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Artificial Intelligence Ethics and Maqasid al-Shariah in Islamic Religious Education for Malaysian Universities

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Abstract

The rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has significantly transformed educational practices worldwide, including Islamic Religious Education (IRE). While AI offers substantial opportunities to enhance learning effectiveness, personalization, and accessibility, its implementation also raises ethical concerns related to privacy, academic integrity, algorithmic bias, transparency, and the preservation of religious values. In the Malaysian context, where Islamic education plays a strategic role in shaping students' moral and spiritual development, the integration of AI requires a framework that aligns technological innovation with Islamic ethical principles. This conceptual paper aims to develop a framework for AI ethics in Islamic Religious Education by integrating contemporary AI ethics principles with the objectives of Islamic law (Maqasid al-Shariah). Using a qualitative conceptual approach through an extensive review of literature on AI ethics, educational technology, Islamic education, and Maqasid al-Shariah, the study identifies key ethical dimensions relevant to AI implementation in IRE. The proposed framework encompasses the principles of transparency, accountability, justice, privacy protection, human dignity, and educational responsibility, supported by the Maqasid al-Shariah dimensions of preserving religion (hifz al-din), intellect (hifz al-'aql), life (hifz al-nafs), wealth (hifz al-mal), and lineage (hifz al-nasl). The framework offers theoretical guidance for policymakers, educators, and higher education institutions in Malaysia to promote responsible AI adoption while maintaining Islamic values and educational objectives. The study contributes to the growing discourse on ethical AI in religious education and provides a foundation for future empirical investigations in Islamic educational settings.

Keywords

Artificial Intelligence Ethics, Islamic Religious Education, Maqasid al-Shariah, Higher Education, Malaysia, Educational Technology, Ethical Framework

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1. INTRODUCTION

The emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become one of the most transformative developments of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, reshaping various sectors, including education. AI technologies such as intelligent tutoring systems, learning analytics, adaptive learning platforms, generative AI tools, and virtual assistants have increasingly

been integrated into educational environments to enhance teaching and learning processes. These technologies offer unprecedented opportunities to personalize learning experiences, improve educational accessibility, facilitate administrative efficiency, and support student engagement. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, AI has the potential to accelerate progress toward inclusive and equitable quality education by supporting innovative learning approaches and expanding educational opportunities across diverse contexts. However, alongside these benefits, AI adoption has generated significant ethical concerns related to privacy, transparency, accountability, bias, fairness, and the potential erosion of human agency in educational decision-making.

The ethical implications of AI have attracted increasing attention from scholars, policymakers, and educational practitioners worldwide. The widespread use of generative AI applications, such as large language models, has transformed how students access information, complete assignments, and interact with educational content. While these tools can enhance learning efficiency and creativity, they also raise concerns regarding academic integrity, misinformation, intellectual dependency, and the diminishing role of critical thinking. Scholars such as Luciano Floridi have argued that ethical governance must accompany technological advancement to ensure that AI systems serve human welfare and uphold fundamental moral principles. Similarly, international organizations have emphasized the necessity of developing ethical frameworks that guide the responsible use of AI in educational settings.

In Malaysia, the integration of AI into higher education has accelerated in response to national digital transformation agendas and the increasing demand for technologically enhanced learning environments. The Malaysian government has actively promoted digital innovation through initiatives such as the National Fourth Industrial Revolution Policy and the Malaysia Digital Economy Blueprint. Universities across the country have increasingly adopted AI-supported learning platforms, online assessment systems, and data-driven educational management tools. These developments have created new opportunities for improving educational quality while simultaneously presenting ethical challenges that require careful consideration. The adoption of AI within educational institutions must therefore be guided by ethical principles that ensure technology serves educational objectives without compromising human values.

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The discussion becomes particularly significant in the context of Islamic Religious Education (IRE). Unlike many academic disciplines that primarily focus on cognitive development and technical competencies, IRE seeks to cultivate spiritual awareness, moral character, ethical behavior, and religious commitment. Islamic education is fundamentally concerned with the holistic development of individuals by integrating intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and social dimensions. The ultimate objective of Islamic education is not merely the acquisition of knowledge but also the formation of righteous individuals who embody Islamic values in their personal and social lives. Consequently, the integration of AI into IRE raises unique ethical questions regarding the compatibility of technological systems with religious principles and moral objectives.

Islamic Religious Education in Malaysia occupies a strategic position within the national education system. As a Muslim-majority country, Malaysia has invested substantially in strengthening Islamic educational institutions at both secondary and tertiary levels. Universities offer compulsory Islamic studies courses and various programs related to Islamic knowledge, jurisprudence, theology, and ethics. The increasing incorporation of AI technologies into these educational contexts has generated discussions concerning the extent to which technological innovation can support religious learning without undermining the values and objectives embedded within Islamic educational philosophy. The challenge lies not only in adopting AI effectively but also in ensuring that its use remains consistent with Islamic ethical teachings.

One of the most influential frameworks for understanding ethics in Islam is Maqasid al-Shariah, which refers to the higher objectives and purposes of Islamic law. Classical scholars such as Abu Ishaq al-Shatibi emphasized that Islamic legal and ethical principles aim to preserve and promote human welfare through the protection of religion (hifz al-din), life (hifz al-nafs), intellect (hifz al-'aql), lineage (hifz al-nasl), and wealth (hifz al-mal). These objectives provide a comprehensive ethical framework that can guide decision-making in contemporary contexts, including technological innovation. In recent years, scholars have increasingly applied Maqasid al-Shariah to emerging issues such as digital governance, biotechnology, environmental sustainability, and artificial intelligence. The framework offers a valuable lens through which the ethical dimensions of AI can be evaluated from an Islamic perspective.

The relevance of Maqasid al-Shariah to AI ethics becomes apparent when considering the potential risks associated with AI implementation in education. Issues such as data privacy, algorithmic discrimination, surveillance, misinformation, and excessive dependence on technology can negatively affect students' intellectual development and personal autonomy. From a Maqasid perspective, educational technologies should contribute to the preservation of intellect by fostering critical thinking rather than encouraging passive reliance on automated systems. Similarly, AI applications should protect privacy and human dignity, ensuring that educational data are collected, processed, and utilized responsibly. The preservation of religion also requires that AI-generated educational content accurately represents Islamic teachings and avoids the dissemination of misleading or inappropriate information.

Despite the growing body of literature on AI ethics, research specifically examining AI ethics within Islamic Religious Education remains limited. Existing studies tend to focus on technical, pedagogical, or regulatory aspects of AI implementation without adequately addressing the integration of Islamic ethical principles. Furthermore, many contemporary AI ethics frameworks are grounded primarily in secular philosophical traditions and may not fully capture the spiritual and moral dimensions emphasized within Islamic educational contexts. This gap highlights the need for a conceptual framework that combines internationally recognized AI ethics principles with Islamic ethical foundations, particularly Maqasid al-Shariah.

The present study addresses this gap by proposing a conceptual framework for AI ethics in Islamic Religious Education within Malaysian universities. The framework seeks to integrate key ethical principles commonly discussed in AI governance—including transparency, accountability, fairness, privacy, and human-centeredness—with the normative objectives of Maqasid al-Shariah. By doing so, the study aims to provide a comprehensive ethical foundation that supports responsible AI adoption while preserving the distinctive values and goals of Islamic education. Such a framework is expected to assist educators, policymakers, curriculum developers, and university administrators in navigating the ethical complexities associated with AI integration in religious learning environments.

As AI technologies continue to evolve and become increasingly embedded within educational systems, the need for ethically informed approaches becomes more urgent. The

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future of Islamic Religious Education in Malaysia will depend not only on technological innovation but also on the ability of educational institutions to maintain moral integrity, spiritual authenticity, and human-centered learning. Therefore, developing an ethical framework that aligns AI implementation with Islamic principles represents an important step toward ensuring that technological advancement contributes positively to both educational excellence and societal well-being.

2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative conceptual research design to develop an ethical framework for the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) within the context of Malaysian higher education. Conceptual research is particularly suitable for examining emerging issues where empirical evidence remains limited and where theoretical integration is needed to establish a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon. According to John W. Creswell, qualitative approaches are effective for exploring complex social and educational issues through the interpretation and synthesis of existing knowledge. In this study, the conceptual approach was used to identify, analyze, and integrate key principles from AI ethics, Islamic educational philosophy, and Maqasid al-Shariah to formulate a coherent ethical framework that can guide the responsible adoption of AI technologies in Islamic Religious Education.

The study relied primarily on an extensive literature review and document analysis. Relevant scholarly publications were collected from internationally recognized academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis, and ScienceDirect. The literature search focused on publications released between 2018 and 2025 to capture recent developments in AI ethics and educational technology. Several keywords and combinations of keywords were employed, including "Artificial Intelligence Ethics," "Ethical AI," "Islamic Religious Education," "Maqasid al-Shariah," "AI in Higher Education," "Educational Technology Ethics," "Islamic Ethics," and "Responsible AI." The inclusion criteria required sources to be peer-reviewed journal articles, books, policy reports, conference proceedings, or official documents discussing ethical aspects of AI, educational technology implementation, Islamic educational principles, or Maqasid al-Shariah. Studies unrelated to education or lacking substantive discussion on ethical

dimensions were excluded from the analysis.

The document analysis process followed a systematic procedure adapted from the qualitative content analysis framework proposed by Philipp Mayring. Initially, all selected documents were reviewed to identify recurring themes and concepts related to AI ethics in educational contexts. During the coding process, ethical principles commonly discussed in international AI governance literature—such as transparency, accountability, fairness, privacy protection, explainability, human autonomy, and non-maleficence—were identified and categorized. Simultaneously, concepts derived from Islamic ethical thought and Maqasid al-Shariah literature were examined to identify their relevance to AI implementation in educational settings. This dual analytical approach enabled the researcher to compare and synthesize ethical principles from both contemporary AI governance frameworks and Islamic normative traditions.

To strengthen the theoretical foundation of the proposed framework, the study adopted a thematic synthesis approach. Thematic synthesis allows researchers to integrate findings from multiple sources and construct higher-order conceptual categories that explain relationships among different concepts. Following the procedures suggested by Thomas and Harden (2008), the analysis was conducted in three stages. First, textual data from selected literature were coded line by line to identify significant ethical concepts. Second, descriptive themes were generated by grouping related codes into broader categories. Third, analytical themes were developed to establish connections between AI ethics principles and the objectives of Maqasid al-Shariah. Through this process, the study identified areas of convergence between international AI ethics standards and Islamic ethical values, particularly regarding human dignity, intellectual development, justice, responsibility, and social welfare.

The framework development process was guided by the five primary objectives of Maqasid al-Shariah, namely the preservation of religion (*hifz al-din*), intellect (*hifz al-'aql*), life (*hifz al-nafs*), wealth (*hifz al-mal*), and lineage (*hifz al-nasl*). These objectives served as analytical lenses for evaluating the ethical implications of AI technologies in Islamic Religious Education. Ethical principles identified from the AI governance literature were systematically mapped onto these Maqasid dimensions to determine their compatibility and relevance. For example, issues related to academic integrity, critical thinking, and intellectual

autonomy were associated with the preservation of intellect, while concerns regarding privacy and data protection were linked to the preservation of human dignity and social welfare. This integrative mapping process facilitated the construction of a conceptual framework that reflects both contemporary technological realities and Islamic ethical principles.

To enhance the credibility and rigor of the conceptual analysis, the study employed source triangulation by comparing findings from educational technology research, AI ethics guidelines, Islamic educational literature, and Maqasid al-Shariah scholarship. Triangulation is widely recognized as a strategy for improving the trustworthiness of qualitative research by validating interpretations across multiple sources of evidence. Through the integration of diverse theoretical perspectives, the study aimed to minimize conceptual bias and ensure a comprehensive understanding of the ethical challenges associated with AI implementation in Islamic Religious Education. The final outcome of the methodological process was the formulation of a conceptual framework that integrates internationally recognized AI ethics principles with the normative objectives of Maqasid al-Shariah. The framework is intended to provide guidance for educators, policymakers, curriculum developers, and higher education institutions in Malaysia seeking to implement AI responsibly while preserving the moral, spiritual, and educational goals of Islamic Religious Education.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the literature revealed that the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into Islamic Religious Education (IRE) presents both significant opportunities and complex ethical challenges. AI technologies have increasingly transformed educational environments by enabling personalized learning, automated assessment, intelligent tutoring systems, predictive analytics, and generative content creation. Within Malaysian higher education institutions, these technologies have become particularly relevant as universities seek to align educational practices with digital transformation initiatives and the demands of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. The findings indicate that while AI can enhance educational efficiency and accessibility, its implementation in Islamic Religious Education requires a carefully designed ethical framework that ensures technological innovation remains aligned with Islamic values and educational objectives.

One of the most prominent findings concerns the potential of AI to improve learning effectiveness in Islamic Religious Education. Adaptive learning systems allow students to engage with educational materials according to their individual learning needs, pace, and preferences. AI-powered platforms can provide immediate feedback, facilitate independent learning, and support students in understanding complex religious concepts. Recent studies have demonstrated that AI-assisted learning environments can enhance student engagement and academic performance by creating more interactive and responsive educational experiences (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). In the context of Islamic education, AI technologies may assist learners in accessing religious resources, understanding classical Islamic texts, and exploring diverse scholarly interpretations more efficiently than conventional methods. Such developments support the broader objective of educational innovation while maintaining the relevance of Islamic education in a rapidly evolving digital society.

Despite these benefits, the analysis identified substantial ethical concerns associated with AI adoption in religious educational settings. One critical issue relates to the reliability and accuracy of AI-generated religious information. Generative AI systems are trained on vast datasets that may contain inaccurate, incomplete, or contextually inappropriate information. Consequently, there is a risk that students may receive interpretations of Islamic teachings that lack scholarly authenticity or fail to reflect accepted religious principles. UNESCO (2023) emphasizes that generative AI tools should not be regarded as authoritative sources of knowledge without human verification and oversight. Within Islamic Religious Education, this concern becomes particularly significant because religious knowledge influences not only cognitive understanding but also moral development and spiritual formation. Therefore, educators must remain actively involved in validating AI-generated content to ensure that religious teachings are conveyed accurately and responsibly.

Another major ethical challenge concerns academic integrity and intellectual development. The widespread availability of AI-based writing assistants and content-generation tools has raised concerns regarding plagiarism, overreliance on technology, and the erosion of critical thinking skills. While AI can facilitate learning processes, excessive dependence on automated systems may reduce students' motivation to engage in independent reasoning and reflective analysis. Islamic educational philosophy places strong

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emphasis on the development of intellectual capacity (*hifz al-'aql*) through critical inquiry, reflection, and the pursuit of knowledge. From this perspective, AI should function as a supportive educational tool rather than a replacement for human intellectual effort. The preservation of intellect, one of the fundamental objectives of Maqasid al-Shariah, requires educational technologies to encourage analytical thinking, creativity, and responsible knowledge acquisition rather than passive consumption of information.

The findings further indicate that privacy and data protection constitute essential ethical considerations in AI-enhanced educational environments. AI systems frequently rely on extensive data collection to generate personalized learning experiences and predictive analytics. Student data may include academic records, behavioral patterns, learning preferences, and personal information. While such data can improve educational outcomes, inadequate safeguards may expose students to privacy violations, unauthorized data sharing, and digital surveillance. International AI ethics frameworks consistently emphasize the importance of privacy protection and informed consent as fundamental ethical principles (Floridi & Cowls, 2019). From an Islamic ethical perspective, the protection of human dignity and personal rights aligns closely with the objectives of Maqasid al-Shariah. Respect for privacy represents an important aspect of preserving individual welfare and preventing harm. Therefore, institutions implementing AI technologies in Islamic Religious Education must establish robust policies governing data collection, storage, and usage to protect students from potential misuse of personal information.

The analysis also highlights concerns regarding fairness and algorithmic bias. AI systems are not inherently neutral; they reflect the assumptions, values, and limitations embedded within their training data and design processes. Biases within AI algorithms may result in unequal treatment, inaccurate recommendations, or discriminatory outcomes affecting certain groups of students. Such concerns are particularly relevant in multicultural societies such as Malaysia, where educational institutions serve students from diverse ethnic, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds. Ethical AI implementation requires mechanisms that ensure fairness, inclusivity, and equal access to educational opportunities. The Islamic principle of justice (*'adl*) provides a strong moral foundation for addressing these challenges. Justice is a central value in Islamic ethical thought and demands that educational technologies operate in ways that promote fairness and prevent discrimination.

Consequently, AI systems used in Islamic Religious Education should be regularly evaluated to identify and mitigate potential biases that may undermine educational equity.

The findings further demonstrate that transparency and accountability are essential components of ethical AI governance. Students and educators often interact with AI systems without fully understanding how decisions are generated or how recommendations are produced. This lack of transparency may reduce trust and limit the ability of users to critically evaluate AI-generated outputs. Ethical AI frameworks developed by UNESCO (2021) and other international organizations emphasize explainability as a key requirement for responsible AI implementation. In Islamic Religious Education, transparency becomes particularly important because educational decisions often involve moral and religious considerations. Educators must be able to explain how AI-generated recommendations are produced and assess whether these outputs align with established religious teachings and educational objectives. Accountability mechanisms are equally important to ensure that responsibility for educational outcomes remains with human educators and institutions rather than being transferred entirely to technological systems.

The conceptual framework developed in this study integrates contemporary AI ethics principles with the five objectives of Maqasid al-Shariah. The preservation of religion (*hifz al-din*) requires AI applications to support authentic religious learning and protect students from misinformation. The preservation of intellect (*hifz al-'aql*) emphasizes the importance of fostering critical thinking and intellectual independence. The preservation of life (*hifz al-nafs*) supports the development of safe and psychologically beneficial learning environments. The preservation of wealth (*hifz al-mal*) highlights the responsible management of educational resources and protection against economic exploitation through technology. The preservation of lineage (*hifz al-nasl*) extends to safeguarding family values, social stability, and ethical conduct in digital environments. Together, these objectives provide a comprehensive ethical framework capable of guiding AI implementation in Islamic Religious Education while maintaining consistency with Islamic moral principles.

The Malaysian context provides a particularly relevant environment for applying this framework. As the country continues to invest in digital transformation and educational innovation, universities face increasing pressure to integrate emerging technologies into teaching and learning processes. However, technological advancement alone cannot

guarantee meaningful educational outcomes. The findings suggest that sustainable AI adoption requires a balance between innovation and ethical responsibility. By integrating Maqasid al-Shariah with internationally recognized AI ethics principles, Malaysian higher education institutions can develop policies and practices that support technological progress while preserving the spiritual, moral, and educational objectives of Islamic Religious Education. This integrated approach contributes not only to responsible AI governance but also to the broader goal of ensuring that technological development serves human well-being and social justice.

4. CONCLUSION

The rapid development of Artificial Intelligence has created transformative opportunities for educational innovation, including within the field of Islamic Religious Education. AI technologies offer substantial benefits through personalized learning, enhanced accessibility, intelligent educational support systems, and improved administrative efficiency. In Malaysian higher education, the growing adoption of AI reflects broader efforts to modernize educational practices and respond to the challenges of the digital era. However, the integration of AI into Islamic Religious Education also introduces significant ethical concerns related to information accuracy, academic integrity, privacy protection, transparency, accountability, and algorithmic fairness. These challenges necessitate the development of ethical guidelines capable of ensuring that technological innovation remains aligned with educational and moral objectives.

This study developed a conceptual framework that integrates internationally recognized AI ethics principles with the objectives of Maqasid al-Shariah. The framework demonstrates that ethical AI implementation in Islamic Religious Education should not be limited to technical considerations but must also address spiritual, moral, and social dimensions of learning. The principles of transparency, accountability, fairness, privacy protection, and human-centeredness correspond closely with the Maqasid objectives of preserving religion, intellect, life, wealth, and lineage. This integration provides a comprehensive foundation for evaluating and governing AI applications within Islamic educational settings.

The study further highlights the importance of maintaining the central role of

educators in supervising, validating, and contextualizing AI-generated content. While AI can enhance learning processes, it should complement rather than replace human judgment, critical thinking, and moral guidance. The preservation of intellectual autonomy and authentic religious understanding remains essential to the objectives of Islamic education.

Overall, the proposed framework contributes to the emerging discourse on ethical AI in religious education by offering a contextually relevant model for Malaysian universities. It provides theoretical guidance for policymakers, educators, and institutional leaders seeking to adopt AI responsibly while safeguarding Islamic values. Future research should empirically validate the framework through case studies, surveys, and stakeholder perspectives to strengthen its practical applicability and support the development of ethical AI policies in Islamic educational institutions.

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