



Al-Dzikra: Jurnal Studi Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan al-Hadits

P-ISSN: 1978-0893, E-ISSN: 2714-7916

<http://ejournal.radenintan.ac.id/index.php/al-dzikra>

Volume 19, Number 2, December 2025, Page 339 - 362

DOI: [10.24042/al-dzikra.v19i2.32785](https://doi.org/10.24042/al-dzikra.v19i2.32785)

Qur'anic Exegesis in the Era of Artificial Intelligence: Religious Authority, Digital Polarization, and Religious Moderation in a Pluralistic Society

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Received: 01-08-2025

Revised: 23-09-2025

Accepted: 17-10-2025

Abstract

This article examines the transformation of religious authority, digital polarization, and religious moderation within pluralistic societies. This qualitative research employs a literature review and thematic-contextual interpretation (tafsir). The data sources for this study include Qur'anic verses, exegetical literature, research on artificial intelligence, digital religion, religious authority, social media polarization, and religious moderation. The findings indicate that AI can assist in verse searching, linguistic analysis, thematic classification, and expanding Islamic knowledge. However, AI has several shortcomings, such as data bias, a lack of contextual understanding, and an absence of moral responsibility. Furthermore, AI can fragment religious authority and accelerate the dissemination of exclusive interpretations through algorithms, misinformation, and digital echo chambers. Consequently, AI should be regarded as an auxiliary tool, not a replacement for Islamic scholars (ulama) or exegetes (mufasssir). To steer the use of AI towards

justice, tabayun (verification/cross-checking), discussion, respect for differences, and public welfare (maslahah), thematic-contextual interpretation and the principles of religious moderation are essential.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence; Digital Polarization; Religious Moderation; Qur'anic Exegesis; Religious Authority.*

Abstrak

Artikel ini membahas bagaimana otoritas keagamaan berubah, polarisasi digital, dan moderasi agama dalam masyarakat majemuk. Penelitian ini adalah penelitian kualitatif yang menggunakan studi kepustakaan dan tafsir tematik-kontekstual. Ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an, literatur tafsir, penelitian kecerdasan buatan, religi digital, otoritas keagamaan, polarisasi media sosial, dan moderasi beragama adalah sumber data penelitian. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa AI dapat membantu dalam pencarian ayat, analisis bahasa, klasifikasi tema, dan memperluas pengetahuan Islam. Meskipun demikian, AI memiliki beberapa kelemahan, seperti bias data, tidak memahami konteks, dan tidak memiliki tanggung jawab moral. Selain itu, AI dapat memecahkan otoritas keagamaan dan mempercepat penyebaran tafsir eksklusif melalui algoritma, misinformasi, dan ruang gema digital. Akibatnya, AI harus dianggap sebagai alat bantu, bukan pengganti ulama atau mufasir. Untuk mengarahkan penggunaan AI ke arah keadilan, tabayun, diskusi, penghormatan terhadap perbedaan, dan kemaslahatan masyarakat, diperlukan interpretasi tematik-kontekstual dan prinsip moderasi beragama.

Kata Kunci: *Kecerdasan buatan; Moderasi beragama; Otoritas keagamaan; Polarisasi digital; Tafsir Al-Qur'an.*

A. Introduction

AI raises complex epistemological and theological issues in Islamic thought. The possibility that AI can generate religious knowledge is one of the major questions. AI has the ability to process large volumes of texts, provide responses that appear systematic, and mimic the linguistic style used in academic or religious circles. However, these capabilities do not automatically make AI a religious authority. AI does not possess spiritual experience, scholarly expertise, moral responsibility, or the ability to understand the social and psychological context of the inquirer. Consequently, in Islamic thought, the use of artificial intelligence

raises questions about the distinction between technology as an auxiliary tool and technology as a substitute for religious authority.¹

AI can assist humans in accessing information, but it can also shape perceptions, steer choices, and create new dependencies on machine-generated responses. From an Islamic perspective, this issue relates to human moral responsibility. What is needed to evaluate the use of AI is not only efficiency and speed, but also justice, public welfare (*maslahah*), transparency, protection of intellect (*'aql*), and accountability for the social effects it produces.² Therefore, technology should not be reduced to a set of data that can be processed mechanically. Instead, technology must be placed within a moral framework that limits how it can be used.

When AI is used to issue fatwas or provide explanations of Islamic law, this issue becomes increasingly important. Religious answers require consideration of context, legal reasoning, social situations, and the personal circumstances of the questioner. Chatbots cannot always distinguish between general and specific matters. Therefore, artificial intelligence cannot fully replace the role of a mufti who possesses knowledge, responsibility, and social connection with the community³. Artificial intelligence can help expand access to religious information. A similar perspective states that fatwas generated by artificial intelligence should not always be used as a basis for religious decision-making, because the sources, methods, and accountability for the results are often unclear.⁴

¹ Shoaib Ahmed Malik, "Artificial Intelligence and Islamic Thought: Two Distinctive Challenges," *Journal of Islamic and Muslim Studies*, 8, no. 2 (2023): 108–15, <https://doi.org/10.2979/jims.00020>.

² Hasan Latifi, "Challenges of Using Artificial Intelligence in the Process of Shi'i Ijtihad," *Religions*, 15, no. 5 (2024): 541, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15050541>.

³ Shoayb Ahmed, "Fatwā and AI: A Literature-Based Assessment on How AI Impacts the Role of the Muftī," *Journal for Islamic Studies*, 42, no. 1–2 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.25159/2957-9163/14400>.

⁴ Lukman Hakim dan Muhamad Risqil Azizi, "Otoritas Fatwa Keagamaan Dalam Konteks Era Kecerdasan Buatan (Artificial Intelligence/AI)," *Ar-Risalah Media Keislaman Pendidikan dan Hukum Islam*, 21, no. 2 (2023): 164, <https://doi.org/10.69552/ar-risalah.v21i2.2101>.

The use of AI to interpret the Qur'an also faces challenges. AI can be used for linguistic analysis, thematic classification, verse searching, and summarization. However, the hermeneutical precision regarding the Arabic linguistic structure, the context of revelation, its connection to the history of scholarship, the differing opinions among exegetes (*mufasssīrūn*), and the moral purpose of its message are not always matched by technical capabilities. A study on ChatGPT's engagement with *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī* shows that artificial intelligence can produce explanations that appear convincing but overlook important details in classical exegesis and even provide information that does not align with historical sources.⁵ Therefore, the use of AI in Qur'anic studies requires the involvement of Islamic scholars (*ulama*) or exegetes (*ahl al-tafsīr*), academic oversight, and source verification. AI is better used as an auxiliary tool for research rather than as an independent interpreter.⁶

The development of digital media has transformed the structure of religious authority even before the emergence of generative AI. Texts, lectures, fatwas, and Islamic explanations circulate outside conventional religious institutions thanks to the internet. Nowadays, people can obtain religious knowledge through websites, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and various other digital platforms, much like what was previously delivered through *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), mosques, *madrasah* (religious schools), and *majelis taklim* (study circles), giving rise to what is termed the digitalization of religious authority. This is a process in which religious legitimacy is created through a combination of scholarship, popularity, communication skills, and digital visibility.⁷ Authority is often measured by

⁵ M. Faidh Fasyani dkk., "Artificial Intelligence and Digital Tafsīr: Assessing the Interpretive Accuracy of ChatGPT's Engagement with Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī," *Journal of Ushuluddin and Islamic Thought*, 2, no. 1 (2024): 86–118, <https://doi.org/10.15642/juit.2024.2.1.86-118>.

⁶ Mohammad Fattahun Niam, "Does Artificial Intelligence Go beyond the Limits of Religious Authority? An Ethical Review on IslamGPT," *Al'Adalah*, 27, no. 1 (2024): 71–84, <https://doi.org/10.35719/aladalah.v27i1.477>.

⁷ Ibrahim N. Abusharif, "Religious Authority, Digitality, and Islam: The Stakes and Background," *Journal of Islamic and Muslim Studies*, 8, no. 1 (2023): 109–19, <https://doi.org/10.2979/jims.00010>.

popularity, delivery style, number of followers, and the ability to attract the audience's attention. Authority based on visibility and communicative appeal has shifted from authority based on scholarly knowledge and *sanad* (chain of transmission).⁸ The emergence of Muslim influencers who shape identity, religious practices, and new lifestyles for the younger generation reflects the same phenomenon.⁹ Indeed, the participation of Muslims has become broader with digital media. Online, groups that were previously unable to participate in formal religious structures can share ideas and form communities. Studies on Muslim actors in Australia show that society still values imams and talented academics. However, they also face difficulties in distinguishing between trustworthy religious knowledge and invalid information.¹⁰ The digitization of religion can also lead to religious messages becoming commodified. On the other hand, some traditional *ulama* and preachers are trying to enter the digital space by changing their delivery methods while still maintaining their scholarly legitimacy.¹¹

In this situation, AI amplifies the changes that have already been brought about by social media. AI can combine, compile, and present various opinions in the form of seemingly neutral answers, while social media produces numerous actors who speak in the name of religion. Social media not only accelerates the spread of information but also creates a communication environment that can foster hostility and group identity. Partisan selection, message content, platform design, and social media recommendation

⁸ Abd Hannan dan Ach Fatayillah Mursyidi, "Social Media and the Fragmentation of Religious Authority among Muslims in Contemporary Indonesia," *Digital Muslim Review*, 1, no. 2 (2023): 84–104, <https://doi.org/10.32678/dmr.v1i2.10>.

⁹ Bouziane Zaid dkk., "Digital Islam and Muslim Millennials: How Social Media Influencers Reimagine Religious Authority and Islamic Practices," *Religions*, 13, no. 4 (2022): 335, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13040335>.

¹⁰ Shaheen Amid Whyte, "Islamic Religious Authority in Cyberspace: A Qualitative Study of Muslim Religious Actors in Australia," *Religions* 13, no. 1 (2022): 69, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13010069>.

¹¹ Moch. Khafidz Fuad Raya, "Digital Islam: New Space for Authority and Religious Commodification Among Islamic Preachers in Contemporary Indonesia," *Contemporary Islam*, 19, no. 1 (2025): 161–94, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-024-00570-z>.

algorithms contribute to ideological and emotional polarization. Systematic reviews of studies on social media and polarization show that exposure to information aligned with one's personal views, uncivil content, and narratives that attack opposing groups can increase ideological and emotional polarization.¹² Because, in line with the logic of the attention economy, content that displays moral outrage, conflict, and hostility toward out-groups tends to attract greater attention.¹³ The phenomenon of 'echo chambers' causes users to continuously interact with similar stories and makes it increasingly difficult for them to accept different perspectives.¹⁴

This is where religious moderation becomes very important. Moderation does not mean eliminating your religious beliefs or equating all religious teachings. Rather, it means developing a fair, balanced, open, and responsible way of handling differences. The principle of *ummatan wasaʿan* is defined in the Qur'an as a direction toward justice, balance, and the ability to participate proportionally in social life.¹⁵ This understanding provides a normative foundation for building a society that maintains its beliefs but does not use them as a justification for violence or discrimination.

Contextual exegesis seeks to connect the meaning of the text with historical developments, societal demands, and contemporary issues. This method does not intend to ignore the classical exegetical tradition; on the contrary, it seeks to find the moral message and general purposes of the Qur'an so that it remains

¹² Emily Kubin dan Christian Von Sikorski, "The Role of (Social) Media in Political Polarization: A Systematic Review," *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 45, no. 3 (2021): 188–206, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.2021.1976070>.

¹³ Jay J. Van Bavel dkk., "How Social Media Shapes Polarization," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 25, no. 11 (2021): 913–16.

¹⁴ Fabiana Zollo, "Dealing with Digital Misinformation: A Polarised Context of Narratives and Tribes," *EFSA Journal*, (IT) 17, no. Proceedings of the Third EFSA Scientific Conference: Science, Food and Society Guest Editors: Devos Y, Elliott KC and Hardy A (2019), <https://doi.org/10.2903/j.efsa.2019.e170720>.

¹⁵ Asma Afsaruddin, "The Hermeneutics of Inter-Faith Relations: Retrieving Moderation and Pluralism as Universal Principles in Qur'anic Exegeses," *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 37, no. 2 (2009): 331–54, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9795.2009.00389.x>.

relevant in changing contexts.¹⁶ In this way, Qur'anic exegesis can be used to address new issues such as artificial intelligence, digital polarization, shifts in authority, and interreligious relations.

Furthermore, the relationship between Qur'anic exegesis and social change shows that the interpretation of the Qur'an¹⁷ is always linked to the social conditions prevailing during historical periods. There is a tension between the continuity of tradition and the need to address modern issues, which is demonstrated by the difference between traditional and progressive exegesis.¹⁸ This tension becomes even stronger in the context of AI, because the technology offers a new form of knowledge production that is not entirely known within the previous exegetical tradition.

Research has developed on artificial intelligence and Islam, digital religious authority, social media polarization, and religious moderation. However, there is still limited research that connects these four issues from the perspective of Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsīr*). This article focuses on three main issues: the shift in religious authority, the emergence of digital polarization, and the strengthening of religious moderation in a pluralistic society. This paper aims to examine how AI affects the production and legitimation of religious knowledge; to identify the threats of digitalized exegesis to polarization and fragmentation; and to establish principles of contextual exegesis that can support dialogue, moderation, and coexistence.

As for books on digital religion, they show how digital technology has transformed the way religion is produced, disseminated, and practiced. Therefore, studies of religion

¹⁶ Dede Rosyada, "A Contextual Method of Interpreting the Qur'an: A Search for The Compatibility of Islam and Modernity," conf. paper presented pada International Conference on Qur'an and Hadith Studies (ICQHS 2017), *Proceedings of the International Conference on Qur'an and Hadith Studies (ICQHS 2017)*, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.2991/icqhs-17.2018.1>.

¹⁷ Moh Toriquddin dkk., "Living Qur'an, Niqab, and Islamic Law: A Study at Mambaush Sholihin Islamic Boarding School, Gresik, East Java," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga dan Hukum Islam*, 8, no. 2 (2024): 934, <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v8i2.19563>.

¹⁸ Syahrani Siahaan dan Mhd. Khaidir Ali, "Quran Interpretation and Social Change: Implications for Religious Practices in The Modern Era," *Al-Mujaddid: Jurnal Ilmu-ilmu Agama*, 5, no. 2 (2023): 40–59, <https://doi.org/10.51482/almujaddid.v5i2.117>.

conducted in digital spaces must consider how technology, users, social structures, and religious traditions interact with one another.¹⁹ Those who previously focused on *ulama*, Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), mosques, and religious organizations are now confronted with digital preachers, influencers, academics, and social media users. Conventional authority is not always eliminated by these changes.²⁰ Rather, they transform the way authority is formed and recognized.

Ulama do not only provide users with religious information, but they also evaluate, compare, comment on, and redistribute that information. In such a situation, effective communication, popularity, and community recognition can serve as new sources of legitimacy.²¹ Users continue to believe that religious education, *sanad* (chain of transmission), experience, and credibility are important components in determining their trust in religious sources.²² Therefore, digitalization does not automatically replace the *ulama*; on the contrary, it creates new relationships between users and both digital and traditional authorities. Social media enables people to convey religious messages, while AI can automatically generate, summarize, and compile religious messages. This change requires broader study, ranging from the digitalization of communication to the automation of religious knowledge production.²³

The Qur'an associates religious moderation with the principle of *ummatan wasaṭan* (a just and balanced community), justice, balance, respect for differences, and the rejection of excess.

¹⁹ Ruth Tsuria dkk., "Approaches to Digital Methods in Studies of Digital Religion," *The Communication Review* 20, no. 2 (2017): 73–97, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10714421.2017.1304137>.

²⁰ Heidi A. Campbell dan Giulia Evolvi, "Contextualizing Current Digital Religion Research on Emerging Technologies," *Human Behavior and Emerging Technologies*, 2, no. 1 (2020): 5–17, <https://doi.org/10.1002/hbe2.149>.

²¹ Akiva Berger dkk., "How Do Religious 'Ask the Expert Sites' Shape Online Religious Authorities? From Clerics to Online Influencers," *Religions*, 14, no. 4 (2023): 444, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14040444>.

²² Whyte, "Islamic Religious Authority in Cyberspace."

²³ Yunus Ergen, "Framing the Study of Digital Religion: Waves of Academic Research, Theoretical Approaches and Themes," *Medya ve Din Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 6, no. 2 (2023): 137–66, <https://doi.org/10.47951/mediad.1363608>.

Moderation does not mean eliminating religious identity. Rather, it means regulating how this identity manifests in social life. The Qur'an offers a foundation for fair, tolerant, and open attitudes in the face of diversity.²⁴ Regarding studies on Qur'anic pluralism, they have also shown how important it is to accept human diversity, engage in dialogue with others, and foster peaceful social relations. Justice and respect for human dignity should be used to address social differences rather than viewing them as a threat.²⁵ In this context, religious moderation becomes a hermeneutic and ethical strategy to prevent exclusive interpretations from developing into hostility or discrimination.

By combining four fields of research, this paper fills that gap. These fields are Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsīr*), artificial intelligence ethics, digital religious authority, and religious moderation. The novelty of this paper lies in the creation of a Qur'anic exegetical framework that not only assesses artificial intelligence in terms of its benefits and risks, but also examines the impact of artificial intelligence on religious legitimacy, social polarization, and communal life in.

This study uses a qualitative method with a library research type (literature review). Primary and secondary sources constitute the research data. Primary sources include Qur'anic verses related to knowledge, information verification, justice, responsibility, moderation, dialogue, and diversity. Secondary sources also include classical and contemporary exegeses (*tafsīr*), which provide linguistic, historical, and contextual understanding of the meanings of the verses, as well as journals, books, and previous research on artificial intelligence in Islamic studies, digital exegesis, religious authority in cyberspace, social media polarization, digital religion, pluralism, and religious moderation.

²⁴ Bayumi Nasrul Hoir, "Thematic Tafsir Study: Religious Moderation in the Qur'an and Hadith," *Bulletin of Islamic Research*, 1, no. 4 (2023): 341–56, <https://doi.org/10.69526/bir.v1i4.4>.

²⁵ Dani Ramdani dkk., "Islam and Pluralism in the Qur'anic Perspective: Thematic Interpretive Studies: Islam dan Pluralisme dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an: Kajian Tafsir Tematik," *Bulletin of Islamic Research*, 2, no. 1 (2024): 113–30, <https://doi.org/10.69526/bir.v2i1.32>.

The analysis process was carried out in three stages. First, the literature was collected and grouped based on four themes: artificial intelligence and Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsīr*), digital religious authority, digital polarization, and moderation and pluralism. Then, the inventory stage. At this stage, the main ideas, methodologies, findings, limitations, and relationships between studies were identified. Finally, the hermeneutic synthesis stage connects Qur'anic principles with the issues of AI and society.

A thematic-contextual exegetical method (*tafsīr*) is used. After being collected by theme, the relevant verses are evaluated based on linguistic meaning, the context of revelation, the relationships between verses, and their moral messages. These meanings are then connected to the realities of AI, shifting religious authority, digital polarization, and the need for moderation in a pluralistic society. Comparison between Qur'anic sources, exegeses (*tafsīr*), academic research on artificial intelligence, and digital religion studies ensures the validity of the analysis.

B. Results and Discussion

1. Artificial Intelligence as a Tool, Not as an Interpretive Authority

Studies indicate that artificial intelligence should not be used as a replacement for *mufasssirs* (Qur'anic exegetes), *ulama* (Islamic scholars), or religious institutions; rather, it should be utilized as a "supporting instrument." Processing data, detecting linguistic patterns, grouping thematic clusters of verses, and presenting information can all be performed by artificial intelligence. However, hermeneutic authority and AI's technical capabilities are distinct. Interpreting the Qur'an requires an understanding of the Qur'anic sciences, its historical context, scholarly traditions, inter-verse relationships, and its moral objectives. AI merely employs data patterns and instructions to generate responses. Consequently, fluently composed replies are not always scientifically accurate or aligned with the exegetical tradition. In terms of ethics, the use of AI technology must adhere to principles such as beneficence, non-maleficence, human autonomy, justice, and accountability. The last principle is

particularly crucial for religious studies, as users must know the sources, the process, and the parties responsible for the system's outcomes.²⁶ In Qur'anic exegesis, this principle implies that any response produced by artificial intelligence must be validated against primary sources, exegetical works, and scholarly opinions.

AI also cannot be held morally accountable. Mufassirs are not just purveyors of information; they also have a duty to ensure that people properly understand and transmit the message of the Qur'an. Exegesis carries social consequences, especially regarding law, interreligious relations, gender, politics, and identity.²⁷ Therefore, the most suitable model for the use of AI in tafsir is a collaborative one; AI may assist in technical tasks, but humans must still perform the interpretive, evaluative, and ethical duties. AI can help identify verses related to the theme of moderation, but determining the meaning, context, and relevance still requires the work of a mufassir. This model prevents two problematic tendencies: the outright rejection of technology and the uncritical acceptance of machine-generated answers.

2. AI and the Transformation of Religious Authority Structures

The transformation of religious authority brought about through the internet and social media must be seen as a consequence of AI's advent. Even before generative AI appeared, digital media had already made religious knowledge broadly accessible beyond formal institutions. Muslims are able to access sermons, fatwas, exegetical works, and religious discussions across various platforms without needing to attend *pesantren*, mosques, or scholarly assemblies. Research on internet-based Islamic education in Indonesia shows that social media has rendered religious learning more informal, succinct, visual, and readily available. Alongside fostering more engaging preaching, this

²⁶ Luciano Floridi dan Josh Cowls, "A Unified Framework of Five Principles for AI in Society," *Harvard Data Science Review*, advance online publication, 23 Juni 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1162/99608f92.8cd550d1>.

²⁷ Muhammad Muhammad dkk., "Jewish Antagonism as Portrayed By Hamka In The Book Of Tafsir Al-Azhar," *Jurnal Ilmiah Islam Futura*, 24, no. 2 (2024): 513, <https://doi.org/10.22373/jiif.v24i2.19900>.

development has also given rise to religious populism and challenges to the authority of established institutions.²⁸

This change in authority does not simply mean the disappearance of the *ulama's* role. Several organizations are even leveraging online platforms to improve religious education, answer public questions, and sustain ties with their communities.²⁹ On the other hand, popularity, communication style, the capacity to produce content, and emotional rapport with followers are all factors that frequently contribute to the construction of new authority. Highly visible religious speakers may acquire legitimacy, even if they lack the same depth of scholarly training as traditional Islamic scholars.³⁰ Thus, the yardstick of authority has moved from scholarly command and *isnād* to a blend of expertise, visibility, persona, and capacity for engagement. On YouTube, the dynamics of authority-building reveal how religious speakers cultivate credibility through identity markers, partnership networks, and dialogic interaction.

AI introduces a new dimension to this dynamic. When social media platforms feature numerous actors speaking in the name of religion, AI can synthesize their diverse views into a single response. Users may thus receive an answer without any indication of whether it draws from classical exegesis, contemporary legal opinions, popular articles, or unverified data. Moreover, authority resides not only with *ulama* or religious speakers, but also with the systems that gather, rank, and deliver information. As a result, AI's authority ought to be understood as 'mediatic authority' rather than religious authority. While artificial intelligence has the technical ability to regulate access to knowledge, it does not rest upon a solid scholarly grounding. The origins, methodologies, and

²⁸ Dindin Solahudin dan Moch Fakhruroji, "Internet and Islamic Learning Practices in Indonesia: Social Media, Religious Populism, and Religious Authority," *Religions*, 11, no. 1 (2019): 19, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11010019>.

²⁹ Solahudin dan Fakhruroji, "Internet and Islamic Learning Practices in Indonesia."

³⁰ Mohammad 'Ulyan, "Digital Da'wah and Religious Authority: A Narrative Review of Islamic Preaching in the Social Media Era," *Sinergi International Journal of Islamic Studies*, 1, no. 3 (2023): 100–113, <https://doi.org/10.61194/ijis.v1i3.591>.

accountability for interpretation must be articulated by individuals and institutions that hold recognized authority.

3. Fragmented Authority and Its Effects on Qur'anic Exegesis

The fragmentation of authority carries both favorable and adverse implications. On the positive side, it affords opportunities to groups that were previously marginalized. Through digital platforms, women, youth, minorities, and preachers from varied backgrounds are able to voice their religious views. Digital spaces also foster dialogue across different religious traditions. Nevertheless, fragmentation becomes a concern when everyone presumes an equal competence to interpret the Qur'an. When religious authority comes to be measured primarily by follower numbers and interaction metrics, scholarly profundity may be eclipsed by visual charisma and personal branding. This dynamic can engender superficial, emotionally driven, and trend-sensitive forms of religiosity. The role of the *ulama* is likewise transformed by the migration from the pulpit to the screen. No longer expected solely to possess mastery of Islamic disciplines, they must now also communicate religious ideas in digital media. This is not simply a technical challenge. *Ulama* must grasp how algorithms function, how information spreads, and how religious messages can be effectively conveyed in a rapid and highly competitive media landscape.³¹

Under these circumstances, religious institutions need to cultivate an authority that is inclusive but still rooted in scholarly rigor. The more effective markers of authority are the quality of reasoning, receptiveness to diverse views, capacity to engage with emerging issues, and readiness to verify information. Strengthening religious authority is not about sealing off digital spaces; instead, it entails constructing an ecosystem of knowledge that unites the broader public, religious scholars, academics, and tech developers.

³¹ Darisy Syafaah dkk., "From Pulpit to Screen: The Evolution of Islamic Scholars' Roles in the Digital Age," *Cakrawala: Jurnal Studi Islam* 19, no. 1 (2024): 11–25, <https://doi.org/10.31603/cakrawala.10760>.

4. Digital Polarization and the Spread of Exclusive Exegesis/Tafser

Digital polarization occurs when users are organized into groups that hold conflicting narratives, identities, and moral judgments. In studies of online polarization, groups are shaped by differences of opinion and social identification. Members of these groups typically regard their own narrative as the universal truth and perceive others as a threat.³² In religious discourse, this can happen through the formation of groups considered deviant and groups of 'true Islam.' While other interpretations are considered conservative, misguided, un-Islamic, or too compromising, a certain interpretation is regarded as the only acceptable interpretation. This process is strengthened by digital media through the spread of content that affirms the group as individuals and attacks other groups.

Emotional and moral language are essential for spreading polarizing content. Moralization and extreme attitudes reinforce a person's tendency to share news that aligns with their group's opinions, regardless of whether it is true or not.³³ Verses or hadiths used to support group identity can be widely circulated within interpretive works, even when their explanations are incomplete. The use of language that contravenes social norms is also linked to the spread of hate speech. Language that contains accusations, condemnation, and dehumanization more readily turns disagreements into hostility.³⁴ Therefore, religious polarization is a major issue not only because of differences in interpretation, but also because of how those differences are communicated. If systems merely prioritize user engagement, AI can accelerate this process. Careful responses that explain differing viewpoints are often less compelling than those that are controversial, emotional,

³² Ana-Maria Bliuc dkk., "Online Intergroup Polarization Across Political Fault Lines: An Integrative Review," *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12 (Oktober 2021): 641215, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.641215>.

³³ Antoine Marie dkk., "Moralization and Extremism Robustly Amplify Myside Sharing," *PNAS Nexus*, 2, no. 4 (2023): pgad078, <https://doi.org/10.1093/pnasnexus/pgad078>.

³⁴ Kirill Solovev dan Nicolas Pröllochs, "Moralized Language Predicts Hate Speech on Social Media," *PNAS Nexus*, 2, no. 1 (2023): pgac281, <https://doi.org/10.1093/pnasnexus/pgac281>.

and assertive. If certain narratives are overrepresented in an AI's training data, the system may replicate those biases and create the impression that a single perspective represents the consensus.

The spread of fake news by pushing a particular issue can encourage individuals to share hostile or false information. Conversely, intellectual humility can reduce this tendency.³⁵ Readers should recognize that their understanding is not always complete, which makes these findings significant for the study of exegesis/interpretation.

Openness to differences, *tabayun* (clarification/verification), and an attitude of intellectual *tawāḍu* (humility/modesty) can help prevent polarization.

5. Contextual Interpretation as a Framework for Addressing AI

To understand the issues surrounding AI and digital society, contextual interpretation can serve as an important method. This method emphasizes that interpretation must consider how the text, the context of revelation, and the needs of society interrelate. Although the message of the Qur'an must be examined based on its moral objectives and the general principles it contains, a literal understanding alone is insufficient.³⁶

The contextual approach allows the Qur'an to be read in a relevant way without losing its connection to tradition. Contextualization means connecting the message of revelation to the world through a responsible analytical process, rather than freely adjusting the verses to changing times.³⁷ Qur'anic principles such as justice, *amanah* (trustworthiness), *tabayun* (verification), respect for reason, and human responsibility serve as the ethical foundation for AI. These principles do not offer technical answers

³⁵ Antoine Marie dan Michael Bang Petersen, "Moralization of Rationality Can Stimulate Sharing of Hostile and False News on Social Media, but Intellectual Humility Inhibits It," *Political Communication*, 42, no. 1 (2025): 57–84, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2024.2363542>.

³⁶ Abdullah Saeed, "Some Reflections on the Contextualist Approach to Ethico-Legal Texts of the Quran," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 71, no. 2 (2008): 221–37, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0041977X08000517>.

³⁷ Syeda Asiya dan Muhammad Samiullah, "Impact of the Contextual Approach on the Qur'anic Interpretations: An Analytical Study," *Jihāt-ul-Islām*, 14, no. 1 (2020): 1–20, <https://doi.org/10.51506/jihat-ul-islam.v14i1.167>.

regarding how algorithms function, but they do provide a moral compass for evaluating how AI ought to be used. Furthermore, contextual interpretation helps distinguish between the use of AI to enhance the public good and its use to reinforce domination or manipulation. AI that accelerates the digitization of manuscripts, aids linguistic research, or assists persons with disabilities in accessing the Qur'an is acceptable. Conversely, AI that disseminates fake fatwas, eliminates interpretive diversity, or manipulates public emotions must be subjected to critical scrutiny.

Contextual interpretation cannot be undertaken without linguistic rigor and Qur'anic scholarship. AI often processes words solely on the basis of statistical patterns, without grasping their full meaning. Furthermore, tafsir has evolved over time to meet the needs of society, as illustrated by the development from classical to modern exegesis. Although this shift does not suggest that older practices are without value, it does indicate that interpretation has the capacity to address new challenges.³⁸ Consequently, artificial intelligence should not be regarded in terms of its relationship with the Islamic scholarly tradition, but rather as a new challenge for the dynamics of tafsir.

6. Religious Moderation as Digital Communication Ethics

Religious moderation in the digital sphere must be interpreted not merely as the content of the message, but also as the manner in which data is obtained, processed, and transmitted.³⁹ Tolerance can become irrelevant when it is used to insult other groups. Conversely, through reasoned argumentation, mutual respect, and a willingness to engage in dialogue, differing interpretations can remain part of a shared existence. A plural society is not built by erasing differences; rather, it is built by

³⁸ Ahmad Zaenuri, "Classical and Modern Exegesis Styles: The Evolution of The Development Exegesis Styles from Classical and Modern Periods," *Jurnal At-Tibyan: Jurnal Ilmu Alqur'an dan Tafsir*, 8, no. 1 (2023): 20–38, <https://doi.org/10.32505/at-tibyan.v8i1.6007>.

³⁹ Moh. Akib, "Implementation of Critical Reasoning and Moderation in Religious Interpretations and Contexts," *Al-Dzikra: Jurnal Studi Ilmu al-Qur'an dan al-Hadits*, 18, no. 2 (2024): 269, <https://doi.org/10.24042/al-dzikra.v18i2.23236>.

managing those differences through justice and conversation. Studies on deliberative digital media indicate that platform design can assist users in finding common ground, reading others' perspectives, and pausing before sharing information. A good system encourages meaningful engagement beyond the mere pursuit of interaction metrics.⁴⁰

This theory can be applied to the dissemination of digital interpretation. Religious platforms can explain differing viewpoints, display the context of verses, and include reference sources. They can also issue warnings when AI-generated answers lack a solid foundation. Additionally, the system can prompt users to verify sources before sharing content. Dialogue skills are also essential for effective digital communication. Disagreement conducted online, when accompanied by thoughtful responses to the other party, can reduce the perception of conflict and foster mutual understanding. Overly brief expressions that lack emotional cues, however, are often perceived as hostile.⁴¹ Consequently, interpretive communication on social media must take into account the language used, the situation, and the manner in which corrections are offered.

7. Integrative Model of Tafsir, AI, and Moderation

An integrative three-layer model can be developed based on the preceding discussion. First, the epistemic layer: every AI-generated response pertaining to the Qur'an must be verified against its sources, compared with authoritative exegeses, and tested using scientific methods. AI should not be used as a source of religious knowledge. Second, the ethical layer: the use of AI must be grounded in justice, public welfare (*maslahah*), user protection, respect for human autonomy, and the prevention of bias. This principle demands clarity regarding how the system operates and who bears responsibility for its outcomes. Third, the

⁴⁰ Alex Pentland dan Lily Tsai, "Toward Building Deliberative Digital Media: From Subversion to Consensus," *PNAS Nexus*, 3, no. 10 (2024): pgae407, <https://doi.org/10.1093/pnasnexus/pgae407>.

⁴¹ Carla Anne Roos dkk., "Dealing with Disagreement: The Depolarizing Effects of Everyday Diplomatic Skills Face-to-Face and Online," *New Media & Society*, 24, no. 9 (2022): 2153–76, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444821993042>.

socio-dialogical layer: digital *tafsir* should encourage respect for differences, interfaith and inter-school dialogue, and the rejection of hate speech. Rather than reinforcing echo chambers, AI should be utilized to deepen mutual understanding.

Third, these layers demonstrate that machine capability will not determine interpretation in the AI era. Data quality, user literacy, the credibility of scholars, the responsibility of technology developers, and the culture of public communication will shape the future. Without such a framework, AI can accelerate the spread of misinformation and polarizing content. Conversely, artificial intelligence can be utilized to enhance access to knowledge and support a more inclusive religious life, provided it takes Qur'anic ethics and scientific research into consideration. Therefore, the central issue in Qur'anic exegesis in the AI era is not merely whether AI can interpret the text, but also how humans can preserve the integrity of knowledge, moral responsibility, and social bonds.

C. Conclusion

The way Muslims acquire, produce, and disseminate religious knowledge has been transformed by artificial intelligence. AI is useful in Qur'anic studies as a tool for verse search, linguistic analysis, thematic classification, and access to exegetical literature. However, because it lacks knowledge, spiritual experience, moral responsibility, and the ability to fully comprehend context, AI cannot replace *mufasssīrūn* (Qur'anic exegetes), '*ulamā*' (Islamic scholars), or religious institutions. Human verification is required for every interpretive output, due to errors, biases, and information hallucinations in AI responses. With AI, religious authority has also shifted through social media. Authority is now shaped not only by depth of knowledge and institutional legitimacy, but also by popularity, visibility, and the ability to manage digital communication. This condition allows for greater participation, but can also lead to fragmentation of authority, the spread of misinformation, and superficial or exclusive interpretations.

Algorithms, echo chambers, excessive moral language, and the dissemination of emotional content make digital polarization

increasingly easier. Qur'anic exegesis in the era of artificial intelligence must adopt a thematic-contextual approach. Religious moderation constitutes the ethics of both knowledge and digital communication. AI's focus should be on enhancing access to knowledge, encouraging dialogue, reducing prejudice, and building a peaceful society. Therefore, AI must be positioned as a technical partner in Qur'anic studies, while it is humans who possess scientific competence, moral responsibility, and the aspiration to build a just society.

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