



## Harmonization Of Fajr Time In Indonesia: The Strategic Role Of Mui Fatwa In Uniting Different Views

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**Abstract:** Variations in determining the beginning of Fajr time in Indonesia, especially the difference between the  $-18^{\circ}$  and  $-20^{\circ}$  solar depression criteria, have sparked debate among Muslim communities. Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and Wahdah Islamiyah apply different criteria based on fiqh reasoning, astronomical calculation, and observational interpretation of fajr *ṣādiq*. This condition often confuses the public and may weaken communal unity, particularly when different prayer schedules circulate without a shared explanatory framework. This study examines the strategic role of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) fatwa as an integrative instrument for harmonizing differences in determining Fajr prayer time. Using a literature study method, the research integrates bayani, burhani, and irfani approaches and analyzes relevant documents and fatwas qualitatively. The bayani approach examines Islamic legal arguments, the burhani approach analyzes astronomical criteria and observational differences, while the irfani approach explains ethical and spiritual considerations in maintaining communal harmony. The findings show that an MUI fatwa can function as a harmonizing mechanism if supported by transparent astronomical evidence and inclusive fiqh reasoning. Such a fatwa can strengthen Islamic legal credibility, reduce public confusion, and reinforce *ukhuwah Islamiyah* through synergy between science and sharia for contemporary Indonesian Muslims facing diverse institutional prayer-time standards today in practice.

**Keywords:** *MUI Fatwa, Fajr Time, Harmonization*

**Abstrak:** Variasi dalam penentuan awal waktu Subuh di Indonesia, khususnya perbedaan antara kriteria sudut depresi matahari  $-18^{\circ}$  dan  $-20^{\circ}$ , telah memicu perdebatan di kalangan masyarakat Muslim. Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, dan Wahdah Islamiyah menerapkan kriteria yang berbeda berdasarkan penalaran fikih, perhitungan astronomi, dan interpretasi observasional terhadap fajr *ṣādiq*. Kondisi ini sering membingungkan masyarakat dan berpotensi melemahkan persatuan umat, terutama ketika jadwal salat yang berbeda beredar tanpa kerangka penjelasan yang sama. Penelitian ini mengkaji peran strategis fatwa Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) sebagai instrumen integratif untuk menyelaraskan perbedaan dalam penentuan waktu salat Subuh. Dengan menggunakan metode studi pustaka, penelitian ini mengintegrasikan pendekatan bayani, burhani, dan irfani serta menganalisis dokumen dan fatwa terkait secara kualitatif. Pendekatan bayani digunakan untuk mengkaji argumentasi hukum Islam, pendekatan burhan menganalisis kriteria astronomi dan perbedaan observasi, sedangkan pendekatan irfani menjelaskan pertimbangan etis dan spiritual dalam menjaga keharmonisan masyarakat. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa fatwa MUI dapat berfungsi sebagai mekanisme harmonisasi apabila didukung oleh bukti astronomi yang transparan dan penalaran fikih yang inklusif. Fatwa semacam ini dapat memperkuat kredibilitas hukum Islam, mengurangi kebingungan masyarakat, dan memperkuat *ukhuwah Islamiyah* melalui sinergi antara sains dan syariat bagi umat Islam Indonesia kontemporer yang menghadapi beragam standar waktu salat dari berbagai institusi.

**Kata kunci:** *Fatwa MUI, Waktu Subuh, Harmonisasi*

### A. Introduction

Indonesia, with its remarkable social, religious, and cultural diversity, presents a unique context for examining its religious practices and regulations<sup>1</sup>. Major Islamic organizations, such as Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama, and Wahdah Islamiyah, have established different criteria

<sup>1</sup> N Ishak and R R M Manitra, "Constitutional Religious Tolerance in Realizing the Protection of Human Rights in Indonesia," *Journal of Human Rights, Culture and Legal System* 2, no. 1 (2022): 31–44, <https://doi.org/10.53955/jhcls.v2i1.24>.



for determining the beginning of the Fajr prayer time. This difference is rooted in the interpretation of Islamic law (fiqh) and the diverse methods of astronomy. In the Indonesian context, the debate mainly concerns the use of different solar depression angles, especially the  $-18^\circ$  and  $-20^\circ$  criteria, in identifying *fajr ṣādiq*. The literature shows that this pluralism is a reflection of the rich intellectual tradition of Islam, but it can also pose practical challenges in its implementation<sup>2</sup>. One of the impacts is confusion in the community due to the difference in Fajr prayer times, which threatens the sense of togetherness in worship.

Fatwas have long been an important instrument in resolving differences of opinion among Muslim communities<sup>3</sup>. As an authoritative decision, religious rulings issued by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) serve as a guide that is expected to be able to bridge differences and create harmony in society<sup>4</sup>. However, fatwas do not have a normatively binding position in the national legal system, because they are not included in the hierarchy of laws and regulations, both from the juridical aspect and from the sociological dimension<sup>5</sup>. In this context, fatwas that bring together various views on the timing of Fajr prayers can provide practical solutions and serve as a common reference, as suggested by previous research that highlights the role of fatwas in maintaining social harmony<sup>6</sup>. However, literature review also shows that fatwas must be based on the integration of scientific methods and fiqh values, in order to ensure its legitimacy and relevance for Muslims.

The main objective of this research is to investigate the theological, scientific, and social dimensions of the controversy over the timing of the Fajr prayer, with a focus on the development of an integrated fatwa proposal by the MUI. The central research question is: how can the MUI fatwa serve as an integrative instrument to harmonize differences in Fajr time criteria among Islamic organizations in Indonesia? In particular, this research aims to encourage the unity of the ummah by providing clear and authoritative guidelines, and increasing the credibility of Islamic institutions through scientific and socially relevant solutions. This study contributes by proposing a harmonization framework that combines fiqh legitimacy, astronomical verification, and social benefit.

## B. Methods

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<sup>2</sup> M Hashas, "Introduction: Islam, Muslims, and Religious Pluralism: Concepts, Scope and Limits," in *Philosophy and Politics - Critical Explorations*, vol. 16 (Springer Science and Business Media B.V., 2021), 1–32, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-66089-5\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-66089-5_1).

<sup>3</sup> Z Mun'im et al., "'Ulamā', Authority, and Political Relations: How the PCNU Jember Fatwā Influenced Public Policy on Gold Mining in Silo?," *Journal of Islamic Law* 6, no. 1 (2025): 46–66, <https://doi.org/10.24260/jil.v6i1.3605>.

<sup>4</sup> Imaro Sidqi and Doli Witro, "Kedudukan Fatwa Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) Dalam Perspektif Hukum Islam Dan Nasional: Studi Implikasi Fatwa Terhadap Masyarakat," *Nizham Journal of Islamic Studies* 8, no. 01 (2020): 62, <https://doi.org/10.32332/nizham.v8i01.2103>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibnu Elmi Achmad Slamet Pelu and Jefry Tarantang, "Fatwa Majelis Ulama Indonesia Sebagai Solusi Permasalahan Umat Islam Di Indonesia," *Al-Manahij: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam* 14, no. 2 (2020): 307–16, <https://doi.org/10.24090/mnh.v14i2.3927>.

<sup>6</sup> Nasikhin Nasikhin, Raharjo Raaharjo, and Nasikhin Nasikhin, "Moderasi Beragama Nahdlatul Ulama Dan Muhammadiyah Dalam Konsep Islam Nusantara Dan Islam Berkemajuan," *Islamic Review: Jurnal Riset Dan Kajian Keislaman* 11, no. 1 (2022): 19–34, <https://doi.org/10.35878/islamicreview.v11i1.371>.



This study uses a literature research design with a social approach, bayani,<sup>7</sup> burhani,<sup>8</sup> and irfani approaches. The social approach is used to understand the impact of different Fajr time criteria on Muslim communities, while the bayani approach examines Islamic legal arguments related to fajr ṣādiq. The burhani approach analyzes astronomical reasoning, including solar depression angles, hisab calculation, and observational differences. The irfani approach is not used to determine the astronomical angle directly, but to explain ethical, spiritual, and communal considerations in maintaining ukhuwah Islamiyah. This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of documents and literature related to the early determination of the Fajr prayer time by Muhammadiyah, NU, and Wahdah Islamiyah. This research focuses on Muhammadiyah, NU, and Wahdah Islamiyah.<sup>9</sup> Data collection techniques are taken from official publications, fatwas, and scientific studies from each organization, as well as supporting literature from leading journals.

The data were analyzed with a qualitative descriptive and comparative approach to identify the central patterns and themes that emerged from each organizational approach. This method allows for an in-depth interpretation of the theological and scientific foundations used by the three organizations.<sup>10</sup>

The analysis was conducted by comparing the fiqh basis, astronomical criteria, methodological assumptions, and harmonization potential of each organization. This procedure strengthens the focus of the study and avoids a merely descriptive presentation of existing opinions.

## C. Results And Discussion

### 1. The Fiqh Perspective, Astronomical Approach, And Fatwa Methodology Regarding Fajr Time

Each work raises a varied focus on determining the beginning of Fajr time, both from the aspect of fiqh, astronomical approaches, and fatwa methods. These studies show that the debate is not only normative, but also methodological, because different scholars and institutions use different textual interpretations, observational standards, and astronomical assumptions. These differences can be grouped as follows:

#### a. Fiqh Approach

A number of previous studies have made important contributions to the discussion of the determination of the beginning of fajr time. Abdur Rachim<sup>11</sup>, for example, highlighting the urgency of understanding the shari'i postulates that are the basis for determining the time of Fajr, focusing on the interpretation of the verses of the Qur'an and the hadith of the Prophet related to the phenomenon of dawn. A similar approach was also used by Slamet Hambali<sup>12</sup>,

<sup>7</sup> M. Ibnu Naufal Maskuri, "Pendekatan Bayani, Burhani Dan Irfani Dalam Pembentukan Mental Spiritual Siswa MTs N 2 Tanggamus Lampung," *Fondatia* 6, no. 4 (2022): 1103–21, <https://doi.org/10.36088/fondatia.v6i4.2368>.

<sup>8</sup> Bayu Teja Sukmana, Lomba Sultan, and Kurniati Kurniati, "Penyelesaian Hukum Islam Dengan Corak Pendekatan Bayani, Ta'Lili Dan Istislahi," *Al-Sulthaniyah* 11, no. 2 (2023): 1–20, <https://doi.org/10.37567/al-sulthaniyah.v11i2.1620>.

<sup>9</sup> C. N. Creswell, J. W., & Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (SAGE Publications., 2018).

<sup>10</sup> Sugiono, *Memahami Penelitian Kualitatif* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2014).

<sup>11</sup> Abdur Rachim, *Ilmu Falak* (Jakarta: Liberty, 1983).

<sup>12</sup> Slamet Hambali, *Pengantar Ilmu Falak*, 1st ed. (Banyuwangi: Bismillah Publisher, 2012).



which emphasizes the importance of caution in interpreting normative texts so as not to cause errors in worship practices.

Meanwhile, Alimuddin Examining the differences of opinion of classical and contemporary scholars regarding the limits of *fajr ṣādiq*, as well as its relevance to modern astronomical conditions<sup>13</sup>. All three tend to focus on normative-theological aspects, especially related to fiqh arguments and shari'i postulates, without exploring in depth the astronomical approach or the integration between scientific and religious approaches. This shows that the discourse on the beginning of Fajr time is still dominated by textual approaches, while empirical studies based on astronomical observations are still limited. Therefore, this study positions fiqh reasoning as the normative foundation, but argues that it must be connected with astronomical verification to answer the practical problem of different prayer schedules.

### ***b. Astronomical Approach***

The writings of Nihayatur Rohman, Tono Saksono, Unggul Suryo Ardi, and Alimuddin highlight the use of astronomical observation and calculation methods, which show variations in the position of the sun in determining the time of dawn. These variations indicate that the difference between  $-18^\circ$ ,  $-19^\circ$ ,  $-20^\circ$ , and other criteria is affected by observational instruments, sky brightness, atmospheric clarity, altitude, light pollution, and the threshold used to identify the first horizontal light of *fajr ṣādiq*.

- 1) Tono Saksono showed the results of Uhamka's research which set a solar depression angle of  $-13.4^\circ$ <sup>14</sup>.
- 2) Nihayatur Rohman used photometry and observed the dawn of *fajr ṣādiq* at  $-18^\circ 10'$ <sup>15</sup>.
- 3) Abdur Rachim<sup>16</sup> and Slamet Hambali<sup>17</sup> It sets  $-20^\circ$  and  $-19^\circ$  for the beginning of dawn, respectively. his range of findings shows that the astronomical debate cannot be reduced to a single number without explaining the observational context and the definition of dawn visibility used by each researcher.
- 4) The light pollution distribution map and radiance quantity data were obtained from a platform that provides light pollution mapping, and were subsequently analyzed through a literature review. The findings indicate that radiance values are directly proportional to the level of light pollution and are influenced by population growth in Medan from 2017 to 2022. As a result, the visibility of astronomical objects and phenomena has progressively declined<sup>18</sup>.
- 5) The results may lead to confusion among the general public who are not familiar with the underlying science. This issue arises from variations in the Sun's altitude. In practice,

<sup>13</sup> Alimuddin, "Perspektif Syar'i Dan Sains Awal Waktu Shalat," *Ad-Daulah* 1, no. 1 (2012): 120–31.

<sup>14</sup> Tono Saksono, *Evaluasi Awal Waktu Subuh Dan Isya*, cet. 1 (Jakarta: UHAMKA Press, 2017).

<sup>15</sup> Nihayatul Rohmah, *Syafaq & Fajar (Verifikasi Dengan Aplikasi Fotometri Tinjauan Syar'i Dan Astronomi)* (Yogyakarta: Lintang Rasi Aksara Books, 2012).

<sup>16</sup> Rachim, *Ilmu Falak*.

<sup>17</sup> Hambali, *Pengantar Ilmu Falak*.

<sup>18</sup> Marataon Ritonga, Arwin Juli Rakhmadi, and Abu Yazid Raisal, "Penentuan Waktu Subuh Menggunakan All Sky Camera Dan Metode Moving Average Di Kota Medan," *Mahkamah : Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam* 8, no. 1 (2023): 13, <https://doi.org/10.24235/mahkamah.v8i1.13033>.



some adopt criteria ranging from  $-18^\circ$  to  $-13^\circ$  for the Sun’s elevation, while others use  $-19^\circ$  or  $-20^\circ$ <sup>19</sup>.

**c. Fatwa (Ruling)**

Supardin discusses the position of fatwa in contemporary jurisprudence, but focuses more on the MUI in general<sup>20</sup>. Abd. Rauf Amin examining the problems of the MUI fatwa related to Palestine, showing social reactions to the MUI fatwa, which can be a comparative study to understand the public's response to the fatwa on Fajr time determination<sup>21</sup>.

Previous research has discussed various aspects of determining the beginning of dawn from the perspective of fiqh and astronomy. However, there has been no research that specifically highlights the urgency of the MUI fatwa on the beginning of dawn and how it affects the harmonization of differences between Islamic organizations in Indonesia. This article therefore contributes by linking fiqh plurality, astronomical disagreement, and institutional fatwa authority into one integrative framework.

**2. Standards for Determining the Early Dawn Time of Islamic Organizations**

The determination of Fajr time in Indonesia is a very relevant topic in the study of Islamic astronomy and jurisprudence. Various Islamic organizations in Indonesia have different criteria in determining the beginning of Fajr, especially related to the angle of the sun's depression below the horizon. This difference arises due to variations in ijthad methods, fiqh approaches, and the results of observations made by related organizations. Astronomically, a two-degree difference between  $-18^\circ$  and  $-20^\circ$  can produce a noticeable difference in the prayer schedule because the sun moves gradually below the horizon before sunrise.

The following table presents the differences in the Fajr time standards used by several Islamic organizations in Indonesia, including Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama, and Wahdah Islamiyah. Each organization has the main parameters in determining the beginning of Fajr time, either based on the foundation of fiqh, rukyat (observation), and astronomical theory. The table also shows that each criterion reflects not only a numerical angle, but also a methodological preference.

**Table 1. Standard Dawn Time of Islamic Organizations**

Organization	Standard Dawn Time	Main Parameters
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<sup>19</sup> Unggul Suryo Ardi, “Problematika Awal Waktu Shubuh Antara Fiqih Dan Astronomi,” *AL - AFAQ : Jurnal Ilmu Falak Dan Astronomi* 2, no. 2 (2021): 87–102, <https://doi.org/10.20414/afaq.v2i2.2921>.

<sup>20</sup> Supardin Supardin, “Kedudukan Lembaga Fatwa Dalam Fikih Kontemporer,” *Jurnal Al-Qadau: Peradilan Dan Hukum Keluarga Islam* 5, no. 2 (2018): 249, <https://doi.org/10.24252/al-qadau.v5i2.7106>.

<sup>21</sup> Abd Rauf Muhammad Amin et al., “Problematic Fatwa: An In-Depth Sociological Investigation of MUI’s Fatwa on Supporting Palestine’s Struggle,” *El-Usrah* 7, no. 1 (2024): 237–52, <https://doi.org/10.22373/ujhk.v7i1.22020>.



Organizations Muhammadiyah	Using a solar depression angle of $-18^{\circ 22}$	Based on the fiqh foundation of observation <sup>23</sup> .
Organizations Nahdlatul Ulama	Using a solar depression angle of $-20^{\circ}$	Based on the principles of Islamic jurisprudence and visual observation <sup>24</sup>
Organizations Wahdah Islamiyah	Using a solar depression angle of $-17.5^{\circ}$	Foundations of Fiqh and astronomical observations and theories <sup>25</sup> .

### 3. Tolerance Considerations

#### a. View of plurality

The three organizations have different views in responding to plurality. Muhammadiyah, which emphasizes a scientific-based methodology, tends to be tolerant of differences as long as the approach is based on scientific analysis. This shows Muhammadiyah's openness to structured and verified arguments, reflecting the spirit of modernity in understanding Islamic law<sup>26</sup>. In addition, Muhammadiyah continues to prioritize the bayani, burhani, and irfani approaches as the basis for determining the criteria for the beginning of the time of Fajr, each of which describes a textual, rational, and spiritual perspective in understanding the phenomenon<sup>27</sup>.

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), with a rukyat approach, is more conservative in maintaining the tradition of direct observation. NU assesses plurality through a traditional lens, which is rooted in the view that Islamic law needs to reflect the local context. Diversity in a global society is inevitable. With this difference, it is hoped that each individual can respect various aspects such as religion, thought, ethnicity, nationality, race, and language, and so on<sup>28</sup>.

Meanwhile, Wahdah Islamiyah shows flexibility by adopting an approach that blends global and local views, demonstrating readiness to bridge differences by using compromise as a basis. This overall attitude reflects the diversity of methods in the Islamic tradition<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> T R Fitra and A Silvana, "Moderate Islamic Jurisprudence: Study of Muhammadiyah's Decision on Changes in Criteria for Fajr Prayer Time," *Mazahib Jurnal Pemikiran Hukum Islam* 20, no. 1 (2021): 43–76, <https://doi.org/10.21093/mj.v20i1.3150>.

<sup>23</sup> Majelis Tarjih dan Tarjih PP Muhammadiyah, *Kriteria Waktu Subuh* (Yogyakarta, 2020).

<sup>24</sup> Pengurus Besar Nahdlatul Ulama Lembaga Falakiyah, "Hasil Kajian Awal Waktu Subuh Di Indonesia," no. 164 (2018): 31909735.

<sup>25</sup> A Royyani et al., "Criteria for Determining Subuh Prayer Time by the Wahdah Islamiyah Jamaat: Socio-Religious Implications," *Ijtihad: Jurnal Wacana Hukum Islam Dan Kemanusiaan* 25, no. 1 (2025): 55–84, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijtihad.v25i1.55-84>.

<sup>26</sup> D Hermansyah and ..., "Eksplorasi Konsep Moderasi Dan Toleransi Dalam Ajaran Kemuhmadiyah: Implikasi Untuk Harmoni Antaragama," ... *Nasional Lppm Ummat* 22 (2024): 1–16, <https://journal.ummat.ac.id/index.php/semnaslppm/article/view/23010%0Ahttps://journal.ummat.ac.id/index.php/semnaslppm/article/download/23010/9252>.

<sup>27</sup> Taufiqurrahman Kurniawan and Fuad Riyadi, "Pendekatan Bayani, Burhani, Dan Irfani Dalam Menentukan Awal Waktu Subuh Di Indonesia," *YUDISIA : Jurnal Pemikiran Hukum Dan Hukum Islam* 12, no. 1 (May 11, 2021): 17–34, <https://doi.org/10.21043/yudisia.v12i1.10472>.

<sup>28</sup> Slamet Slamet, "NADHLATUL ULAMA DAN PLURALISME: Studi Pada Strategi Dakwah Pluralisme NU Di Era Reformasi," *KOMUNIKA: Jurnal Dakwah Dan Komunikasi* 8, no. 1 (1970): 60–78, <https://doi.org/10.24090/komunika.v8i1.749>.

<sup>29</sup> Chris Chaplin, "Salafi Islamic Piety as Civic Activism: Wahdah Islamiyah and Differentiated Citizenship in Indonesia," *Citizenship Studies* 22, no. 2 (2018): 208–23, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2018.1445488>.



**b. Harmonization Opportunities**

Muhammadiyah shows readiness to compromise in the context of harmonization. However, this compromise is conditional on the validity of the methodology used by the other party. This attitude, although pragmatic, is still selective, so it requires an equalization of perceptions first. Muhammadiyah is known for the concept of Manhaj Tarjih which is open to new ideas that have a sharia and scientific basis<sup>30</sup>. Thus, harmonization must begin with transparent criteria, comparable observational data, and an agreed definition of *fajr šādiq*.

NU places more emphasis on tradition-based adaptation, which presents additional challenges to achieving harmonization due to the reluctance to adopt approaches that are considered too far removed from the local context. However, the literature notes that NU can support a cross-tradition approach as long as it does not violate basic sharia principles. Therefore, NU is known as Islam Nusantara. Akhmad Sahal understands Islam Nusantara as a combination of cultural and religious aspects that are closely related. This perspective reflects Islam that is able to adapt between the boundaries of regions where there are special cultures and traditions. As a result, Islam is no longer understood rigidly and exclusively, but is more open and respectful of differences, so that it is able to accommodate the values that develop in a certain region<sup>31</sup>. For this reason, any harmonization effort should not be framed as replacing tradition, but as validating the tradition through renewed observation and scientific dialogue.

On the other hand, Wahdah Islamiyah opens a space for joint discussion, creating opportunities for harmonization This attitude reflects the orientation of this organization to be the link between conservative and progressive views<sup>32</sup>. Its flexible position can support a mediating process led by MUI, especially if all parties are involved in the formulation of criteria.

All three organizations show real opportunities for harmonization, albeit with different approaches. With the spirit of openness, dialogue, and inclusivity, existing differences in methodology do not have to be an obstacle to the creation of common ground. The MUI fatwa that is based on scientific studies and considers aspects of the benefit of the people can be a bridge in formulating guidelines that can be accepted by various parties. The main requirement is that the fatwa should not merely choose one angle, but explain the legal, astronomical, and social reasons behind the selected criterion.

**Table 2. Tolerance Considerations**

Aspect	Muhammadiyah	Nahdlatul Ulama	Wahdah Islamiyah
Views on plurality	Tolerant of other views as long as they are scientific	Prioritizing local rukyat	Tolerant with a flexible approach

<sup>30</sup> Sulidar Sulidar, “Wawasan Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah,” *Tajdida*, 2020, <http://journals.ums.ac.id/index.php/tajdida/article/view/7606/4349>.

<sup>31</sup> Ahmad Baso, *Islam Nusantara Ijtihad Jenius Dan Ijma’ Ulama Indonesia*, 1st ed. (Jakarta Pusat: Pustaka Afid, 2015).

<sup>32</sup> Nurul Wasilah Wahidin, Fatmawati, and Nur Hijriah, “Analisis Variasi Kriteria Awal Waktu Subuh Di Indonesia Terhadap Pelaksanaan Ibadah Salat Dan Puasa,” *Elfalaky* 7, no. 1 (2023): 45–64, <https://doi.org/10.24252/ifk.v7i1.38760>.



Possibility of harmonization	Memungkinkan harmonisasi dengan kompromi	Emphasizing tradition-based adaptation	Opening up space for joint discussions
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#### 4. The Importance of the MUI Fatwa on the Criteria for the Beginning of Dawn

Efforts to unify the prayer time criteria continue, with calls on the government to set clear and consistent standards to resolve these differences<sup>33,34</sup>. The Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) plays an important role in determining the criteria for the beginning of Fajr time in Indonesia. MUI, as a national scholarly body, has a network of branches throughout Indonesia and serves as an advisor to the Islamic community and the government<sup>35</sup>. This institutional position enables MUI to mediate between organizational autonomy and the public need for a common prayer-time reference.

The fatwa of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) plays an important role in determining the criteria for the beginning of Fajr time in Indonesia. In the context of the different angles of the solar depression used by various Islamic organizations, the presence of the MUI fatwa serves as an official guideline that can reduce differences of views and increase harmony in Muslim society<sup>36</sup>. However, the fatwa will be more persuasive if it is formulated through participatory deliberation involving fiqh scholars, astronomers, Islamic organizations, and government institutions.

The theological implications of fatwa are also evident in the methodological formulation, which includes references from the Qur'an, hadith, analogies, consensus, and *maqāṣid sharī'ah*. This approach highlights the profound theological influence and underlies the implementation of policies with a strong and directed framework<sup>37</sup>. In the case of Fajr time, *maqāṣid sharī'ah* is relevant because the fatwa must protect religious validity, public certainty, and communal unity at the same time. Here are some important aspects related to the urgency of the MUI fatwa in determining the criteria for the beginning of Fajr time.

<sup>33</sup> Tasnim Rahman Fitra and Ade Silvana, "Moderate Islamic Jurisprudence: Study of Muhammadiyah's Decision on Changes in Criteria for Fajr Prayer Time," *Mazahib*, June 30, 2021, 43–76, <https://doi.org/10.21093/mj.v20i1.3150>.

<sup>34</sup> A Musonnif et al., "Government Position in Religious Authority Contestation in Indonesia: Reviewing the Government Authority in Determining the Beginning of Islamic Months," *De Jure: Jurnal Hukum Dan Syar'iah* 16, no. 2 (2024): 336–62, <https://doi.org/10.18860/J-FSH.V16I2.27517>.

<sup>35</sup> A Damanhuri and A C Hadi, "Contextualising Fajr Sadiq: Response to Dawn Research Findings with the Sky Quality Meter (SQM)," *Mazahib Jurnal Pemikiran Hukum Islam* 23, no. 1 (2024): 155–98, <https://doi.org/10.21093/mj.v23i1.7293>.

<sup>36</sup> M L Hakim et al., "Between Exclusivity and Inclusivity of Institutions: Examining the Role of the Indonesian Ulema Council and Its Political Fatwa in Handling the Spread of Covid-19," *Khazanah Hukum* 5, no. 3 (2023): 230–44, <https://doi.org/10.15575/kh.v5i3.30089>.

<sup>37</sup> K Hamim, L S Bin Mujib, and A Muhasim, "Religious Fatwā and Human Security: Managing Public Health through the Lens of Islamic Jurisprudence in Indonesia and Saudi Arabia," *Khazanah Hukum* 6, no. 3 (2024): 234–50, <https://doi.org/10.15575/KH.V6I3.40478>.



### **a. Mitigating Community Confusion**

Differences in methods in determining the beginning of Fajr time can cause confusion among Muslims. Common sources of public confusion regarding the criteria for early dawn in Indonesia include differences in the timing of dawn, the use of different observation methods, and the influence of Islamic organizations and government agencies. The main factors contributing to public confusion include the various methods and criteria adopted by prominent Islamic organizations and government agencies, as well as the interaction between astronomy and fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) in determining the entry of dawn time in the Indonesian context<sup>38,39</sup>. This confusion increases when prayer applications, mosque schedules, and organizational calendars display different Fajr times without explaining the criteria used.

Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and Wahdah Islamiyah, have different approaches in determining the angle of the sun's depression, namely  $-18^\circ$  for Muhammadiyah,  $-20^\circ$  for NU, and  $-17.5^\circ$  for Wahdah Islamiyah as shown in Table 1. This change in criteria causes public unrest and confusion, as different organizations and apps may indicate different prayer times<sup>40</sup>. Therefore, the public needs not only a final schedule, but also a clear explanation of why the criteria differ.

The Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) plays an important role in issuing fatwas, which are opinions or legal interpretations on various matters related to Islamic law. These decrees (fatwas) serve as a guide for the Islamic community in Indonesia, address various socio-religious issues, and help unite different opinions<sup>41</sup>. Fatwas issued by the MUI can help resolve differences in religious practices by providing a uniform attitude that is acceptable to all parties. This is important in maintaining harmony and preventing chaos among Muslims<sup>42</sup>. Thus, Muslims no longer experience doubts in carrying out the Fajr worship on time. In this sense, the MUI fatwa functions not only as a legal statement, but also as a public communication instrument that explains the basis of the adopted criterion.

### **b. Increasing the Credibility of Islamic Law**

Facing differences of views regarding the beginning of fajr time, MUI will not only consider aspects of fiqh but also scientific approaches based on astronomical data. By including scientific

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<sup>38</sup> Mohd Saiful Anwar Mohd Nawawi et al., "Hijri Month Determination in Southeast Asia: An Illustration Between Religion, Science, and Cultural Background," *Heliyon* 10, no. 20 (2024): e38668, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e38668>.

<sup>39</sup> F Nelli, "Disclosure of Ijtihad: The Changes of the Early Time of Dawn as a Sharia and Science Integration Effort," *Jurnal Ilmiah Al-Syir'ah* 20, no. 1 (2022): 16–33, <https://doi.org/10.30984/jis.v20i1.1803>.

<sup>40</sup> E A Rojak and R Fawzi, "The Normative Basis of Islamic Astronomy For The Transformation of Prayer Schedules To Digital And Its Accuracy," *El-Usrah* 7, no. 2 (2024): 602–22, <https://doi.org/10.22373/ujhk.v7i2.22097>.

<sup>41</sup> M Sofwan Jauhari and A Ghoni, "The Level of People's Obedience to MUI Fatwas (COVID-19, Bank Interest, and Interfaith Marriage)," *Ahkam: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* 20, no. 2 (2020): 233–56, <https://doi.org/10.15408/ajis.v20i2.18685>.

<sup>42</sup> M Shuhufi et al., "Islamic Law and Social Media: Analyzing the Fatwa of Indonesian Ulama Council Regarding Interaction on Digital Platforms," *Samarah* 6, no. 2 (2022): 823–43, <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjkh.v6i2.15011>.



data, MUI aims to increase the acceptance and credibility of its fatwas among Muslims. This approach is in line with the MUI's broader strategy to use inclusive, flexible, and progressive methods in addressing socio-religious issues<sup>43</sup>. The credibility of the MUI fatwa is also supported by its historical role in guiding the Islamic community and the government, as can be seen from its influence on state policies and regulations<sup>44</sup>. For the Fajr issue, credibility depends on the transparency of astronomical data, the clarity of fiqh reasoning, and the involvement of relevant experts.

Islamic law, which is rooted in the Quran and Hadith, remains relevant in different eras and contexts. This law adapts to changes in society and technological advancements, so it remains applicable and relevant<sup>45</sup>. In line with that, the MUI has issued a fatwa endorsing the integration of hisab and rukyat, which promotes an integrated approach to determining Islamic dates and prayer times. This integration helps resolve disputes and ensures consistency in religious observance. The same integrative logic can be applied to Fajr time by connecting textual indicators of fajr sādiq with measurable astronomical phenomena<sup>46,47,48</sup>.

By integrating the method of hisab and rukyat (observation), the MUI fatwa shows that Islamic law has flexibility in responding to contemporary issues. This confirms the relevance of Islamic law in responding to the challenges of modern times without ignoring existing sharia principles. Thus, the MUI fatwa is not only a religious guideline but also shows that Islam is able to dialogue with science. This dialogue is essential because Fajr time determination depends on both normative religious texts and empirical observation of the natural horizon.

### ***c. Strengthening the Unity of the Ummah***

Decisions (Fatwas) that are inclusive and take into account different approaches from different Islamic organizations can create harmony in the midst of diversity of opinions<sup>49</sup>. The MUI fatwa serves as an important guide for the Muslim community in Indonesia, providing religious

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<sup>43</sup> Hakim et al., "Between Exclusivity and Inclusivity of Institutions: Examining the Role of the Indonesian Ulema Council and Its Political Fatwa in Handling the Spread of Covid-19."

<sup>44</sup> F Mustafid, K Nasution, and A Sodikin, "Positivization of the Council of Indonesian Ulema's Halal Fatwa: Policy and Position in Indonesian Legislation," *Juris: Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah* 23, no. 1 (2024): 155–66, <https://doi.org/10.31958/juris.v23i1.10859>.

<sup>45</sup> Ismail Koto et al., "Islamic Holy Days: The Contention of Rukyatul Hillal and Hisab Hakiki Wujudul Hilal Disputes for Muslims in Indonesia," *Pharos Journal of Theology*, no. 105(2) (March 2024), <https://doi.org/10.46222/pharosjot.105.210>.

<sup>46</sup> Marwadi Marwadi, Rina Heriyanti, and Farah Nuril Izza, "The Fiqh of Hisab-Ru'ya in the Twentieth Century Indonesia: Study on the Thoughts of Hamka, Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy, and Moenawar Chalil about the Unification of Hijri Calendar," *Al-Manahij: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam* 17, no. 1 (April 6, 2023): 13–26, <https://doi.org/10.24090/mnh.v17i1.7902>.

<sup>47</sup> Sakirman Sakirman, "Respon Fikih Terhadap Perkembangan Teknologi Rukyat," *Al-Manahij: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam* 14, no. 1 (June 2, 2020): 69–86, <https://doi.org/10.24090/mnh.v14i1.3190>.

<sup>48</sup> Ahmad Junaidi, "Syahadah Rukyatulhilar Using Astro Digital Imaging: From Subjectivity to Objectivity," *De Jure: Jurnal Hukum Dan Syariah* 14, no. 1 (June 29, 2022): 58–74, <https://doi.org/10.18860/j-fsh.v14i1.15062>.

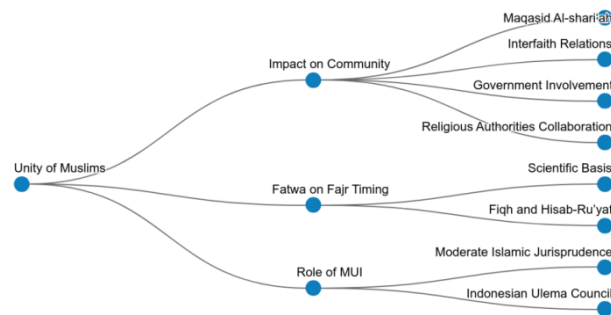
<sup>49</sup> A Musadad et al., "A Maqāṣid Al-Sharī'ah Analysis of the Indonesian Ulema Council's Fatwa on Interfaith Greetings within Contemporary Human Rights Discourse," *Jurnal Ilmiah Mizani* 12, no. 2 (2025): 770–88, <https://doi.org/10.29300/mzn.v12i2.9610>.

decisions on various issues to ensure uniformity and adherence to Islamic teachings<sup>50</sup>. This role is important in maintaining the harmony and unity of religious people. In the specific case of Fajr time, unity should be understood as coordinated guidance that respects valid scholarly differences while reducing unnecessary public confusion<sup>52</sup>.

The fatwa issued by the MUI has a significant impact on the religious practices of Muslims in Indonesia. Fatwas help solve complex religious problems and provide an attitude that society can follow. With the fatwa agreed upon by various parties, Muslims can carry out worship more calmly and without feeling doubt. Unity in this aspect of worship time is important in strengthening ukhuwah Islamiyah and avoiding divisions in the community. This is why the harmonization of Fajr time should prioritize explanation, consultation, and gradual acceptance rather than imposing uniformity without adequate reasoning.

Therefore, the MUI fatwa acts as an adhesive that maintains the unity of the ummah in Indonesia. As another example, the MUI fatwa is very effective in strengthening unity as the case of boycotting products that support Israel is very effective<sup>53</sup>.

**Figure 1. Concept Map of the Association of the Muslim Ummah**



The concept map above shows a concept mapping that illustrates the relationship between the "Unity of Muslims" and several important elements that support the realization of such unity. This map shows how various religious, social, and institutional aspects contribute to maintaining the unity of the ummah, especially in the religious context in Indonesia. In this study, the map should be read as a conceptual framework for MUI-based harmonization of Fajr time criteria.

Institutions such as the MUI play a strategic role in maintaining unity through the application of Moderate Islamic Jurisprudence and its authority as the Indonesian Ulema Council. MUI acts as a mediator as well as a unifier in responding to religious issues that have

<sup>50</sup> Sofwan Jauhari and Ghoni, "The Level of People's Obedience to MUI Fatwas (COVID-19, Bank Interest, and Interfaith Marriage)."

<sup>51</sup> Arief Marizki Purba, Nabila Fahira Nasution, and Immanuel Cristwo Bangun, "Islam and Cults: A Study of the Implementation of the Fatwa Policy of the Indonesian Ulema Council," *Pharos Journal of Theology*, no. 105(2) (March 2024), <https://doi.org/10.46222/pharosjot.105.216>.

<sup>52</sup> Zeffry Alkatiri, "Defend Islam Rally Action 212 and Their Reunion: The Failure of Forming a New Ritual," *Cogent Arts and Humanities* 10, no. 2 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2023.2286069>.

<sup>53</sup> Fiqih Aqilla Ekowidi, "Dinamika Industri Halal Di India: Studi Kasus Pemboikotan Produk Halal Oleh Kelompok Sayap Kanan," *Indonesian Journal of Peace and Security Studies (IJPSS)* 4, no. 2 (2022): 78–94, <https://doi.org/10.29303/ijpss.v4i2.115>.



the potential to divide the ummah. In the Fajr time debate, this mediating role requires MUI to connect fiqh arguments, astronomical findings, and the practical needs of worshippers.

#### **d. Promoting a Scientific Approach.**

The Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) needs to develop a scientific approach in determining the beginning of Fajr time in Indonesia. There are several insights on how the MUI integrates scientific findings into the process of issuing fatwas. The MUI has shown a pattern of incorporating scientific findings into its fatwas. This integration is evident in various fatwas, such as the fatwa on vasectomy/tubectomy, the meningitis vaccine, and the determination of Ramadan, Shawwal, and Dhul-Hijjah and the direction of the Qibla<sup>54</sup>. These examples show that scientific information can support fatwa formulation when the issue involves empirical phenomena.

The fatwas issued by the MUI are generally based on empirical and scientific evidences (burhani), as well as on ethical principles in Islamic teachings, such as *maslahah* (public interest) and *sadd al-dzari'ah* (avoiding danger)<sup>55</sup>. Therefore, their formulation is not only aimed at the benefit of man, but must also be in harmony with divine principles. This is due to the characteristics of Islamic law that integrate divine values, which originate from God as the regulator of human life. For Fajr time, this means that astronomical measurement should be guided by the religious objective of determining worship time correctly and preventing public uncertainty.

The use of scientific data in determining Fajr time by MUI also contributes to advancing the integration of religious knowledge and empirical science in Indonesia. Such integration strengthens the originality of this study because it frames the MUI fatwa not only as a legal response, but as a methodological bridge between fiqh plurality, astronomical evidence, and social harmony.

#### **D. Conclusion**

The findings of the study indicate that differences in determining the criteria for the beginning of Fajr time among Muhammadiyah, NU, and Wahdah Islamiyah can be managed through a tolerance and harmonization approach. These differences are rooted in the methods and instruments used, as well as the interpretation of the dawn phenomenon. More specifically, the difference between the  $-18^\circ$  and  $-20^\circ$  solar depression criteria reflects not only fiqh interpretation, but also different astronomical assumptions, observational methods, and levels of caution in identifying fajr *ṣādiq*. Therefore, constructive and scientific-based dialogue is needed to find common ground that is acceptable to all parties.

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<sup>54</sup> M Rasyid Et Al., "SCIENCE AND ITS ROLE IN CHANGES IN ISLAMIC LEGAL THOUGHT (AN ANALYSIS OF CHANGES IN THE FATWA OF THE INDONESIAN ULEMA COUNCIL DUE TO RECENT SCIENTIFIC FINDINGS)," *Syariah: Jurnal Hukum Dan Pemikiran* 23, no. 2 (2023): 120–37, <https://doi.org/10.18592/sjhp.v23i2.11361>.

<sup>55</sup> Ilyas Supena, "Konstruksi Epistemologi Fikih Pandemi: Analisis Fatwa-Fatwa MUI," *Al-Manahij: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam* 15, no. 1 (June 11, 2021): 121–36, <https://doi.org/10.24090/mnh.v15i1.4203>.



The fatwa of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), if based on astronomical studies, sharia postulates, and consideration of social benefit, can be a solution in uniting these differences of views. An inclusive and research-based fatwa will reflect the spirit of unity in diversity, so that it can provide more relevant and applicable guidelines for Muslims in Indonesia. Such a fatwa should integrate the bayani approach to ensure normative legitimacy, the burhani approach to strengthen scientific accuracy, and the irfani approach to maintain ethical awareness, spiritual caution, and ukhuwah Islamiyah. In addition, efforts to educate the public about the method of determining the time of Fajr and the importance of mutual respect in differences of opinion will further strengthen ukhuwah Islamiyah. With this approach, the unity of the people can be maintained, and the practice of worship becomes more harmonious in accordance with the development of science and contemporary needs. Future studies should strengthen this discussion through multi-location empirical dawn observations across Indonesia using standardized instruments and transparent methods.

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