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## The Crisis of Authority in Global Culture: An Interdisciplinary Analysis of Contemporary Shifts in Epistemology, Values, and Truth

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**Abstract.** The crisis of authority in global culture is a complex phenomenon reflecting a fundamental shift in how humans understand truth, values, and the sources of legitimacy of knowledge. This research focuses on the dynamics of epistemological change in global society influenced by digital technology, cultural relativism, and value pluralism. The main issue studied is how this crisis of authority influences the construction of truth and value systems in contemporary society, as well as its implications for social and spiritual life. The aim of this research is to develop an interdisciplinary analysis that integrates perspectives from philosophy, sociology, theology, and media studies in understanding this phenomenon. The method used is a qualitative approach based on systematic literature studies with a critical analysis of recent academic sources. The main findings indicate that the crisis of authority is characterized not only by the weakening of traditional institutions but also by the emergence of "alternative authorities" based on algorithms, public opinion, and subjective experience. This results in the fragmentation of truth, the relativization of values, and a crisis of epistemological legitimacy. The synthesis of this research confirms that the reconstruction of authority requires an integrative approach that combines rationality, ethics, and spiritual dimensions. In conclusion, the crisis of authority in global culture is not merely a challenge, but rather an opportunity to build a new epistemological paradigm that is more holistic, reflective, and rooted in transcendent values.

**Keywords:** crisis of authority; global epistemology; relativism; digital culture; contemporary truth; value pluralism; algorithmic authority

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## 1. Introduction

The crisis of authority in contemporary global culture is a multidimensional phenomenon that reflects not only social change but also fundamental shifts in epistemological structures, value systems, and the construction of truth. In the last decade, the development of digital technology, the globalization of information, and cultural dynamics have shifted the foundations of authority from institutional to more fluid, fragmented, and subjective forms. This transformation has given rise to what is often referred to as a crisis of epistemological legitimacy, namely the weakening of trust in traditional sources of authority such as educational institutions, religion, and the state. This phenomenon is increasingly evident in the context of a global society connected through digital technology. The development of artificial intelligence, social media, and information algorithms has transformed the way knowledge is produced and distributed. In this context, truth is no longer determined solely by scientific validity or academic authority, but also by virality, popularity, and emotional resonance. Recent research shows that the digital era has created a “post-truth” condition, where emotional persuasion often dominates over objective facts.[1] As a result, epistemic authority is delegitimized, and society tends to rely on subjective perceptions in forming beliefs.

In Indonesia, this crisis of authority is also evident in various sectors, including education, government, and social life. Studies on the identity crisis in higher education show that globalization and technological pressures have led to a disorientation of institutional goals, a weakening of scientific culture, and a degradation of moral values.[2] This demonstrates that the crisis of authority is not only occurring at the global level, but also has significant local implications, particularly in the context of knowledge development and national character. Furthermore, the crisis of public trust in government institutions is an important indicator of the weakening of traditional authority. Phenomena such as “cancel culture” and social media-based public criticism reflect changing patterns of relations between society and formal authority. In this context, legitimacy is no longer determined by structural position, but rather by dynamic and often unstable public perceptions.[3] Thus, authority becomes something that is continuously negotiated in the digital public sphere. Epistemologically, the crisis of authority is also closely related to the problems of knowledge itself. Research by Friedman shows that there is a “crisis of knowing,” in which the concepts of belief, truth, and justification of knowledge become increasingly blurred and ambiguous.[4] This is due to the massive mix of scientific information, personal opinions, and misinformation circulating in the digital space. In this situation, individuals have difficulty distinguishing between objective truth and subjective constructs, thus reinforcing epistemological relativism.

This phenomenon is further exacerbated by the emergence of disinformation and digital infodemics that disrupt the stability of knowledge systems. The integration of artificial intelligence into the media ecosystem has accelerated the production and dissemination of inaccurate information, thereby weakening public trust in credible sources of information.[5] In this context, authority is no longer based on truth, but on the ability to influence public perception. This marks a fundamental shift from a rationality-based epistemology to a perception-based epistemology. From a cultural perspective, the crisis of authority is also related to value pluralism and moral relativism. Globalization has brought together different value systems, resulting in moral fragmentation and identity conflict. Recent studies have shown that the epistemological crisis in contemporary society is often caused by a disconnect between reason, empirical experience, and the spiritual dimension.[6] This condition creates a

disorientation of knowledge that impacts value and identity instability. On the other hand, the emergence of digital culture has also changed the structure of authority in everyday life. In the context of education, for example, the authority of teachers as sources of knowledge is seriously challenged by the influence of social media and viral culture. Research by Kamaluddin shows that teachers are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain their authority amidst the uncontrolled flow of digital information.[7] This reflects a shift in authority from personal figures to decentralized information systems.

However, previous approaches to examining the crisis of authority tend to be partial. Philosophical perspectives emphasize epistemological relativism but pay little attention to its social implications. Sociological perspectives focus on changes in social structures but often neglect normative and spiritual dimensions. Meanwhile, theological approaches emphasize the importance of transcendent authority but face challenges in the context of global pluralism. Thus, there is an urgent need to develop an interdisciplinary approach capable of integrating these various perspectives. The main problem in this study is how to understand the crisis of authority in global culture as a phenomenon involving a complex interaction between epistemology, values, and truth. The research questions posed are: (1) How do shifts in epistemology affect the construction of authority in global society? (2) How does digital technology shape new forms of authority? and (3) How does this crisis affect value systems and truth in contemporary life? To answer these questions, this study proposes an interdisciplinary approach that combines philosophical, sociological, and theological analyses. This approach is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the crisis of authority and offer a conceptual framework for reconstructing authority in the context of global culture. The main contribution of this research is to develop an interdisciplinary analytical model of the crisis of authority, identify the transformation of authority from institutional to digital, offer an epistemological synthesis that integrates rationality, experience, and spirituality, and provide practical implications for strengthening value systems in global society.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Epistemology and Postmodernism Perspective**

Contemporary epistemology has undergone a radical transformation with the advent of postmodernism and the development of global digital culture. The modern paradigm, which emphasizes objectivity, rationality, and the universality of truth, is now being deconstructed through a postmodern approach that views knowledge as a contextual and dynamic social construct. In this context, the crisis of epistemic authority is caused not only by social change but also by a fundamental shift in how humans understand truth and the legitimacy of knowledge. In recent developments, the phenomenon of postmodernism has transformed into a more complex condition, namely the post-truth era. Research by Boler and Davis shows that in this era, subjective emotions and opinions are often more influential than objective facts in shaping public beliefs.[8] This marks an epistemological shift from verification-based truth to perception-based truth. As a result, scientific authority and knowledge institutions have experienced significant delegitimization. Furthermore, recent empirical studies have shown that the expansion of digital media and disinformation has created a profound epistemological crisis, where the boundaries between fact and opinion have become increasingly blurred.[9] In this context, truth is no longer understood as something objective and stable, but rather as the result of narratives produced in the digital public sphere. This is in line with the finding that

disinformation in the post-truth era not only disrupts knowledge systems, but also damages the epistemological foundations of science and society.[10]

From the perspective of political epistemology, this crisis is also characterized by increasing polarization and fragmentation of knowledge. Friedman suggests that the contemporary political crisis is fundamentally an epistemological crisis, where society is fragmented into “epistemic bubbles” that reinforce individual beliefs without rational dialogue.[4] This situation demonstrates that differences are no longer simply variations in perspective, but have evolved into fundamental conflicts over what constitutes truth. Furthermore, the development of information technology and artificial intelligence further complicates the epistemological landscape. In this context, information is not only produced by humans, but also by algorithmic systems with their own operational logic. Floridi calls this phenomenon the transformation towards an “infosphere,” where the boundaries between producers and consumers of knowledge are blurred.[11] This creates a democratization of information, but also increases the risk of epistemological distortion due to a lack of verification and validation. This phenomenon also demonstrates that contemporary epistemology can no longer be understood individually, but must be viewed within a collective and systemic framework. Recent research in digital epistemology suggests that the interaction between humans and technology can weaken individuals' reflective abilities in evaluating truth, due to dependence on external and automated information systems.[12] This leads to what is known as the “outsourcing of epistemic judgment,” the delegation of truth judgments to technology. However, critiques of postmodernism remain relevant in this context. Excessive epistemological relativism has the potential to lead to a nihilism of truth, where there are no longer objective standards for distinguishing between right and wrong. Therefore, some contemporary thinkers propose a reconstruction of epistemology that integrates rationality, dialogue, and ethics as the basis for the legitimacy of knowledge.

## **2.2 Sociological and Digital Cultural Perspectives**

**Rationality** From a contemporary sociological perspective, digital culture has become a transformational force that fundamentally alters the structure of social interactions, power relations, and the construction of authority in global society. The development of digital technologies, including social media, artificial intelligence, and global information networks, has created what is known as a network society, where social relations no longer depend on geographical proximity but on cross-border digital connectivity. This transformation not only changes communication patterns but also reconstructs the meaning of community, identity, and social legitimacy. Research by Farhaeni in digital sociology shows that digital culture has shifted the concept of community from a physical one to a network-based symbolic community.[13] In this context, social solidarity is no longer built through direct interaction, but through participation in globally connected digital spaces. Empirical studies show that digital culture creates new forms of solidarity and social expression, but also produces paradoxes in the form of social fragmentation and alienation. This confirms that digital culture has an ambivalent character: on the one hand, it expands the space for participation, but on the other hand, it deepens social polarization. Furthermore, within the framework of classical sociology, this phenomenon can be understood through the concept of anomie proposed by Émile Durkheim.[14] In the digital context, anomie is no longer only related to the disintegration of social norms, but also to the uncertainty of meaning in digital spaces. Recent studies have shown that viral phenomena on social media, such as the #KaburAjaDulu trend,

reflect a form of collective expression of social tension and dissatisfaction with the existing system.[15] Thus, digital culture is not only a medium of communication, but also a symbolic space for the articulation of social criticism.

Furthermore, the development of algorithmic technology has given rise to what is known as “algorithmic culture,” where social interactions are mediated by artificial intelligence systems. Algorithms function not only as technical tools but also as social actors that shape users’ preferences, identities, and even social norms. Research by Armanda et al. shows that mechanisms such as filter bubbles and echo chambers reinforce information homogeneity and narrow individual perspectives, thereby deepening social polarization.[16] In this context, authority no longer derives from formal institutions, but from algorithmic systems that regulate the visibility and distribution of information. From the perspective of the sociology of communication, this transformation is also related to the evolution of human communication from oral systems to complex digital systems. Digital communication functions not only as a means of conveying information but also as a mechanism for the production of meaning and cultural identity. Recent research shows that the evolution of digital communication has changed the way humans understand social reality, where meaning is no longer stable, but is continuously negotiated in digital interactions.[17] This strengthens the argument that digital culture is a key arena in the construction of contemporary truth.

In politics and power, digital culture also contributes to increasing social polarization and public fragmentation. Recent studies have shown that digital media reinforces ideological segregation through personalized information selection mechanisms, creating “echo chambers” that reinforce individual beliefs.[18] As a result, the public sphere, which was previously an arena for rational dialogue, has now transformed into an arena for narrative conflict that is difficult to bridge. Digital sociology emphasizes that social relations in the digital era cannot be separated from the power structures embedded in technology. Digital platforms have the power to determine what is seen, what is ignored, and how information is perceived by users. Thus, power in digital society is no longer hierarchical, but distributed within complex and often opaque networks. This poses new challenges in understanding authority, as legitimacy no longer relies on formal institutions, but on network dynamics and algorithms. However, this transformation also opens up opportunities for the emergence of more inclusive and democratic forms of social participation. Digital culture enables individuals to become both producers and consumers of information (prosumers), thus expanding the space for public participation. However, without adequate regulatory mechanisms and digital literacy, this potential can turn into a source of disinformation and manipulation.

Thus, the perspectives of sociology and digital culture demonstrate that the crisis of authority in global culture cannot be understood without considering the role of digital technology as a primary mediator of social relations. Digital culture has transformed authority structures from institutional to network- and algorithm-based. This transformation produces complex dynamics, where solidarity and fragmentation, participation and polarization, and democratization and control operate simultaneously. Therefore, a more critical and interdisciplinary sociological approach is needed to comprehensively understand and respond to this challenge.

### **2.3 Theological and Moral Perspectives**

From a theological and moral perspective, the crisis of authority in contemporary global culture is not only understood as a social or epistemological phenomenon, but also as a

spiritual and ethical crisis that touches the deepest dimensions of human existence. Digital transformation, the development of artificial intelligence, and post-truth culture have challenged traditional moral foundations and religious authority that have served as normative references in human life. In this context, theology functions not only as a belief system, but also as a normative framework that provides ethical direction in facing the complexities of the modern world. Contemporary theological research shows that the digital era has created tension between technological progress and spiritual integrity. The development of artificial intelligence, for example, not only brings practical benefits but also raises fundamental questions about human nature, moral responsibility, and the relationship with God. Hermanto emphasized that technology, especially AI, has the potential to shift humanity's understanding of itself as the *imago Dei* (image of God), possessing dignity, freedom, and moral responsibility.[19] Thus, the crisis of authority in a theological context is closely related to the crisis of theological anthropology, namely how humans understand their identity and calling before God in an increasingly digitalized world.

In the context of Christian ethics, digital culture presents serious challenges to the moral formation of individuals and communities. Research shows that digital media often becomes a space for the spread of hoaxes, hate speech, and disinformation, which contradict ethical values such as truth, love, and justice.[20] In this situation, moral authority no longer stems from religious teachings, but is often determined by public opinion and digital algorithms. This reinforces moral relativism and weakens normative ethical standards. Within the framework of digital theology, this phenomenon is also related to the rise of “instant consumption of faith” and shallow spirituality, where religious practice is reduced to a fast, practical, but less profound digital experience. Recent studies have shown that the post-truth era has affected the life of faith, where subjective feelings and personal experiences often take precedence over objective theological truth.[21] This suggests that the crisis of authority occurs not only at the level of knowledge, but also at the level of spirituality. Furthermore, the development of algorithmic culture also raises new ethical dilemmas that demand a more contextual theological response. Digital algorithms lack the moral capacity to distinguish between right and wrong, so users are often exposed to information that is inconsistent with ethical values. In this context, Christian ethics emphasizes that the use of technology must reflect divine wisdom and human moral responsibility.[22] The Church, as a moral institution, is called to be a critical prophetic voice against the misuse of technology and to restore integrity in the digital space.

Contemporary theological reflection emphasizes the importance of integrating faith and technology within a responsible framework. Research shows that technology, including AI, can be a means to enrich the experience of faith if used ethically and reflectively.[23] However, without a strong theological foundation, technology has the potential to lead to dehumanization and the loss of the spiritual dimension in human life. In the context of education and character formation, theological ethics also plays a crucial role in addressing the challenges of digital culture. Studies show that the integration of ethics in religious education is essential to shaping individuals capable of using technology responsibly and morally.[24] This emphasizes that the crisis of authority cannot be addressed solely through technical or regulatory approaches, but requires profound moral and spiritual renewal. Furthermore, theological perspectives also highlight the importance of maintaining the authority of divine revelation amidst global cultural relativism. In the context of postmodernism and digitalization, the authority of the Bible as a source of truth is often questioned or reduced to one of many perspectives. However, an evangelical theological approach emphasizes that the

authority of revelation remains the primary basis for establishing truth and morality, while also needing to be contextualized relevantly in digital culture.[25] Thus, theological and moral perspectives demonstrate that the crisis of authority in global culture is not merely an epistemological or sociological issue, but also a profound spiritual crisis. The shift from transcendent authority to subjective and digital authority has created value fragmentation and moral confusion. Therefore, a theological reconstruction is needed that can holistically integrate faith, ethics, and technology. This approach aims not only to maintain moral authority but also to build a new paradigm that is relevant, contextual, and rooted in transcendent truth amidst the dynamics of global culture.

### **3. Research Methods**

This research uses an interdisciplinary qualitative approach based on a systematic literature review combined with critical-constructive analysis. This approach was chosen because the phenomenon of the crisis of authority in global culture is a complex reality that cannot be explained solely through a single scientific paradigm. Therefore, the integration of epistemological, sociological, and theological perspectives is important to produce a comprehensive and in-depth understanding. Philosophically, this research is rooted in the post-positivistic and constructivist paradigms, which recognize that social reality is complex, contextual, and cannot be fully explained through a purely objectivist approach. In this context, qualitative research allows for the exploration of meanings, interpretations, and social dynamics that are beyond the reach of quantitative methods. Hayati's study confirms that a qualitative approach has the power to deeply explore the epistemological dimensions, values, and human experiences, especially in the context of social change and digitalization.[26]

In addition, a systematic literature review approach was used to identify, evaluate, and synthesize various relevant scientific sources, both from reputable national and international journals. This method allows researchers to understand research trends, find theoretical gaps, and build a strong conceptual framework. Previous research by Nurpina et al. showed that a systematic literature review is an effective method for producing a comprehensive knowledge synthesis without directly collecting field data.[27] The data in this study were collected through several systematic stages, the first being source identification. Data sources included reputable international journals (Scopus, Web of Science), accredited national journals, and books.

### **4. Results and Discussion**

The results of this study indicate that the crisis of authority in global culture is a multidimensional phenomenon involving a complex interaction between epistemological, social, and moral-spiritual factors. This finding was obtained through an interdisciplinary literature synthesis, which confirms that changes in knowledge structures, digital technology, and cultural values have significantly influenced the legitimacy of authority in contemporary society. In general, the results of this study can be classified into three main dimensions: the epistemological dimension, the sociological dimension, and the theological-moral dimension.

#### **4.1 Epistemological Dimension: Fragmentation of Truth and Delegation of Authority**

In the epistemological dimension, this study found that the crisis of authority is characterized by the increasingly intense fragmentation of truth. In the context of the post-

truth era, truth is no longer understood as something objective and universal, but rather as a construct influenced by subjective perceptions, emotions, and dominant narratives. Peters emphasized that the epistemological crisis in the digital era is closely related to the weakening of scientific verification standards and the increasing dominance of public opinion in determining truth.[28] This phenomenon is reinforced by the findings of Lewandowsky, Ecker, and Cook, which show that disinformation not only affects individual perceptions but also damages society's cognitive structure in understanding reality.[29] In this context, individuals no longer have stable epistemic references, so that truth becomes relative and situational. This leads to what is called "epistemic fragmentation," a condition in which society is divided into various groups with their own systems of truth.

From a digital epistemology perspective, Floridi explains that the development of the infosphere has changed the way humans interact with information.[11] Information is no longer linear and structured, but dynamic, distributed, and often unverified. As a result, epistemic authority is delegitimized due to the loss of control over the production and distribution of knowledge. This is in line with the findings of Al et al., which show that digital epistemology in Indonesia faces serious challenges in maintaining the validity of knowledge amidst the uncontrolled flow of information.[12] Thus, the epistemological dimension of the authority crisis shows that the shift from objective truth to epistemological relativism has created instability in the knowledge system. This condition affects not only individuals but also institutions that have been the guardians of knowledge authority.

#### **4.2 Sociological Dimensions: Social Polarization and Algorithmic Authority**

From a sociological perspective, research findings indicate that digital culture has transformed authority structures from institutional to network- and algorithm-based. Social media, as a digital public space, has become a primary arena for the formation of opinion, identity, and social legitimacy. Rawanoko et al. assert that digital culture has transformed social authority structures, where legitimacy is no longer determined by formal position, but by visibility and influence within digital networks.[30] This phenomenon is further amplified by the presence of algorithms that regulate information distribution. Naufal demonstrates that algorithmic culture plays a significant role in shaping individual preferences and reinforcing cognitive biases through filter bubble and echo chamber mechanisms.[31] Consequently, individuals are more likely to be exposed to information that aligns with their beliefs, thus deepening social polarization.

In political and social contexts, this polarization is further complicated by the personalized nature of digital communication. Rahman found that digital media has created ideological segregation that hinders rational dialogue and amplifies social conflict.[18] This suggests that the crisis of authority impacts not only knowledge but also social cohesion and societal stability. However, research results also show that digital culture has positive potential in expanding public participation. Farhaeni emphasized that digital culture allows for the emergence of new forms of network-based solidarity, although they are temporary and unstable.[13] Thus, digital culture has an ambivalent character: on the one hand, it strengthens participation, but on the other hand, it deepens fragmentation. In this context, the concept of authority undergoes a significant transformation. Authority is no longer hierarchical, but is distributed within complex networks. This poses new challenges in understanding legitimacy, because authority can no longer be measured based on formal structures, but based on the dynamics of social interactions in the digital space.

### 4.3. Theological and Moral Dimensions: Value Relativism and the Crisis of Spirituality

In the theological and moral dimensions, this study found that the crisis of authority is closely related to the weakening of normative values and spiritual authority in society. Januar et al. show that digital culture has encouraged the emergence of moral relativism, where ethical standards become flexible and dependent on social context.[32] This has led to a value crisis that impacts individual and community behavior. Arifianto et al. assert that the post-truth era has given rise to an epistemological crisis in the life of faith, where subjective feelings, relativism, and personal opinions tend to be more trusted than objective truth, including theological truth.[33] This shows that the crisis of authority occurs not only at the social level but also at the level of individual spirituality.

In the context of technology, Pardede and Tobing highlight that the development of artificial intelligence poses serious ethical challenges, particularly related to human dignity as the *imago Dei*. [34] Technology that is not governed by moral values has the potential to lead to dehumanization and the loss of the spiritual dimension in human life. However, this study also found that theology has the potential to be a source for the reconstruction of moral authority. Kurniawan et al. assert that Christian ethics can provide a strong normative framework in facing the challenges of digital culture. [22] In this context, churches and religious institutions have a strategic role in rebuilding the moral and spiritual integrity of society.

### 4.4. Integrative Synthesis: A Model of Global Authority Crisis

Based on these three dimensions, this study develops a synthetic model showing that the crisis of authority is the result of the interaction between three main variables: truth (T), perception (P), and digital social structure (S). This relationship can be formulated as follows:

$$A = f(T, P, S) \quad (2)$$

This model shows that authority (A) is no longer determined solely by objective truth, but by a complex interaction between subjective perception and digital social structure. In this context, changes in any one variable can affect the overall legitimacy of authority. The results of this study indicate that the crisis of authority is not simply a negative phenomenon but also reflects a transformation towards a new paradigm in understanding truth and legitimacy. From a critical perspective, this crisis can be seen as an opportunity to reconstruct a more inclusive, dialogical, and reflective authority. However, without a strong normative framework, this transformation has the potential to lead to social disintegration and moral nihilism. Therefore, an interdisciplinary approach is needed that can integrate rationality, technology, and spirituality in rebuilding credible and relevant authority. The implications of this research include: Theoretical Implications: Developing an interdisciplinary framework for the study of the crisis of authority. Practical implications provide a foundation for the development of digital literacy and social ethics. Theological implications emphasize the role of spiritual values in rebuilding moral authority.

## 5. Conclusions

This study concludes that the crisis of authority in global culture is a multidimensional phenomenon arising from the interaction between epistemological shifts, digital cultural transformation, and the weakening of moral-spiritual values. Epistemologically, truth is fragmented due to the dominance of relativism and post-truth, thus weakening the legitimacy

of scientific authority. Sociologically, digital culture and algorithms have reconfigured authority from an institutional structure to a network-based one, resulting in social polarization and fragmentation. Meanwhile, theologically and morally, value relativism has occurred, leading to ethical disorientation and a spiritual crisis. The synthesis of this research shows that authority is no longer determined solely by objective truth, but rather by the interaction between truth, perception, and digital structures. Therefore, the crisis of authority demands an interdisciplinary approach that integrates rationality, digital literacy, and moral-spiritual values. This research contributes to the development of an interdisciplinary analytical framework for understanding the crisis of authority, but is still limited to literature studies. Further research is recommended to test this model empirically. Ultimately, the crisis of authority can be seen as an opportunity to reconstruct a more reflective, dialogical, and holistic paradigm of truth and values in the context of global culture.

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