Artificial Intelligence Ethics in the Light of Islamic Jurisprudence: A Critical Analysis of AI's Moral Implications using Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah

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Abstract:
The rapid expansion of Artificial Intelligence (AI) across multiple domains has generated pressing ethical questions concerning accountability, fairness, privacy and the preservation of human dignity. While secular frameworks, rooted in utilitarian or deontological ethics, offer significant insights, they often overlook faith-based moral imperatives. This study critically examines AI's ethical challenges through the lens of Islamic jurisprudence, focusing on the higher objectives of Sharīʿah (*Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah*): preservation of religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*), life (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*), intellect (*ḥifẓ al-ʿaql*), progeny (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*) and wealth (*ḥifẓ al-māl*). Using a qualitative analytical approach, the paper explores how these objectives provide a comprehensive and spiritually grounded framework for assessing AI's moral implications. Case analyses include AI applications in healthcare, finance, education and governance, highlighting both potential benefits, such as enhanced efficiency and accessibility and risks including moral erosion, bias and socio-economic inequality. The research draws upon classical juristic principles, contemporary fatāwā and emerging global AI governance standards to propose a balanced ethical model. Findings suggest that integrating Maqāṣid principles into AI policy can align technological innovation with holistic human welfare, ensuring that AI serves as a tool for benefit rather than harm. The study concludes that Islamic jurisprudence offers a unique and valuable contribution to global AI ethics discourse by embedding technology regulation within a divine moral framework, thereby harmonizing technological progress with enduring ethical and spiritual values.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence, Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah, Islamic Jurisprudence, Ethics, Technology Regulation*

1. Introduction

Artificial Intelligence has transitioned from speculative fiction to a pervasive force shaping economic systems, healthcare, education and governance. Its transformative capabilities raise pressing ethical questions concerning fairness, transparency, autonomy and the potential erosion of human dignity.[3]

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While secular ethics, often rooted in utilitarianism or deontological reasoning, address some of these concerns, Islamic jurisprudence offers a theocentric moral framework grounded in divine revelation and centuries of legal reasoning.

Within the Islamic legal tradition, Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah serves as an overarching ethical compass that informs the formulation and application of rulings. It ensures that legal determinations aim to protect fundamental human interests and prevent harm.[4] This study aims to critically examine the ethical implications of AI through the prism of Maqāṣid, thereby integrating classical jurisprudential insights with contemporary technological challenges.

2. Conceptual Overview: Artificial Intelligence and Ethics

The discourse on Artificial Intelligence (AI) has shifted in recent years from technical feasibility to moral responsibility. In the global policy arena, ethical considerations now dominate discussions of AI governance, as the technology increasingly shapes human experiences, societal structures and even value systems. Ethical inquiry into AI is therefore no longer optional; it is a necessary safeguard against the erosion of human dignity and social justice. As Luciano Floridi observes:

> "*We are creating a new environment in which human agency will be exercised, and if we do not embed our values into its design, they will be absent from its functioning.*"[5]

This call for embedding values resonates with the Islamic tradition, where every technological advancement must be evaluated within a framework that prioritizes the welfare of humanity and the preservation of divine guidance.

Artificial Intelligence ethics is concerned with the moral dimensions of AI's creation, deployment, and societal integration. Anna Jobin, Marcello Ienca and Effy Vayena define it as:

> "*The study of the principles and practices that govern the responsible design, development and use of AI technologies.*"[6]

Such ethics extends beyond technical efficiency to address fairness, transparency, privacy, accountability and the prevention of harm. The *European Commission's "Ethics*

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[4]. Abū Isḥāq al-Shāṭibī, *Al-Muwāfaqāt fī Uṣūl al-Sharīʿah*, Cairo: Dār Ibn ʿAffān, 1997, 302/2

[5]. Luciano Floridi, "Soft Ethics and the Governance of the Digital," *Philosophy & Technology* 31, no. 1 (2018): 1–8

[6]. Anna Jobin, Marcello Ienca, and Effy Vayena, "The Global Landscape of AI Ethics Guidelines," *Nature Machine Intelligence* 1, no. 9 (2019): 389–399

*Guidelines for Trustworthy AI***"** stress that "AI should be lawful, ethical and robust."[7] highlighting an international consensus that technological progress must not compromise human rights.

In contemporary debates, the secular ethical landscape is dominated by utilitarianism—seeking the greatest good for the greatest number—and deontological ethics—focusing on duties and rules. However, as Wendell Wallach and Colin Allen note, these frameworks, while valuable, lack the metaphysical anchoring necessary for a universally binding moral vision.[8] This is precisely where Islamic ethics offers a distinctive contribution: grounding human action in accountability before God, a moral telos that transcends shifting societal norms. In Islamic thought, technology is considered morally neutral, *ḥalāl* or *ḥarām* depending on its intended purpose and actual consequences. As Ibn Taymiyyah states:

> "*The rulings of things are contingent on their purposes and intended outcomes.*"[9]

This aligns closely with the juristic maxim **al-umūr bi-maqāṣidihā** ("*Matters are judged by their objectives*"), which functions as a compass for evaluating any human innovation, including AI.

From this conceptual foundation, it becomes evident that AI ethics cannot be divorced from a holistic understanding of human welfare. While secular guidelines emphasize transparency, inclusiveness and harm prevention, Islamic jurisprudence enriches these with a divine dimension, ensuring that the ultimate measure of "benefit" is not merely societal satisfaction, but conformity with the higher objectives of Sharīʿah (*Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah*). By integrating these objectives into AI governance, Muslim societies can engage with cutting-edge technologies without compromising their moral and spiritual commitments. In doing so, they heed Al-Shāṭibī's timeless reminder that "The lawgiver's intent in all commands and prohibitions is to secure benefits and avert harms."[10]

3. Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah Framework and AI Ethics

The *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah*, literally 'the higher objectives of Islamic law', represent an essential paradigm for evaluating the moral legitimacy of technological advancements,

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[7]. European Commission, *Ethics Guidelines for Trustworthy AI* (Brussels: European Commission, 2019), p.5

[8]. Wendell Wallach and Colin Allen, *Moral Machines: Teaching Robots Right from Wrong*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, p.43.

[9]. Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmūʿ al-Fatāwā*, Riyadh: Dār ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1995), 165/1.

[10]. al-Shāṭibī, *Al-Muwāfaqāt fī Uṣūl al-Sharīʿah*, 302/2

including Artificial Intelligence (AI). Classical jurists, notably Imām al-Shāṭibī, defined the Maqāṣid as those aims that Sharīʿah seeks to preserve in order to ensure human welfare (*maṣlaḥah*) and prevent harm (*mafsadah*). Al-Shāṭibī stated:

> "*The entire Sharīʿah is aimed at achieving benefits for the servants of God in this life and the Hereafter.*"[11]

This approach trans*cen*ds specific rulings to focus on the universal principles that underlie them. Applying the *Maqāṣid* to AI requires not only examining direct benefits and harms but also anticipating long-term social, ethical and spiritual consequences, a task that resonates with the juristic principle "*sadd al-dharāʾiʿ*" (blocking the means to harm) and "*jalb al-maṣāliḥ wa darʾ al-mafāsid*" (bringing benefits and preventing harms).

3.1 Preservation of Religion (Ḥifẓ al-Dīn):

From an Islamic ethical perspective, safeguarding religious belief and practice is paramount. AI systems capable of generating religious content, teaching Qurʾān, or simulating scholarly dialogues must be designed to uphold theological accuracy and respect for sacred symbols. Imām al-Ghazālī emphasizes that:

> "*Faith is the foundation upon which all other objectives stand.*"[12]

AI that distorts Islamic teachings, whether intentionally or due to algorithmic bias, would violate *ḥifẓ al-dīn*. Conversely, AI can serve as a valuable tool for disseminating authentic Islamic knowledge globally, provided that qualified scholars oversee content verification. The Qurʾān warns against speaking about God without knowledge,[13] underscoring the ethical necessity of ensuring AI-generated religious information is accurate and free from misinterpretation.

3.2 Preservation of Life (Ḥifẓ al-Nafs):

The Qurʾān declares:

> *"Whoever saves one life, it is as if he had saved all mankind."* [14]

AI innovations in healthcare; such as predictive diagnostics, robotic surgeries and public health analytics, can embody this *maqṣad* by enhancing life preservation. However, AI also powers autonomous weapon systems and surveillance mechanisms that may threaten life and human dignity. Ibn ʿĀbidīn notes that:

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[11]. Al-Shāṭibī, Abū Isḥāq. *Al-Muwāfaqāt fī Uṣūl al-Sharīʿah*. Cairo: Dār Ibn ʿAffān, 1997, 302/2

[12]. Al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid. *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn*. Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1993, 45/1

[13]. al Ā'rʾāf, 7:33

[14]. al Mā'idah, 5:32

> "*Any action leading to unjust killing is a violation of Sharīʿah objectives regardless of its worldly benefits.*" [15]

Ethical AI governance must therefore prohibit lethal autonomous systems that remove human moral judgment from life-and-death decisions.

3.3 Preservation of Intellect (Ḥifẓ al-ʿAql):

Protecting the human intellect from corruption and deception is a central Sharīʿah aim. The Qurʾān repeatedly calls believers to *"reflect"* and *"use reason"* (e.g., Qurʾān 3:191). AI algorithms that manipulate public opinion, spread misinformation or produce deepfake media undermine rational thought and informed decision-making. Al-Rāzī warns that:

> "*Anything that blinds the intellect from perceiving the truth is among the gravest of harms.*"[16]

Therefore, the development and deployment of AI should include safeguards against manipulative and addictive content that compromises critical thinking.

3.4 Preservation of Progeny (Ḥifẓ al-Nasl):

This objective encompasses the protection of family structure, lineage and moral upbringing. AI-assisted reproductive technologies, genetic data analytics, and parenting aids must comply with Sharīʿah principles that safeguard lineage and marital boundaries. The Prophet ﷺ said:

> *"Whoever attributes himself to other than his father knowingly, Paradise will be forbidden to him."*[17]

Any AI application that risks obscuring biological lineage or enabling unethical reproductive practices would violate this *maqṣad*. Conversely, AI can aid in medical solutions to infertility when used within the bounds of lawful marriage.

3.5 Preservation of Wealth (Ḥifẓ al-Māl):

Economic justice is a core Islamic value. The Qurʾān commands:

> *"Do not consume one another's wealth unjustly."*[18]

AI in finance; such as fraud detection, risk assessment and microfinance facilitation, can support this objective by protecting wealth and promoting equitable growth.

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[15]. Ibn ʿĀbidīn, Muḥammad Amīn. *Ḥāshiyat Radd al-Muḥtār ʿalā al-Durr al-Mukhtār*. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 2003, 327/6

[16]. Al-Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn. *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*. Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1986, 112/5

[17]. Bukhārī, Muhammad bin Ismā'il, Al Jami' al Sahih, Riyadh: Dārussalām, Hadith no. 6766

[18]. Al Baqarah, 2:188

Yet, unregulated AI-driven trading and credit scoring systems may perpetuate economic inequality and violate prohibitions on *ribā* (usury) and *gharar* (excessive uncertainty). As al-Sarakhsī states:

> "*Wealth is a trust from God, to be preserved and not subjected to reckless speculation.*"[19]

Viewing AI ethics through the *Maqāṣid* framework ensures that technology serves humanity's spiritual, moral and material well-being rather than becoming a tool for exploitation or harm. This perspective is not merely restrictive, it actively encourages technological innovation that advances genuine human welfare (*maṣlaḥah ḥaqīqiyyah*) while maintaining accountability before God.

By integrating Sharīʿah objectives into AI governance, Muslim societies can contribute a distinctive ethical vision to the global discourse; one that is holistic, God-conscious and oriented toward both worldly benefit and eternal accountability.

4. Challenges and Contemporary Relevance

The integration of Artificial Intelligence into societal, economic and governance systems has generated new ethical tensions that challenge classical Islamic jurisprudential tools. While *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah* provides an overarching moral compass, its application to AI raises methodological, interpretive and implementation difficulties. The dynamic, self-learning, and often opaque nature of AI systems makes it harder for jurists (*fuqahāʾ*) to foresee every moral implication. This complexity demands renewed efforts in *ijtihād* (independent juristic reasoning) and *tanzīl al-aḥkām* (contextual application of rulings).

First, the problem of technological opacity, often referred to as the "black box" phenomenon; means that even developers cannot fully explain how some AI algorithms reach their conclusions. This challenges the Sharīʿah principle of transparency in decision-making, as the Qurʾān commands:

> *"And do not conceal testimony, for whoever conceals it—his heart is indeed sinful."*[20]

As Jobin, Ienca, and Vayena observe,

> *"The complexity and opacity of machine learning systems pose a challenge to accountability and responsibility"*[21]

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[19]. Al-Sarakhsī, Shams al-Aʾimmah. *Al-Mabsūṭ*. Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifah, 1993, 27/12

[20]. al Baqarah, 2:283

[21]. Jobin, Anna, Marcello Ienca, and Effy Vayena. "The Global Landscape of AI Ethics Guidelines." *Nature Machine Intelligence* 1, No. 9 (2019) p.391

Second, the issue of moral accountability in autonomous AI systems remains unresolved. In classical fiqh, accountability (*taklīf*) is predicated on human intention and awareness (*qaṣd* and *ʿilm*). Ibn Taymiyyah states:

> *"Taklīf is only established upon one who possesses reason and knowledge of what is commanded."*[22]

Autonomous AI, lacking consciousness, cannot bear moral responsibility, thereby shifting all liability to creators, owners and regulators.

Third, the ethical risk of algorithmic bias raises the danger of systemic injustice (*ẓulm*). The Qurʾān explicitly forbids injustice:

> *"Do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness."*[23]

According to Bostrom,

> *"Machine intelligence, if poorly aligned, could exacerbate existing inequalities or create entirely new forms of oppression."*[24]

Fourth, the challenge of global governance complicates the application of Sharīʿah-based ethics. AI systems are transnational, but Islamic jurisprudence is traditionally applied within defined socio-political contexts. The OIC's IF Academy notes:

> *"The pace of AI development requires unprecedented cooperation among Muslim-majority states to harmonize ethical standards while engaging with global regulatory bodies"*[25]

In light of these challenges, it becomes evident that applying *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah* to AI ethics cannot remain a purely theoretical exercise. It requires:

- Proactive fiqh councils engaging with AI experts to anticipate ethical pitfalls.
- Dynamic fatwā mechanisms that can respond to rapid technological changes without compromising Sharīʿah objectives.
- Participation in global AI policy forums to ensure that Islamic moral concerns are represented in shaping the future of technology.

The way forward is not to reject AI due to its challenges, but to embed its governance within an ethical structure that combines the revelatory wisdom of Sharīʿah with the practical insights of contemporary science and policy.

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[22]. Ibn Taymiyyah, Taqī al-Dīn. *Majmūʿ al-Fatāwā*, 165/1

[23]. al Mā;idah, 5:8

[24]. Bostrom, *Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies*, p.259

[25]. OIC-IFA (International Islamic Fiqh Academy). *Resolution on Artificial Intelligence Ethics*. Jeddah: OIC, 2023

5. Conclusion

Artificial Intelligence stands as one of the most transformative technologies of the 21st century, carrying immense potential for societal benefit as well as unprecedented ethical risks. The application of *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah* to AI ethics reveals that the Islamic legal tradition offers not only a spiritual and moral compass but also a pragmatic and universally relevant framework for guiding technological development. The five essentials; preservation of religion, life, intellect, progeny and wealth, address the full spectrum of human welfare (*maṣleḥah*) and harm prevention (*mafsidah*) in ways that resonate with contemporary AI governance principles.

The critical analysis demonstrates that while secular ethical models such as utilitarianism and human rights frameworks emphasize fairness, accountability and transparency, Islamic jurisprudence embeds these principles within a divinely ordained structure of moral responsibility. This makes its guidance deeply rooted in immutable ethical values while still adaptable through *ijtihād* to emerging technological realities.

However, realizing the potential of *Maqāṣid*-based AI ethics requires moving beyond abstract theorization. It demands institutional mechanisms that integrate Islamic juristic scholarship with AI engineering expertise, proactive participation in global AI policy-making, and educational initiatives to cultivate ethically conscious developers and regulators.

In essence, the Islamic ethical approach to AI, anchored in *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah*, offers a holistic moral vision that can safeguard humanity from AI's potential excesses while fostering innovation that aligns with both divine injunctions and the collective good. As technology advances, the enduring challenge will be to ensure that human moral agency, guided by revelation, remains at the heart of AI's design and application.

6. Recommendations

Based on the critical analysis of Artificial Intelligence ethics through the lens of *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah*, the following recommendations are proposed for scholars, policymakers, technologists and Muslim communities:

6.1.Development of Sharīʿah-Compliant AI Frameworks:

Establish national and transnational regulatory guidelines for AI that explicitly incorporate *Maqāṣid* principles. These frameworks should be informed by both Islamic jurisprudential sources and best practices from global AI governance bodies.

6.2.Formation of Interdisciplinary Ethics Councils:

Create permanent councils composed of Islamic jurists (*fuqahāʾ*), AI engineers, ethicists, and policy experts to assess emerging AI applications. These councils should engage in proactive *ijtihād* to address unprecedented ethical scenarios.

6.3.Mandatory Ethical Training for Muslim AI Practitioners:

Integrate Islamic ethics modules, focused on *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah*, *maṣlaḥah* and harm prevention, into the curricula of computer science, data science and AI programs in Muslim-majority countries.

6.4.Global Muslim Engagement in AI Policy-Making:

Actively participate in international AI regulatory forums to ensure that Islamic moral values are represented in shaping global standards for AI development, deployment and oversight.

6.5. Ethical Audit Mechanisms:

Establish independent *Sharīʿah-compliant AI auditing bodies* to evaluate whether AI systems in finance, healthcare, education and governance adhere to both technical safety requirements and Islamic ethical norms.

6.6.Promotion of AI for Public Welfare (*Maṣlaḥah ʿĀmmah*):

Encourage the use of AI in fields such as disaster management, poverty alleviation, public health, and Islamic education, ensuring that its deployment aligns with the broader objectives of human and societal well-being as defined in *Maqāṣid*.