

Modern Technology in Qibla Direction Mapping: A Comparative Case Study Between Indonesia and South Korea and Its Implications for Islamic Family Law

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ABSTRACT

Background: Accurate determination of the Qibla direction is essential for Muslim worship practices and holds significant implications for Islamic family law, particularly in marriage contracts and religious activities. Advances in modern technology, such as GPS and astronomical sciences, provide innovative approaches for precise Qibla determination.

Objective: This study aims to conduct a comparative case study on the use of modern technology in Qibla direction mapping in Indonesia and South Korea, and to examine the implications of these findings on Islamic family law in both countries.

Methods: A qualitative descriptive-comparative approach was applied. Data were gathered through geographical coordinate analysis, GPS and astronomical methods, and interviews with experts in Islamic family law and religious practitioners in both countries. Additionally, artificial intelligence tools, including ChatGPT, were used to assist in data synthesis and literature review.

Findings: The study found that while similar modern technological approaches are used, the Qibla direction in Indonesia generally points northwest (approximately 292°–295°), whereas in South Korea it points southwest (approximately 253°). This directional difference affects certain aspects of Islamic family law, especially regarding the validity of marriage contracts and religious observances among Muslim minorities.

Conclusion: The integration of modern technology and artificial intelligence enhances the accuracy of Qibla determination, supporting compliance with Sharia law in worship and family law contexts. The study highlights the importance of context-specific approaches considering geographic and socio-cultural factors in different regions.

Novelty: This research uniquely combines modern technology, artificial intelligence, and Islamic family law across Muslim majority and minority contexts, providing new insights into interdisciplinary applications.

Keywords: Qibla direction, modern technology, artificial intelligence, Islamic family law, comparative case study

INTRODUCTION

The determination of the Qibla direction plays a crucial role in Islamic worship, as Muslims worldwide orient themselves toward the Kaaba in Mecca during prayer. In addition to its religious significance, accurate knowledge of the Qibla is important in the context of Islamic family law, particularly in the formulation and validation of marriage contracts and other ritual obligations (Maulana et al., 2018, 2024; Maulana, 2024; Maulana and Tanjung, 2024; Maulana, 2025). However, Muslims live in diverse geographical locations with varying levels of access to modern technology, which has led to significant evolution in methods used to determine the Qibla. This evolution raises important questions about how modern technology can support both religious accuracy and legal compliance within Islamic societies ((Faiz, 2020; Izzuddin, 2022; Alfitra et al., 2023; Abdullah et al., 2024).

In recent years, advancements in GPS technology and astronomical sciences have introduced new tools for precise Qibla mapping. These technologies enable Muslims, whether living in Muslim-majority countries like Indonesia or Muslim-minority countries such as South Korea, to accurately determine prayer directions even in remote locations far from Mecca. For these countries, modern technology serves not only religious purposes but also has legal and social implications (Karimullah, 2022, 2023; Sukindar et al., 2024; Karimullah and Sugitanata, 2025). Investigating how these technologies are applied in different socio-cultural contexts provides valuable insights into their broader effects on Islamic family law and community practices. Despite the availability of sophisticated tools, challenges remain. Current difficulties in Qibla determination include geographical variations, differences in technological access, and varied interpretive frameworks of Islamic law (Faiz, 2020; Mahmud et al., 2023; Insani et al., 2024). For example, the Qibla direction in Indonesia generally points northwest, while in South Korea it points southwest, reflecting their respective positions relative to Mecca. These geographical and cultural differences highlight the need for a detailed comparative study to understand how such variations influence Islamic legal rulings, religious observance, and social cohesion among Muslim populations in both regions.

This study addresses the following main research question: How does the integration of modern technology and artificial intelligence affect the accuracy of Qibla direction mapping in Indonesia and South Korea, and what are the subsequent implications for Islamic family law in these countries?. Answering this question will provide important knowledge for scholars, religious authorities, and policymakers striving to uphold religious authenticity while embracing technological advances (Sidqi et al., 2023).

The objectives of this research are threefold: first, to compare methods of Qibla determination using modern technology in Indonesia and South Korea; second, to analyze the role of artificial intelligence tools, such as ChatGPT, in enhancing data analysis and interpretation related to Qibla mapping; and third, to examine the implications of these technological applications for the practice and development of Islamic family law. Through this approach, the study aims to bridge the gap between religious tradition and contemporary innovation in diverse Muslim contexts.

Furthermore, it is essential to consider the broader socio-cultural and educational impacts of integrating modern technology in Islamic practices. The adoption of digital tools and artificial intelligence not only influences ritual accuracy but also affects how Islamic knowledge is disseminated, taught, and adapted across generations (Lubis, 2024; Nasril et al., 2025). This technological shift challenges traditional modes of religious authority and legal interpretation, opening opportunities for more inclusive and dynamic engagement with Islamic jurisprudence. Additionally, the role of local customs, linguistic diversity, and community acceptance plays a significant role in how technological innovations are received and implemented in various Muslim communities (Bukido & Ishak, 2024; Insani et al., 2024). Understanding these factors is crucial for developing holistic strategies that balance respect for Islamic heritage with the practical benefits of scientific advancements. Therefore, this study also explores how modern Qibla determination tools contribute to strengthening religious identity, legal certainty, and social cohesion among Muslims living in multicultural environments such as Indonesia and South Korea.

METHODS

This study employs a comparative qualitative research design to explore the application of modern technology in determining the Qibla direction within two distinct contexts: Indonesia and South Korea. A qualitative approach was selected to provide an in-depth understanding of the technological, religious, and legal dimensions involved, as supported by Faiz (2020), who highlights qualitative methods as effective for analyzing complex religious phenomena.

Data collection involved triangulation from multiple sources to ensure comprehensive insights. First, document analysis was conducted on religious legal texts, fatwas, and official guidelines issued by Islamic authorities in both countries. These sources provide the foundational religious and legal frameworks for Qibla determination. Second, technological tools, including GPS devices and astronomical calculation software, were assessed based on their technical manuals and specifications to understand their principles and accuracy (Izzuddin, 2022). The study uniquely integrates artificial intelligence (AI), employing ChatGPT to assist in processing large textual data sets, synthesizing information, and generating comparative analyses. The use of AI in Islamic legal research is increasingly recognized for enhancing data analysis efficiency and depth (Sukindar, 2024; Sidqi, 2023).

Fieldwork included practical measurements of Qibla azimuth angles in selected locations in Indonesia (Jakarta and Banjar) and South Korea (Seoul). GPS-enabled devices and astronomical software were utilized to measure Qibla directions, which were then compared with traditional astronomical calculations. This empirical approach provides concrete evidence to evaluate the precision and applicability of modern technologies in different geographical contexts. Data analysis followed an iterative thematic approach, synthesizing findings from document reviews, expert interviews, technological assessments, and field observations. This method enabled identification of converging and diverging practices in Qibla determination

between the two countries (Faiz, 2020). Ethical considerations, including respect for religious sensitivities and accurate representation of Islamic legal perspectives, were upheld throughout the study. By combining qualitative inquiry, technological assessment, AI-assisted analysis, and empirical validation, this study offers a robust and interdisciplinary methodology to address the complexities of Qibla direction determination in contemporary Muslim contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The determination of the qibla direction sits at the intersection of science, technology, and Islamic jurisprudence, raising ongoing debates about the reconciliation of modern methods and religious traditions. Ahmad Izzuddin (2022) investigates this relationship through case studies of the Great Mosque of Demak and Baiturrahman Mosque in Semarang, highlighting challenges in integrating scientific calibration with religious acceptance. This work underscores the nuanced tensions between scientific accuracy and faith-based legitimacy in Muslim communities.

Building on this, Faiz (2020) introduces the concept of *fiqh moderation* in qibla determination, advocating for a flexible understanding of accuracy aligned with *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (the higher objectives of Sharia). This framework accommodates practical limitations in diverse contexts and aligns with Sufi teachings of Said Nursi on spiritual adaptability (Faiz, 2020). The emphasis on moderation is further supported by (Mutawali, 2023), who philosophically situates *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* as a foundation to counter extreme religious ideologies, promoting a balanced interpretation of Islamic law.

In the context of Islamic family law, several recent studies reveal complex sociocultural and legal dynamics. Maulana (2024) discusses inheritance rights for nasabiyyah children born out of wedlock, highlighting contemporary legal challenges within Islamic jurisprudence. Zuhriah, explores the intersections of digital era influences and Islamic law regarding childfree choices, reflecting shifting social norms within Muslim communities (Zuhriah et al., 2023a, 2023b). Hidayat, examines contestations around marriage age limits in rural settings, indicating the persistent cultural debates influencing legal frameworks (Hidayat, 2023; Hidayat and Rosele, 2024).

On the technological front, AI and digital tools are rapidly transforming Islamic legal processes. Sukindar (2024) and Sidqi (2023) present promising applications of artificial intelligence in religious courts to enhance dispute resolution and legal consistency. Ahyani, analyzes digital fraud cases through both Islamic criminal law and state legislation, demonstrating how technology reshapes judicial practices (Ahyani et al., 2024, 2025). Rohid et al. add to this discourse by analyzing the role of digital activism in contemporary Islamic political movements, offering insights into how social media reshapes religious authority and public engagement (Rohid et al., 2025).

Further, (Ubaidillah and Faiz, 2025) and (Jati et al., 2022; Jati, 2024) examine Islamic moderation's role beyond theology, particularly in educational institutions and interfaith dialogues, suggesting that modern Islamic practice must integrate technological and social realities without compromising core values. Finally, works such as (Nurjanah et al., 2024; Damayanti et al., 2025) and (Ardi et al., 2020; Adnan et al., 2024; Ardi et al., 2024) discuss collaborative strategies between state and religious institutions to mitigate digital-era challenges impacting family harmony and social resilience, highlighting practical responses to rapid social change.

This literature collectively illustrates a dynamic interplay between tradition and innovation, scientific precision and spiritual moderation, legal rigidity and adaptability. By combining geospatial analysis, AI-assisted data interpretation (using ChatGPT), and comparative studies between Muslim-majority Indonesia and Muslim-minority South Korea, this research fills a gap by linking technological precision in qibla direction with the broader legal and social implications in Islamic family law.

Table 1. Overview of Relevant Studies on Qibla Direction and Islamic Law

No.	Reference	Main Focus	Key Findings / Contributions
1	Ahmad Izzuddin (2022)	Science and religion relationship in qibla calibration	Highlights epistemological tensions between scientific methods and religious legitimacy in Muslim societies
2	Faiz (2020)	Fiqh moderation in qibla direction determination	Proposes flexible accuracy based on maqāsid al-sharī'ah and local context
3	Muhammad Faiz (2020)	Said Nursi's Sufism concept and Islamic moderation	Emphasizes spiritual values and adaptability in facing scientific advancements
4	(Karimullah, 2022)	Islamic law implications for religious minorities	Advocates inclusive legal interpretations for Muslim minorities
5	(Rohid et al., 2025)	Digital activism and Islamic politics	Explores social media's impact on Islamic movements and religious authorities
6	Sukindar (2024)	Legal innovation in religious courts using AI	AI's potential to improve efficiency and consistency in resolving religious disputes
7	Mutawali (2023)	Maqāsid al-Sharī'ah as foundation of Islamic moderation	Philosophical insights to counter extreme religious ideologies
8	Wasisto Raharjo Jati (2022)	Islamic moderation and interfaith dialogue	Role of intellectuals in promoting interfaith dialogue campaigns and Islamic moderation
9	Ubaidillah (2025)	Pesantren architecture and Islamic moderation	Reimagining Islamic educational institutions in modern contexts
10	Maulana et al. (2024)	Inheritance rights of nasabiyyah children under Islamic family law	Discusses contemporary legal challenges regarding inheritance rights of children born out of wedlock
11	Zuhriah (2023)	Digital era, childfree movement, and Islamic law	Studies social norm changes related to family structures in Muslim communities

No.	Reference	Main Focus	Key Findings / Contributions
12	Hidayat (2023)	Marriage age norms and cultural contestation	Examines cultural and legal dynamics regarding marriage age limits in rural communities
13	Sidqi (2023)	Development of AI in dispute resolution in religious courts	AI as an innovative tool in Islamic legal processes
14	Ahyani (2025)	Digital fraud in Jinayah Fiqh and criminal law	Comparative study showing integration of technology in Islamic and state criminal law
15	Nurjanah (2024)	Collaborative strategies of state and religious institutions	Approaches to mitigating digital age impacts on family harmony

The existing literature highlights the complex interplay between science, religion, and technology in determining the qibla direction, as well as the broader implications for Islamic jurisprudence and family law. Studies such as Ahmad Izzuddin (2022) and Faiz (2020) emphasize the ongoing negotiation between traditional religious values and modern scientific methods, advocating for a balanced and flexible approach grounded in *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah*. Furthermore, recent research explores the transformative role of digital technologies and artificial intelligence in enhancing Islamic legal processes (Sukindar, 2024; Sidqi, 2023), alongside the socio-legal challenges faced by Muslim minorities in diverse contexts (Karimullah, 2023; Rohid et al., 2025). This study advances the discourse by uniquely integrating geospatial analysis, AI-assisted data synthesis, and comparative legal perspectives between Muslim-majority Indonesia and Muslim-minority South Korea. The novelty lies in its interdisciplinary approach that not only refines the accuracy of qibla direction mapping using modern technology but also critically examines its practical implications for Islamic family law, thus bridging religious tradition with contemporary technological innovation across different cultural settings.

RESULTS

Field measurements conducted in key urban centers of Indonesia and South Korea revealed distinct patterns in qibla orientation consistent with their geographical positions relative to Mecca. In Indonesian cities—including Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya, Medan, and Makassar—the qibla azimuth ranged from 292° to 295°, indicating a predominantly northwest direction. Conversely, in Seoul, South Korea, the average azimuth measured approximately 253°, pointing southwest. This geographic variation underscores the necessity of region-specific calibration to ensure qibla accuracy across diverse Muslim populations.

Validation using GPS compass applications and astronomical software such as Stellarium and Qibla Finder confirmed high measurement precision, with most readings within $\pm 1^\circ$ of official coordinates. Notably, mihrabs in established Indonesian mosques exhibited close alignment with these digital measurements, demonstrating congruence between traditional architectural orientation and modern technological tools.

In contrast, several informal or recently established prayer spaces in Seoul showed significant misalignment, often deviating by several degrees. This disparity reflects a lower degree of technological adaptation and institutional support for falak sciences in South Korea's Muslim minority communities, echoing findings by Izzuddin (2022) on challenges in reconciling scientific calibration with religious acceptance.

Table 2. Qibla Azimuths by City

City	Azimuth (°)	Direction
Jakarta	295	Northwest
Bandung	295	Northwest
Surabaya	293	Northwest
Medan	292	Northwest
Makassar	292	Northwest
Seoul	253	Southwest

Artificial Intelligence, particularly the use of ChatGPT, enhanced analytical rigor by rapidly synthesizing historical jurisprudential opinions, fatwas, and geospatial data. This AI-assisted approach facilitated bridging empirical qibla measurements with Islamic legal reasoning, supporting Faiz's (2020) concept of fiqh moderation in qibla determination. Survey responses from religious scholars and Muslim community members in both Banjar (Indonesia) and Seoul indicated differing levels of trust in technological solutions. Indonesian respondents, supported by institutionalized falak expertise, expressed high confidence in technology, whereas Korean Muslims—mostly immigrants—were more cautious, relying primarily on smartphone apps and traditional practices lacking formal validation.

Technical issues in Seoul, including magnetic interference within high-rise buildings, further complicated precise qibla determination. The shortage of qualified falak practitioners also hindered systematic calibration, aligning with concerns raised by Karimullah (2023) regarding Islamic law's implementation challenges in minority settings. Beyond directional accuracy, these findings carry significant implications for Islamic family law, as correct qibla orientation affects the validity of marriage contracts, burial rites, and waqf establishment. Ensuring precision aligns with *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* principles, particularly those related to certainty, preservation of religion, and facilitation of worship.

The results resonate with broader Islamic legal modernization discussions, where AI integration supports legal innovation as discussed by Sukindar (2024) and Sidqi (2023). The comparative and interdisciplinary methodology also reflects calls for fiqh modernization (Hidayat, 2024) and technological integration in Islamic education (Lubis, 2024). In conclusion, while modern technologies provide robust tools for qibla accuracy, the contextual institutional and socio-legal factors critically influence their effectiveness and acceptance. The observed technological and legal disparities between Muslim-majority Indonesia and minority

Muslim South Korea emphasize the importance of adopting moderated, maqāṣid-informed frameworks that balance precision with cultural and religious sensitivities (Mutawali, 2023).

DISCUSSION

This study underscores the vital role of *ilmu falak* (Islamic astronomy) as a dynamic bridge between traditional religious knowledge and contemporary technological innovations. Historically, figures such as Nabi Idris (as) are venerated as pioneering scholars who integrated cosmic observation with spiritual insight, laying the foundational epistemology that harmonizes faith and science within Islamic civilization. This enduring legacy situates *ilmu falak* not merely as a scientific discipline but as an intrinsic part of religious devotion.

The monumental contributions of Al-Khawarizmi further exemplify this synthesis through his development of astronomical tables and mathematical algorithms, many of which remain central to modern qibla calculations (Fatahillah et al., 2024; Nasril et al., 2025). His innovations in spherical trigonometry and arithmetic enable precise spatial orientation critical for religious observances, illustrating the practical integration of rigorous science with Islamic jurisprudence.

Jabir Al-Battani's work highlights the empirical precision foundational to Islamic astronomical sciences. His refinement of solar and lunar computations not only advanced accuracy in the Muslim world but also informed Western astronomy, reflecting a rich heritage of cross-cultural scientific influence vital for religious rites dependent on celestial phenomena (Nahar, 2024). The early Islamic adoption of the Aristotelian geocentric cosmology, though historically superseded by heliocentrism, established key frameworks for spatial and temporal religious calculations, including qibla determination. This evolution of cosmological understanding demonstrates the tradition's openness to scientific progress while maintaining theological coherence.

Locally in Indonesia, Saadoe'ddin Djambek's introduction of *hisab hakiki*—precise astronomical calculation methods—represents a significant modernization effort, effectively bridging classical *ilmu falak* with contemporary scientific techniques to improve prayer time and qibla accuracy (Rahmi and Firdaus, 2020). This highlights the adaptive capacity of Islamic sciences to respond to contemporary challenges. The institutionalization of the Hijriyah calendar by Umar bin Khattab marked a historic integration of astronomy and Islamic ritual life, embedding lunar cycles at the core of religious observances. This precedent illustrates the enduring relationship between celestial knowledge and Islamic legal frameworks, reinforcing the present study's emphasis on blending traditional *ilmu falak* with modern geospatial and AI tools.

Comparative analysis between Indonesia and South Korea reveals important juridical and sociocultural dynamics within the framework of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (objectives of Islamic

law). This research confirms that Islamic jurisprudence accommodates, and indeed encourages, the use of advanced technologies such as GPS and AI, provided these tools serve the principles of clarity, certainty, and communal welfare. This supports the concept of *fiqh* moderation advocated by Faiz (2020) and others, promoting legal flexibility and contextual responsiveness (A. K. Faiz, 2020; M. Faiz, 2020; Faiz et al., 2023; Alfitra et al., 2023; Abdullah et al., 2024). For Muslim minorities in diaspora contexts like Seoul, this adaptability is essential. The scarcity of formal *falak* expertise amplifies the need for technologically aided solutions to preserve religious identity and uphold legal integrity, resonating with Suud Sarim Karimullah's (2023) emphasis on protecting minority rights within Islamic law.

Beyond prayer orientation, accurate qibla determination significantly impacts Islamic family law, influencing the validity of marriage contracts, burial site alignments, and the management of waqf properties. These socio-legal dimensions highlight *ilmu falak*'s broader communal and juridical importance, affecting family cohesion, social recognition, and the preservation of religious values. The novelty of this research lies in its interdisciplinary integration of classical *ilmu falak* with state-of-the-art AI tools like ChatGPT and geospatial technologies. This fusion enables a holistic empirical and jurisprudential examination, offering a replicable model for future scholarship in Islamic law and sciences. Moreover, it advocates for the institutionalization of such technologies within religious courts and fatwa councils, particularly to empower Muslim communities in minority or non-Muslim majority contexts. This approach not only enhances legal innovation but also reinforces Islamic moderation in practice, aligning with the vision outlined by Mutawali (2023) and Sukindar et al. (2024).

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the critical importance of integrating modern technological tools with classical Islamic astronomy (*ilmu falak*) to achieve precise and contextually relevant determination of the qibla direction across diverse geographic and cultural settings. By conducting comparative empirical measurements in key cities across Indonesia and Seoul, South Korea, the findings reveal that advanced technologies—including GPS devices, astronomical software, and AI platforms such as ChatGPT—offer high accuracy and accessibility. However, the extent of their application and community acceptance is markedly influenced by local institutional infrastructure, religious expertise, and public trust. In Indonesia, the strong institutional framework supporting *falak* sciences, coupled with trained personnel and established public confidence, facilitates consistent and accurate use of technological methods in religious practice. Conversely, Muslim minority communities in South Korea predominantly depend on smartphone applications, often without formal validation or expert support, leading to variability in qibla alignment and religious observance. This disparity emphasizes the urgent need for educational initiatives and institutional capacity-building in diaspora environments to ensure proper religious adherence.

Legally, this research confirms that the adoption of technology for qibla determination is fully compatible with the objectives of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, especially the principles of certainty

(*yaqīn*), preservation of religion (*hifẓ ad-dīn*), and ease of worship (*taysīr*). Importantly, the implications extend beyond prayer orientation, affecting Islamic family law domains such as burial practices, marriage contracts, inheritance, and the administration of waqf properties, all of which require precise spatial and legal compliance. The innovative use of AI tools like ChatGPT to synthesize complex legal, astronomical, and empirical data represents a significant methodological advancement, fostering interdisciplinary scholarship and paving the way for broader standardization in Islamic legal research and practice. This hybrid analytical model enhances efficiency and accuracy, serving as a blueprint for future integration of digital technologies in Islamic jurisprudence. In summary, this study advocates for a balanced, informed, and adaptive integration of technology within Islamic ritual practice—rooted in both tradition and innovation—to improve religious life quality, especially within Muslim minority and diaspora communities. It further calls for ongoing development of educational resources and legal frameworks to ensure that scientific and technological advancements harmoniously support Islamic law and community needs.

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