

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) AS A SOURCE OF ISLAMIC INFORMATION: EXAMINING THE RESPONSE OF NAHDLATUL ULAMA (NU) AND MUHAMMADIYAH IN INDONESIA

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Abstract: Artificial intelligence (AI) has recently become an important phenomenon. Interestingly, some Islamic groups have used AI to ask about Islamic information. Of course, the validity, accuracy, and veracity of AI-related information are in severe debate. The two most prominent Islamic organizations in Indonesia, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah have responded to the existence of this AI technology. This article reviews how NU and Muhammadiyah responded to AI as a means of Islamic information. By using qualitative methods, which focus on data in the form of statements by NU figures, offline and online, this article concludes that both NU and Muhammadiyah view AI as a challenge and threat to Islamic authority. However, NU tends to view that AI-generated information should not (*haram*) be used as a reference. For NU, AI cannot be trusted as a provider of religious information. This differs from Muhammadiyah, who emphasizes that preachers can consider AI technology as a vehicle for da'wah. Even for Muhammadiyah, preachers are encouraged to use this technology. NU tends to be more traditionalist and closed regarding AI and even views AI as a threat to Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*) culture; meanwhile, Muhammadiyah is more open to adapting to new technology. These findings can be a reference in developing Islamic da'wah media in the context of dynamically emerging technology.

Keywords: AI; NU; Muhammadiyah; source of Islamic information.

INTRODUCTION

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become an alternative technology that provides various information, although experts debate the validity of the information provided by this technology (Noémi Bontridder & Yves Pouillet, 2021; Annie Benzie & Reza Montasari, 2022). This is, of course, a challenge for the religious world. The existence of AI has given rise to various studies, such as the moral implications of using AI, the integration of AI with religious practices, the analysis of religious texts in AI, and so on (Yuli Ardianysah, 2023). Apart from that, according to Susanna Trotta et al. (2023), many studies regarding AI and religion focus on concerns that AI will replace the role of God. However, what is certain is that according to Marius Doromontan (2022), AI has extraordinary implications for religion. However, ethical and moral problems in using AI for religion remain problematic (Ana Khorunnisa et al., 2023).

Even though various questions remain, AI, whether we admit it or not, continues to develop into a source of religious information and, in turn, can replace the role of traditional religious authorities. This study aims to complement previous studies that have not studied how specific religious organizations adopt AI as a medium or source of religious information. This article, therefore, examines the response of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah in Indonesia regarding the use of AI as a source of religious information as two organizations that work in their respective approaches, NU and Muhammadiyah seem to have different views on AI. This study assumes that specific religious approaches have their way

of looking at new technology. This article can contribute to the development of Islamic media based on artificial intelligence technology.

METHODS

Researcher use qualitative research, where data is explored and analyzed in depth. In qualitative research, the researcher is the key instrument that determines the data obtained. Data was collected using documentation techniques by reading, researching, and drawing conclusions from NU and Muhammadiyah's comments and opinions about AI, which were spread in online media. Researchers will focus on several online media articles published by nu.or.id and muhammadiyah.or.id.

The data was analyzed using the Religious Social Shaping of Technology (RSST) approach (Campbell, 2010). This approach states that religion influences the use of technology, the opposite of the old concept, which says that technology influences religion. In this approach, researchers will test three aspects, namely (1) community, (2) authority, and (3) textual media. The community focuses on community identity, namely NU and Muhammadiyah. Authority focuses on the authority of ulama or religious figures in NU and Muhammadiyah. In contrast, textual media focuses on traditional religious texts that reference these two organizations in viewing AI.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Nahdlatul Ulama's response to AI

NU held a national deliberation (Munas) in 2023, and the position of AI as a source of Islamic information was discussed. This can be seen in an article posted on the NU website as seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Article Posted on NU's Website

No.	Posted Article	Link
1	2023 NU National Conference	https://www.nu.or.id/nasional/munas-nu-2023-

	Recommends PBNU to Create AI (Munas NU 2023 Rekomendasi an PBNU Bikin AI)	rekomendasikan-pbnu-bikin-ai-mluw3
2	2023 NU National Conference: Asking AI is OK, but It is Haram to Use It as a Guide to Practice (Munas NU 2023: Bertanya ke AI Boleh, Tapi Haram Dijadikan Pedoman untuk Diamalkan)	https://www.nu.or.id/nasional/munas-nu-2023-bertanya-ke-ai-boleh-tapi-haram-dijadikan-pedoman-untuk-diamalkan-HvEj3

Reference: nu.or.id, 2023

NU appears to view AI as an adaptable technology. Therefore, NU encourages the need to develop AI based on the NU database. In article number 1, it says,

"Inevitable Technological developments must be welcomed and adopted. Artificial intelligence (AI) is a technology that is developing very quickly. The 2023 Nahdlatul Ulama National Conference (Munas) recommended that the Nahdlatul Ulama Executive Board (PBNU) create an AI with a database from NU."

The establishment of AI based on NU data was carried out by displaying NU's

religious tradition, which emphasizes sect (*madhhabis*)-based religion. It says,

"Data from the PBNU is necessary to fill in the AI so that it can refer to *the Ahlussunah wal Jamaah an-Nahdliyah* schools of thought (*madhhabs*), without being biased by understandings outside of it... This recommendation is based on the rise of AI, where many people ask about religious matters. Meanwhile, AI is still produced by non-Muslims."

In article 2, NU emphasized that using AI as a reference source for worship (*ibadah*) is forbidden. AI can only be used as a tool to ask questions, as it says,

"The 2023 Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) National Conference (Munas) of Alim Ulama determined that it is permissible to ask AI about religion, but it is *haram* to use it as a guideline that is practiced."

Furthermore, it is said that this impossibility refers to several reasons. Namely, first, the truth of AI is not yet guaranteed, even though its knowledge may surpass humans. This prohibition is also based on the fact that the answers given are hallucinatory. Apart from that, AI is still produced by non-Muslim people so it creates its own bias in the answers presented.

Muhammadiyah's response to AI

Muhammadiyah provided a response to AI which can be seen in the following article post as seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Articles Posted on Muhammadiyah's Website

No	Posted Article	Link
1.	Artificial Intelligence	https://muhammadiyah.or.id/2023/10/artificial-intelligence-sebuah-keniscayaan-kenali-

	Necessity, Recognize its Positive and Negative Potential (Artificial Intelligence Sebuah Keniscayaan, Kenali Potensi Positif dan Negatifnya)	potensi-positif-dan-negatifnya/ .
2.	Challenge of Muhammadiyah Mubaligh Da'wah in the Era of AI Development (Tantangan Dakwah Mubaligh Muhammadiyah di Era Perkembangan AI)	https://muhammadiyah.or.id/2024/01/tantangan-dakwah-mubaligh-muhammadiyah-di-era-perkembangan-ai/ .

Reference: Muhammadiyah.or.id, 2023

In article number 1, Muhammadiyah views AI as a necessity, but users must understand the positive and negative potential of this technology, as stated:

"AI is an inevitability. This means that we all cannot escape this AI. However, if we rely too much on AI, we may become useless. This message reminds us of the importance of taking a

wise attitude in facing advances in AI technology and how we can make good use of it while avoiding the negative impacts that may occur. Do not use AI as a jockey, but make it a tutor; that is where you will have skills later. If you become a jockey, you will not learn anything."

Furthermore, as presented in article number 2, Muhammadiyah views that AI can shift the authority of ulama, as stated:

"Ulama, who were originally religious authorities, have shifted that authority to Google, which is connected to the internet network. Moreover, the presence of AI is also taking away the authority and role of ulama among the people."

However, AI can become a source of abundant data that can be utilized by preachers. It is stated that:

"The existence of Big Data is a mine for AI to dig deeper into any knowledge, including religious knowledge. Amid such a situation, the role of preachers must be more stable." IT and AI do come as a challenge, but Muhammadiyah preachers must not give up. Mubalig of Muhammadiyah must be brave and ready to surf the waves of progress."

The data shows that there is encouragement from Muhammadiyah to use AI as long as it is used for positive things. Muhammadiyah preachers encourage their preachers to utilize AI in their preaching (*da'wah*) activities.

Factors of NU and Muhammadiyah's Acceptance of AI

Based on the data above, it can be said that NU and Muhammadiyah both accept AI as a source of religious information. However, the difference is that NU only limits the ability to use AI to ask questions but forbids it as a reference or guide in doing worship (*ibadah*). Meanwhile, Muhammadiyah did not issue a *fatwa* prohibiting the use of AI but asked users to be wise and selective in their use of AI.

There are three factors in NU and Muhammadiyah's acceptance of AI, namely: community, authority, and media textual factors.

Community identity strongly becomes the basis of NU and Muhammadiyah's opinion on AI. NU is known as a traditional Islamic community that is the past ulama tradition, so it is very selective in adopting new technology, and it does not readily accept AI as a guide in worship (*ibadah*). Meanwhile, Muhammadiyah, as a modernist Muslim community, easily views AI's position as inevitable even though it is also a threat to Islam.

In addition, the referenced religious authority also influences their acceptance of AI. Their religious authority is related to religious figures called *kiyai* or *ustadz*. However, both appear different regarding the institutions that preserve this authority. NU's religious authority is more developed in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), which teach their students various cross-school books (*kitab kuning*). Muhammadiyah operates more through modern educational institutions called *sekolah umum* and colleges (*perguruan tinggi*).

Furthermore, their understanding of primary Islamic sources which are the Quran, hadith, and Ulama's books also influences their views on AI. In this regard, NU is more textual than Muhammadiyah which emphasizes a contextual approach. However, both NU and Muhammadiyah still consider that primary Islamic texts cannot be replaced with AI-based Islamic texts. NU and Muhammadiyah seem to

be trying to integrate pure Islamic texts with Islamic texts provided by AI (Adeni, 2022).

Model of New Islamic Information Source

It seems that NU and Muhammadiyah still do not want the authority of their Islamic leaders in the offline space to be eroded. Both view the importance of conventional religious authority in their acceptance of AI. This statement refuses a technocentric perspective that is considered able to negate the historical tendency of influential leaders to influence the diffusion of technology and new media interactions in society (e.g., Beatty & Gordon, 1991; Lin, 2003; Siebel, 2019). However, NU and Muhammadiyah encourage the need for Islamic authority to be channeled or mediated (Benoit-Barné & Cooren, 2009; Fairhurst & Cooren, 2009). Hence, following Harris's (2017) parable about the first church of artificial intelligence or the Way of the Future, AI that can provide the truth information can be run as an Islamic mansion based on large communities of NU and Muhammadiyah.

It can be said that AI needs to be developed as a source of Islamic information. We need to ensure that this technology is not biased in providing information (Brown, 2018). In particular, the most important thing is how to integrate the Islamic community identity, conventional Islamic authority, and pure Islamic sources (texts) with the existence of AI so that there is no religious misdirection in the use of AI. As a technological tool, AI is a technology that must be adopted into the world of Islamic da'wah to enrich and build a broader Islamic discourse (Adeni, 2023).

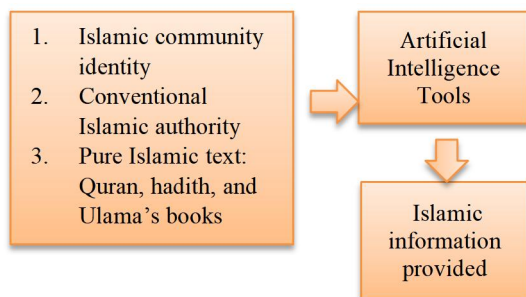


Figure 1. Model of Integration of Islam and AI Tools

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that NU and Muhammadiyah in Indonesia accept AI as a source of Islamic information. However, this acceptance applies as long as AI is used with limitations that do not conflict with Islamic principles. NU and Muhammadiyah's acceptance of AI can be a model for developing AI as a means of Islamic da'wah. The involvement of AI as a space providing various Islamic information is necessary. Therefore, practitioners of Islamic da'wah can develop AI that suits the needs of Islamic da'wah. The most important thing is how valid Islamic data can be integrated with AI.

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