

Original Research

AI-enabled Symbolic Violence against Muslims: Protecting Honor in Islamic Law

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Abstract

Background: Symbolic violence driven by Artificial Intelligence (AI) extends beyond mere issues of representation. It also involves ethical and normative dimensions within Muslim life and can be examined through Islamic legal principles that emphasize the protection of human dignity and honor.

Purpose: This study aims to examine the implications of AI-based symbolic violence on Muslim communities, particularly in relation to the protection of honor from the perspective of Islamic law.

Method: This study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach using a multimodal ethnographic design to analyze how symbols, identities, and religious narratives are produced and circulated within social media environments.

Findings: The findings indicate that AI-based violence differs fundamentally from conventional forms of violence. While traditional forms, such as hate speech or direct blasphemy, tend to be explicit and easily identifiable, AI-based violence operates through constructed representations that appear authentic and persuasive. In this context, the principle of protecting honor in Islamic law becomes highly relevant. AI-driven symbolic violence not only shapes perceptions at a deeper level but also subtly exploits identities, norms, and religious symbols, often without being recognized.

Significance: These findings underscore the importance of strengthening critical digital awareness grounded in religious values as a key strategy for responding to AI-based symbolic violence.

Keywords: AI misuse, Symbolic violence, Muslim communities, Individual honor, Islamic law.

Introduction

Symbolic violence driven by Artificial Intelligence (AI) against Muslims reflects an emerging dynamic in digital crime that is increasingly complex and difficult to identify. This phenomenon underscores the urgency of protecting honor within the framework of Islamic law, as the manipulation of symbols, identities, and religious representations can undermine the integrity of individuals and communities alike. Tedeschi Toschi and Berni Ferretti (2021) argue that the protection of honor becomes even more relevant when violence is no longer direct but operates through technological media capable of rapidly and widely disseminating distortions. In the digital era, AI-based symbolic violence not only functions as an attack on religious meaning but can also become normalized when framed as entertainment or creativity (Fernando et al., 2026). As a result, the boundary between violation and expression becomes increasingly blurred in digital public spaces. In response to this condition, the phenomenon can be evaluated through

the principle of protecting honor in Islamic law as a normative framework. This principle provides a basis for assessing whether digital representations violate the values, dignity, and religious integrity of Muslims in a broader context (Yusrizal et al., 2023).

Existing studies on violence in the AI era tend to be partial and focus on a few dominant themes. First, research primarily focuses on the technical development of AI, including generative capabilities and their impact on digital content production (Anantrasirichai et al., 2026; Leong & Gao, 2025; Shen et al., 2025). Second, studies examine the ethical and legal implications of AI, particularly regarding privacy, disinformation, and the misuse of technology in public spaces (Alashqar et al., 2025; Gaur, 2024; Rodolfo, 2025). Third, other studies examine the broader social impact of AI, including shifts in communication patterns, social relations, and perceptions of truth (Hohenstein et al., 2023; Paes et al., 2023; Singh et al., 2025). While these studies offer valuable insights, they often remain general and have yet to address the specific dimension of symbolic violence within religious contexts. In particular, limited attention has been given to AI-based symbolic violence against Muslims as a phenomenon with significant implications for identity, meaning, and honor within the framework of Islamic law.

In response to these gaps, this study aims to provide a systematic analysis of AI-based symbolic violence against Muslims by examining its forms, mechanisms, and implications within the framework of Islamic law. Specifically, this study seeks to (1) analyze how AI-based symbolic violence against Muslims is represented, produced, and disseminated in digital spaces; (2) examine how sacred places associated with Muslims are appropriated and reconstructed as forms of symbolic violence; and (3) evaluate how Muslim identity is manipulated and utilized within AI-driven symbolic violence practices, particularly in relation to the protection of honor. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach grounded in multimodal ethnography, this study investigates how such practices operate within contemporary digital environments.

This study argues that AI-based symbolic violence against Muslims cannot be understood solely as a media phenomenon or a form of digital expression. Rather, it represents a practice with broader implications for the structure of meaning, identity, and social relations in religious life. Such violence not only involves the distortion of religious teachings, manipulation of symbols, and visual construction of identities, but also shapes how religious realities are produced, circulated, and perceived in digital public spaces. These processes may lead to the normalization of distortion, ultimately blurring the boundary between the sacred and the profane, while weakening symbolic authority within religious traditions. In this context, technology can function as a medium for reproducing symbolic domination that operates subtly yet produces systemic effects on collective perception. Therefore, AI-based symbolic violence extends beyond representation and engages deeply with the ethical and normative dimensions of Muslim life. This condition can be evaluated through Islamic legal principles that emphasize the protection of honor as a foundation for safeguarding the integrity of religious identity and dignity in the AI era.

Literature review

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to the capability of computer systems to simulate human cognitive functions such as learning, understanding, reasoning, and decision-making (Korteling et al., 2021). This concept is grounded in the idea that machines can be programmed to process large volumes of data and identify patterns, which are then used to generate predictions or perform specific actions (Dong et al., 2020; Siemens et al., 2022). AI operates through various approaches, including machine learning, deep learning, and natural language processing, enabling

systems to adapt to new data without requiring explicit reprogramming (Dabral et al., 2024; Sasikala et al., 2021). In its development, AI has evolved beyond a mere assistive tool into a system capable of generating new content, including text, images, and audio that appear highly realistic (Lv, 2023). These characteristics position AI not only as a technology that replicates human intelligence, but also as one that expands the capacity for knowledge production and digital representation (Fernando et al., 2025). Therefore, AI can be understood as a transformative technology that reshapes how individuals interact with information and reality, while significantly influencing various aspects of social life in an increasingly dynamic manner.

The use of AI in contemporary life reflects a dual nature, functioning both as a beneficial instrument and as a source of risk. On the one hand, AI contributes positively by enhancing efficiency across multiple sectors, including healthcare, education, and the economy, through medical diagnosis, personalized learning, and the automation of complex processes (Jiali, 2024; Li & Nichols, 2026; Saurabh & Suryavanshi, 2026). It enables faster and more accurate access to information, thereby supporting more informed decision-making. On the other hand, AI also presents significant risks, particularly in the production of manipulative content such as deepfakes, disinformation, and identity engineering that can mislead the public (Ghai et al., 2026). Such uses have the potential to erode social trust, reinforce biases, and generate new forms of digital crime that are difficult to detect (Muhyadeen, 2025; Sonni, 2025). In addition, AI may exacerbate inequalities in access to technology and raise ethical concerns related to privacy and data control (Raihan et al., 2025). Therefore, AI can be understood as an ambivalent technology whose impact largely depends on how humans use it.

Symbolic Violence

Symbolic violence refers to a form of domination that operates subtly through systems of meaning, language, and representation, such that it is often not recognized as violence by those who experience it (Larasati et al., 2026; Latif et al., 2022). This concept was developed by Pierre Bourdieu (1996) to explain how power is maintained not only through physical coercion but also through the internalization of values, norms, and social structures perceived as natural. Within this framework, individuals accept their social positions without feeling coerced, as domination has been embedded in the way they think and interpret reality (Domingo-Ferrer, 2025; Thapar-Björkert et al., 2016). Symbolic violence operates through institutions such as education, the media, and culture, which shape perceptions of what is legitimate, valid, and valuable (McC. As a result, social inequalities are continuously reproduced without significant resistance, as they are perceived as natural conditions. Thus, symbolic violence is not a direct act but a cultural process that shapes consciousness and influences how individuals understand themselves and their positions within social structures, in a continuous and often invisible manner.

Symbolic violence can be distinguished between conventional and digital forms, reflecting a shift in how domination operates. In conventional contexts, symbolic violence is mediated through social institutions such as education, religion, and mass media, which gradually shape individuals' perspectives on reality (Croizet et al., 2017; Fatmawati, 2020; Srubar, 2017). This process tends to be stable, structured, and long-term, allowing values to be internalized incrementally. In contrast, in digital contexts, symbolic violence undergoes significant transformation as it is mediated by technologies that enable rapid, large-scale production and distribution of meaning (Morales, 2023; Morales et al., 2026). Social media platforms and algorithm-driven systems accelerate the dissemination of representations that can influence public perception within a short period (Arango Pastrana et al., 2025; Kim et al., 2026). Furthermore,

technologies such as AI enable the manipulation of symbols, identities, and narratives that appear authentic, thereby blurring the boundary between reality and constructed representation (Sonni et al., 2025). This transformation indicates that digital symbolic violence is more dynamic, fragmented, and harder to control than its conventional counterpart.

Protecting Honor in Islamic law

The concept of protecting honor in Islamic law refers to the protection of dignity (*ḥifz al-‘ird*) as one of the essential objectives of Islamic law (*maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah*) (Fatarib et al., 2025; Sukataman et al., 2025). In Islamic legal thought, honor is not limited to social reputation, but also encompasses human dignity, moral integrity, and individual identity, all of which must be safeguarded from any form of violation (Bawono et al., 2025). This principle prohibits acts such as false accusation (*qadḥ*), backbiting (*ghībah*), and the dissemination of harmful information without a legitimate basis (Ahmed et al., 2025). The protection of honor also extends to the prohibition of misleading or degrading representations that undermine individuals or communities. In this context, Islamic law places honor alongside the protection of life and property as a fundamental value, meaning that violations carry serious moral and legal consequences (Anshary et al., 2024; Putra & Acela, 2023; Rismawati et al., 2025). Therefore, *ḥifz al-‘ird* functions not only as an ethical norm but also as a social protection mechanism that sustains balanced, structured relationships among individuals in Muslim societies.

The digital era introduces new challenges in implementing the principle of protecting honor in Islamic law, particularly with the emergence of technologies that enable rapid, widespread production and dissemination of information. Digital spaces create opportunities for the spread of false accusations, identity manipulation, and distorted representations that can damage the honor of individuals and communities on a much larger scale (Khan, 2023; Rahman, 2023). Technologies such as artificial intelligence further complicate this situation by producing content that appears authentic, making it difficult to distinguish from reality (Bailo et al., 2026; Javiya et al., 2026). In this context, the concept of *ḥifz al-‘ird* must be understood more contextually in order to address forms of violation that are no longer direct or explicit (Hamim & Supriadi, 2020). The protection of honor extends beyond speech and actions to include digital representations that shape public perception (Aşçı & O’Higgins Norman, 2025). This transformation demonstrates that Islamic law is flexible enough to evolve through *ijtihād* in response to technological developments, while reaffirming the importance of maintaining moral integrity in digital environments.

Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design grounded in multimodal ethnography, as AI-based symbolic violence cannot be adequately explained through quantitative approaches that focus solely on numerical data. This approach enables the study to capture the meanings and contexts embedded in various forms of digital content, including text, images, and videos. Multimodal ethnography examines how symbols, identities, and religious narratives are produced and interpreted within social media environments. In this study, data are understood as cultural practices that reflect power relations and how reality is digitally constructed. The qualitative descriptive design allows for the exploration of diverse forms of symbolic violence without being constrained by rigid categories. It facilitates not only the observation of visible content but also the analysis of how meaning is constructed and disseminated. Therefore, the

selected approach is appropriate for providing an in-depth, comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon while capturing the dynamics of representation within an evolving digital landscape.

The data used in this study consist of qualitative materials in the form of digital content that reflect practices of AI-based symbolic violence. Data were collected from TikTok, websites, and online news platforms, as these sources represent key spaces for the production and distribution of content relevant to the phenomenon under investigation. TikTok was selected due to its highly visual nature and algorithmic structure, which promote content virality and facilitate the rapid spread of manipulative representations. Websites were used to identify more structured, well-documented content, including articles and posts that contained relevant analyses and narratives. Online news platforms were included because they provide information that has undergone editorial selection, thereby offering contextualized accounts of cases emerging in public discourse. The selection of these sources was also based on their capacity to represent the broader dynamics of content production, distribution, and legitimation within an evolving media landscape.

The data collection process was conducted in several stages by systematically identifying digital content from TikTok, websites, and online news platforms related to AI-based symbolic violence. On TikTok, data were collected through keyword searches for AI, religion, and content manipulation, followed by selecting videos that depicted AI use in representing religious symbols, identities, or narratives. On websites, the study examined articles, blogs, and forums discussing the use of AI in religious contexts, with particular attention to content that reflects distortion or manipulation. In the context of online news, data were drawn from reports addressing verified cases that have received public attention. The selected data consist of content that clearly demonstrates AI-based manipulation, is relevant to the research focus, and can be analyzed as a form of symbolic violence within digital contexts.

To ensure data validity, this study conducted a double verification process using the Isgen AI Image Detector application. This tool was selected for its high user rating (4.9) and its widespread use by more than 1 million users, indicating its credibility for supporting data verification. The application analyzes visual patterns in images, including texture, pixel structure, and compositional features commonly associated with AI-generated content. Each image collected from TikTok, websites, and online news platforms was uploaded and analyzed using this system. Upon completion, the application provides a probability score indicating the likelihood of AI involvement in the image's creation. This study includes only data with an AI probability score of 50 percent or higher. Content below this threshold was excluded because it does not provide sufficiently strong indications of AI-generated content.

The data analysis process follows the qualitative analysis framework developed by Miles and Huberman (1994), consisting of three main stages conducted systematically and iteratively. The first stage is data reduction. All collected data from TikTok, websites, and online news platforms were reviewed and filtered for relevance to AI-based symbolic violence. Content that did not indicate AI manipulation or was unrelated to religious symbols and identities was excluded. The second stage is data display. The reduced data were organized into thematic categories, such as distortion of religious teachings, identity manipulation, and symbolic appropriation. This step facilitates the identification of patterns, relationships, and variations within the phenomenon. The third stage involves conclusion drawing and verification. The study interprets the meanings of each category and compares data across sources to identify consistency. Verification is conducted through repeated review of the data to ensure alignment between findings and available evidence, thereby maintaining analytical validity.

This study also considers ethical aspects throughout the processes of data collection, selection, and analysis from TikTok, websites, and online news platforms. It ensures that all data used is publicly accessible and does not violate individual privacy. The study relies solely on openly available content without engaging in intervention, direct interaction, or manipulation of users or content creators. Sensitive personal identities are not explicitly disclosed in the research report, unless they are already part of publicly reported information by official media sources. Furthermore, the use of data is strictly limited to academic and analytical purposes, not for reproducing or redistributing content that may harm specific individuals or groups. The analysis is conducted critically and contextually to minimize bias and avoid misinterpretation of digital content. In doing so, this study seeks to maintain a balance between research needs and ethical responsibility in the use of digital data.

Findings

AI-based symbolic violence is not limited to issues of representation, but also involves ethical and normative dimensions within Muslim life. This context can be evaluated through Islamic legal principles that emphasize the protection of honor as a foundation for assessing the integrity of identity and religious dignity in the AI era. These dynamics are reflected in three key findings identified in this study.

AI-enabled Symbolic Violence against Muslims

Muslim communities' experiences within AI-mediated digital environments continue to be shaped by persistent challenges related to representation, bias, and the protection of dignity. While artificial intelligence enables rapid content production and broad dissemination, it also amplifies stereotypical portrayals and harmful narratives that disproportionately target Muslims. These representations often operate subtly, yet they carry significant implications for the preservation of honor ('ird) within the framework of Islamic law. Moreover, existing governance mechanisms frequently emphasize technical performance and regulatory compliance without adequately addressing the socio-religious dimensions of harm. This gap limits the effectiveness of current interventions and allows symbolic violence to persist in digital spaces. In this context, the present study identifies and categorizes key patterns of AI-enabled symbolic violence against Muslims, as demonstrated in the empirical findings presented below (see Table 1).

Table 1. Characteristics of AI-enabled Symbolic Violence against Muslims

| Characteristics | Content | Platform | Source |
|---|---|-------------|---|
| Doctrinal distortion (AI-generated visuals) | AI-generated video depicting the "first day in hell" as entertainment | YouTube | https://mozaik.inilah.com/ |
| Deepfake of religious figures | Fake video of an Islamic figure offering "supernatural money." | TikTok | https://www.bbc.com/ |
| AI-based religious fraud | Manipulation of a scholar's face for mystical ritual content | Facebook | https://kitatekno.com/ |
| AI-driven religious disinformation | AI-generated misleading religious narratives | X (Twitter) | https://www.vertizon.tv.com/ |
| Deepfake religious identity | An AI account impersonating a Muslim figure | Instagram | https://www.jawapos.com/ |

| | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|--------------|---|
| Manipulation of religious symbols | AI-generated false religious content (visual/text) | Social media | https://jicnusantara.com/ |
| Exploitation of religious figures | AI-generated fake endorsements by Islamic figures | TikTok | https://id.headtopics.com |
| Simplification of religious doctrine | AI depiction of afterlife concepts in a trivial manner | YouTube | https://mozaik.inilah.com |
| AI-based religious hoaxes | False content undermines the understanding of Islam | Social media | https://j-innovative.org/ |

Source: Website-based documents.

Table 1 presents the key characteristics of AI-enabled symbolic violence against Muslims, which operates through the production, manipulation, and distribution of distorted religious content across digital platforms. From Table 1, three main characteristics can be identified. First, there is the distortion and trivialization of Islamic teachings through AI-generated visuals and narratives, such as the representation of hell as entertainment or the simplification of eschatological doctrines, reducing theological complexity into sensational content. Second, impersonation and the exploitation of religious authority emerge through deepfake technologies, as reflected in the falsification of scholars' identities, fictitious endorsements, and the manipulation of Muslim figures for fraud or public opinion engineering. Third, these practices involve the systematic production of religious disinformation and AI-based hoaxes, in which Islamic symbols and narratives are artificially reconstructed to generate misleading meanings and epistemic confusion within digital public spaces. Taken together, these characteristics indicate that AI-based symbolic violence against Muslims is no longer direct or confrontational, but instead operates subtly through engineered representations that gradually undermine the authority and meaning of religious practice.




The characteristics of AI-enabled symbolic violence against Muslims further demonstrate that the transformation of the digital landscape has shifted the nature of violence from direct verbal expression toward more complex and concealed forms of religious representation manipulation. AI-enabled symbolic violence does not merely function as the dissemination of offensive content, but also as a mechanism for producing simulated realities that shape how religion is understood and interpreted in public spaces. As noted by Keskin (2025), through artificial visualization, impersonation of religious figures, and the construction of misleading religious narratives, AI acts as an instrument that blurs the boundary between authenticity and fabrication. These practices suggest that religious authority is no longer determined solely by traditional sources, but has become vulnerable to digital replication and manipulation. Moreover, AI-enabled symbolic violence reflects the commodification of Islamic symbols, which are reproduced for sensationalism and disinformation, thereby transforming sacred values into objects of public consumption. These characteristics confirm that AI-based symbolic violence represents a new form of cultural domination that operates subtly yet produces systemic effects on trust and the integrity of Muslim religious practices.

Appropriation of Sacred Muslim Spaces

The appropriation of sacred Muslim spaces within AI-mediated environments reflects a growing concern regarding the misrepresentation of religious symbols and sites. While digital

technologies expand access to cultural and religious content, they also enable the decontextualization and commodification of spaces that hold deep spiritual significance for Muslim communities. Such representations often detach sacred sites from their theological and ethical meanings, reducing them to aesthetic or commercial objects. This dynamic not only distorts religious understanding but also undermines the protection of honor as recognized in Islamic law. Furthermore, the absence of culturally informed safeguards within AI systems exacerbates the risk of symbolic harm. In response, this study examines patterns of appropriation and reinterpretation of sacred Muslim spaces, highlighting how these practices manifest in AI-generated and mediated content, as detailed in the following findings (see Table 2).

Table 2. Forms of Appropriation of Sacred Muslim Spaces

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Post 1</p>  | <p>Caption 1</p> <p>Ikuti</p> <p>Jesus build Holy Kabba in heaven 🙏🙏 #jesuschrist #ai #makkah #heaven #viral Lihat terjemahan</p> <p>🎵 original sound</p> |
| <p>Post 2</p>  | <p>Caption 2</p> <p>Ikuti</p> <p>Jesus build Masjid Al-Ghamama in heaven 🙏🙏 #jesuschrist #ai #trending #viral #foryoupage Lihat terjemahan</p> <p>🎵 original sound</p> <p>Berisi media yang dihasilkan AI</p> |
| <p>Post 3</p>  | <p>Caption 3</p> <p>Ikuti</p> <p>Jesus Build bridge on lawa river 🙏🙏 #jesuschrist #ai #trending #viral #foryoupage Lihat terjemahan</p> <p>🎵 original sound</p> <p>Berisi media yang dihasilkan AI</p> |

Source: TikTok.

Table 2 illustrates the appropriation of sacred places in Islam, identified as 100% AI-generated, representing a problematic form of symbolic reconstruction in digital environments. The table highlights three visual representations in which meaning is distorted through AI-generated narratives. First, the initial post depicts a figure represented as Jesus constructing the Kaaba, accompanied by the caption “*Jesus built the Holy Kabba in Heaven,*” symbolically conflating theological authority and shifting the sacred meaning of the Kaaba in Islam. Second, the following post portrays the same figure building a mosque, with the caption “*Jesus built Masjid Al-Ghamama in Heaven,*” reconstructing the symbolic meaning of a place of worship within an alternative theological framework. Third, the final post presents the figure of a bridge being constructed in hell, with the caption “*Jesus build bridge of lava river,*” producing a distorted eschatological imagination. Taken together, these representations suggest that AI functions as a medium of cross-religious symbolic appropriation that not only distorts meaning but also reduces sacredness into visual objects open to manipulation and unrestricted reinterpretation.

The appropriation of sacred Muslim spaces further demonstrates AI-enabled symbolic violence against Muslims as a form of cultural violence operating through the manipulation of visual and religious narratives in digital spaces. These AI-based representations, which merge sacred symbols such as the Kaaba, mosques, and eschatological imagery with figures from different theological traditions, reflect a shift from reverence toward symbolic exploitation that is increasingly profane and sensational. Such practices not only blur theological boundaries between religions but also reduce sacred meaning into visual content that can be engineered and consumed without clear epistemic authority. Fernando et al. (2026) argue that AI functions as an instrument for producing alternative realities that can subtly yet systematically deconstruct structures of religious meaning. This phenomenon reflects a new form of symbolic domination that does not operate through confrontation, but rather through the aestheticization and normalization of distortion, thereby weakening the authority and integrity of Muslim religious experience within contemporary digital landscapes.

Manipulating Muslim Identity

The manipulation of Muslim identity in AI-mediated environments represents a critical dimension of symbolic violence that extends beyond misrepresentation into the distortion of selfhood. While artificial intelligence enables personalized and scalable content generation, it also facilitates the construction and circulation of reductive, homogenized, or misleading depictions of Muslim identities. These portrayals often disregard the diversity and complexity of lived experiences, reinforcing stereotypes and narrowing public understanding. Such dynamics pose significant challenges to the preservation of dignity and honor within the framework of Islamic law, where identity is closely tied to moral and social recognition. Moreover, limited oversight of culturally sensitive content further amplifies these risks. In this context, the present study identifies key patterns through which Muslim identity is manipulated in AI-generated and mediated content, as illustrated in the following findings (see Table 3).

Table 3. Cases of Muslim Identity Manipulation

| Figure | Description |
|---------------|--------------------|
|---------------|--------------------|

| | |
|--|---|
|  | <p>A post circulated on Facebook displaying a screenshot of an article titled “<i>Has the Imam Mahdi Been Born? The FBI Is Reportedly Deployed for Investigation.</i>” The screenshot includes several images of Anies accompanied by claims stating: “<i>According to Protestant Islamic belief, Anies Yohanies is the Imam Mahdi. Is this true?</i>”</p> <p>Source: https://Fitnahlagi.com/fitnah-lagi-viral-anies-yohanies-adalah-imam-mahdi/</p> |
|  | <p>A photo of Anies Baswedan dressed in attire resembling that of a Catholic religious leader has also circulated on social media. The post has been shared for some time, with one account uploading it on Facebook on May 2, 2023.</p> <p>Source: https://www.liputan6.com/cek-fakta/read/5421793/cek-fakta-hoaks-foto-anies-baswedan-mengenakan-pakaian-pemimpin-umat-katolik</p> |
|  | <p>The post further includes the statement: “<i>Now his name is Mahdi Yohanis Khan. Various strategies are being used to pursue the ambition of becoming RI-1.</i>” The account adds the narrative: “<i>This is Anies Wan Edan, who is manipulating religion. Anies will justify any means to achieve his ambition of becoming a presidential candidate (RI-1).</i>”</p> <p>Source: https://www.liputan6.com/cek-fakta/read/5412032/cek-fakta-hoaks-anies-baswedan-mengubah-namanya-menjadi-mahdi-yohanis-khan</p> |

Source: Online news reports.

Table 3 presents cases of Muslim identity manipulation identified as 100% AI-generated, representing a problematic form of artificial reality construction within religious representation. The table highlights three forms of identity manipulation that reflect significant distortions of norms and authority in Islam. First, the initial image depicts a Muslim individual consuming prohibited food such as pork, symbolically violating the normative boundary between halal and haram as a fundamental principle in Islamic practice. Second, the following image presents a manipulated identity of a Muslim portrayed as a leader of the Catholic community, creating theological ambiguity and blurring interreligious identity boundaries. Third, the final image represents a Muslim figure claimed to be the Imam Mahdi, directly engaging with highly sensitive eschatological and spiritual authority within Islamic tradition. Taken together, these manipulations indicate that AI functions as a tool for the deconstruction of religious identity, not only generating disorientation of meaning but also potentially undermining the legitimacy of norms and authority in the construction of Muslim identity.

The manipulation of Muslim identity represents a form of AI-enabled symbolic violence against Muslims, marking a shift from direct verbal attacks toward more subtle yet systematic forms of representational engineering. In these practices, AI is used to construct Muslim identities that contradict fundamental religious norms, including depictions of prohibited behavior, the assignment of cross-religious roles, and claims to eschatological authority. Such representations do not merely produce misleading images but also generate artificial realities that blur the boundary between authenticity and manipulation. As a result, religious identity is no longer understood as a stable normative construct, but rather as an object that can be engineered and reshaped according to specific interests. Abror et al. (2024) suggest that AI-based symbolic violence operates through mechanisms of aestheticization and normalization, allowing distortions to appear natural and easily accepted within the flow of social media. Consequently, these practices contribute to the erosion of symbolic legitimacy, the disorientation of meaning, and the weakening of authority in representing Islamic identity.

Discussion

The main findings of this study indicate that AI-based violence differs fundamentally from other forms of violence, particularly in how it operates and shapes social reality. While conventional forms of violence, such as hate speech or direct blasphemy, are typically explicit and easily identifiable, AI-based violence operates through engineered representations that appear authentic and convincing. AI enables the production of visual and narrative content that can precisely mimic identities, authority, and religious symbols, thereby blurring the boundary between fact and fabrication. In this context, AI-based violence not only serves as a symbolic attack but also creates epistemic disorientation, making it difficult for individuals to distinguish truth from falsehood. Its distribution is amplified by social media algorithms, allowing content to spread rapidly and widely with limited control. Compared to other forms of violence, AI also enables more subtle, personalized, and context-specific manipulation. As a result, such violence does not merely target individuals or groups, but also systematically disrupts structures of meaning, trust, and authority within digital spaces.

AI-based symbolic violence against Muslims does not occur as a singular phenomenon, but rather as a spectrum of interconnected practices. The findings reveal the complexity of doctrinal distortion, in which theological concepts are manipulated through artificial visuals and narratives, and in impersonation practices that exploit the authority of religious figures as consumable content. These dynamics are further intensified by the appropriation of sacred symbols and spaces that are reconstructed across different contexts, alongside identity manipulation that positions Muslims in ways that contradict their beliefs and norms. These variations demonstrate that AI is not only used to disseminate disinformation but also to reconstruct religious reality through multiple layers of symbolic representation, figures, and identities. This multidimensional nature indicates that AI-based violence operates across theological, social, and cultural domains simultaneously. Consequently, its impact is not partial but extends to the broader structure of meaning, undermining symbolic authority and neglecting the protection of communal honor.

Within the framework of Islamic law, the protection of honor is an integral component of the Sharia's overarching objectives, elevating the dignity of both individuals and communities to a fundamental value to be preserved. Honor in Islam extends beyond social reputation to include moral integrity, identity, and human dignity, which must not be violated through defamation, backbiting, or misleading representations (Ahmed et al., 2025). In the context of AI-

based symbolic violence, practices such as identity manipulation, doctrinal distortion, and the appropriation of religious symbols can be understood as violations of this principle, as they generate false representations that distort public perception of individuals as well as Islam as a system of values (Fernando et al., 2026). Although such practices may not always take the form of direct verbal attacks, AI-generated visual and narrative constructions may still contain elements of *tadlīs* (deception) and *iftirā'* (false accusation), both of which are normatively prohibited in Islamic law (Fatarib et al., 2025; Sukataman et al., 2025). This condition highlights the need to expand contemporary *ijtihad* to categorize and respond to emerging forms of honor violation in the AI era, while reaffirming the continued relevance of honor protection as an ethical principle in the face of technological disruption.

The latent risks of AI-based violence can also be understood through the perspective of Routine Activity Theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979), which suggests that crime occurs when a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of effective guardianship converge. In AI-driven digital ecosystems, these elements are simultaneously present and reinforced by technological affordances. Offenders have easy access to generative tools to produce manipulative content, targets include religious identities and symbols, and regulatory mechanisms often lag behind the speed of content production and dissemination. These risks are further intensified by the fact that such violence is not always recognized as harmful, but is often disguised as entertainment, creativity, or viral content, thereby normalizing distortion and reducing public sensitivity to violations (Carlyle et al., 2008). Moreover, its massive scale, anonymity, and limited traceability increase the potential for uncontrolled replication, creating a continuous cycle of symbolic violence that may even involve the unintentional participation of other users (Bourdieu, 1996). In this sense, AI acts as a catalyst that expands opportunities for harm while subtly weakening existing social control structures.

The findings of this study also reveal significant differences from classical understandings of symbolic violence, which conceptualize it as a form of cultural domination operating subtly through the internalization of norms and the reproduction of social structures (Nungesser, 2017; Reyes-Reinoso et al., 2024; Thapar-Björkert et al., 2016). In contrast, within the context of AI, symbolic violence is no longer fully dependent on established social structures. However, it is mediated by technology capable of reproducing and modifying symbols instantly, at scale, and across contexts. While classical theories often describe symbolic violence as implicit and internalized (Bourdieu, 1996), this study's findings demonstrate forms of visual and narrative representation that are simultaneously explicit yet concealed through digital aestheticization. This shift marks a transition from structurally embedded symbolic violence to simulation-based symbolic violence in digital environments, which, in turn, demands a normative response grounded in the principle of protecting honor in Islamic law. Such transformation reinforces the need for safeguarding honor, as AI-driven manipulation of symbols, identities, and religious representations can be categorized as forms of *iftirā'* and *tadlīs* that undermine both individual and communal integrity.

Finally, this study recommends strengthening critical digital awareness grounded in religious values as a primary strategy for responding to AI-based symbolic violence against Muslims. It emphasizes that digital literacy should not be understood solely in technical terms, but must be integrated with ethical and theological awareness. Such awareness includes the ability to recognize patterns of AI manipulation, verify the authenticity of content, and understand how religious symbols and identities can be artificially constructed. In addition, it is essential to develop collective sensitivity to distortions of meaning that are often disguised as entertainment

or viral content, to prevent the normalization of practices that undermine religious integrity. In this context, the internalization of the principle of protecting honor becomes crucial as a moral foundation for engaging with and responding to digital content. Therefore, strengthening such awareness serves not only as a form of individual protection but also as an effort to build epistemic and cultural resilience, enabling Muslim communities to preserve the authority of meaning and identity amid the expanding disruption caused by AI-driven technologies.

Conclusion

The key findings of this study highlight that violence no longer occurs in direct forms, but rather through engineered representations that appear real and are difficult to distinguish from truth. As a result, religious symbols, identities, and teachings become increasingly vulnerable to manipulation without clear control. This transformation indicates that the core issue lies not merely in the content itself, but in how reality is produced and subsequently accepted as legitimate within public consciousness. The production of meaning is no longer situated within a stable authority but is dispersed through technologies capable of rapidly replicating and modifying representations at scale. In such conditions, the boundary between the authentic and the artificial blurs, allowing distortions to be perceived not as deviations but as part of reality itself. In this context, the principle of protecting honor within Islamic law becomes highly relevant. AI-based symbolic violence operates at a deeper level by shaping perception, influencing ways of thinking, and directing understanding of reality, while simultaneously exploiting identities, norms, and religious symbols in subtle, often unrecognized ways.

This study contributes to both criminology and Islamic law by offering an integrative framework for understanding AI-based symbolic violence. The findings demonstrate that the manipulation of representations, identities, and religious symbols through technology is not only a social phenomenon but also constitutes a violation of honor from an Islamic perspective. In this regard, criminology provides an analytical framework for identifying the patterns, forms, and mechanisms of AI-based violence, while Islamic law offers a normative foundation for assessing such practices within ethical and legal boundaries. The intersection between these fields is significant, as the phenomenon under study involves not only social actions but also deeply embedded values and the protection of honor in religious life. Consequently, Islamic law is extended to address forms of violation that may not exist within classical categories, yet share similar substantive characteristics. Therefore, the principle of protecting honor remains relevant as a normative foundation, as AI-based violence can be understood both as a criminological phenomenon and as an ethical concern within Islamic law.

This study also acknowledges several limitations. First, the data used are entirely derived from online sources, meaning that the analysis primarily reflects representations of the phenomenon in digital spaces rather than the lived experiences of the actors involved. Reliance on online media limits the depth of understanding regarding motivations, production contexts, and the subjective impacts on individuals or Muslim communities. In addition, the data are inherently fragmentary and shaped by algorithmic logics, and therefore may not fully represent the broader reality. Furthermore, it remains difficult to verify the intentions behind AI-based content solely through online observation. These conditions constrain the study's ability to capture experiential, emotional, and social response dimensions directly. Nevertheless, these limitations open important avenues for future research to adopt more in-depth qualitative approaches. Interviews with affected individuals, content creators, and religious authorities may

provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics, perceptions, and real-world impacts of AI-based symbolic violence.

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Disclosure of Interests

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