

AI as a Partner in Collective Ijtihad: a Model For Empowering Muslim Culturalists and Academics in the Digital Era

Sutrisna Rambalino^{1*}
¹Islamic Religious Education Study Program, Datokarama State Islamic University, Palu, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: Sutrisna Rambalino E-mail: sutrisnarambalino412@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRAK
Volume: 4 ISSN: 2963-5489	This paper explores the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a partner in collective ijtihad within the context of empowering Muslim scholars, academics, and communities in the digital era. Through an interdisciplinary approach that integrates Islamic studies, ethics, and technology, the research examines how AI can serve as an auxiliary tool in contemporary ijtihad processes. It also discusses the ethical, linguistic, and social challenges that accompany this development. The study emphasizes the importance of building a human–AI collaboration based on Islamic values and social responsibility so that technological advancement is not only efficient but also morally grounded. Therefore, this paper contributes to the emerging paradigm of Islamic digital ethics and provides a framework for integrating AI responsibly within Islamic scholarship.
KEYWORDS Artificial Intelligence, Collective Ijtihad, Islamic Ethics, Empowerment, Human–AI Collaboration.	

1. Introduction

The development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has brought significant transformations across various aspects of human life, including religious scholarship and Islamic education. In the context of ijtihad, AI has the potential to become an analytical assistant capable of expanding access to Islamic legal sources, accelerating data analysis, and enhancing collaboration among scholars and academics. However, the adoption of AI also raises ethical and linguistic challenges, as well as algorithmic biases that may affect the integrity of Islamic legal interpretation. This necessitates an integrative model where AI is not positioned as a replacement for human reasoning but rather as a collaborative partner that strengthens human interpretation of Islamic values in the digital age.

2. Literature review

Previous research has addressed the intersection of AI, Islamic ethics, and epistemology. Al-Aidaros (2023) emphasized that the application of AI in Islamic jurisprudence must be guided by the principles of maqāṣid al-sharīʿah to ensure alignment with the objectives of the Sharia. Hasan and Zain (2024) found that the collaboration between scholars and AI could significantly accelerate the process of analyzing hadith and Quranic exegesis through big data methodologies. Meanwhile, Al-Khalifah (2022) warned of linguistic and algorithmic biases that may distort the interpretation of religious texts if not properly managed. These studies collectively highlight that AI’s role in Islamic scholarship is inseparable from ethical, epistemological, and social dimensions, particularly within Muslim societies that uphold strong normative frameworks regarding authority and moral responsibility.

*Sutrisna Rambalino is a Student of Islamic Religious Education Study Program at Postgraduate School, State Islamic University Datokarama Palu, Indonesia. This paper was presented at the 4th International Conference on Islamic and Interdisciplinary Studies (ICIIS) 2025, as a presenter, held by the Postgraduate School State Islamic University Datokarama Palu, Indonesia.

3. Methodology

This research employs a qualitative, library-based approach focusing on academic works that discuss the integration of AI and Islamic ijtiḥad. Primary data sources include peer-reviewed journals, conference papers, and academic books published between 2020 and 2025. A descriptive-analytical method was used to examine key concepts such as collective ijtiḥad, digital ethics, and the empowerment of Muslim communities through technology. The goal is to develop a conceptual model illustrating AI's position as a partner in collective ijtiḥad and scholarly collaboration in the digital era.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 AI as a Tool for Ijtiḥad

a. Definition of Ijtiḥad

Ijtiḥad refers to the intellectual effort of qualified Islamic scholar (mujtahid) to derive legal rulings from the primary sources of Islam – the Qur'an, Sunnah, consensus (ijma'), and analogy (qiyas) – on matters for which no explicit text exists.

b. The Potential of AI in Ijtiḥad

Artificial Intelligence (AI) can serve as an analytical and informational tool in the process of ijtiḥad, though not as a replacement for scholars. Example include :

- Analysis of Hadith and Tafsir data :

AI can process thousands of hadiths rapidly to trace relevant sanad and matn.

- Classification of fatwas and juristic opinions :

AI can map various school of Islamic jurisprudence and their reasoning.

- Fiqh modeling :

Expert systems can simulate juristic reasoning for modern issues such as digital zakat or cryptocurrency transactions.

c. Limitations and Ethical Boundaries

AI lacks the spiritual and moral consciousness that underpins true ijtiḥad, which requires niyyah (intention), understanding of maqāṣid al-sharī'ah (the objectives of Islamic law), and moral wisdom.

Therefore, AI should be seen only as an assistive tool, while legal accountability remains with human scholars.

d. Practical Examples

- Applications such as FatwaBot or FiqhFinder for quick reference to Islamic rulings.
- AI-assisted analysis of contemporary ethical dilemmas, including fintech, bioethics, and environmental concerns.

AI can function as an analytical tool for Islamic jurisprudence through text mining and semantic processing of the Qur'an, hadith, and classical fiqh literature. Natural Language Processing (NLP) enables AI to identify relationships between scriptural evidence and legal contexts, assisting scholars in finding relevant references efficiently. This does not undermine human reasoning; rather, it enhances the process of ijtiḥad as a rational human endeavor. As Yusuf al-Qaradawi argued, modern ijtiḥad must incorporate scientific and technological advancements to remain contextually relevant to contemporary society (al-Qaradawi, 2001).

4.2 Ethics and Language in Islamic AI

Islamic ethics is rooted in the Qur'an and Sunnah. Its core principles include:

- Tawḥīd (Oneness of God): All actions must aim to seek Allah's pleasure.
- 'Adl (Justice): Placing everything in its rightful position, including technological use.
- Iḥsān (Goodness): Employing knowledge and power for the benefit of creation.

In the AI context, ethical conduct means:

- Avoiding data bias and injustice.
- Preventing deceit, manipulation, or social harm.
- Developing AI for public benefit (maṣlaḥah) and avoiding corruption (mafsadah).

b. Language in Islam

Language is a trust of communication. In Islam, language serves to:

- Convey truth and wisdom (Qur'an 16:125).
- Maintain politeness and honesty (Qur'an 33:70).

Thus, linguistic ethics in AI involves:

- Ensuring AI does not spread hate speech, falsehoods, or slander.
- Aligning AI-generated language with ta'dīb (moral education), not mere information transfer.

Ethics play a central role in the development and deployment of AI within Islamic contexts. The language used by AI systems to deliver religious information must avoid ideological bias and maintain scholarly decorum. Given the sacred nature of Arabic as the language of revelation, AI-driven systems must ensure high semantic precision when processing religious terminology. For example, misinterpretations of terms such as 'jihad' or 'kafir' may lead to serious socio-religious misunderstandings if AI systems are not properly monitored (Al-Khalifah, 2022).

4.3 Empowerment Muslim Communities

a. Concept of Empowerment

Empowerment in Islam means activating the potential of the ummah toward economic, social, and spiritual self-reliance. Its basis lies in Qur'an 13:11:

“Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves.”

b. The Role of AI in Empowerment

AI can accelerate Muslim community development through:

- Economic empowerment: Managing zakat, waqf, and microfinance systems more efficiently.
- Educational advancement: Providing personalized Islamic learning through adaptive platforms.
- Social inclusion: Identifying vulnerable groups and optimizing aid distribution.

c. Islamic Principles in Empowerment

Maṣlaḥah (Public benefit)

'Adālah (Social justice)

Ukhuwwah (Solidarity and mutual support)

d. Practical Examples

AI-based mapping of poverty and social needs using mosque data.

AI-driven platforms supporting Islamic MSMEs (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises).

AI also contributes to the empowerment of Muslim communities by improving digital literacy and access to Islamic education. AI-powered applications can assist in Qur'an reading with tajweed correction, offer automated fiqh consultations, or enable interactive virtual learning. When supported by government policies and Islamic educational institutions, such innovations can enhance the intellectual autonomy and socio-economic resilience of Muslim societies (Zainuddin, 2025).

4.4. Human–AI Collaboration Model

a. Basic Concept

Human–AI collaboration refers to the integration of human intelligence and machine intelligence to achieve optimal results.

b. Islamic Principles of Collaboration

In Islam, collaboration is grounded in *shūrā* (consultation) and *ta’āwun* (cooperation in goodness).
> “And cooperate in righteousness and piety...” (Qur’an 5:2)

c. Models of Collaboration

- 1. Human-led, AI-assisted:
Scholars lead the interpretation, AI provides supporting data and analysis.
- 2. Symbiotic collaboration:
AI handles technical or administrative processes; humans make ethical and spiritual judgments.
- 3. Adaptive learning:
AI improves based on human feedback to enhance contextual sensitivity.

d. Challenges

The digital literacy gap among users.
The risk of moral detachment in automated systems.
The necessity for ethically and linguistically Islamic AI models.
The collaborative model between humans and AI in collective *ijtihad* requires a clear division of roles. AI serves as an analytical assistant providing data and alternative viewpoints, while humans retain the authority to make legal judgments. This collaboration reflects the Islamic principle of *shura* (consultation), where decisions are made collectively through reasoned deliberation grounded in moral and spiritual wisdom (Hasan & Zain, 2024).

4.5. Conflicts of Interest and Solutions

a. Definition

Conflicts of interest and social tension arise when moral, economic, or political values clash — often involving competition over resources, influence, or religious interpretation.

b. Within the Context of AI and Islam

1. Ethical Conflicts:

Use of AI for surveillance, propaganda, or opinion manipulation.
Algorithmic bias disadvantaging particular groups.

2. Social Conflicts:
The digital divide between those with and without access to technology.
Fear of dehumanization — humans being replaced by machines.

3. Religious Conflicts:

Anxiety over AI interpreting religious texts without scholarly oversight.

c. Islamic Solutions

Dialogue and consultation: Involving scholars, technologists, and policymakers.
Ethical regulation based on maqāṣid al-sharī'ah: Protecting religion, intellect, life, lineage, and property.
Digital ethics education: Building awareness of Islamic values in technology use.
The implementation of AI in religious domains is not free from conflicts of interest. When AI platforms are controlled by corporate or political entities, there is a risk that religious interpretations may be influenced by economic or ideological agendas. To address this, public ethical governance based on maqāṣid al-sharī'ah should be established, alongside independent ethics councils that oversee AI applications in religious and educational contexts (Al-Aidaros, 2023).

5. Conclusion

AI has great potential as a partner in the collective ijtihad of Muslim scholars and academics. Its primary function is as a tool for data collection, legal analysis, and social prediction. However, AI cannot replace the role of scholars as legal determinants. The integration of AI into ijtihad must be guided by the principles of maqasid al-shariah and ethical regulations. Thus, AI can serve as a means of empowering Muslim communities in the digital age. AI possesses great potential to enhance collective ijtihad and the empowerment of Muslim communities in the digital era. However, its use must be anchored in Islamic ethical principles that preserve human agency as the primary moral subject. By fostering collaboration among scholars, technologists, and policymakers, AI can serve as a valuable partner that enriches Islamic intellectual traditions without displacing human spirituality or reasoning. This paradigm opens opportunities for developing a just and civilized Islamic digital ecosystem grounded in both knowledge and ethics.

References

Al-Aidaros, A. (2023). **Artificial intelligence and maqasid al-shariah in modern Islamic jurisprudence**. Kuala Lumpur: IIUM Press.

Al-Khalifah, S. (2022). **Epistemology of AI in Arabic linguistics**. Doha: Qatar Foundation.

al-Qaradawi, Y. (2001). **Contemporary ijtihad and the role of modern scholars**. Cairo: Dar al-Salam.

Hasan, M., & Zain, R. (2024). *AI and Islamic scholarship: Challenges and opportunities*. **Journal of Islamic Technology Studies*, 12*(3), 45–62.

Zainuddin, M. (2025). **Digital ethics in Muslim societies: Toward collective ijtihad 5.0**. Jakarta: UI Press.