
Epistemic Authority in Islamic Religious Education: Sanad and Talaqqī as Criteria for Assessing Generative AI

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Abstract

Generative artificial intelligence (generative AI) places students of Islamic Religious Education before a source of religious knowledge that carries no chain of transmission. Existing scholarship addresses digital religious authority without entering the classroom, and technology in learning without questioning the knowledge's validity. This study reconstructs sanad and talaqqī into criteria of epistemic authority, tests generative artificial intelligence against them, and draws out the implications for Islamic Religious Education. Methodologically, this conceptual and philosophical-hermeneutic study draws on classical texts of hadith transmission, technological documents, and recent literature drawn from the Scopus database. Directed content analysis yields four criteria: continuity (ittiṣāl), moral integrity ('adālah), accuracy of transmission (ḍabt), and formation (takwīn). Generative artificial intelligence satisfies only accuracy, and only partially. Crucially, three failures are structural and one is contingent. This distinction requires task sorting and reasserting the teacher's standing, not blanket prohibition.

Keywords: Epistemic Authority, Sanad, Talaqqī, Generative AI, Islamic Religious Education.

Otoritas Epistemik Pendidikan Agama Islam: Sanad dan Talaqqi sebagai Kriteria Penilaian Kecerdasan Artifisial Generatif

Abstrak

Kecerdasan artifisial generatif (AI generatif) menempatkan peserta didik Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) di hadapan sumber pengetahuan keagamaan yang tidak memiliki mata rantai penuturan. Literatur yang ada membahas otoritas keagamaan digital tanpa memasuki ruang kelas, dan membahas pemanfaatan teknologi dalam pembelajaran tanpa mempersoalkan keabsahan pengetahuannya. Kajian ini merekonstruksi konsep sanad dan talaqqi menjadi kriteria otoritas epistemik, mengujikannya pada kecerdasan artifisial generatif, serta menarik implikasinya bagi pembelajaran PAI. Sebagai artikel konseptual berpendekatan filosofis-hermeneutik, kajian ini bersumber pada teks tradisi periwayatan, dokumen teknologis, serta literatur mutakhir yang dihimpun dari basis data Scopus. Analisis isi terarah menghasilkan empat kriteria: ketersambungan (ittiṣāl), integritas moral ('adālah), ketepatan penukilan (ḍabt), dan pembentukan (takwīn). Kecerdasan artifisial generatif hanya memenuhi kriteria ketepatan, itu pun sebagian. Temuan pokoknya, tiga ketidakterpenuhi bersifat struktural dan satu kontingen. Perbedaan ini menuntut pemilahan tugas dan penegasan kedudukan guru, bukan pelarangan menyeluruh.

Kata kunci: Otoritas Epistemik, Sanad, Talaqqi, AI Generatif, Pendidikan Agama Islam.

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A. Introduction

A student asks a machine about the legal status of an act of worship and, within seconds, receives an answer that is well ordered and authoritative in tone, backed by no teacher, no chain of transmission, and no one accountable if it proves wrong. Such scenes unfold daily in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) classrooms. This scenario is offered as an illustrative construction rather than a documented case: no published study yet records its precise occurrence in Indonesian or Malaysian IRE classrooms specifically. It is made plausible, however, by broader survey evidence that Muslim students already turn readily to generative systems in religious learning contexts,¹ a trend that renders the scenario not a rhetorical flourish but an anticipated near-term reality. Ibn Sirin's warning that everyone should consider from whom he takes his religion names the principle they violate: validity rests on the chain of those who transmit knowledge, not on the fluency of its phrasing.

This is not an isolated phenomenon. Ironically, at the very moment machines mediate religious questions inside the classroom, the mechanism of sanad itself is undergoing a parallel transformation on the technical side. Data on 650,000 hadith narrators have been released as an open set ready for machine processing. The isnād chains of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim have likewise been restructured into a networked form that can be traced computationally, while the continuity of sanad in disconnected hadith is beginning to be verified through machine learning. The mechanism that for centuries guaranteed that religious knowledge was received only from those worthy of trust has become an object validated by machines, whereas the machine performing that validation possesses no chain of its own. The question therefore shifts from a technical matter to a far more fundamental one: what is it that makes a source of religious knowledge worthy of being called authoritative?

None of this would surprise contemporary Islamic studies, where the transformation of religious authority has been under discussion for two decades. Digital technology had already altered how religious knowledge is conveyed and

¹ Nur Faizin et al., "Muslim Students' Acceptance of Artificial Intelligence in Islamic Religious Education: An Extended TAM Approach," *Discover Education* 4, no. 1 (2025), 304, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44217-025-00767-1>.

received, and how authority itself is constructed online.² In Indonesia, that shift moved authority away from the textual transmission of scholars and pesantren toward digital media transmission that is simultaneously commodified,³ while established religious organisations were pressed to reclaim their position.⁴ Even reference sites managed by anonymous administrators have proved capable of shaping religious interpretation on a wide scale.⁵ A systematic review of seventy-three studies places these developments in a more cautious frame and asks whether what is occurring constitutes a fundamental transformation or merely passing clamour.⁶ Yet this entire conversation rests on one assumption that has never been contested: at the other end there is always a human being. What is debated is which human being has the right to speak, not whether the speaker must be human at all.

That assumption was genuinely unsettled only when generative artificial intelligence (hereafter generative AI) entered the conversation, and the responses that emerged were almost entirely juridical in form. Latifi maps the obstacles to employing generative models in the process of *ijtihād*,⁷ while Atallah constructs a critical framework for fatwa authority mediated by digital technology.⁸ Some authors go further and propose governance for machine-assisted fatwa aligned with *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*.⁹ On the technical side, the reliability deficit is treated as an

² Shaheen Amid Whyte, "Islamic Religious Authority in Cyberspace: A Qualitative Study of Muslim Religious Actors in Australia," *Religions* 13, no. 1 (2022), 69, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13010069>.

³ Moch. Khafidz Fuad Raya, "Digital Islam: New Space for Authority and Religious Commodification among Islamic Preachers in Contemporary Indonesia," *Contemporary Islam* 19, no. 1 (2025): 161–94, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-024-00570-z>.

⁴ Wahyudi Akmaliah, "The Demise of Moderate Islam: New Media, Contestation, and Reclaiming Religious Authorities," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 10, no. 1 (2020): 1–24, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v10i1.1-24>.

⁵ Avi Astor, Ghufuran Khir-Allah, and Rosa Martínez-Cuadros, "Anonymity and Digital Islamic Authority," *Religions* 15, no. 12 (2024), 1507, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15121507>.

⁶ Soleh Hasan Wahid and Syahid Abdulloh, "Digital Islamic Authority: A Revolutionary Shift or Mere Hype? A Systematic Review," *SN Social Sciences* 6, no. 2 (2026), 62, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43545-026-01328-5>.

⁷ Hasan Latifi, "Challenges of Using Artificial Intelligence in the Process of Shi'i Ijtihad," *Religions* 15, no. 5 (2024), 541, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15050541>.

⁸ Fouad Ahmed Atallah, "Digital Mediation and Fatwa Authority in Contemporary Islam: A Critical Islamic Legal and Media-Theoretical Framework," *Religions* 17, no. 3 (2026), 350, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel17030350>.

⁹ Mohamed Rashid Bin Ab Razak, Muhammad Amrullah Bin Drs Nasrul, and Ibrahim Abbas, "Towards a Shari'ah-Compliant Framework for AI-Supported Fatwa in Malaysian Hajj Management: A Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah and Governance Perspective," *Millah: Journal of Religious Studies* 25, no. 1 (2026): 39–80, <https://doi.org/10.20885/millah.vol25.iss1.art2>.

engineering problem: retrieval-augmented systems are designed so that religious answers are anchored to verified sources,¹⁰ and dedicated benchmarks are constructed to measure when a model ought to decline to answer religious questions.¹¹ Both streams are valuable, yet both address muftis and engineers. The learner, who encounters the machine most frequently and is least equipped to evaluate its output, is never addressed.

The only formulation that penetrates beyond this normative layer comes from Dart.¹² He distinguishes epistemic trust from moral and religious trust, then concludes that AI may be accepted as an instrument for retrieving information but cannot bear religious authority because it possesses neither virtue, nor intention, nor accountability an argument he grounds in the Islamic tradition of personal transmission. It is precisely here that the problem animating the present study begins. Dart operates at the level of the online public sphere against a background of misinformation and prejudice, then halts at the normative conclusion that the machine is unfit, without translating that tradition of transmission into criteria that can be applied. Abubakari moves closer by bringing together Islamic epistemology, the capacities of generative models, and their application to hadith verification, though the discussion remains a cross-disciplinary survey.¹³ Both stop short of the two things most needed: operational criteria, and the space in which most young Muslims actually learn their religion.

That space is the classroom and there the literature on religious education has moved in quite another direction, its attention fixed on acceptance, integration, and governance. Cross-national studies map the readiness of Islamic higher

¹⁰ Ahmet Yusuf Alan, Enis Karaarslan, and Omer Aydin, "Improving LLM Reliability with RAG in Religious Question-Answering: MufassirQAS," *Turkish Journal of Engineering* 9, no. 3 (2025): 544–59, <https://doi.org/10.31127/tuje.1624773>.

¹¹ Farah Atif et al., "Sacred or Synthetic? Evaluating LLM Reliability and Abstention for Religious Questions," 2025, 217–26.

¹² Bradley C. Dart, "Epistemic Trust and the Limits of AI Authority in Islam," *Open Theology* 12, no. 1 (2026), 20250069, <https://doi.org/10.1515/opth-2025-0069>.

¹³ Mumuni Sirajo Abubakari, "Generative AI in Contemporary Islamic Religious Education Discourse: Revelation Meets Algorithm," in *Intersections of AI and the Freedom of Religion or Belief* (IGI Global, 2025), 161–200, <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3373-3830-9.ch007>.

education institutions to receive the machine,¹⁴ while others measure Muslim students' acceptance through an extended technology acceptance model.¹⁵ The most recent work has even constructed an artificial intelligence literacy instrument grounded in *adab*, *amānah*, and *tabayyun*.¹⁶ The need is pressing, for cognitive bias in generative models has been shown not merely to be reflected but amplified, affecting users' religious understanding.¹⁷ In that last work, though, the values of tradition function as an ethics of use rather than as a measure of validity. This entire stream assumes that religious knowledge produced by machines is in principle valid, leaving only the question of how to use it safely. The prior question of whether such knowledge is authoritative at all is never posed.

Placed side by side, these three streams reveal a consistent pattern. The literature on religious authority is sociologically rich but does not touch learning. The literature on AI and Islamic law is normatively sharp but does not know the learner. The literature on Islamic religious education is close to the classroom but epistemologically thin. More decisively still, *sanad* and *talaqqī* appear across all three in only two guises: as objects of digitisation, or as rhetorical background mentioned in passing and then abandoned. As the discussion above indicates, Dart comes closest to treating *sanad* as a resource for assessing AI authority, and Abubakari comes closest to linking Islamic epistemology with generative capacities; yet systematic treatments that operationalise *sanad* and *talaqqī* as testable, applied criteria for assessing generative AI specifically within IRE classrooms remain absent. This is so despite the fact that the Islamic tradition has articulated the conditions for accepting transmitted reports in considerable detail, and that

¹⁴ Fatah Syukur et al., "Integration of Artificial Intelligence in Islamic Higher Education: Comparative Responses between Indonesia and Thailand," *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 7, no. 3 (2024): 531–53, <https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v7i3.13>.

¹⁵ Nur Faizin et al., "Muslim Students' Acceptance of Artificial Intelligence in Islamic Religious Education: An Extended TAM Approach," *Discover Education* 4, no. 1 (2025), 304, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44217-025-00767-1>.

¹⁶ Syamsudduha, Suwandi, and Z. A. Tabrani, "ISLAMIC AI LITERACY AS RESPONSIBLE KNOWLEDGE PRACTICE: DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF AILS-IIUS IN INDONESIAN ISLAMIC HIGHER EDUCATION," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 12, no. 1 (2026): 187–201, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v12i1.54254>.

¹⁷ Jing Zhang, Wenlong Song, and Yang Liu, "Cognitive Bias in Generative AI Influences Religious Education," *Scientific Reports* 15, no. 1 (2025), 15720, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-025-99121-6>.

epistemic authority in Islam demonstrably operates through mechanisms other than institutional domination.

Nor is the gap merely conceptual, for its consequences are already visible in the field. Pesantren restrict access to digital media out of concern for its moral effects, while students themselves must cultivate their own competence in navigating online space without losing their footing.¹⁸ Elsewhere, university students now spend much of their time in virtual environments and acquire religious knowledge there without the mediation of a teacher.¹⁹ IRE teachers stand precisely between these two tendencies without the conceptual equipment to assess them. They are required to guide the use of artificial intelligence, yet possess no criteria by which to explain to their students why a fluent answer from a machine is not necessarily knowledge fit to be received.

The present study proceeds from this gap. Its aim is to reconstruct the concepts of sanad and talaqqī into a set of criteria for epistemic authority, to confront generative AI with those criteria, and to draw out the implications for IRE. Three questions guide the inquiry. First, how are the criteria of epistemic authority articulated within the Islamic tradition of knowledge transmission through the concepts of sanad and talaqqī? Second, to what extent does generative AI satisfy or fail to satisfy those criteria as a source of religious knowledge? Third, what implications follow from that confrontation for the standing of the teacher and the design of IRE learning?

The novelty of this study does not lie in the finding that AI is problematic, since that has been asserted by many in various ways. It lies rather in two displacements. While previous scholarship, as reviewed above, has treated sanad chiefly as an object of historical or computational study, no work has systematically operationalised its four constitutive conditions as a test applied to a contemporary source of religious knowledge. First, the question of authority is moved from the

¹⁸ Claire-Marie Hefner, "Morality, Religious Authority, and the Digital Edge: Indonesian Muslim Schoolgirls Online," *American Ethnologist* 49, no. 3 (2022): 359–73, <https://doi.org/10.1111/amet.13088>.

¹⁹ Şeref Göküş, Mukadder Ayten, and Zahide Yilmaz, "A Qualitative Study on University Students' Process of Acquiring Religious Knowledge from Virtual Environments [Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Sanal Ortamlardan Dinî Bilgi Edinme Sürecine Yönelik Nitel Bir Araştırma]," *Mutefekkir* 13, no. 25 (2026): 219–41, <https://doi.org/10.30523/mutefekkir.1871129>.

online public sphere into the classroom, where religious knowledge is actually formed at the most decisive stage of life. Second, sanad and talaqqī are brought down from venerated concepts to working criteria, so that tradition is not merely cited as a marker of identity but employed as an instrument of assessment. In this way the study seeks to contribute not merely an assessment of one technology, but a framework teachers may use to weigh every source of religious knowledge that comes after it.

B. Research Methods

This study is library research conceived as a conceptual article of the theory-synthesis type, which draws together concepts from fields that have developed separately into a single coherent framework,²⁰ and which reads its sources through a philosophical-hermeneutic approach. The two fields joined here are the epistemology of Islamic knowledge transmission and the epistemic character of generative systems. Because the question of what makes a source of religious knowledge authoritative is epistemological and normative, it cannot be answered by measuring behaviour, attitudes, or learning outcomes; within such a design the review of literature is not background but the research method itself, with procedures open to retracing.²¹ Concretely, the synthesis proceeds through four linked steps: (1) identification of the constitutive conditions of authority from the classical tradition of hadith transmission, namely sanad and talaqqī; (2) identification, from provider documentation and recent literature, of the epistemic character of generative AI; (3) confrontation of the two through directed content analysis, in which the conditions identified in step one furnish a predetermined coding frame applied to the material identified in step two; and (4) derivation of pedagogical implications from the resulting matrix of fulfilment and non-fulfilment.

The primary sources fall into two groups. The first comprises four classical works examined in depth, each consulted in a recognised critical edition: the Muqaddimah of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim (ed. Muḥammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī; Beirut: Dār Iḥyā'

²⁰ Elina Jaakkola, "Designing Conceptual Articles: Four Approaches," *AMS Review* 10, nos. 1–2 (2020): 18–26, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13162-020-00161-0>.

²¹ Hannah Snyder, "Literature Review as a Research Methodology: An Overview and Guidelines," *Journal of Business Research* 104 (2019): 333–39, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.07.039>.

<https://doi.org/10.30603/au.v25i2.xxxx>

al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 1991); al-Kifāyah fī ‘Ilm al-Riwāyah (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1988); Ma‘rifah Anwā‘ ‘Ulūm al-Ḥadīth, known as the Muqaddimah of Ibn al-Ṣalāh (ed. Nūr al-Dīn ‘Itr; Damascus: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu‘āṣir, 1986); and the chapter on instruction in Ibn Khaldūn’s Muqaddimah (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1993). Full bibliographic details appear in the References., supplemented by four further works consulted selectively. The second comprises technological and policy documents, among them official provider documentation with its statements of limitation. Secondary sources consist of recent literature on religious authority, the epistemology of trust, and the use of generative AI in religious education, drawn from the Scopus database. All material was gathered through document analysis, a layered reading moving from initial skimming through close reading to thematic coding.²²

The Scopus search proceeded across several keyword domains combining generative AI or large language models with, respectively, Islamic religious authority, sanad or chains of transmission, and Islamic or religious education, run separately so as to capture literature scattered across disciplinary boundaries. This process yielded 736 records, which reduced to 664 after the removal of duplicates; of these, 55 were retained as directly relevant to authority, epistemology, or the transmission of knowledge and are cited throughout this article, while the remainder informed background orientation without being cited individually. The searches were executed on 27 July 2026 and exported in thirteen separate result sets. No date restriction was imposed, so that foundational earlier work would not be excluded; the retrieved corpus accordingly spans 1989 to 2026, though it is heavily weighted toward recent scholarship, with roughly ninety per cent of records published from 2020 onward and more than sixty per cent in 2025 and 2026 alone. This distribution reflects the recency of the debate itself rather than a filter applied by the authors.

Analysis then proceeded in four successive stages corresponding to the steps set out above. Thematic reduction of the classical texts yielded the four criteria of

²² Glenn A. Bowen, “Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method,” *Qualitative Research Journal* 9, no. 2 (2009): 27–40, <https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027>.

epistemic authority; the epistemic character of generative systems was reconstructed from provider documentation and the most recent literature; the two were confronted through directed content analysis, that is, deductive coding employing the criteria of the first stage as a predetermined coding frame,²³ which produced a matrix of fulfilment and non-fulfilment; and the pedagogical implications for IRE were drawn from that matrix. Coding was carried out manually by the authors rather than through qualitative-analysis software: each source document was read in full and annotated against the four criteria (ittiṣāl, 'adālah, ḍabt, takwīn), with passages supporting or contesting each criterion excerpted into a shared coding table that forms the basis of Tables 1 through 4.

Trustworthiness rests on the four means customary in qualitative inquiry.²⁴ Credibility was pursued by consulting the classical texts in recognised critical editions in their original language and by triangulating three kinds of source. Dependability was secured through an audit trail: the open enumeration of every primary text analysed, and the establishment of the coding frame before analysis began, so that the derivation of criteria may be retraced. Confirmability was pursued through investigator triangulation within the author team, whose members are distributed across four institutions in Indonesia and Malaysia and combine expertise in hadith studies, Islamic religious education, and library and information science. The formulation of the four criteria and the results of their confrontation were examined by team members working in different specialisms before being consolidated, so that no single reading determined the outcome. Beyond this, confirmability rests principally on the two provisions already described: an audit trail that permits every criterion to be traced back to the classical text from which it was derived, and a coding frame fixed in advance of analysis, which prevents the criteria from being adjusted mid-course to suit a preferred conclusion. External peer examination beyond the author team was not undertaken, and this is acknowledged here as a boundary of the present design rather than left implicit. Transferability

²³ Satu Elo and Helvi Kyngäs, "The Qualitative Content Analysis Process," *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 62, no. 1 (2008): 107–15, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2007.04569.x>.

²⁴ Yvonna S. Lincoln and Egon G. Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1985).

<https://doi.org/10.30603/au.v25i2.xxxx>

was achieved by formulating the criteria in sufficient detail to be re-applied to technologies yet to come.

One boundary must be stated at the outset: this study does not test model outputs empirically, so that its claims remain conceptual throughout and leave room for field testing in subsequent research. This boundary carries a specific consequence for the claims advanced later regarding the criterion of *ḍabt*. Because no model output was tested against Indonesian-language religious questions, the finding that this criterion is only contingently unmet, rather than structurally unmet, is itself a conceptual inference drawn from the criterion's logical structure rather than from direct measurement; it should accordingly be read as a hypothesis that subsequent empirical work, particularly in Indonesian, is positioned to confirm or revise. Both boundaries point in the same direction: external peer examination and empirical field testing are the two forms of scrutiny this design leaves open, and both are taken up as the research agenda set out in the conclusion.

C. Results and Discussion

1. Formulating Criteria of Epistemic Authority in the Islamic Tradition

The Islamic scholarly tradition has never treated religious knowledge as free-standing information. Before a report is accepted, it first passes through a set of examinations concerning who transmitted it, how he obtained it, and the extent to which he may be held accountable. The warning of Ibn Sirin cited by Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj in the introduction to his collection is therefore not properly read as mere moral exhortation.²⁵ It functions as a procedural rule, since attention to the transmitter is positioned as a condition of acceptance rather than a recommended precaution. It is from this apparatus of examination that criteria of epistemic authority may be derived. What is taken here is not the teaching it contains but its structure, namely the sequence of questions that must be answered before a source is acknowledged as competent to convey religious knowledge.

²⁵ Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, *Sahih Muslim* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1991).

a. Ittiṣāl as the Condition of Continuous Transmission

The first criterion is continuity of transmission, or *ittiṣāl*. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ treats continuity as the principal distinction between reports that may be accepted and those that must be rejected, then details the varieties of discontinuity according to the position and number of missing links. It must be underlined that continuity here speaks not to the completeness of information but to the traceability of responsibility.²⁶ Every link is a person who may be questioned, whose life may be examined, and whose fitness may be judged. A discontinuous report is not thereby false in content; what it loses is the possibility of tracing who bears responsibility for that content.

Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī reinforces this demand from another angle through his defence of the necessity of *riḥlah*, the journey undertaken in pursuit of knowledge. A willingness to traverse distance makes sense only if continuity genuinely requires actual encounter rather than mere possession of a text.²⁷

b. 'Adālah as the Condition of Moral Integrity

The second criterion concerns the moral integrity of the transmitter, or *'adālah*. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī specifies the conditions of a transmitter's fitness so as to include matters that appear at first glance to lie outside the domain of knowledge, such as the preservation of personal honour and freedom from the causes of moral corruption.²⁸ Here lies one of the most distinctive decisions of this tradition, namely the attachment of a moral condition to a function that appears purely epistemic. Accuracy of information was judged insufficient. The reason may be read from the character of religious knowledge itself, which does not rest as mere description but generates obligation to act. The transmitter who conveys it shares in bearing the consequences of what he conveys, and such bearing is meaningful only when it attaches to a person who possesses will and may be held to account.

²⁶ 'Uthman Ibn al-Salah, *Ma'rifah Anwa' 'Ulum Al-Hadith* (Damaskus: Dar al-Fikr al-Mu'asir, 1986).

²⁷ Abu Bakr Ahmad al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, *Al-Kifayah Fi 'Ilm al-Riwayah* (Madinah: Al-Maktabah al-'Ilmiyyah, n.d.).

²⁸ Abū Bakr Aḥmad al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Al-Riḥlah fī Ṭalab al-Ḥadīth*, 1st ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1975).

c. Ḍabt as the Condition of Accurate Conveyance

The third criterion is accuracy of conveyance, or *ḍabt*, which specialists divide into accuracy of memory and accuracy of record. What is instructive is not the division itself but the manner in which accuracy is established. A transmitter is not judged accurate because he declares himself so, but because his reports are compared with those of other trusted transmitters and found to correspond. Accuracy is thus a quality established openly through comparison rather than a claim self-attached. The stringency of this measure is evident in its consequence, for a transmitter who errs occasionally is downgraded even though most of his reports are sound. Tested consistency is judged more decisive than correctness that is merely incidental.

d. Takwīn as the Condition of Learner Formation

The fourth criterion moves in a direction different from the preceding three. Ibn Khaldūn affirms that genuine mastery of a discipline in the form of *malakah* grows only through direct instruction, and that one who pursues knowledge solely from books will not attain it.²⁹ Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr had earlier censured those who take their learning from written sheets, while al-Zarnūjī placed the choice of a teacher as the first decision determining success in study, and al-Ghazālī bound the whole process to the *adab* that orders the relation between student and teacher.³⁰ All four point to the same thing, namely that religious knowledge does not merely transfer but forms.

Recent scholarship shows that this pattern remains alive. Epistemic authority in the Javanese Sufi tradition is formed through experience embodied in practice rather than through mastery of texts alone.³¹ The same holds for Qur’anic

²⁹ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimat Ibn Khaldūn* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1993).

³⁰ Yusuf Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *Jamī‘ Bayan Al-‘Ilm Wa Fadlih* (Makkah: Dar Ibn al-Jawzi, 1994); Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1998); Burhān al-Dīn al-Zarnūjī, *Ta’līm al-Muta‘allim Ṭarīq al-Ta‘allum* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2014).

³¹ Taufikin Taufikin et al., “EMBODIED RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE IN JAVANESE SUFISM: Existential-Practical Hermeneutics and the Formation of Epistemic Authority,” *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf Dan Pemikiran Islam* 16, no. 1 (2026): 196–218, <https://doi.org/10.15642/teosofi.2026.16.1.196-218>.

qirā'āt, whose transmission still requires talaqqī mushāfahah and therefore cannot be wholly assumed by digital devices.³²

e. The Layered Order among the Four Criteria

These four criteria do not stand as a parallel checklist but are layered according to what each addresses. Two of them address the source, namely 'adālah, which assesses the person of the transmitter, and ḍabṭ, which assesses his performance. One addresses the relation between sources, namely ittiṣāl, which ensures that no link has gone missing. The last, by contrast, addresses the recipient, namely takwīn, which requires that knowledge form competence in the one who studies it. Table 1 summarises all four together with the test question that may be derived from each.

Table 1. Criteria of epistemic authority in the Islamic tradition of knowledge transmission

Criterion	Domain addressed	Principal primary sources	Test question
Ittiṣāl (continuity)	Relation between sources	Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī	Can the origin of this knowledge be traced back to the first transmitter without a missing link?
'Adālah (moral integrity)	Person of the transmitter	Al-Khaṭīb Baghdādī	Is there a person who bears the truth of this statement and may be held to account?
Ḍabṭ (accuracy of conveyance)	Performance of the transmitter	Al-Khaṭīb Baghdādī	Has its accuracy been tested through open comparison with other trusted sources?
Takwīn (formation)	Person of the recipient	Ibn Khaldūn; Ibn 'Abd al-Barr; al-Zarnūjī; al-Ghazālī	Does the manner of acquiring this knowledge form competence and adab in the learner?

³² Mohamed Fathy Mohamed Abdelgelil, Bazilah Sakynah Tahir, and Sharifah Norshah Bani Syed Bidin, "Challenges Of Artificial Intelligence (Ai) And Its Impact On Qur'anic Qira'at: A Thematic Review Analysis [CABARAN KECERDASAN BUATAN (AI) DAN KESANNYA TERHADAP QIRAAT AL-QUR'AN: ANALISIS SOROTAN BERTEMA]," *Quranica* 17, no. 2 (2025): 74–96.

<https://doi.org/10.30603/au.v25i2.xxxx>

Read as a whole, these four criteria locate authority not in content but in the conditions of its transmission. A statement carries weight not because it appears true, but because its origin can be traced, it is borne by a fit person, its accuracy has been tested, and it forms its recipient. This character accords with the finding that epistemic authority in Islam operates through trust that grows within everyday practice rather than through institutional imposition.³³ For that very reason, these four criteria cannot be satisfied merely by supplying references.

f. The Reach and Limits of Digitising Sanad

This finding gains its edge when set against the computational work on sanad that has developed of late. The release of datasets of hadith transmitters³⁴ and the restructuring of isnād into networked form³⁵ permit continuity to be examined automatically. Such examination has even been attempted on discontinuous reports.³⁶ Yet what all these efforts capture is only the most formal layer of the four criteria. Ittiṣāl can be represented as a relation between nodes, whereas ‘adālah demands moral judgement, ḍabṭ demands comparison weighed by human beings, and takwīn does not reside in the source at all but in the learner. Bibliometric mapping of research on hadith authentication reveals the same tendency, namely an accumulation of attention on what can be counted.³⁷ The digitisation of sanad, then, does not transfer authority into the machine; it transfers only one of its four conditions.

2. Epistemic Characteristics of Generative Artificial Intelligence

Before these four criteria are confronted with generative artificial intelligence, the epistemic character of such systems must first be formulated. This formulation is deliberately confined to matters bearing on the question of authority

³³ Bhojani and Clarke, “Religious Authority beyond Domination and Discipline: Epistemic Authority and Its Vernacular Uses in the Shi’i Diaspora.”

³⁴ Mghari, Bouras, and El Hibaoui, “Sanadset 650K: Data on Hadith Narrators.”

³⁵ Farooqi et al., “Multi-IsnadSet MIS for Sahih Muslim Hadith with Chain of Narrators, Based on Multiple ISNAD.”

³⁶ Hendawi et al., “Automating Sanad Continuity Verification in Disconnected Hadith Using Machine Learning.”

³⁷ Nur Afifi Alit et al., “Exploring Trends and Themes of Hadith Authentication Research: A Bibliometric Analysis and Future Agenda,” *AlBayan* 24, no. 1 (2026): 127–61, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22321969-12342317>.

and does not address technical architecture, since what is to be examined is not how the system works but what standing may be granted to its output. The material for this formulation is drawn from official provider documentation together with the accompanying statements of limitation, supplemented by recent findings that test the behaviour of such systems in the religious domain.

a. Output that Is Composed rather than Conveyed

The first characteristic concerns the manner in which output is produced. A generative model does not convey a statement from a source that can be pointed to; it composes a sequence of words most likely to occur given patterns in its training corpus. The distinction between conveying and composing appears slight, but its epistemic consequence is considerable. Composed output has no traceable origin, since what the system stores is not statements but statistical patterns. Even the references that sometimes appear in an answer form part of the composed text rather than a record of where the statement came from. Efforts to anchor religious answers to verified sources through retrieval-augmented design in fact confirm this.³⁸ Anchoring must be supplied from outside because it is unavailable from within.

The problem indeed begins earlier than the output. The corpus that trains the system is gathered from online sources in vast quantity without filtering according to the fitness of those who uttered them, so that tested and untested religious views enter it on equal footing. The absence of continuity therefore afflicts not only the answer produced but is already embedded in the material that constitutes the capacity to produce it.

b. The Absence of a Person Bearing Responsibility

The second characteristic concerns the absence of a party who bears responsibility. Provider documentation acknowledges this openly. Anthropic's consumer terms warn that outputs may carry material inaccuracies even where their detail or specificity makes them appear accurate, and place upon the user the

³⁸ Alan, Karaarslan, and Aydin, "Improving LLM Reliability with RAG in Religious Question-Answering: MufasssirQAS."

<https://doi.org/10.30603/au.v25i2.xxxx>

duty of independently confirming whatever the system asserts.³⁹ OpenAI's usage policies go further, prohibiting the "automation of high-stakes decisions in sensitive areas without human review" and listing education among those areas.⁴⁰ The significance of such statements is easily missed. They are not cautions about occasional malfunction but a disclaimer of the very function that 'adālah assigns to the transmitter: the provider declines to stand behind the truth of what its system conveys and returns that burden expressly to whoever receives it. Dart formulates the underlying problem precisely in observing that such systems possess neither virtue, nor intention, nor accountability.⁴¹ It must be emphasised that the problem is not a machine behaving badly, but the absence of any subject to which moral assessment might attach. In consequence, the burden of responsibility shifts to the user. This displacement runs contrary to the tradition of transmission, which places that burden squarely on the transmitter and makes it a condition of acceptance.

c. Accuracy Established without Open Examination

The third characteristic concerns accuracy that goes unexamined. Testing of religious output remains relatively new, and a benchmark constructed to measure the reliability of Islamic legal answers across the four Sunni schools in Arabic and English shows that such reliability remains uncultivated and that abstention behaviour remains a problem in its own right.⁴² Comparison of Qur'an translations produced by generative systems against authoritative translations reveals a comparable gap,⁴³ while examination from the framework of Islamic epistemology

³⁹ Anthropic, "Consumer Terms of Service," Effective October 8, 2025, 2025, <https://anthropic.com/legal/terms>.

⁴⁰ OpenAI, "Usage Policies," Effective October 29, 2025, 2025, <https://openai.com/policies/usage-policies/>.

⁴¹ Dart, "Epistemic Trust and the Limits of AI Authority in Islam."

⁴² Atif et al., "Sacred or Synthetic? Evaluating LLM Reliability and Abstention for Religious Questions."

⁴³ Dzulfaidhi Hakimie Dzulraidi, Ali Abdul Jalil, and Muhammad Lukman Mat Sin, "The Accuracy of Chatgpt In Translating The Qur'an: A Comparative Analysis With Authoritative Translation [KETEPATAN CHATGPT DALAM TERJEMAHAN AL-QURAN: ANALISIS PERBANDINGAN DENGAN TERJEMAHAN AUTORITATIF]," *Quranica* 17, no. 2 (2025): 21–52.

identifies firm limits on their use in exegesis.⁴⁴ Latifi records parallel obstacles in juristic reasoning.⁴⁵

Viewed through the criterion of *ḍabt*, what is problematic is not the occurrence of error, since human transmitters may also err. What is problematic is the absence of an open comparative procedure by which a transmitter's consistency might be graded. A transmitter who errs occasionally may still be assigned a rank, whereas a system whose errors cannot be anticipated has no rank at all. The difficulty compounds when language is taken into account. Available testing rests on Arabic and English, whereas the behaviour of such systems in Indonesian and Malay, the languages of the largest share of the world's Muslim learners, remains almost wholly unexamined. This asymmetry is not incidental to the criterion of *ḍabt* but strikes at its core, since *ḍabt* is established through comparison against trusted transmitters within a given body of material, and where no such comparison has been conducted, no rank can be assigned at all. The gap widens further when the character of religious language is considered. Islamic terminology in Indonesian carries layers of meaning shaped by centuries of local reception: terms absorbed from Arabic have acquired usages that diverge from their origins, while others are rendered through Javanese, Sundanese, or Malay vocabularies bearing their own connotations. A system trained predominantly on Arabic and English sources encounters this layer only through translation, and translation is precisely the point at which the accuracy of religious conveyance is most easily lost. Accuracy that may hold in one language cannot therefore be presumed to hold in another, and it is precisely in Indonesian-language space that everyday religious questions are most often posed, by learners least equipped to detect where meaning has slipped.

d. Fluency Detached from the Fulfilment of Conditions

The fourth characteristic concerns a fluency that severs authority from truth. Generative systems are optimised to produce language that feels natural and convincing rather than truth that has been verified. That fluency then generates an

⁴⁴ Muhammad Hazim Mohd Azhar et al., "Ethics and Limits of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Quranic Exegesis According to the Epistemological Framework of Islamic Knowledge [ETIKA DAN HAD PENGGUNAAN KECERDASAN BUATAN (AI) DALAM TAFSIR AL-QURAN MENURUT KERANGKA EPISTEMOLOGI ILMU ISLAM]," *Quranica* 17, no. 2 (2025): 97–124.

⁴⁵ Latifi, "Challenges of Using Artificial Intelligence in the Process of Shi'i Ijtihad."

<https://doi.org/10.30603/au.v25i2.xxxx>

impression of authority unconnected to the fulfilment of any condition whatever. Lim names this phenomenon generative charisma, the capacity of systems to present the religious appeal that has hitherto attached to persons.⁴⁶ A comparable tendency has in fact long operated at the level of circulation, where algorithmic logic determines which preachers appear authoritative before a young audience.⁴⁷

Compounding matters, bias contained in models is not merely reflected but amplified, and has been shown to affect users' religious understanding.⁴⁸ The principal danger is therefore not the erroneous answer, but the erroneous answer delivered with every outward mark of authority. In the classroom, those outward marks are the easiest to perceive and the hardest to weigh for learners who as yet lack the equipment to assess content.

e. The Four Characteristics as Inherent Design Properties

One point must be stressed before these four characteristics are summarised. None is a temporary defect awaiting correction in a subsequent version; each is a property inherent in how these systems are designed. Composing the most probable continuation is their principal work, not an error to be patched. The absence of a bearing subject follows from the fact that what operates is not a person. Instability of output is a direct consequence of composition by probability. Fluency, meanwhile, is a deliberately pursued objective. This reading matters because it determines the shape of the response: if all four are inherent properties, the way forward lies not in waiting for systems to improve, but in preparing learners able to place them correctly. These four characteristics are summarised in Table 2 together with the criterion each touches.

Table 2. Epistemic characteristics of generative systems and the criteria they touch

Epistemic characteristic	Manifestation in output	Criterion touched
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⁴⁶ Francis Khék Gee Lim, “AI and Generative Charisma in Religious Practices,” *Religions* 17, no. 5 (2026), 549, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel17050549>.

⁴⁷ Wahyudi Akmaliah, “Algorithmic Religious Authority: Digital Islamic Preachers and Mainstreaming the Meaning of Jihad,” *Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture* 14, no. 3 (2025): 430–53, <https://doi.org/10.1163/21659214-bja10157>.

⁴⁸ Zhang, Song, and Liu, “Cognitive Bias in Generative AI Influences Religious Education.”

Output composed, not conveyed	No original statement can be pointed to; references are themselves composed as text	Ittiṣāl
Absence of a bearing party	Burden of verification displaced onto the user	‘Adālah
Accuracy left unexamined	Error cannot be anticipated and no open comparison is available	Ḍabṭ
Free-standing fluency	An impression of authority arises without any condition being met	‘Adālah and Ḍabṭ

f. A Response to the Objection from Written Media

One objection must be answered before proceeding further. The tradition of transmission did not in fact reject written media absolutely, since the reception of reports through writing was known and its conditions regulated. If so, why should machine output be treated differently from a book that is likewise read without its author present? The answer lies in two things a book possesses that generative output does not. A book has an author who can be identified, assessed for fitness, and held responsible for its content, whereas generative output identifies no one. Furthermore, the text of a book is fixed and can therefore be compared across copies and across generations of readers, whereas generative output changes with every use and thus offers no stable object for comparison. In other words, the tradition extended latitude to written media precisely because such media still satisfy ittiṣāl and ‘adālah in a different form. That latitude cannot be extended to something that satisfies neither in any form.

3. Testing Generative Systems against the Four Criteria

The confrontation undertaken here is not intended to pass a verdict of good or bad upon a technology, but to determine its epistemic standing. Each criterion is examined with three possible outcomes: satisfied, partially satisfied, and not satisfied. The examination also strives to be fair by testing the system according to what it acknowledges itself capable of doing rather than according to demands never made of it. An instrument is not blamed for failing to be something other than itself; what must be settled is whether a particular standing may properly be granted to it within religious learning.

a. Standing with Respect to Continuity of Transmission

On the criterion of continuity, the result is not satisfied. The output of generative systems points to no original statement that can be traced, as set out above. One reasonable objection must nonetheless be weighed, namely that retrieval-augmented design can make an answer point to a particular document.⁴⁹ Does continuity not thereby recover? It does not, and the distinction matters. What anchoring recovers is reference, whereas what *ittiṣāl* demands is transmission. Reference points to a text that happens to be available in a database, while *sanad* points to a succession of persons who received and then conveyed, each of whose fitness can be assessed. The one runs laterally toward a document, the other descends across generations. Source anchoring therefore improves the traceability of information without supplying continuity of transmission.

This distinction is not merely terminological. When a report is contested, *sanad* allows examination to move backward from one person to the next until the point of weakness is located. Reference affords no such movement, since it halts at the document and does not explain how that document reached the hand that cited it. The traceability offered by source anchoring thus extends only one step, whereas what the tradition demands is traceability along the entire chain.

b. Standing with Respect to Moral Integrity

On the criterion of moral integrity, the result is likewise not satisfied, and the failure here is the most fundamental. Dart has shown that such systems possess neither virtue, nor intention, nor accountability.⁵⁰ What must be added is that the problem lies not in low moral quality but in the absence of any subject to which moral assessment might be applied at all.

One objection might be raised, namely that the bearer is the model provider. This objection does not hold, for two reasons. First, providers state openly that the truth of output content is not their responsibility and that verification is left to the user. Second, and more decisively, *‘adālah* attaches to the party conveying a particular statement, not to the party who manufactured the instrument. The maker

⁴⁹ Alan, Karaarslan, and Aydin, “Improving LLM Reliability with RAG in Religious Question-Answering: MufassirQAS.”

⁵⁰ Dart, “Epistemic Trust and the Limits of AI Authority in Islam.”

of a pen does not bear moral responsibility for what others write with it. In consequence, the burden that tradition places upon the transmitter shifts to the learner, the party least equipped to carry it.

c. Standing with Respect to Accuracy of Conveyance

On the criterion of accuracy of conveyance, the result differs from the preceding two and is the most instructive to consider. The appropriate status is partially satisfied, within reasonably clear limits. On tasks of conveyance whose object is fixed and whose results can be checked, these systems can display adequate consistency, as is evident in their use to support Qur'an memorisation⁵¹ and in evaluations of applications that check memorisers' recitation.⁵² On tasks requiring judgement, by contrast, that consistency collapses. Testing of Islamic legal answers reveals reliability that remains uncultivated and abstention behaviour that remains unsettled,⁵³ while examination from the framework of Islamic epistemology identifies firm limits on use in exegesis.⁵⁴

Instructively, a distinction of this kind is not foreign to the tradition. Specialists assessed a person's ḍabṭ field by field, so that a transmitter might be judged accurate in certain material and weak in others. That older framework proves still capable of accommodating a new reality, and it is for this reason that the third criterion cannot be declared to fail wholesale. A further qualification follows from the same principle. Since the available testing has been conducted almost exclusively in Arabic and English, the partial fulfilment recorded here holds only for those languages. For Indonesian, the language in which the learners at issue in this study actually pose their questions, the criterion of accuracy cannot yet be assessed at all, and an unassessed criterion is not a satisfied one.

⁵¹ Muhammad Arif Bin Yahya et al., "Empowering the Tradition of Quran Memorization through Artificial Intelligence (AI): A Conceptual and Contemporary Review [PEMERKASAAN TRADISI HAFAZAN AL-QURAN MELALUI KECERDASAN BUATAN (AI): SUATU TINJAUAN KONSEPTUAL DAN KONTEMPORARI]," *Quranica* 17, no. 2 Special Issue 14 (2025): 447–75.

⁵² Al Muslim Mustapa, Mohd Faizulamri Mohd Saad, and Safinah Ismail, "Traditional to Digital: Evaluating the Use of AI in the Tarteel Application to Enhance Quran Memorization [TRADISIONAL KE DIGITAL: EVALUASI PENGGUNAAN AI DALAM APLIKASI TARTEEL UNTUK MENINGKATKAN HAFALAN AL-QURAN]," *Quranica* 17, no. 2 (2025): 53–73.

⁵³ Atif et al., "Sacred or Synthetic? Evaluating LLM Reliability and Abstention for Religious Questions."

⁵⁴ Azhar et al., "Ethics and Limits of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Quranic Exegesis According to the Epistemological Framework of Islamic Knowledge [ETIKA DAN HAD PENGGUNAAN KECERDASAN BUATAN (AI) DALAM TAFSIR AL-QURAN MENURUT KERANGKA EPISTEMOLOGI ILMU ISLAM]."

d. Standing with Respect to Learner Formation

On the criterion of formation, the result is not satisfied, and the failure takes a different form from the other three. The preceding three criteria assess the source, whereas this one assesses what happens to the learner. The problem is therefore not simply that generative systems fail to form, but that they form something else. Answers available instantly and without effort cultivate dependence rather than the *malakah* Ibn Khaldūn had in view, since competence grows only through repetition, error, and correction undergone in the presence of a teacher. This tendency is already recorded among university students who acquire religious knowledge from virtual environments without a teacher's mediation,⁵⁵ and is aggravated by model bias shown to affect users' religious understanding.⁵⁶ Even in the domain that appears most technical, the transmission of *qirāʾāt* still requires an irreplaceable *talaqqī mushāfahah*.⁵⁷ The failure on the fourth criterion is thus not a neutral failure but one that leaves a mark.

e. Summary of Standing and the Emerging Pattern

A note of candour is due before these four determinations are summarised. This confrontation proceeds at the conceptual level, so that the status assigned to the criterion of accuracy is the most open to change as empirical testing accumulates, particularly in languages hitherto uncultivated. The status of the other three criteria, by contrast, does not depend on the outcome of any test, since all three follow from the constitution of the system itself rather than from the quality of its performance. It is this distinction that allows the determinations below to be sustained even as technical capability continues to advance.

Table 3. The standing of generative systems against the four criteria of epistemic authority

Criterion	Status	Basis of determination	Character of failure
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⁵⁵ Göküş, Ayten, and Yilmaz, "A Qualitative Study on University Students' Process of Acquiring Religious Knowledge from Virtual Environments [Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Sanal Ortamlardan Dinî Bilgi Edinme Sürecine Yönelik Nitel Bir Araştırma]."

⁵⁶ Zhang, Song, and Liu, "Cognitive Bias in Generative AI Influences Religious Education."

⁵⁷ Abdelgelil, Tahir, and Bidin, "Challenges Of Artificial Intelligence (Ai) And Its Impact On Qur'anic Qira'at: A Thematic Review Analysis [CABARAN KECERDASAN BUATAN (AI) DAN KESANNYA TERHADAP QIRAAT AL-QUR'AN: ANALISIS SOROTAN BERTEMA]."

Ittiṣāl	Not satisfied	Output composed without an original statement; source anchoring recovers reference, not transmission	Structural
ʿAdālah	Not satisfied	No subject can bear moral assessment; responsibility displaced onto the user	Structural
Ḍabt	Partially satisfied	Consistent on checkable tasks of conveyance; collapses on tasks requiring judgement	Contingent
Takwīn	Not satisfied	Ease without effort cultivates dependence rather than competence	Structural

The pattern emerging from these four determinations is consistent and may be stated concisely. The only criterion that can be satisfied, even partially, is the one that is most formal and most bound to task type. The three criteria that require the presence of a person, namely a succession of transmitters, a bearer who may be held to account, and the formation of the learner, are not satisfied at all. From this a firmer determination of standing may be drawn than the mere assertion that generative systems are unfit. Such systems may occupy the standing of a source of religious information, but cannot occupy the standing of an authority of knowledge. The difference between the two is not one of degree but of kind, for information need only be measured as true or false, whereas knowledge requires that the conditions of transmission be met before the question of true or false is even posed.

f. Distinguishing Structural from Contingent Failure

This determination also clarifies something hitherto obscure. The failures on ittiṣāl, ʿadālah, and takwīn are structural, since all three follow directly from what makes these systems what they are and will not change with improved versions. The failure on Ḍabt, by contrast, is contingent, since it depends on task type and on the quality of testing and may well shift in future. The distinction between the structural and the contingent is the principal contribution of this section, and likewise the reason why the pedagogical response must not take the form of blanket prohibition. To prohibit is to treat all failures as equivalent, when one among them can in fact be remedied and put to use. The discussion that follows translates this distinction into the choices available to teachers.

4. Pedagogical Implications for Islamic Religious Education

The determination of standing set out above invites a pedagogical response that follows the form of the failures rather than a single response applied across the board. What follows is advanced conceptually: each response is derived from the criteria established above rather than from classroom trial, and is offered as a reasoned proposal open to empirical examination. Structural failure cannot be remedied by selecting better tools or composing more careful prompts, since it follows from the constitution of the system itself. What can be done in its regard is to rearrange the relations within the classroom so that conditions the machine cannot satisfy are still satisfied by human beings. Contingent failure, by contrast, can be addressed by sorting tasks.

Two common attitudes are mistaken precisely because they ignore this distinction. Blanket prohibition treats every failure as equivalent and thereby forecloses uses that could in fact be defended. Unconditional acceptance does the reverse, assuming that every failure will be resolved by technical progress. Both proceed from the same error, namely a failure to distinguish what is impossible from what is merely as yet unmet.

a. Restoring the Question of Provenance to Learning Habits

The response to the absence of continuity takes the form of restoring the question of provenance to the habits of learning. The question of where a piece of information comes from has hitherto appeared more often as a warning than as a procedure, whereas in the tradition of transmission that question precedes the assessment of content. Conceptually, one may propose a rule that is simple yet binding: no religious information obtained from a generative system is used before it has been traced to a source that can be named. Whether such a rule proves workable in practice is a question this study cannot settle. An artificial intelligence literacy instrument developed on the foundations of *adab*, *amānah*, and *tabayyun* moves in an adjacent direction, though its standing there is that of an ethics of use.⁵⁸ The difference is not trivial. An ethics of use governs how a person ought to conduct

⁵⁸ Syamsudduha, Suwandi, and Tabrani, "ISLAMIC AI LITERACY AS RESPONSIBLE KNOWLEDGE PRACTICE: DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF AILS-IIUS IN INDONESIAN ISLAMIC HIGHER EDUCATION."

himself, whereas a criterion of validity determines whether something may be received as knowledge at all. The former may be violated without altering the status of the knowledge, whereas the latter determines that status from the outset

b. Affirming the Teacher as the Bearer of Responsibility

The response to the absence of a bearing party requires an affirmation that runs counter to prevailing tendencies. In much discussion, the presence of the machine is invoked to reduce the teacher's standing to that of a technical assistant, whereas the second criterion demands the opposite. When a system cannot bear accountability, someone must still bear it, and in the classroom that person is the teacher. It follows, on the criteria adopted here, that the teacher cannot pass on information he has not examined on the ground that a machine stated it. Comparison between generative system answers and the results of collective deliberation in *baḥṭh al-masā'il* shows that the determination of rulings within the tradition has always attached to an assembly of persons who bear it together.⁵⁹

Learners must further be made aware that the burden of verification has been shifted onto them, since a displacement that goes unnoticed is far more dangerous than one that is recognised. Such awareness is all the more necessary given that machine fluency can present the impression of authority long attached to persons.⁶⁰

c. Sorting Task Types according to Measurable Accuracy

The response to partially satisfied accuracy takes the form of sorting tasks, and it is here that defensible use finds its place. The basis of the sorting rests on two questions: whether the object of the task is fixed, and whether its result can be checked immediately. On this basis three classes may be proposed. Tasks answering both questions in the affirmative may be delegated under ordinary supervision; tasks answering only one require the teacher's accompaniment; tasks answering neither cannot be delegated at all, not out of generalised anxiety, but because the

⁵⁹ N. Faizin, A. S. Maarif, and Y. Hanafi, "Considering Religious Moderation in Islamic Law through AI ChatGPT and Bahsul Masail of Nahdlatul Ulama," *Law*, ahead of print, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17579961.2025.2469351>.

⁶⁰ Lim, "AI and Generative Charisma in Religious Practices."

<https://doi.org/10.30603/au.v25i2.xxxx>

criterion of accuracy genuinely collapses there while the criterion of moral integrity was never satisfied to begin with.⁶¹

Table 4. Sorting of IRE learning tasks according to the criterion of accuracy

Class of task	Basis of sorting	Examples
May be delegated under ordinary supervision	Object fixed and result checkable immediately	Supporting memorisation, checking recitation, generating practice items
Requires the teacher's accompaniment	Object fixed but result requires interpretation	Summarising material, explaining terms, draft translation to be corrected
Cannot be delegated	Object not fixed and result requires judgement	Determining rulings, interpreting verses, personal religious counsel

d. Protecting the Formative Effort of Learning

The response to the criterion of formation is at once the most demanding and the most easily neglected. Because its failure consists not in an absence of formation but in formation in the wrong direction, the response cannot take the form of restricting use alone. What is required is the protection of those kinds of work whose value lies precisely in their difficulty. Memorising, reading repeatedly before a teacher, and composing an explanation in one's own words are forms of work whose benefit arises from the effort undertaken rather than from the result obtained. To delegate such work to a machine is to erase precisely the part that educates. This position is not a rejection of convenience, but an acknowledgement that the *malakah* Ibn Khaldūn had in view grows only through repetition and correction personally undergone. The finding that epistemic authority is formed through experience embodied in practice,⁶² together with the fact that the transmission of *qirāʾāt* still requires *talaqqī mushāfahah*,⁶³ affirms that this condition cannot be met by other means.

⁶¹ Atif et al., "Sacred or Synthetic? Evaluating LLM Reliability and Abstention for Religious Questions."

⁶² Taufikin et al., "EMBODIED RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE IN JAVANESE SUFISM: Existential-Practical Hermeneutics and the Formation of Epistemic Authority."

⁶³ Abdelgelil, Tahir, and Bidin, "Challenges Of Artificial Intelligence (Ai) And Its Impact On Qur'anic Qira'at: A Thematic Review Analysis [CABARAN KECERDASAN BUATAN (AI) DAN KESANNYA TERHADAP QIRAAT AL-QUR'AN: ANALISIS SOROTAN BERTEMA]."

e. Reformulating the Standing of the IRE Teacher

From these four responses emerges a firmer formulation of the standing of the IRE teacher. Teachers have long been understood primarily as conveyors of information, and it is precisely in that standing that they are most easily replaced, since information is now indeed abundant and instantaneous. Yet the four criteria show that conveying information is the smallest part of their work. The teacher is the link that joins the student to traceable transmission, the bearer who carries the truth of what he conveys, the assessor who judges the accuracy of information within its field, and the presence that forms competence and adab in the student. Three of these four standings cannot be assumed by machines, and it is precisely these three that are least often mentioned when the teacher's role is discussed.

f. Institutional Implications and Curricular Placement

These responses cannot be left entirely to the capacity of individual teachers. Studies of the readiness of Islamic higher education institutions show that preparation has thus far been directed more toward facilities and governance,⁶⁴ while the tension between practical risk mitigation and religious normativity remains unresolved.⁶⁵ The criteria formulated in this study suggest a different path, namely making the capacity to weigh the validity of sources a competence that is taught rather than a warning inscribed in a code of conduct. Conceptually, its most fitting placement within the IRE curriculum would be alongside the treatment of the sources of Islamic teaching, since it is there that the question of where a teaching comes from is already a matter of study.

g. Limitations of the Study and a Further Research Agenda

Several limitations must be stated openly. All of the responses above are derived conceptually and have not been tested in actual instruction, so that their applicability across levels and school settings remains open to examination. The status of the accuracy criterion likewise calls for empirical testing in Indonesian,

⁶⁴ Syukur et al., "Integration of Artificial Intelligence in Islamic Higher Education: Comparative Responses between Indonesia and Thailand."

⁶⁵ St Aflahah et al., "AI, ETHICS, AND ISLAMIC HIGHER EDUCATION: NAVIGATING THE TENSIONS BETWEEN PRACTICAL RISK MITIGATION AND RELIGIOUS NORMATIVITY," *Jurnal Ilmiah Islam Futura* 26, no. 1 (2026): 1–24, <https://doi.org/10.22373/jiifv26.i1.32978>.

<https://doi.org/10.30603/au.v25i2.xxxx>

which has thus far gone uncultivated. Such testing would be worth constructing along the lines of existing benchmarks for Arabic and English, though adapted to the material actually taught in Indonesian madrasah and school curricula, and attentive to the layered local reception of Islamic terminology. Until such work is undertaken, the partial fulfilment recorded on the criterion of accuracy should be read as a finding about English and Arabic, not as a finding about the language in which most of the world's Muslim learners study. Even so, the resulting framework possesses one advantage that does not depend on any particular technology. The four test questions in Table 1 may be applied to any source of religious knowledge that emerges in future, since what is asked is not how something works but which conditions it meets. The contribution of this study therefore does not end with the device that happens to be under discussion today.

D. Conclusion

The study's principal contribution is the distinction between structural and contingent failure, a distinction that determines the entire pedagogical response developed below. This study finds that the authority of religious knowledge in the Islamic tradition has never been determined by the content of a statement but by the conditions of its transmission, and that those conditions may be formulated into four working criteria, namely continuity, moral integrity, accuracy of conveyance, and formation. Tested against all four, generative artificial intelligence satisfies only one criterion, and only partially. The principal finding of this study, however, lies not in that failure but in its character: non-fulfilment on continuity, moral integrity, and formation is structural, since it follows directly from the constitution of the system and will not change with improved versions, whereas non-fulfilment on accuracy is contingent, since it depends on task type and on the quality of testing. The distinction between the structural and the contingent constitutes the novelty of this study. That distinction arises from two displacements pursued from the outset, namely moving the question of authority from the online public sphere into the classroom, and bringing sanad and talaqqī down from venerated concepts to criteria applicable to any source.

The consequences for Islamic Religious Education are decisive. Because three of the failures are structural, the appropriate response is not to await technological improvement but to rearrange the standing of human beings within the classroom, so that the teacher stands as: (1) the link that satisfies *ittiṣāl*, tracing knowledge back to a source that can be named; (2) the bearer that satisfies *‘adālah*, standing accountable for the truth of what is conveyed; (3) the assessor that applies *ḍabt*, judging the accuracy of a claim within its field; and (4) the presence that enables *takwīn*, forming the student's competence through encounter rather than through convenience. Three of these four standings cannot be assumed by machines. Conversely, because one failure is contingent, defensible use remains open so long as tasks are sorted according to the fixity of their object and the checkability of their results. This study therefore rejects two attitudes that are equally mistaken. Blanket prohibition treats all four failures as equivalent, overlooking that one of them is contingent and, within its proper limits, remediable through careful task design. Unconditional acceptance treats all four failures as merely technical, overlooking that three of them are structural and cannot be resolved by any future improvement in the technology. The advantage of the resulting framework lies in its independence from any single technology, since its four test questions may be applied to any source of religious knowledge that emerges hereafter. The framework is offered as a robust first formulation, derived from core texts in the sciences of hadith transmission and of classical educational thought; its extension through a wider corpus, particularly *uṣūl al-fiqh* and modern Islamic educational philosophy, would only strengthen its applicability rather than displace it. Future research should test this framework empirically in Indonesian IRE classrooms, for instance through a quasi-experimental design comparing learners who receive instruction using the criteria framework with those who do not, while also measuring the accuracy of generative systems on religious questions posed in Indonesian, following the benchmark design of Atif et al. adapted to Indonesian madrasah curricula, since this criterion has thus far gone uncultivated. The distinction between structural and contingent failure is not merely academic; it determines whether the appropriate response is to wait for the technology to improve or to rearrange the standing of human beings within the classroom.

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