

Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a Double-Edged Sword: Its Impacts on Religion from Islamic Perspectives

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Abstract

Introducing Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, particularly ChatGPT, into various facets of human life, including religion, has brought both benefits and challenges. This paper aims to highlight the impacts of AI, specifically ChatGPT, on religion by employing a qualitative content analysis using a directed deductive method based on a newspaper report (attached as an appendix) submitted by the author to *The Guardian* newspaper. The paper outlines the significant positive contributions of ChatGPT to religious scholarship while addressing its drawbacks, such as diminishing face-to-face interactions, misquotations of scripture, and documented cases where ChatGPT has allegedly encouraged users toward harmful actions, including murder. Additionally, the paper discusses how NASFAT is guiding its members on the responsible use of ChatGPT through webinars featuring clear explanations from religious studies and ICT experts. Finally, the paper recommends promoting AI literacy among adherents of various religions.

Keywords

ChatGpt, religion, impacts, NASFAT, double-edged-sword

Definition of Terms

Artificial Intelligence is a broad and general term that refers to any type of computer software that engages in human-like activities, including learning, planning and problem-solving. Today it is properly known as narrow AI, in that it is designed to perform a narrow task, e.g., only facial recognition, internet searches or driving a car (Aina, 2024).

NASFAT, the acronym of an Islamic society headquartered in Nigeria called Nasrul-Lahi-l-Fatih Society, has as its mission to develop an enlightened Muslim society, nurtured by a true understanding of Islam for the spiritual upliftment and welfare of mankind (nasfat, n.d.). According to Tella (2025), the society was formed in Lagos, Nigeria on 5th of March, 1995 and it has branches and groups

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in about 350 locations across the globe. NASFAT is the proprietor of Fountain University, Osogbo, Nigeria.

Introduction

The birth of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has generated significant debate across various facets of life, religion inclusive. AI, with its immense potentials for both benefit and harm, has come with unique challenges and opportunities for religious leaders and adherents. According to Stephen Hawking as quoted in Makridakis (2017), the rise of powerful AI will be either the best or the worst thing ever to happen to humanity, adding that, we do not yet know which.

In a similar development, the Chief Missioner of Nasrul-Lahi-l-Fatin Society (NASFAT), Imam Abdul-Azeez Onike, has described AI as a double-edged-sword with numerous benefits and downsides, advising religious clerics and adherents of various religions to be Artificial Intelligence literate, in order to be able to separate the wheat from the chaff, in view of information overload, manipulative tendencies, fact distortion, inaccurate information, non-traceable and non-referenceable data, conversational notes that impair human physical social interaction, authentication challenges, insufficient background knowledge of religious issues, concepts, fundamentals and principles by some users of AI, threat of atheism and pornographic contents, tendency to be swayed by access of more information via AI than even fellow human beings, which could make the AI more trusted than man, among others (Irekamba, 2025). He advises religious clerics and followers to become AI-literate, accepting the potential of AI to both promote and distort religious practice and knowledge.

AI is likened to a new industrial revolution, shifting from human computation to automated computation (Malik, 2024). This paper examines the dual impact of AI on religion, focusing on its potential benefits, dangers and threats, while considering strategies for effective usage, authentication and adaptation.

According to Malik (2024), every technology will change the global landscape, social media came in 2010 and our youths were thrown into it without proper education on it, hence, psychologists detected an upsurge in depression, suicide, loss of self-esteem, etc. among our youths. Therefore, man needs to master the AI before the AI would master it. There is also the need to stimulate the interest of adherents of the Islamic faith in the acquisition of literacy in Artificial Intelligence and its tools. In a webinar organised by NASFAT, Prof. A. M Aibinu aptly sums it, the illiterate of our generation is not he who cannot read and write, but he who does not have digital literacy (A. M Aibinu, personal communication, January 7, 2024)

The wider challenge of addressing the question of a positive future in a world with AI is that it entails tacit acceptance of the imposition of AI as a foregone conclusion. The motto "Accelerate or Die" has been adopted by a Silicon Valley subculture dedicated to the re-organisation of society through technological acceleration, which leaves the impression that humanity is being held hostage to

the imposition of AI and all that is left is to negotiate the terms of the surrender (Chaudhary, 2024).

Methodology

The paper employs a qualitative content analysis using a directed deductive method based on a newspaper opinion report (attached as an appendix) submitted by the author to *The Guardian* newspaper and published as part of contribution to an article aimed at seeking Islamic clerics' opinions on the impacts of Artificial Intelligence on religion. Some other relevant online literature, hadith, and Quranic texts were also used. The need to analytically review the submission to *The Guardian Newspaper*, previously not meeting academic research standards, justifies its selection as a primary source for refinement into reworkable academic material.

Literature Review

Difference Between Google Search and ChatGPT

Granted that Google Search and Chatgpt are both tools for accessing information, there is a need to highlight the fundamental difference between the two. While Artificial Intelligence is a broad and general term that refers to any type of computer software that engages in human-like activities, including learning, planning and problem-solving, as mentioned above, one of its tools, Chat GPT offers personalised, conversational answers directly, understanding the context of your question, whereas Google provides a list of links to web pages based on your search query. Google excels at finding specific information across the web, whereas ChatGPT focuses on delivering a more human-like, interactive experience (Gupta, 2024).

Roles of AI in Religious Practice

AI technology presents new frontiers in religious discourse, evangelism, and scholarship. For instance, AI can assist in the dissemination of religious texts and provide platforms for educational programmes. Imam Onike emphasises the importance of this shift, urging religious leaders to separate valuable information from misinformation in an era of information overload and manipulative tendencies. AI tools like ChatGPT offer great promise in research and scholarship, enhancing access to religious knowledge and facilitating dialogue among adherents. However, Qasmi mention that the risks are significant as well, including the spread of inaccurate religious information, such as mixing Quranic verse with Hadith (Qasmi, 2024, 6:00), the potential erosion of traditional

religious authority, and the challenges of authentication in AI-generated data via a tool like ChatGPT, especially for those who do not have access to the various original religious texts in AI-generated data, as well as weak or insufficient background in Islamic scholarship of the searcher.

Theological Worldview on AI

Islamic theology appreciates the inevitability of technological advancements. Little wonder, therefore, the Quran mentions, “Soon shall We show them Our Signs on the horizons and in their own beings until it becomes clear to them that it is the Truth. [Qur’an 41:53] (Maududi, 1972). This verse highlights the continual revelation of knowledge through scientific discoveries. The prophetic traditions, such as the hadith that predicts competition in the construction of tall buildings, can be interpreted as foreseeing the technological developments that shape modern life, including AI: The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: "Abu Hurayra reported that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "The Final Hour will not come until people compete with one another in the height of their buildings” (Sunnah.com, n.d). This hadith is often interpreted as predicting the modern trend of skyscraper construction and urbanization, where cities compete to build the tallest structures, as seen in places like Dubai, New York, and other major metropolitan centres.

Challenges of AI in Religion

The rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has raised significant ethical concerns, particularly from an Islamic perspective, where morality, justice, and social responsibility are integral to decision-making (Waqar *et al.*, 2025). Islam as a religion promotes judicious AI use in line with justice and societal welfare, this is a reflection of Islamic ethical principles such as *adl* (justice) and *maslahah* (public welfare), as discussed in works like Elmahjub (2023) and Thalgi (2025). Despite its advantages, AI presents significant challenges to religious institutions. Abdul-Azeez (2024) highlights the threat posed by AI’s capability to distort information and sway individuals from traditional beliefs.

There is a big challenge of authenticity as Qasmi mentions an instance when he prompted ChatGPT for some Hadith, he was given four authentic and two fabricated (non-existent) Hadith, but thanks to the base knowledge of the enquirer (Qasmi, 2024, 14mins-17mins) that saved him. Particularly as it regards Islamic jurisprudence, Bugaje (n.d) mentions that one major worry is accuracy and authenticity. Islamic rulings and interpretations have deep context; AI models that hallucinate answers or amalgamate sources could mislead users. The head mufti of a U.S. seminary, Abrar Mirza, strongly advised Muslims **not to get fatwas from AI platforms** and to instead seek human scholars even if that “takes longer”. He noted that a human mufti is not just a factual expert but also spiritually grounded – something an algorithm cannot replicate.

The implications of ascribing a statement falsely to the holy Prophet and or using the same for an Islamic ruling are weighty and sinful in Islam: Narrated Salama: I heard the Prophet (ﷺ) saying, "Whoever (intentionally) ascribes to me what I have not said then (surely) let him occupy his seat in Hell-fire." (Sunnah.com, n.d). There are evident tendencies of AI to precipitate violence, Singleton *et al.* (2023) mentioned an incident where an AI-powered app encouraged a user to commit violence by urging him to kill the Late Queen of England. This clearly illustrates the potentially dangerous drawback of uncontrolled use of AI in society.

Survey of Muslim Experts on AI: A survey has been conducted to gather Muslim experts' professional views on AI-related issues. The results were published in a study titled "A Preliminary Survey of Muslim Experts' Views on Artificial Intelligence." This study emphasised the need for thorough and strict regulations to ensure that AI research and technology adhere to Islamic principles. The findings suggest that while there are some insensitivities towards the greater extent of AI's impact on Muslim consumers, there is a consensus on the urgent need for regulations that align AI with the benefits of enhancing Muslim life, underpinned by Maqasid al-Shari'ah (Iqra, 2025, p. 16).

Bearing in mind this objective of shari'ah: Ibn al-Qayyim, may Allah have mercy on him, said, "Verily, the shari'ah is founded upon wisdom and welfare for the servants in this life and the afterlife. In its entirety, it is justice, mercy, benefit, and wisdom. Every matter which abandons justice for tyranny, mercy for cruelty, benefit for corruption, and wisdom for foolishness is not a part of the Sharia even if it was introduced therein by an interpretation" (Elias, 2012). Any act of violence is condemned by Islam; the religion frowns upon any criminal tendencies and activities.

Additionally, unethical uses of AI, such as promoting cheating in examinations, Abu Huraira reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "Whoever raises arms against us is not one of us. Whoever deceives us is not one of us." (Sahih Muslim 102 as cited in Sunnah.com, n.d).

AI tools' capability of providing illicit advice further underscores the need for religious leaders to address AI's negative aspects proactively. A Belgian man reportedly ended his life following a six-week-long conversation about the climate crisis with an artificial intelligence (AI) chatbot, the man became extremely eco-anxious when he found refuge in Eliza, an AI chatbot on an app called Chai. Eliza consequently encouraged him to put an end to his life after he proposed sacrificing himself to save the planet (El Atilla, 2023), whereas the Quran unequivocally condemns suicide, "...and do not cast yourselves into destruction with your own hands; do good, for Allah loves those who do good (Quran, 2, p. 195) (Islamic Foundation UK, n.d).

Adaptation Strategies for Religious Institutions

There is an urgent need to pace with the reality of this digital age and accept the fact that AI is very significant and indispensable contemporary tool in presenting Islam and educating new Muslims about their religion; however, a high level of attention must be paid to the great challenge of the inputs and outputs of such technology which depends mainly on the ideological and intellectual backgrounds of its developers and users (Abdelgalil, 2024).

Therefore, facing the reality of this unavoidable integration of AI into various aspects of life, religious institutions like NASFAT have taken steps to educate their members on both the benefits and dangers of AI. Collaborative efforts with organisations such as the Da'wah Institute of Nigeria and Islamic Education Trust have resulted in training programmes designed to equip religious leaders and adherents with the tools necessary to navigate the AI landscape responsibly, in addition to organisation of webinars to educate members. For example, some members enrolled in courses like "Mastering ChatGPT and AI for Islamic Education," organised by Al balagh academy, which focus on ethical and effective AI usage in religious contexts.

AI Ethics and Islam

According to SAP (2024) AI ethics refers to the principles that govern AI's behaviour in terms of human values, as it helps to ensure that AI is developed and used in ways that are beneficial to society. It also encompasses a broad range of considerations, including fairness, transparency, accountability, privacy, security, and the potential societal impacts. SAP (2024) adds that, AI ethics is a force for good that helps mitigate unfair biases, removes barriers to accessibility, and augments creativity, among many other benefits.

Karren Mills, as quoted in Pazzanese (2020) mentions that, "AI presents three major areas of ethical concern for society: privacy and surveillance, bias and discrimination, and perhaps the deepest, most difficult philosophical question of the era, the role of human judgment". Similar concerns were revealed in the research findings of Tampubolon and Nadeak (2024), the findings suggest that while AI can provide new insights and facilitate interfaith dialogue, there are ethical concerns related to authenticity, bias, and the potential loss of traditional religious authority, so also did Waqar (2025) share a similar view.

Similarly, not less fearful are the predictions of Ray Kurzweil as mentioned by Iqra (2025, para 2) in Human-level AI by 2029, Kurzweil believes that AI will achieve human-level intelligence by 2029. In the Singularity by 2045, he predicts that by 2045, AI will surpass human intelligence, leading to a point where humans and machines merge, known as the Singularity. When it comes to advancements in medicine, Kurzweil anticipates that AI will revolutionise medicine, enabling personalised treatments and potentially curing diseases like cancer and Alzheimers, making aging to be a thing of the past within the next five to ten years through AI applications in medicine.

In a similar vein, as stated by Franklin, the Rabbi in the Hamptons, “His experiment with ChatGPT has ultimately left him feeling that the rise of AI could have an upside for humanity, adding that, though artificial intelligence may be able to mimic our words, and even read our emotions, what it lacks is the ability to feel our emotions, understand our pain on a physical level, and connect deeply with others, concluding that, “Compassion, love, empathy, that’s what we do best,” he said. “I think that ChatGPT will force us to hone those skills and become, God willing, more human.” (as quoted in Netburn, 2023).

As mentioned by Netburn (2023), most theologians say other ethical concerns relating to AI are more pressing, adding that they worry about growing financial inequality as automation eliminates thousands of jobs, and they question our ability to exercise free will as we increasingly rely on computer algorithms to make decisions for us in medicine, education, the judicial system, and even how we drive our cars and what we watch on TV (Netburn, 2023). However, proper administration of AI ethics as mentioned earlier by SAP (2024), with proper consideration of Islamic values and ethos, can allay our fears.

Conclusion

AI symbolically represents a double-edged sword for religious practice, offering both profound opportunities and serious challenges. Although, according to Ahmed *et al.* (2025), various religions have highlighted the issues of AI and ethics- Christianity emphasises human dignity and divine sovereignty, advocating for AI that aligns with stewardship and love. Islam promotes judicious AI use in line with justice and societal welfare. Hinduism views AI through Dharma and Ahimsa, encouraging ethical practices. Buddhism focuses on alleviating suffering and supporting AI's positive impact.

Religious leaders must nonetheless, engage with AI thoughtfully, balancing its potential to enhance religious education and engagement while coming to terms with the accompanying risk of misinformation, ethical lapses, and a weakening of traditional structures of religious authority. As AI continues to evolve, the need for increased AI literacy among religious clerics and adherents becomes ever more pressing. Through proper education and adaptation, religious societies like NASFAT are taking the necessary steps to ensure that AI serves as a tool for spiritual growth rather than a threat to religious integrity. This in spite of the assertion that it’s possible spiritual leaders may one day be replaced by robots as AI continues to improve (anything is possible) (Netburn, 2023).

Therefore, there is a need for the religious leaders to be aware of the looming danger and adequately prepare for it; this is against the backdrop of the findings of Nawi *et al.* (2021) that show that the findings generally indicate the

respondents' insensitivity towards the greater extent of AI impact on Muslim consumers at large. Seeking continuous knowledge is not negotiable. Also, Islamic scholars' determination to always be on guard, and be guided by Quran 5: 2 "...And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression..." shall help in alleviating negative fall-outs from the AI.

Recommendations

Given the evident drawbacks of artificial intelligence as shown in the result of this paper, there is a need for adherents of religions, especially Muslims, to have Artificial Intelligence literacy, have foundation knowledge in some key concepts in Islam, and have knowledge of how to prompt ChatGpt. For confirmation of the authenticity of information or data generated by ChatGpt, it would be advisable to figuratively "box ChatGpt to the corner" by asking it to provide the accessible source, weblink, or reference for its information or data. Failure to do this can make a religious leader erroneously quote the Bible as the Quran and vice versa, or ascribe mistakenly a statement made by one Islamic scholar to another.

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Appendix

AI As a Double-Edged Sword: Its Impacts on Religion, **Onike of NASFAT counsels on AI literacy for religious adherents.**

The Chief Missioner of Nasrul-Lahi-l-Fatin Society, NASFAT, Imam Abdul-Azeez Onike has described AI as a double-edged-sword with numerous benefits and downsides, advising religious clerics and adherents of various religions to be Artificial Intelligence literate, in order to be able to separate the wheat from the chaff, in view of information overload, manipulative

tendencies, fact distortion, inaccurate information, non-traceable and non-referenceable data, conversational notes that impair human physical social interaction, authentication challenges, insufficient background knowledge of religious issues, concepts, fundamentals and principles by some users of AI, threat of atheism and pornographic contents, tendency to be swayed by access of more information via AI than even fellow human beings, which could make the AI more trusted than man, etc.

Although the AI exploits should not surprise Muslims as we are still going to experience more scientific knowledge breakthroughs, Allah (swt) says, “We will show them Our Signs in the universe, and in their own selves, until it becomes manifest to them that this (the Quran) is the truth.” [Fussilat 41:53]

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: *"Abu Hurayra reported that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "The Final Hour will not come until people compete with one another in the height of their buildings."*

Interpretation: This hadith is often seen as predicting the modern trend of skyscraper construction and urbanization, where cities compete to build the tallest structures, as seen in places like Dubai, New York, and other major metropolitan centres.

Therefore, clerics and religious scholars have to come to terms that there are new frontiers in da’wah (evangelism) with probing questions such as, What has changed?, Where do you see it?, Are they relevant and real?, What are the implications to religious adherents and clerics, dawah (evangelical) workers/scholars, religious societies and applications to Dawah (evangelism) work?, and How do we adjust to the Change?

What is NASFAT doing? Having appreciated the facts that AI has come to stay with its attendant benefits and challenges, the society, in collaboration with sister organisations like Da’wah Institute of Nigeria/Islamic Education Trust, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria, organise various trainings periodically to be abreast of AI and IT developments.

At present, some of our members are participating in an online training programme organised by Albalagh Academy titled “Mastering ChatGPT and AI for Islamic Education.”

As much as AI has come with a lot of benefits, knowing how to prompt it, the kind of information to seek, knowledge of how to authenticate such information, etc, are key ingredients and tools that clerics and religious adherents must equip themselves with.

As a double-edged sword, AI, especially ChatGPT, has positively contributed to research and scholarship. On the negative side, however, BBC reported how an AI-Powered App encouraged a man to kill the Queen. (<https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.bbc.com/news/technology-67012224.amp>).

Quoting *Daily Star Newspaper*, Onike says, “ChatGPT is a powerful tool that lets anyone make their own chatbots. As well as using it to make AI wives, people have been exploiting the tool to cheat on exams and even get shoplifting advice.” (Dally, 2023).

ChatGPT is a powerful tool that lets anyone make their own chatbots. As well as using it to make AI wives, people have been exploiting the tool to cheat on exams and even get shoplifting advice. (https://www.dailystar.co.uk/tech/news/man-makes-ai-wife-kills-28936153?int_source=amp_continue_reading&int_medium=amp&int_campaign=continue_reading_button#amp-readmore-target).

We were also told in one of the sessions on AI training how someone who was conversing with ChatGPT received a response that asked him to kill his wife.

NASFAT is leaving no stone unturned in ensuring that our members are adequately educated on the benefits and ills of AI; as a matter of fact, we have organised well-attended webinars on this topic in recent time.

May God bless our efforts.