Potret Pemikiran

Prayer Practices of International Students at Islamic University of Indonesia: A Comparative *Madhhab* Study

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A B S T R A C T

This study explores the diversity of salat (ritual prayer) practices among international students at the Islamic University of Indonesia (UII) who come from various Islamic legal *madhahib* (madhahib, madhahib of Islamic jurisprudence). These differing practices, particularly in salat al-farḍ (obligatory prayers), often raise questions among local students within a predominantly Syafi'i jurisprudential environment. The research aims to examine how international students perform salat and whether they adopt inclusive or exclusive attitudes in responding to local religious norms. Employing a qualitative approach grounded in Bhikhu Parekh's theory of multiculturalism and comparative Islamic jurisprudence, this study draws on coordination with UII's Office of International Affairs, closed and open interviews, observations, literature reviews, and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Data was analyzed through processes of reduction and interpretive analysis. The findings reveal significant variations in prayer practices, including the recitation of Surat al-Fatiḥah (the Opening Chapter of the Qur'an)—particularly the *basmalah* (the phrase "In the name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate")—hand positioning, the practice of qunut (a supplicatory prayer), and attitudes toward additional movements during prayer. Theoretically, this study extends comparative madhhab jurisprudence by situating lived ritual differences within a multiculturalism framework, thereby conceptualizing jurisprudential diversity not merely as a practical accommodation, but as a normative foundation for religious inclusivity in contemporary Muslim academic settings.

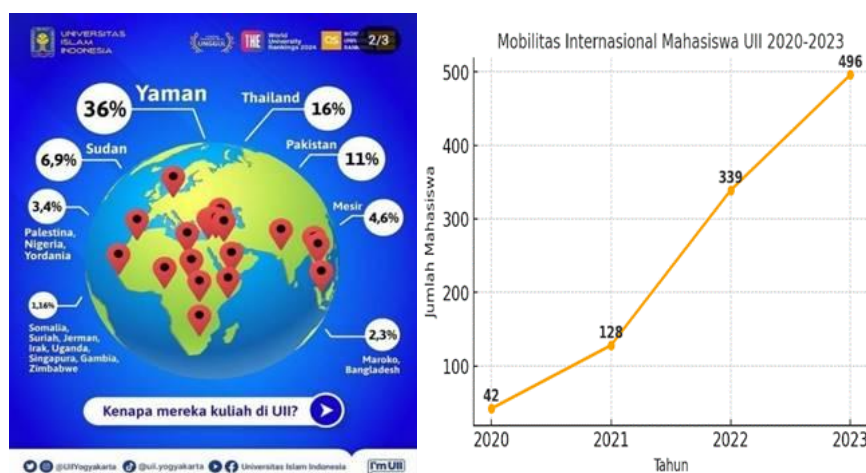## A R T I C L E   I N F O

How to cite:

1. INTRODUCTION

Religious identity, ideology, and one's worldview inevitably shape how individuals respond to various aspects of life (Hidayatulloh, 2025). This diversity is a manifestation of *sunnatullah* (divine law) that teaches humans to be inclusive, tolerant, and harmonious (Arfa & Lasaiba, 2022). This form of diversity, often referred to as multiculturalism, is also observable within university environments. One example is the practice of salat among international students at the Islamic University of Indonesia (UII). This study is motivated by the diverse practices of obligatory prayer *(salat al-farḍ)* among international students at UII, which have raised questions within the university community. Moreover, the increasing number of international students accepted each year calls for the university to provide orientation and support, to prevent exclusivism within public spaces. Understanding the diverse jurisprudential backgrounds (madhahib) of international students is crucial for a major institution like UII. This becomes even more important considering programs such as the International Program (IP), student exchange initiatives, and campus organizations that facilitate cultural and religious acculturation—highlighting the need for serious attention and research. In general, the madhhab background of UII's international students aligns with the dominant madhhab of thought in their respective home countries. The global distribution of Islamic legal madhahib can be broadly illustrated as follows (Kamali, 2008):

Picture 1. The Distribution of Fiqh madhahib in the World

In 2020, UII welcomed 42 new international students from 10 countries: Palestine, Liberia, Jordan, Egypt, Syria, Nigeria, Yemen, Thailand, Gambia, and Pakistan. According to the Vice-Rector for Networking and Entrepreneurship, Ir. Wiryono Raharjo, this admission aligns with the vision of UII's founders, who established the university in 1945. Although differences in time, culture, and behavior are inevitable, such diversity is expected to become a vital and meaningful source of learning (Suryana, 2020). In 2023 alone, UII hosted 496 international students from 41 countries through various inbound mobility programs, including degree programs, credit transfer, and short-term exchanges. This marked a significant increase from previous years, 339 students in 2022 and 128 students in 2021 (Jehamun, 2024). These figures indicate a two-way intercultural dynamic: not only through the presence of international students but also through UII students' participation in global academic mobility. To illustrate this, the author presents the following data on the growth of international mobility at UII:

Picture 2. The Increase in International Mobility of UII Students

This diversity is particularly visible in the practice of salat, where students from different Islamic legal traditions perform ritual prayer within a predominantly Syafi'i environment. Variations in prayer movements, recitations, and ritual procedures have occasionally raised questions among local students, indicating the need for deeper academic engagement with jurisprudential plurality in everyday worship practices (Hidayatulloh & Nahar, 2025). The study explores how international students adapt within an environment predominantly adhering to the Syafi'i madhhab of thought, specifically in the context of performing obligatory prayers. It seeks to determine whether they tend toward inclusivity by participating in congregational prayers and adopting local practices, or whether they maintain an exclusive and potentially intolerant stance (Modood, 2012). More specifically, the study contributes to the development of comparative jurisprudence (*fiqh al-madhahib*) by examining, the prayer practices of international students identifying both similarities and differences across madhhab traditions, and situating these practices in relation to classical scholarly opinions and their textual foundations (Hidayatulloh, 2024). Through this approach, research seeks to assess the alignment between normative legal teachings and lived religious practice.

Diversity is a manifestation of Islam's rich intellectual heritage that should be approached with tolerance and scholarly rigor. A sound understanding of the procedures and nullifiers of salat is essential to ensure that worship is conducted correctly and validly (Muharramah & Hamid, 2022). Classical fiqh literature demonstrates that ritual practices in prayer are shaped by distinct legal methodologies rather than representing a single, uniform model. Within the Shafi'i madhhab, for example, *Fatḥ al-Qarib al-Mujib* by Shaykh Muḥammad ibn Qasim al-Ghazi distinguishes recommended acts of prayer (*sunan*) into *sunan abʿaḍ*, whose omission requires *sujud al-sahw*, and *sunan hayʾat*, which do not entail such a requirement (Al-Ghaziy, 2020). Such classifications illustrate that diversity in salat is embedded within the normative structure of Islamic law itself.

This jurisprudential plurality becomes more apparent when viewed comparatively across different *madhahib* of law. While the Shafi'i tradition regards the recitation of *qunut* in the Fajr prayer as a recommended practice, other *madhahib* adopt contrasting legal evaluations, such as the Ḥanafi view that considers it a religious innovation

(*bidʿah*), or the Ḥanbali position that categorizes it as *makruh* (discouraged). These divergent rulings reflect legitimate differences in legal reasoning and textual interpretation, underscoring that variation in ritual practice is an accepted dimension of Islamic jurisprudence rather than a deviation from it. Beyond its legal formulation, salat also constitutes a deeply personal and experiential act of worship. Contemporary studies emphasize that prayer involves frequent, motivated, and emotionally meaningful engagement, highlighting its significance in shaping individual religious experience (Schille-Hudson et al., 2025).

Previous studies on ṣalah have primarily examined prayer through normative, pedagogical, or biomedical lenses, often treating it as a uniform ritual practice. While comparative fiqh literature acknowledges jurisprudential diversity, these discussions remain textual and rarely explore how such differences are negotiated in real-life communal settings (Darmiyanto & Arsyad, 2021). Similarly, research on religious tolerance and multiculturalism tends to focus on conceptual frameworks rather than concrete intra-religious practices (Casram, 2016). This gap highlights the need for empirical studies that integrate classical jurisprudential analysis with lived experiences in multicultural environments. Addressing this gap, the present study offers a novel approach by combining phenomenological fieldwork (Creswell & Poth, 2016), with comparative fiqh and Bhikhu Parekh's multiculturalism theory to contextualize ritual diversity among international students in Indonesia. This approach contributes to the development of comparative fiqh studies by linking classical legal discourse with lived religious practices in multicultural settings.

This study advances the state of the art by integrating comparative Islamic jurisprudence with multiculturalism framework to examine lived salat practices among international students. This research conceptualizes ritual variation not merely as legal difference, but as a socially meaningful expression of Islamic pluralism and religious inclusivity. The novelty of this research lies not only in its thematic focus but also in its methodological approach, which integrates a comprehensive framework comprising bibliometric analysis, textual examination of classical Islamic legal sources and contemporary scholarly works, as well as contextual analysis through interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and field observations. It is important to note that the bibliometric analysis was limited to English-language publications indexed in the Scopus database, and thus, the findings may not fully represent the entire body of scholarship on the diversity of salat practices within the Islamic tradition.

2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research design grounded in a phenomenological approach and informed by multiculturalism theory and comparative Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh al-madhahib), as articulated by Bhikhu Parekh (Parekh, 2001). A qualitative methodology was chosen to capture the lived religious experiences of international students and to understand how they interpret, negotiate, and practice salat within a socio-religious environment predominantly shaped by the Syafi'i madhhab. The comparative madhhab approach enables an in-depth examination of similarities and differences in prayer practices across various Islamic legal traditions, while simultaneously fostering an inclusive understanding of diversity within Islamic

law. This methodological orientation aligns with the view that Islamic jurisprudence is dynamic and adaptable, allowing it to respond constructively to contemporary global and multicultural contexts without compromising its core values and principles (Osman, 2023).
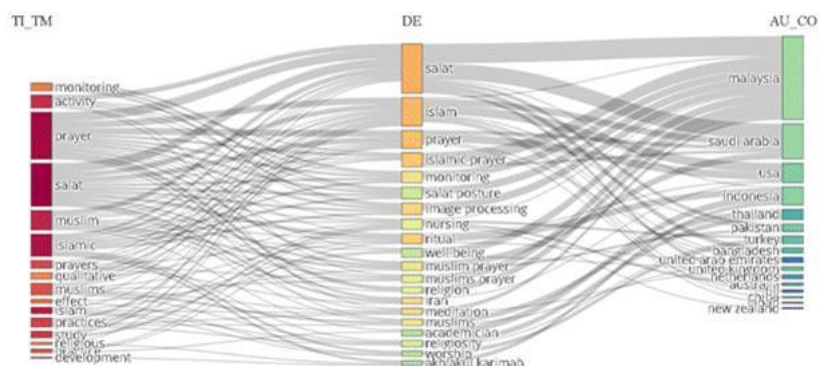
Official data from the International Office of UII indicate an increase in international student enrollment in recent years. The participants of this study were international Muslim students enrolled at UII. A purposive sampling strategy was employed to ensure that participants met the following criteria: being international students at UII, identifying as Muslim, and having experience performing salat within the campus religious environment. Data collection was conducted in two stages. First, a closed-ended questionnaire was distributed to 12 international students to obtain preliminary demographic information, including countries of origin, length of stay in Indonesia, and self-identified madhhab affiliation. Second, in-depth open-ended interviews were conducted with 9 selected participants representing diverse national backgrounds and Islamic legal madhahib, including Ḥanafi, Maliki, Syafi'i, and Ḥanbali traditions. The number of interview participants was determined based on the principle of data saturation (Guest et al., 2006), no substantially new themes or analytical categories emerged, indicating that thematic saturation had been achieved.

To obtain rich and comprehensive data, multiple data collection techniques were employed. Semi-structured interviews were used to explore participants lived experiences of salat, their adaptation to local religious practices, and their attitudes toward jurisprudential differences. Each participant received a clear explanation of the research objectives and procedures, and informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. To protect participants' identities, anonymity was ensured using coded identifiers such as "Respondent 01" through "Respondent 09." In addition to interviews, direct observations were conducted in campus prayer spaces to document variations in prayer movements, recitations, and ritual procedures that are commonly associated with different madhhab traditions. To contextualize the scholarly landscape, the researcher also examined 55 Scopus-indexed publications using the keywords *salat* and Islam, as summarized in Table 5.

Table 1. Scopus Source: keyword salat and Islam

Category	Quantity
Authors	132
Author's Keyword (DE)	170
Sources	51
Authors of single-authored docs	24
References	2621
Documents	55
International Co-Authorship	20%
Document Average Age	08.58
Annual Growth Rate	1.63 %
Co-Authors per Doc	02.58
Average Citations per Doc	0,711805556

The researcher found that articles with the keyword salat are closely related to various aspects of life, such as health, well-being, and morality. This finding is reinforced by the present study, which reveals that a proper understanding of salat practices across different madhhab perspectives can foster tolerance towards religious diversity.
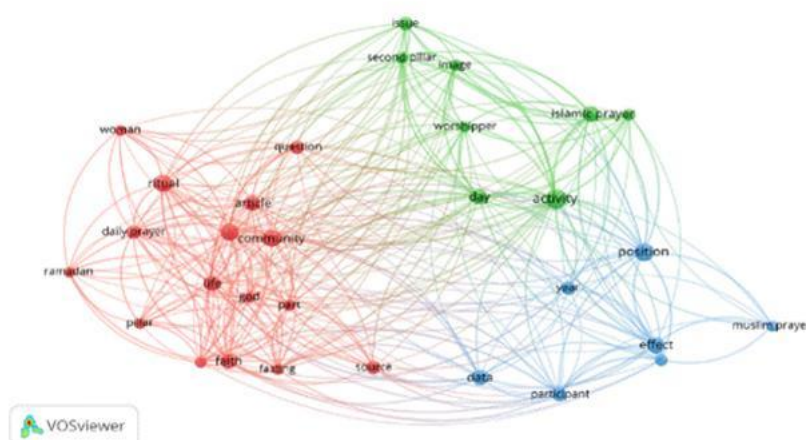

Picture 3. Scopus-indexed journal (Three-Field Plot)

In the figure above, the "TI_TM" column refers to research topics. salat emerges as one of the primary themes, alongside prayer, Muslim, and Islamic. This indicates that salat has become a significant focus across various scholarly studies. The "DE" column represents the keywords associated with the relevant articles. The keyword salat appears prominently and is linked to several other terms such as Islam, monitoring, salat posture, health, and well-being. This suggests that research on salat extends beyond its ritualistic aspects to include scientific considerations such as prayer movements, their conformity to jurisprudential rulings, and their effects on health and overall well-being. The movements in salat can be likened to light-intensity physical exercises as they involve multiple joints and muscles in each posture (Osama et al., 2019). Meanwhile, the "AU_CO" column refers to the authors' countries of origin. The keyword salat is strongly associated with countries such as Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, the United States, Indonesia, Thailand, and Pakistan. This indicates that research on salat is conducted extensively across various nations, with Malaysia appearing to be a major contributor to this field.

Picture 4. Article contributors by country

In addition, the researcher conducted a bibliometric analysis of the most frequently occurring terms within the 55 Scopus-indexed articles and identified several findings, which are visually represented using red, green, and blue clusters.
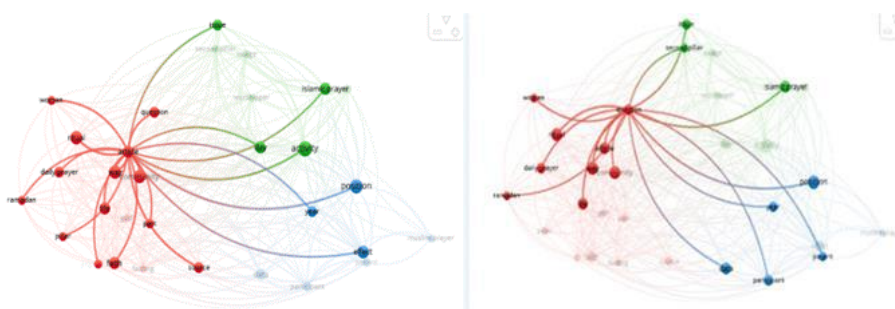

Picture 5. Scopus article source (Bibliometric)

Table 2. Bibliometric image description

Cluster	Main Theme	Theme Connections	Interpretation
Red	community	*faith, fasting, life, god, ritual, daily prayer, dan ramadan*	The theme is closely related to religious life and spiritual practices.
Green	islamic prayer	*worshipper, second pillar, issue, image, day, activity*	It focuses on the ritual aspects of worship and their implementation in Islam.
Blue	muslim prayer	*position, effect, participant, year*	A more analytical approach, such as examining the impact of salat.

The terms within each cluster are interconnected by lines, indicating the presence of conceptual relationships between elements from different clusters. For instance, the words 'article' and 'question' appear as intersection points among several clusters, suggesting that many studies focus on academic discussions or inquiries related to this theme.

Picture 6. Keyword: article, question and daily prayer

The term 'daily prayer' also serves as a point of intersection between elements in different clusters; however, it is not connected to certain terms such as 'data'. This indicates that studies discussing daily prayer (salat) have not extensively examined it through the lens of textual evidence from recognized classical Islamic scholars. Therefore, this research aims to bridge that gap by linking empirical findings with authoritative textual sources.

Data analysis in this study employed a qualitative thematic approach supported by NVivo software to enhance analytical rigor, transparency, and traceability (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The use of NVivo was not merely instrumental but formed an integral part of the systematic coding and interpretation process. All interview transcripts, focus group discussion records, and field observation notes were imported into NVivo as primary data sources.

The analytical procedure followed three interrelated stages. First, open coding was conducted by identifying meaningful units related to prayer practices, juristic references, adaptation strategies, and perceptions of difference. Codes such as *hand position*, *basmalah recitation*, *qunut practice*, *movement validity*, and *juristic justification* emerged inductively from the data. Second, axial coding was applied to connect these initial codes into broader analytical categories, including *madhhab-based variation*, *contextual adaptation*, *ritual tolerance*, and *social interaction in congregational prayer*. Finally, selective coding was undertaken to integrate these categories into overarching themes that address the research objective, particularly the role of comparative fiqh in mediating diversity and social integration among international students.

To ensure data credibility, this study implemented methodological triangulation by combining in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and non-participant observation (Denzin, 2017). Source triangulation was achieved through the inclusion of respondents from different madhhab affiliations and diverse national backgrounds, allowing cross-verification of practices and interpretations. In addition, theoretical triangulation was applied by interpreting field data through the framework of comparative fiqh, drawing upon classical juristic sources and contemporary fiqh scholarship. Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the research process. All participants participated voluntarily and were informed of their right to withdraw from study at any stage without consequence. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by excluding identifying information from transcripts and research outputs, and all data were used solely for academic purposes.

A FGD involving international students and students from international-class programs at UII was also organized to facilitate collective reflection and to cross-validate individual interview findings. Furthermore, secondary data were collected through an extensive review of academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers, and classical Islamic legal texts (kutub al-turath) related to comparative fiqh and salat practices. Key emerging themes were validated and supported by relevant prior studies (Radzi et al., 2016). As final outputs, the researcher prepared a journal article in accordance with publication standards, as well as

additional deliverables including a book and a documentary video highlighting the observed salat practices.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The primary findings of this study indicate that variations in salat (daily prayer) practices among respondents are significantly influenced by their madhhab (madhhab of thought) backgrounds. Respondents following the Ḥanafi madhhab from Pakistan tended to preserve their original practices. In contrast, those from Kazakhstan, while also affiliated with the Ḥanafi tradition, displayed a higher degree of adaptability due to the influence of teachers and broader perspectives that promote tolerance. Maliki respondents from Sudan also showed signs of adaptation, except in cases where they lacked clarity or deeper understanding of the differences. Respondents affiliated with the Shafi'i madhhab, particularly those from Yemen and Egypt, found it easier to adapt to local prayer practices due to greater similarity in rituals. While most respondents reported no significant difficulties, one Maliki respondent experienced resistance when leading prayer (as imam), due to differences in practice compared to the local madhhab. Meanwhile, Ḥanbali respondents from Saudi Arabia continued their usual ritual practices, perceiving the differences as minor and non-disruptive. Overall, these differences were generally attributed to variations in hadith transmission, scholarly interpretations, and the legal methodologies of respective madhhab. However, all respondents viewed these differences as valid within the broader framework of Islamic law and upheld mutual respect across traditions.

The diversity of movements and postures in salat must still conform to the guidance practiced by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). One effective way to learn the correct methods is through instructional texts and manuals (Winata et al., 2023). Such diversity is not only observed between different madhhabs (Islamic legal madhahib), but also within adherents of the same madhhab, reflecting the dynamic interpretations and local customs that may influence individual practices. The researcher conducted data analysis and direct observation, focusing on elements of salat that are both ritually essential (arkan) and frequently vary in practice, making them highly visible during communal worship. The following are examples of variations in salat practices among the respondents:

Table 3. Diversity in the Practice of salat

Discussion	Ḥanafiyyah	Malikiyyah	Syafi'iyyah	Hanabilah
Hand Position	Below or above the navel (male); on the chest (female)	Folded or hands by the sides (*irsal*)	Between chest and navel	On the chest
Reciting Basmallah	Silently (*sirr*)	Not obligatory	Aloud (*jahr*)	Silently (*sirr*)

Recitation of Al-Fatihah by Makmum	Not obligatory	Silently (*sirriyyah*, obligatory); *jahriyyah*, not obligatory	Always obligatory	Not obligatory
Qunut in Fajr Prayer	Innovation (*bid'ah*) if done continuously	Present, prioritized before bowing (*ruku'*)	*Sunnah ab'adh*	Only in *Qunut Nazilah* (emergency situations)
Tashahhud Posture	*Iftirash* in all Tashahhud (male); *sadl* in all Tashahhud (female)	Final Tashahhud: *Iftirash* or *Tawarruk*; others: *Iftirash*	Final Tashahhud: *Tawarruk*; others: *Iftirash*	Male: *Tawarruk* (final), *Iftirash* (others); Female: *Sadl* in all Tashahhud
Index Finger Movement in *Tashahhud*	Twice when reciting the two testimonies (*shahadatain*)	Twice when reciting the two testimonies	Only once during the recitation of *shahadatain*	At every mention of the word "Allah"
Excessive Movements That Invalidate Prayer	Consecutively more than 3 movements	Intentional & without need	Movements that are unnecessary and inappropriate	Movements that are unnecessary and inappropriate

Negotiating Hand Positions and Takbir Practices in salat

One dominant view in classical fiqh literature emphasizes the practice of qabd, namely placing the right hand over the left during the standing position (qiyam) while reciting Surah al-Fatihah. This position is commonly associated with the Syafi'i and Ḥanbali madhahib. Field data from international students at UII largely reflect this dominant view. Most respondents affiliated with the Syafi'i, Ḥanafi, and Ḥanbali madhahib placed their hands on the chest or between the chest and the abdomen. Male Ḥanafi respondents from Pakistan and Kazakhstan positioned their hands either below or above the navel, while female respondents from the same madhhab tended to place their hands on the chest. These findings indicate that *qabd* continues to function as a widely recognized normative reference in contemporary salat practice. However, this apparent normativity is challenged both by empirical findings and by internal jurisprudential debates. A Maliki respondent (Respondent 06) consistently practiced irsal, allowing the arms to hang naturally without crossing them. During the Focus Group Discussion, this practice was justified by referring to *amal ahl al-Madinah*, which is recognized in Maliki jurisprudence as an authoritative source of legal reasoning. This position complicates the assumption that *qabd* represents a universally

accepted practice and demonstrates that alternative forms of hand positioning are legally grounded within the Islamic legal tradition. The jurisprudential debate becomes more apparent when examining the evidentiary basis for *qabd*. The Ḥanbali madhhab often refers to the narration of Wail ibn Hujr, which states:

عن وائل بن حجر رضي الله عنه قال: صليت مع النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم، فوضع يده اليمنى على يده اليسرى على صدره

> Narrated by Wail ibn Hujr (ra): "*I performed prayer with the Prophet, and he placed his right hand over his left hand on his chest.*" (Al-Fauzan, 2015).

Despite its frequent citation, this narration has been critically examined by Abdullah bin Salih al-Fawzan in his commentary Minhat al-Allam fi Sharh Bulugh al-Maram. He noted that the narration, as recorded by Ibn Khuzaymah (1/243) and al-Bayhaqi (2/30), passes through Muammal ibn Ismail, who, although known for his honesty, was considered weak in memory. Abu Hatim further stated that Muammal committed many mistakes in transmission. This critique shows that the textual basis for qabd, while widely accepted, is not beyond scholarly debate.

A similar tension appears in discussions of irsal within the Maliki madhhab. Al-Fawzan questioned how Imam Malik could be associated with irsal while transmitting a hadith that supports qabd and dedicating a specific chapter to it in al-Muwatta (1/158), entitled Bab Wad al-Yadayn Ihdahuma ala al-Ukhra fi al-salat (Anas, 2018). This critique highlights the presence of internal methodological differences within Islamic jurisprudence. In response, Maliki scholars such as al-Baji offered a contextual explanation. He argued that Imam Malik's disapproval of qabd may have been motivated by concern that ordinary worshippers would assume it to be a compulsory pillar of prayer, the omission of which would invalidate the salat. Al-Baji stated:

وقد يحمل قول مالك بكراهة قبض اليدين على خوفه من اعتقاد العوام أن ذلك ركن من أركان الصلاة تبطل الصلاة بتركه

> "*This explanation reframes irsal not as a rejection of textual evidence, but as a pedagogical approach aimed at preventing rigid ritualism among the wider community.*" (al-Muntaqa, 1/281)

When these competing jurisprudential positions are examined alongside field data, a synthesizing pattern emerges. Many international students reported that in congregational prayers they chose to follow the imam's practice, even when it differed from their personal madhhab background. This adaptive behavior indicates that jurisprudential diversity in hand position and takbir movements is not experienced as a source of conflict, but rather as a practical space for negotiating tolerance and maintaining social cohesion. In this context, technical variations in salat function as mechanisms of integration within a multicultural academic environment, rather than as markers of division.
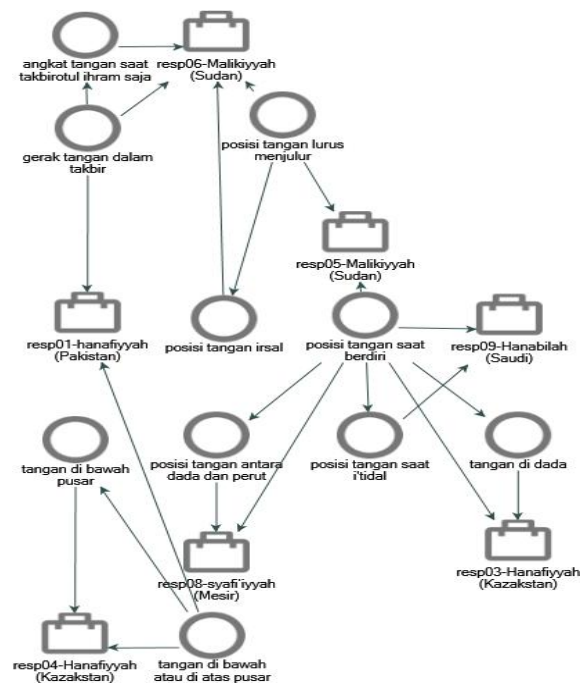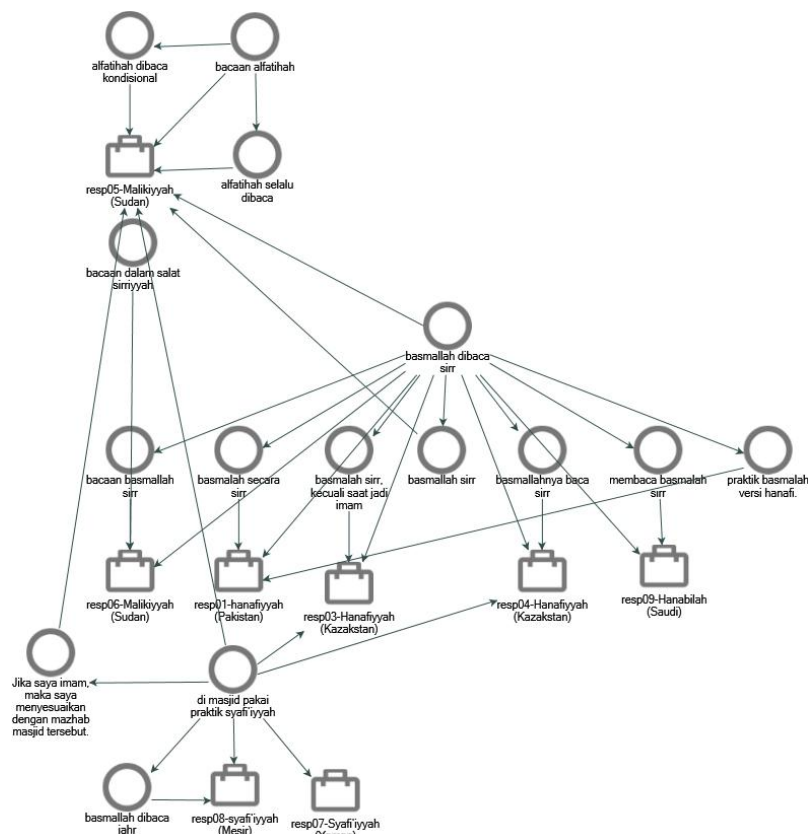
Figure 7. NVivo coding map of hand-position and takbir variations among respondents.

Negotiating the Recitation of Basmalah and al-Fatihah in salat

Picture 8. NVivo coding map of basmalah and al-Fatihah recitation patterns (jahr/sirr; makmum/ imam)

The field data indicate that variations in the recitation of the Basmalah and Surat al-Fatihah among international students at UII largely reflect their respective fiqh affiliations. Respondents from the Ḥanafi and Ḥanbali madhahib generally recited the Basmalah silently, based on the view that it is not part of Surat al-Fatihah but serves as a separator between Qur'anic chapters. A notable exception emerged from a Ḥanafi respondent from Kazakhstan, who demonstrated contextual adaptability by reciting the Basmalah aloud after residing in Indonesia, particularly when acting as an imam. Similarly, respondents affiliated with the Maliki madhhab maintained that the Basmalah is not obligatory in prayer, referring to the Dar al Mushaf Ifriqiyya edition of the Qur'an, in which Surat al-Fatihah begins with *al hamdu lillahi rabb al alamin*, in line with the Madinah mushaf transmission and Maliki legal tradition. In contrast, Syafi'i respondents consistently recited the Basmalah aloud in audible prayers, as they consider it an integral part of Surat al-Fatihah that must be recited in both audible and silent prayers.

From a normative perspective, congregational prayer is designed to cultivate discipline, unity, and ritual precision, encompassing correct recitation, bodily movements, punctuality, and ritual purity as part of the outward dimension of worship (Topan, 2018). However, previous studies note that inaccuracies in recitation or movement often occur, either due to limited exposure to formal prayer instruction or the persistence of incorrect learning practices (Koubâa et al., 2020). In this context, the diversity observed in the field should not be hastily interpreted as deviation, but rather as an expression of legitimate juristic plurality grounded in authoritative legal reasoning.
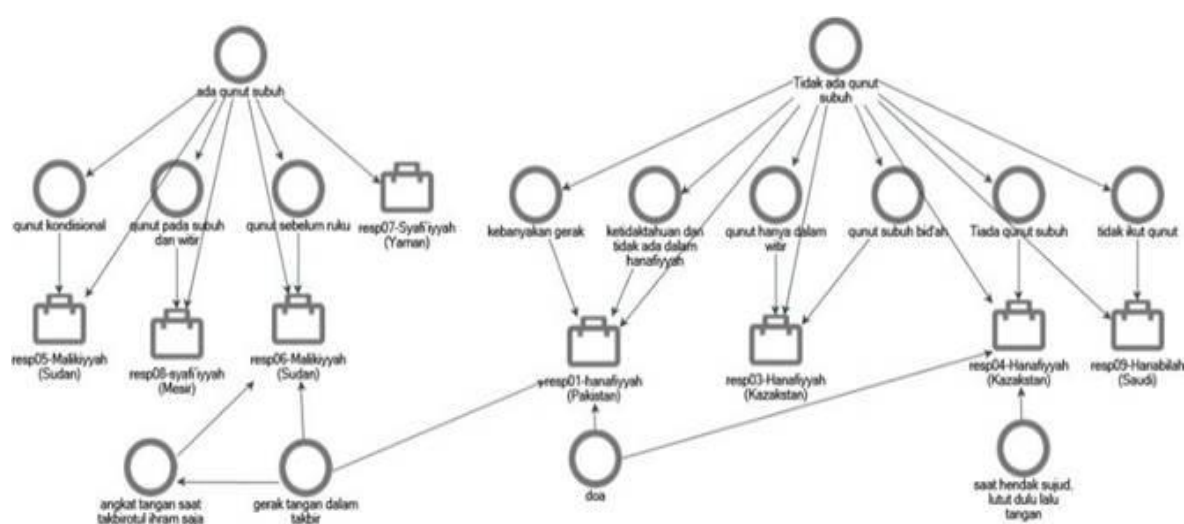
This plurality becomes more evident in the debate concerning the obligation of reciting Surat al-Fatihah by the follower (makmum). Classical jurists articulated three dominant positions: first, that recitation is obligatory in silent prayers but not in audible ones, as held by the Maliki madhhab; second, that it is obligatory in both silent and audible prayers, as maintained by the Syafi'i madhhab; and third, that the follower is not required to recite at all, whether in silent or audible prayers, as argued by the Ḥanafi and Ḥanbali madhahib (Al-Fauzan, 2015). These divergent views stem from different readings of an authentic hadith narrated by Jabir ibn Abd Allah: "Whoever performs prayer behind an imam, then the imam's recitation suffices for him" (Al-Aini, 2018).

Empirically, Maliki respondents applied a situational approach to the recitation of Surat al-Fatihah. They recited it when praying individually, when acting as imam, and when praying as followers during Zuhr and Asr prayers. This practice closely aligns with the patterns observed among Indonesian students in the focus group discussion and reflects the positions of classical Maliki scholars. Nevertheless, the dominant consensus among most jurists affirms that reciting Surat al-Fatihah is obligatory for both the imam and the individual praying alone, and that prayer is invalid without it. An exception to this consensus is found in the views of Abu Hanifah and one narration from Imam Ahmad, who held that reciting Surat al-Fatihah is not obligatory in either audible or silent prayers, and that reciting any portion of the Qur'an suffices. This position is supported by the general meaning of the Qur'anic verse, "*So recite whatever is easy for you from the Qur'an*" (al Muzzammil: 20), as well as the prophetic instruction to a man ordered to repeat his prayer to recite whatever is easy for him from the

Qur'an. In responding to this apparently conflicting evidence, Ḥanafi jurists employed the method of al jam, or reconciliation, within usul al fiqh. Al Kasani explained in Badai al Sanai fi Tartib al Sharai that the obligation to recite Surat al Fatihah applies to the imam and the individual praying alone, but not to the follower. He cited a report from Ibn Abbas, in which recitation was permitted in Zuhr and Asr prayers, while silence was required when the recitation of the imam was audible, in accordance with the Qur'anic command: *"When the Qur'an is recited, listen to it and be silent, so that you may receive mercy"* (Q.S. al-Araf: 204) (Al-Kasani, 2018).

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that differences in the recitation of the Basmalah and Surat al Fatihah among international students are not merely technical discrepancies, but manifestations of well-established juristic methodologies. In a multicultural academic environment, awareness of these legitimate differences plays a crucial role in fostering mutual respect, reducing ritual friction, and strengthening social integration within congregational worship.

The Practice of Qunut

Picture 9. The Practice of Qunut

The empirical data show that the practice of *Qunūt* among international students reflects a clear juristic divide that corresponds to established positions within the classical madhahib of Islamic law. Respondents affiliated with the Maliki madhhab generally recited *Qunūt* before *rukūʿ*, although they emphasized its conditional nature rather than treating it as a fixed component of the Fajr prayer. In practice, Maliki respondents demonstrated contextual adaptability by adjusting their performance when acting as an *imām* or following congregational prayers in Indonesian mosques. By contrast, respondents from the Syafi'i madhhab consistently regarded *Qunūt* as an integral part of the Fajr prayer, to be recited after rising from *rukūʿ* (*iʿtidāl*) in the second *rakʿah*, and during Witr prayers, particularly in the latter half of Ramadan.

In opposition to these views, respondents from the Ḥanafi madhhab did not perform *Qunūt* in the Fajr prayer and, in some cases, classified it as *bidʿah*. For them, *Qunūt* is restricted to the Witr prayer after ʿIshāʾ and is recited before *rukūʿ*. One respondent from Pakistan expressed concern that additional recitations or movements

beyond what is deemed obligatory could undermine both the validity of the prayer and the practitioner's concentration. A similar tendency was observed among respondents from the Ḥanbali madhhab, who also refrained from performing *Qunūt* in the Fajr prayer and preferred to remain silent when following an *imām* who recites it, except in cases of *Qunūt al Nāzilah*, which is widely recognized as permissible during times of collective hardship.

Nevertheless, a synthesis of juristic discourse and field data reveals that individual practice does not always fully reflect the normative guidance of each legal madhhab. Classical Ḥanbali scholarship, as articulated by al Mardawi, indicates that although *Qunūt* in the Fajr prayer is regarded as *makrūh*, followers are still encouraged to maintain congregational harmony by responding appropriately when praying behind an *imām* who performs it. He states:

<div dir="rtl">

لو ائتم بمن يقنت في الفجر تابعه، فأمن أو دعا

</div>

"If one prays behind an imam who performs Qunūt in the Fajr prayer, he should follow him, either by saying āmīn or by supplicating." (Al-Mardawi, 2018)

This position reflects a broader fiqh principle that prioritizes unity and social cohesion in congregational worship over strict insistence on individual juristic preferences.

A comparable pattern emerged in the focus group discussion regarding the manner of descending into *sujūd*. Participants generally agreed that the knees should touch the ground before the hands. However, this apparent consensus does not negate the existence of other authoritative opinions. Authentic hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah records that the Prophet instructed worshippers to place their hands before their knees when performing *sujūd*:

<div dir="rtl">

إذا سجد أحدكم، فلا يبرك كما يبرك البعير، وليضع يديه قبل ركبتيه

</div>

"When one of you performs sujūd, he should not descend as a camel does; rather, he should place his hands before his knees." (Reported by Abu Dawud, al Tirmidhi, and al Nasaʾi).

Taken together, these findings underscore that variations in the practice of *Qunut* and related prayer movements are rooted in valid juristic interpretations rather than ritual inconsistency or error. Within a multicultural academic setting, such as that inhabited by international students, recognition of these legitimate differences serves as a critical mechanism for fostering tolerance, facilitating adaptation, and strengthening social integration in shared spaces of worship.

Variations in *Tashahhud* Sitting Postures

The findings demonstrate that differences in *tashahhud* sitting postures among international students are closely aligned with established juristic traditions, while also revealing internal diversity within individual madhhab affiliations. Classical fiqh literature identifies two primary sitting positions in prayer: *iftirash*, in which one sits on the left foot with the right foot upright and its toes facing the qiblah, and *tawarruk*, in which the left foot is positioned beneath the right leg with the buttocks resting on the ground (An-Nawawi, 2018). These positions serve as a normative framework
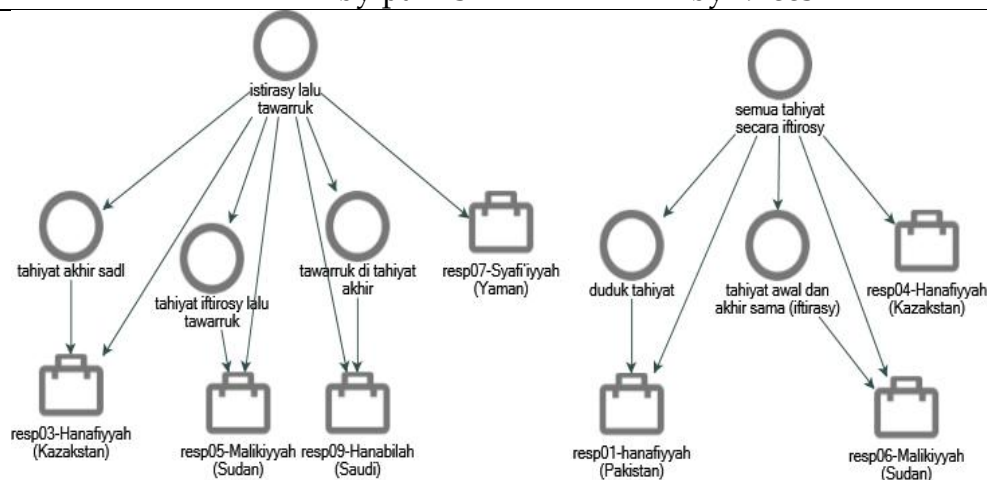
through which the observed practices of the respondents can be systematically understood.

Respondents affiliated with the Ḥanafi madhhab generally practiced *iftirash* in both the first and final *tashahhud*, reflecting the dominant position within the madhhab. However, field observations revealed an important variation among female respondents. One female participant from Kazakhstan adopted the *sadl* posture, sitting with both legs extended to the right side. This finding indicates that gender practice and local learning contexts may shape ritual performance even within a single legal madhhab, thereby challenging assumptions of uniformity at the level of lived religious practice.

Among Maliki respondents, two distinct patterns emerged. One respondent consistently performed *iftirash* in both *tashahhud* sittings without curling the toes of the right foot toward the qiblah, while another combined *iftirash* in the first *tashahhud* with *tawarruk* in the final sitting, a practice more commonly associated with the Syafi'i madhhab. Through successive open-ended interviews, the researcher found that such variation was not accidental, but rather linked to differences in teachers, reference texts, and modes of transmission, even among respondents originating from the same country. This internal diversity is further illustrated by differences in hand position and prostration techniques among Maliki respondents, as documented in the field data. For example, differences were observed among respondents from the Maliki madhhab, as detailed below:

Table 4. Diversity within a single Madhhab

Practice	Respondent 05	Respondent 06
Hand Position	Qabḍ (hands folded between the chest and the navel)	Irsāl (arms hanging straight down at the sides)
Final Tashahhud	Tawarruk position	Iftirāsh position
Prostration	Knees first, followed by palms	Palms first, followed by knees

Picture 10. NVivo coding map of tashahhud sitting postures across respondents

From the perspective of the Syafi'i madhhab, sitting posture is not a determinant of prayer validity, although performing *tawarruk* in the final sitting and *iftirash* in other sittings is considered sunnah for both men and women. The practice of Syafi'i respondents closely resembled that of one Maliki respondent, particularly in distinguishing between the first and final *tashahhud*. A significant juristic distinction, however, lies in the treatment of a missed first *tashahhud*: within the Syafi'i madhhab it may be compensated by *sujud sahwi*, whereas Maliki jurisprudence requires returning to the sitting posture even after standing. This difference underscores how procedural detail reflects broader methodological distinctions between madhahib.

Respondents from the Ḥanbali madhhab reported a sitting pattern similar to that of the Syafi'i madhhab, namely *iftirash* in the first *tashahhud* and *tawarruk* in the final sitting. A distinctive feature of the Ḥanbali tradition, however, concerns female congregants, who are permitted to sit either cross legged (*mutarabbiʿah*) or in the *sadl* position. Imām Aḥmad expressed a preference for *sadl*, a posture attributed to the practice of ʿĀʾishah Ra., which closely resembles the male *tawarruk* position (Hidayatulloh, 2014). This position aligns with the practice observed among female respondents from both the Ḥanbali and Ḥanafi madhahib, further illustrating cross madhhab convergence at the level of practice.

The male sitting postures prescribed by the Syafi'i, Ḥanbali, and Maliki madhahib find strong textual support in the well-known hadith narrated by Abū Ḥumayd al Sāʿidī, who described the Prophet's prayer as follows:
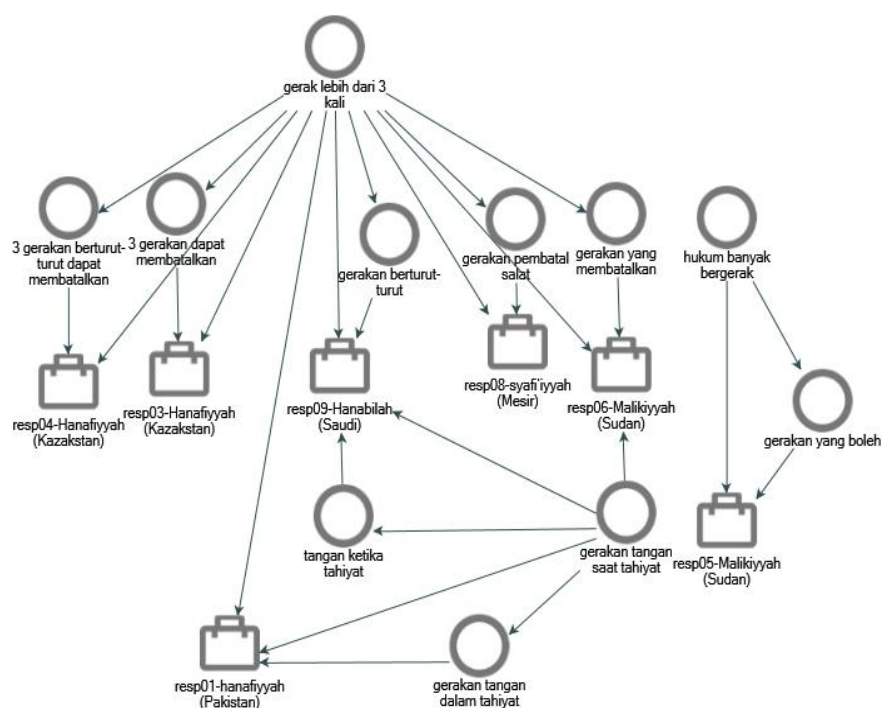
قَالَ أبو حُمَيْدٍ السَّاعِدِيُّ: أَنَا كُنْتُ أَحْفَظَكُمْ لِصَلَاةِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عليه وسلَّمَ ... فَإِذَا جَلَسَ في الرَّكْعَتَيْنِ جَلَسَ علَى رِجْلِهِ الْيُسْرَى، وَنَصَبَ الْيُمْنَى، وإذَا جَلَسَ في الرَّكْعَةِ الآخِرَةِ قَدَّمَ رِجْلَهُ الْيُسْرَى، وَنَصَبَ الأخْرَى وقَعَدَ علَى مَقْعَدَتِهِ

"When the Prophet ﷺ sat in the two rakʿahs, he sat on his left foot while keeping his right foot upright. When he sat in the final rakʿah, he brought his left foot forward, kept the other upright, and sat on his buttocks." (Al-Bukhārī, 2018)

Regarding the verbal component of *tashahhud*, only minor variations were observed among respondents, particularly in the concluding supplications, which function as personal prayers. In contrast, the core wording of the *tahiyyat* formula displayed a high degree of uniformity across all participants. This pattern suggests that while juristic diversity is clearly expressed in bodily postures, it does not necessarily extend to the essential textual components of the prayer.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that variations in *tashahhud* posture are grounded in authoritative juristic interpretations and shaped by educational transmission rather than ritual inconsistency. In a multicultural congregational setting, recognizing these legitimate differences contributes to reducing normative tension, enhancing mutual respect, and supporting social integration among international students engaged in shared acts of worship.

Juristic Perspectives on Movements That Invalidate *salat*

Picture 11. Movements in salat

The field findings indicate that respondents held varying views regarding movements that may invalidate *salat*, reflecting nuanced juristic reasoning across different madhahib of Islamic law. A respondent from the Ḥanafi madhhab expressed the view that performing more than three consecutive movements unrelated to the essential acts of prayer renders the prayer invalid. In contrast, respondents from the Maliki madhhab and several participants in the focus group discussion emphasized that not all movements necessarily affect the validity of prayer. According to this view, intention and necessity are decisive factors; movements performed unintentionally or out of necessity, such as wiping the face after *qunūt*, adjusting the prayer row (*ṣaff*), or covering the ʿawrah, do not invalidate the prayer. Meanwhile, respondents affiliated with the Syafi'i and Ḥanbali madhahib asserted that unnecessary and inappropriate movements may invalidate prayer, particularly when performed deliberately and repeatedly, such as excessive scratching or stepping without a legitimate reason.

Despite these differences, the respondents shared a common underlying concern for preserving the sanctity, focus, and solemnity of prayer. This shared objective becomes more apparent when examining a frequently debated issue, namely the movement of the index finger during *tashahhud*. Classical jurists articulated at least three main positions on this practice (Al-Fauzan, 2015). The first position, held by most scholars from the Ḥanafi, Syafi'i, and Ḥanbali madhahib, as well as some Maliki authorities such as Ibn Rushd and Ibn al ʿArabī, maintains that the index finger should be pointed without movement. The second position considers moving the index finger to be *sunnah*, as advocated by scholars including Ibn al Qayyim, al Albānī, Ibn Bāz, and Ibn ʿUthaymīn. A third position, supported by al Qurṭubī and al Ṣanʿānī, holds that both moving and not moving the index finger are permissible, as each practice is supported by authentic narrations.

Empirical observations revealed that respondents' practices corresponded closely with these juristic positions. Respondents from the Maliki and Ḥanafi madhahib generally kept their hands still on the thighs, lifting the index finger only briefly during the recitation of the *shahādatayn*, after which it remained pointed toward the place of prostration. By contrast, a respondent from the Ḥanbali madhhab continuously moved the index finger throughout the *tahiyyāt*, particularly when pronouncing the name of Allah. These variations illustrate how juristic plurality is manifested in lived religious practice without necessarily undermining the unity of congregational worship. Further support for the permissibility of necessary movements during prayer can be found in several well-established prophetic narrations.

عن أبي قتادة أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: صلى ذات يوم وهو حامل أمامة بنت ابنته، فكان إذا سجد وضعها وإذا قام حملها. متفق عليه.

"Abu Qatadah Ra. reported that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ once prayed while carrying his granddaughter, Umāmah bint Zaynab. During prostration, he would put her down, and when he stood up, he would carry her again." (Muttafaq 'alaih).

Similarly, Ibn ʿAbbās reported that when he stood on the Prophet's left during prayer, the Prophet gently repositioned him to the right side (muttafaq ʿalayh). These narrations demonstrate that purposeful movements, when justified, do not compromise the validity of prayer.

Based on the synthesis of FGD findings and juristic sources, movements during prayer may be classified into five categories of *taklīfī* rulings. Obligatory movements (*wājib*) are required to preserve the validity of prayer, such as removing *najāsah* or correcting one's direction toward the *qiblah*, as illustrated by the Prophet ﷺ removing his sandals upon being informed of impurity (Katz, 2013; Surtee, 2017). Prohibited movements (*ḥarām*) consist of excessive and consecutive actions without justification that invalidate prayer. Disliked movements (*makrūh*) are unnecessary actions that diminish *khushūʿ*, such as fiddling with clothing or objects, and may become *ḥarām* if repeated excessively. Recommended movements (*sunnah*) include actions that enhance congregational order, such as straightening the prayer rows, exemplified by the Prophet's repositioning of Ibn ʿAbbās. Permissible movements (*mubāḥ*) encompass light or multiple movements performed out of necessity or emergency, including praying while walking or riding in situations of fear, as indicated in the Qur'anic directive: "And if you fear, then pray on foot or riding" (al Baqarah: 238–239).

In synthesis, the data indicate broad agreement among respondents that excessive, purposeless, and repeated movements that disrupt *khushūʿ* may invalidate prayer, whereas minor or necessary movements do not (al Utsaimin, 2017). Within a multicultural congregational context, recognizing these juristic distinctions enables worshippers to navigate differences in practice with greater tolerance, adaptability, and mutual respect, thereby supporting social integration among international students engaged in shared ritual spaces.

4. CONCLUSION

This study confirms that variations in prayer practices among international students are not indicators of ritual inconsistency, but manifestations of legitimate

juristic diversity within the framework of comparative fiqh. In line with the research objective, the findings demonstrate that differences in ritual performance correspond to established methodological positions of classical madhhab and are mediated through processes of educational transmission and contextual adaptation in a multicultural academic setting. Theoretically, this research contributes to comparative fiqh studies by bridging normative juristic analysis with lived religious practice, showing that ikhtilāf fiqhī operates not only at the level of textual doctrine but also through social interaction in congregational worship. This positions fiqh plurality as a dynamic legal resource that enables flexibility and cohesion within diverse Muslim communities. Practically, the findings highlight the importance of juristic literacy in fostering tolerance and social integration among international students, as understanding the fiqh foundations of ritual variation reduces misinterpretation and supports harmonious coexistence in shared prayer spaces. This study is limited by its qualitative scope and institutional focus. Future research may expand the empirical context, apply mixed methods, or explore the implications of comparative fiqh for religious education and mosque governance in multicultural environments.

5. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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