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Crying, Self-Reflection, and Hadith Authority: A Religious Discourse Analysis of Critiques of Contemporary Emotional Rituals

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Abstract

This article examines religious discourse on emotionally driven ritual practices in contemporary Islam through a qualitative–normative analysis of sermons delivered by Ali Mustafa Yaqub, a prominent Indonesian Hadith scholar. Focusing on muhasabah, collective dhikr, and crying in worship, the study investigates how Hadith authority is mobilized to evaluate ritual legitimacy amid the increasing use of music, dramatized narratives, and psychological suggestion in popular spirituality. Methodologically, the research combines qualitative content analysis and normative religious discourse analysis, drawing on selected sermon transcripts and question-and-answer sessions that explicitly address crying (al-bukā'), emotional stimulation, and worship practices. The findings reveal a systematic distinction constructed between authentic crying rooted in fear of God (khauf ilāhī), inward self-reflection, and eschatological awareness, and artificial crying generated through externally engineered emotional techniques. This distinction is grounded in fiqh al-ḥadīṡ, where Hadith functions not merely as a textual reference but as an epistemological framework for regulating ritual practice. The study further demonstrates that critiques of emotional ritualization reflect broader contestations of religious authority within the contemporary Islamic public sphere. By foregrounding Hadith epistemology as a normative evaluative tool, this article contributes to Islamic ritual studies by offering an analytical model for assessing emotional authenticity and ritual legitimacy in modern Islam.

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Artikel ini mengkaji wacana keagamaan mengenai praktik ritual berbasis emosi dalam Islam kontemporer melalui analisis kualitatif–normatif terhadap ceramah Ali Mustafa Yaqub, seorang ulama hadis Indonesia. Dengan memfokuskan kajian pada praktik muhasabah, zikir kolektif, dan fenomena menangis dalam ibadah, penelitian ini menelaah bagaimana otoritas hadis dimobilisasi untuk menilai legitimasi ritual di tengah maraknya penggunaan musik, narasi dramatik, dan sugesti psikologis dalam spiritualitas populer. Secara metodologis, penelitian ini. mengombinasikan analisis isi kualitatif dan analisis wacana keagamaan normatif dengan menggunakan data berupa transkrip ceramah terpilih serta sesi tanya jawab yang secara eksplisit membahas menangis (al-bukā'), stimulasi emosional, dan praktik ibadah. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan adanya distingsi sistematis yang dibangun antara tangisan autentik yang bersumber dari rasa takut kepada Allah (khauf ilāhī), refleksi batin, dan kesadaran eskatologis, dengan tangisan artifisial yang dihasilkan melalui teknik emosional yang direkayasa secara eksternal. Distingsi ini berakar pada kerangka fiqh al-ḥadīs, di mana hadis tidak hanya diposisikan sebagai rujukan tekstual, tetapi juga sebagai kerangka epistemologis untuk mengatur praktik ritual. Penelitian ini juga menunjukkan bahwa kritik terhadap ritualisasi emosi merefleksikan kontestasi otoritas keagamaan yang lebih luas dalam ruang publik Islam kontemporer. Dengan menempatkan epistemologi hadis sebagai instrumen evaluatif normatif, artikel ini berkontribusi pada pengembangan studi ritual Islam melalui penyediaan model analitis untuk menilai autentisitas emosional dan legitimasi ritual dalam Islam modern.

Keywords: Muhasabah, crying in worship, hadith, religious authority, emotional rituals.

Introduction

Over recent decades, Muslim religiosity in Indonesia has undergone significant transformations in its forms of expression, mediation, and public engagement. Research on urban Sufism and popular piety has documented the emergence and development of new forms of religious and spiritual gatherings, including *majālis dhikr*, urban Sufi communities, and other forms of collective religious engagement (Howell, 2001; Mustofa, 2012; Wildan & Witriani, 2021). Parallel developments in the media have expanded the ways in which Islamic teachings and devotional practices are mediated and experienced, particularly through television, social media, and digitally connected religious communities (Howell, 2008; Slama, 2017; Husein & Slama, 2018). Studies of contemporary Indonesian Muslim practices further indicate that digital mediation has reshaped forms of religious sociality, authority, and affective engagement, while also generating new configurations of public piety (Slama, 2017a, 2017b; Husein &

Slama, 2018; Slama, 2025). These transformations provide an important context for Islamic Religious Education (IRE), which is expected not only to transmit religious knowledge but also to cultivate students' spiritual awareness, moral dispositions, and lived religious practice. In this context, a spiritual approach may help bridge formal religious knowledge with students' inner experience, emotional development, worship practices, and character formation, thereby strengthening the internalization of religious values and their translation into everyday conduct.

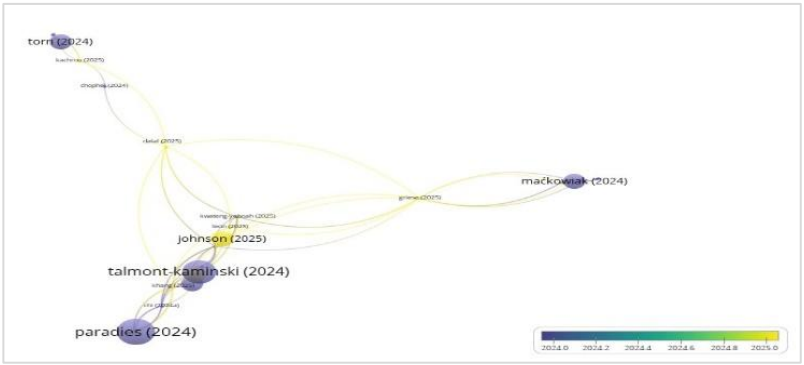
This phenomenon has generated serious debate among Islamic scholars and academics. On the one hand, emotional approaches are regarded as effective in fostering the spiritual awareness of modern societies that tend to be pragmatic and religiously alienated. On the other hand, such approaches are criticized for potentially shifting the orientation of worship from adherence to normative textual evidence toward transient emotional gratification. This critique is articulated primarily by Hadith scholars, who emphasize the necessity of aligning religious practices with the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad.

This article analyzes these critiques by examining sermons delivered by Ali Mustafa Yaqub, an Indonesian Hadith scholar, who explicitly addresses emotionally driven *muhasabah* practices and the phenomenon of mass crying in contemporary religious rituals. By analyzing the discourse of these sermons, the article aims to elucidate how Hadith authority is employed to evaluate, correct, and delimit popular spiritual practices (Yaqub, 2025).

In this context, it is essential to situate emotionally charged religious rituals not merely as forms of popular devotional practice, but as part of the dynamic field of religious discourse continuously negotiated among textual authority, scholarly authority, and the spiritual needs of modern society. The transformation of the forms and media of religious rituals reflects a shift in modes of religiosity that are not only normative, but also communicative and performative. Accordingly, analyses of emotionally driven *muhasabah* practices and collective crying must be situated within broader theoretical frameworks of contemporary religious rituals, particularly in relation to normative legitimacy, scholarly authority, and the construction of religious meaning in the modern public sphere.

To establish the scholarly context and identify the dominant research trajectories surrounding contemporary religious rituals, a bibliometric analysis was conducted to map the development, thematic concentration, and interconnections of relevant studies. A search of the Scopus database identified at least 1,698 bibliographic records published from the 1960s through 18 December 2025, indicating sustained scholarly interest in religious rituals within modern and contemporary contexts. The VOSviewer network visualization reveals several interconnected thematic clusters rather than a single homogeneous research field. These clusters broadly encompass ritual practice and religious experience; spirituality and devotional practices; religious identity and community; and the social, cultural, and contemporary transformation of religious practice. The interconnections among these clusters suggest that research on contemporary rituals has increasingly moved beyond descriptive accounts of ritual performance toward broader analyses of lived religion, identity formation, social relations, and changing modes of religious expression. This thematic configuration is particularly relevant to the present study because it situates spiritual and ritual practices within broader transformations of contemporary Muslim religiosity while highlighting the need to examine how such practices are interpreted, experienced, and internalized within specific educational and socio-cultural contexts. The development and interrelationships of these research themes are visualized in the VOSviewer network presented in Figure 1.

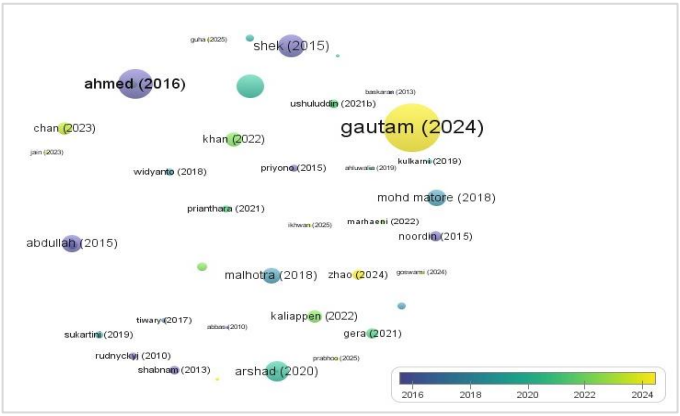
Figure 1. Scopus database mapping of research networks based on searches of article titles, abstracts, and keywords related to "contemporary religious rituals.



The search results covering publications from the 1960s to 18 December 2025 identified a total of 1,698 documents. Meanwhile, within the publication period from 2024 to 18 December 2025, a total of 310 documents were recorded in the bibliographic database. The distribution and interconnections of research themes during this period can be observed in network visualizations generated with VOSviewer, as shown below.

On the other hand, these bibliometric findings not only indicate the volume of publications but also highlight the strategic position of ritual studies within global religious discourse. Research on Emotional Spiritual Quotient (ESQ) indexed in the Scopus database during the publication period from 2008 to 18 December 2025 comprises 49 bibliographic documents. The distribution and interconnections of these research themes can be observed in bibliometric network visualizations generated with VOSviewer, as shown Figure 2 below.

Figure 2. Scopus database mapping of research networks based on searches of article titles, abstracts, and keywords related to "Emotional Spiritual Quotient (ESQ)." The search results covering the publication period from 2008 to 18 December 2025 identified a total of 49 documents.



Based on a bibliometric mapping of the Scopus database in Figure 2, it can be concluded that studies on contemporary religious rituals have shown significant and sustained development in global academic discourse. The volume of publications—reaching 1,698 documents from the 1960s to 18 December 2025—reflects a consistent level of cross-disciplinary scholarly interest in religious rituals in modern contexts. Furthermore, the identification of 310

documents published between 2024 and 18 December 2025 indicates an intensification of academic attention in the most recent period, underscoring the relevance of this issue to contemporary social, cultural, and religious dynamics. By contrast, research on Emotional Spiritual Quotient (ESQ) appears on a relatively more limited scale, with only 49 bibliographic documents identified between 2008 and 18 December 2025. This comparison suggests that while emotional–spiritual approaches have gained scholarly attention, they remain a more specialized subtheme within the broader landscape of contemporary religious ritual studies. Network visualizations generated through VOSviewer further reveal increasingly complex thematic interconnections, while simultaneously opening avenues for more focused, contextual, and interdisciplinary future research.

Despite its growing prominence in educational and organizational discourse, the Emotional and Spiritual Quotient (ESQ) framework raises important epistemological questions when applied to Islamic spirituality and ritual practice. In the Indonesian ESQ tradition, particularly in Agustian's foundational formulation, emotional and spiritual intelligence are integrated through Islamic principles and translated into a systematic framework for character formation and personal development (Agustian, 2001). Although this approach may offer pedagogical value, its application to Islamic spiritual formation requires careful epistemological qualification. When religious experience is approached primarily through emotional stimulation, psychological conditioning, or performance-oriented outcomes, there is a risk of reframing worship and spiritual transformation in terms of managed affect and instrumental utility rather than as practices grounded in revelation and Prophetic guidance. From the perspective of ḥadīth epistemology (*fiqh al-ḥadīth*), such a shift risks marginalizing Prophetic normative authority by interpreting religious formation predominantly through contemporary psychological paradigms rather than through the Qur'an and Sunnah. This concern can be situated in relation to the Prophetic principle that "actions are judged by intentions" (*innamā al-aʿmāl bi al-niyyāt*), which underscores the centrality of intention in the evaluation of religious action (al-Bukhārī, ḥadīth no. 1; Muslim, ḥadīth no. 1907). Accordingly, the spiritual

significance of religious practice cannot be reduced to observable emotional effects or externally induced responses. In al-Ghazālī's account of spiritual purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*), knowledge, disciplined practice, ethical self-cultivation, and persistent struggle against the lower self constitute important dimensions of the purification of the heart and the transformation of character (al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*). Thus, within the classical Islamic tradition, spiritual transformation is understood not merely as the production of heightened emotional states but as a sustained process of moral and spiritual cultivation. ESQ should therefore not be treated as a normative framework for Islamic spiritual formation; rather, it may be regarded as a contingent pedagogical instrument whose legitimacy and application remain subordinate to the normative authority of revelation, Prophetic guidance, and established Islamic conceptions of spiritual discipline (Agustian, 2001; Komarudin et al., 2022; Ikhwan et al., 2025).

At the same time, a critical epistemological stance toward emotionally driven frameworks such as ESQ does not deny the broader social and anthropological significance of ritual practices within human societies. Rather, it necessitates a careful analytical distinction between the functional roles of ritual in fostering social cohesion and personal meaning, and the question of their normative religious legitimacy. As noted by Jakubovská et al. (2025), whether collective or individual, religious or secular, contemporary rituals continue to play an important role in intellectual development and community formation, even as their forms are selectively preserved, modified, or recontextualized across changing social environments.

Although studies on emotionally charged religious rituals have developed quite extensively, most existing research tends to adopt descriptive sociological and psychological approaches, focusing on social functions, emotional experiences, and their impact on the cohesion of religious communities. Such approaches have paid relatively limited attention to issues of normative legitimacy and religious epistemology, particularly those grounded in the Prophetic Hadith as an authoritative reference in Islam. This research gap constitutes the central focus of the present article. By analyzing sermons delivered by Ali Mustafa Yaqub—an Indonesian Hadith scholar who explicitly critiques

emotionally driven *muhasabah* practices and the phenomenon of mass crying in contemporary religious rituals—this article aims to demonstrate how Hadith authority is employed as an epistemological instrument to evaluate, correct, and delimit popular spiritual practices developing within the modern Islamic public sphere.

Although previous studies have approached contemporary emotional rituals primarily through sociological and psychological perspectives, emphasizing their social functions, affective dynamics, and experiential dimensions, less attention has been given to their evaluation within Islamic normative epistemology. This gap is particularly significant in relation to contemporary religious practices whose emotional and performative dimensions may shape understandings of worship, spirituality, and religious authenticity. Addressing this gap, the present study advances a ḥadīth-epistemological approach as a normative, evaluative framework for examining contemporary emotional ritual practices. By analyzing the sermons of Ali Mustafa Yaqub as primary textual sources, the study examines how ritual practices can be assessed through *fiqh al-ḥadīth*, particularly with regard to Prophetic guidance, textual evidence, intention, and normative principles of religious practice. In doing so, the study contributes to Islamic ritual studies by moving beyond predominantly descriptive sociological and psychological accounts toward a more explicitly normative and corrective framework grounded in the ḥadīth tradition. This approach provides a basis for critically evaluating the epistemological legitimacy and religious validity of emerging forms of emotional religiosity in contemporary Islamic contexts.

Against this scholarly backdrop, the present article addresses this gap by advancing a Hadith-based epistemological approach to evaluating emotionally driven ritual practices in contemporary Islam. This article offers an original contribution to the study of contemporary Islamic rituals by advancing a Hadith-based epistemological framework for evaluating emotionally driven religious practices. While existing scholarship on emotional rituals has predominantly employed descriptive sociological, anthropological, or psychological approaches, this study introduces *fiqh al-ḥadīṡ* as a normative–analytical lens for assessing ritual legitimacy and emotional authenticity. By analyzing the sermons of Ali

Mustafa Yaqub as authoritative discursive texts, the article demonstrates how Hadith functions not merely as a textual reference but as an epistemological mechanism that regulates ritual boundaries, distinguishes between authentic and artificial emotional expressions, and negotiates religious authority in the modern Islamic public sphere. The study further contributes empirically by foregrounding Southeast Asian Hadith scholarship within global ritual studies, a context that remains underrepresented in international literature. Conceptually, it extends ritual studies beyond descriptive accounts by proposing a model of Hadith-based normative evaluation that integrates emotional experience, ritual practice, and prophetic authority, thereby enriching interdisciplinary debates on religious authority, emotional authenticity, and the transformation of spirituality in contemporary Islam.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative–interpretive research design that integrates qualitative content analysis with normative religious discourse analysis to examine how meaning, argumentative structures, and Hadith-based authority are constructed in critiques of emotionally driven ritual practices within contemporary Islam (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Clark et al., 2021; Fitri, 2022; Saefullah, 2024; Ramandani, 2024). Qualitative content analysis is employed to identify recurring themes, concepts, and argumentative patterns across the selected sermons, particularly those concerning *muhasabah*, crying in worship (*al-bukā'*), emotional stimulation, and the legitimacy of ritual practices. Normative religious discourse analysis is then used to examine how Hadith authority is constructed, interpreted, negotiated, and legitimized through the religious arguments presented in these sermons. The primary data consist of purposively selected transcripts of Ali Mustafa Yaqub's sermons, including documented question-and-answer sessions in which issues of *muhasabah*, crying in worship (*al-bukā'*), emotional stimulation, and the legitimacy of ritual practices are explicitly addressed. These sermons were selected based on their clear articulation of Hadith-based normative reasoning and their relevance to public debates on popular emotional spirituality.

Secondary data comprise classical Hadith compilations, authoritative works on *fiqh al-ḥadīṡ* and contemporary scholarly literature on religious rituals, emotional religiosity, and Islamic religious authority (Firdaus, 2020; Andaluzi et al., 2025). The units of analysis include thematic arguments, normative evaluations, and forms of Hadith justification articulated in the sermons, particularly those concerning distinctions between authentic and artificial crying, criteria for ritual legitimacy, and critiques of emotional manipulation in worship.

Data collection was conducted through systematic documentation of sermon materials, followed by an iterative analytical process involving data reduction, thematic coding, and normative–epistemological interpretation grounded in Hadith epistemology. Analytical rigor was enhanced through source triangulation, achieved by cross-referencing sermon discourse with classical Hadith sources and relevant academic literature (Taylor, 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Harrits & Møller, 2021). Positioned within a critical–normative Islamic studies framework, this research employs Hadith epistemology as an evaluative analytical lens for examining, delimiting, and contextualizing popular spiritual practices in the contemporary Islamic public sphere, without advancing prescriptive or doctrinal theological judgments (Molina-Azorin & Fetters, 2021; Simons & Copley, 2022; Amna, 2025; Jannah, 2025).

Theoretical Perspectives

This study is grounded in three principal theoretical pillars: religious authority in Islam, Hadith epistemology (*fiqh al-ḥadīṡ*), and theories of contemporary religious rituals. These frameworks are employed in an integrative manner to examine how emotionally driven *muhasabah* practices and collective crying are produced, contested, and evaluated within the modern Islamic public sphere.

First, the concept of religious authority in Islam positions the Qur'an and Hadith as the primary normative sources for determining the legitimacy of ritual practices. Within this framework, Hadith scholars function as custodians of scholarly authority, possessing epistemic legitimacy to assess the authenticity of religious practices and their conformity to the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad.

This authority is not absolute; rather, it is continuously negotiated through scholarly discourse, public preaching, and communal responses, thereby constituting an arena of contestation between textual tradition and popular expressions of religiosity.

Second, this study adopts the perspective of Hadith epistemology known as *fiqh al-ḥadīṡ*, an approach that emphasizes not only the authenticity of Hadith chains of transmission (*isnād*) and texts (*matn*), but also a substantive, contextual, and normative understanding of Hadith meanings in ritual practice. From this perspective, Hadith is positioned not merely as a legal source but as an evaluative mechanism for regulating ritual innovation and distinguishing between practices considered authentic acts of worship and those deemed deviant or lacking a robust textual foundation (Firdaus, 2020; Andaluzi et al., 2025).

Third, this study draws on theories of contemporary religious rituals, particularly the concepts of ritual authenticity and performative ritual. Authentic rituals are understood as religious practices grounded in normative foundations and exhibiting historical continuity with early religious traditions, whereas performative rituals emphasize symbolic, emotional, and collective experiential dimensions, often produced through media, music, and techniques of psychological suggestion. This framework enables a critical analysis of shifts in the function of ritual from a medium of religious obedience to an instrument of emotional catharsis and spiritual consumption.

By integrating these three theoretical frameworks, this study analyzes Ali Mustafa Yaqub's sermons as a form of normative–corrective discourse that seeks to uphold Hadith authority in response to the proliferation of popular emotional rituals. This framework further elucidates how critiques of emotionally driven *muhasabah* practices are not merely matters of individual religious preference but rather reflect broader epistemological dynamics and contests of authority within contemporary Islam.

Findings and Discussion

Hadith Authority as the Basis of Ritual Legitimacy

In the sermons analyzed, Ali Mustafa Yaqub consistently refers to *ṣaḥīḥ* Hadith narrated by Imams al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal. These references are employed both to address congregants' questions and to correct erroneous religious understandings. Hadith concerning the comparative numbers of those who will enter Paradise and Hell, as well as Hadith highlighting the virtue of crying out of fear of God in solitude, are invoked as foundational arguments asserting that acts of worship must possess clear textual legitimacy.

The deployment of these Hadith elucidates the authority of Hadith scholars in delineating the boundaries of legitimate ritual practice. Within this framework, Hadith functions as an evaluative standard against which various forms of spiritual expression emerging within society are assessed.

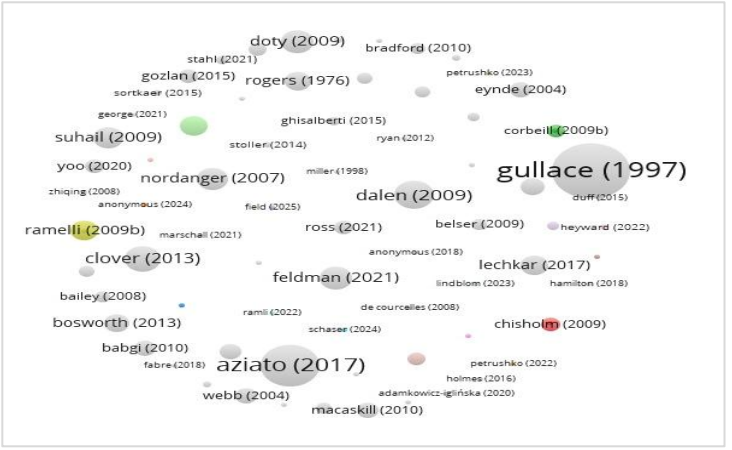
The Distinction between Authentic and Artificial Crying

The analysis identifies three interconnected findings concerning Ali Mustafa Yaqub's critique of emotionally driven religious practices. First, his sermons distinguish between authentic and artificial crying as two fundamentally different forms of emotional expression in worship. Second, Hadith functions as an evaluative normative standard through which the religious legitimacy of such emotional practices is assessed, while the resulting discourse establishes boundaries for acceptable forms of popular religious expression. One of the central arguments in Yaqub's sermons is therefore the conceptual distinction between authentic and artificial crying in religious practice. Authentic crying is framed as an individual spiritual expression arising from reflective awareness of sin, fear of God, and a deep eschatological orientation; it is therefore personal, spontaneous, and not directed toward the public sphere. By contrast, artificial crying is understood as an emotional response elicited by external stimuli—such as music, the preacher's rhetorical intonation, and suggestive narratives—which, within the normative framework constructed by Yaqub, is regarded as lacking ritual legitimacy because it does not stem from a sincere spiritual impulse.

This perspective is reinforced by contemporary empirical studies indicating that spiritual transformation and recovery are correlated with multisensory–physiological changes that elicit authentic emotional responses, including weeping accompanied by inner tranquility, and intensified religious connectedness (Varela, 2023). Furthermore, other research emphasizes that prayer functions as a medium of transcendent communication, fostering hope for a divine response both affectively and reflectively (Van den Eynde, 2004).

More broadly, crying in spiritual and religious contexts has attracted interdisciplinary scholarly attention across fields concerned with religion, psychology, emotion, and ritual practice. A bibliometric mapping of the Scopus database using the keyword "Crying for God" identified 79 publications published between 1976 and 20 December 2025 (see Figure 3). This body of literature indicates sustained scholarly interest in the relationship between crying, religious experience, emotional expression, and spirituality, while also providing a broader research context for examining how emotional expressions in religious practice are interpreted, evaluated, and regulated within particular normative traditions.

Figure 3. Scopus database mapping of research networks based on a search of article titles, abstracts, and the keyword "Crying for God." The search, covering publications from 1976 to 20 December 2025, identified 79 documents.



Ali Mustafa Yaqub critiques modern muhasabah practices that rely on mass psychological effects. Such practices are constructed as forms of devotional innovation lacking precedent in the practices of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his companions. This type of emotional ritualization is viewed as potentially blurring the boundaries between worship and religious entertainment.

From a normative perspective, ritual innovations lacking scriptural basis are considered capable of leading believers into methodological confusion and weakening the worship orientation grounded in obedience. This critique also reflects concerns about the transformation of worship into merely a vehicle for emotional release.

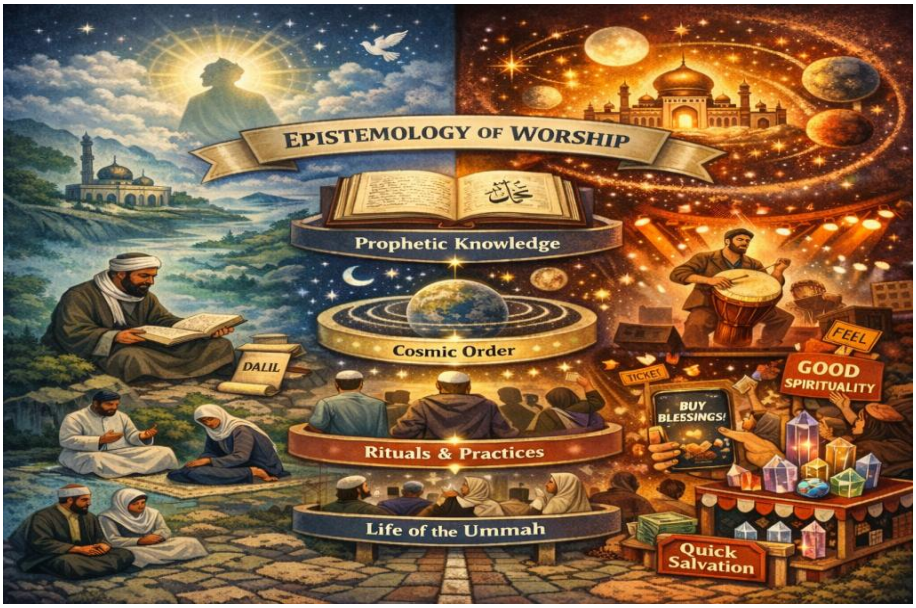
Furthermore, the above statement refers to the authentic values of religious teachings. Human emotions deepen when confronted with uncertainty and profound mystery. Life is filled with countless minor frustrations, and religion guides and channels feelings that surpass human capacities. In this sense, authentic weeping is grounded in religion, directing humans toward truth and providing meaning to life. Moreover, Rogers (1976) notes that religion indicates a path for reconciling with destiny as something beyond empirical experience.

Epistemology of Worship: Scriptural Evidence versus Personal Preference

Ali Mustafa Yaqub's lecture highlights the distinction between worship grounded in scriptural evidence (*dalil*) and worship driven by personal preference, critiquing the commodification of spirituality whereby religious experiences are emotionally and commercially packaged. This aligns with al-Ghazālī's epistemology of worship, which asserts that worship is valid only when understood and performed through revelation, interpreted spiritually (*ta'wīl*), and situated within a cosmological framework connecting the physical and spiritual realms, with prophetic knowledge at its pinnacle (Andani, 2018). Such a perspective reinforces normative boundaries, ensuring that emotional or performative elements do not compromise doctrinal integrity or spiritual

authenticity. Moreover, this conception integrates with Wittgenstein's notion of religious adherence as a *form of life*, encompassing both ritual acts—worship, prayer, meditation, commemorations—and propositional attitudes, linking individual practices and spiritual experiences to the communal and interpretive life of the religious community (Wolterstorff, 2007). Within this epistemological framework, the conception of worship articulated above is visually represented in the following illustrative model.

Figure 4. An illustrative model of the epistemology of worship



Discussion

This analysis demonstrates that Ali Mustafa Yaqub's lecture functions not only as a medium for conveying normative teachings but also as a mechanism for discursive control over popular religious practices emerging in the public sphere. By emphasizing the supremacy of scriptural evidence, the preacher seeks to uphold the authority of Hadith scholars while correcting tendencies toward instant spirituality that prioritize ephemeral emotional experiences. In a broader context, this phenomenon reflects a contestation between textual traditionalism and ritual innovations grounded in emotional experience, highlighting the

dynamics of contemporary Islamic religiosity as it navigates the ongoing negotiation among normative authority, ritual authenticity, and the psychological needs of believers.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of a Hadith-based epistemology of ritual, positioning *fiqh al-ḥadīṡ* not merely as a juridical interpretive tool but as an epistemic mechanism for regulating emotional authenticity in contemporary religious rituals. By demonstrating how Hadith authority functions as a corrective-normative framework, this article extends the study of religious rituals beyond descriptive analyses toward a normative evaluation grounded in scriptural evidence within the context of modern Islam.

Despite its analytical and theoretical contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the analysis is based on a purposive selection of Ali Mustafa Yaqub's sermons and documented question-and-answer sessions that explicitly address *muhasabah*, crying in worship (*al-bukā'*), and emotional stimulation. While these materials are representative of his Hadith-based normative reasoning, they do not encompass the full diversity of emotionally driven ritual practices developing across different Muslim sociocultural contexts. Second, this study adopts a qualitative–normative approach grounded in *fiqh al-ḥadīth*, prioritizing the epistemological evaluation of ritual legitimacy over the empirical assessment of participants' emotional experiences, psychological states, or ritual effects. Accordingly, the findings do not seek statistical generalizability but rather propose an analytically grounded normative framework for evaluating emotional authenticity and ritual legitimacy. Finally, because the analysis relies primarily on discursive texts and interpretive methods, future research could extend this framework through comparative studies of other Muslim preachers and religious authorities to examine how different interpretive approaches to Hadith shape the evaluation of emotionally driven ritual practices. Such research could further incorporate ethnographic observation, interviews, and psychological approaches to investigate how these practices are experienced, internalized, and negotiated by religious practitioners in lived contexts. Comparative research across preachers, communities, and

sociocultural settings would also help assess the broader applicability and contextual variation of the normative framework proposed in this study.

Conclusions

This study demonstrates that Ali Mustafa Yaqub's critique of emotionally driven *muhasabah* establishes Hadith-based epistemological criteria for assessing the legitimacy of emotional expressions in contemporary Islamic ritual practice. The findings show that his discourse functions not merely as a critique of particular devotional practices but also as a form of religious authority that negotiates the boundaries of ritual legitimacy and acceptable emotional religiosity within the contemporary Islamic public sphere. More broadly, the study highlights the significance of Hadith epistemology for understanding how contemporary Muslim scholars evaluate, regulate, and legitimate evolving forms of religious practice, while laying the groundwork for comparative research on diverse scholarly approaches to emotional spirituality across Muslim contexts.

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