

Fatwa Institutions in Malaysia: Navigating Current Challenges and Changes

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ABSTRACT

The fatwa institutions in Malaysia play a crucial role in interpreting Islamic law and guiding the Muslim community. However, these institutions face various modern challenges affecting their effectiveness and relevance. This article explores the primary obstacles encountered by Malaysia's fatwa institutions, including the conflict between traditional jurisprudence and contemporary societal issues, the impact of technological advancements, and the demand for increased transparency and accountability. It also considers how these institutions are adapting to the evolving socio-political landscape and the implications for their authority and legitimacy. This study aims to provide insights into how fatwa institutions can address these challenges while upholding their core principles by analysing recent developments. The findings offer valuable perspectives for policymakers, religious scholars, and the wider community, helping them understand and address the complex issues faced by Malaysia's fatwa institutions in the 21st century.

INTRODUCTION

In Malaysia, a Fatwa represents an official Islamic legal ruling that holds considerable legal authority and goes beyond the individual perspective of a Mufti on a specific issue. It is seamlessly integrated into the state's Islamic jurisprudence and plays a pivotal role in interpreting and adapting religious precepts to contemporary societal challenges. This underscores the importance of robust oversight by regulatory bodies to ensure Fatwas's equitable and judicious application.

The objective of this discussion is to provide an elaborate examination of the organisational structure of Fatwa Institutions within Malaysia, offering insights into the intricate procedural framework for the issuance of Fatwas, meticulously categorising the various types of Fatwas, identifying and analysing the multifaceted challenges confronting Fatwa institutions, and presenting comprehensive and viable strategies to address these challenges effectively.

FATWA INSTITUTIONS IN MALAYSIA

In the Malaysian context, the governance of Islamic affairs is primarily delegated to the state governments, which exert control over such matters through religious authorities and figures of significance, such as the Sultans, alongside the operation of various Islamic institutions. Furthermore, the federal government has implemented coordinating bodies to oversee and ensure uniformity in Islamic activities across the nation.

1. Malaysia Department of Islamic Development (JAKIM)

The Department of Islamic Development Malaysia, known in Malay as "Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia" (JAKIM), represents the apex federal government agency responsible for the governance of Islamic affairs

within the Malaysian context. A primary ambition of JAKIM is the establishment of an overseeing institution aimed at supervising and coordinating the issuance of Fatwas across various states, thereby fostering an enhancement of the nation's collective *ijtihad* (*Ijtihad jami'i*) process, as elucidated by Ibrahim et al. (2019) and Ibrahim & Ab Rahman (2021).

Tasked with a multifaceted set of responsibilities, JAKIM's purview extends to the formulation and standardisation of Islamic laws, the coordination of Islamic administration nationwide, and the promotion of Islamic educational proliferation, as supported by findings from Nelson & Shah (2018), Suhaimee et al. (2019), and Asni & Sulong (2021). Additionally, JAKIM functions as the secretariat for the *Majlis Kebangsaan Hal Ehwal Islam* (MKI), the National Council of Islamic Affairs, thereby consolidating and executing decisions promulgated by the Council of Rulers (*Majlis Raja-Raja*), offering consultative advice to the federal government on Islamic matters, and the issuance of Fatwas. JAKIM is further charged with ensuring the homogeneous application of Islamic law across Malaysia, operating as the nation's focal point for all Islamic matters, and engendering collaboration among the Fatwa institutions of various states and the federal apparatus. Such endeavours aim to establish a robust mechanism for the harmonisation and standardisation of Islamic practices, as echoed by scholars such as Yahya et al. (2018), Daud & Abdullah (2019), and Mat Salleh et al. (2021). In summation, JAKIM's role encompasses the efficient communication and dissemination of all ratified Fatwas to the Malaysian populace, thereby underpinning its critical significance in the country's Islamic administrative framework.

2. The National Council for Islamic Affairs

Established on the 1st of July, 1969, during the 18th Conference of Rulers (*Majlis Raja-Raja*), the National Council for Islamic Affairs (*Majlis Kebangsaan Islam*) is a pivotal federal institution charged with harmonising state efforts for the administration of Islamic affairs across the nation (Daud & Abdullah, 2019; Abdullah et al., 2021; Mohamad et al., 2022). Representation on the Council encompasses nearly all Malaysian states, ensuring a comprehensive integration of perspectives. The foundational aim of the Council is to engage in rigorous debate, thoughtful consideration, and the regulation of any issues presented by either the *Majlis Raja-Raja*, the State Islamic Religious Councils, or any member thereof. The MKI assumes the exclusive responsibility of offering advice and recommendations to the pertinent authorities after meticulous deliberation and analysis (Ibrahim et al., 2019; Mat Salleh et al., 2021).

3. National Fatwa Committee

The founding of the National Fatwa Committee by the Malaysian Federal Government represents a pioneering strategy for the administration and coordination of fatwas (Islamic legal edicts) on a national level. This initiative, as established, serves the purpose of overseeing, aligning, and, where possible, reconciling the fatwas issued by different state jurisdictions within the boundaries of the Conference of Rulers (*Majlis Raja-Raja*), as highlighted in the literature (Ismail, 2019; Asni & Sulong, 2021; Mat Salleh et al., 2021). The primary aim of this committee is to reduce inconsistencies, divergences, and conflicts among the Fatwa committees, thus contributing to a unified Islamic legislative framework.

The formation of the National Fatwa Committee arises from an expansion of federal authority based on the consent and authorisation from the states. This mechanism is further detailed through the active involvement of state Muftis in the Committee, supporting their dual function as members. This arrangement ensures a broad representation of the diverse state interests, facilitating a collective approach to discussions that exceed the narrow confines of federal matters. It includes Muftis from throughout the nation, thus reflecting the geographical and doctrinal diversity of Malaysia (Nasohah et al., 2012; Daud & Abdullah, 2019; Saidin et al., 2022). Furthermore, the legal foundation for establishing the National Fatwa Committee is anchored in constitutional provisions. The *Yang di-Pertuan Agong*, as the supreme Islamic authority in the country, is constitutionally endowed with the prerogative to augment the legislative and administrative powers of the

states (Mochammad Sahid et al., 2021; Razak & Hasan, 2021; Yee et al., 2021).

Additionally, this framework highlights the potential extension of the National Fatwa Committee’s role in issuing fatwas on a national level, even in matters conventionally considered within the realm of state jurisdiction (Asni & Sulong, 2021; Mat Salleh et al., 2021). As such, establishing the National Fatwa Committee does not infringe upon constitutional mandates; instead, it aims to enhance, rather than replace, the authority of state governance. This body acts as a forum for meeting diverse state-based Muftis, providing a deliberative platform to discuss and reconcile issues of Islamic jurisprudence nationally. It operates under the National Council for Islamic Affairs (Majlis et al.), promoting a coordinated approach to interpreting and applying Islamic law across Malaysia (Nasohah et al., 2012).

4. State Fatwa Committee

As stated in Article 74 (2) of the Federal Constitution of Malaysia, Islamic affairs are within the purview of the State Legislative List. Article 80 (1) affirms that each state’s Sultanate has full authority over these matters, which the state governments manage. While the state government holds jurisdiction over Fatwa in Malaysia, there exists a national-level committee called “The National Fatwa Committee,” established by the Federal Government to coordinate and standardise Fatwa across the country, thereby reducing discrepancies and conflicts.

The process of Islamic activities, including the issuance of Fatwas, varies across different states in Malaysia. Nevertheless, all states have similar laws and regulations to govern Islamic matters within their respective territories. This legislative framework is the “Administration Of Islamic Law (Federal Territories).” For example, Section 4 (1) of the Administration of Islamic Law (Federal Territories) Act 505, 1993, outlines the establishment of the “Majlis Agama Islam Wilayah Persekutuan” to provide advice to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong on Islamic matters. These laws empower the Sultan to appoint an Islamic Religious Council (Majlis Agama Islam), which is responsible for advising the Sultan on all Islamic matters as stipulated in Section 31 of the Administration Of Islamic Law (Federal Territories) Act 505, 1993, except matters of Hukum Syarak (Islamic law and administration of justice), where the mufti assumes a role in advising the Sultan. The Council also addresses non-religious issues contributing to the socioeconomic well-being of the Muslim Ummah (community) within the state.¹

Table 0-1: Fatwa committee in the state

Name of Committee	State	Administration of Islamic Law in the State
Jawatankuasa Perunding Hukum Syarak	Pahang	Section 39
	Wilayah Persekutuan	Section 31
Jawatankuasa Syariah	Melaka	Section 33
	Negeri Sembilan	Section 33
	Pulau Pinang	Section 39
Jawatankuasa Fatwa	Johor	Section 15
	Kedah	Section 36
	Terengganu	Section 53
	Selangor	Section 46
Majlis Fatwa	Sabah	Section 38
Jemaah Ulama	Kelantan	Section 33
Lembaga Fatwa	Sarawak	Section 36, Chapter 105

In the governance structure regarding the assignment of Council members, excluding the ex-officio

positions such as the mufti and the deputy mufti, which are appointed at the discretion of the Sultan without recourse to consultation with external entities, all other roles are appointed based on nominations emanating from the recommendations of either the Menteri Besar or the Chief Minister. Notably, within specific jurisdictions, such as Johor, the appointments of the mufti and deputy mufti are predicated upon the recommendations made by the current chairman of the Council. In contrast, within the Federal Territories, the onus is on the Yang di-Pertuan Agong to conduct consultations and solicit advice from the Minister after dialogues with the Council.

The delegation of authority to promulgate Fatwas in Malaysia is allocated to various state-specific Fatwa committees. These bodies are typically composed of the mufti, deputy mufti, the state legal advisor, an individual appointed from the Majlis Agama Islam, additional members specified by legal frameworks, and a secretary, whose appointment is effected through the state Majlis. This organisational structure delineates a nuanced approach to dispensing Islamic jurisprudence within the Malaysian context, denoting a strategic amalgamation of centralised authority with decentralised propagation of religious edicts.

CHALLENGES FACED BY MALAYSIAN FATWA INSTITUTIONS

Scholarly literature extensively explores Fatwas's acceptance level among the Malaysian population (Othman Ishak, 1981; Abdullah, 2004; Kasan, 2008; Shamsudin et al., 2018). Othman Ishak's study in 1981, involving interviews with various stakeholders such as muftis, qadhis, and intellectuals, revealed a noticeable hesitance within Malaysian society to embrace Fatwas, particularly among governmental officials fully. The literature portrays a divided stance towards Fatwas, with some individuals showing complete compliance while others voice opposition (Abdullah, 2004; Hasnan, 2008).

Incidents of challenging the viewpoints of muftis on controversial issues such as the Fatwa on Pokemon Go, the Penang Fatwa, the designation of the DAP as "kafir harbi," the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), the prohibition directives against Sisters in Islam, and the conduct of beauty pageants have been documented. Some dissenters have taken their objections to the judiciary to contest the validity of Fatwas (Kamarudin et al., 2017; Abdul Rahman et al., 2018).

Although the rejection of Fatwas remains limited to a minority of the population, it has fostered a perception of general apathy within the Malaysian community towards the mandates issued by Fatwa institutions (Ashaari et al., 2019). Consequently, a noticeable segment of society tends to reject Fatwas or mufti pronouncements instead of seeking religious guidance from alternative sources such as religious teachers, Imams, family networks, acquaintances, and print media (Abdullah, 2004). This trend has been linked to various factors, including the ineffective dissemination of Fatwas, inadequate explanation of their rationale, and the partial publication of Fatwa documentation (Rosidi et al., 2021a).

1. Dissemination of Fatwa

The proliferation of Fatwa information poses significant challenges within specific communities, resulting in a pronounced lack of comprehension and acceptance of Fatwas, as elucidated by Kasan (2008). This phenomenon is characterised by a prevalent disregard for Fatwa decrees, with individuals frequently citing ignorance, accentuating this informational deficit's critical nature. Such a lacuna in awareness has been strategically leveraged by parties in Shariah courts to mitigate their legal culpability, as exemplified in the case of *Syarie Officer v. Fahyu Hanim Ahmad, Noni Mohammad, and Sharina Shaari* (1997), wherein the defendants' claims of unawareness concerning pertinent Fatwas were adjudged to be untenable. This case precipitated advocacy from Datuk Abu Hassan Omar, the erstwhile Chief Minister of Selangor, for amplifying Fatwa dissemination, particularly amidst discussions surrounding participation in the Selangor state beauty pageant.

Notwithstanding the extensive scholarly discourse by A Rahman et al. (2016) and Irwan et al. (2017), which consistently underscores a prevailing apathy or ignorance towards Fatwas among the populace, improvements in the propagation of Fatwas by state Fatwa committees remain nominal. This reflects a systemic inefficacy in the extant dissemination methods, as Ismail (2010) posited, implying that the prevalent avenues for Fatwa distribution—primarily restricted to state mosques, educational institutions, government entities, and select private organisations—do not sufficiently penetrate the community. Although initiatives undertaken by states such as Perak, Terengganu, and Perlis to circulate Fatwas through more accessible mediums like pamphlets or brochures have been noted, these efforts have scarcely altered the prevailing dynamics. Moreover, the engagement with online platforms for Fatwa dissemination has elicited limited interest, denoting a widespread disaffection with traditional and digital Fatwa distribution methodologies.

Empirical research conducted by Raihanah Abdullah (2004) corroborates this critique, demonstrating that a substantial majority of the surveyed demographic perceives the distribution and accessibility of Fatwas within the community as inadequate. This corpus of scholarly evidence delineates the imperative for a comprehensive reevaluation and fortification of Fatwa dissemination techniques to guarantee extensive dissemination and meaningful interaction with the community. Given that Fatwas constitute legally binding opinions within the ambit of Malaysia's Islamic jurisprudence, an all-encompassing strategy for their distribution is indispensable, transcending the existing constraints. Absent significant enhancements in dissemination infrastructure, the efficacy and acceptance of Fatwa decrees are likely to continue being compromised.

2. Explanation of Fatwa

The complexity and diversity of Fatwa pronouncements across different states in Malaysia have led to significant perplexity and challenges within the community. This observation is substantiated through comprehensive analyses conducted by various researchers (Ishak, 1981; Abdullah, 2004; Yong et al., 2009; Asuhaimi et al., 2017). These variations in religious edicts have engendered confusion regarding their precise implementation and have also introduced formidable challenges for adherents, as underscored in recent scholarly investigations (Asuhaimi et al., 2017; Abdul Rahman et al., 2018). A detailed examination of Fatwa issuances pertinent to the interests of the Muslim community in Malaysia unveils noticeable inconsistencies. A salient instance is a decision made during the 80th Muzakarah of the Fatwa Committee of the National Council for Islamic Religious Affairs Malaysia, from February 1-3, 2008, which sanctioned investments in Amanah Saham Bumiputera (ASB) and Amanah Saham Nasional (ASN), including the disbursement of dividends and bonuses. In stark contrast, the Fatwa Departments of Selangor and Penang concluded with opposing stances in their Fatwa declarations. This discordance ignited debates among Muslim investors who adhere to the principles of halal and haram, leading to a withdrawal from investment initiatives led by Permodalan Nasional Berhad (PNB). Nevertheless, the divergence in Fatwa pronouncements was gradually reconciled following reevaluations by the Fatwa Departments of Selangor and Penang on April 27, 2017, and August 15, 2017, respectively (Berita Harian, October 16, 2020).

Furthermore, disparities in Fatwa have surfaced concerning the ESQ Leadership Training Fatwa. The Federal Territory Islamic Religious Council denounced the motivational program by ESQ for purported deviations from Islamic teachings and Shariah law, including elements from non-Muslim spirituality (Mstar, October 16, 2020). Contrarily, the National Fatwa Committee, on June 16, 2010, declared that ESQ's practices do not contravene the fundamental beliefs of Ahli Sunnah Wal Jamaah (Mstar, October 16, 2020). Such inconsistencies have aggravated societal disorientation and fostered a tendency to disregard the contentious Fatwas (Abdullah, 2004; Buang, 2012; Rosele et al., 2013; Buang, 2016; Asuhaimi et al., 2017; Abdul Rahman et al., 2018; Rosidi et al., 2021c).

A scrupulous literature review reveals significant disparities or contradictions in Fatwas across various states, fostering a climate of disdain and neglect towards certain Fatwas. Despite rigorous academic efforts in Malaysia aimed at addressing the inconsistency of Fatwa declarations over an extended timeline, achieving a consolidated and harmonised Fatwa framework from the federal to the state level remains a formidable challenge. This scenario is attributed to several factors including, but not limited to, obstacles posed by state enactments, the influence of local customs (*uruf*), diverse educational backgrounds among muftis, and perceived deficiencies in the guidelines provided by the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM). Additionally, there is a consensus that the Fatwa institution's elucidation of Fatwas to the public lacks sufficient comprehensiveness (Salwa, 2003; Kasan, 2008; Miziizam et al., 2018). This lack of clarity and coherence in the communication and implementation of Fatwas poses an enduring conundrum that necessitates scholarly attention and strategic interventions for resolution.

3. Methodology of Fatwa Writing

Within the contemporary discourse on Islamic jurisprudence, the role of Fatwa institutions in disseminating religious edicts through scholarly publications has emerged as a pivotal measure to augment accessibility for the masses and concurrently bolster communal trust in these religious decrees (Buang, 2012; Buang, 2016). It is posited that ensuring each Fatwa is anchored in a well-articulated rationale situated within the framework of Islamic legal precedents is of utmost importance. This necessitates that the Fatwa issuance process encapsulates a comprehensive engagement with the underlying principles and arguments (*illah*), as extensively delineated by Al-Qaradhawi (1988).

The phenomenon of issuing succinct Fatwas has been met with scepticism within specific segments of the community, particularly those which necessitate a nuanced understanding in the absence of detailed references and extensive discourse on the underlying arguments (Kasan, 2008; Buang, 2012). Contemporary communities are inclined to seek detailed exposition that provides deep insights into the foundational arguments shaping the decision-making processes within Fatwa organisations (Suratem et al., 2015). Accordingly, for a Fatwa to effectively fulfil its intended objective in addressing queries about Islamic law and its interpretation, such religious edicts must be articulated with utmost clarity to ensure that the community comprehensively understands the intended significance (Al-Qaradhawi, 1988).

Furthermore, integrating wisdom and the interpretation of *illah*—a fundamental aspect in Fatwa adjudication—can significantly enhance the legitimacy of Fatwa judgments and promote their acceptance within contemporary societies that value rational justifications (Bakar, 1997). However, it is regrettable that specific Fatwa organisations resort to merely citing previous *fiqh* opinions without substantial explanations or justifications, thereby fostering scepticism and subjecting these institutions to rigorous academic scrutiny in Malaysia (Majid, 2004; Buang, 2016).

It is imperative to underscore that scholarly critiques directed at official Fatwas predominantly aspire to refine and ameliorate the quality of FATWAs through rigorously conducted discourse, as opposed to outright rejecting the Fatwa judgment. Nonetheless, the academic community, especially those specialising in Islamic studies, has criticised the inadequate methodologies and procedures employed in Fatwa determination (Buang, 2016).

Despite increased awareness of Fatwas among individuals with higher educational attainment, it has been observed that those with lower educational backgrounds and residing in rural areas exhibit a greater predisposition towards accepting Fatwas than their highly educated and urban counterparts (Kasan, 2008). This propensity is underscored by prior polls, which indicate a tendency for Fatwas issued without an elaborate exposition of reasons and references to face rejection. Additionally, the mere citation of a Fatwa's conclusion sans the requisite arguments and dialogue has been identified as a contributing factor to the

proliferation of scepticism regarding the credibility of Fatwa decisions (Salwa, 2004; Buang, 2012; Nawi, 2014; Buang, 2016).

Consequently, Fatwa organisations must enhance their writing techniques to ensure completeness and persuasiveness. While the publication of simplified Fatwa rulings in layperson's language within government gazettes is conceived to facilitate public comprehension of current Islamic regulations, an equal pertinence exists to pursue elaborate documentation of Fatwas, entailing in-depth discussion and comparison across varied Fatwa dissemination platforms. This strategy is poised to cater to individuals prioritising argumentation, enabling them to engage with and compare divergent Fatwas meticulously. Hence, Fatwa organisations must refine their documentation methodologies to achieve an advanced structure and comprehensiveness (Salwa, 2003; Kasan, 2008).

ALTERNATIVE DISSEMINATION METHOD: ONLINE MEDIA

In Malaysia's dynamically evolving religious milieu, the designated authorities entrusted with the issuance of Fatwas have notably refined their methodologies for disseminating and elucidating Fatwas in the face of diminished public engagement. The preeminent authority overseeing Islamic affairs, the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM), spearheaded the launch of the JAKIM e-Fatwa portal in 2001, which became operational in 2003. This endeavour constituted a critical advancement in the propagation techniques of Fatwas across the nation (Suratem et al., 2015). Moreover, JAKIM assumed a leading role in creating the e-SMAF database, an exhaustive archive of Fatwas promulgated at both state and national echelons (Khairuldin et al., 2018). Concurrently, establishing official websites across all fourteen states enhanced the accessibility of Fatwas. Notably, the Federal Territory Mufti's Office and the Pulau Pinang Mufti's Department distinguished themselves by developing official mobile applications that consolidate Fatwas from their respective departments (Khairuldin et al., 2018).

The modalities for Fatwa dissemination have been diversified to encompass social media platforms, albeit with varying degrees of integration across the differing departments. Ashaari et al. (2020) accentuated the Mufti Departments of Perlis, Negeri Sembilan, and Wilayah Persekutuan for their pronounced utilisation of Facebook. A variation is discernible in the channels employed for the diffusion of Mufti lectures, with distinguished figures such as the former Federal State Mufti, Datuk Dr Zulkifli al-Bakri, and Datuk Dr Mohd Asri Zainal Abidin, the Mufti of Perlis, opting to utilise their personal Facebook and Instagram accounts for these purposes. Despite these accounts not functioning as official conduits of Mufti agencies, they are perceived by the community as reflective of the Muftis' authoritative stances (Ashaari et al., 2020). This strategic orientation towards leveraging contemporary technological mediums for the dissemination of Fatwas has elicited considerable support, as demonstrated by 92% of participants in a study conducted by Buang & Che Rosli (2017), who advocated for the incorporation of modern communication technologies, including SMS (short message service), email, and social media, within the framework of Fatwa dissemination.

The Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) orchestrated an inaugural conference to augment the infrastructure of the Fatwa institution within Malaysia. Termed as the Multaqa of the Fatwa Councils of Malaysia, this conference was convened from the 21st to the 23rd of September 2020, marking a pivotal moment in the annals of Islamic scholarly dialogue within the nation. The event congregated 120 distinguished members from the State Fatwa Committee and the Muzakarah Committee of the National Council for Islamic Religious Affairs Malaysia (MKI), thereby facilitating an enriched forum for intellectual discourse and collaboration. The core aspiration of this gathering was to engender a robust level of cooperation and consensus-building among the members of the committees above.

This seminal event was notably graced by the presence and endorsement of His Majesty, Sultan Nazrin

Muizzuddin Shah Ibni Almarhum Sultan Azlan Muhibbuddin Shah, the Sultan of Perak Darul Ridzuan. Before this assembly, the Sultan promulgated the Royal Decree Towards Dignifying the Fatwa Institution, which underscored a collective ambition for the Fatwa institution to evolve its methodologies and approaches following the demands of contemporary global challenges. This initiative aims to fortify its stature as a dependable source of religious guidance. Moreover, the Sultan issued a clarion call to Muftis and religious scholars to proactively support the Monarch or the Government, acting as the Head of the Islamic Religion within their respective realms. This academic congregation did not merely serve as a testament to the dynamic adaptation of Islamic jurisprudence in the face of contemporary exigencies but also acted as a strategic platform to accentuate the pivotal role that religious scholars play in the guidance of Islamic governance and policymaking within Malaysia and potentially, beyond.

In 2020, Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah articulated a seminal set of guidelines for issuing Fatwas, emphasising the imperative for Fatwa Committees to acknowledge the plethora of educational paradigms available to Muslims in the contemporary era. This directive underscored an evolved epistemological landscape characterising modern Muslims, marked by a propensity for critical analysis, refined scholarship, and the employment of comparative methodologies, which necessitate robust evidential substantiation before the acceptance of information. Moreover, Sultan Nazrin accentuated the profound implications of communication technologies on the operational dynamics, societal reception, and cognitive constructs associated with Fatwas. The advent of digital platforms facilitating the provision of Fatwas has occasioned an imperative re-examination of conventional dissemination modalities. In this context, Sultan Nazrin articulated the importance of enacting comprehensive communication strategies to guarantee that Fatwas are comprehended, accepted, and respected within the Muslim community, as detailed in his 2020 issuance. Subsequently, a related conference yielded ten resolutions to fortify the nation's Fatwa institutions. Among these, a notable resolution called for the assimilation of avant-garde technologies in the devising and propagating of Fatwa services, as reported by Berita RTM on 25 October 2020.

Recent media-based surveys on society's understanding and acceptance of Fatwas suggest that Fatwa acceptance is increasing among Malaysia's Muslim population (A Rahman et al., 2016; Buang & Che Rosli, 2017; Shamsudin et al., 2018; Rosidi et al., 2021c). The most critical aspect these researchers identified is that the fast and efficient dissemination of Fatwa knowledge will improve social awareness and acceptance of Fatwas (A Rahman et al., 2016; Buang & Che Rosli, 2017; Shamsudin et al., 2018; Rosidi et al., 2021b). Using the reception model established by Hans Robert Jouss in the late 1960s, A Rahman et al. (2016) discovered that most Muslims in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor agreed to every Fatwa released by the council published in Malaysian newspapers. Meanwhile, Buang and Rosli (2017) discovered that most university students in Selangor are comfortable with Fatwa management and decision-making due to technology's ease of access to Fatwa materials. The respondents were 100 students from The National University of Malaysia and The University of Malaya, but they tested no acceptance, reception model, or hypothesis. Shamsudin (2018) used the Technology Approval Model (TAM) to assess the acceptance of Fatwa dissemination by online media among Muslims in Selangor.

CONCLUSION

In Malaysia, the issuance and acceptance of fatwas are undergoing significant obstacles to their dissemination, elucidation, and methodological approaches, subsequently affecting their efficacy and the degree of public endorsement. Traditional modalities for promulgating fatwas are inadequate in a rapidly evolving, information-centric society, leading to diminished community engagement with and acceptance of these religious directives.

1. Dissemination of Fatwas: Predominantly, the methodologies employed in distributing Fatwas cannot effectively engage a broad and heterogeneous audience, rendering a considerable segment of the

community either uninformed or misinformed about emergent Fatwas. There is a quintessential demand for devising more efficacious strategies to guarantee that fatwas are accessible to and comprehended by a more comprehensive section of the populace.

2. Explanation of Fatwas: After distribution, the interpretations and ramifications of Fatwas often remain inadequately explicated. This paucity of clear and accessible elucidations precipitates misinterpretation risks, undermining these decrees' credibility and acceptance. It is imperative to furnish detailed and understandable explanations to ensure the precise conveyance of the intended messages of the fatwas.
3. Methodology of Fatwa Writing: The protocols governing the formulation and issuance of fatwa may no longer align with the exigencies of contemporary issues, failing to resonate with the modern audience. This discrepancy engenders perceptions of irrelevance or detachment from the actual experiences of the community. An urgent reassessment and modernisation of the fatwa-writing methodology are essential to maintain its relevance and significance within the current societal milieu.

Incorporating online media presents a viable solution to surmount these challenges. Digital platforms offer a dynamic and efficient avenue for the dissemination of fatwas, enhancement of transparency, and direct engagement with the community. Using interactive tools, social media, and dedicated online portals by fatwa institutions can significantly ameliorate their outreach, provide comprehensive explanations, and modernise their methodological practices. Adopting digital innovations facilitates enhanced communication and fortifies fatwa institutions' relevance and authoritative standing in an ever-more interconnected global landscape.

As the fatwa institutions in Malaysia adapt to these evolving challenges, the astute leverage of online media is a crucial strategy in amplifying their influence and ensuring that their advisories continue to cater to the needs of the Muslim community efficaciously.

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