



Dataism as a New Religion? An Islamic Epistemological Critique of the Sacralization of Data in the Digital Paradigm

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Abstract

The increasing dominance of algorithms, artificial intelligence, and big data systems in digital life has given rise to dataism as an epistemic paradigm that positions data as the primary source of truth's legitimacy and the basis for social, economic, and moral decision-making. Studies on dataism are still largely dominated by Western epistemology and have yet to incorporate Islamic epistemology as a systematic, critical framework for data absolutization. This study aims to analyze the epistemic character of dataism and formulate an Islamic epistemological critique of the tendency to sacralize data in the digital paradigm. This research is a qualitative-conceptual study based on a literature review, using epistemological analysis, the philosophy of science, and philosophical criticism of technology approaches to dataism, alongside classical and contemporary Islamic epistemological thought. The results show that dataism constructs a reductionist knowledge structure by focusing on the validity of truth in terms of computational measurability, thereby subordinating ethical experience, rational reflection, and transcendent dimensions to algorithmic logic. This pattern produces a closed epistemic authority that functions like a secular belief system, positioning data as the final arbiter of reality and value. Islamic epistemology offers a corrective framework by integrating the senses, reason, and revelation within a hierarchy of knowledge that positions empirical data instrumentally rather than absolutely. These findings emphasize the importance of data's

epistemic boundaries and enrich the discourse on digital philosophy and technology ethics from a non-reductionist Islamic perspective.

Keywords: Dataism; Data Sacralization; Islamic Epistemology; Philosophy of Science; Digital Paradigm

Abstrak

Meningkatnya dominasi algoritma, kecerdasan buatan, dan sistem big data dalam kehidupan digital telah mendorong lahirnya dataisme sebagai paradigma epistemik yang menempatkan data sebagai sumber utama legitimasi kebenaran dan dasar pengambilan keputusan sosial, ekonomi, serta moral. Kajian tentang dataisme umumnya masih didominasi oleh epistemologi Barat dan belum banyak menempatkan epistemologi Islam sebagai kerangka kritik yang sistematis terhadap absolutisasi data. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis karakter epistemik dataisme serta merumuskan kritik epistemologi Islam terhadap kecenderungan sakralisasi data dalam paradigma digital. Penelitian ini merupakan kajian kualitatif-konseptual berbasis studi kepustakaan dengan pendekatan analisis epistemologis, filsafat ilmu, dan kritik filsafat teknologi terhadap literatur dataisme serta pemikiran epistemologi Islam klasik dan kontemporer. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dataisme membangun struktur pengetahuan reduksionis dengan memusatkan validitas kebenaran pada aspek yang terukur secara komputasional, sehingga pengalaman etis, refleksi rasional, dan dimensi transenden ter subordinasi oleh logika algoritmik. Pola tersebut menghasilkan otoritas epistemik tertutup yang bekerja menyerupai sistem keyakinan sekuler karena menempatkan data sebagai rujukan final dalam menentukan realitas dan nilai. Epistemologi Islam menawarkan kerangka korektif melalui integrasi indera, akal, dan wahyu dalam hierarki pengetahuan yang menempatkan data empiris secara instrumental, bukan absolut. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya batas epistemik data serta memperkaya diskursus filsafat digital dan etika teknologi melalui perspektif Islam yang non-reduksionis.

Kata Kunci: Dataisme; Sakralisasi Data; Epistemologi Islam; Filsafat Ilmu; Paradigma Digital

Introduction

The contemporary digital paradigm demonstrates a fundamental transformation in how humans understand reality, truth, and the authority of knowledge. Data is positioned as the primary basis of legitimacy for social, economic, political, and even moral decision-making (Safrizal et al., 2026). This shift has given rise to dataism, an epistemic paradigm that views all of reality as a stream of data that can be measured, predicted, and optimized through algorithmic calculations (Adamczyk, 2023). Harari (2017) calls dataism a “new religion” because it positions the flow of information as the highest value humans must follow. The sacralization of data is evident in the tendency to accept computational results as objective truths that are difficult to question, as if algorithms possessed neutral, value-free authority. This condition gives rise to serious epistemological problems because truth is reduced to statistical quantification and mathematical correlation. At the same time, the dimensions of ethics, revelation, moral intuition, and transcendent meaning are removed from the knowledge process. Islamic epistemology views knowledge as originating not only from empirical experience

and instrumental reason but also from revelation, the highest normative source that guides human reason and experience (Syafaq et al., 2023). Criticism of dataism is therefore directed not at the instrumental use of technology or data, but rather at the absolutization of data, which has the potential to replace the functions of values, morality, and transcendent authority in human life.

The expansion of dataism is accelerating as the global digital economy grows and artificial intelligence penetrates various sectors of life. The World Economic Forum (2025) calls data “the new strategic asset” that determines global economic and political power in the 21st century. The International Data Corporation (2018) estimates that global data volume will reach more than 180 zettabytes by 2025, a nearly threefold increase compared to 2020. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2022) notes the massive use of big data and artificial intelligence in public policy, social behavior prediction, security systems, healthcare, and economic governance. UNESCO (2024) warns of the increasing delegation of moral judgment to algorithmic systems, including in job recruitment, educational evaluation, and AI-based legal decision-making. The United Nations (2024) also indicates that more than 70% of member states have integrated digital datafication systems into government administration and public services. This practice is evident in predictive policing, social credit systems, social media personalization, automated credit scoring, and recommendation algorithms that influence social choices and everyday human behavior. This situation indicates that data is beginning to form a new structure of knowledge authority that determines what is considered true, rational, and valuable. The dominance of this datafication logic has implications for the marginalization of ethical and religious considerations, as the validity of decisions is increasingly determined by calculative efficiency rather than moral and humanitarian considerations.

Academic studies on dataism have developed through various approaches, although most still stem from the paradigm of secular Western philosophy. Harari (2017) views dataism as a new global ideology that places information processing as the highest value of modern life. However, his study has not yet addressed the epistemological implications for religion. Zuboff (2022), using surveillance capitalism theory, shows that human behavioral data has been commodified to build digital power relations. However, her research focuses on the political-economic dimensions of digital capitalism. Peters, Jandrić, and Hayes (2021) highlight the ontological reduction of humans to informational entities due to the dominance of digital technology, but do not yet link this to transcendent sources of knowledge. Gray (2023) examines data colonialism as a new form of global exploitation through datafication, but her analysis does not address the sacralization of data or the moral authority of religion. Klingbeil, Grützner, and Schreck (2024) reveal the risks of algorithmic bias, dehumanization, and injustice in data-driven systems, but their discussion remains limited to contemporary technology ethics.

Neuberger et al.'s study (2023) asserts that data has become a mechanism for modern social and political legitimacy, although it has not been analyzed from a religious epistemological perspective. Meanwhile, Islamic epistemological thinkers such as Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (1995), Osman Bakar (1999), and Ismail Raji al-Faruqi (1982) have emphasized the importance of integrating revelation, reason, and empirical experience within the structure of Islamic knowledge, but have not specifically linked this to the phenomenon of dataism and the absolutization of digital algorithms. This gap indicates that research on dataism as a modern quasi-religion, critiqued through an Islamic epistemological framework, remains very limited. This study identifies the research gap as the absence of an analysis explaining how the sacralization of data constructs absolute epistemic claims and potentially rivals revelation as a source of truth legitimacy.

The research problem formulation is how dataism constructs epistemic claims through the sacralization of data, and how Islamic epistemology critiques this absolutization within the structure of modern knowledge. This research aims to analyze the basic assumptions of dataism as an epistemic paradigm, explain the mechanisms of data sacralization in contemporary digital culture, and formulate an Islamic epistemological critique of the dominance of algorithmic rationality. The research's basic argument rests on the assumption that Islamic epistemology offers an integral framework that hierarchically and proportionally situates revelation, reason, and empirical experience, so that truth is not reduced to mere quantitative calculations. This perspective allows for an epistemological critique of dataism without falling into an anti-technological trap, as technology is viewed as an instrument that divine and humanitarian values must guide. This research's theoretical contribution lies in developing an Islamic philosophical critique of contemporary digital ideology through the concepts of data sacralization and digital quasi-religion. Its practical contribution is to strengthen an ethical framework for technology grounded in Islamic values, develop critical digital literacy, and provide a normative foundation for more humane, ethical, and transcendent data governance and artificial intelligence.

Method

This research uses a critical-interpretive qualitative method grounded in the philosophy of science, with the main approach being Islamic philosophical hermeneutics, functionally combined with Foucauldian genealogy of knowledge and critical discourse analysis, to build an Islamic Digital Epistemology Critique Framework for reading the absolutization of data in the contemporary digital paradigm. Primary data includes works on the philosophy of technology and dataism, such as the thoughts of Yuval Noah Harari, documents on global digital governance and the AI ethics framework, accompanied by a corpus of Islamic epistemology in the form of works by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Ismail Raji al-Faruqi, and Osman Bakar. In contrast, secondary data are

obtained from Scopus and Web of Science articles for the period 2016–2026. Data collection was carried out through a limited systematic literature review using concept-based filtering techniques, thematic document analysis, and mapping of epistemic oppositions based on keywords such as dataism, algorithmic objectivity, computational rationalism, hierarchy of knowledge, and revelation epistemology. Data analysis was carried out through the identification of discourse units, categorization of quantitative truth claims, reconstruction of the logic of data sacralization, critical testing using the principles of the hierarchy of science, the relationship between reason and revelation, and the ethics of truth in Islamic epistemology, then validated through conceptual triangulation, intertextual cross-reading, and interpretive audit trail to produce systematic, non-reductionist, and argumentative epistemological criticism.

Results and Discussion

The Epistemological Structure of Dataism and the Claim to Truth Authority

The epistemological structure of dataism rests on the ontological assumption that reality derives its validity from measurability, calculability, and computational legibility. This position transcends data's function as a technological instrument, positioning it as the primary medium for representing reality and a source of legitimacy for knowledge (Desai et al., 2022). This perspective aligns with the dataist worldview, which views all biological, social, and cultural phenomena as flows of information that can be processed algorithmically (Uribe, 2023). This framework fosters epistemic monism, which holds that quantitative reality is more valid than interpretive forms of knowledge. Human experience is understood as a set of variables that can be mapped through statistical correlations (Giannotta, 2022). This reduction demonstrates a shift from hermeneutic to predictive epistemology, prioritizing probability, efficiency, and calculative ability over reflective understanding of the meaning of human experience.

The dataistic paradigm gains legitimacy through the assumption of algorithmic objectivity, which presents computational systems as neutral mediators between fact and knowledge. This claim of neutrality is rooted in digital positivism, which identifies truth with the results of mathematical calculations and statistical processing (Ramsälv, Ekström, & Westlund, 2024). However, algorithms always involve epistemic decisions, such as variable selection, reality categorization, evaluation parameters, and optimization orientations, which reflect specific normative interests (Habeebullah et al., 2026). This relationship demonstrates that algorithmic objectivity is not a pure category but a socio-technical construct shaped by system design and the distribution of knowledge and power. Computational complexity and algorithmic opacity produce epistemic asymmetries that encourage collective acceptance of system outputs as objective facts. Epistemic authority then shifts from human interpretive rationality to computationally based statistical validation. This shift does not eliminate the role of humans, but subordinates human

judgment to algorithmic validation, which is considered more accurate, consistent, and bias-free (Ferrario, Facchini, & Termine, 2024).

Dataism's universalism rests on the assumption of commensurability, which holds that all human experience can be translated into comparable quantitative formats. Statistical patterns are treated as a universal language believed to explain human behavior across social and cultural spaces without losing epistemic validity (Lee & Ribes, 2025). This framework reinforces the tendency of computational universalism, which ignores the attachment of meaning to historical, symbolic, and normative contexts. Knowledge gains legitimacy not through interpretive depth, but through generalizability and numerical replication. The singularity of experience is reduced to probabilistic patterns that can be predicted through statistical models. This process demonstrates the dominance of correlational logic over causal explanation and hermeneutic understanding. Consequently, alternative epistemologies such as narrative, philosophical reflection, and hermeneutics are deemed less valid because they do not meet the standards of quantitative measurement (Binder, 2020). This position suggests that dataism constructs a hierarchy of knowledge that places data as the highest measure of epistemic validity.

The epistemic legitimacy of dataism is formed through social mechanisms that resemble modern belief structures. Assumptions about the superiority of data, algorithmic efficiency, and computational rationality are accepted as fundamental premises that are rarely philosophically tested. This condition demonstrates the formation of a normative epistemic consensus that renders the results of digital calculations a form of truth requiring no further justification. Global technological institutions play a significant role in generating symbolic authority through control of data infrastructure, artificial intelligence, and large-scale analytical systems (Yu, Liang, & Xue, 2022). This relationship demonstrates that the legitimacy of digital knowledge is not born solely from methodological validity but also from the distribution of technocratic power that determines what is worthy of knowledge and belief. Collective acceptance of algorithmic outputs arises not only from technical effectiveness but also from a belief in the superiority of modern computing systems. This structure demonstrates the transformation of data from an information-processing tool into a source of epistemic legitimacy that has acquired quasi-sacred status in contemporary digital culture.

The transformation of human experience into a quantitative entity is a key mechanism of datafication that underpins the epistemological structure of dataism. This process involves formal abstraction that separates human experience from its affective, symbolic, and ethical dimensions, producing a format compatible with analytical systems. The value of experience is determined by its capacity for numerical representation and its integration with predictive and optimization mechanisms. Reality is then treated as an object of calculation that must be made more efficient and measurable (Ruckenstein & Pantzar, 2017). This orientation

demonstrates the dominance of instrumental rationality, which identifies knowledge with technical control over human behavior. Predictive capabilities are ultimately prioritized over causal understanding or reflection on meaning. This situation results in epistemic narrowing as the complexity of experience is reduced to partial statistical patterns. Knowledge is still presented as comprehensive, even though it captures only aspects of reality that can be expressed numerically and integrated into computational models.

The absolutization of data as the final source of truth demonstrates a techno-positivist tendency that obscures the normative dimension of digital knowledge. Each stage of data production involves decisions about the objects of measurement, classification techniques, evaluation parameters, and purposes of use that reflect specific political values and institutional interests (Ruiz, Gallagher, & Najjuma, 2025). The language of objectivity and efficiency masks these normative assumptions, making ethical decisions appear as a technical inevitability. This depoliticization mechanism reinforces algorithmic legitimacy by presenting computational results as interest-free and inherently rational. The focus on quantification also encourages the neglect of aspects of reality that cannot be reduced to statistical variables. The critique of dataism is directed not at the use of data as a scientific instrument, but rather at the transformation of data into an epistemic paradigm that monopolizes the definition of truth.

The overall structure of dataism demonstrates the formation of a closed epistemic horizon that combines data ontology, algorithmic objectivity, and technocratic legitimacy into a dominant knowledge system. Epistemic closure arises when the validity of knowledge is recognized only through calculative standards and statistical measurability. Criticism of data limitations is often cast as irrationality or anti-technological resistance because the dataistic paradigm equates rationality with numerical computation. This situation demonstrates the emergence of a new form of digital scientism that assumes that data can represent reality in its entirety. The relationship between data primacy and algorithmic legitimacy results in the sacralization of digital knowledge, treating computational output as objective truth beyond the need for critical interpretation. Data no longer functions as an analytical tool but instead becomes an epistemic foundation that determines the validity of meaning, the orientation of knowledge, and standards of modern rationality. This structure opens up space for philosophical critique of the dominance of the digital paradigm, which has the potential to shift the plurality of human epistemologies toward computational monism.

Reduction of Truth: An Islamic Critique of Quantitative Objectivism

The reduction of truth to statistical calculations marks a crucial epistemological transformation in the digital era, where data is understood as a legitimate source of knowledge. The dataism paradigm builds on the assumption that reality can be translated through datafication, namely, the conversion of human

experiences, actions, and relationships into measurable variables and computational patterns. Truth is then reduced to predictive validity based on algorithmic correlations, while the dimensions of meaning, purpose, and value are positioned as subjective residues devoid of epistemic significance (Ruckenstein & Pantzar, 2017). Quantitative objectivism operates through methodological abstraction, simplifying complex reality into numerical indicators, thereby treating mathematical precision as synonymous with ontological truth (Lim, 2025). The critique of Islamic epistemology is not directed at the use of empirical data or methods, but rather at the absolutization of quantification as the sole standard of knowledge's validity. The primary problem with dataism lies in the ontologization of data, namely the tendency to treat statistical representations as reality itself. In contrast, numbers merely represent aspects of reality selected through methodological construction and specific interpretive interests (Couldry & Mejias, 2019).

Islamic epistemology views truth as *al-haqq*, namely the conformity of knowledge to the essence of being, encompassing empirical, rational, metaphysical, and normative dimensions simultaneously (Bakar, 1991). This concept does not stop at factual accuracy or numerical correspondence; rather, it assumes a connection among facts, meaning, purpose, and values. The structure of Islamic epistemology rests on a hierarchical relationship between the senses, reason, and revelation. The senses provide particular data through empirical experience; reason performs abstraction, categorization, and universal reasoning; and revelation provides a metaphysical orientation and normative framework that transcends the scope of empirical observation (Al-Attas, 1995). This relationship demonstrates that data is not final knowledge, but rather the initial stage of the epistemic process. Data that has not been interpreted by reason remains only fragmentary information, while knowledge attains perfection through wisdom, namely the ability to understand the purpose and existential implications of reality (Açikgenç, 1996). This perspective rejects reducing all forms of knowledge to statistical probabilities, as epistemic validity is determined not only by predictive accuracy but also by the knowledge's ontological appropriateness and its ethical orientation toward reality.

The quantitative objectivist paradigm faces fundamental limitations when dealing with dimensions of reality that are not fully amenable to empirical quantification. Statistical methods operate through simplification, variable selection, and context elimination to process phenomena into predictive patterns. These mechanisms yield high calculative capabilities, but simultaneously limit the epistemic reach of knowledge (Degenhardt, Seifert, & Szymczak, 2019). Thomas S. Kuhn's (1970) critique demonstrates that data are never neutral because paradigms, theoretical assumptions, and specific interpretive interests always influence observations. Dataism ignores this problem by identifying the measurable as real and the immeasurable as epistemically irrelevant. This assumption equates the

method's limits of with reality's limits. Moral consciousness, intentionality, religious experience, and existential goals cannot be reduced to numerical indicators without losing their ontological substance. Statistical measurements may represent the external symptoms of human experience, but they cannot capture the underlying structures of meaning within those experiences. These limitations indicate that the methodological validity of empirical quantification cannot be extended to total claims about the nature of reality.

The Islamic epistemological critique of quantitative empiricism does not aim to replace scientific rationality with normative dogmatism, but rather to deconstruct the absolute claims of modern empirical methods. The Islamic epistemological tradition accepts empirical observation as a valid source of knowledge but positions it as a partial instrument that requires rational correction and a focus on revelation (Syafaq et al., 2023). This framework differs from digital scientism, which assumes that the accumulation of data can automatically produce objective knowledge (Dorschel, 2021). Statistical correlations only demonstrate the interconnectedness of variables, not the ontological meaning of those relationships. Algorithmic predictions can infer human behavior from probabilistic patterns but cannot explain the existential reasons for human actions or the underlying moral purposes (Jiang et al., 2025). Data are raw representations of phenomena; information emerges through classification; knowledge is formed through rational understanding; wisdom emerges from integrating knowledge with ethical and metaphysical orientations. Reducing all these levels to statistical calculations results in a serious epistemic reduction of the complexity of human reality.

Quantitative objectivism also produces an ethical transformation, shifting the legitimacy of truth toward calculative efficiency and algorithmic optimization. Value neutrality is understood as the elimination of normative considerations in favor of methodological objectivity. Consequently, social decisions are increasingly determined by statistical indicators, predictive scores, and probability-based utilitarian calculations. This phenomenon is evident in digital surveillance systems, social rankings, and automated decision-making mechanisms that assess humans based on measurable data patterns. Statistical accuracy is then treated as moral legitimacy even though the resulting decisions can diminish substantive justice and human dignity (Hansen, 2023). Islamic epistemology rejects the separation between truth and value because *al-Haqq* always contains an ethical dimension that directs knowledge toward justice and welfare (Mahmudulhassan et al., 2025). Empirical facts are never sufficient to determine moral values without a normative framework that transcends them. Algorithmic rationality can calculate consequences and probabilities, but it cannot determine what should be chosen as good or just. Reducing ethical considerations to statistical optimization reveals the fundamental limitations of quantitative objectivism, which views humans as moral subjects with existential goals and normative responsibilities.

The loss of meaning is the most serious implication of data absolutization in the contemporary digital paradigm. Dataism understands knowledge as the identification of computational patterns and correlations, without recourse to teleological explanations. Knowledge is reduced to the ability to predict behavior and optimize systems. At the same time, questions about the purpose of life, the wisdom of existence, and moral orientation are considered outside the epistemic domain (Carpentier, 2025). This paradigm gives rise to the fragmentation of human experience, as individual identity is reduced to a collection of distinct performative indicators. The practice of the quantified self, a culture of metrics-based evaluation, and the logic of digital performativity demonstrate how humans are understood through productivity figures, algorithmic preferences, and behavioral data traces (Barry, 2020). Islamic epistemology views meaning as the core of knowledge, as reality is understood to have an ontological purpose and order. Wisdom is not simply the accumulation of information but rather the ability to understand the relationship between facts, values, and existential goals (Asyibli et al., 2025). Statistical correlation may yield high predictive efficiency, but it fails to explain why humans should live, act justly, or seek the truth. The inability to answer these teleological questions reveals the fundamental limitations of quantitative objectivism.

A critical comparison between dataism and Islamic epistemology reveals fundamental differences regarding the nature of truth and the position of humans as subjects of knowledge. Dataism views truth as the output of a data processing system that produces the most accurate predictions through probabilistic calculations. Islamic epistemology understands truth as an integral relationship between empirical reality, human rationality, and the orientation of revelation. Islamic critique does not reject digital technology, statistics, or empirical science, but rather rejects the absolutization of quantitative methods that ignore the plurality of dimensions of knowledge. This position allows for the integration of scientific rationality with metaphysical and ethical orientations without falling into anti-science or digital scientism, which substitutes data for meaning, value, and revelation.

The Sacralization of Data and the Erosion of Revelatory Authority

The sacralization of data represents a transformation in the structure of knowledge legitimacy when calculative systems acquire authoritative status beyond their instrumental function. This condition indicates the emergence of a new regime of truth, as proposed by Michel Foucault (1980), namely a configuration of knowledge and power that determines what is acceptable as true. The dataism paradigm centers epistemic legitimacy on measurability, predictability, and performance optimization, so that knowledge that cannot be quantified experiences gradual delegitimization (Harari, 2016). This logic shapes an epistemic structure that positions algorithms as the primary mediators of reality assessment (Symons &

Alvarado, 2022). This situation demonstrates a process of epistemic sacralization, in which data is accepted as a normative reference deemed neutral, accurate, and interest-free, without reflective examination of the underlying ideological assumptions.

This transformation of algorithmic authority occurs through the mechanism of technological performativity, which transforms operational effectiveness into normative legitimacy. Jean-François Lyotard (1984) describes performativity as an orientation in modern knowledge that judges truth by the efficiency and productivity of the system. This logic is evident in the contemporary digital ecosystem, where algorithmic recommendations can accurately predict consumption behavior, political preferences, and even social interaction patterns. This technical success then serves as the basis for epistemic trust, such that optimal outcomes are assumed to be synonymous with wisdom in decision-making. Clay Shirky (2009) refers to this phenomenon as algorithmic authority, the tendency to accept algorithmic output as a valid reference without critically evaluating the process by which it is formed. Data sacralization operates through the naturalization of digital authority, which gradually shapes the horizon of collective consciousness. This dominance produces technological rationality, as Herbert Marcuse (1964) proposes, when instrumental rationality becomes the dominant structure governing human orientation toward reality, values, and social action.

Islamic epistemology views knowledge as a harmonious integration of revelation, reason, and empirical experience, directed toward ethical truth and human ontological responsibility. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (1978) positions revelation as the highest source of knowledge, providing a framework of meaning for human intellectual activity, while reason discerns the signs of truth without assuming an absolute position. This perspective differs fundamentally from dataism, which centers epistemic legitimacy on the autonomy of calculative systems without transcendent reference (Ricaurte, 2019). This distinction does not indicate opposition between Islam and technology, but rather a fundamental difference in the sources of knowledge validation and epistemic goals. Islam does not reject data or empirical rationality, but rather the absolutization of quantitative knowledge that ignores moral and teleological dimensions. The sacralization of data becomes problematic when digital systems are treated as the final arbiters of practical truth. At the same time, revelation is reduced to symbolic references lacking regulatory authority over the formation of social or existential human decisions.

This reduction in the authority of revelation occurs through a shift in the criteria for the validity of knowledge, from an initial reliance on moral correspondence to operational pragmatism grounded in predictability. The dataism paradigm tends to adopt a pragmatic epistemic model in which truth value is determined by the system's ability to achieve efficiency, predictive accuracy, and optimized behavior (Connor, 2025). This shifts the epistemological orientation of

digital society toward recognizing that statistical patterns are more relevant than normative ethical considerations. The meaning of reality is then reduced to data correlations that can be calculated and monetized. This shift occurred not through an explicit rejection of religion, but rather through a reconfiguration of the hierarchy of knowledge that marginalized non-quantitative sources. Revealed knowledge lost its public legitimacy because it was deemed inoperative according to the logic of digital performance. This structure demonstrates how algorithms are gradually replacing human normative judgment through data-driven governance mechanisms operating across the economic, educational, political, and social spheres.

Epistemic secularization emerges when the mechanisms for establishing truth are detached from a transcendent orientation and become entirely dependent on the validation of calculative systems. Charles Taylor (2007) explains that modern secularization is not simply a decline in religiosity, but rather a shift in the conditions of belief that shape how humans understand reality. Contemporary digital phenomena demonstrate a new form of secularization in which society retains its religious identity, but its epistemic orientation is controlled by algorithms and data platforms. The legitimacy of social decisions is determined based on calculations of efficiency and measurable performance. This condition creates a post-sacred epistemology structure, a system of knowledge that retains religious symbols while shifting the authority of truth to digital systems (Levin, 2021). Epistemic secularization operates implicitly through changes in how we know and assess reality. Its impact is far more profound than institutional secularization because this transformation touches the foundations of human epistemological awareness without requiring open conflict with religion or religious institutions.

Algorithmic neutrality is an ideological construct that reinforces the sacralization of data by concealing value assumptions within computational systems. Langdon Winner (1986) asserted that technological artifacts are never free from vested interests because technological design always carries a particular political and social orientation. A similar critique is developed by Safiya Umoja Noble (2018) through an analysis of algorithmic bias, which reveals how digital systems covertly reproduce power hierarchies and ideological preferences. Claims of algorithmic objectivity lead society to accept data outputs as an undeniable representation of reality, even though computational parameters are shaped by value selection, economic interests, and specific institutional orientations (Fukuda et al., 2019). This situation demonstrates that the sacralization of data is not merely a technological reinforcement but a blurring of the ideological dimensions of digital systems through the image of technical objectivity. Islamic epistemology serves a critical function against this tendency through the principle of epistemological monotheism, which limits all human knowledge and requires moral evaluation. Revelation serves as a corrective to the absolutization of instrumental rationality, which claims universality without ethical accountability (Al-Faruqi, 1992).

The dominance of technocratic epistemology shapes the configuration of knowledge power, leading humans to accept digital calculations as a universal standard of rationality. Martin Heidegger (1977) explained this phenomenon through the concept of *Gestell*, namely, the way technology frames reality as a mere resource to be processed and optimized. This perspective seems relevant to the dataism paradigm, which views humans, their preferences, and their life experiences as a collection of measurable information. Reality loses its ontological dimension of meaning when all aspects of life are reduced to objects of calculation. As a result, humanity's relationship to knowledge shifts from a search for wisdom to a management of efficiency. Islamic epistemology offers a different orientation, positioning knowledge as a path to the development of moral responsibility and divine awareness (Nasr, 1987). Islamic criticism of dataism is not directed at digital technology as an instrument but rather at the tendency to treat computational systems as the final source of legitimacy.

Data sacralization must ultimately be understood as a fundamental transformation of the structure of knowledge legitimacy, shifting the center of epistemic authority from revelation to algorithms and digital systems. This shift establishes a new knowledge paradigm that assesses the validity of reality in terms of the system's measurability, predictability, and performativity. This condition gives rise to a form of epistemic secularization that operates subtly by restructuring mechanisms of legitimacy without directly eliminating religious symbols. Dataism acquires a quasi-transcendent character when algorithms are believed to provide action orientation without the need for metaphysical evaluation or substantive moral considerations. A critique of Islamic epistemology demonstrates that knowledge cannot be reduced to mere quantitative calculations, as it also relates to ethical responsibility, ontological goals, and transcendent human consciousness.

Reconstruction of Data Position within an Islamic Framework

Reconstructing the position of data requires a systematic differentiation between data, information, and knowledge so that the critique of dataism does not stop at a rhetorical rejection of quantification. Data are symbolic representations of observational results that lack intrinsic meaning until they are interpreted. Information is formed through analytical relationships that connect data to specific contexts, while knowledge is born through the integration of interpretation, rational validation, and goal orientation (Bokulich & Parker, 2021). This framework demonstrates that data never operate autonomously because the entire measurement process is shaped through methodological selection, ontological assumptions, and specific categorical constructions. The Islamic epistemological tradition recognizes this layered structure through the concept of *marātib al-'Ilm* (levels of knowledge), which distinguishes between sensory perception, rational abstraction, and metaphysical orientation (Nasr, 1987). The position of revelation serves as an evaluative horizon that prevents knowledge from falling into

materialistic reduction. This integration allows for recognizing the empirical validity of science without reducing quantification to the sole criterion of truth. Knowledge remains open to moral, existential, and transcendent dimensions that cannot be fully represented through statistics or algorithmic calculations.

The principle of *tabayyun* demonstrates that, according to Islamic epistemology, knowledge validation goes beyond mere factual verification. Verification does not stop at the technical correspondence between data and the object of observation, but also encompasses an evaluation of the credibility of the source, the context in which the information was produced, the purpose of its delivery, and its epistemic implications. This structure creates an important distinction between technical validity, empirical validity, interpretive validity, and epistemic legitimacy. Technical validity concerns the accuracy of measurement procedures, while empirical validity concerns the correspondence between representations and observational facts. Interpretive validity examines the accuracy of meaningful relationships and the context in which information is used, while epistemic legitimacy assesses the coherence of knowledge within a broader framework of truth. The modern digital paradigm tends to stop at the first two layers, dominated by probability, statistical correlation, and algorithmic prediction. As a result, knowledge is reduced to quantitative calculations that neglect the dimensions of purpose and meaning. *Tabayyun* offers a model of methodological prudence that is not destructively skeptical, but rather epistemically aware of the limitations of data representation and the possibility of interpretive distortion.

Contextuality occupies a central position in this epistemological reconstruction because data is never presented in a neutral, value-free way. Data production is always influenced by categorization frameworks, institutional interests, technological structures, and specific conceptual assumptions (Hardy, Dixon, & Hsi, 2020). Islamic epistemology's critique of the universality of data is not directed at rational objectivity, but rather at decontextualized datasets treated as if they represent reality in its entirety. Empirical knowledge requires a relational reading that considers historical conditions, social situations, and the purposes for which information is used to prevent interpretations from degenerating into digital determinism. This approach differs from relativism because it acknowledges the possibility of objectivity through rational evaluation and methodological correction (Downey et al., 2024). Epistemic hermeneutics treats data as partial representations that are always open to conceptual revision. Algorithmic bias, categorization manipulation, and the selectivity of data collection demonstrate that quantification is not synonymous with neutrality. This critique reinforces the argument that digital totalization is not merely a technological problem but an epistemological one that absolutizes statistical representation as a final truth.

The epistemic structure of Islam establishes an integrative relationship between the senses, data, reason, and revelation without granting absolute

dominance to any one element. The senses provide the initial experience of empirical reality, while data organizes that experience through measurable symbolism. Reason constructs inferential relationships, tests the consistency of arguments, and evaluates the validity of interpretations. Revelation serves to establish ontological orientations and normative boundaries so that knowledge is not reduced to mere instrumental rationality. This relationship demonstrates that conflicts between sources of knowledge are not resolved by eliminating one element, but rather through an evaluative hierarchy that positions each element according to its epistemic function. The absolutization of data creates an epistemic inversion, in which empirical representational tools are treated as the final source of authority (Ramsälv et al., 2024). The critique of dataism is directed not at technology or statistical analysis, but rather at technocratic rationality, which assumes digital calculations can replace human judgment (Mökander & Schroeder, 2024). This reconstruction maintains the function of empirical rationality without relinquishing the metaphysical orientation that maintains the integrity of the goals of human knowledge.

Data limitations are not a methodological weakness to be eliminated through technological totalization, but rather an inherent characteristic of all human knowledge. All data is formed through processes of variable selection, category framing, and the simplification of reality to make it measurable. This process produces partial representations that never fully reflect the complexity of the object of knowledge. Awareness of these limitations prevents data from being transformed into epistemic dogma. The modern digital paradigm often assumes that increasing the quantity of data automatically improves knowledge quality, yet statistical correlations do not always yield causal understanding or substantive meaning (Ghasemaghaei & Turel, 2021). Critiques of Islamic epistemology demonstrate that human reality encompasses moral dimensions, inner consciousness, spiritual experiences, and existential orientations that cannot be reduced to numerical patterns. The Limits of Quantification demonstrates that measurability is not the sole parameter of truth, as many aspects of human life can only be understood through reflective interpretation and normative evaluation (Carson, 2020). True knowledge demands an openness to non-quantitative dimensions without rejecting the importance of empirical evidence.

The epistemological reconstruction of Islam ultimately positions data as a legitimate but non-sovereign instrument of knowledge. Data plays a crucial role in empirical observation, social analysis, and technological development. However, the legitimacy of knowledge still requires the integration of critical rationality, interpretive evaluation, and a revelatory orientation. This model creates an epistemic structure that distinguishes technical evidence, empirical representation, conceptual interpretation, and ontological legitimacy, ensuring that knowledge does not remain merely statistical calculations. This integration maintains a balance

between rational objectivity and depth of meaning without sacrificing either. Revelation serves as an evaluative horizon that directs the use of knowledge toward humanitarian goals and ethical responsibility. This reconstruction demonstrates that Islam's critique of dataism is neither anti-science nor anti-technology, but rather a critique of the absolutization of digital authority. Comprehensive knowledge is possible only when data is understood as a means of interpreting reality, not as a source of ultimate truth that replaces rational reflection, human experience, and a transcendental orientation.

Conclusion

The dominance of the digital paradigm positions dataism as an epistemological regime that constructs the legitimacy of truth through quantitative calculations, algorithmic predictions, and claims of universal objectivity, thereby marginalizing ethical considerations, human experience, and the moral authority of religion. This study demonstrates that the sacralization of data operates like a secular religion, as algorithms are positioned as the most valid source of decisions for social behavior, information consumption, and even the formation of public knowledge authority. Islamic epistemological critique offers an alternative framework by integrating reason, revelation, and empirical experience, thereby preventing truth from being reduced to mere statistics or technological efficiency. The paper's theoretical contribution lies in developing an Islamic-based critique of digital epistemology that broadens the discourse in contemporary philosophy of science. Its practical implications include strengthening algorithmic literacy, addressing the ethics of artificial intelligence, and developing a critical digital Islamic education curriculum. The paper's limitations are evident in the dominance of philosophical-conceptual approaches without analysis of digital platforms, observation of Muslim communities, or studies of technology policy. Further research should focus on digital ethnography, studies of algorithm governance, and the empirical evaluation of the application of Islamic-value-based AI ethics. This approach is important for examining the relationships among religious authority, digital culture, and data-use practices in contemporary Muslim ecosystems across countries and user generations.

Acknowledgments

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Author Contribution Statement

HA contributed to the conceptualization of the study, the formulation of the methodology, data analysis, the writing of the initial draft, and the coordination of correspondence and final editing of the manuscript. AO was involved in data collection, literature review, and verification of reference sources. GH contributed to the analysis of the findings, interpretation of the results, and critical review of the manuscript's substance. LD supported the data validation process, the preparation

of visualizations and tables, and the alignment of the writing structure with publication guidelines. NM played a role in language editing, checking the consistency of citations and references, and conducting the final review to ensure the manuscript's suitability before submission. All authors have read, reviewed, and approved the final version of the manuscript and are responsible for the integrity of the content of the article.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that this manuscript has no conflicts of interest whatsoever. The entire process of preparation, analysis, interpretation of data, and presentation of results was carried out independently without any influence from any third party that could affect the objectivity, integrity, or scientific substance of the manuscript. The authors also declare that they have no financial, professional, institutional, or personal interests that could potentially bias the content, findings, or conclusions presented in this manuscript.

AI Usage Statement

The authors declare that artificial intelligence (AI) technology was used in the preparation of this manuscript only to a limited extent to assist in improving language quality, grammar correction, sentence structure refinement, and formatting. AI was not used to produce the scientific substance of the research. All problem formulation, conceptualization, concept development, data collection and analysis, interpretation of findings, argumentation, idea development, conclusion drawing, and all academic content contained in this manuscript are the result of intellectual work and the full responsibility of the authors.

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