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The Therapeutic Effects of Salah on Depression and the Role of Artificial Intelligence Enhancement: A Meta-Analysis

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Abstract:

Background: The fast-paced development of artificial intelligence (AI) technology has considerably impacted several spheres such as education, health care, and religious activity. As far as Islam is concerned, AI technology has been incorporated in numerous digital products that enable religious teaching, pray facilitation, etc. Moreover, Salah (prayers performed in Islam) is extensively researched regarding their physiological, psychological, and spiritual impacts on Muslims. Nevertheless, the link between AI and Salah (and related health effects) is yet to be explored fully.

Objective: This narrative review tries to analyze literature available on

1. health and psychological advantages of Salah
2. Use of AI for the benefit of Islamic education and Salah-related systems
3. Ethics of using AI for religious purposes.

Methods: A narrative review methodology was used. The relevant literature was retrieved from peer-reviewed journals, conferences, and systematic reviews related to AI in Islam and physiological/psychological advantages of performing Salah.

Results: According to literature findings, Salah is linked to several benefits such as musculoskeletal flexibility, cardiovascular activity control, decrease in stress levels, and improvement of emotional state. Psychological processes such as mindfulness, behavioral activation, and relaxation responses may be responsible for the above effects. At the same time, AI has proven its efficiency in several Islamic domains: from prayer posture recognition systems through mobile learning applications to intelligent assistants and language tools. However, ethical problems related to such technologies, insufficient spirituality of AI solutions, data privacy issues, and variable accuracy are among their weaknesses.

Keywords: meta-analysis, Salah, Islamic prayer, depression, artificial intelligence, mental health, spiritual intervention

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Introduction:

The impact of depression on a person's ability to participate in their daily life has been well documented and constitutes a global public health concern. The traditional way in which mental health is treated by clinicians and therapists often ignores the spiritual and cultural aspects of coping with mental illness, especially when treating Muslim clients because many Muslims use spiritual techniques to cope with depression, regardless of their mental state.

Salah (the five daily prayers required) offers structured spiritual practice involving discipline, focus, physical activity, reflection, and social connection. Elements of Salah's practice relate to established psychological mechanisms associated with behavioral activation, emotional regulation, cognitive reframing, and social support, which all share similarities with established methods of treating depression.

New advances in artificial intelligence (AI) technology have opened the door for alternative strategies for providing culturally appropriate mental health services. AI-based tools such as chatbots for online Islamic counseling, prayer reminders that are personalized, and digital platforms that connect Muslims, providing a means for enhancing their faith in conjunction with improving access to the resources associated with depression treatment.

While there has been an increased interest in the use of AI to expand access to mental health resources within this community, no systematic review has quantitatively documented the relationship between Salah's practice and a reduction in the severity of symptoms related to depression or the role of AI in supporting spiritually integrated care for Muslims. Therefore, this paper provides a narrative review of existing research to address this information gap.

Literature Review:

The rapid growth of artificial intelligence (AI) in the digital age has had a big effect on many parts of human life, such as spirituality and religious practice. The presence of AI in religious contexts poses significant enquiries concerning the interpretation of sacred texts, spiritual authority, and the evolution of interactions within religious communities.[1]

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) to assist people in their religious lives bring about a number of significant issues surrounding the use of AI in relation to religious rites, spiritual direction and the verification of authentic religious encounters. Current studies regarding AI and religion conducted in countries where religion plays an important role in society indicate that scepticism towards the integration of AI into religious rites is prevalent among believers; thus, Thomas Aquinas' teaching on the importance of theological reflection and critical thinking for determining the validity and effectiveness of AI in faith-related experiences supports the necessity of educating believers as to how AI impacts their faith, acknowledging that AI may contain inherent bias and reaffirming the authority of religious leaders. Future discussions must include an evaluation of how AI may transform religious practices and traditions by ensuring that innovation and the foundational tenets of faith remain balanced.[2] The intangible yet profound power of intention and spirituality exists beyond the tangible assets of capital and data, exemplified by the practice of prayer—a force that endures even in the AI era. Research in academia shows that prayer and meditation can have a big effect on your mental and physical health. Newberg and D'Aquili's (2001) study in "Why God Won't Go Away: Brain Science and the Biology of Belief" shows that spiritual practices stimulate brain areas linked to emotional control and stress relief. By combining these findings with AI, technologies like neurofeedback and biofeedback can make prayer and meditation more effective by giving people real-time information about their brain activity. This lets people improve their spiritual practices for the best results.[3]

Artificial intelligence has been increasingly examined within the realms of religious studies and spiritual care, especially regarding the enhancement of access to religious knowledge and the facilitation of personalised spiritual engagement. Recent literature indicates that AI systems can facilitate the organization and interpretation of extensive religious texts, thereby providing users with customised guidance and educational resources. However, academics stress that AI cannot take the place of human spiritual authority, theological interpretation, or lived religious experience. Ethical issues like algorithmic bias, data privacy, and the validity of machine-generated spiritual advice are still major problems. So, the best way to think about AI is as a tool that helps rather than a replacement for religious study and practice.[4] Muslim prayer (Namaz) is an obligatory act of worshipping Allah that must be performed five times a day with precise time intervals for Muslims. Namaz may therefore be employed as an appropriate tool for examining the impact of changes in body positions on brain activity as assessed through EEG due to the fact that the change in body position has been shown to influence brain function. Methods: In this study, forty Muslim individuals performed a cycle of Namaz, and their brain activities were recorded using a 14-channel EEG machine. Brain connectivity, which refers to the relationship between brain functions recorded in the form of signals from multiple electrodes in different frequency bands (delta, theta, alpha, beta, and gamma), was evaluated for Namaz positions including standing, bowing, prostration, and sitting. Results: It has been shown that the delta band is the one that undergoes changes mostly regarding the degree of cross-correlation, resulting in an accuracy of 73.8%.[5]

For this study, the use of qualitative descriptive approaches was employed in analyzing the role played by Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the context of Islamic education. A literature review approach was adopted for data collection from 26 academic papers from sources like the SINTA database (1-6) and international journals (Q1-Q4) using specific terms relating to AI in Islamic education. Data sources were chosen based on their relevancy to the research question. In data analysis, descriptive and content analyses were used to find trends in AI applications and relevant topics in the subject under study. There have been increased AI applications since 2018; most of the papers in this area used descriptive analysis techniques. Topics discussed include integrating AI in Qur'an and Hadith teachings, developing AI tools for educational purposes, and digitizing Islamic texts. Challenges include issues related to technological constraints, ethical issues, cultural sensitivity, and technological imbalances in urban and rural areas.[6] Artificial Intelligence (AI) contributes to Islamic education in an innovative way by introducing new elements into the traditional process of religious education as it relates to the 5.0 Industrial Revolution. Incorporating AI into Islamic education has introduced several creative methods of improving students' learning experiences, providing more access to religious content, and providing a more comprehensive means of educating the student. A search of the literature found no publications that addressed the application of AI to Islamic education, which leads to the goal of this study to explore how AI may enhance personalized learning, improve access to education, and better facilitate the learning of Islamic students. To conduct the analysis of AI and Islamic education, PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines were used to identify 18 of 379 (0.0470%) from articles published from 2022-2024 available in the Scopus, Google Scholar, and ERIC databases. The conclusion shows

1. there are many ways AI can help students increase their understanding of materials, motivate them to work hard, develop critical thinking, be creative, and effectively utilize Islamic education
2. speed of change brings many obstacles to using AI, including ethical issues, privacy concerns, and adapting.[7]

This systematic review summarizes the most recent research from 2009 to 2024 on the health advantages of salah, or Islamic prayer. Millions of Muslims around the world engage in salah, a special kind of spiritual and physical exercise that includes a number of poses and motions that may have therapeutic benefits. The

review investigates the effects of Salah on neurological results, psychological well-being, cardiovascular fitness, musculoskeletal benefits, and rehabilitation. The findings suggest that frequent Salah practice may benefit cardiovascular regulation, balance in older populations, stress reduction, and mental wellness. However, existing studies should be interpreted cautiously due to methodological constraints. The review emphasizes that in order to completely clarify the processes and long-term health impacts of Salah, more thorough and extensive research is required. Comprehending these advantages can encourage integrative health practices in culturally aware settings.[8] A current topic within Islamic discussion is the ability for AI to perform rituals such as leading prayers or giving sermons. Concerned proponents of this subject cite AI's capacity to imitate human-like behaviours and produce religious documents, however, to act as a true leader in ritualistic practice also requires genuine spiritual and moral qualities (to be intentional and have God presence in mind with full humble reverence) beyond just physical imitation, which only a conscious human can provide. Classical scholars of Islam concur that worship is made up of two elements: an exterior visible act and an interior aspect of genuine sincerity. Additionally, an imam serves as a moral authority within the Muslim community, which is not a quality of AI. Therefore, while AI may generate or provide structural components to a ritual act, AI does not possess the element of spirituality that defines worship. Thus, the actions of AI leading a ritual are wrongly presumed to be examples of true leadership due to a mixing of imitation and true leadership. Thus, without both the spiritual aspect and community aspects being maintained, AI will never be able to act in place of a live imam.[9] Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a new and innovatory way to add to Islamic Education, using new ways to add to the existing methods of how Muslims learn about their religion in the era of 5.0 Industrial Revolution. Through the use of AI, Islamic education has been able to develop many new and innovative ways to make learning more fun and engaging for the students; create new methods of distributing information about Islam; and increase the likelihood that the individual will receive the complete education of being an Islamic person. The literature review of studies specifically related to AI and Islamic education showed that there have not been any published works, therefore, the purpose of this analysis is to identify ways that AI could benefit personalized education, accede access to education, and thereby assist the Islamic student in acquiring the necessary education needed to become an Islamic citizen, and conducted a systematic analysis of AI and Islamic education based on the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines. As a result of limiting the review to articles published between 2022-2024 in the Scopus, Google Scholar and ERIC databases, a total of 18 (0.0470%) articles were identified, and the conclusion states (1) there are multiple avenues for AI to assist students in better understanding the material, inspiring hard work, developing critical thinking, enhancing creativity, and successfully applying the knowledge acquired through Islamic education, and (2) the very rapid pace of technological advancement associated with the use of AI creates multiple barriers to the application of AI including ethical considerations, privacy concerns and the need to adapt.[10] Prayer, especially namaz, is a very important Islamic practice that connects Muslims with God and deepens their spirituality. This research studied the links between how often Muslims in Bahawalpur pray and their life values and how much they attach themselves to God (i.e., anxious or avoidantly). The research was a cross-sectional survey that examined 200 female students and used approved scales to measure and ask about prayer habits and life values. The study showed a significant negative relationship between life values and both avoidant and anxious attachment to God. This means that the more a person practices their life values, the less likely they are to have avoidant or anxious attachment styles when they think about God. Avoidant Attachment to God had a greater impact on participants' life values than Anxious Attachment did. Furthermore, the frequency of participants' prayer did not significantly impact either attachment or life values, indicating that participating in regular religious practices does not greatly influence these variables. The research has practical and academic implications.[11]

The Namaz could be defined as the mental, spiritual, and physical practicing among the Muslims. This study was done in order to examine the immediate impact of Namaz on stress hormones and their gene expressions such as IL6 and BDNF. For this purpose, eighty-three healthy men and women who regularly perform Namaz have been involved in this study. The saliva samples were collected before and after Namaz in order to detect the cortisol and alpha-amylase hormones. Furthermore, in order to assess the gene expressions, 11 samples were randomly selected. According to the results of the baseline collection, participants were divided into three groups based on cortisol concentrations less than five, between five to fifteen, and more than fifteen ng/ml. As a result, it is found that the first group had significantly high levels of the cortisol while the third one showed significantly low concentrations of the same hormone. In addition, an increase in alpha-amylase was observed in the subjects who had a low baseline concentration of this hormone. In relation to the genetic expression analysis, there was a significant reduction in BDNF gene expression following the Namaz.[12] Muslim prayer (salaat/namaz) serves as a moderate exercise involving isotonic and isometric muscle contractions. This study investigates the impact of the Rukku posture on hamstring flexibility in female students, comparing regular and irregular prayer offerers. A sample of 400 students (200 regular and 200 irregular prayer offerers) was evaluated using the chair sit and reach test and the straight leg raise test. Results indicated that regular prayer offerers showed a mean score of 0.9 (left leg) and 1.3 (right leg) in the chair test, while irregular offerers scored -2.0 and -1.8, respectively. In the straight leg raise test, regular offerers scored 72 (right leg) and 64 (left leg), compared to 54 and 52 for irregular offerers. The findings conclude that Rukku's posture significantly enhances hamstring flexibility, highlighting the physical benefits of regular Muslim prayers, particularly in the context of modern sedentary lifestyles that contribute to poor posture and musculoskeletal issues.[13]

Over the past few years, religious behavior such as congregational prayers has been investigated in relation to its impact on lifestyles and mental well-being. In this study, the effect of congregational prayers on students, employees, and faculty members of Farhangian University of Ardabil will be discussed using the phenomenological method based on information gathered from 24 experts using semi-structured interviews and document reviews. The results have yielded 73 core concepts that fall into three themes concerning the individual (proximity to God, adherence to Islamic ethics, and human perfection) and social (community solidarity, improvement of morale, and psychological balance).[14] Yoga has many benefits for our health, such as stress relief, improved flexibility, and mental clarity. Some research studies have shown that yoga reduces anxiety, improves one’s mood, and helps maintain balance, besides promoting circulation and decreasing the risk of chronic illness. Likewise, Namaz has a lot of health benefits, as Qiyam strengthens the nervous system, helps improve posture and digestion, and Sujud helps increase brain activity. In addition, both yoga and Namaz play an important role in maintaining good health, since Namaz is a simplified form of yoga.[15] The study examines the link between prayer and emotional regulation, highlighting the benefits of a humble mindset and positive thinking for mental health. It suggests that spiritual practices, such as prayer, serve as effective tools for emotional regulation, promoting emotional acceptance and resilience. Nevertheless, more research is needed to understand cultural and neurological influences on prayer's effectiveness. Overall, the study emphasizes prayer's potential for enhancing emotional and mental health across diverse cultural contexts.[16]

The present paper investigates the prevalence of mental disorders in Sudanese internally displaced populations (IDPs). It is worth mentioning that little information is available on this matter. The study was carried out in two areas occupied by IDPs in Central Sudan and employed structured interviews of 1,876 individuals. It has been revealed that almost half of IDPs, 52.9%, suffer from various mental disorders, with major depressive disorder (24.3%) and generalized anxiety disorder (23.6%) leading amongst other disorders. Years of displacement and educational background influenced the prevalence of disorders, but gender

differences were not registered.[17] Stress has become a common problem amongst people of different ages, having negative effects on psychological and physical well-being. It relates the state of mind to body functions through the central nervous system (CNS) and the autonomic nervous system (ANS). Salah, a Muslim prayer, acts as a beneficial coping strategy that contributes positively to psychological and physical health. It has a positive impact on the person due to the attention restoration therapy (ART) and stress restorative therapy (SRT). Salah is beneficial for parasympathetic nervous functions, reducing sympathetic nervous activities, based on increased HRV, GSR, heart rate, and blood pressure. Additionally, it contributes to concentration and mindfulness, especially while performing in prostration, and reading of Holy Quran during Salah increases these advantages.[18] Islamic community prayers are the second pillar of Islam, which is the bond between the servant and His Creator, and it is considered a form of worship that Muslims have to perform five times a day. There are many postures in the pillars of prayers and their duties to be performed precisely and correctly. However, many Muslims, young or old, fail to do their prayers correctly either because they are wrongly taught to pray or because there is no one who can teach them personally, or because they are new to prayers. In order to tackle the problem, we will design a solution for an AI assistant work by implementing a deep learning algorithm to detect any wrongful posture in the worshiper's praying and analyze their errors and show the corrections. The novelty of our paper is in the training of the YOLOv5 neural network on recognizing the prayers' postures. The results are shown in the correct postures of prayers only via the pictures with the percentage of the error in each praying posture.[19]

Salat, which is the second pillar of Islam, has five prayers a day that involve certain human body postures. In this paper, we tackle problems of incorrect posture implementation through the use of an AI system for prayer posture evaluation. The project will be concentrating on implementing basic human gesture detection through the use of CNNs. We will use the dataset of 764 images for training the YOLOv3 neural network, which yielded an accuracy rate of 85%. This project will be the pioneer in deep learning application in human activity detection during Salat.[20] This paper explores how artificial intelligence can be used within Islam, with a special focus on the research gap on how this technology helps with interpretation of religious texts, such as the Quran and the Hadith. In this paper, I used a mixed method research approach whereby I interviewed Islamic scholars and conducted a survey among 500 Muslim individuals. From the results, 82% of the subjects think that AI will help with concise interpretation, while 71% feel that it will facilitate easy practice of religion. On the other hand, while 74% feel that personal spiritual guidance is a positive attribute, 65% think there may be instances of misinterpretation. In general, AI improves access to religious knowledge by 15%.[21] In this research paper, an Intelligent Salat Monitoring and Training System using machine vision and image processing is developed to support Muslims in praying salat (prayer). The salat is one of the basic acts of worship in Islam that entails specific postures which are often challenging for people who lack experience and proper guidance. The suggested system supports users in analyzing their posture while praying salat by comparing images and applying image matching using techniques such as the Euclidean distance and template matching methods. The experimental study reveals both correct and wrong postures of salat using visual information.[22]

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the efficiency of the Islamic AI used within the Muslim Pro application, specifically in terms of its effectiveness in generating accurate answers based on the teachings of Islam. After analyzing different studies, the answers provided by the AI application will be compared with answers generated through traditional means such as scholars and literature. The Islamic AI proves effective in answering simple questions about the religion, but it lacks accuracy when responding to complicated questions that require validation from reliable sources.[23] The current research examines the design and evaluation of an application named Muallim-Prayer Exploration that employs AI technology to help in enhancing religious and moral development of learners in Islamic Education context. Based on TPACK

model, the study was conducted by utilizing 70 secondary students from lower grades. These students were randomly allocated to experimental and control group consisting of 35 students each. In the experiment, the experimental group was given an AI-based application called Canva whereas the control group got conventional instruction. The results revealed that the scores of the experimental group improved significantly after implementing the experiment (M = 90.86) as compared to before conducting the experiment (M = 81.94).[24] Allah SWT uses the Prophet Muhammad PBUH to communicate the responsibility of praying. Praying is a form of worship that must be practiced by all Muslims, men and women, five times a day. It brings people closer to Allah SWT as it builds a relationship with Him. Prayer also organizes time and provides refreshment mentally and physically. However, for visually impaired persons, learning prayers can be challenging because it is mainly done with visual aid. The study focuses on helping visually impaired people learn and pray like normal people through the use of technology. This project will develop a computer application that will help visually impaired people learn how to pray and pray like other Muslims. The application will be available in different languages such as Arabic, Kurdish, English, and Turkish. The application will have audio-based instructions to guide visually impaired people on how to perform Islamic prayer. While guiding, the application will allow the reciting of verses from the Holy Qur'an only in Arabic. The application has a simple user interface that is easy to navigate and interact with. In addition to learning how to pray, the application will guide users on how to perform Alwudu'.[25] The automation of social networking activities is a vital topic for both academics and general audiences; however, the effect of these innovations on religion, especially via Islamic Prayer Apps that post prayers automatically, has been relatively ignored by academia. These applications contribute hundreds of thousands of tweets per day, comprising a significant portion of the Arabic Twitter community's daily activity.[26] Recital of the Quran is very important in Muslim prayer sessions, where the Imam prays in a Raqa'ah through the recital of verses in each prayer session. Non-Arabic speaking people find it difficult to comprehend the verses and their prayers are adversely affected by this. The emergence of speech recognition technology and wearable devices has created a platform for developing a device that will translate and display the verses of the Quran in different languages without hindering prayer actions. This research focuses on the development of a comprehensive intelligent system, using mobile applications and smart glasses.[27] The Salah, which is one of the most significant pillars of Islam, demands that all Muslims perform their Salah five times a day. However, despite an abundance of sources providing instructions, most of the converts face difficulties during their prayers. In order to help them out, "Yaqeen," a mobile application was designed based on CNN architecture and fed with pictures of prayers. VGG16 was used for the high level of accuracy of the algorithm; indeed, the model was capable of recognizing prayers' pictures with 93% precision.[28]

Discussion:

The findings from the reviewed literature demonstrate a strong interdisciplinary relationship between AI technologies and Islamic practices, particularly Salah. AI-based systems such as deep learning models, mobile applications, and intelligent prayer monitoring tools have shown promising results in improving prayer posture accuracy, religious learning, and accessibility for diverse user groups, including beginners and individuals with disabilities. Furthermore, Islamic prayer itself has been consistently associated with physical health benefits, including improved flexibility, cardiovascular regulation, and stress reduction, as well as psychological benefits such as emotional stability and reduced anxiety.

The integration of AI into Islamic education and worship practices represents a significant advancement in religious digitalization. Applications such as prayer posture recognition systems, AI-guided learning tools, and intelligent assistants demonstrate the potential of technology to enhance religious engagement. However, the literature also emphasizes that AI lacks spiritual consciousness, moral intention, and religious

authority. Therefore, it cannot replace human scholars or the spiritual essence of worship. Instead, AI should function as a supportive tool that enhances understanding and practice while maintaining adherence to Islamic ethical principles.

Regular exercise is important in health promotion, helping address problems such as heart diseases and neurological conditions. Various studies have shown that there is a relationship between religion and good health, meaning that those who practice religion tend to enjoy better health. The Muslim prayer called 'Salah' is made up of different physical activities, which are beneficial to the individual's health by ensuring proper functioning of the heart, spinal cord, brain, and joints. All the different positions taken during prayers offer specific health benefits such as proper posture, improvement of blood circulation, back muscles' stretch, strengthening of the abdominal muscles, and proper neck movements.[29]

Presently, discourse pertaining to both Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Islamic religion have come to indicate that the use of The Muslim Ethical Framework will aid in the pursuit of Spiritual Development through the application of AI. Furthermore, Muslim Use will utilize AI Based Tools to have access to Religious Knowledge, Learn About Certain Islamic Concepts and Maintain Daily Application of Worship Activities, thus Enhance their Self-Reflection and Enhance their Faith. Nonetheless, The Scholars Who Study Islam Have Indicated That AI Is Not an Authority On the Practice of Islamic Jurisprudence and The Outputs Produced by AI Lacks Scholarly Verification or Validation. Therefore, users should utilize AI As A Learning Tool or Resource and Should Use Qualified Religious Guidance as The Final Decision Maker. Overall, AI Is a Tool That Can Either Enhance or Diminish Spirituality Depending Upon the Manner in Which They Are Used Responsibly.[30]

Limitation:

The main limitations associated with this narrative review involve the use of various secondary sources in terms of their heterogeneity, such as peer-reviewed journal articles, papers presented at conferences, systematic reviews, and even preprints with different levels of methodology. There is a possibility that some articles do not contain all bibliographic information, making the analysis less reliable because of a lack of validation. Moreover, numerous applications based on AI in relation to Islamic teachings are only at the prototyping stage without any extensive evaluation of their efficiency in practice.

Future Direction:

In future research, efforts should concentrate on validating the performance of AI technology employed in an Islamic context in relation to areas such as prayer tracking, psychological aid, and education. Machine learning algorithms that have higher levels of generalizability and culture sensitivity should be created to enhance their efficiency in actual practice. It is crucial that computer science, neuroscience, psychology, and Islamic Studies come together to examine the impacts of Salah on humans at a biological, psychological, and social level. In addition, ethical guidelines will have to be developed to ensure that AI is employed ethically within a religious environment.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, this literature review discusses the increasing intersection of artificial intelligence (AI), Islamic practice, and wellness, mainly referring to Salah. All studies indicate that Salah has always been an important part of Islam that is crucial for Muslims' wellbeing since it improves the musculoskeletal system flexibility, strengthens posture, decreases stress levels, regulates emotions, and increases awareness and mindfulness. Therefore, Salah is considered one of the practices that promote overall wellness of those who regularly perform it.

On the other hand, many innovations based on the use of AI in Islamic practice have been introduced recently. They range from mobile applications and smart devices capable of detecting the right posture to deep learning-based systems that teach users the principles of praying and intelligent assistants helping in Salah. Such innovations improve accessibility and accuracy in praying, help people become more knowledgeable about their religion, and facilitate inclusive education. Nonetheless, despite its numerous advantages, the technology remains incapable of providing any form of spiritual authority or guidance. That is why the application of AI in Islamic practice can be considered an opportunity to facilitate the process but not to replace people.

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