



# THE DYNAMICS OF HIJRI MONTH DETERMINATION IN INDONESIA: RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY, PLURALISM, AND SOCIAL COHESION

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## Abstract

The determination of the start of the Hijri month is a fundamental aspect of Islamic religious practice, particularly in setting the dates for religious observances such as Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha. However, differences in determination methods and criteria often give rise to social dynamics within Muslim communities. This article aims to analyse the dynamics of determining the start of the Hijri month and its impact on the social cohesion of the Muslim community. This study employs a qualitative approach based on a literature review, analysing scholarly literature, institutional documents, and previous research through the framework of the sociology of religion, particularly theories of social cohesion and religious authority. The analysis focuses on how epistemological differences, the role of institutions, and socio-cultural contexts shape religious practices and social relations. The findings indicate that differences in Indonesia regarding the determination of the start of the Hijri month are influenced by variations in the interpretation of religious texts and astronomical criteria, as well as the authority of religious institutions. These differences have an ambivalent impact on social cohesion: they can trigger fragmentation, symbolic conflict, and polarisation, yet they also foster tolerance, pluralism, and mechanisms of social adaptation. This research contributes by shifting the focus of study from fiqh and astronomical approaches towards a sociological approach that places social cohesion at the centre of the analysis.

**Keywords:** Beginning of the Islamic Month; Social Cohesion; Social Dynamics.

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## Abstrak

Penentuan awal bulan Hijriah merupakan aspek fundamental dalam praktik keagamaan Islam, khususnya dalam penetapan waktu ibadah seperti Ramadan, Idul Fitri, dan Idul Adha. Namun, perbedaan metode penentuan dan kriteria, kerap menimbulkan dinamika sosial di tengah masyarakat Muslim. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis dinamika penentuan awal bulan Hijriah serta dampaknya terhadap kohesi sosial umat Islam. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis studi pustaka dengan menganalisis literatur ilmiah, dokumen kelembagaan, dan penelitian terdahulu melalui kerangka sosiologi agama, khususnya teori kohesi sosial dan otoritas keagamaan. Analisis difokuskan pada bagaimana perbedaan epistemologis, peran institusi, serta konteks sosial-kultural membentuk praktik keagamaan dan relasi sosial. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa perbedaan di Indonesia dalam penentuan awal bulan Hijriah dipengaruhi oleh variasi interpretasi teks keagamaan dan kriteria astronomi serta otoritas lembaga keagamaan. Perbedaan tersebut berdampak ambivalen terhadap kohesi sosial: dapat memicu fragmentasi, konflik simbolik, dan polarisasi, namun juga mendorong toleransi, pluralisme, serta mekanisme adaptasi sosial. Penelitian ini berkontribusi dengan menggeser fokus kajian dari pendekatan fikih dan astronomi menuju pendekatan sosiologis yang menempatkan kohesi sosial sebagai fokus utama analisis.

**Kata Kunci:** Awal Bulan Hijriah; Dinamika Sosial; Kohesi Sosial.

## INTRODUCTION

Determining the start of the Hijri month is a fundamental aspect of the religious life of Muslims, with direct implications for the observance of collective acts of worship, such as Ramadan fasting, Eid al-Fitr, and Eid al-Adha.<sup>1</sup> In the Islamic scholarly tradition, the determination of the start of the month is understood not only as a technical astronomical issue within the science of astronomy but also as part of the construction of religious authority and social practices within society. The differing approaches between the *hisab* (astronomical calculation) and *rukyat* (crescent moon observation) methods reveal epistemological diversity in understanding the sources of Islamic teachings.<sup>2</sup> This diversity, on the one hand, reflects the richness of the Islamic intellectual tradition; on the other hand, it has the potential to generate complex social dynamics, particularly when such differences intersect with religious practices that are both mass-scale and symbolic in nature.

Empirically, discrepancies in determining the start of the Hijri month still frequently occur in various Muslim countries, including Indonesia, as evidenced by the inconsistency in the determination of the start of Ramadan and religious holidays between the government and religious organizations. This situation often gives rise to social phenomena such as differences in the practice of worship within a single community, confusion among

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<sup>1</sup>Rudi Hartono and Muhammad Yunus, "Analisis Penentuan Awal Bulan Hijriyah Dengan Metode Pendekatan Hisab dan Rukyat," *Jurnal Al-Mizan: Jurnal Hukum Islam dan Ekonomi Syariah*, 2025.

<sup>2</sup>Shobani, "Metodologi Penentuan Awal Ramadhan: Studi Komparatif Antara Hisab, Rukyat, Dan Imkanur Rukyat," accessed March 31, 2026, <https://ejournal.stidkinu.ac.id/index.php/JIMI/article/view/107>.

the general public, and the potential for polarization based on religious affiliation. On the other hand, this reality also demonstrates a pattern of social adaptation in the form of tolerance and acceptance of differences, reflecting the dynamics of social cohesion among Muslims.<sup>3</sup> This fact underscores that the issue of determining the start of the Hijri month cannot be understood solely as a technical-scientific matter, but also as a social phenomenon involving the interplay between knowledge, authority, and religious practices within society.

The dynamics of determining the start of the Hijri month cannot be separated from the complex interplay between scientific approaches, religious authorities, and the surrounding social context. Differences in methods and criteria are not merely technical differences but reflect epistemological differences in understanding religious texts and interpretive authority. Furthermore, the state's involvement through the *isbat* session and the role of religious organizations add an institutional dimension to this determination process.<sup>4</sup> In this context, Islamic astronomy has transformed from merely an astronomical discipline into an arena of dialectic between science, religion, and power, which continues to evolve alongside technological advancements, the globalization of information, and increasing public participation in religious discourse.

These dynamics then give rise to various impacts that are not only of a religious-normative nature but also of a social-community nature. Differences in the determination of the start of the Hijri month often lead to tangible consequences in the form of discrepancies in the timing of religious observances within a single community, which has the potential to cause social disorientation and symbolic tension.<sup>5</sup> In some cases, these differences can develop into polarization based on affiliation with specific organizations or religious authorities. However, these impacts do not always lead to open conflict; rather, they can also give rise to forms of social negotiation and cultural adaptation that demonstrate the flexibility of society in responding to differences.

From the perspective of the sociology of religion, this situation is closely linked to the concept of social cohesion among Muslims—that is, the level of attachment, solidarity, and social integration within a religious community. Social cohesion is not determined solely by uniformity in religious practices, but also by the community's ability to foster trust, tolerance, and mechanisms for resolving differences.<sup>6</sup> Thus, differences in determining the start of the Hijri month can be understood as both a test and an opportunity for the formation of inclusive social cohesion. Therefore, it is important to examine in depth how the dynamics of this determination interact with the social conditions of society, as well as the extent to which it contributes to the strengthening or, conversely, the weakening of social cohesion among Muslims.

Unlike a number of previous studies, which generally place the determination of the start of the Hijri month within a normative *fiqh* and technical astronomical framework—

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<sup>3</sup>Siti Muslifah, "Upaya Menyikapi Perbedaan Penentuan Awal Bulan Qamariyah di Indonesia," *Azimuth: Journal of Islamic Astronomy* 1, no. 1 (2025): 74–100, <https://doi.org/10.15642/azimuth.v1i1.788>.

<sup>4</sup>Zainal Abidin Bagir, *Integrasi Ilmu dan Agama: Interpretasi dan Aksi* (Mizan Pustaka, 2005).

<sup>5</sup>Fahmi Misbahudin, "Penggunaan Metode Hisab Sullam Al-Nayyirain dalam Penetapan Awal Bulan Islam Tinjauan Sosiologi Dakwah," *LANTERA: Jurnal Komunikasi dan Penyiaran Islam* 3, no. 1 (2024): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.30999/lantera.v3i1.3419>.

<sup>6</sup>Muhammad Ijlal Sasakki Junaidi, "Kohesi Sosial Pada Komunitas Jamaah Sapta Dharma di Taman Siswa Yogyakarta," *Jurnal Moderasi* 5, no. 1 (2025): 15–31, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jm.2025.51.02>.

such as studies focusing on the comparison of *hisab* and *rukyat* methods,<sup>7</sup> analyses of the accuracy of astronomical calculations,<sup>8</sup> or studies on the authority of religious and state institutions<sup>9</sup>—this article shifts the focus of analysis to the sociological dimension, specifically the social cohesion of the Muslim community as the primary variable. Several previous studies have also touched upon aspects of conflict or differences in religious practices,<sup>10</sup> but tend to treat these as secondary implications without explicit measurement or a theoretical framework regarding social cohesion. Furthermore, other research has focused more on the internal dynamics of religious organizations or the legitimacy of the Isbat Council's decisions,<sup>11</sup> without deeply examining how such differences are responded to, negotiated, and internalized within the social life of the community. Therefore, this study offers a novel approach by integrating perspectives from Islamic astronomy and the sociology of religion through an analysis that specifically places social cohesion as the primary focus, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between religious practices, authority, and the social integration of the Muslim community.

This study holds significant theoretical and practical relevance within the context of contemporary Islamic studies. Academically, this research contributes to the advancement of astronomical studies by expanding its scope into the field of the sociology of religion, thereby addressing not only technical and normative aspects but also broader social dimensions. Practically, the findings of this study are expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding for policymakers, religious authorities, and the public in constructively managing differences in determining the start of the Hijri month to maintain social harmony and integration. Furthermore, this study is also crucial as a foundation for formulating strategies to strengthen social cohesion amidst the plurality of religious practices among Muslims. The objectives of this study are to analyze the dynamics of determining the start of the Hijri month, examine its impact on the social cohesion of the Muslim community, and identify the factors that influence the strengthening or weakening of social cohesion in this context.

Although numerous studies on the determination of the Hijri month have been conducted, most have primarily focused on normative fiqh perspectives and technical-astronomical approaches, such as comparisons between *hisab* and *rukyat*, calculation accuracy, and the legitimacy of religious authorities. However, there remains a significant gap in studies that explicitly position the social dimension—particularly social cohesion among Muslims—as the central focus of analysis. Previous research tends to treat social impacts as secondary implications without a robust theoretical framework explaining how

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<sup>7</sup>Martinus Oktavianus, “Perbedaan Penentuan Awal Bulan Hijriyah Di Indonesia: Tinjauan Integratif Ilmu Falak Dan Fiqh Siyash,” *Jurnal Pelita Nusantara* 3, no. 3 (2025): 147–61, <https://doi.org/10.59996/jurnalpelitanusantara.v3i3.953>.

<sup>8</sup>Imron Hadi, “Studi Analisis Akurasi Perhitungan Awal Waktu Shalat Menggunakan Universal Astrolabe,” *AL-AFAQ: Jurnal Ilmu Falak dan Astronomi* 4, no. 1 (2022): 129–56, <https://doi.org/10.20414/afaq.v4i1.5154>.

<sup>9</sup>Haeruman Jayadi et al., “Dialektika Otoritas Keagamaan dan Ilmu Pengetahuan dalam Penetapan Awal Bulan Kamariah,” *Aksioreligia* 3, no. 1 (2025): 30–39, <https://doi.org/10.59996/aksioreligia.v3i1.769>.

<sup>10</sup>Taufiqurachman, *Analisis Perbandingan Antara Metode Hisab Dan Rukyat Dalam Menentukan Awal Bulan Ramadhan Di Indonesia*, n.d., accessed March 31, 2026, <https://jiip.stkipyapisdompnu.ac.id/jiip/index.php/JIIP/article/view/6203>.

<sup>11</sup>Ahmad Syiful Anam, “Dinamika Sidang Isbat di Indonesia dari Tahun 1381 H-1441 H./1962 M – 2020 M: Kajian Hukum, Siyash Syari’yyah Dan Sejarah,” accessed March 31, 2026, <https://eprints.walisongo.ac.id/id/eprint/25139/>.

such differences shape social relations within society. Therefore, this study addresses the central problem: how do the dynamics of Hijri month determination affect social cohesion among Muslims in Indonesia? More specifically, this research seeks to answer two key questions: (1) what factors influence differences in determining the Hijri month in Indonesia? and (2) how do these differences contribute to the formation, strengthening, or weakening of social cohesion among Muslims? this study aims to provide a more focused contribution by bridging Islamic astronomy with the sociology of religion.

## METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design using a library-based approach, integrating the sociology of religion with Islamic astronomy. This approach is intended to examine the determination of the Hijri month not only as an astronomical phenomenon but also as a socio-religious practice shaped by various actors, authorities, and social contexts.<sup>12</sup> Data were collected from secondary sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, official government documents, and publications from religious organizations. The selection of sources followed explicit inclusion criteria: (1) relevance to Hijri month determination, (2) engagement with socio-religious or institutional dimensions, and (3) academic credibility and recency. Sources that did not meet these criteria were excluded to ensure data reliability.

The analytical process was conducted systematically in several stages. First, relevant data were identified and organized through document review. Second, a coding process was applied to classify key themes such as epistemological differences, religious authority, and social cohesion. Third, thematic analysis was employed to identify patterns and relationships across the data. Finally, the findings were interpreted using the theoretical frameworks of social cohesion and religious authority. This structured approach enhances the transparency, consistency, and validity of the analysis, ensuring that the findings are methodologically rigorous and analytically grounded.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Dynamics of Determining the Beginning of the Hijri Month

The variety of methods for determining the start of the Hijri month reflects the diversity of approaches within the tradition of Islamic astronomy.<sup>13</sup> The *hisab* method, which is based on astronomical calculations, has evolved into several variants, such as *wujūd al-hilāl*—now known as the KHGT (Single Global Hijri Calendar)—and *imkān al-ru'yah*, which employ different criteria for determining the start of the month.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, the *rukyat* method emphasizes direct observation of the crescent moon, either manually with the naked eye or with the aid of modern optical technology.<sup>15</sup> This difference is not merely technical but also reflects differing perspectives on interpreting the

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<sup>12</sup>Mahanum Mahanum, "Tinjauan Kepustakaan," *ALACRITY: Journal of Education*, July 9, 2021, 1-12, <https://doi.org/10.52121/alacrity.v1i2.20>.

<sup>13</sup>Ahmad Musonnif, "Pendekatan dalam Penelitian Ilmu Falak di Indonesia," *Dinamika Penelitian: Media Komunikasi Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan* 24, no. 01 (2024): 151-70, <https://doi.org/10.21274/dinamika.2024.24.01.151-170>.

<sup>14</sup>Fitriyanti Vivit, *Kalender Hijriyah Dalam Kajian Syari'ah dan Astronomi* (Bening Media Publishing, n.d.).

<sup>15</sup>Fiya Faridatul Afidah, "Implementasi Pendapat Ibnu Hajar Terkait Teknologi Rukyat Hilal di Era Modern," *The Moon* 1, no. 1 (2025): 14-23.

relationship between religious texts and empirical reality, resulting in decisions that are not always uniform in practice.

The difference between these methods stems from differing epistemological approaches to understanding the sources of Islamic teachings. The textual (normative) approach tends to regard hadiths on *rukyyat* as the primary basis for determining the start of the month, so that direct observation is considered to have stronger legitimacy.<sup>16</sup> Conversely, the rational *hisab* approach views the development of science, particularly astronomy, as capable of providing more accurate certainty through mathematical calculations. The tension between these two approaches reveals a dialectic between tradition and modernity in the study of astronomy, which subsequently leads to differences in religious practices within society.<sup>17</sup>

The dynamics of determining the start of the Hijri month are also heavily influenced by the roles of various actors who hold authority in making such decisions. The government, through the *isbat* hearing mechanism, seeks to serve as the official authority that accommodates diverse viewpoints and issues decisions of a national nature.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, religious organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah have their own methodologies and authority, which sometimes result in differing decisions. Additionally, local authorities and religious scholars also play a significant role in influencing public choices, particularly at the grassroots level.<sup>19</sup> The interaction among these actors shapes a complex social landscape in the practice of determining the start of the Hijri month.

In addition to internal factors, these dynamics are also influenced by external factors that have grown increasingly significant in the contemporary era. Technological advancements, such as digital astronomical applications, modern telescopes, and computer-based calculation systems, have improved accuracy while expanding public access to astronomical information.<sup>20</sup> Social media has also accelerated the dissemination of information and religious discourse, which in some cases can reinforce differences or broaden the space for dialogue. At the global level, the phenomenon of globalization has spurred comparisons of lunar month determination practices among various Muslim countries, which in turn has sparked discussions regarding the unification of the Hijri calendar. These external factors indicate that the dynamics of determining the start of the Hijri month are no longer merely local in nature but have become part of complex global interactions.

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<sup>16</sup>Ahmad Fauzi, "Ikhtiyat in The Epistemology of Astronomy Fiqh: An Integration of Conservatism and Contextualism," *TATHO: International Journal of Islamic Thought and Sciences*, August 23, 2025, 261–73, <https://doi.org/10.70512/tatho.v2i3.144>.

<sup>17</sup>Bashori Alwi et al., "Ilmu Falak dalam Perspektif Filsafat Ilmu," *Borneo: Journal of Islamic Studies* 6, no. 1 (2025): 223–36, <https://doi.org/10.37567/borneo.v6i1.4544>.

<sup>18</sup>Suharyono, "Politik Hukum Penentuan Awal Bulan Qomariyah di Indonesia Persepsi Lembaga Falakiah Pengurus Wilayah Nahdhatul Ulama Jawa Timur" (Program Studi Studi Islam Program Doktor Pascasarjana UIN Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq Jember, 2025).

<sup>19</sup>Arfan Nusi, "The Conformity in Religious Practice Relationship Between Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)-Muhammadiyah in Gorontalo" (doctoral, Universitas Hasanuddin, 2022), <https://repository.unhas.ac.id/id/eprint/28158/>.

<sup>20</sup>Hegar Yudha Saxena, "Evolusi Metodologi Ilmu Falak di Indonesia (Analisis Terhadap Pengaruh Teknologi dan Hukum Islam)" (Diploma, S1-Hukum Keluarga UIN SSC, 2024), <https://repository.syekh Nurjati.ac.id/16247/>.

## B. Factors Contributing to Differences in Determination

Differences in determining the start of the Hijri month essentially stem from variations in the scientific criteria used to establish the presence of the crescent moon. In the practice of astronomy, there are differences in parameters such as the altitude of the crescent, elongation (the angular distance between the sun and the moon), and the crescent's visibility level, which serve as the basis for determination.<sup>21</sup> Some parties determine the start of the month when the crescent moon is already above the horizon (*wujūd al-hilāl*)—now known as the KHGT (Single Global Hijri Calendar)—while others require specific visibility criteria (*imkān al-ru'yah*) to ensure the crescent moon can actually be observed. These differing standards mean that the results of calculations and observations do not always lead to the same decision, even when the observed object is identical.

In addition to technical factors, differences among religious authorities are also a major cause of variations in the determination of the start of the month.<sup>22</sup> In the context of a country like Indonesia, the government, through the *isbat* session, seeks to act as the formal authority that determines the start of the month on a national level. However, religious organizations possess their own epistemic authority and bases of legitimacy—which do not always align with the state's decisions. This situation creates a dualism, or even a pluralism, of authority, where the public has the choice to follow either the government's decision or that of the organization they believe in, thereby increasing the likelihood of discrepancies.<sup>23</sup>

Ideological factors and religious methodologies further reinforce these differences. Each group possesses distinct frameworks of thought, methodologies of legal deduction, and theological tendencies in interpreting the textual evidence regarding the determination of the beginning of the month. Some groups are more textual and strictly adhere to the practice of *rukyat*, while others are more flexible and open to using *hisab* as the primary basis. These methodological differences are not merely technical but are also tied to religious identity and deeply rooted intellectual traditions within each group.<sup>24</sup>

In addition, political factors and institutional legitimacy cannot be overlooked in explaining this phenomenon. The determination of the start of the Hijri month is often linked to efforts to maintain authority and influence within society. The state has an interest in maintaining social stability through national decisions, while religious organizations strive to maintain methodological consistency and the trust of their

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<sup>21</sup>Moelki Fahmi Ardliansyah and Restu Trisna Wardani, "The Dilemma of Global Hijri Calendar Unification: The Dialectic of Fiqh and Astronomy in Realizing the Standardization of The Modern Islamic Calendar," *Zicons: Zawiyah International Conference on Sharia and Legal Studies* 1 (December 2025): 341–58.

<sup>22</sup>Jayadi et al., "Dialektika Otoritas Keagamaan dan Ilmu Pengetahuan dalam Penetapan Awal Bulan Kamariah."

<sup>23</sup>Ahmad Mushonnif, "Fragmentasi Otoritas Antar Organisasi Pemerintah dan Organisasi Keagamaan Dalam Penentuan Awal Bulan Islam," *Al-Hukama': The Indonesian Journal of Islamic Family Law* 3, no. 2 (2013): 165–79, <https://doi.org/10.15642/al-hukama.2013.3.2.165-179>.

<sup>24</sup>Ahmad Musonif, "The Typology of Authority in Islam (Analysis of the Views of the Islamic Community in Indonesia about Ulil Amri in the Determination of the Beginning of Hijri Months)," *Kontemplasi: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 8, no. 2 (2020): 253–76, <https://doi.org/10.21274/kontem.2020.8.2.253-276>.

members.<sup>25</sup> In certain contexts, differences in determination can become a symbol of resistance or affirmation toward a particular authority, so that political aspects implicitly help shape these dynamics.

### C. Impact on the Social Cohesion of the Muslim Community

Differences in determining the start of the Hijri month have a direct impact on the fragmentation of the Muslim community, especially when these differences result in inconsistent observance of religious holidays within a single region or even within a single community. The disparity in the timing of Eid al-Fitr or Eid al-Adha celebrations is not merely administrative in nature; it also touches upon the symbolic dimension of communal unity.<sup>26</sup> In a society that culturally emphasizes the value of collectivity, these differences can diminish a sense of unity and solidarity, as sacred moments that should be celebrated together are, in practice, celebrated separately.

In addition to fragmentation, these differences also have the potential to lead to polarization based on religious organizations. People tend to identify with specific authorities, such as the government or religious organizations, resulting in the formation of groups with differing preferences regarding the determination of the start of the month.<sup>27</sup> This polarization can intensify when each group insists that its own methodological approach—whether *hisab* or *rukyyat*—is the most valid. Consequently, social relations between groups may become strained, especially if these differences are framed within narratives of exclusivity or claims to sole truth.

Differences in determining the start of the Hijri month can also trigger symbolic conflicts related to the legitimacy of religious truth. Debates over the most correct method often take place not only among academics or religious scholars but also spill over into the public sphere, including social media, thereby increasing the potential for friction.<sup>28</sup> For the general public, this situation can cause confusion in making choices, especially when faced with authorities that are equally legitimate. This confusion affects not only religious practices but also trust in religious authorities, which can ultimately weaken the social cohesion of the Muslim community as a whole.

Despite the potential for fragmentation, differences in determining the start of the Hijri month can also have a positive impact on social cohesion among Muslims, particularly in fostering tolerance among communities. When people are confronted with the reality of differences, there arises a need to understand and respect one another's religious

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<sup>25</sup>Nur Aiman, "Unifikasi Kalender Hijriah: Upaya Mencari Titik Temu dalam Menjawab Tantangan Islam Global Kontemporer," *Jurnal Dinamika Pendidikan Nusantara* 6, no. 4 (2025), <https://ejournals.com/ojs/index.php/jdpn/article/view/3802>.

<sup>26</sup>Mursyid Fikri and Indriana Indriana, "Persepsi dan Harapan Netizen Mengenai Variabilitas Waktu Perayaan Idul Fitri di Indonesia," *Al Qalam: Jurnal Ilmiah Keagamaan dan Kemasyarakatan* 18, no. 4 (2024): 2791–803, <https://doi.org/10.35931/aq.v18i4.3450>.

<sup>27</sup>Jayadi et al., "Dialektika Otoritas Keagamaan dan Ilmu Pengetahuan dalam Penetapan Awal Bulan Kamariah."

<sup>28</sup>Muhammad Agung Raharjo, "Analisis Kausal Komparatif (Dekonstruksi Metode Hisab-Rukyyat Dalam Penentuan Awal Bulan Hijriah): Dekonstruksi Metode Hisab-Rukyyat dalam Penentuan Awal Bulan Hijriah," accessed March 31, 2026, <https://journal.uin-alauddin.ac.id/index.php/elfalaky/article/view/58325>.

choices.<sup>29</sup> In many cases, Muslims are still able to practice their worship side by side without open conflict, despite differences in the determination of the timing. This demonstrates a social capacity to manage differences peacefully, which is actually an important indicator of mature social cohesion.

Furthermore, these differences also open the door to recognizing the plurality of religious practices within Islam. The diversity of *hisab* and *rukyat* methods, as well as the resulting variations in decisions, reflect that religious practices are not always singular in nature but rather encompass a broad spectrum of interpretations.<sup>30</sup> Awareness of this plurality can enrich the public's religious understanding while reducing tendencies toward exclusivism. Thus, differences are no longer viewed as a threat but as part of the legitimate and acceptable dynamics of Islamic intellectual tradition.

These dynamics also contribute to the strengthening of group identity while fostering dialogue among religious groups.<sup>31</sup> Every organization or community has the opportunity to clarify its methodological foundations and religious arguments, thereby strengthening internal cohesion. However, in a broader context, these differences also spur cross-group interaction and discussion, both in formal forums and in the public sphere. This dialogue has the potential to foster mutual understanding and reduce prejudice, thereby ultimately strengthening the social cohesion of the Muslim community as a whole through constructive communication and negotiation mechanisms.

#### D. Community Responses and Social Adaptation

Public reactions to differences in determining the start of the Hijri month reveal a range of attitudes influenced by the level of trust in religious authorities. Some members of the public choose to follow the government's decision through the *isbat* hearing, with the aim of maintaining national unity and social stability. This group tends to view the state as an authority capable of accommodating various viewpoints and producing the most representative decision. This attitude is generally driven by a focus on unity and the ease of collective social-religious practices.

On the other hand, there are groups within society who prefer to follow specific religious organizations, such as those with which they share ideological and cultural affinities. This choice is based not only on methodological considerations but also on historical trust in the authority of religious scholars and the scholarly traditions upheld by the organization. For this group, consistency with religious methodology is considered more important than uniformity of practice at the national level. This indicates that loyalty to religious authority plays a significant role in shaping public attitudes toward differences.

In addition to these two tendencies, there is also a flexible or pragmatic attitude among members of the community who strive to adapt to the social conditions around them. This group tends not to be rigidly bound to a single authority but instead considers aspects of the common good, such as maintaining social harmony or following the majority

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<sup>29</sup>Yulia Rahmadani Hidayah, "Pandangan MUI Terkait Perbedaan Penetapan 1 Syawal 1444 H di Indonesia: (Kontroversi Hari Raya Idul Fitri 2023 M/1444 H)," accessed March 31, 2026, <https://journal.uin-alauddin.ac.id/index.php/elfalaky/article/view/37768>.

<sup>30</sup>Ahmad Fauzi, "Negotiating the New Moon: Social Media and the Dynamics of Hijri Calendar Determination among Muslims," *Al-Hilal: Journal of Islamic Astronomy* 7, no. 2 (2025): 167-90, <https://doi.org/10.21580/al-hilal.2025.7.2.28554>.

<sup>31</sup>Bashori Alwi, "Dinamika Penetapan Awal Bulan Hijriah di Indonesia Untuk Mencari Titik Temu," accessed March 31, 2026, <https://eprints.walisongo.ac.id/id/eprint/16009/>.

in their region. This pragmatic attitude reflects a high capacity for social adaptation, where people prioritize the stability of social relationships over abstract methodological debates.

In everyday social life, differences in determining the start of the Hijri month are not uncommon within families and communities, such as when family members celebrate holidays at different times. Nevertheless, many communities are still able to maintain harmony by viewing these differences as normal. Religious leaders play a crucial role in this context, particularly in promoting a moderate understanding and defusing potential conflicts. Additionally, communities have developed various strategies to maintain harmony, such as respecting each other's choices, avoiding confrontational debates, and prioritizing the value of togetherness in social life. This situation demonstrates that social cohesion is not solely determined by uniformity but also by the ability to adapt and manage differences wisely.

### **E. An Analysis of the Dynamics at the Beginning of the Islamic Month and Social Cohesion Among Muslims**

From the perspective of social cohesion theory, differences in determining the start of the Hijri month indicate that social cohesion does not always depend on uniformity in religious practices. Although uniformity is often regarded as a primary indicator of unity, the social reality of the Muslim community shows that diversity in practices can coexist with a relatively stable level of cohesion. This suggests that social cohesion is determined more by the quality of social relationships—such as mutual respect and the ability to manage differences—than by mere uniformity in the performance of religious rituals.

When viewed implicitly through the framework of solidarity, this phenomenon can be understood as a shift from a pattern of solidarity based on uniformity toward one that is more adaptive to differentiation. In the context of modern society, cohesion no longer relies entirely on shared values and practices, but rather on the interconnectedness of individuals and groups with differences.<sup>32</sup> Thus, differences in determining the start of the Hijri month can be seen as part of the social dynamics that reflect the complexity of contemporary Muslim society.

Trust and tolerance play a key role in maintaining social cohesion amidst these differences.<sup>33</sup> Trust in religious authorities—whether state-sanctioned or organizational—enables communities to continue practicing their faith with strong conviction without having to negate the choices of other groups. Meanwhile, tolerance functions as a social mechanism that allows differences to be accepted as a legitimate reality. When these two elements are maintained, the potential for conflict can be minimized and social relations remain harmonious.

However, differences in determining the start of the Hijri month also carry the potential for conflict, especially when accompanied by claims of exclusive truth, as seen in Muslifah's research.<sup>34</sup> Tensions can arise if each group not only defends its own position but also rejects the legitimacy of the other side. Under such conditions, differences that

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<sup>32</sup>Tamrin Fathoni, "Konsep Solidaritas Sosial dalam Masyarakat Modern Perspektif Émile Durkheim: The Concept of Social Solidarity in Modern Society: Émile Durkheim's Perspective," *Journal of Community Development and Disaster Management* 6, no. 2 (2024): 129–47, <https://doi.org/10.37680/jcd.v6i2.6402>.

<sup>33</sup>Muhammad Yusuf, "Relevansi Nilai-Nilai Sosial dalam Ajaran Islam Terhadap Penguatan Kohesi Sosial Masyarakat Modern," *Journal of Islamic Studies and Social Sciences* 1, no. 1 (2026): 1–14.

<sup>34</sup>Muslifah, "Upaya Menyikapi Perbedaan Penentuan Awal Bulan Qamariyah di Indonesia."

were originally technical in nature can escalate into symbolic conflicts touching on aspects of identity and religious authority, thereby potentially weakening social cohesion.

These differences can also serve as a potential for integration if managed constructively.<sup>35</sup> Research by Sulaiman et al.<sup>36</sup> indicates that diversity in methods and practices can open avenues for dialogue, enrich perspectives, and foster inclusive attitudes in religious life. Within this framework, social cohesion is not defined as absolute uniformity, but rather as a society's ability to build social bonds amidst differences. Thus, the dynamics of determining the start of the Hijri month can be understood as an arena where conflict and integration occur simultaneously, depending on how society responds to and manages them.

#### F. The Relationship Between Astronomy and Social Structure

The relationship between astronomy and social structure demonstrates that astronomy functions not only as a scientific tool for determining the positions and movements of celestial bodies, but also as a social instrument that influences the religious practices of Muslims. As a scientific discipline, astronomy provides a rational and empirical basis for determining the beginning of the Hijri month.<sup>37</sup> However, in practice, these calculations and observations are not neutral; rather, they are interpreted and legitimized within a specific religious-social framework. Thus, astronomy operates within a space that connects science with values, authority, and social interests.

This relationship can be understood through the flow of knowledge, authority, practice, and society. Astronomical knowledge produced by experts is then adopted and validated by religious authorities, whether individual scholars, organizations, or the state.<sup>38</sup> These authorities play a role in transforming knowledge into normative decisions that are followed by society in daily religious practice. This process demonstrates that scientific knowledge does not automatically become social practice, but rather, it is through mechanisms of legitimation and the distribution of authority that determine how such knowledge is accepted and implemented by the faithful.

In contemporary developments, there has been a shift in authority regarding the use and dissemination of astronomical knowledge. Whereas in the past authority was more concentrated among traditional scholars as the guardians of scholarly and religious authority, today that role has increasingly expanded to formal institutions such as the government and religious organizations.<sup>39</sup> In fact, with the advent of digital technology and social media, the public has also begun to play an active role in accessing, disseminating, and even interpreting information related to the determination of the start of the Hijri month. This shift creates a new landscape in which authority is more distributed, while

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<sup>35</sup>Vivi Yulia Nora, *Merawat Damai di Tengah Perbedaan: (Agama dan Peran Pemuda)* (Dunia Penerbitan Buku, 2026).

<sup>36</sup>Sulaiman, "Tolerance in Welcoming the First Day of Fasting in the Month of Ramadan between the Nahdatul Ulama and the Muhammadiyah," accessed March 31, 2026, <https://journal.iain-manado.ac.id/index.php/PP/article/view/1898>.

<sup>37</sup>Oktavianus, "Perbedaan Penentuan Awal Bulan Hijriyah di Indonesia."

<sup>38</sup>Jayadi et al., "Dialektika Otoritas Keagamaan dan Ilmu Pengetahuan dalam Penetapan Awal Bulan Kamariah."

<sup>39</sup>Jaenal Arifin, "Dialektika Hubungan Ilmu Falak dan Penentuan Awal Ramadhan, Syawal, Dzulhijjah di Indonesia (Sinergi Antara Independensi Ilmuwan dan Otoritas Negara)," *Jurnal Penelitian* 13 (2019).

simultaneously opening opportunities for strengthening public participation as well as the potential for fragmentation in religious practices.

The implications of these research findings in the social sphere underscore the importance of managing differences in maintaining cohesion among Muslims. Differences in determining the start of the Hijri month are inevitable, but they can be managed by fostering tolerance, inclusive communication, and mechanisms for dialogue among religious groups. The public needs to be equipped with adequate religious literacy so that they can understand the fundamentals of these differences in a balanced manner and avoid getting caught up in claims of exclusive truth. With effective diversity management, the diversity of religious practices can actually become a source of social strength that enriches religious life, rather than a catalyst for disintegration.

In the realm of religion and policy, these findings highlight the urgency of integrating methods and criteria for determining the start of the Hijri month as a means of minimizing technical discrepancies. This integration need not eliminate diversity, but rather aims to establish common ground between the *hisab* and *rukyat* approaches through scientific dialogue and mutual agreement. On the other hand, the state's role as a mediator needs to be strengthened, not only as a formal decision-maker but also as a facilitator capable of bridging various interests and religious authorities. Through an inclusive approach grounded in effective public communication, the state can contribute to fostering social stability while preserving harmony among Muslims amidst the plurality of religious practices.

Overall, the findings and discussion demonstrate that the determination of the Hijri month is not merely a technical or astronomical issue, but a complex socio-religious phenomenon shaped by the interaction of epistemological differences, religious authority, and socio-cultural contexts. The variation between *hisab* and *rukyat*, the contestation of institutional authority, and the influence of technological and social change collectively produce dynamic outcomes in Muslim society. These dynamics generate ambivalent implications for social cohesion, simultaneously creating potentials for fragmentation, polarization, and symbolic conflict, while also fostering tolerance, pluralism, and adaptive social mechanisms. The relationship between Hijri month determination and social cohesion should be understood as a dynamic process in which conflict and integration coexist, depending on how differences are negotiated and managed within society.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the determination of the Hijri month is a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by the interaction of epistemological differences, religious authority, and socio-cultural contexts. The coexistence of *hisab* and *rukyat* methods, along with competing institutional authorities, produces an ambivalent impact on social cohesion generating both fragmentation and polarization, as well as tolerance, pluralism, and adaptive social integration. These findings imply that differences in religious practice should not be viewed solely as a source of conflict, but as a potential foundation for inclusive cohesion when supported by trust, dialogue, and effective communication. From a policy perspective, this study recommends strengthening religious literacy among the public, promoting integrative dialogue between *hisab* and *rukyat* approaches, and enhancing the role of the state as an inclusive and mediating authority.

For future research, empirical studies involving fieldwork and community-based data are needed to further examine how these dynamics are experienced at the grassroots level.

Comparative studies across regions or countries are also recommended to deepen understanding of the relationship between religious authority, pluralism, and social cohesion in diverse Muslim societies.

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