

RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY AND SOCIAL PEACEBUILDING: AN ISLAMIC LAW PERSPECTIVE FROM PROBOLINGGO CITY, INDONESIA

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Abstract

*This study examines how religious authority contributes to interreligious tolerance and social peace in Probolinggo City, Indonesia, from an Islamic legal perspective. Employing a qualitative single-case study with a socio-legal orientation, the study analyses publicly accessible institutional and policy documents available up to April 2025. The documentary corpus includes publications issued by the Probolinggo City Government, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB), and other relevant institutions. Data were analysed through reflexive thematic analysis combining deductive and inductive coding. The findings indicate that religious authority operates not merely through formal religious status but through social legitimacy, interinstitutional networks, public communication, dialogue, and the capacity to translate religious norms into preventive social practices. Islamic values including *wasatiyyah*, *'adl*, *maṣlaḥah*, *tasāmuḥ*, *iṣlāḥ*, and *ukhuwah* provide an ethical orientation for managing difference and preventing religious tension. The study develops an Islamic legal–social peace mechanism consisting of normative values, norm translation, relational legitimization, preventive institutionalisation, and social peace. This framework demonstrates how Islamic legal ethics can acquire practical significance through legitimate religious authority and inclusive local institutions.*

Keywords: *religious authority; Islamic law; tolerance; social peace; peacebuilding; Probolinggo.*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menganalisis bagaimana otoritas keagamaan berkontribusi terhadap toleransi antaragama dan perdamaian sosial di Kota Probolinggo melalui perspektif Hukum Islam. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus tunggal dan orientasi sosio-legal melalui analisis dokumen publik yang tersedia hingga April 2025. Korpus penelitian meliputi publikasi Pemerintah Kota Probolinggo, Kementerian Agama, Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama (FKUB), dan lembaga terkait. Data dianalisis menggunakan *reflexive thematic analysis* melalui pengodean deduktif dan induktif. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa otoritas keagamaan tidak hanya bekerja melalui kedudukan formal, tetapi melalui legitimasi sosial, jejaring antarlembaga, komunikasi publik, dialog, dan kemampuan menerjemahkan norma agama menjadi praktik sosial preventif. Nilai *wasatiyyah*, *'adl*, *maṣlaḥah*, *tasāmuḥ*, *iṣlāḥ*, dan *ukhuwah* menjadi orientasi etis dalam mengelola perbedaan dan mencegah ketegangan keagamaan. Penelitian ini mengembangkan *Islamic legal–social peace mechanism* yang terdiri atas nilai normatif, *norm translation*, legitimasi relasional, institusionalisasi preventif, dan perdamaian sosial. Kerangka tersebut menunjukkan bagaimana etika Hukum Islam memperoleh signifikansi praktis melalui otoritas keagamaan yang legitimate dan institusi lokal yang inklusif.

Kata kunci: otoritas keagamaan; Hukum Islam; toleransi; perdamaian sosial; *peacebuilding*; Probolinggo.

INTRODUCTION

Religious plurality is a defining feature of contemporary societies and simultaneously represents both an opportunity and a source of vulnerability in the construction of social peace. Religion may provide legitimacy for exclusion and conflict, yet it may also offer ethical resources for reconciliation, solidarity, non-violence, and conflict transformation (Kwuelum, 2024; Odak, 2024). In societies characterised by identity-based polarisation, peacebuilding strategies that rely exclusively on state institutions are increasingly regarded as insufficient, directing scholarly attention toward community-based mechanisms and religious actors who possess social proximity, moral influence, and sustained relationships with local communities (Kwuelum, 2024). Experimental research involving Muslim and Christian communities has further demonstrated that exposure to religious norms containing non-violent messages can reduce support for violence, suggesting that the substantive ethical content of religion can contribute to peaceful social orientations (Hager & Sharma, 2023). Nevertheless, the relationship between religion and peace is not automatic. The social effects of religious messages depend upon legitimacy, institutional capacity, political context, and the ability of religious actors to translate normative teachings into socially meaningful practices (Odak, 2024; Williamson et al., 2023).

Previous scholarship demonstrates considerable variation in the operation of religious authority within peacebuilding processes. Odak (2024), examining Muslim, Catholic, and Orthodox religious leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina, shows that religious engagement in peacebuilding is conditioned by doctrine, organisational capacity, individual characteristics, control over religious messages, and community recognition. Hager and Sharma (2023) likewise demonstrate that non-violent religious norms can contribute to changing attitudes toward intergroup violence. Conversely, Williamson et al. (2023), drawing on evidence from more than 12,000 Sunni Muslims across eleven Middle Eastern countries, show that the politicisation of religious leaders may weaken their religious legitimacy even where audiences agree with their political positions. Religious authority therefore cannot be assumed to generate peaceful outcomes merely because it is religious.

Studies in Indonesia similarly reveal the ambivalent position of religion within intergroup relations. Hidayati and van Doorn Harder (2020) show that Muslim and Christian religious elites can contribute to maintaining stable

interreligious relations while simultaneously avoiding more substantive theological dialogue. Al Qurtuby (2023) further demonstrates that Indonesian religious communities may become involved in both conflict and reconciliation, with peaceful outcomes frequently emerging through interaction among religious actors, civil society, local cultures, and state institutions. Research on religious moderation in Indonesia likewise suggests that religious commitment need not contradict tolerance when religious orientations are connected to non-violence, national commitment, and acceptance of cultural diversity (Subchi et al., 2022). These studies indicate that the relationship between religious authority and peace must be examined through the mechanisms by which religious values are interpreted, communicated, institutionalised, and translated into social practices.

Despite these contributions, three important gaps remain. First, research on religious authority has predominantly examined religious leaders in contexts of violent conflict, post-conflict reconciliation, political mobilisation, or contested legitimacy. Comparatively less attention has been given to the everyday operation of religious authority in relatively peaceful communities, particularly to mechanisms intended to prevent tensions from escalating into open conflict (Odak, 2024; Williamson et al., 2023). Second, peacebuilding research frequently analyses the activities of religious actors without sufficiently integrating the normative foundations informing their social practices. Consequently, Islamic legal values such as justice, public welfare, tolerance, reconciliation, fraternity, and respect for human dignity are rarely examined together with religious authority as components of an integrated socio-normative mechanism. Third, Indonesian research has often concentrated on regions with histories of religious violence, national political controversies, or highly visible Muslim-Christian tensions, leaving preventive religious peacebuilding at the urban local level comparatively underexplored (Al Qurtuby, 2023; Hidayati & van Doorn Harder, 2020).

These gaps are theoretically significant because social peace should not be reduced to the absence of violent conflict or understood exclusively as the outcome of post-conflict reconciliation. Peace may also be produced and maintained through routine communication, trust formation, normative translation, institutional cooperation, and the management of differences before they escalate into violence. This perspective shifts analytical attention from episodic interventions toward *preventive and everyday peacebuilding* and enables religious authority to be examined as part of the social infrastructure through which peaceful intergroup relations are maintained.

Building upon these gaps, the principal contribution of this study is the formulation of an *Islamic legal-social peace mechanism*. The framework conceptualises religious authority as a relational capacity through which normative Islamic values are translated into social practices, acquire legitimacy through relationships of trust, and become institutionalised through preventive mechanisms. Rather than positioning religious leaders primarily as mediators who intervene after conflict has occurred, this study examines religious authority through three interconnected processes: the translation of Islamic normative values into public practices, the construction of relational legitimacy among religious and institutional actors, and the institutionalisation of mechanisms intended to manage differences before they escalate.

Probolinggo City provides a relevant local setting for examining these processes. Official documentation records interfaith dialogue intended to maintain social stability before the 2024 general election, consultations regarding the administration of houses of worship, dissemination of regulations designed to prevent interreligious friction, and the institutional strengthening of FKUB (Pemerintah Kota Probolinggo, 2023, 2024a, 2024b, 2025; DPMPTSP Kota Probolinggo, 2024). Accordingly, Probolinggo is treated not as evidence that religious tension is absent but as a bounded urban case through which preventive mechanisms of religious peacebuilding can be examined.

The study addresses three research questions: **(1) How is religious authority exercised in maintaining and strengthening interreligious tolerance in Probolinggo City? (2) How are Islamic legal values translated into practices supporting social peace? and (3) Through what institutional mechanisms are potential religious tensions managed before they escalate into open conflict?** By addressing these questions, this study seeks to bridge scholarship on religious authority, Islamic legal ethics, and preventive peacebuilding while explaining how local institutions can transform religious values into social resources for managing religious plurality.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using a *single-case study* design with a socio-legal orientation. A case study design was selected because it allows socially complex phenomena to be examined in depth within geographically and institutionally bounded contexts (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Probolinggo City was treated as a bounded urban case in which religious authority, Islamic normative values, and

institutional mechanisms interact in the maintenance of interreligious relations. The socio-legal orientation was employed to connect normative dimensions of Islamic law with social practices, institutional arrangements, and public representations of religious harmony. Islamic law was therefore not treated solely as a body of textual prescriptions but as a source of social ethics whose practical meaning emerges through interpretation and institutional practice.

The study was conducted in April 2025 and analysed publicly accessible documentary materials published no later than 30 April 2025. The final analytical corpus consisted of five official documents published between May 2023 and April 2025. These comprised: (1) documentation of an interfaith leaders' dialogue organised by FKUB in preparation for the 2024 general election; (2) documentation of FKUB's consultation with the acting mayor concerning the administration and legality of houses of worship; (3) documentation of FKUB's dissemination of regulations governing houses of worship; (4) documentation of a local government dialogue concerning guidelines for the establishment of houses of worship and the prevention of interreligious friction; and (5) documentation of the inauguration of the 2025–2030 FKUB leadership and its institutional mandate for maintaining interreligious harmony (Pemerintah Kota Probolinggo, 2023, 2024a, 2024b, 2025; DPMPTSP Kota Probolinggo, 2024).

Documents were selected purposively according to their relevance to the research questions. A document was included when it contained information concerning: (1) the exercise of authority by religious leaders or religious institutions; (2) interreligious dialogue, religious moderation, mediation, or collaboration; (3) religious or ethical narratives relating to peace and tolerance; (4) institutional responses to potential interreligious tensions; or (5) interaction among FKUB, religious communities, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and local government. Materials were excluded when they were published after April 2025, could not be attributed to an identifiable institutional source, substantially duplicated information already represented in the corpus, or lacked substantive relevance to the research questions.

Document analysis was employed because institutional documents permit systematic investigation of policy orientations, institutional practices, public narratives, and relationships among actors while also requiring critical attention to the context in which those documents were produced (Bowen, 2009). The analysis therefore considered not only documentary content but also the institutional position of each publisher, the intended audience, the policy context, and the

possibility that official institutions may emphasise successful programmes and social harmony while underrepresenting unresolved tensions or unsuccessful interventions.

Data were analysed using *reflexive thematic analysis* through the stages of familiarisation, initial coding, theme construction, theme review, theme definition, and analytical interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Coding combined deductive and inductive strategies. Deductively, the analysis was guided by three sensitising concepts: *religious authority*, *norm translation*, and preventive institutional mechanisms. Inductively, the analysis remained open to additional patterns emerging from the corpus, including institutional networking, interpersonal trust, public communication, regulatory socialisation, interfaith dialogue, and the management of houses-of-worship issues.

Islamic legal analysis was introduced as an interpretive layer after the initial documentary patterns had been identified. The principal normative concepts were *wasatiyyah* (moderation), *'adl* (justice), *maṣlaḥah* (public welfare), *tasāmuḥ* (tolerance), *iṣlāḥ* (reconciliation), and *ukhuwah* (fraternity). Maintaining this analytical sequence reduced the risk of imposing predetermined Islamic legal categories upon the documentary material. The resulting interpretive framework followed the analytical sequence:

normative values → norm translation → relational legitimization → preventive institutionalisation → social peace.

Research credibility was strengthened through comparison among documents, consistency checks, transparent coding decisions, and researcher reflexivity (Nowell et al., 2017). Particular attention was given to *confirmation bias*, especially the possibility of presuming that religion necessarily contributes positively to peace. The research also recognised the risk of *institutional positivity bias*, because official government and religious publications may be more likely to document harmony and institutional success than disagreement, failure, or unresolved tension. Consequently, the absence of documented conflict was not interpreted as evidence that social tensions were entirely absent.

Because the research relied exclusively on publicly accessible institutional documents and involved no direct interaction with human participants, ethical risks to individuals were limited. Nevertheless, information relating to religious identity and intergroup relations was interpreted cautiously to avoid stigmatising particular communities. The research design does not establish a causal claim that religious authority independently produces social peace; rather, it identifies documented

mechanisms through which religious authority appears to contribute to the maintenance of interreligious relations.

RESULT

Religious Authority as Relational and Institutional Capacity

The documentary evidence indicates that religious authority in Probolinggo City operates through an interaction between formal institutional position and relational capacity. Religious leaders, particularly those involved in FKUB, are positioned as intermediaries linking religious communities, local government institutions, and public authorities. Their authority therefore cannot be reduced to theological status or formal religious office. It also depends upon their capacity to facilitate communication, participate in institutional consultation, represent religious communities in public discussions, and contribute to the management of potentially sensitive religious issues.

This pattern was already evident in May 2023, when FKUB organised an interfaith gathering of religious and community leaders in anticipation of the 2024 general election. The activity was deliberately organised in a dialogical format and framed around FKUB's role in maintaining social stability during an electoral period. Rather than responding to an existing religious conflict, the programme positioned communication among religious leaders as a preventive mechanism intended to preserve social cohesion before political competition could intensify identity-based tensions.

The relational character of religious authority also appeared in the governance of houses of worship. In September 2024, FKUB consulted the acting mayor regarding the legal and administrative status of houses of worship and emphasised the need for coordination between FKUB and relevant government institutions. The issue involved not merely technical administration but also the relationship between constitutional religious freedom, administrative legality, community acceptance, and the prevention of social friction.

The institutional position of FKUB was subsequently reinforced through public dissemination and dialogue concerning regulations governing the establishment of houses of worship. FKUB collaborated with the local investment and integrated services agency to provide information to local administrative leaders regarding regulatory requirements. A further government-organised

dialogue in October 2024 explicitly connected regulatory understanding with efforts to prevent friction and conflict between religious communities.

Institutional strengthening continued with the inauguration of FKUB's 2025–2030 leadership on 24 April 2025. The local government publicly positioned FKUB as a central forum for effective communication among religious communities and as an institutional partner responsible for strengthening unity and peace. Taken together, these documents demonstrate that religious authority operates through a combination of religious representation, relational trust, institutional access, and capacity for mediation

Norm Translation and Islamic Social Ethics

A second analytical pattern concerns the transformation of religious and ethical principles into practical orientations for social interaction. Although the official documents do not systematically articulate a complete Islamic jurisprudential framework, their narratives repeatedly emphasise moderation, harmony, mutual respect, peaceful coexistence, dialogue, and the avoidance of conflict. These documentary orientations can be interpreted through Islamic legal ethics without assuming that every institutional actor explicitly uses the same jurisprudential terminology.

Within this socio-legal interpretation, *wasatiyyah*, *'adl*, *maṣlaḥah*, *tasāmuḥ*, *iṣlāḥ*, and *ukhuwah* provide a coherent normative framework for understanding the peace-oriented practices documented in Probolinggo. *Wasatiyyah* provides an orientation toward moderation and avoidance of extremity; *'adl* requires fairness in the management of relations among religious communities; *maṣlaḥah* directs public action toward collective welfare; *tasāmuḥ* provides an ethical foundation for recognising religious difference; *iṣlāḥ* prioritises reconciliation and the prevention of social disruption; and *ukhuwah* expands the ethical significance of fraternity within shared social life.

The analytical significance of these principles does not lie merely in their existence as abstract Islamic concepts. Their relevance emerges through *norm translation*: the process by which ethical principles become public messages, regulatory orientations, dialogue practices, and institutional responses. For example, the socialisation of rules governing houses of worship translated general commitments to religious freedom and harmony into practical administrative information intended to minimise misunderstanding among local actors

Similarly, interfaith dialogue before the 2024 election transformed general ideals of social harmony into preventive communication among religious actors at a moment when political competition might otherwise have heightened identity mobilisation. Islamic law therefore operates in this analysis less as an isolated collection of prohibitive rules and more as an ethical repertoire through which public actions oriented toward justice, welfare, tolerance, and reconciliation may be interpreted.

Preventive Institutionalisation of Social Peace

A third major pattern concerns the preventive rather than reactive orientation of local peace mechanisms. The analysed documents do not primarily portray religious leaders intervening after serious interreligious violence. Instead, institutional practices are directed toward maintaining communication, clarifying potentially contentious regulatory issues, socialising rules, and preserving channels of interaction before disagreements develop into open conflict.

The governance of houses of worship represents the clearest example. Houses of worship can become sites of legal, administrative, and social contestation when requirements are poorly understood or when relationships among communities become strained. The Probolinggo documents demonstrate an effort to address this risk through consultation, regulatory socialisation, and dialogue involving FKUB, government agencies, village-level administrative leaders, and other actors.

This approach demonstrates what this study conceptualises as *preventive institutionalisation*. Conflict prevention does not depend solely upon individual goodwill; it becomes embedded within recurring institutional relationships, regulatory procedures, consultation mechanisms, and organisational roles. FKUB consequently operates as an intermediary institution connecting religious communities with local governmental authority.

The 2023 interfaith dialogue surrounding the electoral context similarly illustrates preventive institutionalisation. Political periods can intensify social and identity divisions, yet the institutional response was to create dialogue before open conflict emerged. Likewise, the institutional renewal of FKUB in April 2025 reflects the expectation that interreligious harmony requires sustained organisational capacity rather than temporary intervention.

Taken together, these findings indicate that documented mechanisms of social peace in Probolinggo are constructed through the interaction of normative values, religious legitimacy, public communication, and institutional arrangements. Religious authority consequently functions not merely as a source of moral influence but as part of a local social infrastructure for *preventive and everyday peacebuilding*.

DISCUSSION

The findings suggest that religious authority in Probolinggo City is more appropriately conceptualised as a relational and institutionally embedded capacity than merely as the formal status possessed by religious leaders. This interpretation is consistent with Odak (2024), who demonstrates that the peacebuilding effectiveness of religious actors depends upon the interaction of doctrine, organisational capacity, control over religious messaging, individual characteristics, and community recognition. Similar scholarship also indicates that religious authority derives its social influence not only from institutional position but from legitimacy, trust, and the ability to communicate religious norms effectively within particular social contexts (Kwuelum, 2024; Williamson et al., 2023). Religious authority therefore becomes socially meaningful when it is recognised and exercised through relationships connecting religious actors with communities and institutions (Odak, 2024).

The findings also resonate with Williamson et al. (2023), whose study demonstrates that formal religious leadership does not automatically guarantee legitimacy. Authority must instead be continuously sustained through social credibility and relational trust, particularly when religious actors engage with political and governmental institutions (Williamson et al., 2023). The Probolinggo evidence extends this insight by demonstrating that religious legitimacy may acquire institutional significance when religious actors serve as intermediaries linking community interests, administrative procedures, and governmental structures. This intermediary function is consistent with broader peacebuilding scholarship emphasising the importance of collaboration among religious actors, civil society, communities, and state institutions in sustaining peaceful social relations (Al Qurtuby, 2023; Kwuelum, 2024).

The Probolinggo case also extends peacebuilding scholarship by shifting analytical attention from post-conflict mediation toward *preventive and everyday peacebuilding*. Much religious peacebuilding research understandably concentrates

on societies experiencing or recovering from violent conflict, where religious leaders often participate in reconciliation, mediation, and post-conflict reconstruction (Odak, 2024). However, recent scholarship increasingly recognises that peacebuilding also involves preventive practices operating before violence occurs, including dialogue, social relationship-building, and institutional mechanisms for managing difference (Driessen, 2025; Ganiel, 2023; Kwuelum, 2024). The mechanisms documented in Probolinggo primarily operate within this preventive domain. Interfaith dialogue during politically sensitive periods, regulatory consultation, public dissemination of information, and institutional coordination are intended to reduce the likelihood that religious or social differences will escalate into open conflict.

Peace in this sense is not simply the absence of violence. It is an ongoing relational capacity involving communication, trust, institutional memory, and procedures through which sensitive issues can be addressed before they become sources of social polarisation (Driessen, 2025; Kwuelum, 2024). This interpretation complements Al Qurtuby's (2023) argument that peacebuilding in Indonesia cannot be reduced to formal liberal institutions because local actors, religious communities, cultural resources, civil society, and the state frequently interact in producing and maintaining peace. It also supports approaches to peacebuilding that emphasise local relationships and routine social practices rather than treating peace solely as the outcome of formal conflict-resolution interventions (Ganiel, 2023).

Within this process, FKUB may be conceptualised as an *intermediary institution*. It does not possess the coercive authority of the state, yet neither is it merely an informal religious association. Its institutional position allows it to connect moral representation with administrative and governmental processes. This intermediary role is particularly relevant because effective interreligious peacebuilding frequently requires cooperation between religious authority, civil society structures, and governmental institutions rather than reliance upon a single institutional actor (Al Qurtuby, 2023; Kwuelum, 2024). In Probolinggo, this intermediary role is especially visible in the management of houses-of-worship issues, where religious freedom, administrative legality, local acceptance, and the risk of communal friction intersect.

The Islamic legal dimension adds another analytical layer. Values such as *wasatiyyah*, *'adl*, *maṣlaḥah*, *tasāmuḥ*, *iṣlāḥ*, and *ukhuwah* acquire social relevance when they are translated into norms of conduct and institutional practices rather than remaining abstract religious principles. Studies of religious moderation in

Indonesia similarly demonstrate that religious commitment can coexist with tolerance when religious orientations emphasise non-violence, national commitment, moderation, and acceptance of cultural and religious diversity (Subchi et al., 2022). Comparative studies of tolerance and religious moderation in Southeast Asian Muslim societies likewise underline the importance of contextualising Islamic normative principles within plural social environments (Muhajarah & Soebahar, 2024). This distinction is important because the existence of peaceful doctrines alone cannot adequately explain peaceful social outcomes.

Hager and Sharma (2023) demonstrate that non-violent religious norms can reduce support for violence, while also showing that the substantive content of those norms matters more than their mere identification as religious teachings. Their findings suggest that religious norms influence social behaviour through their content and interpretation rather than simply through religious labelling (Hager & Sharma, 2023). Consequently, the existence of Islamic values supporting tolerance and reconciliation does not automatically generate peaceful social relations. Those values must be interpreted, communicated, and incorporated into patterns of social interaction and institutional practice.

The present study therefore proposes *norm translation* as a central mechanism connecting Islamic legal ethics with social action. Normative values initially provide ethical orientation, but religious and institutional actors must translate those values into intelligible narratives, practices, procedures, and forms of engagement. This interpretation corresponds with studies showing that the peacebuilding effectiveness of religious leaders depends partly upon their ability to control, interpret, and communicate religious messages to their communities (Odak, 2024). A general commitment to tolerance, for example, acquires practical significance when it is expressed through dialogue with another religious group, transparent communication regarding houses-of-worship regulations, or institutional mechanisms allowing disputes to be addressed before they become polarising (Driessen, 2025; Kwuelum, 2024).

The process also depends upon what this study terms *relational legitimation*. Norms are not socially effective merely because they are normatively compelling. Actors communicating those norms must possess sufficient credibility and trust among relevant communities. The importance of legitimacy is supported by research demonstrating that the political behaviour of religious leaders can strengthen or weaken public perceptions of their religious authority (Williamson et al., 2023). Similarly, Odak (2024) emphasises that community acceptance

constitutes a crucial condition for religious leaders to exercise meaningful influence in peacebuilding processes. Relational legitimacy therefore helps explain why religious authority remains important even when formal regulatory power belongs primarily to state institutions.

Religious actors can provide forms of social recognition and moral credibility that governmental regulation alone may not generate. At the same time, their legitimacy remains dependent upon the relationships they maintain with both religious constituencies and public institutions (Odak, 2024; Williamson et al., 2023). This relational dimension distinguishes religious authority from purely bureaucratic authority and helps explain why interreligious governance frequently depends upon cooperation between state institutions and trusted religious intermediaries (Al Qurtuby, 2023).

The third process, *preventive institutionalisation*, occurs when peace-oriented practices move beyond individual initiatives and become embedded in recurring institutional arrangements. Dialogue forums, consultation procedures, regulatory dissemination, coordination between FKUB and government agencies, and institutional renewal can all contribute to this process. Scholarship on interreligious peacebuilding similarly emphasises that sustainable dialogue requires institutional continuity and repeated engagement rather than episodic or symbolic encounters (Driessen, 2025; Kwuelum, 2024). The proposed *Islamic legal-social peace mechanism* can therefore be expressed as:

normative values → norm translation → relational legitimization → preventive institutionalisation → social peace.

The framework should not, however, be interpreted as a deterministic causal sequence. Each component can fail. Religious values can be articulated without meaningful translation; actors may possess formal authority without social legitimacy; dialogue may become ceremonial; and institutions may reproduce unequal social relationships. Research on interreligious dialogue has similarly warned that institutionalised dialogue can lose its transformative potential when participation remains elitist, symbolic, or disconnected from underlying social inequalities (Driessen, 2025). The mechanism proposed here therefore identifies a set of conditions through which Islamic legal ethics may contribute to peace rather than asserting that religion necessarily generates peaceful outcomes.

This qualification is particularly important in light of Williamson et al. (2023), who show that political involvement may undermine religious legitimacy. Cooperation between religious leaders and government can strengthen preventive

governance, but excessive political instrumentalisation may weaken the moral independence upon which religious authority depends (Williamson et al., 2023). Al Qurtuby (2023) similarly demonstrates the ambivalent potential of religious actors in Indonesia, where religion may contribute either to violence or reconciliation depending upon the political, institutional, and social context. The commonly invoked relationship between *ulama* and *umara* should therefore not be interpreted as requiring uncritical alignment between religious and political authorities.

Hidayati and van Doorn Harder (2020) provide another important caution. Stable relationships among religious elites may preserve social harmony without necessarily producing deeper transformation of interreligious relations. Elite cooperation may coexist with unresolved theological boundaries, unequal social relations, or limited interaction among ordinary members of religious communities (Hidayati & van Doorn Harder, 2020). Consequently, the success of FKUB and similar institutions should not be assessed solely through the absence of conflict or the frequency of formal meetings. This limitation is also consistent with broader critiques suggesting that interreligious dialogue becomes less transformative when it remains concentrated among institutional elites and fails to expand meaningful engagement at the community level (Driessen, 2025).

More substantive indicators of preventive peacebuilding would include continuity of communication, diversity of participation, responsiveness to contested issues, inclusion of younger actors and women, capacity to handle disputes fairly, and the existence of sustained interreligious relationships beyond ceremonial encounters (Driessen, 2025; Kwuelum, 2024). Repeated interaction is particularly significant because interreligious encounters can help challenge spatial and social boundaries separating religious communities. Research in Surabaya, for example, demonstrates how *interreligious place-making* can challenge patterns of religious segregation and create new possibilities for interaction across religious identities (Mulya & Schäfer, 2023). Preventive peacebuilding in Probolinggo should therefore be assessed not only through formal institutional programmes but also through the extent to which such initiatives facilitate durable and meaningful interreligious relationships.

The reliance on official documentation nevertheless requires methodological caution. Institutional documents are produced within particular organisational contexts and may selectively represent programmes, achievements, and social conditions (Bowen, 2009). Government and religious institutions may have stronger incentives to publicise successful initiatives and harmonious relationships than to

document failures, unresolved tensions, or internal disagreements. The findings should therefore be interpreted as evidence of an **officially documented architecture of preventive peacebuilding**, not as proof that every religious community experiences interreligious relations identically. This distinction is essential to maintaining methodological integrity and corresponds with the need for reflexivity and transparency in qualitative thematic research (Nowell et al., 2017).

The reliance on official documents makes institutional mechanisms visible but provides less information concerning dissenting voices, everyday experiences, hidden tensions, or community-level perceptions. This limitation reinforces the importance of avoiding causal claims that religious authority independently produces social peace. Rather, the documentary evidence identifies mechanisms through which religious authority, institutional coordination, and normative communication appear to contribute to the maintenance of peaceful interreligious relations.

Nevertheless, the findings have significant practical implications. Preventive peacebuilding can be strengthened by preserving credible and morally independent religious leadership, maintaining regular interfaith communication, developing early-warning mechanisms for emerging religious disputes, improving public understanding of regulations affecting religious communities, and expanding participation beyond established religious elites (Driessen, 2025; Kwuelum, 2024). Interreligious programmes should also prioritise repeated interaction rather than isolated ceremonial encounters because sustained social engagement provides greater potential for building trust and reducing social distance (Mulya & Schäfer, 2023).

The principal theoretical implication is that Islamic law can be conceptualised as an *ethical repertoire* rather than merely as a set of formal legal commands. Its contribution to social peace depends upon interpretation, translation, relational legitimacy, and institutionalisation. This interpretation is compatible with research on religious moderation demonstrating that Islamic religious commitments can function constructively within plural societies when they are articulated through non-violence, moderation, civic responsibility, and acceptance of diversity (Subchi et al., 2022; Muhajarah & Soebahar, 2024). Accordingly, Islamic legal ethics and religious authority should not be studied separately when explaining how religiously informed communities maintain peaceful pluralism.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that social peace in Probolinggo City is sustained through the interaction among religious legitimacy, the translation of Islamic normative values, and institutional mechanisms that facilitate communication and manage religious differences before they escalate into open conflict. Religious authority therefore cannot be understood solely as a formal status attached to religious leaders. Its practical significance emerges through relational credibility, community recognition, institutional access, and the capacity of religious actors to connect religious communities with public institutions. Within this framework, FKUB operates as an intermediary institution that links moral authority, religious representation, administrative structures, and local governance.

From an Islamic legal perspective, the values of *wasatiyyah*, *'adl*, *maṣlaḥah*, *tasāmuḥ*, *iṣlāḥ*, and *ukhuwah* constitute an ethical repertoire that can orient religious action toward tolerance, social welfare, reconciliation, and the prevention of communal tension. However, these normative principles do not automatically produce peaceful outcomes. Their social significance depends upon processes of interpretation, communication, legitimacy, and institutionalisation. Islamic law therefore contributes to social peace not merely as a body of textual prescriptions but as a source of social ethics that becomes effective when translated into public narratives, interreligious practices, institutional procedures, and durable relationships.

The principal theoretical contribution of this study is the formulation of the *Islamic legal–social peace mechanism*, which can be expressed through the sequence **normative values → norm translation → relational legitimation → preventive institutionalisation → social peace**. The framework extends existing scholarship on religious authority and peacebuilding by shifting attention from predominantly post-conflict mediation toward *preventive and everyday peacebuilding*. It shows that peace can also be maintained through routine dialogue, trust-building, regulatory communication, institutional coordination, and other mechanisms operating before social differences develop into open conflict.

The framework should not be interpreted as a deterministic causal model. Religious norms may fail to acquire practical significance, formal religious authority may lack community legitimacy, interreligious dialogue may become symbolic or elitist, and institutional cooperation may be weakened by political instrumentalisation or unequal power relations. Social peace therefore depends not simply upon the existence of religious institutions but upon the credibility,

inclusiveness, independence, and continuity of the relationships through which religious authority is exercised.

Practically, the findings highlight the importance of maintaining regular interfaith communication, strengthening early-warning mechanisms for emerging religious tensions, improving transparent communication concerning regulations affecting religious communities, broadening participation beyond established religious elites, and preserving the moral independence of religious leaders in their relationships with political authorities. Peacebuilding initiatives should also promote sustained interaction among religious communities rather than relying predominantly on ceremonial encounters.

This study is limited by its focus on a single urban context and its reliance primarily on publicly accessible institutional documents. Such sources make the institutional architecture of peacebuilding visible but may foreground successful programmes and harmonious narratives while underrepresenting dissent, failed interventions, hidden tensions, and the everyday experiences of ordinary religious communities. Consequently, the findings should be understood as an analysis of an **officially documented architecture of preventive peacebuilding**, rather than as evidence that all religious communities experience interreligious relations in the same way or that religious authority independently causes peaceful conditions.

Future research should therefore incorporate in-depth interviews with religious leaders, minority religious communities, women, young people, and ordinary citizens; conduct comparative studies across regions with different religious and political configurations; and employ longitudinal approaches to examine whether preventive peacebuilding mechanisms remain resilient during periods of political competition, social crisis, or heightened religious tension. Such research would provide a stronger empirical basis for evaluating the explanatory capacity of the *Islamic legal-social peace mechanism* beyond the Probolinggo context

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