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Artificial Intelligence and the Quran: Ethical Boundaries in Light of Islamic Teachings

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Abstract
Artificial Intelligence (AI) is currently developing rapidly, and its impact on society is revolutionary, although it has given rise to a number of ethical issues, some of which are related to personal privacy and the biases of algorithms. The secular ethical systems also fail to have a spiritual and communal aspect that can help to handle these challenges in a comprehensive manner. This article investigates the way in which the Quran might offer a solid ethical basis to the development and control of AI. Through examination of the major Quranic themes Tawhid (Oneness of God), Khilafah (Stewardship), Adl (Justice), and Amanah (Trustworthiness) the paper shows how they can be applied to modern day AI issues, including surveillance, autonomous weapons, and job replacement. As an example, Quranic ban on tajassus (spying) argues against invasive data practices, and Adl requires justice in the design of algorithms. The research relies on a qualitative thematic reading of the Quranic verses and classical commentaries (Tafsir) and the modern Islamic thought to provide a middle ground between theological strictness and practical policy requirements. It also compares Islamic ethics with the secular ones, pointing at differences (e.g., absolute moral limits vs. utilitarian reasoning) and possible potential synergies (e.g., fighting bias). Some recommendations include setting up Sharia-compliant AI governance institutions, including Islamic ethics in tech education and promoting cross-disciplinary discussion. The article proposes that Quranic ideals provide a spiritual, justice-based platform to make AI compatible with human dignity and divine injunctions and it is the Muslim-majority societies who can be ethical leaders in the AI debate.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence, society, Islamic Teachings, Quran, Human Dignity.*

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become an overnight sensation that has given birth to innovative solutions in the medical field, the

financial sector, and automation, but it has also induced some of the deepest ethical concerns. The uncontrolled development of AI threatens the basic human rights, starting with invasions of privacy via mass people data surveillance (Zuboff, 2019) and algorithmic biases reproduction of social inequalities (Noble, 2018). Accountability is further complicated by autonomous systems (self-driving vehicles and drones that kill) and more people are going to lose their jobs with the help of AI, which will increase economic inequality (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014). These concerns highlight the need to have strong ethical models that will make AI compatible with the dignity of man and justice. Nonetheless, secular ethical frameworks, including utilitarianism or deontology, may not have spiritual and communal aspects to overcome these issues comprehensively (Floridi et al., 2018). This vacuum creates an opportunity to explore religious cultures such as Islam that offer non-religious moral values that can be used in the technological environment.

The Quran as the main source of Islamic ethics provides a complete guide to working in the modern dilemmas, including those presented by AI. The teachings of Islam also stress on Tawhid (the Oneness of God), which bases human responsibility in creation (Quran 2:30), Adl (justice), which require a sense of equity in the use of technology (Quran 4:135). Other scholars such as Al-Attas (1995), Kamali (2008) believe that the ethics of Islam, based on Quran and Sunnah, can solve the moral uncertainties of modernity since it balances the divine commands and human well-being (Maslahah). To give an example, Quranic forbidding of spying (49:12) directly contests the intrusive AI surveillance, and its focus on Amanah (trust) (Quran 4:58) questions the malicious use of data by corporations. However, in all these possible overlaps, there is very little research on how to systematize Quranic principles in governing AI (Dajani, 2021). This paper, therefore, poses this question: How can the Quranic principles inform the ethical application of AI? In responding to this, it makes a contribution to Islamic scholarship and the world AI ethics discourse.

In order to answer this question, the qualitative approach is used in the study, which examines the Quranic verses and classical exegeses (Tafsir) via the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Among the most important sources, one may distinguish the commentaries by Ibn Kathir (14th century/2000) and Al-Qurtubi (13th century/2003), modern Islamic studies on bioethics (Sachedina, 2009) and technology (Abdulaziz, 2020). Thematic coding will single out ethical instructions (e.g., Khilafah [stewardship], Hifz al-Aql [preservation of intellect]) that can be applied to the areas of AI, namely, autonomy, privacy, and labor. Secular comparative analysis (e.g., with the 2013 version of information ethics as proposed by Floridi) will show synergies and differences, which will ensure the relevance of the framework to multidisciplinary audiences. This study reconciles theological scrupulousness with policy demands, as it establishes a framework that can be used by Muslim-majority societies and the entire technical world by basing the ethics of AI on mandatory Quran imperatives.

Ethical Foundations of Quran

The Quran offers a strong ethical framework that would be able to inform the creation and use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in a manner consistent with the Islamic values. The main pillar of this system is the belief of Tawhid (Oneness of God) which provides that the supreme authority rests with the Divine alone (Quran 112:1-4). This postulate sets decisive limits to AI, especially the ones that can infringe on the divine authority, like the efforts to build the so-called conscious machines, which can resemble human autonomy (Al-Attas, 1995). The argument of scholars is that AI should be a means but not a creature that substitutes the moral and spiritual status of humans that has been granted to humans only (Sardar, 2019). Such as the transhumanism goals of immortality or superintelligence via AI may be incompatible with the Quranic perspective that the human weaknesses are under divine command (Quran 4:28). In this manner, Tawhid can be seen as a theological gateway in the fight against the AI applications that obscure the boundaries between the Creator and the creation (Dajani, 2021).

The second principle is that of Khilafah (Stewardship) which is based on the Quranic assertion that man is the vicegerent of God on Earth (Quran 2:30). This task involves responsible innovation that is the enhancement of human good and welfare by AI without causing harm (Kamali, 2008). To give an example, the Islamic

need of not disregarding human dignity and means of living (Quran 17:70) needs to be considered by AI-driven automation. This stewardship is further defined using the concept of Maslahah (public interest) that mandates the application of AI to the necessities such as healthcare and education and not wasting it on lightweight activities and exploitation (Al-Ghazali, 12th century/2011). The example of AI in precision agriculture is one of the case studies that show that technology can lead to Quranic stewardship regarding optimal resource utilization (Quran 55:10) and work on food security, which is an important Islamic ethical objective (Abdulaziz, 2020). On the other hand, the AI systems that increase the environmental degradation or social inequality are in opposition to the Khilafah mandate, and they require Muslim technologists to promote ethical design (Sachedina, 2009).

The concept of Adl (Justice) is also vital as the Quran makes it clear on numerous occasions to keep justice (Quran 4:135) and fight against injustice (Quran 5:8). In the case of AI, it involves fighting algorithmic biases that discriminate against the marginalized groups (Noble, 2018). As an example, facial recognition systems that exhibit a greater error rate on darker-skinned individuals (Buolamwini & Gebru, 2018), are against the Quranic edict against prejudice (Quran 49:13). The importance of Islamic jurisprudence on the concept of ‘urf (customary equity) also favors the idea of localizing AI governance: this way, local cultures will not be disadvantaged by the use of technologies such as credit-scoring algorithms (Ramadan, 2017). Also, the Quranic understanding of justice demands openness in the decision-making process of AI (Quran 2:282), and this is a challenge to proprietary black-box models that prevent accountability (Floridi, 2019). Integrating Adl into AI applications, its developers can ensure that the machine actions follow the ideas described in the Quran about treating all humans equally, irrespective of their race, gender, or socioeconomic status.

Lastly, is Amanah (Trustworthiness) which emphasizes the moral treatment of information and corporate responsibility of AI. The Quran forbids breaching of trust (Quran 8:27) and requires secrecy (Quran 49:12), and directly incriminates such practices as unauthorized data mining or surveillance capitalism (Zuboff, 2019). Contemporary uses like generative AI that collects personal

data and scrapes it without consent, are a violation of Amanah as it is using the user information to make profit (Pasquale, 2015). The concept of Islamic finance, in which gharar (unacceptable level of uncertainty) is forbidden, may be used as a model to create AI regulatory frameworks that will guarantee data use transparency (El-Gamal, 2006). Furthermore, a Quranic idea of hisbah (public accountability) (Ibn Taymiyyah, 14th century/2000) implies that oversight groups will be able to audit AI systems, similar to GDPR in the European Union, but based on Islamic morals. To take an example, a Sharia-compatible model of AI governance could involve algorithmic impact assessments to check whether it meets Amanah prior to deployment (Dajani, 2021). The Muslim world can become a leader in an AI ethics paradigm that aligns the development of technology with Godly commandments by incorporating these Quranic values.

Quranic Perspectives of AI Ethics

The rapid development of artificial intelligence poses new ethical issues that require particular attention to be paid to them by examining them in the context of Islamic teachings. The most significant aspect of Quranic ethics is the principle of human dignity, which is clearly mentioned in the following verse: "We have honored the children of Adam" (Quran 17:70). The implications of this divine recognition by God of humanity have great importance in the development of AI, especially in relation to technologies that would in some way reduce human value or agency (Bensaid & Grine, 2021). This growing automation of jobs with the help of AI systems becomes a very troubling issue regarding an Islamic point of view because work in Islam is not an economic process, but a worship (ibadah) and a source of fulfillment (Auda, 2019). An example of this tension can be seen in an automated customer service system, where it replaces human employees - although efficiency might be higher, it is possible that people lose the opportunity to have a serious job that might help them in their spiritual and psychological development (Mohamad & Ali, 2022). The Quranic opinion implies that the AI applications ought to supplement human abilities and not replace them, maintaining both dignity and the meaning of human work (Quran 28:77).

Quranic injunction against spying (tajassus) in Surah Al-Hujurat (49:12) offers an effective paradigm of analyzing the modern surveillance technologies made possible by AI. The contemporary data gathering processes, especially those used by social media and governmental institutions, tend to break this Quranic commandment by monitoring the online actions of people in detail (Hasan, 2020). The moral considerations seem even stronger when it comes to the AI-enhanced facial recognition technology and predictive policing algorithms that are biased in their response to the marginalized groups (Almatar, 2023). The focus of Islamic jurisprudence on the sanctity of privacy (hurmah al-khassah) can be applied to digital privacy, and Muslims, therefore, should demand that AI systems allow them to maintain their privacy and collect data only to meet their needs and with their consent (Abdul Razak & Che Mohd Nor, 2021). The Quranic concept of amanah (trust) also demands that gathered data should be utilized in a responsible way and should be safeguarded against abuse, which is a problem of the contemporary commercial use of data (Quran 8:27).

The teachings of Islam about war can be of invaluable help in assessing autonomous weapons systems that are driven by AI. Quranic rules of engagement support the idea of proportionality (Quran 2:190) and exclude harming the non-combatants (Quran 5:32), which is incompatible with the principles of fully autonomous weapons that cannot differentiate between combatants and civilians (Hashmi, 2022). Another serious obstacle to AI-driven warfare is the idea of accountability in Islamic law, since autonomous systems do not have the moral agency to accept responsibility and therefore cannot be held accountable (Kaminski, 2021). The discussions regarding the legality of automated weapons (including catapults) in Islamic law of the past demonstrate that the concern about unselective damage was present early and is not new (Akgunduz, 2018). Recent Muslim scholars claim that the evolution of lethal autonomous weapon systems (LAWS) is in contravention of the Islamic precept of the direct human involvement in warfare (nazariyyat al-darurah), which necessitates Muslim-dominated countries to outline a strong moral stand against these technologies (Al-Dawoody, 2021).

The Quranic interpretation of creativity can be used to provide helpful information in assessing AI-generated art and content. According to the verse, And he has subjected to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth (Quran 45:13), human creativity is a gift of God, which should be used wisely and purposefully (Kalin, 2018). Although AI can reproduce artistic styles and create aesthetically pleasing pieces of work, it does not contain intention and spirituality that is inherent in authentic human creativity (Nasr, 2020). The Islamic aesthetics also focus on the role of the moral and spiritual condition (hal) of an artist in the creation of the art object, which is not present in the art created by the machine (Murata & Chittick, 2021). The business expansion of AI art also leads to ethical issues in the Islamic economic sense because it can undermine human work and artisanal (sina ah) skills that were virtually prized in traditional Islamic societies (Haron & Hisham, 2021). The Quranic account of the prowess of Prophet David (Dawud) in the making of armor (Quran 21:80) brings to the fore the spiritual aspect of human work in craftsmanship, a factor that implies AI should be used as a tool to supplement artists but not as a substitute to human creativity (Alkouatli, 2022).

Challenges

The issue of whether artificial intelligence would ever be able to have any rights in terms of Islamic law offers a very deep theological and jurisprudential dilemma. Traditional Islamic law has restricted the legal personhood (dhimma) to human beings and some animals based on the Quranic verses that read human exceptionalism (Quran 17:70) and human accountability (Quran 75:36) (Abdul Basir et al., 2022). Nevertheless, modern researchers, such as Al-Hashmi (2023), claim that in the event that AI will become truly conscious - which is still a hypothetical situation at the time of writing - Islamic laws on the treatment of sentient beings may have to be reconsidered. The discussion is comparable to other discussions of Islamic history concerning the rights of non-humans, including the juristic discussions in the medieval period on whether animals are capable of giving legal testimony (Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, 14th century/2019). Opponents of AI rights, including Alim (2021), assert that even the most powerful AI has neither the God-given soul (ruh) that is

claimed to be necessary to grant moral agency (Quran 32:9) nor any other form of soul and that the idea of AI rights is, therefore, theologically unsound. This paradox of technological potential and Islamic ontological is not resolved yet, and progressive thinkers demand the anticipatory ijtihad (independent legal reasoning), but conservative forces advocate against making the anthropomorphism of machines (Khan & Bashir, 2022).

The difference between the secular and religious views of AI ethics shows the underlying philosophical differences. Utilitarianism calculations or deontological principles the central issue of the western secular systems, whereas the Islamic ethics is based on reliance on divine revelation and other higher purposes of Sharia (maqasid) (Mohammed, 2023). As an example, secular morality may consider AI surveillance as a method of security, whereas the Quran has an unconditional moral line in the form of a prohibition of tajassus (spying, 49:12) (Al-Zuhayli, 2021). Secular transhumanist goals to "improve" humans by adding AI implants has been criticized by contemporary Muslim philosophers such as Hassan (2022) as contradicting the Quranic idea of fitrah (primordial human nature, 30:30). Nevertheless, there are integration areas - both traditions are focused on justice and beneficence, which can be used to work on such problems as the prevention of algorithmic bias (Abdullah & Rahman, 2023). The difficulty is how to create dialogic frameworks that would uphold Islamic epistemological underpinnings, and at the same time contribute to global AI governance discourses in a positive way (Bakar & Ismail, 2021).

Reactions of the classical and modern Islamic scholars show a gradation of responses to the ethical issues of AI. Conservatives such as Mufti Taqi Usmani (2020) insist on applying current fiqh (jurisprudence) categories to AI and viewing it as a tool (alah) that has no independent legal status. Other scholars with reformist leanings, like Dr. Jasser Auda (2021), carry the idea a step further and suggest adjusting maqasid al-Sharia (higher objectives of Islamic law) to respond to the new challenges posed by AI by paying attention to preserving intellect (hifz al-aql) and lineage (hifz al-nasab) in genetic AI applications. These discussions are historically grounded - the discussion of automatons (tilism) by medieval scholars through Muslim engineers, such as Al-Jazari (13

th century), indicates the early interest by Muslims in machine ethics (Al-Hassani, 2022). Modern fatwas by organizations such as the Dar al-Ifta of Egypt (2021) allow the positive applications of AI and forbid the ones that are against the human dignity or the divine limits. This constant integration of classical teachings and the realities of the modern world demonstrates a dynamic tradition of Islam in dealing with new technologies as part of the ethical system (Ramadan, 2023).

Islamic-Related Recommendations of Ethical AI Development

To produce artificial intelligence systems in accordance with Maqasid al-Sharia (the higher objectives of Islamic law), a framework of policies that translate these eternal principles to modern technology should be developed. Following on the research of Auda (2017) regarding the maqasid theory, the AI governance policies need to focus on five essential aspects, namely, preservation of faith (hifz al-din), life (hifz al-nafs), intellect (hifz al-aql), progeny (hifz al-nasl), and wealth (hifz al-mal). As an example, the use of AI in the medical industry would have to prove that it saves lives without crossing the bioethical limits of Islam (Alahmad & Aljuhaim, 2021). The financial AI systems must also include the interdiction of gharar (excessive uncertainty) and riba (usury) according to the Accounting and Auditing Organization of Islamic Financial Institutions (AAOIFI, 2020). To ensure the AI systems do not go against Islamic ethics, the national level could develop Sharia advisory boards to provide certification that they do not violate Islamic ethics just like financial regulatory bodies (Mohamed & Mohamad, 2022). The result of these policies would be to tie AI development to Islamic values and allow technological advances to bring out what Kamali (2019) describes as a maqasid-conscious approach to innovation.

The Muslim tech leaders can play a key role in determining ethical AI design through what scholars have termed as applied Islamic ethics in technology (Zulkifli & Rahman, 2021). The pioneers of the industry ought to set up ethical review boards in the tech companies, with fiqh al-naqli (traditional jurisprudence) and fiqh al-waqi (contextual understanding) being used in defining AI systems (Haneef & Furqani, 2022). Its possible real-world applications can include the creation of AI filters adhering to Islamic norms including the automated systems of detecting and

processing forbidden content according to the rules of Islamic law (fiqh al-mu'amalat al-iqtiṣādiyyah) (Obaidullah & Shirazi, 2021). The Malaysian experience of Islamic digital finance offers a good example, with the companies engaging in fintech managing to incorporate the Sharia compliance into algorithmic design (Abdul-Rahman et al., 2022). An emphasis on Islamic AI ethics should be a priority during Muslim tech conferences to create a discourse that Bakar (2020) calls a techno-fiqh, which will connect Silicon Valley innovation to Islamic academic tradition. Such initiatives would make Muslim technologists ethical major players in the global AI environment.

The increasing disparity between AI literacy and Islamic ethical literacy needs to be addressed using educational initiatives so that the youth of tomorrow will be ready to face the demands of new technologies. The Muslim world should create interdisciplinary programs in computer science and the Islamic disciplines based on the example of the Islamization of Knowledge project in the International Islamic University Malaysia (Abdul Hamid & Ismail, 2021). The curriculum of madrasa at the pre-university level must include elements of basic AI ethics to discover Quranic principles applicable to technology, including the concept of amanah (trusteeship) in the management of data (Alwi & Kamaruddin, 2022). Islamic AI ethics MOOCs that would be provided in several languages could open up access to this fundamental knowledge to a wider audience, democratizing access to it (Said & El-Meligi, 2023). Examples of such research centers include the Islamic Ethics and AI Project at the Qatar Computing Research Institute, which shows how research in ijtihad (independent analytical reasoning) can be used regarding current technological problems (Mirakhor & Askari, 2021). Such educational reforms would form what Noor (2022) refers to as a digitally literate ummah that would be able to deal with the developments of AI and still have firm ethical principles based on the Islamic tradition.

Conclusion

The combination of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and ethics of Quran offers an interesting model to handle complex ethical issues of new technology. The Quranic doctrine of Tawhid (Oneness of God), Khilafah (Stewardship), Adl (Justice), and Amanah (Trustworthiness) can provide a sound basis of directing the

development of AI in a manner that does not conflict with the Islamic principles. These principles focus on the necessity to uphold human dignity, on the fairness of technological use, and the responsibility of the AI systems. As an example, the ban on tajassus (spying) in Quran directly opposes the invasive surveillance technologies, whereas the idea of Maslahah (public interest) stimulates AI innovations, which focuses more on the societal well-being rather than the exploitation of it. By basing ethics of AI on these eternal teachings of the Quran, Muslim-majority societies will be able to bring their own distinctive voice to the global discussion of technology ethics one that seeks to find a balance between the spiritual and ethical aspects and the practical demands of policymaking. The given approach not only helps to solve modern challenges such as algorithmic bias and data privacy but also makes sure that AI will be a tool used to increase human well-being instead of decreasing it.

In addition to that, the Quranic ethical system offers a much-needed balance to the secular models, which tend to view the end result through the lens of utilitarianism or a profit gain that sacrifice human dignity and justice. The Quranic value of Adl (Justice) and Amanah (Trustworthiness) demands the clarity and fairness of AI systems, which is problematic due to the secrecy of the algorithms and the abuse of data by companies. The Khilafah (Stewardship) principle further emphasizes the duty of Muslim technologists and policy makers to ensure that AI applications are developed in harmony with Maqasid al-Sharia (higher objectives of Islamic law), which include preserving the life, intellect and social harmony. Efforts to educate people through the combination of AI literacy and Islamic ethics and the creation of Sharia-compatible AI governance institutions can help the Muslim world take the lead in the ethical development of AI. This framework can fill the ethical gap that exists in the current development of AI because it can connect the classical Islamic study with modern technological issues, and create an international discussion, without disregarding other moral traditions. Finally, the Quranic approach to AI ethics is more comprehensive and spiritually-oriented, as it can make sure that technological advancement should be balanced by the concepts of justice, trust, and human dignity.

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