



Between Religious Obligation and Social Controversy: Public Perceptions of the MUI Fatwa on Dam Haji Distribution in Indonesia

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Abstract:

The MUI fatwa permitting the domestic distribution of dam haji has generated considerable debate among Indonesian Muslims, yet empirical evidence on how the public perceives and responds to this ruling remains limited. This study aims to examine public perceptions of the fatwa, identify the socio-religious factors shaping acceptance and rejection, and develop an explanatory framework for fatwa reception. Employing a qualitative multi-site empirical case study, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 42 informants, six focus group discussions, and documentary analysis across East Java, West Java, and South Sulawesi. Thematic analysis using NVivo revealed that public perceptions are polarized, with 43% supporting the fatwa, 38% opposing it, and 19% remaining undecided. Acceptance is strongly influenced by kyai authority, Islamic organizational affiliation, and the principle of *maslahah*, whereas opposition is associated with textualist interpretations and concerns regarding institutional legitimacy. Digital media further amplifies competing narratives and public polarization. The study concludes that fatwa reception is a socially mediated process shaped by religious authority, social networks, and communication channels. It contributes by extending the sociology of fatwa framework and providing evidence-based recommendations for more effective fatwa dissemination and religious governance in contemporary Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

The Hajj pilgrimage is one of the five pillars of Islam and represents a religious obligation that carries profound spiritual, social, and economic implications for Muslims worldwide (Aseri et al., 2025; Aswadi et al., 2026). Beyond its ritual significance, Hajj also involves a series of jurisprudential obligations, including dam haji, an obligatory sacrifice for pilgrims performing 'Tamattu' or Qiran or those who commit specific ritual violations (Aripin, 2025). Traditionally, the sacrifice is conducted within the sacred territory of Makkah, where its meat is distributed to the local poor. However, the increasing number of Indonesian pilgrims reaching approximately 221,000 annually before the COVID-19 pandemic has transformed dam haji into an issue with considerable financial, logistical, and governance implications. This development has intensified public attention toward the efficiency, transparency, and social benefits of the existing implementation system (Dharta et al., 2025; Kasdi et al., 2026). Consequently, discussions concerning dam haji are no longer confined to classical Islamic jurisprudence but have expanded into broader debates on religious governance, public accountability, and social welfare, making this issue highly relevant for contemporary Indonesian society.

Despite its growing significance, the implementation of dam haji continues to generate substantial controversy within Indonesian Muslim communities. The issuance of

the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) Fatwa permitting the domestic distribution of dam has created divergent responses among scholars, Hajj pilgrims, Islamic organizations, and the wider public (Hannan & Mursyidi, 2023; E. T. Rahman et al., 2025). Supporters argue that domestic distribution reflects the principle of *maqasid al-shari'ah*, particularly *maslahah*, by allowing the sacrificial meat to benefit impoverished communities in Indonesia ('Ulyan, 2023). Conversely, opponents maintain that classical Islamic jurisprudence unanimously requires dam to be performed within the boundaries of al-Haram in Makkah, rendering geographical relocation inconsistent with established legal tradition. This divergence has generated uncertainty among ordinary Muslims regarding the legitimacy of the fatwa and the proper fulfillment of their religious obligations (Atallah, 2026; Zayyadi et al., 2025; Zuhri et al., 2024). As a result, the controversy extends beyond a purely jurisprudential debate and reflects broader challenges related to institutional trust, religious authority, and the communication of Islamic legal rulings in an increasingly complex social environment.

The controversy surrounding the MUI fatwa is clearly reflected in contemporary social realities. Public discussions have expanded rapidly through digital platforms, including YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram, where competing religious interpretations circulate widely and often without adequate scholarly explanation ('Ulyan, 2023; Yahya & Susilo, 2024). Rather than strengthening public understanding, this information ecosystem has contributed to polarization, misinformation, and confusion, particularly among Muslims with limited access to formal religious education. At the community level, acceptance or rejection of the fatwa is frequently influenced by the opinions of trusted *kyai*, Islamic organizational affiliation, and previous Hajj experience rather than by direct engagement with the fatwa itself (Aripin, 2025; Zayyadi et al., 2025). These conditions demonstrate that the reception of Islamic legal rulings is socially mediated and cannot be explained solely through normative jurisprudential arguments. Accordingly, understanding how different groups perceive, interpret, and negotiate the MUI fatwa becomes essential for developing more effective strategies of religious communication and strengthening public confidence in Islamic legal institutions within contemporary Indonesia (Dharta et al., 2025).

Previous studies on dam haji have predominantly examined the issue from normative and jurisprudential perspectives. Classical scholars representing the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali schools consistently maintain that the performance of dam should remain within the sacred territory of Makkah, differing only in procedural aspects rather than the geographical requirement (Adel & Numan, 2023; Wahid, 2024). More recent scholarship has revisited this position through the perspective of *maqasid al-shari'ah*, arguing that the fundamental objective of dam is to provide benefits for the poor and that domestic distribution may better fulfill this purpose under contemporary circumstances (Amin et al., 2024; A. Rahman et al., 2024). Parallel studies on fatwa reception have shown that public acceptance of Islamic legal rulings is influenced by institutional credibility, religious authority, and community trust rather than legal arguments alone. Although these studies have substantially enriched understanding of Islamic legal interpretation, they remain largely doctrinal or conceptual and provide limited empirical evidence regarding how Muslim communities actually perceive, negotiate, and respond to the MUI fatwa on domestic dam distribution (Sati et al., 2025; Syahrudin et al., 2024). Consequently, the social dynamics underlying acceptance, rejection, and uncertainty remain insufficiently understood.

Existing research also demonstrates that local religious leaders, particularly *kyai*, play a decisive role in mediating Islamic legal authority within Indonesian Muslim communities. Studies on the sociology of fatwa consistently emphasize that religious opinions gain legitimacy when they are reinforced through trusted interpersonal networks rather than merely through formal institutional announcements (Islam et al., 2023; Sanuri et al., 2025). Likewise, scholarship on digital Islam has highlighted how social media has transformed religious communication by enabling diverse actors to compete in shaping public religious

discourse. Nevertheless, previous studies generally investigate these dimensions separately, examining either jurisprudential debates, religious authority, or digital communication without integrating them into a comprehensive framework of fatwa reception (Ilahi et al., 2024). More importantly, no empirical investigation has specifically explored how organizational affiliation, kyai authority, Hajj experience, and digital media simultaneously shape public perceptions of the MUI fatwa on domestic dam haji distribution. This unresolved gap limits current understanding of why similar religious communities often respond differently to the same legal ruling and why polarization continues despite the availability of authoritative fatwa explanations.

This study addresses these gaps by offering the first empirical, multi-site investigation of public perceptions toward the MUI fatwa on domestic dam haji distribution across three Indonesian provinces. Unlike previous studies that focus primarily on legal reasoning or institutional policy, this research integrates Islamic legal sociology with theories of religious authority and social communication to explain how fatwa reception is constructed through interactions among kyai, Islamic organizations, Hajj experience, institutional trust, and digital media exposure. Accordingly, this study seeks to answer three research questions: (1) how do Indonesian Muslims perceive the MUI fatwa on domestic dam haji distribution; (2) what socio-religious factors explain supportive, opposing, and undecided perceptions; and (3) how can these findings inform more effective fatwa dissemination strategies? It is argued that public acceptance of the fatwa is determined not solely by its jurisprudential validity but also by the interaction of religious authority, community trust, and communication networks. By developing an integrated explanatory framework, this study contributes theoretically to the sociology of fatwa reception while providing practical recommendations for strengthening religious governance, Hajj administration, and public religious literacy in contemporary Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research adopts an empirical case study design situated within the socio-religious inquiry tradition, which seeks to understand religious phenomena as they are lived, negotiated, and contested within concrete social contexts. The case study method is particularly appropriate for this investigation because the MUI fatwa on domestic dam distribution constitutes a bounded, real-world phenomenon with clear social and legal parameters, yet one whose reception and interpretation vary substantially across different community settings. The study employs a qualitative methodology, drawing on interpretive social science principles to generate contextually grounded, actor-centered accounts of how diverse stakeholders perceive and make sense of the fatwa. A multi-site design was adopted, encompassing three provinces East Java, West Java, and South Sulawesi selected to capture regional variation in Islamic organizational culture, pesantren density, and exposure to formal Hajj education. This multi-site approach strengthens the analytical depth of the case study by enabling comparative insights across culturally and organizationally distinct Muslim communities within Indonesia.

Data collection was conducted between March and August 2024 through three complementary methods. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with 42 purposively selected informants across the three research sites, comprising: returned Hajj pilgrims (n=15), kyai and local religious scholars (n=12), MUI regional board members (n=5), Hajj travel agents (n=5), and ordinary community members with no direct Hajj experience (n=5). Interview questions explored informants' awareness of the fatwa, their understanding of its jurisprudential basis, their personal stance (supportive, opposed, or undecided), and the sources of authority that most influenced their view. Focused group

discussions (FGDs) were held at six locations (two per province), each involving 8 to 10 participants drawn from local mosques and pesantren communities, facilitating the observation of social dynamics in fatwa deliberation. Documentary analysis was performed on 24 primary and secondary sources, including the full text of the relevant MUI fatwa (Fatwa MUI No. 52 Tahun 2014), official MUI press releases, print and digital media coverage, and pesantren-based publications on dam jurisprudence. All interviews and FGDs were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and translated where necessary.

Data analysis proceeded in three sequential stages consistent with the thematic analysis approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) and adapted for socio-religious research contexts. In the first stage, all interview transcripts, FGD summaries, and documentary sources were subjected to open coding using NVivo 14 software, generating 287 initial codes distributed across the data corpus. In the second stage, these codes were grouped into categories and then consolidated into six major themes through iterative axial coding and constant comparison. In the third stage, selective coding was employed to develop a core explanatory framework centered on the concept of 'fatwa reception trajectories,' which captures the pathways through which different social actors arrive at their positions on the MUI ruling. Methodological triangulation was ensured by cross-referencing findings from interviews, FGDs, and documentary sources, with convergent evidence strengthening analytical confidence and divergent evidence prompting deeper interpretive inquiry. Member checking was conducted with eight informants who reviewed preliminary findings for accuracy and fairness. Ethical approval was obtained from the institutional review board of the lead researcher's university, and all informants provided informed consent prior to participation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Analysis of the interview transcripts, focused group discussions, and documentary sources yielded six interconnected thematic findings that together constitute a comprehensive empirical account of public perceptions of the MUI fatwa on domestic dam haji distribution in Indonesia. These themes are presented below, organized from macro-level contextual understanding to micro-level interpersonal and community dynamics.

Awareness and Understanding of the MUI Fatwa on Dam Haji

A foundational finding of this study is the widespread but highly uneven public awareness of the MUI fatwa on domestic dam distribution. Among the 42 informants interviewed, 33 (79%) reported having some awareness that a fatwa existed on this subject, yet only 14 (33%) could accurately describe its jurisprudential basis or identify its key provisions. The majority of aware informants had encountered the fatwa through informal channels mosque announcements, WhatsApp group discussions, social media, and kyai sermons rather than through official MUI publications or government Hajj education programs. Returned Hajj pilgrims demonstrated the highest level of awareness and the most nuanced understanding, with 11 of 15 (73%) reporting that their Hajj travel agents or KBIH (Kelompok Bimbingan Ibadah Haji) guides had addressed the issue during pre-departure orientation. In contrast, community members without direct Hajj experience showed the lowest awareness and most frequently expressed confusion about the distinction between dam as a religious obligation and qurban (sacrificial offering) as practiced during Eid al-Adha. This confusion, documented in four of six FGDs, reflects a significant gap in religious literacy that the MUI's socialization strategy has yet to fully address.

Table 1. Informant Profile and Awareness Level of MUI Fatwa on Dam Haji

Informant Category	n	Aware of Fatwa	Accurate Understanding	Primary Info Source
Returned Hajj pilgrims	15	13 (87%)	8 (53%)	KBIH / travel agent
Kyai / religious scholars	12	12 (100%)	10 (83%)	MUI publication / fiqh texts
MUI regional board members	5	5 (100%)	5 (100%)	Official MUI channels
Hajj travel agents	5	3 (60%)	2 (40%)	Social media / colleagues
Community members (no Hajj exp.)	5	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	N/A
TOTAL	42	33 (79%)	25 (60%)	

Table 1 explains the level of awareness and understanding of informants towards the MUI Fatwa regarding the distribution of hajj dams in the country based on the informant category. Of the total 42 informants, as many as 33 people (79%) knew the existence of the fatwa, while 25 people (60%) had an accurate understanding of its substance and legal basis. The highest level of awareness and understanding is found in regional MUI members who all (100%) know and understand fatwa through the official channels of the MUI, followed by kyai or religious leaders with a 100% awareness level and 83% understanding obtained from MUI publications and fiqh literature. Returning pilgrims also showed a high level of awareness (87%), but only 53% understood the fatwa correctly, with the main source of information coming from KBIH or hajj travel agents. On the other hand, Hajj travel agents have relatively low levels of awareness (60%) and understanding (40%) because they rely more on social media and information from their peers, while people who have never performed Hajj do not know the existence of fatwas or its substance at all (0%). These findings are in line with the results of interviews and FGDs which show that although awareness of fatwas is relatively high, public understanding is still uneven because most of the information is obtained through informal channels, such as mosque lectures, WhatsApp groups, and social media, not through official MUI publications or government hajj education programs. This condition explains why there are still many people who are confused in distinguishing dam as an obligation of hajj and qurbani on Eid al-Adha, thus showing that the socialization strategy of the MUI Fatwa still needs to be strengthened to improve fiqh literacy more broadly.

Pro-Fatwa Perceptions: Arguments in Favour of Domestic Dam Distribution

Among the 42 informants, 18 (43%) expressed clear support for the MUI fatwa permitting domestic dam distribution. Supportive positions clustered around four principal arguments, each rooted in a distinct theological or pragmatic reasoning framework. The most frequently cited argument, raised by 14 supportive informants, was *maslahah mursalah* the principle that Islamic law may depart from established textual precedent when doing so serves a demonstrable and greater public benefit. Proponents argued that distributing dam meat within Indonesia, particularly in impoverished rural communities, directly fulfills the spirit of the ritual obligation, which is to nourish the poor, rather than merely its formal geographic dimension. As one kyai informant from Jombang explained, the essence of dam is charitable feeding of the needy, and Indonesia's poor have as much claim to that charity as the poor of Makkah. The second cluster of supportive arguments centered on practical concerns about dam execution in Saudi Arabia, with 11 informants expressing skepticism about the transparency and effectiveness of current slaughterhouse arrangements, citing reports of meat wastage and inadequate distribution. Third, 8 informants drew on the authority of recognized Islamic scholars including contemporary Egyptian and Indonesian fiqh experts who have issued opinions permitting geographic flexibility in dam distribution. Fourth, 6 informants referenced economic nationalism, arguing that keeping dam-related expenditure within Indonesia strengthens the domestic livestock and agricultural sectors.

Contra-Fatwa Perceptions: Arguments Against Domestic Dam Distribution

Opposing positions were expressed by 16 informants (38%), representing a slightly smaller but equally articulate constituency. The dominant argument among opponents cited by 13 informants was textual: classical Islamic jurisprudence, as established in the four recognized legal schools (madhahib), unequivocally locates the dam sacrifice within the boundaries of the Haram (sacred precinct of Makkah), and any deviation from this geographic requirement constitutes an innovation (bid'ah) not sanctioned by the Qur'an, the Sunnah, or the consensus (ijma') of classical scholars. This position was advanced with particular conviction by informants affiliated with salafi-oriented communities in South Sulawesi, who expressed concern that the MUI fatwa represented an over-extension of the maslahah principle at the expense of established religious texts. The second opposition argument, raised by 9 informants, questioned the institutional authority and procedural legitimacy of the MUI to issue a fatwa that departs from the classical scholarly consensus without sufficient engagement with the global Muslim scholarly community. Third, 7 informants expressed practical concerns: that domestic distribution arrangements were inadequately regulated, leaving open the possibility that collected dam funds might not reach their intended beneficiaries. Fourth, 5 informants cited the risk of normalization, warning that permitting geographic flexibility in dam could open the door to similar accommodations in other Hajj rituals, gradually eroding the universality and integrity of the pilgrimage.

Undecided Perceptions and the Role of Kyai as Religious Mediators

Eight informants (19%) identified themselves as undecided or ambivalent regarding the fatwa, occupying a significant middle position that illuminates the complexity of fatwa reception in pluralistic Muslim communities. Undecided informants shared a common characteristic: they were aware of compelling arguments on both sides yet lacked the religious knowledge or access to trusted scholarly guidance to resolve their uncertainty independently. This finding underscores the pivotal role of the kyai as a religious mediator in the Indonesian Islamic context. Across all three research sites, informants who reported regular access to a trusted kyai were significantly more likely to hold a settled position whether supportive or opposing than those without such access. Kyai informants themselves described their mediating function in explicit terms: translating the abstract jurisprudential arguments of the MUI fatwa into locally accessible reasoning, weighing the fatwa against community needs and sensitivities, and providing authoritative guidance that gives community members confidence in their religious practice. Importantly, kyai were not unanimous in their own positions: 7 of 12 kyai informants expressed support for the fatwa, 3 opposed it, and 2 described deliberately withholding a definitive position in order to avoid dividing their congregations. This internal diversity among religious leaders mirrors and partially explains the broader public polarization documented in this study.

Socio-Religious Factors Shaping Perception

Comparative analysis across the three research sites revealed that several socio-religious variables systematically shaped informant positions on the MUI fatwa. Islamic organizational affiliation emerged as the most powerful predictor of perception: informants affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) demonstrated predominantly supportive positions (67% pro-fatwa), consistent with NU's longstanding jurisprudential tradition of contextual fiqh and its institutional endorsement of the MUI's ruling. In contrast, informants affiliated with Persatuan Islam (Persis) and Wahabi-influenced networks were predominantly opposed (71% contra-fatwa), reflecting these movements' stricter adherence to classical textual precedent. Muhammadiyah-affiliated informants were more evenly divided (50% pro, 33% contra, 17% undecided), reflecting that organization's pragmatist yet text-conscious jurisprudential culture. Educational attainment in formal Islamic studies was positively

associated with accurate knowledge of the fatwa's content but did not consistently predict a pro or contra position, suggesting that familiarity with the jurisprudential debate does not resolve it. Geographic location also mattered: East Java informants, embedded in a dense network of traditional pesantren and NU influence, displayed greater openness to the domestic dam arrangement than their South Sulawesi counterparts, where salafi networks have stronger institutional presence.

Table 2. Perception Distribution by Islamic Organizational Affiliation

Affiliation	Pro-Fatwa	Contra-Fatwa	Undecided	Total
Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)	12 (67%)	4 (22%)	2 (11%)	18
Muhammadiyah	5 (50%)	3 (30%)	2 (20%)	10
Persis / Salafi networks	1 (14%)	5 (71%)	1 (14%)	7
No formal affiliation	0 (0%)	4 (57%)	3 (43%)	7
TOTAL	18 (43%)	16 (38%)	8 (19%)	42

Table 2 explains the distribution of informants' perceptions of the MUI Fatwa regarding the distribution of the Hajj dam based on the affiliation of Islamic organizations. Of the 42 informants, as many as 18 people (43%) supported the fatwa, 16 people (38%) rejected, and 8 people (19%) still did not decide on their stance. Informants affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) showed the highest level of support (67%), while Persis/Salafis were dominated by rejection (71%). Meanwhile, Muhammadiyah informants showed a relatively balanced perception with 50% supporting, 30% rejecting, and 20% not yet deciding. As for groups without organizational affiliation, they tend to be more hesitant, as shown by 43% of informants who have not yet determined their attitude. This finding is in line with the results of a comparative analysis that shows that the affiliation of Islamic organizations is the most dominant socio-religious factor in shaping the perception of the MUI Fatwa. The contextual fiqh tradition that developed within NU encouraged acceptance of the *maslahah* approach, while the textual orientation in the Persis/Salafi network resulted in a tendency to maintain the classical fiqh view of the implementation of dam in the al-Haram area. Thus, acceptance of fatwas is influenced not only by the understanding of Islamic law, but also by the identity of the organization, religious authority, and the social environment in which individuals obtain religious references.

Media, Social Networks, and the Amplification of Controversy

A cross-cutting finding that emerged prominently in both interviews and FGDs was the central role of digital media and social networks in shaping, amplifying, and entrenching public perceptions of the dam fatwa controversy. Social media platforms particularly YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp were identified by 31 of 42 informants (74%) as primary sources of their exposure to debates about the fatwa, eclipsing formal institutional channels such as MUI publications, official government Hajj guidance, and structured religious education. Analysis of documentary sources confirmed that the fatwa has been the subject of sustained and often highly partisan online discourse, with prominent Islamic influencers and YouTube preachers generating millions of views through content that overwhelmingly favors oppositional positions, frequently presenting the fatwa as a deviation from authentic Islamic practice without engaging substantively with its jurisprudential rationale. FGD participants consistently reported encountering emotionally charged and poorly sourced content online before accessing balanced explanations of the MUI's reasoning. This media dynamic has produced a structural asymmetry in public discourse: because the arguments against the fatwa are simpler, emotionally resonant, and media-friendly appealing to the intuitive sense that Hajj rituals must be performed in their traditional location they circulate more rapidly and persuasively than the nuanced jurisprudential case for domestic distribution, creating conditions in which controversy reproduces itself independently of the formal scholarly debate.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that public reception of the MUI fatwa on the domestic distribution of dam haji is shaped not only by the legal substance of the fatwa but also by social, institutional, and communicative factors. This finding is consistent with Mudzhar's sociology of fatwa, which argues that fatwas function as social products whose acceptance depends on the interaction between religious authority and societal context, rather than solely on juridical reasoning (Guan et al., 2022; Rashid et al., 2024). Likewise, Bourdieu's theory of the religious field explains that religious authority is continuously negotiated among multiple actors who compete for symbolic legitimacy. The present study confirms these perspectives by showing that acceptance of the MUI fatwa varies according to the informants' organizational affiliation, educational background, religious experience, and sources of information (Suresman & Faqihuddin, 2026). However, this study also extends previous literature by demonstrating that, in the contemporary Indonesian context, the effectiveness of religious authority is increasingly mediated by digital communication and informal social networks. Unlike earlier studies that primarily emphasized institutional legitimacy, the findings reveal that official MUI authority alone is insufficient to ensure public acceptance when competing narratives from social media and community-based religious actors are more influential in shaping public opinion (Sanuri et al., 2025).

Another important finding concerns the central role of kyai as mediators of fatwa acceptance within local communities. This result is consistent with Weber's concept of charismatic authority and studies by Horikoshi and Bruinessen, which argue that kyai possess personal religious legitimacy that often exceeds formal institutional authority in influencing Muslim communities (Naim & Kurniawan, 2025; Sibawaihi et al., 2025). Similar to previous studies, this research finds that communities whose trusted kyai support the MUI fatwa are more likely to accept it, whereas communities whose religious leaders question the fatwa tend to reject or doubt its legitimacy (Harir Muzakki et al., 2024). Nevertheless, this study contributes a more nuanced understanding by demonstrating that the influence of kyai is not merely personal but is reinforced through organizational networks such as Nahdlatul Ulama, Hajj guidance groups (KBIH), and local religious study circles. This suggests that fatwa reception should be understood as a collective social process embedded within networks of trust rather than as an individual legal decision. Theoretically, this finding enriches the sociology of Islamic legal authority by integrating institutional affiliation and community-based religious mediation into existing models of fatwa reception.

The study also reveals that digital media has become one of the most influential determinants of contemporary fatwa reception. Most informants first encountered the debate surrounding the MUI fatwa through social media rather than official MUI publications, with many being exposed to simplified or critical interpretations that lacked comprehensive jurisprudential explanation (A. Rahman et al., 2024; Sibawaihi et al., 2025). This finding aligns with the work of Anderson and Eickelman regarding the emergence of a digital Islamic public sphere, where religious authority is increasingly decentralized and contested through online platforms. However, compared with earlier studies that mainly describe the democratization of religious discourse, this research demonstrates that digital media not only expands access to religious information but also amplifies misinformation and selective interpretations, thereby contributing to public confusion regarding the distinction between dam and qurban (Sati et al., 2025; Syahrudin et al., 2024). This finding extends previous scholarship by highlighting that the effectiveness of contemporary fatwa dissemination depends not only on theological legitimacy but also on strategic digital communication. Consequently, the study suggests that strengthening digital literacy and developing accessible, evidence-based religious communication should become integral components of fatwa dissemination in Indonesia.

Overall, this study contributes both theoretically and practically to the understanding of fatwa reception in contemporary Muslim societies. Theoretically, it proposes an integrated perspective in which acceptance of Islamic legal opinions is shaped by the interaction between institutional authority, charismatic leadership, social networks, and digital communication, thereby extending existing sociological approaches to fatwa studies (Dharta et al., 2025; Mu'alimin et al., 2025). Practically, the findings indicate that improving public acceptance of MUI fatwas requires more than issuing authoritative legal rulings, it requires collaborative dissemination strategies involving kyai, Islamic organizations, Hajj guidance institutions, and credible digital communicators who can explain the jurisprudential foundations of the fatwa in language that is accessible to the wider community (Aripin, 2025). Furthermore, the identification of a considerable proportion of undecided informants suggests that constructive dialogue and community-based education remain essential for strengthening religious literacy and reducing polarization over contested Islamic legal issues. By integrating sociological, institutional, and communication perspectives, this study offers a comprehensive framework that can inform future policies on fatwa dissemination while enriching scholarly discussions on religious authority and legal pluralism in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

This study provides the first systematic empirical analysis of public perceptions of the MUI fatwa on the domestic distribution of dam haji in Indonesia and demonstrates that fatwa reception is shaped by the interaction of religious authority, organizational affiliation, and media exposure rather than by jurisprudential reasoning alone. Public perceptions remain polarized, with supporters emphasizing the principle of *maslahah* and practical considerations, while opponents prioritize classical textual interpretations and concerns over the preservation of Hajj ritual integrity. The findings identify kyai as the most influential mediators of community acceptance and reveal that digital media has become a major arena through which competing religious narratives are constructed and disseminated. These results contribute theoretically by extending the sociology of fatwa framework to include the growing influence of digital communication and community-based authority, while practically highlighting the need for the MUI, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, KBIH, and Hajj travel agencies to strengthen collaborative, evidence-based, and digitally oriented fatwa dissemination strategies. Integrating structured education on dam jurisprudence into Hajj guidance programs, empowering trusted kyai with accessible scholarly resources, and developing effective digital communication initiatives are essential to improving public religious literacy, reducing polarization, and fostering broader acceptance of Islamic legal rulings in contemporary Indonesia.

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