Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Islamic Science: Between the Democratization of Knowledge and Epistemological Challenges

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Abstract

The development of generative artificial intelligence (AI) opens up opportunities to expand access to Islamic knowledge through information retrieval, translation, summarization, and provision of initial explanations. However, ease of access does not automatically guarantee the validity of information and depth of religious understanding. This research aims to analyze the potential of generative AI in supporting the democratization of Islamic knowledge, identify the accompanying epistemological challenges, and propose a conceptual framework for the responsible use of AI. This research uses a literature review with a qualitative approach and critical-conceptual analysis. Relevant literature on generative AI, Islamic scholarship, religious authority, and knowledge verification is analyzed through thematic synthesis. The research results show that generative AI has the potential to facilitate access to Islamic information and support early learning. However, its use presents challenges related to source traceability, understanding of context, accuracy of interpretation, scientific authority, and validation of information. These challenges demonstrate that AI responses cannot automatically be treated as authoritative religious knowledge. As a conceptual response, this study proposes a *Critical Islamic AI Literacy framework* consisting of five stages: *Access, Verify, Contextualize, Evaluate,* and *Reflect* . This framework is expected to serve as a starting point for integrating easy technological access with critical thinking skills and scientific responsibility. However, the framework still requires empirical testing to assess its applicability and effectiveness in various contexts of Islamic education and studies.

Keywords: generative artificial intelligence, Islamic knowledge, epistemological challenges, authority

Introduction

The development of artificial intelligence (*AI*) has transformed the way humans search for, process, and understand information. This technology allows users to obtain explanations on a topic, summarize reading material, translate text, and compile learning materials in a relatively short time (Huang, Hwang, Chen, & Hwang, 2026) . This convenience opens up opportunities for people to access knowledge without always relying on conventional information sources. AI has the potential to drive the democratization of knowledge, namely expanding people's opportunities to obtain and utilize information. However, ease of access does not always equate to quality of understanding. AI-generated answers may contain errors, present incomplete information, or fail to explain the underlying sources. Therefore, the ability to obtain information needs to be balanced with the ability to check and assess its truth.

This issue is crucial in Islamic studies because religious knowledge is not only related to the content of information, but also to the sources, context, methods of interpretation, and the scientific authority that underpins it (Khumaini, 2026) . AI can help users obtain initial information about the Quran, hadith, fiqh, history, and Islamic thought (Makmum, 2025) . This technology can also simplify explanations of complex religious concepts, making them more easily understood by the wider public (SAAZ Putri, Muslimah, & Fauzia, 2026) . However, answers that appear convincing do not necessarily reflect the full range of opinions, historical background, or argumentative basis for a view. When examining the Islamic scientific tradition, understanding a problem requires considering the sources and methods used. The use of AI in Islamic studies should not be judged solely on the speed and ease of obtaining answers, but also on its ability to support a responsible understanding process.

Several studies have examined the use of AI in Islamic education and other Islamic disciplines. Amilusholihah and Ramadhan, through a systematic review, identified the potential of AI to support student understanding, motivation, critical thinking skills, and creativity (Amilusholihah & Ramadhan, 2025) . The study also highlighted ethical issues, privacy concerns, and the changing role of teachers in the learning process. Findings regarding the use of AI in Islamic education are also evident in the study by Wasehudin et al. (2024), which shows that this technology can support learning through personalized materials, automated assessments, virtual tutoring, and the provision of learning content (Wasehudin, Aslihah, Sirojudin, & Yuttana, 2024) . Both studies demonstrate that AI has the potential to enhance the learning process and expand access to religious information. However, these benefits still need to be understood along with the challenges that arise in its implementation.

Discussions on AI in Islamic studies also encompass more fundamental issues, namely the validity of knowledge and religious authority. Ab Rahim et al. (2025), through a study on the use of AI in fatwa issuance, highlight the importance of ethical guidelines and considerations in the use of this technology (Rahim, Rahman, Thaidi, Azimi, & Jailani, 2025) . In the study of hadith, Khamim and Fadhila discuss sanad as an epistemological basis for hadith validation (Khamim & Fadhila, 2026) . Meanwhile, Syarifuddin, through his article, examines changes in Islamic scientific authority in the development of digital technology (Syarifuddin, 2026) . Similar issues are discussed by Fatmal and Ahmad in a critical study of the use of ChatGPT as a religious authority in hadith studies. In the field of interpretation (Fatmal & Ahmad, 2026) , Bagasharov et al. highlight the capabilities and limitations of AI in interpreting the Quran, particularly regarding the interpreter's authority, the validity of knowledge, and understanding of historical and social contexts (Bagasharov, Zhantaeva,

Khalizhan, Kurmanbayev, & Khaydarov, 2026) . In general, these studies show that the use of AI in Islamic studies concerns not only technical aspects but also how religious knowledge is acquired, examined, interpreted, and accounted for.

Previous research has discussed the use of AI in Islamic learning, fatwa issuance, hadith validation, religious authority, and interpretation of the Qur'an. These various studies provide a foundation for understanding the opportunities and challenges of using AI in Islamic scholarship. However, the relationship between expanding access to knowledge and how users assess the source, context, validity, and authority of information remains an interesting area for further integrated study. The ease of accessing information through AI is not always accompanied by an adequate understanding of its basis and context. This article uses the concept of epistemic fragmentation as an analytical framework to understand the risks when religious information is received without considering the relationships between the information, its context, and its basis of authority. This concept is not meant to imply that every use of AI results in knowledge fragmentation.

Based on this, this article aims to analyze the role of generative AI in expanding access to Islamic knowledge, the epistemic challenges that accompany it, and the relevance of Islamic scientific principles in addressing it. This article positions AI as a tool to support initial search and understanding that still requires source verification, contextual understanding, and critical assessment.

Methods

Research Design

This research uses a literature review with a qualitative approach and critical-conceptual analysis .

Participants

The research data consists of journal articles and scientific publications relevant to generative AI, Islamic epistemology, religious authority, and knowledge verification.

Research Procedures

The research was conducted through literature searches, selection of relevant sources, identification of main themes, comparison of findings, and preparation of a conceptual synthesis.

Data Collection Technique(s)

Data were collected through documentation and searching of scientific publications based on their relevance to the research focus, particularly the democratization of knowledge, epistemic mediation, scientific authority, and validation of Islamic information.

Data Analysis Technique

The data was analyzed using thematic-critical analysis by grouping the literature based on themes, comparing arguments, and connecting the findings with the principles of verification in Islamic science.

Results

Generative AI and the Democratization of Islamic Knowledge

The results of the literature synthesis indicate that generative artificial intelligence has the potential to expand access to Islamic knowledge through ease of information search, personalized learning, language translation, and providing initial explanations on religious

issues. Hadi (2025) identified several opportunities for using AI in Qur'anic da'wah, including global access, interactive chatbots, digital Qur'anic learning, and reading and memorization assistance (Hadi, 2025) . Falah and Florensia (2025) also demonstrated that AI can support a more personalized and adaptive learning experience (Falah & Florensia, 2025) . Meanwhile, Amrulloh and Rondi (2026) highlighted the potential of AI in accelerating Arabic-Indonesian translation and aiding text comprehension (Amrulloh & Rondi, 2026) . However, accuracy of meaning remains a challenge, especially when the processed text contains religious terms and context-dependent expressions.

This expansion of access is related to changes in the way users search for and process information. Putri et al. (2026) showed that convenience and speed are among the reasons students use AI, although excessive use has the potential to reduce independent thinking (AN Putri, Salsabila, Putri, & Eriana, 2026) . In the context of learning, Amaliyah et al. (2025) reported the contribution of AI to students' communication, presentation, and discussion skills in science learning (Amaliyah, Suroso, Abdullah, Maknun, & Ardiansyah, 2025) . These findings show that AI can support learning activities and help users interact with the material more flexibly. However, the results of this research in the context of general education cannot directly be used as evidence that the use of AI improves the quality of Islamic understanding. In Islamic studies, AI is also used to assist in initial literature searches, linguistic analysis, translation, and summarization of religious information. Fatmal and Fatmal and Ahmad (2026), for example, discuss the use of ChatGPT in the study of hadith, while Bagasharov et al. (2026) outline the potential use of AI to aid in the analysis and comparison of Qur'anic texts (Bagasharov et al., 2026; Fatmal & Ahmad, 2026) . This utilization can help users gain an initial understanding of a problem before conducting further study. However, the results provided by AI still need to be checked based on traceable sources and appropriate scientific methods. An easy-to-understand initial explanation does not always cover all the relevant context or differences of opinion.

The reviewed literature also shows that digital technology supports changes in the way Islamic knowledge is conveyed and received by society. Sholihah et al. discuss the use of digital technology in the documentation and dissemination of hadith, while Syarifuddin (2026) explains that the visibility of religious information in the digital space is also influenced by the platform's distribution mechanisms (Sholihah, Noorhidayati, & Badruzaman, 2027; Syarifuddin, 2026) . This suggests that access to knowledge is not only related to the availability of sources, but also to how the information is presented and discovered by users. Therefore, the high visibility or popularity of religious information cannot be used as a sole measure of its quality and scholarly authority. Overall, the reviewed literature suggests that generative AI has the potential to support the democratization of Islamic knowledge by facilitating information retrieval, bridging language barriers, and assisting early learning. However, this expansion of access does not automatically guarantee the validity of the information or the depth of religious understanding. Thus, the democratization of knowledge in this context is more appropriately understood as expanding opportunities to obtain information, which still needs to be accompanied by the ability to assess sources, understand context, and check the accuracy of explanations.

Epistemic Challenges of AI-Mediated Islamic Knowledge

Despite offering ease of access, the use of AI to acquire Islamic knowledge presents a number of epistemological challenges. Based on the literature synthesis, these challenges relate to source traceability, understanding of context, accuracy of interpretation, scientific authority, and validation of information. These five aspects are interrelated because an answer that is easy to understand is not necessarily supported by clear sources, presented in an adequate context, or has been examined using appropriate scientific methods. First, source traceability becomes an issue when AI responses lack clear references or generate references that are difficult to verify. Aqil (2026) discusses the risks of AI bias and hallucinations in understanding hadith. This situation highlights the importance of verifying whether the generated answers are truly sourced from reliable literature. In the study of hadith, for example, the suitability of the wording or the similarity of the answer to general understanding is not enough to determine the validity of a narration. Users still need to check relevant scientific sources and assessments.

Second, limitations of context and interpretation can influence the understanding of religious texts. AI can help translate, summarize, and compare information, but these results have the potential to reduce historical, social, linguistic, or differences of opinion that are important in interpretation. Bagasharov et al. (2026) discuss the limitations of AI in understanding the context necessary for analyzing the text of the Quran. Additionally, when multiple religious views are presented in a single answer without explanation of the basis for each argument, users may have difficulty distinguishing between the opinions and the context behind them. Third, the use of AI presents issues in assessing scientific authority. Ahmad and Ghafar (2026) explain that AI systems and digital platforms can influence the interpretations presented and those deemed authoritative in explaining religious texts (Ahmad & Ghafar, 2026) . Syarifuddin (2026) also discusses the relationship between traditional religious authority and the visibility of information in digital spaces. These findings do not necessarily indicate that the authority of the ulama has been replaced. However, this demonstrates the importance of distinguishing explanations generated by AI systems from the opinions of experts with proven scientific competence and foundations. In Islamic tradition , the assessment of knowledge relies not only on the content of the information, but also on the source, scientific competence, and method of examination. Khamim and Fadhila (2026) place the sanad as one of the epistemological bases for assessing the authenticity of hadith (Khamim & Fadhila, 2026) . Similarly, Sholihah et al. discuss the importance of the sanad, the process of receiving and transmitting hadith (*al-taḥammul wa al-adā'*), and the role of teachers in the tradition of transmitting knowledge (Sholihah et al., 2027) . These principles demonstrate that the ease of obtaining explanations through technology does not eliminate the need for verification processes appropriate to the field of study.

Fourth, a validation gap arises when users accept answers without examining primary sources, comparing references, or seeking assessment from a competent authority. Hidayah et al. (2026) discuss the use of AI to generate religious disinformation, which can complicate the verification process (Hidayah, Murfianti, Purnama, & Fadhilah, 2026) . In such situations, users need not simply assess whether an answer is plausible but also examine the source of the information, the context of the discussion, and its consistency with relevant sources. This need for validation becomes important especially when the information relates to hadith, interpretation, or Islamic legal issues that require special methods and competencies.

These challenges demonstrate that the use of AI in Islamic studies requires an approach that focuses not only on ease of access to information but also on the quality of the assessment process. A summary of the challenges and their implications is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Potential and Epistemological Challenges of AI in Access to Islamic Knowledge

Dimensions	AI Potential	Challenges and implications
Source	Assists in searching and summarizing religious information.	References need to be checked so they can be traced and accounted for.
Context	Assist with translation and presentation of initial explanations.	Summaries need to be checked to ensure they do not omit important historical, social, or linguistic context.
Interpretation	Helps explain and compare religious information.	Differences of opinion need to be examined based on the basis of the argument and the context.
Authority	Expanding access to religious explanations.	AI answers need to be distinguished from the explanations of experts who have scientific competence.
Validation	Supports initial search and comparison of information.	Information needs to be checked through primary sources and appropriate scientific methods.

Source: Author's synthesis based on the literature reviewed .

Table 1 shows that the challenges of using AI relate not only to the accuracy of information but also to how it is understood and evaluated. Source traceability, contextual understanding, interpretive assessment, scholarly authority, and validation are interrelated in determining the quality of religious information. If these aspects are ignored, users risk receiving answers without understanding their basis and limitations. Therefore, ease of access through AI needs to be balanced with critical examination. In Islamic studies, this process is important so that the use of AI continues to pay attention to reference sources, the context of discussion, and relevant scientific methods.

Discussion

Democratization of Knowledge and the Limits of Validity

The democratization of knowledge through generative AI needs to be distinguished from the validity of the information it produces. AI facilitates access to Islamic knowledge through search, translation, summarization, and preliminary explanation. However, ease of access does not guarantee accuracy of information, clarity of sources, or correctness of interpretation. Expanding access opens up learning opportunities, while validity depends on the sources, arguments, and examination methods used. This difference raises questions about how users evaluate the information obtained. AI's coherent and convincing answers may not be supported by adequate references. Users need to check the origin of information, understand its context, and assess the basis of its argument. Without such checks, ease of access risks encouraging passive acceptance of information.

Looking at the context of Islamic science, the assessment of information is closely related to the sources and methods of examination. Khamim and Fadhila (2026) discuss sanad as the epistemological basis for validating hadith, while Syarifuddin (2026) examines changes in religious authority in the digital era. Both studies help explain that obtaining information is not the same as ensuring its credibility. Sanad, for example, plays a role in assessing the transmission of hadith, although this principle cannot be applied identically across all Islamic disciplines. The difference between access and validity can be seen in the use of AI for hadith studies and interpretation. The explanation of hadith still requires examination of the sources

of the narration, while the interpretation of the Qur'an needs to take into account the text, context, and method of interpretation. Makmum (2025) discusses AI generative interpretation, while Aqil (2026) examines AI bias and hallucinations in hadith studies. These two studies can be used as a reference to examine the limitations of AI output in the Islamic field according to the focus of the study.

This discussion shows that expanding access needs to be balanced with the ability to assess information. AI can help with initial search and understanding, but users still need to check sources, compare explanations, and understand context. The validity of Islamic information is not solely determined by the fluency of AI responses, but requires critical assessment based on appropriate scientific methods and, if necessary, consultation with competent experts.

Epistemic Mediation, Fragmentation, and Islamic Scholarly Authority

Generative AI not only facilitates access to knowledge but also influences how information is presented and understood. In this article, epistemic *mediation* refers to the process by which AI processes information into answers, summaries, translations, or explanations. Users then understand a problem through these representations, without always consulting the original source. Therefore, the selection of information and its presentation are crucial in using AI to study Islam. This mediation can help users understand religious concepts, especially when encountering difficult language or technical terms. However, restating information also has the potential to reduce the visibility of the source, simplify the context, or obscure differences in argument. Bagasharov et al. (2026) discuss the issue of context in AI-assisted interpretation of the Quran, while Aqil (2026) examines bias and hallucination in hadith studies. The study demonstrates the need to examine AI output based on the sources and characteristics of the scientific fields discussed.

This risk can be analyzed through the concept of *epistemic fragmentation* , which is a condition where information is received without adequate understanding of the relationship between the source, context, interpretation, and validation. For example, a user may read a summary of a hadith without tracing the sources of the narration or understanding the relevant differences in judgment. This issue is also related to scientific authority. Ahmad and Ghafar (2026) discuss the limits of interpretation and authority in AI-mediated religious knowledge, while Syarifuddin (2026) examines changes in religious authority in the digital era. These studies help explain why answers that are easily accessible and understandable do not necessarily have an adequate scientific basis. Epistemic fragmentation isn't a guaranteed outcome of every AI use. The risks depend on the information presented and how users examine it. AI can assist in the initial search and comparison of explanations, but it cannot replace the role of teachers, scholars, or experts with expertise in their fields. In the Islamic scholarly tradition, validation of hadith involves examining the narrations and sanad, while interpretation of the Qur'an requires attention to the text, context, and method of interpretation. These principles can serve as a basis for assessing AI output without pitting the technology against Islamic scientific traditions.

Conceptually, epistemic mediation describes how AI presents information, while epistemic fragmentation describes the risks when the relationships between source, context, interpretation, and validation are not adequately understood. This condition can make it difficult for users to assess the credibility of the information and the authority underlying it.

Therefore, the use of AI in Islamic learning needs to be accompanied by the ability to trace sources, understand context, evaluate arguments, and recognize the limits of technology's authority. These needs form the basis for developing the *Critical Islamic AI Literacy framework* in the next section.

Critical Islamic AI Literacy as a Conceptual Response

Challenges of using AI in Islamic studies include examining sources, understanding context, assessing interpretations, and scientific authority. This article proposes a *Critical Islamic AI Literacy framework* based on a synthesis of literature on knowledge access, epistemic mediation, epistemic fragmentation, and verification in the Islamic scientific tradition. This framework includes five stages: *Access, Verify, Contextualize, Evaluate,* and *Reflect* . *Access* means using AI to obtain initial information, not making it the sole source of knowledge. *Verify* emphasizes checking sources and the accuracy of information through credible references. *Contextualize* guides users to understand the text's context, historical background, linguistic aspects, and relevant differences of opinion. *Evaluate* assesses the argumentation, source credibility, and the competence of the person providing the explanation. *Reflect* encourages users to recognize the limitations of AI and the responsibility of using and disseminating Islamic information.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Critical Islamic AI Literacy



Source: Developed by the author based on literature synthesis.

These five stages are interrelated and do not have to occur in a linear fashion. When finding unclear sources or inadequate arguments, users can re-verify or check the context of the information. This framework connects the benefits of AI in expanding access with the need to assess the quality of knowledge. *Access* supports learning opportunities, while *Verify* and *Contextualize* help check sources and understand information. *Evaluate* and *Reflect* emphasize the assessment of argumentation, authority, and the responsible use of information. Thus, AI literacy in Islamic studies encompasses not only technology skills but also the ability to critically and responsibly evaluate information. This framework is still conceptual and has not been empirically tested. Its implementation needs to consider religious knowledge, digital literacy skills, the purpose of using AI, and the characteristics of the problem being studied. Validation of hadith, interpretation of the Qur'an, and learning of fiqh, for example, require different sources and assessment methods. These five stages therefore need to be adapted to the context and needs of the user.

Critical Islamic AI Literacy framework lies in its efforts to connect the use of AI with source checking, understanding context, assessing authority, and scientific responsibility. This

framework is not a substitute for Islamic scientific tradition or a uniform validation procedure for all fields. This framework offers a starting point for the development of critical and responsible AI-assisted Islamic learning. Further research can test its application in Islamic education, hadith learning, interpretation, and digital religious literacy.

Conclusion

This research shows that generative artificial intelligence (AI) has the potential to expand access to Islamic knowledge through information retrieval, translation, summarization, and provision of initial explanations. However, ease of access does not automatically guarantee the validity of information and depth of religious understanding. A literature synthesis identified challenges related to source traceability, contextual understanding, interpretation accuracy, scientific authority, and information validation. These findings emphasize that AI should be positioned as a tool to support learning and initial research, not as a substitute for verification processes or competent scientific authorities. As a conceptual contribution, this article proposes a *Critical Islamic AI Literacy framework* consisting of five stages: *Access, Verify, Contextualize, Evaluate,* and *Reflect* . This framework links expanding information access with source verification, contextual understanding, argumentation assessment, and responsible use of Islamic knowledge. Practically, this framework can serve as an initial foundation for developing more critical and responsible AI-assisted Islamic learning. However, this framework is still conceptual and has not been empirically tested. Further research needs to test its application in Islamic education, hadith studies, Qur'an interpretation, and digital religious literacy. The use of AI needs to be directed not only at facilitating access to knowledge, but also at strengthening the ability to understand, examine, and account for information.

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Conflict of interests

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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