

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AS A SCIENTIFIC TRUST: A REFLECTIVE STUDY OF SURAH AL-BAQARAH (2):31–32 ON ITS POSITIVE ROLE IN THE ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This study explores the relevance of *Surah al-Baqarah* (2:31–32) to the development of artificial intelligence (AI) from an Islamic perspective, framing AI as a trust of knowledge that must be managed with wisdom. The verses emphasize that the human ability to recognize, name, and organize knowledge is a divine gift that distinguishes humanity from other creatures, and serves as a basis for the legitimacy of humankind's role as *khalifah* (vicegerent) on earth. Employing a qualitative method with a thematic (*mandu'i*) interpretation approach, this study analyzes primary and secondary sources, including contemporary commentaries such as *Tafsir al-Misbah*, alongside the perspectives of Muslim scholars, practitioners, and activists. The findings indicate that AI is a product of human knowledge that presents both opportunities and challenges; therefore, its application must be grounded in Qur'anic values, principles of wisdom, and ethical guidelines to prevent misuse, overdependence, and the erosion of human dignity. The study recommends that AI be utilized as a means to enhance *da'wah*, education, and public welfare, rather than as a replacement for the essential and irreplaceable role of human beings.

Keywords: *artificial intelligence, positive role*

INTRODUCTION

The development of artificial intelligence (AI) has become a defining feature of the modern era. Beyond its technical applications, AI raises profound philosophical, ethical, and theological questions. In the Islamic context, this progress is significant because it influences how science is perceived, how intellectual responsibility is exercised, and how the Qur'anic concept of humanity as *khalifah* (vicegerent) is understood. Among Muslim scholars, AI's rapid penetration has sparked both recognition of its substantial benefits and concerns over its potential harm, including moral degradation, excessive dependence on technology, and the erosion of essential human values.

In the context of contemporary developments, AI has permeated various sectors, including health, education, economics, and even the religious sphere. In religious practice, AI is applied in diverse ways — from AI-based chatbots for Islamic consultations, to the use of big data in hadith and tafsir studies, and the implementation of AI technology in Hajj and Umrah services. However, this progress also presents significant challenges, such as the spread of religious information lacking

scientific and scholarly validation, and concerns over the potential displacement of human roles in transcendental and normative matters. Addressing this issue, the Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, in an AI socialization and workshop at Bunda Mulia High School in Jakarta on Tuesday, March 18, 2025, stated: “AI will not be a threat, it will not replace humans, but humans who do not use AI will eventually be defeated by humans who use AI” (Youtzmedia, 2025). His statement underscores that the primary challenge lies not in AI's existence, but in human preparedness to manage it wisely, intelligently, and responsibly.

This research is significant because its foundation is found in *Surah al-Baqarah* (2:31–32), which states:

﴿وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ فَقَالَ أَنْبِئُونِي بِأَسْمَاءِ هَؤُلَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ۝٣١ قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ ۝٣٢﴾ (البقرة)

Translation (Ministry of Religion, Republic of Indonesia):

(31) And He taught Adam the names of all things; then He presented them to the angels

and said, “Tell Me the names of these, if you are truthful.” (32) They said, “Glory be to You, we have no knowledge except what You have taught us. Indeed, it is You who are the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.”

This verse illustrates how Allah guided Adam (peace be upon him), with “the names” symbolizing knowledge as both a divine gift and a sacred trust. It serves not only as a theological foundation for Islamic epistemology but also as an ethical framework, requiring that all forms of knowledge — including AI, as a product of human intellect — be managed with integrity and moral responsibility. Classical scholars such as al-Rāzī and Ibn Kathīr explain that the human capacity to comprehend and organize knowledge is an honor that distinguishes humanity from all other creatures. Reflecting on this verse is therefore essential to raising Muslim awareness of AI’s place within the broader context of knowledge and Qur’anic values. Previous studies, such as Arif (2020) and Becker et al. (2005), have addressed AI in relation to Islamic knowledge, emphasizing the need to frame technology within a religious paradigm to preserve its spiritual and humanitarian relevance. However, specific analysis connecting the Qur’anic account in *Surah al-Baqarah* (2:31–32) to the ethical responsibility of knowledge in the context of AI remains rare.

This study seeks to explore how Qur’anic verses can provide a conceptual foundation for understanding AI as a scientific trust that must be managed responsibly. It aims to contribute to the development of technological ethics from an Islamic perspective, while offering a reflective framework for Muslims to navigate the digital era with wisdom and accountability. By integrating data, factual developments, and current trends in AI, this analysis gains greater relevance. Without a conscious application of religious and ethical principles in responding to the AI revolution, Muslim’s risk becoming passive consumers devoid of value awareness, and may even fall into uses of technology — including AI — that conflict with Islamic teachings and invite potential misuse.

In the contemporary era, digital technology — particularly AI — is advancing rapidly and significantly influencing various aspects of life,

including religion and education. Its presence presents both challenges and opportunities, depending on how it is utilized by humans. The development of AI is not merely the product of human ingenuity, but also a reflection of human reason and knowledge, which are trusts (*amānah*) bestowed by Allah SWT. As stated in *Surah al-Baqarah* (2:31–32), Allah directly taught Adam the names of all things, granting him the ability to recognize and designate them — a capacity that forms the basis of human knowledge and responsibility.

Then, by presenting the objects — both living and inanimate — to the angels, Allah challenged them: “Name these, if you are truly more noble than humans.” The angels acknowledged their limitations, affirming that they had no knowledge except what Allah had taught them. This moment highlights Prophet Adam’s primary distinction: the possession of knowledge. It is this divine gift that forms the foundation of humanity’s role as *kehalifah* (vicegerent) on earth. In the same way, AI is a product of science and technology made possible by the intellectual capacity Allah has endowed upon humans.

Theoretical Background

Eriana and Zein (2023), in their work *Artificial Intelligence*, describe AI as a computer system capable of imitating human intelligence, including the abilities to think, learn, and make decisions. Their research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of AI and its potential in modern life, discussing key branches such as Natural Language Processing (NLP), Machine Learning (ML), Deep Learning (DL), and robotics. The book also examines AI applications in health, industry, education, and public services, explaining its operational mechanisms through algorithms and artificial neural networks, and emphasizing the importance of ethics in AI development. The findings highlight AI’s significant contribution to supporting human activities, particularly in accelerating and simplifying work. However, they stress that AI use must be accompanied by responsibility to prevent harmful misuse.

The relevance of Eriana and Zein’s research to the present study lies in its affirmation that AI progress must be guided by humanitarian

values — a principle aligned with the message of *Surah al-Baqarah* (2:31–32) concerning the trust of knowledge. From an Islamic perspective, the use of AI is therefore not only a matter of technological advancement but also a moral responsibility for those entrusted with knowledge.

Fadilah and Amin (2023), in their article “*Deconstruction of Education in Surah al-Baqarah Verses 31–32: An Analysis from the Perspective of Quraish Shihab’s Tafsir al-Misbab*”, explain that Quraish Shihab interprets the teaching of names to Prophet Adam as a symbol marking the beginning of human education. This teaching is not limited to naming objects but also encompasses understanding their functions and the use of language as a tool for thought. The interpretation underscores that intellectual capacity is a divine gift that makes humans worthy of serving as *khalifah* (vicegerent) on earth. *Tafsir al-Misbab* employs a *dirayah* approach, combining logic, Arabic linguistics, and classical sources.

The relevance of this research to the present study lies in its emphasis that these verses contain educational values — particularly the centrality of knowledge, the role of language, and the responsibility of reason — all of which align with viewing AI as a trust of knowledge that must be used wisely.

Insana et al. (2024), in their article “*Ethics and Challenges of Da’wah in the Era of Artificial Intelligence*”, examine the use of AI in Islamic *da’wah*, particularly through AI-based chatbots. The study evaluates both the opportunities and challenges of employing AI to convey religious messages, as well as its impact on religious authority and public understanding. The findings indicate that AI chatbots can significantly expand access to Islamic information, engage the digital generation, and enhance the effectiveness of *da’wah* dissemination. However, challenges remain, including limited contextual understanding, potential miscommunication, and the risk of reducing the role of *ulama* as primary sources of guidance. The authors recommend that AI in *da’wah* be applied within the framework of Islamic ethical principles, ensuring information accuracy and expert oversight of religious content.

The relevance of this study to the present research lies in its shared emphasis on the responsible use of technology — particularly AI — in alignment with spiritual and ethical values.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research method employed in this study is qualitative, which emphasizes understanding phenomena through descriptive analysis of written sources (Del Cid et al., 2009). Qualitative research produces empirical data that must meet specific criteria: validity, reliability, and objectivity. Validity refers to the degree of accuracy between the actual conditions of the object and the data collected by the researcher (Nasution, 2023).

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative design with a thematic (*mandū’i*) interpretation approach. This approach is considered appropriate for exploring the meaning of *Surah al-Baqarah* (2:31–32) and explaining its relevance to the contemporary development of AI within an Islamic framework. Data collection was carried out through literature and library research, utilizing both primary sources — such as Qur’anic exegesis (*Tafsir al-Misbab*) — and secondary sources, including journal articles, books on AI, media reports, and interviews with student activists engaged in promoting AI in the Islamic context.

Data collection was conducted through library research, focusing on sources that directly link the Qur’anic text to the development of AI as both a social and scientific phenomenon. The data were then analyzed using the *mandū’i* interpretation method, aimed at uncovering the Qur’an’s message on knowledge as a divine trust, as expressed in *Surah al-Baqarah* (2:31–32). The analysis also incorporated the perspectives of contemporary scholars and public discourse on AI, including the statement by Vice President Gibran Rakabuming, which emphasized the importance of mastering AI rather than avoiding its use.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that *Surah Al-Baqarah* verses 31–32 provide a theological foundation that knowledge is both a gift and a mandate from Allah SWT to humankind. The account of Prophet Adam’s ability to recognize and

articulate names reflects the distinctive intellectual capacity of humans, which underpins their legitimacy as caliphs on earth. In the context of AI development, this capacity can be understood as the human potential to create, regulate, and guide technology responsibly, ensuring its alignment with the values prescribed by Islamic teachings.

AI represents a form of scientific advancement that carries a significant mandate for its users. From an Islamic perspective, its utilization must be grounded in spiritual values and ethical principles. This study affirms that AI is not merely a technological tool, but also a test of human moral awareness in managing knowledge. Accordingly, Muslims are expected to actively frame AI usage within the principle of wisdom, ensuring that its application aligns with both humanitarian and divine objectives. In the contemporary era, the use of AI is not only permissible but also encouraged, provided it functions as a supportive instrument and does not foster excessive dependence.

The author conducted an interview with Raihan Kamil, a student in the Hajj and Umrah Management Study Program and former Chair of the Student Council at the Universal Student Islamic Boarding School for the 2023–2024 period. In the interview, Raihan noted that the use of AI in the digital era has become a necessity for Generation Z, particularly in completing college assignments and engaging in various academic activities. He observed that services such as ChatGPT can provide quick responses and facilitate access to a wide range of academic information. However, he also highlighted the potential for dependency, which may reduce the habit of reading literature directly and foster an instant learning culture. Therefore, he stressed that AI should be used in a balanced manner, supported by references from relevant literature, especially academic books. In response to the Vice President's statement on the pros and cons of AI, Raihan estimated that approximately 45% were in favor and 55% were opposed. He concluded that the use of AI should be context-dependent and should not serve as the sole reference for completing tasks, including college assignments.

Based on the author's interview with Dani Muhammad Syafi'i, an activist and discussion

facilitator at the Universal Islamic Boarding School Students, the use of AI can be seen from both positive and negative perspectives. On the negative side, excessive use may lead to dependency, where individuals tend to accept results without engaging in independent processing or analysis. On the positive side, when used wisely—as a foundational framework to be further developed—AI can make a substantial contribution to supporting human activities. In response to Vice President Gibran Rakabuming Raka's statement, Dani emphasized that perceptions of AI depend on the perspective taken. From a humanitarian standpoint, humans cannot be fully replaced by AI. From an intelligence standpoint, AI is an artificial system capable of unlimited processing, yet it lacks consciousness and emotion—qualities that remain distinct human advantages beyond the reach of technology.

From the author's interviews with various sources and the analysis of contemporary interpretations, this study links the interpretation of *Al-Misbah* by M. Quraish Shihab with contemporary issues, particularly the role of AI. In his commentary on QS. Al-Baqarah verses 31–32, Quraish Shihab explains that Allah taught Prophet Adam the names of all things, thereby granting the potential for knowledge—not only about the names of objects or words used to indicate them, but also about their functions. This knowledge was not merely the transfer of information, but an acknowledgment of the human capacity to understand, name, and manage knowledge. This concept parallels AI as a product of human knowledge that must be managed responsibly. In this context, AI is not only a technological outcome but also a mandate of knowledge entrusted to humans. Quraish Shihab further emphasizes that the uniqueness of humans lies in their ability to understand, express ideas, and capture meaning—an intellectual foundation that makes them worthy to serve as *kehalifah* on earth. This intellectual capacity reflects the human mind's ability to build systems of understanding. Nevertheless, it must be recognized that AI remains solely a tool and cannot serve as a substitute for human reason.

M. Quraish Shihab further explains that wisdom entails using knowledge appropriately, which includes considering its benefits and

avoiding potential harm. This principle is directly relevant to the use of AI, emphasizing the necessity of grounding technological applications in ethical values so that they do not become instruments of harm, injustice, or domination. Accordingly, the use of AI must be infused with wisdom, as humans are divinely guided to exercise their knowledge responsibly. In his interpretation of QS. Al-Baqarah verses 31–32, Quraish Shihab notes that the angels' initial response was not an objection, but rather a means to demonstrate that humans possess capacities of understanding and knowledge management that angels do not. This confirms the theological legitimacy of humanity's role as managers of knowledge, which extends to the domain of AI. Therefore, AI should be regarded as a tool to be directed by humans, not as an entity that governs them. This positioning of AI as an auxiliary instrument—rather than a substitute for human intellect—is fully consistent with Qur'anic principles and the message of the verse.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of Surah Al-Baqarah verses 31–32 and their relevance to the phenomenon of AI from an Islamic perspective, it can be concluded that AI represents part of the mandate of knowledge entrusted by Allah to humanity. The ability of Prophet Adam to recognize and name objects, as described in the verse, reflects the intellectual superiority of humankind and affirms their legitimacy as caliphs on earth. Consequently, AI—being a product of human intellect and scientific advancement—derives from the very potential of reason granted by God. Its utilization, therefore, must remain inseparable from moral responsibility and the ethical principles of Islamic teachings.

This research emphasizes that the implementation of AI must be grounded in wisdom, as highlighted in M. Quraish Shihab's *Tafsir Al-Misbah*—namely, the use of knowledge to generate benefits and prevent harm. In practical terms, AI holds immense potential as a tool for *da'nab* and education when applied judiciously. However, it also presents significant challenges, including technological dependency, the dissemination of invalid information, and the erosion of human values. Therefore, the mastery of AI

must be coupled with a strong commitment to protect, manage, and utilize it for the collective good, ensuring that it serves humanity rather than becoming an instrument of domination or a replacement for fundamental human principles.

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