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# THE IMPACT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ON SOCIETY

## VIEWS OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS LEADERS

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### Abstract

The article discusses the nature of the impact of artificial intelligence on society from the standpoint of religious figures of Islam. The main method was a questionnaire using the Likert method. We analysed how artificial intelligence affects human potential. We revealed the degree of dependence of socio-cultural aspects of the society development on artificial intelligence, identified threats and risks posed by artificial intelligence. Also, the nature of the impact of artificial intelligence on religious activities was determined. The hypothesis was put forward: the influence of artificial intelligence on society is diverse, multifaceted with positive and negative biases, the depth and nature of the impact of which have not been fully studied by Islamic religious figures. The public is concerned about the risks of harming people and society. The advantage of this article is to identify the structure of Muslim views on the nature of the impact of artificial intelligence on society, as well as to identify the ratio of positive and negative aspects of its influence. For the first time the authors examined the attitude of imams to artificial intelligence according to given indicators. The obtained results can serve as the basis for further research in the issues of the correct and humanistic use of artificial intelligence in the social sphere. Moreover, they may become the basis for the formation and development of a system of cultural and religious values in the digital economy.

*Keywords:* human, potential, activities, risks, threats

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### 1. Introduction

In the XXI century, the development of society is under the influence of new factors that significantly change the philosophy, the whole idea of the world

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structure significantly. One of such factors is AI. It is increasingly entering our lives. Its main purpose is to assist a person in his activities, the development of his potential. The specialists in the field of information technology, philosophers, sociologists, psychologists, religious figures, HR managers, etc. carry out evaluation and determination of ways to use it. Scientists and practitioners are trying to fit AI into everyday life.

A number of scientists are exploring the possibilities of using AI in Medicine [1-4]. Possibilities of using AI in building sphere [5], automation of control by various systems are investigated [6-8]. Opportunities to improve the social efficiency in a complex or part-by-part way by introducing AI are actively explored [9-15]. Studies are underway to identify ways and means of using AI in training, staff development [16-18], developing talent [19], and improving management in the digital economy [20-22], in HR management [23].

Despite a rather long use of AI in human life, the rules for the interaction of natural and artificial intelligence have not yet been formed, the risks and threats to humans have not been determined. Ethical research is in its infancy [24-26; G. McGee, *Robot Code of Ethics. Exploring life, inspiring innovation*, 2007, <https://www.the-scientist.com/column/a-robot-code-of-ethics-46522>]. The issue of replacing natural intelligence with artificial intelligence is particularly acute [27; R. Cellan-Jones, *Stephen Hawking warns artificial intelligence could end mankind*, 2014, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-30290540>]. The risks of job loss are increased due to the active introduction of AI in various areas of labour activity [28]. AI has a psychological effect on people [29, 30], while the nature of its impact is not always positive [31, 32]. All this alarms people. They want to see a reliable assistant in AI, and not a monster that devours and destroys them.

Religious figures cannot but respond to changes in society [33]. There is a discussion regarding the relationship between Science and religion [34, 35]. There is an opinion that the Koran does not contradict human evolution [36] and therefore can use AI [37]. In some cases, the possibility of using neuro-fuzzy network to restore churches and places of worship is considered [38]. However, systemic studies on this issue have not been conducted. There are especially few scientific works that reveal the position of modern denominations regarding the nature of the influence of AI on society.

The comprehensive coverage and depth of AI penetration into human life and activity, lack of scientific papers revealing the nature of the influence of artificial intelligence on society from the perspective of religious leaders, necessitated this study.

## 2. Methodology

The purpose of the study was to identify the nature of the impact of artificial intelligence on society from the standpoint of Islamic religious leaders. The goal was achieved within the framework of scientific tasks:

1. to determine the nature of the impact of artificial intelligence on human potential,
2. to identify the degree of dependence of social and cultural aspects of the society development on artificial intelligence,
3. to identify threats and risks posed by artificial intelligence,
4. to identify the nature of the influence of artificial intelligence on religious activity.

The hypothesis was put forward by the team of authors: the influence of artificial intelligence on society is diverse, multifaceted with positive and negative biases, the depth and nature of the impact of which have not been fully studied by Islamic religious figures.

The group of authors conducted a research for 3 years to reveal the nature of the influence of artificial intelligence on society from the standpoint of religious figures. At the same time, the research was conducted regarding the views of different denominations on artificial intelligence: Catholics, Orthodox, Muslims, Jews and Buddhists. Views of representatives of Islam were studied from April 2019 to November 2019. The study included the III Regional Training Seminar for Imams of Mosques of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of KHMAO-Yugra (RDUM KHMAO-Yugra) 'Features of the organization of the activity of mosques of KHMAO-Yugra in the conditions of modern realities of Russian society', as well as in the Republic of Tajikistan. The study involved 21 clergymen out of 25, who are members of the Regional Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug aged 31 to 56 years. In addition, 37 participants from the republic of Tajikistan took part in the study. The sample volume was  $n = 58$ .

The choice of the Regional Spiritual Council of Muslims (RSCM) of the Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug-Ugra to achieve the goal of the study was based on a significant coincidence in the goals and objectives of the study and the activities of this organization. The main tasks in the activities of the RSCM of the Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug-Yugra are: active participation in the development of vital areas of society: education, culture, healthcare, spiritual education, achieving peace and harmony, including interfaith, strengthening moral standards. The goals of the Tajik Muslims were consonant with the goals of the religious figures of the Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug.

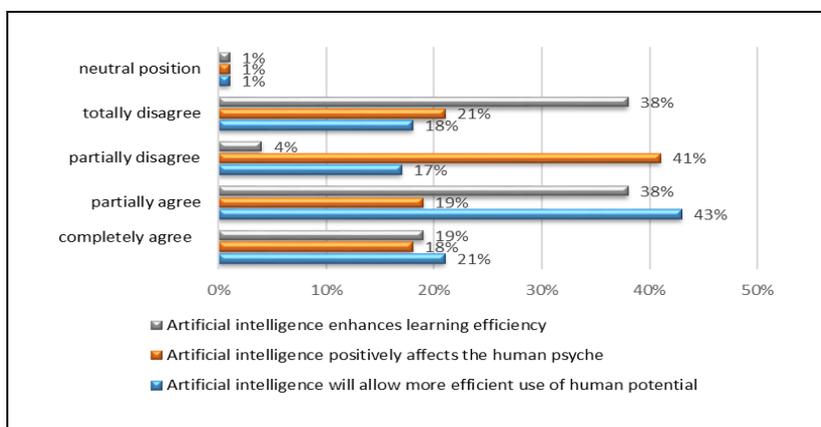
A structured questionnaire was prepared in the author's version. First, it underwent expert analysis of specialists in this field. Then, an experimental test was conducted with a similar population group only for a different sample. It was done before the main data collection. This event was held in order to clarify the correctness and relevance of the questions formulated, the correspondence of the capabilities of the study group to answer the asked questions.

The applied methods were: questionnaire survey, semi-structured in-depth interviews, content analysis, statistical analysis methods. The author's version of the questionnaire was formed using the Likert methodology. The obtained empirical data were summarized and analysed.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. The nature of the impact of artificial intelligence on human potential

A study of the nature of the impact of AI on a person made it possible to establish that respondents are not inclined to believe that AI will help people in their professional activities, intellectual development (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** The impact of artificial intelligence on human potential.

Despite the fact that the opinions of the respondents were divided, however, the bulk of the imams believe that AI will contribute to increase the efficiency of using natural intelligence in the social environment and business. Only 1% of respondents could not decide on this issue. It reveals that the leaders of Islam have a clear position in the system of human values and the prospects for the development of society in the digital economy.

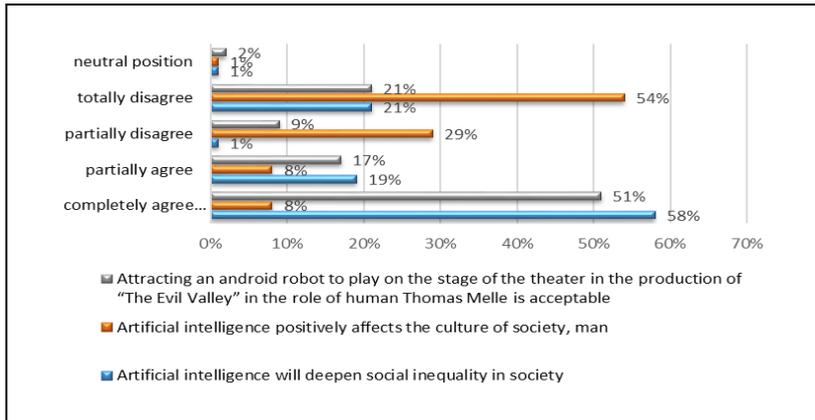
Imams consider the existing training system to be an important aspect for human development. An analysis of the data in Figure 1 suggests that only 19% of respondents unconditionally pin their hopes on AI in improving training effectiveness. At the same time, part of the respondents relies on the partial use of AI in training systems. This can be explained by the fact that people have a different attitude to innovations.

The impact of AI on the psyche is not clear. 37% of respondents displayed a positive attitude to this issue (partially or completely agree). Apparently this part of the imams is in the power of Islam in the issue of psychology. However, more than half of the respondents are concerned about the nature of the impact of AI on the human psyche.

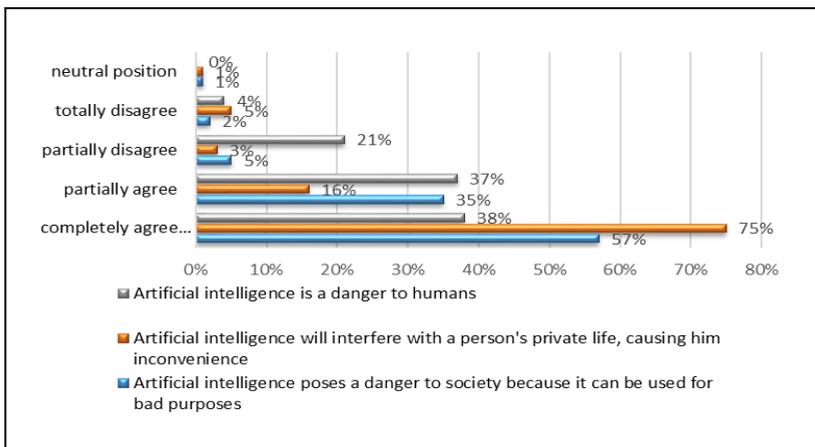
#### 3.2. Dependence of social and cultural aspects of the development of society on artificial intelligence

According to respondents, AI will deepen social inequality in society (Figure 2). This is the opinion of the majority of respondents.

### The impact of artificial intelligence on society



**Figure 2.** The impact of AI on the social and cultural development of society.



**Figure 3.** The nature of the human danger posed by AI.

According to most imams not everyone can afford to purchase modern innovative products, devices, equipment, thereby social inequality will increase. At the same time, 21% of respondents expressed the opinion that AI does not limit the ability of the poor in their development, to obtain material wealth. The basis for such an opinion may be either the impossibility of reducing social inequality as such, or the lack of communication, dependence in access to AI on human wealth. In addition, to a greater extent, AI attracts the attention of young people who still do not feel the social divide so deeply between the bulk of the population and very rich people.

Analysis of the data in Figure 2 shows that AI affects mainly negatively the culture of the society, the person. There is no clear opinion on this statement, but more than half are sure (54%) that artificial intelligence worsens the culture of society, of a person. These conclusions are somewhat contrary to the results of respondents' answers to the question about the use of an android robot on the stage of the theatre in the production of 'The Sinister Valley' instead of the man Thomas Melle.

Most of the respondents (51%) are positive about the fact that on the stage of the theatre in the production of 'The Sinister Valley' the role of the person Thomas Melle is 'played' by an android robot. The opinions of the rest were divided. Apparently, there is still no clear understanding of what aspects of society's culture and what kind of control the leaders of Islamic religious organizations should take.

### ***3.3. Security - threats and risks posed by artificial intelligence***

During the course of revealing the degree of AI danger to a person, it was found that almost all respondents were concerned about the nature of AI's impact on a person, society (Figure 3).

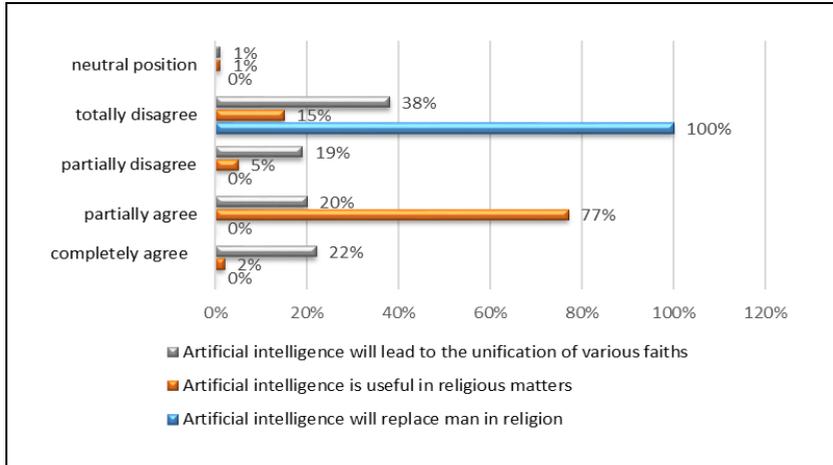
38% of respondents completely agreed that AI posed a danger. Apparently, this part of the imams clearly represents the essence of the danger from the impact of AI on a person, society as a whole. Interesting results were obtained in assessing the degree of AI interference in a person's private life, and the ability to inconvenience him. The opinion of respondents on this statement is obvious: 75% are completely sure that artificial intelligence will interfere in a person's private life, causing him inconvenience. This answer is quite explainable. People are sceptical of everything new, unknown. 57% of respondents are sure that artificial intelligence poses a danger to society because it can be used for sinister purposes. Based on the results of the survey, it can be concluded that almost all who answered the question are afraid that when using artificial intelligence, people may pursue vile intentions. Almost all imams believe that information security will suffer significantly from the effects of AI. This is due to the fact that at the present time, when AI is increasingly entering the life of a person not only at a professional, but also at a household level, society, religious leaders feel its negative influence.

### ***3.4. The nature of the influence of artificial intelligence on religious activities***

The nature of the influence of AI on religious affairs did not cause significant disagreement among respondents (Figure 4). The majority of respondents (79%) mostly agrees or completely agrees with the opinion that artificial intelligence is useful in religious affairs. One fifth of respondents considered AI useless in Islamic affairs. This means that they exclude all kinds of benefits from using AI in religious affairs. Only 1% of respondents could not decide on their opinion on this issue.

A definite answer on the question of whether AI can replace a person in religion was received. The answer to this question was almost predictable, although there might have been some options. Absolutely all respondents (100%) are sure that artificial intelligence cannot replace a person in religion, because a person is a spiritual being, therefore, religion occupies a very important place in his life, while artificial intelligence does not have a soul.

The imams evaluated the unifying role and strength of AI differently. Despite the fact that the opinions of the respondents were divided, it can be concluded that some imams consider AI as a means of uniting various religions, apparently, under the patronage of Islam.



**Figure 4.** The impact of artificial intelligence on religious activities.

#### **4. Discussion**

The study found that the impact of AI on human potential is diverse. The opinion of the clergy that AI will not help people in their professional activities, intellectual development seems somewhat strange. After all, the very appearance of AI was aimed to make people's lives easier, helping them in their professional activities and personal lives [39].

Perhaps here the competitive contradiction between natural and artificial intelligence in its role, the mastering of the human soul, was manifested. Nevertheless, a fifth of the imams see the use of AI in the human value system and the prospects for the development of society in the digital economy as useful. Apparently, this particular part of respondents hopes for AI in improving the effectiveness of training. They are not especially worried about the mental state of a person due to the dynamic and sometimes aggressive impact of AI. Furthermore, many imams are concerned about the nature of the influence of AI on the human psyche. They believe that it is necessary to look for adequate ways to counteract the harmful effects of AI.

Active use of AI has a negative impact on the social environment. Most clergymen believe that AI will deepen social inequality in society due to the limited material capabilities of the majority of the population. However, a small part of the respondents does not associate material well-being with the possibilities of enriching a person with the help of AI, especially in the modern world. Most likely, these are people who, for various reasons, do not feel the social gap between the main part of the population and very rich people. Faith,

spiritual values neutralize material, social inequality even in a world where money serves as an idol.

AI adds problems to the system of cultural values, changes the philosophy of man [40]. More than half of the clergymen believe that artificial intelligence worsens the culture of society, of a person. At the same time, in the religious sphere there is still no clear position on the nature of changes and the system of opposing AI in the cultural sphere. As the study showed, most of the imams have a positive attitude to the fact that the android robot plays the role of the man Thomas Melle on the stage of the theatre in the production of *The 'Sinister Valley'*. Replacing a person with a robot on the stage of the theatre, where human values, problems are presented to the audience for discussion, is at least controversial.

In the security system, AI is considered by respondents as one of the negative factors. They are concerned about the nature of the impact of AI on humans, society. Particularly alarming is the danger that AI will interfere in a person's private life, causing him inconvenience. Clergy disturb the collection and processing of personal information, the danger of its use against a person. Modern programs and means of tracking, control built into smartphones, various electronic equipment, and open social networks do not add peace and confidence in personal safety [41]. Recent scandals related to the leakage of personal data from various closed, secret databases for storing personal data exacerbate these fears. Especially respondents fear that when using AI, people can be driven by lowly feelings, they will pursue terrible intentions. On the one hand, the results of the answers are influenced by the life experience of imams who fear the unpredictability of AI implementation. On the other hand, youth and the desire for innovation are visible.

No particular disagreements in assessing the use of AI in religious activities were found. The vast majority of imams believe that AI can be useful in religious matters only under certain circumstances. A fifth of the respondents are confident in the futility of AI in the activities of Islam. Clerics are unanimous that AI cannot replace a person in religion. This is logical, since religion is a set of spiritual values that a person cultivates in himself, communicating with God, often through clergy. Replacing them by AI is impractical and unnatural. The prospect of uniting different confessions through AI has caused some differences of opinion. This correlates with some studies [42]. Some imams believe that this is possible and, apparently, under the patronage of Islam.

An analysis of the data showed that a small part of the clergy is ready for systemic innovations in the use of AI. It makes up about 20% of all imams. This proportion is logical and promising. The fundamental nature of faith, denomination must be strong, indestructible. However, it is necessary to take into account on-going changes in real life and the economy and strive to respond to the challenges of time in a timely manner. A clearer position of respondents turned out to be characteristic of all the studied topics. There are practically no Muslims who have not defined their attitude to the nature of the influence of artificial intelligence on society.

## 5. Conclusions

The study of the nature of the influence of artificial intelligence on society made it possible to identify some characteristic features and peculiarities of the views of Islamic religious leaders on this issue. The comprehensive and multifaceted influence of AI and its entry into human life is illustrative. The hypothesis is confirmed – the influence of artificial intelligence on society is of versatile and multifaceted nature, with positive and negative sides. The depth and nature of their influence is not fully studied by Islamic religious figures. At the same time, Muslims believe that in society there is ripening and growing suspicion and fear of its improper use, the risks of harm to the person, society. Clerics believe that the social and cultural development of society is increasingly dependent on AI. AI reduces the state of protection of spiritual, social, economic and other values of society from threats posed by an aggressive information environment.

Not all areas of artificial intelligence can replace natural intelligence. This primarily concerns the spiritual sphere of man. The clerics are unanimous that AI cannot replace a person in religion, Islam. However, some imams believe that AI will help unite various faiths, apparently under the patronage of Islam. There is no complete certainty that artificial intelligence will allow more efficient use of human potential and natural intelligence, and will increase the quality and innovativeness of training. In addition, the study found that a small part of the clergy is ready for systemic innovations in the use of AI. The clerics of this group tend to respond timely to systemic changes in society. The majority of the remaining clergymen are exclusively focused on the service of faith.

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