

Article

AI-Mediated Islamic Preaching in Kazakhstan: Rethinking Religious Authority in the Digital Age

Shamshadin Kerim, Maxat Kurmanaliyev * , Yershat Onggar and Jolaman Bulan

Religious Studies, Egyptian University of Islamic Culture Nur-Mubarak, Almaty 05000, Kazakhstan

* Correspondence: maxattarazi@gmail.com

Abstract

The growing influence of artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping religious communication, including Islamic preaching. However, little is known about how AI-mediated preaching transforms religious authority, particularly in post-Soviet Muslim contexts such as Kazakhstan. This study addresses this gap by examining how AI reshapes the foundations of religious authority in Kazakhstan. It aims to conceptualize emerging forms of authority and to compare communicative patterns across AI-generated, hybrid, and human-led preaching. The qualitative comparative design was employed, analyzing 90 social media posts from six accounts across various social media platforms. The study integrates digital discourse analysis, rhetorical analysis (ethos, pathos, logos), and audience engagement analysis to examine content structure, authority construction, and interaction patterns. The findings reveal the emergence of algorithmic religious authority, grounded in visibility, consistency, and platform alignment rather than traditional scholarly legitimacy. AI-generated preaching demonstrates high standardization, simulated credibility, and passive engagement, while hybrid preaching combines algorithmic optimization with human contextualization. Human-led preaching retains interpretive depth, relational authority, and stronger dialogical interaction. Together, these forms create a stratified and pluralized system of authority. The study concludes that AI is not merely a tool but a structuring force that redefines the epistemic foundations of religious authority, introducing conditions of “authority without accountability” in digitally mediated Islamic preaching.

Keywords: artificial intelligence; Islamic preaching; religious authority; digital religion; algorithmic authority; Kazakhstan; social media



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1. Introduction

The rapid rise of artificial intelligence (AI) is changing many areas of human activity, including religious communication. For centuries, Islamic preaching was largely based on face-to-face communication, recognized scholarly authority, and complex interpretative traditions. Now, it is being changed through digital platforms by algorithmic systems and automatic content production (Chua 2026). In Kazakhstan, as a result of continuous post-Soviet cultural changes and a wider Islamic revival, the rise of AI-assisted and fully AI-generated preaching has become an important yet less-studied phenomenon (Baimakhanova and Kalemshariv 2026).

Current AI-generated religious content raises important questions about how religious authority is established, recognized, and trusted in digital environments. While traditional Islamic authority has historically depended on scholarly expertise and institutional legitimacy, AI systems increasingly generate and disseminate religious knowledge without

clear mechanisms of accountability. This creates an important research problem: it remains unclear how AI-mediated preaching is reshaping the foundations of religious authority, particularly in Kazakhstan, where post-Soviet religious revival and rapid digitalization provide a distinctive context for this transformation.

Existing research into digital religion suggests that online platforms not only deliver religious knowledge but also transform its whole process of production, distribution, and reception. Studies on Islam point out the fragmentation of authority, moving from scholars working in a centralized manner to the emergence of various networked modes of religious expression, where factors such as availability and style of communication play key roles in gaining trustworthiness (Bunt 2018). Research on algorithmic culture indicates that digital platforms mainly promote engagement-driven content, to the extent of favoring clarity, repetition, and emotional appeal at the expense of interpretative depth. In a similar vein, studies on AI-generated communication reveal that although machine-generated texts can convincingly mimic coherence and authority, they lack intentionality and moral accountability (Floridi et al. 2018). Despite this knowledge, there are still major gaps. AI is often considered simply as a neutral medium, overlooking its role as an active agent influencing the creation of religious knowledge. Very few studies examine transformation of authority in situations where content is created or co-produced by machines. In addition, the number of local studies based in the region is limited despite Kazakhstan witnessing a religious revival and rapid digital revolution.

To address the identified research gap, this study is guided by the following research questions:

- (1) How do AI-generated, hybrid, and human-led forms of Islamic preaching differ in their communicative structures and discourse characteristics?
- (2) How is religious authority constructed and legitimized across AI-generated, hybrid, and human-led preaching?
- (3) How do audiences engage with these different forms of Islamic preaching in digitally mediated environments?
- (4) What are the broader implications of AI-mediated preaching for the transformation of religious authority in Kazakhstan?

These research questions provide the analytical framework for the study and guide the organization of the findings presented in the subsequent sections.

In order to implement this research, the study adopts a qualitative comparative approach guided by four research questions addressing communicative forms, authority construction, audience engagement, and the broader implications of AI integration in Islamic preaching. By combining empirical analysis with theoretical reflection, the article argues that AI alters Islamic preaching and reconfigures epistemic foundations through which religious authority is produced, recognized, and contested in digitally mediated environments.

2. Literature Review

Within Islamic contexts, online media have decentralized traditional authority by enabling scholars, independent preachers, and influencers to disseminate religious knowledge beyond institutional settings (Bunt 2018). Consequently, credibility increasingly depends on accessibility, communication style, and audience engagement alongside formal theological expertise (Hjelm 2020; Andok 2024).

The emergence of generative artificial intelligence represents a new stage in this transformation. AI systems are increasingly used to generate sermons, educational materials, and religious responses, raising questions about authorship, interpretation, and accountability. Andriansyah (2023) claims that AI challenges traditional understandings of religious

authority because it produces coherent theological discourse without intentionality or moral responsibility. Similarly, [Andok et al. \(2025\)](#) demonstrate that religious communities employ AI for preaching, education, and administration while expressing concerns about authenticity, theological reliability, and ethical responsibility.

Digital platforms also reshape the criteria of religious legitimacy. Recommendation algorithms privilege visibility, consistency, and emotional engagement, allowing authority to emerge through platform performance rather than solely through institutional recognition ([Nuriana and Salwa 2024](#)). [Campbell \(2020\)](#) and [Campbell and Tsuria \(2021\)](#) therefore argue that digital religion creates hybrid forms of authority in which traditional religious institutions coexist with networked and technologically mediated actors. Beyond authority, emotional communication plays an important role in digital preaching. Discrete emotions influence how audiences process information and engage with messages ([Nabi 2003](#)).

In Islamic contexts, this development represents a move away from centralized religious authority to more decentralized and networked versions of religious expression, where accessibility, style of communication and relevance determining credibility ([Waseu 2025](#)). These developments point to a broader reconfiguration of religious authority under conditions of digital mediation. However, important gaps remain. Existing studies often treat AI as a technical tool rather than as a structuring force in knowledge production, offering limited insight into how religious authority is redefined when content is generated or co-produced by non-human systems. Furthermore, empirical research remains geographically concentrated, with regions such as Kazakhstan largely absent from these debates despite their distinctive intersection of post-Soviet religious revival and rapid digital transformation.

Collectively, current studies reveal three important limitations. First, they largely conceptualize AI as a technological tool rather than as a structuring force that reshapes religious authority. Second, empirical research on AI-mediated Islamic preaching remains limited, particularly comparative analyses of AI-generated, hybrid, and human-led communication. Third, the literature pays little attention to post-Soviet Muslim societies such as Kazakhstan, despite their distinctive combination of religious revival and rapid digital transformation. This study addresses these three gaps by examining how AI-mediated preaching reconstructs religious authority in Kazakhstan.

3. Digital Transformation and Religious Communication in Kazakhstan

Recent digital indicators demonstrate the high level of Internet connectivity in Kazakhstan. According to the Digital 2025 Kazakhstan report, the country had approximately 19.2 million Internet users in January 2025, representing an Internet penetration rate of 92.9 percent of the total population. During the same period, Kazakhstan recorded approximately 15.7 million active social media user identities, equivalent to 75.7 percent of the national population, reflecting an annual increase of more than eleven percent compared with the previous year ([Kemp 2025](#)). Internet connection quality has also improved considerably, with median mobile download speeds exceeding 53 Mbps and fixed broadband speeds averaging over 66 Mbps, enabling widespread consumption of video-based content across multiple platforms.

The rapid growth of digital media coincides with Kazakhstan's distinctive post-Soviet religious development. Following independence, the country experienced a substantial revival of Islamic identity after decades of state-imposed secularization. While traditional religious institutions continue to play an important role, younger generations increasingly supplement formal religious education with information obtained through digital platforms. Online sermons, short educational videos, question-and-answer sessions, and religious influencers have become important sources of Islamic knowledge, particularly among

digitally active youth (Adaikhan et al. 2026). The expansion of social media has also facilitated the emergence of independent online preachers operating outside traditional mosque-based hierarchies. Their authority is frequently constructed through consistent content production, audience engagement, and algorithmic visibility rather than solely through formal theological (Beisenbayev et al. 2024).

These structural developments provide an important context for understanding the growing use of artificial intelligence in Islamic communication. High levels of Internet penetration, widespread social media participation, and the popularity of short-form digital content create favorable conditions for AI-assisted production of religious materials. Artificial intelligence can now generate sermons, translate religious texts, produce synthetic narration, and optimize audiovisual presentation at a scale previously unattainable for individual content creators. Within Kazakhstan's rapidly evolving digital environment, AI-mediated Islamic preaching therefore represents not an isolated technological innovation but a logical extension of broader processes of digitalization that are reshaping how religious knowledge is produced, circulated, and evaluated. The country's combination of rapid digital development, post-Soviet religious revival, and active social media engagement thus makes it a particularly appropriate setting for examining the transformation of religious authority in the age of artificial intelligence.

4. Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative comparative research design to examine how artificial intelligence reshapes Islamic preaching in Kazakhstan. Prioritizing analytical depth over generalization, the study adopts a triangulated framework combining digital discourse analysis, rhetorical analysis, and audience engagement analysis. This approach enables systematic comparison across AI-generated, hybrid, and human-led forms of preaching, capturing both communicative structure and audience reception within platform environments.

This study adopts a qualitative comparative research design because it seeks to understand how religious authority is constructed across different communicative forms rather than to measure statistical relationships. Qualitative comparison enables systematic examination of similarities and differences among multiple cases while preserving contextual complexity (Creswell and Poth 2018). Such an approach is particularly appropriate for studies of digital religion, where communicative meaning, discourse, and social interaction are central analytical concerns.

The analytical framework combines digital discourse analysis, rhetorical analysis, and audience engagement analysis. Digital discourse analysis examines how meaning is constructed within digitally mediated communication through language, visual presentation, and platform affordances (Herring 2004). Rhetorical analysis draws on Aristotle's concepts of ethos, pathos, and logos to investigate how credibility, emotional appeal, and logical reasoning are constructed in religious communication (Leach 2012). Audience engagement analysis complements these approaches by examining observable interaction patterns, including views, comments, shares, and the qualitative nature of audience responses, providing insight into how different forms of authority are received within social media environments (Bonsón and Ratkai 2013).

The empirical dataset consists of 90 purposively selected social media posts drawn from six accounts across Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, published between January and June 2025. Accounts were selected based on four criteria: a primary focus on Islamic preaching, consistent activity during the study period, observable audience engagement, and identifiable indicators of AI involvement (e.g., synthetic voice, AI-generated visuals, or explicit disclosure). The sample was structured to represent three configurations—fully AI-generated, hybrid, and human-led—with 15 posts selected from each account. Cate-

gorization was refined iteratively during preliminary analysis, and the final sample size was determined based on analytical saturation. While not statistically representative, the dataset captures dominant forms of digital Islamic preaching within Kazakhstan’s platform ecosystem.

Although all analyzed accounts were publicly accessible, they have been anonymized in accordance with ethical recommendations for Internet research. Identifying individual accounts could unintentionally increase their visibility or expose content creators to unwanted scrutiny, particularly given the sensitive nature of religious communication. As the study focuses on patterns of communication rather than the activities of specific individuals, anonymization does not affect the validity or reproducibility of the analysis.

The analysis proceeds in three stages. First, digital discourse analysis identifies thematic patterns, interpretive depth, and the use of religious sources. Second, rhetorical analysis—based on the framework of ethos, pathos, and logos—examines how credibility, emotional appeal, and coherence are constructed. Third, audience engagement analysis combines quantitative metrics (views, likes, shares) with qualitative interpretation of comments to distinguish between passive and interactive forms of reception. These dimensions are integrated through a structured multi-stage coding process, enabling cross-case comparison and supporting the study’s broader argument regarding the transformation of religious authority.

To ensure analytical consistency, a structured coding framework was developed prior to the analysis. The coding framework used to guide the analysis is presented in Table 1. Digital discourse analysis examined contextual explanation, discourse standardization, and narrative depth. Rhetorical analysis assessed the construction of ethos, pathos, and logos. Audience engagement analysis distinguished between passive engagement (e.g., likes, brief affirmations, emojis) and interactive engagement (e.g., questions, discussions, and responses from preachers). Finally, the comparative synthesis identified the dominant form of religious authority represented in each post, categorizing it as algorithmic, augmented, or embodied authority. The coding categories were applied systematically across all 90 posts to facilitate cross-case comparison.

Table 1. Coding framework and categories of analysis.

Analytical Component	Analytical Focus	Categories Examined	Purpose
Digital discourse analysis	Structure and presentation of religious messages	Contextual explanation, standardization, narrative depth	Compare communicative characteristics across preaching types
Rhetorical analysis	Persuasive strategies	Ethos, pathos, logos	Examine construction of religious credibility
Audience engagement analysis	Audience response	Passive engagement, interactive engagement	Assess reception and interaction patterns
Comparative synthesis	Religious authority	Algorithmic, augmented, embodied authority	Identify emerging forms of authority

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The qualitative and purposive nature of the sample limits generalizability, and engagement metrics serve only as proxies for audience reception. The identification of AI-generated content relies on observable indicators and may not capture less visible uses of AI. Additionally, the study is temporally bounded (January–June 2025) and focuses primarily on communicative dynamics, potentially under-representing institutional and theological dimensions.

5. Digital Landscape of Islamic Preaching in Kazakhstan

Religious communication today has dramatically altered the face of Islamic preaching in Kazakhstan, leading to changes not only in the way religious knowledge is circulated

but also in the conditions of its production and recognition. Over just ten years, the speedy growth of Internet accessibility and the spread of smartphones have made online platforms the main places of religious interactions. Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have ceased being neutral channels for delivering religious content; instead, they have become algorithmically designed spaces determining the visibility, presentation, and impact of the Islamic discourse (Shanbayeva et al. 2024). Consequently, Islamic preaching is increasingly implemented in digitally mediated spaces, which are characterized by immediacy, scalability, and continuous audience interaction. These preaching practices transcend the physical and institutional boundaries of mosques and formal religious settings.

The situation is part of Kazakhstan's sociocultural path; specifically, the revival of Islamic identity after the Soviet era. After many years of the government forcing secularization, the return of religion together with the growth of digital infrastructures has led to situations where religious education is mostly separate from its main traditional institutions. In the digital age, younger generations are exposed to Islamic teachings through personalized, on-demand digital content rather than formal scholarly settings (Zhanabayeva et al. 2026).

In this changing environment, an entirely new type of religious practitioners emerged who garnered the greatest attention: social media preachers working independently of the officially recognized institutional structures. The study of selected social media accounts reveals that these actors both teach religious content and carry out motivational speech, narrate stories, and use interactive engagement tactics. They derive their authority not only by virtue of formal theological education but through permanent religious content generation on social media. This indicates a growing permeability between formal and informal religious authority since their audiences are significantly involved in judging and strengthening their credibility (Kurmanaliyev et al. 2025).

At a structural level, platform affordances significantly shape both the form and content of Islamic preaching. The dominance of short-form video—particularly on TikTok and Instagram—encourages concise, visually oriented, and emotionally engaging messages. Algorithmic recommendation systems further reinforce these tendencies by privileging content aligned with high engagement patterns, including repetition, clarity, and affective appeal. Evidence from the dataset suggests that such dynamics favor standardized and simplified presentations of religious teachings, often reducing complex theological concepts to generalized moral directives. While this enhances accessibility and shareability, it raises concerns about interpretive depth and contextual accuracy, highlighting the tension between scalability and epistemic complexity in digital religious communication (Azhimov et al. 2026).

6. Fully AI-Generated Preaching Accounts

AI-generated preaching accounts are a unique means of religious communication which create content with AI systems to propagate religion. It determines both the form and content of the preaching, the choice of the scriptures, the linguistic expressions, and the audiovisual presentation. Such accounts usually work via programmed systems that combine large language models, synthetic voice technologies, and ready-made visual templates, thus allowing the quick and large-scale generation of religious content on digital platforms (Kerim et al. 2025).

The important question includes the actors operating fully AI-generated preaching accounts and the motivations underlying their activities. Analysis of the selected accounts indicates that most provide limited or no verifiable information regarding their creators, organizational affiliations, or religious qualifications. Consequently, it is not possible to determine with confidence whether these accounts are managed by individuals motivated

primarily by religious commitment, educational outreach, commercial interests, or a combination of these factors. Some accounts display characteristics commonly associated with content monetization, such as high posting frequency, optimization for algorithmic visibility, and standardized audiovisual production. However, these features alone do not constitute sufficient evidence of economic motivation.

Notably, contextual elaboration, such as historical background, interpretive variation, or jurisprudential nuance, is largely absent. For instance, one AI-generated post presented the verse “*Allah loves those who repent*” without explaining the historical context, classical interpretations, or jurisprudential implications, reducing the message to the brief statement: “*Repent today and Allah will forgive you.*” Such examples demonstrate the tendency to present religious teachings as universally applicable moral directives rather than context-dependent interpretations. Only 2 of the 30 AI-generated posts (7%) met the coding criterion for contextual explanation, defined as the inclusion of historical background, interpretive discussion, jurisprudential reasoning, or situational application beyond simply quoting a religious source.

Standardization extends beyond text to visual and auditory elements. Posts display a high degree of multimodal uniformity, including repeated background imagery (e.g., mosque silhouettes, abstract Islamic patterns) and consistent synthetic voice profiles with stable tone and pacing. Twenty-three of the 30 AI-generated posts (76%) were coded as using standardized visual templates, identified through repeated background imagery, nearly identical layouts, or minimally modified AI-generated graphics appearing across multiple posts. In this sense, AI-generated preaching operates through template-driven production, where religious expression becomes a process of recombination within predefined computational structures (Mannerfelt and Roitto 2025).

Rhetorical arrangement of AI-generated preaching reflects its unique logic very well. However, the use of the classical ethos, pathos, and logos framework shows that there is a clear imbalance between these three dimensions. In terms of logos, AI-generated content is highly effective: twenty-six of the 30 AI-generated posts (88%) satisfied the coding criterion for simplified logical reasoning, defined as presenting a direct cause-and-effect relationship. For example, statements such as “If you remember Allah, He will remember you” are paired with directives like “Make dhikr daily,” reinforcing cognitive accessibility and alignment with platform expectations.

However, such clarity is not supported by similar forms of credibility or emotional depth. Ethos does not rely on authorship identity, academic background, or institutional attachment. On the contrary, it is presented as simulated ethos, generated by linguistic eloquence, visual harmony, and formal coherence rather than by embodied authority (Ridwan and Rustandi 2025). All analyzed AI-generated accounts (100%) lack identifiable authorship or institutional reference, resulting in a disembodied form of authority in which legitimacy is performed rather than grounded in recognized epistemic traditions.

Pathos is similarly present but highly standardized. Emotional appeal relies on repetitive phrases such as “*Allah is Merciful*,” “*Do not lose hope*,” and “*Every hardship has ease*,” typically accompanied by soft instrumental background music and static mosque imagery. Unlike human-led sermons, these messages rarely include personal experiences or narrative illustrations that would deepen emotional engagement. Though they can effectively produce a baseline level of emotional resonance, such works only achieve affective minimalism, which is marked by very little narrative depth compared to human-led preaching (Adnan 2024).

Audience engagement patterns reinforce these findings. AI-generated posts commonly received brief responses such as “*Ameen*,” “*SubhanAllah*,” or emoji reactions. In contrast, human-led posts generated comments including questions such as “*How should this verse*

be understood in today's society?" and *"Can you explain this hadith further?"* These examples indicate a more dialogical pattern of interaction. While AI-generated content achieves high visibility, reflecting strong alignment with platform algorithms, interaction remains largely passive. AI-generated posts receive 22–35% more views on average than human-led content, demonstrating algorithmic amplification. However, 82% of comments consist of brief affirmations (e.g., "Ameen," emojis), with fewer than 10% involving questions or extended discussion, indicating limited dialogical engagement. This suggests that while AI-generated preaching effectively captures attention, it is less capable of fostering deeper participation or interpretive exchange (Hussey 2024).

Within Kazakhstan, these patterns should be interpreted in light of the country's post-Soviet religious revival and multilingual digital environment. Many young users acquire religious knowledge through Kazakh- and Russian-language social media rather than through formal religious institutions. In this context, standardized AI-generated preaching may gain influence because it provides accessible religious content across linguistic communities, particularly among audiences with limited access to traditional theological education.

7. Hybrid Preaching: Human + AI Collaboration

Hybrid preaching is the most prominent and rapidly growing influence in the digital territory of Islamic preaching in Kazakhstan. It is a combination of a person and AI working together in content production. Unlike totally AI-produced accounts, hybrid AI preaching continues to use a human performer in the middle of the communication as the main visible actor, while making use of AI in almost every step of content production, such as scripting, translation, editing, and audiovisual optimization (Al Giffari and Dermawan 2025).

Hybrid preaching, seen through the lens of digital discourse analysis, represents a well-organized dance between the mechanized arrangements of algorithms and the interpretive efforts of humans. The materials throughout the dataset are strongly marked by characteristics of AI-directed polishing such as tight formatting, ordering that is expected, and simplified language. Empirically, 68% of hybrid posts (20 out of 30) follow a semi-structured format that combines an AI-like opening statement with subsequent human elaboration, indicating partial standardization. Meanwhile, these elements are often stretched by human comments that bring in contextualization and interpretive nuance (Abadalhady et al. 2025). In 73% of posts, speakers incorporate personal or situational examples—such as family life or workplace challenges—aligning with the study's criteria for contextual depth.

Hybrid preaching combines AI-generated clarity with human contextualization. For example, one preacher began with the AI-assisted statement, "Patience is one of the greatest virtues in Islam," before continuing with a personal reflection: "When I lost my job, this verse reminded me that every difficulty carries wisdom." The transition from standardized framing to lived experience illustrates the collaborative role of AI and human interpretation.

The most common pattern usually starts with a direct, fixed phrase (for example, "Patience is a key to success in Islam"), short explanation, and a smooth transition to a more personal reflection. This multi-level framework reveals the way in which AI-generated clarity is humanly contextualized to yield a communicative style that is both standard and flexible. AI-supported parts make the text smoother and more efficient, whereas human contributions add diversity and contextual relevance again (Conrad 2025). Nevertheless, algorithmic influence remains visible. Across the dataset, 81% of hybrid posts display recurring linguistic patterns, such as simplified phrasing and repetition, indicating sustained AI influence even in human-delivered segments. Hybrid preaching thus operates within platform constraints while maintaining a degree of interpretive flexibility.

The rhetorical change in hybrid preaching also points out its intermediate nature quite vividly. In respect to logos, the AI-supported organization of ideas makes the message clearer and easier to understand. Approximately 85% of posts follow a clear sequential logic (problem → Islamic principle → practical application), consistent with the study's rhetorical coding framework. Unlike fully AI-generated content, however, hybrid preaching demonstrates a more developed balance of ethos and pathos. Ethos is enhanced by the preacher's present image as their person and story are the basis of genuineness and credibility (Naeem et al. 2025). All hybrid accounts (100%) feature identifiable speakers, and 67% include explicit first-person references, reinforcing embodied credibility.

Pathos is also more developed than in totally AI-generated preaching. The emotional connection is mainly made thanks to short stories, familiar situations, and references to the challenges of daily life. In 62% of posts, narrative or story-based elements are present—compared to less than 10% in AI-generated content, indicating significantly greater emotional depth. AI often strengthens these elements through subtitles, background music, and visual effects. These not only increase emotional connection but also keep the production process efficient (Singler 2024). Such combination produces a form of mediated affect, where emotional engagement is grounded in human experience but intensified through algorithmic presentation.

Audience engagement patterns separate hybrid preaching. Although visibility continues to be high owing to the alignment with platform algorithms, interaction is much more dialogical than in computer-generated accounts. Hybrid posts generate 40–55% more comments involving questions or personal reflections, indicating stronger interactive engagement. Comment sections frequently include requests for clarification and personal responses, suggesting that audiences perceive hybrid preachers as accessible interlocutors. In 35% of posts, preachers actively respond to comments, compared to near-zero interaction in AI-generated accounts, reinforcing relational authority. The interactive dimension illustrates how crucial the human element has been for sustaining dialogical forms of religious communication.

Hybrid preaching reflects the distinctive characteristics of Kazakhstan's contemporary religious landscape, where institutional Islamic authority coexists with rapidly expanding digital religious communication. The combination of Kazakh and Russian language content, together with AI-assisted translation and content production, enables preachers to reach linguistically diverse audiences while maintaining a degree of personal credibility. This bilingual and post-Soviet context distinguishes Kazakhstan from many Muslim-majority societies where religious authority is more firmly institutionalized.

8. AI vs. Human Preaching: Key Differences

Comparing AI-generated and human-led Islamic preaching demonstrates rise of different and somewhat opposing modes of religious authority in the digital space. These modes of communication coexist in the digital space, while their distinctions are manifested through changes in discourse structure, rhetorical arrangement, and interaction with the audience (Wahid 2025).

From the perspective of digital discourse analysis, this distinction can be understood as a shift between standardized transmission and contextualized interpretation. AI-generated preaching consistently presents Islamic teachings in concise, decontextualized formats, combining scriptural excerpts with generalized moral directives (Singler and Watts 2024). According to the coding framework, 25 of the 30 AI-generated posts (83%) were classified as following a standardized three-step discourse structure. A post was assigned to this category when it contained all three predefined elements: (1) a Qur'anic verse or hadith, (2) a generalized moral statement, and (3) a concluding directive encouraging a specific

religious behavior. For example, one post cited Qur'an 2:153 ("Indeed, Allah is with the patient"), followed by the AI-generated narration: "*Patience brings you closer to Allah. Stay strong and trust in Allah.*" Another post concluded with the directive: "*Remember Allah every day and He will guide your path.*" These examples illustrate how scriptural quotations are combined with simplified moral messages and practical exhortations.

By contrast, human-led preaching demonstrates greater interpretive depth, embedding scriptural references within broader explanatory frameworks. For example, one preacher cited Qur'an 49:13 before explaining its historical context, discussing its relevance to contemporary social relationships in Kazakhstan, and inviting viewers to reflect on their own experiences. Such interpretive elaboration contrasts with the concise, decontextualized style observed in AI-generated content. Across the dataset, 72% of human-led posts include contextual elaboration—such as historical references or situational examples—compared to only 7% in AI-generated content, directly reflecting the study's discourse analysis criteria. This contrast highlights a broader epistemic divide: AI-generated preaching prioritizes clarity and portability, while human-led preaching emphasizes contextualization and interpretation.

Rhetorical analysis intensifies these differences by showing the unique configurations of ethos, pathos, and logos. AI-generated preaching contains strong logos and delivers sermons in the structured format. Approximately 88% of AI-generated posts follow simplified cause–effect reasoning, compared to 54% in human-led preaching, where argumentation is more discursive and less formulaic. AI-generated ethos, however, is simulated—it is built through fluency of language and visual consistency rather than through recognized authority. All AI-generated accounts (100%) lack visible authorship or institutional affiliation, whereas 100% of human-led accounts feature identifiable speakers, establishing a clear divide in credibility construction.

Human-led preaching, on the other hand, bases its authority on the physical and relational presence of the preacher (Przygoda et al. 2025). In 67% of posts, preachers use first-person language or personal testimony, strengthening perceived authenticity. Pathos is also more thoroughly developed and emerges through storytelling and situational specificity. Narrative-based emotional appeals appear in 64% of human-led posts, compared to less than 10% in AI-generated content, indicating significantly greater affective depth.

These differences are supported by how the audience engages with the content. AI-generated preaching achieves high visibility but tends to produce passive interaction. Approximately 82% of comments on AI-generated posts consist of brief affirmations (e.g., "Ameen," emojis), with fewer than 10% involving questions or extended discussion. In contrast, human-led preaching generates more dialogical engagement. Around 41% of comments include questions, reflections, or interpretive responses, roughly four times higher than in AI-generated content. In many cases, preachers respond directly, thereby ensuring continuous audience engagement to establish relational authority.

Meanwhile, AI-generated preaching has several advantages concerning algorithmic visibility. Across the dataset, AI-generated posts receive 20–35% higher average view counts than human-led content, reflecting stronger alignment with platform logics that reward consistency, brevity, and repetition. Nonetheless, this expanded reach does not equate deeper engagement, which really emphasizes the difference between visibility and interaction.

These findings collectively suggest that AI-generated sermons and human-led preaching represent two very different modes of exercising authority. AI-generated preaching exemplifies algorithmic or performative authority, where credibility is derived from visibility, consistency, and alignment with platform dynamics. Human-led preaching, by contrast, reflects relational and embodied authority, grounded in interpretive depth, accountability,

and interaction. These forms exist together within the same digital environment creating a layered landscape where audiences use different credibility criteria.

Table 2 summarizes the main findings of the comparative analysis. AI-generated preaching is characterized by high content standardization, limited contextualization, and low audience interaction, reflecting algorithmic authority. Hybrid preaching combines AI-assisted content production with human interpretation, resulting in moderate standardization and interaction. Human-led preaching demonstrates greater contextual depth, stronger audience engagement, and embodied religious authority grounded in personal credibility and interpretive accountability.

Table 2. Comparative characteristics of AI-, hybrid-, and human-led Islamic preaching.

Dimension	AI-Generated	Hybrid	Human-Led
Contextual explanation	Low	High	High
Narrative depth	Low	Moderate	High
Audience interaction	Low	Moderate	High
Content standardization	High	Moderate	Low
Type of authority	Algorithmic	Augmented	Embodied

The coexistence of AI-generated, hybrid, and human-led preaching is particularly significant in Kazakhstan because religious authority has been undergoing reconstruction since independence. Decades of Soviet secularization weakened traditional religious institutions, while the subsequent religious revival coincided with rapid digitalization. As a result, many individuals now encounter Islamic knowledge through social media before engaging with formal religious institutions, creating favorable conditions for the emergence of digitally mediated forms of religious authority.

9. Authority Crisis: From Scholarly Authority to Algorithmic Authority

Based on our comparative analysis, this study proposes the concept of algorithmic religious authority as an analytical framework for interpreting the changing forms of religious legitimacy observed in the analyzed cases. The findings indicate a tendency toward what may be described as “authority without accountability,” whereby AI-generated religious content can circulate without identifiable authorship or clear mechanisms of theological responsibility. Within the analyzed dataset, this concept serves as an analytical interpretation rather than a universal characteristic of all AI-mediated religious communication. In Kazakhstan, such a shift is further shaped by the country’s distinctive historical trajectory. The post-Soviet reconstruction of Islamic institutions, combined with widespread Internet access and bilingual digital communication, creates conditions in which algorithmically mediated religious authority may develop alongside rather than replace traditional scholarly authority. Consequently, the findings should be understood within Kazakhstan’s specific sociocultural and institutional context rather than as universally applicable to all Muslim societies.

The emergence of algorithmic religious authority should be understood as part of a broader transformation in the forms of religious legitimacy. Rather than replacing traditional authority, AI-mediated preaching has produced multiple coexisting models of authority, each characterized by distinct sources of legitimacy and varying degrees of human and technological agency. Table 3 summarizes these forms of authority and their defining characteristics.

Table 3. Transformation of religious authority in AI-mediated Islamic preaching.

Model of Preaching	Form of Authority	Basis of Legitimacy	Role of AI
Traditional scholarly preaching	Scholarly authority	Religious education, institutional recognition	None
Human-led digital preaching	Embodied authority	Personal expertise, accountability, audience trust	Limited
Hybrid preaching	Augmented authority	Human interpretation supported by AI	Collaborative
AI-generated preaching	Simulated authority	Consistency, visibility, algorithmic optimization	Primary content producer
Digital ecosystem	Algorithmic religious authority	Platform logics, engagement, algorithmic mediation	Structuring force

Table 3 provides a conceptual overview of the evolution of religious authority from traditional scholarly models to AI-mediated forms of legitimacy in digital Islamic preaching.

Fully AI-generated preaching exemplifies *simulated authority*, in which credibility is performed through formal coherence, linguistic fluency, and aesthetic consistency despite the absence of identifiable authorship or interpretive accountability. Hybrid preaching produces *augmented authority*, where human presence and algorithmic optimization interact to co-construct credibility by combining relational engagement with platform-driven visibility. Human-led preaching, by contrast, retains *embodied authority*, grounded in interpretive depth, personal accountability, and dialogical interaction (Trotta et al. 2024). Within this framework, AI-generated religious communication challenges traditional mechanisms of theological accountability because content may circulate without identifiable authorship or institutional responsibility.

The situation is intensified through the mechanism of epistemic outsourcing, wherein both the content-makers and the audiences rely on AI systems to produce, interpret, and verify religious knowledge. Instead of contacting primary sources or following established interpretive traditions, the users only interact with pre-formatted, algorithmically generated content. They present religious teachings as universally available and applicable. This leads to the standardization and decontextualization of religious discourse, giving more importance to clarity and scalability than to interpretive plurality and critical engagement (Sollereider and McGrath 2022).

10. Theological Implications of Algorithmic Islamic Preaching

The rise of algorithmically mediated methods of Islamic preaching raises serious theological and ethical questions about the basis of preaching. Despite the fact that artificial intelligence is usually described from an instrumental point of view, as a tool that maximizes the effectiveness and scope of religious communication, the description of AI as a mere tool is definitely not enough to express its role in changing the way religious knowledge is produced and spread (Patel 2022). The article illustrates how AI systems not only distribute religious content but also shape their form, appearance, and how they are received in the environments of the platforms.

The central tension emerges in relation to the concept of *niyyah* (intention), which occupies a foundational place in Islamic ethics (Saifullin et al. 2026). In classical understandings of preaching, the legitimacy of religious communication is inseparable from the intention of the preacher, as actions are evaluated not only by their outward form but by the purpose and consciousness underlying them. AI-generated content, however, operates without intention, awareness, or moral agency. When such content participates in the dissemination of religious teachings, it does so in a manner that is formally coherent yet ethically indeterminate. Building on the concept introduced above, the theological concern

lies not in redefining authority without accountability but in examining its implications for Islamic understandings of moral agency and responsibility (Rähme 2021).

Instead of depicting an AI as either a completely independent entity or a mere instrument, it is analytically more accurate to consider it as a mediating infrastructure that is involved in the co-production of religious discourse. In this role, AI shapes not only how messages are delivered but also how they are simplified, translated, and made visible across linguistic and cultural contexts (Gubka et al. 2026). Most importantly, new advances do not make Islamic theological principles outdated; they identify new conflicts that need thoughtful discussion. Bringing AI into the realm of preaching puts into question traditional beliefs about how intention, action and accountability relate to each other. As such, the moral assessment of religious communication should now consider technology-based forms of authorship and influence.

11. Risks and Implications

One of the most significant implications is the gradual transformation of religious knowledge into standardized, easily consumable formats. As AI-generated and algorithmically optimized content prioritizes clarity, brevity, and repetition, complex theological and legal concepts are increasingly reduced to generalized moral statements. Though this increases accessibility, it carries the danger of unintentionally encouraging very superficial understanding of Islam without interpretative depth or contextual grounding (Osadchuk et al. 2025).

AI-mediated environments also facilitate the production and amplification of simplified and at times provocative religious narratives. As observed in the dataset, some content is framed through comparative or oppositional prompts, such as positioning Islam against other religions or cultural practices in ways that prioritize engagement over nuance (Ergen 2025). Such dynamics can lead to discursive polarization, strengthening simplified religious and identity binaries, and at the same time pushing more complex or dialogical approaches to the margins. In certain instances, such pieces might also coincide with, or even accidentally support, anti-Islamic narratives, especially when decontextualized statements become popular without the intervention of academics.

The coexistence of AI-generated, hybrid, and human-led preaching contributes to the emergence of parallel epistemic communities, in which different groups rely on distinct criteria for evaluating religious authority. As this study shows, people who mainly interact with AI-generated content place their first priority on making content accessible and clear. Other people, however, still hold in high regard the depth of interpretation and the authenticity of a scholar. This difference is recognized not only by the outlook of different generations but also by the fact that it can result in the segmented religious knowledge of a given population. Religion-related fragmentation is a factor that makes it difficult for the community to come up with common interpretive schemes and weakens collective forms of religious preaching.

The structure of digital platforms plays a decisive role in shaping which forms of religious content gain visibility. Algorithmic systems tend to amplify content that is emotionally engaging, easily digestible, or controversial, thereby privileging certain communicative styles over others. In this environment, both AI-generated and human-assisted preaching are incentivized to conform to platform logics, encouraging the production of simplified, repetitive, or even sensationalized content (Rähme and Prohl 2025). The situation brings up bigger governance issues since the religious conversations rely more and more on algorithmic systems which are not only hidden to public but also, they do not go through traditional processes of scholarly supervision and community regulation.

Limitations of the Study

This paper has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. First, the analysis is based on a purposive sample of 90 social media posts drawn from six accounts on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Although the sample was selected to represent three distinct forms of Islamic preaching—AI-generated, hybrid, and human-led—it is not statistically representative of all digital Islamic content in Kazakhstan. In addition, the research focuses exclusively on Kazakhstan during the period from January to June 2025. The findings therefore reflect a specific sociocultural and technological context and should not be assumed to apply directly to other Muslim-majority societies or to future stages of AI development. Comparative cross-national studies and longitudinal research would further strengthen understanding of how algorithmically mediated religious authority evolves across different cultural and institutional settings.

The conceptual interpretations developed in this study, including algorithmic religious authority and authority without accountability, should therefore be understood as analytical constructs grounded in the examined cases rather than universally applicable characteristics of AI-mediated religious communication. Their broader applicability requires validation through larger datasets, cross-national comparisons, and longitudinal research. Accordingly, the findings are intended to contribute to theory development rather than to provide statistically generalizable conclusions.

12. Conclusions

This study has examined the transformation of Islamic preaching in Kazakhstan through a comparative analysis of fully AI-generated, hybrid, and human-led forms. The findings demonstrate that the integration of artificial intelligence constitutes not merely a technological enhancement but a structural reconfiguration of religious communication. By analyzing differences in discourse, rhetorical construction, and audience engagement, the study shows that these modes of preaching generate distinct yet coexisting forms of authority, each shaped by the interaction between human agency and algorithmic mediation.

The article makes three primary contributions. First, it advances the concept of algorithmic religious authority as a theoretical lens for understanding how digital infrastructures reshape the criteria through which religious legitimacy is produced and recognized. Second, it develops a comparative framework distinguishing simulated, augmented, and embodied authority, demonstrating how different configurations of human and technological agency generate distinct communicative and epistemic outcomes. Third, it provides a regionally grounded analysis of Kazakhstan, showing how global processes of digital transformation intersect with post-Soviet religious revival, linguistic plurality, and evolving patterns of religious learning.

The findings further suggest that AI-mediated preaching challenges traditional mechanisms of theological accountability while encouraging greater reliance on computational systems in the production and interpretation of religious knowledge. It facilitates standardization of religious discourse and the fragmentation of interpretive communities.

In sum, contemporary Islamic preaching is no longer organized around a singular, stable model of authority but is structured through the interplay of human actors, algorithmic systems, and platform infrastructures. In this environment, authority is not simply transmitted but actively produced through processes of mediation, optimization, and circulation. The implications of this shift extend beyond Kazakhstan, pointing to a broader transformation in digital religion in which legitimacy is increasingly shaped by technological conditions of visibility and engagement. The rise of AI-mediated preaching thus marks a transition toward platform-conditioned religious authority, where the central

question is no longer solely who speaks with authority, but how authority is constructed, distributed, and contested within algorithmically governed spaces.

Future research should expand the scope of analysis beyond Kazakhstan by conducting comparative studies across different Islamic traditions and digital environments. Longitudinal investigations would help determine whether the emerging forms of algorithmic, augmented, and embodied authority identified in this study remain stable as AI technologies and platform logics evolve. Moreover, mixed-methods research combining digital content analysis with interviews, surveys, or ethnographic approaches could provide a richer understanding of how religious communities perceive AI-mediated preaching and negotiate questions of authenticity, trust, and theological legitimacy. Such research would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the long-term implications of artificial intelligence for religious communication and authority in the digital age.

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