The Patterns of Fiqh Thought of the Four Imams of the School of Islamic Jurisprudence and Their Implications for the Formation of Tolerant Character in the Digital Era

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the characteristics of fiqh thought of the four major Islamic school imams and their implications for forming a tolerant character in the digital era. It employs a qualitative approach with library research, drawing on academic books, indexed journal articles, and relevant scholarly works on fiqh schools, ijtihad methods, and tolerance. Data were collected through systematic documentation with specific selection criteria and analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, involving data condensation, display, and conclusion drawing based on thematic categorization. The findings reveal that differences among the four imams stem from variations in epistemology, ijtihad methods, and socio-historical contexts, reflecting the intellectual richness of Islamic tradition. These differences contain values that contribute to the development of tolerant character, manifested in attitudes such as accepting diversity, listening patiently, respecting differing opinions, avoiding hate speech, demonstrating humility, acting wisely, and fostering critical digital literacy communities. The study concludes that fiqh thought not only functions as a normative foundation of Islamic law but also holds contextual relevance in shaping tolerance in the digital age, requiring its actualization through analytical-contextual education and inclusive digital literacy.

Keywords: Popular Schools, Tolerant Character, Digitalization

INTRODUCTION

The digital era has brought about a major transformation in the way humans interact, including in conveying and understanding religious teachings. Various social media platforms have become open spaces for discussion, but also arenas for often unhealthy debate. This problem is evident when differences of opinion between sects or religious figures give rise to sharp arguments in the digital public sphere. [1] Hate speech, mutual blame, and one-sided claims of truth have created a negative image, not only within the Muslim community but also among the wider public, who then view Islam as a religion rife with chaos.

This phenomenon demonstrates a fundamental problem: a lack of in-depth religious literacy among the digital community. Many individuals quickly draw conclusions without thoroughly reading religious references. However, in Islamic scholarly tradition, every legal explanation requires a clear chain of narration and extensive reference work. [2] This situation is further exacerbated by the instant gratification culture of the digital age, where people tend

[1] Wiwin Warliah et al., "The YouTube Platform as a Means of Modern Preaching: Habib Jafar's Contribution," *Busyro: Journal of Preaching and* … 5, no. 2 (2024): p. 2., https://doi.org/10.55352/kpi.v5i2.1541.

[2] Islam Fadilah Waslah, "Digital Literacy-Based Education in Strengthening Religious Moderation for Students at Al-Madinah Diwek Jombang Superior Middle School," *Pediaqu: Journal of Social and Humanities Education* 4, no. 02 (2024): p. 2.

to accept a single opinion circulating on social media without comparing it with the views of other scholars, thus giving rise to confusion and even mutual insults among the community.

Throughout Islamic history, scholars from popular schools of thought such as Abu Hanifah, Malik ibn Anas, al-Syafi'i, and Ahmad ibn Hanbal have exemplified how to address differences of opinion. They developed their own forms of Islamic legal thought by delving deeply into the evidence, without condemning other schools of thought. [3] In fact, differences of opinion were seen as a means to test arguments and enrich Islamic scholarship, not as a means to close the door to discussion. However, the principle *of tolerance* demonstrated by these scholars is often overlooked in religious communication practices in the digital age.

Problems arise when social media, which should be a means of building harmonious social networks, is instead used to undermine others. Digital discussions lose their nuance of deliberation and mutual respect, shifting into arenas of polarization and hostility. [4] As a result, the general public struggles to distinguish between legitimate differences of opinion within Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) and narrow-minded fanaticism that leads to division. In this context, strengthening the value of tolerance based on classical Islamic thought becomes highly relevant and needs to be actualized.

On the other hand, the digital era also presents serious challenges in the form of the growth of fanatical and extremist movements that utilize social media as a propaganda tool. Narratives of violence, rejection of diversity, and claims of a single truth are widespread, giving rise to the negative stigma of Islamophobia. Several cases of violence perpetrated by extremist groups have even been recorded in modern history as acts that tarnish Islam's reputation in the eyes of the world. This demonstrates that without a proper understanding of moderate Islamic teachings, the digital space can become fertile ground for the emergence of intolerant and radical attitudes.

In mapping academic positions and ensuring the originality of a study, a search for previous literature is an absolutely necessary foundation. Regarding the study with the above theme, it is also inseparable from previous literature that serves as a reference in deepening and analysis. Therefore, in this study, several previous studies were found to be relevant both methodologically and substantively. This literature review serves not only as a form of appreciation for the contributions of previous researchers, but also as an instrument to identify research gaps . By analyzing various perspectives, ranging from contemporary ijtihad, the sociology of knowledge, to the dynamics of Islamic law in the digital era, this study seeks to position itself to provide a new, more specific contribution in linking the dialectic of schools of thought with the formation of a tolerant character amidst today's technological disruption.

Previous research has explored the technical and methodological aspects of Islamic law. Asep Supriatna focused on the adaptation of the ijtihad method in the digital era [5], while Suyyirah et al.[6] and Dwi Dasa Suryantoro attempted to draw a common thread between the integration of knowledge and the philosophical influence of Islamic schools of thought on the

[3] Husnu Shidqiah et al., "Analysis of the History of the Development of Fiqh Schools and Their Influence on Contemporary Islamic Law," *Aladalah: Journal of Politics, Social, Law and Humanities* 3, no. 2 (2025): p. 2., https://doi.org/10.59246/aladalah.v3i2.1243.

[4] Maslani Shopiah Syafaatunnisa, "Problems in Social Media Postgraduate UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung Abstract In Internet Activities, There Are Ethics and Etiquette That Internet Users Must Follow. 1 Because Basically, Ethics Are Not Only Applied in His World," *An-Najah: Journal of Islamic Development and Learning* 03, no. 01 (2024): p. 2.

[5] Asep Supriatna, "The Development of Jurisprudence in the Digital Era: A Study of the Ijtihad Method in Understanding Contemporary Problems," *As-Syar'i: Journal of Family Guidance & Counseling* 6, no. 1 (2024): p. 1, https://doi.org/10.47476/assyari.v6i1.5478.

[6] Suyyirah et al., "Dynamics of Ijtihad and Madzhab in Islam," *Jurnal Cerdas Hukum* 3, no. 2 (2025): p. 1.

dynamics of law in general. [7] Dzulkifli Noor narrowed the dialectic to a specific theme, namely waqf law. [8] Furthermore, research by Noor Halimah et al. focused on how differences of opinion among Islamic school of thought influenced the codification of Islamic law in the Indonesian context.[9]

However, no research has explicitly linked the dialectic of the thoughts of the four popular Islamic schools of thought to the outcome of character formation in tolerance amidst digital disruption. Most studies focus on legal debates (*khilafiyah*) or formal methodologies, without addressing the pedagogical and social psychological dimensions of digital society. There is a gap in the literature explaining how the diversity of opinions among the Islamic schools of thought (often viewed as a source of division) can be constructed as an instrument for strengthening tolerance to stem the tide of polarization and radicalism on social media. This is where this research is novel: it draws classical dialectics into the practical realm of character formation in modern society.

The primary contribution of this research is to present a reconstruction of the school of thought as a "Pedagogy of Tolerance" in the digital era. It not only examines the differences of opinion between schools of thought textually, but also transforms this dialectic into a model of moderate behavior (*wasathiyah*). This research provides both theoretical contributions to the development of contemporary Islamic legal sociology and practical contributions in the form of inclusive digital religious literacy for a younger generation vulnerable to exposure to religious absolutism in cyberspace.

This research stems from academic concerns about how the dialectical thinking of the Imams of the popular Islamic schools of jurisprudence in the Islamic world can be rearticulated as a foundation for strengthening character in the modern era. Narratively, the main problem to be solved in this study begins by exploring how the dialectical structure of the thoughts of the Imams of the schools (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali) responds to legal diversity, and how this dialectic actually contains the seeds of a deep character of tolerance. The researcher then goes deeper to analyze the implications of the dynamics of this thought on the formation of moderate behavior in society. Ultimately, this research aims to formulate a contextual model for the spirit of tolerance of the schools of thought as a strategic instrument to stem the tide of intolerance, absolutism of thought, and social polarization that is increasingly massive due to the distortion of religious information amidst the current digitalization.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a library research type *that* focuses on the study of the thoughts of figures (thought study). Data sources are obtained from primary and secondary literature relevant to the theme of the fiqh thoughts of the four imams of the Islamic school of thought and their implications for tolerance in the digital era. To maintain academic quality, the researcher established criteria for selecting literature including: (1) scientific publications within the last 10–15 years for contemporary sources, as well as authoritative classical works as primary references; (2) types of literature in the form of indexed journal articles (Sinta, DOAJ, or Google Scholar), academic books, and previous research results; and (3) substantial relevance to the topic of the fiqh schools, the ijtihad

[7] Dwi Dasa Suryantoro, “A Philosophical Study of Imam Shafiʿi’s Legal Thought: Its Influence on the Formation of the Fiqh School and the Dynamics of Islamic Law,” *The Indonesian Journal of Islamic Law and Civil Law* 6, no. 1 (2025): p. 1.

[8] Dzulkifli Noor, "Dialectics of Islamic School of Islamic Thought About Waqf Dzulkifli Noor Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta, Indonesia e-Mail:," *Ar-Risala Scientific Journal: Islamic Media, Education and Islamic Law* 23, no. 2 (2025): p. 1.

[9] Noor et al. Halimah, “Fiqh Schools in Indonesia: Differences of Opinion on the Construction of Islamic Law,” *Journal of Islamic Education* 1, no. 1 (2023): p. 1.

method, and the concept of tolerance or religious moderation. Literature that does not meet these criteria is eliminated to minimize bias and maintain the validity of the study.

The literature search strategy was carried out systematically through academic databases such as Google Scholar, Sinta-indexed journals, and other scientific repositories using keywords such as "schools of jurisprudence", "ijtihad of imams of schools of thought", "differences between schools of thought", "tolerance in Islam", and "religious moderation in the digital era". The search process began with initial literature identification, followed by selection based on titles and abstracts, and then full reading was carried out *to* ensure suitability with the research focus. From this process, a number of literatures were obtained that were analyzed in depth (for example, ± 25–40 primary sources) which were considered representative to describe the characteristics of the schools of thought and their relevance in the contemporary context.

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, developed thematically based on categories. The collected data were condensed and classified into several main categories, namely: (1) the epistemology of the thoughts of each imam of the madhhab; (2) the ijtihad method used in determining the law; and (3) the social implications of the differences in madhhab on the formation of a tolerant character. Next, the data were presented in the form of an analytical narrative to display the pattern of relationships between these categories. The interpretation process was carried out by linking findings from the literature with the social context of digital society, thus producing a more contextual meaning. Based on this process, the researcher then drew conclusions in stages, namely from the collected data, interpreted into an analytical framework, until producing conceptual findings regarding the relevance of madhhab thinking as a basis for the formation of a tolerant character in the digital era.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The history of medieval Islamic legal thought spans the period from 1250 to 1500. This century saw the emergence of prominent figures with extensive knowledge and insight into legal discussions. Some prominent figures, popular to this day, include Imam Hanafi, Imam Maliki, Imam Shafi'i, and Imam Hambali. They are known as jurists of *Islamic jurisprudence* , also known as Imams of the Islamic school of thought.[10]

Imam Abu Hanifah's Thought Style

Imam Hanafi, known as one of the scholars with extensive knowledge in the science of fiqh, had the real name Abu Hanifah al-Nuʿman ibn Thabit ibn Zuhti. He was born in the city of Kufa, Iraq, in 80 AH (699 AD) and died around 150 AH (767 AD). During his life, he experienced two major periods in Islamic history, namely the reign of the Umayyad Dynasty and the Abbasid Dynasty, where he spent 52 years under the Umayyad Dynasty and 18 years under the Abbasid Dynasty. His contributions to the development of fiqh made him one of the leading figures in the history of Islamic thought.[11]

Referring to Heri Mahfudhi's writing, it shows that the life of Abu Hanifah al-Nu'man ibn Thabit is depicted as being in the midst of two major powers in Islamic history, namely the Umayyad Dynasty and the Abbasid Dynasty. During this period, the political dynamics were quite complex and full of conflict. Various polemics that occurred during his life included the collapse of the Umayyad Dynasty, which was replaced by the Abbasid Dynasty through quite violent political upheaval. In addition, there was also the phenomenon of

[10] David Kristianto, "Differences between Classical, Medieval, and Modern Islamic Thought and Their Development," *Madinah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 10, no. 1 (2023): pp. 2-3., https://doi.org/10.58518/madinah.v10i1.1480.

[11] Muhammad Rijal Fadli, "Historical Overview: Islamic Legal Thought During the Tabi'in Period (Imam Hanafi, Imam Malik, Imam Syafi'i and Imam Hanbali) in Istinbat Al-Ahkam," *Tamaddun Journal: Journal of Islamic History and Culture* 8, no. 1 (2020): p. 17., https://doi.org/10.24235/tamaddun.v8i1.5848.

coercion of power by the Abbasid rulers on the people to comply with their political policies. In addition, the conflict between the Abbasid Dynasty and the 'Alawiyah group (Ahlul Bayt) also added to the socio-political tensions at that time. This situation was exacerbated by various events such as tyranny of power, rebellion, injustice, and the loss of a sense of security and peace within the community.[12]

However, this turbulent political reality did not directly change Imam Abu Hanifah's perspective on conducting istinbath (legal judgment). In academic discourse, the question often arises, "To what extent do political conditions influence a scholar's legal methodology?" In the context of Imam Abu Hanifah, various sources indicate that, despite living amidst power conflicts, his intellectual integrity remained intact. He did not use political dynamics as the primary basis for establishing law, but instead adhered to scientific principles derived from texts and the rational method of ijtihad.

Another perspective is presented in the writings of Novita Ardiyanti Ningrum and her colleagues, which highlight the social aspects of Imam Abu Hanifah's life. They describe how during this period the city of Baghdad developed into a cosmopolitan center of Islamic civilization. This development was marked by the establishment of Bayt al-Hikmah, a center for the translation and development of knowledge that brought together various intellectual traditions, both from the Islamic world and from other civilizations. In the context of such a heterogeneous and dynamic society, a rational approach to understanding law became increasingly important. Therefore, it is not surprising that Imam Abu Hanifah is known as a figure who extensively utilized a rational approach in his ijtihad.[13]

Researchers then linked this to the social context in which his thought developed, namely the cities of Kufa and Baghdad. These two regions were known as centers of interaction for various social, cultural, and intellectual groups. This metropolitan society demanded a more analytical and rational approach to law. This is where the term ahl al-ra'yu emerged, a group of scholars who emphasized the use of reason or rationality in understanding legal issues.

Based on the two scientific sources above, it can be understood that Imam Abu Hanifah's life was not only influenced by political dynamics, but also by the intellectual and social developments of society at that time. However, the most fundamental thing according to researchers is the depth of knowledge he possessed as a result of a long learning process and extensive intellectual wanderings. This depth of knowledge greatly influenced the way he determined laws regarding various problems that arose in society. It can be said that the pattern of Imam Abu Hanifah's fiqh thought was not only born from religious texts alone, but also from the interaction between scientific traditions, social reality, and his rational abilities. This is what then made his fiqh thought develop strongly in the regions of Kufa and Baghdad, and is widely known as a rational and contextual fiqh approach in the history of Islamic legal thought.

Imam Malik's Thought Pattern

Imam Malik was a contemporary of Imam Hanafi. He was also a scholar with extensive knowledge in the field of fiqh, thus he was known as the Imam of the Madzhab. His name was Abu Abdillah Malik bin Anas As Syabahi Al Arabi bin Malik bin Abu Amir bin Harith. He was born in the city of Medina, precisely in the Hijaz region in 93 H/713 AD and he died in 179 H/798 AD in Medina. [14] His life was framed within the simplicity of Medina society which, although modest in material terms, had a diverse social structure. This diversity arose

[12] Heri Mahfudhi, "The Thought Pattern of Imam Abu Hanifah and Its Relevance to the Law of Marriage Without a Guardian," *Adhki: Journal of Islamic Family Law* 3, no. 2 (2021): pp. 4-6.

[13] Journal of Legal Studies and Through the Hanafi School, *Legal Standing* , 8, no. 3 (2024): 990–1003.

[14] Danus Aris Setiyanto, "Islamic Legal Thought of Imam Malik Bin Annas (Social History Approach)," *Al-Ahkam: Journal of Sharia and Legal Sciences* 1, no. 2 (2016): p. 4., https://doi.org/10.61132/santri.v3i2.1365.

from the remnants of the prophetic civilization mixed with the flow of immigrants, creating a dynamic social ecosystem. This condition sociologically forced the birth of elastic yet principled legal thinking, which later manifested in the use of the *Al-Maslahah Al-Mursalah method* .[15]

As someone who grew up in the center of the transmission of revelation, Imam Malik naturally became a central figure *of the Ahlul Hadith* . Medina at that time was a "living library" where the Prophet's hadith still resonated in the memories and daily practices of its people. However, his profound wisdom led him to go beyond simply collecting texts. Imam Malik viewed the practices of the Ahlul Madinah (the practices of the people of Medina) as a highly authoritative source of law. For him, the collective actions of the people of Medina, passed down from generation to generation from the Companions, constituted a form of "mutawatir hadith" in the form of action. His logic was simple yet sharp: it was impossible for the people of Medina to collectively do something that contradicted the Prophet's sunnah, which had been passed down only a few generations before.

Geopolitically, Imam Malik stood at a crucial historical crossroads, a period of transition and consolidation between the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties. Living under the shadow of these two great powers demanded both sharp political intuition and steadfast faith. Here, his integrity was tested. Although he respected authority as a guardian of stability, Imam Malik never allowed Islamic jurisprudence to become a tool for legitimizing rulers. His view that a leader who deviated from the Sharia was oppressive reflected intellectual courage. He distinguished between civil obedience to prevent chaos (*fitnah*) and absolute legal truth. For him, justice was the primary pillar of Sharia, and any deviation from it, by anyone, was an act of oppression.

Al-Maslahah Al-Mursalah (benefit not specifically mentioned in the text but aligned with the objectives of sharia) model demonstrates Imam Malik's religious pragmatism. He recognized that texts are limited, while the dynamics of a pluralistic society continue to evolve. With this instrument, he ensured that Islamic law could respond to the challenges of the times without losing its divine spirit. His extraordinary intellectual capacity enabled him to distinguish between essential maslahah and those that were merely desires or momentary interests. This is what makes the Maliki school known for its down-to-earth character, adapting to local wisdom as long as it does not conflict with the principles of monotheism, yet strictly upholding the originality of Medinan traditions.

Imam Malik ibn Anas embodies the harmony between tradition and rationality. He successfully combined the richness of hadith transmission with the social realities of Medina. His steadfastness in the face of two major dynasties demonstrated that Islamic law, in the hands of qualified scholars, is an independent force that transcends practical political interests.

Imam Shafi'i's Thought Pattern

Imam Syafi'i was a scholar who lived during the time of Imam Malik, he was also a scholar with extensive knowledge of jurisprudence in the science *of fiqh* . Imam Syafi'i's real name was Muhammad bin Idris bin al-Abbas bin Syafi'i bin al-Saib bin Ubaid bin Abdu Yazid bin Hasyim bin al-Mutholib bin Abdi Manaf. Imam Syafi'i was born in 150H/767M in the city of Gazah, Palestine, and he died in 204H. [16] He was very serious in pursuing religious

[15] Nur Salsabila et al., *Malikiyah School of Thought: History, Thought and Development of the School* , in *Journal of Islamic Education* , vol. 1, no. 2 (2023).

[16] Siti Nur Adibah et al., "The Urgency of Fiduciary Guarantees in Islamic Law and the Views of the Imam Shafiʾi School of Thought," *Syari'Ah: Journal of Indonesian Comparative of Syari'ah Law* 4, no. 2 (2021): p. 9.

knowledge, so that with his seriousness he became a prominent scholar who had extensive knowledge and insight in the science of *fiqh* .[17]

Sociocultural change is a major catalyst in the evolution of Islamic law, a reality fully recognized by Imam Shafi'i through the concepts of *Qaul Qadim* (old opinion) and *Qaul Jadid* (new opinion). This phenomenon demonstrates that Islamic law is not static in a vacuum, but rather a living entity that follows the dynamics of society. While in Baghdad, Imam Shafi'i formulated *Qaul Qadim* , which was heavily influenced by the Iraqi economic structure at the time. One of the most representative examples is the obligation of zakat on olives. In Baghdad, olives were not just an ordinary commodity, but an economic pillar with high sales value and a staple food for the community. Methodologically, Imam Shafi'i saw the existence of *'illat* (legal ratio) in the form of economic benefits and strong food dependence, thus establishing zakat as an instrument for the distribution of social justice.[18]

However, Imam Shafi'i's geographical transition to Egypt brought a fundamental paradigm shift in his *Qaul Jadid* . He found empirical facts that in Egypt, the position of olives experienced a decline in sociocultural roles, they were no longer a primary need, but merely a complementary food with an economic value that was not as dominant as in Iraq. The change in the legal status of olives from obligatory to non-obligatory zakat in Egypt proves that Imam Shafi'i used a sharp sociological legal approach. He understood the principle that law always revolves around the reason for its existence (*al-hukmu yadurru ma'a al-'illati wujudan wa 'adaman*). If the social and economic function of an item changes, then the burden of legal obligations that accompany it must also be reviewed in order to maintain the dignity of sharia justice.[19]

This transformation of thought does not indicate intellectual inconsistency, but rather reflects the maturity of knowledge and academic honesty of a great mujtahid. Legal changes in the Shafi'i school were triggered by the synchronization of religious texts with the varying social, economic, cultural, and political realities of each region. His profound knowledge enabled him to recontextualize religion, positioning Islamic law as an adaptive solution to human needs, not a rigid burden. Thus, Qaul Jadid is authentic proof that competent ijtihad is ijtihad that can read texts within a contextual framework, ensuring that the heavenly message remains relevant and grounded amidst the diversity of human civilization.

Imam Ahmad Bin Hanbali's Thought Style

Imam Hanbali is a fourth school of thought scholar who also operates in the field of fiqh. His full name is, Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Hanbal Ibn Hilal Ibn As`ad Ibn Idris Ibn Abdillah Ibn Hayyan Ibn Abdillah Ibn Anas Ibn `Auf Ibn Qosit Ibn Mazin Ibn Syaiban Ibn Zulal Ibn Ismail Ibn Ibrahim. He was born in Baghdad (Iraq), specifically in the city of Maru/Merv, in 164H/780M.[20]

He was a contemporary of Imam Syafi'i and was his teacher. He was a person who studied religious knowledge, so that with his seriousness in studying he made himself a prominent scholar and he was one of the scholars who was followed by some Muslims for his

[17] Moch. Khoirul Anam, "The Basics of Istinbath of Imam Syafi'i's Law," *Al-Ihda': Journal of Education and Thought* 14, no. 1 (2022): p. 18., https://doi.org/10.55558/alihda.v14i1.25.

[18] Mohamad Subli, Kurniati Kurniati, and Misbahuddin Misbahuddin, "The Social Impact of the Change of Qaul Qadim Imam Syafii to Qaul Jadid," *Pappasang* 5, no. 2 (2023): pp. 12-13, https://doi.org/10.46870/jiat.v5i2.842.

[19] Subli, Kurniati, and Misbahuddin, "The Social Impact of the Change of Qaul Qadim from Imam Syafii to Qaul Jadid." 12-13.

[20] Ardiyani, "The Development of Imam Ahmad Bin Hanbal's Fiqh Thought: Construction of the Ijtihad Method," *Journal of Islamic Education* 1, no. 2 (2023): p, 3.

way of thinking in the science of fiqh. With the knowledge he possessed, he was able to produce a work that we know as *the Al-Musnad book.*[21]

Socioculturally, Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal grew up in an intellectual ecosystem in Baghdad that was not much different from that of Imam Shafi'i, but he faced more specific theological and methodological challenges. As a prominent student of Imam Shafi'i, Ahmad ibn Hanbal absorbed the depth of his teacher's fiqh, often using Shafi'i's opinions as a reference in complex matters. However, the dialectic of his thought reached its peak when faced with the dominance of *the Ahlul Ra'yi* (rationalist) group that was very strong in Baghdad at that time. This intellectual tension shaped the character of the Hanbali school of thought, which was very protective of the originality of revelation. Ahmad ibn Hanbal positioned himself as a rigid defender *of naqli (sacred text) evidence , thus he narrowed the space for ra'yi* (reason) in the process of establishing law. For him, hadith, even *da'if hadith* that met certain criteria and fatwas of companions were far more authoritative and should be prioritized over the results of speculative human rational analogies.[22]

Differences of opinion among the imams of the schools of thought demonstrate that Islamic law is the result of a complex interaction between absolute texts and contingent realities. Geographical, cultural, and customary differences are not merely background factors, but rather instruments that influence how a scholar conducts *istinbath* (legal exploration). The high level of knowledge and breadth of insight of the imams of the schools of thought enable them to map out which areas of religion are static (*tsawabit*) and which are dynamic (*mutaghayyirat*). From this perspective, legal changes due to social conditions do not affect the dogmatic realm of mahdah worship, but rather focus on the realm of muamalah. This realm of muamalah provides space for local wisdom to engage in dialectic with sharia, where social practices in a region can influence the form and technical implementation of law in accordance with the provisions of the ulama who understand the essence of the benefit.

The final synthesis of this dialectic confirms that the diversity of schools of thought, from the hadith traditions of Imam Malik in Medina, to the transformation of *the Qaul Jadid* of Imam Shafi'i in Egypt, to the puritanical traditionalism of Imam Ahmad in Baghdad, constitutes a methodological richness within Islam. These differences are a manifestation of the flexibility of sharia in responding to human needs without sacrificing fundamental divine principles. Thus, Islamic law exists as a living entity; it maintains its noble identity through its texts, while remaining relevant through a deep understanding of the social and cultural contexts of a diverse society.

The Implications of the Thinking of 4 Popular Schools of Thought in the Formation of Tolerant Character in the Midst of Digitalization

1. **Practicing Accepting Differences as Inevitability**

of training, but rather "limited awareness." This relates to the concept of *Locus of Control* . Often, resistance to differences is not caused by a lack of information (data), but rather a lack of *a* **framework** for processing that information. Without the awareness that truth in the realm of ijtihadi (thought) is relative (*dzanni*), individuals tend to be trapped in *naive realism* , the belief that their way of seeing the world is the absolute objective reality, while others' views are aberrations. [23]

[21] Ashif Az Zafi Lu'luatul Badriyyah, "Differences between the Schools of Thought of the Four Great Imams (Hanafi, Maliki, Syafi'i and Hambali) in the Paradigm of Islamic Law," *Al-Muaddib: Journal of Social and Islamic Sciences* 5, no. 1 (2020): p. 6.

[22] Nadia, "The Life and Characteristics of Imam Ahmad Bin Hanbal's Legal Thought," *Comparativa* 1, no. 2 (2020): pp. 14-17.

[23] Veri Adi Saputra, "Building an Inclusive and Communicative Generation with Multicultural Education in the Digitalization Era In this Era of Globalization, Education Not Only Functions as a Conduit of Knowledge, But Also as a Vehicle for Forming Values," *Jupensal: Journal of Universal Education* 1, no. 2 (2024): p. 6.

The use of the example of the four imams of the Islamic school of thought is highly relevant in the context of Legal Pluralism . The differences in the methodologies of the imams' *istinbath* (legal exploration) are not a product of egoism, but rather a product of differences in methodological tools and socio-geographical backgrounds. In the digital age, this "rich and dynamic" intellectual tradition is often reduced to a black-and-white narrative. There is a disconnect between the richness of classical methodology and the digital literacy of modern society, which tends to seek instant and single answers through social media algorithms.[24]

According to theories of moral development (such as Thomas Lickona's), *moral knowing* is only the beginning. The real challenge is bridging the gap between moral *feeling* and *moral action* . Difficulty accepting differences often arises from a "cognitive distance" between what is learned in educational institutions and what is seen on social media. When social media amplifies polarization, *moral understanding* of tolerance is often overridden by the emotional urge to defend one's group (*in-group favoritism*).[25]

In this context, several discussions have emerged: *first* , if the primary focus is awareness-raising, how can educational institutions shift their curriculum from a "dogmatic-textual" to an "analytical-contextual" one so that students not only understand *the* differences, but *also why* they exist? *Second* , how do we instill awareness of "difference as an inevitability" in a digital ecosystem designed to create *echo chambers* that stifle dialogue? *Third* , to what extent do social class and literacy factors influence a person's mental readiness to accept differing *ijtihad in society?*

Transforming education from a dogmatic approach to an analytical-contextual one is key to building collective awareness that methodological differences are an intellectual necessity that enriches legal and social products. Amidst the currents of digitalization that often create *echo chambers* and polarization through social media algorithms, strengthening digital literacy and "cognitive flexibility" is a crucial bulwark to prevent society from becoming trapped in a single, false truth. Sociologically, this effort must be accompanied by equal access to literacy and cultural capital, so that mental readiness to accept the diversity of ijtihad is no longer hampered by limited insight or social class, but rather manifests as a tolerant character capable of navigating the complexities of modern reality critically and wisely.

Accepting differences as *the law of God* requires more than just advice; it requires a restructuring of thinking . The challenge ahead is how to translate the rich methodology of past ijtihad into language relevant to the digital generation, so that differences are no longer viewed as a threat to faith but as evidence of the intellectual greatness of Islam.

2. Practice listening patiently

After training ourselves to accept differences, the next step in developing a tolerant character is practicing patient listening. Differences are inevitable; the various opinions that emerge in society generally stem from references to the works of scholars and their interpretations of religious texts. Listening patiently doesn't mean being excessive or draining our energy. As long as we hold to a sound truth, others' differing opinions will not shake our convictions. Everyone tends to claim the truth, and that's fine as long as those claims are supported by both *rational* and *rational evidence* .[26]

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[24] Alif Okta Nabila and Murfiah Dewi Wulandari, "Elements of Global Diversity in the Thematic Book for Grade IV Elementary School Students on the Theme of the Beauty of Diversity in My Country," *Jurnal Cakrawala Pendas* 8, no. 3 (2022): p. 8., https://doi.org/10.31949/jcp.v8i3.2607.

[25] Abdul Mahruf, Widya Andriyani, and Kholil Lur Rochman, *Implementation of Thomas Lickona's Thoughts on Character Education in Islamic Education Management* , 11, no. 1 (2026): 453–66.

[26] Nanda Inka Fitri, "Patience in Facing Problems from the Perspective of the Prophet's Hadith," *Pendas: Scientific Journal of Elementary Education* 10, no. 2 (2002): p. 8.

What needs to be practiced is the ability to listen without overreacting. Simple ways to cultivate this attitude include: being open-minded (don't be easily offended), listening and absorbing the other person's opinion, analyzing it thoroughly, and then ensuring that the truth you hold is well-founded. This approach is effective because oversensitivity often leads to anarchy or extreme actions.

A relevant historical example is the difference of opinion between Imam Malik and Imam Shafi'i regarding the status of the dowry. According to Imam Malik, the dowry is a pillar of marriage, while Imam Shafi'i considers it merely a gift from a husband to his wife in return for sexual intercourse, not part of the pillars of marriage. [27] Both respected each other and demonstrated a scientific attitude and the ability to understand. This attitude, humility, openness, and respect in dialogue, play a significant role in maintaining social harmony. With the mastery of knowledge and the development of scientific etiquette, accepting differences becomes easier without sacrificing the truth believed in.

3. Practice Respecting Other People's Opinions

Differences of opinion are a natural part of the development of science. The history of Islamic civilization records various interesting events in how Muslim scholars constructed knowledge in various fields based on logical argumentation. For example, al-Kindi gave birth to rationalist thought and harmonized Greek and Islamic philosophy [28]; al-Farabi introduced the concept of *al-Madinah al-Fadhilah* [29]; Ibn Sina developed the theory of emanation [30]; and al-Ghazali strengthened *irfani epistemology* .[31]

In the field of jurisprudence, major school imams also emerged with distinctive styles of thinking. Imam Abu Hanifah emphasized the use of *al-ra'yu* (ratio) in legal istinbat, Imam Malik based more on *qaul sahib* and the traditions of hadith experts, Imam Syafi'i developed a methodology through the concepts of *qaul qadim* and *qaul Jadid* , while Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal tended to follow the pattern of his predecessors, although he was somewhat critical of the concept of ijma'.

The intellectual journey of these figures demonstrates their openness to differing views. The debates that ensued were not a form of division, but rather part of an intellectual dynamic that fostered mutual strengthening and refinement of ideas. In other words, diversity of thought served as a driving force for the development of knowledge in Islamic civilization.

Likewise, in the lives of Muslims, training oneself to respect the opinions of others is a crucial step in maintaining the continuity of the community. [32] Of course, if an opinion deviates from the creed or contains falsehood, it must be rejected. However, when it relates to matters that can enrich Islamic culture and ensure its survival and sustainability, an open attitude is essential.

One way to train yourself to respect others' opinions is to increase your literacy. The more you read and broaden your horizons, the broader your knowledge and the more open-

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[27] Muhamad Rizki Akmal and Idarotul Nginayah, "The Position of Dowry in Marriage Contracts from the Perspective of Imam Malik and Imam Syafi'i," *Al-Wasith Journal: Journal of Islamic Law Studies* 7, no. 2 (2022): p. 20., https://doi.org/10.52802/wst.v7i2.756.

[28] Sipa et al., "Integration of Philosophy and Religion in Islamic Education (A Study of Al-Kindi's Thoughts for Strengthening Reason and Revelation)," *Al-Qodiri: Journal of Education, Social and Religious Studies* , 2025, p. 2., https://doi.org/10.54503/0515-9628-2024.77.3-4-268.

[29] Nur Alisa, Siradjuddin, and Misbahuddin, "The Concept of the Ideal State and Society According to Al-Farabi from an Economic Point of View," *Syarikat: Journal of the Sharia Economic Group* 6, no. 2 (2023): p. 1., https://doi.org/10.25299/syarikat.2023.vol6(2).13338.

[30] Karmawati Karmawati, Indo Santalia, and Kamridah Kamridah, "The Development of Islamic Thought on Emanation Theory According to Al Farabi and Ibn Sina," *Madika: Journal of Politics and Governance* 4, no. 1 (2024): p. 1., https://doi.org/10.24239/madika.v4i1.3018.

[31] Rodiah Nasution and M. Sholih Salimul Uqba, "Irfani Epistemology Imam Al-Ghazali's Perspective in Islamic Education," *La-Tahzan: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 16, no. 1 (2024): p. 1.

[32] Mian Aulina Lubis Hoki Diana Siregar, "Cultivating an Attitude of Mutual Appreciation and Respect for Others in Children at the Ashabul Muhajirin Islamic Education Foundation Medan," *Kampung Akademik Publishing: Jurnal Sains Student Research* 2, no. 1 (2024): p. 2.

minded you become at accepting differences. A common problem in our lives today is a lack of literacy, leading many people to respond fanatically without truly understanding the substance of the issue.

This phenomenon is evident on social media, where shallow debates often occur that deviate from scientific thinking. Therefore, increasing literacy is key to training oneself to respect others' opinions. This will ensure that scientific discussions remain vibrant as a healthy space for intellectual dynamics, while simultaneously fostering a culture of mutual respect among the community.

4. Avoiding Hate Speech

In the face of various social upheavals, especially amidst existing differences, Muslims should strive to refrain from insulting one another or spreading hatred among themselves. Social media should be used as a means of preaching and spreading the blessed teachings of Islam, not as a platform for sowing hostility. Allah SWT has warned in Surah Al-Hujurāt, verse 11, against belittling and hating one another, as this would classify those who do so as oppressors.

The best attitude for Muslims in dealing with differences of opinion is to avoid hate speech and replace it with a wise attitude. A simple way to determine this is by conducting *self-reflection* or self-audit: which is better: maintaining unity or inciting hostility, feeding the needy or neglecting them, doing good or committing injustice, teaching good or teaching evil, preaching with gentleness or with violence, hating or loving? Each of these moral choices carries consequences that determine the quality of our faith and humanity.[33]

Some might argue against the importance of tolerance, citing irreconcilable differences in faith or law. However, differences of opinion in Islam are ultimately rooted in scientific studies and diversely understood texts. Hate speech does not stem from these scientific differences, but rather from emotional and irrational religious behavior. Overly fanatical individuals often become trapped in a self-righteous mindset, isolating themselves from the views of others. Yet, the claim to absolute truth belongs only to Allah SWT, while humans are always within the realm of possibility.

History records that Abu al-Hasan al-Asy'ari initially lived within the Mu'tazilite theological tradition. However, after delving deeper into various disciplines, he broke away from this group and formulated his own ideas [34]. Imam Shafi'i subsequently produced two forms of fatwah: *the qaul qadim (edict of eternity)* and *the qaul jadid (edict of eternity)* . This demonstrates that the truth believed by humans is always relative, subject to change through deeper exploration and understanding.

The biggest problem in our social life is the tendency to easily hate others simply because of differences. Yet, we often don't fully understand and delve into others' beliefs. Therefore, developing a tolerant character is crucial. Tolerance doesn't mean sacrificing religious principles, but rather the ability to appreciate differences, control emotions, and prioritize brotherhood above group ego. In this way, differences of opinion can become a source of intellectual and spiritual richness in the lives of Muslims.

5. Practicing Humility

Developing a tolerant character is closely linked to humility. A humble person will more easily accept differences of opinion because humility fosters open-mindedness and a broad heart. Conversely, many problems arise from a narrow-mindedness or a closed-mindedness toward the truth coming from others. Humility can destroy ego, arrogance, and

[33] Dia Hidayati Usman et al., "A Model of Islamic Basic Education Based on Wisdom in Ar-Razi's Interpretation of QS. Luqman: 12-19," *Ta'dibuna: Journal of Islamic Education* 14, no. 1 (2025): p. 10., https://doi.org/10.32832/tadibuna.v14i1.19397.

[34] Widia Nanda Putri, Padang State University, and Digital Technology, "Al-Asy'ariyah: The History of the Rise and Important Figures of Al-Asy'ariyah," *Inspirstif Edukatif: Jurnal Belajar* 6, no. 1 (2024): p. 1.

selfishness. As long as these negative traits remain in control, no matter how strong the argument for truth presented, it will still be rejected by logic limited by the human ego.

Humility is not the opposite of logic, but rather its balance. Logic often leads people to a selfish attitude, while humility brings a pure awareness to accept differences as part of the dynamics of life. Cultivating humility is not easy, because the human mind is often faced with a struggle between truth and falsehood. [35] A humble person will abandon falsehood and choose the path of praise, while arrogance will lead to falsehood and division.

Humility is also a commendable virtue that encourages one to be ready to face differences of opinion with open arms. This can be cultivated through increasing religious literacy, not limiting oneself to just one scholar, broadening one's horizons through diverse perspectives, and increasing *tafaqqur (recitation of the Qur'an*) and dhikr (remembrance of God). In this context, dhikr is not merely verbal recitation, but rather a process of deep thought accompanied by an awareness of God's presence. When the divine element is firmly embedded in the heart, one will more easily accept differences and display humility in every interaction.

This attitude is crucial for maintaining social harmony. A humble person doesn't easily judge, let alone hate, others simply because of differences of opinion. What appears bad in the eyes of others isn't necessarily bad in the eyes of God. For example, the story of a prostitute who gave water to a thirsty dog, and then Allah forgave her sins (Sahih Bukhari, no. 3321). [36] This incident teaches us that human logic doesn't always align with divine logic. Therefore, humility is the best attitude when facing differences. With humility, tolerance can flourish in society, so that differences don't become a source of conflict, but rather an opportunity to enrich mutual understanding and maintain the continuity of life together.

6. Practicing Wise Attitude

Today's use of social media demands discretion, both in uploading and sharing content. A sense of tolerance (*tasamuh*) in social media can be developed through a wise attitude, namely the ability to refrain from easily accepting or spreading information without verifying the source. A wise person will take two steps when faced with unclear information: *first* , ignoring it to avoid escalating the issue; *second* , investigating and digging deeper into the information until finding reliable clarity. [37] In this context, wisdom is also reflected in a person's ability to make decisions without harming others.

So, how do you become a wise person? Wisdom is born from three main things: *first* , a deep intuition that trains one to read situations clearly;[38] *second* , the breadth of scientific knowledge that provides a basis for considering various problems;[39] *Third* , openness of heart and mind in accepting differences. Through these three aspects, a person will become accustomed to prioritizing understanding toward others. [40] A person with an understanding attitude will not easily offend others in words, will not be inclined to hurt others in actions, and will be sincere in pursuing knowledge with a comprehensive approach.

The history of great scholars in the field of Islamic jurisprudence provides vivid examples of wise conduct. They employed diverse methods in establishing laws, not driven by lust, but by the breadth of their intuition, moral depth, and the breadth of their knowledge. From this emerged the wisdom that became a solid pillar of the Islamic scholarly tradition.

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[35] Zuhriyandi, "Religious Harmony and Conflict Prevention: A Moderation Perspective According to the Qur'an and the Bible," *Moderatio: Jurnal Moderasi Beragama* 3, no. 2 (2023): p. 10.

[36] Salim Rosyadi Oktaviana, Masrukhin Muhsin, "Human Compassion for Pets: A Thematic Hadith Study," *Tadhkiroh: Journal of Applied Islamic Law and Sharia Philosophy Studies* 2, no. 2 (2025): p. 10.

[37] Arman Hanafi and Muhammad Yasin, "Efforts to Strengthen Social Relations in Community Life," *Journal of Education & Social Sciences (Sinova)* 1, no. 2 (2023): p. 2., https://doi.org/10.71382/sinova.v1i2.19.

[38] Hizkia Fredo Valerian, "Religious Intuition in National Life: Revisiting N. Driyarkara's Thoughts on Pancasila," *Jurnal Dekontruksi, Jurnal Filsafat* 2, no. 1 (2021): p. 1.

[39] Gina 'Ul Amini, "The Interaction of Science and Religion: The Perspective of Chemistry in Islam as Science and Chemistry," *Islamology: Journal of Religious Sciences* 1, no. 2 (2024): p. 6.

[40] Marianus Ivo Meidinata, "Proclamation and Openness of Islam and Catholicism: A Review of Reconciliation According to Comparative Religious Studies," *Abrahamic Religions: Journal of the Study of Religions* 2, no. 1 (2022): p. 6., https://doi.org/10.22373/arj.v2i1.12110.

This contrasts sharply with today's phenomenon, where many people are quick to speak out in public, despite their limited literacy, resulting in shallow thinking and actions that are far from wise.

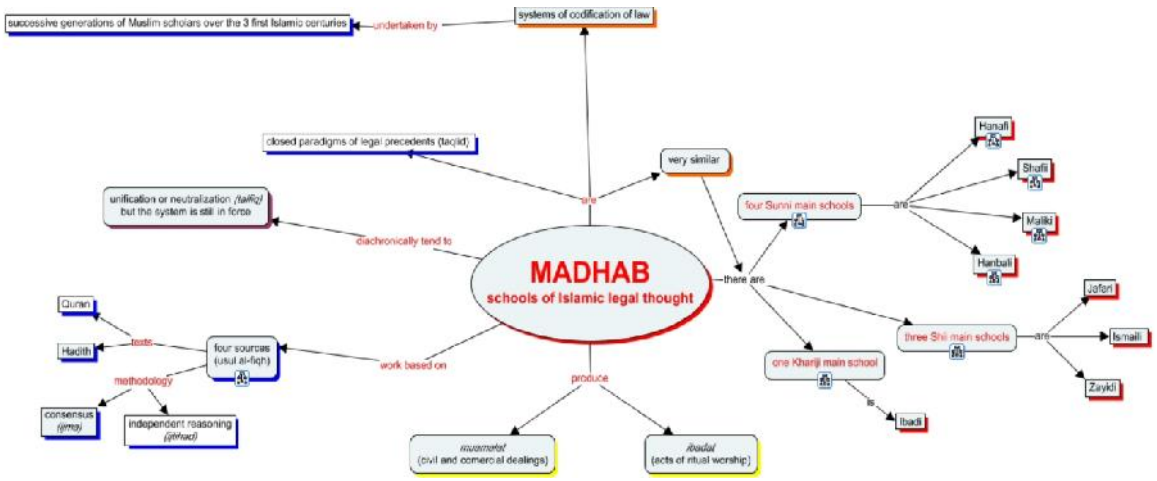
Building a tolerant character through a wise attitude is crucial for the development of a healthy Islamic scholarly tradition. This wise attitude trains people to appreciate differing views as a blessing in religious life. History records that during the reign of the Caliph Al-Ma'mun (circa 830 CE), the Baitul Hikmah was established as a center for Islamic studies and knowledge. [41] This institution emerged from the wisdom of Muslims who cared about the development of knowledge and considered differences of opinion a strength, not a weakness. The development of a tolerant character is inseparable from efforts to instill a wise attitude. The deeper a person's intuition, the broader their knowledge, and the more open their heart, the greater their ability to accept differences without causing division. This is the essence of *tasamuh (compassion)* , relevant to instill in both real life and the digital world.

7. Building a Critical Digital Literacy Community

Establishing a digital literacy community is a strategic step in fostering tolerance within society. This community not only serves as a platform for posting Islamic studies but also serves as a bulwark against the various propaganda prevalent on social media. A digital literacy community will be effective if it embraces people from diverse groups, factions, and understandings. [42] It creates a broad space for the exchange of differing opinions, allowing for a healthy transformation of universal values.

One of the main reasons people easily reject differing opinions is a lack of understanding of others' beliefs and perspectives. Through digital literacy communities, each religious group or school of thought has the opportunity to explain the sources that form the basis of its beliefs, and vice versa. [43] This way, miscommunication and misunderstandings between Muslims can be minimized. However, the fundamental issue lies not only in the importance of forming such communities, but also in the public's awareness, readiness, and willingness to participate. Excessive fanaticism and extreme views often discourage some from participating, even though this reluctance actually narrows the space for dialogue and widens the gap between differences.

Figure 1. Analysis of the Implications of Thought of 4 Imams of the School of thought



Therefore, building a digital literacy community remains a necessity. The mere existence of this community has significantly contributed to the advancement of Islam in the

[41] Lutfi Putra Mahesa, "Management of the Baitul Hikmah Library during the Abbasid Period," *Tadribuna: Journal of Islamic Management Education* 3, no. 2 (2023): pp. 4-5.

[42] M. Makhrus, N. Al Ngizati Ngama Yasifah, and Istianah Istianah, "Improving Digital Literacy Through Idebergerak.Com as a Community-Based Philanthropic Movement," *Journal of Literacy, Community Service and Empowerment* 2, no. 1 (2023): p. 1., https://doi.org/10.61813/jlppm.v2i1.26.

[43] Yesi Arikarani et al., "The Concept of Islamic Education in Strengthening Religious Moderation," *Edification Journal of Islamic Religious Education* 2, no. 1 (2024): p. 4.

digital space. Their primary task is to enlighten the community through digital da'wah (Islamic outreach), scientific studies of theology, fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), tafsir (Islamic interpretation), and various branches of Islamic knowledge. To be effective, this community needs to develop competent human resources in their respective fields. For example, a hadith expert could be given space to guide hadith studies, someone specializing in fiqh could direct discussions on Islamic law, and so on. Most importantly, these activities must be carried out continuously, not stopped midway.

Through this process, digital literacy communities can become a vehicle for fostering a tolerant character. Muslim intellectuals involved will become accustomed to accepting differences as normal, while simultaneously contributing to creating a more prosperous social atmosphere. Digital literacy serves as both an information medium and an educational instrument that fosters collective awareness of the importance of coexisting despite differences.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research objective to examine the characteristics of the four imams' fiqh thoughts and their implications in the formation of a tolerant character in the digital era, it can be concluded that the differences in views among the imams of the schools are a logical consequence of differences in epistemology, ijtihad methods, and the underlying social context, so that they cannot be understood as a form of conflict, but rather as intellectual wealth in the Islamic legal tradition. The results of the analysis indicate that the values contained in the dynamics of these differences have strong relevance in forming a tolerant character, especially when integrated with a character education framework that includes aspects of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. In the context of the digital era characterized by information polarization, echo chamber tendencies, and low literacy, these values can be transformed into operational attitudes in the form of the ability to accept differences as inevitable, listen patiently, respect the opinions of others, avoid hate speech, be humble, act wisely, and build collective awareness through a critical digital literacy community. Thus, the fiqh thoughts of the four imams' schools are not only relevant in the normative realm, but also have contextual implications as a basis for the formation of a tolerant character in modern society. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen analytical-contextual education, increase digital literacy, and develop inclusive dialogue spaces so that the values of tolerance contained in the classical fiqh treasury can be actualized in an adaptive and sustainable manner.

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