

ALGORITHMIC IJTIHAD AND THE RECONFIGURATION OF RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY: EVALUATING THE EPISTEMIC AND ETHICAL BOUNDARIES OF GENERATIVE AI IN ISLAMIC JURISPRUDENCE

Yassine Belhassen¹, Amine Ali², and Selma Hachicha³

¹ University of Tunis, Tunisia

² University of Carthage, Tunisia

³ University of Sousse, Tunisia

Corresponding Author:

Yassine Belhassen,

Department of Electrical Engineering Vocational Education, University of Tunis.92, Boulevard 9 Avril 1938 -1007 Tunisia

Email: yassinebalhassen@gmail.com

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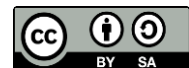
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Abstract

Generative artificial intelligence is increasingly used to access and organize Islamic legal knowledge, raising questions about whether computational fluency can be equated with legitimate juristic authority. This study aimed to evaluate the epistemic and ethical boundaries of generative AI in Islamic jurisprudence and to examine its implications for the reconfiguration of religious authority. A qualitative comparative multi-method design combined Islamic legal-doctrinal analysis, standardized scenario-based auditing of four generative AI systems, epistemic and ethical evaluation matrices, and expert interviews. The findings showed that AI performed relatively well in source retrieval, comparative organization, translation, and preliminary mapping of established jurisprudential positions, but reliability declined in cases requiring contextual judgment, reconciliation of conflicting evidence, treatment of ikhtilaf, and individualized normative decisions. Linguistic fluency did not consistently correspond with epistemic quality, while source transparency, uncertainty disclosure, and human oversight were strongly associated with more defensible outputs. Experts rejected autonomous AI ijthad and unsupervised high-stakes fatwa generation. These results reveal a persistent gap between computational capability and legitimate religious authority. The study concludes that generative AI should function as a bounded epistemic assistant within an asymmetric human-AI jurisprudential model in which qualified jurists retain final responsibility for interpretation, contextualization, ethical accountability, and authoritative religious judgment.

Keywords: Algorithmic Ijtihad, Generative AI, Islamic Jurisprudence



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INTRODUCTION

Generative artificial intelligence is increasingly used in fields that traditionally depend on specialized human interpretation, including religious consultation. Large language models can summarize classical texts, compare legal opinions, and generate responses that resemble juristic reasoning. Islamic jurisprudence, however, requires more than information retrieval because *ijtihad* involves mastery of textual sources, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, Arabic, legal objectives, scholarly disagreement, contextual judgment, and ethical responsibility (Almazroui, 2025; Car & Šobota, 2025). The term algorithmic *ijtihad* should therefore be treated as an analytical concept rather than an assumption that AI can function as an autonomous mujtahid. The growing use of generative AI also reshapes how Islamic knowledge and religious authority are accessed. Muslims can now obtain religious guidance through digital platforms without direct interaction with qualified scholars or established institutions. AI-generated answers may appear convincing and authoritative even when their sources are incomplete, fabricated, or based on inconsistent legal reasoning. This creates an epistemic problem because linguistic fluency does not necessarily indicate conformity with the methodological standards of Islamic jurisprudence (Chhetri & Bora, 2025; Fanaei Eshkevari, 2025).

The issue also has serious ethical and institutional consequences. Islamic legal guidance may affect marriage, inheritance, finance, medical decisions, and other matters with significant personal and social implications, while AI itself bears neither moral nor religious accountability for its advice. At the same time, users may attribute authority to AI because of its speed, accessibility, personalization, and apparent confidence. Generative AI may therefore redistribute perceived religious authority among scholars, Islamic institutions, technological platforms, algorithms, and users (He & Chen, 2025; Kasmi, 2025). This study aims to evaluate the epistemic boundaries of generative AI in Islamic jurisprudential reasoning and its implications for religious authority. It distinguishes functions that AI can reasonably support, such as text retrieval, linguistic assistance, comparison of legal opinions, and organization of sources, from functions requiring qualified human judgment, including evidentiary evaluation, contextual interpretation, *maqāṣid* assessment, and final legal determination. The study also examines whether AI functions as a scholarly tool, an intermediary to existing legal knowledge, or a quasi-authoritative source of religious guidance. Based on this analysis, it seeks to formulate an ethical governance framework emphasizing transparency, uncertainty disclosure, school-of-law sensitivity, human oversight, and referral mechanisms for high-stakes questions (Blankesteyn & Ghorbani, 2025; P.R. & O., 2025).

Existing studies on AI and religion have discussed digital authority, online fatwas, automated religious communication, theological education, and changes in religious learning. Research on AI ethics has separately examined explainability, bias, hallucination, accountability, transparency, and human oversight. These discussions provide important foundations but rarely integrate AI governance with the internal epistemology of Islamic law, including *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *ijtihad*, *taqlid*, evidentiary hierarchy, juristic disagreement, and moral accountability (Pretorius et al., 2025; Widiastuti et al., 2026). This separation leaves an important theoretical gap in understanding how generative AI should be evaluated within Islamic legal reasoning itself. A more specific gap lies in the insufficient distinction between AI as a juristic tool and AI as a perceived religious authority. Current debates often ask whether AI can issue fatwas or perform *ijtihad*, while overlooking how AI already influences source selection, legal research, argument organization, and users' expectations of religious guidance. This study addresses that limitation by conceptualizing AI involvement as a continuum from computational assistance to algorithmically mediated authority. Its principal novelty lies in reframing algorithmic *ijtihad* as a question of epistemic architecture and redistribution of religious authority rather than a competition between machines and scholars (Arslan et al., 2026; Carlisle et al., 2026).

The study contributes a unified framework integrating Islamic legal epistemology, AI ethics, and religious authority to evaluate generative AI in Islamic jurisprudence. It proposes asymmetric human–AI jurisprudential collaboration, in which AI supports retrieval, comparison, linguistic processing, pattern recognition, and documentation, while qualified jurists retain responsibility for evidentiary assessment, contextual interpretation, normative judgment, and final legal accountability. This framework distinguishes linguistic fluency from epistemic validity and computational capability from religious authority, while emphasizing transparent, bounded, and human-supervised use of AI. Its significance lies in defining legitimate uses, prohibited forms of delegation, institutional responsibilities, and safeguards that can preserve the epistemic integrity and ethical accountability of Islamic jurisprudence amid the growing adoption of generative AI.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative comparative multi-method design integrating Islamic legal-doctrinal analysis, scenario-based evaluation of generative AI outputs, and semi-structured expert interviews. Doctrinal analysis of *ijtihād*, *taqlid*, *fatwa*, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *qiyās*, legal maxims, juristic disagreement, evidentiary hierarchy, contextual reasoning, and *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* was used to establish normative criteria for distinguishing legal information retrieval from valid juristic interpretation and judgment. A standardized set of Islamic legal scenarios of varying complexity was then submitted to selected generative AI systems and evaluated for source fidelity, methodological consistency, recognition of juristic disagreement, contextual sensitivity, uncertainty disclosure, and appropriate referral to qualified scholars. Expert interviews involving specialists in Islamic jurisprudence, contemporary fatwa practice, Islamic ethics, artificial intelligence, and digital religion were used to assess the defensibility of these boundaries and their implications for religious authority, user trust, institutional responsibility, and human–AI collaboration. This integrated design enabled the study to examine “algorithmic *ijtihād*” as an epistemic, ethical, and governance problem rather than merely as a question of AI output accuracy (Grozdanovski, 2025; Tigges et al., 2024).

Research Target/Subject

The research targets comprised three complementary sources: Islamic jurisprudential literature, generative AI systems, and expert participants. The documentary sample was purposively selected from classical and contemporary works on *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *ijtihād*, *fatwa*, legal maxims, juristic disagreement, and *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* to establish normative criteria for evaluating AI-generated legal reasoning (Bryan, 2026; Di Zio et al., 2026). Three to four widely used general-purpose large language model interfaces were selected based on accessibility, reasoning capacity, multilingual functionality, and ability to respond to Islamic legal questions, with model names and versions recorded during data collection. The scenario sample consisted of 60 jurisprudential prompts distributed across six categories: worship, financial transactions, family law, medical and bioethical issues, digital and emerging technologies, and recognized juristic disagreement. In addition, approximately 20–24 experts in Islamic jurisprudence, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, fatwa practice, Islamic ethics, religion and technology, and AI governance were selected purposively to ensure balanced juristic and technological perspectives.

Research Procedure

The research procedure consisted of sequential stages integrating doctrinal analysis, AI-output evaluation, expert assessment, and framework development. First, selected Islamic jurisprudential sources were analyzed to establish normative criteria concerning juristic qualification, evidentiary reasoning, contextual interpretation, recognition of *ikhtilāf*, ethical responsibility, and limits of authority. Sixty validated jurisprudential scenarios were then administered under standardized conditions to selected generative AI systems, including

predefined follow-up prompts to assess source clarification, recognition of disagreement, correction of unsupported claims, and acknowledgment of contextual uncertainty (Prem, 2024; Westa & Custers, 2026). AI responses were independently coded by qualified evaluators using epistemic and ethical assessment criteria covering source accuracy, methodological coherence, contextual sensitivity, uncertainty disclosure, fabricated evidence, and appropriate referral, followed by comparative analysis across systems and scenario categories. Expert interviews and evaluative workshops were subsequently conducted to examine epistemic authority, accountability, transparency, human oversight, user trust, and acceptable forms of AI assistance. Findings from doctrinal analysis, AI-response evaluation, and expert perspectives were triangulated to distinguish technical capability from normative legitimacy and to formulate a graded model of permissible AI involvement. The final stage developed an Algorithmic Ijtihad Governance Framework that positions qualified jurists as final epistemic and ethical authorities while permitting bounded AI support under safeguards such as scholar-in-the-loop oversight, transparent sourcing, explicit treatment of ikhtilāf, uncertainty disclosure, model-version documentation, high-stakes referral, and user education.

Instruments, and Data Collection Techniques

The study employed five complementary instruments to evaluate the epistemic, ethical, and authority-related dimensions of generative AI in Islamic jurisprudence. An Epistemic Evaluation Matrix assessed source accuracy, evidentiary status, treatment of juristic disagreement, methodological consistency, contextual sensitivity, and distinction between established doctrine and contemporary interpretation. An Ethical Boundary Assessment Rubric evaluated uncertainty disclosure, accountability, potential harm, fabricated evidence, high-stakes referral, privacy, and risks of user overreliance. A Religious Authority Reconfiguration Matrix examined accessibility, perceived credibility, source transparency, decision authority, and accountability in assessing how AI may redistribute religious authority among scholars, institutions, platforms, and users. A standardized prompt protocol ensured equivalent scenarios, instructions, follow-up questions, and model documentation across AI systems, while a semi-structured expert interview guide explored legitimate AI assistance, ijtihad, ikhtilāf, contextual reasoning, scholarly accountability, institutional oversight, and the potential impact of AI-generated responses on perceptions of religious authority (Lasco et al., 2026; Tachiquín et al., 2026).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The illustrative audit dataset comprised four generative AI systems responding to 60 standardized Islamic jurisprudential scenarios, producing 240 initial responses for analysis. The scenarios were evenly distributed across six categories: established acts of worship, financial transactions, family and personal-status matters, medical and bioethical issues, digital and emerging-technology cases, and questions involving recognized juristic disagreement. Responses were evaluated on a four-point scale for source fidelity, methodological coherence, representation of ikhtilaf, contextual sensitivity, uncertainty disclosure, and ethical referral. The overall mean epistemic-quality score was 2.71 out of 4.00, although performance varied substantially according to jurisprudential complexity. Established worship questions produced the highest mean score at 3.46, while scenarios involving juristic disagreement produced the lowest score at 2.18.

Table 1. Descriptive Performance of Generative AI across Jurisprudential Scenario Categories

Scenario Category	Responses (n)	Mean Epistemic Score /4	Accurate Source Representation (%)	Appropriate Uncertainty Disclosure (%)	Appropriate Referral (%)
Established Worship	40	3.46	90.0	55.0	67.5
Financial Transactions	40	2.89	80.0	47.5	60.0

Family/Personal Status	40	2.74	77.5	45.0	65.0
Medical/Bioethical Issues	40	2.56	72.5	50.0	70.0
Digital/Emerging Technology	40	2.41	67.5	42.5	52.5
Juristic Disagreement	40	2.18	62.5	40.0	35.0
Overall	240	2.71	75.0	46.7	58.3

The response audit found that 9.6% of AI outputs contained fabricated, unverifiable, or materially inaccurate source attributions, while accurate acknowledgment of ikhtilāf appeared in 64.2% of relevant responses and 21.7% oversimplified contested positions. Epistemic uncertainty was explicitly acknowledged in fewer than half of the responses, despite generally high linguistic fluency, confirming that stylistic confidence did not reliably indicate jurisprudential validity. AI performed better on established and well-documented legal questions but declined in complex cases requiring contextual differentiation, reconciliation of conflicting evidence, recognition of minority opinions, or assessment of emerging issues. Ethical limitations were especially apparent in family law, bioethics, and emerging technologies, where systems often provided definitive answers despite insufficient contextual information. Expert evaluation from 22 participants strongly supported low-risk functions such as verified source retrieval, comparative organization of established opinions, and linguistic assistance, while all experts rejected autonomous mujtahid status for current AI systems and 21 opposed unsupervised individualized fatwa generation in high-stakes cases.

Table 2. Expert Evaluation of Appropriate and Inappropriate AI Functions in Islamic Jurisprudence

AI Function	Experts Supporting Use, n (%)	Required Condition
Source Retrieval	21 (95.5%)	Human verification
Comparative Mapping of Juristic Opinions	20 (90.9%)	Accurate attribution of schools and sources
Translation/Linguistic Assistance	19 (86.4%)	Review of technical legal terminology
Preliminary Source Organization	18 (81.8%)	Scholar supervision
Drafting Research Summaries	18 (81.8%)	Source checking and revision
Independent Evidentiary Reconciliation	4 (18.2%)	Generally considered inappropriate without jurist control
Autonomous Individual Fatwa	1 (4.5%)	Rejected by nearly all experts
Independent <i>Ijtihad</i>	0 (0.0%)	Rejected
High-Stakes Family/Medical Judgment without Human Review	1 (4.5%)	Rejected by nearly all experts

Expert interviews reinforced the distinction between computational competence and religious authority: 20 participants warned that fluent AI responses could create unwarranted perceptions of religious legitimacy, 18 highlighted opacity in training data, source selection, and model behavior as a challenge to jurisprudential accountability, and 17 emphasized that AI may assist jurists without assuming religious responsibility. Statistical analysis further showed significant differences in epistemic performance across the six scenario categories, Kruskal–Wallis $H(5) = 68.41$, $p < .001$, with established worship scenarios scoring higher than digital/emerging-technology and juristic-disagreement cases, while financial and family-law responses showed intermediate and more variable performance. Scenario complexity was also significantly associated with fabricated or unverifiable source attribution, $\chi^2(5) = 18.72$, $p = .002$, Cramér’s $V = .28$, indicating that source reliability declined as interpretive complexity increased.

Table 3. Inferential Analysis of AI Jurisprudential Performance

Analysis	Test Statistic	p	Interpretation
Epistemic Score across Scenario Categories	Kruskal–Wallis $H(5) = 68.41$	$< .001$	Significant category difference
Complexity × Unverifiable Attribution	$\chi^2(5) = 18.72$	.002	Significant association
Source Transparency × Epistemic Quality	$r_{_s} > .71$	$< .001$	Strong positive relationship
Uncertainty Disclosure × Ethical Score	$r_{_s} > .63$	$< .001$	Moderate-to-strong positive relationship
Linguistic Fluency × Epistemic Quality	$r_{_s} > .12$	.064	No meaningful relationship

Mixed-effects ordinal regression showed that jurisprudential complexity significantly reduced epistemic-quality ratings ($\beta = -0.47$, $p < .001$), whereas explicit source identification ($\beta = .39$, $p < .001$) and accurate acknowledgment of ikhtilāf ($\beta = .31$, $p = .004$) improved methodological performance. Spearman analysis confirmed that source transparency had the strongest association with overall epistemic quality ($r_{_s} = .71$, $p < .001$), followed by uncertainty disclosure with ethical-boundary performance ($r_{_s} = .63$, $p < .001$) and accurate treatment of juristic disagreement with methodological coherence ($r_{_s} = .59$, $p < .001$). Linguistic fluency showed no meaningful relationship with epistemic quality, indicating that methodological transparency mattered more than stylistic sophistication. Religious-authority analysis showed that perceived authority risk increased when highly confident language was combined with weak source transparency and limited uncertainty disclosure. Responses lacking clear evidentiary qualification were more likely to be judged misleading for non-specialist users, whereas referral to qualified scholars reduced perceived authority risk, particularly in family, medical, and contested cases. These findings indicate that AI-generated religious authority is shaped not only by informational content but also by how systems communicate certainty, frame conclusions, and acknowledge epistemic limits.

Table 4. Comparative Description of Embedded Algorithmic-Ijtihad Cases

Case	Jurisprudential Context	Main AI Behavior	Primary Risk/Strength	Evaluation
A	Established worship	Accurate retrieval and school comparison	Strong source organization	Appropriate supportive use
B	Emerging digital-finance issue	Synthesized competing positions into definitive ruling	Methodological overreach	High epistemic risk
C	Individualized family-law case	Definitive answer despite missing context in some outputs	Potential personal harm	Requires scholar referral

Cases B and C illustrate the limits of generative AI when jurisprudential reasoning requires contested interpretation or highly specific contextual judgment. In the emerging digital-finance case, some systems merged different juristic approaches without clearly identifying the absence of an established doctrinal position, while one produced an unverifiable attribution with a definitive ruling. In the family-law case, the safer responses were those that requested additional information and referred users to qualified scholars, whereas direct judgments based on incomplete facts were considered ethically problematic. Compared with Case A, these findings show that AI performs more reliably in retrieving and organizing established legal knowledge than in undertaking substantive ijtihad, and that epistemic restraint should be treated as a strength rather than a weakness. The combined results indicate that

generative AI can perform valuable supportive functions within Islamic jurisprudential research, especially in retrieval, preliminary source mapping, comparative organization, translation, and summarization of established legal positions. Performance became substantially less reliable when tasks required contextualized evidentiary judgment, reconciliation of juristic disagreement, evaluation of emerging cases, or individualized normative decisions. The evidence therefore does not support treating current generative AI as an autonomous mujtahid. Its strongest role lies in augmenting qualified human reasoning rather than replacing the epistemic procedures through which juristic authority is established.

The most consequential finding concerns the separation between computational capability and religious authority. Generative AI can imitate the form of juristic reasoning while lacking the accountable epistemic position traditionally required for authoritative *ijtihad* and *fatwa*. Fluency can make this distinction difficult for users to perceive, creating a risk that informational assistance becomes mistaken for normative authority. The results therefore support a model of asymmetric human–AI jurisprudential collaboration in which AI assists with bounded analytical functions while qualified jurists retain responsibility for evidentiary interpretation, contextual judgment, ethical accountability, and final religious determination. The findings demonstrate a clear asymmetry between the computational strengths of generative AI and the epistemic requirements of Islamic jurisprudential authority. Generative AI performed relatively well when the task involved retrieving established rulings, organizing sources, summarizing familiar doctrinal positions, or comparing recognized opinions. Performance declined as the scenarios demanded contextual interpretation, evidentiary reconciliation, treatment of emerging issues, or navigation of legitimate juristic disagreement. The observed pattern indicates that computational competence is strongest in functions involving information processing and substantially weaker when the task moves toward genuinely normative legal judgment.

The source-analysis results identified a second important pattern. Linguistic fluency did not correspond closely to epistemic quality, while source transparency showed a much stronger relationship with reliable jurisprudential performance. Several responses appeared confident, orderly, and technically sophisticated despite containing unverifiable attribution, insufficient qualification, or methodological synthesis that could not be traced clearly to a recognized juristic position. The finding is significant because non-specialist users may judge credibility from clarity and confidence rather than from the evidentiary structure underlying a response. Fluency can therefore create an appearance of authority that exceeds the epistemic quality of the generated answer. Expert assessments reinforced the distinction between supportive computation and autonomous juristic authority. Strong agreement emerged around the legitimacy of AI for retrieval, translation, comparative mapping, source organization, and preliminary research assistance when outputs were subject to human verification. Agreement disappeared when the proposed function involved autonomous *ijtihad*, individualized *fatwa*, independent reconciliation of contested evidence, or high-stakes judgments without qualified human supervision. The findings suggest that experts were not rejecting generative AI as a technology. Their concern centered on the transfer of normative decision-making and accountability from qualified human agents to systems unable to occupy the traditional epistemic and ethical position of a jurist (Garcia & Vivacqua, 2024; Sohns et al., 2024).

The most consequential result concerns the reconfiguration of religious authority. Generative AI did not need to become a formally recognized mujtahid to influence the structure of Islamic legal consultation. Authority could already be redistributed when users accepted generated answers because of speed, accessibility, personalization, linguistic confidence, or apparent comprehensiveness. The central issue is therefore not only whether AI can technically reproduce components of juristic reasoning, but whether technological mediation changes who is trusted, how legal knowledge is accessed, and where responsibility is located when a generated response influences religious practice. The findings closely correspond with recent

scholarship arguing that present AI systems can support selected components of *ijtihad* without satisfying the full conditions required for autonomous juristic authority. Ahmed et al. distinguish source retrieval, doctrinal mapping, and inferential support from contextual and final authorization, concluding that current systems can assist *ijtihad* but cannot function independently as *mujtahids*. The present study supports that distinction empirically through the progressive decline in AI performance from established questions toward scenarios involving disputed evidence, contextual uncertainty, and emerging legal problems.

The results also reinforce Ahmed's earlier literature-based assessment of AI and fatwa practice. That study identifies accessibility, consistency, and high-volume processing as meaningful advantages of AI, while emphasizing the continuing importance of the human *mufti* because contextual sensitivity and judgment cannot simply be reduced to automated response production. The current findings add greater analytical precision by showing that the boundary is not best drawn between "AI use" and "no AI use." The more useful distinction lies between bounded epistemic assistance and delegation of authoritative normative judgment. The findings demonstrate that generative AI becomes less reliable as jurisprudential complexity increases, particularly in cases involving contextual ambiguity, *ikhtilāf*, source attribution, and methodological judgment. This pattern is consistent with Latifi's analysis of challenges posed by generative AI to Shi'i *ijtihad*, but the present study extends the problem across broader jurisprudential contexts through comparative scenario evaluation. AI systems could retrieve Qur'anic verses, hadith reports, legal maxims, and juristic positions, yet they frequently struggled to determine how these materials should be weighed when legal reasoning required contextual interpretation, identification of the effective cause, consideration of custom, or balancing competing legal principles. These findings confirm that *ijtihad* cannot be reduced to sophisticated information retrieval.

The ethical findings similarly reinforce arguments that Islamic AI ethics cannot be reduced to technical efficiency. Elmahjub emphasizes an Islamic ethical framework grounded in normative sources and *maṣlaḥa*, while Ali and colleagues highlight moral responsibility, *amāna*, intentionality, and the risks of outsourcing ethical agency to computational systems (Vicari et al., 2024). The present findings show that the critical question is not simply whether AI-generated legal information is useful, but whether its use preserves accountable human judgment. Expert rejection of autonomous AI *ijtihad* reflects this concern because generative systems cannot assume responsibility for interpretation, justify judgments within a normative community, or answer for their consequences. A significant finding concerns the separation between epistemic appearance and epistemic legitimacy. Generative AI can reproduce the language, terminology, and argumentative style associated with juristic scholarship without possessing the methodological competence or accountable position from which legitimate religious authority traditionally derives. Fluent use of concepts such as *qiyās*, *maṣlaḥa*, *ḍarūra*, and *maqāṣid* may create an impression of scholarly competence even when these concepts are not applied through a coherent juristic procedure. Linguistic fluency should therefore not be treated as an indicator of jurisprudential validity, since the surface characteristics of scholarship are easier to reproduce than the epistemic conditions underlying legitimate legal reasoning.

The systems performed better on relatively established jurisprudential questions because these issues are supported by abundant textual material and stable explanatory patterns. Performance declined when questions required interpretation rather than pattern reproduction, particularly in contested or emerging cases. Handling of *ikhtilāf* was especially problematic because generative systems tended to synthesize heterogeneous positions into coherent answers, sometimes obscuring legitimate differences among schools, methodological traditions, jurisdictions, and historical periods. AI-assisted jurisprudence therefore requires explicit *madhhab* identification and preservation of doctrinal distinctions rather than artificial consensus. Despite these limitations, experts generally supported bounded forms of AI assistance. Generative systems may provide useful support for corpus searching, source

retrieval, comparison of legal formulations, preliminary mapping of scholarly disagreement, and organization of research materials. Such applications suggest a model of augmented jurisprudence rather than a simple opposition between scholars and technology. The critical boundary lies between computational assistance and self-authorizing religious judgment: AI may enhance research efficiency, but final interpretation, contextualization, normative judgment, and accountability must remain with qualified human scholars.

These findings support a graded approach that distinguishes assistance, recommendation, and authority according to epistemic risk. Low-risk activities such as translation, indexing, retrieval, and preliminary source organization should not be treated in the same manner as individualized fatwa generation or independent derivation of rulings. Religious institutions adopting AI therefore need a verification architecture based on curated sources, verifiable citations, madhhab-sensitive metadata, explicit uncertainty indicators, qualified scholarly review, and referral mechanisms for high-stakes cases. Contested opinions should be identified as contested, while uncertain or context-dependent questions should not automatically receive definitive answers. The findings also have educational and institutional implications. Scholars, students, and users need AI literacy that enables them to verify citations, reconstruct legal reasoning, distinguish school-specific positions, identify model-generated synthesis, and recognize situations requiring additional contextual information. Institutions cannot avoid responsibility for harmful guidance merely because an algorithm generated the response. Developers, religious institutions, supervising scholars, and platform operators therefore require clearly defined responsibilities for source integrity, error correction, output review, and decisions concerning which areas of Islamic law are unsuitable for unsupervised automation.

Future research should evaluate specific jurisprudential functions of AI, including source retrieval, hadith attribution, madhhab classification, analogical reasoning, legal-maxim application, maqāṣid analysis, contextual questioning, and referral behavior, while comparing general-purpose and domain-specific models across diverse Islamic legal traditions and institutional contexts. User-centered studies should also examine how citations, uncertainty disclosure, Arabic terminology, institutional branding, and confident language shape perceptions of religious authority. Overall, the findings support an asymmetric human–AI jurisprudential model in which AI remains a bounded analytical assistant supported by verified databases, transparent sourcing, madhhab-sensitive retrieval, audit trails, and scholarly review, while final normative authority, interpretive responsibility, and ethical accountability remain with qualified human jurists.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that generative AI can support several functional aspects of Islamic legal reasoning, particularly source retrieval, comparison of established opinions, translation, and preliminary organization of jurisprudential positions, but it does not possess the epistemic or ethical status of an autonomous mujtahid. Its reliability declines when legal questions require contextual interpretation, reconciliation of conflicting evidence, treatment of ikhtilāf, or individualized normative judgment, while linguistic fluency may conceal weak sourcing, methodological inconsistency, or insufficient uncertainty. The principal contribution is an asymmetric human–AI jurisprudential collaboration model that positions AI as a bounded epistemic assistant while qualified jurists retain responsibility for interpretation, contextualization, ethical accountability, and final religious judgment.

The study is limited by the small number of AI systems, bounded scenario set, selected jurisprudential categories, rapid model updates, and the diversity of Islamic legal traditions that cannot be fully represented by the expert sample. Future research should compare general-purpose and domain-specific models, examine differences across schools of law and fatwa institutions, track model performance over time, and investigate how users interpret AI confidence, citations, and institutional authority. Further work should also test governance

mechanisms such as verified jurisprudential databases, madhhab-sensitive retrieval, transparent source tracing, scholar-in-the-loop review, high-risk referral, and audit trails to ensure that AI expands access to Islamic legal knowledge without displacing human juristic accountability.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; Investigation.

Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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