</sup> Muslim intellectuals increasingly enter mosque spaces, introducing a form of authority rooted in social and humanities scholarship developed in universities that reshapes Islamic preaching. This study argues that such authority is constructed, contested, and continually shifting rather than fixed or absolute.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, this study describes the pattern as “appropriateness”, the adaptation of Muslim intellectual authority in the public sphere grounded in what Max Weber terms discursive skill.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, this study examines how Muslim intellectuals reassert their authority in Yogyakarta’s urban public sphere through the dissemination of critical Islamic ideas in the mosque.

This study examines intellectual activities at the Jenderal Sudirman Mosque in Yogyakarta, including *Ngaji* Filsafat, *Ngaji* Postcolonial, *Ngaji* Javanese Islam, and Qur’anic Studies, with involvement from university-based intellectuals and participation from diverse audiences. Unlike many urban mosques that focus on doctrinal teachings, preliminary observations indicate that these activities engage critical Islamic discourse, which this study further investigates in relation to their capacity to attract diverse public audiences both offline and online. To explore this phenomenon, the study employs a descriptive qualitative approach. According to Hancock, qualitative research focuses on describing and interpreting data in order to generate new theoretical concepts.<sup>30</sup> Based on this approach, data were collected through direct observation of intellectual activities at the mosque, including themes of

<sup>25</sup> Arifianto, “Rising Islamism and the Struggle for Islamic Authority in Post-Reformasi Indonesia.”

<sup>26</sup> Elisabeth Becker, “Reconstructing the Muslim Self in Diaspora: Socio-Spatial Practices in Urban European Mosques,” *International Journal of Islamic Architecture* 8, no. 2 (2019): 389–414, [https://doi.org/DOI:10.1386/ijia.8.2.389\\_1](https://doi.org/DOI:10.1386/ijia.8.2.389_1).

<sup>27</sup> Kathryn M. Robinson, *Mosques and Imams: Everyday Islam in Eastern Indonesia*, 1st ed. (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2020), 15–17.

<sup>28</sup> Alatas, *What Is Religious Authority?: Cultivating Islamic Communities in Indonesia*, 12.

<sup>29</sup> Travis Warren Cooper, *The Digital Evangelicals: Contesting Authority and Authenticity After the New Media Turn* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2022), 10.

<sup>30</sup> Beverley Hancock, Elizabeth Ockleford, and Kate Windridge, *An Introduction to Quality* (Leicester: The NIHR RDS for the East Midlands / Yorkshire & the Humber, 2009), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003358404-2>.

discussion, modes of dissemination, and participant composition, as well as through online observation to capture public responses.<sup>31</sup> Additional data were obtained through semi-formal interviews with purposively selected informants,<sup>32</sup> including mosque administrators (*takmir*) and participants. The data were analysed through stages of collection, reduction, presentation, verification, and conclusion drawing,<sup>33</sup> allowing the study to identify patterns and generate empirical insights into how Muslim intellectuals negotiate their authority within the urban Islamic public sphere. Subsequently, the data was verified through the lenses of authority and appropriation to produce analytical conclusions on Muslim intellectual authority in urban Yogyakarta.

## Results and Discussion

### *The Mosque as a Site of Intellectual Authority*

Masjid Jenderal Sudirman (MJS) is located in the southern part of Sleman Regency, facing the city of Yogyakarta. The mosque is situated in the middle of the elite Kolombo residential area, which is surrounded by a Christian community.<sup>34</sup> Around the mosque, there are many economic activities, ranging from small traders to cafés where young people gather. In 1970, the mosque was built to protect the Muslim community in Kolombo from Christianization efforts. However, between 1980 and 2000, the mosque became involved in political Islamic activism that supported the establishment of an Islamic state.<sup>35</sup> In addition, the mosque once confronted the state, leading to the arrest of key figures and the suspension of its study activities for allegedly opposing *Pancasila*. After the 1998 *Reformasi*, its leadership shifted as Muslim intellectuals from universities entered its administration,<sup>36</sup> marking a new phase in the mosque's intellectual orientation.

<sup>31</sup> John W. Creswell et al., "Qualitative Research Designs: Selection and Implementation," *The Counseling Psychologist* 35, no. 2 (March 1, 2007): 236–64, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000006287390>.

<sup>32</sup> Jo Anne Ollerenshaw and John W. Creswell, "Narrative Research: A Comparison of Two Restorying Data Analysis Approaches," *Qualitative Inquiry* 8, no. 3 (June 1, 2002): 329–47, <https://doi.org/10.1177/10778004008003008>.

<sup>33</sup> Matthew B. Miles and A Michael Huberman, *Analisis Data Kualitatif: Buku Sumber Tentang Metode-Metode Baru* (Jakarta: Universitas Indonesia (UI Press), 1992), 43; Moh. Soehadha, *Metodologi Penelitian Sosiologi Agama: Kualitatif* (Yogyakarta: SUKA Press, 2018), 20.

<sup>34</sup> Dwi Adhe Nugraha and Agnes Sunartiningasih, "Masjid Sebagai Ruang Literasi (Studi Kasus Masjid Jenderal Sudirman Colombo, Sleman, Yogyakarta)," *Kalimah: Jurnal Studi Agama Dan Pemikiran Islam* 19, no. 1 (January 31, 2021): 139–65, <https://doi.org/10.21111/klm.v19i1.6370>.

<sup>35</sup> Fejrian Yazdajird Iwanebel, "Gerakan Keagamaan Dan Identitas Kultural Masjid Jendral Sudirman Yogyakarta," *IBDA` : Jurnal Kajian Islam Dan Budaya* 17, no. 1 (August 12, 2019): 173–94, <https://doi.org/10.24090/ibda.v17i1.2817>.

<sup>36</sup> Derry Ahmad Rizal, M. Yaser Arafat, and Nurul Khorina Seci Vella, "Masjid Dan Literasi Keagamaan: Studi Analisis Sosiologis Gerakan Literasi Di Masjid Jendral Sudirman Yogyakarta," *Empirisma: Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Kebudayaan Islam* 33, no. 1 (January 29, 2024): 145–66, <https://doi.org/10.30762/empirisma.v33i1.1404>.

In 2003, Yasser Arafat, an academic from Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University with training in the socio-anthropology of religion at both Sunan Kalijaga and Gadjah Mada University, joined Masjid Jenderal Sudirman and redirected its orientation from Islamism toward a cultural approach. He first introduced *sholawatan* with *hadrah* and later initiated study programs on themes rarely addressed in mosques, deliberately distinguishing them from the conventional fiqh-centered studies widely available elsewhere.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, he first invited Herman Sinung Janutama, a Javanese cultural expert, to study *serat* (Javanese classical texts), while Yasser himself led *Ngaji Islam Jawi* as the foundation of what he referred to as cultural Islam.<sup>38</sup> Later, the study of *Al-Hikam*, a seminal work by the great Sufi scholar Shaykh Ibn Ata'illah, was introduced, initially taught by Kyai Imron Jamil. This was later continued by the renowned Muslim intellectual and poet Quswadi Syafii, an alumnus of Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University. He led the study of *Ruba'iyat* by Jalaluddin Rumi and *Tarjuman al-Aswaq* by Ibn Arabi.<sup>39</sup>

**Figure 1.** Intellectuals in Jenderal Sudirman Mosque



In 2004, Yasser introduced *Ngaji Filsafat*, inviting Fahrudin Faiz, a lecturer in Islamic theology and philosophy at Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University. Initially attended by only a few participants, the sessions gradually grew to attract more than 300 attendees from diverse backgrounds, including students, activists, academics, and the wider public.<sup>40</sup> Through his accessible style, Fahrudin Faiz brought philosophical discourse into a more approachable public space, covering classical, modern, and contemporary traditions. By the time of this research, the program had reached its 383rd session and expanded online, attracting broad audiences with 260,000

<sup>37</sup> Yaser Arafat, interview by Abd. Aziz Faiz, Yogyakarta, 22 November 2024.

<sup>38</sup> Yaser Arafat, interview by Abd. Aziz Faiz, Yogyakarta, 22 November 2024.

<sup>39</sup> Yaser Arafat, interview by Abd. Aziz Faiz, Yogyakarta, 4 December 2024.

<sup>40</sup> Yaser Arafat, interview by Abd. Aziz Faiz, Yogyakarta, 22 November 2024.

subscribers on the Masjid Jenderal Sudirman YouTube channel.<sup>41</sup> This development illustrates how mosque-based study circles can transform philosophical discourse into a widely accessible form of public Islamic learning.

Another highly influential intellectual is Ahmad Rafiq, a specialist in Quranic exegesis and is widely recognized as an expert in Living Qur'an studies. Ahmad Rafiq conducted study sessions at Masjid Jenderal Sudirman, focusing on the Quran from the perspective of Islamic Studies. Unlike traditional Quranic studies in other mosques, which center on doctrine and exegesis, his sessions explored the Quran through the lens of scholarly discourse and the intellectual dynamics of key figures in the field. This study program quickly gained popularity among the general public in Yogyakarta, attracting more than 150 attendees in its first session.<sup>42</sup> Recently, the study has gained wider attention after being broadcast on YouTube, reaching a broader audience. Previously limited to master's and doctoral students in universities, Ahmad Rafiq's approach to Qur'anic studies has now entered the public sphere through the mosque, presenting critical ideas with accessible methodologies for urban Muslims.<sup>43</sup> Recently, Masjid Jenderal Sudirman has expanded its programs with thematic studies that introduce unconventional topics rarely discussed in mosques. Scholars such as Katrin Bandel,<sup>44</sup> Muhammadi Alfayat<sup>45</sup>, and Irfan Afifi<sup>46</sup> bring perspectives on postcolonialism, environmental Qur'anic interpretation, and Javanese Islam, alongside traditional *ngaji kitab*. Together, these programs position the mosque as a space where classical and contemporary Islamic knowledge intersect.

### **Religious Knowledge and the Audience Formation**

Islamic knowledge production by Muslim intellectuals at Jenderal Sudirman Mosque is widely supported by the public. This is reflected, first, in the continuity of systematic study sessions,<sup>47</sup> and second, in the diversity of audiences they attract. For example, *Ngaji Filsafat* sessions attract around 300–400 participants from diverse social backgrounds, including students, academics, and punk youth. The urban upper middle class is also present, partly because the mosque is located in the elite Kolombo

<sup>41</sup> "Masjid Jenderal Sudirman," YouTube, diakses pada 2 Oktober 2024, [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCnHSRb6TD2B\\_4yIIYssf4dw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCnHSRb6TD2B_4yIIYssf4dw).

<sup>42</sup> Management Board of Masjid Jenderal Sudirman Yogyakarta, *Report on Religious Studies and Islamic Discussions at Masjid Jenderal Sudirman*, Yogyakarta, 2024.

<sup>43</sup> "Masjid Jenderal Sudirman," YouTube, diakses pada 9 November 2024, [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCnHSRb6TD2B\\_4yIIYssf4dw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCnHSRb6TD2B_4yIIYssf4dw).

<sup>44</sup> "Masjid Jenderal Sudirman," YouTube, diakses pada 19 Desember 2024, [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCnHSRb6TD2B\\_4yIIYssf4dw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCnHSRb6TD2B_4yIIYssf4dw).

<sup>45</sup> "Masjid Jenderal Sudirman," YouTube, diakses pada 20 Desember 2024, [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCnHSRb6TD2B\\_4yIIYssf4dw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCnHSRb6TD2B_4yIIYssf4dw).

<sup>46</sup> "Masjid Jenderal Sudirman," YouTube, diakses pada 4 Januari 2025, [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCnHSRb6TD2B\\_4yIIYssf4dw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCnHSRb6TD2B_4yIIYssf4dw).

<sup>47</sup> Yaser Arafat, interview by Abd. Aziz Faiz, Yogyakarta, 4 December 2024.

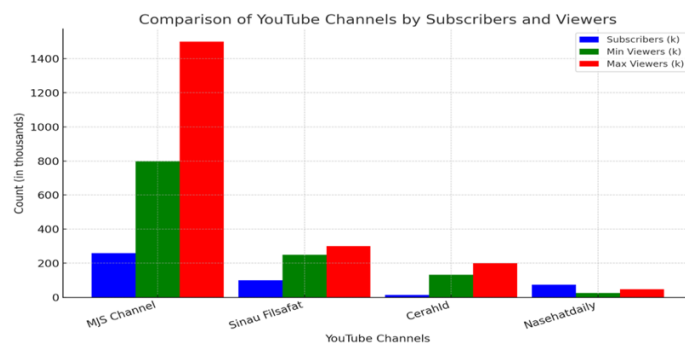
residential area in Sleman, with some attendees arriving in luxury cars. The audience is also religiously diverse, as participants from other faiths attend the sessions even without Islamic symbols such as the *hijab*.<sup>48</sup> Third, the audience is also evident through online platforms. Lectures on philosophy, *Ngaji* Javanese Islam, and Qur’anic studies are widely redistributed on YouTube, TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram with permission from the mosque’s management.<sup>49</sup> The mosque’s official YouTube channel attracts a large number of viewers and even public figures; musicians such as Iwan Fals have shared and praised Fahrudin Faiz’s lectures, while former Minister of Trade Gita Wirjawan invited him to discuss philosophy and Islam on his podcast, *Endgame*.<sup>50</sup> The following table shows their presence across several YouTube channels.

**Table 1.** Mosque-Based YouTube Channels and Audience Reach

YouTube Channel	Content	Subscribers	Viewers
MJS Channel	Full philosophy studies, book studies ( <i>ngaji kitab</i> ), Quranic studies, <i>Ngaji Islam Jawi</i> , postcolonial studies, and other thematic discussions.	260k	798k-1.5M
Sinau Filsafat	Excerpts from MJS philosophy studies related to the soul, desires, and happiness.	101k	250-300k
CerahId	Excerpts from MJS philosophy studies focusing on logical thinking, shaping life perspectives, and understanding the state of the soul based on philosophical knowledge.	14k	132-200k
Nasehatdaily	Excerpts from MJS philosophy studies related to optimism in life, refreshing the mind, and self-reflection in the form of daily advice.	75.1k	26-48k

Source: Authors compilation in 2024

**Figure 2.** Subscribers and Viewership Across MJS-Related YouTube Channels



<sup>48</sup> Management Board of Masjid Jenderal Sudirman Yogyakarta, *Report on Religious Studies and Islamic Discussions at Masjid Jenderal Sudirman*, Yogyakarta, 2024.

<sup>49</sup> Management Board of Masjid Jenderal Sudirman Yogyakarta, *Report on Religious Studies and Islamic Discussions at Masjid Jenderal Sudirman*, Yogyakarta, 2024.

<sup>50</sup> "Masjid Jenderal Sudirman," YouTube, diakses pada 10 December 2024, [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCnHSRb6TD2B\\_4yIlyssf4dw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCnHSRb6TD2B_4yIlyssf4dw).

The support from both offline and online audiences strengthens the intellectual authority of Muslim scholars in bringing academic discourse into the mosque, even with relatively complex topics (See table 1). These topics include the philosophy of Aristotle, Immanuel Kant, Habermas, and Islamic philosophers such as Al-Farabi, Al-Kindi, Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali, and Mulla Sadra, as well as Indonesian thinkers like Siti Jenar, Ranggawarsita, Soekarno, Hatta, and others. Traditionally, such material has been confined to limited circles due to its complexity, making it difficult to reach the broader public. However, at Jenderal Sudirman Mosque, these discussions are presented in a simple and accessible manner, using everyday language, reflective engagement, and contextualization with daily life.<sup>51</sup> The dissemination of these materials are delivered in a lighthearted manner, infused with humor and simple examples, making the discussions more engaging and enjoyable for the audience.<sup>52</sup>

The social-humanities-based studies, particularly philosophy, at Jenderal Sudirman Mosque are often contextualized with religion, Islam, and culture. In certain contexts, they even take on the tone of religious sermons. However, this sermon-like atmosphere serves as an extension of the material's explanation. For instance, the inclusion of religious messages in *Ngaji Filsafat* is intended to provide a deeper understanding of faith through the lens of philosophical knowledge. The ideas presented are fairly balanced. For example, if one week they discuss the thoughts and arguments of religious agnosticism, the following session presents counterarguments from philosophers and religious scholars who oppose it.<sup>53</sup> In this way, the studies appear neutral, allowing the audience to form their own perspectives. At the same time, these intellectuals occasionally share their personal views, offering critical insights while also supporting religious norms and orthodox beliefs.

The dissemination of Islamic critical thought at Jenderal Sudirman Mosque, particularly through programs such as *Ngaji Filsafat*, also takes the form of published books produced under the mosque's name rather than through commercial or university presses. Titles such as *Filosof Juga Manusia*, *Dunia Cinta Filosofis Khalil Gibran*, and *Sebelum Filsafat* are sold and displayed during mosque events, extending the reach of the discussions beyond study sessions. Through these publications and various study programs, Muslim intellectuals such as Ahmad Rafiq, Yasser Arafat, Fahrudin Faiz, and Katrin Bandel are able to disseminate social-humanities-based ideas, build

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<sup>51</sup> "Masjid Jenderal Sudirman," YouTube, diakses pada 12 January 2025, [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCnHSRb6TD2B\\_4yIIYssf4dw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCnHSRb6TD2B_4yIIYssf4dw).

<sup>52</sup> "Masjid Jenderal Sudirman," YouTube, diakses pada 21 December 2024, [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCnHSRb6TD2B\\_4yIIYssf4dw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCnHSRb6TD2B_4yIIYssf4dw).

<sup>53</sup> "Masjid Jenderal Sudirman," YouTube, diakses pada 19 December 2024, [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCnHSRb6TD2B\\_4yIIYssf4dw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCnHSRb6TD2B_4yIIYssf4dw).

audiences, and establish intellectual authority within the sacred space of the mosque and the wider urban public sphere.

### **Appropriation of Intellectual Muslim Authority**

University-based Muslim intellectuals possess strong theoretical thinking, yet they face challenges in disseminating their ideas to the public sphere.<sup>54</sup> Their thoughts, which are rooted in philosophy and the social humanities, are often met with resistance, countered by religious orthodoxy and normative doctrines. Referring to the concept of the ideal model of knowledge production proposed by ‘Abd al-Majīd al-Ṣaghīr, Islamic scholarly authorities often face tensions between ideal models and social realities, which encourage them to develop adaptive strategies.<sup>55</sup> In addition, this study also identifies at least three main challenges they encounter. First, opposition from within the Muslim community, particularly from those who position themselves as guardians of Islam, such as Hartono Ahmad Jaiz<sup>56</sup>, Adian Husaini<sup>57</sup>, and religious preachers affiliated with right-wing organizations like HTI and Salafi movements. Such opposition is also experienced among mosque administrators and Muslim intellectuals at the Sudirman Mosque. Wahid, a mosque administrator, confirms that this type of criticism is among the most frequently encountered, particularly in the form of negative religious judgments, especially toward *Ngaji* Filsafat. According to Wahid, segments of the urban Muslim label *Ngaji* Filsafat as deviant, as this approach is viewed as speculative and not grounded in sacred texts considered authoritative in guiding the faithful.<sup>58</sup>

Second, the stigma and accusations they encounter. These challenges can be particularly severe, including labels such as “liberal Islam”,<sup>59</sup> “Western thought prostitute”, “apostate”, and “infidel”. In some cases, threats escalate into physical intimidation, as seen in the case of Ulil Abshar Abdalla, who received a book bomb due to his intellectual positions.<sup>60</sup> Third, challenges from within their own academic environment, stemming from the imperialism of education. Their substantive theoretical ideas rarely become part of university curricula, are seldom cited by

<sup>54</sup> Ibrahim, “Being Authoritative But No Authority?”, 20–47.

<sup>55</sup> Moch. Ali Mutawakkil, J. Nabiel Aha Putra, and Roma Wijaya, “The Scientific Authority in Islam from the Perspective of ‘Abd al-Majīd al-Ṣaghīr: The Ideal and the Reality of Knowledge Production,” *An-Nida’* 48, no. 2 (2024): 225–244, <https://doi.org/10.24014/an-nida.v48i2.32863>.

<sup>56</sup> Hartono Ahmad Jaiz and Abduh Zulfidar Akaha, *Bahaya Islam Liberal: Sekular Dan Menyamakan Islam Dengan Agama Lain*, Cet. 2 (Jakarta: Pustaka Al-Kautsar, 2002).

<sup>57</sup> Adian Husaini, *Hegemoni Kristen-Barat Dalam Studi Islam Di Perguruan Tinggi*, Cet. 1 (Jakarta: Gema Insani, 2006), 5; Adian Husaini, *Liberalisasi Islam di Indonesia*, Cet. 1 (Jakarta: Gema Insani Press (GIP), 2015), 11.

<sup>58</sup> Wahid, interview by Abd. Aziz Faiz, Yogyakarta, 5 April 2025.

<sup>59</sup> Ibrahim, “Being Authoritative But No Authority?”, 20–47.

<sup>60</sup> H.M.S. Urip Widodo, “Teror Bom Buku Di Jakarta: Peran Polri Dalam Penanganan Terorisme Di Indonesia,” *Jurnal Keamanan Nasional* 2, no. 2 (2016): 241–68, <https://doi.org/10.31599/jkn.v2i2.48>.

academic communities. Referencing the work of local colleagues seems less appealing, whereas citing foreign scholars tends to be viewed as a sign of broader intellectual engagement and depth.<sup>61</sup> Amid these stigmas and challenges, Muslim intellectuals in Yogyakarta introduce their ideas into public discourse through direct engagement in mosques, including sermons, lectures, scholarly *ngaji*, and the teaching of classical texts. Mosques, as centers of religious authority in contemporary urban Islam, function as strategic spaces for intellectuals to disseminate their ideas beyond academic settings and reach wider audiences (See figure 1 and table 1).

The mosque has become a strategic site through which Muslim intellectuals articulate and project critical Islamic discourse. This appropriation operates on several levels. First, at the level of approach, religious teaching is presented in a fluid and culturally grounded manner rather than through rigid orthodoxy, while still employing the familiar study circle format of *ngaji* that resonates with the wider religious community. Second, at the level of content, mosque based intellectuals introduce more progressive and theoretically informed materials, translating them into accessible reflections suited to the religious concerns of urban Muslims. Third, at the level of presentation, programs such as *Ngaji Filsafat* are framed through contemporary themes that resonate with urban youth, allowing complex ideas to circulate in an engaging and relatable form (see table 2).

**Table 2.** *Ngaji* Themes Addressing Youth and Urban Challenges

The theme	Description	<i>Ngaji</i> session
Spiritual journey	This session discusses the spiritual journey toward inner transformation based on the ideas of Nasir al-Din al-Tusi and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya.	Desember 2024
Tranquility and Pleasure	This session discusses Epicurus' ideas on inner tranquility and simple pleasures as the foundation of a happy life.	November 2024
Sound Reason and Mental Health	This session discusses Ibn Sina's ideas on the relationship between sound reason and mental health.	November 2024
Reviving Passion	This session discusses the ideas of several philosophers on rediscovering enthusiasm for life, motivation, and personal purpose weakened by routine, social pressures, or uncertainty about life direction.	September 2024

Source; Compiled from observations and mosque online documents

<sup>61</sup> Ibrahim, "Being Authoritative But No Authority?", 20-47.

At the same time, in the mosque Muslim intellectuals extend their authority beyond universities, asserting leadership in Islamic and cultural discourse while disseminating Islamic interpretations to the wider public.<sup>62</sup> Meanwhile, universities are largely perceived as modern and secular institutions, while Muslim intellectuals extend their scholarly authority into the public sphere through the sacred space of mosques.<sup>63</sup> Through programs such as *Ngaji Filsafat*, Qur'anic Studies, *Ngaji* Javanese Islam, and Postcolonial Studies, they attract broad audiences and extend progressive ideas beyond academia.<sup>64</sup> In doing so, they project their authority amid competing ideas, particularly from right wing Islamic currents and the impersonal authority shaped by new media. In urban settings, Muslim intellectuals shift from elite academic discourse in universities to mosques as platforms for circulating alternative Islamic ideas, often engaging broader questions of religion and culture beyond strict normativity.<sup>65</sup> They introduce critical reflection into spaces previously untouched by progressive thought. Programs such as *Ngaji Filsafat*, Qur'anic Studies, and Postcolonial Studies connect faith, knowledge, and rationality within sacred spaces, making intellectual ideas once confined to books and elite seminars accessible through mosque-based study circles.

### **Critical Islamic Thought and Public Legitimacy**

Muslim intellectuals have assumed a new role and authority in the discourse of Islamic knowledge production within urban mosque spaces. This new authority is gained through the transmission of knowledge, spiritual reflection, and the cultivation of universal humanistic ethics, enthusiasm, and hope.<sup>66</sup> The dissemination of *Ngaji Filsafat* (Philosophical Studies), *Studi Al-Qur'an* (Qur'anic Studies), *Ngaji Islam Jawi* (Javanese Islam), Postcolonial Studies, *Serat Jawa* (Javanese Literature), and other discussions within the mosque demonstrates the functioning of a discursive-critical approach to Islamic knowledge production in Yogyakarta's public sphere. The discourse on Islamic

<sup>62</sup> Julian Millie et al., "Post-Authoritarian Diversity in Indonesia's State-Owned Mosques: A Manakiban Case Study," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 45, no. 02 (2014): 194-213, <https://doi.org/DOI:10.1017/S002246341400006X>.

<sup>63</sup> Muhammad Khailid, Katimin, and Zainul Fuad, "Dinamika Pembentukan Perda Syariah: Peran Dan Kontribusi Partai Politik Islam Dalam Mewujudkan Wajib Belajar Pada Madrasah Diniyah Takmiliyah Awaliyah (MDTA) Di Kota Medan," *Edukasi Islam: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 12, no. 3 (2023): 2737-50, <https://doi.org/10.30868/ei.v12i03.5262>; Hartono Ahmad Jaiz, *Ada Pemurtadan Di IAIN* (Jakarta: Pustaka al-Kautsar, 2005), 15.

<sup>64</sup> Ibrahim, "Being Authoritative But No Authority?", 20-47.

<sup>65</sup> Budhy Munawar-Rachman, *Reorientasi Pembaruan Islam: Sekularisme, Liberalisme dan Pluralisme Paradigma Baru Islam Indonesia* (Malang: Pusat Studi Agama dan Multikulturalism Pascasarjana Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang, 2018), 20-25.

<sup>66</sup> Alwee, "Asian Intellectuals for Cultural Resistance, 32

knowledge is part of Islamic teaching through “critical ideas”.<sup>67</sup> In this context, Islam at Jenderal Sudirman mosque is approached not only as faith but also as knowledge. Through programs such as *Ngaji Filsafat* and related studies, Muslim intellectuals frame Islamic teachings as rational and reflective inquiry while remaining engaged with religious belief and orthodoxy.

Islamic reflection derived from the discourse of knowledge becomes an abstraction that transcends theoretical concepts, as it is directed toward fostering communal awareness. *Ngaji Filsafat* and other programs are engaged with real-life issues faced by urban society (See table 2). These intellectuals treat philosophy as a discursive method aimed at shaping a rational understanding (*logos*) of life.<sup>68</sup> In this context, intellectuals offer a form of Islamic spiritual reflection. Fahrudin Faiz, as the instructor of *Ngaji Filsafat*, frequently uses the language and real-life examples of urban society to present religious reflection. This philosophical approach encourages audiences to reassess and rationalise their understanding of Islam. As one participant Muhammad Adrian noted, “Listening to Pak Faiz’s explanations feels as if my understanding of Islam has been completely opened.”<sup>69</sup> In this sense, philosophy becomes a pathway to truth and wisdom.<sup>70</sup> The emphasis on rational reflection in these mosque-based discussions resonates with earlier traditions of rational Islamic thought in Indonesia. Harun Nasution and other scholars, for example, advocated a rational approach to Islamic philosophy and theology to challenge dogmatism and exclusivism in religious understanding.<sup>71</sup>

Muslim intellectuals presenting critical ideas at Masjid Jenderal Sudirman appear to be constructing and formulating an urban Islamic way of thinking. The critical Islamic discourse in this mosque is reshaping Islam with a foundation of culture and rationality, guiding it toward a universal public ethic (see table 2). For a long time, right-wing Islamic groups and their mosques have been closely associated with an anti-philosophy and anti-science stance, viewing them as Western-secular discourses and part of an ideological war (*ghazwa al-fikr*) that threatens religious orthodoxy.<sup>72</sup> At

<sup>67</sup> Azhar Ibrahim, “Contemporary Islamic Discourse in the Malay-Indonesian World: Critical Perspectives,” *Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 29, no. 2 (2022): 495, <https://doi.org/DOI:10.1355/sj29-2m>.

<sup>68</sup> Xiaojun Ding and Feng Yu, “Philosophical Practice as Spiritual Exercises towards Truth, Wisdom, and Virtue,” *Religions* 13, no. 4 (2022): 1–22, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13040364>.

<sup>69</sup> Muhamad Adrian, interview by Abd. Aziz Faiz, Yogyakarta, 5 February 2025.

<sup>70</sup> Ding and Yu.

<sup>71</sup> Avisena Perdana Putra Muama and Abdelrahman Moawad Ali Tahawi, “Reconstruction of Rationality in Islamic Philosophy and Theology: Harun Nasution’s Thought and Its Relevance to Contemporary Islamic Studies in Indonesia,” *An-Nida’* 49, no. 1 (2025): 73–89, <https://doi.org/10.24014/an-nida.v49i1.36321>.

<sup>72</sup> N Muthohirin, M Kamaludin, and Fahrudin Mukhlis, “Transformasi Pendidikan Islam Salafi: Implikasi Terhadap Multikulturalisme di Indonesia,” *The Annual Conference on Islamic Religious Education* 2, no. 1 (2022): 1–24.

Sudirman Mosque, social-humanities is integrated as a reflective tool that deepens religious understanding and bridges rationality with the essence of Islam. Through the interaction between Muslim intellectuals, universities, and the mosque, academic ideas are translated into accessible language, allowing rational and universal interpretations of Islam to reach broader urban audiences beyond university spaces.

The legitimacy of their critical Islamic ideas, mediated through the mosque, has gained broad public support both offline and online (see Table 1 and Figure 2). As a result, the dissemination of their substantive ideas is no longer confined to specific groups or institutional boundaries. Azhar further confirms that one of the main obstacles to the wider circulation of Muslim intellectuals' ideas in the public sphere has historically been the lack of support from traditional Islamic institutions.<sup>73</sup> However, this is not the case in Yogyakarta. Here, they receive support from mosques and their communities, enabling them to expand critical ideas and affirm the universality of Islam in response to societal needs. Public support for the Islamic ideas of Muslim intellectuals is not limited to mosque communities; they are also provided with the means to construct online authority. Their Islamic teachings circulate through the mosque's social media platforms. Public support can be observed through engagement metrics such as access, subscribers, views, and the spread of ideas across various online media platforms.<sup>74</sup> As a result, intellectuals and mosques have created a new landscape of Islamic teaching for the urban Muslim community in Yogyakarta.

## Conclusion

Muslim intellectuals challenge the assumption that the authority of university-based scholars has declined in the age of digital media and in the post-Reformasi 1998 context. Instead of being marginalised by popular online preachers, they reconfigure intellectual authority through the appropriation of scholarly legitimacy associated with universities and its relocation into mosque spaces. Through this process, they generate a counter-narrative to the dominance of populist Islamic discourse and position the mosque as a site where academic knowledge, critical reflection, and religious commitment intersect. This configuration enables Muslim intellectuals to engage wider publics and has gained significant public support both offline and online, contributing to the formation of contemporary Islamic knowledge production in urban contexts.

This study further shows that the emergence of Muslim intellectuals in mosque spaces represents a distinct pattern of Islamic knowledge production. Their authority expands through the circulation of critical Islamic ideas that connect religious discourse with broader social and cultural issues, while academic legitimacy is recontextualized

<sup>73</sup> Ibrahim, "Being Authoritative But No Authority?", 36–38.

<sup>74</sup> Shaheen Amid Whyte, "Islamic Religious Authority in Cyberspace: A Qualitative Study of Muslim Religious Actors in Australia," *Religions* 13, no. 1 (2022): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13010069>.

within sacred communal settings. The mosque functions as a mediating arena where knowledge, piety, and public participation converge, allowing alternative Islamic narratives to develop alongside the growing influence of digital religious actors. In this context, Muslim intellectuals, once perceived as disconnected from the broader public, are now reasserting their authority in the public sphere. However, this study is limited to a specific urban case and does not fully account for variations across different socio-cultural contexts.

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