

COMPANION ROBOTS, DIGITAL INTIMACY AND THE PURPOSES OF MARRIAGE IN ISLAMIC LEGAL PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

The rise of advanced artificial-intimacy devices is not merely a moral concern but also a potential existential threat to the foundational structure of Islamic marriage (*nikāḥ*). While Islamic legal reasoning may prohibit their use, such a legal response remains inadequate because it does not address the deeper underlying problem. The true crisis is the robot's function as a technological replacement, a concept termed in this study "Digital Substitution" (*Digital Badal*). The apparent perfection of the machine threatens to replace the human effort and responsibility from which marriage derives much of its spiritual strength. By demanding little or no relational effort, the robot erodes the human capacity to cultivate essential virtues such as mercy (*rahmah*) and patience (*ṣabr*). Furthermore, the common legal argument that permits the use of such robots as a lesser harm in situations of necessity (*darūrah*) is critically examined. This study argues that such reasoning constitutes a misdiagnosis because it overlooks the broader systemic harm involved. A comprehensive response is therefore necessary, grounded in the preventive doctrine of *sadd al-dharā'ī* (blocking the means to harm). This approach requires Muslim states to impose a complete ban on the manufacture and sale of such devices through the authority of *siyāsah shar'iyah* (Islamic public policy). Alongside this prohibition, the Muslim community must initiate an educational movement that restores an appreciation of human struggle and imperfection, thereby protecting the spiritual integrity of the Muslim family from technology's illusory promises of effortless intimacy.

Introduction

The emergence of advanced sex robots, propelled by increasingly sophisticated artificial intelligence and hyper-realistic synthetic biology, is not merely another moral dilemma confronting Islamic jurisprudence (Rigotti, 2025); rather, it constitutes an existential challenge to the structural integrity of the Islamic legal system itself. Contemporary juristic analyses generally prohibit artificial intimacy on the grounds of its association with fornication, obscenity and the dignity owed to the human person (Hammad, 2025). Yet we contend that such a ruling, though sound in its conclusion, is analytically incomplete. It operates at the level of the act, naming the prohibited deed, while leaving undiagnosed the deeper philosophical and systemic pathology that digital intimacy introduces. The decisive question is not merely whether a person may lawfully form an intimate relationship with a robot—a question whose answer is treated as settled—but what it means, legally and socially, for a manufactured object to be positioned as a substitute for the human spouse. The central thesis of this study is therefore that sex robots compel a re-examination of the concept of *badal* (substitution), not only as a theological category but as a lived distortion of the practice of *nikāḥ*. The classical logic of *badal*, whereby a superior alternative replaces an inferior one, is here inverted: the divinely instituted purposes of procreation, mercy and companionship are exchanged for an artificial and inert imitation. This form of *Digital Badal*, we maintain, undermines the very *maqāṣid* upon which the Islamic law of marriage rests.

For this reason, we hold that the dominant framing of the legal issue is itself misconceived. To treat the sex robot merely as an instrument of gratification, a more elaborate form of masturbation, or forbidden visual stimulation continues to reduce a systemic problem to an individual vice. The robot is better understood as a new mode of agency that contests human *khilāfah* (vicegerency). When a Muslim places a programmed synthetic partner in the position of a human one, the harm is not exhausted by the sin committed; it extends to the algorithmic erosion of the *maṣlahah*, or public interest, that *nikāḥ* is intended to secure. Marriage in Islam is not merely a licence for intimacy but a social and religious framework for preserving lineage (*hifẓ al-nasl*) and generating emotional and communal tranquillity (*sakīnah*) (Aisyah et al., 2025; Faisal et al., 2024). The frictionless perfection of artificial intimacy is precisely what makes it dangerous: it presents itself as preferable to the unpredictable and demanding reality of human relationships.

The threat is thus twofold. First, it strikes at the *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, compromising the preservation of lineage (*hifẓ al-nasl*), religion (*hifẓ al-dīn*) and the integrity of the family structure (Wanto et al., 2021). By offering tension-free gratification while producing none of the social goods the *maqāṣid* are designed to protect, sex robots create a structural divide between legal form and legal purpose (Mehmood, 2024). Second, and more fundamentally, they recast the question of human stewardship. God appointed humanity—imperfect, yet capable of moral growth—as His vicegerent on earth. To transfer intimacy, responsibility and relational accountability to a non-sentient machine is therefore to abdicate that trust and withdraw from the social responsibilities entailed by *khilāfah*.

This study deliberately moves the inquiry beyond the binary of *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām*. The technological replacement of human relationships represents a spiritual, ethical and sociological rupture that the act-centred instruments of *fiqh* are not, on their own, sufficient to address. Where existing scholarship has largely focused on establishing the prohibition, this study is concerned with its broader institutional consequences: what becomes of Muslim families, communities, and the very enterprise of Islamic law when human bonds are displaced by seemingly flawless and obedient digital companions? From this perspective, digital intimacy is not a discrete moral test to be passed or failed but a stress test of the depth and adaptive capacity of Islamic jurisprudence in the algorithmic age.

Hence, this study pursues three aims. First, it develops the theoretical model of *Digital Badal* to demonstrate how artificial substitutes hollow out the metaphysical authenticity of human relationships, marital contracts and social functions recognised by the *Sharīʿah*. Second, it examines how artificial intimacy threatens the foundational objectives of preserving lineage (*hifẓ al-nasl*) and protecting the intellect (*hifẓ al-ʿaql*), since it substitutes escapism for the formative difficulty of real relationships. Third, it advances a jurisprudential argument that Muslim jurists must move beyond an exclusive focus on individual sin towards an examination of systemic harm, deploying *sadd al-dharāʾiʿ* (blocking the means

to harm) as the basis for institutional and public-policy measures capable of protecting Muslim communities from the sociological consequences of normalised human-robot intimacy.

Literature Review

The scholarly discussion on robotics within Islamic law remains at an early stage, and any serious treatment of artificial intimacy must begin with the studies that have given the issue a distinct juristic formulation. Hamza Abed Al-Karim Hammad's (2025) study, "Artificial Intimacy and Islamic Jurisprudence: Legal and Ethical Perspectives on Sex Robots", is among the most directly relevant contributions to this emerging field. Hammad's contribution is significant: drawing upon established principles of fiqh, he reaches the clear juristic conclusion that sexual relations with robots are prohibited (*ḥarām*), grounding this prohibition in the jurisprudence of lawful sexual pleasure and the sanctity of the human body (Hammad, 2025). The present study accepts this conclusion and does not seek to reopen the question of the underlying prohibition. It argues, however, that the conclusion addresses only one dimension of the technology. Hammad answers the question of whether such conduct is permissible, but gives less attention to why the sex robot may threaten the legal order at a systemic level or how that order should respond through institutions rather than individual conscience alone. A ruling that correctly identifies a prohibited act may nevertheless leave the wider structure placed at risk by that act insufficiently examined.

That structure is the marriage covenant, and it is precisely here that the literature remains limited. Read against the wider tradition of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, three problems remain underdeveloped. The first is the meaning of *nikāḥ* as a contract that, by its nature, requires parties capable of bearing legal and moral responsibility. The second concerns the breadth of the *maqāṣid* endangered by artificial intimacy, which extends beyond the conventional concern with lineage. The third concerns the juristic instrument most suited to addressing harm that is systemic rather than personal. Prior scholarship establishes the prohibition, but has yet to examine fully the implications of replacing the human spouse with an apparently flawless and obedient artificial substitute. The remainder of this review reconstructs the textual and doctrinal resources required to address that gap.

The Quranic conception of marriage extends beyond a narrowly contractual understanding and encompasses ontological, moral and social dimensions. The verse that frames the purpose of marital law reads:

Translation: And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquillity in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed, in that are signs for a people who give thought.

(Surah Al-Rum, 30:21)

Marriage, on this reading, is not merely a permission for intimacy but a divinely ordered framework of tranquillity (*sakīnah*), affection (*mawaddah*) and mercy (*rahmah*). Classical jurists of the Hanafi and Maliki schools understood *nikāḥ* as generating reciprocal rights and obligations (*ḥuqūq*) that a robot, by its constitution, can neither bear nor discharge (Asman, 2024). Al-Sarakhsi (d. 1090 CE), in his *al-Mabsut*, locates the foundation of the contract in lineage and mutual support, commitments inseparable from human intention (*niyyah*) and moral accountability (*taklīf*) (Ramli, 2018). The Qur'an describes this bond as a solemn covenant (*mīthāqan ghalīẓan*):

Translation: And how could you take it while you have gone in unto each other and they have taken from you a solemn covenant?

(Surah Al-Nisa', 4:21)

An expression used in the Qur'an for covenants of exceptional gravity cannot meaningfully apply to an object that possesses neither legal intention nor moral accountability. The machine may imitate the external form of companionship, but it cannot assume the reciprocal obligations upon which marital companionship depends.

The deeper theological stake concerns human vicegerency. Because earlier scholarship grounds the prohibition mainly in analogy with other forbidden acts, including unlawful intercourse and comparable

forms of prohibited sexual conduct, it leaves largely unexamined the standing of the human being as God's trustee on earth. That standing is established where God addresses the angels:

Translation: ... Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority.

(Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:30)

This trust is bound up with *taklīf*, or moral accountability, and marriage is among the principal social settings in which such accountability is exercised. The Prophet PBUH said:

Translation: When a man marries, he has fulfilled half of the religion; so let him fear God regarding the remaining half.

(Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ, n.d., Hadith No. 3096)

Marriage, so understood, is a means of moral completion, with part of its formative value arising from the patience, sacrifice and forgiveness required by a relationship between fallible human beings (Rosmita et al., 2022). Its social dimension is equally explicit:

Translation: Every one of you is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock. The leader of people is a guardian and is responsible for his subjects. A man is the guardian of his family, and he is responsible for them. A woman is the guardian of her husband's home and his children, and she is responsible for them.

(Sahih al-Bukhari, n.d., Hadith No. 7138; Sahih Muslim, n.d., Hadith No. 1829)

To withdraw from the human social unit into a private, engineered intimacy may therefore be understood as a withdrawal from the responsibility represented by the figure of the shepherd (*rā'in*) and from the relational labour through which the divine trust is fulfilled. A robot designed to provide compliant intimacy may minimise reciprocal moral demands; by reducing relational friction, it may also diminish the opportunity for moral formation.

Confining the discussion to *ḥifẓ al-nasl*, the preservation of lineage, does not fully reflect the range of interests potentially affected. A broader reading of the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* reveals a more comprehensive concern. Al-Shāṭibī (d. 1388 CE) linked the protection of *maṣlaḥah* to the preservation of the intellect (*ḥifẓ al-'aql*) and religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*), among other essential interests (Shihan & Ali Zaroum, 2023). The preservation of the intellect is conventionally associated with the prohibition of intoxicants. By analogy, this study argues that a perfectly customisable companion may operate metaphorically as a different form of intoxication, offering sustained escape from relational reality and potentially impairing moral judgement. The preservation of religion is also implicated, as marriage in Islam is regarded as an act of worship (*'ibādah*) and a Sunnah of the Prophet PBUH (Laluddin et al., 2013). If technology gradually displaces an institution associated with *sakīnah*, lineage and religious responsibility, the erosion of *nikāḥ* may also weaken the surrounding social fabric. The Qur'an's emphasis on communal cohesion reinforces this broader concern:

Translation: And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided.

(Surah Ali-Imrān, 3:103)

Although this verse does not address artificial intimacy directly, it provides a wider normative basis for evaluating technologies that may isolate individuals from reciprocal communal relationships. By enclosing the individual within a private artificial world, digital intimacy may therefore undermine, rather than directly contradict, the Qur'anic ideal of communal cohesion.

If the threat is systemic, the doctrinal response must extend beyond a verdict of prohibition. The doctrine of *sadd al-dharā'ī'*, or blocking the means to harm, offers one relevant juristic instrument. Particularly prominent in the Maliki school, the doctrine permits the restriction of an otherwise lawful means where its use is likely to lead to a prohibited or substantially harmful outcome (Salleh et al., 2019). Al-Qarāfī (d. 1285 CE) elaborated the principle to prevent permissible acts from becoming gateways to social harm (Elmahjub, 2019). The Qur'an identifies the recognised boundaries of lawful sexual relations:

Translation: And they who guard their private parts, except from their wives or those their right hands possess, for indeed, they will not be blamed; but whoever seeks beyond that, then those are the transgressors.

(Surah Al-Mu'minun, 23:5–7)

The relevant *dharī'ah* in the present case is not merely the existence of the device but its potential to normalise technological substitution for reciprocal human relationships. Applied prospectively, *sadd al-dharā'i'* may support a shift from individual censure towards preventive institutional policy, a context in which contemporary family-law scholarship has increasingly applied the doctrine (Rachmadhani et al., 2024).

Taken together, the existing literature—with Hammad's juristic analysis foremost among the studies directly addressing sex robots—has accomplished the essential task of articulating the legal prohibition of artificial intimacy. It has not, however, sufficiently examined the prohibition's institutional consequences or reframed the issue from one of personal wrongdoing into a broader crisis of legal meaning, marital purpose and communal responsibility. It is to that reframing, and to the case for *sadd al-dharā'i'* as a principal institutional safeguard for the moral and legal architecture of the Muslim community, that this study now turns.

Methodology

This study uses a two-phase approach that shifts the discussion about artificial intimacy away from moral categorisation into a critical exploration of Islamic legal and social philosophy. It does not seek to survey public opinion or assess technological potential descriptively. Instead, it employs qualitative analysis of doctrines based on classical *uṣūl al-fiqh*, together with selected psychological and sociological theories.

In the first phase, this study critically analyses the existing jurisprudential framework of artificial intimacy. The analysis begins from the prevailing juristic position that artificial intimacy is *harām*. That position is derived from existing legal principles concerning the prohibition of unlawful sexual activity (*zinā*) and respect for human dignity. Then, the applicability of *ḍarūrah* and the principle of the lesser harm in this context is critically examined. According to the lesser-harm principle, the use of a robot for sexual purposes may be lawful when it is considered the option with lesser harm than committing *zinā*. The analysis then draws on the concept of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* and on the probable consequences of the practice. This study argues that because sex robots are mass-produced within a system of repeatable commercial and technological processes, their regular use is difficult to accommodate within a doctrine of *ḍarūrah* that is normally exceptional and temporary in nature. As a result, artificial intimacy is analysed not as personal wrongdoing but as a potential threat to the whole structure of Islamic marriage and law.

In the second phase of this study, a theoretical framework called *Digital Badal* is introduced. This framework involves technological substitution of the functions that are attributed to human relationships in *nikāḥ*. The introduction of *Digital Badal* draws on three psychological and sociological theories:

- i. The Effort Heuristic: This concept is used along with the idea of *taḳlīf* (moral accountability) to analyse the impact of the frictionless design of a robot on the development of patience and mutual responsibility. The study explores the possibility that the lack of effort in a human-robot relationship undermines the morally formative aspect of the marriage.
- ii. Social Exchange Theory (SET): This theory is applied to analyse how the removal of mutual risk and costs makes it difficult to develop *rahmah* (mercy) and moral capital in the relationship. Instead of treating human intimacy as a fully controlled process, this study focuses on the moral value of reciprocal sacrifice.
- iii. Cognitive Dissonance Theory: This theory is applied to the explanation of how users may reconcile their preference for an artificial companion with religious and moral beliefs about reciprocal human relationships. In this study, such reconciliation is seen as a process that involves metaphorical use of a “moral intoxicant” or *Digital Waswasah*, which conditions the user to

become intolerant of the natural imperfections of human relationships. Therefore, that process is discussed in terms of *ḥifẓ al-‘aql*.

Results and Discussion

The prohibition (*ḥarām*) of sexual intimacy with a robot is treated in this study as an established position within contemporary Islamic legal discourse. Although this legal classification is essential, a binary determination of permissibility or prohibition alone is inadequate to address the wider implications of artificial intimacy. The main finding of the study is that the sex robot is not merely an object of prohibited sexual desire; rather, it functions as a *Digital Badal*: a systematic form of technological substitution that displaces the spiritual, relational and legal purposes of *nikāḥ* with technological utility.

The analysis therefore shifts from the micro-ethical question of individual conduct towards a broader macro-ethical examination of the technology's institutional and social implications. More specifically, it asks why artificial intimacy has emerged in a form capable of challenging established theological, marital and social paradigms. From this perspective, the use of a sex robot is examined not merely as an individual act of wrongdoing but as a potential manifestation of a wider failure in the social covenant that warrants prospective institutional analysis grounded in *uṣūl al-fiqh*. This discussion is therefore concerned not only with the private intention of the user but also the possible consequences of the technology's commercial availability and social normalisation.

The Substitution of Taklīf: Eliminating Moral Labour and Reassessing the Necessity Argument

The central concern is that sex robots displace the reciprocal moral agency presupposed by *nikāḥ*. This study examines that concern by bringing the psychological concept of the 'Effort Heuristic' into dialogue with the theological concept of *taklīf*. The Islamic marriage contract is a solemn covenant between two morally and legally accountable persons (*mukallaḥūn*), each of whom assumes reciprocal rights and responsibilities. Thus, marriage is perceived not only as something that gives people pleasure but also as an environment where moral duty, self-control and spiritual growth occur.

As the hadith quoted above indicates, marriage completes half of the religion, and it is therefore among the principal settings in which *taklīf* is discharged.

The 'Effort Heuristic' describes the tendency to place greater value on objects or outcomes that require significant personal effort (Kruger et al., 2004). Applied with caution, the concept helps explain why a technologically frictionless form of intimacy may fail to reproduce the morally formative qualities of a reciprocal human relationship. An artificial companion is designed to reduce disagreement, vulnerability and mutual demands, while marriage typically requires patience, negotiation, sacrifice and responsibility.

This distinction is especially important when considering the juristic argument that the use of a sex robot could be permitted under the doctrine of necessity as the lesser of two evils (*ikhtiyār ahwan al-sharrayn*) where the alternative is committing *zinā*. Identifying the lesser harm, however, requires a careful comparison of the moral, psychological, social and spiritual consequences of both *zinā* and sex-robot use. It should not simply be assumed that one will always represent the lesser evil in every situation.

The relevant juristic discussion draws on the positions of the Hanafī and Hanbali schools regarding masturbation in cases where a person genuinely fears committing *zinā* and is unable to marry. These concessions, however, are generally presented as limited responses to exceptional and immediate circumstances. This study contends that the same reasoning cannot automatically be extended to sex robots. The classical discussions on masturbation concern an individual facing an urgent personal crisis and using his or her own body. Such conduct does not normally depend on the creation of a permanent commercial system, nor does it introduce an external substitute for a human partner. A sex robot, by contrast, is an industrially manufactured and repeatable alternative to reciprocal human intimacy.

The study therefore identifies three structural weaknesses in extending the necessity argument to artificial intimacy.

- i. Failure to Differentiate between Temporary Relief and Permanent Substitution: Where the doctrine of necessity allows for taking recourse to some lesser harm in order to avoid some greater one, such an approach is subject to the known restrictions of the doctrine (Shavit, 2014). A sex

robot in this study is considered a Digital Badal, a permanent technological substitute for a human spouse. Extending the doctrine of necessity to such cases might turn a temporary personal allowance into a justification for the development of a technological industry. The issue is thus not only about making a choice between two individual actions. It involves a choice between an immediate personal sin and a commercial system capable of transforming the nature of people's intimacy expectations and reducing the need for marriage.

- ii. The Industrialisation of *Darūrah*: The doctrine of necessity is normally considered an exceptional and proportionate solution to an urgent situation. The limitation is expressed in a maxim: necessity is measured according to its proper extent (*al-darūrah tuqaddaru bi-qadarihā*) (Dien, 2004). The industrialisation of sex robots might thus turn a temporary and proportionate personal need into an ordinary and repetitive technological convenience. What is more, where a product is advertised as a necessity for emotional or sexual satisfaction, it might generate the feeling of necessity that would later serve to justify its use. It might also change users' expectations in such a way that they would come to see ordinary human partners as less attractive and less adequate. Thus, the industrial production of a necessity makes its legal assessment more problematic.
- iii. Displacement of *Taklīf*: The classical solutions to the problem of masturbation presuppose a *mukallaf* who remains able to return to lawful human intimacy and to fulfil the duties attaching to it. A sex robot, on the other hand, is created to exclude many moral requirements of human relations from the life of the user. The 'Effort Heuristic' is not a legal solution per se. Nevertheless, it helps in analysing whether the systematic elimination of difficulties could lead to the user's reluctance to engage in efforts. Using a robot under *darūrah* might thus turn a temporary concession into a regular habit of consumption that would undermine the willingness of the user to make reciprocal efforts. The paradox here is that while an individual is protected from one serious sexual transgression, the user may become accustomed to practices that undermine his or her capacity for lawful intimate life, repentance and social activities. In that respect, a sex robot has the potential to displace a morally formative environment of *'ibādah* with technologically driven pleasures.

Algorithmic Reductionism: The Pathology of Raḥmah and the Failure of Sakīnah

The second concern is what this study terms *Algorithmic Reductionism*: the reduction of the marital purposes of tranquillity (*sakīnah*), love (*mawaddah*) and mercy (*raḥmah*) into programmable responses, even though they are considered the fundamental pillars of the marital relationship by the Qur'an (Surah Al-Rum, 30:21). As it is understood in the theory proposed here, *raḥmah* is not just affection but also the active manifestation of forbearance, compassion and moral discipline towards another human being who is an autonomous and imperfect individual. The effort of dealing with imperfection could be part of emotional and spiritual development.

The 'Social Exchange Theory' (SET) is used to investigate why the robot is unable to generate *raḥmah*. *SET holds that relationships are defined partly by perceptions of cost, reward, alternatives and exchange patterns* (Stafford & Kuiper, 2021). Human interaction involves trade-offs: individuals often risk vulnerability and emotional pain to experience deeper rewards, including compassion and peace. By contrast, the digital exchange presents a relationship that has no risk and no cost, at least at the emotional or moral level, since the robot is imagined as an ideal servant that has no independent will and cannot make mistakes or commit betrayal, despite the very real financial and practical costs of purchasing and maintaining such a machine. The resulting contradiction is clear: by removing cost and risk, the robot also removes the mechanism through which genuine moral capital is created. Sexual closeness therefore becomes a pretence of *raḥmah*, an empty echo of intimacy.

The robot thereby inhibits the user's ability to experience genuine *raḥmah* and renders the user spiritually desensitised and emotionally dysfunctional in relation to real-life commitments. This *Algorithmic Reductionism*, the reduction of the profound notion of *raḥmah* to a line of code, shows that the robotic relationship lacks any metaphysical justification in Islamic law.

The Psychological Disorder: Digital Waswasah and Cognitive Dissonance

The *Digital Badal* crisis is also reflected at the level of individual psychology, where the objective of *ḥifẓ al-ʿaql* must be reconsidered. Traditionally, this objective underpins the prohibition of intoxicants (*khamr*) because they impair sound judgement and moral agency. The Qurʾan condemns *khamr* not only because of its chemical effect but also because of its social harms, including the provocation of enmity (*ʿadāwah*) and hatred (*baghdāʾ*) and the diversion of individuals from the remembrance of God and prayer:

Translation: O you who believed, indeed, intoxicants, gambling, (sacrificing on) stone altars (to other than Allah), and divining arrows are but defilement from the work of Satan, so avoid it that you may be successful. Satan only wants to cause between you animosity and hatred through intoxicants and gambling and to avert you from the remembrance of Allah and from prayer. So will you not desist?

(Surah Al-Maʿidah, 5:90-91)

This study argues that the idealised digital companion is a moral and psychological intoxicant—a *Digital Waswasah*, or an intrusive, whispering influence upon the heart—that produces comparable social harm by rewiring the heart rather than chemically altering the mind. Cognitive Dissonance Theory provides conceptual support for this argument. Human beings seek internal consistency; when two beliefs conflict and produce dissonance, individuals may adjust one of those beliefs to reduce psychological discomfort (Dilakshini & Mohan Kumar, 2020). Within an actual marriage, such dissonance is productive and leads to moral action. By contrast, the robot provides idealised harmony, creating a new and distorted baseline expectation. The user’s mind is conditioned to expect a frictionless, zero-dissonance utopia.

The consequence is that when the user, conditioned by this continuous inner murmur of effortless perfection, returns to the complexities of human existence, the ordinary and necessary dissonance of an actual relationship becomes psychologically intolerable. The user is thereby conditioned to resolve dissonance through withdrawal, anger and rejection instead of addressing it through moral effort, which is precisely the outcome against which the Qurʾan cautions. The robot corrupts the intellect not by dulling it but by conditioning it to an unattainable reality, thereby eroding the social capacity for tolerance and compromise and transforming the user into a harmful and disruptive force in society.

Sociological Barrenness and Maṣlaḥah-Based Policy Defence

The final and most important finding of this study is the shift from personal sin to industrialised collective harm. The expanding artificial-intimacy industry has a serious effect on public interest and the central objective of protecting family life. Why, then, must the state intervene in an apparently private market? The answer lies in the legal principle of blocking the means to harm. According to this principle, an action that leads to a prohibited or highly harmful outcome may itself be prohibited.

The relevant precedent is the prohibition of temporary marriage (*mutʿah*) (Huda, 2024). Most Sunni jurists prohibited *mutʿah* because, despite the involvement of two moral agents, the form of the contract privileges temporary individual utility over permanence, stability and responsibility for lineage, which are central to the *maṣlaḥah* of *nikāḥ*. If a human-to-human contract may be prohibited because it subverts the institution of marriage, the case against a non-sentient machine that structurally removes the need to form a family, contribute to lineage and perform *taḳlīf* is, according to this study, even stronger. This study considers the robot more structurally destructive than *mutʿah* because it risks producing sociological barrenness and demographic decline while lacking the moral agency through which *tawbah* (repentance) may occur.

This systemic threat moves the matter beyond personal *fiqh* into the sphere of public policy and governance (*siyāsah sharʿiyyah*). State intervention is therefore fully justified as a preventive measure to protect human moral infrastructure. The *Digital Badal* theory thus demonstrates that the robot is a profound moral failure precisely because it is an impeccable technological achievement. By removing spiritual challenges, it replaces divine wisdom with human technological hubris, an outcome that Islamic law cannot allow, and that Muslim governance must prevent prospectively.

Recommendations for a Preventive Defence Against Digital Badal

The analysis exposes a greater danger: technology promotes the belief that the most valuable aspects of life can be obtained without effort. The idealised, obedient robot promotes a myth that undermines the soul's capacity to undertake the moral effort essential to spiritual development (*taklīf*).

Thus, the Muslim response should be to restore the moral value of difficulty systematically and reconstruct the human infrastructure of mutual dependency. Simply banning the product is not enough; the desire for artificial substitutes must also be addressed by restoring the value of reciprocal human relationships. This requires bold policy measures and philosophical re-education.

The Legal Citadel: Establishing a Structural and Preventive Ban

The first step must be to close the supply channels for this technology decisively, not through vague morality clauses but through a strong, structural legal framework. For the reasons set out above, treating the robot as the lesser evil through which to prevent adultery is a serious legal mistake. To legalise its sale on the basis of necessity is to legalise an entire industry whose objective is to replace *nikāḥ*.

The principle of *sadd al-dharā'ī* should therefore be applied prospectively (Rachmadhani et al., 2024). The proposed application of the doctrine seeks not only to block the means leading to *zinā* but also to prevent the institutional breakdown of the family unit and the erosion of *ḥifẓ al-nasl*. Thus, Muslim governments should not view the sex robot as merely a vulgar toy but as a sociological threat to the moral fabric of the Islamic community. This requires a comprehensive prohibition on the research, production, importation and commercial trade of advanced artificial-intimacy devices.

This is a declaration of sovereignty—a declaration that human moral agency and the human family are non-negotiable resources that cannot be outsourced to a machine. This policy should not be presented as conservative moral policing but as a preventive measure to protect citizens from a technology that actively undermines their ability to love, empathise and contribute to society. Removing the product would also remove the false choice it creates and direct the individual towards the difficult but spiritually rewarding process of human connection.

The Educational Counter-Badal: Rebuilding the Moral Muscle of Raḥmah

A legal prohibition addresses the product, not the attitude that creates the demand for a frictionless partner. This study finds that the robot capitalises on the psychological desire for perfection, thereby weakening the emotional capacity required for commitment. Hence, the second pillar should be a systematic re-education campaign—a Counter-Badal—designed to challenge the assumptions of *Algorithmic Reductionism* and rehabilitate the spiritual worth of hard work. This is not a matter of preaching traditional roles; rather, it involves teaching the spiritual mechanics of love.

Religious education should no longer merely instruct individuals to be merciful; it should also teach them how to cultivate *raḥmah* (mercy) and *ṣabr* (patience) (Malik, 2024). This demands a substantial change in religious and community teaching. First, a sustained philosophical campaign should be initiated to challenge the popular expectation of frictionless consumption in relationships. Teachers should draw upon the Effort Heuristic to explain that the value of *nikāḥ* does not lie in immediate gratification but in the considerable effort it requires, including forgiveness, sacrifice and patience.

The spiritual reward (*thawāb*) of marriage is directly proportionate to the emotional work invested in it. The imperfections of the human spouse are not necessarily obstacles to happiness but spiritual instruments through which God purifies and develops individual character. When a spouse errs, the response— forbearance, guidance and *raḥmah*—becomes an act of worship that cannot be rendered towards a machine incapable of error.

Second, this necessitates the redesigning of premarital and marital counselling, with an emphasis on active *raḥmah* as an emotional capacity. The counselling process should not be confined to communication skills but should also address the spiritual management of conflict. Couples need to be taught that moments of conflict are not necessarily failure but may become occasions for spiritual growth. They should also be taught that *raḥmah* is not merely an emotion but a conscious moral choice to act kindly even when anger appears justified.

This understanding—that the most difficult moments in marriage may be among its most spiritually rewarding occasions—is the philosophical antidote to the robot’s alluring assurance of effortless perfection. Helping individuals recognise the value of confronting relational difficulties may make them less inclined to seek frictionless technological alternatives. This educational defence remains essential even if technology advances to the point of simulating sentience. Individuals may nevertheless reject such technology on deeper rational and spiritual grounds because it cannot provide the reciprocal moral context required for the fulfilment of their principal spiritual responsibilities.

The Social Safety Net: Rebuilding the Ummah as an Anti-Solipsism Network

The “necessity” argument, that people may turn to robots to avoid *zinā*, reveals a serious failure within the community. If a person considers a machine to be the only available solution, this indicates deep loneliness and an absence of adequate social support. The third pillar addresses the sociological causes of the issue: the social safety net of the ummah must be collectively rebuilt to address the isolation that leads individuals towards digital solipsism. Communities should not wait until the crisis occurs; they should actively establish accessible, affordable and supportive avenues for human connection.

First, the most straightforward means of reducing demand for artificial substitutes is to make lawful marriage more accessible. The economic costs of marriage—the excessive *mahr*, expectations of extravagant weddings and the burdens of educational and housing debt among young couples—constitute substantial unintended barriers to *ḥifẓ al-nasl* (Showkat et al., 2022). The capacity to marry should therefore be supported through community policy. Government agencies, mosques and Islamic centres must collaborate to ensure that the cost of *nikāḥ* is significantly reduced and that young couples are assisted in establishing stable households. No financially stable and willing Muslim should be prevented from marrying because of avoidable social or economic barriers.

Second, strong, stigma-free systems of support for loneliness and conflict management should be established. This entails setting up community-based, confidential counselling and mentorship programmes. Lonely and single individuals should have access to safe and supportive social groups that meet their need for companionship within religiously appropriate settings. Couples experiencing serious conflict should have easy access to experienced, impartial elders and counsellors who can help them develop empathy and understanding during difficult times. This support ensures that when individuals experience loneliness or frustration, they reach out to caring people instead of relying on an emotionless machine. The community must provide the first line of protection against digital solipsism by surrounding and supporting vulnerable individuals. Through collective actions, the community shows that each person matters, is seen and is supported in the effort to fulfil *taklīf* through real human relationships that are accessible, sustainable and adequately supported.

Conclusion

This study fundamentally reframes the debate on artificial intimacy. The sex robot is not merely a moral lapse; it is a *Digital Badal*—a systematic, technological substitute that removes the capacity for reciprocal responsibility required for spiritual development in Islam. The principal contribution of this study lies in its rejection of the simplistic “lesser of two harms” argument. This study contends that permitting the robot, even in cases of necessity, is a profound legal and philosophical error. It is not a temporary solution to individual wrongdoing but an industrial tool that permanently corrupts the soul, teaching the user to reject the difficult yet meaningful reality of human mercy and embrace the sterile perfection of a machine. By demanding zero effort and zero compromise, the robot produces a form of *Algorithmic Reductionism*, emptying the sacred covenant of *nikāḥ* of its spiritual content.

The rational conclusion is clear: the threat is structural, and the defence must be institutional. The Muslim community must apply the principle of blocking the means to harm in support of a total ban on the technology. The legal mechanism for this requires Muslim states to implement comprehensive legislation under the authority of *siyāsah shar‘iyyah*, prohibiting the manufacture, importation and sale of these devices. Enforcement should include discretionary penalties (*ta‘zīr*), ranging from significant financial fines to imprisonment for corporate entities and repeat individual offenders, thus undermining the economic viability of the *Digital Badal* industry. This is not an exercise in moral policing; it is a preventive defence of the human social contract, affirming that the divine design of human relationships

accommodates imperfection. True love, spiritual reward and human flourishing emerge from the difficult, high-effort crucible of mutual dependence—a challenge that the machine promises to remove and that the Muslim community must strive to restore. The ultimate goal is to make the difficult reality of human love an accessible, feasible and overwhelmingly supported choice.

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