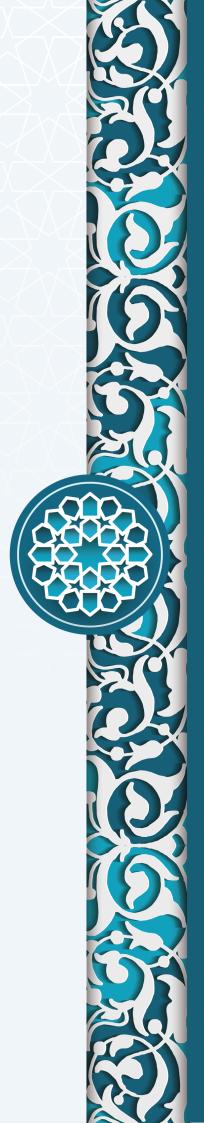# Enhancing Interfaith Discourse Between Muslim and Christian Communities via Artificial Intelligence: Opportunities and Challenges

إعداد

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Abstract

Background: In the digital age, interfaith communication builds trust and controls extremism. Innovative strategies to develop Christian-Muslim interactions are needed due to complicated history.

Significance: It has been demonstrated that AI strengthens religious beliefs, but the literature is vague on its significance in fostering religious trust. This research examines the potential of AI-mediated communication to enhance interfaith dialogue between Muslims and Christians and establish trust and rapport.

Methodology: Six Muslim and Christian professors were contacted to ascertain the impact of AI on interfaith dialogues.. First, the two groups did pre- and post-experimental activities. In the pre-experimental activity, the Christian and Muslim Scholars discussed religion verbally. In the post-experimental, the scholars discussed each other religion through the help of Chat GPT. Then, after this experiment, focus group interviews were performed involving both religious scholars.

Results: The focus group interview results have also supported that AI discussion plays an influential role in the interchange of ideas and enhances religious understanding, opportunities and challenges as compared to verbal discussion.

Future Implication: The research underscores the necessity for additional investigation into the ethical ramifications of AI in interfaith communication, given its substantial influence on interfaith harmony and as a foundation for future scholars to assess the effects of technology on religious expansion.

Keywords: Interfaith Dailouge, Artifical Intelligence, AI-Mediated Communication, Chat GPT

1. Introduction

The concept of Muslim-Christian Dialogue is demonstrated through the significance attributed to the exchange of ideas and concepts at the Arab, local, and global levels (Oleś et al., 2020). Its effectiveness in fostering trust and rapport among the participants of the dialogue and enhancing mutual understanding is particularly noteworthy in this age when new mass communication technologies render it impossible for any nation or society to remain disconnected from regional and international developments (Kraus et al., 2021). The dialogue serves as a means to engage in communication with and remain informed about these cultural and intellectual currents (Kausar et al., 2024).

The advancement of interfaith dialogue is crucial for fostering global peace and tranquility in the face of religious diversity. Christians and Muslims around the world need more religious conversation, inter-faith relations, and Christian-Muslim interaction to live together peacefully and fight Islamic extremism (ur Rehman & Brohi, 2021). Christian-Muslim interactions and relations have a complex history, marked at times by conflict or rivalry and at other times by constructive, peaceful coexistence (MacDonald et al., 2022).

The establishment of a rapport between Muslims and Christians through Christian-Muslim dialogue aims to transcend theological and mutual prejudices with the ultimate goal of promoting tolerance and deradicalization (MacDonald et al., 2022). Deradicalization is the process of teaching people about the need to accept different religions and be tolerant of fighting violent ideas, religious extremism, and terrorism. One possible

approach to accomplish this is by employing a hermeneutical process, which aims to mitigate the severity of violent passages in the Quran (Aslam, 2019).

Theological and philosophical concerns have traditionally dominated discussions concerning artificial intelligence (AI) and religion. For instance, there has been considerable attention given to the potential for AI systems to surpass human intelligence and supplant the concept of God (Haenlein & Kaplan, 2019). Numerous task-specific AI systems have already integrated into facets of our daily existence, whereas such AI systems remain a distant possibility.(Metwali, Khalaf , 2023). The interaction between religious actors and these technologies is growing. Religious scholars utilize them to preserve and disseminate their scriptures and to carry out religious rituals and practices. Additionally, they exert influence and control over their development and utilization in accordance with their values and worldviews(Trotta et al., 2024).

In this era of the technological period, where societies are interlinked through different kinds of technologies, it is vital to incorporate the interfaith dialogue as it fosters a sense of trust and controls the rise of radicalism. The complicated Christian-Muslim history that is already surrounded by several conflicts and rivalry demands innovative ways to enhance the dialogue between these two religions to strengthen the relationship (MacDonald et al., 2022). The past literature have already mentioned the significance of interchange of dialogues and theoretical beliefs to improve this complicated decision (Andriansyah, 2023; Kovalenko, 2023; Oleś et al., 2020). Furthermore, the past literature has also shown the role of AI in strengthening particular religious beliefs (Elias & Mansouri,

2020; Oleś et al., 2020; Prohl, 2021). However, a gap exists in the literature in showing the significance of AI- mediated interfaith dialogues in building trust between two religions.

The advancement of AI can pose a great significance in enhancing the interfaith dialogues between Muslims and Christians since it helps in bonding the cultural and religious gaps at both the global, and the local level. This research aim is to enhance the interfaith dialogue between Muslims and Christians through the AI application with the purpose of fostering peaceful interactions and augmenting religious tolerance. The growth of AI and its connection to religion can be seen as similar to the growth of science and technology and their connection to religion. Artificial intelligence is often the subject of ongoing debates and academic research. To foster a dynamic relationship between religion and AI, it is, therefore, essential to broaden the academic sphere(Trotta et al., 2024). In this technological era, it becomes mandatory to evaluate the impact of technology on the human psychological, physical, and spiritual growth. The determination of the interlink between the AI, and interfaith dialogue is vital to understand since it plays an influential role in enhancing, and strengthening the relationship, and communication between two communities. According to the past researches, AI-mediated communication facilitates the creation and maintenance of spiritual beliefs and communities, while also playing a role in establishing religious power (Choi, 2023; Mason & Carr, 2022; Wang et al., 2022). Therefore, this research has done in identifying the role of AI mediated communication on Muslims and Christians communication. Secondly, the incorporation of the AI also pose significant challenges, and the oppertunites for the interfaith dailouge.

The common challeneges of AI-mediated communication include the ethical, trust, and the accountability issues. While it's oppertunities include providing the chances of personlised communication, assist in conflict resolution, and offering a wealth of knowledge regarding particular topic. Identifying the potential challangese, while using the AI for interfaith dailouge, the research aim is to encourage the trust, and harmony in the during the AI mediated communication interfaith dailouge. Furthermore, this research has also shed light on the theological and philosophical perspectives of Muslim, and Chirstsin in utilizing AI for the interfaith communion. It would help figure out how religious views impact the acceptance of contemporary technology as a means to promote dialogue and mutual understanding.

Past researches already have shown that AI could enhance the knowledge of the religious understanding. But it fails to show that how these AI tools can be utilised to enhances ones' and anothers religious communities knowledge. Therefore, the rationale of this research is to get deeper knowledge regarding the role of AI in improving the Chirstain- Muslims interfaith knowledge. For this, the qualitative analysis has been performed on the United States (US) Chirstain-Muslim Scholars. Firstly, pre-and post experiments were held between the Chistain, and Muslims scholars to initiate the interfaith dialogue. Than after that focus group interview was held to evaluate the overall outcomes.

1.1. Scope and Limitation

One of the limitations of this research is the small sample size. The research only considers six scholars, three from each

faith, to perform the qualitative analysis. The other limitation is only considering the USA scholar for determining the AI impact on inter-faith religion, limiting cross-cultural diversity. Furthermore, the research only utilised Chat GPT as an AI tool and failed to provide varied results. However, the present research also included some limitations, such as it just focused on determining the cultural diversity of Muslims and Christians, ignoring the broad cultural context. Furthermore, it has also analyzed the AI-mediated communication challenges for interfaith dialogues that also limited the scope of the research.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Role of Inter-Faith Dialogue in Building Muslim-Christian Interfaith Trust

According to Jacques Dupuis, a Doctor of Theology, dialogue is a distinct and essential component of evangelization. It encompasses all constructive and positive interreligious connections and relationships with individuals and communities of other faiths. Its purpose is to foster mutual understanding and spiritual growth while adhering to the truth and valuing freedom. Both observation and an examination of individual religious beliefs (Jones Jr, 2023). Furthermore, it is critical to possess a comprehensive understanding of the linguistic definition of the term ‹dialogue› as it pertains to our topic of discussion. In consequence, a selection of the most precise definitions has been provided. Dialogue, as defined by the Oxford Dictionary, is a discourse involving two or more individuals or groups with a specific focus on the investigation of a given topic or the resolution of a problem(Gandolfi et al., 2023).

Gerald Forde explains in his book «A Resource for Christian Muslim Dialogue» that dialogue identifies causes of tensions in Christian-Muslim relations that are often social, political, or economic, as opposed to religious, and that its purpose is to foster better relations and mutual understanding between individuals (Loo, 2024). Blair posed the following question: «Do we genuinely believe that it is possible to resolve the Jerusalem issue without discussing its religious significance to the three Abrahamic faiths?» To avoid or reduce tensions, dialogue aims to foster confidence and comprehension, as well as remove prejudices and barriers that can contribute to mistrust, suspicion, and intolerance (Popovska et al., 2017). Furthermore, it is also noted that The fundamental objective of interfaith dialogue is to forge an ideal society in which individuals bear responsibility for the plight of others, demonstrate compassion towards one another, refrain from causing harm to one another, and operate under a humane, rational, and ethical system of production and distribution.

2.2. Current Challenges in Muslim-Christian Interfaith Dialogues

The presumption underlying Christian-Muslim dialogue is that both Islam and Christianity are the most religiously pervasive in terms of global distribution. With an estimated 2.3 billion members of Christianity and 1.2 billion devotees of Islam, representing fifty percent of the global population (Sui, 2023). Interfaith dialogue in the Muslim world has become an enormous challenge due to the Gulf War, during which historical recollections are often ignored or diverted focus to other concerns. Despite the impracticability of opposing the «new

political order» due to vulnerability and disempowerment, there is widespread concern that it represents an additional «disorder.» Thus, it is necessary to amplify the voices of Christians who oppose conflict to prevent resentment or disillusionment from eroding trust established through dialogue (Rofiqi & Haq, 2022). The conflict between the «time of politics» and the «time of spirituality» needs to be taken seriously and dealt with in creative ways in interfaith conversation. There is a constant risk that interfaith dialogue will become entangled in or parallel with political initiatives or concerns. On the contrary, dialogue participants might, at times, prioritize its «warmth» to the extent that they fail to recognize the necessity of considering political realities (Shardlow et al., 2021). The progression of political events is not consistently mirrored by the passage of time. A time characterized by intricacy and rarity is differentiated from a more refined time by a consistent chronology. A gradual and, in a sense, a metaphysical procedure that profoundly shapes behaviour and mindset. The interfaith dialogue must creatively and earnestly confront the tension that exists between religious differences and shared humanity (Sneddon, 2021).

Interfaith dialogue, particularly Muslim-Christian dialogue, faces significant challenges due to historical clashes and conflicts. These clashes have occurred throughout Islam›s history, including battles between Islamic and Roman empires. The Prophet Muhammad›s death and the conquering of Byzantine Constantine by the Ottoman Empire during the 1452 AD era heightened tensions between Islam and Christianity. On the other hand, the War of Crusades marked a significant conflict between Islam and Christianity, resulting in significant human loss (Khan et al., 2020). The era of colonialism, which began

after the Renaissance, exploited the Muslim world›s ideology and resources. The modern era, after 11/9, has consumed Muslim resources in the war on terrorism. It has destroyed the self-confidence of both Islamic and Christian communities. The incommensurability between Islam and Western cultures has led to a fearful image of Islam, making it difficult to initiate meaningful interfaith dialogue (Dyakov, 2021).

Muslim-Christian dialogue also faces challenges due to the sensitivity of identity on theological grounds, particularly in majority-populated areas. Both religious communities are proud of their religious identities and are sensitive to their religious identities. Theological challenges have engaged Christians throughout the centuries, including questions of Christian self-identity and self-expression in relation to Islam (Whyte & Yucel, 2023). This destructive identity issue has led to questions on religious understanding and peaceful coexistence among the majority community. In Muslim countries, non-Muslim communities, Christian Europe›s Muslim minority, and Hindu India›s Muslim minority often feel like their identity is being erased from the political and economic spheres (Bigelow, 2022). Both Islam and the West have tense relationships with each other based on biases and stereotypes. It is challenging to have a dialogue in this uncomfortable circumstance, but it is not impossible.

2.3. Emerging Trends in AI-Mediated Communication

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into interpersonal communication has the potential to revolutionise the way individuals interact and portray themselves in mediated situations. AI-mediated communication (MC) differs from

conventional computer-mediated communication (CMC) technologies that mainly transport messages and from typical machine-authored texts that lack human representation (Waddell, 2018). AI-MC, for instance, constitutes «smart replies»: The technology autonomously creates sections of the user›s message on their behalf. AI-MC has the potential to influence a wide range of interactions, including one-to-one exchanges like messaging and one-to-many transmissions like composing user profiles or appearing in live YouTube clips (Hancock et al., 2020).

After Weizenbaum's first investigation, a lot of AI-MC research has focused on the realm in which human and machine communication is predominantly carried out through natural language. It is widely accepted that human beings tend to attribute social norms and personality to computers (Jakesch et al., 2019; Weizenbaum, 1966). The recent technological developments allow agents to create conversations that mimic human conversation. Research on social bots suggests that people work to establish common ground in these conversations when they believe the agent is human, and adding anthropomorphism may have strong negative reactance effects (Adam et al., 2021).

The use of AI as a part of religious beliefs and practice has very far-reaching implications when it comes to understanding reality. In order to achieve their responsibilities with unparalleled accuracy, precision, and reliability, AI systems use data-driven algorithms. Religious communities participate in complex relationships with systems that are integrated with their particular interpretations and visions of religious truths and practices (Segato et al., 2020). AI systems manifest unique

worldviews and mediate religious content in various ways since they are often shaped by human prejudices, cultural settings, or sociopolitical determinants (Korinek & Balwit, 2022). Considering the fact that AI appears as an additional source and ‹voice› in defining modern religious understanding, religious communities are required to address and assess what it offers. Religious understanding can be improved, refined and widened by AI capabilities. However, there is also a difficulty in determining which insights mediated by AI are consistent with their fundamental beliefs (Avest, 2022).

2.4. Previous Research on AI in Interfaith Dialogues

Research performed by Andriansyah (2023) has mentioned in the research that AI is forecasted to have a substantial influence on half of all enterprises during the next five years. ChatGPT has already shown its versatility in the medical field, supporting tasks including medical exam preparation and acting as an in-person transcriptionist. The field of AI and religion is also becoming more popular as this research is considering the following areas: ethical consequences, incorporation into religious rituals, examination of religious scriptures, promotion of interfaith discussions, and impact on the concept of creation from a theological perspective (Andriansyah, 2023).

Likewise, Trotta et al. (2024) have conducted research that reveals that the connection between AI and religion enhances these two concepts in current literature and academic knowledge on an ethical and religious nature. This literature has demonstrated the effects of AI to replace human intelligence and God. This researcher has included several mechanisms through which the religious actor and the AI can interact to depict the impact

of AI on religious development. The research results have highlighted the use of AI by religious actors, not only in their activities but also in their advocacy, policy-making and training to promote the use of AI that would improve religious practices (Trotta et al., 2024).

Similarly, Kausar et al. (2024) research delves into the challenges faced by Islamic law in the modern era of artificial intelligence. It explores topics such as the preservation of tradition, compatibility with artificial intelligence, human rights, religious freedom, pluralism, finance, ethical practices, technology, bioethics, and international law engagement. Sharia law, based on the Quran, Hadith, and scholarly interpretations, faces numerous challenges in the modern world. The research employs descriptive methodology, emphasizing the need for a reevaluation of Islamic laws, increased consciousness, solidarity, and Ijtehad to protect the authenticity and essence of Islamic law(Kausar et al., 2024)

3. Methodology

The current research has utilized the qualitative approach in determining the influence of AI integration on the Muslim-Christian Interfaith religion. Qualitative research enables the exploration of subjective aspects of human experience that are not readily quantifiable by posing inquiries that do not lend themselves to numerical measurement (Latvis et al., 2024). A focus group interview involving Muslim and Christian modern religious scholars was conducted to determine how they utilize the AI tool Chat GPT to learn about each other religion. Overall, six Muslim-Christian scholars, three from each religion,

have been considered. These scholars were United States-based and were selected randomly through the utilization of convenient sampling. Convenience sampling entails selecting respondents who are «convenient» for the researcher (Stratton, 2021). Informed consent from all the students was taken prior to the experiment and interview. While availing the informed consent, the participants were acknowledged regarding the research objective.

Prior to conducting the focus group interviews, an experiment was carried out between the two groups. The purpose of the experiment was to determine how Chat GPT facilitated collaborative interfaith dialogue between Christian and Muslim scholars and to establish their level of trust. A pre- and post-experiment was done between these two groups. Both experiments took place on Google Meet, an online site so that each participant could become part of the experiment. The focus group interview and experiment timings were finalized with the agreement of both parties involved. Both individuals in the group were instructed to conduct the interfaith discussion using traditional methods as part of a pre-experiment. Muslims and Christian scholars discussed each other›s faiths to learn more about them.

Furthermore, In the post-experiment, both focus groups were initially instructed to use the Chat GPT to engage in interfaith dialogue. The interfaith dialogue was then requested to be repeated by both focus groups, but this time using the Chat GPT. After conducting the pre-, and post-experiments, then the focus group interview with each of the two focus groups was performed to determine the impact of how the Chat GPT utilization improves their inter-faith dialogues.

4. Results

In pre and post-experiment, both focus groups discussed every other religion. In one experiment, the participants performed discussion in a traditional way, that is, verbally. While in post experiments the researchers utilized the Chat GPT. During the discussion, three main elements were highlighted. These included interchange of ideas, difficulty in understanding religious perspectives, and level of religious understanding. The researcher was part of both pre- and post-experiments. After these pre- and post-experiments, the researcher conducted focus group interviews involving both faith scholars.

4.1. Interchage of Ideas

The researcher has asked both faith scholars about how they perceived Chat GPT in comparison to the traditional approach in interchanging their ideas reading about their religion. Upon this, one of the Christian Scholar coted that:

" While the oral discussion was in real-time, there were times when the complexities of some faith notions made it quite challenging to share subtle views. When considering the limited amount of time that was available for conversation, there were situations in which complex notions of faith might have been simplified or dealt with in a more pertinent manner. We wanted to have more time on which we would discuss the issues in greater detail.»

One of the Muslim Scholar shared his view on the interchange of dailouge through the Chat GPT:

" With no doubt. ChatGPT allowed for a more seamless transition between the many facets of our religions, as well as

a visible extension of topics that were discussed. We were able to examine intricate theological themes seamlessly because of the technology, which resulted in a debate that was both more subtle and deeper. The discussion was encouraged to flow more smoothly, and a wider range of ideas was able to be shared as a result of its effectiveness as a conversational trigger."

4.2. Challangese in Understanding Religious Perspectives

During the experiment, both the focus groups also shed light on the challenges they faced while sharing their religious perspectives traditionally, as well as through the utilization of Chat GPT, an AI tool. A Muslim scholar mentioned that discussing each other religious perspectives verbally was more challenging than through the AI tool. He mentioned that:

"Even though both of us were committed, it was hard to talk about detailed theological differences. When exploring complex theological topics, it became challenging to effectively communicate specific concepts about theological disparities. When attempting to explain complicated theological ideas verbally, communication breaks down, making it difficult for both parties to understand one other at times."

In response to this comment, the Chirtain participant further added: "It was not that we did not want to understand; it was that our different religious views made things difficult. For instance, throughout our conversation, we explored the essence of God. There were instances where verbal communication failed to adequately convey the subtle distinctions and complex particulars that emerged in our comprehension. This highlighted the necessity for a more advanced forum like AI tools to discuss such complicated theological aspects."

4.3. Level of Religious Understanding

Through the pre-, and post-experiment, it was also determined how the traditional approach and the Chat GPT impact both religious scholars› understanding. During the focus group interview, one of the Muslim Scholars answered:

"The post-experiment conversations mediated by AI-enabled us to investigate the degrees more effectively. With regard to topics like the Trinity and its interpretation within Christian theology, the AI provided a clear structure for a focused analysis. It helped the flow of thoughts, enabling us to clarify and understand the complexities in our opinions. The technology acted as a catalyst for an improved and subtle debate, which led to deeper understanding."

In favour of this, the reply of the Christian scholar is as follows:
" Indeed. AI-enabled discussions during the post-experiment stage created a conducive environment for an in-depth analysis of religious teaching. In the analysis of Tawhid in Islam, the application of technology-enabled a focused and more effective discussion. The platform provided a structured framework for us to discuss and elaborate on many aspects, thus enabling a deeper understanding of the details of our religious beliefs. I believe that the AI played a crucial role in enhancing the mutual understanding of religious beliefs.»

5. Disscussion

The focus group interviews emphasized the positive impact of AI-based interfaith discourses. ChatGPT was preferred by participants for its better organization and improved communication, hence giving rise to a deeper discussion of the

ideas shared and a clear understanding of religious perspectives. The findings point out that the integration of AI technology into interfaith dialogues has the potential to evade some challenges encountered in traditional speech exchanges.

Academics, private sectors, and civil society are currently debating the effects of AI on generating sustainable relationships between the two parties, nations, and religions (Trotta et al., 2024). Vinuesa et al. (2020) assert that for AI to be utilized sustainably, it is vital to comprehend its obstacles, dangers, and prospects. To avert an equitable future fueled by AI, dialogue must be inclusive of all actors from all nations (Vinuesa et al., 2020). This demand for increased civil society involvement in AI is further endorsed by stakeholders such as Stiftung Neue Verantwortung and the European Union(European Commission, 2021).

Similarly, Umbrello (2023) mentioned that AI could change how people research religion by reading and analysing holy books like the Bible, Quran, and Bhagavad Gita. These systems have the potential to generate synthesized insights, cross-reference verses, and identify patterns, ushering in an era of advanced theological scholarship (Umbrello, 2023). Chandra & Ranjan (2022) have depicted that in addition to conventional interpretations, these digital analyses may unveil previously unexplored depths of meaning. The revolutionary nature of AI›s foray into experiential spirituality is that it enables individuals seeking spiritual comfort to virtually visit sacred sites such as Mecca through simulations powered by AI. This expansion of accessibility and inclusivity into previously inaccessible domains exemplifies the constructive capacity of AI. In general, the transformative capacity of AI is apparent within the domain

of spirituality and the spiritual(Chandra & Ranjan, 2022). However, Digunum (2019) argues that AI systems calibrated according to particular values may lead to conflicts among value groups. A system that recognizes different religious and moral values is capable of promoting understanding and interaction between diverse religions. Thus, AI alignment strategies should be culturally sensitive so as to not deepen the current divisions and instead foster peace and conflict resolution (Dignum, 2019).

6. Future Implications

Besides the limitation, the current research has provided an opportunity to explore AI in interfaith religion further. FutureFuture research could have a greater effect on this exploration by taking into account the participants from various faiths and locations, widening the cross-cultural, global outlook. Moreover, future research could also find out whether ethical considerations or AI biases are affecting the influence of AI in improving interfaith dialogues between two religions. Furthermore, a future researcher may also focus on the long-term effect of AI on interfaith religious participants› perspectives and attitudes in determining whether AI can sustainably contribute to engaging in interfaith religious dialogues.

7. Conclusion

This research has given a deeper understanding of AI›s influence in changing Muslim and Christian scholar›s perceptions concerning each other›s religion. The research has revealed the prominent role of AI, particularly, Chat GPT in encouraging dialogue and

enhancing mutual understanding among Muslim, and Christain scholars. The research outcomes have proved that AI can have a vital role in interchaninging of ideas, pose less challenges during interfaith dailouge, and enhance level of understanding of each other religion as compared to the traditional approach. The results emphasise that AI can facilitate the dialogue and deepen mutual understanding among followers of different faiths, addressing challenges in discussing religious views. Moreover, The research suggests to continue investigating the ethical aspects of AI for interfaith communication due to its effect on interfaith peace. It has established a strong basis for future scholars to assess the impact of technology on religious expansion and adds to understanding the complex relationship between technology and religion.

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