

FIRST POINTS OF REFERENCE IN RELIGIOUS DECISION- MAKING: EXAMINING *TAQLID* AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Hariati Ibrahim¹
Muhammad Fadhli Musa²
Siti Selihah Che Hasan³
Liziana Kamarul Zaman⁴
Hidayati Mohamed Jani⁵

¹ Faculty of Law, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Kelantan, Malaysia (E-mail: hariati80@uitm.edu.my)

² Academy of Contemporary Islamic Studies (ACIS), Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Kelantan, Malaysia (E-mail: muhammadfadhli@uitm.edu.my)

³ Faculty of Law, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Kelantan, Malaysia (E-mail: selihah@uitm.edu.my)

⁴ Faculty of Law, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Kelantan, Malaysia (E-mail: lizia735@uitm.edu.my)

⁵ Faculty of Law, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Kelantan, Malaysia (E-mail: hdyati730@uitm.edu.my)

*Corresponding author: hariati80@uitm.edu.my

Article history

Received date : 14-7-2026

Revised date : 15-7-2026

Accepted date : 20-8-2026

Published date : 20-9-2026

To cite this document:

Ibrahim, H., Musa, M. F., Che Hasan, S. S., Kamarul Zaman, L., & Mohamed Jani, H. (2026). First points of reference in religious decision-making: Examining taqlid among university students. *Journal of Islamic, Social, Economics and Development (JISED)*, 11 (86), 480 – 500.

Abstract: *The university environment exposes students to diverse intellectual discourses, often prompting them to navigate complex religious challenges independently. In Islamic jurisprudence, when individuals face such issues, they may resort to Taqlid (following qualified scholarly authority) or utilize other decision-making frameworks. Understanding how modern educated youth approach these spiritual and legal hurdles is crucial for contemporary religious education and discourse. The research investigates how university students make religious decisions in the digital era through the theoretical lens of taqlid. A quantitative research design was employed, utilizing a structured online survey questionnaire distributed to a convenience sample of university students. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, and means) to evaluate students' information-seeking behaviors and their understanding of Taqlid. Statistical analysis indicates that university students frequently encounter religious dilemmas, primarily resolving them by consulting a religious teacher or scholar, making it the most common first point of reference. They also refer to official religious websites suggesting that respondents continue to value authoritative and credible sources even when seeking information online. Furthermore, the descriptive data reveals that respondents do not exhibit blind reliance on their initial source of religious information. Critically, these results suggest that while many respondents demonstrate a degree of trust in their initial source, this trust is not absolute. These quantitative insights provide measurable data for religious educators and institutional authorities. The findings highlight a critical need to introduce structured modules on Islamic legal methodologies in higher education, ensuring students are equipped with verifiable and sound frameworks for religious problem-solving in the digital era.*

Keywords: *Religious Decision-Making, University Students, Quantitative Analysis, Taqlid, Religious Behaviour, Islamic Jurisprudence.*

Introduction

The rapid expansion of digital media has transformed how Muslims access and engage with religious knowledge. While religious learning was traditionally obtained through qualified scholars, religious institutions, mosques, and authoritative texts, digital technologies now provide instant access to religious information through search engines, social media, video platforms, podcasts, mobile applications, and artificial intelligence (AI). This increased accessibility has broadened opportunities for religious learning by exposing users to diverse interpretations and scholarly opinions. However, it has also created a complex information environment where authoritative teachings coexist with unverified content, requiring users to distinguish between reliable and less reliable sources.

Within Islamic jurisprudence, *taqlid* provides an important framework for understanding how ordinary Muslims make religious decisions. Since most Muslims do not possess the specialised knowledge required to derive legal rulings directly from the Qur'an and Sunnah, they traditionally rely on qualified scholars, such as *mujtahids* and *muftis*, for guidance. *Taqlid* therefore enables individuals to practise their religion while recognising the distinction between expert legal reasoning (*ijtihad*) and reliance on scholarly authority. It does not necessarily imply blind obedience, but may reflect an individual's recognition of the limits of their own knowledge and reliance on qualified religious expertise. However, digital media has changed the environment in which *taqlid* is practised by diversifying sources of religious authority. Official religious institutions, scholars, preachers, social media influencers, online communities, and AI-powered platforms can now provide religious information simultaneously. Muslims are therefore exposed to multiple and sometimes competing interpretations of religious issues. Religious decision-making increasingly involves not only choosing whom to follow, but also identifying and evaluating the credibility, legitimacy, and authority of different sources.

University students are particularly relevant to this issue because of their extensive use of digital technologies for obtaining information, including information related to religion. Religious institutions now disseminate fatwas and educational materials through websites and social media, while scholars, preachers, influencers, and AI tools provide alternative sources of guidance. Although this environment offers greater convenience and access to knowledge, it also exposes students to competing religious authorities and interpretations. This raises an important question: when university students encounter a religious issue, whom or what do they turn to first, and how do they determine which source to trust?

Although previous studies have extensively discussed *taqlid* from jurisprudential and theological perspectives and recent research has examined digital religion, religious authority, and digital literacy, limited empirical attention has been given to how university students actually seek religious guidance in everyday situations. In particular, little is known about the first sources students consult when confronted with religious questions, the extent to which they rely on recognised religious authorities or personal reasoning, how digital platforms influence these choices, and whether their understanding and practice of *taqlid* remain consistent with its classical jurisprudential conception. Addressing these questions is important for understanding the evolving nature of religious authority in the digital age and for informing initiatives that promote responsible religious decision-making among young Muslims. Accordingly, this study

investigates the first points of reference used by university students when making religious decisions. Specifically, it examines where students seek religious guidance, the extent to which they rely on qualified religious authority or independent reasoning, and their understanding of *taqlid* within the contemporary digital environment.

Problem Statement

The rapid expansion of digital media has fundamentally transformed how Muslims access religious knowledge and seek guidance on religious matters. University students increasingly rely on search engines, social media platforms, video-sharing websites, and artificial intelligence (AI)-powered tools because these platforms provide immediate and convenient access to religious information. However, the accessibility and diversity of digital religious content have also created a complex information environment in which authoritative religious teachings coexist with opinions from independent preachers, influencers, and unverified online sources. Although these platforms offer unprecedented opportunities for religious learning, students may lack the religious digital literacy necessary to evaluate the credibility and authority of competing religious information before accepting or acting upon it (Ashari & Faizin, 2023; Purwaningtyas et al., 2024).

While *taqlid* has been extensively discussed within Islamic jurisprudence as the practice of lay Muslims relying on qualified religious scholars, existing research has predominantly examined its doctrinal, legal, and theological foundations. Comparatively little empirical attention has been given to how *taqlid* is practised in contemporary digital environments, where students have access to multiple and often competing sources of religious authority. Current studies provide limited evidence regarding the first sources students consult when faced with religious questions, the extent to which they rely on qualified scholars, official religious institutions, personal reasoning, or digital platforms, and whether their information-seeking behaviours reflect the traditional principles of *taqlid*. Consequently, the relationship between digital information-seeking behaviour and the practice of *taqlid* among university students remains insufficiently understood.

Addressing this gap is important because the first source consulted for religious guidance may influence not only the quality of religious decisions but also the development of students' understanding of religious authority and Islamic knowledge. Examining students' first points of reference can provide valuable insights into how religious decisions are formed in the digital age, whether traditional scholarly authority continues to shape those decisions, and the extent to which digital platforms have redefined contemporary practices of *taqlid*. Such findings may contribute to the development of religious digital literacy initiatives, strengthen the role of recognised religious authorities in digital environments, and inform educational strategies that promote informed and responsible religious decision-making among university students.

Method

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional research design using a structured online questionnaire distributed to a convenience sample of university students from several higher education institutions in Malaysia. The questionnaire comprised 24 items organised into five sections: (i) Demographic Information, (ii) First Point of Reference for Religious Matters, (iii) Reliance on Authority versus Independent Reasoning, (iv) Digital Influence, and (v) Awareness and Understanding of *Taqlid*. To minimise response bias, the definition of *taqlid* was intentionally presented in Question 23, near the end of the questionnaire, after respondents had answered the preceding questions. This design enabled the researchers to capture participants'

natural attitudes and behaviours regarding religious decision-making before introducing the formal definition of *taqlid*. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, to describe students' religious information-seeking behaviours. Inferential statistical analyses were also conducted to examine the relationships between respondents' demographic characteristics, particularly their academic backgrounds, and their understanding and orientation towards *taqlid*. A formal pilot study was not conducted prior to the main data collection. The absence of formal pilot testing is acknowledged as a limitation and provides an opportunity for future studies to further refine and validate the instrument.

Sampling and Data Collection

A quantitative research design was employed using a structured online questionnaire administered through Google Forms. The study adopted a convenience sampling approach because participants were recruited based on their accessibility and willingness to participate. The target population comprised university and higher education students in Malaysia. Data were collected from 2 July 2026 to 14 July 2026. Participants were recruited through student groups and online communication platforms, particularly Telegram and WhatsApp, through which the survey link was distributed. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of the purpose of the study before completing the questionnaire.

A total of 281 usable responses were obtained from students affiliated with selected Malaysian higher education institutions, including UiTM Machang, the Centre of Foundation Studies, UiTM, the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), the Centre for Foundation Studies, IIUM, and Institut Pendidikan Guru (IPG) Sungai Petani, Kedah. The sample was predominantly drawn from UiTM Machang. Because convenience sampling was employed and the distribution of respondents across institutions was uneven, the sample does not represent the population of Malaysian university students proportionately. Accordingly, the findings should be interpreted as reflecting the experiences and perceptions of the participating students rather than being generalised to all Malaysian university students.

No formal statistical power analysis was conducted prior to data collection. The sample size of 281 was therefore determined by the number of eligible and usable responses obtained during the data-collection period. This limitation is acknowledged, and the findings are interpreted primarily as descriptive and exploratory evidence concerning students' religious information-seeking behaviour and first points of reference.

Scope and Limitation

This study focuses on Muslim university students in Malaysia and examines their religious decision-making practices in relation to the concept of *taqlid*. Specifically, it investigates the primary sources from which students seek religious guidance, the extent to which they rely on religious authority or independent reasoning and the influence of digital platforms on their religious information-seeking behaviour. The study adopts a quantitative survey design to capture students' perceptions and behaviours at a single point in time. As the concept of *taqlid* is rooted in Islamic jurisprudence, the study is confined to Muslim university students and does not include respondents from other religious backgrounds.

Literature Review

The Meaning of Taqlid

To understand the concept of *taqlid*, it is important to examine both its literal and technical meaning within the framework of Islamic jurisprudence. Derived from the Arabic root *qallada* (قَلَدَ), the term *taqlid* originates from *al-qilādah* (القلادة), which refers to a collar, necklace, or leash around the neck (Ibn Manzur, 1985). In a metaphorical sense, it implies placing the responsibility or the "weight" of a legal decision onto the neck of another person. In Islamic law, *Taqlid* is technically defined as accepting and acting upon the statement or ruling of a scholar without knowing the specific textual proofs (*Dalil*) or legal methodology behind it (al-Zuhaili, 1987). Building upon these linguistic and technical meanings, *taqlid* is generally defined as the practice of following the legal opinions of qualified religious scholars without independently examining the detailed evidence or exercising personal legal reasoning (Jalil et al., 2025; Rusnita, 2022). Specifically, it refers to accepting or following the opinions of *mujtahids* without fully understanding the reasoning or evidence underlying their rulings. In the framework of Islamic jurisprudence (*Usul al-Fiqh*), religious decision-making is fundamentally divided into two approaches: *Ijtihad* (independent legal reasoning) and *Taqlid* (imitation or following). While *Ijtihad* is a rigorous academic process reserved exclusively for qualified scholars (*Mujtahid*) who derive rulings directly from the Quran and Sunnah (Supriyanto, 2010), *Taqlid* serves as the vital legal mechanism for the rest of the Muslim populace to navigate their daily religious practices.

Taqlid is not merely "blind faith" in religion itself; rather, it is the intellectual acknowledgment of one's own limitations in specialized legal knowledge, leading an individual to rely on the expertise of a qualified jurist (*Mufti* or *Mujtahid*) or a recognized school of thought (*Madhhab*). This practice is commonly associated with individuals who do not possess the necessary qualifications to perform *ijtihad*. From a broader epistemological perspective, *taqlid* has also been described as the uncritical acceptance of authority or tradition, whereby individuals adopt beliefs without independent reflection (Alhayyani, 2024). *Taqlid* should not necessarily be equated with blind or irrational acceptance. For ordinary Muslims, reliance on qualified religious authority may represent a recognition of the limits of their own specialised knowledge rather than an absence of reasoning. An individual may still exercise judgement in selecting a qualified scholar, assessing the credibility of a source, seeking clarification, comparing scholarly opinions, or determining whether a particular ruling is applicable to their circumstances. Thus, *taqlid* and personal evaluation should not necessarily be understood as mutually exclusive. Rather, religious decision-making may involve different degrees of reliance on authority, personal evaluation, and independent reasoning.

This distinction is particularly important in the contemporary digital environment, where individuals may encounter religious opinions from qualified scholars, official institutions, influencers, anonymous sources, search engines, and AI-generated systems. Reliance on a qualified scholar therefore differs conceptually from accepting an online religious opinion solely because it is popular, frequently encountered, or algorithmically recommended. From this perspective, the present study examines not only whether university students rely on religious authority, but also what or whom they consult first, how they evaluate the information encountered, and whether their reliance involves verification and critical engagement.

Legal status (Hukm) of Taqlid

The ruling on *taqlid* depends on an individual's level of religious knowledge and capacity for *ijtihad*. Those who possess the necessary qualifications to perform *ijtihad* are prohibited from practicing *taqlid* and are instead required to derive legal rulings directly from the primary sources of Sharia. In contrast, *taqlid* is regarded as necessary for ordinary Muslims who lack the expertise to independently interpret Islamic legal evidence (Rusnita, 2022; Mubarak et al., 2024). This view is supported by the Qur'anic injunction in Surah al-Nahl (16:43), which instructs those who lack knowledge to seek guidance from people of knowledge.

Historically, the practice of *taqlid* developed gradually alongside the expansion of Islamic civilisation and the increasing complexity of legal issues. During the early period of Islam, legal rulings were primarily derived through *ijtihad* based on the Qur'an and Sunnah. As Islamic societies grew, reliance on qualified jurists and established schools of jurisprudence became increasingly important in ensuring consistency and stability in legal decision-making (Jalil et al., 2025).

While the classical concept of *taqlid* assumes that individuals rely on recognised religious scholars and established schools of jurisprudence, the digital era has fundamentally altered the landscape of religious authority. Today, Muslims encounter religious guidance from a diverse range of online sources, including official religious institutions, independent preachers, social media influencers, and artificial intelligence platforms. Consequently, the contemporary challenge is no longer whether individuals practise *taqlid*, but rather whom they choose to follow and how they evaluate the credibility of competing religious authorities in digital environments.

Concepts Related to Taqlid in Digital Era

Several concepts are relevant to understanding *taqlid* and how Muslims seek and evaluate religious guidance, including digital searching, source evaluation, qualified religious scholars, epistemic trust, online information credibility, religious authority, and information verification. However, these concepts are not examined independently in this study. Instead, they provide context for understanding students' first point of reference when seeking solutions to religious questions. The study focuses primarily on identifying whom or what students consult first, whether they initially rely on qualified scholars, digital sources, or personal reasoning, and how these behaviours relate to the concept of *taqlid*. Concepts such as trust and information credibility are therefore considered only to the extent that they help explain students' choice of their initial source. A more detailed examination of these factors provides opportunities for future research. Future studies could investigate whether students' choice of a first source is influenced by perceived credibility, trust in religious authority, institutional recognition, social media popularity, or other factors. Such research could also examine why students choose particular sources and how their initial choice affects subsequent evaluation and religious decision-making. This approach allows the present study to remain focused on first points of reference while identifying broader areas for further investigation.

Digital Searching/Sources

The rapid expansion of digital media has fundamentally transformed how Muslims access religious knowledge and engage with religious authorities. Campbell and Tsuria (2021) argue that digital media has become an integral part of contemporary religious life, reshaping not only access to religious knowledge but also the ways in which believers evaluate religious authority. Rather than replacing traditional religious institutions, digital platforms have diversified the

sources of religious guidance, creating an environment in which users must navigate multiple and often competing religious voices. Askar et al, (2025) explicitly outlines how online platforms, ranging from official institutional websites to Muslim scholar pages, and social media have emerged as ‘new Islamic knowledge authorities’ for university students. Consequently, the ability to critically assess the credibility and legitimacy of online religious information has become an increasingly important aspect of religious decision-making. Taken together, these studies indicate that the digitalisation of religious knowledge has not simply increased access to information; it has also transformed the process through which religious authority is encountered and assessed. Consequently, the ability to critically evaluate the credibility, legitimacy, and authority of online religious sources has become an increasingly important component of contemporary religious decision-making.

In response to these challenges, recent studies emphasise that digital literacy should extend beyond technical competence to include the ability to evaluate religious information critically. Ashari and Faizin (2023) argue that students require structured religious digital literacy, supported by digital-based Islamic learning resources that enable them to assess online religious information responsibly. Similarly, Fauzan et al. (2026) found that stronger digital literacy significantly enhances students' ability to interpret, evaluate, and apply Islamic values within technology-based learning environments, suggesting that digital literacy directly influences religious understanding and judgement. Suryani et al. (2024) further demonstrate that digital literacy grounded in Islamic values strengthens critical thinking, risk perception, and decision-making when individuals encounter online religious information. Collectively, these studies suggest that digital literacy in the religious context should not be understood merely as the ability to access, navigate, or use digital technologies. Rather, it involves a broader set of evaluative and ethical competencies that enable individuals to assess the credibility of religious information, recognise potential risks, and make informed decisions. This perspective is particularly important in an environment where students may encounter religious information from sources that differ substantially in authority, expertise, and reliability.

Despite these recommendations, emerging evidence indicates that many Muslims continue to rely on digital religious information without sufficient evaluation. Putri and Leksono (2025) introduced the concept of *digital taqlid*, describing the tendency of Muslims to rely on digital technology for rapid religious guidance while neglecting deeper textual understanding, critical reasoning, and contextual analysis. According to the authors, this phenomenon contributes to biased information, diminished *tabayyun* (verification), difficulties in distinguishing authoritative sources, and the reinforcement of cognitive bias through social media algorithms.

Extending this concern to artificial intelligence, Anam (2025) argues that the widespread use of generative AI has created a new form of digital *taqlid*, whereby users accept AI-generated religious responses without examining the supporting evidence or reasoning. Similarly, Kalwar et al. (2026) warn that the unregulated digital ecosystem facilitates the spread of fragmented religious knowledge and misinformation, potentially threatening the integrity of *aqidah*. Sati et al. (2025) likewise observe that the proliferation of digital fatwas and AI-generated religious interpretations encourages passive acceptance of religious opinions without understanding the underlying Sharia methodology or consulting qualified religious authorities. Existing scholarship conceptualises digital *taqlid*, but there remains limited empirical evidence on whether and how university students actually exhibit behaviours associated with digital *taqlid* when seeking solutions to religious questions. This study however does not intend on detail

discussion about digital *taqlid* but emphasis actual behaviour of university students and their first point of reference.

Collectively, these studies demonstrate that while digital platforms have significantly expanded access to religious knowledge, they have also increased the complexity of religious decision-making by exposing users to competing sources of authority. The digital environment has transformed religious authority, making digital literacy essential for evaluating religious information and preventing passive reliance on unverified digital sources. Although existing research consistently advocates digital literacy and source verification, limited attention has been given to how university students actually navigate these competing authorities when making religious decisions. This highlights the need to examine not only where students obtain religious information but also how they evaluate its credibility and determine which religious authorities to trust before acting upon it.

Evaluating Sources & Information Verification

The growing reliance on digital platforms for religious information has made source evaluation an essential component of responsible religious decision-making. Information verification refers to the process of assessing and checking information encountered online to determine its reliability and accuracy. This process may involve verifying sources, checking information through independent sources, and evaluating the credibility of information before accepting or sharing it (Khan & Idris, 2019). Ab Kadir et al. (2025) argue that the credibility of Islamic information should be assessed based on the authority of the source, authenticity, and accuracy of the content before it is accepted or acted upon. Similarly, Yusof (2017), in a study of state Islamic institutional websites in Malaysia, emphasises that the credibility of online religious information depends not only on the content itself but also on the trustworthiness and legitimacy of its source. These findings highlight that evaluating the source of religious information is fundamental in ensuring that online religious guidance is reliable.

The importance of source evaluation has become even more critical in the digital era, where users are exposed to a multitude of competing religious voices. Mahmud et al. (2026) argue that digital media has intensified challenges to religious authority in Malaysia by creating a highly competitive information environment in which official fatwa institutions coexist with social media influencers, independent preachers, and user-generated content. The rapid dissemination of online religious information often outpaces the process of *tabayyun* (verification), contributing to public confusion, confirmation bias, and reduced confidence in recognised religious authorities. To address these challenges, the authors advocate strengthening digital fatwa literacy, improving the digital presence of official religious institutions, and promoting verification practices before religious information is accepted or acted upon. Collectively, these studies suggest that the ability to evaluate the credibility and authority of religious sources is no longer optional but an essential competency for Muslims navigating religious issues in the digital age.

Qualified Scholars

In Islam, seeking guidance from qualified scholars has long been recognised as the appropriate approach for Muslims who lack the expertise to derive religious rulings independently. This principle is grounded in the Qur'an, which instructs believers to "ask the people of knowledge if you do not know" (Surah An-Nahl 16:43). Accordingly, referring to recognised scholars serves as a practical mechanism for ensuring that religious beliefs and practices are based on sound Islamic knowledge. Religious authority in Islam is founded on *'ilm* (religious

knowledge), which is acquired through rigorous scholarly education and training rather than popularity or personal influence (Saat, 2018). Although the criteria for a "qualified scholar" may differ across Muslim communities, recognised religious education, scholarly credentials, and expertise remain important indicators of legitimacy. This preference for qualified religious authorities is reflected in Whyte's (2022) study of Australian Muslims, which found that respondents placed greater trust in local imams, sheikhs, and Islamic academics than in social media influencers or other non-specialist sources. However, the digital age has transformed how Muslims access religious information. Campbell and Tsuria (2021) argue that digital media has diversified religious authority by enabling numerous individuals and platforms to disseminate religious content, making it increasingly difficult for users to distinguish between authoritative and less credible sources. Consequently, Muslims, particularly university students who are frequent users of digital platforms, must not only access religious information but also critically evaluate the qualifications and credibility of those providing religious guidance before making religious decisions.

Epistemic Trust

Epistemic trust refers to an individual's willingness to accept information conveyed by others as authentic, trustworthy, relevant to oneself, and applicable to other contexts (Weiland, 2024). It involves trusting others as reliable sources of knowledge, particularly when individuals depend on others for information that they cannot independently access (Rolin, 2024). Since individuals are unable to independently verify all information they encounter, they often rely on others who are perceived to possess greater knowledge, expertise or authority. Consequently, epistemic trust may be influenced by factors such as perceived expertise, credibility, competence and authority. When a source is considered sufficiently trustworthy, individuals may be more willing to accept the information provided. The relevance of epistemic trust becomes increasingly significant in the digital age, where individuals are exposed to vast amount of information from various sources. Anderau (2023) describes "*epistemic flooding*" as an online epistemic environment in which individuals are constantly exposed to information that exceeds their capacity to process it carefully. This condition can make it increasingly difficult for individuals to independently evaluate the reliability of every piece of information they encounter, thereby increasing their reliance on sources considered knowledgeable and trustworthy. However, such reliance should be based on recognizable criteria of reliability, while individuals' epistemic responsibility must be considered in relation to their competencies and the context in which that knowledge is required (Alhayyani, 2026).

Online Information Credibility

Online information credibility refers to the extent to which information and its source are perceived as believable and reliable. It is primarily assessed based on two key dimensions: the source's expertise and trustworthiness (Tuzahra, 2021). Since online platforms allow information to be published with limited editorial oversight, users need to critically evaluate the credibility of information before accepting or using it (Hussin et al., 2020). In the context of religious decision-making among university students in the digital era, the evaluation of online credibility becomes significantly more complex. University students frequently relying on social media, blogs, and digital preaching for guidance without realizing the unique challenges they are facing when assessing religious content due to the intersection of authoritative theology, emotional resonance, and decentralized digital media. In traditional settings, religious credibility is tied to institutional validation, such as formal theological degrees, affiliation with recognized institutions, or decades of community leadership. On the other hand, in the digital landscape, credibility is often reshaped by digital popularity

metrics such as follower counts, production quality, storytelling charisma, and viral reach (Andok, 2024; Rokibullah, & Laksana, 2024). As a result, university students may mistakenly equate high visual production values or algorithmic reach with theological expertise and trustworthiness. Furthermore, the absence of traditional gatekeepers such as religious councils or senior scholars on digital platforms allows unverified or radical religious interpretations to proliferate without oversight (Hussin et al., 2020).

Networked Religious Authority

Networked religious authority refers to the transformation of how religious authority is established and recognised in the digital era. Whereas religious authority was traditionally concentrated among formally recognised scholars and religious institutions, digital media has created opportunities for various actors, including online preachers, religious influencers, websites, and social media platforms, to disseminate religious knowledge and opinions (Andok, 2024). As a result, access to religious authority has become more diverse and is no longer dependent solely on traditional religious structures. In the digital environment, religious authority is also shaped through interactions between religious actors, users, and digital platforms. Users are not merely passive recipients of religious information; they actively select, compare, follow, and evaluate the sources they perceive as credible and trustworthy (Berger & Golan, 2023). Factors such as expertise, credibility, popularity, accessibility, and audience engagement influence how users perceive the authority of a particular religious source. Studies among Muslim university students further indicate that Islamic organisations' websites, Muslim scholars' webpages, and social media have emerged as important sources of Islamic knowledge (Askar et al., 2025). However, the emergence of digital religious authority does not necessarily mean that traditional scholars and religious institutions have lost their authority. Rather, it has created a more diverse and interconnected landscape of religious authority, where users encounter multiple sources with varying levels of expertise and credibility. Therefore, in the context of university students, the important question is not only where they obtain religious information, but also whom they perceive as authoritative and trustworthy when making religious decisions. This makes the concept of networked religious authority particularly relevant to understanding contemporary practices of *taqlid* in the digital era.

Analysis of Findings

Table 1: Respondents Demography (Q1-5)

	Construct	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	18-20	135	48%
	21-23	130	46.3%
	24 and above	16	5.7%
	Total	281	100%
Gender	Male	181	64.4
	Female	100	35.6
	Total	281	100%
Field of Study	Islamic Studies	30	10.7%
	Law	5	1.8%
	Business, Banking, Office Management & Public Administration	67	23.8%
	Accounting	129	45.9%
	Art & Design	1	0.4%
	Social Sciences/Policy Studies	24	8.5%
	Computer Sciences & Mathematics	1	0.4%
	Information Management	19	6.8%
	Molecular Biology and Microbiology	1	0.4%
	Teaching of English as a Second Language	2	0.7%
	Applied science, Sustainable and Environmental Science	1	0.4%
	Humanities	1	0.4%
	Total	281	100%
Level of Study	Diploma/Foundation/Matriculation	121	43.1%
	Degree	145	51.6%
	Postgraduate	15	5.3%
	Total	281	100%
Have you received formal Islamic education?	Yes	277	98.6%
	No	4	1.4%
	Total	281	100%

Decision-Making Behaviour (Q6, Q8, Q13 & Q17)

Understanding behavioural patterns is essential for explaining how individuals make decisions and respond to complex situations. In the context of religious decision-making, identifying the first source that university students consult provides valuable insight into how they construct religious knowledge and determine the credibility of religious information. The first point of reference is particularly significant because it often shapes subsequent information-seeking behaviour, influences the evaluation of alternative viewpoints, and ultimately affects the religious decisions that individuals make. Examining this initial preference also enables researchers to assess whether students continue to rely on recognised religious authority or increasingly depend on digital platforms when resolving religious issues.

For the purpose of this study, the first point of reference is conceptualised through two broad pathways. The first is the scholar route, in which students seek guidance from qualified religious scholars or recognised religious institutions. This approach reflects the traditional Islamic model of knowledge transmission, which emphasises scholarly expertise, established chains of learning (*isnad*), authorisation (*ijazah*), and contextual interpretation of Islamic sources. Guidance obtained through this route is generally grounded in recognised jurisprudential methodologies and considers the individual's specific circumstances before religious advice or legal opinions (*fatwa*) are provided.

The second pathway is the digital route, in which students initially seek religious guidance through search engines, social media platforms, video-sharing websites, online discussion forums, or artificial intelligence (AI) tools. These platforms provide immediate and convenient access to a vast range of religious content produced by official institutions, qualified scholars, independent preachers, influencers, and other content creators. However, the visibility of online content is often influenced by platform algorithms and user engagement metrics rather than solely by scholarly credentials or theological authority. Consequently, students may encounter multiple and sometimes conflicting religious perspectives, making the ability to evaluate the credibility, authority, and authenticity of digital sources an increasingly important component of responsible religious decision-making. Understanding which pathway students adopt as their first point of reference therefore provides important insights into how religious authority is negotiated in the digital age and whether contemporary information-seeking behaviours remain consistent with the traditional principles of *taqlid*.

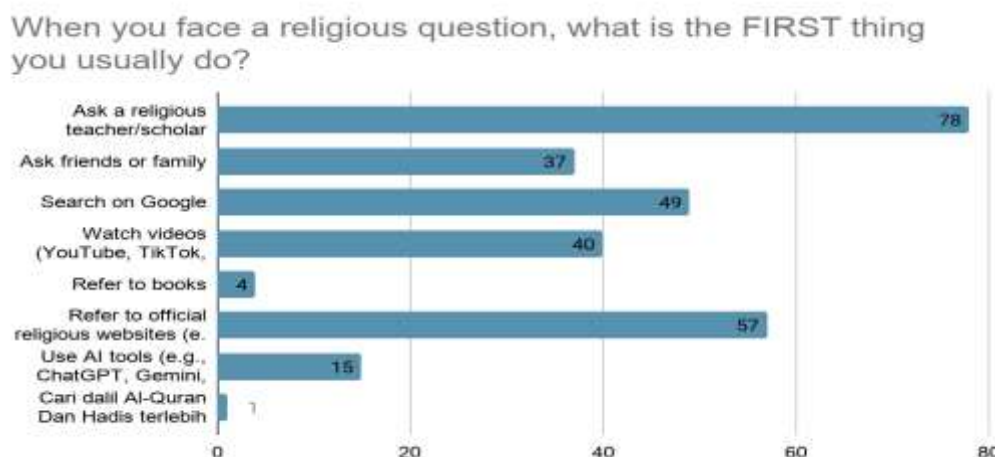


Figure 1: Findings on Q6

The findings indicate that when faced with a religious question, respondents primarily prefer to consult a religious teacher or scholar ($n = 78$), making it the most common first point of reference. This is followed by referring to official religious websites ($n = 57$), suggesting that respondents continue to value authoritative and credible sources even when seeking information online. However, a substantial number also turn to Google ($n = 49$) and social media videos such as YouTube or TikTok ($n = 40$), reflecting the growing influence of digital platforms in religious information-seeking. Seeking advice from friends or family ($n = 37$) remains a common practice, although it is less preferred than consulting religious authorities or official online sources. In contrast, relatively few respondents reported using AI tools such as ChatGPT or Gemini ($n = 15$), referring to books ($n = 4$), or consulting the Qur'an and Hadith directly ($n = 1$) as their initial approach. Overall, these findings suggest that while traditional religious authority remains the primary source of guidance, respondents increasingly adopt a hybrid information-seeking behaviour that combines trusted scholars with digital resources, highlighting the evolving landscape of religious decision-making in the digital age.

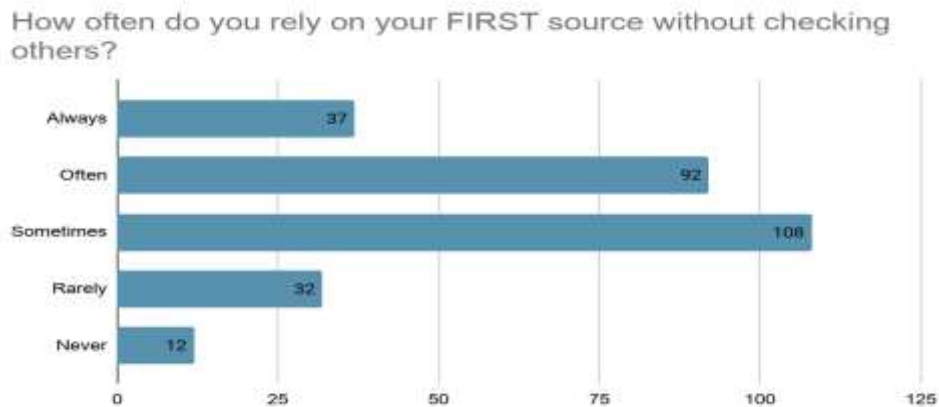


Figure 2: Findings on Q8

The findings reveal that respondents do not exhibit blind reliance on their initial source of religious information. Instead, the largest proportion reported sometimes relying on their first source without checking others ($n = 108$), followed by often ($n = 92$) and always ($n = 37$). In contrast, relatively fewer respondents indicated that they rarely ($n = 32$) or never ($n = 12$) rely solely on their first source. Critically, these results suggest that while many respondents demonstrate a degree of trust in their initial source, this trust is not absolute. The predominance of the "sometimes" category indicates a situational approach to information verification, where respondents may verify information depending on factors such as the complexity of the issue, the credibility of the source, or the perceived consequences of the religious decision. This finding aligns with contemporary digital information-seeking behaviour, where users frequently move between multiple online and offline sources before reaching a conclusion. However, the combined number of respondents who often or always rely on their first source ($n = 129$) remains substantial and raises concerns regarding cognitive shortcuts and authority bias in digital environments. If the initial source is a qualified scholar or an official religious institution, such reliance may reflect justified epistemic trust consistent with Islamic principles of *taqlid*. Conversely, if the first source originates from social media influencers, search engine results, or algorithm-driven recommendations, unquestioning reliance increases the risk of misinformation, selective exposure, and algorithmic reinforcement of inaccurate religious interpretations. Therefore, these findings illustrate that the issue is not merely whether

respondents rely on their first source, but who or what that first source is. This reinforces the importance of strengthening religious digital literacy, enabling individuals not only to verify religious information but also to critically evaluate the credibility, qualifications, and authority of their initial source before accepting or acting upon it. Such evidence supports the argument that digital religious decision-making should integrate both traditional scholarly authority and critical information verification rather than relying solely on the accessibility or popularity of online content.

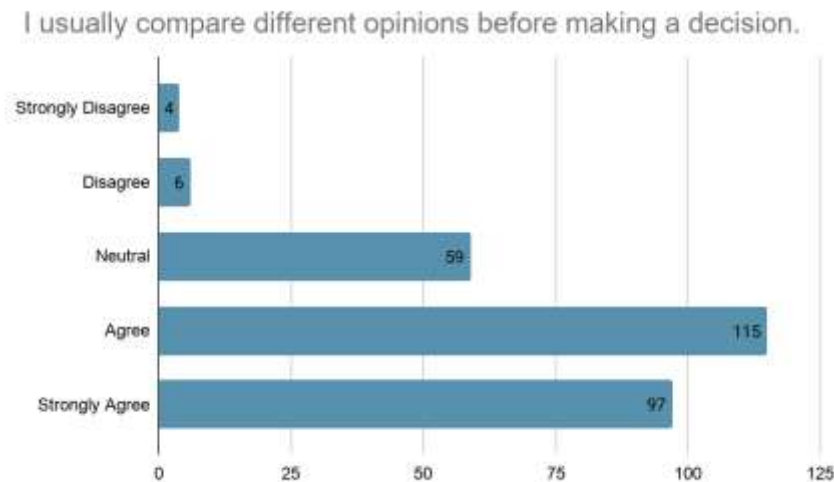


Figure 3: Findings on Q13

The findings indicate that respondents generally demonstrate a reflective approach to religious decision-making by comparing different opinions before reaching a conclusion. The majority agreed ($n = 115$) or strongly agreed ($n = 97$) that they usually compare different opinions before making a decision, representing approximately three-quarters of the respondents. This suggests that although respondents value the guidance of qualified religious scholars, they do not necessarily accept a single opinion uncritically but instead engage in some level of evaluation and comparison. The 59 neutral responses indicate that a sizable proportion of respondents may compare opinions only in certain situations, depending on the complexity or significance of the issue. Meanwhile, the very small number who disagreed or strongly disagreed shows that relatively few respondents rely exclusively on one viewpoint without considering alternatives. These findings reflect an encouraging level of critical engagement with religious information and support the notion of a hybrid religious decision-making process, in which individuals combine traditional scholarly authority with independent evaluation. However, comparing different opinions alone does not guarantee sound religious judgement, as the quality of the comparison depends on the credibility and qualifications of the sources consulted. Therefore, the findings reinforce the need for stronger religious digital literacy, enabling individuals to distinguish between qualified scholarly opinions and algorithm-driven or unverified online content when making religious decisions.

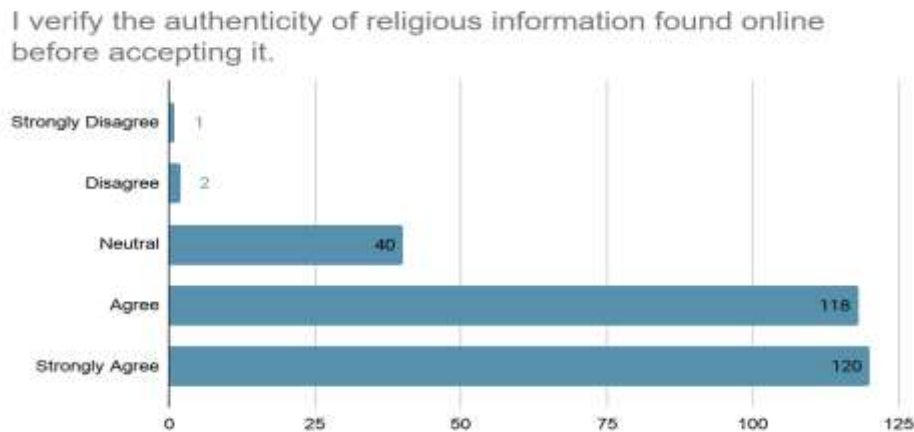


Figure 4: Findings on Q17

Based on the survey data, the vast majority of the 281 participants demonstrate a high level of caution and digital literacy regarding the statement, "I verify the authenticity of religious information found online before accepting it". An overwhelming 84.7% of respondents either "Strongly Agree" (120 individuals) or "Agree" (118 individuals) with this practice, indicating that a significant portion of the sampled population actively fact-checks or scrutinizes religious content before trusting it. In contrast, a small segment of 14.2% (40 individuals) remains neutral, while a negligible 1% (3 individuals combined) openly disagree or strongly disagree with the necessity of verifying such information. Overall, these findings strongly suggest that the surveyed group is highly sceptical of unverified online religious content, favouring active verification over passive acceptance.

***Taqlid* Index (Q9, Q11 and Q24)**

The researchers measured respondents' behaviours and attitudes associated with *taqlid* to assess their orientation towards the concept. In Question 9, respondents were asked whether they preferred to follow the opinions of a qualified religious scholar rather than search for the supporting evidence themselves. Similarly, Question 11 asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement with the statement, "*Ordinary Muslims should follow the opinions of qualified religious scholars in religious matters.*" This question was intentionally presented before the concept of *taqlid* was defined to capture respondents' natural attitudes without introducing bias.

To further validate the findings, Question 24 was placed at the end of the questionnaire. After respondents were provided with a definition of *taqlid* in Question 23, they were asked whether they considered *taqlid* to be necessary. Comparing responses before and after the definition enabled the researchers to assess the consistency of respondents' attitudes and determine whether a clearer understanding of the concept influenced their perceptions.

I prefer to follow the opinions of a qualified religious scholar rather than search for the evidence myself.

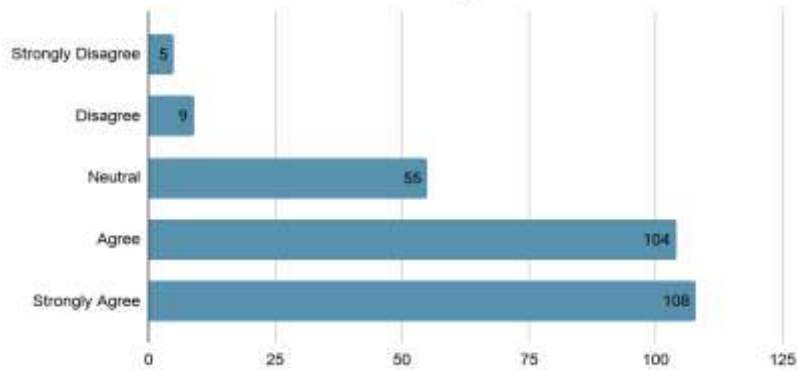


Figure 5: Findings on Q9

The findings demonstrate a strong tendency among respondents to rely on qualified religious scholars rather than independently searching for religious evidence. The majority of respondents strongly agreed ($n = 108$) or agreed ($n = 104$) with the statement, giving a combined total of 212 respondents (approximately 75.4%). This indicates that most participants recognise the importance of seeking guidance from individuals with formal religious knowledge and expertise, reflecting a preference for traditional religious authority over personal interpretation. Only a very small proportion disagreed ($n = 9$) or strongly disagreed ($n = 5$), while 55 respondents (approximately 19.6%) remained neutral. These results suggest that although digital technologies have made religious information widely accessible, respondents continue to place greater trust in qualified scholars when making religious decisions. The findings also provide empirical support for the continued relevance of *taqlid*, whereby ordinary Muslims acknowledge the limitations of their own religious knowledge and choose to follow recognised scholars in matters requiring specialised expertise. At the same time, the relatively large neutral group indicates that some respondents may adopt a more independent or hybrid approach by consulting multiple sources before accepting religious guidance, highlighting the influence of digital information-seeking alongside traditional scholarly authority.

Ordinary Muslims should follow the opinions of qualified religious scholars in religious matters.

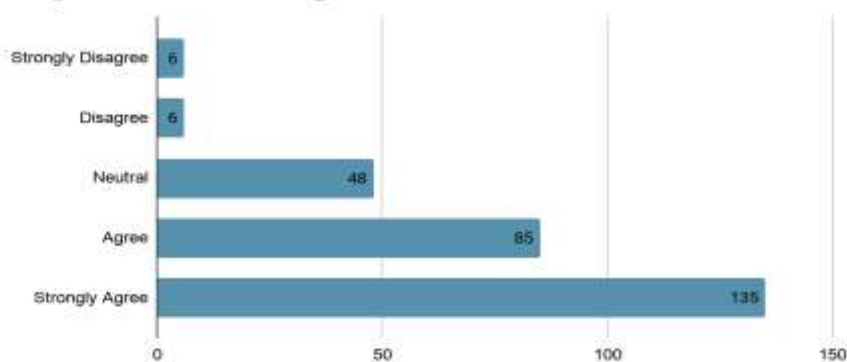


Figure 6: Findings on Q11

The findings indicate a strong preference among respondents to rely on qualified religious scholars rather than independently searching for religious evidence. A substantial majority either strongly agreed ($n = 85$) or agreed ($n = 135$) with the statement, while only 12 respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed. This suggests that respondents generally recognise the epistemic authority of trained scholars and acknowledge the limitations of their own religious knowledge, reflecting an inclination towards *taqlid* in matters requiring religious expertise. However, the presence of 48 neutral responses indicates that a notable minority may be uncertain or adopt a more balanced approach by consulting scholars while also seeking supporting evidence from other sources. These findings demonstrate that, despite the widespread availability of religious information through digital platforms, respondents continue to place considerable trust in traditional religious authority. Nevertheless, this reliance should not be interpreted as passive acceptance; rather, it highlights the need to complement scholarly guidance with religious digital literacy so that individuals can critically evaluate online religious information while maintaining confidence in qualified religious authorities.

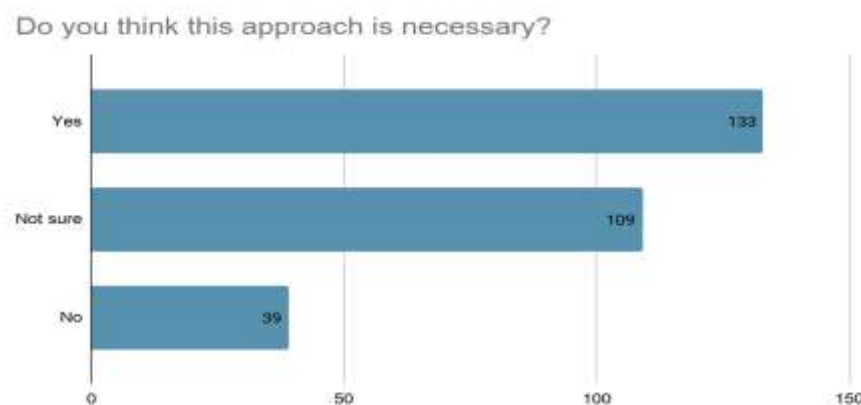


Figure 7: Findings on Q24

There is a clear leaning towards implementing *taqlid*, as the single largest group of respondents (47.3%, or 133 people) explicitly agree that the approach is necessary, compared to only 13.9% (39 people) who firmly oppose it. However, a substantial 38.8% (109 people) remain undecided, indicating that while outright resistance is very low, a significant portion of the audience requires more information, clarity, or evidence before offering full support. Moving forward, the strategy should focus on improving understanding of *taqlid* through targeted communication and education to address the doubts of this large "Not sure" group.

Possible Solution & Reform

A study among Indonesian adolescents found that, in the absence of interactive mentors or credible religious authorities, students are more likely to develop fragmented theological understandings, weak religious foundations, and "pseudo-worship" practices due to their inability to verify the accuracy and authenticity of online religious content (Abdullah et al., 2024). The authors therefore emphasise the importance of acquiring essential Islamic knowledge from qualified religious educators (*kyai*) with recognised scholarly credentials, arguing that such a foundation enables young Muslims to distinguish credible Islamic information from misleading or distorted online content.

Recognising the pervasive influence of digital technologies, Ashari and Faizin (2023) argue that modern Islamic education should move beyond simply discouraging the use of internet

resources. Instead, educational institutions should cultivate Religious Digital Literacy, a framework that integrates digital literacy skills with Islamic ethical principles (*adab*), critical evaluation, and source verification. Such an approach equips students to navigate online religious information responsibly while maintaining adherence to authentic Islamic teachings. Supporting this view, Ab. Kadir et al. (2025) developed and validated an Islamic Information Credibility Scale, proposing that Muslims should evaluate online religious information based on the credibility of the source, the accuracy and authenticity of the content, and the authority of the individual providing the information, particularly through reference to the Qur'an and authentic Hadith rather than relying on popularity or social influence. These findings reinforce the importance of systematically evaluating religious information before accepting or acting upon it.

Building upon these perspectives, this study argues that while referring to qualified religious scholars remains fundamental to Islamic religious decision-making, digital platforms have become an inseparable component of how university students seek religious guidance. Rather than viewing digital technologies as alternatives to traditional religious authority, they should be utilised as complementary tools that facilitate access to authentic religious knowledge. However, this requires students to possess the ability to evaluate the credibility of information, verify sources, distinguish between qualified and unqualified religious authorities, and critically assess online religious content before accepting or acting upon it. Accordingly, this study proposes a Religious Digital Decision-Making Model as a practical conceptual framework to guide university students in navigating digital religious information responsibly. The model integrates the principles of *taqlid*, source evaluation, *tabayyun* (verification), and religious digital literacy to promote informed religious decision-making in the contemporary digital environment. In particular, the model incorporates an explicit "Evaluate Source" stage, reflecting the validated criteria proposed by Ab. Kadir et al. (2025), to ensure that religious decisions are informed by credible, authoritative, and authentic Islamic sources rather than by online popularity or algorithm-driven visibility. Based on the findings, researchers suggest that a Religious Digital Decision-Making Model should be developed to guide students through complex religious issues in the modern era. Because students are mixing traditional concepts with digital habits, this model needs to integrate four core pillars:

- i. Digital Literacy: Helping students navigate informal online ecosystems and digital portals safely.
- ii. Source Evaluation: Training students to assess the credibility of online information rather than taking it at face value.
- iii. Verification (*Tabayyun*): Encouraging a structured method for critically verifying religious content before accepting its validity.
- iv. Religious Authority (*Taqlid*): Structuring how students can still rely on the trusted opinions of qualified religious scholars while using digital tools.

Ultimately, this model would act as a practical roadmap, ensuring students can independently verify online content while staying grounded in sound scholarly guidance. The development of this model represents a significant direction for future research.

Conclusion

Despite the widespread availability of digital platforms, university students continue to rely on the framework of *taqlid* and the guidance of religious scholars when confronted with religious dilemmas. The majority of respondents followed the scholar route, either by consulting religious scholars or referring to religious websites. Reliance on authority does not necessarily

mean blind following. At the same time, the abundance of online content concerning religious *hukm* appears to have encouraged greater caution in religious decision-making. Rather than accepting the first answer encountered, students may consult multiple sources, compare information, and seek reliable and authoritative references before accepting a religious ruling. Thus, their reliance on authority does not necessarily reflect blind adherence; instead, it may involve an informed process of identifying and evaluating credible sources. Religious decision-making therefore appears to be a multi-step process in which a substantial proportion of students also practise *tabayyun* (verification) by critically evaluating online religious information before accepting its validity. Ultimately, the coexistence of continued reliance on religious authority and increasingly sophisticated digital information-seeking behaviour highlights the need for a future Religious Digital Decision-Making Model that integrates traditional religious authority, digital literacy, source evaluation, and verification. While the findings of this study cannot be generalised to represent the behaviour of all university students in Malaysia due to the use of convenience sampling and the uneven distribution of respondents across institutions, they provide useful preliminary evidence of how students navigate religious questions in the contemporary digital environment. The findings therefore provide a basis for more extensive research involving larger and more representative samples to further examine the changing nature of religious decision-making among Malaysian university students.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to everyone who contributed to the completion of this study. Special thanks are extended to UiTM Kelantan for their support and resources that have given way to the publication of this paper.

References

- Ab Kadir, K., Sahari @ Ashaari, N., Ramli, R. Z., & Salim, J. (2025). Islamic information credibility scale development: Factors and indicators validation using fuzzy Delphi technique. *Information Development*, 41(2), 353–367. <https://doi.org/10.1177/026666669231163255>
- Abdullah, S., Mufid, M., Ju'subaidi, J., & Purwanto, P. (2024). Religious confusion and emptiness: Evaluating the impact of online Islamic learning among Indonesian Muslim adolescents. *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, 80(1). <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v80i1.9510>
- Alhayyani, M. (2024). Al-Ghazali on taqlid, ijtiḥad, and forming beliefs. *Conatus – Journal of Philosophy*, 9(2), 9–22. <https://doi.org/10.12681/cjp.36321>
- Alhayyani, M. (2026). From *Taqḥid* to digital *Ijtiḥad*: Al-Ghazali's Epistemology and the Fake News Challenge. *Philosophies*, 11(2), 39. <https://doi.org/10.3390/philosophies11020039>
- al-Zuhaili, W. (1987). *Uṣūl al-fiqḥ al-Islāmī* (Vols. 1–2). Dār al-Fikr.
- Anam, R. K. (2025). Against algorithmic authority: Al-Ghazali, digital taqlid, and the crisis of epistemic agency in the age of AI. *Journal of Islamic Philosophy and Contemporary Thought*, 3(1), 1–35. <https://jurnalufu.uinsa.ac.id/index.php/jipct/article/view/3544>
- Anderau, G. (2023). Fake news and epistemic flooding. *Synthese*, 202(4). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-023-04336-7>
- Andok, M. (2024). The Impact of Online Media on Religious Authority. *Religions*, 15(9), 1103. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15091103>
- Ashari, M. K., Faizin, M., & Shiddiq, J. (2023). Religious digital literacy of students in Indonesia and Malaysia. *Tadris: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 18(1), 189–210. <https://doi.org/10.19105/tjpi.v18i1.8794>
- Askar, A., Nurdin, N., Pettalongi, A., Pettalongi, S. S., & Basire, J. H. I. T. (2025). Online Islamic knowledge sources and their authority in Islamic learning: A case study of Indonesian Muslim universities. *Cogent Education*, 12(1), Article 2504236. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2025.2504236>
- Berger, A., Baram-Tsabari, A., & Golan, O. (2023). How Do Religious "Ask the Expert Sites" Shape Online Religious Authorities? From Clerics to Online Influencers. *Religions*, 14(4), 444. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14040444>
- Campbell, H. A., & Tsuria, R. (Eds.). (2021). *Digital religion: Understanding religious practice in digital media* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Fauzan, M., Amalina, N., & Ismail, M. (2026). Digital literacy and Islamic values: Strengthening religious understanding in the era of AI-based learning. *Global Perspectives in Education Journal*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.64008/gpej.v2i1.52>
- Hussin, N., Hashim, H., Wan Mokhtar, W. N. H., Mohd Tokiran, N. S., Nordin, N., Tengku Izhar, T. A., & Ibrahim, Z. (2020). Theorizing online information credibility among teenagers. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 10(11), 473–481. <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v10-i11/8118>
- Ibn Manẓūr, M. ibn M. (1985). *Lisān al-ʿArab* (Vol. 3). Dār al-Maʿārif.
- Jalil, M. A., Razib, M. M. H., & Islam, M. Z. (2025). The doctrine of taqlid: A road block to the progressive development of Muslim law. *International Journal of Social Science and Human Research*, 8(9), 7114–7122. <https://doi.org/10.47191/ijsshr/v8-i9-48>
- Kalwar, M. A., Ahmad, D., Khan, H. S. R., & Ilyas, N. S. (2026). Aqīdah in the digital age: Social media, religious authority, and an Islamic legal framework. *Ulul Albab: Jurnal Studi dan Penelitian Hukum Islam*, 9(2), 192–211. <https://doi.org/10.30659/jua.v9i2.51261>

- Khan, M. L., & Idris, I. K. (2019). Recognize misinformation and verify before sharing: A reasoned action and information literacy perspective. *Behavior & Information Technology*, 38(11), 1194–1206. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0144929X.2019.1578828>
- Mahmod, A. H., Guleng, M. P., & Mokhtar, H. (2026). Autoriti fatwa dalam era digital: Kepimpinan dakwah digital dan tadbir urus kredibiliti agama di Malaysia [*Fatwa authority in the digital era: Digital da'wah leadership and governance of religious credibility in Malaysia*]. *Journal of Fatwa and Falak Selangor*, 3(1), 122–161. <https://juffas.muftiselangor.gov.my/index.php/jurnal/article/view/72>
- Mubarak, M., Aulia, N. R., & Kurniati, K. (2024). Eksistensi taqlid dalam konteks pengalaman keagamaan di era kontemporer. *Aladalah: Jurnal Politik, Sosial, Hukum dan Humaniora*, 2(4), 252–262. <https://doi.org/10.59246/aladalah.v2i4.1004>
- Purwaningtyas, F., Dalimunte, M., & Dewi, S. (2024). Exploring adolescents' digital information-seeking patterns and religious behavior. *Jurnal Kajian Informasi & Perpustakaan*, 12(2), 251–278. <https://doi.org/10.24198/jkip.v12i2.58627>
- Putri, D. E. S., & Leksono, A. F. (2025). Taqlid digital dalam fenomena politik identitas berbasis keagamaan. *Journal of Law, Society, and Islamic Civilization*, 13(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.20961/jolsic.v13i1.98897>
- Rokibullah, & Laksana, M. O. (2024). Social media utilization by preachers to shape religious perceptions among Indonesian youth. *International Journal of Communication and Public Discourse*, 4(1), 11–22. <https://doi.org/10.59784/ijcpd.v2i1.7>
- Rolin, K. H. (2024). Earning epistemic trustworthiness: An impact assessment model. *Synthese*, 203(2), 39. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-023-04472-0>
- Rusnita. (2022). Taqlid from the perspective of religious education. *International Journal Education and Computer Studies*, 2(2), 69–80. <https://doi.org/10.35870/ijecs.v2i2.794>
- Saat, N. (2018). *Tradition and Islamic learning: Singapore students in the Al-Azhar University*. ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute. <https://doi.org/10.1355/9789814786867>
- Sati, A., Halim, A., Nasution, A. H., & Ridwan, M. (2025). The digital transformation of tafsir and its implications for Islamic legal derivation in the contemporary era. *MILRev: Metro Islamic Law Review*, 4(1), 389–415. <https://doi.org/10.32332/milrev.v4i1.10425>
- Supriyanto, A. (2010). *Ijtihad: Makna dan relasinya dengan syari'ah, fiqih, dan ushul fiqih*. *Maslahah: Jurnal Hukum Islam dan Perbankan Syariah*, 1(1). <https://doi.org/10.33558/maslahah.v1i1.1198>
- Tuzahra, F. (2021). Reading Online: Evaluation of Online Sources Credibility. *Journal of Research on Language Education*, 2(1), 32–36.
- Weiland, A.-M., Taubner, S., Zettl, M., Bartmann, L. C., Frohn, N., Luginsland, M., & Volkert, J. (2024). Epistemic trust and associations with psychopathology: Validation of the German version of the Epistemic Trust, Mistrust and Credulity-Questionnaire (ETMCQ). *PLoS ONE*, 19(11), e0312995. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0312995>
- Whyte, S. A. (2022). Islamic religious authority in cyberspace: A qualitative study of Muslim religious actors in Australia. *Religions*, 13(1), Article 69. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13010069>
- Yusof, N. (2016). The credibility of Islamic religious institutional websites in Malaysia. *Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication*, 32(2), 82–104. <https://doi.org/10.17576/JKMJC-2016-3202-05>