

Strategies for Teaching Islamic Education in Higher Education Institutions in the Context of Contemporary Educational Transformation

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Abstract

Classical Islamic pedagogy warrants knowledge through *sanad*, a chain of transmission traced back to a recognized teacher; digital platforms warrant it through reach, recency, and rhetorical appeal. Lecturers in Islamic Religious Education teach where the two systems meet, in courses that assess and credential. Prior research shows religious authority online is contested and that students arrive with source hierarchies their institutions did not build, but stops at the learner; what teachers do in response is unexamined. This instrumental single-case study asks how lecturers at a State Islamic university that was elevated to university status (UIN Madura) manage competing warrants. Data came from 15 interviews (6 lecturers, 6 students, 3 program directors), 3 classroom observations, and 6 documents, analyzed using hybrid deductive–inductive thematic coding with negative-case testing. Lecturers construed the difficulty not as erroneous content but as a contest over the warrant. They responded with practices we term *authority work*: re-anchoring a circulating claim to a warranted chain while keeping it open, routinizing verification into a standing slot, and re-sequencing instruction so the classical text arrives as an analytic tool rather than opening doctrine. This work extends digital epistemic authority from learner to teacher. It specifies *sanad* as the warrant, but it strains against a value the construct does not carry: reverence-ranking of the canonical text, which some students defended as *adab*. Enabling and blocking conditions were social and administrative rather than technological, relocating the problem from teacher competence to institutional design.

Keywords: digital epistemic authority; religious authority; *sanad*; Islamic higher education; religious moderation; pesantren.

Introduction

Classical Islamic pedagogy authorizes knowledge through transmission. A claim carries weight because it can be traced through a chain of named transmitters, the logic condensed in *sanad*, and because a recognized teacher stands behind it. Digital platforms are authorized on other grounds: engagement, recency, reach, and the capacity to extend to anyone with an account the ability to address a mass audience. Lecturers in Islamic Religious Education (IRE/PAI) teach at the point where the two systems meet and must work within both at once, in courses that assess and credential.

Empirical research has documented the shift itself. Young Indonesian scholars assemble rulings from online sources that their own teachers do not control.¹ Content analysis of online religious teaching finds authority in Islamic religious education moving away from institutionally credentialed figures.² Secondary students' critical awareness of internet-sourced religious material is uneven and inconsistently cultivated by their schools.³ At the level of public discourse, contestation over who may speak for Islam has reshaped Indonesian religious politics.⁴ Across this work, the finding is consistent: the warrant is contested. What lecturers do about it inside their own courses is not part of the record.

Research on technology in Indonesian Islamic higher education asks a different question and has grown quickly. One strand models adoption by applying established behavioral frameworks to blended and online environments.⁵ A second measures the

¹ Rusli, M. S. Hasyim, and Nurdin, "A New Islamic Knowledge Production and Fatwa Rulings: How Indonesia's Young Muslim Scholars Interact with Online Sources," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 14, no. 2 (2020): 499–518, <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2020.14.2.499-518>; Rusli and N. Nurdin, "Understanding Indonesia's Millennia of Ulama Online Knowledge Acquisition and Use in Daily Fatwa-Making Habits," *Education and Information Technologies* 27, no. 3 (2022): 4117–40, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-021-10779-7>.

² Maemonah et al., "The Shift in the Authority of Islamic Religious Education: A Qualitative Content Analysis on Online Religious Teaching," *The Qualitative Report* 27, no. 9 (2022): 1830–46, <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2022.5325>.

³ Ju'subaidi et al., "Students' Critical Awareness of the Internet and Social Media Use as Resources for Islamic Learning in Indonesian Public Senior High Schools," *British Journal of Religious Education* 47, no. 2 (2025): 140–55, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2024.2368888>.

⁴ W. Akmaliah, "The Demise of Moderate Islam: New Media, Contestation, and Reclaiming Religious Authorities," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 10, no. 1 (2020): 1–24, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v10i1.1-24>.

⁵ Maryono, D. Puspitasari, and Purwanto, "Factors Influencing the Active Engagement of Undergraduate Students in Blended Learning," *Suranaree Journal of Social Science* 20, no. 1 (2026): e282320, <https://doi.org/10.55766/sjss282320>; M. C. Utami et al., "Assessing Technology Readiness for Blended Learning among Students in Indonesian Islamic Higher Education Institutions," *Journal of Theoretical and Applied Information Technology* 104, no. 8 (2026): 174–85.

effects of particular instructional designs.⁶ A third locates the binding constraint in the teacher, documenting gaps in technological pedagogical content knowledge and in lecturer readiness,⁷ including technology self-efficacy among lecturers at Madura itself. Each strand treats religious material as content to be delivered through a better channel. The question of what happens to the warrant behind the content does not arise.

Five recent syntheses confirm that this is an absence in the field rather than an oversight in our reading. Wahid maps the intersection of Islam and digital technology using bibliometric methods.⁸ Arif, Aziz, and Ma'arif review the competencies of IRE teachers in the digital age and frame the problem as a skills deficit.⁹ Arif et al. review the use of artificial intelligence in IRE.¹⁰ Bujangga et al.¹¹ Review social media in Islamic education, and Trimulyo et al. review educational technology for disseminating Islamic values.¹² Where authority appears in these syntheses, it appears as background. None treats the management of competing warrants as a pedagogical task.

The study closest to the present one is Askar et al., which examined how students at Indonesian Muslim universities orient themselves toward online Islamic knowledge

⁶ Muhamad Fauzi et al., "Mainstreaming Religious Moderation in Indonesian Higher Education: Perspectives on Goals, Curriculum Content, and Implementation Strategies," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 22, no. 2 (December 2025): 400–422, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.v22i2.12901>; Amirudin Amirudin, Iqbal Amar Muzaki, and Sri Nurhayati, "Problem-Based Learning as a Pedagogical Innovation for Transforming Higher Education Students' Islamic Religious Comprehension," *Educational Process: International Journal* 18 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.22521/edupij.2025.18.412>; Syahraini Tambak and Desi Sukenti, "Student Involvement Within Islamic Teacher Education: For a Future Profession," *QIJIS (Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies)* 11, no. 2 (January 2024): 317, <https://doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v11i2.8141>.

⁷ S. Murhayati et al., "Integration of TPACK Model in Islamic Religious Education Curriculum: An Analysis of Readiness and Barriers," *Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences* 46, no. 4 (2025): 460418, <https://doi.org/10.34044/j.kjss.2025.46.4.18>; Salma Rozana et al., *Pedagogical Transformation in Islamic Religious Education: Integrating Deep Learning and Coding for Elementary School Students*, 10, no. 2 (2026): 92–106.

⁸ S. H. Wahid, "Exploring the Intersection of Islam and Digital Technology: A Bibliometric Analysis," *Social Sciences and Humanities Open* 10 (2024): 101085, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2024.101085>.

⁹ Muhamad Arif, M. K. N. A. Aziz, and M. A. Ma'arif, "A Recent Study on Islamic Religious Education Teachers' Competencies in the Digital Age: A Systematic Literature Review," *Journal of Education and Learning (EduLearn)* 19, no. 2 (2025): 587–96.

¹⁰ M. Arif et al., "Artificial Intelligence in Islamic Religious Education: A PRISMA-Based Review and the SEI-CHAT Framework," *Online Learning in Educational Research* 6, no. 1 (2026): 65–85, <https://doi.org/10.58524/oler.v6i1.993>.

¹¹ H. Bujangga et al., "Social Media in Islamic Education: A Systematic Review of Current Trends, Benefits, and Challenges," *Asian Journal of Human Services* 29 (2025): 409–23, <https://doi.org/10.14391/ajhs.29.409>.

¹² A. Trimulyo et al., "Educational Technology for Disseminating Islamic Values: A Systematic Literature Review and Bibliometric Analysis," *Research Journal in Advanced Humanities* 7, no. 2 (2026), <https://doi.org/10.58256/0ha3hq85>.

sources and the grounds on which they judge those sources authoritative.¹³ Their account stops at the student. It establishes that students arrive with source hierarchies their institutions did not build, and it leaves open what teaching does in response. That response is the object of this study.

Three bodies of theory bear on the question, and none was built for it. Berger and Golan (2024) propose *digital epistemic authority* to account for how online religious learning enables self-socialization and reconfigures which sources count as legitimate; they developed the construct in religious communities outside Islam and directed it at learners rather than teachers.¹⁴ Campbell, through the religious-social shaping of technology, establishes that religious communities negotiate technology in relation to tradition rather than passively receive it, and that authority is reworked through that negotiation; her unit of analysis is the community, not the classroom.¹⁵ Mezirow supplies a learning mechanism: a ruling encountered online that contradicts prior teaching is, in his sense, a disorienting dilemma, but transformative learning theory assumes the learner arbitrates between frames on rational grounds and is silent on entitlement to adjudicate a religious claim.¹⁶

Two elements are missing for the present case. The first is the teacher, positioned within an institution that assesses and credentials, and is therefore unable to leave the question open. The second is *sanad*, a warrant mechanism with no direct counterpart in the Christian and Jewish contexts where digital-religion theory was largely developed. We therefore take Berger and Golan's construct as a starting point and extend it with a sensitizing concept, in Blumer's sense, which we call *authority work*: the practices through which teachers re-anchor circulating religious claims to warranted chains of transmission while keeping those claims open to discussion.¹⁷ The concept directs

¹³ A. Askar et al., "Online Islamic Knowledge Sources and Their Authority in Islamic Learning: A Case Study of Indonesian Muslim Universities," *Cogent Education* 12, no. 1 (2025): 2504236, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2025.2504236>.

¹⁴ A. Berger and O. Golan, "Online Religious Learning: Digital Epistemic Authority and Self-Socialization in Religious Communities," *Learning, Media and Technology* 49, no. 2 (2024): 274–89, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2023.2169833>.

¹⁵ Heidi A. Campbell, "The Rise of the Study of Digital Religion," *Digital Religion. Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*, Routledge, London and New York, 2013, 1–21.

¹⁶ Jack Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*, vol. 350 (Jossey-bass San Francisco, 1991).

¹⁷ Herbert Blumer, "What Is Wrong with Social Theory?," *American Sociological Review* 19, no. 1 (February 1954): 3, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2088165>.

attention to a class of practices. It is not a model offered for confirmation, and the Discussion specifies where our data extend, qualify, and contradict it.

Three features make Madura a strategic rather than a convenient site for observing that work. *First*, the institution is mid-transformation. In May 2025, Presidential Regulation 52/2025 elevated the State Islamic Institute (IAIN) of Madura to university status as Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Madura. Within Indonesia's system of state Islamic higher education institutions (Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam Negeri, PTKIN), elevation obliges an institution to broaden its disciplinary portfolio, expand digital infrastructure, and compete on metrics set outside the religious sciences, even as its religious faculties are expected to deepen. The two demands do not obviously align.¹⁸ Second, Madurese religious culture organizes authority around persons, an order condensed in the formula *Buppa'*, *Babbu'*, *Guru*, *Rato*, and a substantial proportion of students enter from pesantren. Person-based warrants are therefore unusually visible here and less likely to be obscured by secularized institutional norms than at a metropolitan campus. Third, PTKIN carries a state mandate to mainstream religious moderation through teaching,¹⁹ an agenda described as being implemented only superficially in some institutions,²⁰ and resisted by lecturers in others.²¹ The site is politically live rather than neutral. If authoritative work is observable anywhere in Indonesian Islamic higher education, it should be observable here, and its absence at this site would raise doubts about the construct more generally.

This study, therefore, examines how IRE lecturers at UIN Madura manage competing warrants in their teaching. Three questions guide the analysis: RQ1. How do IRE lecturers describe the challenge that platform-circulated religious content poses to their courses? RQ2. What do they do in response, and how do they justify those responses

¹⁸ Hayadin et al., "Contemporary Changes in Islamic Higher Education in Indonesia: Dynamic Encounter between Modernization and Tradition," *Journal of Al-Tamaddun* 20, no. 1 (2025): 189–200, <https://doi.org/10.22452/JAT.vol20no1.14>; S. Sapiudin et al., "Developing a Digitally Integrated Critical-Contextual Learning Model of Ushul Fiqh for Future Islamic Education Teachers," *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research* 24, no. 6 (2025): 653–71, <https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.24.6.30>.

¹⁹ M. Nasir and M. K. Rijal, "Keeping the Middle Path: Mainstreaming Religious Moderation through Islamic Higher Education Institutions in Indonesia," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 11, no. 2 (2021): 213–41, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v11i2.213-241>.

²⁰ Chusnul Chotimah, Saifuddin Zuhri Qudsy, and Mirna Yusuf, "Superficial Implementation of Religious Moderation in Islamic Educational Management," *Cogent Education* 12, no. 1 (2025): 2442235.

²¹ M. Syaifuddin et al., "Lecturers' Resistance to Religious Moderation Policy in Handling Radicalism: Evidence from State Islamic University of Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, Indonesia," *Pakistan Journal of Life and Social Sciences* 22, no. 2 (2024): 3314–29, <https://doi.org/10.57239/PJLSS-2024-22.2.00244>.

in relation to transmission-based warrants? RQ3. Which institutional and cultural conditions do they identify as enabling or constraining that work?

The contribution is bounded, and we state the bounds here rather than only in the limitations section. Empirically, the study offers an account of how lecturers respond pedagogically to contested religious warrants, a response that existing work on Indonesian Muslim university students establishes as necessary but does not examine.²² Conceptually, it extends Berger and Golan's²³ digital epistemic authority from learners to teachers and specifies the place of *sanad* within it; the construct is theirs, and our claim is to extension rather than origination. In practice, it addresses PTKIN leaders who are implementing digital transformation and religious moderation mandates simultaneously and have little evidence of how the two interact within a single course. As an exploratory single-case study, it supports analytic rather than statistical generalization, and the concluding section returns to that limit.

Method

This study employs a qualitative and instrumental single-case study design. This case was selected not because the institution is inherently unique, but because it provides access to a process that is difficult to observe elsewhere: how faculty members manage conflicting religious knowledge frameworks within the formal curriculum. This design follows Yin's conventions regarding case protocols, scope limitations, and chains of evidence, while its analytical orientation is interpretive rather than positivist.²⁴

The study is delimited as follows. The unit of analysis is the teaching practices of IRE faculty regarding religious content circulating on digital platforms. The contextual scope is courses offered in the IRE program at UIN Madura. The temporal scope is September 2025 through April 2026. Activities outside these parameters, including lecturers' personal use of social media, are not included.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling, combining criterion sampling with maximum variation.²⁵ The inclusion criterion for faculty was teaching

²² Askar et al., "Online Islamic Knowledge Sources and Their Authority in Islamic Learning: A Case Study of Indonesian Muslim Universities."

²³ Berger and Golan, "Online Religious Learning: Digital Epistemic Authority and Self-Socialization in Religious Communities."

²⁴ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*, 6th ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2018).

²⁵ M. Q. Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods: Integrating Theory and Practice*, 4th ed. (SAGE, 2015).

responsibility for at least one IRE course between September 2025 and April 2026. Variation was sought across three dimensions believed to shape how lecturers interpret transmission-based warrants: length of teaching experience; educational background (pesantren or general higher education); and whether the courses taught are text-centered (e.g., Qur'anic and hadith studies) or issue-centered (e.g., Islamic ethics and religious moderation). Students were included only after completing at least two IRE courses, so that they could speak to variation among instructors rather than to a single class.

The final sample comprised six faculty members, six students, and three program directors/administrators (Table 1), for a total of 15 interviewees. Recruitment proceeded through direct invitation followed by referral: six faculty were contacted, and all agreed; ten students were contacted, of whom four declined owing to off-campus commitments; and three program directors/administrators agreed to participate.

Sample size was determined by information power rather than data saturation.²⁶ Information power holds that the number of participants required decreases as the aim narrows, the sample becomes more specific, support from established theory strengthens, the quality of dialogue rises, and the analytic strategy becomes more case-focused. This study has a narrow aim, a highly specific sample, and a well-established theoretical anchor in digital epistemic authority,²⁷ and an in-depth single-case analytic strategy. Recruitment continued until further interviews yielded variation within the established categories rather than new categories.

Table 1. Participants (identifiers harmonized to a single roster)

ID	Role	Years of service	Course/background
L1	Lecturer	10	Introduction to Islamic Studies (text-centered)
L2	Lecturer	8	Qur'anic Studies & Hadith (text-centered)
L3	Lecturer	3	History of Islamic Education (text-centered)
L4	Lecturer	7	Theology and Sufism / Akhlak Tasawuf (text- and issue-centered)
L5	Lecturer	8	Fiqh & Ushul Fiqh (text-centered)
L6	Lecturer	4	Islam and Madurese Culture / Religious Moderation (issue-centered)

²⁶ K. Malterud, V. D. Siersma, and A. D. Guassora, "Sample Size in Qualitative Interview Studies: Guided by Information Power," *Qualitative Health Research* 26, no. 13 (2016): 1753–60.

²⁷ Berger and Golan, "Online Religious Learning: Digital Epistemic Authority and Self-Socialization in Religious Communities."

PD1	Program director (Head of Study Program)	—	—
PD2	Program director/administrator	—	—
PD3	Program director/administrator	—	—
S1	Student (semester 7; pesantren alumnus)	—	≥2 IRE courses completed
S2–S6	Students (mixed pesantren / general backgrounds)	—	≥2 IRE courses completed

Codes identify all participants throughout. Names, course codes, and other details that could permit identification in a small program have been omitted or generalized.

Three data sources were selected to allow lecturers' accounts of their teaching to be compared with both directly observed practices and the documents in which those practices were planned and recorded (Table 2).

Table 2.
Data sources and their analytical functions

Source	Volume	Analytical function	Main RQ
Semi-structured interviews	15 (6 lecturers, 6 students, 3 program directors)	Accounts of challenges, responses, and their justifications	RQ1, RQ2
Non-participant classroom observation	3 sessions	Practices actually enacted, including those not reported	RQ2
Documents	6 items (program profile, curriculum, syllabi/semester lesson plan (RPS))	Planned practices and institutional conditions	RQ2, RQ3

Interviews were semi-structured and ranged from approximately 38 to 52 minutes (mean = 45). The guide covered four domains: instances in which students introduced religious content from external sources; instructors' responses and their reasoning; the role of classical texts and *sanad* in the course; and institutional support or obstacles. Questions were open-ended and incident-anchored, asking participants to describe specific episodes rather than offer general overviews, to reduce the tendency of professional respondents to give normative accounts of what should have happened.

Three class sessions were observed, in Introduction to Islamic Studies (L1), Qur'anic Studies & Hadith (L2), and Theology and Sufism (L4), between September 2025 and April 2026. Observation was non-participant: the researcher sat apart from the students and did not join the discussion. Field notes were recorded using a structured protocol. The document corpus (program profile, curriculum, and course syllabi) is treated as evidence of institutional intentions and planned conditions rather than as a

record of what occurred. Where a document contradicts an interview account, both are retained, and the discrepancy is analyzed rather than resolved in favor of one party.

Analysis followed a hybrid deductive–inductive thematic approach (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane),²⁸ operationalized with the coding conventions of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña.²⁹ This hybrid form was chosen because the study begins from a sensitizing concept rather than a closed framework or a blank slate. Blumer's distinction is important here: a sensitizing concept indicates where to look without determining what will be found, so the procedure must be able to disconfirm it.³⁰

Analysis proceeded in five stages. *Stage 1, Familiarisation.* All transcripts, field notes, and documents were read in full before coding, with analytic notes throughout: *stage 2, First-cycle coding.* Three code types were applied simultaneously. Provisional codes were derived from digital epistemic authority as formulated by Berger and Golan,³¹ source evaluation, legitimacy, and self-socialization. Descriptive and in vivo codes were generated inductively, with in vivo codes used whenever participants employed terms specific to Islamic scholarship. Process codes captured actions performed during teaching episodes.

Stage 3, Testing provisional codes. Each provisional code was checked against the coded quotations and classified as retained, modified, or deleted. Deleted codes are reported in the Findings rather than discarded, because a sensitizing concept that has not been addressed at all cannot be said to have been tested. Inductive codes with no counterpart in the framework are retained and reported as candidate extensions.

Stage 4, Second-cycle coding. Codes were grouped into categories and organized into themes. Category boundaries were tested by returning to the original quotes and asking whether they could be reassigned; where reassignment was justified, boundaries were redrawn.

Stage 5, Negative-case analysis. Data inconsistent with each emerging theme were actively sought rather than merely noticed. Each theme was tested against three counter-explanations before being retained: that the practice reflects resource constraints rather

²⁸ Blumer, "What Is Wrong with Social Theory?"

²⁹ Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (Washington: SAGE Publications, 2014).

³⁰ Blumer, "What Is Wrong with Social Theory?"

³¹ Berger and Golan, "Online Religious Learning: Digital Epistemic Authority and Self-Socialization in Religious Communities."

than epistemic reasoning; that it reflects institutional compliance with religious moderation policy rather than the lecturer's own stance; and that it reflects the avoidance of controversial questions rather than their management. Themes that withstood these tests were retained.

Table 3.
Audit trail from data to theme (illustrative)

Raw quote (translated)	First-cycle code	Type	Category	Theme
"What is often missing is the spiritual and ethical dimension. That is why I always include a digital reflection at the end of each session, for example, presenting a case of cyberbullying and then discussing it from an ethical perspective." (L1)	Reorganizing online material within an ethical framework	Process	The practice of re-anchoring	Bringing platform content into a justifiable framework
"Flexibility can be a double-edged sword. If mismanaged, rather than deepening understanding of classical texts, it can dilute it, because instructors tend to choose topics that are current but superficial." (L4)	Curricular flexibility as a threat to textual depth	In vivo / inductive	Perceived trade-offs in curriculum reform	Maintaining depth amid flexibility

Trustworthiness is addressed against Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four criteria, each with stated procedures. *Credibility*. Triangulation across interviews, observations, and documents, and prolonged engagement from September 2025 to April 2026. Participants' reflections were treated as additional data rather than as validation: where a participant disagreed with an interpretation, the disagreement was recorded and analyzed rather than used to override the analysis.

Transferability. Thick description of setting, participants, and institutional conditions allows readers to judge applicability to their own contexts. The study claims to perform analytic, not statistical, generalization. *Dependability*. A documented audit trail includes the interview guide, observation protocol, a codebook with definitions and decision rules, analytic memos, and dated notes on coding decisions and category revisions. An external auditor reviewed the trail and traced several randomly selected themes back to the raw data.

Confirmability. Reflexive memos were maintained throughout, documenting the first author's initial reactions and assumptions; interpretive columns in the field notes were kept separate from descriptive columns; and the external audit is described above.

Positionality and reflexivity. The first author is a member of academic staff at the site. This affords access to classrooms, documents, and colleagues that an outside researcher would gain only slowly, as well as an understanding of the institutional vocabulary, curriculum, and religious idioms that participants use. It also poses three risks: colleagues may present their teaching in professionally acceptable terms; students who know the researcher also teaches may soften criticism of faculty; and familiarity may lead to treating local categories as self-evident rather than as objects of analysis. Four steps addressed these risks. Participation was voluntary and unrelated to any evaluation, and participants were told that their responses would not be shared with program directors in an identifiable form. Students were interviewed by a researcher with no academic relationship to them. Reflexive memos written after each interview, noting expectations and unexpected moments, were reviewed in Stage 3 to check whether provisional codes were supported by data or merely by familiarity. An external auditor from outside the institution was chosen to challenge assumptions that insiders would not question.

Ethics. Participants were identified by code; names, course codes, dates, and other identifying characteristics were omitted or generalized. Recordings and transcripts were preserved. Because the study touches on religious interpretation, where professional and personal commitments intertwine, participants were allowed to review and withdraw quotes attributed to them before submission.

Findings

Across sources, the most stable finding is that what lecturers describe as the problem of platform-circulated content is not the content but the *warrant*, the grounds on which a claim is entitled to settle a religious question in a course that assesses and credentials. This reframing organizes the section. RQ1 establishes how lecturers construe the challenge; RQ2 sets out the practices through which they respond, reading through the sensitizing concept of *authority work*; RQ3 identifies the conditions under which that work is possible or blocked. Table 4 maps each theme to its research question and supporting sources. The section reports one provisional code that the data did not support and four inductive codes with no counterpart in the starting framework, and it closes with the negative-case tests each theme was required to survive.

Table 4.
Themes, research questions, and supporting sources

Theme	RQ	Interview	Observation	Document
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1. The disputed object is the warrant, not the content	RQ1	L1, L2, L4, L6, S1, PD1	(obs: L2, L4)	—
2. Re-anchoring: relocating a claim to a warranted chain while keeping it open	RQ2	L1, L2, L4, L6	(obs: L1, L2, L4)	(doc: syllabi)
3. Curricularizing verification (the routinized <i>tabayyun</i> slot)	RQ2	L4, L6, S1	(obs: L4)	(doc: semester lesson plan/RPS)
4. Inductive re-sequencing and the <i>adab</i> counter-pressure	RQ2	L4, S1	(obs: L4)	—
5. The internalization blind spot	RQ2	L2, L4	—	(doc: assessment rubric)
6. A socially enforced proportion ceiling	RQ3	L4, PD1	—	(doc: curriculum minutes)
7. Administrative compression, generic training, thin infrastructure	RQ3	L2, L4, PD1	—	(doc: semester lesson plan RPS/course learning outcomes (CPMK))
8. Adjudication migrates off the institutional record	RQ3	L2, L4, S1	—	—

RQ1, The disputed object is the warrant, not the content

Lecturers did not describe platform-circulated material as difficult because it was factually wrong. In *fiqh*, especially, several noted that disagreement is native to the discipline. What they described as new was a shift in how students treated entitlement in a claim. The clearest account came from L4, recalling a first-semester *Fiqh* service course on ritual purification. A student raised his hand, opened a YouTube video for the class, and reported that a preacher had said the sevenfold washing for severe impurity was unnecessary because the underlying *hadith* was weak:

"The problem was not whether that opinion was right or wrong; in *fiqh*, there is legitimate disagreement. The problem was that the student treated a YouTube video as an authority equal to, or even above, my explanation, which drew directly on comparative *fiqh*. He did not ask, 'Is there another view?' He asked, 'The YouTube ustadz says this, so which one is correct?' As if the validity of an argument were decided by the number of views, not by the strength of the evidence and its scholarly chain." (L4)

The episode names the structure precisely: two rival principles of legitimacy meeting inside a single classroom. One is condensed in *sanad*; a claim carries weight because it can be traced through named transmitters, and a recognized teacher stands behind it. The other is metric and rhetorical, reach, recency, and a case that "sounds convincing." Berger and Golan's construct of digital epistemic authority anticipates this reconfiguration of which sources count as legitimate; the present data extend it from the

learner, where they developed it, to the teacher who must adjudicate between the two principles in real time.

Students corroborated the structure from the other side of the desk. S1, a seventh-semester pesantren alumnus, sorted online sources by exactly the criterion the lecturers defended:

"With well-known scholars who have a clear *sanad*, I feel safe. The problem is the small channels with provocative titles, 'This Is the Innovation People Think Is Sunnah,' 'Is This Scholar Deviant?' Those sometimes leave me confused, especially when the argument sounds convincing." (S1)

That a student already ranks sources by *sanad* is consistent with Askar et al.'s finding that students arrive with source hierarchies that their institutions did not build. What the data add is the point at which that private hierarchy becomes a public problem. S1 described several days of genuine uncertainty over whether the *qunut* in the dawn prayer was recommended or an unwarranted innovation, after a well-produced video contradicted the *Shāfi'ī* position taught in class; the uncertainty resolved only when he approached the lecturer afterward and was walked through the *khilāfiyya*, the legitimate boundary of disagreement. In Mezirow's terms, this is a disorienting dilemma. Still, it carries a feature his theory lacks: the learner does not treat himself as entitled to arbitrate between frames on rational grounds alone. He seeks a warrant and refers the dilemma upward.

Two features distinguish the teacher's position from the learner's and recur throughout the RQ1 data. The dilemma is public: it surfaces in front of the class, often with the video playing, so the lecturer cannot defer it. And it is non-negotiable in a way it is not for a learner browsing alone, because the course assesses and credentials; leaving the question open is itself a graded act. L4 was explicit about the resulting trap: to say "that video is wrong" is to "position myself as authoritarian and close off critical thought," while to say nothing is to concede that view-count and warrant are equivalent. The response to that trap is the object of RQ2.

RQ2, Authority work: re-anchoring while keeping the question open

We use *authoritative work* to name the practices through which lecturers re-anchor circulating claims to warranted chains of transmission while keeping those claims open to discussion. The data support the concept but also specify it, extend it, and mark one point at which the practice generates its own resistance.

2. The re-anchoring move

The recurrent response was neither an endorsement nor a prohibition, but a redirection from the claim's content to the criteria for adjudicating it. L4's handling of the purification episode is the paradigm case:

"I took a middle path. I said, 'All right, let us analyze this together.' I opened the book, showed the underlying hadith, set out the positions of the four schools, explained why the majority require sevenfold washing, and I was honest that some scholars permit fewer. Then I asked the whole class: 'How do you know that someone is qualified to be a reference in a matter of fiqh? What are the criteria?' From there I moved into the *adab* of seeking knowledge and scholarly authority." (L4)

The move has a consistent grammar across lecturers. The claim is not refuted; it is relocated into a framework, the four schools, the strength of evidence, and the qualification of the speaker, within which it can be weighed. Authority is reasserted not through the lecturer's status but by making the criteria of authority the explicit object of study. L1 described a milder, standing version of the same instinct: closing each session by re-situating an online case within an ethical framework rather than pronouncing on it (Table 3). L2 named it as a boundary he would not cross for one class of material:

"For anything to do with the *sanad* or *matn* of hadith, I still use the conventional way, reading the text, then examining it together. I do not dare replace it entirely with digital methods, because the methodology of transmission requires a precision that does not fit being reduced to fast content. If it is forced, I fear only the skin is left, and the methodological essence is lost." (L2)

L6, teaching an issue-centered moderation course, met an extreme social-media narrative brought to class by a student, not with condemnation but with methodological dissection:

"The content took me aback, but I tried not to blame it outright. I invited him and the class to take the argument apart together, to see where it was methodologically weak." (L6)

Read together, these accounts survive the reading that re-anchoring is merely the avoidance of a controversial question. In each case, the lecturer engages with the substance and provides an alternative basis for judgment rather than closing the topic.

1. Curricularizing verification

Where the framework anticipates authority work as an in-the-moment negotiation, the data show lecturers converting it into routine. After the purification episode, L4 institutionalized the response:

"Since that incident, at the start of every Fiqh session, I insert a ten-minute slot I call *Tabayyun Konten* (content verification). In turn, a student shows one piece

of religious content from social media they found that week, and we analyze it together: who is speaking, what is their scholarly background, what is their evidence, and whether it aligns with what we study in class." (L4)

L6 made a parallel change to the course plan, inserting sessions on sorting sources that, in his words, "were not in my RPS/semester lesson plan before; now I include them." S1 confirmed the slot's existence and rarity, naming his one lecturer who ran it regularly, and observed that most colleagues assumed pesantren-origin students "can already sort it themselves," an assumption he judged false. Routinization is reported here as a candidate extension of the construct rather than a feature of it; it should be corroborated against the syllabi (doc: RPS/semester lesson plan) and the observation of L4's course (obs: L4), since the interview establishes intention rather than enactment.

2. Inductive re-sequencing, and the *adab* counter-pressure

A subtler form of authority work was a reversal of instructional order. Rather than presenting the classical text first as doctrine and the contemporary case second as illustration, L4 inverted the sequence in Akhlak Tasawuf, opening with three contrasting short-video clips on wealth and asceticism, eliciting students' judgments, and only then introducing al-Ghazālī:

"The classical text was not something I handed over at the beginning as doctrine, but placed in the middle as an analytical tool." (L4)

The trigger was pedagogical, not technological: an anonymous end-of-term note from the previous semester, "the material was good, but it felt like listening to the radio: in one ear and out the other," led L4 to conclude he had been teaching a subject "that should touch the heart" in a purely cognitive register. S1, describing an equivalent video project in the same course, gave independent evidence that the re-sequencing worked on at least some students, locating the learning in the demand to re-explain a concept in his own words: knowing that asceticism means "not being attached to the world" collapsed the moment he had to say, concretely, in three minutes, to a lay audience, what it permits and forbids.

This theme is where authority work meets its own limit, and the negative instance is analytically important. A group of students from a strong *Salaf* pesantren background did not read the re-sequencing as a deepening of the text but as a breach of its decorum. One approached L4 privately:

"Sir, is it not a lack of *adab* to discuss short-video content and then compare it with the *Ihyā*”? Like equating the sacred with the trivial." (student, reported by L4)

L4's reply, that al-Ghazālī himself argued from the markets and everyday conduct of his own time, so that social media is "the market of this era", did not fully resolve the objection, and he conceded the point it raised: "not all students are ready for an inductive approach like this; some need to be brought to revere the text before they can dissect it." This qualifies the construct rather than confirming it. Authority work assumes the value at stake is the *warrant* of a claim; here, a second value, the *ranking* of text above phenomenon as a matter of reverence, is itself part of the tradition and can be violated by the very practice designed to defend the tradition's warrants. The construct, taken from contexts without a comparable *adab* toward canonical texts, does not carry this tension; the Discussion returns to it.

3. The internalization blind spot

Lecturers were candid and consistent about the boundaries of their own claims. Asked whether their digital projects changed their understanding rather than merely produced a submitted artifact, both L2 and L4 said they had no adequate instrument. L2: "Honestly, I don't yet have an instrument that can really measure that." L4 pointed to two projects of near-identical technical quality, one that interviewed peers about online display and set the results against a translated al-Ghazālī passage, and one that was slickly edited but restated a textbook definition and, when questioned, yielded only "we learned that asceticism is important." He read the second as evidence that "the task was completed, but internalization did not happen." Reported here as a limitation of the practice itself, this blind spot matters to the study's contribution: authority work, as lecturers practice it, can reliably relocate a claim to a warranted framework but cannot verify that the relocation has been internalized.

RQ3, Conditions: a socially enforced warrant hierarchy and an administrative squeeze

Lecturers and the program head identified conditions that enable or block authority work. The conditions are not primarily technological.

1. A socially enforced proportion ceiling

Curriculum policy nominally licenses the flexibility that authority work needs. Lecturers used it for method and assessment design, but reported an unwritten limit on

one specific freedom, reducing the share of classical-text study, which was social rather than regulatory:

"What I do not use, or rather, do not dare use, is the flexibility to reduce the portion of certain material. In theory, I could cut the classical-text portion to add contemporary projects. But I do not dare. Here, the pesantren roots are very strong. Students' parents, the *kiai* at partner pesantren, and even some senior colleagues would question any reduction in the *kitab* portion. So the flexibility exists on paper, but socially there is an unwritten limit." (L4)

The program head described the same constraint operating in formal curriculum decisions, through what she called three orientations among the faculty: senior lecturers anchored in the pesantren tradition, younger returnees pressing for active and project-based methods, and a bridging group. A dispute over Ushul Fiqh was resolved not by principle but by a negotiated ratio:

"In the end, we compromised: seventy per cent classical, thirty per cent contemporary, on condition that the contemporary material must always refer back to the *ushul* framework learned from the *kitab*." (PD1)

The condition attached to the compromise, that contemporary material must refer back to the classical framework, is itself an authoritative work encoded at the level of curriculum governance. This is the study's clearest institutional finding and a candidate extension of the construct: at this site, the warrant hierarchy is maintained *socially*, by parents, partner *kiai*, and senior colleagues, not only epistemically by the lecturer.

2. Administrative compression, generic training, thin infrastructure

Against that cultural ceiling ran an administrative floor. Both lecturers reported compressing exactly the reflection-heavy material that authoritative work most requires, to meet reporting targets:

"Near the end of term, I was chasing the course learning outcomes (CPMK) targets set in the RPS (semester lesson plan). In the end, the material that needed long reflection, I compressed into a single meeting. I wasn't satisfied with the administrative demands." (L2; L4 reported an equivalent compression of *tasawuf* material)

Time, not conviction, was named as the binding constraint on integrating the spiritual dimension into active methods; one lecturer rated his own practice "six out of ten" on that integration and located the shortfall in the minutes available for reflection, not in method. The program head placed the deeper constraint in bureaucracy rather than hardware: usable but unstable Wi-Fi, a learning management system (LMS) most lecturers touch only to upload PDFs, one shared computer laboratory, a procurement

chain crossing five desks with a six-month-to-one-year cycle, and training that arrives two or three times a year but generic, "*how to use Google Classroom*", never the IRE-specific problem of integrating technology into classical-text teaching or assessing the internalization of values. "*The biggest constraint*," she said, "*is not physical infrastructure. It is bureaucratic.*" Consistency of process, she added, was the program's real weak point: output standards held, but one lecturer's class "*feels alive*" while another "still lectures one-way for ninety minutes," and "students know; they tell each other." S1's account of a semester-long, unvarying read-and-note course, after which attendance collapsed with no penalty in grades, is the student-side corroboration of that variance.

3. Adjudication migrates off the institutional record

The condition with the sharpest implication is that the authority work students most valued was happening largely outside the institution's formal digital infrastructure. Both lecturers and the students reported that substantive religious questions migrated to WhatsApp, often late at night, where students were markedly bolder than in class:

"In class, many stay silent. On WhatsApp, they are braver, no social pressure. I'm the same: in class, I hesitate to speak up, but on WhatsApp, I can lay out a long argument." (S1)

Lecturers valued the openness but named its costs: the exchanges are undocumented, easily buried among other messages, and impose an out-of-hours burden the institution neither recognizes nor supports. The formal LMS, by contrast, was used mainly as a file repository; its structured discussion forum lost out to the platform with instant notifications and a lower barrier to speech. The finding is reported as a candidate extension: the real site of contested-warrant adjudication is not the class or the LMS but an informal channel that leaves no institutional trace, thereby both amplifying the work and rendering it invisible to the very quality processes it describes.

4. Disconfirmed provisional code, candidate extensions, and negative-case analysis

Consistent with the coding protocol, one provisional code drawn from the starting framework is reported as unsupported at the teacher level, and inductive codes without a counterpart in the framework are reported as candidate extensions.

Disconfirmed at the teacher level, self-socialization. Berger and Golan's construct includes learner self-socialization and the reconfiguration of beliefs through self-directed online learning. The data show this clearly among students (S1's independent following of scholars ranked by *sanad*; days of private uncertainty over *qunut*), but they do not describe lecturer practice. As a provisional code applied to teacher conduct, it found no support and is reported here rather than discarded. The construct's learner-facing components hold; its extension to teachers requires different components, which the authority-work themes supply.

Candidate extensions. Four inductive codes recurred that the starting framework does not contain: the routinization of verification into a standing curricular slot; the *adab* counter-pressure, in which re-anchoring can itself be read as a breach of reverence toward the text; the socially enforced warrant ceiling, maintained by parents, partner *kiai*, and senior colleagues rather than by the lecturer alone; and the off-record migration of contested-warrant adjudication to informal channels. These are offered for examination in the Discussion, not as confirmed additions to the construct.

Negative-case analysis. Each theme was tested against the three counter-explanations before retention. *First*, that the practices reflect resource constraints rather than epistemic reasoning: constraints are real and reported as a distinct condition, but re-anchoring requires no resources, and the proportion ceiling is attributed to social expectation, with lecturers stating they would not reduce classical-text study even if freed to, the opposite of a resource story. The counter-explanation is retained as a co-occurring condition, not the mechanism.

Second, that the practices reflect compliance with the religious-moderation mandate rather than the lecturer's stance: (dissecting an extreme narrative) is most exposed to this reading, but lecturers engaged the substance methodologically rather than issuing the mandated conclusion, and curricular changes followed specific incidents rather than policy cycles; the mandate is flagged as a partial motive, not the form of the practice.

Third, that the practices reflect avoidance rather than management: the evidence against avoidance is that lecturers opened the disputed texts, stated the range of positions, including the minority one, and returned to the criteria of adjudication; the *tabayyun* slot exists to keep contested content in view. The *adab* counter-pressure is

the genuine negative instance, and the theme is qualified accordingly rather than reported as a clean confirmation.

Discussion

Overview of the argument

The study set out to examine how IRE lecturers at a mid-transformation State Islamic university manage competing warrants when platform-circulated religious content enters their courses. Three findings answer the research questions. Lecturers construe the challenge not as erroneous content but as a contest over the *warrant* (RQ1). They respond with a recognizable repertoire we have called *authority work*: relocating a circulating claim to a warranted chain of transmission while keeping it open, routinizing that relocation as classroom verification, and, in some courses, reversing the instructional order so that the classical text arrives as an analytic tool rather than as opening doctrine (RQ2). They identify the enabling and blocking conditions as social and administrative rather than technological: a socially enforced ceiling on how far the share of classical-text study may fall, an administrative compression of the reflective material the work requires, and the migration of the most valued adjudication to informal, off-the-record channels (RQ3).

We read these findings against Berger and Golan's concept of digital epistemic authority, the study's sensitizing concept.³² Table 5 states, for each finding, whether the data confirm, extend, or contradict the construct and the adjacent literature. The through-line is that prior work has established that religious authority online is contested and shifting, but has stopped at the learner or the public sphere; this study specifies what a teacher inside an institution that assesses and credentials does in response, and where the borrowed construct breaks against a value it was not built to carry.

Table 5.
Relation of findings to the sensitizing construct and literature

Finding	Relation to digital epistemic authority (Berger & Golan, 2024)	Key literature engaged
Warrant, not content, is the disputed object (RQ1)	Confirms and relocates: confirms the reconfiguration of legitimate sources; relocates the analytic focus from learner to teacher	Askar et al. (2025); Maemonah et al. (2022); Rusli et al. (2020); Hefner (2022); Hefni et al. (2026)

³² Berger and Golan, “Online Religious Learning: Digital Epistemic Authority and Self-Socialization in Religious Communities.”

Re-anchoring to <i>sanad/madhab</i> while keeping the claim open (RQ2)	Extends: supplies a teacher-side mechanism that the construct lacks; specifies <i>sanad</i> as the warrant	Sapiudin et al. (2025); Abdul Khalil et al. (2024); Ibtihajuddin et al. (2025); Nasution et al. (2024); Chaudhary (2020)
Curricularizing verification, the routinized <i>tabayyun</i> slot (RQ2)	Extends: converts self-socialization-era literacy into a standing teacher practice	Hak & Putra (2025); Saiful Maarif et al. (2024); Ju'subaidi et al. (2025)
The <i>adab</i> counter-pressure (RQ2)	Contradicts/qualifies: the construct does not carry a value of reverence-ranking of canonical text	Abitolkha et al. (2025); Muhammad et al. (2024); Campbell (2013)
A socially enforced warrant ceiling (RQ3)	Extends: authority is maintained socially, not only epistemically	Hayadin et al. (2025); Nasution et al. (2024); Nasir & Rijal (2021)
Off-record migration and the readiness reframing (RQ3)	Extends: relocates the binding constraint from competence to institutional design	Arif et al. (2025); Murhayati et al. (2025); Utami et al. (2026); Jamridafrizal et al. (2019)

Authority work as the teacher-side complement of digital epistemic authority.

The study's first contribution is to move digital epistemic authority from the learner, where Berger and Golan developed it, to the teacher who must adjudicate. Their construct explains how online religious learning enables self-socialization and reconfigures which sources count as legitimate. The RQ1 finding confirms that reconfiguration is at work in the Indonesian Islamic university classroom: students arrive, treating reach, recency, and rhetorical polish as grounds that can rival a transmission-based warrant. This is consistent with the wider Indonesian evidence that authority in Islamic knowledge is being renegotiated online, among young scholars assembling rulings from sources their teachers do not control,³³ in the documented shift of authority away from institutionally credentialled figures in online religious teaching,³⁴ and among Generation-Z Muslims resourcing Islamic law outside established channels.³⁵ Ethnographic work on Indonesian Muslim schoolgirls online makes the same point about the everyday, gendered texture of that renegotiation.³⁶

³³ Rusli, Hasyim, and Nurdin, "A New Islamic Knowledge Production and Fatwa Rulings: How Indonesia's Young Muslim Scholars Interact with Online Sources."

³⁴ Maemonah et al., "The Shift in the Authority of Islamic Religious Education: A Qualitative Content Analysis on Online Religious Teaching."

³⁵ W. Hefni et al., "Transitional Religiosity in Accessing Sources of Islamic Law: Transforming Authority and Practices among Generation-Z Muslims in Austria," *Juris: Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah* 25, no. 1 (2026): 201–11, <https://doi.org/10.31958/juris.v25i1.16495>.

³⁶ C. M. Hefner, "Morality, Religious Authority, and the Digital Edge: Indonesian Muslim Schoolgirls Online," *American Ethnologist* 49, no. 3 (2022): 359–73, <https://doi.org/10.1111/amet.13088>.

What none of this work addresses is the teacher's move. Askar et al.³⁷ come closest, establishing that students at Indonesian Muslim universities arrive with source hierarchies their institutions did not build; their account, by design, stops at the student. The present study takes up the question they leave open and names the answer. *Authority work* is not a synonym for teaching digital literacy; it is the specific practice of re-anchoring a circulating claim to a warranted chain of transmission while keeping it open to examination. The teacher's position differs from the learner's in two respects that the construct does not model, both of which are visible in the data. The dilemma is public; it surfaces in front of the class, often with the video playing, and it is non-deferrable because the course grades and credentials are at stake, so leaving the question open is itself an assessed act. The learner in Berger and Golan's account can browse and defer; the lecturer in this study cannot. This is why we treat authority work as the teacher-side complement of digital epistemic authority rather than as a mere application of it.

Re-anchoring: specifying the mechanism and naming the warrant

The second contribution is to specify the mechanism. The recurrent teacher move was neither an endorsement nor a prohibition but a redirection from the content of a claim to the criteria for adjudicating it, opening the text, laying out the range of positions, including the minority one, and making the qualification of a speaker the explicit object of study. This is where the study specifies what Berger and Golan leave abstract: at this site, the warrant that re-anchoring appeals to is *sanad*, the chain of transmission with a recognized teacher behind it, which has no direct counterpart in the contexts where digital-religion theory was largely developed.

The mechanism parallels, in pedagogical form, several normative frameworks now emerging in the literature for governing religious claims online. Work on Islamic digital ethics argues for principled criteria, rather than case-by-case verdicts, by which believers should weigh online religious information,³⁸ a logic recently developed through *maqāṣid*-based reasoning about social media conduct.³⁹ and through accounts of negotiating

³⁷ Askar et al., "Online Islamic Knowledge Sources and Their Authority in Islamic Learning: A Case Study of Indonesian Muslim Universities."

³⁸ M. Y. Chaudhary, "Initial Considerations for Islamic Digital Ethics," *Philosophy & Technology* 33, no. 4 (2020): 639–57, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13347-020-00418-3>.

³⁹ M. A. A. Lokman et al., "Applying Al-Ta'īl Bi al-Ḥikmah to Social Media Use: A Complementary Approach to the Maqasid Shariah Approach in Islamic Digital Ethics," *Millah: Journal of Religious Studies* 25, no. 1 (2026): 291–324, <https://doi.org/10.20885/millah.vol25.iss1.art8>.

Islamic normativity in relation to online self-presentation.⁴⁰ Muhammadiyah's fiqh information is an explicit attempt to codify such guidance,⁴¹ and studies of expert agreement have sought to identify indicators of the credibility of Islamic information on social media.⁴² The re-anchoring move enacts, in the classroom and in real time, the same shift these frameworks make on paper: from adjudicating the claim to adjudicating the warrant. Parallel curricular experiments make the alignment concrete, problem-based learning that develops *ijtihad* skills in fiqh,⁴³ a digitally integrated critical-contextual model of *ushul al-fiqh* for future teachers,⁴⁴ and the performative logic of *ijtihad irshadi* documented in the *bahtsul masail* tradition Ibtihajuddin et al.,⁴⁵ all locate the pedagogical value in reasoning from warranted sources rather than in the ruling itself. That some lecturers refused to digitize *sanad* and *matn* work at all, teaching it through modified *bandongan* because "only the skin is left" if the transmission methodology is compressed into fast content, echoes the argument that the study of kitab kuning carries an epistemic function that resists reduction.⁴⁶

Re-anchoring also refines the learning mechanism that the Introduction borrowed from Mezirow.⁴⁷ A ruling encountered online that contradicts prior teaching is, in his sense, a disorienting dilemma. Still, the data show it is resolved not by the learner arbitrating between frames on rational grounds, as transformative learning theory assumes, but by the learner seeking and the teacher supplying a *warrant*. The student, uncertain about the dawn-prayer qunut, did not reason his way to a private resolution; he

⁴⁰ M. H. Siregar et al., "Digital Fiqh and Ethical Governance: Negotiating Islamic Normativity and Online Narcissism in Contemporary Indonesia," *Juris: Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah* 24, no. 1 (2025): 181–91, <https://doi.org/10.31958/juris.v24i1.13218>.

⁴¹ Muhamad Fauzi et al., "Mainstreaming Religious Moderation in Indonesian Higher Education: Perspectives on Goals, Curriculum Content, and Implementation Strategies."

⁴² K. A. Kadir, N. Sahari, and H. M. Judi, "Indicators of Islamic Information Credibility on Social Media through Expert Agreement," *Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication* 35, no. 2 (2019): 499–522, <https://doi.org/10.17576/JKMJC-2019-3502-30>.

⁴³ S. Abdul Khalil, N. F. Mohd Razif, and M. I. Rosele, "Developing Ijtihad Skills for Undergraduate Students through Problem-Based Learning in Fiqh Subjects: Present Practices and the Way Forward," *Asia Pacific Journal of Educators and Education* 39, no. 2 (2024): 197–217, <https://doi.org/10.21315/apjee2024.39.2.11>.

⁴⁴ Sapiudin et al., "Developing a Digitally Integrated Critical-Contextual Learning Model of Ushul Fiqh for Future Islamic Education Teachers."

⁴⁵ M. Ibtihajuddin et al., "Reconstructing Islamic Legal Epistemology: The Performative Logic of Ijtihad Irshadi in the Lajnah Bahtsul Masail of Pesantren Lirboyo," *Justicia Islamica* 22, no. 2 (2025): 461–88, <https://doi.org/10.21154/justicia.v22i2.10927>.

⁴⁶ S. Nasution, H. Asari, and H. Al-Rasyid, "Kitab Kuning and Religious Moderation: A Study on State Islamic Universities in Indonesia," *Journal of Al-Tamaddun* 19, no. 2 (2024): 73–88, <https://doi.org/10.22452/JAT.vol19no2.5>.

⁴⁷ Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*, vol. 350.

referred the dilemma upward and was walked through the boundary of legitimate disagreement. Mezirow's mechanism describes the disturbance well and its resolution poorly for a tradition in which entitlement to adjudicate is itself at stake.

Curricularizing verification, and the information-literacy bridge

A third, more specific contribution is that lecturers converted in-the-moment re-anchoring into a routine: a standing verification slot in which students bring content and the class dissects who is speaking, on what training, and with what evidence. This routinization is a candidate extension of the construct: it takes what the digital-religion literature frames as learner self-socialization and re-institutionalizes it as a recurring teacher-led practice. It also builds a bridge to a literature that has run parallel to digital-authority theory rather than joining it. Studies link information literacy to religious moderation among Indonesian students, Hak & Putra, and develop Qur'an-literacy interventions for moderation in IRE through communicative action research, Saiful Maarif et al., while Ju'subaidi et al.⁴⁸ show that secondary students' critical awareness of internet-sourced religious material is uneven and inconsistently cultivated. The present finding specifies the classroom device, a routinized verification episode anchored to *sanad* criteria, through which that critical awareness is actually built or, more often, left to chance. The student reports that only one or two lecturers run such a slot, most assuming pesantren-origin students "can already sort it themselves," is the negative confirmation: the practice is effective where it exists and absent where the sorting is presumed.

Where the borrowed construct breaks: the *adab* counter-pressure

The sharpest theoretical result is a contradiction, and we report it as one rather than smoothing it over. Re-anchoring assumes the value at stake is the *warrant* of a claim. But a group of students from a strong Salaf pesantren background read the very practice designed to defend the tradition, placing a short video clip beside the Ihyā' to analyze it, as a breach of *adab*, a violation of the reverence-ranking that places the canonical text above the ephemeral phenomenon. The lecturer's own concession, that some students must be brought to revere the text before they can dissect it, marks the limit precisely. Digital epistemic authority, developed in religious communities without a comparable

⁴⁸ Ju'subaidi et al., "Students' Critical Awareness of the Internet and Social Media Use as Resources for Islamic Learning in Indonesian Public Senior High Schools."

adab toward canonical texts (Berger & Golan, 2024), does not carry this second value, and so cannot see that authority work in this setting must manage two commitments at once: the warrant of a claim *and* the ranking of text above phenomenon. A move that serves the first can violate the second.

This is where Campbell's religious-social shaping of technology is more adequate than the digital-authority construct alone. Her account leads us to expect that a community will negotiate a new technology against its tradition rather than absorb it neutrally, and the *adab* objection is exactly such a negotiation surfacing inside a single classroom.⁴⁹ The finding also connects to the substantive literature on the material at issue: work on adaptive *zuhud* frameworks for the digital era, Abitolkha et al.,⁵⁰ and on the place of Sufism within the IRE curriculum in East Java, Muhammad et al.,⁵¹ shows that teaching asceticism and inwardness through contemporary media is already a contested pedagogical problem, not only an authority problem. The contribution here is to identify the mechanism of the contest: inductive re-sequencing can deepen some students' understanding of the text. In contrast, for others, it transgresses the reverence that is itself part of what the course transmits. A construct imported without modification would miss this entirely.

Conditions: a socially enforced warrant hierarchy and the modernization–tradition tension

The RQ3 findings extend the account from the individual teacher's epistemics to the institution's social order. Lecturers reported that curriculum policy licenses methodological flexibility on paper, but that an unwritten social limit, enforced by students' parents, partner-pesantren *kiai*, and senior colleagues, blocks any real reduction in the share of classical-text study. The program head described the same limit operating in formal curriculum decisions, resolved through a negotiated ratio whose binding condition was that contemporary material must always refer back to the classical *ushul* framework. This is authoritative work encoded at the level of governance rather than

⁴⁹ Campbell, "The Rise of the Study of Digital Religion."

⁵⁰ A. M. Abitolkha et al., "Balanced Engagement: Kiai Ihsan Jampes' Adaptive Zuhud Framework for Spiritual Transformation in the Digital Era," *Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies* 13, no. 1 (2025): 39–80, <https://doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v13i1.22322>.

⁵¹ F. Muhammad, A. M. Abitolkha, and L. Dodi, "Dimensions of Sufism within the Islamic Religious Education Curriculum in Higher Education: Multicase Study in East Java, Indonesia," *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 7, no. 1 (2024): 40–58, <https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v7i1.4525>.

classroom practice, and it specifies a mechanism that the digital-authority literature lacks. At this site, the hierarchy of warrants is maintained socially, not solely by the lecturer's epistemic judgment. The finding aligns with accounts of Indonesian Islamic higher education as a dynamic encounter between modernization and tradition rather than a one-way process of modernization,⁵² and with the argument that *Kitab Kuning* functions as a moderating anchor at State Islamic universities.⁵³ It also explains, without recourse to individual conservatism, why elevation to university status and its outward-facing metrics do not simply override the religious faculties' deep commitments.

The moderation mandate is the obvious rival explanation for some of what we have called authority work, and the study takes it seriously rather than dismissing it. PTKIN is subject to a state mandate to mainstream religious moderation through teaching.⁵⁴ That mandate is known to be implemented superficially in some institutions, Chotimah et al.,⁵⁵ and resisted by lecturers in others.⁵⁶ The negative-case analysis weighs this reading and retains it only as a co-occurring motive: lecturers engaged the substance of extreme content methodologically rather than issuing the mandated conclusion, and curricular changes followed specific classroom incidents rather than policy cycles. Authority work is not reducible to moderation compliance, though at a politically live site the two plainly interact, which is itself consistent with the mixed implementation reported in the literature.

Reframing the constraint: from teacher-competence deficit to institutional design

A large and growing strand locates the binding constraint on technology in Indonesian Islamic education in the teacher, in gaps in technological pedagogical content knowledge, in lecturer readiness,⁵⁷ and in the broader project of raising digital

⁵² Hayadin et al., "Contemporary Changes in Islamic Higher Education in Indonesia: Dynamic Encounter between Modernization and Tradition."

⁵³ Nasution, Asari, and Al-Rasyid, "Kitab Kuning and Religious Moderation: A Study on State Islamic Universities in Indonesia."

⁵⁴ Nasir and Rijal, "Keeping the Middle Path: Mainstreaming Religious Moderation through Islamic Higher Education Institutions in Indonesia."

⁵⁵ Chotimah, Qudsy, and Yusuf, "Superficial Implementation of Religious Moderation in Islamic Educational Management."

⁵⁶ Syaifuddin et al., "Lecturers' Resistance to Religious Moderation Policy in Handling Radicalism: Evidence from State Islamic University of Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, Indonesia."

⁵⁷ Arif et al., "Artificial Intelligence in Islamic Religious Education: A PRISMA-Based Review and the SEI-CHAT Framework"; Murhayati et al., "Integration of TPACK Model in Islamic Religious Education Curriculum: An Analysis of Readiness and Barriers"; Utami et al., "Assessing Technology Readiness for Blended Learning among Students in Indonesian Islamic Higher Education Institutions."

competence and engagement.⁵⁸ This study does not dispute that such gaps exist, but its RQ3 findings reframe the diagnosis at this site. The lecturers here were not primarily blocked by an inability to use tools. They were blocked by time, compressing reflection-heavy *tasawuf* or *tafsīr* material into a single meeting to meet course learning outcomes (CPMK) reporting targets, and by an administrative apparatus (a five-desk, six-month-to-one-year procurement chain; generic rather than IRE-specific training) that a competence framing does not capture. Most consequentially, the authority work students valued most had migrated to WhatsApp, late at night, where students were bolder than in class but where the exchange was undocumented, easily buried, and unremunerated. This is consistent with evidence that social media accommodates collaborative learning in Indonesian Islamic higher education more readily than formal systems do. Still, it carries a sharper implication: the real site of contested-warrant adjudication is invisible to the quality processes a readiness framing would strengthen. Improving lecturers' technological knowledge will not surface work that the institution cannot see. The contribution is to relocate the problem from the teacher's skills to the institution's design.

Practical implications

Three implications follow for PTKIN leaders implementing digital transformation and religious moderation mandates simultaneously, framed as matters of institutional design rather than competence prescriptions. *First*, authority work should be recognized and resourced as a distinct pedagogical task, not folded into generic digital-literacy training; the training lecturers said they needed, integrating technology into classical-text teaching, assessing the internalization of values, managing content that contradicts the syllabus, is IRE-specific, and is not what generic platform training supplies. *Second*, the off-record migration of adjudication to informal channels should be made visible and supported, rather than left to erode out-of-hours goodwill; a verification routine of the kind lecturers improvised (the *tabayyun* slot) is a low-cost, on-record alternative aligned with the evidence on information literacy for moderation. *Third*, the socially enforced proportion ceiling should be treated as a design parameter, not an obstacle: the program's own compromise, licensing contemporary re-sequencing on condition that it refers back

⁵⁸ Maryono, Puspitasari, and Purwanto, "Factors Influencing the Active Engagement of Undergraduate Students in Blended Learning."

to the classical framework, is a workable template for protecting the *turāth* while permitting the inductive methods that engage digital-native students.

Limitations and future research

The limitations bound the claims. As an exploratory, instrumental single-case study, the work supports analytic rather than statistical generalization; it does not establish how prevalent authority work is across PTKIN, only that it is observable and specifiable at a strategically chosen site. The first author's insider position afforded access but also carries the risks addressed in the Method section, and readers should weigh the findings accordingly. Future research could test the transferability of authority work at metropolitan PTKIN, where person-based warrants are less visible; examine whether the *adab* counter-pressure recurs where pesantren intake is lower; and develop and validate an instrument for the internalization that lecturers reported being unable to assess, the one point on which the practice, on its own account, cannot yet verify its own effect.

Conclusion

IRE lecturers at UIN Madura do not treat platform-circulated religious content as a problem of wrong information. They treat it as a contest over the warrant, the grounds on which a claim may settle a religious question in a course that grades and credentials. Their response is a describable repertoire, which this study names *authority work*: relocating a circulating claim to a warranted chain of transmission while holding it open, routinizing that relocation as a standing verification slot, and, in some courses, inverting the instructional order. Hence, the classical text serves as an analytic tool rather than an opening doctrine.

These practices extend Berger and Golan's digital epistemic authority from the learner, where they developed it, to the teacher who cannot defer a public and assessed dilemma, and they specify the warrant that re-anchoring appeals to as *sanad*. The account does not merely apply the construct; it marks where the construct breaks. When re-sequencing places a short video beside a canonical text, students formed in a Salaf pesantren read the move as a breach of *adab*, the reverence-ranking of text above the phenomenon that the borrowed construct, built elsewhere, does not carry. Authority work here manages two commitments at once, and a move serving the first can violate the second.

The conditions that enable or block this work are social and administrative, not technological: a socially enforced ceiling on reducing classical-text study, administrative compression of reflective material, and the migration of the most valued adjudication to undocumented WhatsApp exchanges. The binding constraint is institutional design, not teacher competence. As an exploratory single-case study, it supports analytic, not statistical, generalization and provides authoritative work for testing across other PTKIN.

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