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From Human Scholars to AI Fatwas: Media, Ethics, and the Limits of AI in Islamic Religious Communication

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ABSTRACT

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into Islamic jurisprudence, particularly in issuing fatwas, raises significant theological, ethical and practical concerns. Traditionally, Islamic legal rulings have been derived through scholarly interpretations of the Quran, Hadith, Ijma (consensus), and Qiyas (analogy). The rise of AI-driven fatwa systems challenges this conventional framework by introducing automated decision-making processes that lack of ijtihad (independent reasoning), niyyah (intention), and divine inspiration elements that are essential for legitimate Islamic rulings. While AI-powered applications can assist in providing quick access to established and stable rulings, concerns persist regarding their ability to uphold the ethical and spiritual integrity of Islamic jurisprudence. This research concludes that AI-generated fatwas cannot fully replace human scholars, primarily due to their limitations in contextual reasoning. This conclusion is drawn through a qualitative descriptive content analysis of recent research papers and official announcements regarding the use of AI by various Darul-Ifta institutions in Muslim countries. However, AI can be used effectively under scholarly supervision in areas such as Islamic finance, halal certification, and preliminary legal guidance. A balanced approach, where AI serves as a supportive tool rather than an authoritative source of religious rulings, ensures that technological advancements align with Islamic ethical principles. The study emphasizes the necessity of human oversight to maintain the authenticity of religious verdicts and proposes a framework for integrating AI responsibly within Islamic jurisprudence.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Islamic Jurisprudence, Digital Knowledge, Media Ethics.

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

The rapid advancement of AI has transformed various fields, including religious communication and ethical decision-making. AI's integration into Islamic jurisprudence particularly through Quranic interpretation and fatwa issuance has sparked scholarly debate concerning theological authenticity and ethical legitimacy (Al-Shahri, 2021; Bunt, 2018). While offering enhanced accessibility, AI-generated fatwas raise critical concerns about their alignment with Islamic traditions and the essential role of human scholars.

Traditionally, Islamic jurisprudence relies on four key sources: the Quran, Hadith, Ijma, and Qiyas (Haque, 2022). Scholars interpret these sources through rigorous deliberation to ensure fidelity to divine guidance. AI-driven fatwa platforms disturb this model by automating tasks historically performed by humans, raising questions about whether reliance on AI undermines core Islamic principles (Ebrahim, 2021; Bunt, 2018). From an Islamic communication viewpoint, credibility and trust are vital in spreading religious information. Islam emphasizes truthfulness and thorough verification to prevent societal harm (Sabri & Abdul Rahim, 2023). Without robust human oversight, AI risks circulating misinformation, thereby it might wilt community trust and Islamic ethical standards.

Moreover, the integration of AI into religious guidance reflects the broader trend of technological determinism, which suggests that technological advancements inevitably reshape communication and decision-making practices (Ng, 2024). Although AI enhances efficiency and consistency, it lacks the emotional depth and contextual understanding necessary for certain types of judgement, particularly in religious contexts. In the case of fatwa issuance, for example, human qualities such as empathy, ethical intention (*niyyah*), and spiritual discernment are essential and cannot be fully replicated by AI (Malkawi, 2021).

In Islamic finance, AI effectively ensures Sharia compliance and validates halal practices (Hussain & Karim, 2020). However, substantial scepticism persists regarding AI's ability to reflect nuanced moral considerations in Islamic jurisprudence (Malkawi, 2021). Hence, this paper critically examines AI's addition into Islamic religious communication, exploring its theological legitimacy, ethical boundaries, credibility, authority mediation, and implications for ethical transmission of religious knowledge (Sabri & Abdul Rahim, 2023; Ng, 2024).

Study Background

The junction of technology and Islamic jurisprudence has gained significant academic attention with the rise of digital fatwa platforms. Initially, online fatwa websites allowed global access to scholarly religious rulings (Bunt, 2018). Recent advancements in machine learning (ML) and natural language processing (NLP) have expanded these platforms, enabling AI to analyse religious texts and autonomously respond to prompts (Al-Shahri, 2021). Proponents highlight AI's benefits in accessibility and convenience, especially for Muslims without immediate access to scholars (Elmessiri & Mohamad, 2021). Islamic institutions already use AI for verifying Sharia compliance in finance and answering routine religious queries via chatbots (Malkawi, 2021; Hussain & Karim, 2020). Yet, the formal issuance of fatwas by AI remains controversial, mostly because of traditional fatwa generation demands rigorous human intellectual and spiritual reasoning (ijtihad) (Kamali, 2003; Ebrahim, 2021).

Significant theological questions arise regarding AI's legitimacy as religious authority, its impact on traditional scholarly roles, and potential conflicts with human scholars' rulings. These issues highlight the tension between embracing technological innovation and preserving established Islamic jurisprudence practices (Al-Shahri, 2021; Elmessiri & Mohamad, 2021). Continuing scholarly deliberation remains crucial to integrating technological advancement harmoniously within Islamic traditions.

Objectives

This paper pursues three interconnected objectives: to examine the communicative role of AI within the domain of Islamic jurisprudence and its impact on traditional structures of religious authority; to investigate the ethical, theological, and epistemological boundaries of AI-generated Islamic rulings; and to critically assess the extent to which AI-based fatwas align with the interpretive principles of Sharia or represent a potential disruption to established theology.

Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by classical Islamic jurisprudential theories articulated by prominent scholars such as Imam al-Shafi'i and Imam al-Ghazali, emphasizing the rigorous human intellectual and ethical processes inherent in religious interpretation (*ijtihad*) and decision-making. Additionally, the analysis incorporates contemporary communication theories, specifically Technological Determinism which posits that technology significantly shapes social structures and communicative practices and Yevgeniy Morozov's critique of over-reliance on technology, cautioning against the excessive trust placed in technological solutions at the expense of human judgement and ethical oversight.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Theological Foundations of Islamic Jurisprudence

Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) placed on well-defined theological and methodological framework developed by classical scholars. This framework emphasizes the origin of law from divinely revealed sources, interpreted through rigorous scholarly reasoning under the authority of learned jurists. Islamic legal theories were crystallized by foundational figures such as Abu Hanifa, Malik ibn Anas, Imam al-Shafi'i and Ahmad ibn Hanbal. They were further developed by scholars like Abu Hamid al-Ghazali and Ibn Qudamah al-Maqdisi. Together, they form the bedrock upon which Islamic law is built and by which the validity of any legal ruling is assessed (Abdullah et al., 2023).

The Quran is the primary and ultimate source of legal and moral guidance. It is direct words of Allah. Imam al-Juwayni (d. 1085) highlighted its supreme authority over all other proofs. The Quran contains roughly 500 legal verses (*ayat al-ahkam*), addressing worship, family, law, commerce, and governance (Al-Ghazali, 1993). Jurists must master these verses, including their linguistic nuances, contexts, and any instances of abrogation (*naskh*) (Kamali, 2003). Quranic guidance often provides broad principles rather than exhaustive details, requiring further scholarly interpretation. However, Imam al-Shafi'i stated that interpretations conflicting with clear Quranic evidence are unacceptable (Al-Shafi'i, 1961).

The Sunnah is a secondary source in order to use in Islamic jurisprudence. It is documented sayings, actions and approvals of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). It is the second fundamental source in Islamic jurisprudence. It clarifies and supplements the Quran, detailing practices such as prayer rituals not explicitly stated in the Quran (Al-Shafi'i, 1961). Authentic hadith reports are considered binding and divinely inspired legal evidence that requiring thorough verification (Al-Ghazali, 1993). Jurists should know key legal hadiths, ideally around 1,200 from major collections (Kamali, 2003). While the Quran takes precedence, the Sunnah can specify Quranic injunctions and establish new rulings, supported by the Quranic directive to "obey God and the Messenger" (4:59).

Ijma (Consensus) refers to the unanimous agreement of qualified scholars on legal ruling after the Prophet's (PBUH) time, recognized as binding and authoritative (*dalil qat'i*). Al-Ghazali emphasized that consensus, guided by divine protection, ensures correctness, citing the hadith: "My community will never agree upon an error" (Ibn Majah). Early jurists refined consensus from broad community agreement to scholarly consensus (*Ulama*) (Khadduri, 1961). Consensus confirms rulings, interprets revelation definitely, and ensures continuity, stability, and coherence of Islamic law (Kamali, 2003). An established consensus among Muslim scholars is considered authoritative and must

not be contravened. Thus, Islamic jurisprudence positions ijma as the third fundamental source of law, following the Quran and the Sunnah.

Qiyas (Analogical Reasoning), the fourth source, extends Sharia rulings to new sites by analogizing them to established cases. It involves identifying a clear textual ruling (*asl*), determining its effective cause (*'illah*), and applying this ruling to new cases sharing the same cause (Al-Shafi'i, 1961; Kamali, 2003). Imam al-Shafi'i emphasized qiyas as indispensable to ijtihad, illustrated vividly by hadith where Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) approved Mu'adh ibn Jabal's approach about using personal reasoning (*ijtihad*) when explicit textual guidance was unavailable (Abu Dawud, hadith 3592). Jurists meticulously validate analogies, ensuring their coherence with logic and textual evidence (Ibn Qudamah, 2006). Widely accepted except by literalists (*Zahiris*), qiyas serves as a fundamental method for rationally applying revelation, effectively bridging the gap between finite texts and a vast range of circumstances (Al-Ghazali, 1993; Kamali, 2003).

Qualities of the Mujtahid

Classical Islamic jurisprudence articulates detailed criteria for ijtihad that the rigorous intellectual effort to derive Islamic rulings. Imam al-Ghazali defned it as thorough scholarly pledge, leaving no aspect unexplored (Al-Ghazali, 1993). Core qualifications for a mujtahid, initially listed by Abu'l-Husayn al-Basri and later refined by al-Juwayni, al-Ghazali, and Ibn Qudamah, include (Kamali, 2003):

1. Arabic Mastery:

Full proficiency in classical Arabic grammar, rhetoric, and prophetic idioms is crucial to accurately interpreting Quranic and hadith texts. Linguistic deficiencies risk misinterpretation (Al-Shatibi, 1388).

2. Comprehensive Quranic Knowledge:

Profound familiarity with roughly 500 legal verses (ayat al-ahkam), their contexts, and authoritative remarks are essential. The mujtahid should recognize general, specific, absolute, qualified, and abrogated verses (Al-Ghazali, 1993).

3. Deep Understanding of Sunnah:

Expertise in authentic legal hadith, their reliability, interpretation, and the consensus around them. Scholars like Ahmad ibn Hanbal suggested familiarity with about 1,200 key hadiths and major collections is necessary (Kamali, 2003).

Awareness of Ijma (Consensus):

Knowledge of established scholarly consensus is essential to avoid contradicting settled rulings. A true mujtahid should understand both consensus and legitimate differences of opinion, as recognized factually (Al-Shawkani, 1917).

5. Skill in Qiyas and Usul al-Fiqh:

Proficiency in analogical reasoning (*qiyas*) and Islamic legal theory is necessary. The jurist must methodically infer causes (*'illah*), reconcile evidence, and reason systematically rather than arbitrarily (Kamali, 2003).

6. Integrity and Sound Intellect (Adalah):

Islamic scholarship requires that a mujtahid be morally upright, sincere-looking, modest and avoid major deviations or selfish motives. Personal integrity ensures community trust in scholarly authority (Al-Ghazali, 1993; Zuhayli, 1986).

Meeting these standards earns one the status of a recognized independent jurist (*mujtahid*). Classical tradition distinguishes varying degrees absolute and school-bound, but all share these core attributes. Such jurists are revered as the "inheritors of the Prophets (PBUH)," entrusted with guiding the Muslim community through informed and ethical interpretation (Al-Termidhi, hadith 2682).

Authority of the Ulama and the Limits of Interpretation

The Islamic scholars (*Ulama*) hold substantial authority in Islam due to their crucial role as interpreters and mediators of divine law. The rulings of a qualified mujtahid are not mere personal opinions, but expert interpretations rooted firmly in scripture and scholarly consensus. Although Islamic theology acknowledges that individual jurists may err, sincere scholarly effort is highly valued and rewarded by God, as affirmed by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH): "When a judge exercises ijtihad and reaches the correct conclusion, he receives a double reward; if he judges and errs, he still receives a reward" (Sahih Muslim, hadith 1716a). This principle emphasizes that sincere effort, even if mistaken, is morally guided by divine grace (Kamali, 2003, pp. 228-229).

For the average Muslim lacking scholarly qualifications, the authority of the Ulama translates into the obligation of *taqlid* (following qualified scholarship). Classical Islamic scholars, including Imam al-Nawawi and Ibn Qudamah, stressed that laypersons must rely upon learned scholars to interpret scriptural texts correctly (Al-Nawawi, 2008; Ibn Qudamah, n.d.). The development of structured *madzhabs* (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i

and Hanbali) has historically provided reliable frameworks through which Muslims' access juristic opinions, discouraging unqualified individuals from arbitrary. Therefore, the Ulama interprets divine texts, while the public relies upon and implements their authoritative guidance.

Significantly, Islamic jurisprudence insists on the necessity of continuous ijtihad to address new circumstances, despite historical debates on its scope. Scholars such as Ibn Taymiyyah and al-Shawkani explicitly advocated ongoing renewal and discoursed rigid adherence to tradition without rational justification (Halluq, 1984). Consequently, the Ulama's authority is dynamic, subject to their continued scholarly integrity, accountability to the community, and responsibility before God.

Technological Determinism and Over-Reliance

Technological Determinism (TD) posits that technological advancements significantly shape societal structure, cultural values, and communicative practices, implying that technology itself drives societal change rather than merely serving as a neutral tool (McLuhan, 1964; Ng, 2024). According to TD, new communication technologies profoundly influence not only how messages are transmitted but also how authority and credibility are mediated within societies (Ng, 2024). In Islamic contexts, applying TD highlights that AI-driven fatwa issuance could fundamentally alter traditional dynamics of religious authority, communication credibility, and community trust, replacing personalized, scholar-driven deliberation with automated, impersonal interactions (Bunt, 2018; Ng, 2024). Thus, from a TD perspective, the introduction of AI into religious jurisprudence must be carefully assessed for its broader impacts on Islamic ethical norms and the authority traditionally held by human scholars.

Yevgeniy Morozov (2013) critically examines the contemporary trend of excessive reliance on technological solutions, coining the term "technology solutionism" to describe society's misplaced belief that technology can effortlessly resolve complex social, ethical, and cultural problems. Applying Morozov's critique on AI-generated fatwas highlights the potential risks associated with over-dependence on AI, which might diminish critical thinking, human moral responsibility, and nuanced spiritual discernment, ultimately undermining the richness and complexity integral to Islamic legal reasoning and religious guidance (Morozov, 2013; Malkawi, 2021).

In summary, classical Islamic theology establishes a balanced framework where divine revelation (*Quran and Sunnah*) remains supreme, human juristic reasoning (*ijtihad*) operates under rigorous qualifications, and scholarly consensus upholds interpretative continuity. While this ensures Islamic jurisprudence remains faithful so sacred texts and adaptable to evolving contexts, incorporating artificial intelligence necessitates cau-

tion. From the perspective of Technological Determinism, AI integration vastly re-shapes the communication and mediation of religious authority. Moreover, the critique of technology solutionism warns that excessive dependence on AI might oversimplify complex ethical and spiritual deliberations, risking the erosion of nuanced human judgement essential in Islamic legal reasoning. Therefore, careful evaluation is required to ensure technological innovations support rather than disrupt the balance between tradition and contextual responsiveness.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research is based on secondary data, drawing exclusively from classical and current literature on Islamic jurisprudence, fatwa issuance, and the role of AI in religious contexts. Using a library-based research design and qualitative descriptive content analysis, this study examines a wide range of scholarly materials, along with official decisions issued by various Muslim establishments and *Darul-Ifta* institutions globally.

The data includes two main categories: classical Islamic Jurisprudence sources and modern academic publications. Classical texts by scholars such as Imam al- Shafi'i, Imam al-Ghazali, Ibn Qudamah, al-Juwayni and al-Shawkani provide essential insights into *usul al-fiqh*, ethical frameworks, and traditional structures of religious authority. Modern sources include peer-reviewed articles and authoritative works discussing technological developments, particularly AI and its integration into Islamic contexts. These works address key concerns such as technological determinism, ethical boundaries in religious communication, and scholarly debates on AI-generated fatwas.

This study follows Sandelowski's (2000) qualitative descriptive content analysis. It applies iterative close reading to interpret authoritative excerpts and jurisprudential principles from classical Islamic legal texts, including the Holy Quran and Hadith collections, alongside contemporary scholarly and institutional materials on AI fatwa issuance. The analysis focuses on three central themes: challenges of AI fatwa issuance, ethical and practical concerns of AI fatwa, and permissible uses of AI in Islamic frameworks. Materials were selected based on their relevance to questions of religious authority, technological mediation, and institutional discourse. The coding process incorporated deductive codes derived from established Islamic legal theory and science and technology studies, including *Ijtihad* prerequisites, technological determinism, and ethical accountability. In parallel, inductive codes emerged organically through engagement with the texts, such as moral distancing in digital rulings, loss of juristic humility and of course user's knowledge and capabilities of result analysing or lack of *maqasid* - consciousness in algorithmic reasoning. One additional important inductive

code identified was the potential benefits of AI in auxiliary roles within Islamic framework, which contributed to the third theme the permissible uses of AI. Themes and patterns were identified manually through repeated readings and conceptual categorization.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Challenges of AI Fatwa Issuance

The advent of AI in recent years has prompted discussions about its potential role in Islamic legal verdicts (*fatwas*) and whether it can assist or even perform ijtihad. Several Islamic institutions have experimented with AI-based fatwa services. For example, the UAE's Islamic Affairs department in Dubai and Egypt's Dar al-Ifta have introduced automated chat systems to provide quick answers to religious queries (Tsourlaki, 2022). This modern development poses a significant challenge to traditional ijtihad and raises profound theological and ethical questions. In Islam, issuing a fatwa is not a mere data-processing task that it is a scholarly function imbued with spiritual accountability. The integration of AI into this process challenges the boundaries of what is considered allowable or advisable in delegating aspects of religious authority to machines. Muslim scholars and ethicists have approached this issue with caution, examining AI's role in supportive functions such as information retrieval, the organization of prior juristic opinions, and its application in fields like Islamic finance (Ab Rahim et al., 2025, p. 95).

The nature of fatwa and the rigorous requirements of ijtihad pose a fundamental challenge to AI's capacity to issue legitimate religious rulings. A fatwa is non-binding legal opinion issued by qualified scholar (*mufti*) applying Sharia principles to specific scenarios. Issuing a fatwa traditionally requires ijtihad rigorous intellectual effort involving understanding the question's context, identifying relevant scriptural sources, and exercising ethical and reasoned judgement. Unlike simple data retrieval, ijtihad involves creative analogical reasoning, evaluation of opposing evidence, and nuanced insight into Islamic principles (*maqasid al-sharia*). The Jordanian Iftaa' Department underscores that AI, although proficient in pattern recognition, cannot independently reason or openly interpret Sharia in novel situations due to its lack of true empathetic and moral insight (Za'atreh, 2024; Chowdhury, 2021, cited in Ab Rahim et al., 2025). Moreover, Islamic jurisprudence places significant emphasis on intention (*niyyah*) and moral integrity, asserting that actions are ultimately judged by their underlying intentions, as articulated in the foundational hadith: "Actions are judged by intentions, and every person will be rewarded according to what they intended" (Sahih al-Bukhari, hadith 1). This principle is fundamental to the ethical and spiritual framework of Islamic law. In the context of issuing legal judgments (*fatwas*), a mufti's sincere intention, God-consciousness (*taqwa*), and accountability before society are essential. These qualities are

often manifested through devotional acts, scholarly consultation, and rigorous deliberation. Such sacred and ethical dimensions, deeply embedded in the human soul and rooted in spiritual responsibility, cannot be replicated by AI systems. Therefore, even when AI-generated fatwas structurally resemble those of scholars, they fundamentally lack the spiritual depth, moral accountability, and ethical discernment necessary for religious legitimacy and authoritative guidance (al-Khatib, 2024).

The lack of divine guidance and spiritual legitimacy in AI-based decisions challenges its acceptability within traditional Islamic frameworks. Islamic scholars often describe true knowledge as a light from God. They invoke divine guidance (*hidayah* or *tawfiq*) in the process of ijtihad. Imam Malik is reported to have said that often he would say "I do not know" out of fear of speaking about God's religion without clarity, indicating reliance on a scene of divine guidance or lack thereof. In jurisprudence, there is the idea that the correctness of a difficult fatwa may depend on Allah guiding the scholar's heart to the best opinion. The Quran promises, "Those who strive in Us – We shall guide them to Our ways" (Quran 29:69). The sincere conclusions of a mujtahid are believed to be subtly guided by divine assistance. This metaphysical dimension, of course, lies entirely outside the capacity of AI. No matter how advanced, AI does not possess a heart capable of prayer, nor can it receive divine inspiration or experience the moral scruples (*wara'*) that a God-conscious jurist may feel when faced with uncertainty. For example, the Prophet (PBUH) taught about doubtful matters (*mutashabihat*), explaining that the righteous soul hesitates and feels unease when confronted with ambiguity. Such intuitive caution is considered an essential component of ethical decision-making (al-Nawawi, 2008). AI cannot experience this hesitation. It will simply output an answer if programmed to do so, even no matters that perhaps a cautious mufti would decline to answer immediately or at all. Another important aspect of the fatwa process is its emphasis on personalization and empathy. A mufti takes into account the questioner's individual circumstances, such as their background, level of religious knowledge, personal hardships, and any extenuating conditions that may influence the legal response. As a result, two individuals may receive slightly different answers to what appears to be the same question. For example, a new Muslim who is still becoming familiar with the basic practices of the faith may be offered a more accommodating ruling than a lifelong Muslim who is expected to have a stronger foundation in religious obligations. Likewise, a Muslim living as a minority in a non-Muslim country may be given a different legal opinion compared to someone residing in a Muslim-majority society, due to differences in societal norms, available resources, and community support. These context-sensitive rulings reflect the jurist's effort to uphold legal principles while addressing the unique needs of each individual. The ability to contextualize a fatwa to the person's circumstances within the allowance of Sharia is part of the mufti's wisdom (Ibn Qayyim, 1991). AI currently lacks genuine contextual understanding and empathy. It might tailor answers based on keywords or learned patterns for example, offering a dispensation if it recognizes certain words, but this

not true understanding. Muslim scholars worry that AI could apply rules mechanically, without the necessary human discretion that comes from real-life awareness (Za'atreh, 2024). Indeed, the Jordanian Fatwa Department warned that AI may "mix the principles of different schools of thought, leading to confusion in fatwa issuance" and cannot appreciate "the cultural and social context of the inquirers", lacking the "human aspect and personal experience" needed for sound guidance (Za'atreh, 2024). This could result in distorted or inappropriately strict answers that a wise mufti would avoid. Ultimately, the legitimacy of a fatwa is not only about textual accuracy but also about process and person who issues it and how. A fatwa from a qualified mufti carries a legitimacy that n impersonal AI response simply cannot attain, regardless of content, because the Sharia has always been a living tradition passed from heart to heart, not just a database of rules.

Ethical and Practical Concerns of AI Fatwa

Muslim scholars have raised ethical and practical concerns about using AI in fatwa issuance. Ethically, AI lacks the moral and contextual judgement essential for religious rulings. Practically, issues of reliability, transparency, and accountability are central, as AI cannot perform ijtihad or interpret complex legal matters like a qualified jurist. While AI may support information retrieval, its independent use risks undermining traditional jurisprudential authority.

The risk of error in AI-generated fatwas raises serious concerns about responsibility and accountability. If an AI gives a mistake ruling and people act on it, who bears the sin or blame? In Islamic theology, those who misguide others in religious matter carry a heavy burden (Quran 16:25). But an AI, as an algorithm, cannot carry sin. This blurs moral responsibility. The developers or the institution deploying the AI might indirectly share responsibility, but they might not even be aware of a specific erroneous output. This diffusion of duty is dangerous in matters of faith. This practice undermines the principle that a mufti is accountable before God for the fatwas he issues and must be prepared to defend them. As emphasized in the Journal of Fatwa Management and Research (2025), AI cannot replace scholars. If such a replacement were to occur, the warning conveyed in a hadith of the Prophet (PBUH) may become a reality. The hadith states: "Indeed, Allah does not take away knowledge by removing it from the people, but He take it away through the death of scholars, until no scholar remains. Then people will appoint the ignorant as leaders; they will be asked, and they will issue fatwas without knowledge, thereby going astray and leading others astray" (Sahih al-Bukhari, hadith 100). Overreliance on AI-generated fatwas at the expense of human scholars threatens not only the integrity of Islamic legal reasoning, but also risks the gradual erosion of traditional scholarly institutions and schools of thought. This concern, though often expressed informally, reflects a real fear of the consequences of unchecked AI in religious contexts. A recent study has noted the likelihood of subjective

biases and inconsistencies in AI-generated responses when these systems are not care-fully monitored (Ab Rahim et al., 2025, p. 78). Unlike a human jurist, AI does not rec-ognize its limitations and cannot express the humility of saying "Allahu a'lam" (God knows best) when confronted with uncertainty.

The absence of human oversight and structured review processes in AI fatwa systems undermines trust and accountability. Traditional fatwa councils like Egypt's Dar al-ifta or Indonesia's MUI issue fatwas through committees, with peer review and often senior muftis overseeing juniors. There is a chain of accountability and the reputations of scholars are on the line. An AI system, if given too much autonomy, could sidestep these checks. It might aggregate rulings from various sources, including less reliable ones, and present them with equal confidence. As Dr. S. Chowdhury notes, delegating decision-making to AI without human oversight poses a danger, and it is "imperative to uphold the position of human scholars as the ultimate authority and to utilize AI as an instrument to augment their expertise rather than supplant their discernment." (Chowdhury, 2021, summarized in Ab Rahim et al., 2025 p. 95). In other words, any involvement of AI in fatwa process should remain under the supervision of qualified ulama, who are ultimately responsible for the final content. At this stage of develop-ment, AI is best understood as a supportive tool, akin to a digital library or a translation application, rather than an autonomous legal authority or a mufti.

The potential misuse of AI for "fatwa shopping" highlights concern about manipulation and selective religious justification. There is a fear that mass-produced AI fatwa appli-cations could lead users to shop for replies or get answers without beneficial counsel that usually accompanies a fatwa session (Salisu et al., 2020). Part of a mufti's role is as a counselor often, they advise, admonish, or console the questioner in the course of answering. A cold answer from a bit might fail to convey the spiritual advice that a human mufti might add. Also, if different AI systems or settings yield altered answers, user might try multiple prompts until they get the answer they wish, treating it like a trivial Q&A. This could erode the seriousness with which people approach religious rulings. It might also be exploited by unqualified persons who deploy AI to issue un-sure fatwas, creating confusion. The Islamic tradition puts emphasis on chain of au-thority (*Sanad*). One should take religious knowledge from known, reputable authori-ties (Nakissa, 2019). An AI has no transparent Sanad, at best, it is as good as the dataset it was trained on, which an ordinary user cannot ascertain. If someone fortuitously trains an Islamic Q&A model on week data, the public wouldn't easily know. Thus, releasing AI fatwas broadly could open the door to sectarian or extremist distortions veiled as legitimate answers.

The growing dependence on AI for religious guidance reflects a broader trend in media and communication where technology can influence authoritative knowledge. In the context of Islamic discourse, this shift risks diminishing the visibility and influence of

traditional scholars (Ulama) within the digital public sphere. From a sociological and communicative standpoint, scholars have raised concerns that over-reliance on AI-generated fatwas could gradually erode the credibility of living scholars and weaken the institutional authority of *Ifta*. As AI platforms become more accessible and appear to offer quick, personalized answers, the public may begin to marginalize human scholars whose roles extend far beyond issuing legal opinions. Ulama serve as educators, moral exemplars, and community leaders who foster religious continuity and collective identity. If their presence is reduced or mediated solely through algorithmic systems, this could undermine not only Islamic education but also the social cohesion traditionally upheld by scholarly consensus. As noted in a recent publication in fatwa studies, "AI-generated fatwas may undermine the conventional role and authority of human scholar... Human scholars participate in consensus-building and academic discourse, which AI systems cannot entirely replicate" (Ab Rahim et al., 2025, p. 94). The interpretive process in Islamic jurisprudence is deeply dialogic, involving scholarly debate, mutual persuasion, and respect for legitimate disagreement. AI, in contrast, does not contribute to this evolving discourse but primarily recycles existing content. It lacks the consciousness, takes, and intellectual creativity necessary to produce original juristic reasoning. Over time, the normalization of AI-led interpretation may lead to stagnation or fragmentation in Islamic legal thought, which ironically undermines the very progress and modernization that proponents of AI-driven *fiqh* aim to achieve.

In light of these concerns, leading Muslim authorities have taken a cautious, moderate stance that AI can be employed to assist the fatwa process, but not to independently issue fatwas. For instance, Secretary General of the International Islamic Fiqh Academy H.E. Prof. Sano (2024) discussed AI and urged that it can be used for improving research efficiency but kept under scholar supervision (IIFA, 2024). The Grand Mufti of Egypt Dr. Shawki Allam (2023) has stated that digital platforms are useful for fatwa dissemination and answering simple questions, but the "heart of fatwa-making" understanding new issues deeply and making holistic judgments remains a human jurist's task (Egypt's Dar al-Ifta, 2023).

Major Muslim institutions, including the UAE's "Virtual Ifta" service and Al-Azhar's online fatwa portal, explicitly maintain human oversight, utilizing AI solely to facilitate scholarly review and accessibility (IACAD, 2019; Al-Azhar, 2020). These measures affirm careful use of AI technology.

Permissible Uses of AI in Islamic Frameworks

Despite the limitations above, Muslim scholars do acknowledge potential benefits of AI in auxiliary roles. Indeed, when carefully integrated, AI technology could enhance the work of muftis and make scholarly knowledge more accessible, without replacing the scholars.

AI can assist in managing vast bodies of Islamic knowledge, enhancing organization and retrieval. AI systems can be efficiently catalogue and search large bodies of Islamic texts and prior fatwas. This can help a mufti quickly retrieve precedents and opinions from the classical heritage. Instead of manually combining through dozens of volumes, a scholar could use an AI search tool to find relevant analogies or commentary, then apply his own reasoning to that information. In this sense, AI acts like an advanced library index. It can help organize fatwas by topic, monitor new questions trending among the public, and even detect if a question has been answered before in order to avoid redundancy (Louafi et al., 2025).

AI can be effectively used for language translation and improving accessibility to religious texts and rulings. Modern AI translation tools can translate questions and answers across languages with increasing accuracy. This has enabled institutions like Al-Azhar's Global Fatwa Centre to deliver fatwas to people worldwide in their native languages almost in real-time (Tsourlaki, 2022). AI can break language barriers, allowing the scholarly guidance of Ulama in one region to reach Muslims in another who previously might have been limited to local resources.

In fields like Islamic finance, AI is permissible for performing complex calculations and rule-based applications. Sharia-compliant finance often involves intricate contract structures and ongoing compliance checks such as ensuring a portfolio of stocks remains halal by monitoring financial ratios. AI algorithms can assist shariah boards by fast analyzing financial data to flag non-compliance or suggest adjustments in real-time. While the final ruling of permissibility on a financial product is given by human scholars, AI can do heavy computational lifting and scenario analysis to present the scholars with options. For example, AI could simulate the *zakat* calculation for complex asset holdings, or evaluate the *riba*-risk of thousands of transactions in an Islamic bank, tasks that are tedious for humans but straightforward for software. This supportive use leverages AI's strength in computation while keeping the scholar in charge of the judgement calls (Abdullah et al., 2023).

AI may support educational platforms by automating fatwa FAQs and structured informational forums. AI-driven chatbots can handle basic Q&A for commonly asked questions, basically acting like an interactive fatwa FAQ. Questions such as how to perform ablutions, basic inheritance share calculations, fasting rules, which have straightforward answers, can be handled by AI based on pre-approved knowledge base. This frees up human muftis to focus on more complex or unprecedented queries. Many Islamic authorities see no harm in this, as long as the answers provided are vetted. In fact, it can reduce wait times and make reliable answers available around the clock. Some implementations include warning users that "This is a general answer; for specific circumstances you should consult a scholar" thereby delineating the scope of the AI's authority as limited to well-known issues (Ab Rahim et al., 2025).

AI can help ensure consistency in fatwas by cross-checking rulings with existing legal opinions. It can also be used by fatwa-issuing bodies to ensure internal consistency and bias monitoring. By analyzing a large set of fatwas, AI might detect if a particular mufti's answers are drifting toward an outlier position compared to others, or if there is an inadvertent bias for instance, being consistently stricter on certain type of issue (Tsourlaki, 2022). The scholars could then review those findings and discuss if an adjustment or clarification is needed. In this way, AI serves as a mirror, reflecting patterns that humans might overlook over time.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This research explored the integration of AI into Islamic jurisprudence from both media and religious communication perspectives, examining how AI have mediated religious authority and influenced the transmission and perception of Islamic legal rulings. After evaluating all challenges and concerns of AI in fatwa issuing, the study found that while AI technologies offered notable benefits such as increased accessibility, procedural efficiency, and consistency, they lacked core elements that are fundamental to traditional Islamic legal processes. These include *ijtihad* (independent reasoning), *niyyah* (intentionality), and openness to divine inspiration. Such human-centered qualities were found to be essential for producing rulings that are not only legally valid but also ethically and spiritually grounded. From a communication standpoint, the growing reliance on AI in issuing fatwas raised concerns about the depersonalization of religious discourse, along with the potential erosion of scholarly dialogue, consensus-building, and moral accountability. As AI became more involved in religious expression, this study stressed the need to carefully assess its role in communication to protect the integrity and authenticity of Islamic law.

Furthermore, the study acknowledges permissible uses of AI under the careful supervision of qualified Ulama, especially in structured domains such as Islamic finance, knowledge access, translation and interpretation as well as basic religious guidance. These applications remain legitimate provided human scholars maintain ultimate oversight, ensuring adherence to Islamic ethical and theological principles.

Based on the findings, several key recommendations are proposed to guide the liable integration of AI into Islamic ruling contexts. First, Islamic institutions should ensure scholarly oversight through robust ethical governance frameworks that maintain final authority in the hands of qualified human scholars. AI tools must be clearly positioned as supportive instruments, not independent sources of fatwa. To avoid confusion, AI-generated religious guidance should explicitly communicate its limitations, clarifying that such content is informational and not a substitute for scholarly rulings. A human-in-the-loop model is advisable, particularly in areas like Islamic finance and primarily

legal guidance, where AI can manage data-intensive tasks while human scholars oversee nuanced judgements and ethical concerns. Strengthening collaboration between Islamic scholars and AI developers is also essential to ensure that AI systems align with authentic jurisprudential sources and reflect scholarly consensus, thereby enhancing reliability and legitimacy. Moreover, community education programs should be implemented to raise awareness about the appropriate role and limitations of AI in religious matters. Finally, future research should explore detailed case studies of AI applications in Islamic jurisprudence, and education, examining practical outcomes, ethical implications, and community acceptance over time to develop more comprehensive guidelines for technological integration.

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