

Revisiting Salafi Epistemology in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: A Theological Framework for Authentic Knowledge in Digital Da'wah and Islamic Education

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Artificial intelligence (AI) increasingly mediates the production, dissemination, and validation of knowledge, raising questions about epistemic authority in Islamic religious contexts. This study examines how Salafi epistemology can provide a theological framework for evaluating AI-assisted knowledge in digital da'wah and Islamic education. Drawing on classical works associated with Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn al-Qayyim, together with contemporary scholarship on Islamic epistemology and AI, the study employs a qualitative theological-textual approach to analyse the relationship between revelation (wahy), reason ('aql), transmitted knowledge (naql), and algorithmic inference. It argues that AI may serve legitimate instrumental functions in organising, transmitting, and supporting access to religious knowledge, but cannot independently assume the authority of the 'ālim or mujtahid. The study proposes a revelation-centred evaluative framework that emphasises scholarly supervision, authenticated transmission, moral accountability, transparency, and the subordination of technological tools to divine guidance. This framework seeks to preserve theological authenticity while enabling responsible use of AI in Islamic education and digital da'wah.

Keywords: Salafi epistemology; artificial intelligence; Islamic epistemology; digital da'wah; Islamic education; revelation.

1. Introduction

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) has significantly changed how people interact with knowledge in the twenty-first century. AI systems are now capable of sophisticated cognitive tasks that were previously believed to be exclusive to human intelligence, such as processing language, deciphering images, analysing data, and even producing original material. Qur'anic chatbots, automated fatwa databases, and intelligent tutoring systems for Islamic education are just a few examples of how AI applications have spread into religious domains in the Muslim world. A new frontier in the dissemination and interpretation of religious knowledge is reflected in these advancements (Shoayb Ahmed, n.d.). Beneath this technological optimism, however, comes a serious theological question: how should Islamic thinking, especially in the Salafi tradition, address the epistemic implications of artificial intelligence? (Rashid & Kausik, 2004).

Probabilistic models that identify patterns in large datasets are the foundation of AI technologies. Instead of understanding or revelation, these systems "know" by induction and correlation. Despite their sophistication, their outputs are generated through statistical patterning rather than human understanding, moral agency, or religious accountability. Islam's epistemology, on the other hand, is based on the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and his followers as well as the certainty (yaqīn) of divine revelation (wahy). Particularly in the Salafi tradition, naql (textual transmission) is emphasised as the ultimate source of knowledge, while 'aql (reason) functions within a revelation-centred epistemic order. The logic of AI, which prioritises data, computation, and statistical inference over divine guidance, is in conflict with this epistemic hierarchy (El-Tobgui, 2020; Floridi & Chiriatti, 2020).

Scholars like Osman Bakar (2018) and Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (1995) have long cautioned that the uncritical adoption of Western epistemological frameworks runs the risk of

displacing the Islamic idea of knowing from its metaphysical foundations. This worry is heightened by the challenge posed by AI, since algorithmic systems that seem to "know" and "reason" are rapidly challenging the epistemic authority of revelation. This presents fundamental theological issues for followers of the Salafi credo, whose methodology (manhaj) aims to maintain the integrity of Islamic thought and practice based on the knowledge of the Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ (pious forebears). Can artificial intelligence (AI), a product of human creation, engage in religious reasoning? Is it reliable for interpreting divine writings, rendering decisions, or forming spiritual understanding? Or must its application be limited to non-authoritative, instrumental purposes only?

Given the expanding impact of AI, these problems necessitate a methodical re-examination of Salafi epistemology. Recent research using ibn Taymiyyah terminology emphasises the Salafi school's sophisticated epistemological structure, which strikes a balance between transmitted revelation and rational interaction within predetermined bounds, despite the school's tendency to emphasise orthodoxy and literalism. This paradigm is based on the idea that genuine revelation is the source of true knowledge and that human reason serves only as a tool for comprehending and applying that revelation, never as a competing source of truth. As a result, the Salafi approach offers a logical theological basis for assessing AI technologies as epistemic phenomena that engage with the field of religious knowledge rather than only as tools (El-Tobgui, 2020).

Few studies have systematically linked these ideas to traditional religious epistemologies, despite the fact that there is a growing body of work on the "Islamic ethics of AI". The majority of the current discussion centres on the ethical use of technology, including concerns about privacy, bias, and automation, without delving into the more profound issue of how computers "know" and whether or not that knowledge is consistent with the Islamic idea of 'ilm. By investigating

how Salafi epistemology might act as a guiding framework for guaranteeing authenticity and theological integrity in the use of AI for digital da'wah and Islamic education, this research aims to close that gap (Abdelnour, 2025; Lala, 2025).

This study uses a qualitative textual approach from a methodological standpoint. In order to determine epistemic principles that can guide the ethical use of intelligent systems in religious contexts, it examines both modern AI ethics literature and traditional Salafi works, particularly those of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn al-Qayyim. The argument starts with the idea that although AI can help spread knowledge, it cannot take the place of a 'ālim (scholar) or mujtahid (trained jurist). Its data-based understanding is still dependent, relative, and unenlightened by God. As a result, the Salafi framework developed in this study treats AI as a secondary tool that may assist efficiency but does not possess independent theological authority (Bishara, 2022).

This investigation is important for reasons other than theological. Knowing the epistemic lines separating revelation from computation is essential for preserving the validity of religion in a society where digital algorithms mediate religious knowledge more and more. This paper proposes a framework for balancing technological advancement with the unchangeable principles of Aqidah salafiah as Muslims navigate AI-driven platforms for learning, fatwa consultation, and spiritual guidance. This paradigm ensures that digital dawah stays true to the methodology and creed of the religious forebears by insisting that all technology tools function under the epistemic supremacy of revelation.

All things considered, this study seeks to accomplish three goals:

- To clarify the core ideas of Salafi epistemology with regard to revelation, reason, and knowledge.
- To examine how these ideas can be used to digital religious contexts in order to

overcome the epistemic issues raised by AI.

- To put forth a theological framework that preserves the integrity of the Islamic religion while incorporating AI into teaching and dawah.

This study affirms the continued relevance of revelation-based epistemology in an era dominated by machine reasoning while also adding to the growing conversation on AI and theology by re-examining the Salafi intellectual legacy through the prism of modern technology.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Artificial Intelligence and the Transformation of Knowledge

One of the biggest epistemic revolutions in human history is the rise of artificial intelligence (AI). According to academics, artificial intelligence (AI) heralds the emergence of a "infosphere," in which information is generated and verified more and more by computational systems as opposed to human intelligence. In this new environment, machine learning models are constantly redefining the parameters of what constitutes "truth," and algorithms are used to assess the reliability of information. Long-held philosophical and theological presumptions regarding moral agency, human rationality, and epistemic authority are called into question by this shift (Cruz-Aguilar, 2025; E. Haber et al., 2025; Jude, 2024).

This technical change has significant theological ramifications from an Islamic standpoint. AI systems are starting to take on duties that have historically been filled by human scholars ('ulamā') as they are integrated into religious applications like sermon generators, fatwa chatbots, and Qur'ānic translation engines. The holy divide between revealed knowledge ('ilm naqlī) and empirical or speculative knowledge ('ilm 'aqlī) may be undermined by the automation of religious thinking. Islamic epistemology views divine revelation as the ultimate and reliable source of knowledge, in contrast to Western epistemology, which favours empirical verification. Thus, there is a

fundamental conflict between revelation-based epistemology and AI's dependence on inductive reasoning and statistical inference (Ahmed et al., 2025; Arzroomchilar & Olamaiekopaie, 2022; Raquib, 2013).

This contradiction is highlighted in recent multidisciplinary investigations. Artificial intelligence (AI) systems are "epistemically opaque," which means that even their engineers cannot fully understand how they reason internally. When such techniques are used in the interpretation of sacred texts, this opacity poses a theological and moral dilemma. AI lacks intentionality and moral awareness, in contrast to a human exegete who is answerable for hermeneutical choices. Centuries ago, Al-Ghazālī noted that knowledge without moral responsibility is merely ignorance masquerading as wisdom. Therefore, the fundamental epistemological dilemma still stands: is it possible for a computer that lacks morality and reason to lawfully relay heavenly knowledge? (Poya, 2023; Tai, 2020).

2.2 Classical Islamic Epistemology: Revelation, Reason and Authority

The intellectual heritage of Islam offers a complex framework for comprehending knowledge (ʿilm). Though they maintained a distinct hierarchy among them, classical scholars acknowledged that there were several sources of knowledge, including revelation (wahy), sense perception (ḥiss), and reason (ʿaql). Because it comes from divine omniscience, Revelation was regarded as the most authoritative source. Experience and reason were useful but flawed instruments that helped understand revelation rather than negate it (Misra, 2022).

Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1328) was one of the first scholars to offer a particularly significant synthesis of revelation and reason. In *Dar' Ta'arud al-'Aql wa al-Naql* ("Refutation of the Contradiction between Reason and Revelation"), he rejected the dichotomy that had divided Islamic theology since the Mu'tazilite-Ash'arite debates. According to Ibn Taymiyyah, since both come from God, sound reason (ʿaql ṣaḥīḥ) and

authentic revelation (naql ṣaḥīḥ) are naturally harmonious. Any apparent conflict results from human error, whether it be from flawed logic or a misreading of the Bible. The foundation of Salafī thought is this epistemic harmony: truth is defined by revelation, and reason validates it within appropriate bounds (El-Tobgui, 2020).

This paradigm was developed in *Miftāḥ Dār al-Sa'ādah* by Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 1350), the leading follower of Ibn Taymiyyah, who claimed that all useful knowledge comes from revelation and that reason, when properly directed, reinforces faith rather than contradicts it. Such a perspective grounds knowledge on divine authority rather than human conjecture, protecting epistemic certainty (yaqīn). In his *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam* subsequently resurrected this concept, cautioning that disconnecting knowledge from its divine source leads to its desacralisation in modernity (Al-Attas, 2014).

The Salafī approach to knowledge is theologically grounded on this classical epistemology. It insists on textual faithfulness to the Qur'ān and Sunnah, rejecting intellectual abstractions that transcend revelation and speculative theology (kalām). This focus guarantees that knowledge stays genuine and useful (ʿilm nāfi'). According to this paradigm, revelation remains epistemically normative, while reason is not treated as an independent authority capable of overriding authentic revelation (El-Tobgui, 2020).

2.3 Salafī Epistemology in Modern Scholarship

Salafism is frequently misrepresented in today's academic debate as an inflexible or anti-intellectual ideology. Recent research, however, has shown that it has a sophisticated epistemology that is firmly anchored in classical theology. Ibn Taymiyyah's methodology aimed to purify reason by submitting it to the authority of revelation rather than being completely literalist or anti-rational. This is a "epistemology of trust," where the believer places the utmost reliance in divine understanding while acknowledging the limitations of human intelligence (Carter & Simion, 2020; Hoover, 2020).

The most thorough modern analysis of Ibn Taymiyyah's epistemology, emphasising its coherence and intellectual sophistication, is given by Carl Sharif El-Tobgui. He clarifies that according to Ibn Taymiyyah, revelation (naql) is the standard that establishes what constitutes sound reasoning rather than an outside force imposed on it. Enlightenment epistemologies that place independent human reason above revelation stand in stark contrast to this method. Therefore, any knowledge system, including artificial intelligence, must be assessed in light of the Salafi framework to see whether it complies with divine instruction (El-Tobgui, 2020).

An ethical component is also a part of Salafi epistemology. Knowledge is transforming and moral in addition to being theoretical. Beneficial knowledge, according to Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn al-Qayyim, results in moral behaviour and spiritual cleansing. Al-Ghazālī's previous differentiation between 'ilm al-nafi' (useful knowledge) and 'ilm al-lā yanfa' (knowledge without benefit) is in line with this perspective. This distinction becomes crucial in the context of artificial intelligence (AI): whereas machines are capable of processing and storing enormous volumes of data, they are unable to internalise moral or spiritual intent. Therefore, from a Salafi standpoint, artificial intelligence (AI) can help organise and transmit information, but it cannot capture the transformational power of divine knowledge.

2.4 Artificial Intelligence and Islamic Theology: The Emerging Gap

The majority of talks on "Islamic ethics of technology" are still limited to practical ethics rather than theological epistemology, despite the fact that they are growing. In recent exploration of topics like algorithmic bias and fairness from Islamic moral principles, studies rarely tackle the more profound ontological and epistemological questions: what is knowledge, and who possesses it? This paper attempts to fill the vacuum left by this omission (Zuhairi et al., 2024).

Specifically, not much research has been done to connect Islamic ideas of knowledge with AI's epistemic mechanisms, such as neural networks,

machine learning, and pattern recognition. From an epistemological perspective, AI systems analyse correlations and produce probabilistic results; they do not "know" in the human sense. They are devoid of moral responsibility, consciousness, and intentionality all necessary conditions for true understanding of Islamic doctrine. In Islam, knowledge ('ilm) includes tasdīq (affirmation) and 'amal (moral application) in addition to awareness. Because they lack faith (īmān) and will (irādah), machines are unable to meet these requirements (Yusuf, 2014).

Therefore, it is essential to distinguish between authoritative and instrumental information. AI can help with Qur'ānic data analysis or tahqīq (authenticity verification of hadith), but it cannot make official religious judgements. Its epistemic role is not ghāyah (end), but wasīlah (means). Ibn Taymiyyah's dictum that means must always be used for legitimate and divinely approved purposes is echoed in this distinction. As a result, the Salafi tradition offers a clear theological standard for incorporating AI: it is acceptable and even commendable when applied as a means of advancing truth, but it is forbidden when it asserts authority outside from revelation.

2.5 Synthesis: Towards a Revelation-Based Framework for AI

When various viewpoints are combined, a number of insights become apparent. First, there is a rigid hierarchy upheld by classical Islamic epistemology, particularly in its Salafi formulation: revelation leads reason, and reason leads empirical research. Second, by elevating empirical computing as the primary source of validation, contemporary AI epistemology flips this hierarchy. Third, a framework that recognises technological efficiency without sacrificing spiritual validity is necessary to bridge these paradigms.

As a result, this study uses Salafi epistemology as a paradigm for assessing AI that is both normative and analytical. This helps to expand the field of "Islamic theology of technology," which goes beyond ethics to include the metaphysics of knowing. Few academics have

developed a theology that can uphold revelation's epistemic authority in digital systems, despite the fact that AI continues to influence how Muslims acquire and assimilate religious knowledge. This highlights the importance of this conversation. This paper uses both qualitative and textual methodologies to extract such a framework from Salafi sources, as described in the next section.

3. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

3.1 Salafi Epistemology as Normative Lens

This study uses Salafi epistemology as its theoretical foundation and places itself inside the epistemological worldview of the Salaf al-*Ṣāliḥ* (the pious forefathers). In the field of Islamic knowledge creation and transmission, Salafi epistemology offers a cogent theological framework for assessing the knowledge claims, moral ramifications, and the theological validity of artificial intelligence (AI).

With al-*waḥy* (divine revelation) as the ultimate and unchangeable source of truth and al-*‘aql* (human reason) as a tool for comprehending, interpreting, and applying revelation—never as an independent authority Salafi epistemology is fundamentally characterised by a revelation-centered conception of knowledge. This hierarchy was explained by, who claimed that legitimate transmission (naql *ṣaḥīḥ*) and reason (*‘aql ṣaḥīḥ*) never contradict one another; rather, when a discrepancy appears, reason must realign itself to the clarity of revelation. This epistemic principle, which is particularly pertinent at a time when technology mimics cognition without divine foundation, protects Islamic knowledge against relativism and speculative human thinking (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1998).

This idea was expanded upon by Ibn al-Qayyim (1996), who divided knowledge into two groups: *‘ilm shar‘ī* (revealed knowledge) and *‘ilm kasbī* (learnt knowledge). Whereas the latter is only instrumental and ultimately dependent on revelation, the former results in guidance (*hidāyah*). They may help produce *‘ilm kasbī*, but they cannot participate in *‘ilm shar‘ī* since it requires divine illumination and moral

accountability, both of which are lacking in machines. This dual classification serves as the epistemic basis for interacting with technological artefacts like AI.

According to al-Attas (2014), this is a "theocentric epistemology," wherein tawhid the understanding of God's ultimate unity as the source of truth is the foundation of all legitimate knowledge. Therefore, knowledge cannot just be the gathering of facts or information; it must also result in the recognition of divine actuality (*ma‘rifah Allāh*). This viewpoint is supported Bakar (1998) emphasises that Islamic knowledge (*‘ilm*) and virtue (*akhlāq*) are intertwined because ethics and epistemology merge in the search for truth. Knowledge devoid of a moral or spiritual direction is both potentially damaging and epistemically imperfect.

AI is viewed in this context as both a challenge and an opportunity. On the one hand, it makes Islamic resources more accessible, facilitating international education. However, its epistemic framework, which is based on statistical inference, correlation, and probability, clashes with the Islamic idea of certainty (*yaqīn*). Such probabilistic reasoning is regarded by the Salafi perspective as *zannī* (speculative) knowledge that cannot be trusted in theology or religion. As a result, even if AI can be a tool for communication (*wasīlah*), its use as a religious authority (*ḥujjah*) must be completely disregarded.

Five Salafi Epistemological Foundational Principles for AI Evaluation

This study develops five fundamental concepts that function as evaluative standards for evaluating AI in Islamic contexts based on the aforementioned ancient and modern sources:

- The ultimate authority and epistemic source for truth is revelation (*waḥy/naql*); all technological or logical development must be judged according to how well it complies with divine texts (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1998).
- Subordination of Reason (*‘aql*) – Since reason can only be legitimate when it

operates within the parameters of revelation, artificial intelligence (AI), as a development of human reason, must continue to be subservient to the revealed scripture (El-Tobguie, 2020).

- Transmission and Scholarship Authority (isnād wa-‘ilm), Scholarly oversight and verified transmission are necessary for true knowledge. The interpretive function of the ‘ulamā’ cannot be replaced by AI systems since they lack isnād (Ibn al-Qayyim, 1996).
- Niyyah wa-taqwā, or moral accountability and intention. Since AI lacks intentionality, it is incapable of bearing epistemic responsibility; knowledge must be sought with piety and sincerity (Bakar, 2018).
- Instrumental Subordination (asbābiyyah): When tools are used for valid religious purposes, they can be used as instrumental methods. Although AI can be a neutral tool, its results should not be given theological weight (Ibn al-Qayyim, 1996).

These principles produce a theological-epistemic model that distinguishes between instrumental utility and authoritative legitimacy. In practice, AI is permissible (mubāḥ) for educational facilitation but prohibited (maḥzūr) if it assumes interpretive or juridical functions reserved for scholars.

3.2 Research Design: Qualitative Theological-Textual Approach

The study evaluates the epistemic position of AI within Islamic thinking using a qualitative theological-textual framework that integrates both deductive and inductive approaches. This methodology is consistent with the interpretivist paradigm prevalent in religion studies, which places more emphasis on theological reasoning, context, and meaning than on quantitative measurement.

(A) Deductive Theological Strand

The first strand consists of a textual interpretation of classical Salafi texts, with particular emphasis on works by Ibn al-Qayyim

(Miftāḥ Dār al-Sa‘ādah, Madārij al-Sālikīn) and Ibn Taymiyyah (Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā, Dar’ Ta‘ārūḍ al-‘Aql wa al-Naql). In order to derive epistemological principles pertaining to revelation, reason, and moral intentionality, these writings are analysed. Recurring themes, like the subjugation of intellect, the authority of transmission, and the epistemic connection between knowledge and worship, are found and categorised through the process of textual coding, hermeneutic synthesis, and conceptual abstraction.

By building a normative framework based on theological texts, this strand operates deductively. It guarantees that genuine Salafi doctrine, not philosophical creations imposed from outside the study, will serve as the foundation for the evaluation model that will be employed later on.

(B) Inductive Applied Strand

In the second strand, current AI uses in Islamic education, da‘wah, and jurisprudential support are thematically analysed. Examples include AI chatbots that provide fatwa responses, Qur'an-learning programs that use natural language processing (NLP), and automated systems for hadith authentication. To assess how these systems frame, process, and distribute Islamic knowledge, documentation, developer white papers, and scholarly critiques are examined.

The mechanisms by which AI "knows," "interprets," and "communicates" are examined in this inductive strand, which then contrasts them with the Salafi epistemological model. Finding the degree of congruence or divergence between AI-generated knowledge and the standards of ‘ilm shar‘ī is the aim.

3.3 Analytical Procedure

Three methodical steps are used in the data analysis process to guarantee methodological transparency, logical rigour, and theological depth.

1. Extraction of Epistemic Principles: Theological content analysis is used to code classical texts. The researcher finds explicit or

implicit viewpoints on epistemology, revelation, and reason in the text. The five-dimensional evaluative framework previously described is a synthesis of the resulting principles.

2. Evaluation of AI Case Studies: The five evaluation aspects are used to evaluate a few chosen AI applications, such as educational tutors, fatwa bots, and Qur'an translators:

- **Conformity to Revelation:** Is the system faithful to the meanings that have been revealed?
- **Scholarly Oversight:** Are results confirmed by reputable academics or reliable sources?
- **Accountability and Transparency:** Are the sources, restrictions, and guidelines for interpretation of the data made public?
- **Moral and Pedagogical Impact:** Does the system encourage risk deviation or accurate conviction ('aqidah ṣaḥīḥah)?
- **Instrumental Subordination:** Is AI positioned explicitly as a tool rather than a power?

3. Theological Synthesis and Interpretation: The results are evaluated in light of Salafi epistemology's theological reasoning. AI is confirmed as acceptable when utilised appropriately as a teaching tool. It is considered theologically problematic and epistemically flawed when it mimics ijtihād, or interpretation, without scholarly mediation.

The creation of a Salafi Evaluation Matrix for AI (SEMA), a conceptual model that maps technological capabilities against theological boundaries and is a tool for developers and policymakers, is the result of this stage

3.4 Ensuring Rigour: Validity, Reliability, and Ethical Integrity

- **Internal validity** is guaranteed by theological coherence; the resulting principles must always line up with Sunnah, the Qur'an, and traditional Salafi viewpoints.
- **External Validity:** Contextualised within current global debates, the work is

supported by cross-referencing contemporary scholarship on AI ethics and epistemology (Floridi, 2019).

- **Reliability:** A visible coding system and the methodical application of primary and secondary sources are the means by which reliability is attained. The procedure might be repeated by a different researcher with training in Islamic epistemology.
- **Ethical Integrity:** All online resources are openly accessible, and interpretations adhere to the ethical decorum of research, or adab al-baḥṭh. Applications of AI are discussed positively to advance technological progress rather than to denigrate it.

Additionally, the researcher acknowledges that a normative adherence to the Salafi manhaj shapes the interpretive viewpoint, exhibiting epistemic reflexivity. Such reflexivity places discoveries into a distinct religious framework and improves transparency.

3.5 Operationalisation: From Theoretical Model to Practical Guideline

Based on the evaluative principles, this study suggests a "Salafi Guideline for AI Integration" to put theory into reality. The guideline lists the circumstances under which using AI becomes acceptable from a religious standpoint:

1. **Scholarly Supervision:** To ensure interpretive authenticity, AI systems that deal with the Qur'an, Sunnah, or fatwa must be supervised by qualified scholars.
2. **Transparency Statements:** Data sources, model restrictions, and disclaimers that outputs are not authoritative should all be disclosed by developers.
3. **Mechanisms for Correction:** Platforms must provide feedback mechanisms that allow knowledgeable academics to fix mistakes.
4. **Pedagogical Context:** AI programs should not be left for unsupervised individual use; instead, they should be included into supervised learning settings.
5. **Doctrinal safeguards:** Content creators and organisations must make sure that

their work complies with ‘aḳidah salafiyyah and refrains from spreading unclear or speculative interpretations.

These standards guarantee that AI upholds theological integrity while embracing technological efficiency, serving (khādim) Islamic study rather than replacing it.

3.6 Limitations and Future Directions

This study acknowledges a number of disciplinary and methodological constraints. First, findings are applicable to AI in Islamic contexts but not to AI ethics generally due to the theological perspective, which restricts empirical generalisation. Second, thorough technical examination is hampered by the absence of direct access to private AI models. Nevertheless, the study's normative contribution creating a ground-breaking framework for AI engagement based on revelation-based epistemology outweighs these drawbacks.

In order to demonstrate how different theological presuppositions influence technological engagement, future research could operationalise the Salafi Evaluation Matrix (SEMA) across particular case studies, contrasting Salafi, Ash‘arī, and modernist epistemic frameworks. The discussion of Islamic epistemology and AI ethics would both benefit from this comparative expansion.

4.0 Findings and Discussion

4.1 Overview

The Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ's five epistemological principles—the importance of revelation, the subordination of reason, the authority of transmission, moral responsibility, and instrumental subordination—are applied in this section to examine how contemporary AI systems in Islamic contexts either support or contradict the Salafi understanding of ‘ilm shar‘ī. Three case studies (1) AI-assisted Islamic tutoring systems, (2) chatbots that generate fatwas, and (3) Qur'an-learning AI - illustrate various facets of AI involvement with religious knowledge. The results are examined from a theological (from the standpoint of ‘aḳidah

salafiyyah) and methodological (from the standpoint of epistemic coherence) standpoint.

4.2 Case Study 1: Qur‘ān-Learning AI Applications

Muslim students have embraced AI-assisted Qur'an-learning services like Tarteel, Quran.com Voice AI, and Tilawah.ai. These systems use deep neural networks and speech recognition to identify pronunciation mistakes (tajwīd) and give immediate feedback. From a technology perspective, they enhance traditional learning (talqīn) and democratise access to Qur‘an recitation training. However, their position needs to be precisely defined from a Salafi epistemological perspective.

4.2.1 Alignment with Salafi Principles

The following are some ways that the Qur'an-learning AI techniques somewhat conform to Salafi principles:

- Principle 5: Instrumental Subordination: These platforms serve as asbāb (means) that facilitate learning without asserting interpretive power. Their usage is allowed (mubāḥ) as long as they are clearly stated as tools rather than teachers.
- Authority of Transmission (Principle 3): AI applications stay within the acceptable bounds of isnād when they are overseen by certified Qur'an instructors and use validated recitation datasets from authenticated qurrā'. The teacher's function as a musnid, or transmitter, is still crucial.

This illustrates the difference between ‘ilm kasbī (learnt technical skill) and ‘ilm shar‘ī (revealed guidance), according to Ibn al-Qayyim (1996), where mastering norms and pronunciation is helpful, but comprehending meaning necessitates guided transmission.

4.2.2 Epistemological Concerns

However, two major epistemic risks are identified:

1. Automated Authority Confusion: Instead of viewing AI feedback as probabilistic

recommendations, many users interpret it as authoritative correction. Since the naql of the Qur'an relies on exact tawātur (mass-transmission) rather than statistical approximation, this presents an epistemological challenge. In an area that needs yaqīn (certainty), AI's probabilistic evaluation introduces zann (speculation).

2. **Loss of Spiritual Intent (niyyah):** According to Salafi tradition, reciting the Qur'an is not just a phonetic exercise but rather 'ibādah (worship). The learner runs the risk of concentrating more on performance indicators than ta'abbud (devotion) when AI contact becomes mechanistic. Ibn Taymiyyah (1998) cautioned that knowledge devoid of purpose becomes spiritually meaningless.

In order to provide 'ibādah orientation and correction by trained qurrā', Qur'an-learning AI must be pedagogically integrated inside a human-guided setting, even though it is acceptable and advantageous.

4.3 Case Study 2: Fatwa-Generating Chatbots

AskIslamBot, Fatwa.ai, and bespoke GPT-based Islamic assistants are examples of AI-based "fatwa bots" that promise to instantly respond to consumers' religious enquiries. To produce answers, these systems employ large language models (LLMs) that have been trained on translations of the Qur'an, hadith compilations, and fiqh compendia. From the perspective of user experience, they appear to be effective and easily accessible. However, they pose the greatest dangers from a Salafi theological and epistemic standpoint.

4.3.1 Violation of Revelation-Centred Epistemology

An act of ijtihād, fatwa issuing (iftā') necessitates (1) a thorough understanding of Arabic, (2) a thorough comprehension of the Qur'an and Sunnah, and (3) a keen awareness of context (waqi'). However, because AI lacks taqwā, cognition, and volition, its involvement in ijtihād is epistemically incorrect. According to scholars,

ijtihād is predicated on divine accountability (taklīf), which is exclusive to aware agents. AI-generated fatwas are therefore theologically invalid and non-binding. Additionally, these systems frequently rely on secondary data and English translations rather than Arabic original sources. This goes against Salafi demands for linguistic accuracy and textual authenticity. Ibn Taymiyyah's epistemology necessitates taḥqīq al-ma'nā (verification of meaning) through direct contact with naṣṣ rather than mediated interpretation (El-Tobgui, 2020; Ibn Taymiyyah, 1998).

4.3.2 Ethical and Moral Risks

AI is not a suitable participant in theological conversation because it lacks moral accountability (niyyah wa-taqwā). Sincerity (ikhlāṣ) and piety (taqwā) are essential components of legitimate knowledge transmission in Salafi philosophy. Without motive, a fatwa is not only lacking, but it has no spiritual significance. Furthermore, the probabilistic creation of fatwa bots frequently results in unclear or contradicting rulings. For instance, depending on how the question is phrased, a model may give permissive, neutral, or prohibitive answers when asked about celebrating birthdays. Both yaqīn and ṣidq (truthfulness), which are essential components of 'aqidah salafiyyah, are directly at odds with this epistemic instability (Bakar, 2018).

4.3.3 Theological Implications

Theologically speaking, assigning iftā' to AI is equivalent to tashbīh al-'aql bi al-makhlūq ghayr al-mukallaf, or equating human intellect with processes that are not accountable. The idea of tawḥīd al-ḥākimiyyah—exclusive divine sovereignty in legislation—is compromised by this. Users obfuscate the difference between divine command (amr ilāhī) and machine prediction (iḥtimāl ḥisābī) when they give religious power to an unconscious technology.

Therefore, even though the tool itself (AI) is not haram, Salafi scholars would consider such acts bid'ah 'ilmiyyah—an innovation in the epistemic process of religion. This study therefore treats

unsupervised AI-generated fatwas as simulations of juristic reasoning rather than as acts of qualified iftā'.

4.4 Case Study 3: AI-Assisted Islamic Tutoring Platforms

Conversational AI is used by AI teaching services (such as QuranGPT, IslamicTutor.ai, and LearnDeen) to help students with subjects like 'aqidah, fiqh, and sirah. They can offer quizzes, summarise classic literature, and mimic interactive learning. The function of such systems in the dissemination of doctrinal knowledge is examined in this section.

4.4.1 Pedagogical Strengths

AI instructors are available around-the-clock, can test comprehension, and can customise learning routes. They support the Qur'anic call to seek knowledge (fa'lam annahu lā ilāha illā Allāh; Q. 47:19) when employed as teaching tools under scholarly supervision.

According to the Salafi perspective, such technology fulfils a valid educational purpose (fa'idah ta'limiyyah) if the content upholds the orthodox doctrine ('aqidah ṣaḥīḥah) and supports genuine textual comprehension. allowed the use of tools to support religious education as long as they do not change the understanding of the text (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1998).

4.4.2 Risks to Epistemic Authenticity

Nevertheless, two theological tensions emerge:

1. AI methods that extract quotes from classical books without contextual hierarchy or isnād verification are known as decontextualisation of texts. Instead of algorithmic pattern-matching, the salafi

methodology requires tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr, or interpretation through conveyed reports. Citations taken out of context have the potential to skew doctrinal purity by creating mixed content that resembles ta'wīl, or speculative interpretation, which is generally rejected in Salafism.

2. Emulation of Scholarly Roles: AI symbolically substitutes the 'ālim when it takes on the position of a teacher (mu'allim). Scholars are "the inheritors of the prophets" (al-'ulamā' warathat al-anbiyā'), according to Ibn al-Qayyim (1996). This spiritual heritage cannot be fulfilled by a system devoid of consciousness or piety. Therefore, it is against the notion of adab al-'ilm (appropriate decorum of knowledge) to anthropomorphise AI instructors as "teachers."

4.4.3 Possible Reconciliation

The study suggests a mediated model—AI as assistant, not ustādh—to resolve these conflicts. AI's acceptable function is found in:

- Organising lesson plans,
- Offering keyword indexing or language analysis, and
- Providing neutral cues to aid in human-led learning.

Such use guarantees that knowledge stays mawqūf (dependent) upon verified human learning and upholds asbābiyyah (instrumental subordination). Intention and supervision are crucial requirements; AI must function under the guidance and niyyah of scholar.

4.5 Cross-Case Synthesis: The Salafi Evaluation Matrix in Practice

By applying the Salafi Evaluation Matrix for AI (SEMA) developed in Section 4, the study synthesizes the comparative findings as follows:

Table 1: Salafi Evaluation Matrix for AI (SEMA)

Criterion	Quran AI	Fatwa Bots	AI Tutors	Salafi Assessment
Primacy of Revelation	Generally preserved if text unchanged	Frequently violated due to paraphrasing and probabilistic inference	Conditional – depends on dataset authenticity	Caution Required
Subordination of Reason	Maintained (AI acts as tool)	Violated (AI imitates <i>ijtihad</i>)	Ambiguous (AI performs interpretive synthesis)	Mixed Compliance
Authority of Transmission (<i>Isnad</i>)	Valid if human oversight present	Absent – no chain of authentication	Weak – data often unverified	Problematic
Moral Accountability (<i>Niyyah/Taqwa</i>)	Absent but low risk	Absent and high theological risk	Absent but mitigable under supervision	Depends on Usage Context
Instrumental Subordination (<i>Asbabiyah</i>)	Clearly tool-based	Usurps interpretive role	Tool-based if supervised	Permissible if subordinated

Overall finding:

The legitimacy of AI in Salafi epistemology is determined by its epistemological posture rather than its technological form, specifically if it plays an authoritative function (*nāṭiq bi al-waḥy*) or continues to serve revelation (*khādim al-waḥy*).

4.6 Theological Discussion: AI, Knowledge, and the Boundaries of ‘Ilm Shar‘ī

The difference between information and knowledge is the source of the religious struggle that underlies AI engagement. According to the Salafi perspective, ‘ilm is a divinely led apprehension that changes the knower's moral and spiritual status rather than just a matching of assertions to reality. Knowledge, according to al-Attas (2014), is "the arrival of the soul at the meaning of a thing," suggesting morality, philosophical awareness, and consciousness—all of which are lacking in artificial intelligence.

4.6.1 AI as Epistemic Simulation

Artificial intelligence (AI) systems mimic epistemic conduct through pattern recognition; they do not "know" in the human sense. Instead of producing ‘ilm yaqīnī, this simulation produces *zannī ma‘lūmāt* (probabilistic knowledge). Any epistemic system based solely on probability is ontologically constrained, according to Ibn Taymiyyah's premise that ‘aql ṣarīḥ never contradicts naql ṣaḥīḥ. Thus, AI cannot transcend the transition from tool to authority without going against the principle of *tawḥīd al-ma‘rifah*, or oneness of knowledge (El-Tobgui, 2020).

4.6.2 Reasserting Human Responsibility

The theological foundation of knowing ethics, human accountability (*taklīf*), is restored in the Salafi model. Transmitting ḥadīth, issuing fatwas, and performing *ijtihād* are all restricted to responsible agents. Machines cannot be held accountable to Allah because they lack soul (*rūḥ*). Within the normative framework developed

here, the absence of moral intention and accountability means that AI may process and present information, but it cannot itself fulfil the human religious responsibilities associated with seeking, embodying, and transmitting 'ilm shar'ī. Under the guidance of divine aim, the human scholar must continue to be the moral locus of learning.

4.6.3 Implications for Future Islamic Education

Unquestionably, AI has educational advantages, but Salafi epistemology requires a well-anchored integrated approach:

- AI should supplement human education, not take its place.
- Theological accuracy must be ensured by scholarly scrutiny.
- The fact that AI results are informational tools rather than theological proofs should be made clear in user awareness efforts.

No algorithm can fulfil the prophetic precept that "the scholar is the lamp of the Ummah" ('ālim sirāj al-ummah), which is shown in this balance.

4.7 Epistemological Implications: Reaffirming the Limits of Machine Intelligence

The results of this study demonstrate a profound epistemological gap between the statistical cognition of AI and the knowledge derived from Salafi revelation. The following is a summary of the distinction:

Table 2: Comparison of Salafi and AI Epistemologies

4.7 Epistemological Implications: Reaffirming the Limits of Machine Intelligence	4.7 Epistemological Implications: Reaffirming the Limits of Machine Intelligence	4.7 Epistemological Implications: Reaffirming the Limits of Machine Intelligence
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Therefore, without human intervention, AI cannot generate religious knowledge, even though it is capable of synthetic reasoning. As a result, the Salafi paradigm offers not only a critique but also a normative framework for interaction, allowing instrumental use but prohibiting the ontological elevation of technology.

4.8 Summary of Section

In conclusion, the examination of the three areas (learning the Qur'an, delivering fatwas, and tutoring) shows that:

1. It is acceptable and advantageous to use AI as a servant of revelation.
2. AI is both theologically and epistemically unacceptable as a replacement for scholarship.
3. Moral intent, human monitoring, and respect to textual authenticity are necessary for AI to have epistemic validity.

Thus, the Salafi epistemological framework preserves the sanctity of 'ilm shar'i while allowing Muslims to use AI sensibly, making sure that technology acts as a conduit to divine truth rather than a hindrance.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

With emphasis on the interactions between revelation-centered knowledge systems and algorithmic and data-driven epistemes, this work

has examined the complex relationship between Salafi epistemology and the development of artificial intelligence (AI). According to the research, artificial intelligence (AI) poses epistemic, ethical, and hermeneutical challenges to the Islamic worldview, especially to the Salafi understanding of wahy (revelation) as the ultimate source of truth, even though it greatly aids in data management, automation, and access to Islamic sources.

AI lacks both niyyah (intention) and 'aql (reason) in the theological sense, according to the analysis in the sections before this one. It functions mechanically and lacks both moral responsibility and the ability to make spiritual decisions. These qualities are essential to al-insan al-mukallaf (the morally upright human being) in Salafi theology. Therefore, AI cannot serve as a stand-alone marji' (source of reference) but rather as a wasilah (means) for human inquiry.

The investigation confirmed that naql, or the transmission of revelation, and 'aql, or logical understanding, are the two pillars of Islamic knowledge. But the order in which they are arranged is unchangeable: reason comes before revelation, not the other way around. In contrast to AI systems, this ordering guarantees moral accountability and epistemic harmony. All knowledge claims, including those produced by digital technologies, must be evaluated in accordance with usul al-din (religious principles) and maqasid al-shari'ah (higher goals of Shariah),

according to the Salafi creed, which is based on fahm al-salaf al-salih.

Furthermore, the study made clear that the use of AI in religious education and communication has the potential to either improve or skew perceptions of Islam. AI improves access to Islamic materials when it is governed by the values of tawhid, adab al-'ilm (ethics of knowledge), and amanah 'ilmiyyah (intellectual trust). But if unchecked, it can lead to dilution of interpretive authority, bid'ah 'aqliyyah (innovations of reasoning), and epistemological uncertainty.

Thus, this study comes to the conclusion that AI needs to be included into an Islamic epistemological framework that places akhlaq (ethics) as the driving principle, wahy as the supreme authority, and 'aql as a supplementary tool. This kind of integration protects the integrity of scientific advancement as well as the sanctity of revelation.

5.2 Academic and Practical Recommendations

a) For Muslim Scholars and Researchers

1. **Epistemological Vigilance:** Researchers ought to establish a distinct epistemic line that separates information produced by machines from revealed knowledge. This differentiation avoids confusing computational likelihood with heavenly guidance. al-Attas (1995) and El-Tobgui (2020) offer fundamental concepts for upholding such boundaries.
2. **Multidisciplinary Research:** To create morally sound algorithms that adhere to maqasid al-shari'ah, Islamic scholars must collaborate with AI scientists. To guarantee that AI applications in religious contexts preserve textual authenticity and moral impartiality, an interdisciplinary conversation between ulama and data scientists is necessary (Floridi & Chiriatti, 2020).
3. **Creation of Salafi-AI Frameworks:** It is essential to create a digital epistemology framework that is informed by Salafi. With

emphasis on taqlid al-naql (dependence on transmission) rather than istiqlal al-algorithm (algorithmic induction), such a model should specify the acceptable bounds of AI involvement in Qur'anic exegesis, hadith authentication, and fatwa formulation.

b) For Islamic Universities and Educators

1. **Curricular Reform:** Postgraduate theology and philosophy programs at institutions like UniSIRAJ and other Islamic universities ought to include courses on "AI and Islamic Epistemology." This guarantees that future academics will be technologically literate and theologically accurate.
2. **Pedagogical Integration with Ethics:** To maintain adab al-ta'lim (educational decorum), AI-based teaching tools (such as chatbots, automated grading, and virtual learning platforms) must be used under ethical supervision. Islamic education should strive to cultivate adab and the formation of the good human being, rather than efficiency alone, in line with al-Attas's philosophy of Islamic education (al-Attas, 1999).
3. **Institutional Fatwa on AI Usage:** To establish institutional rules on acceptable AI uses in research, teaching, and public da'wah, academic councils and fatwa committees should work together. By doing this, epistemological differences between institutions are avoided and practice homogeneity is guaranteed.

c) For AI Developers and Policy Makers

1. **Ethical Algorithm Design:** When creating machine learning systems, Muslim AI engineers must incorporate the Islamic ethical precepts of justice ('adl), honesty, and reliability (amanah). According to Q. al-Nahl 16:90, "In fact, Allah commands justice, excellence, and giving to relatives." This is in line with the Qur'anic requirement.
2. **Transparent Data Governance:** Subject matter experts must authenticate, validate,

and make transparent the source and calibre of data utilised for AI models in Islamic environments. The idea of *al-tathabbut fi al-khabar* (information verification), which is stressed in Q. al-Hujurat 49:6, is reflected in this practice.

3. The establishment of a Global Council for AI Ethics in Islam, with representatives from top Islamic institutions, Shariah boards, and technology institutes, should be encouraged by policymakers. Such cooperation may also support clearer and more consistent criteria for the development and use of AI in Islamic religious contexts.

5.3 Future Research Directions

The current analysis identifies a number of intriguing topics for additional research:

- Comparative Epistemology: The larger discussion on AI ethics in Islam could benefit from a methodical comparison of Salafi epistemology with that of other Islamic schools, such as Ash'ari, Maturidi, and modern reformist ideas.
- AI and Spiritual Cognition: Future studies should examine whether artificial intelligence (AI) can replicate or enhance *dhikr*, *tadabbur*, or other types of spiritual cognition, as well as what theological restrictions apply to these endeavours.
- AI in Legal Reasoning and Fatwa Production: An analysis of algorithmic decision-making in *iftā'* institutions would shed light on the extent to which AI may engage in bounded reasoning, or *ijtihad al-muqayyad*, without going against the *taqlid al-salaf* norm.
- AI and Islamic Governance: Linking traditional teachings of *tawhid al-hakimiyyah* with contemporary

frameworks for data sovereignty, the ethical management of AI in Muslim cultures necessitates theological discourse on justice, governance, and human agency.

5.4 Final Reflection

In the end, the Salafi method of knowledge which is based on revelation, informed by the wisdom of the religious forebears, and regulated by the rules of *adab* offers a timeless compass for navigating the digital era. Despite all of its analytical abilities, artificial intelligence is still limited by human programming and lacks a spiritual core. The Qur'an reminds us that:

"They question you about the spirit. Say: You have only been given a small amount of understanding, and the spirit is of my Lord's affairs (Qur'an al-Isra 17:85).

This heavenly reminder emphasises the need for humility in all knowledge-seeking endeavours. Therefore, AI must be viewed as a servant of revelation and a tool to aid human cognition under divine guidance, rather than as a competitor to human understanding.

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6. Author Declaration

The authors confirm that this manuscript is an original work. It has not been published previously, is not under consideration by any other journal, and does not contain plagiarized material. All sources have been appropriately acknowledged and cited. The authors also declare that they have no conflicts of interest to report regarding the present study

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