

# Artificial Intelligence and Religious Ethics: Evaluating Reliance on Islamic Chatbots For Spiritual Guidance

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**Abstract:** The emergence of generative artificial intelligence (AI) and Large Language Models (LLMs) has initiated a transformative period in the dissemination of religious knowledge and the exercise of spiritual authority within the global Muslim community. By providing a comprehensive evaluation of the ethical, theological, and jurisprudential implications of utilizing Islamic chatbots for religious guidance, with a localized focus on the Republic of Uzbekistan, the article examines technical performance metrics from benchmarks like IslamicEval 2025, sociological shifts among Generation Z users, and the application of the Maqāṣid al-Sharī'a as a normative framework for digital ethics. The findings emphasize that while AI facilitates unprecedented access to religious texts, the persistence of "algorithmic hallucinations," the absence of spiritual lineage (sanad), and the lack of moral intentionality (niyyah) necessitate a "Human-in-the-Loop" approach to safeguard the integrity of the Islamic legal tradition.

**Keywords:** Artificial Intelligence, Islamic Ethics, Uzbekistan, Fatwa, Religious Authority, Maqāṣid al-Sharī'a, Digital Hermeneutics, @fatvo\_uzbot, QuranGPT, Generation Z.

## Introduction: The Digital Transformation of the Ummah

The evolution of digital technology has fundamentally reconstructed the religious landscape of the Muslim Ummah, shifting the locus of knowledge acquisition from traditional institutions to pervasive algorithmic platforms.<sup>1</sup> This transformation represents the latest chapter in a long historical trajectory of technological adaptation within Islam. The Ottoman authorities famously resisted the printing press for nearly two centuries to safeguard the prestige of manuscript culture and prevent textual errors.<sup>2</sup> This was followed in the 20th century by the rise of cassette sermons in the 1970s and the "Sheikh Google" era of the 1990s, characterized by CD-ROM databases and early online fatwa portals like IslamOnline.<sup>2</sup> However, the advent of generative AI in the 2020s marks a qualitative shift. Unlike previous media, which acted as static repositories, contemporary AI systems generate

personalized, conversational responses that simulate human scholarly judgment, giving rise to "algorithmic religious authority".

In Uzbekistan, a nation with a deep heritage of Hanafi scholarship and a significant Muslim majority, the state has taken a proactive role in mediating this transition.<sup>4</sup> The integration of AI into public administration and the cultural sphere has necessitated an urgent evaluation of its religious dimensions.<sup>6</sup> As of June 2025, the official stance of the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan emphasizes that AI, while a product of divine-given human intellect, must be regulated to preserve human values and Shari'a regulations.<sup>6</sup> The challenge lies in reconciling the efficiency of technical systems with the nuanced, context-dependent nature of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh).

Specialized Islamic chatbots now offer believers new ways of interacting with sacred texts. Platforms such as QuranGPT and Ansari Chat promise to bridge linguistic

divides and make knowledge accessible to non-specialists.<sup>2</sup> Yet, the automation of religious knowledge challenges long-standing hierarchies and introduces risks ranging from "hallucinated" verses to the erosion of the traditional mentor-student relationship (talaqqi). This report evaluates these dynamics, prioritizing the ethical benchmarks of Maqāṣid al-Sharī'a—the preservation of religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property—as a guide for responsible AI development.

**The Uzbekistan Paradigm: The June 2025 Fatwa and Legislative Context**

**The Theological Vision of Mufti Nuriddin Khaliqnazar**

In June 2025, the Chairman of the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan, Mufti Sheikh Nuriddin Khaliqnazar, articulated a comprehensive theological position on artificial intelligence. This vision, receiving widespread coverage across the Islamic world, posits that AI is an

"instrument" (wasilah) rather than an "objective" (ghayah). The MBU fatwa acknowledges the rapid advancements in digital technologies as integral to modern life, citing the Quranic verse, "And He creates that which you do not know" (16:8), as a theological basis for recognizing technological innovation.

However, the fatwa establishes strict boundaries for the application of AI in the religious domain, particularly regarding Ifta (issuing fatwas). The MBU highlights that a Mufti must be a mukallaf—a legally accountable human person—which technical systems cannot be.<sup>6</sup> The issuance of a ruling is not merely a task of data retrieval but a hermeneutical exercise requiring an understanding of the seeker's specific circumstances, local customs (urf), and socio-economic conditions.<sup>6</sup> These "nuanced human considerations" remain beyond the independent comprehension of current AI architectures.

Principle of the June 2025 Fatwa	Theological/Legal Justification	Reference
<b>Supportive Role Only</b>	AI as a tool for classification and data retrieval; "Ask the people of the message if you do not know" (16:43)	6
<b>Prohibition of Independent Fatwas</b>	Requires a mukallaf (accountable person); AI lacks legal and moral responsibility	6
<b>Contextual Necessity</b>	Human jurists consider time, place, and socio-economic variables that AI cannot synthesize	6
<b>Institutional Reference</b>	Trustworthy scholars and the Fatwa Center remain the ultimate reference point	6

**National Regulation and the "Human-in-the-Loop" Requirement**

Following the religious ruling, the Uzbek government moved to solidify the legal status of AI. On January 21, 2026, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev signed Law No. LRU-1115, "On making additions and changes to certain legislative acts of the Republic of Uzbekistan in connection with the regulation of relations arising from the use of artificial intelligence". This legislative act does not stand alone but embeds AI oversight into existing laws to clarify definitions, responsibilities, and liabilities.

For the religious sector, this law implies a structured approach to digital Sharia services. The government and the MBU emphasize that humans must remain at the heart of the development process.<sup>6</sup> This is reflected in the operation of domestic tools like @fatvo\_uzbot, which is designed not as a generative assistant that creates new rulings, but as an intellectual search system grounded in the official fatwa database of the MBU. By limiting the bot to retrieving established human-authored content, the MBU maintains its monopoly on interpretive authority while leveraging AI

to handle the high volume of public inquiries.

**Ethical Foundations: Maqāṣid al-Sharī'a and the "Heart" of AI**

**Maqāṣid al-Sharī'a as a Normative Benchmark**

The rapid development of AI presents ethical challenges that Western frameworks—such as utilitarianism or deontology—may not fully address in a Muslim context. Consequently, scholars have proposed an ethics framework grounded in Maqāṣid al-Sharī'a. This holistic perspective evaluates technology based on its contribution to public welfare (maslahah) and its protection of five core values.

1. Hifz al-Dīn (Protection of Religion): AI must not facilitate the spread of fabricated hadiths or erroneous interpretations that threaten the purity of jurisprudence.<sup>1</sup> The proliferation of "hallucinations" in LLMs, where the system misquotes the Quran, is a primary violation of this objective.
2. Hifz al-Aql (Protection of Intellect): The use of AI should enhance human critical thinking rather than foster a "dependency" that erodes the capacity for independent reasoning (ijtihād).

3. Hifz al-Nafs (Protection of Life): AI ethics must prevent the weaponization of religious discourse by extremists. There is a concern that unregulated AI could provide "fatwas" justifying violence or radicalization.

4. Hifz al-Nasl (Protection of Lineage): This involves protecting privacy and preventing data collection that could compromise family integrity or individual dignity.

5. Hifz al-Māl (Protection of Property): In the realm of Islamic finance (muamalah), AI must ensure transparency and justice, preventing algorithmic bias from reinforcing economic inequality.

### The Centrality of the Heart (Qalb) in Islamic Cognitive Theory

A critical distinction between human and artificial intelligence in Islamic thought is the role of the "heart" (qalb).<sup>22</sup> Unlike Western paradigms that focus primarily on the "mind" as a cognitive processor, Islam views the heart as the cognitive, moral, and spiritual

center of the human being. Engagement with religious guidance requires "inner reform" and spiritual clarity, which are processes of the heart.

The "Digital Mufti" operates on "performative mimicry" and statistical correlation rather than "intentional reasoning" (niyyah). While AI may surpass human intelligence in data processing speed, it lacks the capacity for vulnerability, moral struggle, and the embodiment of divine attributes like mercy and forgiveness. This ontological distinctiveness suggests that AI cannot achieve the level of "blessing" (barakah) or spiritual meaningfulness required for true guidance.

### Evaluating Authentic Islamic Chatbots: Technical and Sociological Results

#### Taxonomy of Islamic Chatbot Architectures

The current landscape of Islamic AI tools can be categorized by their scope, governance, and technical grounding. These systems range from closed-domain search bots to sophisticated LLM-powered assistants.

Chatbot Name	Primary Scope	Authority Posture	Technical Grounding
@fatvo_uzbot	Uzbek fatwa retrieval	Official (MBU)	Closed-domain Search
QuranGPT	Scriptural exegesis	Educational/Interpretive	Generative (LLM)
Ansari Chat	General guidance	Open-source/Transparent	Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG)
WisQu	Shia jurisprudence	Denominational	Grounded in Shia corpora
Islamicly	Daily rituals/Finance	Informational	LLM with domain fine-tuning
Ask AiDeen	General (via Muslim Pro)	Semi-official/Opaque	Proprietary API

### Technical Performance: Accuracy and the Hallucination Problem

Technical evaluations in 2025, specifically the "IslamicEval" shared tasks, have highlighted significant disparities in how LLMs handle religious data.<sup>18</sup> The precision required for sacred texts is exceptionally high, as a single incorrect diacritic in Arabic can alter the

meaning of a verse, potentially leading to misinterpretation.

Data from IslamicEval 2025 reveals that LLMs are more prone to verification errors in Quranic content than in Hadith content.<sup>18</sup> This is attributed to the strict "word-for-word" preservation standards for the Quran, whereas Hadith narratives (matn) allow for some

authentic linguistic variations. Furthermore, the removal of diacritics (Tashkeel) from inputs was found to reduce model validation performance by several percentage points.

Metric (IslamicEval 2025)	GPT-4o (Top Performer)	Qwen3-235B (Open Source)	Gemma-12B-IT
Identification (F1 Score)	0.821	0.861 (with MOE)	0.694
Validation Accuracy	0.898	0.795	0.737
Recall Rate (Retrieval)	>95%	>90%	Variable

### Generation Z and the "Dual-Trust" Phenomenon

Sociological surveys conducted between 2024 and 2025 indicate a complex relationship between educated Muslim youth (Generation Z) and AI authority.<sup>1</sup> A significant dichotomy exists where AI is favored for its technical advantages but rejected for its lack of spiritual validity.

Research identifies a "dual-trust" behavior: 65% of Gen

Z respondents consult AI for sensitive, private, or stigmatized questions (e.g., puberty or private sins) because the chatbot offers a judgment-free environment.<sup>1</sup> However, 88% of these same respondents state they would strictly follow traditional Ulama for rulings on worship (ibadah), citing the importance of sanad (scientific lineage) and the "spiritual satisfaction" that AI cannot provide.

Trust Variable	AI Chatbots (ChatGPT/Gemini)	Traditional Ulama (Human)
Response Speed	Instant (< 10 seconds)	Variable (Days/Weeks)
Accessibility	24/7, Private	Limited / Public perception
Validity Basis	Big Data / Syntax	<i>Kitab Kuning / Sanad</i>
Spiritual Connection	Perceived as "Functional"	Perceived as "Spiritual"
Contextual Nuance	Often Literal/Textual	Situational/Hermeneutic

## DISCUSSION

### Challenges to Religious Integrity

#### From Sanad to Syntax: The Disruption of Hermeneutics

The transition from traditional scholarship to AI-mediated guidance represents a shift from sanad-based learning to syntax-based retrieval. Historically,

Islamic knowledge was authorized through chains of transmission that guaranteed not just the text but the legitimacy of the interpretation. AI systems, particularly those like QuranGPT, function as "epistemic actors" that challenge this framework by democratizing access at the cost of interpretive rigor.

One documented technical failure illustrates this risk. In translating the Hadith "Al-Madinatu Tanfi Al-

Khabats" (The City of Madinah purges its impurities), LLMs provided a literal translation referring to physical waste or sanitation infrastructure.<sup>1</sup> Traditional scholars like Habib Abdurrahman Assegaf note that this literalism erases the spiritual meaning—the purification of the city from sin or corruption.<sup>1</sup> This "semantic dilution" is a direct consequence of a system that understands word patterns but lacks *dzaug* (spiritual taste) and theological context.

### Algorithmic Bias and Sectarian Drift

LLMs are trained on broad, often uncurated corpora, which may include Islamophobic associations or biased theological stances.<sup>2</sup> Studies have shown that general-purpose models like GPT-3 disproportionately link Muslims to violence or extremism, a bias that can seep into religious chatbots if not strictly curated.

Furthermore, there is a risk of "sectarian drift." Most current bots default to a generic Sunni consensus, often blending different schools of jurisprudence (*madhāhib*) without disclosure.<sup>2</sup> While denominational specificity in bots like WisQu (Shia) can enhance trust, it also risks creating "algorithmically mediated echo chambers" that deepen sectarian divides.<sup>2</sup> For a diverse nation like Uzbekistan, ensuring that AI reflects the domestic Hanafi-Maturidi tradition while avoiding the "virtualization" of extremist content is a paramount security and religious concern.

### The Role of Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG)

To mitigate these risks, the technical community has proposed Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG) as a safer alternative to purely generative models.<sup>24</sup> RAG systems, such as MufassirQAS, do not generate answers from their internal weights alone; instead, they retrieve relevant passages from a verified database of Islamic texts and synthesize an answer based strictly on those citations.

Evaluation results show that RAG-based systems demonstrate superior performance in maintaining accuracy and transparency. By providing source page numbers and referenced articles, these systems enable users to "independently verify claims," aligning with the scholarly requirement for *sanad*.<sup>2</sup> In a study involving high school students learning Hadith, RAG systems achieved a context relevance mean of 0.797, proving efficient as a "teacher-assisting" interface.

### CONCLUSION: Toward a Responsible Digital Ifta

The integration of artificial intelligence into the spiritual life of Muslims, particularly in the context of Uzbekistan, represents a watershed moment for religious authority. The June 2025 fatwa by the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan serves as a vital ethical compass, distinguishing between the "supportive" capabilities of

AI in data classification and the "substitutive" impossibility of AI in legal issuance. The findings of this report suggest that while AI significantly enhances the accessibility of religious knowledge, it remains a "Black Box" that lacks the accountability, intentionality, and spiritual lineage of human scholars.

Empirical data from 2024 to 2026 highlights that the path forward lies in "algorithmic pluralism" and citation transparency. The popularity of the @fatvo\_uzbot in Uzbekistan demonstrates the success of a closed-domain, state-verified approach. Conversely, the technical challenges faced by global generative models underscore the persistence of "algorithmic hallucinations" and the need for continuous expert oversight.

The following recommendations serve as a framework for the future development of Islamic chatbots:

- **Institutional Oversight:** AI tools should be managed as supportive interfaces for established religious boards to prevent the spread of extremist or unverified rulings.
- **Citation-First Architecture:** Developers must prioritize RAG-based models that provide verifiable links to canonical texts (Quran, Hadith, and classical exegesis).
- **Linguistic Precision:** Systems must be optimized for Classical Arabic, preserving diacritics and theological nuances that are often lost in translation.
- **Human-Centric Ethics:** AI development should be guided by *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'a*, ensuring that technological progress serves the higher objectives of preserving faith and human dignity.

Ultimately, as Mufti Nuriddin Khaliqzazar emphasized, technology is a means to serve humanity, not a tool to control its destiny. The heart of the believer remains the ultimate locus of spiritual understanding, a domain that remains beyond the reach of any machine.

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