ISLAMIC COUNSELING FRAMEWORK FOR DEALING WITH AI-BASED DIGITAL GRIEF (BARZAKH DIGITAL)

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Abstract

The rapid emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has led to the creation of "griefbots" and "digital afterlife" technologies, which simulate interaction with the deceased. This development raises critical, unexamined questions about its impact on bereavement within established religious frameworks. This paper aims to analyze the theopsychological and ethical implications of these technologies from the perspective of Islamic counseling. This study employs a qualitative, library-based research design. It conducts a thematic and comparative analysis of two distinct bodies of literature: classical Islamic texts on spiritual psychology and contemporary academic literature on the psychological and ethical dimensions of grief technology. The findings reveal a profound conflict between the function of griefbots and the Islamic framework for grief. The technology's "illusion of continuity" fundamentally contradicts the core Islamic principle of accepting God's decree (qadr), thus impeding healthy mourning. Furthermore, the artificial dependency fostered by these simulations undermines the spiritual practice of reliance on God (tawakkul), replacing it with a technological surrogate. From an ethical perspective based on the objectives of Islamic law (maqāṣid al-sharīʿah), the technology is identified as a potential source of harm (mafsadah) to an individual's faith and intellect. The study concludes that AI-driven grief technologies are spiritually and psychologically incongruent with a healthy Islamic grieving process. This necessitates the development of a specialized therapeutic approach. The primary implication is the proposed Islamic counseling framework, which provides practical, theologically grounded strategies for guiding individuals away from digital illusions and toward authentic spiritual healing.

Keywords: : *griefbot, islamic psychology, digital afterlife, grief counseling, tawakkul.*

Introduction

The dawn of the 21st century is characterized by the pervasive integration of digital technology into the most fundamental aspects of human experience. From birth to social connection, and now, even to death, the boundaries between the physical and virtual worlds are becoming increasingly porous. Within this transformative landscape, the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) has given rise to a particularly profound and ethically complex phenomenon: the digital afterlife. This burgeoning industry offers services, colloquially known as "griefbots" or "Thanabots," which utilize machine learning algorithms to analyze a deceased individual's vast digital footprint—their emails, social media posts, text messages, and other data—to create a dynamic, interactive simulation that loved ones can communicate with post-mortem (Reséndiz & Rodríguez-Reséndiz, 2024). This technological feat, moving beyond static memorials into the realm of interactive digital continuation, signifies a radical shift in how societies conceive of

memory, legacy, and the very finality of death. As a result, a "Digital Afterlife Industry" has emerged, commercializing the preservation of digital personas and offering a novel, if unsettling, means of sustaining connections with the departed (Voinea, 2024; Yang, 2025).

This development is not merely a technological curiosity; it represents a significant socio-cultural disruption that poses critical questions for established frameworks of meaning-making, particularly those provided by the world's religious traditions. For millennia, religions have offered structured rituals, theological explanations, and communal support systems to help individuals navigate the universal experience of bereavement. These traditions provide a coherent understanding of life, death, and what may lie beyond, grounding the grieving process in a stable metaphysical reality. The introduction of technologies that create an illusion of persistence directly challenges these age-old frameworks, creating a new and urgent arena for psychological, ethical, and theological inquiry. The central significance of this research, therefore, lies at this critical intersection: where the bleeding edge of AI technology meets the timeless spiritual and psychological needs of the human condition in the face of loss. It investigates a phenomenon that has the potential to fundamentally alter one of the most sacred and vulnerable of human experiences, necessitating a rigorous and culturally sensitive examination.

The nascent scholarly conversation surrounding these technologies has unfolded primarily along two secular axes: psychological impact and technological ethics. From a psychological standpoint, the evidence remains nascent and deeply ambivalent. Some studies suggest that interacting with a digital simulation of a deceased loved one can offer a measure of comfort, reducing feelings of acute loneliness and fostering a sense of continued connection that aligns with the "continuing bonds theory" of grief (Voinea, 2024; Yang, 2025). This perspective challenges traditional bereavement models that emphasize detachment, proposing instead that maintaining a bond can be a healthy part of mourning. However, a significant body of research raises alarms about the potential for psychological harm. Scholars express concern that these interactions may foster an unhealthy attachment, trapping the bereaved in a cycle of unresolved grief and delaying their acceptance of the reality of their loss (Yang, 2025). Rather than facilitating the difficult work of mourning, griefbots may offer a seductive escape, ultimately complicating and prolonging the psychological distress they purport to alleviate.

Concurrently, the ethical debate has highlighted a host of complex dilemmas. A primary concern revolves around informed consent and the authenticity of the digital recreation, questioning the right of any entity to reanimate a person's persona without their explicit prior permission (Couture et al., 2023). Furthermore, critics point to the profound risk of emotional manipulation and exploitation. In the vulnerable state of grief, individuals may become dependent on these services, which are often provided by commercial entities, thus raising the specter of the commodification of grief itself (Meitzler et al., 2024; Yang, 2025). Issues of data privacy and the potential for the misuse of a person's digital legacy are also paramount, creating a landscape fraught with ethical minefields that demand robust governance and regulation (Huang et al., 2023). While these psychological and ethical critiques are indispensable, they are predominantly situated within a secular, Western intellectual framework. They analyze the human subject as a psychological and rights-bearing individual but largely omit the dimension of the human as a spiritual being whose understanding of life and death is shaped by a theological worldview.

Herein lies the critical gap in the existing literature that this study aims to address. While the aforementioned scholarly conversations are vital, they have yet to engage meaningfully with the rich conceptual resources of the world's religious traditions.

Specifically, the discourse on griefbots is almost entirely disconnected from the field of Islamic studies, which possesses a sophisticated and deeply rooted tradition of psychology, ethics, and counseling centered on navigating human suffering. Islamic thought provides a comprehensive framework for understanding grief through core theological and spiritual concepts such as *qadr* (divine decree), *tawakkul* (trustful reliance on God), *sabr* (patient endurance), and *hikmah* (seeking wisdom in adversity). Although a body of literature exists on Islamic grief counseling that utilizes these principles, it has not yet been brought into direct dialogue with the unprecedented challenges posed by digital afterlife technologies. This study, therefore, builds a necessary bridge between these two isolated conversations, asking: How does the use of AI to replicate the deceased impact the grieving process from an Islamic psychological and spiritual perspective, and how can an Islamic counseling framework be formulated to manage these novel effects?

This article argues that while AI-driven grief technologies offer a compelling illusion of solace, they are fundamentally incompatible with a healthy grieving process from an Islamic spiritual perspective because they promote an artificial attachment that directly undermines the core theological principles necessary for authentic healing and acceptance. By creating a simulation of continuity, these technologies encourage a resistance to the finality of death, which obstructs the believer's ability to engage in the spiritually transformative work of accepting *qadr* and practicing *tawakkul*. The unique contribution of this study is twofold: first, it bridges the critical scholarly gap between the secular discourse on AI ethics and the rich tradition of Islamic pastoral theology. Second, it moves beyond a simple critique to propose a proactive and coherent conceptual framework for Islamic counseling in the age of digital grief. By examining this intersection, this paper not only offers guidance for Muslim communities, individuals, and counselors navigating this new terrain but also presents a compelling case for the necessity of integrating spiritual and theological perspectives into the broader global conversation on the ethics of artificial intelligence, challenging the notion that technology can be developed in a values-neutral vacuum.

Method

This study employs a qualitative, library-based research design centered on conceptual analysis. This approach is particularly suited for bridging historical theological traditions with contemporary ethical and psychological challenges, allowing for a rigorous and contextually sensitive evaluation of the topic (Astra et al., 2024; Sholehuddin et al., 2021). The overall approach is interpretive, aiming to construct a coherent argument by synthesizing insights from disparate bodies of knowledge rather than generating new empirical data.

The research is based on a critical analysis of two distinct sets of primary and secondary sources. The first category comprises classical Islamic texts, with a specific focus on the seminal works of influential scholars in Islamic psychology and ethics, whose insights into the human psyche (*nafs*) and spiritual development remain foundational (Elzamzamy et al., 2024). The second category comprises contemporary, peer-reviewed academic literature sourced from scholarly databases, focusing on the psychological impact of griefbots, the ethics of the digital afterlife, and the role of AI in society.

The analytical process involved a systematic, three-stage thematic comparison. First, key themes concerning the management of grief and the cultivation of resilience, namely *qadr* (divine decree), *tawakkul* (reliance on God), *sabr* (patience), and *hikmah* (wisdom) were identified and extracted from the classical Islamic sources. Second, prevalent themes regarding the effects of grief technology, such as "illusion of continuity" and "emotional dependency," were identified in the contemporary literature. Finally, a comparative

analysis was conducted to map the points of conceptual conflict and theological tension between these two frameworks, forming the basis of the paper's central thesis.

Result and Discussion
The Spiritual Psychology of Grief in Islamic Tradition

To critically evaluate the impact of digital afterlife technologies from an Islamic perspective, it is first essential to establish the tradition's own sophisticated framework for navigating bereavement. Far from being a monolithic call for stoic suppression, the Islamic approach to grief is a dynamic, multi-faceted process designed to guide the bereaved through the natural and painful reality of loss toward a state of spiritual equilibrium and growth. It is not the absence of sorrow that is the ideal, but rather the managed containment of sorrow within a theological framework that affirms divine wisdom and the ultimate reality of the afterlife. This spiritual psychology is constructed upon four interdependent pillars *qadr* (divine decree), *tawakkul* (trustful reliance on God), *sabr* (patient endurance), and *hikmah* (the pursuit of wisdom). This framework, as will be argued, stands in stark contrast to the premises undergirding griefbot technology, which offers a technological circumvention of the very spiritual labor that the Islamic tradition deems essential for authentic healing.

The theological bedrock of the Islamic response to grief is the concept of *qadr*, the belief in divine providence. This principle posits that all events, including the profound pain of death and loss, unfold according to God's all-encompassing knowledge and wisdom. This is not presented as a call for fatalistic resignation but as a foundational truth for contextualizing human suffering. The Qur'an states this principle directly: "No disaster strikes upon the earth or among yourselves except that it is in a Book before We bring it into being… So that you do not grieve over what has escaped you nor rejoice over what He has given you" (Qur'an, Al-Hadid 57:22-23). This divine instruction aims to moderate emotional extremities by rooting human experience in a stable, divinely ordained reality. Classical scholars like Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 386 AH) interpreted this so profoundly that they considered excessive, uncontrolled grief over worldly loss to be a spiritual failing, as it implies a questioning of the divine plan to which a believer is meant to submit. This internal acceptance of a reality beyond one's control is the first and most critical step in the Islamic grieving process (al-Makkī, 2015).

In modern psychological terms, *qadr* functions as a powerful cognitive reframing tool. It shifts the narrative of loss from a random, meaningless tragedy to a purposeful, albeit painful, event within a divine schema. This cognitive shift is crucial for mitigating the existential anxiety and sense of cosmic injustice that often accompany bereavement. Contemporary scholarship confirms this therapeutic function, noting that belief in *qadr* promotes resilience by allowing individuals to situate their personal loss within a larger, meaningful spiritual context, thereby alleviating feelings of despair (Ansari & Iqbal, 2023; Çetrez et al., 2020). By internalizing that the event is not an accident but an appointment, the believer is cognitively equipped to begin the process of acceptance, not by denying their pain, but by understanding its ultimate source and purpose. As the classical scholar Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505 AH) advised, the death of a loved one should be viewed as a journey in which the deceased has merely preceded the survivor to their shared, ultimate destination (al-Ghazālī, 2011).

If *qadr* provides the cognitive framework for acceptance, *tawakkul* provides the affective and spiritual mechanism for enacting it. Defined as the active and trustful reliance on God, *tawakkul* is the heart's response to the mind's understanding of the divine decree. It is, as the Sufi master al-Qushayrī (d. 465 AH) articulated, "the surrender of affairs to God" and a profound trust in His sufficiency, as promised in the Qur'an: "And whoever relies upon God, He is sufficient for him" (Qur'an, al-Talaq 65:3). This is not passive inaction but a deliberate act of relinquishing the illusion of control and the

heavy burden of anxiety that comes with it (al-Qushayrī, 2015). Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī (d. 795 AH) further clarifies it as "the true reliance of the heart on God in seeking benefit and repelling harm." Within the context of grief, *tawakkul* is the act of entrusting one's emotional vulnerability and sorrow to God, trusting that His wisdom and mercy are greater than one's own understanding (Ibn Rajab, 2013). This fosters a state of inner peace, as contemporary scholars note, assuring the bereaved that they are not alone in their suffering (Nasrin, 2025).

The practice of this cognitive and spiritual surrender is sustained through the active virtue of *sabr*, or patient endurance. *Sabr* is not a grim or passive waiting but a dynamic and resilient fortitude in the face of adversity. It is the behavioral manifestation of one's belief in *qadr* and *tawakkul*. The cultivation of *sabr* is considered a cornerstone of emotional and spiritual health in the Islamic tradition, encouraging individuals to endure hardship with a grace that transforms pain into a means of spiritual purification and elevation (Ariff, 2025; Rahim, 2025). This process is often fortified by communal support and spiritual practices like prayer, which collectively reinforce psychological resilience (Ansari & Iqbal, 2023; Çınaroğlu, 2025). Furthermore, *sabr* is intrinsically linked to the pursuit of *hikmah*, or wisdom. The believer is encouraged not only to endure the trial but to actively reflect upon it, seeking the divine wisdom and lessons embedded within the experience of loss. This transforms grief from a static state of suffering into a transformative journey. As Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597 AH) advised, the believer should be patient while "seeking reward for what he endures," thereby framing the experience as an opportunity for drawing closer to the divine (Ibn al-Jawzī & Farḥān, 2010).

These four principles form an integrated spiritual and psychological system for processing grief. It begins with the cognitive acceptance of reality (*qadr*), which is emotionally actualized through a deep and abiding trust in God (*tawakkul*). This state is actively maintained through the virtue of patient endurance (*sabr*), which in turn opens the door to finding meaning and spiritual growth (*hikmah*). This entire process is fundamentally reality-facing; it requires the bereaved to confront the finality of death directly and engage with it as a profound spiritual and existential reality. It is a framework built on acceptance, surrender, and the search for transcendent meaning. Having established this foundation, it becomes possible to analyze how the introduction of a technology designed to simulate continuity and create an illusion of presence might not supplement, but rather fundamentally disrupt, this sacred process.

Digital Illusion vs. Spiritual Reality

While the Islamic tradition provides a robust framework for processing grief through acceptance and spiritual surrender, the emergence of griefbot technology introduces a fundamentally oppositional paradigm. Instead of guiding the bereaved toward an acceptance of reality, this technology is engineered to construct an interactive illusion— a digital proxy that simulates the continued presence of the deceased. This core function creates a profound theopsychological conflict, directly challenging the spiritual principles foundational to Islamic bereavement counseling. Where the Islamic framework demands a confrontation with the finality of death as a prerequisite for healing, griefbots offer a method of indefinite deferral. This section will dissect this conflict, arguing that by creating an "illusion of continuity," these technologies not only risk psychological harm, as noted in secular literature, but also actively obstruct the believer's path to spiritual reconciliation by undermining the principles of *qadr*, *tawakkul*, *sabr*, and *hikmah*.

This technological paradigm is not a distant theoretical possibility but an emergent reality with documented psychological and ethical consequences. Real-world case studies provide a crucial window into how these "digital séances" function. For instance, a notable case involves "Dadbot," a project where an individual created a digital version of

their deceased father to continue conversations (Worth, 2025). Such experiences reveal that users turn to griefbots for emotional relief, to resolve unfinished conflicts, or to say a final goodbye. Despite users being aware of the bot's artificiality, a tendency to anthropomorphize the technology makes the conversations feel real in the moment, confirming the bot's powerful psychological impact (Worth, 2025). The documented effects, however, are not uniformly positive. Reports highlight a significant concern that griefbots may unhealthily prolong the grieving process. By allowing continuous interaction with a simulated personality, the technology can prevent users from fully confronting the reality of death (Fernandez, 2025; Vesperini, 2025). This has led some researchers to recommend that griefbots be treated with extreme caution, suggesting they should potentially be classified as medical tools for treating diagnosed conditions like Prolonged Grief Disorder (PGD). Such a classification would necessitate strict regulation to avoid exacerbating the psychological vulnerability of the recently bereaved (Lindemann, 2022). These secular ethical debates, focusing on issues of data privacy, user autonomy, and the morality of using a deceased person's likeness, underscore a consensus that this technology is potent and carries inherent risks (Klugman, 2024).

The most immediate and fundamental point of conflict lies between the griefbot's simulated persistence and the theological imperative of accepting *qadr* (divine decree). As established, *qadr* involves a cognitive and spiritual acceptance of death's finality as a component of God's plan. Griefbots are designed to do the precise opposite: they foster a sense of ongoing connection that can inhibit the user's ability to accept the reality of their loss (Firnando & Wahyudi, 2024). By enabling continued, albeit artificial, interaction, the technology creates a powerful psychological barrier to acknowledging the irreversible nature of death. This is where secular psychological concerns and Islamic theological principles converge. Scholars warn that prolonged engagement with digital avatars can lead to emotional entanglement and complicate the mourning process, potentially solidifying grief into a pathological state (Astra et al., 2024; Boufkhed et al., 2023). From an Islamic viewpoint, this is not merely a psychological risk but a spiritual one; the "illusion of continuity" directly contradicts the theological truth that earthly existence is transient and finite, a core understanding necessary to seek solace through faith (Marlina & Ulya, 2024). The technology encourages the heart to cling to a digital shadow, making the spiritual task of surrendering to God's decree exceedingly difficult.

A metaphysical chasm between the Islamic understanding of personhood and the premises of artificial intelligence deepens this conflict. Islamic metaphysics posits that the essence of a person their consciousness, personality, and moral awareness is rooted in the *rūḥ*, the soul, which is understood as a divine, immaterial entity. The Qur'an states this inimitability clearly: "And they ask you about the soul. Say, 'The soul is of the affair of my Lord'" (Al-Isra 17:85). Classical scholars like al-Ghazālī described the soul as the true locus of knowing God, an entity not reducible to physical processes (al-Ghazālī, 1987). In this view, the *rūḥ* is the indivisible, unique essence of a person, bestowed by God and fundamentally beyond human comprehension or replication (al-Jawziyya, 1994). AI, in stark contrast, operates on purely material principles of algorithms and data processing (Arrozy & Zarman, 2024). Therefore, from an Islamic metaphysical perspective, the authentic replication of a human personality by AI is a metaphysical impossibility. The griefbot is not, and can never be, the deceased; it is an algorithmic echo devoid of the spiritual essence the *rūḥ* that defines personhood. This understanding reframes the griefbot from a neutral tool to a source of profound deception, offering an imitation that, by its very nature, obscures the spiritual reality of the human being.

Just as the illusion of continuity subverts *qadr*, the resulting emotional dependency on the technology supplants the practice of *tawakkul* (trustful reliance on God). *Tawakkul* requires the bereaved to turn their heart toward God as the ultimate source of solace,

sufficiency, and healing. It is an act of spiritual reliance. Griefbot technology, however, offers an alternative locus for that reliance. By providing an immediate and interactive source of perceived comfort, it fosters a form of artificial attachment. The user becomes dependent on the simulation for emotional regulation, turning to the algorithm in moments of distress rather than engaging in the more difficult spiritual work of turning to God. This shifts the focus of the grieving heart from the Divine Creator to a human-made creation. The artificial dependency risks becoming a spiritual surrogate, replacing a vertical relationship of trust with God with a horizontal, technological dependency that keeps the user tethered to a worldly illusion.

Moreover, this reliance on a digital escape creates a significant barrier to the cultivation of *sabr* (patient endurance) and the pursuit of *hikmah* (wisdom). Within the Islamic framework, the pain of loss is not an obstacle to be circumvented. However, a profound trial to be endured with patience, offering a path toward spiritual growth and deeper understanding. *Sabr* represents the active, resilient fortitude needed to journey through suffering, not to detour around it. Griefbots, however, provide exactly such a detour a digital palliative that enables the user to sidestep the acute pain of absence. By taking refuge in simulated conversations, the bereaved individual is drawn away from the silent, reflective space where *sabr* is forged and *hikmah* is discovered. The technology substitutes distraction for contemplation and illusion for reality, effectively short-circuiting the transformative potential inherent in grief. Consequently, rather than emerging from the trial with an enriched understanding of life, death, and their relationship with the divine, the user risks being caught in a state of suspended animation emotionally placated but spiritually stagnant.

The functionality of griefbot technology, therefore, is not merely misaligned with but is actively antithetical to the spiritual psychology of grief in the Islamic tradition. This direct challenge to the principles of *qadr*, *tawakkul*, *sabr*, and *hikmah* reveals a profound theopsychological incompatibility. Such an inherent conflict moves the discussion beyond individual spiritual psychology and into the domain of communal ethics and religious law. Suppose the technology poses a fundamental challenge to the core tenets of faithful grieving. In that case, it raises significant questions about its permissibility and ethical boundaries, necessitating a formal analysis from the perspective of the higher objectives of Islamic law (*maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*).

Ethical Dimensions: A *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah* Perspective

The preceding analysis established a deep theopsychological conflict between the function of griefbot technology and the Islamic spiritual framework for bereavement. This inherent tension, however, is not merely a matter of individual spiritual struggle; it extends into the domain of communal ethics and religious law. Islamic jurisprudence evaluates the permissibility of any new phenomenon not in a vacuum, but through the comprehensive ethical framework of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* the higher objectives of Islamic law. This framework functions as a moral compass, assessing whether an innovation ultimately serves the public good (*maṣlaḥah*) or leads to harm and corruption (*mafsadah*). From this perspective, AI is viewed as a tool, not a moral agent, and its use is contingent upon its alignment with these higher objectives. This section, therefore, shifts the analysis from the internal, psychological impact to an external, ethical evaluation. It argues that griefbot technology, by virtue of its capacity to obscure spiritual reality and foster unhealthy dependencies, poses a significant risk of *mafsadah*, primarily by undermining two of the essential objectives of the Sharīʿah: the preservation of faith (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*) and the preservation of the intellect (*ḥifẓ al-ʿaql*).

The *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* are traditionally understood to protect five essentials (*al-ḍarūriyyāt al-khams*): faith, life, intellect, lineage, and property. Any action or technology that threatens these fundamentals is deemed a source of *mafsadah*. The primary ethical

charge against griefbots arises from their direct impact on the preservation of faith. As demonstrated, the technology's "illusion of continuity" actively works against the believer's ability to internalize the concept of *qadr* and practice *tawakkul*. This is not a trivial consequence; it is a direct interference with the core tenets of Islamic belief and practice. By creating a digital surrogate for solace that competes with divine reliance, the technology can weaken the very foundation of a believer's relationship with God, thereby causing harm to their spiritual well-being. Contemporary scholars analyzing the intersection of AI and Islamic ethics have warned precisely of this danger, noting that any technology can be considered a source of *mafsadah* if it damages the soul and obscures the spiritual realities of life and death (Erwahyudin, 2024). The griefbot, in this light, risks becoming a technologically sophisticated form of spiritual distraction, pulling the bereaved away from the path of faith-based healing.

Beyond the harm to faith, griefbot technology also presents a subtle but significant threat to the preservation of the intellect (*ḥifẓ al-ʿaql*). Islamic ethics places a high value on clarity of mind and the ability to distinguish truth from falsehood, reality from illusion. The intellect is considered a divine gift that must be protected from that which would corrupt or confuse it. Griefbots, by their very design, operate in a liminal space between reality and simulation. They intentionally blur this line to provide comfort, but in doing so, they risk impairing the user's grasp on reality, especially during a period of intense emotional vulnerability. This prolonged engagement with a convincing falsehood could weaken the user's cognitive ability to process reality as it is, which is a necessary precursor for both psychological and spiritual health. The technology encourages a form of cognitive dissonance where the mind knows the person is gone, but the emotions are being trained to react as if they are still present. This confusion can be considered a form of intellectual harm, contradicting the Sharīʿah's objective to preserve the clarity and integrity of the human mind.

This ethical critique is further deepened by a profound theological question regarding the limits of human innovation in relation to divine creation (*khalq*). Islamic theology draws a sharp distinction between God's act of creation *ex nihilo*—particularly the creation of life and the soul (*rūḥ*) and human acts of making or innovation (*ṣanʿa* or *iḥtirāʿ*). The act of actual creation is an exclusive attribute of God. As classical scholar al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī explained, divine creation (*ibdāʿ*) is origination without any pre-existing precedent, a power humans do not possess (al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, 2006). A well-known prophetic tradition powerfully underscores this boundary: "Who is more unjust than one who tries to create like My creation? Let them create an atom, let them create a grain" (al-Jawziyya, 1994). This establishes a clear theological line: humans are capable of transformative innovation with the materials God has created, but not of originating life or consciousness.

When applied to AI, this distinction is critical. Griefbots and digital afterlife technologies are acts of sophisticated imitation, not creation. They simulate personality through algorithms and data, but they do not and cannot replicate the divine essence of the *rūḥ*. Contemporary scholarship affirms this, noting that AI remains firmly within the realm of human innovation, as it lacks the immaterial, divine element that constitutes true consciousness (Çelik, 2023; Hakim & Nurrohim, 2025). The technology, therefore, does not represent a transgression into the domain of *khalq*. However, the ethical problem does not disappear. The issue is not that humans have created a soul, but that they have created an imitation so convincing that it can deceive the grieving heart and lead to the *mafsadah* previously discussed. The theological question then shifts from the act of creation to the morality of the imitation. The attempt to digitally mimic a human being raises concerns about hubris and the potential for technology to serve spiritually detrimental ends, even if it does not technically cross the ultimate line of divine creation.

The ethical analysis, grounded in *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, thus reveals that the core issue with griefbot technology is not its existence as a technological artifact, but its application in the deeply sensitive context of human grief. Its potential to inflict harm upon an individual's faith and intellect categorizes it as a significant source of *mafsadah*. While the technology may not be an act of divine creation, its powerful capacity for imitation is the very mechanism through which this spiritual and psychological harm is delivered. This ethical conclusion, derived from the foundational principles of Islamic law, necessitates a proactive response from those entrusted with the spiritual and psychological care of the community.

Toward an Islamic Counseling Framework for Digital Grief

The establishment of griefbot technology as a source of profound theopsychological conflict and potential ethical harm (*mafsadah*) necessitates a proactive, constructive response. A critique alone is insufficient; a practical therapeutic pathway must be articulated to guide individuals navigating this complex new terrain. The rich tradition of Islamic psychology, which seamlessly integrates spiritual principles with mental health practices, offers the ideal foundation for such a response. This final section synthesizes the preceding analyses to propose a coherent Islamic counseling framework specifically designed to address the challenges of digital grief. This framework is not a rejection of technology *per se*, but a method of re-centering the bereaved individual within their own spiritual tradition. It aims to mitigate the harms of artificial attachment by actively cultivating the therapeutic principles of *qadr*, *tawakkul*, *sabr*, and *hikmah*, thereby guiding the individual away from digital illusion and toward authentic spiritual healing.

The first and most critical objective of this counseling framework is Theological Reframing. The primary harm of the griefbot is its "illusion of continuity," which obstructs the acceptance of *qadr*. An Islamic counselor's initial task is to help the client deconstruct this illusion by gently re-grounding them in the spiritual realities of life, death, and the soul (*rūḥ*). This process aligns with contemporary models of Islamically Integrated Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), which leverage spiritual beliefs to re-evaluate and restructure harmful cognitive patterns (Subhas et al., 2021). The counselor would not simply dismiss the client's emotional attachment but would help them explore it through a theological lens. This involves discussing the Islamic understanding of the *rūḥ* as a unique, inimitable divine essence, thereby reframing the griefbot not as a continuation of the deceased, but as a sophisticated yet soulless echo. By encouraging reflection on spiritual narratives about the nature of the soul and the afterlife (Biancalani et al., 2022; Post et al., 2023), the counselor helps the client cognitively distinguish between authentic memories, which honor the deceased, and artificial interactions, which merely simulate them. This reframing is a crucial first step in loosening the emotional grip of the digital proxy and reopening the path to accepting God's decree.

Building on this reframed understanding, the second objective is Spiritual Reorientation. As established, dependency on a griefbot can supplant the spiritual practice of *tawakkul*. The therapeutic goal here is to redirect the heart's reliance away from the technological artifact and back toward God. This can be achieved by integrating faith-based practices into the counseling process, effectively replacing the habit of digital engagement with acts of spiritual remembrance. Counselors can draw on the decisive role of authentic remembrance (*dhikr*) as a spiritually-rooted mindfulness practice (Dover, 2020; Koenig, 2023). Instead of turning to the avatar in moments of loneliness or pain, the client can be encouraged to engage in *dhikr*, prayer, or recitation of the Qur'an. These practices serve as a direct conduit to the divine, offering a source of solace that is infinitely more profound and sustaining than any algorithm. As Çınaroğlu (2025) suggests, incorporating concepts like *tawakkul* can help individuals re-evaluate their attachments and foster healthier emotional connections. This reorientation is a behavioral intervention

that helps the client build new spiritual habits, gradually diminishing the perceived need for the digital surrogate and reinforcing their trust and reliance on God as the ultimate source of peace.

The final therapeutic objective is Communal Re-engagement. Griefbot interaction is an inherently individualistic and isolating experience, contrasting sharply with the communal nature of mourning in the Islamic tradition. This isolation can exacerbate grief and deepen dependency on the technology. Therefore, a key strategy within the Islamic counseling framework is to guide the client back into the supportive community actively. The literature highlights the profound psychological and spiritual benefits of communal rituals, which reinforce social bonds and facilitate a shared grieving process (Asatsa, 2025; Biancalani et al., 2022). A counselor can encourage the client to participate in remembrance gatherings, charitable acts in the name of the deceased, or seek support from family, friends, and religious elders. As Gabay & Tarabeih (2022) note, the emotional depth found in these communal gatherings offers a powerful antidote to the artificiality of digital relationships. This re-engagement serves multiple purposes: it provides a real-world support system, validates the client's grief within a shared context, and reinforces the spiritual reality that while an individual's life has ended, the community's bond of faith and mutual care endures.

These three therapeutic objectives theological reframing, spiritual reorientation, and communal re-engagement form the pillars of a responsive Islamic counseling framework for digital grief. This approach does not deny the pain of loss, but seeks to channel it through spiritually authentic and psychologically sound pathways. It directly addresses the specific harms identified in the preceding analysis by systematically deconstructing the digital illusion, redirecting the heart's reliance toward the divine, and re-embedding the individual within a supportive faith community. By doing so, this framework provides a clear, practical, and theologically grounded methodology for helping Muslims navigate the unprecedented challenges posed by digital afterlife technologies, ensuring that the timeless principles of their faith can guide them through even the most modern forms of grief.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that while AI-driven griefbots and digital afterlife technologies offer a novel, technologically mediated form of solace, they are fundamentally incompatible with a healthy, spiritually grounded grieving process within the Islamic tradition. The core of this incompatibility lies in the "illusion of continuity" these technologies create, which directly obstructs the believer's necessary journey toward acceptance of divine decree (*qadr*). By fostering an artificial dependency, this digital interaction supplants the crucial spiritual practice of reliance on God (*tawakkul*), thereby hindering authentic emotional and spiritual healing. The analysis further demonstrated that, from an ethical standpoint guided by *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, such technology risks causing spiritual and intellectual harm (*mafsadah*). This study's primary contribution is twofold: it bridges a significant gap between the scholarship on emerging AI ethics and Islamic pastoral psychology, and it proposes the first conceptual counseling framework explicitly designed to guide Muslims through the unique challenges of digital grief. Its main limitation is its theoretical nature, relying solely on textual analysis. Future research should therefore shift its focus to empirical methodologies, including case studies and qualitative interviews with Muslim users of these technologies, to validate and refine the proposed therapeutic strategies and gain a deeper understanding of the lived experience of digital mourning within the community.

Author Contributions Statement

AM and ANM developed and designed the research concept. AM and LF collected and analyzed the data. ANM verified the research findings. AM and LF contributed to the writing and review of the initial draft of the manuscript. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript submitted.

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