

Semantic Association of Jihad: Indonesian Muslim Students' Perspectives

Nur Latifah¹, Akhmad Muzakki², Sofiatul Karimah^{3*}

Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia

Author Email: latifah.nur@uin-malang.ac.id¹, akh.muzakki@uin-malang.ac.id², shofia.v99@gmail.com³

Abstract. The findings show that the students' view on *Jihad* is not merely identical to fighting but also the application of *Jihad*, which varies. It has a wide spectrum as long as its purpose and still in the religious morality frame. Spreading *Rahmatan* (affection) concept and The word *jihad*, which mentioned in the Qur'an about 35 times, including its derivations, has often been understood only at the scriptural level, detached from its contexts. As a result, *jihad* has been assumed to be a specific act of violence, such as terrorism and radicalism. This article aims to explain the concept of *jihad* in Islam from the perspective of Indonesian Muslim students at Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia, and to explore the factors that influence their understanding of *jihad*. This study adopts a semantic approach to the teaching of *jihad* in the *Qur'an*, contextualizing it with the current situation. The findings show that the students' view of *jihad* is not limited to physical fighting, but also includes a wide range of other applications, as long as they are motivated by religious morality. The moral and spiritual values implicit in *jihad* include spreading the concept of *rahmatan* (affection) and promoting peace of life and spiritual values.

Keywords: *Jihad*, Semantics, *Santri*, Moral and Spiritual strength

1 Introduction

The word *jihad*, as written in the Holy Book, is often understood only at the scriptural level, leading to its association with fighting against disbelievers or violence and radicalism. That phenomenon became more common after a series of terrorist acts using religion's attributes inside the *Takbir* label [1]. This perception has contributed to the increasing growth of intolerance and radicalization among people with limited understanding of religious studies, especially youth. As a result, the term *jihad* has become associated with negative connotations and is often seen as having no place in civic society. However, this perception is only one of the many meanings of the word *jihad*. A narrow understanding of *jihad* can lead to dangerous ideologies that can eventually develop and put into action.

According to [2], the understanding of *jihad* was mostly constructed socially into a narrow understanding. Hence, the meaning of the word *jihad* should be observed from various contexts so that a shallow meaning will not be attached to it. As the source of text construction containing the social welfare values, the Holy Book should be studied intensely so that the human values will be shown through its *maqashidut tasyri`* or the commands of God [3]. Indeed, *asbab al-nuzul* should be prioritized in understanding the meaning of the word *jihad*, which is stated in the Holy Book, so that the true meaning of *jihad* will not be determined out of context in a Holy Book verse [4].

As an illustration, in the circle of Islamic *santri* and learners, *jihad* is recognized as a spirit in constructing Islamic civilization and advancement, searching for knowledge with the spirit and soul of *tauhid* (Oneness of God), patience and genuineness, refining morals and characters, and delivering Islamic preaching in order to educate humans to have faith or be pious and ingenious [2], [5], [6]. According to [7], defending the country from any threat that causes harm to the country's stability and security is also a part of *jihad* to create a peaceful atmosphere within the country. This is in line with [8], stating that stabilizing security is a part of *jihad*. On the other perspective, *jihad* becomes a facility for radical religious movement, and *jihad* is a medium of doctrine to build radical ideology and terrorism.

This paper examines the views of students at Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim on *jihad*, contextualized with Indonesia's current situation. It also explores the background of thought that shapes their understanding of *jihad*. Considering that these students have an Islamic boarding school educational background

and currently reside in an Islamic university dormitory that actively promotes moderation and religious tolerance, their views are particularly important to consider.

2 Methods

This research is categorized into field research with a mixed method. This study utilizes two types of data: primary and secondary data. The primary data of this study are taken from observations and interviews with students of the State Islamic University of Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang who live in dormitories. The secondary data are obtained from documents or archives pertaining to the implementation of student character development in the Islamic dormitory of Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang [9].

The sample of this study is 300 new students (2021-2022) State Islamic University Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang who were randomly chosen. A random sample is employed because the researcher mixes people from all populations to ensure equality. Furthermore, the researcher does not separate status, type, age, and student activity. The data collected through interviews, document review, and observations are reviewed through interactive analysis methods [10] involving three stages: data reduction, data presentation, verification, and conclusion. Data reduction is an attempt to streamline data by sorting out important information, simplifying it, and grouping it as needed. The presentation of data is an attempt to describe the data in a clear and concise manner, accompanied by textual evidence and relevant theories. The technique used to present the research data is analytical synthesis. Verifying the data and conclusions is the final step in the research process, which involves re-examining the relationship and relevance of the research findings to the formulation of the problem. The analysis results were verified based on the research objectives and continued with inductive conclusions [11].

2.1 Empirical Data and Analysis

2.1.1 Narrative Construction of Word Jihad in the Holy Book

In Islamic terminology, *jihad* is defined as the intense struggle to exert all the potential and capabilities to achieve goals, especially to maintain the truth and goodness. This definition is not always about a fight in Allah's way because many verses use the derivation of the word *jihad* in the context of the relationship between pious children and infidel parents. They are QS. *al-Ankabut* verse 8 and QS. *Luqman* verse 15, also in *surah al-Hajj* verse 78, in which the word *jihad* is used in devoted worship (QS, 22: 78). According to the interpretation above, *jihad* is an act of using all strength, power, and capability, both in the form of deeds and words as an effort to uphold *kalimatullah*. The words of *jihad* and its derivation in The Holy Book are repeated 34 (thirty-four) times in 23 (twenty-three) *surah* in various forms.

There is a verse that contains 2 (two) words of *jihad*, namely QS, 22: 78 and QS, 25: 52, in which the word *jihad* is written in the form of *mashdar* (noun) and *fi'il amr* (imperative respective), and QS, 29: 6 is written in the form of *fi'il madli* (perfective), and *mudlari`* (imperfective). In addition, there is one verse that contains 3 (three) *isim fa'il* (subject), namely QS, 4: 95. So, to facilitate the category of the word *jihad*, it is explained through the picture above, which is divided into 5 (five) categories; 1) *fi'il madli*, which states the past form 15 times (43%), 2) *fi'il mudlari`*, which states the present progressive form 5 times (14%), 3) *mashdar*, which is not bound by time 4 times (12%), 4) *isim fa'il*, who does an act 4 times (11%), and 5) *fi'il amr*, which confirms an order 7 times (20%).

The reduction of the meaning of *jihad*, which has increasingly led to ambivalence in religious understanding, must be discarded from modern Islamic civilization. This is because the interpretation of *jihad* in the classical era is certainly no longer appropriate when applied in the present, as there is a temporal difference that requires a new transformation in the implementation of the spirit and passion of *jihad*. In Islamic history, *jihad* is said to be one of the teachings in the Holy Book, while the Holy Book is believed to be a source of faith. In other words, *jihad* is a manifestation of faith. In the perspective of the Holy Book, the manifestation of *jihad* is varied, and it has a very broad spectrum that reaches all activities as long as the basis and purpose are within the frame of religious morality [12].

2.1.2 The Students' Perspectives on Jihad in the Holy Book

In the Holy Book, there are three *surahs*, *Ali Imran* verse 142, *an-Nahl* verse 110, and *Muhammad* verse 31. The word *jihad* is accompanied by the word *shabar*, which means persistent and hardy. The word *shabar* in those three verses is often forgotten or not seen as an integral part of *jihad fi sabilillah*. The Holy Book often adopts the term *shabar* as the main trait for believers in fulfilling their religious obligations, namely *jihad*, which is comprehensively understood [13]. It means carrying out the worship as a form of God's call, and the Holy Book uses the term *jihad* followed by a patient attitude. Thus, *jihad* is understood as an attempt to exert all the capabilities in upholding *amar ma'ruf nahi munkars* as an enactment of God's command.

Through semantic interpretation of the definition of *jihad* in the Qur'an, which involves relating several texts and contexts or combining the meaning of *jihad* with other meanings in certain texts, 283 students (*santri*) stated that *jihad* is synonymous with humanity, peace, justice, noble character, and patience. Fifteen students argued that it is synonymous with war, terrorism, radicalism, intolerance, and violence. While other two students stated that they are neutral, as shown in the following questionnaire results:

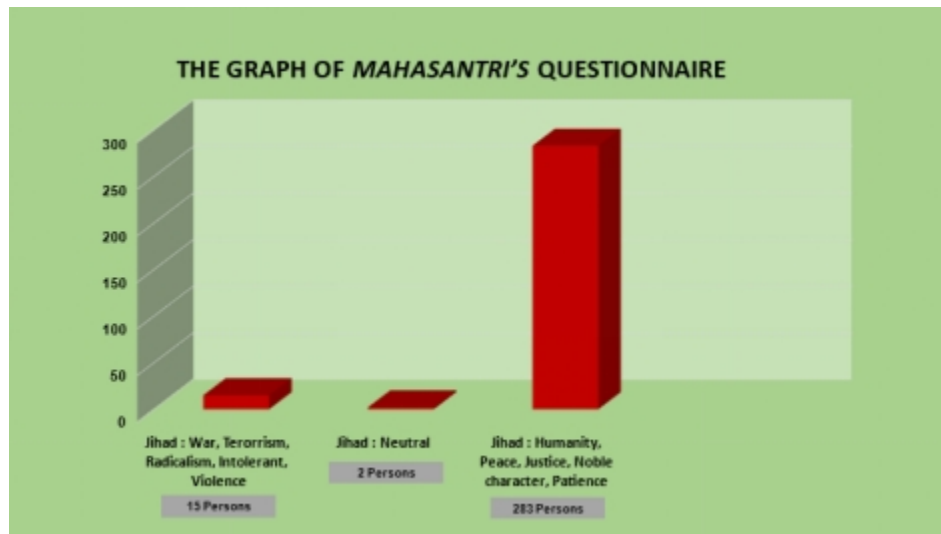


Figure 1. Graph of *mahasantri*'s understanding of the word *jihad* semantically.

Based on the interview with students (January 2020), their tendency is affected by radicalism, terrorism, and intolerance because it is based on their educational and family background, limited intelligence, social intercourse, and limited comprehension of religious concepts. Moreover, they cannot establish encounters with other religions as part of the pluralism spirit. Dominant factors influencing them are understanding meaning very textual (scriptural) and following a teacher who delivers religious doctrine irresistible.

3 Result and Discussion

The word *jihad* in the Holy Book is repeated 35 (thirty-five) times with various types of words. Of thirty-five kinds of words of *jihad* and its derivation, only 7 (seven) times Allah conveyed in the form of '*amr*' (respective imperative), namely, QS. 5: 35, QS. 9: 41, 73 & 86, QS. 22: 78, QS. 25: 52, and QS. 66: 9, the rest are informative or forceful forms explaining the position and benefits of *jihad*. For example, giving alms to those who carry out the pilgrimage, such as the reward of those who strive in the way of Allah (QS, 9: 9), those who do *jihad* will get high degrees and virtues. Allah calls them righteous people (*shiddiq*) (QS, 49:15). Besides, the diction *jihad* is applied as comparisons (QS, 4: 95), affirmations (QS, 8: 72), statements (QS, 8: 74) & 16: 110), suggestions to achieve noble degrees as Muslims, virtue, heaven, and mercy (QS, 2: 18, 9: 20 & 9: 88), to obtain heaven (QS, 3: 142), a threat to those who do not want to do *jihad* (QS, 9: 81), and there is even the word *jihad* which is not as meaningful as it is in general, which means to force (QS, 29: 8 & 31: 15).

The socio-historical context (*asbab al-nuzul*) verses of *jihad* that are expressly using respective imperative sentences based on the interpretation of [14], i.e., QS, 5: 35, QS, 9: 41, 73, 86, QS, 22: 78, QS, 25: 52, and QS, 66: 9. *Surah al-Maidah* (5) verse 35 and *surah at-Taubah* (9) verses 41, 73 and 86 Allah firmly commands all believers to conduct *jihad* against unbelievers, idolaters, and apostates who interfere Islamic *da'wah*, as well as *surah al-Tahrim* (66) verse 9. Meanwhile, *surah al-Hajj* (22) verse 78 orders Muslims to do *jihad* to worship Allah [14], and *surah al-Furqan* (25) verse 52 commands Muslims to do *jihad* to be thankful to Allah the Almighty who has given *ni'mat* (prosperity) in the form of Islam and the Holy Book[15]. By paying attention to the context of the revelation verses above, the war in Islam is permitted if unbelievers frankly interfere with Islamic *da'wah*. *Jihad* is not only limited to the meaning of defending Islam by taking part in a war or holding a sword and others. Its meaning can be interpreted in higher frames, such as *jihad* through pens, money, or combating evil desire [16].

In Arabic, the word *jihad* is not true if it is only interpreted as fighting because there is the word *jihad* which means to worship diligently (QS, 22: 78) and to argue (QS, 25: 52). Neglecting the context of the verse will result in the reduction of the actual meaning, which encompasses a variety of aspects. Therefore, it is unsurprising that the Western world associate *jihad* with extremism, terrorism, and radicalism. It is because they

only read or understand *jihad* from the narrow-minded people. Even among fundamentalists, *jihad* is often used to legitimize its struggle in the name of religion because they equate the meaning of *jihad* with holy war [17]. Not all verses in the Holy Book that mention *jihad* contain suggestions for violence and extremism.

One of the students, when interviewed, said that *jihad* is a war against people who are not of the same faith because it is a clear command in the *Qur'an*. If not, then we Muslims will forever be toyed with by them in various ways, so Islam as a high religion is only in name. It is not mentioned in history when the prophet, companions, and *tabi'in* Muslims always fought in the name of religion so that Islam could rule the world (interview with Afandi, 20 March 2022). In addition, external factors influence the understanding and thoughts of MSAA students at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. They are such as lack of religious understanding, different Islamic background, lack of selection in choosing religious teachers (*ustadz*), limited association with peers, and often self-isolation; all problems are solved by themselves and easy to solve. Influenced by religious studies in social media (Questionnaire on MSAA *Mahasantri*, April 2022).

This fault occurs because *Jihad* is often paired with *qital*, which is understood as an attitude of bringing weapons to fight people who are considered *kafir*, or associated with terrorism and radicalism. The understanding of the word *jihad* in the Holy Book should be contextualized with the causes of the verse's revelation. Therefore, the wars involving the Prophet and his companions can be understood proportionately. The wars were only carried out because they were forced to defend themselves and Islam, and they were defensive, not offensive. The values and passions of warfare uphold morals and truth, not merely fighting. Islam comes with a mission to bring peace, so the development of noble morality is a top priority in *da'wah* in this context [18].

Jihad is an intense fight involving soul, money/assets, spoken action, and rationale for upholding Islam and Islamic preaching [19]. *Jihad* is the main spirit in building the development and advancement of Islam. Without the spirit of *jihad*, the noble mission of Islam will only die out. Hence, the *jihad* spirit must always be burning within the Muslims' hearts in any situation and condition. *Jihad* in Islam cannot be identified with war, battle, and military expedition. Islam goes against any act of anarchism, violence, persecution, terror, bombing, and other crimes [5].

Furthermore, understanding the context semantically to find new moral, spiritual, and passionate values that accompany and are hidden behind the word *jihad* is crucial. The Holy Book has juxtaposed the word *jihad* with the word "*shabar*," as mentioned in QS, 16: 110 and QS, 47: 31. "*Shabar*" becomes a keyword often forgotten when reading texts about *jihad* in the Holy Book. This keyword provides the understanding that steadfastness is the main characteristic of believers to implement God's command, which is *jihad* with a holistic and comprehensive meaning as written in the Holy Book. In a *Hadith*, it is mentioned that Islam people must be patient in performing the religious command, staying away from religious prohibition, and facing calamity (QS, *al-Kahfi* (18): 28, QS, *Yusuf* (12): 33, QS, *al-Ahqaf* (46): 35).

In the view of a *santri*, not all command words in the *Qur'an* have the meaning as they are, but it must also be understood that the context that accompanies the verse. Therefore, in command of *jihad*, we must interpret the implied meaning behind the word. The moral and spiritual values behind the word are that the *Qur'an* asks us to be intelligent people, able to read situations and circumstances, so *jihad* in the *Qur'an* does not always mean war in the name of religion. However, a strong intention to be a good person, obedient to religious orders and patience in dealing with unpleasant situations is also the meaning of *jihad* that is often forgotten.

In the view of a *santri*, not all command words in the *Qur'an* have a literal meaning. It is also important to understand the context in which the verse was revealed. Therefore, in the command of *jihad*, we must interpret the implied meaning behind the word. The word's moral and spiritual characteristics are that the *Qur'an* asks us to be intelligent and capable of reading events and circumstances. Therefore, *jihad* in the *Qur'an* does not always mean war in the name of religion. However, a strong intention to be a good person, obedience to religious commands, and patience in dealing with unpleasant situations are also meanings of *jihad* that are often forgotten. The moral and spiritual values behind the commands in *Qur'an* must be explored by juxtaposing them with other verses on the same theme (interview with Nasrul, 27 February 2022).

The word "*jihad*" means to strive or struggle in the way of God. This can be interpreted as carrying out God's commands and avoiding His prohibitions, with patience. Therefore, any movement that promotes radicalism, terrorism, intolerance, or violence in the name of Islam is a misrepresentation of the meaning of *jihad* and should be abolished. The meaning was only relevant in the past when non-muslim were against Muslims. Nowadays, most MSAA *santri* state that spreading the affection concept (*rahmatan*) and manifesting peace of life are moral and spiritual values which is the implicit meaning of *jihad* that should be introduced and campaigned.

The MSAA UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang curriculum emphasizes character building, providing more guidance and practice in living in a pluralistic society [20]. Because of their backgrounds, most current students are unaware of Islam's rich and extensive principles. The main purpose of the curriculum at MSAA UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang is to understand religion's teachings reasonably, respecting differences and

pluralism. Therefore, cultivating morals, ethics, and character is a top priority so that all students have a moderate, inclusive, and humanist religious view.

In pandemic conditions, *jihad* is meant for social movement based on humanism-solidarity, delivering peace, and eliminating poverty and economic disparity. They also realize justice, eliminate ignorance and arrogance, improve their character and noble attitude, preach patiently and affectionately, and comprehend unpleasant situations humbly. Thus, this substance of Islam becomes the soul of the meaning of *jihad* in the Holy Book. Manifesting *jihad* meaning is very various and has a comprehensive understanding which covers all activities as long as its purpose is in the religious morality frame [21].

Jihad, for a student and a *santri*, is a battle against ignorance and the degeneration of morals and character. It is one of the meanings behind the *Quranic* necessity of the term *jihad*. A teacher who teaches well can guide his students to become civilized and knowledgeable people; that is part of the actual command of *jihad*. Islam is a humanist, inclusive, and tolerant faith that emphasizes the importance of love and compassion for all creatures on Earth. Once a student has a full and holistic understanding of Islamic teachings, they will come to realize that the religion's ultimate goal is to spread love and peace to all of humanity. Even Islam will reap sympathy from other religions; there is admiration for the teachings brought by the Prophet Muhammad; this is the great mission carried out in the Prophet's *da'wah* (interview with umi kulsum, 9 April 2022).

4 Conclusion

The word *jihad* in the Holy Book is repeated 35 (thirty-five) times along with derivation. There are only 7 (seven) times Allah conveyed it in the form of *fi'il amr* (imperative respective); the rest are written in informative forms which explain the position and advantages of *jihad*. In *surah al-Maidah* (5) verse 35, *surah Taubah* (9) verses 41, 73, and 86, and *surah al-Tahrim* (66) verse 9, Allah strictly commands all believers to do *jihad* against unbelievers, polytheists, and apostates who disturb Islamic preach. Meanwhile, *surah al-Hajj* (22) verse 78 gives orders to do *jihad* to worship Allah (not fighting), and *surah al-Furqan* (25) verse 52 commands *jihad* to give thanks for *ni'mat* from Allah SWT. The word *jihad* in the Holy Book is not always synonymous with war. However, the manifestations of *jihad* are very diverse and have a broad spectrum that reaches all activities as long as the purpose is within the frame of religious morality.

The Holy Book *surah* 16 verse 110 and *surah* 47 verse 31 pairing the word *jihad* to "*shabar*" becomes a keyword to deconstruct *jihad*. It is early known as war, radicalism, terrorism, intolerant, and violence which was argued by 13 % of respondents as humanity, peace, justice, noble character, and patience 85 % of respondents said. Therefore, MSAA institution of State Islamic University Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang will politically rearrange its curriculum design which becomes a reference in the learning process, especially about a *jihad* chapter. It is oriented toward contextual and humanist *jihad*.

The finding of this study is that it is compulsory to understand the semantic association of the word *jihad* from other scientific perspectives, such as semiotics, sociolinguistics, and others. Through various approaches, understanding the meaning of the word *jihad* in the Holy Book will not be a sole, absolute, and final truth for certain groups of people. Thus, the Holy Book, which appears to invite dialogue with all humanity, will always provide affection until it exists throughout time.

References

- [1] R. Ucu K, "Don't Yell At Takbir, Later accused of Terrorists," *Republika*, 2020. <https://republika.co.id/berita/ozgttv318/jangan-teriak-takbir-nanti-dituduh-teroris>.
- [2] R. Triana, "The Internalization of Jihad in Character Education," *Islam. Educ. J.*, 2018, doi: <https://doi.org/10.30868/ei.v7i01.208>.
- [3] L. Jamaa, "Divine and Humane Dimension in the Maqashid al-Syari'ah," *J. Sharia Sci. Law*, vol. 45, pp. 214–221, 2011.
- [4] M. Chirzin, "Reactualizing Jihad Fi Sabil Al-Lah in Modern and Indonesia Context," *Ulumuna*, 2017, doi: <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v10i1.432>.
- [5] A. Yaqin, "Reconstruction and Reorientation of Jihad in the Contemporary Era: Thematic Study of Jihadi Verses," *OKARA J. Lang. Lit.*, 2016, doi: <https://doi.org/10.19105/ojbs.v10i1.807>.
- [6] D. Hartini, "Contextualization of Jihad Meaning in the Millennial Era," *Dialogia Islam. Stud. Soc. J.*, vol. 17, pp. 81–100, 2019, doi: <https://doi.org/10.21154/dialogia.v17i1.1656>.
- [7] A. Mustaqim, "Defending the State in Holy Book Perspective," *A Transform. Mean. Jihad*, 2011, doi: <https://doi.org/10.24042/ajsk.v11i1.614>.
- [8] D. Irawan, "The Controversy of Jihad Concept and Meaning in the AlHoly Book about Creating Peace," *Relig. J. Relig. Study*, 2014, doi: <https://doi.org/10.14421/rejusta.2014.1001-05>.
- [9] S. Arikunto, *Research procedure: A practical approach*. Jakarta: Rineka Cipta, 2010.
- [10] D. Northcutt, N., & McCoy, *Interactive qualitative analysis: A systems method for qualitative research*. California: Sage Publication, 2004.
- [11] A. M. Miles, M. B. Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis*. London: Sage Publication, 1992.
- [12] A'la, *Contemporary Jahiliyah and Violence Logical Hegemony: Kniting Islam of Indonesia, Building World Civilization*. Yogyakarta: PT Lkis Printing Cemerlang, 2014.
- [13] A. Afsaruddin, *Deconstruction Theory of Jihad and Syahid*. Bandung, Indonesia: PT Mizan Pustaka, 2018.
- [14] I. Katsir, *The Interpretation of al-Qur'an al-Adzim*. Beirut: Dar al-Ilmiyah, 1992.
- [15] J. Thabari, M, *Jami' al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Holy Book (Tafsir Thabari). First Edition*. Beirut: Dar al-Makrifah, 1991.
- [16] A. Ardiansyah, "The Development of meaning of the word Irhab 'Terorist' and Jihad 'Jihad' in Arabic," *Study Arab. Linguist. Radicalism Termination. At-Turats*, 2015, doi: <https://doi.org/10.24260/at-turats.v9i1.309>.
- [17] A. Hifni, "Straightening the Meaning of Jihad," 2020. <http://wahidfoundation.org/index.php/news/detail/Meluruskan-Makna-Jihad>.
- [18] M. . Ridlo, "Putting Meaning of Jihad: Analytical-Comparative Studies on Fundamentalist and Modernist's View," *Tsaqafah*, 2018, doi: <https://doi.org/10.21111/tsaqafah.v14i1.2299>.
- [19] M. Asmara, "Reinterpretation of Jihad and Terrorist Meaning," *Al Istinbath Journals Islam. Law*, pp. 63–80, 2016.
- [20] MSAA, *Academic Manual MSAA UIN Malang*. UIN. Press, 2018.
- [21] C. Nizar, "Jihad Contextualization of Indonesia Perspective," *Islam. Study J. Ulul Albab*, 2015, doi: <https://doi.org/10.18860/ua.v16i1.2784>.