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Dialectics of *Irādah* and Reason in Ijtihad: A Field Study of the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) of Wajo Regency

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Abstract

This study examines the dialectical relationship between *irādah* (divine will) and reason (human reasoning) in the interpretation of *āyāt al-aḥkām* and *ḥadīth al-aḥkām*. Although this dialectic occupies a central place in Islamic legal theory, existing scholarship has addressed it largely in normative or macro-institutional terms, leaving its operation in local fatwa practice empirically underexamined. The study therefore aims to analyze how textual authority and rational reasoning interact in the formulation of fatwas by the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) of Wajo Regency. It employs a qualitative field study design. The data consist of in-depth interviews with members of the Wajo MUI Fatwa Commission, fatwa documents, and institutional materials, collected through interviews, documentation, and observation of institutional practice. The data were analyzed through systematic coding, thematic categorization, and interpretive analysis grounded in *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *qawāʿid fiqhiyyah*, and *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*. The findings show that ijtihad at Wajo MUI involves a dynamic interplay between *irādah* and reason: *irādah* is not accessed directly but approached through textual indications and interpretive mediation, while reason functions as an epistemic instrument for operationalizing normative meaning under specific sociocultural conditions. Three patterns emerge: text-dominant, reason-supported, and context-based, with the reason-supported pattern predominating. *Ijtihād jamāʿī* and *ʿurf* function as institutional mediators in this process. The study contributes an empirically grounded account of local ijtihad to the epistemology of Islamic law, showing how the adaptability of Islamic law operates through interpretive mechanisms rather than textual rigidity. Conceptually, the study distinguishes *irādah* from *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, *qaṣd al-shāriʿ*, and textual semantics, and traces how these conceptual layers are negotiated in local fatwa-making.

Keywords: Dialectic of *Irādah* and Ratio; Ijtihad; Interpretation of Islamic Law; Fatwa Commission; Socio-Cultural Context.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji hubungan dialektis antara irādah (kehendak ilahi) dan akal (penalaran manusia) dalam penafsiran āyāt al-aḥkām dan ḥadīth al-aḥkām. Meskipun dialektika ini menempati posisi sentral dalam teori hukum Islam, penelitian yang ada sebagian besar membahasnya dalam kerangka normatif atau makro-institusional, sehingga cara kerjanya dalam praktik fatwa di tingkat lokal masih kurang diteliti secara empiris. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis bagaimana otoritas tekstual dan penalaran rasional berinteraksi dalam perumusan fatwa oleh Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) Kabupaten Wajo. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain studi lapangan kualitatif. Data terdiri atas wawancara mendalam dengan anggota Komisi Fatwa MUI Wajo, dokumen fatwa, dan bahan-bahan kelembagaan yang dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, dokumentasi, dan observasi terhadap praktik kelembagaan. Data dianalisis melalui pengodean sistematis, kategorisasi tematik, dan analisis interpretatif yang berlandaskan pada uṣūl al-fiqh, qawāʿid fiqhiyyah, dan maqāṣid al-sharīʿah. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ijtihad di MUI Wajo melibatkan interaksi dinamis antara irādah dan akal: irādah tidak dapat diakses secara langsung, tetapi didekati melalui indikasi tekstual dan mediasi interpretatif, sedangkan akal berfungsi sebagai

instrumen epistemik untuk mengoperasionalkan makna normatif dalam kondisi sosial-budaya tertentu. Terdapat tiga pola yang muncul, yaitu pola dominan teks, pola didukung akal, dan pola berbasis konteks, dengan pola didukung akal sebagai pola yang paling dominan. Ijtihād jamāʿī dan ʿurf berfungsi sebagai mediator kelembagaan dalam proses tersebut. Penelitian ini memberikan gambaran empiris mengenai ijtihad lokal bagi kajian epistemologi hukum Islam, dengan menunjukkan bahwa adaptabilitas hukum Islam berlangsung melalui mekanisme interpretatif, bukan melalui kekakuan tekstual. Secara konseptual, penelitian ini membedakan irādah dari maqāṣid al-sharīʿah, qaṣd al-shāriʿ, dan semantik tekstual, serta menelusuri bagaimana lapisan-lapisan konseptual tersebut dinegosiasikan dalam proses perumusan fatwa di tingkat lokal.

Kata Kunci: *Dialektika Irādah dan Ratio; Ijtihad; Penafsiran Hukum Islam; Komisi Fatwa; Konteks Sosio-Kultural*

A. Introduction

The dialectical relationship between *irādah* (divine will) and *ratio* (human reasoning) remains a central concern in Islamic legal thought, particularly in the interpretation of *āyāt al-aḥkām* and *ḥadīth al-aḥkām*. Instead of representing a rigid dichotomy, these two dimensions function within a dynamic epistemological framework in which revelation and reason interact to produce legal meaning. Contemporary scholarship shows that Islamic law is not merely a textual construction but an interpretive process that constantly negotiates between normative authority and contextual reality, thus ensuring its relevance in addressing modern social challenges.[1] Read in this way, the question is not whether reason participates in the derivation of rulings, but through which procedures its participation is disciplined.[2]

Within this framework, ijtihad constitutes the principal methodological instrument through which the normative content of revelation is made operative in changing circumstances. Contemporary scholarship on *uṣūl al-fiqh* has progressively shifted attention from the reproduction of established doctrine towards the reasoning procedures by which rulings are derived, including the systematic use of *qawā'id fiqhiyyah* and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* as instruments of legal extension.[3] A significant development in this respect is the consolidation of *ijtihād jamā'ī*, or collective ijtihad, in which interpretive authority is exercised through deliberative bodies rather than by individual jurists.[4] Studies of collective ijtihad emphasise that this institutional form alters not only who reasons but also how reasoning is validated, since conclusions emerge from argument among scholars of differing competences.[5] Any account of the *irādah–ratio* relationship therefore requires attention to the institutional settings in which ijtihad is actually performed.

In the Indonesian context, this dialectical engagement is institutionally mediated through the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI), particularly in its fatwa-making process. The

[1] Nora Maulana Safwan and Nurul Khansa Fauziyah, 'The Contemporary Ijtihad Method in Determining Sharia Business Law: Answering Legal Needs in the Era of Economic and Technological Change', *Al-Mawarid Journal*, 7.1 (2025), doi:10.20885/mawarid.vol7.iss1.art9.

[2] Muhammad S Arinalhaq, Suadi Saad, and Endang Saeful Anwar, 'The Epistemological Transformation of Classical Islamic Law: A Methodological Reconstruction for Contemporary Jurisprudence', *El-Faqih: Journal of Islamic Thought and Law*, 11.2 (2025), pp. 519–48.

[3] Mawaddah Warohmah, 'Contemporary Methodology of Islamic Law Studies: A Critical Approach to the Sources and Mechanisms of Law Formulation', *ISTISHLAH: Journal of Islamic Law*, 3.1 (2025), pp. 13–22.

[4] Aznan Hasan, 'An Introduction to Collective Ijtihad (Ijtihād Jamā'ī): Concept and Applications', *American Journal of Islam and Society*, 20.2 (2003), pp. 26–49, doi:10.35632/ajis.v20i2.520.

[5] Ahmed Gad Makhlouf, 'Evolution of Islamic Law in the 20th Century: The Conception of Collective Ijtihād in the Debate Between Muslim Scholars', *Oxford Journal of Law and Religion*, 9.1 (2020), pp. 157–78, doi:10.1093/ojlr/rwaa019.

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MUI uses collective ijtihad (*ijtihād jamā'ī*), integrating classical sources with methodological tools such as *uṣūl al-fiqh* and contextual reasoning. This process shows that legal judgments do not derive only from textual literalism but emerge through structured reasoning that accommodates social realities and contemporary needs.[6] As a semi-official body whose fatwas carry persuasive rather than legally binding force, the MUI occupies a distinctive position of religious authority in Indonesia, and studies of Indonesian fatwa practice indicate that its methodological choices are shaped as much by institutional position and social expectation as by the internal logic of legal theory.[7][8] Comparable observations have been made with respect to the Council's engagement with other religious and civic institutions, which situates fatwa production within a broader field of social negotiation.[9]

Recent developments further suggest that Islamic legal reasoning has extended beyond the boundaries of traditional disciplines. In response to issues such as finance and sharia regulatory frameworks, MUI fatwas increasingly combine empirical analysis and interdisciplinary approaches. This development reflects the evolving role of rational inquiry in shaping legal outcomes, illustrating that *ratio* serves as an essential instrument in articulating and operationalising *irādah* in the modern context.[10] Analyses of fatwas on digital financial instruments make the same point from the side of *uṣūl al-fiqh* methodology, since the classification of a novel instrument presupposes an accurate description of how it works.[11]

At the same time, the interpretation of *āyāt al-aḥkām* and *ḥadīth al-aḥkām* has undergone a significant methodological transformation. The contemporary approach emphasises contextual and ethical readings, moving beyond literalist interpretations towards a more purposive and hermeneutical framework.[12] This shift highlights the importance of historical awareness and moral reasoning in uncovering the purpose of Islamic law, thereby strengthening the integrative relationship between revelation and rationality.[13] This transformation is visible in two connected developments. In hadith studies, contextual criticism has extended evaluation beyond the authentication of transmission towards the substantive assessment of meaning and its conditions of application.[14] In legal theory, *maqāṣid*-oriented scholarship has moved the higher purposes of the law from a supplementary consideration to a primary interpretive lens, thereby assigning rational reasoning a disciplined role within, rather than outside, the interpretation of revelation.[15]

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[6] I Agustono, 'The Significance of Ijtihad and Fatwa Methods in the Development of Islamic Law in Indonesia', *TAQNIN: Journal of Sharia and Law*, 2024.

[7] Nico J. G. Kaptein, 'The Voice of the "Ulamā": Fatwas and Religious Authority in Indonesia', *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions*, 125 (2004), pp. 115–30, doi:10.4000/assr.1038.

[8] Syafiq Hasyim, 'Religious Pluralism Revisited: Discursive Patterns of the Ulama Fatwa in Indonesia and Malaysia', *Studia Islamika*, 26.3 (2019), pp. 475–509, doi:10.36712/sdi.v26i3.10623.

[9] Heny May Widiyawati, M Yakub, and Muhammad Firdaus, 'The Dynamics of Thinking of MUI and FKUB (Forum for Religious Harmony)', *Journal of Islamic Thought and Social Dynamics*, 1.1 (2025).

[10] B Arifin, 'Islamic Legal Reasoning in Dispute Resolution and Sharia Financial Risk Management of DSN-MUI Fatwas', *Islamic Law Review*, 2026.

[11] A. Latif, 'Fatwa DSN-MUI terhadap Instrumen Keuangan Digital: Analisis Ushul Fiqh', *Ahkam: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah*, 22.2 (2022).

[12] Adis Duderija, 'The Imperatives of Contemporary Islamic Reform: Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah, Neo-Traditionalism, and the Future of Islamic Law', *Journal of Islamic Ethics*, 7.1–2 (2023), pp. 1–25, doi:10.1163/24685542-12340078.

[13] W Anam and M Sulaeman, 'Law, Ethics, and Hadith Ahkam: An Analysis of Fatwa MUI in the Perspective of Progressive Interpretation', *Samarah Journal*, 2024.

[14] Wasman, Mesraini, and Suwendi, 'A Critical Approach to Prophetic Traditions: Contextual Criticism in Understanding Hadith', *Al-Jāmiʻah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 61.1 (2023), pp. 1–17, doi:10.14421/ajis.2023.611.1-17.

[15] Jasser Auda, 'A Maqāṣidī Approach to Contemporary Application of the Sharīʻah', *Intellectual Discourse*, 19.2 (2011), doi:10.31436/id.v19i2.231.

Despite these developments, most of the existing scholarship remains focused on macro-level analysis of MUI fatwas, especially at the national level. While such studies provide valuable insights into institutional structure and general methodology, they tend to overlook the dynamics of localised ijtihad practices.[16] In reality, regional MUI bodies operate in specific socio-cultural contexts that significantly influence their interpretive strategies and legal considerations, pointing to critical gaps in current research.[17] Existing research has thus concentrated on three areas: the national MUI and its institutional structure, the normative methodology of fatwa production, and the epistemology of Islamic law at a theoretical level.[18] The practice of ijtihad within district-level MUI bodies, where interpretation is negotiated in direct contact with local social conditions, has remained largely outside this literature, even though the few available regional studies suggest that *maṣlaḥah* reasoning is deployed there in distinctive ways.[19]

Moreover, there has been limited scholarly attention to the explicit articulation of the dialectic between *irādah* and *ratio* in an empirical setting. Most studies address Islamic legal reasoning in abstract or methodological terms without examining how divine intent and human reasoning interact in concrete decision-making processes. This gap is especially noticeable in the study of hadith-based legal interpretation, where the relationship between text and context is often assumed rather than critically analysed.[20] As a result, the dialectic is more often presumed than demonstrated, and its operation within institutional deliberation has not been documented empirically. Two consequences follow, and together they define the significance of the gap. First, theoretical accounts of the *irādah–ratio* relationship remain untested against the reasoning that jurists actually perform. Second, without such evidence, the flexibility frequently attributed to Islamic law cannot be located in any identifiable procedure, and therefore remains an assertion rather than a finding.

This research seeks to address this gap by examining the practice of within the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) of Wajo Regency. By focusing on a local institutional context, it aims to explore how scholars negotiate the relationship between divine authority and rational interpretation in deriving legal decisions from *āyāt al-aḥkām* and *ḥadīth al-aḥkām*. The study adopts an interdisciplinary perspective that integrates Islamic legal theory, hermeneutics, and socio-legal analysis, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of contemporary ijtihad practices.[21] Accordingly, the discussion is organised around three questions: (1) how is the sequence of ijtihad structured at Wajo MUI, and how are textual authority and rational mediation distributed within it; (2) how does the dialectic of *irādah* and *ratio* manifest across different types of legal problem; and (3) how do socio-cultural conditions, including *'urf*, enter into the interpretation of *āyāt al-aḥkām* and *ḥadīth al-aḥkām* at the local level.

This article uses *irādah* primarily as a theological–legal concept referring to the divine will as it is accessed and operationalised through revealed sources and authorised interpretive procedures. In the empirical setting of a fatwa commission, *irādah* does not function as an immediately knowable intention but as a normative horizon: it constrains interpretation through

[16] A Harmanto, A Jera, and M Hafis, 'Reconstructing the Epistemology of MUI Family Law Fatwas', *Journal of Islamic Law*, 2025.

[17] A Kasdi, U Farida, and M Huda, 'Fatwa and Religious Authority: Islamic Law and Digital Ethics', *Al-Ahkam Journal*, 2026.

[18] Syafiq Hasyim, 'Prioritizing Life over Religion in Indonesia's Covid-19 Fatwas: The Fatwas of NU, Muhammadiyah, and MUI', *Studia Islamika*, 30.3 (2023), pp. 407–38, doi:10.36712/sdi.v30i3.32732.

[19] Irfan Haq and Muhammad Yunus, 'Reassessing Maslahah in Islamic Legal Adaptation: Analysis of MUI South Sulawesi Fatwa', *PS: Journal of Sharia Thought*, 2.1 (2025), pp. 45–58, doi:10.55575/ps.v2i1.48.

[20] S Firdaus and M Achmad, 'Epistemological Studies of Islamic Law in the Context of the Fatwa of the Indonesian Ulema Council', *Pusaka Journal*, 2024.

[21] H Fatarib, Z Z Ali, and N A Arifin, 'Progressive Legal Reasoning in Contemporary Islamic Legal Reform', *JURIS*, 2025.

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the authority of the Qur'an and the Sunnah while also requiring juristic mediation to become actionable in new circumstances.

This sense of *irādah* must be distinguished from (1) *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, (2) *qaṣd al-shāriʿ*, and (3) textual meaning (*dalālat al-lafẓ*). *Maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* denotes the higher objectives of the Sharīʿah that are inferred inductively (*istiqrāʾ*) across a corpus of texts and rulings; it provides a teleological framework for evaluation, that is, why the law exists and what goods it protects.[22] *Qaṣd al-shāriʿ* is narrower: it refers to the Lawgiver's intent behind a particular ruling or textual directive and is typically reconstructed through *uṣūl al-fiqh* tools such as cause (*ʿillah*), contextual indications (*qarāʾin*), and the relationship between general and specific texts. Textual meaning, by contrast, concerns semantic and linguistic signification—what the wording indicates at the level of language (*ʿibārah*, *ishārah*, *dalālah*, and the hierarchy of explicit and implicit meanings).[23]

In other words, *maqāṣid* and *qaṣd al-shāriʿ* are purposive constructs derived through juristic reasoning, whereas textual meaning is grounded in language, and *irādah*—within institutional ijtihad—functions as the normative anchor that is never reduced to either semantics alone or purposes alone. The analytical contribution of this article is therefore not to equate *irādah* with *maqāṣid*, but to show how Wajo MUI jurists move between these layers: they begin from textual meaning, reconstruct *qaṣd al-shāriʿ* through *uṣūl* reasoning, and evaluate outcomes through *maqāṣid*-oriented considerations in order to articulate a legally defensible expression of *irādah* in a given case.[24]

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to both theoretical and empirical discussions. Theoretically, it advances the discourse on the epistemology of Islamic law by explicitly articulating the dialectical relationship between *irādah* and *ratio* in contemporary institutional settings. Empirically, it provides insight into the practice of ijtihad at the local level, which remains underexplored in current scholarship.[25] By placing the analysis in a local as well as a broader context, this study underscores the importance of contextual diversity in shaping the development of Islamic law. The contribution of the study is analytical rather than declarative. It traces the sequence through which textual authority, rational reasoning, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, and socio-cultural context are linked in the production of particular legal decisions, and it describes that sequence as a dynamic equilibrium between *irādah* and *ratio*. The claim is deliberately bounded: it characterises the institutional practice observed at Wajo MUI and is offered as an empirical illustration rather than as a general proposition about Islamic law.

This study uses a qualitative fieldwork approach, which is suitable for capturing the interpretive and contextual dimensions of legal reasoning. The design is a single-institution field study, and its purpose is not to measure the frequency of interpretive choices but to understand the meanings, reasoning procedures, and considerations through which members of a local fatwa commission move from text to ruling. Such a design is appropriate where the object of inquiry is an interpretive practice that becomes visible only through the accounts of those who perform it and through the documents that record its outcomes.

Primary data were collected through six in-depth, semi-structured interviews with members of the Wajo MUI Fatwa Commission, conducted between 21 and 30 April 2026.

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[22] A. F. M. Fathuddin, 'Al-Shāṭibī's Theory of the Higher Objectives of Islamic Law: A Historical and Contemporary Analysis', *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 39.1 (2022), pp. 1–28.

[23] Arip Purkon, 'Hermeneutic Approaches in the Study of Islamic Law', *AHKAM: Journal of Sharia Science*, 13.2 (2013), pp. 183–92, doi:10.15408/ajis.v13i2.930.

[24] Muhammad Mufid, 'Towards the Reconstruction and Reinterpretation of Al-Kulliyyāt al-Khams: A Study of Maqāṣid in Interdisciplinary Islamic Studies', *Al-Mazaahib: Journal of Comparative Law*, 12.2 (2024), pp. 215–30, doi:10.14421/al-mazaahib.v12i2.4450.

[25] I Jalili and I Syukri, 'Utilizing Qawāʿid Fiqhiyyah in Legal Analysis', *Istinbath Journal*, 2025.

Participants were selected purposively on the basis of their direct involvement in fatwa deliberation. In accordance with research ethics and the confidentiality agreed with the commission, informants are identified by initial codes—AR, FR, HM, SN, AN, and MS—which are used consistently throughout the analysis and in the interview list appended to this article. The interviews explored how informants identify relevant *naṣṣ*, how they employ *uṣūl al-fiqh* and *qawā'id fiqhiyyah*, how they weigh *maṣlaḥah* and local custom, and how they account for decisions in cases without explicit textual guidance.

These interview data were complemented by documentation and observation. The documentary corpus consists of internal fatwa materials made available by the commission, including written rulings, deliberation notes, and institutional documents.[26] Observation of institutional practice provided contextual understanding of how deliberative sessions are organised, although the commission's closed deliberations were not accessible in full. The combination of interviews, documents, and observation permitted the triangulation of informants' accounts against the record of decisions actually issued.

The analytical process involved systematic coding, thematic categorisation, and interpretive analysis. Interview material was transcribed and coded to identify recurring reasoning moves; codes were then grouped into themes concerning textual authority, rational mediation, collective deliberation, *maṣlaḥah*, and *'urf*. The resulting themes were interpreted through the conceptual apparatus of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *qawā'id fiqhiyyah*, *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, and contemporary hermeneutics, enabling a structured examination of how textual and rational elements interact in practice.[27] Consistent with the interpretive character of the study, the findings are presented as a thematically organised account in which informants' statements are quoted directly and then read against the conceptual framework and the relevant literature, rather than as measurements of interpretive tendencies.

B. Results and Discussion

The Structure of Ijtihad in Wajo MUI: Between Textual Authority and Rational Mediation

The findings show that the ijtihad process in Wajo MUI is not merely a textual exercise but a structured epistemological negotiation between normative sources and contextual reasoning. Informants consistently emphasised that legal deliberation begins with the identification of the relevant *naṣṣ* (Qur'an and hadith), followed by interpretive engagement through the principles of *uṣūl al-fiqh*. This sequence, however, is not mechanical; it is interpretive and adaptive, depending on the nature of the issue under discussion. One informant explained:

> "We always start with the Qur'an and hadith, but the texts do not directly address all contemporary problems. Therefore, we must interpret it through scientific reasoning and existing legal principles."[28]

Another respondent reinforced this point by emphasising the methodological layer that follows textual identification:

> "After identifying the text, we examine the opinions of classical scholars, then apply the legal maxim and consider the current situation before deciding."[29]

Read together, these statements indicate that *irādah* is not accessed directly but mediated through a structured process of interpretation. Two clarifications follow. First, *irādah* is not treated as an object to which either the researcher or the informants have direct access;

[26] MUI Kabupaten Wajo, *Arsip Dokumen Fatwa Komisi Fatwa* (unpublished internal documents, 2026).

[27] Arip Purkon, 'Hermeneutic Approaches in the Study of Islamic Law', *AHKAM: Journal of Sharia Science*, 13.2 (2013), pp. 183–92, doi:10.15408/ajis.v13i2.930.

[28] Interview with AR, Wajo, 21 April 2026.

[29] Interview with HM, Wajo, 24 April 2026.

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it is approached only through revelation, textual indications, and the interpretive apparatus of *uṣūl al-fiqh* and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*. Second, *ratio* does not substitute for revelation but functions as an epistemic instrument through which normative meaning is understood and rendered operative in a determinate context.[30] What the data document, accordingly, is neither textual determinism nor rational autonomy, but interaction, mediation, and negotiation between the two. In this process, *ratio* serves as an epistemic bridge that connects the universality of revelation with the specificity of contemporary reality, which confirms that Islamic legal reasoning operates within a multi-layered epistemology in which textual authority is continually reinterpreted through rational engagement.[31]

The data further reveal that the application of *uṣūl al-fiqh* in Wajo MUI is not doctrinal but pragmatically oriented. Scholars often use *qawā'id fiqhiyyah* as a flexible tool to simplify complex legal reasoning, as one informant noted:

> "Legal adage helps us generalize the principle so that we can respond quickly to new cases without always going back to lengthy textual debates."[32]

This statement shows that *ratio* is not only interpretive but also operational, allowing for efficiency and adaptability in legal decision-making. The finding resonates with contemporary studies showing that Indonesian fatwa institutions increasingly rely on legal maxims (*qawā'id fiqhiyyah*) as a source of independent reasoning in addressing modern issues.[33] The convergence with those studies is not incidental: it follows from a shared institutional condition, namely the requirement to respond to novel cases within limited deliberative time, which makes *qawā'id fiqhiyyah* attractive as a compressed form of established reasoning. The divergence lies in scale and mode of application. Whereas those studies describe national bodies operating through codified procedure, the present data show the same maxims applied in a district forum directly to locally observable consequences, which shortens the distance between legal reasoning and the social field it addresses.[34]

In addition, the ijtihad structure in Wajo MUI reveals a recursive and dialogical process rather than a linear one. Legal discussions often move back and forth between textual evidence and contextual considerations. In cases related to economic practices, for example, an initial textual interpretation is frequently revised after local economic conditions have been taken into account. One participant explained:

> "Sometimes a text seems obvious at first, but after discussing its impact on society, we reconsidered its application to avoid harm."[35]

This iterative pattern suggests that *ratio* actively reshapes the understanding of *irādah* rather than simply translating it. It also reflects a hermeneutic approach in which meaning is generated through continuous interaction between text and context.

Another important dimension is the collective character of ijtihad (*ijtihād jamā'ī*). The findings indicate that decisions are rarely made individually but through deliberative forums

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[30] Jasser Auda, *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah as Philosophy of Islamic Law: A Systems Approach* (London and Washington: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2008), doi:10.2307/j.ctvkc67tg.

[31] Asmawi Asmawi, 'Epistemology of Islamic Law: Historical, Sociological Perspectives in the Development of Evidence', *Tribakti: Journal of Islamic Thought*, 32.1 (2021), pp. 57–76, doi:10.33367/tribakti.v32i1.1393.

[32] Interview with SN, Wajo, 27 April 2026.

[33] Muniruddin Ritonga, Mhd. Syahnan, and Muhammad Amar Adly, 'Survey of the Use of Qawā'id Fiqhiyyah in the Fatwa of Three Institutions of the Indonesian Ulema Council, Fatwa of the National Sharia Council (DSN), and the Decision of the Fatwa of the MPU', *MUDABBIR: Journal of Research and Education Studies*, 5.2 (2025), doi:10.56832/mudabbir.v5i2.2521.

[34] Imam Kamaluddin and Achmad Charis Maulana, 'Dynamics of Qawaid Fiqhiyyah Implementation in DSN-MUI Fatwa', *Al-Afkar: Journal for Islamic Studies*, 7.4 (2024), pp. 1332–43.

[35] Interview with FR, Wajo, 22 April 2026.

involving scholars with diverse expertise, a process that increases the legitimacy and epistemic resilience of the resulting ruling. As one informant noted:

> "In the discussions, each scholar brought a different perspective, some focusing on textual evidence, others on social impact. The final decision is always the result of negotiations."[36]

Ratio in this context is therefore not individualistic but socially constructed through scholarly interaction, in a manner corresponding to what contemporary scholars describe as institutional ijtihad, in which knowledge production is distributed across a network of experts rather than concentrated in a single authority.[37] Read against the literature on *ijtihād jamā'ī*, this pattern confirms the general claim that collective deliberation distributes interpretive authority, while also qualifying it. Studies of collective ijtihad have examined mainly national and transnational councils, in which deliberation is formalised through written procedure;[38] at Wajo MUI the same distributive logic operates informally, through face-to-face argument among scholars who are themselves embedded in the community that the ruling will affect. The theoretical implication is that the epistemic value of *ijtihād jamā'ī* derives not only from the plurality of expertise assembled, but also from the proximity of the deliberating body to the conditions in which its ruling will operate.

A further difference emerges when the practice of ijtihad at the local level is compared with that at the national level. Whereas national MUI fatwas tend to follow standardised and highly formal procedures, Wajo MUI displays greater flexibility in adapting interpretive strategies to local contexts. This flexibility is evident in the incorporation of local custom (*'urf*) and practical considerations into legal reasoning. One respondent stated:

> "We cannot ignore local traditions as long as they do not contradict Islamic principles. Sometimes they help us understand how the law should be applied."[39]

These findings highlight that local ijtihad operates through a context-sensitive rationality in which legal reasoning is shaped by socio-cultural realities. Such adaptability reflects the dynamic nature of Islamic law and its capacity to engage with diverse contexts without losing its normative foundation.[40]

In addition, the emphasis on *maṣlaḥah* (public interest) further illustrates the pragmatic orientation of ijtihad in Wajo MUI. Scholars regularly evaluate the potential benefits and harms of a legal decision before finalising a fatwa, which indicates that *irādah* is understood not only through textual indications but also through the purposes that the text is taken to serve. As one informant observed:

> "Our goal is not just to follow the text but to ensure that the results bring benefits to society."[41]

This *maqāṣid*-oriented reasoning shows that *ratio* plays a central role in uncovering the ethical dimensions and objectives of Islamic law, in line with contemporary theoretical

[36] Interview with AN, Wajo, 29 April 2026.

[37] Aznan Hasan, 'An Introduction to Collective Ijtihad (Ijtihād Jamā'ī): Concept and Applications', *American Journal of Islam and Society*, 20.2 (2003), pp. 26–49, doi:10.35632/ajis.v20i2.520.

[38] Ahmed Gad Makhlouf, 'Evolution of Islamic Law in the 20th Century: The Conception of Collective Ijtihād in the Debate Between Muslim Scholars', *Oxford Journal of Law and Religion*, 9.1 (2020), pp. 157–78, doi:10.1093/ojlr/rwaa019.

[39] Interview with MS, Wajo, 30 April 2026.

[40] Muhammad Rosyid and Dedi Dwi Afrizal, 'Integration of Customary Law in the Reform of Islamic Family Law in Indonesia', *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Law*, 5.2 (2025), pp. 140–55, doi:10.35891/ijijel.v5i2.1170.

[41] Interview with AR, Wajo, 21 April 2026.

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developments that emphasise the integration of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* into modern legal reasoning.[42]

From a theoretical perspective, these findings challenge the assumption that Islamic legal reasoning is dominated by textual determinism.[43] They reveal instead a dynamic structure in which *irādah* and *ratio* operate in a mutually reinforcing relationship, so that the dialectic between them appears not as a tension to be resolved but as a productive mechanism that enables the adaptability of Islamic law. On a broader level, the Wajo MUI case demonstrates that local ijtihad practices play an important role in translating universal legal principles into context-specific applications. This carries implications for wider Islamic legal discourse, since it indicates that the development of Islamic law lies less in uniformity than in contextual plurality grounded in shared epistemological principles.[44] For the epistemology of Islamic law, this suggests that textual authority and rational reasoning are more accurately modelled as functionally differentiated than as hierarchically ordered: the text supplies the normative reference, while reasoning supplies the conditions under which that reference is applied. Neither element is dispensable, and neither displaces the other.

The Dialectic of Irādah and Ratio in Legal Interpretation

The central finding of this study is that the relationship between *irādah* and *ratio* manifests as a continuous dialectical process rather than a fixed hierarchy. The empirical data show that legal interpretation within Wajo MUI is shaped by dynamic negotiation between textual authority and rational deliberation, in which both elements function interactively depending on the nature of the legal problem. Across the interviews and the internal fatwa documents reviewed, three recurring patterns can be distinguished, as summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Patterns of the Irādah–Ratio Dialectic in Wajo MUI

No.	Pattern	Description	Empirical evidence
1.	Text-dominant	Legal decisions rely heavily on explicit textual evidence[45]	Ritual worship (e.g. prayer, fasting, and zakat practice), where the commission treats explicit texts as determinative.
2.	Ratio-supported	Texts are interpreted through *qawā'id* and *maqāṣid*	Family and social issues, where texts are read through *qawā'id fiqhiyyah* and *maṣlaḥah*/*maqāṣid* considerations (e.g. dispute prevention, protection of lineage and property).
3.	Context-based	Rational analysis predominates because of the absence of explicit texts[46]	Contemporary economic problems, including digital transactions, where understanding the technical form of the transaction precedes legal classification and the reasoning becomes strongly contextual.

The table illustrates that the relative dominance of *irādah* or *ratio* depends on the typology of the legal problem. In matters of *'ibādāt*, where textual prescriptions are explicit

[42] Abdul Gofar, Siti Amina, and Nisrina Fajrin, 'Reconstruction of the Concept of Maslahah Mursalah as a Basis for Contemporary Ijtihad in Answering the Challenges of Modernity', *Tamaddun*, 10.1 (2025), pp. 10–28, doi:10.47759/f1hyrg84.

[43] Muhammad Jailani, 'The Integration of Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah in National Legal Reform: Towards a Just and Sustainable Legal System', *Journal of Sharia and Islamic Law*, 4.2 (2025), doi:10.47902/jshi.v4i2.427.

[44] Rahmad Hidayat, 'Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah as the Foundation for the Development of Islamic Sharia Law in Responding to Contemporary Social Challenges', *Journal of Islamic Sharia Law Studies*, 1.1 (2026).

[45] Arip Purkon, 'Hermeneutic Approaches in the Study of Islamic Law', *AHKAM: Journal of Sharia Science*, 13.2 (2013), pp. 183–92, doi:10.15408/ajis.v13i2.930.

[46] Ritonga, Syahnan, and Adly, 'Survey of the Use of Qawā'id Fiqhiyyah in the Fatwa of Three Institutions of the Indonesian Ulama Council'.

and well established, legal reasoning tends to prioritise direct textual adherence. Conversely, in areas such as *muʻāmalāt*, where textual guidance is general or absent, rational interpretation becomes increasingly central. One respondent explained:

> "When dealing with the issue of muamalah, we cannot rely solely on literal texts. We must consider the benefits (*maṣlaḥah*) and the disadvantages, which require rational judgment."[47]

This statement shows that *ratio* operates as a methodological instrument for uncovering the purpose of *irādah*, not for replacing it. The process reflects a purposive orientation in which the meaning of the law derives not only from the textual form but from the underlying legal intent, and it is consistent with contemporary *maqāṣid*-based approaches that emphasise the teleological dimension of Islamic legal reasoning.[48] The findings converge with that scholarship because both locate legal meaning in the purposes a ruling serves rather than in its literal formulation. They differ, however, in evidentiary basis: whereas that scholarship argues largely through doctrinal reconstruction, the present data show *maqāṣid* reasoning used as a working procedure within institutional deliberation, which indicates that in this setting it functions as an operative rather than a merely programmatic category.

Further interviews reveal that these dialectical interactions are not static but situationally responsive. Another informant noted:

> "In some cases, this text provides general guidance, but we must interpret it based on current realities. Otherwise, the verdict may be irrelevant."[49]

This account shows that *ratio* serves as a contextualising force, ensuring that legal judgments remain valid in a changing socio-economic environment. The interpretive process therefore involves continuous recalibration between textual meaning and contextual relevance, which reinforces the observation that Islamic law is adaptive by virtue of its interpretive procedures rather than by concession.

Across the interviews and the internal fatwa documents reviewed, the ratio-supported model appears most frequently in the Wajo MUI's handling of non-ritual problems.[50] In this model, textual evidence serves as a normative foundation, while rational tools such as *qawāʻid fiqhiyyah* and *maqāṣid* analysis are used to expand and operationalise legal meaning. One participant described this process as follows:

> "We rarely abandon texts entirely, but we often need principles to expand their application. That's where the proverb and the purpose of the law come in."[51]

This hybrid approach shows that *irādah* and *ratio* are not competing sources but complementary components of an integrated epistemological system. It also confirms that contemporary ijtihad relies on methodological pluralism rather than on a single interpretive paradigm.[52]

By contrast, the context-based model emerges particularly in cases involving new issues, such as digital transactions or modern financial instruments, where explicit textual references are lacking. In these situations, scholars rely more heavily on rational analysis, empirical data, and comparative reasoning. One informant explained:

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[47] Interview with HM, Wajo, 24 April 2026.

[48] Nurul Miftah Fadhli, Ahmad Muhaini, and Ahmad Marzuki, 'Reconstruction of Islamic Law Concepts Based on Sharia Maqasid and Contemporary Social Context', *FAQIH: Journal of Islamic Law*, 9.1 (2025), pp. 1–15, doi:10.37216/faqih.v9i1.1631.

[49] Interview with AN, Wajo, 29 April 2026.

[50] MUI Kabupaten Wajo, *Arsip Dokumen Fatwa Komisi Fatwa* (unpublished internal documents, 2026).

[51] Interview with FR, Wajo, 22 April 2026.

[52] Sapriadi Sapriadi, Darliana Darliana, and Junaidi Mudjrimin, 'The Development of Ijtihad in Modern Times in Indonesia: The Challenge of Mujtahid in Legal Istinbat', *Al-Ahkam: Journal of Islamic Law*, 7.2 (2025), pp. 101–16, doi:10.35905/al-ahkam.v7i2.3644.

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"For new economic problems, we have to understand how the system works first. Only then can we connect it with the principles of Islam."[53]

These findings highlight the growing importance of interdisciplinary knowledge in Islamic legal reasoning. They also show that *ratio* extends beyond traditional legal tools to include empirical and analytical methods, reflecting the evolving character of contemporary ijtihad.[54] Importantly, the dialectical model observed in this study challenges the widespread assumption that Islamic law is rigid or dominated by textual literalism. It reveals instead that flexibility is embedded in its epistemological structure, especially through the mechanism of collective ijtihad. The deliberative nature of fatwa-making allows scholars to balance textual fidelity with contextual sensitivity, producing decisions that are normatively grounded and socially relevant.[55]

From a theoretical perspective, these findings support the argument that the relationship between *irādah* and *ratio* should be understood as a dynamic equilibrium rather than a hierarchical order. Such a balance allows Islamic law to maintain its normative authority while adapting to changing circumstances, and it is consistent with contemporary legal theory that views interpretation as a dialogical process involving continuous interaction between text, reason, and context.[56] The term *dynamic equilibrium* is used here in a restricted sense. It does not assert a quantitative balance between revelation and reason, nor does it imply that the two carry equal authority. It describes a relation in which the normative priority of the text is retained, while the interpretive weight borne by reasoning varies with the availability and specificity of textual indications. Equilibrium in this sense is an outcome of interpretive procedure rather than a doctrinal postulate.

Taken together, these observations indicate that the dialectic between *irādah* and *ratio* is not merely an abstract theoretical construction but a living practice within an institutional setting. The Wajo MUI case shows how this dialectic operates in actual decision-making, shaping legal outcomes in ways that reflect both universal principles and local realities, and thereby demonstrating the contribution of local practice to broader theoretical debate.[57] Ultimately, the findings suggest that the strength of the Islamic legal tradition lies in its capacity to sustain these dialectical interactions. Rather than being viewed as competing authorities, *irādah* and *ratio* are better understood as mutually constitutive elements that together enable the continuous renewal of Islamic law.

Interpretation of Āyāt al-Aḥkām and Ḥadīth al-Aḥkām

To address the need for more concrete textual analysis, this section presents three condensed case vignettes synthesised from themes recurring in the internal fatwa documents analysed and from the interview narratives.[58] Each vignette states the Qur'anic verse or hadith relied upon, the interpretive move applied (text-dominant, ratio-supported, or context-based),

[53] Interview with MS, Wajo, 30 April 2026.

[54] Allam Tri Mufadhol and Neni Nuraeni, 'The Istinbath Ahkam Method in Solving Contemporary Problems: A Case Study of Fatwa and Ijtihad', *Socius: Journal of Social Sciences Research*, 3.2 (2025), pp. 110–18, doi:10.5281/zenodo.16935179.

[55] Imam Kamaluddin and Achmad Charis Maulana, 'Dynamics of Qawaid Fiqhiyyah Implementation in DSN-MUI Fatwa', *Al-Afkar: Journal for Islamic Studies*, 7.4 (2024), pp. 1332–43.

[56] Aulia Ranny Priyatna and others, 'Towards Dynamic Fiqh: Jasser Auda's Contribution in the Transformation of Islamic Legal Theory', *JSHI: Journal of Sharia and Islamic Law*, 4.1 (2025), pp. 1–13, doi:10.47902/jshi.v4i1.396.

[57] Allam Tri Mufadhol and Neni Nuraeni, 'The Istinbath Ahkam Method in Solving Contemporary Problems: A Case Study of Fatwa and Ijtihad', *Socius: Journal of Social Sciences Research*, 3.2 (2025), pp. 110–18, doi:10.5281/zenodo.16935179.

[58] MUI Kabupaten Wajo, *Arsip Dokumen Fatwa Komisi Fatwa* (unpublished internal documents, 2026).

and the way legal meaning shifts when the ruling is operationalised in contemporary circumstances.

Vignette 1 (Text-dominant): Zakāt al-fiṭr and the determinacy of explicit prophetic specification. A recurring pattern in ritual-worship deliberations is that the commission treats explicit prophetic specification (*bayān*) as controlling, leaving limited room for expansive analogical or purposive modification. An example is the deliberation on *zakāt al-fiṭr* practice, in which the textual core is the report transmitted from Ibn ʻUmar concerning the prescribed measure and the staple items.

Chain of transmission (*sanad*): Yaḥyā ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Sakan → Muḥammad ibn Jahḍam → Ismāʻīl ibn Jaʻfar → ʻUmar ibn Nāfiʻ → his father (Nāfiʻ) → ʻAbdullāh ibn ʻUmar.

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ السَّكَنِ، حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ جَهْضَمٍ، حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ بْنُ جَعْفَرٍ، عَنْ عُمَرَ بْنِ نَافِعٍ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنِ ابْنِ عُمَرَ رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمَا قَالَ: فَرَضَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ زَكَاةَ الْفِطْرِ صَاعًا مِنْ تَمْرٍ، أَوْ صَاعًا مِنْ شَعِيرٍ عَلَى الْعَبْدِ وَالْحُرِّ، وَالذَّكَرِ وَالْأُنْثَى، وَالصَّغِيرِ وَالْكَبِيرِ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ، وَأَمَرَ بِهَا أَنْ تُؤَدَّى قَبْلَ خُرُوجِ النَّاسِ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ.

Translation: "The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) made obligatory the *zakāt al-fiṭr* of one *ṣāʻ* of dates or one *ṣāʻ* of barley upon every Muslim, slave or free, male or female, young or old, and he ordered that it be paid before the people went out for the prayer."[59]

In this text-dominant pattern, *ratio* operates mainly as a clarifying tool (*taḥqīq al-manāṭ*)—identifying local staple equivalents and calculating the *ṣāʻ* measure—rather than as a basis for re-designing the ruling. The prophetic specification of both the quantity and the categories of obligated persons narrows the interpretive space, so that reasoning is confined to the accurate identification of the case to which the text applies. This illustrates how textual meaning (*dalālah*) can function as a close proxy for *qaṣd al-shāriʻ* in ritual matters, thereby producing an institutional articulation of *irādah* that is strongly bounded by the wording and by its established juristic reception. In relation to the empirical patterns discussed above, the vignette shows that the text-dominant pattern is not the product of literalism as a disposition, but of the determinacy of the text itself in this class of cases.

Vignette 2 (Ratio-supported): Marriage administration, dispute prevention, and maqāṣid-oriented reasoning. In family and social issues, the commission commonly begins from general textual directives and then relies on *qawāʻid* and *maqāṣid* considerations to operationalise them within contemporary governance structures. A textual anchor frequently cited in such deliberations is the command to fulfil contracts, namely QS. al-Mā'idah (5): 1.

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓاْ أَوۡفُواْ بِٱلۡعُقُودِۚ أُحِلَّتۡ لَكُم بَهِيمَةُ ٱلۡأَنۡعَٰمِ إِلَّا مَا يُتۡلَىٰ عَلَيۡكُمۡ غَيۡرَ مُحِلِّي ٱلصَّيۡدِ وَأَنتُمۡ حُرُمٌۗ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَحۡكُمُ مَا يُرِيدُ

Translation: "O you who have believed, fulfil your covenants. Lawful for you are the grazing livestock, except that which is announced to you, and hunting is not permitted while you are in the state of *iḥrām*. Indeed, Allah decrees what He wills."[60]

Alongside this directive, informants reported the use of the legal maxim *al-ḍarar yuzāl* (harm must be removed) as an interpretive bridge. The maxim is itself derived from the

[59] Muḥammad ibn Ismāʻīl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Kitāb al-Zakāh, bāb farḍ ṣadaqat al-fiṭr, ḥadīth no. 1503; the same report is transmitted by Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Kitāb al-Zakāh, bāb zakāt al-fiṭr ʻalā al-muslimīn min al-tamr wa al-shaʻīr, ḥadīth no. 984.

[60] Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, *Al-Qur'an dan Terjemahannya* (Jakarta: Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2019).

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prophetic principle *lā ḍarara wa lā ḍirār*, discussed in the following vignette, and its function here is to translate a general obligation into a determinate administrative requirement.[61]

In the ratio-supported model, the commission reads the Qur'anic directive not as a narrow instruction limited to classical contract forms, but as a normative basis for modern administrative requirements—documentation and registration—aimed at protecting lineage (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*) and property (*ḥifẓ al-māl*) by reducing future disputes. Two interpretive steps are involved. First, the general wording *awfū bi-al-ʿuqūd* is read as establishing an obligation of contractual integrity that is indifferent to the historical form in which a contract is recorded. Second, the purposes served by that obligation are identified, and administrative instruments are evaluated by their capacity to serve those purposes. This illustrates how *maqāṣid* reasoning functions as an institutional criterion of legal adequacy while remaining anchored to textual obligations, and it corresponds closely to the pattern that the informants described when they explained that principles are needed in order to extend the application of texts.[62]

Vignette 3 (Context-based): Digital lending, the classification of ribā, and the necessity of technical description. In contemporary economic problems—especially digital finance—the interpretive sequence often begins with a technical description of the transaction, because legal classification depends on the structure of obligations, fees, risk allocation, and default mechanisms. The textual anchor commonly invoked in deliberations on interest-bearing increments is the prohibition of *ribā* in QS. al-Baqarah (2): 275.

ٱلَّذِينَ يَأۡكُلُونَ ٱلرِّبَوٰاْ لَا يَقُومُونَ إِلَّا كَمَا يَقُومُ ٱلَّذِي يَتَخَبَّطُهُ ٱلشَّيۡطَٰنُ مِنَ ٱلۡمَسِّۚ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمۡ قَالُوٓاْ إِنَّمَا ٱلۡبَيۡعُ مِثۡلُ ٱلرِّبَوٰاْۗ وَأَحَلَّ ٱللَّهُ ٱلۡبَيۡعَ وَحَرَّمَ ٱلرِّبَوٰاْۚ فَمَن جَآءَهُۥ مَوۡعِظَةٞ مِّن رَّبِّهِۦ فَٱنتَهَىٰ فَلَهُۥ مَا سَلَفَ وَأَمۡرُهُۥٓ إِلَى ٱللَّهِۖ وَمَنۡ عَادَ فَأُوْلَٰٓئِكَ أَصۡحَٰبُ ٱلنَّارِۖ هُمۡ فِيهَا خَٰلِدُونَ

Translation: "Those who consume interest will stand on the Day of Resurrection like those driven to madness by Satan's touch. That is because they say, 'Trade is no different from interest.' But Allah has permitted trade and forbidden interest. Whoever refrains—after having received warning from his Lord—may keep his previous gains, and his case is left to Allah. As for those who persist, it is they who will be the inhabitants of the Fire, abiding therein forever."[63]

The verse is cited in full here because its legal force is inseparable from the contrast it draws between sale and *ribā*: the prohibition is stated together with the permission of trade, so that the interpretive task is precisely to determine on which side of that distinction a given transaction falls. Alongside the verse, the commission invokes the prophetic prohibition of harm.

Chain of transmission (*sanad*): ʿAbd Rabbihi ibn Khālid al-Numayrī (Abū al-Mughallis) → Fuḍayl ibn Sulaymān → Mūsā ibn ʿUqbah → Isḥāq ibn Yaḥyā ibn al-Walīd → ʿUbādah ibn al-Ṣāmit.

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ رَبِّهِ بْنُ خَالِدٍ النُّمَيْرِيُّ أَبُو الْمُغَلِّسِ، حَدَّثَنَا فُضَيْلُ بْنُ سُلَيْمَانَ، حَدَّثَنَا مُوسَى بْنُ عُقْبَةَ، حَدَّثَنَا إِسْحَاقُ بْنُ يَحْيَى بْنِ الْوَلِيدِ، عَنْ عُبَادَةَ بْنِ الصَّامِتِ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَضَى أَنْ: «لَا ضَرَرَ وَلَا ضِرَارَ».

[61] I Jalili and I Syukri, 'Utilizing Qawāʿid Fiqhiyyah in Legal Analysis', *Istinbath Journal*, 2025.

[62] Adis Duderija, 'The Imperatives of Contemporary Islamic Reform: Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah, Neo-Traditionalism, and the Future of Islamic Law', *Journal of Islamic Ethics*, 7.1–2 (2023), pp. 1–25, doi:10.1163/24685542-12340078.

[63] Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, *Al-Qur'an dan Terjemahannya*.

Translation: "The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) ruled that there is to be neither harm nor the reciprocation of harm."[64]

Here, *ratio* becomes context-based in two senses. First, jurists must establish the factual *manāṭ*—the operative cause or feature—by reconstructing the mechanics of the transaction, for instance whether "fees" are effectively time-linked increments on a principal.[65] Second, they must evaluate foreseeable harms and social consequences, using *maṣlaḥah* reasoning alongside the classical categories. The hadith functions in this sequence not as an independent source of the ruling but as the normative criterion by which the reconstructed consequences are assessed, while the verse supplies the categorical distinction that the reconstruction is meant to apply. This pattern demonstrates that contextual reasoning does not displace *irādah*; rather, it is mobilised in order to avoid misapplying a text whose legal function depends on correctly identifying the real-world object to which it is applied.[66] Comparable reasoning has been observed in analyses of DSN-MUI fatwas on digital financial instruments and on contracts such as *rahn*, where classification likewise proceeds from an account of the contractual structure before a legal category is assigned.[67]

Taken together, the three vignettes indicate that the interpretation of *āyāt al-aḥkām* and *ḥadīth al-aḥkām* in Wajo MUI reflects a hybrid methodological approach that integrates classical exegetical traditions with contemporary contextual reasoning. This hybrid model suggests that interpretation is not confined to the authority of classical texts but involves active engagement with evolving knowledge systems and socio-economic realities.[68]

In addressing contemporary financial issues, scholars often reinterpret classical legal texts using modern analytical frameworks, including economic indicators, institutional regulations, and risk considerations, which reflects a significant expansion of interpretive tools beyond the traditional instruments of jurisprudence. An informant explained:

> "We cannot interpret the hadith on trade in the same way as in the past. Today's financial system is more complex, so we need additional analysis."[69]

Another participant emphasised the need for interdisciplinary understanding:

> "Before making a decision, we must understand how the modern financial system operates. Without it, our interpretation of the text would not be complete."[70]

These accounts suggest that *ratio* serves as an epistemological extension, allowing scholars to reinterpret legal texts in the light of contemporary complexity. The observation is consistent with recent research showing that modern fatwa institutions increasingly incorporate empirical and technical knowledge as part of the interpretive process, especially in areas such as Islamic finance and governance.[71] The convergence with those studies is explicable in terms

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[64] Muḥammad ibn Yazīd Ibn Mājah, *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, Kitāb al-Aḥkām, bāb man banā fī ḥaqqihi mā yaḍurru bi-jārihi, ḥadīth no. 2340 (from ʻUbādah ibn al-Ṣāmit); a parallel mursal transmission appears in Mālik ibn Anas, *al-Muwaṭṭa'*, Kitāb al-Aqḍiyah (from ʻAmr ibn Yaḥyā al-Māzinī, from his father). Although hadith critics have questioned the strength of individual chains of this report, its content has been received by jurists as the textual basis of the maxim *al-ḍarar yuzāl*.

[65] Muhammad Maksum, 'The Mechanism of Avoiding Riba in Islamic Financial Institutions: Experiences of Indonesia and Malaysia', *JURIS (Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah)*, 22.2 (2023), doi:10.31958/juris.v22i2.6952.

[66] A. Latif, 'Fatwa DSN-MUI terhadap Instrumen Keuangan Digital: Analisis Ushul Fiqh', *Ahkam: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah*, 22.2 (2022).

[67] Nur Aisyah Aulia Yusnitha and Imam Muslih, 'Analysis of the DSN-MUI Fatwa on the Rahn Contract: A Case Study at Pegadaian Syariah', *Jurisprudence: Journal of Sharia Science*, 9.1 (2025), pp. 67–78, doi:10.22373/jurisprudensi.v9i1.10557.

[68] Ahmad Sulhadi, 'Recontextualizing Maqāṣid al-Sharīʻah in Contemporary Qur'anic Exegesis', *Samawat Journal*, 8.2 (2024), pp. 123–35, doi:10.58223/samawat.v8i2.449.

[69] Interview with SN, Wajo, 27 April 2026.

[70] Interview with AR, Wajo, 21 April 2026.

[71] B Arifin, 'Islamic Legal Reasoning in Dispute Resolution and Sharia Financial Risk Management of DSN-MUI Fatwas', *Islamic Law Review*, 2026.

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of subject matter: contemporary financial questions cannot be classified in legal terms without an accurate technical description of the transaction, so interpretation necessarily incorporates non-legal knowledge. The theoretical consequence is that the boundary of the interpretive act has widened, and that competence in contemporary ijtihad now includes the capacity to characterise the object of the ruling correctly.

The data further show that interpretation in Wajo MUI is strongly shaped by contextual awareness. Scholars treat *āyāt al-aḥkām* and *ḥadīth al-aḥkām* as normative frameworks that require contextualisation rather than rigid application. One informant noted:

> "The meaning of the text is inseparable from the situation in which it is applied. We must always consider the current conditions."[72]

This position reflects a contextual hermeneutic approach in which meaning arises from the interaction between text and reality. It also indicates that *irādah* is accessed through interpretive mediation rather than literal extraction, which reinforces the dynamic relationship between revelation and reasoning.[73]

In addition, the findings reveal a strong emphasis on ethical considerations in the interpretation of hadith, particularly in cases involving social and economic justice. One respondent stated:

> "If literal interpretation causes harm or injustice, then we need to reconsider. The purpose of Islamic law is to bring profit."[74]

This statement indicates a shift towards moral reasoning, in which interpretation is guided by ethical purposes rather than by textual literalism alone. Such an approach reflects the increasing influence of *maqāṣid*-oriented thinking in contemporary Islamic legal interpretation, where the ultimate purposes of the law become the primary interpretive lens.[75]

The study also found that scholars engage critically with the historical context of hadith when deriving legal decisions. Rather than treating a hadith as universally applicable without qualification, they examine the circumstances of its emergence. As one informant explained:

> "We need to understand why a hadith is said, not just what it says. Context is very important."[76]

This demonstrates a historically informed interpretive model that distinguishes between universal principles and context-specific applications. Such an approach increases interpretive flexibility and allows Islamic law to remain relevant across a variety of temporal and social contexts, in a manner consistent with scholarship on the contextualisation of hadith through *maqāṣid*-based criteria.[77]

Importantly, this hybrid interpretive framework challenges the idea that Islamic legal texts are static or resistant to change.[78] It suggests instead that adaptability is inherent in the interpretive tradition itself, since the integration of classical exegesis with contemporary reasoning reflects the continuity of that tradition through transformation rather than a deviation

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[72] Interview with HM, Wajo, 24 April 2026.

[73] Arip Purkon, 'Hermeneutic Approaches in the Study of Islamic Law', *AHKAM: Journal of Sharia Science*, 13.2 (2013), pp. 183–92, doi:10.15408/ajis.v13i2.930.

[74] Interview with MS, Wajo, 30 April 2026.

[75] Putra Ramadan, Badrun Munir, and Ahmad Amri, 'A Review of Sharia Maqasid on Judges' Decisions in a Contemporary Context', *Al-Fikr: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 6.2 (2025), pp. 88–102, doi:10.61166/af.v6i2.1674.

[76] Interview with AN, Wajo, 29 April 2026.

[77] Refki Saputra, 'Contextualization of Hadith Based on the Concept of Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah: Methodological Analysis of Hadith Actualization in Indonesian Socio-Cultural', *MISYKAT: Journal of Qur'anic Sciences of Sharia Hadith and Tarbiyah*, 9.1 (2024), pp. 97–112, doi:10.33511/misykat.v9n1.97-112.

[78] Ahmad Hadziq, Rudi Bistara, and Miftahur Rahmah, 'Dialectics of Tradition and Modernity: Muhammad Iqbal's Ijtihad in the Hermeneutics of Hadith', *AJIPP: Journal of Religion, Islam, and Educational Thought*, 7.1 (2025), doi:10.24090/ajipp.v7i1.12265.

from it.[79] From a theoretical perspective, the findings support the view that Islamic legal interpretation operates within a dynamic epistemological system that accommodates both stability and change. The dialectic between *irādah* and *ratio* allows scholars to maintain fidelity to textual sources while addressing contemporary challenges, which confirms that the vitality of Islamic law lies in its interpretive capacity rather than in textual rigidity.[80] On a broader level, the Wajo MUI case shows how local interpretive practices contribute to wider discussion on the renewal of Islamic law. By demonstrating how classical texts can be reinterpreted in response to modern realities, the study highlights the importance of contextual approaches in developing a responsive and relevant Islamic jurisprudence.[81] For Qur'anic and hadith studies specifically, this indicates that *āyāt al-aḥkām* and *ḥadīth al-aḥkām* operate in institutional practice as normative references whose application requires reconstruction of the conditions they address, a position consistent with contextual approaches to hadith criticism.[82]

Contextualising the Irādah–Ratio Dialectic: Local Ijtihad and the Epistemological Reconstruction of Islamic Law

Another significant finding of this study concerns the strong influence of socio-cultural context in shaping both the structure and the outcomes of legal reasoning at Wajo MUI. Unlike national-level fatwas, which tend to adopt standardised procedures and are formally codified, local fatwas exhibit a higher level of contextual responsiveness. This responsiveness is not only pragmatic but reflects a deeper epistemological orientation in which legal reasoning is embedded in the realities of communal life.[83]

The empirical data show that scholars at Wajo MUI frequently incorporate local customs (*'urf*) and social practices into the interpretive process, provided that these do not contradict the basic principles of Islam. One informant explained:

> "Local traditions are part of our reality. As long as they don't violate the core teachings of Islam, they can guide how we apply the law."[84]

Another respondent added:

> "Sometimes the text is general, but local conditions help us determine how it should be applied in practice."[85]

These findings suggest that legal reasoning at the local level is not separable from its social context but is strongly shaped by it. In this sense, the dialectic between *irādah* and *ratio* extends beyond epistemology into the sociological domain, where interpretation is influenced by cultural norms, communal needs, and lived experience.[86] The role of *'urf* here is methodologically specific: local practice does not generate norms, but supplies the descriptive

[79] Muhammad Mufid, 'Towards the Reconstruction and Reinterpretation of Al-Kulliyyāt al-Khams: A Study of Maqāṣid in Interdisciplinary Islamic Studies', *Al-Mazaahib: Journal of Comparative Law*, 12.2 (2024), pp. 215–30, doi:10.14421/al-mazaahib.v12i2.4450.

[80] Fajar Firmansyah, Muh. Rizal Mooduto, and Hasyim Hasan, 'Islamic Legal Thought and the Dynamics of Contemporary Society', *Al-Ahkam: Journal of Islamic Criminal Law*, 7.1 (2025), pp. 25–40, doi:10.35905/al-ahkam.v7i1.4176.

[81] Putra Ramadan, Badrun Munir, and Ahmad Amri, 'A Review of Sharia Maqasid on Judges' Decisions in a Contemporary Context', *Al-Fikr: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 6.2 (2025), pp. 88–102, doi:10.61166/af.v6i2.1674.

[82] Wasman, Mesraini, and Suwendi, 'A Critical Approach to Prophetic Traditions'.

[83] A Harmanto, A Jera, and M Hafis, 'Reconstructing the Epistemology of MUI Family Law Fatwas', *Journal of Islamic Law*, 2025 <https://journal.iaimnumetrolampung.ac.id/index.php/jm/article/view/6802>.

[84] Interview with AN, Wajo, 29 April 2026.

[85] Interview with MS, Wajo, 30 April 2026.

[86] Roni Ahmad Roni, Hasyim Umar, and Muhammad Mukhtar, 'Ta'āruḍ al-Adillah: A Multidimensional Maqāṣid Approach to Flexibility in Islamic Law', *Mediasas: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 5.1 (2025), pp. 55–70, doi:10.58518/mediasas.v5i1.291.

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premises on which the application of a norm depends. The distinction matters, because it separates contextual reasoning from any relativisation of normative authority.[87]

This socio-cultural embeddedness transforms the character of ijtihad from a purely textual-rational exercise into a context-sensitive process of legal negotiation. Rather than applying universal norms uniformly, scholars reinterpret them through the lens of local reality, which reflects a balance between universality and particularity in which Islamic law retains its normative foundations while adapting to a diverse socio-cultural environment.[88]

These findings carry significant theoretical implications for understanding the epistemology of Islamic law. The data show that the relationship between *irādah* and *ratio* should not be conceptualised as a fixed hierarchy in which revelation dominates and reason functions merely as a subordinate tool. It is better understood as a dynamic balance in which the two elements interact continuously to produce contextually relevant legal meanings.[89]

Such a balance allows Islamic law to maintain its normative integrity while remaining able to adapt to changing circumstances. In contrast to classical formulations that often emphasise textual authority as the primary determinant of legal outcomes, the findings of this study suggest that contemporary ijtihad, particularly at the local level, operates through a more fluid and dialogical interaction between revelation and reason.[90]

This perspective challenges reductionist views that describe Islamic law as rigid, static, or resistant to change. It supports instead the argument that the adaptability of Islamic law lies in its interpretive mechanisms, especially its capacity to integrate textual fidelity with contextual reasoning. Such integration is not a departure from tradition but a continuation of its dynamic epistemological heritage.[91]

The case of Wajo MUI illustrates that local ijtihad practices play an important role in reconstructing the epistemology of Islamic law from the bottom up. By situating legal reasoning within a specific socio-cultural context, local scholars contribute to a more pluralistic and contextual understanding of Islamic law, which has broader implications for Islamic legal discourse in showing that interpretive diversity is not a weakness but a capacity that enables the law to remain relevant across a range of situations.[92] In sum, the study shows that the dialectic between *irādah* and *ratio* is not merely an abstract theoretical construction but a living and evolving practice. Its reconstruction through local ijtihad highlights the importance of contextual engagement in maintaining the vitality and relevance of the Islamic legal tradition in the modern world.

Practical Implications and Broader Relevance

The findings highlight the strategic role of local ijtihad institutions such as Wajo MUI in translating Islamic legal sources into contextually workable norms. Rather than presenting

[87] Muhammad Rosyid and Dedi Dwi Afrizal, 'Integration of Customary Law in the Reform of Islamic Family Law in Indonesia', *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Law*, 5.2 (2025), pp. 140–55, doi:10.35891/ijijel.v5i2.1170.

[88] Irfan Haq and Muhammad Yunus, 'Reassessing Maslahah in Islamic Legal Adaptation: Analysis of MUI South Sulawesi Fatwa', *PS: Journal of Sharia Thought*, 2.1 (2025), pp. 45–58, doi:10.55575/ps.v2i1.48.

[89] Nur Hidayah Attas, Kurniati Kurniati, and Zainuddin Mustafa, 'Dialectics of Reason and Revelation in the Formation of Fatwas and Regulations in Indonesia', *Al-Syakhsiyyah: Journal of Islamic Family Law*, 7.1 (2025), pp. 33–48, doi:10.30631/alsyakhshiyyah.v7i1.9935.

[90] Fadli Bahreni, Syaiful Iska, and Aisyah Hidayati, 'Epistemology, Ontology, and Axiology of Islamic Economics in the Framework of Sharia Philosophy', *JPSDa: Journal of Sharia Thought and Da'wah*, 4.1 (2026), pp. 1–18, doi:10.54990/jpsda.v4i1.4705.

[91] Hasyim F Attamimi and others, *Moderate Islamic Studies: An Epistemological and Contextual Approach* (Google Books, 2026).

[92] Sapriadi Sapriadi, Darliana Darliana, and Junaidi Mudjrimin, 'The Development of Ijtihad in Modern Times in Indonesia: The Challenge of Mujtahid in Legal Istinbat', *Al-Ahkam: Journal of Islamic Law*, 7.2 (2025), pp. 101–16, doi:10.35905/al-ahkam.v7i2.3644.

local practice as an alternative to textual authority, the case demonstrates how institutional ijtihad functions as mediation: it stabilises textual commitments while enabling disciplined adaptation through the tools of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *qawā'id fiqhiyyah*, and *maṣlaḥah*-oriented evaluation.[93]

The relevance of this contribution should nevertheless be stated within the empirical limits of the study. Because the data are drawn from a single district-level institution, the article does not claim to map a global Islamic legal discourse or to predict the future of Islamic law in general. It offers instead an empirically grounded illustration of how the *irādah–ratio* dialectic operates in one local fatwa setting, and it shows why broader theorisation about contemporary ijtihad should remain attentive to institutional and socio-cultural variation.

At most, the broader relevance is methodological: the Wajo case suggests that the most defensible way to theorise contemporary Islamic legal reasoning is to trace how texts, interpretive procedures, and social consequences are assembled in concrete decision-making. This provides a cautious basis for comparison with other fatwa councils without overextending the claims beyond the evidence.[94]

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Despite its contributions, this research is subject to several limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the study focuses on a single regional institution, namely Wajo MUI, which limits the generalisation of its findings. Given the diversity of socio-cultural contexts across Indonesia, ijtihad practices may vary significantly between regions, and the conclusions of this study should therefore be understood as context-specific. This limitation defines the analytical scope of the study rather than diminishing the validity of its findings: the account is intended to be transferable as an interpretive model of local ijtihad rather than statistically generalisable to other regions.

Second, the research encountered limitations in accessing the internal deliberation process within the Fatwa Commission. While interviews provide valuable insights into interpretive reasoning, the absence of full observational data limits a deeper understanding of how legal decisions are negotiated in real time. These limitations reflect broader methodological challenges in the study of institutional religious authority.[95]

Future research is therefore encouraged to adopt comparative and interdisciplinary approaches. Comparative studies involving several regional MUI branches or other fatwa institutions would allow a more comprehensive analysis of local ijtihad practices and their variations.[96] In addition, integrating insights from sociology, anthropology, and legal studies can deepen understanding of how Islamic law interacts with complex social systems.

Future studies should also explore the impact of technological developments, such as digital platforms and artificial intelligence, on the processes of ijtihad and fatwa production. As Islamic legal reasoning increasingly intersects with technological change, examining these dynamics will be crucial to understanding the future trajectory of Islamic law.[97] In summary, while this study provides a focused analysis of the dialectic between *irādah* and *ratio* in a

[93] Abdul Gofar, Siti Amina, and Nisrina Fajrin, 'Reconstruction of the Concept of Maslahah Mursalah as a Basis for Contemporary Ijtihad in Answering the Challenges of Modernity', *Tamaddun*, 10.1 (2025), pp. 10–28, doi:10.47759/f1hyrg84.

[94] Mawaddah Warohmah, 'Contemporary Methodology of Islamic Law Studies: A Critical Approach to the Sources and Mechanisms of Law Formulation', *ISTISHLAH: Journal of Islamic Law*, 3.1 (2025), pp. 13–22.

[95] Nico J. G. Kaptein, 'The Voice of the "Ulamā": Fatwas and Religious Authority in Indonesia', *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions*, 125 (2004), pp. 115–30, doi:10.4000/assr.1038.

[96] Ritonga, Syahnan, and Adly, 'Survey of the Use of Qawā'id Fiqhiyyah in the Fatwa of Three Institutions of the Indonesian Ulema Council'.

[97] A Kasdi, U Farida, and M Huda, 'Fatwa and Religious Authority: Islamic Law and Digital Ethics', *Al-Ahkam Journal*, 2026.

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specific local context, it also opens the way for broader and more comprehensive research. Addressing these limitations would contribute to a more nuanced and widely relevant understanding of contemporary Islamic legal reasoning.

C. Conclusion

This study shows that the dialectical relationship between *irādah* (divine will) and *ratio* (human reasoning) in the interpretation of *āyāt al-aḥkām* and *ḥadīth al-aḥkām* at Wajo MUI is best understood as a dynamic, case-sensitive equilibrium rather than a fixed hierarchy. In institutional ijtihad, jurists begin from textual meaning, reconstruct *qaṣd al-shāriʿ* through *uṣūl* procedures, and then operationalise the ruling through rational instruments—*qawāʿid*, *maṣlaḥah*, and contextual analysis—resulting in different patterns of interpretive dominance according to the type of problem addressed. The contribution of this article is to make that procedural sequence empirically visible in a local fatwa institution and to clarify conceptually how *irādah* differs from *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, *qaṣd al-shāriʿ*, and textual semantics. Its principal limitation is scope: the evidence is based on one district-level commission and on interviews and documents that do not fully capture closed deliberation dynamics. For that reason, the findings are offered as an empirically grounded illustration that can be tested and refined through comparative studies across other local and national fatwa bodies.

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