

## Recognition without Assimilation: *Fiqh* of Intra-Muslim Tolerance among Shia Muslims in Jepara, Indonesia

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### Abstract

Sunni–Shia relations are often examined through the lenses of sectarian conflict, doctrinal contestation, and exclusion, while less attention has been paid to how Shia minorities negotiate jurisprudential differences in everyday life within Sunni-majority settings. This article explores how Shia Muslims in Jepara, Indonesia, negotiate their Ja'fari identity and *madhhab*-based religious practices within a Sunni-majority environment, and how these processes are experienced as forms of recognition in socio-religious life. Drawing on a qualitative socio-legal approach, the study combines interviews with Shia community leaders and members alongside observations of socio-religious practices. The data were analyzed thematically, with Axel Honneth's theory of recognition serving as an interpretive framework for understanding the experiences of recognition identified in the findings. The results reveal that Shia Muslims maintain cross-*madhhab* family ties and communal care while openly expressing their Ja'fari identity and practices. They also participate in shared religious spaces and engage with Sunni Muslims in communal rituals, mutual assistance, philanthropy, and various forms of collective cooperation. These findings demonstrate that jurisprudential differences are negotiated through everyday interaction and accommodation, while religious visibility, participation, and social contribution are experienced as forms of recognition. The article argues that these patterns constitute recognition without assimilation and sustain harmonization without homogenization. Furthermore, it conceptualizes the accommodation of *madhhab*-based legal reasoning and practices as jurisprudential recognition and develops the *fiqh* of intra-Muslim tolerance as a normative-jurisprudential framework for managing the social consequences of *fiqh* plurality without allowing jurisprudential disagreement to become grounds for intra-Muslim exclusion.

[Relasi Sunni–Syiah sering dikaji melalui konflik sektarian, kontestasi doktrinal, dan eksklusi, sementara bagaimana minoritas Syiah menegosiasikan perbedaan yurisdiksional dalam kehidupan sehari-hari di lingkungan mayoritas Sunni masih relatif kurang mendapat perhatian. Artikel ini menganalisis bagaimana Muslim Syiah di Jepara, Indonesia, menegosiasikan identitas Ja'fari dan praktik keagamaan berbasis mazhab dalam lingkungan mayoritas Sunni, serta bagaimana proses tersebut dialami sebagai bentuk rekognisi dalam kehidupan sosial-keagamaan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan sosio-legal melalui wawancara dengan pemimpin dan anggota komunitas Syiah serta observasi terhadap praktik sosial-keagamaan. Data dianalisis secara tematik, sedangkan teori rekognisi Axel Honneth digunakan untuk menginterpretasikan pengalaman rekognisi yang muncul dari temuan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Muslim Syiah mempertahankan relasi

*keluarga dan kepedulian komunal lintas mazhab sembari menampilkan identitas dan praktik Ja'fari secara terbuka. Mereka juga berpartisipasi dalam ruang keagamaan bersama serta terlibat dengan Muslim Sunni dalam ritual komunal, gotong royong, filantropi, dan berbagai bentuk kerja sama kolektif. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa perbedaan jurisprudensial dinegosiasikan melalui interaksi dan akomodasi keseharian, sementara keterbukaan identitas, partisipasi, dan kontribusi sosial dialami sebagai bentuk rekognisi. Artikel ini berargumen bahwa pola tersebut merepresentasikan rekognisi tanpa asimilasi dan menopang harmonisasi tanpa homogenisasi. Lebih lanjut, artikel ini mengonseptualisasikan akomodasi terhadap penalaran dan praktik berbasis mazhab sebagai rekognisi jurisprudensial serta mengembangkan fikih toleransi intra-muslim sebagai kerangka normatif-jurisprudensial untuk mengelola konsekuensi sosial dari pluralitas fikih tanpa menjadikan perbedaan jurisprudensial sebagai dasar eksklusi intra-Muslim.]*

**Keywords:** *Fiqh* of Intra-Muslim Tolerance; Jurisprudential Recognition; Shia Muslims; Sunni–Shia Relations; Indonesia.

## Introduction

Sunni-Shia relations constitute an important arena for understanding how internal differences within Islam acquire social and legal consequences in contemporary Muslim societies.<sup>1</sup> The differences between these two traditions encompass not only theological issues and religious authority but also manifest themselves in legal reasoning, ritual practices, and *madhhab* (school of law) affiliations that shape the religious identities of their adherents. Such differences do not necessarily result in conflict.<sup>2</sup> However, when doctrinal and jurisprudential boundaries intersect with identity politics, religious authority, and majority-minority relations, they may acquire an exclusionary force that extends beyond the realm of theological debate.<sup>3</sup> In the Indonesian context, several studies have demonstrated that Shia identity has undergone processes of labeling, delegitimization, and framing as a threat to orthodoxy and the Muslim majority.<sup>4</sup> Al Makin, for instance, demonstrates how the homogenization of Islamic identity can contribute to the persecution of Shia groups, while Zulkifli demonstrates that anti-Shia framing is shaped not only by doctrinal differences but also by religious ideology, majoritarian perspectives, and perceptions of threat.<sup>5</sup> The academic issue, therefore, concerns not only why Sunni-Shia differences in certain contexts produce exclusion but also how the same differences can be negotiated so that they do not

<sup>1</sup> Nadia Farabi, “Addressing the Challenges of Heresy in Peacebuilding: Evidence from the Ahmadiyya and Shia in Indonesia,” *Conflict, Security & Development* 25, no. 1 (January 2025): 113–31; Emmanuel Edeh, “Revisiting Religious Sectarianism in Nigeria: Sunni and Shia Muslims’ Intra-Religious Conflict, Impact, and Implications,” *The International Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Society* 15, no. 1 (2024): 75–97.

<sup>2</sup> Zulkifli, *The Struggle of the Shi’is in Indonesia* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2013), 95–107.

<sup>3</sup> Elvire Corboz, “Sunni–Shi’a Relations in Europe: Framing an Emerging Field of Research,” *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 12, no. 1 (March 2023): 1–14; Asfa Widiyanto, “Rapprochement between Sunnism and Shiism in Indonesia: Challenges and Opportunities,” *Epistémé: Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Keislaman* 16, no. 1 (May 2021): 31–58; Ilzamudin Ma’mur et al., “Dynamics Post-Hizb Ut-Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) Dissolution: Activist Reactions and Public Response,” *International Journal of Islamic Khazanah* 15, no. 2 (December 2025): 87–101.

<sup>4</sup> M. Khusna Amal, “Anti-Shia Mass Mobilization in Indonesia’s Democracy: Godly Alliance, Militant Groups and the Politics of Exclusion,” *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 10, no. 1 (May 2020): 25–48; Anik Farida et al., “The State, Shia, and Exclusionary Policies in Makassar–Indonesia,” *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 17, no. 2 (December 2023): 452–82.

<sup>5</sup> Zulkifli Zulkifli, “What Drives Anti-Shia Framing in Indonesia?,” *Studia Islamika* 31, no. 1 (2024): 1–29.

automatically develop into social boundaries that negate the visibility, participation, and presence of minority groups in shared social life.

This issue is particularly relevant in the context of Jepara, Indonesia, where the Shia Ithnā ‘Ashariyyah community lives within a Muslim society in which the majority is affiliated with the Sunni tradition, particularly the Shāfi‘ī *madhhab*.<sup>6</sup> In this context, the term “*madhhab* differences” needs to be used carefully. This article does not reduce all Sunni-Shia differences to issues of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), as the two traditions also differ in a number of theological, historical, and religious authority-related matters.<sup>7</sup> The focus of this study is more limited to jurisprudential differences and *madhhab*-based religious practices, particularly when Shāfi‘ī-Ja‘farī distinctions are manifested in ritual practices, expressions of religious identity, and the use of shared socio-religious spaces.<sup>8</sup> Jepara is important not because it is assumed to be an inherently harmonious space, but because previous research has indicated a relatively cooperative configuration of Sunni-Shia relations within a broader Indonesian context that has also witnessed various forms of stigmatization and exclusion of Shia communities.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, this study begins with a central question: how do Shia Muslims negotiate their identities and jurisprudential differences within a Sunni-majority environment so that Ja‘farī practices remain visible while interaction and participation in shared socio-religious spaces continue? This question shifts attention from harmony as an assumed or established condition toward the everyday processes through which differences can be maintained and managed without requiring assimilation.

Studies on Sunni-Shia relations can be broadly mapped into at least three tendencies. First, a number of studies focus on doctrinal and *fiqh* dimensions and on efforts toward rapprochement between the two traditions, including discussions of *madhhab* plurality and the possibility of establishing common ground without erasing internal differences within Islam.<sup>10</sup> Second, the literature on sectarianism, religious minorities, and the politics of exclusion explains how Shia identity is constructed as a religious other through fatwas, social mobilization, anti-Shia framing, and practices that restrict the community.<sup>11</sup> Third, studies on tolerance, intra-religious dialogue, and coexistence demonstrate that Sunni-Shia relations do not always move toward conflict; everyday interactions, dialogue, local institutions, and

<sup>6</sup> Muhammad Lutfi Hakim, “Ismail Mundu on Islamic Law of Inheritance: A Content Analysis of Majmū‘ al-Mīrāth fī Ḥukm al-Farā‘id,” *Al-Jami‘ab: Journal of Islamic Studies* 61, no. 1 (June 2023): 59–79; Yasrul Huda, Jajat Burhanuddin, and Mahmood Kooria, “Strengthening the Shafi‘i Madhhab: Malay Kitab Jawi of Fiqh in the 19th Century,” *JURIS (Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah)* 22, no. 2 (December 2023): 259–73.

<sup>7</sup> Elfia Elfia et al., “Gender Equality in Imamate Shia and Sunni Inheritance Jurisprudence: A Comparative Analysis of Legal Doctrines and Familial Relationships,” *Maqāhib* 23, no. 2 (December 2024): 555–94.

<sup>8</sup> UAN, “Interview with a Shia Religious Leader in Jepara,” November 2025; UNA, “Interview with the Treasurer of Ahlulbait Indonesia (ABI), Jepara,” November 2025.

<sup>9</sup> Mukhlis Mukhlis et al., “Rejection of Former Shia Community in Sampang Perspective on Human Rights Law: Discourse of Religious Rights and Freedom in Indonesia,” *Lex Scientia Law Review* 7, no. 2 (November 2023): 959–94; Farida et al., “The State, Shia, and Exclusionary Policies in Makassar–Indonesia,” 452–82.

<sup>10</sup> Widiyanto, “Rapprochement between Sunnism and Shiism in Indonesia,” 31–58; Muhammad Fauzinudin Faiz, Khoiruddin Nasution, and Ali Sodikin, “Converging Religious Doctrine: Sunni-Shi‘i Marriages in Indonesia,” *Al-Ahwāl: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Islam* 17, no. 1 (June 2024): 123–46.

<sup>11</sup> Makin, “Homogenizing Indonesian Islam,” 1–32; Amal, “Anti-Shia Mass Mobilization in Indonesia’s Democracy,” 25–48; Zulkifli, “What Drives Anti-Shia Framing in Indonesia?,” 1–29.

social cooperation can provide spaces for managing differences.<sup>12</sup> In the context of Jepara, several previous studies have documented relatively cooperative social relations, practices of *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), and forms of grassroots moderation between Sunni and Shia communities.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, this literature leaves unresolved the question of how such conditions are experienced and negotiated by the Shia community as a minority, particularly when the differences being maintained involve *madhhab*-based *fiqh* practices and identities. In other words, previous studies have tended to explain conflict and exclusion on the one hand, or harmony and moderation on the other, while the mechanisms connecting the negotiation of differences, everyday accommodation, experiences of recognition, and the persistence of jurisprudential identities still require more systematic socio-legal elaboration.

This article addresses this gap by placing the experiences of Shia Muslims at the starting point for analyzing how *fiqh* differences are negotiated, accommodated, and experienced within a Sunni-majority environment in Jepara. This study does not seek to reconstruct Sunni and Shia perceptions symmetrically, let alone conclude that all Sunni Muslims in Jepara theologically accept Shia or recognition all Ja'fari legal positions. Instead, the analysis focuses on how the community experiences openness toward its identity, participation in socio-religious spaces, interpersonal relations, and recognition of its contributions. This article argues that intra-Muslim tolerance in Jepara is experienced by Shia Muslims not as the erasure of differences, but through processes of negotiation and accommodation that allow Shia identity and certain Ja'fari practices to remain visible while enabling participation in shared social life. In this article, this pattern is conceptualized as recognition without assimilation. Thus, this study aims to explain how Shia Muslims in Jepara negotiate *fiqh* differences, experience recognition without assimilation, and how these experiences provide an empirical basis for conceptualizing the *fiqh* of intra-muslim tolerance.

## Research Methodology

### *The Study Context*

This study was conducted in November 2025 in Bangsri District, Jepara Regency, Central Java Province, Indonesia (see Figure 1). Jepara Regency has a population of more than 1.2 million, with a religious composition dominated by Muslims (97.64%), followed by Christians (1.88%), Buddhists (0.35%), Catholics (0.09%), and Confucians (0.001%).<sup>14</sup> The Sunni Muslim majority in Jepara is predominantly affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and

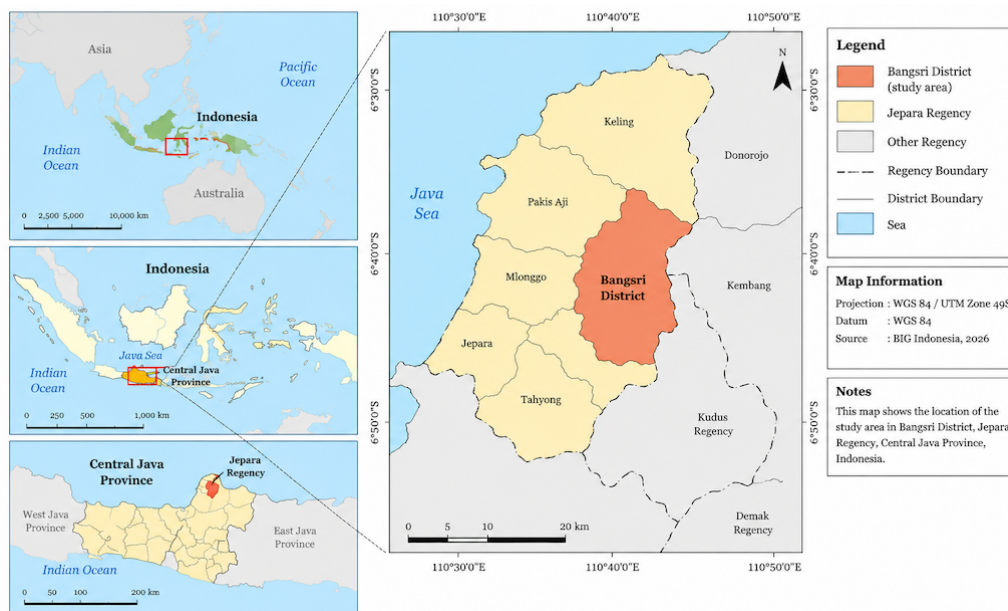
<sup>12</sup> Fany Nur Rahmadiana Hakim, "Re-Understanding Tolerance through Intrareligious Dialogue: The Discourse of Anti-Shi'ism in Indonesia," *Uloomuna* 25, no. 2 (December 2021): 350–72; Olav Elgvin, "For the Greater Good: Common Goals and Institutional Sunni–Shi'a Cooperation in Norway," *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 12, no. 1 (March 2023): 15–35.

<sup>13</sup> Moh Rosyid and Lina Kushidayati, "Negotiating Difference: Sunni–Shia Relations and Grassroots Religious Moderation in Jepara, Indonesia," *Al-Hikmah: Jurnal Agama dan Ilmu Pengetahuan* 23, no. 1 (May 2026): 168–79; Ahmad Saefudin, Abdul Munip, and Khoirotul Laila Ulfa, "Internalization of Multicultural-Based Islamic Education: Sunni-Shia Synergy in Banjaran Bangsri Village, Jepara," *Edukasia: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Islam* 16, no. 1 (March 2021): 37–56; Ahmad Saefudin and Fathur Rohman, "Building Social Harmony in the Jepara Shi'ite Minorities," *Journal of Contemporary Islam and Muslim Societies* 3, no. 2 (December 2019): 176–204.

<sup>14</sup> Ozi Setiadi, Umi Qodarsasi, and Wahyu Khoiruzzaman, "Religious Tolerance Model of Society in Jepara: Principles Analysis of Freedom, Acceptance, and Trust," *Jurnal Penelitian* 20, no. 1 (May 2023): 81–94.

the *Shāfi'ī* tradition, while the *Shia Ithnā 'Ashariyyah* community follows the *Ja'farī* tradition. Within this local context, differences in *madhhab* affiliation remain visible in religious identities and certain religious practices but do not necessarily develop into open sectarian conflict.<sup>15</sup> Initial research data indicate the existence of social spaces that, in the experience of members of the Shia community, allow them to openly express their religious identity and perform certain *Ja'farī* practices without having to conceal their identity through *taqiyyah* (concealment of religious identity).<sup>16</sup> Cross-*madhhab* interactions were also found in *pengajian* (Islamic study gatherings), *salat berjamaah* (congregational prayer), *ṣalāt al-jumu'ah* (Friday prayer), social activities, and *haul* (commemoration of a religious figure's death anniversary) held on 1 *Muḥarram* to commemorate Sheikh Muhammad Arif al-Adny, a figure from Yemen with historical connections to the Shia community in Jepara.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, Bangsri District was selected as the research site to examine how Shia Muslims as a minority group maintain their religious identity while experiencing and negotiating *madhhab*-based differences within a predominantly Sunni socio-religious environment.

**Figure 1**  
**Location of Study Area**



Source: Authors' elaboration, 2026.

### *Researcher Positionality and Data Collection*

The researchers' positions in this study are reflected through an insider–outsider perspective, taking into consideration how social position, proximity to informants, and access to the

<sup>15</sup> Rosyid and Kushidayati, "Negotiating Difference," 168–79; Saefudin and Rohman, "Building Social Harmony in the Jepara Shi'ite Minorities," 176–204.

<sup>16</sup> UAN, "Interview with a Shia Religious Leader in Jepara."

<sup>17</sup> "Fieldnotes from Observations of the Socio-Religious Practices of the Shia Community in Jepara," November 2025; Muh Khamdan, Wiharyani, and Nadiah Abidin, "Pancasila Values and Peace Verses as Resilience Against the Religious Extremism: Study on Nahdlatul Ulama and Shi'a," *Progresiva: Jurnal Pemikiran dan Pendidikan Islam* 13, no. 2 (June 2024): 181–200.

field may influence the processes of data production and interpretation.<sup>18</sup> The researchers were not members of the Muslim community in Jepara where the study was conducted, but had contextual proximity as members of the broader Muslim community and held a normative position that views Sunni and Shia as part of the internal diversity of Islam. This position intersects with The Amman Message, which recognizes the Sunni *madhhabs*, including the Shāfi‘ī *madhhab*, as well as the Ja‘farī *madhhab* within the Shia Ithnā ‘Ashariyyah tradition, as part of the diversity of Islamic traditions and restricts the practice of *takfīr* (excommunication) against their adherents.<sup>19</sup> This normative framework was not used as an assumption for determining the research findings but was explicitly acknowledged as part of the researchers’ reflexivity because it could influence how they understood and interpreted intra-Muslim differences. During the fieldwork, the researchers stayed at Pesantren Darut Taqrib, a *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) known to be affiliated with the Shia tradition in Jepara. This proximity through accommodation and field access enabled more intensive interaction with the Shia community and helped the researchers gain a contextual understanding of the informants’ experiences. At the same time, this position was recognized as a form of methodological proximity that required reflection so that the community’s narratives would not automatically be treated as representing the entirety of Sunni-Shia relations in Jepara.

**Table 1**  
**Categories of Informants**

| Code | Gender | Informant Category                                          | Interview Location        |
|------|--------|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| UAN  | Male   | Shia Religious Leader                                       | Home and <i>Pesantren</i> |
| UMT  | Male   | Shia Religious Leader                                       | Home                      |
| UMA  | Male   | Public Relations Officer, Ahlulbait Indonesia (ABI), Jepara | Home and <i>Pesantren</i> |
| UNA  | Male   | Treasurer, Ahlulbait Indonesia (ABI), Jepara                | Home                      |
| UKF  | Female | Member, Muslimah Ahlulbait Indonesia (ABI), Central Java    | <i>Pesantren</i>          |
| UN   | Female | Member, Muslimah Ahlulbait Indonesia (ABI), Jepara          | <i>Pesantren</i>          |
| UA   | Female | Member, Muslimah Ahlulbait Indonesia (ABI), Jepara          | <i>Pesantren</i>          |
| AS   | Male   | Academic in Jepara                                          | Home                      |

Source: Compiled by the authors from field interviews in Jepara (2025).

This study positioned in-depth interviews as the primary source of data for understanding how Shia Muslims experience and interpret *madhhab* differences, social acceptance, the visibility of religious identities and practices, participation, and everyday relationships within a predominantly Sunni environment. Interviews were conducted with eight informants selected through a combination of purposive and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling was used to select informants based on the relevance of their positions

<sup>18</sup> Sonya Corbin Dwyer and Jennifer L. Buckle, “The Space Between: On Being an Insider-Outsider in Qualitative Research,” *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 8, no. 1 (March 2009): 54–63.

<sup>19</sup> Mu’assasat Āl-al-Bait li-l-Fikr al-Islāmī, *The Amman Message (Risālat ‘Amman)*, First Electronic Edition, Mabda English Series 1 (Amman: Al Manhal ePublishing, 2013), 16.

and experiences to the research focus, while snowball sampling was employed to expand access through the community's social networks. At the initial stage, the researchers contacted AS, an academic with research experience on the Shia community in Jepara, to obtain contextual information about the research setting and facilitate field access. Through AS, the researchers were subsequently connected with UMA, a public relations officer of Ahlulbait Indonesia (ABI), Jepara, and an active member of the Shia Muslim community. UMA served as both a key informant and gatekeeper by providing information on the socio-religious context, facilitating access throughout the research process, and assisting the researchers in identifying and establishing contact with relevant informants (see Table 1).

The identification of informants was subsequently expanded through recommendations from previously interviewed informants using snowball sampling, allowing for variation in positions and experiences relevant to understanding religious practices, social interactions, and the experiences of Shia Muslims in negotiating *madhhab* differences in Jepara. The composition of informants was deliberately centered on Shia leaders, organizational representatives, and community members. Accordingly, this study does not seek to reconstruct Sunni and Shia perspectives symmetrically. Rather, it examines how Shia Muslims experience and interpret interpersonal acceptance, the visibility of their religious identities and practices, participation in shared social spaces, and recognition of their social contributions within a predominantly Sunni environment. Consequently, informants' accounts of their attitudes toward or relationships with Sunni Muslims are treated as part of Shia Muslims' experiences and perceptions, rather than as direct representations of the views of the broader Sunni community in Jepara. The interview data were complemented by focused observations of socio-religious practices and documentation of relevant socio-religious activities. Observation and documentation were used to contextualize and compare interview narratives with observable practices, particularly regarding how identity, ritual differences, and participation are expressed in shared social spaces. These sources were not used to infer the attitudes of the Sunni community as a whole or to claim doctrinal acceptance that was not directly demonstrated by the data.

### *Research Approach and Data Analysis*

This field research employed a socio-legal approach to examine the relationship between social experiences, religious practices, and the normative dimensions of Islamic law in intra-Muslim life. This approach enabled the study to operate at two interconnected levels of analysis. First, it sought to understand, from an emic perspective, how Shia informants themselves described their experiences of maintaining their religious identity, negotiating differences, and participating within a predominantly Sunni environment. Second, it interpreted the socio-legal significance of these experiences in relation to the plurality of *fiqh*. The data were analyzed thematically through repeated readings of interview transcripts, observation notes, and relevant documentation to identify patterns, interconnections, and variations in experiences relevant to the research questions. Based on this process, the data were organized into three interrelated analytical domains. First, the negotiation of *madhhab* differences and socio-religious practices, encompassing identity openness, communication, social interaction, the visibility of religious differences, and engagement in shared spaces.

Second, recognition, encompassing experiences of interpersonal acceptance, the ability to maintain and express religious identities and practices, participation in socio-religious spaces, and recognition of social contributions. Third, harmonization, understood not as the elimination of differences, but as the continuation of relationships, participation, and cooperation amid the persistence of *madhhab* distinctions. These three domains were not treated as causal stages that necessarily unfold in a linear sequence. Rather, they served as analytical categories for distinguishing the processes of negotiation, experiences of recognition, and the relational quality that emerged within everyday social life.

Axel Honneth's recognition theory was employed at the interpretive stage to systematically examine the patterns of recognition identified in the data, rather than as a normative framework that predetermined what should be found in the field. Honneth's three dimensions of recognition—love, rights, and solidarity—were used to distinguish the quality of informants' experiences in interpersonal relationships, their status and capacity to participate, and the recognition of their social contributions.<sup>20</sup> In the analytical operationalization of this study, love was examined through cross-*madhhab* intimacy and communal care; rights through religious visibility and religious participation; and solidarity through collective cooperation and social contribution. The category of rights was used in a limited sense to examine experiences related to religious visibility, social standing, and the capacity to participate in socio-religious spaces, rather than to directly assess the fulfillment of formal legal equality or the constitutional rights of the Shia community. Similarly, solidarity was not treated as synonymous with harmony or the absence of conflict. Instead, it was used as an analytical category for examining experiences of social recognition associated with participation and contributions to shared interests.

Accordingly, Honneth's theory functioned as an interpretive framework for examining social experiences rather than as a normative basis for determining the theological or jurisprudential legitimacy of a particular *madhhab*. At the subsequent stage, the socio-legal analysis brought these empirical patterns into dialogue with Islamic legal literature on the plurality of *fiqh*, *ikhtilāf* (jurisprudential disagreement), *ijtihad* (independent legal reasoning), *maṣlaḥah* (public good), *ukhūwah Islāmiyyah* (Islamic brotherhood), and the principle of non-exclusion. This dialogue was used to interpret the jurisprudential significance of accommodating *madhhab*-based differences. Through this engagement between empirical findings and the Islamic legal tradition, the article develops jurisprudential recognition as an analytical conceptualization of conditions in which differences in *madhhab*-based reasoning and practices are afforded space to exist, be expressed, and be accommodated without automatically becoming grounds for exclusion.

### Negotiating Sunni–Shia Differences in Everyday Socio-Religious Life

Sunni–Shia relations in Jepara take place within a context in which religious identity distinctions remain maintained in everyday social life.<sup>21</sup> In this study, Sunni Muslims are predominantly affiliated with the Shāfi'ī *madhhab*, whereas Shia Ithnā 'Ashariyyah follow the

<sup>20</sup> Axel Honneth, "Recognition or Redistribution?," *Theory, Culture & Society* 18, nos. 2–3 (June 2001): 43–55.

<sup>21</sup> "Fieldnotes from Observations of the Socio-Religious Practices of the Shia Community in Jepara."

Ja'fari *madhhab*.<sup>22</sup> The differences between these two traditions cannot be reduced entirely to matters of *fiqh*, as they also encompass theological, historical, and religious authority dimensions. However, the analysis in this section focuses specifically on jurisprudential differences and *madhhab*-based religious practices as manifested in ritual observance, expressions of religious identity, and the use of socio-religious spaces. This focus is important because, in some contexts, Sunni-Shia differences may intersect with contests over religious authority, the politicization of identity, and the construction of sectarian boundaries, although the history of relations between the two traditions also demonstrates various forms of rapprochement and efforts to establish spaces of encounter.<sup>23</sup> In the Indonesian context, these differences may even acquire exclusionary force when Shia are framed not only as a group considered theologically deviant but also as a threat to the social order of the Muslim majority.<sup>24</sup> Jepara presents a different local configuration. Shia community informants described how they continue to maintain *madhhab*-based distinctions, but these distinctions are not necessarily experienced as barriers to interaction and participation in shared socio-religious life.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, the analytical question in this section is not simply what distinguishes Sunni and Shia, but rather why and how these differences are negotiated so that they do not automatically develop into exclusionary social boundaries.

One recurring pattern in the informants' narratives was the openness of religious identity accompanied by communication and social interaction across *madhhab* boundaries. UMT explained that the Sunni-Shia relations he perceived as relatively harmonious did not emerge automatically. Rather, they were produced and maintained through communication, openness toward others, *ṣilat al-raḥim* (maintaining social and kinship ties), and social interaction, which, in his view, could reduce *sū' al-ẓann* (negative prejudice) toward Shia Muslims. He stated:<sup>26</sup>

*"The tolerance that exists in Jepara, particularly in Sunni-Shia relations, has certainly developed through a process. We build communication with one another and cultivate an attitude of openness toward others. The harmonization that exists today reflects mutual respect. Shia followers in Jepara open themselves to communication so that others can get to know us. Through openness and social interaction, sū' al-ẓann toward followers of the Shia madhhab can be avoided. Through maintaining social ties with one another and interacting with good character, harmonization can be established properly."*

This explanation is important because it demonstrates that openness is not merely a consequence of the absence of conflict but also a relational strategy through which different

<sup>22</sup> See: Sainun Sainun, Muhammad Lutfi Hakim, and Arif Sugitanata, "From Religious Understanding to Tradition: The Role of Tuan Gurus in the Fidyah Practice within the Sasak Muslim Community," *JURIS (Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah)* 23, no. 2 (December 2024): 337–49; Abdul Helim et al., "Fiqh Reference Patterns of the Majelis Taklim in Central Kalimantan," *El-Mashlahab* 14, no. 1 (June 2024): 169–88; Zulkifli, *The Struggle of the Shi'is in Indonesia*, 95–107.

<sup>23</sup> Widiyanto, "Rapprochement between Sunnism and Shiism in Indonesia," 31–58; Oliver Scharbrodt, "A Minority within a Minority?: The Complexity and Multilocality of Transnational Twelver Shia Networks in Britain," *Contemporary Islam* 13, no. 3 (October 2019): 287–305.

<sup>24</sup> Zulkifli, "What Drives Anti-Shia Framing in Indonesia?," 1–29; Makin, "Homogenizing Indonesian Islam," 1–32.

<sup>25</sup> UNA, "Interview with the Treasurer of Ahlulbait Indonesia (ABI), Jepara."

<sup>26</sup> UMT, "Interview with a Shia Religious Leader in Jepara," November 2025.

identities can become known and understood in everyday social interactions. The phrase “so that others can get to know us” indicates that social familiarity constitutes part of the negotiation process: Shia identity is not concealed but introduced through communication and social relationships, thereby allowing prejudice to be managed. This finding is consistent with previous research showing that the social consequences of Sunni-Shia differences are shaped not solely by doctrinal substance but also by social openness, identity framing, and the dynamics of majority-minority relations.<sup>27</sup>

This negotiation is further evident in how members of the Shia community maintain their jurisprudential visibility within a predominantly Sunni social environment. Interview data indicate that informants did not describe their shared social life as requiring them to conceal their Shia identity or abandon ritual practices that distinguish the Ja‘farī tradition. For example, UAN associated the tolerance he experienced in Jepara with the possibility of performing prayer according to the Ja‘farī tradition without folding his arms and without feeling compelled to practice *taqiyyah*.<sup>28</sup> A female informant likewise explained that Shia identity is not concealed in social activities and can be discussed openly through dialogue with other Muslims.<sup>29</sup> These data do not demonstrate that all Sunni Muslims in Jepara provide theological validation of Shia or accept all Ja‘farī jurisprudential positions. Nevertheless, Shia Muslims experience a social space in which their identity and some *madhhab*-based practices can remain visible without automatically resulting in exclusion. In this context, negotiation does not mean the elimination of distinctions; rather, it refers to the capacity to maintain differences while continuing to participate in shared social relations.

A similar pattern can be observed in cross-*madhhab* interpersonal and family relationships. UAN described Sunni-Shia collaboration in socio-religious activities while also indicating that cross-*madhhab* encounters have extended into the family sphere. He stated: “In Jepara, both Sunni and Shia Muslims collaborate with one another in socio-religious activities, and so far, there have been no problems. The Shia community in Jepara is very open, both toward Sunni Muslims and other religious groups. In fact, here, within the same household and family, there are husbands and wives who are Sunni and Shia, respectively, and this does not pose a problem here.”<sup>30</sup> This testimony does not indicate the disappearance of Sunni-Shia differences; rather, it demonstrates that *madhhab* boundaries do not necessarily coincide with interpersonal boundaries. Religious affiliation can be maintained while family relationships continue. The findings of this study resonate with the research of Faiz, Nasution, and Sodikin on Sunni-Shia marriages in Indonesia, which shows that family actors can navigate doctrinal and social complexities without treating sectarian differences as an automatic reason to sever relationships.<sup>31</sup> In the context of Jepara, therefore, negotiation occurs not through the fusion of identities, but through the ability to distinguish between the persistence of *madhhab* affiliation and the continuity of interpersonal relationships.

<sup>27</sup> Saefudin and Rohman, “Building Social Harmony in the Jepara Shi‘ite Minorities,” 176–204; Saefudin, Munip, and Ulfa, “Internalization of Multicultural-Based Islamic Education,” 37–56.

<sup>28</sup> UAN, “Interview with a Shia Religious Leader in Jepara.”

<sup>29</sup> UN, “Interview with a Member of Muslimah Ahlulbait Indonesia (ABI), Jepara,” November 2025.

<sup>30</sup> UAN, “Interview with a Shia Religious Leader in Jepara.”

<sup>31</sup> Faiz, Nasution, and Sodikin, “Converging Religious Doctrine,” 123–46.

Negotiation of differences also takes place through the use of shared socio-religious spaces. Interview findings documented the involvement of the Shia community in mosques and various religious activities, while field observations showed cross-*madhhab* interaction during congregational prayers, *ṣalāt al-jumu'ah*, and *tahlilan* (a ceremony to commemorate a deceased person).<sup>32</sup> UAN described these practices as follows: “In Jepara, both Sunni and Shia Muslims interact with one another as a family, without considering whether someone is affiliated with the Shia or Sunni tradition. Here, for example, when someone dies, the person leading the tahlilan may be Shia while the congregation is Sunni, and vice versa, with a Sunni person leading and Shia Muslims participating in the congregation.”<sup>33</sup> This pattern is consistent with several previous studies in Jepara showing that *tahlilan*, *maulid* (commemoration of the Prophet Muhammad’s birthday), grave visitation, and other socio-religious activities provide spaces of encounter between the Shia minority and the Sunni majority.<sup>34</sup> The findings of this study indicate that shared spaces and practices provide arenas in which *madhhab* boundaries are negotiated in practice. Actors can enter the same spaces, engage in socio-religious relations, and, in some contexts, share roles without first abandoning their respective jurisprudential affiliations. Accordingly, the use of shared spaces is more appropriately understood as a form of everyday accommodation of differences than as evidence of doctrinal convergence.

Overall, the findings in this section demonstrate that Sunni-Shia differences in Jepara are not merely a matter of identity classification or doctrine, but also concern how the social consequences of jurisprudential differences and religious practices are managed in everyday life.<sup>35</sup> The experiences of Shia informants show that certain Ja‘farī practices can remain visible while communication, family relationships, communal activities, and the use of shared socio-religious spaces continue to take place.<sup>36</sup> This interpretation distinguishes the Jepara experience from several other contexts in Indonesia, where Shia identity has been framed as deviant or threatening and subsequently used to justify restrictions on the organizations, activities, or public spaces of the Shia community.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, these findings extend previous research on Sunni-Shia harmony in Jepara by demonstrating the mechanisms that make the maintenance of such conditions possible.<sup>38</sup> Accordingly, the contribution of this section is not merely to reaffirm that Sunni-Shia relations in Jepara are “harmonious,” but to demonstrate that, from the perspective of the Shia minority, differences can be maintained because they are negotiated through everyday mechanisms that enable them to remain different, remain visible, and remain engaged. These findings provide the basis for the following section, which analyzes whether these processes of negotiation and

<sup>32</sup> “Fieldnotes from Observations of the Socio-Religious Practices of the Shia Community in Jepara.”

<sup>33</sup> UAN, “Interview with a Shia Religious Leader in Jepara.”

<sup>34</sup> Saefudin and Rohman, “Building Social Harmony in the Jepara Shi‘ite Minorities,” 176–204; Saefudin, Munip, and Ulfa, “Internalization of Multicultural-Based Islamic Education,” 37–56.

<sup>35</sup> Yayuk Whindari et al., “Negotiating Islamic Law and Religious Tolerance in Mixed-Marriage Families in South Korea,” *De Jure: Jurnal Hukum dan Syar‘iah* 17, no. 2 (December 2025): 574–98.

<sup>36</sup> UAN, “Interview with a Shia Religious Leader in Jepara.”

<sup>37</sup> Zulkifli, “What Drives Anti-Shia Framing in Indonesia?,” 1–29; Amal, “Anti-Shia Mass Mobilization in Indonesia’s Democracy,” 25–48.

<sup>38</sup> Saefudin and Rohman, “Building Social Harmony in the Jepara Shi‘ite Minorities,” 176–204; Saefudin, Munip, and Ulfa, “Internalization of Multicultural-Based Islamic Education,” 37–56.

accommodation are also experienced as forms of recognition through the domains of love, rights, and solidarity.

**Experiencing Recognition: Love, Rights, and Solidarity among Shia Muslims**

The negotiation of differences discussed in the previous section provides the relational context for the experiences of recognition among Shia Muslims in Jepara. Such recognition does not emerge in a single form; rather, it can be identified through three distinct yet interconnected social domains: interpersonal intimacy and care, religious visibility and participation, and cooperation and appreciation of social contributions.<sup>39</sup> Interview data reveal experiences of maintaining cross-*madhhab* family relationships and communal care, openly displaying Shia identity and practicing certain Jaʿfarī rituals, participating in religious spaces and dialogue, and engaging in *gotong royong*, philanthropy, and the provision of religious facilities for the benefit of the broader community. These patterns are analyzed through Axel Honneth’s three domains of recognition—love, rights, and solidarity—which respectively relate to acceptance within affective relationships, respect for an individual’s status and capacity to act, and social appreciation of an individual’s qualities and contributions.<sup>40</sup> In this study, these three domains are operationalized from the perspective of Shia minority experiences: love through cross-*madhhab* intimacy and communal care; rights through religious visibility and religious participation; and solidarity through collective cooperation and social contribution. This framework does not assume that all Sunni Muslims in Jepara provide uniform recognition to the Shia community. Rather, it is used to explain how Shia

**Table 2**  
**Typology of Experienced Recognition among Shia Muslims in Jepara**

| Dimension  | Typology                | Form of Experienced Recognition                                                                                    |
|------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Love       | Cross-Madhbab Intimacy  | Interpersonal acceptance and maintenance of intimate and kinship relations without erasing <i>madhhab</i> identity |
|            | Communal Care           | Affective care, social presence, and support across <i>madhhab</i> boundaries                                      |
| Rights     | Religious Visibility    | Experienced capacity to maintain and openly express Jaʿfarī identity and religious practices                       |
|            | Religious Participation | Experienced access to and participation in shared religious, educational, and dialogical spaces                    |
| Solidarity | Collective Cooperation  | Experience of social belonging through participation in collective activities across <i>madhhab</i> boundaries     |
|            | Social Contribution     | Social esteem associated with contributions to shared social and religious interests                               |

Source: Authors’ analysis of field data, 2025.

Muslims experience particular relational qualities after *madhhab* differences have been negotiated in everyday life. Accordingly, this analysis extends previous studies that have positioned openness in interaction and social intimacy as the basis of Sunni-Shia harmony in

<sup>39</sup> Renante D. Pilapil, “Struggling over Recognition: Honneth, Political Resistance, and Violence,” *Frontiers in Sociology* 10 (January 2026): 1693721.

<sup>40</sup> Honneth, “Recognition or Redistribution?,” 43–55.

Jepara by demonstrating forms of recognition that, from the perspective of the Shia community, give substantive meaning to shared life amid the persistence of differences.<sup>41</sup>

### *Recognition through Love: Cross-Madhab Intimacy and Communal Care*

In Honneth's recognition theory, love refers to a form of recognition rooted in primary relationships and affective bonds, particularly within families, friendships, and interpersonal relationships that support an individual's sense of security and self-confidence in relating to others.<sup>42</sup> In this study, the concept of love is not used to generalize the existence of uniform emotional closeness between all Sunni and Shia Muslims in Jepara. Rather, it is used in a more limited sense to examine the experiences of Shia Muslims when *madhab* differences do not undermine the continuity of interpersonal relationships and support in situations of vulnerability. Two prominent patterns emerged from the field data. First, cross-*madhab* intimacy, which is evident in the continuity of family relationships and personal closeness even when the parties maintain different *madhab* affiliations. Second, communal care, which is manifested through attention, presence, and social support when community members experience death or misfortune. Within this framework, recognition in the domain of love goes beyond merely acknowledging the existence of those who are different; it refers to the experience that *madhab* differences do not preclude the possibility of maintaining close and supportive relationships.

Cross-*madhab* intimacy is most clearly evident in narratives concerning families whose members maintain different *madhab* affiliations. UAN explained that there are families in Jepara, including married couples, whose members are affiliated with Sunni and Shia traditions while continuing to maintain family relationships.<sup>43</sup> These data do not indicate that Sunni-Shia differences have lost their doctrinal significance or that either party must merge into the identity of the other. Rather, their analytical significance lies in the coexistence of persistent *madhab* distinctions and the continuity of interpersonal bonds.<sup>44</sup> In the informants' experiences, therefore, *madhab* boundaries do not necessarily become relational boundaries. This finding resonates with research on Sunni-Shia marriages in Indonesia, which shows that family actors can navigate doctrinal and social complexities without necessarily treating sectarian differences as a reason to sever relationships.<sup>45</sup> The finding also adds a further dimension to previous studies in Jepara that have associated openness in interaction and closeness between the Shia *pesantren* environment and the surrounding

<sup>41</sup> Saefudin and Rohman, "Building Social Harmony in the Jepara Shi'ite Minorities," 176–204; Saefudin, Munip, and Ulfa, "Internalization of Multicultural-Based Islamic Education," 37–56.

<sup>42</sup> Honneth, "Recognition or Redistribution?," 43–55.

<sup>43</sup> UAN, "Interview with a Shia Religious Leader in Jepara."

<sup>44</sup> Moh Syaeful Bahar et al., "Managing Sunni-Shia Tensions: Socio-Political and Cultural Peacebuilding in Sādah Bā 'Alawiyyah, Indonesia," *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeum* 13, no. 3 (September 2025): 2195–222; Khoirul Faizin et al., "Islamic Political Thought without Sovereignty: Sunni-Shia Coexistence, Authority, and Pancasila in Bondowoso, Indonesia," *Ulumuna* 30, no. 1 (July 2026): 220–45.

<sup>45</sup> Faiz, Nasution, and Sodikin, "Converging Religious Doctrine," 123–46; Sara Rizvi Jafree, "'As One Grows Older, the Hidden Meaning and Importance of Being a Practicing Shia Becomes Clearer': Voices of Shia Women Married to Sunni Men," *SN Social Sciences* 4, no. 2 (February 2024): 34.

community with reduced stigma toward the Shia community.<sup>46</sup> Read through Honneth's framework, the significance of such relationships lies not in the disappearance of differences, but in the experience that different identities do not diminish a person's acceptance within primary relationships.

Communal care becomes evident when cross-*madhhab* relationships are expressed through attention and presence when individuals or families face social vulnerability, particularly in situations of death and misfortune. Interview data documented concern for community members experiencing misfortune, as well as cross-*madhhab* involvement in *tablilan* when a community member dies. UAN explained that, in his experience, a Shia Muslim may lead a *tablilan* gathering attended by members of the Sunni community. Conversely, a Sunni Muslim may lead a *tablilan* gathering attended by members of the Shia community.<sup>47</sup> This practice is consistent with previous studies that have identified *tablilan*, *maulid*, and grave visitation as spaces of encounter between the Shia minority and the surrounding Sunni community in Jepara.<sup>48</sup> However, the data from this study allow for a more specific interpretation. *Tablilan* in the context of death is not merely a space for ritual encounter, but also a medium through which communal presence and support are expressed when families are in vulnerable situations. Therefore, communal care is more appropriately understood as affective recognition that crosses *madhhab* boundaries in situations of vulnerability, rather than as evidence of theological agreement or ritual convergence between Sunni and Shia Muslims.

### *Recognition through Rights: Religious Visibility and Religious Participation*

Unlike love, which operates primarily through primary relationships, the domain of rights in Honneth's theory concerns the recognition of a person as a subject who possesses social standing, claims to respect, and the capacity to participate in shared social life.<sup>49</sup> In this study, rights is used in a limited sense as an analytical category for understanding how Shia Muslims experience the ability to maintain their identity, practice their religion, and participate in various socio-religious spaces. Because the research data were not intended to measure the fulfillment of constitutional rights or formal legal equality, rights-based recognition here is not understood as evidence that all rights of the Shia community have been institutionally guaranteed or fulfilled. Two more specific empirical patterns can be identified: religious visibility and religious participation. Informants reported the ability to openly display their Shia identity and perform certain Ja'fari practices. Meanwhile, other data also describe the use of shared places of worship, involvement as *imāms* (prayer leader) and *khatibs* (Friday sermon preacher), participation in *haul* activities, and engagement in dialogue forums through the Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama (FKUB, Interreligious Harmony Forum) and Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI, Indonesian Ulema Council).<sup>50</sup> The distinction between formal rights

<sup>46</sup> Saefudin and Rohman, "Building Social Harmony in the Jepara Shi'ite Minorities," 176–204; Saefudin, Munip, and Ulfa, "Internalization of Multicultural-Based Islamic Education," 37–56.

<sup>47</sup> UAN, "Interview with a Shia Religious Leader in Jepara."

<sup>48</sup> Saefudin and Rohman, "Building Social Harmony in the Jepara Shi'ite Minorities," 176–204; Saefudin, Munip, and Ulfa, "Internalization of Multicultural-Based Islamic Education," 37–56.

<sup>49</sup> Honneth, "Recognition or Redistribution?," 43–55.

<sup>50</sup> AS, "Interview with an Academic in Jepara," November 2025.

and the social standing and participation experienced in practice is important because studies of religious minorities in Indonesia show that formal legal guarantees do not always correspond directly to social recognition and effective access in everyday life.<sup>51</sup>

Religious visibility is first evident in the informants' experiences of not having to continually conceal their Shia identity while continuing to perform ritual practices that mark their Ja'fari affiliation. UAN associated the tolerance he experienced in Jepara with the possibility of openly identifying as Shia: "*Why is Jepara very tolerant? Because people understand one another despite their differences. Shia Muslims in Jepara should not practice taqiyyah. Here, praying without folding the arms is not a problem. This shows that differences in fiqh are accepted and demonstrates tolerance in the practice of worship.*"<sup>52</sup> A female member of the Shia community likewise stated that her Shia identity is not concealed in social activities and that such openness creates opportunities for conversations with other Muslim women about Shia identity and practices.<sup>53</sup> These two testimonies allow for a distinction between the ability to be known and to appear openly as Shia (identity visibility) and the ability to display ritual practices associated with the Ja'fari tradition (jurisprudential visibility). As emphasized in the previous section, these data do not demonstrate that the entire Sunni community in Jepara provides theological validation of Shia or jurisprudential legitimacy to all Ja'fari positions. Their significance is more limited but nevertheless important: Shia Muslims experience a social space in which their identity and certain ritual differences can be displayed without having to be continually concealed. Within the framework of rights-based recognition, this experience indicates the presence of experienced religious standing—an experience of having the standing to appear as a distinct religious subject—which constitutes a social prerequisite for participation without requiring doctrinal agreement. The significance of this experience becomes even more apparent when compared with other contexts in Indonesia in which Shia communities have faced stigmatization, restrictions on public space, and exclusionary policies.<sup>54</sup>

Religious participation takes the analysis a step further because recognition does not stop at the ability to be visible; it also concerns the experience of gaining access to and performing roles within shared socio-religious spaces. UNA reported that Sunni and Shia Muslims use the same mosque for *ṣalāt al-jumu'ah* and that the roles of *imām* and *khaṭīb* can be performed alternately. He stated: "*The community here is very diverse, so in the mosque here, during Friday prayers, Shia and Sunni Muslims pray together, including serving as the imām and khaṭīb for Friday prayers. Here, they take turns, both Sunni and Shia.*"<sup>55</sup> This account is supported by the author's observation of the performance of *ṣalāt al-jumu'ah* at one of the mosques in Jepara.<sup>56</sup> Beyond ritual practices, interview data also indicate experiences of acceptance among

<sup>51</sup> Zuly Qodir and Robert W. Hefner, "Minority, Cultural Citizenship, and Indonesian Islam: Challenges in a Pluralistic Society," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 14, no. 2 (2024): 409–39; Robert W. Hefner, "Which Islam? Whose Shariah? Islamisation and Citizen Recognition in Contemporary Indonesia," *Journal of Religion and Political Practice* 4, no. 3 (September 2018): 278–96.

<sup>52</sup> UAN, "Interview with a Shia Religious Leader in Jepara."

<sup>53</sup> UA, "Interview with a Member of Muslimah Ahlulbait Indonesia (ABI), Jepara," November 2025.

<sup>54</sup> Makin, "Homogenizing Indonesian Islam," 1–32; Farida et al., "The State, Shia, and Exclusionary Policies in Makassar–Indonesia," 452–82.

<sup>55</sup> UNA, "Interview with the Treasurer of Ahlulbait Indonesia (ABI), Jepara."

<sup>56</sup> "Fieldnotes from Observations of the Socio-Religious Practices of the Shia Community in Jepara."

members of the Shia community in educational settings, involvement in dialogue spaces through the FKUB and MUI, and cross-*madhhab* participation in *haul* activities.<sup>57</sup> These findings show that participation is not limited to the freedom to perform rituals internally, but also encompasses the experience of entering shared spaces, performing roles, engaging in dialogue, and participating in the management of socio-religious life. This resonates with studies of Sunni–Shia cooperation in other contexts, which show that shared interests and institutional spaces can facilitate cross-sectarian cooperation without requiring the erasure of each group’s identity.<sup>58</sup> Accordingly, rights-based recognition in this study is most appropriately understood as experienced religious standing and participation, rather than as a claim that formal legal equality between Sunni and Shia communities has been fully achieved.

### *Recognition through Solidarity: Collective Cooperation and Social Contribution*

The third dimension, solidarity, shifts the analysis from interpersonal acceptance and the standing to participate toward social esteem, namely, the experience that individuals’ and groups’ capacities and contributions are valued within shared social life.<sup>59</sup> The research data show that Shia informants not only described themselves as actors who can be present in social spaces, but also as actors involved in *gotong royong*, *rewang* (mutual assistance in communal events), religious activities, philanthropy, mosque construction, and social services. Two patterns can be distinguished from these data. First, collective cooperation, in which informants described the involvement of Sunni and Shia Muslims in activities serving communal interests. Second, social contribution, in which members of the Shia community contribute labor, resources, or philanthropic activities whose benefits are not limited to their own *madhhab* community. This distinction is important because solidarity within Honneth’s framework is not synonymous with the mere absence of hostility or coexistence within the same geographical area. Rather, this domain requires the experience that a subject’s capacities and contributions have value within a shared horizon of common interests.

Collective cooperation is most clearly evident in narratives concerning *gotong royong* and *rewang*. UAN described these practices as a routine part of local social life: “*In Jepara society, both Shia and Sunni Muslims engage in gotong royong with one another because people here strongly emphasize unity and family ties. In gotong royong activities, such as repairing roads, building mosques, and organizing religious events, we work together, and this has become something ordinary here.*”<sup>60</sup> UKF provided a more direct account of everyday practices through the involvement of Shia and Sunni women in *rewang* during funerals or weddings, as well as in social service activities.<sup>61</sup> These data show that cross-*madhhab* cooperation does not occur only in formal forums, but also through communal practices that require labor, time, and repeated presence. From the informants’ perspective, this pattern can be understood as cooperative belonging: a sense of

<sup>57</sup> UA, “Interview with a Member of Muslimah Ahlulbait Indonesia (ABI), Jepara”; AS, “Interview with an Academic in Jepara.”

<sup>58</sup> Elgvin, “For the Greater Good,” 15–35; Widiyanto, “Rapprochement between Sunnism and Shiism in Indonesia,” 31–58.

<sup>59</sup> Honneth, “Recognition or Redistribution?,” 43–55.

<sup>60</sup> UAN, “Interview with a Shia Religious Leader in Jepara.”

<sup>61</sup> UKF, “Interview with a Member of Ahlulbait Indonesia (ABI), Central Java,” November 2025.

belonging to collective life is formed through involvement in shared work and common interests, rather than through uniformity of *madhhab* affiliation. This interpretation complements previous research in Jepara that has positioned openness in interaction and closeness between the Shia community and its surrounding social environment as important elements in the formation of harmony.<sup>62</sup>

Social contribution is more specifically evident through philanthropic practices and contributions to shared socio-religious facilities. UKF reported a “Jumat Berbagi” activity involving the distribution of food without distinguishing recipients based on Sunni or Shia affiliation, as well as participation in *rewang*, funeral activities, weddings, and social service activities together with Sunni women. She stated: “*We cooperate with Muslim women from the Sunni community, such as in the ‘Jumat Berbagi’ activity. We also cooperate in socio-religious activities, such as when someone dies, at weddings, and in social service activities.*”<sup>63</sup> In addition, members of the Shia community were reported to have contributed to the construction of a mosque whose congregation is predominantly Sunni through material assistance, labor, and joint work.<sup>64</sup> Whereas collective cooperation emphasizes doing things together, social contribution highlights the ability of a minority group to contribute something of value to interests that extend beyond its own community. Within Honneth’s framework, this pattern approximates social esteem, whereby the presence of a minority group is not merely tolerated, but its capacities and contributions are experienced as having value within shared social life.<sup>65</sup> This claim should nevertheless be limited to the experiences reported by the informants; the research data do not permit generalization about how the Sunni community as a whole evaluates the contributions of the Shia community. However, it is precisely at the level of experience that the findings from Jepara differ from other contexts in Indonesia, where Shia identity has more often emerged in relations characterized by marginalization, stigmatization, and exclusionary politics.<sup>66</sup>

Overall, the recognition experienced by Shia Muslims in Jepara is multidimensional and mutually reinforcing, but it should not necessarily be understood as a series of stages unfolding linearly. Cross-*madhhab* intimacy and communal care show that *madhhab* differences do not always sever interpersonal closeness and care; religious visibility and religious participation demonstrate the experience of remaining visible as Shia, maintaining certain Jaʿfarī practices, and participating in socio-religious spaces; while collective cooperation and social contribution demonstrate the experience of being part of collective work and contributing to broader interests. These findings are consistent with previous research on Sunni–Shia openness and harmony in Jepara,<sup>67</sup> but they provide a more specific analytical explanation from the position of the Shia minority. Harmony acquires substantive

<sup>62</sup> Saefudin and Rohman, “Building Social Harmony in the Jepara Shiʿite Minorities,” 176–204; Saefudin, Munip, and Ulfa, “Internalization of Multicultural-Based Islamic Education,” 37–56.

<sup>63</sup> UKF, “Interview with a Member of Ahlulbait Indonesia (ABI), Central Java.”

<sup>64</sup> UAN, “Interview with a Shia Religious Leader in Jepara.”

<sup>65</sup> Honneth, “Recognition or Redistribution?,” 43–55.

<sup>66</sup> Makin, “Homogenizing Indonesian Islam,” 1–32; Anik Farida et al., “The Politics of Exclusion Based on Religious Identity (Shiah Case in Indonesia),” in *Managing Disruption and Developing Resilience for a Better Southeast Asia*, ed. Nawawi et al. (Singapore: Springer Nature, 2026), 509–22.

<sup>67</sup> Saefudin and Rohman, “Building Social Harmony in the Jepara Shiʿite Minorities,” 176–204; Saefudin, Munip, and Ulfa, “Internalization of Multicultural-Based Islamic Education,” 37–56.

meaning when Shia Muslims experience being accepted in interpersonal relationships, being able to remain visible and participate, and being socially valued. Accordingly, Honneth's theory is not used to claim that recognition in Jepara is complete or uniformly extended by the entire Sunni community, but rather to distinguish the relational qualities that emerge in the experiences of Shia Muslims. The findings of this study contrast with several previous studies outside Jepara, where Sunni–Shia rapprochement may coexist with misunderstanding, politicization, and sectarian contestation.<sup>68</sup>

### **From Recognition to Harmonization: Harmonization without Homogenization**

The recognition experienced by the Shia Muslim community in Jepara is intertwined with the continuity of socio-religious relations amid the persistence of differences. As demonstrated in the preceding sections, these experiences are manifested through interpersonal closeness and care, the visibility of religious identity and participation, as well as cooperation and appreciation of social contributions. The relational consequences of these experiences are conceptualized as harmonization, but this term does not refer to a condition free from tension or to the disappearance of Sunni–Shia differences. Rather, harmonization is understood in a more limited sense as the process of maintaining socio-religious relations, participation, and cooperation while differences in identity, jurisprudence, and religious practices remain present. Analytically, recognition and harmonization therefore constitute two related but non-identical layers. Recognition explains the relational qualities experienced by informants when they can remain accepted, visible, able to participate, and valued, whereas harmonization refers to the continuity of relationships made possible when these differences are not automatically converted into exclusionary boundaries. This distinction is important because the literature on Sunni–Shia relations demonstrates diverse social configurations, ranging from rapprochement and cooperation to the politicization of identity and exclusion.<sup>69</sup> Accordingly, harmonization in this article is not a category that presupposes consensus, but rather a relational concept for explaining how shared social life can be maintained amid differences that remain unresolved at the doctrinal level.

From the perspective of Shia Muslims, such harmonization is not a condition that emerges automatically simply because Sunni and Shia Muslims inhabit the same social space. UMT described it as a process that requires openness, communication, interaction, and *ṣilat al-raḥim*.<sup>70</sup> This account demonstrates harmonization as a relational achievement that is continuously produced and maintained through everyday practices, rather than as a social characteristic that can simply be assumed to be inherent in Jepara society. Openness allows Shia identity to be present and become known in everyday interactions, while communication and *ṣilat al-raḥim* are understood by the informants as mechanisms for managing *su' al-ḥal* that may arise toward that identity. This finding is consistent with research that positions

<sup>68</sup> Widiyanto, “Rapprochement between Sunnism and Shiism in Indonesia,” 31–58; Amal, “Anti-Shia Mass Mobilization in Indonesia’s Democracy,” 25–48.

<sup>69</sup> Widiyanto, “Rapprochement between Sunnism and Shiism in Indonesia,” 31–58; Corboz, “Sunni–Shi’a Relations in Europe,” 1–14; Said Agil Siradj, “The Sunni–Shi’ah Conflict and the Search for Peace in Indonesia,” *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 7, no. 1 (June 2013): 145–64.

<sup>70</sup> UMT, “Interview with a Shia Religious Leader in Jepara.”

interpersonal communication as an important mechanism for managing relations across religious groups.<sup>71</sup> An academic in Jepara likewise associated social harmony with the intensity of interaction and the ability of community members to separate differences in religious belief from everyday social relationships.<sup>72</sup> These data demonstrate that differences can remain religiously significant without necessarily determining the entire pattern of social relationships. Therefore, communication and interaction do not function to erase *madhhab* boundaries; rather, they manage the social consequences of those boundaries so that they do not invariably develop into the disruption or severing of relationships.

It is precisely the persistence of these differences that explains why harmonization in Jepara is more appropriately understood as harmonization without homogenization. The research data show that Shia Muslims continue to identify with the Ja‘fari tradition and maintain a number of religious practices that distinguish them from the Sunni community, while family relationships, the use of shared socio-religious spaces, dialogue, and cross-*madhhab* cooperation continue to take place.<sup>73</sup> Accordingly, harmonization does not require theological convergence, the standardization of ritual practices, or the weakening of *madhhab* identity. Rather, it refers to the capacity to maintain relationships and participation while these distinctions remain visible. The findings of this study resonate with those of Widiyanto, who demonstrates that Sunni-Shia rapprochement in Indonesia can coexist with persistent doctrinal differences, misunderstanding, the politicization of identity, and geopolitical influences.<sup>74</sup> Conversely, Al Makin’s study of persecution against Shia demonstrates how pressures toward the homogenization of religious identity can transform differences into grounds for exclusion.<sup>75</sup> The contrast with these previous studies helps explain the significance of the Jepara case: not because Sunni-Shia boundaries have disappeared, but because the social function of these boundaries is not always exclusionary. From the perspective of Shia Muslims, *madhhab* boundaries continue to mark differences in identity and practice, but they do not always become boundaries of exclusion that prevent interpersonal closeness, religious visibility, participation, or cooperation. In this sense, recognition without assimilation acquires empirical significance: recognition allows differences to remain present without requiring those who are different to become the same.

This harmonization without homogenization takes material form through repeated practices of cooperation. UAN described cross-*madhhab* involvement in road repairs, mosque construction, and religious activities,<sup>76</sup> while UKF reported cooperation between Shia and Sunni women in *rewang*, social service activities, and the “Jumat Berbagi” initiative, in which recipients were not distinguished according to *madhhab* affiliation.<sup>77</sup> Field data also documented the material and labor contributions of Shia community members to the construction and maintenance of religious facilities used for the benefit of the broader

<sup>71</sup> Hakim, “Re-Understanding Tolerance through Intrareligious Dialogue,” 350–72.

<sup>72</sup> AS, “Interview with an Academic in Jepara.”

<sup>73</sup> UAN, “Interview with a Shia Religious Leader in Jepara”; UNA, “Interview with the Treasurer of Ahlulbait Indonesia (ABI), Jepara.”

<sup>74</sup> Widiyanto, “Rapprochement between Sunnism and Shiism in Indonesia,” 31–58.

<sup>75</sup> Makin, “Homogenizing Indonesian Islam,” 1–32.

<sup>76</sup> UAN, “Interview with a Shia Religious Leader in Jepara.”

<sup>77</sup> UKF, “Interview with a Member of Ahlulbait Indonesia (ABI), Central Java.”

community.<sup>78</sup> These practices demonstrate that harmonization does not depend solely on an abstract attitude of “mutual respect,” but is reproduced through social interdependence, in which *madhhab* differences are situated within networks of collective work, reciprocal assistance, and contributions to communal interests. This finding is consistent with Elgvin’s study of Sunni–Shia institutional cooperation in Norway, which demonstrates that shared goals can provide a basis for cross-sectarian cooperation without requiring the erasure of each group’s identity.<sup>79</sup> In this context, *ukhūwah Islāmiyyah* can be used cautiously as a normative interpretive category for understanding this orientation toward cooperation, but not as an emic category assumed to be used uniformly by all informants. Accordingly, what sustains harmonization is not similarity across all beliefs and practices, but the capacity to organize shared interests across *madhhab* distinctions. Therefore, the harmonization experienced by Shia Muslims extends beyond minimal tolerance understood as the absence of open conflict. It is formed through active accommodation encompassing communication, *ṣilat al-rahim*, identity visibility, participation, dialogue, *gotong royong*, philanthropy, and contributions to shared interests. In this formulation, harmonization without homogenization constitutes the relational consequence of recognition without assimilation. In other words, differences are maintained but do not automatically become grounds for severing relationships or restricting participation.<sup>80</sup> The subsequent question is therefore no longer whether *madhhab* differences persist, but how accommodation of these differences can be interpreted normatively within the framework of Islamic law.

### From Social to Jurisprudential Recognition: Constructing *Fiqh* of Intra-Muslim Tolerance

The research findings demonstrate that the recognition experienced by Shia Muslims in Jepara does not stop at their acceptance as individuals or as a social group, but also extends to the space afforded to their identity and to certain religious practices rooted in the Jaʿfarī tradition. Informants reported being able to maintain their *madhhab* identity openly, perform certain distinct ritual practices without having to conceal them through *taqiyyah*, and participate in shared socio-religious spaces.<sup>81</sup> The data also show that jurisprudential distinctions are not always carried into the domains of philanthropy, *gotong royong*, and social activities, allowing *madhhab* differences to be maintained without determining the overall pattern of social relations.<sup>82</sup> At this point, social recognition acquires a more specific dimension, which this article conceptualizes as jurisprudential recognition. This term refers to recognition of differences in *madhhab*-based reasoning and practices that allows such differences to remain present, be expressed, and be accommodated without automatically being converted into grounds for delegitimation or intra-Muslim exclusion. Jurisprudential recognition, therefore, does not require agreement with all doctrines or legal positions of

<sup>78</sup> “Fieldnotes from Observations of the Socio-Religious Practices of the Shia Community in Jepara.”

<sup>79</sup> Elgvin, “For the Greater Good,” 15–35.

<sup>80</sup> Widiyanto, “Rapprochement between Sunnism and Shiism in Indonesia,” 31–58.

<sup>81</sup> UAN, “Interview with a Shia Religious Leader in Jepara”; UNA, “Interview with the Treasurer of Ahlulbait Indonesia (ABI), Jepara.”

<sup>82</sup> UKF, “Interview with a Member of Ahlulbait Indonesia (ABI), Central Java.”

another *madhhab*. Rather, it refers to recognition of jurisprudential difference without requiring doctrinal agreement. This distinction is important because what is afforded space in the informants' experiences is not only the "Shia" identity as a social category, but also certain practices that concretely mark their affiliation with the Ja'farī tradition. Accordingly, social recognition becomes relevant to the analysis of Islamic law when the object being negotiated and accommodated includes jurisprudential differences themselves.

The analytical shift from social recognition toward jurisprudential recognition finds its normative basis in the epistemological character of *fiqh* as the product of human reasoning concerning the normative sources of Islam. The Islamic legal tradition developed through *ikhtilāf* and the plurality of *ijtihād*, such that diversity in legal opinions constitutes an inherent part of the intellectual history of *fiqh*, rather than a deviation from its fundamental structure.<sup>83</sup> However, this principle of plurality cannot simply be used to equate all Sunni-Shia differences with internal differences among Sunni *madhhabs*. Sunni-Shia relations also involve theological, historical, and religious-authority dimensions that cannot all be reduced to *ikhtilāf furū'ī* (disagreement on subsidiary jurisprudential matters). It is precisely within this boundary that the thought of Mahmud Shaltut acquires particular relevance. In addition to situating *ijtihād* within an orientation toward the pursuit of justice and *maṣlaḥah* and criticizing absolute adherence to a *madhhab*, Shaltut was an important figure in the Sunni-Shia *taqrīb* (*rapprochement*) project, which sought to separate *madhhab* differences from the necessity of excluding their adherents.<sup>84</sup> The significance of this position for this article does not lie in the claim that Shaltut eliminated Sunni-Shia differences, but in the normative possibility of recognizing the existence of distinct jurisprudential traditions without requiring doctrinal assimilation. Meanwhile, Muhammad Jawad Mughniyah employed cross-*madhhab* comparison to demonstrate that jurisprudential similarities and differences can be systematically identified without necessarily being transformed into communal antagonism.<sup>85</sup> Accordingly, the epistemological basis of jurisprudential recognition is not the assumption that all Sunni-Shia differences constitute *furū'īyyah*, but rather a more limited proposition. The plurality of legal reasoning allows jurisprudential differences to be recognized as differences that can be maintained without, in themselves, requiring the social exclusion of Muslims who adhere to them.

On the basis of the encounter between these empirical findings and the tradition of jurisprudential plurality in Islamic law, this article constructs *fiqh* of intra-Muslim tolerance not as a new *madhhab*, a body of positive law, or an emic category explicitly used by the informants, but rather as a normative-jurisprudential framework for managing the social consequences of jurisprudential differences among Muslims. This position proceeds from the understanding that *fiqh* is not merely a corpus of established legal rules, but also a tradition of normative-interpretive reasoning that continually engages with the social conditions in which law is understood and practiced. Therefore, the designation of this framework as *fiqh*,

<sup>83</sup> Al-Zuhaylī, *Al-Fiqh al-Islāmī wa Adillatuh*, 68–72; Al-'Alwani, *Adab al-Ikhtilāf fī al-Islām*, 76–77.

<sup>84</sup> Mahmud Shaltut, *Al-Fatāwā: Dirāsah li-Musḥkilāt al-Muslim al-Mu'āṣir fī Ḥayātih al-Yanmiyyah al-'Āmmah wa al-Khāṣṣah* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 2001), 44–45; Al-Zuhaylī, *Al-Fiqh al-Islāmī wa Adillatuh*, 68–72.

<sup>85</sup> Muhammad Jawad Mughniyah, *Al-Fiqh 'alā al-Madhāhib al-Khamsah* (Beirut: Dār al-Tayyār al-Jadīd, 2008), 30–34.

rather than merely as an ethic of tolerance, is based on two considerations. First, the differences negotiated in this case involve *madhhab*-based reasoning and religious practices. Second, the evaluation of the consequences of these differences can be situated within jurisprudential categories such as *ikhtilāf*, *ijtihād*, and *maṣlaḥah*. The element “intra-Muslim” defines the relational scope of this concept, namely, the management of differences among groups that all identify themselves as Muslim, whereas “tolerance” refers to the normative orientation of preventing jurisprudential disagreement from automatically being transformed into social and socio-religious delegitimation and exclusion. In this sense, *fiqh* of intra-Muslim tolerance can be formulated as a normative-jurisprudential framework that recognizes the persistence of *madhhab*-based differences while directing their social consequences toward recognition, participation, and shared social life without requiring doctrinal homogenization.

The construction of *fiqh* of intra-Muslim tolerance rests on several principles that perform different but interconnected normative functions. First, *ikhtilāf* and the plurality of *ijtihād* provide an epistemological basis for recognizing the existence of diverse forms of legal reasoning without requiring the standardization of legal opinions.<sup>86</sup> Second, *ukhūwah Islāmiyyah* provides a communal horizon within which shared membership as Muslims can be maintained amid *madhhab* differences. Both Sunni and Shia sources contain normative resources that emphasize respect, the prohibition of injustice, and responsibility toward fellow Muslims.<sup>87</sup> Third, *maṣlaḥah* provides an orientation toward shared interests that, in the empirical context of Jepara, corresponds to practices of philanthropy, *gotong royong*, social work, and contributions to shared religious facilities.<sup>88</sup> Fourth, *al-ta‘āyush al-silmī* (peaceful coexistence) provides a relational orientation for sustaining shared social life without requiring the disappearance of religious distinctions. Fifth, the principle of non-exclusion provides a normative boundary to prevent *madhhab* differences from being readily transformed into *takfīr* or *taḍlīl* (declaration of deviance) against fellow Ahl al-Qiblah (Muslims who share the qibla).<sup>89</sup> At this point, Shaltut’s position acquires significance extending beyond an argument concerning the plurality of *ijtihād*. The *taqrīb* project associated with him demonstrates an effort to maintain Sunni–Shia differences while rejecting the transformation of those differences into the severing of membership in the Muslim community.<sup>90</sup> A similar orientation finds contemporary articulation in *The Amman Message*, which includes the Ja‘farī *madhhab* alongside other Islamic *madhhabs* within the scope of Islam’s internal diversity and restricts the practice of *takfīr* against its adherents.<sup>91</sup> Accordingly, these principles do not function to demonstrate that Sunni and Shia Muslims

<sup>86</sup> Al-Zuhaylī, *Al-Fiqh al-Islāmī wa Adillatuh*, 68–72; Al-‘Alwani, *Adab al-Ikhtilāf fī al-Islām*, 76–77.

<sup>87</sup> Muhammad ibn Ya‘qūb al-Kulaynī, *Al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī* (Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyyah, 1978), 166; Muhammad ibn Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī, *Al-Adab al-Mufrad min Aḥādīth al-Nabī* (Beirut: Mu‘assasat al-Tārikh al-‘Arabī, 2008), 119.

<sup>88</sup> UAN, “Interview with a Shia Religious Leader in Jepara”; UKF, “Interview with a Member of Ahlulbait Indonesia (ABI), Central Java.”

<sup>89</sup> Yusuf al-Qaradāwī, *Al-Ṣaḥwāb al-Islāmiyyah bayna al-Ikhtilāf al-Masbrū‘ wa al-Tafarruq al-Madhmūm* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 2001), 134–41; al-‘Alwani, *Adab al-Ikhtilāf fī al-Islām*, 76–77.

<sup>90</sup> Shaltut, *Al-Fatāwā*, 44–45.

<sup>91</sup> Mu‘assasat Āl-al-Bait li-l-Fikr al-Islāmī, *The Amman Message*, 16.

are theologically or jurisprudentially identical; rather, they provide a normative grammar for managing differences without exclusion.

The emphasis on the social consequences of differences is what distinguishes *fiqh* of intra-Muslim tolerance from a mere moral exhortation to be tolerant. In the Indonesian context, doctrinal and jurisprudential differences can acquire exclusionary force when they intersect with religious ideology, majoritarian perspectives, identity framing, and perceptions of threat.<sup>92</sup> Zulkifli demonstrates that anti-Shia framing is shaped through a combination of these factors,<sup>93</sup> while Farida et al. and Al Makin show how stigmatization of Shia in certain contexts can develop into social and institutional restrictions.<sup>94</sup> Therefore, the Islamic legal question addressed in this article does not stop at the epistemic question of whether a jurisprudential position is considered correct or incorrect, but extends to the socio-legal question of what social consequences are attached to such disagreement for Muslims who hold that position. The framework proposed here does not require all *madhhab* positions to be considered substantively equally correct. Rather, it requires an analytical distinction between judging a jurisprudential position and excluding the Muslim who holds that position. In this sense, *fiqh* of intra-Muslim tolerance overlaps with *fiqh al-wasatiyyah* (moderate Islamic jurisprudence), but is not identical to it. Whereas *fiqh al-wasatiyyah* places moderation as a general orientation in legal and religious life, *fiqh* of intra-Muslim tolerance focuses more specifically on how the social consequences of jurisprudential differences in intra-Muslim relations should be managed.<sup>95</sup> Accordingly, this framework is not intended to eliminate theological differences, substantively equalize all *madhhab* positions, or resolve all contests over Sunni–Shia authority. However, differences in jurisprudential judgment do not necessarily have to result in the exclusion of Muslim subjects who hold different positions.

Thus, *fiqh* of intra-Muslim tolerance as proposed in this article does not begin with a set of normative propositions for which justification is subsequently sought in the data found in Jepara. Rather, this construction emerges from a dialogue between the empirical experiences of the Shia community and the normative resources of the Islamic legal tradition. Empirically, informants described how their identity and certain Ja‘farī practices can remain visible while social relations, religious participation, and cooperation continue within a

<sup>92</sup> Apipuddin Apipuddin et al., “From Disrespect to Recognition: The State’s Legal-Ethical Transformation in Ensuring the Constitutional Rights of Lombok’s Ahmadiyah Refugees,” *Ijtihad: Jurnal Wacana Hukum Islam dan Kemanusiaan* 25, no. 2 (December 2025): 333–62; Fu-Lai Tony Yu and Diana S. Kwan, “Competing Orthodoxy in the Islamic World: Sunnis Versus Shi’as,” in *Conflicts and Challenges in the Middle East: Religious, Political and Economic Perspectives*, ed. Ho-Don Yan et al. (Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2024), 45–59.

<sup>93</sup> Zulkifli, “What Drives Anti-Shia Framing in Indonesia?,” 1–29.

<sup>94</sup> Farida et al., “The State, Shia, and Exclusionary Policies in Makassar–Indonesia,” 452–82; Makin, “Homogenizing Indonesian Islam,” 1–32.

<sup>95</sup> Suwarjin, “Achieving Religious Harmony through Fiqh Wasatiyah,” *Manchester Journal of Transnational Islamic Law and Practice* 19, no. 2 (2023): 145–61; Supardi Mursalin et al., “Fiqh Tolerance in a Contemporary Context: The Response of State Islamic Religious University Students to Religious Extremism,” *MILRev: Metro Islamic Law Review* 3, no. 2 (2024): 287–319; Moh Mukri et al., “The Implementation of the Maslahah Principle in Cultivating Religious Moderation in the State Islamic Universities,” *Al-Adalah* 21, no. 2 (2024): 371–400; Aslam Sa‘ad, Muhammad Faiz, and Muhammad Masruri, “Religious Studies and the Production of Critical Religious Moderation: Epistemic Humility and Reflexive Habitus in Indonesian Higher Education,” *Religious: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama dan Lintas Budaya* 9, no. 3 (December 2025): 329–46.

predominantly Sunni environment.<sup>96</sup> This pattern provides a basis for conceptualizing jurisprudential recognition, namely, a condition in which *madhhab*-based differences are afforded space to exist, be expressed, and be accommodated without automatically becoming grounds for exclusion. Normatively, the plurality of *fiqh*, *ikhtilāf*, *ijtihad*, *maṣlaḥah*, *ukhūwah Islāmiyyah*, and the principle of non-exclusion provides an Islamic legal vocabulary for interpreting how the social consequences of such differences can be managed.<sup>97</sup> Therefore, the two concepts need to be clearly distinguished. Jurisprudential recognition is an analytical conceptualization of an empirical pattern, whereas *fiqh* of intra-Muslim tolerance is a normative-jurisprudential formulation concerning how the social consequences of jurisprudential plurality should be managed in intra-Muslim life. This is where the principal contribution of this article to Islamic legal and socio-legal studies lies. *Fiqh* is not understood merely as a framework for producing, comparing, and evaluating legal positions, but also as a normative language for managing the social consequences of the existence of *fiqh* plurality in practice.<sup>98</sup> In this formulation, the Jepara experience is not presented as a universal model of Sunni-Shia relations, but is used as an empirical point of departure for demonstrating the possibility of recognition without assimilation.

## Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the intra-Muslim tolerance experienced by the Shia community in Jepara does not occur through the elimination of *madhhab* (school of law) differences, but through everyday processes of negotiation and accommodation that allow these differences to remain present in socio-religious life. Informants described how their identity and a number of practices rooted in the Jaʿfarī tradition can be maintained within a predominantly Sunni Shāfiʿī environment, while interpersonal relations, religious participation, and social cooperation continue to take place. Through Axel Honneth’s recognition theory, these experiences can be understood through three interrelated domains: love through cross-*madhhab* intimacy and communal care; rights through religious visibility and the experience of participating in socio-religious spaces; and solidarity through collective cooperation and recognition of social contributions. These findings demonstrate that negotiation explains the processes through which differences are managed, whereas recognition explains the relational qualities experienced when such differences do not prevent acceptance, visibility, participation, and social esteem. From the experiences of Shia Muslims, this pattern sustains what this article conceptualizes as harmonization without homogenization: the continuity of relationships and cooperation without requiring theological convergence or the standardization of *madhhab* practices. Accordingly, the principal finding of this study is not that Sunni-Shia differences have lost their relevance, but that these differences can be maintained while their social consequences are negotiated and accommodated. In this sense,

<sup>96</sup> UAN, “Interview with a Shia Religious Leader in Jepara”; UNA, “Interview with the Treasurer of Ahlulbait Indonesia (ABI), Jepara”; UKF, “Interview with a Member of Ahlulbait Indonesia (ABI), Central Java.”

<sup>97</sup> Husein Muhammad, *Fikih Toleransi: Nalar Moderasi dan Toleransi dalam Islam* (Yogyakarta: IRCiSoD, 2025), 28–29.

<sup>98</sup> Hijrian Angga Prihantoro et al., “Fiqh Hybridity in a Pluralistic Society: The Case of the Saprahan Tradition in Pontianak, Indonesia,” *JURIS (Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah)* 25, no. 1 (April 2026): 83–98.

intra-Muslim tolerance in Jepara can be understood as recognition without assimilation, rather than as doctrinal assimilation, jurisprudential homogenization, or merely the absence of open conflict

The main contribution of this article lies in distinguishing, while also establishing the relationship between, jurisprudential recognition and *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) of intra-Muslim tolerance. Jurisprudential recognition constitutes an analytical conceptualization of experiences in which differences in *madhhab*-based reasoning and practices are afforded space to remain present, be expressed, and be accommodated without automatically being converted into grounds for intra-Muslim exclusion. Meanwhile, *fiqh* of intra-Muslim tolerance constitutes a normative-jurisprudential formulation of how the social consequences of such plurality can be managed through the internal resources of Islamic law. This framework does not require all *madhhab* positions to be regarded as substantively equally correct; rather, it emphasizes the need to distinguish between disagreement with a jurisprudential position and the exclusion of Muslims who hold that position. From this perspective, *fiqh* functions not only as a framework for producing and evaluating legal opinions, but also provides a normative language for managing the social consequences of jurisprudential plurality in intra-Muslim life. Because this study represents only the experiences of Shia community leaders and members, its findings cannot be generalized as representative of Sunni-Shia relations in Indonesia. Therefore, future research should systematically involve Sunni actors and religious institutions, employ a longitudinal approach to trace changes in cross-*madhhab* relations, and conduct comparative research across different locations to examine the extent to which jurisprudential recognition and *fiqh* of intra-Muslim tolerance have explanatory power across different configurations of Muslim majority-minority relations.

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