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The Use of Artificial Intelligence in Sharia Studies Learning at Islamic Higher Education Institutions: Opportunities, Challenges, And Ethical Boundaries

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Abstract. This article aims to analyze the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in teaching and learning Sharia studies at Islamic higher education institutions, focusing on the opportunities, challenges, and ethical boundaries associated with its use. This study employs a qualitative method with a library research approach through a critical examination of journal articles, books, and other scholarly literature relevant to AI in higher education, generative AI, digital literacy, academic integrity, technology ethics, and Sharia studies education. The data were analyzed using content analysis. The findings indicate that AI offers significant opportunities to improve access to Sharia related sources, the effectiveness and efficiency of learning, case-based learning in fiqh and uşul al-fiqh, the study of kitab turāth and Arabic language literature, personalized learning, digital literacy, and interdisciplinary studies. However, its use also presents challenges, including hallucinations, inaccuracies in information and references, the reduction of the complexity of Islamic jurisprudence, algorithmic bias, plagiarism, student dependence, and questions concerning scholarly authority. This article concludes that AI may be accepted as a learning support tool, but the information it generates

must be verified. AI cannot replace lecturers or Islamic scholars (ulama) and using AI to issue fatwas without expert verification poses significant risks. Therefore, the application of the human in the loop principle is necessary to safeguard academic integrity, scholarly authority, and ethical responsibility in Sharia studies education.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence; Sharia Studies Learning; Islamic Higher Education; AI Ethics; Generative AI.

INTRODUCTION

The development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has brought significant changes to higher education practices, including teaching and learning processes, the provision of learning resources, feedback, personalized learning, and the development of students' academic abilities. The emergence of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), particularly applications based on large language models (LLMs), has further expanded these possibilities, enabling students to obtain explanations, summaries, examples, translations, and responses to academic questions quickly and interactively. A systematic review of AI in higher education indicates that AI technologies have been applied to various educational functions, although earlier research was more strongly oriented toward technological aspects than pedagogical perspectives and the role of educators (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). The development of LLMs also demonstrates that AI can support educational innovation while simultaneously raising concerns about information reliability, technological dependence, unequal access, and responsible use (Kasneci et al., 2023). Accordingly, AI can no longer be viewed merely as an additional tool in higher education but rather as a technology with the potential to transform the relationship among lecturers, students, knowledge, and the learning process.

In the context of Islamic higher education institutions, these developments have more complex implications because the objects of learning involve not only general knowledge but also Islamic disciplines characterized by distinctive epistemological, normative, and interpretive dimensions. Sharia studies, for example, encompass *fiqh*, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, *qawā'id fiqhiyyah*, *tafsīr al-aḥkām*, *ḥadīth al-aḥkām*, and contemporary Islamic law, all of which require the ability to read texts, understand contexts, compare scholarly opinions, conduct legal analysis, and consider public interests (*maṣlaḥah*). AI offers new opportunities in these processes, such as assisting students in conducting preliminary literature searches, identifying *fiqh* concepts, comparing scholarly opinions, formulating research questions, translating Arabic texts, and obtaining preliminary explanations of legal issues. Research on the use of AI in education indicates that chatbot-based technologies can create more interactive and personalized learning experiences, although their effectiveness largely depends on users' ability to evaluate the quality and accuracy of the information generated (Tlili et al., 2023). Therefore, in Sharia studies education, AI is more appropriately positioned as a *learning assistant* than as an authoritative source that replaces lecturers, classical texts, or students' scholarly reasoning.

These opportunities also create space for pedagogical transformation in Sharia studies education. AI can be used to promote learning that is more adaptive, dialogical, and problem based. For example, students may be asked to use AI to obtain several alternative answers to a fiqh related problem and then verify those answers against the Qur'an, Hadith, fiqh texts, works of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, and contemporary academic literature. In such a model, AI is not the objective of learning but rather an object and instrument for developing *critical thinking*, *source verification*, and *digital literacy*. AI literacy is increasingly regarded as an important component of educational competence because users need not only to know how to operate AI tools but also to understand their capabilities, limitations, risks, and ethical implications (Lintner, 2024). This approach is particularly relevant to Sharia studies education because students are expected not merely to obtain legal information but also to evaluate sources, understand legal arguments, conduct *taḥqīq al-manāṭ*, distinguish stronger from weaker scholarly opinions, and academically justify their legal conclusions.

Nevertheless, the use of AI in Sharia studies education also presents epistemological and pedagogical challenges that cannot be overlooked. Generative models can produce answers that appear convincing but contain factual errors, inaccurate references, oversimplifications of differences among scholarly opinions, or information lacking a clear evidentiary basis. These problems become particularly serious when AI is used to address religious issues that require precision in understanding Arabic texts, historical contexts, *istinbāt* methodologies, and the structure of legal reasoning. Studies of ChatGPT in education have identified concerns related to information accuracy, misleading information, privacy, manipulation, academic honesty, and inappropriate use (Tlili et al., 2023). Consequently, excessive dependence on AI may shift learning from activities involving understanding and reasoning toward merely obtaining instant answers. In the context of Sharia studies, such a condition may weaken students' abilities in *taḥqīq*, *tahlīl*, *tarjīh*, and *istinbāt* if they accept AI-generated outputs without verifying the underlying primary sources and methodologies.

Beyond epistemological concerns, the use of AI also poses significant challenges to academic integrity and educational ethics. Students may use AI to prepare papers, complete assignments, formulate legal arguments, or answer examinations without genuinely understanding the material being studied. Research on the use of ChatGPT in higher education indicates that AI can provide benefits in terms of student engagement and accessibility while simultaneously raising concerns regarding academic honesty, plagiarism, and the difficulty of distinguishing students' own work from AI-generated outputs (Cotton et al., 2024). Research on higher education institutions' responses to GenAI also indicates that institutions have begun developing policies to regulate AI use, particularly with regard to academic integrity, learning processes, and responsible use (Dabis & Csáki, 2024). From the perspective of Islamic education, these issues should not be understood solely within the framework of *academic integrity* but should also be associated with the values of *amānah* (trustworthiness), *ṣidq* (truthfulness), *mas'ūliyyah* (responsibility), and respect for the process of acquiring knowledge. Therefore, the ethical boundaries of

AI use in Sharia studies education need to be clearly formulated so that technology strengthens the educational process rather than replacing the intellectual and moral responsibilities of students and lecturers.

Against this background, there is a need to develop a framework for the use of AI in Sharia studies education that brings together technological innovation with the epistemological characteristics of Islamic law and the principles of academic ethics. International literature on AI in higher education has extensively examined its benefits, risks, AI literacy, academic integrity, and institutional policies; however, studies specifically connecting AI use with the distinctive characteristics of Sharia studies education at Islamic higher education institutions remain relatively limited. This gap is important because Sharia studies education has specific requirements that distinguish it from other academic disciplines, particularly with regard to source authority, the validity of legal evidence, *istinbāt* methodology, diversity among legal schools, socio-historical context, and moral responsibility in formulating legal conclusions. Therefore, this article aims to analyze the use of AI in Sharia studies education at Islamic higher education institutions by focusing on three main dimensions: the opportunities AI offers for improving the quality and effectiveness of learning; the epistemological, pedagogical, and academic challenges it creates; and the ethical boundaries necessary to ensure that its use remains consistent with the principles of academic integrity and the values of Islamic education. Through this approach, AI is expected not to be positioned as a substitute for human scholarly authority but rather as a supporting instrument whose use remains governed by scholarly methodology, source verification, critical reasoning, and ethical responsibility.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on Artificial Intelligence (AI) in higher education initially focused largely on the application of technology to improve learning effectiveness, educational personalization, intelligent tutoring systems, assessment, and administrative support. Through a systematic review of research on AI in higher education, Zawacki-Richter et al. (2019) demonstrated that AI has considerable pedagogical potential, although research at that time was relatively more oriented toward technological perspectives than pedagogical perspectives and the role of educators. This finding is important because integrating AI into education involves not only technological capabilities but also how the technology is positioned within the relationship among lecturers, students, curricula, and learning objectives. With the emergence of *generative AI* and *large language models* (LLMs) such as ChatGPT, the functions of AI have expanded from relatively structured learning systems to technologies capable of generating texts, explaining concepts, providing feedback, simulating dialogue, and assisting with various academic tasks. Accordingly, the literature indicates a shift from AI as a learning support system toward AI as an interactive partner in the knowledge-construction process.

Several studies indicate that *generative AI* offers significant opportunities to improve the quality of learning in higher education. Kasneci et al. (2023) explain that LLMs can provide personalized learning support, assist students in understanding

concepts, generate ideas, provide feedback, and support academic writing. Tlili et al. (2023) similarly demonstrate that ChatGPT can provide benefits for learning interactions, although these benefits must be considered alongside concerns regarding accuracy, bias, privacy, and technological dependence. Literature specifically examining the use of ChatGPT in higher education has also identified opportunities for assessment innovation, instructional support, distance learning, research design, academic writing, and academic productivity (Sok & Heng, 2024). These findings provide a theoretical basis for understanding AI as a form of *cognitive and learning support* for students. In Sharia studies education, these possibilities can be contextualized to assist students in understanding fiqh terminology, translating Arabic texts, identifying concepts in *uṣūl al-fiqh*, comparing scholarly opinions, formulating research questions, and conducting preliminary exploration of Islamic legal issues. However, such functions should be positioned as support for the learning process rather than as a replacement for students' *istinbāṭ* and legal reasoning.

Although AI offers pedagogical opportunities, the literature also reveals serious epistemological concerns associated with its use. Generative models do not always produce accurate information and may provide answers that appear linguistically convincing but are substantively incorrect. Kasneci et al. (2023) emphasize that one of the major concerns surrounding LLMs is their potential to generate inaccurate, biased, or misleading information. Tlili et al. (2023) likewise demonstrate that the use of chatbots in education needs to be accompanied by critical evaluation of the outputs they generate. This issue becomes particularly important when AI is used in Sharia studies because the validity of Islamic legal knowledge is determined not only by the coherence of an answer but also by the validity of its sources, the accuracy of textual interpretation, the methodology of *istinbāṭ*, the context of the issue, and the quality of legal reasoning. AI-generated answers that conflate different schools of Islamic jurisprudence, provide inaccurate references, or oversimplify differences of opinion may lead to *epistemic errors* in the learning process. Therefore, AI literacy in Sharia studies education should encompass not only the ability to use AI tools but also the ability to verify primary sources, evaluate arguments, compare scholarly opinions, and distinguish between information that may be used for exploratory purposes and knowledge that can be academically justified.

Another major issue emphasized in the literature is academic integrity. Cotton et al. (2024) demonstrate that ChatGPT presents new challenges to academic practices because students may use it to generate texts or complete assignments without engaging in the intellectual processes that should constitute part of learning. This issue extends beyond conventional notions of plagiarism to more fundamental questions concerning intellectual ownership, the authenticity of students' work, and the validity of assessment. Excessive use of AI may enable students to obtain academic outcomes without genuinely experiencing the learning process. Consequently, the literature emphasizes the need to reconsider assessment strategies, institutional policies, and AI literacy among both lecturers and students. In Sharia studies education, the issue of integrity is even more complex because students' competencies should not be assessed solely on the basis of final products such as

papers or written answers, but also on their ability to read sources, understand *dalil*, formulate *ta'lim al-aḥkām*, conduct comparative analysis, and justify the process through which legal conclusions are reached. Therefore, AI use should be directed toward supporting these processes rather than taking over the intellectual activities that constitute the core of Sharia studies education.

The literature on AI in education increasingly positions AI literacy and ethics as essential components of technological integration. AI literacy does not merely refer to the technical ability to operate AI applications but also encompasses an understanding of how AI works, its limitations, the evaluation of AI-generated outputs, awareness of bias and privacy issues, and responsibility in its use. A systematic review of AI literacy among higher education students demonstrates that AI literacy is necessary for students to use technology effectively while also understanding its ethical implications (Mahadewi et al., 2025). Literature on AI ethics in education has likewise identified issues such as algorithmic bias, privacy, transparency, accountability, and institutional policy gaps (Yan et al., 2025). In the context of Islamic higher education, these ethical dimensions can be further developed through the values of *amānah* (trustworthiness), *ṣidq* (truthfulness), *mas'ūliyyah* (responsibility), *adab al-'ilm* (ethics of seeking knowledge), and respect for scholarly authority. From this perspective, the use of AI in Sharia studies education should not be evaluated solely by asking whether the technology is effective, but also whether its use preserves the integrity of the knowledge-acquisition process, academic responsibility, honesty, and the position of human beings as subjects responsible for evaluation and decision-making.

Based on this review, research on AI in higher education has developed considerably, particularly in relation to pedagogical benefits, ChatGPT use, academic integrity, AI literacy, and the ethics of technology use. Nevertheless, a contextual and epistemological research gap remains in studies of AI use in Sharia studies education at Islamic higher education institutions. Most international literature discusses AI in higher education in general and has not specifically addressed the distinctive characteristics of disciplines grounded in religious texts, source authority, *uṣūl al-fiqh* methodology, diversity among schools of Islamic jurisprudence, and moral responsibility in the formulation of Islamic legal conclusions. There is therefore a need to develop a perspective that not only adopts existing frameworks for AI in general education but also adapts them to the epistemological characteristics of Sharia studies. This article conceptualizes AI use through three interconnected dimensions: pedagogical opportunities, epistemological and academic challenges, and ethical boundaries. This framework enables AI to be understood as an instrument of *cognitive augmentation* that can support the learning process while remaining under the supervision of students and lecturers through source verification, critical reasoning, scholarly methodology, and ethical principles. This position further emphasizes that the central question is not simply whether AI may be used in Sharia studies education, but rather for what purposes, at which stages of learning, through what verification mechanisms, and within what limits AI may be used without undermining human intellectual authority and ethical responsibility.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative method with a library research approach to analyze the use of *Artificial Intelligence* (AI) in Sharia studies education at Islamic higher education institutions, particularly in relation to its pedagogical opportunities, epistemological and academic challenges, and ethical boundaries. The research data consist of journal articles, books, and other relevant scholarly literature. Sources were selected based on their relevance to the research focus, academic quality, recency, and direct connection to issues concerning AI in education. The data were analyzed using content analysis by identifying, categorizing, comparing, and interpreting findings from the literature according to three main themes: (1) the opportunities offered by AI to improve the effectiveness and quality of Sharia studies education; (2) epistemological, pedagogical, and academic integrity challenges; and (3) ethical boundaries for AI use based on principles of academic responsibility and the epistemological characteristics of Sharia studies. The library research approach was selected because it enables the study to systematically synthesize existing knowledge while critically examining the trends and research gaps identified in previous studies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Opportunities for Using AI in Sharia Studies Learning

The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), particularly generative AI based on large language models (LLMs), offers opportunities to expand students' access to Sharia-related sources in a rapid and flexible manner. AI can assist students in conducting preliminary searches for fiqh concepts, *uṣūl al-fiqh* terminology, schools of Islamic jurisprudence, *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* themes, and contemporary Islamic legal literature. AI's ability to summarize and organize information can also help students identify connections among various sources that would previously have required considerable time to locate manually. A systematic review of ChatGPT use in Arab higher education indicates that one of the major benefits of this technology is its capacity to support learning, skills development, writing, and translation. Nevertheless, AI should still be positioned as a means of preliminary exploration rather than as an authoritative source; therefore, any information related to Islamic law should be reverified through primary sources and credible academic literature (Assad & Alomari, 2026).

AI also has the potential to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of Sharia studies education by helping students obtain explanations, examples, summaries, practice questions, and feedback quickly. In fiqh learning, for example, students can ask AI to explain a concept at a basic level and then develop the discussion toward more complex levels of analysis. Lecturers can also utilize AI to develop teaching materials, formulate discussion questions, create case simulations, or provide varied exercises aligned with learning outcomes. The literature on LLMs in education indicates that these technologies can support learning interactions, feedback, and the development of learning materials in more flexible ways (Kasneci et al., 2023). More recent research on AI in higher education also indicates that the impact of AI on student engagement is strongly influenced by how the technology is integrated with

teaching methods. Therefore, technological efficiency should not be separated from lecturers' pedagogical design (Long et al., 2026).

AI can be utilized to develop more contextualized learning in *fiqh* and *uṣūl al-fiqh* through a *case-based learning* approach. Students can be presented with contemporary issues and then use AI to obtain alternative perspectives or preliminary formulations of the problems. They can subsequently be guided to evaluate AI-generated responses using legal evidence (*dalīl*), *fiqh* maxims, *istinbāṭ* methods, scholarly opinions, and the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* approach. In this way, AI does not function as a fatwa-generating machine but rather as an intellectual *sparring partner* that encourages students to engage in analysis, critique, verification, and *tarjih*. This approach is consistent with the view that LLMs can support learning and knowledge exploration, while their outputs need to be critically evaluated because their quality and accuracy may vary (Kasneci et al., 2023). In Sharia studies education, this model can strengthen students' ability to distinguish between legal information, legal argumentation, and the process of determining legal rulings.

One particularly relevant opportunity for Sharia studies education is the use of AI to assist students in engaging with *kitab turāth* and Arabic-language literature. AI can be used to assist with text translation, vocabulary explanations, grammatical structure identification, preliminary explanations of *fiqh* terminology, and comparisons of how particular terms are used in different contexts. These capabilities can reduce linguistic barriers that students frequently encounter when reading classical and contemporary Arabic literature. Research on ChatGPT use in higher education in Arab countries indicates that writing and translation are among the major benefits identified in the literature, while research on AI assisted Arabic language learning also demonstrates growing opportunities for the use of AI in language education at the university level (Assad & Alomari, 2026; Salmas & Zubaidah, 2026). Nevertheless, when dealing with *turāth* texts, AI should primarily serve as a preliminary comprehension tool because the nuances of classical Arabic, technical terminology, historical contexts, and differences in meaning across schools of Islamic jurisprudence still require examination of the original texts and guidance from qualified lecturers or experts.

AI also creates opportunities for developing more personalized and adaptive Sharia studies education because students can interact with AI systems according to their respective levels of knowledge, needs, and learning difficulties. For example, students who have not yet understood the basic concept of *qiyās* can request simple explanations and concrete examples, whereas students who have already mastered the concept can use AI to discuss *qiyās* in more complex contemporary legal cases. AI systems can also provide follow-up questions, exercises, dialogue simulations, and feedback tailored to users' responses. A recent systematic review of AI-based personalized learning in higher education indicates that developments in AI have led to the integration of *machine learning*, *natural language processing*, *intelligent tutoring systems*, and LLMs to create more adaptive learning experiences (Peng & Li, 2025). Research on ChatGPT use in Arab higher education also identifies *personalized learning* as one of the major benefits of AI (Assad & Alomari, 2026).

The integration of AI into learning can also serve as a means of enhancing the digital literacy of Sharia studies students. In this context, digital literacy does not merely refer to the ability to operate AI applications but also encompasses the ability to formulate effective *prompts*, evaluate AI-generated outputs, identify potential errors or biases, verify references, compare AI-generated answers with academic sources, and understand the limitations of the technology. Sharia studies students with strong AI literacy can learn to use technology critically without losing their ability to engage with primary sources and conduct independent reasoning. This is important because the rapid development of AI requires higher education institutions not only to teach students how to use the technology but also how to evaluate the quality of the information it generates. Research on AI in Arab higher education indicates that the use of ChatGPT offers benefits for skills development and learning experiences but simultaneously requires pedagogical adaptation and attention to ethical issues (Assad & Alomari, 2026). Therefore, AI literacy should become an integral component of the academic competencies of Sharia studies students in the digital era.

Another important opportunity is AI's capacity to create space for more interdisciplinary learning in Sharia studies. AI enables students to connect perspectives from *fiqh* and *uṣūl al-fiqh* with other fields such as economics, information technology, medicine, environmental studies, communication, positive law, and the social sciences. For example, students can analyze *fintech* from the perspective of Islamic commercial jurisprudence while simultaneously examining technological and digital economic dimensions; investigate Islamic bioethics by connecting *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* with medical science; or analyze AI regulation by bringing together Islamic law, positive law, technology ethics, and computer science. A systematic review of AI based personalized learning indicates that developments in AI are not limited to personalized learning but may also strengthen collaboration and interdisciplinary approaches in higher education (Peng & Li, 2025). Moreover, the development of research on GenAI in higher education demonstrates the need for multidimensional research and cross-disciplinary collaboration to develop a more comprehensive understanding and application of the technology (Ogunleye et al., 2024). In the context of Sharia studies, this opportunity is important for developing students who not only understand Islamic law normatively but are also capable of connecting Sharia principles with the complexity of contemporary issues.

Challenges of Using AI in Sharia Studies Learning

One of the major challenges associated with the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), particularly generative AI, in Sharia studies education is the possibility of hallucination, which occurs when AI generates information that appears linguistically convincing but is factually inaccurate. In the context of Sharia studies, this problem has more serious consequences because errors may occur not only in general information but also in Qur'anic verses, Hadith quotations, Hadith numbers, translations, book titles, or the attribution of scholarly opinions. Research examining ChatGPT-generated outputs demonstrates that users need to scrutinize the completeness and relevance of AI-generated references because the system may

produce inadequate or unverifiable citations (Franzoni Velázquez et al., 2024). Recent research on AI in the context of Islamic knowledge further emphasizes that Islamic knowledge environments require strong source grounding, citation accuracy, and the ability to preserve differences among schools of Islamic jurisprudence. Therefore, AI generated answers to Sharia related questions should not be accepted merely on the basis of linguistic fluency or apparent argumentative coherence. Every Qur'anic verse, Hadith, legal maxim, and scholarly opinion generated by AI should be verified against primary sources and credible Islamic scholarship.

The next challenge concerns the question of AI's authority in Islamic knowledge and law. AI is essentially an information provider that processes and generates responses based on patterns within data. It is not a legal authority possessing scholarly competence, moral responsibility, or legitimate authority to determine Islamic rulings. This distinction is crucial in Sharia studies education because Islamic law involves more than the ability to locate information. It also requires understanding legal evidence, *istinbāt al-aḥkām*, *taḥqīq al-manāt*, considerations of public interest, social context, and accountability for legal conclusions. Therefore, AI should not be placed on the same level as lecturers or Islamic scholars (*ulama*) as a source of scholarly authority. AI can assist students in obtaining preliminary information, developing questions, or comparing arguments, but final validation and evaluation must remain with human beings who possess the necessary scholarly competence. The literature on ChatGPT in education also demonstrates that AI has substantive limitations and therefore needs to be integrated with pedagogical methods and human evaluation rather than replacing academic interaction (Crompton & Burke, 2024). Accordingly, within the structure of Sharia studies education, the ideal position of AI is as an epistemic support tool, while lecturers and *ulama* remain mentors and scholarly authorities in the process of understanding, critically evaluating, and interpreting Sharia knowledge.

AI also has the potential to reduce the complexity of Islamic law because generative models tend to provide concise, direct, and seemingly singular answers to issues that are actually multidimensional. In fiqh, a particular issue may involve *ikhtilāf al-fuqahā'* (juristic disagreement), differences in madhhab methodologies, variations in social context, different understandings of the legal *'illah*, considerations of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, and different methods of *istinbāt*. When students ask AI about the ruling on a particular issue and receive a single answer without an explanation of differing scholarly opinions, they risk developing a simplistic understanding of fiqh and assuming that every Islamic legal issue has one definitive answer. In fact, understanding why a particular scholar arrived at a particular ruling is often more important than merely knowing what the ruling is. Therefore, the use of AI in fiqh education should be directed toward exploring *ikhtilāf*, comparing evidence and methodologies, and critically evaluating arguments rather than merely obtaining instant answers. A systematic review of ChatGPT research in education demonstrates that the benefits of AI must always be considered alongside its limitations, including concerns about information quality and the need for critical evaluation of AI-generated outputs (Albadarin et al., 2024).

The use of AI also presents significant challenges to academic integrity, as students may employ AI to produce papers, answer examination questions, formulate fiqh arguments, or complete assignments without engaging in the intellectual processes that constitute the actual objectives of learning. The issue is not merely whether the use of AI constitutes plagiarism, but also whether students genuinely possess the knowledge and skills reflected in the work they submit. Research examining the perceptions of students and lecturers indicates that AI use has generated concerns about academic integrity while also highlighting the need to develop mechanisms for responsible AI use (Karkoulou et al., 2025). Other research has likewise demonstrated the relationship between the use of AI chatbots and academic integrity concerns in higher education (Khan et al., 2024). In Sharia studies education, this issue becomes particularly important because academic tasks such as analyzing *āyāt al-aḥkām*, conducting *takhrīj al-ḥadīth*, comparing madhhabs, analyzing *qawā'id fiqhiyyah*, and developing legal arguments should demonstrate students' own intellectual abilities. Therefore, AI use should be accompanied by transparency, disclosure of AI use, source verification, and assessment designs that evaluate students' reasoning processes rather than merely their final products.

Another challenge is the emergence of student dependence on AI as a source of instant answers. The ease of obtaining immediate responses may lead students to reduce activities such as reading classical texts, searching academic literature, verifying legal evidence, discussing issues with lecturers, and conducting independent analysis. In the long term, such dependence may weaken *critical thinking*, *problem-solving* abilities, and academic independence. This issue is particularly relevant to Sharia studies because students' competence is determined not only by their ability to obtain information but also by their ability to understand texts, conduct analysis, formulate arguments, and take responsibility for legal conclusions. The literature on ChatGPT in education identifies excessive dependence as one of the important risks associated with the use of this technology (Kasneci et al., 2023). Accordingly, the principle that should be developed is AI-assisted learning rather than AI dependent learning. Students should use AI to expand exploration and obtain feedback, then return to primary sources, academic literature, and guidance from lecturers to evaluate the results. Through this approach, AI functions as cognitive support that strengthens students' thinking processes rather than replacing those processes.

The final challenge concerns the possibility of algorithmic bias in Islamic knowledge provided by AI. AI models are trained on datasets that do not necessarily represent the entire Islamic scholarly tradition in a balanced manner. The dominance of particular languages, limited representation of classical Arabic literature, differences in the quality of digitized sources, the tendency of AI systems to rely on popular rather than scholarly sources, and the predominance of particular perspectives may influence the answers generated. In the context of fiqh, such biases may lead AI to present one particular madhhab perspective or interpretation more frequently while overlooking other views that have strong methodological foundations. A systematic study of *debiasing* in educational algorithms demonstrates that algorithmic bias is a substantive problem requiring contextual approaches and

mechanisms for evaluating fairness (Idowu, 2024). Therefore, Sharia studies students need to recognize that AI-generated answers do not constitute a neutral representation of the entire Islamic intellectual tradition. AI use should be accompanied by source criticism, cross-madhab and cross-literature comparison, and verification against primary sources. In this context, the challenge posed by AI is not merely the possibility of generating incorrect answers but also the possibility of producing answers that are partial, biased, or unrepresentative of the diversity of Islamic legal epistemologies. This reinforces the importance of involving lecturers and *ulama* as human-in-the-loop actors to ensure that AI use remains within the boundaries of scholarly rigor and Sharia ethics.

Ethical Boundaries of AI Use in Sharia Studies Learning

In Sharia studies education, the use of *Artificial Intelligence* (AI) is generally acceptable when it is positioned as a learning support tool (*learning assistant*), rather than as a substitute for students' thinking processes. AI can be used to assist students in generating initial ideas, explaining concepts, producing summaries, translating texts, formulating discussion questions, conducting case simulations, or providing preliminary feedback on an argument. The literature on *generative AI* in higher education indicates that this technology has the potential to support learning, academic interaction, and skills development, but these benefits depend heavily on how AI is integrated with learning theories and pedagogical practices (McGrath et al., 2025). In the context of Sharia studies, AI may appropriately serve as a learning support tool as long as students remain the primary subjects who read sources, understand legal evidence, conduct analysis, and formulate conclusions. Accordingly, the appropriate principle is not *AI-dependent learning* but AI-assisted learning, in which AI expands learning capacity without taking over students' intellectual responsibility (McGrath et al., 2025).

A further boundary is necessary when AI is used as a source of information. AI can provide preliminary information concerning Qur'anic verses, Hadith, *fiqh*, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, and scholarly opinions, but such information cannot automatically be accepted as accurate. Generative models can produce outputs that appear convincing while containing errors, omissions, or information that is difficult to verify. Therefore, Sharia studies students need to apply the principle of source verification to any information that has academic or legal implications. Qur'anic verses should be checked against reliable editions of the Qur'an and authoritative works of tafsir. Hadith should be traced to recognized Hadith sources and *takhrīj* literature. Scholarly opinions should be verified against the original books or academic works in which those opinions are documented. Systematic research on AI in education indicates that accuracy, reliability, and limitations of AI-generated outputs are important concerns that require serious attention (Albadarin et al., 2024). Similarly, research on the ethical challenges of GenAI emphasizes the importance of human oversight and evaluation mechanisms for AI-generated outputs (García-López & Trujillo-Liñán, 2025). Thus, AI may serve as an entry point to information, but it should not be regarded as the endpoint of scholarly verification.

In Sharia studies education, AI should not be positioned as a substitute for lecturers or *ulama* because there is a fundamental distinction between the ability to generate information and scholarly authority. AI processes patterns of information and generates responses through computational models, whereas lecturers and *ulama* possess scholarly competence, interpretive experience, contextual understanding, and academic and moral responsibility for the explanations they provide. Research on AI in higher education indicates that the development of generative chatbots raises fundamental questions about the relationship between technology, learning, and the human role in education (McGrath et al., 2025). Recent research on the epistemic implications of GenAI also highlights tensions between *cognitive offloading* and students' critical autonomy. Uncritical AI use may weaken students' epistemic engagement in the learning process (Suazo et al., 2026). Therefore, in Sharia studies education, the ideal relationship is one in which AI supports lecturers and students rather than replacing lecturers and *ulama*. Lecturers continue to play essential roles as *mentors*, facilitators, evaluators, and guides to scholarly methodology, while AI functions as a supporting instrument in the learning process.

A stricter boundary is required when AI is used to provide answers that are treated as *fatwas* or Islamic legal rulings. AI can assist students in exploring different opinions concerning a particular issue, but treating AI-generated output as a final *fatwa* without expert examination constitutes a significant risk. A *fatwa* is not merely a process of finding information about "the ruling on a particular issue". It involves understanding *taṣawwur al-mas'alah*, identifying relevant evidence, analyzing the *'illah*, applying legal maxims, considering *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, examining the social context, and assessing the concrete circumstances of the person seeking the *fatwa*. Since AI does not possess the moral and religious responsibility of a *mufti* or Islamic legal expert, AI generated output cannot automatically be regarded as a *fatwa*. From the perspective of higher education, GenAI itself continues to face epistemic limitations and requires human evaluation of the information it produces (Albadarin et al., 2024). Therefore, AI may be used for legal exploration, but legal decisions or *fatwas* must remain subject to verification and evaluation by qualified experts.

These four classifications demonstrate that not all uses of AI in Sharia studies education carry the same level of risk. Using AI to translate Arabic vocabulary, generate practice questions, or conduct *brainstorming* involves relatively low risks. Using AI to explain scholarly opinions or compare madhhabs requires more rigorous verification. By contrast, using AI to generate legal conclusions or *fatwas* involves a substantially higher level of risk. Islamic higher education institutions should therefore develop risk based AI governance for Sharia studies education. Such policies may distinguish between activities that are permitted, permitted with verification, and prohibited. Research on the ethical and regulatory challenges of GenAI demonstrates that AI-related issues in education concern not only accuracy but also privacy, algorithmic bias, inequality, accountability, and the need for comprehensive regulatory frameworks (García-López & Trujillo-Liñán, 2025). In addition, research on student perspectives indicates that understandings of academic integrity in the use of GenAI remain diverse, suggesting that higher education institutions need to provide clear guidance concerning academically acceptable uses of AI (Ying, 2026).

Accordingly, the boundaries of AI use should not be formulated merely around the question of whether AI use is “permitted or prohibited,” but rather according to purpose, function, level of risk, verification requirements, and user responsibility.

Based on these classifications, the most relevant principle for Sharia studies education is human-in-the-loop, meaning that every use of AI that generates substantive information must remain subject to human supervision, evaluation, and responsibility. This principle allows AI to be utilized effectively without granting excessive authority to the technology. Students may use AI to explore an issue, but they must verify sources and formulate their own arguments. Lecturers may use AI to assist in developing teaching materials and assessments, but they must still conduct academic validation, while legal issues requiring *fatwas* must be referred to experts with appropriate Sharia competence. This approach is consistent with emerging literature on AI in education emphasizing the importance of preserving *epistemic agency*, critical thinking, and human cognitive autonomy in the use of GenAI (Suazo et al., 2026). Accordingly, the ethical boundary for AI use in Sharia studies education can be formulated through one fundamental principle: AI may assist in acquiring and developing knowledge, but it must not take over human authority, responsibility, or judgment in understanding and determining Islamic law.

CONCLUSION

The use of *Artificial Intelligence* (AI) in Sharia studies education at Islamic higher education institutions offers substantial opportunities to improve access to scholarly resources, learning effectiveness, case-based learning, engagement with Arabic and *turāth* literature, personalized learning, digital literacy, and interdisciplinary scholarship. However, its use also presents challenges, including *hallucinations*, inaccurate information and references, algorithmic bias, the reduction of fiqh complexity, plagiarism, student dependence, and questions concerning scholarly authority. The literature on AI in higher education indicates that its benefits can be realized optimally only when its use is accompanied by human oversight, AI literacy, academic integrity, and appropriate pedagogical design. In the context of Sharia studies, the boundaries of AI use should be articulated through four positions: AI as a learning support tool is acceptable, AI as an information source requires verification, AI as a substitute for lecturers or *ulama* is inappropriate, and AI as a provider of *fatwas* without expert verification poses epistemological and ethical risks. Accordingly, the central principle governing AI use in Sharia studies education is human in the loop, whereby AI functions as a supporting instrument for expanding learning capacity and knowledge exploration, while scholarly authority, the process of *istinbāt*, critical evaluation, source validation, and moral responsibility remain with lecturers, *ulama*, and students as the principal subjects of the learning process. This approach enables Islamic higher education institutions to embrace AI innovation without compromising academic integrity, methodological depth, and the distinctive epistemological character of Sharia studies.

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