ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE REALM OF FATWA: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY ON ITS USE AS A REFERENCE TOOL IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

The rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies has significantly transformed various sectors including Islamic legal research and fatwa issuance. However, this rapid integration of AI into religious and legal domains raises critical concerns regarding the authenticity, accuracy, and authority of AI-generated religious responses. In particular, the increasing tendency of users to consult AI tools such as ChatGPT for religious guidance presents a pressing epistemological and ethical problem: to what extent can AI function as a reliable reference in matters of Islamic jurisprudence without undermining the institutional integrity of authoritative fatwa bodies in Malaysia? This study examines the feasibility of using AI as a reference tool in the domain of fatwa, focusing specifically on its application within the Malaysian context. By analysing selected fatwa frameworks and institutional perspectives, this study also reflects on the epistemological and ethical implications of integrating AI technologies into fatwa processes. The study employs a qualitative analytical approach based on document analysis and comparative assessment between AI-generated responses and authoritative fatwa sources, to evaluate the extent to which AI can support, but not replace, the role of human muftis and fatwa committees. Findings indicate that while AI demonstrates notable utility in data retrieval, pattern recognition, and preliminary legal referencing, its limitations in contextual reasoning (waqʻī), moral discernment, and independent ijtihad underscore the necessity of maintaining strict epistemic boundaries. The study emphasizes that AI integration in fatwa processes must be guided by the Islamic principle of tabayyun (critical verification), ensuring that digital information employed in legal deliberations is critically evaluated in both

form and substance. Consequently, this paper proposes ethical and operational considerations for the use of AI in fatwa management, advocating a complementary framework that supports, rather than supplants, the sanctity and authority of traditional Islamic jurisprudence.

Keywords: *Fatwa, Artificial Intelligence, Tabayyun, Waqʻī, Technology.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into various sectors has revolutionised contemporary knowledge systems including the field of Islamic jurisprudence. As AI applications expand rapidly from algorithmic data analysis to natural language processing and machine learning, their potential use in religious decision-making processes such as fatwa issuance has garnered increasing attention (Ahmed, 2021). In Malaysia's established fatwa system, recent interest in applying Artificial Intelligence (AI) has sparked both optimism and caution. While AI promises to assist muftis and fatwa committees in organising legal data and conducting comparative analysis, it also raises fundamental questions about the preservation of interpretive authority and the reliability of algorithmic reasoning in religious decision-making (Wan Mohd, 2020).

However, the incorporation of AI into religious-legal authority raises important epistemological and ethical questions, such as whether algorithmic reasoning can capture the contextual (*waqʻī*) and moral dimensions of *ijtihād*, and how the automation of legal references might influence the sanctity of scholarly discretion (*ijtihād jamāʻī*) within institutional fatwa settings. These concerns highlight the tension between technological efficiency and the authenticity of human interpretive authority in Islamic jurisprudence. Unlike conventional databases, AI systems have the capacity to generate, infer and even simulate content that may influence legal reasoning (Andriansyah, 2023). This becomes particularly critical when such tools are used to support or guide fatwa development, which traditionally relies on human *ijtihād*, contextual judgment (*waqʻī*) and deep engagement with Islamic textual sources (Nor Jamal & Zakaria, 2023). Given these dynamics, it is vital to explore how AI is being utilized, both currently and potentially, as a reference mechanism in Malaysia's fatwa management processes and whether its function enhances or compromises the epistemic framework of fatwa formulation.

Furthermore, the increasing use of AI in generating religious content on digital platforms raises significant concerns for the principle of *tabayyun* or critical verification. As highlighted in the Qur'anic injunction (Qur'an, 49:6), ensuring the credibility of information is paramount, especially when decisions have

legal and ethical consequences. Classical exegetes such as al-Ṭabarī (2001) and Ibn Kathīr (1997) interpret this verse as a command to verify any report received from an untrustworthy source before acting upon it, to prevent injustice or harm. Al-Qurṭubī (1967) further explains that the verse establishes a foundational principle of *tabayyun* (critical verification) that safeguards truth and justice in both individual and institutional decision-making. Building on this Qur'anic ethos, the increasing reliance on AI-generated content within Islamic digital discourse raises parallel concerns. Without adequate verification, the use of such content could lead to uncritical acceptance, misinformation or the dilution of scholarly authority in Islamic legal reasoning (Nor Musfirah & Nurul Husna, 2022). In this light, there is a growing need to examine how the ethical deployment of AI can support the principles of *ijtihād*, *tabayyun* and the broader objectives of Shariah, rather than becoming an unregulated substitute for human reasoning.

This paper presents an analytical examination of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a reference tool within the Malaysian fatwa ecosystem. It critically explores the practical applications of AI technologies, their epistemic compatibility with Islamic legal reasoning and the implications they present for institutional fatwa practices. By situating this inquiry within the principles of *ijtihād* and *tabayyun*, the paper contributes to the emerging discourse on digital Islamic governance, highlighting how technological innovation can be ethically aligned with the enduring objectives of Shariah and the preservation of religious authenticity in the age of AI.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a disruptive technological force has prompted scholars across disciplines to re-evaluate traditional epistemological frameworks, especially in domains where human judgment, ethics and religious authority are central. The field of Islamic legal thought (*fiqh*) is no exception. As digital technologies continue to mediate access to religious knowledge, there is a growing need to understand how these innovations intersect with the process of fatwa issuance and consultation (Ferrara, 2024). In recent years, literature addressing the intersection of AI and religion has expanded, exploring issues such as AI ethics from an Islamic perspective, algorithmic bias in religious content and the viability of machine-assisted legal reasoning in *sharīʿah* contexts. However, much of this scholarship remains exploratory and scattered across various academic silos, with limited engagement in analysing how AI is specifically utilised or could be utilised, as a reference tool in formal fatwa processes within Muslim-majority countries like Malaysia (Ridwan et. al, 2024).

Several Muslim-majority countries, including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Indonesia and the United Arab Emirates, have embarked on developing digital or AI-assisted fatwa platforms to enhance accessibility and responsiveness in religious decision-making. Malaysia, however, presents a particularly structured and state-coordinated model through its formal fatwa institutions and expanding digital infrastructure. As these institutions begin to explore or implement AI-driven mechanisms, critical questions arise concerning the authenticity, reliability and epistemic legitimacy of such systems (Abdulmalik & Dayyabu, 2025). In this context, the Islamic principle of *tabayyun*, the process of rigorous verification and validation of information emerges as an essential ethical framework through which the integration of AI into fatwa mechanisms can be critically examined.

This literature review examines three interrelated dimensions central to the present study. It first considers the evolving role of artificial intelligence within contemporary epistemic and knowledge systems, highlighting how digital technologies are reshaping modes of reasoning, authority and information validation. It then analyses the institutional structures and digital transformation of fatwa authorities in Malaysia, situating these developments within the broader global discourse on legal authority and AI. Finally, it discusses the utilisation of AI as a reference instrument in fatwa formulation, underscored by the ethical necessity of upholding the Quranic principle of *tabayyun* in ensuring authenticity and reliability throughout such applications. Collectively, these dimensions provide the conceptual foundation for examining how AI intersects with Islamic legal epistemology and guide the subsequent analysis of its integration within contemporary fatwa management systems.

2.1 *Artificial Intelligence and Its Role in Knowledge Systems*

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has increasingly become an integral element of contemporary knowledge ecosystems, fundamentally transforming the processes through which information is generated, organised and applied. Broadly defined as the capacity of machines to emulate intelligent human behaviour, AI encompasses several subfields including machine learning, natural language processing (NLP), computer vision and expert systems that enable machines to perform tasks traditionally dependent on human cognition, such as reasoning, decision-making and pattern recognition (Ntoutsi et al., 2020).

The application of AI now extends across multiple domains, including healthcare, education, finance and legal systems, where its capacity to analyse extensive datasets and provide real-time analytical outputs has enhanced

efficiency, predictive accuracy and decision-making quality (Ashley, 2017). In the field of knowledge production, AI contributes to academic content management, semantic analysis and automated document generation. Furthermore, AI-driven recommendation algorithms have transformed the ways in which information is disseminated and consumed in digital environments, consequently influencing public perception, discourse and behavioural trends (Babak et al., 2022).

Within the sphere of religious knowledge, AI has also begun to assume a significant, albeit controversial, role. Its applications include automated fatwa retrieval systems, chatbot-based Islamic Q&A services and AI-assisted digital jurisprudence databases. Platforms such as AskTheScholar or AI-enhanced Qur'an applications provide users with rapid access to scholarly content, though often with limited oversight from qualified scholars (Manswab & Abdul Hafiz, 2024). While these innovations facilitate the democratisation and accessibility of Islamic knowledge, they concurrently raise critical concerns regarding the authenticity, reliability and epistemological legitimacy of AI-generated outputs.

The role of AI in the religious domain must therefore be examined within the broader framework of Islamic epistemology, which emphasises not only the acquisition of information but also its authentication (*taḥqīq*), contextual interpretation (*waqʿī*) and ethical application (*ḥikmah*). Although AI systems may replicate certain human reasoning patterns, they remain devoid of the spiritual and moral dimensions that underpin Islamic legal judgement (Tampubolon & Nadeak, 2024). This limitation underscores fundamental questions concerning the suitability of delegating interpretive or juridical authority to algorithmic mechanisms that lack *niyyah* (intentionality), *taqwā* (God-consciousness) and comprehensive grounding in the *uṣūl al-fiqh* tradition (Ratih, 2024).

In summary, AI undoubtedly offers valuable tools for enhancing knowledge access and analytical capacity. Nevertheless, its integration into the Islamic context, particularly in the realm of fatwa necessitates a cautious and principled approach that balances technological utility with the preservation of religious authenticity, scholarly authority and human accountability.

2.2 *Fatwa Institutions in Malaysia and the Emerging Discourse on AI in Islamic Legal Authority*

The fatwa institution in Malaysia functions within a well-established legal and administrative framework that integrates both federal and state religious authorities. Fatwas are primarily issued by the State Mufti

Departments, each operating under the authority of its respective Islamic Religious Council in accordance with the State Administration of Islamic Law Enactments. At the national level, coordination is facilitated through the Muzakarah Majlis Kebangsaan Bagi Hal Ehwal Ugama Islam Malaysia (MKI), with the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) specifically its Fatwa Management Division serving as the secretariat. This mechanism ensures a degree of standardisation and inter-state harmony in fatwa deliberations, while still preserving the autonomy of each state in issuing binding religious rulings. The structure reflects Malaysia's unique attempt to balance traditional Islamic jurisprudential authority with the federal constitutional arrangement, wherein Islam is constitutionally placed under state jurisdiction (Wan Mohd, 2020).

In the Malaysian context, the process of fatwa issuance involves collective deliberation (*ijmāʿ*) among scholars, rigorous examination of *nuṣūṣ* (scriptural texts), consideration of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* (the higher objectives of Islamic law) and contextual (*waqʿī*) analysis of contemporary realities (Siti Farahiyah et al., 2025). As society increasingly engages with emerging technologies including artificial intelligence (AI), fatwa institutions are confronted with the need to address issues that often extend beyond the parameters of classical jurisprudence. Recent examples include fatwas concerning cryptocurrency, biometric identification and the ethical dimensions of robotic surgery.

Although awareness of AI's growing impact is evident, its incorporation within the fatwa issuance process particularly as a supporting reference tool remains nascent. Most institutional engagements with AI are currently limited to addressing external inquiries on technological matters rather than utilising AI internally to support scholarly reasoning (Soleh, 2024). Nevertheless, global academic discourse has begun to explore this intersection more deeply. For instance, scholars such as Hamdani (2023) and Karimullah (2023) have proposed the application of machine learning algorithms to assist jurists in identifying legal precedents, synthesising scriptural interpretations and detecting inconsistencies across fatwa rulings. Such developments point toward the potential of enhancing fatwa research through AI-assisted comparative jurisprudence (*fiqh muqāran*) or database-driven recognition of legal maxims (*qawāʿid fiqhiyyah*).

However, these prospects necessitate cautious scrutiny. AI systems, particularly those trained on extensive textual corpora, may inadvertently introduce biases, misinterpretations or culturally contingent reasoning that diverges from the dominant *madhhab* (school of thought) or local socio-religious norms (Ferrara, 2024). In Malaysia, where the Shāfiʿī school predominates, the contextual localisation of AI applications becomes imperative to safeguard

consistency and legitimacy. Moreover, the integration of AI must not supplant the human dimension of fatwa deliberation, an endeavour that depends not only on textual knowledge but also on spiritual insight, ethical discernment and the collective accountability of the *ʿulamāʾ* (Hermansyah et al., 2023).

A further layer of complexity arises in the matter of juridical authority. Can AI-generated information or recommendations legitimately serve as *mustanad fatwā* (a valid source for legal reference)? To what extent may *muftīs* rely on algorithmic reasoning that lacks *ijtihād* and *niyyah*? These questions lie at the core of contemporary scholarly discourse, reflecting the tension between the pursuit of technological efficiency and the preservation of traditional methodologies of *istinbāṭ* (legal derivation). Hence, while AI presents promising avenues for enhancing knowledge accessibility, legal research and data synthesis, its adoption within fatwa institutions must be carefully structured to serve as a supplementary instrument rather than a substitute for *ijtihād*-driven human reasoning. Any movement toward integration must prioritise transparency, ethical design, contextual fidelity and the unambiguous accountability of human scholars (Safwan et al., 2025).

2.3 *AI as a Reference Tool in Fatwa: Opportunities, Limitations and the Imperative of Tabayyun*

The application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) within Islamic contexts presents both substantial opportunities and significant epistemological challenges. As a reference instrument in the fatwa process, AI systems can provide efficient access to extensive databases of fiqh texts, prior fatwa rulings and classical as well as contemporary scholarly commentaries. With natural language processing (NLP) and machine learning, these systems can assist jurists in classifying legal issues, performing semantic searches across multiple schools of jurisprudence and identifying relevant analogical precedents. Such capacities position AI as a valuable aid in the preliminary stages of *istinbāṭ* (derivation of rulings), particularly in addressing complex or novel issues such as biotechnology, financial derivatives and digital ethics (Alshithisri, 2023).

One of the principal advantages of AI lies in its ability to retrieve and synthesise vast volumes of data with precision, thereby enabling scholars to analyse *qawāʿid fiqhiyyah* (legal maxims), *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* (objectives of Islamic law) and diverse juristic opinions with enhanced efficiency. In addition, AI holds the potential to democratise access to *fiqh*-based knowledge especially among emerging scholars and researchers, by functioning as a structured intermediary of knowledge (Amirah et al., 2024). Current initiatives, including Islamic chatbot assistants and digital fatwa repositories exemplify the initial phase of AI's contribution toward facilitating public religious inquiry and consultation.

However, the use of AI in Islamic jurisprudence cannot be reduced to considerations of efficiency alone. There are fundamental epistemological concerns involving interpretation, intentionality and moral accountability. Unlike human scholars, AI systems lack consciousness, ethical intuition and theological awareness (Hakim & Anggraini, 2023). They are incapable of apprehending the deeper spiritual and ethical dimensions of *sharīʿah*, nor can they perform *ijtihād* in its authentic sense, which requires both intellectual exertion and moral responsibility before God (Elmahjub, 2023). To ensure epistemic validity and religious integrity, the involvement of qualified scholars and jurists is indispensable. These experts provide interpretive depth through their mastery of scriptural sources, legal methodologies and fiqh doctrines, which form the backbone of Islamic legal reasoning. Their participation helps contextualise AI-generated outcomes within recognised frameworks of *uṣūl al-fiqh* and *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*.

Furthermore, the collaborative engagement of these scholars in processes of validation (*taḥqīq*) and verification (*tabayyun*) is essential to maintaining coherence between AI-assisted analysis and established juristic rulings. Through systematic review and scholarly oversight, potential deviations or inconsistencies can be identified and corrected. This process not only safeguards the legitimacy of AI-assisted fatwa formulation but also reinforces its reliability, ensuring that such technologies operate within the ethical and procedural boundaries of the Islamic legal tradition (Siti Farahiyah et al., 2025).

These limitations become more pronounced when AI-generated suggestions are mistakenly perceived as authoritative or binding. The first limitation concerns the absence of contextual discernment AI systems, no matter how advanced, operate through probabilistic correlations rather than moral or situational judgement. They are unable to weigh factors such as *ʻurf* (local custom), *niyyah* (intention) or *maṣlaḥah* (public interest), which are integral to the formulation of *ḥukm sharʻī*. The second limitation involves the lack of epistemic hierarchy. AI cannot distinguish between *qaṭʻī* (definitive) and *ẓannī* (speculative) evidence, nor can it evaluate the strength of juristic reasoning that underpins different fatwa opinions. Consequently, when users or even institutions rely on AI outputs without proper human supervision, there is a risk of conflating algorithmic references with authoritative legal verdicts, thereby eroding the boundary between scholarly deliberation and automated retrieval (Khasani, 2022).

Furthermore, algorithmic systems may inherit or even amplify biases embedded in their training data. If the data corpus consists primarily of selective, decontextualised or translation-based *fiqh* sources, the AI may reproduce interpretive distortions that overlook linguistic nuances, historical

circumstances or *madhhab*-specific reasoning. For example, a model trained predominantly on contemporary English-language fatwas could marginalise the interpretive depth of Arabic classical jurisprudence, leading to inconsistencies or contradictory rulings when addressing local Malaysian contexts (Nawi et al., 2021). Such biases are not merely technical errors, they carry serious epistemological consequences, as they may normalise partial readings of *sharī'ah* under the guise of neutrality. Hence, the application of AI in fatwa work requires continuous human oversight, methodological calibration and the ethical principle of *tabayyun* (critical verification) to ensure that the knowledge it produces remains authentic, balanced, and contextually grounded.

Considering these potential risks such as the public's tendency to treat AI-generated recommendations as binding rulings, the possibility of algorithmic bias and the decontextualisation of scriptural texts, the Islamic principle of *tabayyun* (careful verification of information) becomes crucial. Derived from Quranic guidance (Surah al-Ḥujurāt 49:6), *tabayyun* calls upon believers to verify the authenticity and reliability of any report before acting upon it, especially when it carries legal, ethical or social implications. Within the digital fatwa landscape, this principal functions as a moral and methodological safeguard, ensuring that AI-generated outputs are not accepted uncritically. In practice, *tabayyun* requires scholars and users alike to examine the sources, interpretive consistency and contextual validity of AI-generated content before forming or disseminating opinions. This process promotes a balanced integration of technology and religious authority, preventing misinformation while preserving the epistemic integrity of Islamic jurisprudence (Wahyuni, 2019).

Furthermore, integrating the principle of *tabayyun* as a foundational design element within AI systems can significantly enhance both trust and accountability. This integration may involve establishing algorithmic transparency, ensuring the traceability of scriptural and juristic sources, implementing human-in-the-loop verification mechanisms and incorporating diverse *madhhab*-based references to reflect the pluralism of Islamic jurisprudence. Consequently, fatwa institutions must develop comprehensive ethical and methodological frameworks that regulate AI integration frameworks where technology operates in service of the Islamic tradition, rather than dictating it (Munshi et. al, 2021). In summary, while AI offers considerable potential to facilitate fatwa-related research and reference, its utilisation must remain bounded by epistemic humility, ethical safeguards and the consistent application of *tabayyun*. The sustainable future of AI in fatwa work thus depends not merely on technological advancement but, more crucially on the collective commitment of scholars and institutions to uphold

the intellectual integrity and moral accountability inherent in Islamic legal reasoning (Mu'tashim et. al, 2023).

The reviewed literature demonstrates a growing academic interest in the integration of AI into various dimensions of Islamic jurisprudence, particularly its potential as a reference tool in fatwa issuance. Researchers have acknowledged AI's capacity to enhance access to legal texts, facilitate classification and retrieval of fiqh cases, and support comparative jurisprudential analysis (Polat et. al., 2022). Nevertheless, the literature also highlights several epistemological and ethical limitations, most notably the risk of treating AI-generated outcomes as authoritative fatwas in the absence of human oversight and critical evaluation.

Existing studies however have yet to examine in depth how AI technologies are functionally embedded within fatwa institutions in Malaysia, or how Islamic legal epistemology especially the principle of *tabayyun* can be operationalised into concrete technological safeguards. While the ethical implications of AI within religious contexts have been explored conceptually, structured operational frameworks remain largely underdeveloped (Ratih, 2024). Accordingly, this study positions itself to address these gaps by critically analysing the role of AI as a reference instrument within the Malaysian fatwa landscape, while embedding *tabayyun* as a core evaluative and normative framework. Such integration serves both theoretical and applied objectives, ensuring that technological adoption in Islamic jurisprudence remains aligned with the ethical traditions, methodological precision and scholarly integrity that define the discipline.

3.   METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, primarily utilising document analysis to explore the potential and limitations of Artificial Intelligence (AI), particularly language models such as ChatGPT as reference tools in the field of fatwa in Malaysia. The research does not involve fieldwork or empirical data collection through interviews, instead it focuses on critical textual analysis to understand epistemological and methodological intersections between AI-generated reasoning and traditional Islamic legal frameworks. The primary sources for this research consist of selected fatwas issued by the Federal Territories Mufti Department (Jabatan Mufti Wilayah Persekutuan) and other authorised Malaysian fatwa institutions between 2018 and 2024. These fatwas were chosen to represent a range of contemporary issues spanning economic, technological and social dimensions, rather than to provide exhaustive case analyses. The selection aims to illustrate how traditional fatwa reasoning frameworks operate in addressing modern

challenges.

In the traditional practice of fatwa issuance, juristic rulings are derived through a process that integrates *nusus* (scriptural evidence), *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* (higher objectives of Islamic law), *qawāʿid fiqhiyyah* (legal maxims) and contextual reasoning (*taḥqīq al-manāṭ*). This serves as the normative benchmark for assessing any interpretive or advisory process (al-Raysunī, 2014). Accordingly, the study generates a second set of texts comprising responses from ChatGPT, where similar questions corresponding to each selected fatwa theme were posed. The purpose is not to evaluate the rulings themselves but to observe how AI frames religious guidance, organises its reasoning and references textual or ethical principles in comparison with human-authored fatwas. The analysis employs thematic content analysis to identify recurring concepts, reasoning structures and epistemic patterns across both sets of texts i.e., (i) human-authored fatwas and (ii) AI-generated responses.

Thematic coding was conducted around several analytical dimensions; the presence and quality of Islamic legal reasoning (*istinbāṭ*), the use of jurisprudential maxims (*qawāʿid fiqhiyyah*), ethical reasoning involving *maṣlaḥah* and *mafsadah* and particularly the application of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* and *tabayyun*. The latter principle holds special significance, as this study forms part of a broader research project on digital verification (*tabayyun* digital) and epistemology in Islam. By systematically comparing these two bodies of text, the study seeks to determine whether AI-based tools such as ChatGPT can function as reliable and ethically sound reference instruments for Islamic legal discourse. The comparison also highlights key epistemological and moral boundaries, particularly concerning interpretive authority, authenticity and accountability that must guide any prospective integration of AI into the fatwa ecosystem. This text-based, qualitative approach thus provides a rigorous and contextually grounded framework for assessing both the promise and perils of AI in religious decision-making.

4.   RESULTS & DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings and analytical discussion in direct correspondence with the research objectives. The study is structured around three primary aims that collectively explore the interface between Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Islamic legal discourse. First, it seeks to identify the potential of AI, particularly advanced language models such as ChatGPT as reference tools capable of supporting fatwa-related processes through information retrieval, knowledge synthesis and preliminary reasoning. Second, it examines the epistemic and ethical limitations inherent in AI-generated religious responses, with emphasis on the absence of interpretive depth,

contextual sensitivity and moral accountability that define human juristic reasoning (*ijtihād*). Third, it assesses the necessity of *tabayyun* (verification) as a foundational epistemological and moral framework in engaging AI technologies within the domain of fatwa, ensuring that the principles of verification, contextual interpretation and ethical restraint are preserved.

The discussion that follows is organised thematically according to these objectives rather than by specific case examples. This structure enables a more conceptual and evaluative exploration of AI's function within the epistemology of Islamic jurisprudence. Nevertheless, selected comparative illustrations between actual fatwas issued by Malaysian institutions and AI-generated outputs are included to substantiate the analysis. These examples serve not as the focal point of the discussion, but as empirical reflections that reinforce the broader argument regarding the opportunities, challenges and necessary safeguards, particularly the role of *tabayyun* in integrating AI responsibly into fatwa-related contexts.

4.1   *AI as a Reference Tool: Potentials in Fatwa-related Contexts*

The findings indicate that Artificial Intelligence, particularly through language models such as ChatGPT, demonstrates notable potential in facilitating preliminary reference and information retrieval within the domain of fatwa. As a natural language processing tool, AI exhibits the capacity to synthesise dispersed knowledge, retrieve relevant fiqh concepts from diverse textual sources and present concise and structured responses to general religious or legal queries (Abdulrahman & Walusimbi, 2024). In this respect, the system functions comparably to digital fiqh repositories or online fatwa databases, offering users rapid access to relevant scriptural, juristic and ethical discussions. This ability to organise and articulate knowledge efficiently positions AI as a valuable tool for enhancing the accessibility of Islamic legal information, particularly among researchers, students and laypersons seeking initial reference points before consulting qualified scholars (Hakim & Anggraini, 2023).

Beyond mere retrieval, AI also displays an interpretive ability (*tafsīrī*) that allows it to contextualise issues within a broader framework of Islamic ethics and jurisprudence (Khasani, 2022). When prompted with questions related to emerging issues such as cryptocurrency transactions, biomedical ethics or digital surveillance, ChatGPT demonstrates the capacity to relate such topics to established fiqh categories, *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* and relevant *qawāʿid fiqhiyyah*. This interpretive layer reflects an advanced linguistic and conceptual mapping capability that supports understanding rather than decision-making. Hence, AI's contributions are most effective in facilitating preliminary exploration and

framing of issues prior to deeper scholarly analysis.

However, despite these advantages, AI's functionality remains inherently limited to *taʿrīfī* (descriptive) and *tafsīrī* (interpretive) levels, rather than *istinbāṭī* (derivative legal reasoning). The process of *istinbāṭ* requires more than textual association. It involves the jurist's disciplined application of *uṣūl al-fiqh* methodologies, nuanced understanding of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* and deep moral accountability before God. AI systems, being devoid of consciousness, *niyyah* (intentionality) and *taqwā* (God-consciousness), cannot emulate this dimension of ethical reasoning (al-Raysunī, 2014). They also lack the sensitivity to contextual realities (*waqʿiyyah*) that shape the application of rulings across different social and temporal settings. As such, while AI may simulate the surface features of fiqh discourse, it cannot perform the evaluative or deliberative reasoning that defines legitimate fatwa issuance.

Accordingly, AI should be recognised not as a source of legal authority but as a supportive reference instrument that complements human expertise. Its role lies in expanding access to information, assisting in literature organisation and providing linguistic scaffolding for preliminary understanding. The authority to interpret, apply and issue binding fatwa must remain exclusively with qualified muftis and juristic councils who embody both intellectual rigour and spiritual responsibility. By positioning AI within this bounded framework, fatwa institutions can leverage its technological potential without compromising the sanctity and epistemic integrity of Islamic legal tradition.

4.2   *Epistemic and Ethical Limitations in AI-generated ReligiousResponses*

The comparative analysis between AI-generated outputs and selected fatwas from Malaysian institutions reveals clear epistemic deficiencies that underscore the limitations of AI in engaging Islamic legal reasoning. While language models such as ChatGPT exhibit the ability to retrieve *qawāʿid fiqhiyyah* (legal maxims) and reference general Quranic verses or hadith texts, their reasoning process remains superficial and often lacks coherence within the structured methodology of *uṣūl al-fiqh*. The model tends to amalgamate information from disparate sources without recognising hierarchical distinctions between evidence, levels of authority or juristic precedence. Consequently, AI-generated responses frequently present a form of 'textual eclecticism' that may appear comprehensive on the surface but fails to reflect the internal logic, discipline, and gradation essential to authentic Islamic legal reasoning (Mu'tashim et. al, 2023).

For instance, in matters concerning *muʿāmalāt* such as cryptocurrency, digital assets or online investments, ChatGPT demonstrates the capacity to summarise

broad global opinions often citing permissibility or caution based on general principles of *ribā*, *gharar* and *maslaḥah*. However, such outputs typically omit the nuanced deliberations of regional fatwa councils such as those under the Federal Territories Mufti Department or state-level committees, which contextualise rulings according to Malaysia's financial regulations, Shariah Advisory Council guidelines and socio-economic realities. This absence of *waqʿiyyah* (contextual awareness) reflects the epistemic limitation of AI, while it can reproduce doctrinal content, it lacks the hermeneutical and institutional sensitivity necessary for authoritative *istinbāṭ*. In this respect, AI responses resemble what might be termed informational *fiqh*, not normative *fiqh* that is, knowledge 'about' the law rather than legally binding reasoning derived from qualified interpretive authority (Mu'tashim et. al, 2023).

Beyond epistemic constraints, there are also significant ethical limitations embedded in AI-generated religious discourse. Islamic jurisprudence situates fatwa issuance within a deeply moral and spiritual framework governed by *amānah* (trust), *taqwā* (God-consciousness) and *masʾūliyyah* (responsibility). A mufti is not merely a transmitter of information but a moral agent (*mukallaf*) accountable before God for the implications of his rulings (al-Raysunī, 2014). In contrast, AI operates without consciousness, intentionality (*niyyah*) or the burden of *taklīf* (moral responsibility). This absence of ethical intentionality fundamentally disqualifies AI from the moral horizon within which *ijtihād* and fatwa operate.

The risk therefore lies in the perceived authority of AI-generated responses. When users engage AI tools for religious guidance, the clarity between 'assistance' and 'authority' can easily blur. Without proper oversight or disclaimer, such systems may inadvertently foster what can be described as *ghurūr maʿlūmī*, an epistemic delusion in which machine-generated synthesis is mistaken for genuine scholarly *ijtihād* (Soleh, 2024). This false sense of certainty poses ethical dangers, especially when individuals act upon AI-generated advice without human verification, potentially leading to misguided practices or the erosion of confidence in recognised fatwa institutions. Hence, the epistemic and ethical limitations of AI underscore the necessity of positioning it strictly within an auxiliary, rather than autonomous role in Islamic legal contexts. Human oversight grounded in *ʿilm*, *taqwā* and institutional authority remains indispensable to ensure that technological innovation complements rather than compromises the sanctity and moral integrity of fatwa processes.

4.3 *The Imperative of Tabayyun: Towards a Framework for AI–Fatwa Integration*

The Quranic principle of *tabayyun* derived from Surah al-Ḥujurāt (49:6)

stands as the epistemological fulcrum for reconciling technological advancement with the moral discipline of Islamic legal reasoning. The verse commands believers: '*O you who believe, if a fāsiq (wrongdoer) brings you news, verify it (fatabayyanū), lest you harm people in ignorance and then become regretful for what you have done.*' This injunction situates *tabayyun* as a divine mandate for intellectual caution, critical verification and ethical discernment in the transmission of knowledge. Within the fatwa context, *tabayyun* functions not merely as a moral exhortation, but as a methodological safeguard ensuring that every piece of information, whether generated by human scholars or artificial systems is subjected to processes of verification, contextualisation and ethical evaluation before being accepted as religiously authoritative (Khairul et. al, 2025).

In an era of algorithmic mediation, the role of *tabayyun* becomes increasingly vital. The proliferation of AI tools that produce religious content introduces new layers of epistemic uncertainty from the accuracy of machine learning outputs to the contextual adequacy of data sources. Integrating *tabayyun* as a guiding framework offers a systematic approach for navigating these uncertainties. It compels both muftis and the public to treat AI-generated responses as *mubādiʾ al-maʿrifah*, preliminary knowledge that must be further examined through scholarly validation, institutional oversight and jurisprudential scrutiny (Noor & Damariswara, 2022). Such a process reaffirms that the authority of fatwa remains inherently human and morally grounded, even when assisted by digital technologies.

From a *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* perspective, the operationalisation of *tabayyun* within AI–fatwa integration aligns with the higher objectives of preserving *dīn* (faith) and *ʿaql* (intellect). These two essentials underpin the epistemic integrity of the Muslim community by safeguarding it from *talbīs al-ḥaq bi al-bāṭil*, the conflation of truth and falsehood which may arise from unverified digital knowledge (Rosidi et. al, 2022). Through *tabayyun*, AI systems can be embedded with ethical checkpoints that encourage transparency, accountability and interpretive humility. For instance, incorporating human-in-the-loop verification, traceable data lineage and multi-*madhhab* cross-referencing could serve as technological expressions of *tabayyun* in practice. Such mechanisms ensure that technological tools operate within the parameters of *amanah ʿilmiyyah* (intellectual trustworthiness) and do not substitute for qualified human judgement (Khairul et. al, 2025).

Furthermore, *tabayyun* functions as an epistemic corrective against the modern tendency toward *taqlīd al-taknūlūjiyy*, uncritical reliance on technological authority. By embedding the ethos of *tabayyun* into AI-assisted fatwa design, institutions reaffirm the primacy of moral agency and interpretive

consciousness over algorithmic automation (Ridwan et. al, 2024). This approach transforms *tabayyun* from a reactive process of fact-checking into a proactive principle of epistemic governance, ensuring that the use of AI enhances rather than erodes the moral and intellectual accountability of Islamic legal discourse. Ultimately, the integration of *tabayyun* provides the bridge between innovation and tradition. It delineates the boundary between information and knowledge, between assistance and authority. When positioned as a foundational principle, *tabayyun* ensures that the utilisation of AI in fatwa work remains faithful to the ethical spirit of *ijtihad*, a disciplined pursuit of truth guided by divine revelation, rational reflection and moral responsibility.

5.   RECOMMENDATION

In view of the findings and limitations discussed, several recommendations are proposed to ensure the responsible integration of AI systems such as ChatGPT within Malaysia's fatwa ecosystem. Firstly, it is crucial to cultivate the principle of *tabayyun* (critical verification) among Muslim users engaging with AI-generated Islamic content. Rooted in Qur'an 49:6, this principle calls upon believers to verify information, particularly when it bears legal, ethical or doctrinal implications. AI-generated content, even when linguistically coherent or seemingly accurate, may omit contextual nuances, regional fatwa deliberations or authoritative interpretations. Users must therefore be educated to treat such responses as *mubādiʾ al-maʿrifah* (preliminary knowledge) to be verified through qualified scholarship and official fatwa mechanisms.

Secondly, fatwa authorities in Malaysia particularly the Jabatan Mufti Negeri and the Majlis Fatwa Kebangsaan under the purview of Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM) should explore structured collaborations with AI developers and Islamic research institutions. Such partnerships could support the creation of knowledge-aware AI systems embedded with authenticated fatwa repositories, local jurisprudential data and *maqāṣid*-based reasoning frameworks. This collaborative approach would strengthen epistemic reliability while localising AI applications to Malaysia's distinctive socio-religious and legal environment.

Thirdly, there is a pressing need to enhance public digital literacy through targeted education on AI ethics and religious verification. This may include embedding the concept of *tabayyun* digital within school curricula, higher education syllabi and community-based *daʿwah* initiatives, so that users approach digital information with critical awareness and spiritual accountability. A digitally literate Muslim community would be better

positioned to discern between authentic, context-sensitive fatwa guidance and algorithmically produced generalisations.

Finally, the development of a Digital Fatwa Verification Companion, a dedicated online platform that enables users to cross-reference AI-generated responses with verified fatwa sources should be prioritised. Rather than replacing existing fatwa portals, such a system could function as a complementary layer that enhances user confidence, ensures traceability of sources and mitigates the risk of *ghurūr maʿlūmī* (epistemic delusion). This initiative would empower both lay Muslims and institutional actors to uphold the integrity of *syarʿiyyah* knowledge within the expanding digital ecosystem.

Ultimately, while AI holds transformative potential for democratizing access to Islamic knowledge, its deployment in fatwa-related contexts must remain anchored in the ethical scaffolding of *tabayyun*, the epistemological discipline of *uṣūl al-fiqh* and the institutional oversight of human scholars. Only through such integration can technological advancement harmonize with the authenticity, trustworthiness and spiritual objectives that underpin Islamic legal authority.

6.   CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTION

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into Islamic legal discourse represents not only a technological milestone but also a profound epistemological challenge. This study has examined the potentials, limitations and implications of using AI particularly large language models such as ChatGPT as reference tools in the Malaysian fatwa landscape. The findings demonstrate that while AI exhibits significant potential in facilitating access to Islamic knowledge and supporting preliminary legal inquiries, it remains epistemically limited. AI-generated responses often display linguistic precision and structural coherence, yet lack the juristic depth, contextual fidelity and *sharʿiyyah* legitimacy necessary for authoritative legal pronouncements. In several instances, AI outputs present generalised rulings detached from *madhhab*-specific reasoning, *ʿurf* (local custom) or deliberations of recognised fatwa councils.

The study underscores the indispensable role of the human dimension in Islamic legal reasoning. The processes embodied by muftis, fatwa councils and institutional mechanisms cannot be substituted by algorithmic models. Human scholars embody *niyyah* (intention), *amānah* (trust) and *masʾūliyyah* (accountability) virtues that constitute the moral and epistemological foundations of *iftāʾ*. Integrating the ethic of *tabayyun* (critical verification) within AI-assisted religious engagement therefore becomes essential. It

provides an ethical and methodological compass to ensure that digital tools operate within the epistemic boundaries of *uṣūl al-fiqh* and the moral framework of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*. This principle safeguards the credibility and integrity of Islamic legal discourse, ensuring that technological innovation complements rather than compromises the sanctity of religious authority.

Looking ahead, the future of AI in fatwa work should be framed not in terms of automation, but augmentation. Rather than replacing human jurists, AI should serve as an intelligent assistant enhancing research efficiency, expanding access to verified knowledge and supporting institutional deliberations under human oversight. Future research may therefore focus on the co-development of Islamically aware AI systems through collaboration between religious authorities, technologists and epistemologists. Such systems could incorporate authenticated fatwa repositories, multilingual juristic corpora and *maqāṣid*-oriented reasoning frameworks, tailored to Malaysia's socio-religious context.

In addition, the formulation of an Islamic AI ethics framework rooted in the principle of *tabayyun* merits further exploration. This framework could operationalise *tabayyun* as a digital verification protocol, establishing guidelines for responsible data use, source authentication and user accountability. Empirical studies involving fatwa committees, AI developers and Muslim digital users would enrich understanding of how AI-assisted religious guidance functions in practice. Furthermore, interdisciplinary collaborations between scholars of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, computer science and media ethics are vital to ensure that AI technology serves Islamic legal traditions rather than redefining them.

Ultimately, the sustainability of AI in the fatwa ecosystem depends on its integration within a human-centred epistemology that values discernment, verification and accountability. The convergence of *tabayyun*, scholarly oversight and technological advancement offer a promising path forward, one that harmonises innovation with authenticity, ensuring that the transmission of *sharʿiyyah* knowledge remains credible, contextual and spiritually grounded in the digital age.

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