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KUPI as a Networked Islamic Feminist Movement in Indonesia: Negotiating Gender Justice within Islamic Tradition

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Abstract

The Indonesian Women Ulama Congress (KUPI) has emerged as one of the most significant examples of Islamic feminist activism in Indonesia, seeking to address gender injustice through the issuance of *fatwas*. This article examines how KUPI enables women ulama to gain recognition as religious authorities while remaining rooted in the epistemology and sources of the Islamic tradition. It argues that KUPI should be understood not merely as a forum for women ulama or a *fatwas*-making institution, but as a networked Islamic feminist movement that functions as an epistemic space. Drawing on document analysis of KUPI's official publications and relevant academic literature, and informed by Saba Mahmood's concept of pious agency and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's notion of epistemic recognition, this article demonstrates that KUPI's institutional networks, collective processes of knowledge production, and methodology of *fatwas* formulation enable women's lived experiences to become legitimate sources of Islamic legal reasoning. In doing so, KUPI creates the epistemic conditions through which women can establish and gain recognition for their religious authority from within the Islamic tradition.

Keywords: KUPI, Islamic Feminism, Pious Agency, and Epistemic Space.

Introduction

The feminist movement, throughout its development, has evolved into diverse strands. In general, it can be understood as a social movement that aims to achieve justice by liberating individuals, especially women, from any oppressive practices (Cott, 1987). However, various motifs have also given rise to currents within this movement, such as liberal feminism, radical feminism, Marxist feminism, and socialist feminism. Broadly speaking, these are shaped by motifs influenced by women's social status and their lived experience of oppression, as well as by other movements (Friedman et al, 1987). Considering that in several different social contexts women are often placed in structurally disadvantaged positions, it illustrates that the patriarchal social structure that has forced them to face has led to multiple forms of

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subordination and oppression (Burris, 1982; Omvedt, 1986). Although this movement aims to liberate individuals from the oppressive patriarchal system, it has also been subject to criticism. In particular, the dominant model of women's emancipation emerged from Western intellectual traditions where religion is seen as one of the patriarchal systems that oppress and hinder women's autonomy (Hanif, 2026).

By ignoring the role of religion, such as Islam, through that secular lens, the focus of emancipation becomes limited to forms of religious dress or veiling practices that are considered 'religious but oppressive,' namely the use of *the burqa,* and reproduces the imposition of externally defined conceptions of freedom (Mir-Hosseini, 2006; Abu-Lughod, 2002). Moreover, such an approach can be said to fail in understanding the lived realities of Muslim women (Seedat, 2013) and ignore the potential for internal critiques articulated from within the Islamic tradition—as has been proposed by Amina Wadud and Fatima Mernissi (Mernissi and Lakeland, 1995; Wadud, 1999). In fact, such a feminist framework struggles to recognize women's agency, which is expressed through self-discipline and piety (Ayotte and Husain, 2005). Recently, the feminist movement in Indonesia, especially Islamic feminism, has been widely discussed and developed through the presence of KUPI (Indonesian Women Ulama Congress). As stated in the "Tentang Kongres" section on the Kupipedia website, the women ulama associated with this network have initiated their first major congress in 2017 in Cirebon and their second congress in 2022 in Semarang and Jepara (Tim KUPI, 2017).

Therefore, many previous studies have discussed KUPI from various perspectives. Those can be categorized into several major themes. Firstly, about reclaiming women ulama's authority, some researchers explore the strategies employed by KUPI to construct the legitimacy of the status of women ulama's that they advocate (Rohmaniyah, Kotele, and Widiastuti, 2022a), how the concept of women ulama is defined based on an ideology that emphasizes women's perspectives as well as their ongoing struggles in promoting social transformation (Farida and Kasdi, 2018), and also their positions in contesting the institutional structure of *fatwas* making that is gender-biased (Ismah, 2024). Second, a few studies have also examined KUPI's methodological framework in formulating *fatwas*. Here, several researchers elaborate the hermeneutic framework and methodology that KUPI used to develop gender-just interpretations of religion (Rohmaniyah et al, 2022; Kloos and Ismah, 2023), especially on Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) through the *maqashid syariah cum mubadalah* methods (Faizah et al, 2024; Kodir et al, 2025a), and the trilogy of principles, *ma'ruf* (good), *mubadalah* (reciprocity), and *keadilan hakik*i (substantive Justice) in addressing gender-related issues (Agustina and Ismah 2024a). Third, other researchers also capture KUPI's role and contribution in ratifying the Sexual Violence Crime Bill in Indonesia in 2022 (Marhumah et al, 2025a; Ismah, 2025; Hidayahtulloh, 2026).

To contribute to this growing body of robust scholarship, this paper advances the debates by examining KUPI as an epistemic space. The term epistemic space offered here will be explained in the theoretical framework section. Accordingly, this paper asks how KUPI functions as a space that enables women ulama to reclaim religious authority while remaining grounded in Islamic tradition by considering the agency of women ulama. To develop the argument, the paper proceeds as follows. First, it examines KUPI's

organizational structure and knowledge-production process as a networked Islamic feminist movement. Second, it analyzes how women ulama within KUPI construct new forms of religious authority through pious agency grounded in Islamic tradition. And finally, it examines how KUPI transforms marginalized speech into fully recognized epistemic legibility.

Given that KUPI has conducted two different five-yearly congresses, namely KUPI I in 2017 and KUPI II in 2022, and has been discussed by several researchers with diverse backgrounds, this qualitative study, in answering the formulated research question above, is based on document analysis and employs a descriptive analysis model. The used data is divided into primary and secondary. The primary data come from official KUPI documents published on Kupipedia and existing academic papers discussing KUPI, including its history, organizational form and networks, and applied strategies in formulating *fatwas*. Then, the secondary data is also gathered from news articles and media coverage documenting KUPI's public activities and contributions in responding to contemporary gender-related issues. To support the subsequent analytical process on the contents depicted in those sources, this study also utilizes the ideas of Saba Mahmood on pious agency and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak on epistemic marginalization, which will be explained further in the next section.

KUPI as a Networked Islamic Feminist Movement in Indonesia

In Indonesia, the discussion of *fatwas*-making institutions has largely centred on the role of the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) and other major Islamic organizations, including Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), as well as networks of ulama at the local level. *Fatwas* issued by these institutions are included in the typology of 'collective *fatwas'*, which shows a manifestation of religious authority embodied in groups of persons (Kaptein, 2004). Although *fatwas* do not have binding legal force in Indonesia (Renie, 2021), they can shape public response to social issues (Sirry, 2013; Mufid, 2020; Anwar, 2005; Quraisyin and Hanif, 2022). It is therefore important to consider who is involved in the *fatwas*-making process and what methodologies are used, considering that the practice has become an arena for the contestation of gender relations in the midst of restrictions on women's participation—albeit on a limited scale, they have practiced issuing *fatwas* in many *majelis taklim* (religious lessons) and mosques by responding to issues, such as purification, social relations, and worship (Ismah, 2024; Rohmaniyah, Kotele, and Widiastuti, 2022a). That is, if their participation is restricted, especially in broader issues affecting women, it risks overlooking women's lived experiences and producing unjust collective *fatwas*.

To address these issues, particularly the limitations on women's participation that prevent them from participating in the issuance of collective *fatwas*, women ulama in KUPI have undertaken various initiatives to reclaim their religious authority as an initial step, given that such authority influences who is recognized as having the right to issue legitimate *fatwas*. They have not only proposed a new definition of ulama, which has long been dominated by men's perspectives, and issued *fatwas* on several strategic issues but have also developed an alternative epistemology, in which women's experiences and interpretations serve as authoritative sources in legal reasoning (Rohmaniyah et al, 2022a). In addition, as a movement, this study notes that there is an organizational structure in KUPI that enables these changes. Rather than simply functioning as a women ulama's participation forum and operating as a formal institution organized around a centralized leader (i.e., chairperson),

KUPI draws on its networks (Rofiah, 2022). It is supported by several NGOs, community groups, pesantren, and Islamic universities, such as Alimat, AMAN Indonesia, Fahmina, Rahima, Gusdurian, Pesantren Kebon Jambu Al-Islamy, Pesantren Hasyim Asy'ari Bangsri, UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati Cirebon, and UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta (Tim KUPI, 2023). Thus, this fluid organizational form facilitates the wider circulation of KUPI's ideas (Nadia and Faizah, 2024).

While concerns remain that the authority KUPI has cultivated through its decentralized organizational structure is confined to its internal network, this recognition can be extended through KUPI's digital campaigns (Huda, 2025) or through strategic collaborations with Islamic universities in Indonesia aimed at strengthening the position of women ulama (Tim KUPI, 2026). Besides, looking back at the previous congresses, KUPI's authority was also recognized by other state institutions. For example, KUPI gained symbolic recognition in 2017 when Lukman Hakim Saifuddin, the Minister of Religious Affairs, delivered the closing address at the closing ceremony of the first congress (Kloos and Ismah 2023, 819) and through the support of Komnas Perempuan in organizing the second congress in 2022 (Tim Komnas Perempuan, 2022), as well as the award it presented to KUPI as a pioneer in building a safe space from violence (Tim KUPI, 2025). Thus, the recognition of KUPI's authority in a networked movement adopted depends primarily on internal coalitions, advocacy work, and collaborations with external actors. Moreover, that decentralized organizational structure not only shapes how KUPI is managed, but it also shapes its knowledge production.

In KUPI, before *fatwas* are issued, the knowledge underpinning for responding to social problems emerges from a multi-layered process of *halaqah* (small study circle) held in several regions of Indonesia, where women ulama, activists, and experts discuss together the issues (Arwani and Hannase, 2024; Agustina and Ismah, 2024a). These *halaqah,* initiated by community groups and independent collectives that share KUPI's vision (Nadia and Faizah, 2024), also play an important role in reconciling classical Islamic scholarly authority with feminist methods and discourses in the interpretation of texts (Kloos and Ismah, 2023). Indeed, *halaqah* held across different regions to expand KUPI's network are also responsive to social issues identified through the communities with which KUPI works. In social movements, the presence of *halaqah* can also be read as an alternative space to build solidarity and articulate shared grievances. This is because the grievances arising from social problems that are shared can be the primary driver for individuals to participate in the movement (Snow et al, 2018), given that grievances are inherent in social life. Furthermore, grievances can only become a larger movement when there are spaces that allow individuals to meet and act together (Jenkins, 1983). In KUPI, these *halaqah* provide such spaces.

In addition, each *fatwas* issued by KUPI during the Musyawarah Keagamaan forum (Arwani and Hannase, 2024; Agustina and Ismah, 2024a; Farida and Kasdi, 2018) follows a systematic sequence. The first stage is *tashawwur* (description), which defines the social problem in detail as the initial conceptualization while emphasizing principles of justice and their relationship to Islamic teachings. The second stage is *adillah*, which includes evidence from the Quran and Hadith, the views of classical and contemporary ulama, and Indonesian positive law, which is regarded as the context-specific reference. The third stage is *istidlal,*

which is the process of reasoning (Abdul Kodir et al, 2025a). Only after all these elements are examined does KUPI formulate its final recommendation as *fatwas*. The use of sources from the Islamic tradition, particularly the Quran and Hadith, in this process acknowledges that Muslims represented by women ulama continue to seek connections to authoritative references to the past in response to guidance for the present and future (Asad, 2009). It maintains continuity with Islamic epistemology while challenging patriarchal institutional arrangements. Hence, the organizational structure, epistemic features, and systematic sequence in issuing *fatwas* indicate that KUPI is not simply a forum of women ulama; it is a networked Islamic feminist movement in Indonesia.

Pious Agency and the Internal Challenge to Patriarchal Monopoly

One of the central imperatives of KUPI is to confront and dismantle the historical monopoly over religious authority held predominantly by men (Zamir, 2014). Because religious recommendations (*fatwas*) serve as imperative references for society, the traditional restriction of ulama status exclusively to men has historically produced gender-biased interpretations that subordinate women's roles and marginalize their lived experiences (Nurmila, 2025; Rohmaniyah, 2022a; Kodir et al, 2025a). This systemic exclusion is manifested in institutional gatekeeping such as the minimal representation of women within the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) or their structural silencing in traditional *bahthul masa'il* forums (Ismah, 2016; Rohmaniyah, 2022a). KUPI does not accept this marginalization nor abandon the religious tradition altogether; instead, it intervenes by forging a new religious authority rooted in disciplined, pious agency. KUPI's engagement with Islam is not a bargain with patriarchy but an enactment of pious agency that rearticulates authority from the inside out.

The foundation of the movement is deeply rooted in the country's vast ecosystem of traditional Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) and small study circle (*halaqah*). Rather than emerging in a vacuum, KUPI continues a century-long history of women gathering in these spaces to study, lead, and interpret Islamic knowledge (Chandrakirana and Kodir, 2025). This foundation rests on a strong historical genealogy of Indonesian women leaders born in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such as Siti Walidah (promoting literacy and Quranic studies), Rahmah El-Yunusiah (forming study groups to explore women's concerns), and Khoiriyah Hasyim (co-founding pesantren for both male and female students), who established the precedent for women to utilize religious knowledge for community transformation as an autonomous evolution (Chandrakirana and Kodir, 2025).

Building on this legacy, KUPI's legitimacy and social support system are closely linked to the pesantren community. Major gatherings are intentionally held within women-led pesantren, such as Pesantren Kebon Jambu in Cirebon and Pesantren Hasyim Asy'ari in Jepara, emphasizing these institutions as spaces for cultivating women's religious scholarship and leadership (Chandrakirana and Kodir, 2025). Long-standing grassroots organizing and educational initiatives by founding organizations like Rahima and Fahmina further function as technologies of ethical self-making. Fahmina conducted the Dawrah Kader Ulama Perempuan (Learning Circles for Cadres of Women Ulama) to deepen grassroots scholarship, while Rahima dedicated fifteen years to its Pendidikan Ulama Perempuan (Education for Women Ulama) program (Ma'ruf et al, 2022; Jayanti and Kudhori, 2026).

These initiatives retutor women's reason and sensibilities within the tradition, enabling them to emerge as active subjects of religious knowledge rather than mere objects of men-authored law.

The virtuoso pianist metaphor—where submission to a rigorous disciplinary regime is the exact condition that empowers agency in the first place—is reflected in KUPI's methodological rigor and sustained engagement with classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*) alongside contemporary social analysis (Ma'ruf et al, 2022; Beta, 2024). KUPI ulama employ the traditional methodological tool of *istinbat al-hukm* (Islamic legal reasoning). By prioritizing a collective search for primary evidence (*adillah*) based on the Quran and Hadith, while adhering firmly to the belief that they are the primary and most authoritative sources, KUPI asserts its capacity to interpret divine intent, much like a virtuoso of Islamic jurisprudence (Ranganathan, 2016). This includes thematic searches for *adillah* by systematically collecting verses and Hadith, such as utilizing seven Quranic verses and five Hadith texts regarding child marriage, viewing the sources as integral, non-contradictory units of *rahmatan lil alamin*, and engaging them directly to bypass historical patriarchal biases embedded within traditional commentaries (Mun'im et al, 2024; Kodir et al, 2025a).

The term ulama itself has also been reclaimed through this *istinbat*. KUPI argues that the term is inherently gender-neutral but has been culturally monopolized by men, basing its claim to authority not on liberal autonomy but on being equal inheritors of the Prophet's mission (Ma'ruf et al. 2022; Chandrakirana and Kodir, 2025). Furthermore, KUPI employs specialized methodological frameworks such as the *mubadalah* principle, namely seeking reciprocal meanings in gender-specific teachings, and *keadilan hakiki*, which centres human dignity together with the unique biological (menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth) and social experiences of women as essential data for religious reasoning (Agustina and Ismah, 2024a). These frameworks reorient classical vocabulary toward a gender-inclusive agenda while ensuring that deliberations and *fatwas* consciously follow established forms of *fiqh*, thereby producing gender-just interpretations.

While the movement itself is referred to as *Ulama Perempuan* (an ideological and inclusive community), the individual *perempuan ulama* (biologically women ulama) provide its foundational credibility and localized leadership. Women leaders of pesantren, such as Nyai Masriyah Amva and Nyai Hindun Anisah, hosted the 2017 and 2022 congresses at their respective pesantren, transforming them into centres for gender-just religious discourse. These individuals often navigate personal challenges, including community scepticism or the loss of a husband (the traditional *kyai*), in asserting their own authority. Their success in regaining community trust demonstrates how religious leadership is cultivated through conscious and reflective obedience rather than through a rejection of tradition (Nurmila, 2025; Chandrakirana and Kodir, 2025). This pious agency confirms that women who practice piety are not automatically losing their agency; on the contrary, they consciously express their ability to choose and act within the framework of religious tradition while simultaneously building new spaces that enable them to respond to social issues, using piety as a strategy to reconstruct women's authority, identity, and participation in the religious sphere.

From Evidentiary Object to Epistemic Subject

The priorities raised by KUPI concern issues that have profoundly shaped the lives of women but have long remained peripheral within mainstream Islamic legal discourse. From this point forward, KUPI fundamentally shifts the aim from which legal questions are recognized. Historically, women were never absent from Islamic scholarship. They taught, transmitted knowledge, and participated in religious learning, yet their presence rarely translated into epistemic authority. The decisive boundary lay in the production of collective *fatwas*, where authoritative interpretations of Islamic law were formulated. Women's experiences generally entered *fiqh* as phenomena to be regulated rather than as legitimate premises from which legal reasoning could begin (Handoko and Mohamed, 2026). KUPI intervenes at this boundary by repositioning women not simply as participants in religious life but as authoritative producers of Islamic legal interpretation.

This intervention becomes visible in KUPI's method of legal deliberation. During the *tashawwur* stage, empirical realities are established before textual reasoning begins. Women's biological experiences, including menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding, and reproductive health, together with social realities such as domestic violence, sexual violence, forced marriage, economic dependency, stigmatization, and unequal gender relations, are treated as indispensable elements for understanding the legal problem itself (Nurmila 2025; Kodir et al, 2025a). These realities do not replace the Quran, Hadith, or classical jurisprudence as the primary sources of Islamic law. Instead, they redefine the evidentiary conditions through which those sources are interpreted. Lived experience therefore becomes part of the epistemic process of *istinbat al-hukm*, instead of remaining merely the object upon which legal rulings are subsequently imposed (Rochmawati 2026; Handoko and Mohamed, 2026).

This shift is evident across KUPI's major religious deliberations. In the *fatwa* on child marriage, legal reasoning begins with empirical evidence concerning maternal mortality, reproductive health risks, educational discontinuity, psychological trauma, and structural inequality before these realities are connected to Quranic principles, *maqashid syariah*, and classical legal discussions. Likewise, in the deliberation on forced marriage, *wilayat al-ijbar* is no longer interpreted primarily as paternal authority to compel marriage but as a responsibility to protect the welfare of the child (Agustina and Ismah, 2024a). Similar reasoning appears in the *fatwas* concerning pregnancies resulting from rape, where the psychological condition of survivors and the risk of self-harm become integral legal considerations, and in the prohibition of female genital mutilation, where medical evidence regarding bodily harm is incorporated alongside Islamic principles prohibiting injury (Mun'im et al, 2024; Nurmila, 2025). Across these deliberations, revelation remains the highest source of authority; what changes is the range of realities acknowledged as legally meaningful.

The movement from internal religious deliberation toward wider public authority can be understood through Jamal's extension of Mahmood's pious agency. Jamal argues that agency frequently exceeds ethical self-formation and becomes institutional, political, and publicly consequential (Jamal, 2005). KUPI illustrates this movement. The authority cultivated through years of pesantren education, collective *halaqah*, and mastery of Islamic

legal reasoning is translated into collaborations with universities, civil society organizations, state institutions, and legislative processes. Religious agency therefore does not remain confined within spaces of moral formation but acquires broader institutional visibility and public legitimacy.

However, Jamal alone cannot fully explain what is ultimately transformed. Her framework demonstrates how pious agency enters public institutions, but it does not sufficiently explain how women become recognized as producers of authoritative knowledge (Bangstad, 2011; Jamal, 2009). Spivak provides the critical lens needed to grasp the depth of this hurdle. For Spivak, the central problem of epistemic violence is not merely whether marginalized subjects possess agency or a voice, but that dominant epistemic structures determine whose speech can ever become intelligible as legitimate knowledge in the first place (Spivak, 1988; Kapoor, 2004; Morton, 2010). Within classical *fiqh*, women certainly appeared throughout legal discourse, but predominantly as objects of regulation whose lived realities required external translation by men jurists. Their lives supplied jurisprudence cases, yet rarely constituted authoritative grounds for producing jurisprudence itself (Aminudin et al, 2026). Reading KUPI through Spivak does not suggest an effortless overcoming of subaltern silencing, nor a complete dismantling of patriarchal hegemony. Instead, KUPI's intervention represents a fraught, strategic subversion from within: by aggressively inserting their embodied and social experiences into the foundational premises of legal reasoning (*tashawwur*), KUPI forces a crack in the dominant epistemic architecture. The shift is thus a hard-won negotiation where women move from being passive evidentiary objects of Islamic law to recognized epistemic subjects capable of altering the very conditions under which religious authority becomes legible.

This epistemic transformation is increasingly visible in KUPI's expanding institutional recognition. Rather than remaining an internal initiative among women ulama, its authority circulates through a broad network connecting pesantren, Islamic universities, civil society organizations, legal advocacy groups, and state institutions, including Rahima, Fahmina, Alimat, AMAN Indonesia, Gusdurian, Komnas Perempuan, UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati Cirebon, and UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta (Chandrakirana and Kodir, 2025; Nurmila, 2025; Jayanti and Kudhori, 2026; Rochmawati, 2026). Through these collaborations, KUPI's religious deliberations are reproduced in community education, academic research, legal assistance, public campaigns, and grassroots *halaqah*. Nor Ismah's recent analysis similarly identifies the emergence of women as fatwa issuers as a significant transformation of Indonesia's historically men-dominated religious authority, emphasizing that women ulama increasingly integrate classical Islamic scholarship with lived experience, national legal frameworks, and human rights perspectives in the production of religious judgments (UINSSC, 2025). The growing involvement of universities, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and Komnas Perempuan further indicates that KUPI's authority has progressively extended beyond its original organizational constituency into broader religious and public institutions.

The practical consequences of this transformation are equally apparent. The first KUPI Congress in Cirebon (2017) produced religious recommendations concerning sexual violence, child marriage, and environmental destruction, while the second congress in Jepara

(2022) expanded these to include forced marriage, pregnancies resulting from rape, female genital mutilation, women's participation in preventing violent extremism, and environmental sustainability (Chandrakirana and Kodir, 2025; Mun'im et al, 2024). These religious deliberations subsequently informed advocacy conducted through KUPI's organizational network. The child marriage fatwa became an important religious reference supporting the 2019 revision of Indonesia's Marriage Law, which raised the minimum legal age of marriage for women from sixteen to nineteen years. Likewise, KUPI's sustained engagement contributed to the enactment of the Sexual Violence Crime Bill by framing protection against sexual violence as an obligation grounded in the objectives of the *shariah* rather than just a secular human rights concern (Arrahmah, 2021; Luviana, 2022; Chandrakirana and Kodir, 2025; Nurmila, 2025; Marhumah et al, 2025a). The establishment of Kupipedia further institutionalizes this transformation by functioning as a digital infrastructure through which *fatwas*, methodological principles, biographies of women ulama, and gender-responsive interpretations circulate across pesantren, universities, activists, and wider Muslim publics (Rochmawati, 2026).

Religious authority is no longer concentrated in individual men ulama but increasingly distributed through interconnected institutions, collaborative deliberation, and digital knowledge production. KUPI therefore does not establish an alternative source of Islamic authority outside the tradition, as revelation, *fiqh*, and classical scholarship remain indispensable. Read through Spivak, KUPI's most significant intervention is ultimately not simply expanding women's participation in religious institutions, but fundamentally transforming the epistemic conditions under which religious authority itself becomes intelligible and legitimate.

Conclusion

This research demonstrates that KUPI cannot be understood solely as a forum for women ulama that has succeeded in producing gender-responsive *fatwas*. Importantly, KUPI operates as a networked Islamic feminist movement that relies on collective action and institutional networks to reclaim women ulama's authority. Such a movement enables the ideas and authority of KUPI to circulate across broader spaces. Furthermore, KUPI should be comprehended as an epistemic space, in which women ulama are able both to construct and to gain recognition for their religious authority from within the Islamic tradition. In this regard, Saba Mahmood's concept of pious agency helps to explain that the effort is not carried out by breaking with tradition, but through mastery of Islamic traditions, disciplined engagement in the process of *istinbat*, and pious practices that constitute the basis of their legitimacy. However, as Gayatri C. Spivak points out, the capacity to act does not by itself produce authority. KUPI therefore provides the epistemic conditions through which women's life experiences, religious knowledge, and their collective practices become epistemically intelligible and are recognized as legitimate components of Islamic knowledge production.

Nevertheless, this research still has limitations. By relying primarily on document analysis, this study has not been able to explain how power relations work within KUPI's own networks. The character of KUPI as a networked movement does not automatically

indicate that the relationships formed are egalitarian. Rather, each network still has centres of influence, gatekeepers, and institutional hierarchies, meaning that the institutions and community groups supporting KUPI cannot be regarded as completely neutral nodes. To address that limitation, this study suggests field research through participatory observation and in-depth interviews, especially in the phases before, during, and after the next KUPI congress to examine how different actors and networks shape KUPI. Such an approach would provide an understanding of the dynamics of negotiations and power relations that cannot be fully captured through document analysis.

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