

Developing fatwa-making competencies in Islamic higher education: An empirical assessment of students' competency acquisition in a Fatwa-making at Mohammed Bin Zayed University for Humanities

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Abstract

Due to the evolving religious, legal, and digital landscape, there is a growing demand for competency-based approaches to Fatwa education within the Islamic higher education. Though there is an increasing institutional focus on developing future muftis with the skills required to handle the contemporary societal challenges, evidence on how students gain such competencies in fatwa-making remains limited. This study evaluated the effectiveness of fatwa-making course in developing students' fatwa-making competencies at Mohammed Bin Zayed University for Humanities (UAE). Descriptive cross sectional survey design was used. The study included 305 undergraduate students who were selected by using a census approach. The data were obtained from a structured questionnaire, which was validated, and the reliability of the questionnaire was obtained through Cronbach alpha and was satisfactory. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis), Pearson product-moment correlation, multiple regression and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 level of significance. The results indicated that acquisition was high in all three competency

areas. The source authentication competency had a strong positive relationship with the overall fatwa-making competency, and it was found to be the strongest predictor in the multivariate model. In the same way, contextual jurisprudential reasoning exhibited a statistically significant suppression effect in the multivariate model, while jurisprudential and argumentative reasoning did not make any unique contribution after controlling for the other competencies. Consequently, the study recommends that competency-based fatwa education needs to focus on the integrated development of contextual knowledge, legal knowledge and skills in the verification of sources, as well as digital information literacy, in order to enhance the relevance, credibility, and quality of twenty-first-century fatwa education.

Keywords: Competency-based education, fatwa-making, Islamic higher education contextual jurisprudential reasoning, source authentication, jurisprudential reasoning.

Introduction

In the past twenty years, Islamic legal education has seen significant changes driven by globalisation, technological innovation and the explosion of digital communication in every sphere of knowledge production. Fatwas were traditionally issued in a stable institutional setting, where religious authority was exercised and upheld by known experts and scholars within known networks (Doğan, 2022). Although fatwas have existed for centuries, they are now being shared in milliseconds on digital platforms, social media, online databases, and transnational scholarly circles, exposing Muslims to an increasingly diverse body of legal interpretations.. This

level of religious knowledge has created a great deal of problems regarding the authority's ability to maintain trust, authenticity of legal evidence (Masruha et al., 2025), contextual relevance of legal rulings and the capability of future muftis to deal with the complexity of social issues (Kausar et al., 2024). The evolution of fatwa-making has shifted its nature from the scholarly approach mostly confined to texts to a multi-dimensional professional practice, which requires a range of advanced analytical, contextual, ethical and communicative skills.

These changes have also affected the expectations placed on Islamic institutions of higher education. The

universities that educate future muftis and legal experts of Sharia are no longer tasked with teaching outdated or mere classical knowledge of jurisprudence (Panjwani, 2024); instead, they are expected to train individuals who are capable of applying classical jurisprudence with methodological accuracy and intellectual integrity to contemporary societal issues. This transformation reflects the wider trends of competency-based education that have taken place across the worldwide higher education landscape (Dastane et al., 2024), which focuses on the acquisition of knowledge, skills, professional judgement and transferable competencies needed for successful work in real-world professional settings. In Islamic legal education, competency-based learning suggests that graduates must have not only a strong foundation in classic Islamic jurisprudence but also the capability to analyse new legal issues, interpret various evidence (Syabrina & Nasrin, 2026; Pahrurroji, 2025), and make coherent legal arguments and formulate contextually relevant fatwas to address the challenges of the modern era (Azmi et al., 2025).

In today's world, the complexity of Muslim societies has made competency-

based fatwa education essential. The modern muftis are increasingly facing legal issues regarding artificial intelligence, electronic finance, biomedical ethics, environmental issues, migration, interfaith issues, family law and global public health (Kausar et al., 2024; Sona, 2024). Solutions to these problems require more than the mere memorisation of classical texts on law. It involves understanding how to read legal evidence in a constantly evolving social and legal context, the ability to consider multiple perspectives on law, a critical understanding of the reliability of various sources of religious information and the ability to apply sound professional judgment to the question of continuity versus lawsuits. Sarwar (2025) is of the view that modern-day fatwa-making is being seen as a more intellectually challenging activity involving the blending of a range of complementary skills, rather than the application of discrete legal principles.

Contextual jurisprudential reasoning is one such ability that plays a significant role among these abilities. In *uṣūl al-fiqh*, the term *taḥqīq al-manāṭ* means "the determination of the lawful features of each case prior to the application of rulings" (Parrey, 2024). *Taḥqīq al-manāṭ*

emphasises the importance of understanding the social realities of a situation, its changes, the public interest (*maṣlaḥah*), and the intentions of Islamic law (*maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*) for the proper evaluation of the legal rulings to make sure that judgments are authentic and relevant. Classical jurists, and especially al-Shāṭibī, believed that understanding the context was essential to the proper application of Islamic law and that it was a fundamental part of sound jurisprudential reasoning (Wibisono & Roeslan, 2025). In the current context of higher education, this classical concept can be understood as a professional skill for students to acquire to connect between basic Islamic legal frameworks and the modern world by applying logical analytical approaches.

As the importance of contextual reasoning has grown, so have the trends in educational research related to higher-order thinking and authentic learning. Competency-based education is based on the principle that learning to be competent is achieved by subjecting the learner to situations in which the knowledge they acquired is needed for analysis, evaluation, judgment, and problem solving, instead of mere memorisation of facts (Laskar, 2024;

Chappell et al., 2020). These evaluations are especially relevant to Islamic legal education, as the modern fatwas are complicated affairs, which will require mixing of scriptural evidence, shifting social environments, advances in science, ethical considerations and public policy. Thus, Syabrina and Nasrin (2026) and Sapiudin et al. (2025) stated that contextual jurisprudential reasoning allows students not only to learn the principles of Islamic law but also to apply these principles responsibly in addressing contemporary legal and moral issues.

Jurisprudential and argumentative reasoning are closely related to contextual reasoning, and are often synonymous in Islamic legal theory, as is the term *istidlāl*. Contextual reasoning has to do with understanding the context of the issues faced in the law, while *istidlāl* is the systematic process which leads to legal conclusions from established law sources (Yusuf, 2025). Students need to identify legal evidence, differentiate between stronger and weaker juristic opinions, evaluate possible arguments, structure legal reasoning in some kind of coherent order and present legal conclusions in intellectually convincing and methodologically sound manners in order to achieve effective

fatwa-making. Therefore, jurisprudential reasoning is not just merely the knowledge of uṣūl al-fiqh, but also critical thinking, analytical judgement, logical consistency, and a synthesis of different legal views into legal opinions.

The argumentative competence has recently been identified as a characteristic feature of the modern Islamic field, attracting growing scholarly attention. As the audiences seeking fatwas become increasingly diverse, muftis are required to provide a clear legal rationale for their decisions (Anwar, 2024), grounding their ruling in structured legal argument, not just institutional authority. Therefore, the validity of modern fatwas relies not only on the accuracy of the legal deductions but also on the clarity, coherence and consistency of the reasoning process by which the deductions are made. These developments have prompted Islamic higher education institutions to stress more upon critical thinking, analytical reasoning and professional communication skills of students in addition to the traditional knowledge of jurisprudence (Abdulghani et al., 2025; Batsal & Hadi, 2025).

In digitally mediated religious environments, source authentication competency has grown to be of increasing importance, complementing contextual and argumentative reasoning. The exponential growth of religious content online has made it easy to access many collections of Qur'anic exegesis, hadith collections, or juristic works, and even contemporary fatwas and scholarly commentaries (Sati et al., 2025). Meanwhile, new digital tools have facilitated the proliferation of unchecked narration, out-of-context legal rulings, fabricated hadiths, misinterpreted translations, and ideologically driven interpretations. Hence, Bekkin (2020) is of the view that the future muftis should have advanced information literacy skills to critically evaluate the authenticity and credibility of religious sources before engaging in legal reasoning and issuing fatwas.

Source authentication is thus more than just verifying chains of transmission and juristic authorities. In current educational settings, it is the larger skill of judging the authenticity of scholarly materials, evaluating digital repositories, checking for citation authenticity, determining legal authority of documents, comparing conflicting sources, and critically

assessing the reliability of religious information spread through digital media. The competencies are closely tied to the modern concepts of information literacy that state that the skills of information users are increasingly required to find, assess, combine and utilise reliable information in complex contexts of decision making (Chaliha et al., 2024). In Islamic legal education, therefore, source authentication not only constitutes an epistemological prerequisite that has been embedded in Islamic scholarly tradition but also a professional skill needed for a responsible role in religious life in the digital age.

Contextual jurisprudential reasoning, jurisprudential and argumentative reasoning, and source authentication should not be seen as separate skills which are unrelated, but should be analysed in unison. Instead, they form a comprehensive syllabus of competencies which form the basis of effective fatwa-making. Contextual reasoning helps with the understanding of the facts that underlie legal issues; jurisprudential reasoning offers the methodological tools needed to make legal conclusions systematically (Anshori & Abdurrahman, 2025); source authentication helps with the authenticity, reliability and

methodological soundness of the evidence on which legal reasoning can be based. Modern competency-based theory of education also posits that competence is developed in the interplay of the complementary competencies, rather than mastery of specific competencies alone (Açıkgöz & Babadoğan, 2021). Thus, the relevant competences of students as a group are a significant concern for Islamic higher education institutions aiming for the production of students who are able to face the new complexities of legal, ethical and social issues in modern Muslim societies.

While these competency domains have received growing theoretical interest in Islamic legal literature, there are a number of interesting questions to address concerning their development in the formal university setting. So far, a lot of the literature is still largely normative in nature, focusing on Fatwa methodology, classical jurisprudential theory and the changing nature of religious powers in modern societies. Very little empirical research is available on the effectiveness of the specialised university courses in developing measurable fatwa-making competencies among students and on the contribution of each competency domain to the

building of professional competency in general. This restriction is especially notable as competency-based education evolves as a model of curriculum design, learning outcomes, and assessment for higher education institutions around the world. This empirical gap is significant, especially considering the unique position that fatwa-making holds in the realm of professional fields. In this context, the current research investigates the acquisition of competency from the perspective of an empirical study among undergraduate students studying the fatwa-making course at the Mohammed Bin Zayed University for Humanitarians. Specifically, the study explores students' acquisition of: contextual jurisprudential reasoning, jurisprudential and argumentative reasoning, and source authentication competencies; relations between these competency domains and overall fatwa-making competency; the competency domain that most strongly predicts overall fatwa-making competency; and differences in competency among first-, second-, third-, and fourth-year students. The study adopts competency-based education and Islamic legal pedagogy approaches to demonstrate a competency-based, valid knowledge of the competencies of effective fatwa-making, and to provide

evidence to support curriculum development, instructional practice, competency assessment and education policy in Islamic higher education.

The study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To determine the level of students' acquisition of contextual jurisprudential reasoning competencies after completing the fatwa-making course.
2. To determine the level of students' acquisition of jurisprudential and argumentative reasoning competencies after completing the fatwa-making course.
3. To determine the level of students' acquisition of source authentication competencies after completing the fatwa-making course.
4. To determine the significant relationships among contextual jurisprudential reasoning, jurisprudential and argumentative reasoning, source authentication competencies, and overall fatwa-making competency.
5. To determine the competency domain that is the strongest predictor of overall fatwa-making competency among students.

6. To determine the significant differences in overall fatwa-making competency based on students' academic level.

The research questions of the study include the following:

1. What is the level of students' acquisition of contextual jurisprudential reasoning competency after completing the fatwa-making course?
2. What is the level of students' acquisition of jurisprudential and argumentative reasoning competency after completing the fatwa-making course?
3. What is the level of students' acquisition of source authentication competencies after completing the fatwa-making course?
4. Are there significant relationships among contextual jurisprudential reasoning, jurisprudential and argumentative reasoning, source authentication competencies, and overall fatwa-making competency?
5. Which competency domain is the strongest predictor of overall fatwa-making competency among students?

6. Are there significant differences in overall fatwa-making competency based on students' academic level?

In line with the objectives and the research questions, the following hypotheses were framed and tested at 0.05 significant level.

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between contextual jurisprudential reasoning competency and overall fatwa-making competency.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between jurisprudential and argumentative reasoning competency and overall fatwa-making competency.

Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between source authentication competencies and overall fatwa-making competency.

Ho₄: Contextual jurisprudential reasoning, jurisprudential and argumentative reasoning, and source authentication competencies significantly do not predict overall fatwa-making competency.

Methodology

Research design

The study involved a quantitative cross-sectional survey design to investigate students' learning of fatwa-making

competencies after the completion of the fatwa-making course at Mohammed Bin Zayed University for Humanities (MBZUH), United Arab Emirates. A cross-sectional design was appropriate as it enabled the data to be collected from a well-defined population at one time (Harland & Heller, 2026), allowing for the competence level to be measured, the relationships between the domains of competence to be examined, the predictors of overall fatwa-making competence to be identified, and comparisons to be made between the competencies of the different academic levels. Hoang (2026) stated that because the design allows educational outcomes to be studied in natural settings of education, and without any manipulation of the learning environment, this design is widely used in competency assessment research.

Research context

The study was carried out in the Mohammed Bin Zayed University for Humanities, Abu Dhabi, UAE. The university is well known for its focus on Islamic studies, human values, coexistence, moderation (wasatiyyah) and the fusion of classical Islamic knowledge and today's issues in society. The fatwa-making course has been introduced in the

Islamic studies undergraduate degree programme to develop the required skills for the modern legal process of fatwā, which include knowledge of uṣūl al-fiqh and maqāṣid al-sharīʿah, contextual jurisprudence, legal reasoning, and the evaluation of evidence. The course, therefore, offers a proper educational environment to ascertain competency attainment in fatwa-making.

Population and sampling

The study population comprised all undergraduate students who had successfully completed the fatwa-making course during the period of the study. As the number of students who were eligible for the study was relatively small, a census sampling technique was used, meaning that all students who were qualified for the study were invited to participate. A total of 305 students completed the questionnaire, from all 4 academic levels of undergraduates (Year 1, Year 2, Year 3, Year 4). Having students on different academic levels allowed for exploring developmental differences of fatwa-making competency across the undergraduate programme, as well as provided sufficient statistical power for correlation, regression and ANOVA analysis.

Instrumentation

A researcher developed a questionnaire called the Fatwa-Making Competency Acquisition Questionnaire (FMCAQ), which was used to collect data. The instrument was created after reviewing the literature pertaining to competency-based education, uṣūl al-fiqh, fatwa methodology, contextual jurisprudence, information literacy, and Islamic legal reasoning. The questionnaire conceptualised fatwa-making competency into three competency domains that were grounded in theory: contextual jurisprudential reasoning (taḥqīq al-manāṭ); jurisprudential and argumentative reasoning (istidlāl); and source authentication competency.

The questionnaire consisted of five sections. Section A collected respondents' demographic information, including their academic year. For contextual jurisprudential reasoning competency, 15 items were used for the evaluation of students' ability to relate to the contextual aspects of Islamic law, to analyse the factors, and to apply maqāṣid al-sharī'ah in jurisprudential reasoning in Section B. The fifteen items of section C measured jurisprudential and argumentative reasoning competency, such as legal analysis, designing legal

arguments, jurisprudential application of uṣūl al-fiqh, assessment of competing legal arguments, and reasoning based on evidence. There were fifteen items in Section D that assessed source authentication competency, including verification of Islamic sources, evaluation of scholarly evidence, information literacy with digital sources, verifying citations, and assessing legal authenticity. There were fifteen items in Section E that assessed the overall fatwa-making competency.

The responses were recorded on a four-point Likert Scale from 1 Strongly Disagree to 4 Strongly Agree. The elimination of the neutral response option in using a four-point scale led respondents to make a clear judgment on competency acquisition.

Validity and reliability

The questionnaire was well content-validated before data collection. The instrument was assessed independently by three experts in Islamic jurisprudence, curriculum and instruction, and educational measurement for content relevance and construct representation, clarity of wording, and consistency with the goals of the study. Their recommendations helped in revising the

wording, sequencing and conceptual alignment of the items, resulting in an improvement of content validity of the instrument.

A pilot study was conducted with undergraduate students who shared similar characteristics with the target population to evaluate the psychometric properties of the instrument. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to determine internal consistency reliability. The competency domains obtained satisfactory reliability values >0.70 , and the reliability of the overall questionnaire of 0.90 was high, suggesting that the questionnaire was suitable for measuring the competencies of students in the field of fatwa-making.

Data collection procedure

The reviewers of the research ethics committee of the relevant institution gave their ethical approval prior to data collection. Further formal permission was then gained from the University administration to administer the questionnaire. Eligible students were briefed on the aim of the study, and their participation was voluntary. All participants provided informed consent before completing the questionnaire.

After completion of the fatwa-making course, the questionnaire was given to students to ensure that their responses reflected the knowledge and competencies acquired through the course. The participants were asked to fill out the questionnaire anonymously to minimise the social desirability bias and reduce the likelihood that their responses would be influenced by concerns about personal identification. No personally identifiable information was gathered, and all completed questionnaires were stored securely in accordance with the institutional ethical guidelines.

Data analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 29, was used to analyse the data. The data were checked for completeness, missing data, and assumptions of parametric statistical analysis before hypothesis testing. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis) were used to assess students' competency acquisition levels and to check the distribution of the measured variables.

Descriptive statistics were used to answer research Questions One, Two and Three. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis was used in studying the

relationship between each competency domain and the overall fatwa-making competency, as well as the inter-relationships between the competency domains. Multiple linear regression analysis was performed to examine the contribution of contextual jurisprudential reasoning, jurisprudential reasoning, argumentative reasoning, and source authentication competency to the overall fatwa-making competency and to ascertain which competency is the best predictor of fatwa-making competency. The differences among the students from Year One to Year Four in the fatwa-making competency as a whole were analysed by one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The level of significance used was 0.05 Alpha.

Ethical considerations

The research was conducted in keeping with the internationally accepted tenets of conducting research with human

subjects. It was a voluntary study, and the respondents were made aware that they could leave at any time without incurring any penalties. Throughout the research process, the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants were protected by ensuring that no personally identifiable information was gathered. The data were only used for academic purposes and were stored securely to prevent unauthorised access. The study adhered to the institutional ethical guidelines of informed consent, participant welfare, confidentiality, and responsible data management.

Results

Research question 1

What is the level of students' acquisition of contextual jurisprudential reasoning competencies after completing the fatwa-making course?

Table 1: *Mean analysis of students' acquisition of contextual jurisprudential reasoning competencies after completing the fatwa-making course*

<i>n</i> = 305				
S/N	Contextual jurisprudential reasoning competency: <i>Once the fatwa-making course has been completed, I can:</i>			
		Mean	SD	Skewness Kurtosis

1	Discuss issues facing society and culture in the present time.	3.27	.47	.478	.631
2	Make connections between Islamic law and the current situation.	3.79	.44	-1.923	2.837
3	Take into account the circumstances in the context of legal opinions.	3.70	.46	-.886	-1.223
4	Use the principles of Islamic laws to tackle problems of the modern world.	3.60	.49	-.424	-1.832
5	Critically analyse contemporary issues within a legal framework.	2.94	.38	-4.077	19.777
6	Weigh the meaning of evidence within the context.	3.81	.39	-1.614	.610
7	Differentiate between fixed and flexible elements of Islamic law.	3.70	.47	-1.054	-.410
8	Use the concept of maqāsid al-sharī'ah in jurisprudential arguments.	3.78	.41	-1.361	-.149
9	Take public interest into account in legal matters.	2.96	.38	-3.544	19.409
10	Evaluate the impact of judicial decisions on society.	3.80	.41	-1.809	2.073
11	Understand the meanings of legal documents in relation to current situations.	3.75	.44	-1.145	-.693
12	Apply legal reasoning in the context of a changing social environment.	3.72	.45	-.974	-1.058
13	Evaluate the relevance of classical rulings to modern situations.	3.00	.21	-4.021	57.084
14	Bring context into the formulation of fatwas.	3.87	.34	-2.154	2.657

15	Discuss current issues from an Islamic perspective.	3.81	.42	-1.955	2.880
Cluster mean		3.57	.40	-1.50	5.15

A descriptive analysis of the students' contextual jurisprudential reasoning competencies after the fatwa-making course is shown in Table 1 below. The results show that the mean and standard deviations of the respondents' cluster are 3.57 (SD = 0.40), which expresses the extent of contextual jurisprudential reasoning competency of the respondents. The highest mean scores were found for the items bringing context into the formulation of fatwas (M = 3.87, SD = 0.34), weighing the meaning of the evidence within the context (M = 3.81, SD = 0.39), discussing current issues in an Islamic perspective (M = 3.81, SD = 0.42), evaluating the impact of judicial decisions on society (M = 3.80, SD = 0.41), and making connections between Islamic law and the current situation (M = 3.79, SD = 0.44). The lowest mean scores were found in critically analysing the contemporary issues within a legal framework (M = 2.94, SD = 0.38), regarding public interest in legal matters (M = 2.96, SD = 0.38) and assessing the relevance of classical rulings in modern

situations (M = 3.00, SD = 0.21). The mean skewness and kurtosis for the competency domain were -1.50 and 5.15, respectively, which suggested that the responses were negatively skewed with a relatively peaked distribution.

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between contextual jurisprudential reasoning competency and overall fatwa-making competency.

Table 2: *Pearson product-moment correlation analysis of the relationship that exists between contextual jurisprudential reasoning competency and overall fatwa-making competency*

Variables	Std.		r	R ²
	Mean	Deviation		
CJRC	3		-.2	.04
	5	0.14	0.1	.01
	7		0	.00
OFMC	3.60	0.15		

CJRC= Contextual Jurisprudential Reasoning Competency; OFMC = Overall Fatwa-Making Competency, and R²= Coefficient of Determination

There is no significant relationship between overall fatwa-making competency and contextual fatwa-making competency. Table 2 shows Pearson product-moment correlation analysis for the relationship between contextual jurisprudential reasoning competency and overall fatwa-making competency. The mean score of contextual jurisprudential reasoning competency was 3.57 (SD = 0.14) while the mean score of the overall fatwa-making competency was 3.60 (SD = 0.15).

The result of the analysis found a correlation coefficient value of $r = -0.210$, meaning that there is a weak negative correlation between the contextual jurisprudential reasoning competency and the overall fatwa-making competency. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.044$) indicates that contextual jurisprudential reasoning competency only explained 4.4% of the overall fatwa-making competency.

Research question 2

What is the level of students' acquisition of jurisprudential and argumentative reasoning competency after completing the fatwa-making course?

Table 3: Mean analysis of students' acquisition of jurisprudential and argumentative reasoning competency after completing the fatwa-making course

n = 305

Jurisprudential and argumentative reasoning competency: <i>Once the fatwa-making course has been completed, I can:</i>		Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
S/N					
1	Construct logical legal arguments.	3.81	.42	-1.955	2.880
2	Deliver convincing legal arguments.	3.78	.41	-1.384	-.084
3	Critically examine legal issues in a systematic way.	3.02	.13	7.655	56.966
4	Make comparisons between different jurisprudential perspectives.	3.87	.34	-2.154	2.657

5	Critically evaluate legal arguments.	3.76	.44	-1.325	.102
6	Use the principles of <i>uṣūl al-fiqh</i> in reasoning.	3.81	.39	-1.587	.522
7	Make inferences based on information.	2.89	.50	-3.062	9.703
8	Determine flaws in legal reasoning.	3.80	.40	-1.507	.274
9	Support legal arguments with appropriate evidence.	3.80	.40	-1.507	.274
10	Evaluate the merits of opposing legal arguments.	3.70	.46	-.869	-1.254
11	Construct logical arguments.	3.02	.15	6.403	39.255
12	Critically analyse modern fatwas.	3.91	.28	-2.911	6.519
13	Justify legal opinions with appropriate evidence from the text.	3.82	.39	-1.643	.702
14	Analyse to provide a resolution to conflicting legal opinions.	3.77	.42	-1.315	-.272
15	Identify fair and unfair arguments.	3.01	.08	12.288	149.974
	Cluster mean	3.58	.35	.08	17.10

The descriptive statistics in Table 3 show that the students' level of jurisprudential and argumentative reasoning competency was at a high level, with a cluster mean of 3.58 (SD = 0.35). The highest mean scores were found for critically analysing modern fatwas (3.91, SD = 0.28), making comparisons between different perspectives in jurisprudence (3.87, SD = 0.34), justifying opinions with appropriate evidence from the text (3.82, SD = 0.39), constructing appropriate logical

arguments in jurisprudence (3.81, SD = 0.42), and using the principles of *uṣūl al-fiqh* for reasoning (3.81, SD = 0.39). The lowest mean scores were found for making inferences based on information (M = 2.89, SD = 0.50), identifying fair and unfair arguments (M = 3.01, SD = 0.08), constructing logical arguments (M = 3.02, SD = 0.15) and critically examining legal issues in a systematic way (M = 3.02, SD = 0.13). The skewness and kurtosis values for the competency domain were close to zero (average =

0.08) and high (average = 17.10, respectively), suggesting an approximately symmetric but highly peaked distribution of the responses.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between jurisprudential and argumentative reasoning competency and overall fatwa-making competency.

Table 4: *Pearson product-moment correlation analysis of the relationship that exists between jurisprudential and argumentative reasoning competency and overall fatwa-making competency*

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	r	R ²
JARC	3.58	0.12	305	-.126	.016
OFMC	3.60	0.15			

JARC= Jurisprudential and Argumentative Reasoning Competency; OFMC = Overall Fatwa-Making Competency, and R²= Coefficient of determination

Table 4 shows the results of the Pearson product-moment correlation test for the 4 comparisons between jurisprudential and argumentative reasoning competency with overall fatwa-making competency. The mean scores of jurisprudential and argumentative reasoning competency were 3.58 (SD = 0.12) and 3.60 (SD = 0.15), respectively, while the overall mean scores of fatwa-making competency were 3.59 (SD = 0.13). A weak negative correlation was found between jurisprudential and argumentative

reasoning competency and overall fatwa-making competency, with $r = -0.126$. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.016$) showed that the variance or differences in overall fatwa-making competency accounted for 1.6% of the variance in the influence of jurisprudential and argumentative reasoning competency.

Research question 3

What is the level of students' acquisition of source authentication competencies after completing the fatwa-making course?

Table 5: Mean analysis of students' acquisition of source authentication competencies after completing the fatwa-making course*n* = 305

Source authentication competency: At the					
S/N	end of the fatwa-making course, I can:	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
1	Verify the authenticity of Islamic sources.	3.69	.47	-.802	-1.366
2	Identify reliable and unreliable sources.	3.85	.36	-1.998	2.003
3	Critically analyse juristic references.	3.16	.36	1.891	1.586
4	Determine authentic hadith evidence.	3.77	.43	-1.442	.460
5	Determine authoritative sources of Islamic information.	3.61	.49	-.438	-1.820
6	Check citations prior to using them in legal reasoning.	3.80	.40	-1.482	.197
7	Differentiate between primary and secondary sources.	3.18	.39	1.507	.814
8	Analyse and assess information on Islamic resources found online.	3.75	.43	-1.186	-.597
9	Recognise the problems with legal evidence.	3.56	.52	-.676	.052
10	Evaluate the usefulness of sources for legal problems.	3.87	.34	-2.154	2.657
11	Use common practices of source verification.	3.03	.65	-1.388	3.838
12	Search for credible sources using scholarly databases.	3.75	.43	-1.165	-.646
13	Check information from a variety of sources.	3.62	.49	-.495	-1.766
14	Accept valid contemporary fatwas.	3.85	.36	-1.926	1.719
15	Assess the validity of lawful evidence.	3.18	.41	.941	2.744

Cluster mean	3.58	.43	-.61	.39
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Table 5 shows the descriptive analysis of students' gains in acquiring competencies in source authentication after taking the fatwa-making class. The results revealed a cluster mean of 3.58 (SD = 0.43), which was an extremely high level of competency at source authentication. The highest mean scores were obtained for the competency indicators on evaluating sources for legal problems (M = 3.87, SD = 0.34), recognising reliable and unreliable sources (M = 3.85, SD = 0.36), accepting valid contemporary fatwas (M = 3.85, SD = 0.36), checking citations before using them in legal reasoning (M = 3.80, SD = 0.40), and determining authentic hadith evidence (M = 3.77, SD

= 0.43). The lowest mean scores were for common practices of source verification (M = 3.03, SD = 0.65); critically analysing juristic references (M = 3.16, SD = 0.36); differentiating between primary and secondary sources (M = 3.18, SD = 0.39); and assessing the validity of lawful evidence (M = 3.18, SD = 0.41). The competency domain had an average skewness value of -0.61 and an average kurtosis value of 0.39, suggesting a moderately skewed distribution with kurtosis near normal.

Ha₃: There is no significant relationship between source authentication competencies and overall fatwa-making competency.

Table 6: *Pearson product-moment correlation analysis of the relationship that exists between source authentication competency and overall fatwa-making competency*

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	r	R ²
SAC	3.58	0.13	305	.577	.333
OFMC	3.60	0.15			

SAC= Source Authentication Competency; OFMC = Overall Fatwa-Making Competency, and R²= Coefficient of Determination

The results of Pearson product-moment correlation between source authentication competency and overall fatwa-making competency are presented in Table 6. The mean score for the source authenticity competency was 3.58 (SD = 0.13), and the mean score for the overall competency of fatwa-making was 3.60 (SD = 0.15). The results of the analysis showed that there is a positive relationship between the source authentication competency and the fatwa-making competency, with the value of $r = 0.577$, which means the value is in

the moderate level. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.333$) shows that the variance of the source authentication competency accounted for 33.3% of the variance of the overall fatwa-making competency.

Research question 4:

Are there significant relationships among contextual jurisprudential reasoning, jurisprudential and argumentative reasoning, source authentication competency and overall fatwa-making competency?

Table 7: *Pearson product-moment correlation analysis of the relationship that exists among contextual jurisprudential reasoning, jurisprudential and argumentative reasoning, source authentication competency and overall fatwa-making competency*

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	r	R ²
CJRC	3.57	0.14	305	-.210	.044
JARC	3.58	0.12	305	-.126	.016
SAC	3.58	0.13	305	.577	.333
OFMC	3.60	0.15			

CJRC= Contextual Jurisprudential Reasoning Competency; JARC= Jurisprudential and Argumentative Reasoning Competency; SAC= Source Authentication Competency; OFMC = Overall Fatwa-Making Competency, and R²= Coefficient of Determination

The Pearson product-moment correlation analysis of the relationships between contextual jurisprudential reasoning

competency (CJRC), jurisprudential and argumentative reasoning competency (JARC), source authentication competency (SAC) and overall fatwa-

making competency (OFMC) is presented in Table 7. The descriptive statistics show that contextual jurisprudential reasoning competency had a mean score of 3.57 (SD = 0.14), jurisprudential and argumentative reasoning competency had a mean score of 3.58 (SD = 0.12), source authentication competency had a mean score of 3.58 (SD = 0.13), and finally, overall fatwa-making competency had a mean score of 3.60 (SD = 0.15). Based on the correlation results, contextual jurisprudential reasoning competency is negatively correlated with overall fatwa-making competency with a weak correlation value ($r = -0.210$, $R^2 = 0.044$). Likewise, there was a negative weak correlation between jurisprudential and

argumentative reasoning competency with overall fatwa-making competency ($r = -0.126$, $R^2 = 0.016$). However, source authentication competency had a moderate positive correlation with the overall fatwa-making competency ($r = 0.577$, $R^2 = 0.333$). The highest correlation coefficient and coefficient of determination between the three competency domains and the overall fatwa-making competency were for source authentication competency.

Ho₄: Contextual jurisprudential reasoning, jurisprudential and argumentative reasoning, and source authentication competencies do not significantly predict overall fatwa-making competency.

Table 8: Multiple regression analysis of contextual jurisprudential reasoning, jurisprudential and argumentative reasoning, source authentication competency and overall fatwa-making competency

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	P
Constant	30.629	4.638	—	6.604	0.000
CJRC	-0.158	0.053	-0.149	-2.961	0.003
JARC	-0.046	0.063	-0.037	-0.734	0.464
SAC	0.639	0.053	0.562	12.156	0.000

Model fit: $R = 0.600$, $R^2 = 0.360$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.354$, $F(3, 301) = 56.536$, $p = 0.001$

The results of multiple regression analysis that examined the predictive contribution of contextual jurisprudential reasoning competence, jurisprudential and argumentative reasoning competence, and source authentication competence to overall fatwa-making competence are presented in Table 8. The regression model resulted in the following: multiple correlation coefficient: $R = 0.600$, coefficient of determination: $R^2 = 0.360$, and adjusted coefficient of determination: Adjusted $R^2 = 0.354$. The overall regression model was significant, $F(3, 301) = 56.536$, $p = .001$. Results of the individual regression coefficients showed that contextual jurisprudential reasoning competency significantly contributed to fatwa-making competency

($B = -0.158$, $SE = 0.053$, $\beta = -0.149$, $t = -2.961$, $p = .003$). The effect of jurisprudential and argumentative reasoning competency on overall fatwa-making competency was not statistically significant ($B = -0.046$, $SE = 0.063$, $\beta = -0.037$, $t = -0.734$, $p = .464$). There was a statistically significant positive correlation between competency in the source and competency in overall fatwa-making ($B = 0.639$, $SE = 0.053$, $\beta = 0.562$, $t = 12.156$, $p < .001$). The results show that the three competency domains accounted for 36.0% of the overall variance in fatwa-making competency.

Research question 5

Which competency domain is the strongest predictor of overall fatwa-making competency among students?

Table 9: Multiple regression analysis of the strongest competency domain predictor of overall fatwa-making competency among students

Predictors	β	t	Sig
CJRC	-0.149	-2.961	0.003
JARC	-0.037	-0.734	0.464
SAC	0.562	12.156	0.000

The standardised regression coefficients for the three competency domains in the

regression model are shown in Table 9. Based on the results, the competency of

source authentication has the largest standardised regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.562$, $t = 12.156$, $p < .001$), followed by the competency of contextual jurisprudential reasoning ($\beta = -0.149$, $t = -2.961$, $p = .003$). The standardised regression coefficient (β) for jurisprudential and argumentative reasoning competency was the lowest ($\beta = -0.037$, $t = -0.734$, $p = .464$), and it was not statistically significant. Based on

the standardised beta coefficients, the strongest predictor of overall fatwa-making competency among the three competency domains examined was source authentication competency.

Research question 6

Are there significant differences in overall fatwa-making competency based on students' academic level?

Table 10: Descriptive statistics of overall fatwa-making competency by students' academic level

Levels	N	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Year 1	73	3.44	0.23	.297	-.671
Year 2	86	3.60	0.23	-1.021	.524
Year 3	101	3.67	0.12	-.179	.240
Year 4	45	3.69	0.20	-.808	.142

In order to present the descriptive statistics of the overall fatwa-making competency, a descriptive analysis is given in Table 10 below according to the academic level of the students. The results indicate that Year 1 students recorded the lowest mean competency score ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 0.23$), followed by

Year 2 students ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.23$), Year 3 students ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.12$), and Year 4 students ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 0.20$), who recorded the highest mean score. Competency scores were found to be skewed between -1.021 and 0.297 , and kurtosis ranged from -0.671 to 0.524 across the four academic levels.

Table 11: One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) of overall fatwa-making competency by academic level

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	583.920	3	194.640	64.029	.000
Within Groups	914.988	301	3.040		
Total	1498.918	304			

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to see if there was a significant difference between the mean competency scores in order to determine the statistical significance of the differences observed. Overall, fatwa-making competency showed a statistically significant difference at the four academic levels, $F(3, 301) = 64.029$, $p < .001$ (as presented in Table 11). The between-group sum of squares was 583.920, and the within-group sum of squares was 914.988 with mean squares of 194.640 and 3.040, respectively. The ANOVA test showed that there was a significant difference between the overall Fatwa-Making competencies of students by their academic levels. The omnibus ANOVA test only tells us if there is a significant difference between the groups; post hoc multiple comparison analyses are needed to determine the

academic levels at which the difference occurred.

Discussion of findings

In relation to objective one

The findings revealed that students demonstrated a high level of contextual jurisprudential reasoning competency following completion of the fatwa-making course. In particular, students reported greater abilities in integrating considerations of context in the formulation of fatwas, consideration of the legal evidence in today's context, discussing issues of the day in an Islamic way, and the relationship between Islamic law and present-day realities. The results indicate that the course was successful in building students' competence in producing legal reasoning beyond literal meaning from the texts into contextual legal reasoning, which is now considered to be a necessary

competence in making fatwas in the current era.

The results support the competency-based education approach (Pérez Zúñiga et al, 2025), which advocates that higher education should foster transferable job skills that can be applied to real-life scenarios, rather than just imparting theoretical knowledge. Contextual reasoning (fiqh al-wāqī‘) has emerged as a significant aspect of Islamic jurisprudence, as today's muftis are expected to apply classical legal principles in light of very dynamic social, technological, economic, and cultural changes.

The present findings are in line with the findings made by Sapiudin et al. (2025), who developed a digitally integrated critical-contextual learning model for uşūl al-fiqh. Their study found that this instructional approach enhanced students' ability to relate the rules of classical jurisprudence with the contemporary legal problems. The authors finally concluded that contextual reasoning must be a part of the basic learning of Islamic legal education rather than remaining an implicit element of jurisprudential instruction.

In a similar fashion, this study confirmed the results of Azeez and Adegboyega (2026), who noted that the use of critical-thinking strategies in teaching fiqh significantly increased the ability of students to analyse complex legal problems, consider alternative opinions regarding the jurisprudential dimensions of the problems, and formulate legal arguments in context. A study they conducted found that pedagogical methods that focus on the students' learning rather than the teacher's lecture promote higher-order juristic reasoning than the standard lecture approach.

Students' competency was generally high, though the higher-order competency of analysing contemporary legal issues, considering public interest (maşlahah) and evaluating the relevance of classical rulings to modern situations was comparatively lower, indicating that these competencies are still relatively challenging. The skills involved in these require high levels of synthesis of classical jurisprudence, the maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah, and the context of the present society, and these are generally acquired over a long period of study and practice of the law.

Overall, the results provide a positive contribution to the development of contextual jurisprudential reasoning in the fatwa-making course and suggest ways to improve the teaching and learning of public interest jurisprudence, modern legal studies, and contemporary issues in society that require classical legal rulings.

The results showed that there was a weak negative correlation between the contextual jurisprudential reasoning competency and the overall fatwa-making competency. Even though it explained only a small percentage of the variance in the overall competency, this result shows that contextual reasoning alone may not be enough to explain students' overall competency in fatwa-making. This discovery mirrors the multidimensionality of fatwa-making. In the modern era, Islamic legal decision-making is not limited to the context but also involves the ability to apply textual evidence, verify the authenticity of sources, engage with the methodology of the Islamic law (uṣūl al-fiqh), make ethical judgments, and use juristic reasoning (Abu-AlShaeer, 2025). Therefore, contextual reasoning is just one element of a larger set of competencies. This finding contrasts with

the belief in the literature on competence-based education, which Teunissen et al. (2021) concluded that a higher level of contextual reasoning would directly translate to a higher professional competence. But it can be justified when it comes to the question of whether or not it is always possible to get legally secure fatwas from contextual reasoning, if no rigorous evidence authentication is provided. This is in line with the recent study by Sattar et al. (2026), which highlighted the need to conduct contextualisation after the authenticity of the legal evidence. Taken together, the findings thus support the idea that contextual reasoning should be developed alongside other competencies of jurisprudence and should not be built in isolation within fatwa-making education.

In relation to objective 2

The result indicated that students' jurisprudential and argumentative reasoning competence were high after running the fatwa-making course. Pupils' abilities in the analysis of contemporary fatwas, as well as in comparison of different approaches to law and jurisprudence, were especially well developed, as were their skills in building arguments and using uṣūl al-fiqh

(mastery of the fundamentals of jurisprudence) and textual evidence to support legal opinions. The results indicate the importance of argumentation in Islamic jurisprudence. Formulating fatwas demands that the muftis build a coherent line of argument around the legal issues, explain how to harmonise diverging views of the jurists and provide a justification for the conclusion of the law, using the recognised sources of Islamic law. As a result, the competency levels observed suggest that the course effectively fostered students' analytical, argumentative, and jurisprudential competencies.

The results confirm the results of Nawi et al. (2025), which state that the use of instructional strategies that focus on critical thinking had a significant impact on improving the skills of students in the fields of jurisprudential analysis, legal evaluation, and argumentative reasoning in fiqh education. The authors further found that the active learning methods promote better legal reasoning than the traditional methods of memorisation. Similarly, Herlina et al. (2025) showed that problem-based and project-based learning strategies significantly enhanced students' critical thinking, teamwork, and

legal reasoning skills in Islamic higher education institutions. Their work indicates that student engagement with real-world legal issues positively impacts students' knowledge and skills in legal practice.

However, students did mention low levels of competency in making legal inferences as well as recognising fair and unfair arguments. These skills are high-level analytical and involve a broad range of examples of real contentious legal issues and legal case analysis. Their lower ratings suggest that more focus should be given to practical skills in legal reasoning in the fatwa-making curriculum. Furthermore, the results suggest that the course was effective in fostering the jurisprudential and argumentative reasoning skills, while also indicating the need to strengthen instruction in advanced inferential reasoning and evaluative judgment.

The results indicated that there was a weak negative correlation between the jurisprudential and argumentative reasoning competency, with this competency domain accounting for only a small proportion of the observed variance in overall fatwa-making competency. Jurisprudential reasoning is

an essential element of fatwa-making, but the present results indicate that legal argumentation is not sufficient to explain students' competency in the entire fatwa-making process. Meerangani et al. (2026) reported that effective fatwa formulation requires simultaneous integration of legal reasoning, contextual analysis, source authentication, ethical responsibility, and methodological competence. This finding partly contrasts with recent education research, which reported that emphasising the importance of critical thinking and legal reasoning is a major determinant of professional competence (Andreucci-Annunziata et al., 2023). However, within Islamic jurisprudence, legal argumentation derives its authority from authentic textual evidence and recognised legal methodology. Consequently, argumentative ability that is not supported by reliable evidence authentication may contribute relatively little to overall professional competency. The findings, therefore, suggest that jurisprudential reasoning should be developed alongside evidence authentication and contextual jurisprudential reasoning within competency-based Fatwa education.

In relation to objective three

The findings demonstrated that students attained a high level of source authentication competency after completing the fatwa-making course. Students reported particularly strong competencies in evaluating the usefulness of legal sources, distinguishing reliable from unreliable references, accepting valid contemporary fatwas, verifying citations, and authenticating hadith evidence. The results of this study highlight the need for information verification in Islamic law education. The credibility of the legal evidence used in the juristic reasoning is a fundamental element in Authentic fatwa-making. In turn, source authentication is one of the basic skills that must be mastered for sound legal judgment.

The results are in line with the recent studies that highlighted the increasing significance of information literacy in Islamic higher education. For example, Abubakari (2024) argued that Islamic teachers are now required to have digital literacy skills and information verification skills due to the growing reliance on the digital information environment for Islamic study in the modern world, which entails systematic information verification. Likewise, Howell et al. (2025)

found that deepening students' religious literacy has a positive impact on their academic ability and other professional development aspects in Islamic higher education. The results of their study provide evidence that the acquisition of authentic religious materials serves as a platform for developing higher-order competencies.

It is concluded that advanced source criticism is still a topic for further instructional focus because of the comparatively lower ratings for analysing juristic references, differentiating between primary and secondary sources and verifying legal evidence. These skills are advanced academic reasoning that grows over time as a result of repeated encounters with classical and modern Islamic legal texts. Furthermore, the results show that the fatwa-making course is effective in developing the ability of students to conduct legal research based on evidence and at the same time, it is also found that it still needs to emphasise students' information literacy in conducting advanced source criticism.

The results showed that there was a moderate positive correlation between the competency of students in source

authentication and the competency of students in fatwa-making competency, which means that the higher the students' competency in source authentication, the higher the students' competency in fatwa-making competency. This discovery reiterates the pivotal role of source authentication in Islamic jurisprudence. According to Wahab et al. (2026), fatwa-making is fundamentally based on the authenticity, credibility and methodological validity of the legal text from which the juristic conclusion is drawn, where many professional fields have information verification as a support skill. Therefore, students who have greater skills in the genuine authentication of Qur'anic evidence, hadith, juristic opinions and contemporary legal references are more likely to make sound and defensible legal judgements.

The results align with the modern literature in favour of enhancing the integration of information literacy in higher education programs of Islamic institutions. Warisno et al (2026), Habibi (2025) and Ma'arif et al (2025) have also concluded that the ability to verify evidence, the digital literacy and the ability to evaluate scholarly sources are essential abilities for modern Islamic

scholarship and religious practice. The findings are also relevant to the competency-based education literature because they show that the domain of source authentication is the best educational basis for effective operation of contextual reasoning and jurisprudential argumentation in the competency domains examined. The findings emphasise the need for the inclusion of strict source criticism, hadith authentication, legal citation analysis and digital information evaluation in the fatwa-making curricula in Islamic higher education institutions in order to improve students' professional competence in general.

In relation to objective four

The results showed different relationships between the competency domains and the overall fatwa-making competency. The correlations between contextual jurisprudential reasoning competency and jurisprudential and argumentative reasoning competency and overall Fatwa-Making competency were negative with weak correlations, while the correlation of source authentication competency and overall competency was positive with moderate correlation. Source authentication competency had the strongest relationship with overall fatwa-

making competency, with 33.3% of variance. These results indicate that while students' contextual reasoning and jurisprudential argumentation competency were relatively high, these competencies were not significantly connected to the overall competency in fatwa-making. Formulating a fatwa is a complex scientific endeavour that involves combining context, logic, methodology, ethics and the law, and above all, legal evidence. Therefore, the ability to reason in context or to construct an argument alone can be insufficient indicators of overall fatwa-making ability.

The results are in line with the competency-based education model, which Alainati (2021) argues that professional competence is gained through complementary knowledge, skills, and attitudes rather than through singular competencies. It also upholds the teachings of modern Islamic jurisprudence scholars like Sattar et al. (2026) and Sarwar (2025), which states that "responsible fatwa-making" commences with the careful authentication and evaluation of legal evidence prior to contextual interpretation and legal reasoning. The results also support recent research by

Eriksen (2022) and Neumann et al. (2022), who identified source evaluation and evidence literacy as the key predictors of competent legal decision making in higher education, especially in professional contexts that require evidence-based judgment.

The multiple regression analysis showed that the three competency areas collectively developed a statistically significant prediction model, accounting for about 36.0% of the variance of the overall fatwa-making competency. But when the single predictors were examined, there were significant differences in their contributions. Both the Source authentication competency and the contextual jurisprudential reasoning competency contributed positively, though the former proved to be the strongest and the latter the weakest, while the jurisprudential and argumentative reasoning competency failed to contribute significantly to the overall fatwa-making competency. The strong predictive power of the finding for source authentication competency underscores how essential it is for the verification of evidence in Islamic legal learning. The process of formulating a fatwa is essentially an evidence-based process, in which scholars must

determine the authenticity, reliability, and relevance of scriptural and juristic sources before beginning reasoning in the field of jurisprudence. It is thus concluded that students with better source authentication skills are more likely to produce fatwas that are legally, methodologically, and academically sound.

In general, the results contribute to the theory of competency integration models, which state that competency development occurs as a result of the complementary interaction of competencies. The findings mean that curricula planners at Islamic higher education institutions should bolster the instructional coherence between legal reasoning, contextual interpretation and source authentication, instead of learning outcomes that are considered as independent skills.

In relation to objective five

The results indicated that the source authentication competency was the most significant to predict Fatwa-Making competency across the three competency domains explored. The standardised regression coefficient for source authentication is significantly higher than the other two, which suggests that

source authentication uniquely predicted students' overall competency. This discovery is a confirmation of the pivotal role of evidence authentication in Islamic jurisprudence. In classical and modern educational theories of fiqh, there is a clear emphasis on obtaining rulings based on evidence which is authentic and credible (Anshori & Abdurrahman, 2025; Bakar & Sahman, 2024). Juristic reasoning, analogy, and contextual interpretation are all tools that can be used to make meaning of the source(s) of law only after the authenticity and reliability of those sources have been ascertained. Finally, students with higher competencies in legal evidence authentication are more likely to show higher competencies in the overall fatwa-making.

The conclusion also suggests that the development of information literacy in the field of contemporary education is still necessary to equip students with information and knowledge in the field of education in general, including fatwa-making. The increasing availability of digital Islamic resources, online fatwas, and electronically accessible juristic literature has made source verification an increasingly important competency for future muftis (Adnan, 2024; Wahid,

2024). Strengthening students' ability to evaluate digital sources, authenticate hadith, assess juristic references, and verify legal citations is, therefore, likely to enhance the quality and credibility of Fatwa-Making education. These findings align with contemporary competency-based educational models, which emphasise that professional performance is strengthened when learners acquire robust information evaluation skills alongside domain-specific knowledge. They also support emerging evidence within higher education that information literacy and evidence verification are among the strongest determinants of professional decision-making quality.

In relation to objective six

The results indicated that there was a significant difference between the academic levels of students in terms of overall fatwa-making competency. There was a gradual improvement in mean competency scores from Year One to Year Four, with students at the higher year levels reporting higher levels of overall competency than those at the lower year levels. This sequential progression of competence follows developmental models of professional development that Vindigni (2023) found expertise is developed through a gradual buildup of

knowledge, repeated practice, and repeated authentic disciplinary experiences. Students will increasingly be expected to be exposed to harder texts in the successive years of Islamic higher education, deal with more complex jurisprudential issues, and be given more complex opportunities for legal reasoning. All of these academic experiences, of course, contribute to the competency of fatwa-making in a cumulative way.

Although the ANOVA established that significant differences existed among the academic levels, it did not identify the specific groups responsible for these differences. Therefore, interpretation of pairwise differences requires post hoc multiple comparison analyses. Nevertheless, the observed trend of increasing competency across academic levels provides evidence that prolonged engagement with the Islamic higher education curriculum contributes positively to students' development of fatwa-making competency. From a curriculum perspective, these findings underscore the importance of maintaining vertically aligned competency development throughout undergraduate Islamic studies programmes. They also highlight the need

to provide early-year students with additional opportunities for authentic legal reasoning, source authentication, and practical fatwa exercises in order to accelerate competency development before the final years of study.

Conclusion

The aim of this study is to show the empirical evidence of the development of fatwa-making competencies among undergraduate students at Mohammed Bin Zayed University for Humanities through the study of the interrelationships between contextual jurisprudential reasoning, jurisprudential and argumentative reasoning, source authentication competency and overall fatwa-making competency. The results illustrate that 'Fatwa-Making' is a multidimensional phenomenon and needs complementary competencies to be integrated and executed effectively instead of depending on any one of the competencies. Students were generally competent in all three domains; however, it was found that they scored significantly differently on each competency when it came to overall fatwa-making.

The regression analysis reveals that the source authentication competency is the

most significant predictor of the overall fatwa-making competency, highlighting the essential nature of source authentication in the Islamic legal process. This discovery reinforces the epistemological principles of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, which is based on the premise that legal evidence must be authentic and credible before it can be used to arrive at sound juristic reasoning and valid fatwa formulation. Also, the negativity of the coefficient for contextual jurisprudential reasoning found statistically significant should not be interpreted as an inverse relationship between education. Likewise, the fact that jurisprudential and argumentative reasoning did not contribute significantly implies that legal argument alone is not enough to predict a comprehensive fatwa-making competency with the inclusion of evidence authentication and contextual reasoning.

All these results suggest that the competency integration models suggest that competencies are not learned in isolation, but rather through an interaction of complementary knowledge, skills, and dispositions. The results of this study suggest that, in the context of Islamic Higher Education, the curriculum in fatwa-making teaching should break

out the limitations of separate teaching and adopt the "integration of contextual reasoning, legal argumentation, and source authentication" approach. This is likely to generate students who are able to effectively meet contemporary legal challenges in a manner that is grounded in an Islamic legal methodology and the authenticity of the legal sources.

The study also reveals that the source authentication competency is the highest individual determinant of fatwa-making competency. This discovery is significant for Islamic legal education in an age of Insta-publishing of religious material and the widespread availability of the internet fatwa. In addition to being able to reason in terms of law, future muftis must also be equipped with higher skills in evaluating internet information and authenticating hadiths, assessing juristic authorities, verifying legal references, etc., before drawing legal opinions. Therefore, scholarly information literacy should be considered as a core competency of professionalism in fatwa-making, in addition to the teaching of jurisprudential methodology and legal reasoning.

The study also provided evidence that overall, students' fatwa-making

competency is found to be increasing from one academic level to another. This developmental sequence indicates that competency development is progressive and that it is a cumulative process that involves ongoing exposure to ever-deeper knowledge of jurisprudence, to genuine learning activities and to a deliberate form of legal reasoning across the undergraduate curriculum. This result is in line with the competency-based curriculum model that suggests learning to be scaffolded and professional skills to be developed in stages. It also shows that the concept of coherent curriculum sequencing is able to play a meaningful role in the professional development of students in Islamic legal education. However, due to the nature of the analysis, which only determined that differences exist across academic levels and not across specific groups, additional studies should include post hoc analysis and longitudinal designs to gain a more complete understanding of competency development over time.

Finally, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on competency-based Islamic legal education by empirically establishing a framework that guides the understanding of the competencies that support

competency in fatwa-making. The results have important implications for both theory and practice, as they show the importance of the integration of source authentication, contextual jurisprudential reasoning and legal argumentation in the development of competent future muftis. Such awareness helps the curriculum developers, teachers, and policy makers to make fatwa-making education more robust and to make sure that the graduates are equipped with the professional skills needed to address the complex legal and ethical issues that are facing the modern Muslim societies.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations are given:

1. The curricula in fatwa-making in higher education institutions of Islam should be re-designed based on a competency-based approach and include purposive integration of competencies in contextual jurisprudential reasoning, jurisprudential and argumentative reasoning and source authentication throughout the programme and not as separate units of instruction.
2. Source authentication competency should be given greater importance in

- the curriculum, and students should be systematically trained in hadith authentication and verification of opinions, evaluation of modern fatwas, analysis of legal citations and use of good digital Islamic databases. Considering that source authentication was the most powerful indicator of overall fatwa-making competency, enhancement in this area will have a significant impact on the students' professional skills.
3. Course instructors should use student-centred pedagogical techniques such as problem-based learning, case-based learning, simulation of fatwa committees, collaborative jurisprudential argumentation and realistic jurisprudential case analysis, to further enhance students' contextual reasoning and jurisprudential argumentation in realistic legal scenarios.
 4. To better enable students to apply classical Islamic jurisprudence to the changing social contexts, there is a need to increase the opportunities given to them to interact with issues of emerging importance in contemporary social life, such as artificial intelligence, digital finance, biomedical ethics, environmental sustainability, family law and global social challenges in the fatwa-making curriculum.
 5. Continuous competency assessment shall be combined with the traditional written examination using authentic professional competency-based assessment methods such as writing fatwas, oral legal defence, peer review, reflective practice and supervised jurisprudential method in analysing case studies, in order to assess the professional competence of the students more comprehensively.
 6. Academic programmes should introduce structured competency development gradually from the beginning of the academic career and strengthened gradually by more complex jurisprudential tasks, and fatwa-making experiences gradually in the last years of the academic life.
 7. Islamic legal education universities need to allocate resources for research to develop digital scholarly resources, authenticated Islamic databases and faculty professional development in order to improve

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| <p>evidence-based teaching, information literacy, and modern fatwa research.</p> <p>8. Finally, future studies should confirm the competency framework designed in this study by conducting longitudinal, mixed-methods and cross-cultural studies in various</p> | <p>Islamic higher education institutions and national contexts. They would give more information on the development, transferability and sustainability of fatwa-making competencies among future Islamic legal scholars.</p> |
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