In God We Trust, In AI We Ask: Religiosity and Moral Advice Seeking in the AI Age

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Abstract

As AI chatbots increasingly enter domains long considered uniquely human, such as moral guidance, questions arise about how they intersect with traditional frameworks like religion. While it is commonly assumed that religious individuals would resist AI intrusion in the moral sphere, we found the opposite. Across two pre-registered studies with a stratified U.S. sample (*N*=695), both self-reported religious engagement and religious belief consistently predict greater openness to seeking moral advice from AI systems. Parallel mediation models indicate that this relationship is mediated primarily by a broader disposition to seek moral guidance from multiple sources, and secondarily by perceived authority of AI as moral advisors. Rather than shielding individuals from AI's appeal in the moral domain, religiosity may systematically facilitate it. These findings carry broad societal implications for AI-mediated moral guidance, a new challenge requiring coordinated attention from technologists, faith communities, and policymakers alike.

Keywords: Religiosity, Moral Advice Seeking, Human-Computer Interaction

Word Count: 4999

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With 900 million weekly active ChatGPT users in early 2026 (OpenAI, 2026), AI chatbots[1] are rising to prominence among the most widely-used tools from which people seek guidance on consequential decisions. From technical assistance to social decisions like dating (Cunningham, 2025), investment (Alves, 2025), and hiring (Gorelick, 2025), artificial intelligence is becoming increasingly embedded in domains once reserved for human judgment. More recently, AI has entered explicitly religious contexts, with millions interacting with AI chatbots framed as spiritual guides or even deities to explore religious moral teachings or confessing their moral failings(L. Jackson, 2025; Kuper, 2025)

At first glance, this phenomenon might seem strange for many reasons. First, religious institutions have been vocally resistant to AI in faith-based practice. In that vein, the Vatican cautioned against substituting God for artifacts (Fernández et al., 2025), Pope Leo XIV (2026) warned against relying on AI oracle, and an AI "priest" hosted on Catholic.com was promptly stripped of its clerical title within two days of its launch following public backlash (Hoopes, 2024). Second, previous studies in human-robot interaction suggest exposure to embodied AI (e.g., robot preachers) undermines religious commitment (J. C. Jackson et al., 2023). Taken together, these findings might suggest that morality is a domain that *ought to* be reserved

[1] Throughout this manuscript, the terms "artificial intelligence," "AI," "AI chatbots," and "AI systems" refer primarily to LLM-based conversational chatbots, as reflected in our measures. We recognize that artificial intelligence encompasses a far broader range of technologies; however, we focus on chatbot-based interaction because, for much of the public in 2024–2026, AI chatbots represent the most salient and familiar face of artificial intelligence.

exclusively for human judgement, and in accord with that view, research shows that people view machine-mediated moral decisions as potentially problematic (Bigman & Gray, 2018). Yet, at the very least, the popularity of religious AI chatbots suggests that resistance and openness might well coexist within religious populations. Rather than treating this as a simple contradiction, we treat it as a theoretically informative asymmetry. The same features of religiosity that generate wariness toward AI chatbots may, through distinct psychological pathways, also generate openness to AI moral counsel. The present paper aims to begin identifying those pathways.

May the Very Nature of Religion Forster Openness to Advice from a Wide Array of Sources, Including Artificial Intelligence?

Here, we consider that religion may shape openness to AI guidance in ways that go beyond doctrinal content alone and that defy conventional wisdom on how people tend to view AI's infiltration into human social affairs. Across traditions, religion often involves recurring engagement with questions of meaning (C. Smith, 2017), morality (Baumsteiger et al., 2013; Duriez & Soenens, 2006; McKay & Whitehouse, 2015), and authority (Gifford, 2005), while also cultivating psychological orientations such as humility (Aghababaei et al., 2016), openness to wisdom (White et al., 2024), anthropomorphic thinking (Guthrie, 2021), and sensitivity to agency (Boyer, 2001). These features of religious life may make some believers especially receptive to seeking guidance from sources that appear knowledgeable, responsive, and morally relevant, including AI chatbots. As such, and in contrast to the recent AI-resistance espoused by formal religious institutions (e.g., Fernández et al., 2025; Leo XIV, 2026) and the budding documentation of widespread psychological resistance to AI systems occupying increasingly complex social roles (Rubin et al., 2025; Wenger et al., 2026), we predict that religiosity itself may predict openness to AI advice positively, rather than negatively. We stake this prediction

partly on the basis of what religion teaches, and partly on the basis of the habits of mind and social cognition it tends to foster. Below, we outline a number of candidate mechanisms that may support a positive relationship between religiosity and AI advice seeking.

Religion and the Disposition to Moral Consultation

Religions across traditions often involve structured moral deliberation, and engagement with ethical questions as central practices that shape communal life and individual identity (McKay & Whitehouse, 2015; C. Smith, 2017). Religious rituals, texts, and communities provide settings where believers reflect on moral norms, deliberate about right action, and seek guidance from diverse sources such as clergy, scripture, and self-reflection (Baumsteiger et al., 2013; Gifford, 2005). These practices make consulting multiple sources of moral guidance a routine part of religious life. This disposition toward moral consultation may incline religious believers to seek moral advice from AI, much as they consult clergy or family. We therefore expect religiosity to predict greater openness to AI moral advice as it fosters a broader tendency to seek moral guidance in general and from diverse sources. Accordingly, we examine both the frequency of seeking moral advice from 13 non-AI, non-religious sources and general interest in seeking such advice across those same sources as potential mediators of this association.

Religion and Epistemic Humility

Epistemic humility, intellectual curiosity, and openness to higher wisdom are valued across many religious traditions and may have implications for where believers seek guidance (Porter et al., 2016). Although the relationship between religiosity and intellectual humility varies (Choe et al., 2024), religious commitment is associated with Honesty-Humility, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness, alongside a greater orientation toward virtuous self-development and receptivity to moral learning (Aghababaei et al., 2016). These dispositions may

lower resistance to consulting novel or unconventional sources outside the self, provided they are perceived as potentially informative or wisdom-bearing. Other evidence similarly suggests that adults from diverse religious backgrounds attribute greater moral goodness to people who display curiosity about both religious and scientific topics (White et al., 2024), consistent with the possibility that religious individuals may value openness in the pursuit of truth. On this basis, religiosity may predict greater interest in seeking moral advice from novel sources, including AI, partly because religious life fosters a general disposition toward humble, curious, and guidance-oriented engagement with morally relevant input.

Religion and Moral Objectivism

A related candidate mechanism concerns beliefs about the nature of morality itself. Many religious believers understand morality as grounded in objective and universal truths rather than something constructed or shaped solely by context, relationships, or personal perspective. Consistent with this view, 61% of highly religious Americans endorsed moral objectivism (G. A. Smith et al., 2025). When morality is seen as objective, the epistemic channel assessing that moral truth may matter less than the source's capability to convey it. A machine, clergy member, or scripture may all serve as potentially viable conduits of an underlying moral reality. This contrasts with the situational or relational views, where the moral advisor's identity, credibility, and social position determine guidance's validity or meaning (Hohenberg & Guess, 2023). Moral objectivists, by this logic, may face a lower psychological barrier to considering AI as an acceptable source of moral input, not necessarily because they trust AI more, but because they trust the underlying moral structure that any (reliable) source might reflect.

Religiosity and Positive Perceptions of Artificial Intelligence

"In a world without gods, there is plenty of room for substitutes in the marketplace (Geraci, 2024, p. 299)." The parallels between AI and religious deities may offer another route through which religiosity fosters openness to AI moral guidance. Like deities, generative AI chatbots possess features that seem quasi-omniscient, quasi-omnipotent, and disembodied. They are trained on vast corpora of knowledge, remain continuously available, are relatively indefatigable, and operate from an invisible but ever-present digital "cloud". Interactions with them are often private, immediate, nonjudgmental, and marked by expressed empathy (Ovsyannikova et al., 2025). They are also perceived as capable of engaging moral questions competently (Dillion et al., 2025), and users sometimes report feeling "more heard" by them than by other humans (Yin et al., 2024). In religious traditions that encourage ongoing dialogue with a higher power and continuous pursuit of wisdom, these qualities may make AI chatbots feel like intuitively plausible partners for moral reflection (C. Smith, 2017). We therefore propose that religiosity may be associated with more favorable general perceptions of AI chatbots, including greater perceived authority of AI on moral matters, and more positive evaluations of chatbots as sources of good moral advice. These perceptions may, in turn, serve as candidate mechanisms linking religiosity to openness to AI moral advice.

Religiosity and Anthropomorphism

Religion has long been characterized by a tendency to perceive the world in humanlike terms, especially by attributing agency, intention, and mind to unseen or ambiguous forces (Guthrie, 2021). Correspondingly, in several analyses of basic worldviews, religion and spirituality were most strongly associated with perceiving the world as "alive" (Clifton et al., 2019; Kerry et al., 2025). More broadly, anthropomorphism is thought to arise from the

accessibility of human-centered knowledge, the motivation to understand and predict other agents, and the desire for social connection (Epley et al., 2007), processes relevant to both deities and AI chatbots, which now display an unprecedented degree of conversational humanlikeness. We propose that religious individuals may be especially likely to extend these tendencies to AI. In particular, religion is associated with a "hypertrophy of social cognition" (Boyer, 2001), or a heightened readiness to infer agency and intention in ambiguous contexts, as well as with mind-body dualist intuitions that make it easier to conceive of minds as existing apart from physical bodies (Bloom, 2007). Together, these tendencies may make AI chatbots seem more mind-like, agentic, and socially meaningful to religious individuals, thereby increasing openness to seeking moral advice from them.

Studies 1 and 2

Building on the literature outlined above, the present research examines whether religiosity predicts greater openness to seeking moral advice from AI chatbots, and whether this relationship operates through multiple psychological mechanisms. In Study 1, we assessed candidate mediators including the disposition to seek moral consultation from various sources, epistemic humility, moral objectivism, and positive perceptions of AI chatbots as moral advisors. In Study 2, we extended the model by focusing on the tendency to anthropomorphize AI chatbots as an additional candidate mechanism, alongside other personality traits, including fear of negative judgment, self-reflective tendencies and deference to authority as secondary potential mechanisms through which religious people may be more likely to seek moral advice from AI chatbots.

Together, these studies advance a counterintuitive claim. Namely, religiosity, far from insulating individuals from AI's entrance to the moral domain, may systematically facilitate it. If

AI chatbots can influence the moral reasoning of religious individuals, the implications extend well beyond psychology. At the societal level, widespread AI-mediated moral guidance could reshape the role of institutional religion, alter the texture of communal life, and redefine individual moral identity. These stakes make the question of how AI systems are designed, deployed, and regulated in morally contested contexts not merely a technical one, but a matter of public policy, one that will require coordinated attention from technology companies, faith communities, and policymakers alike.

Method

Participants

All participants were recruited through Prolific. Responses were excluded if they were incomplete, flagged by Qualtrics as likely fraudulent, contained a duplicated Prolific ID, or failed the requisite attention checks. Two pilot studies were reported in Supplementary. The two pre-registered studies used stratified sampling to ensure balanced representation across sex, age, ethnicity (based on simplified U.S. census categories), and political affiliation. The demographic characteristics for Study 1 and Study 2 are presented in Table 1.

Study 1 (*N*=348; pre-registered: https://aspredicted.org/mv2z-t7dw.pdf; data collected March 27, 2025) and Study 2 (*N*=347; pre-registered: https://aspredicted.org/z378hg.pdf; data collected September 23–25, 2025) served as the formal replication and mediation samples. All data and supplementary materials are at: https://osf.io/qfv9d/.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Study 1 and Study 2

Characteristic	Study 1	Study 2
Data Collection Date	March 27, 2025	September 23–25, 2025
Sample Size (N)	348	347
Age (Mean +/- SD)	45.52 +/- 16.12	45.24 +/- 15.77
Gender - Woman	177 (50.86%)	172 (49.57%)
Gender - Man	170 (48.85%)	170 (48.99%)
Gender - Other	1 (0.29%)	4 (1.15%)
Gender - Prefer not to disclose	0 (0%)	1 (0.29%)
SES (1-10) (Mean +/- SD)	5.26 +/- 1.77	5.01 +/- 1.66
Political Leaning (1-7) (Mean +/- SD)	3.86 +/- 1.86	3.93 +/- 1.85
Race - Black or African American	45 (12.93%)	45 (12.97%)
Race - East Asian	13 (3.74%)	11 (3.17%)
Race - Hispanic or Latina/o/x/e	17 (4.89%)	23 (6.63%)
Race - Indigenous American, American Indian, or Alaska Native	5 (1.44%)	3 (0.86%)
Race - Middle Eastern or North African	5 (1.44%)	0 (0%)
Race - South Asian	6 (1.72%)	9 (2.59%)
Race - Southeast Asian	8 (2.3%)	10 (2.88%)
Race - White	213 (61.21%)	210 (60.52%)
Race - Other	2 (0.57%)	3 (0.86%)
Race - Multirace	33 (9.48%)	33 (9.51%)
Race - Did not answer	1 (0.29%)	0 (0%)
Faith - Agnostic	52 (14.94%)	64 (18.44%)
Faith - Atheist	30 (8.62%)	41 (11.82%)

Characteristic	Study 1	Study 2
Faith - Buddhist	3 (0.86%)	3 (0.86%)
Faith - Christian	203 (58.33%)	197 (56.77%)
Faith - Hindu	2 (0.57%)	5 (1.44%)
Faith - Jewish	4 (1.15%)	4 (1.15%)
Faith - Muslim	4 (1.15%)	4 (1.15%)
Faith - Other	36 (10.34%)	21 (6.05%)
Faith - Multifaith	14 (4.02%)	8 (2.31%)

Materials and Procedure

All participants completed the study on Qualtrics. After providing informed consent, they answered a series of questionnaires presented primarily in randomized order to reduce order effects. Demographic questions were administered at the end of the survey.

The primary aim of both pre-registered studies was to test the hypothesis that religiosity, both self-reported and as indexed by behavioral frequency, positively predicts the propensity to seek moral advice and guidance from AI chatbots. Study 1 and Study 2 used the same independent variables (*self-reported religiosity* and *Religious Behavior Score*), and the same primary and secondary outcomes (frequency of and interest in seeking moral advice from AI chatbots, respectively) but differed in the set of potential mediators examined. The primary outcome was *frequency of seeking moral advice from AI chatbots* ("How often do you seek moral advice from an AI chatbot?"; 1=*never*, 7=*once a day or more*). We also assessed participants' *interest in seeking moral advice from AI chatbots* ("How interested are you in seeking moral advice or guidance from each of the below sources?"; 1=*not at all*, 7=*extremely*) as a secondary outcome; all analyses of secondary outcomes are reported in the Supplementary.

To assess participants' broader disposition to moral consultation, both studies measured frequency of and interest in seeking moral advice from 18 sources. To compute each composite, we averaged across 13 non-AI, non-religious sources. Five sources were excluded to avoid criterion contamination with the outcome ("Chatbots/ AI assistants") and predictor (three explicitly religious sources), and because internal deliberation ("Yourself") does not constitute external guidance.

Following the theoretical framework outlined in the Introduction, potential mediators were organized into six clusters: (a) moral consultation disposition (overall frequency of and interest in seeking moral advice from non-AI, non-religious sources); (b) epistemic humility (*open-mindedness on moral issues*, and in Study 1, *general curiosity* and *intellectual humility* assessed via two convergent scales); (c) moral objectivism (*belief in moral objectivity*); (d) positive perception of AI chatbots (*perceived authority of AI chatbots as moral advisors*, and in Study 1, *perceived valence of AI chatbots as moral advisors*); (e) *tendency to anthropomorphize AI chatbots* (Study 2 only); and (f) other personality traits (Study 2 only; *fear of negative judgment*, *self-reflective tendency*, and *deference to authority* via two convergent measures). Study 1 tested clusters (a)–(d). Study 2 retained clusters (a)–(d) and added clusters (e)–(f). Three measures were revised between studies: *self-reported religiosity* was rescaled from 5-point to 7-point to match the response format of all other measures; *belief in moral objectivity* was changed from a bipolar slider (-50~+50) to a 7-point Likert scale to standardize the response format; and in *perceived authority of AI chatbots as moral advisors*, the word *accurate* was removed (i.e., "trusted authorities for giving accurate moral advice" became "trusted authorities to give moral advice") to better reflect the nature of advice-seeking. Several measures from Study 1 were not

included in Study 2 to narrow the research focus and reduce respondent burden. Table 2 summarizes all variables used across the two pre-registered studies.

Table 2

Variables Used in Study 1 and Study 2

Measure	Study 1	Study 2
Predictors		
Self-Reported Religiosity	"To what extent do you consider yourself to be religious?" (1=*not at all*, 5=*very*)	"To what extent do you consider yourself to be religious?" (1=*not at all*, 7=*extremely*)
Religious Behavior Score	Average of "How often do you attend religious services/ pray?" (1=*never*, 7=*once a day or more*)	Same as Study 1
Outcomes		
Frequency of Seeking Moral Advice from AI Chatbots	"How often do you seek moral advice from an AI chatbot?" (1=*never*, 7=*once a day or more*)	Same as Study 1
Interest in Seeking Moral Advice from AI Chatbots†	"How interested are you in seeking moral advice from an AI chatbot?" (1=*not at all*, 7=*extremely*)	Same as Study 1
Mediators		
(a) Moral consultation disposition		
Frequency of Seeking Moral Advice	Average frequency of seeking moral advice from 13 non-AI, non-religious sources (1=*never*, 7=*once a day or more*)	Same as Study 1
Interest in Seeking Moral Advice	Average interest in seeking moral advice from 13 non-AI, non-religious sources (1=*not at all*, 7=*extremely*)	Same as Study 1

Measure	Study 1	Study 2
(b) Epistemic humility		
Open-Mindedness on Moral Issues	Moral Curiosity Scale (Hartman, 2022)	Same as Study 1
General Open-Mindedness	Curiosity and Exploration Inventory-II (Kashdan et al., 2009)	—
Intellectual Humility (MMIH)	Multidimensional Intellectual Humility Scale (Alfano et al., 2017)	—
Intellectual Humility (CIHS)	Comprehensive Intellectual Humility Scale (Krumrei-Mancuso & Rouse, 2016)	—
(c) Moral objectivism		
Belief in Moral Objectivity	"To what extent do you believe that morality is objective or relative?" (slider: −50=*entirely relative* to +50=*entirely objective*)	"Do you believe that, in general, the answers to moral questions are objectively right or wrong, or they are based on people's subjective opinions and preferences?" (1=*definitely subjective*, 7=*definitely objective*)
(d) Positive perception of AI chatbots		
Perceived Authority of AI Chatbots	"Chatbots/AI assistants are trusted authorities for giving accurate moral advice" (1=*strongly disagree*, 7=*strongly agree*)	"Do you believe that chatbots/AI assistants are trusted authorities to give moral advice?" (1=*strongly disagree*, 7=*strongly agree*)
Perceived Valence of AI Chatbots	"Chatbots/AI assistants are _____ at giving moral advice" (1 = *extremely bad*, 7 = *extremely good*)	—
(e) Tendency to anthropomorphize AI chatbots		
Tendency to Anthropomorphize AI	—	Adapted Anthropomorphism Subscale of the Godspeed Questionnaire (Bartneck et al., 2009)

Measure	Study 1	Study 2
(f) Other personality traits		
Fear of Negative Judgment	—	Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (Leary, 1983)
Self-Reflective Tendencies	—	Self-reflection subscale of the Self-Reflection and Insight Scale (Grant et al., 2002)
Deference to Authority (MFQ-2)	—	Authority subscale of the Moral Foundation Questionnaire (MFQ-2) (Atari et al., 2023)
Deference to Authority (MAC-Q)	—	Deference subscale of the Morality-as-Cooperation Questionnaire (Curry et al., 2019)
Moderator		
Access to AI Chatbots	—	"How accessible do you find AI chatbots for giving moral advice or guidance?" (1=*not at all accessible*, 7=*completely accessible*)
Overall Access to Moral Advice Sources	—	Average accessibility across 13 non-AI, non-religious moral advice sources (1=*not at all accessible*, 7=*completely accessible*)

† Results for Interest in Seeking Moral Advice from AI Chatbots as the outcome largely mirror those for Frequency and are reported in the Supplementary Materials.

In Study 1, clusters (a) and (c) also collected non-moral-specific parallel measures (e.g., general frequency of and interest in seeking advice from non-AI, non-religious sources; belief in factual objectivity with "truth" in place of "morality"). These measures are included in the datasets, but the analyses are omitted for brevity, as the present study focuses on moral-specific

constructs. Study 2 removed these non-moral-specific measures to reduce participant fatigue and narrow research focus.

Results

Question 1 — Does Self-Reported Religiosity Predict Frequency of Seeking Moral Advice from AI Chatbots?

Across two pilot studies (reported in the Supplementary Materials) and two pre-registered studies, self-reported religiosity was positively and significantly correlated with the frequency of seeking moral advice from AI chatbots.

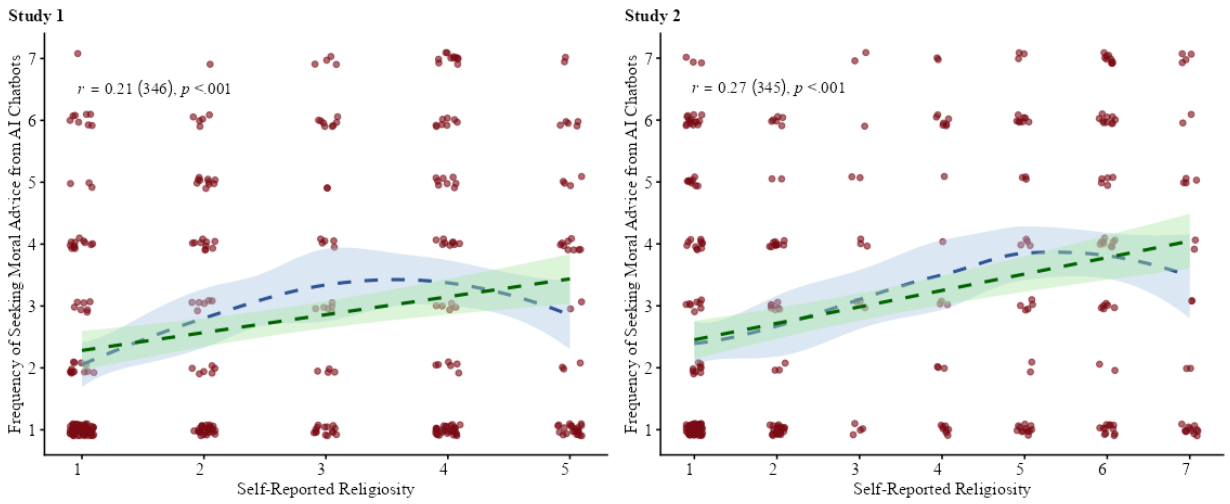
Table 3

Pearson Correlations Between Self-Reported Religiosity and Frequency of Seeking Moral Advice From AI Chatbots

Study	N	*r*	*t*	df	*p*
Study 1	348	0.21	3.96	346	<.001
Study 2	347	0.27	5.26	345	<.001

Figure 1

Self-Reported Religiosity and Frequency of Seeking Moral Advice from AI Chatbots



Note. Each panel shows jittered raw data points, a linear regression fit with 95% confidence band in green, and a LOESS trend line with 95% confidence band in blue. Pearson correlations are annotated within each panel.

Follow-up linear regression analyses confirmed that self-reported religiosity significantly predicted frequency of seeking moral advice from AI chatbots in both simple (Model 1) and covariate-adjusted models (Model 2).

Table 4

Self-Reported Religiosity Predicting Frequency of Seeking Moral Advice from AI Chatbots

	Model 1					Model 2				
Study	*b*	*SE*	95% CI LL	95% CI UL	*p*	*b*	*SE*	95% CI LL	95% CI UL	*p*
Study 1	0.29	0.07	0.15	0.43	< .001	0.25	0.08	0.09	0.41	0.002
Study 2	0.27	0.05	0.17	0.36	< .001	0.20	0.06	0.09	0.31	< .001

Note. Model 1 = simple regression. Model 2 = multiple regression controlling for age, education, income, SES, and political orientation.

Question 2 — Does Behavioral Religiosity Predict Frequency of Seeking Moral Advice from AI Chatbots?

While self-reported religiosity captures individuals' global self-identification as religious, behavioral measures may provide a more nuanced and less socially desirable index of religious engagement. We constructed a **Religious Behavior Score** averaging two items: "How often do you attend religious services/ pray?" (1=*never*, 7=*once a day or more*) to capture both social and individual aspects of religious engagement. In the remaining main analyses, we use this score as the primary predictor, deferring self-reported religiosity to Supplementary.

We first examined whether Religious Behavior Score predicts AI moral advice seeking across both studies.

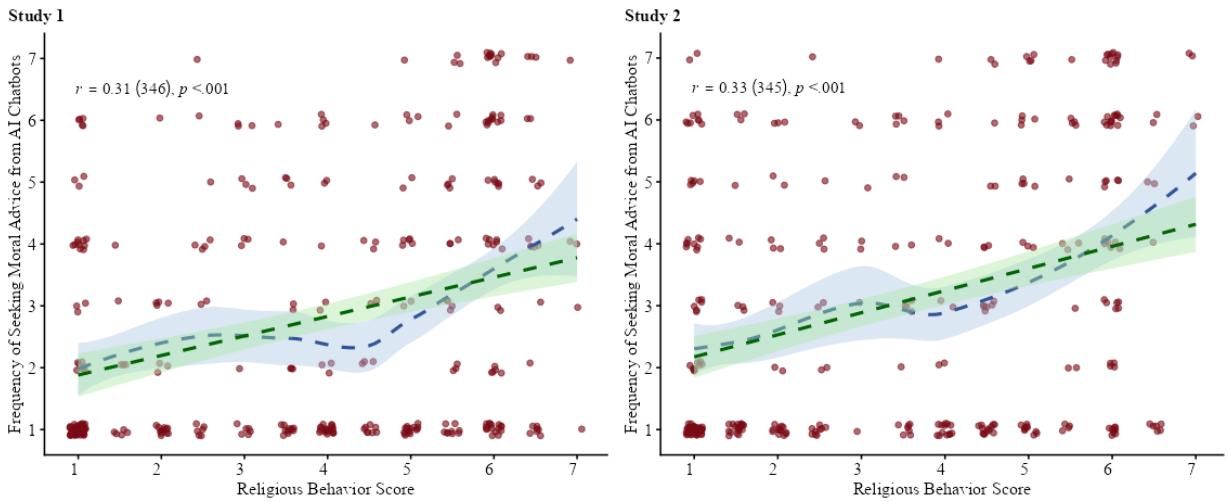
Table 5

Pearson Correlations Between Religious Behavior Score and Frequency of Seeking Moral Advice From AI Chatbots

Study	N	*r*	*t*	df	*p*
Study 1	348	0.31	6.05	346	<.001
Study 2	347	0.33	6.51	345	<.001

Figure 2

Religious Behavior Score and Frequency of Seeking Moral Advice from AI Chatbots



Note. Each panel shows jittered raw data points, a linear regression fit with 95% confidence band in green, and a LOESS trend line with 95% confidence band in blue. Pearson correlations are annotated within each panel.

Follow-up linear regression analyses confirmed that behavioral religiosity significantly predicted frequency of seeking moral advice from AI chatbots in both simple (Model 1) and covariate-adjusted models (Model 2), with effect sizes consistently exceeding those of self-reported religiosity.

Table 6

Religious Behavior Score Predicting Frequency of Seeking Moral Advice from AI Chatbots

	Model 1					Model 2				
Study	*b*	*SE*	95% CI LL	95% CI UL	*p*	*b*	*SE*	95% CI LL	95% CI UL	*p*
Study 1	0.32	0.05	0.21	0.42	< .001	0.30	0.06	0.18	0.42	< .001
Study 2	0.36	0.05	0.25	0.46	< .001	0.30	0.06	0.18	0.42	< .001

Note. Model 1 = simple regression. Model 2 = multiple regression controlling for age, education, income, SES, and political orientation.

Religious Behavior Score consistently and positively predicted the frequency of seeking moral advice from AI chatbots in Studies 1 and 2, effects that were robust to the inclusion of demographic covariates.

Question 3 — What Mediates the Relationship Between Religiosity and the Frequency of Seeking Moral Advice from AI Chatbots?

To identify mechanisms driving the relationship between religiosity and AI moral advice seeking, we examined several potential mediators (Table 2). We first conducted regression analyses (simple regression and multiple regression models adjusted for demographic covariates) to establish which mediators were significantly predicted by Religious Behavior Score. We then restricted mediation analyses to those reaching significance in at least one path-a model. Finally, we estimated a parallel mediation model for each study using structural equation modeling. To minimize criterion contamination among multiple mediators within the same cluster, we selected the mediator that accounted for the largest proportion of variance mediated from each significantly predicted cluster.

Table 7

Study 1: Religious Behavior Score Predicting Each Potential Mediator

Study	Model 1					Model 2				
	b	*SE*	95% CI LL	95% CI UL	*p*	*b*	*SE*	95% CI LL	95% CI UL	*p*
Overall Frequency of Seeking Moral Advice	0.26	0.03	0.19	0.32	< .001	0.23	0.04	0.15	0.31	< .001
Overall Interest in Seeking Moral Advice	0.21	0.03	0.14	0.27	< .001	0.18	0.04	0.11	0.26	< .001
General Open-Mindedness	1.02	0.23	0.57	1.46	< .001	1.16	0.26	0.65	1.66	< .001
Open-Mindedness on Moral Issues	1.14	0.41	0.33	1.96	0.006	1.48	0.46	0.57	2.39	0.002
Intellectual Humility (CIHS)	-0.21	0.28	-0.76	0.33	0.439	0.32	0.33	-0.33	0.96	0.337
Intellectual Humility (MMIH)	-0.53	0.51	-1.54	0.47	0.297	0.09	0.61	-1.11	1.28	0.885
Belief in Moral Objectivity	3.82	0.77	2.30	5.34	< .001	2.79	0.93	0.97	4.62	0.003
Perceived Valence of AI Chatbots as Moral Advisors	0.20	0.04	0.12	0.27	< .001	0.17	0.05	0.08	0.27	< .001
Perceived Authority of AI Chatbots as Moral Advisors	0.21	0.04	0.13	0.30	< .001	0.20	0.05	0.10	0.30	< .001

Note. Model 1 = simple regression. Model 2 = multiple regression controlling for age, education, income, SES, and political orientation.

Table 8

Study 2: Religious Behavior Score Predicting Each Potential Mediator

Study	Model 1					Model 2				
	b	*SE*	95% CI LL	95% CI UL	*p*	*b*	*SE*	95% CI LL	95% CI UL	*p*
Overall Frequency of Seeking Moral Advice	0.24	0.03	0.17	0.30	< .001	0.22	0.04	0.15	0.29	< .001
Overall Interest in Seeking Moral Advice	0.20	0.03	0.13	0.27	< .001	0.20	0.04	0.12	0.27	< .001
Open-Mindedness on Moral Issues	1.01	0.46	0.10	1.92	0.030	0.93	0.52	-0.09	1.96	0.074
Belief in Moral Objectivity	0.30	0.05	0.20	0.40	< .001	0.23	0.06	0.12	0.34	< .001
Perceived Authority of AI Chatbots as Moral Advisors	0.16	0.05	0.06	0.25	0.001	0.07	0.05	-0.03	0.18	0.178
Tendency to Anthropomorphize AI Chatbots	0.12	0.03	0.06	0.18	< .001	0.09	0.03	0.03	0.16	0.004
Fear of Negative Judgement	-0.35	0.33	-1.00	0.30	0.290	-0.04	0.36	-0.75	0.67	0.913
Self-Reflective Tendencies	0.44	0.36	-0.26	1.15	0.213	0.84	0.41	0.04	1.63	0.040
Deference to Authority (MFQ-2)	1.77	0.15	1.48	2.07	< .001	1.00	0.15	0.71	1.30	< .001
Deference to Authority (MAC-Q)	13.40	2.12	9.24	17.56	< .001	6.40	2.32	1.83	10.96	0.006

Note. Model 1 = simple regression. Model 2 = multiple regression controlling for age, education, income, SES, and political orientation.

In Study 1, Religious Behavior Score significantly predicted most potential mediators. In both simple and multiple regression models, Religious Behavior Score predicted overall frequency of and interest in seeking moral advice from non-AI, non-religious sources (cluster a), general open-mindedness, open-mindedness on moral issues, and intellectual humility measured by CIHS and MMIH (cluster b), belief in moral objectivity (cluster c), and perceived valence and authority of AI chatbots as moral advisors (cluster d). Intellectual humility (CIHS and MMIH; cluster b), was non-significant in both models and therefore excluded from subsequent analyses. In Study 2, Religious Behavior Score similarly predicted overall frequency of and interest in seeking moral advice (cluster a), open-mindedness on moral issues (cluster b), belief in moral objectivity (cluster c), and perceived authority of AI chatbots (cluster d). Among the newly added Study 2 measures, tendency to anthropomorphize AI chatbots (cluster e) and both measures of deference to authority (cluster f) were significantly predicted by Religious Behavior Score. Fear of negative judgment and self-reflective tendencies (cluster f) were non-significant and excluded from subsequent mediation analysis.

Table 9

Study 1: Individual Mediation Analyses

Mediators	Path a	Path b	Indirect (ab)			Direct c'	Full Model
	X -> M	M -> Y (given X)	Effect	95% CI LL	95% CI UL	X -> Y (given M)	Proportion Mediated
Overall Frequency of Seeking Moral Advice	0.26***	1.00***	0.26***	0.18	0.33	0.06	81.23%
Overall Interest in Seeking Moral Advice	0.21***	0.91***	0.19***	0.12	0.26	0.13**	58.85%
General Open-Mindedness	1.02***	0.08***	0.08***	0.04	0.12	0.24***	24.73%
Open-Mindedness on Moral Issues	1.14**	0.04***	0.04**	0.01	0.08	0.27***	13.79%
Belief in Moral Objectivity	3.82***	0.00	0.00	-0.03	0.03	0.31***	1.03%
Perceived Valence of AI Chatbots as Moral Advisors	0.20***	0.57***	0.11***	0.06	0.16	0.20***	35.22%
Perceived Authority of AI Chatbots as Moral Advisors	0.21***	0.55***	0.12***	0.07	0.17	0.20***	37.55%

Note. Religious Behavior Score → mediator → frequency of seeking moral advice from AI chatbots. Only mediators significant ($p <$ .05) in at least one regression model (simple or multiple) are included.

Table 10

Study 2: Individual Mediation Analyses

Mediators	Path a	Path b	Indirect (ab)			Direct c'	Full Model
	X -> M	M -> Y (given X)	Effect	95% CI LL	95% CI UL	X -> Y (given M)	Proportion Mediated
Overall Frequency of Seeking Moral Advice	0.24***	0.99***	0.24***	0.17	0.31	0.12*	66.04%
Overall Interest in Seeking Moral Advice	0.20***	0.82***	0.16***	0.11	0.23	0.19***	46.05%
Open-Mindedness on Moral Issues	1.01*	0.04***	0.04*	0.00	0.08	0.31***	12.22%
Belief in Moral Objectivity	0.30***	0.04	0.01	-0.02	0.05	0.34***	3.72%
Perceived Authority of AI Chatbots as Moral Advisors	0.16**	0.71***	0.11**	0.04	0.18	0.24***	31.55%
Tendency to Anthropomorphize AI Chatbots	0.12***	0.78***	0.09***	0.05	0.14	0.26***	26.03%
Self-Reflective Tendencies	0.44	0.02**	0.01	-0.01	0.03	0.35***	3.09%
Deference to Authority (MFQ-2)	1.77***	0.06**	0.11***	0.05	0.19	0.24***	31.76%
Deference to Authority (MAC-Q)	13.40***	0.01***	0.08***	0.04	0.13	0.28***	22.48%

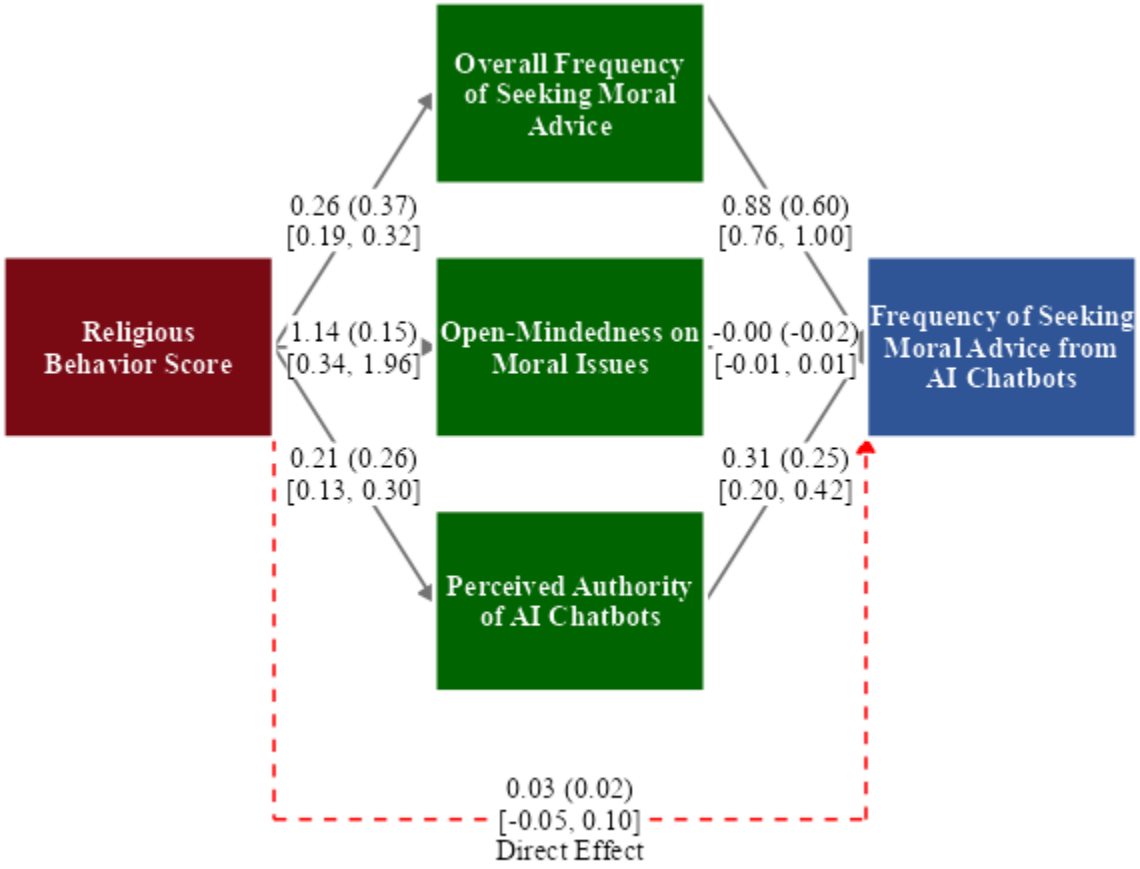
Note. Religious Behavior Score → mediator → frequency of seeking moral advice from AI chatbots. Only mediators significant ($p <$ .05) in at least one regression model (simple or multiple) are included.

Across both studies, the relationship between Religious Behavior Score and frequency of seeking moral advice from AI chatbots was most strongly mediated by individuals' overall tendency to seek moral advice from diverse non-AI, non-religious sources (cluster a). Perceived authority of AI chatbots as moral advisors (cluster d) served as a consistent secondary mediator in both studies, and open-mindedness on moral issues (cluster b) contributed to a smaller but reliable indirect effect. Among the new mediators introduced in Study 2, deference to authority (cluster f; both MFQ-2 and MAC-Q) and tendency to anthropomorphize AI chatbots (cluster e) also emerged as significant indirect pathways. Belief in moral objectivity (cluster c), fear of negative judgment and self-reflective tendencies (cluster f; Study 2 only) do not significantly mediate the relationship between Religious Behavior Score and frequency of seeking moral advice from AI chatbots and were excluded from parallel mediation analyses.

To examine the contribution of each mediator while accounting for their intercorrelations, we constructed a parallel mediation model for each study using the *lavaan* package in R (Rosseel, 2012). For each study, we selected the mediator with the highest proportion of variance mediated from each cluster significantly predicted by Religious Behavior Score. For Study 1 we included three mediators: overall frequency of seeking moral advice from non-AI sources (cluster a), open-mindedness on moral issues (cluster b), and perceived authority of AI chatbots as moral advisors (cluster d). Study 2 retained these three and added tendency to anthropomorphize AI chatbots (cluster e) and deference to authority — MFQ-2 (cluster f). All mediators included were allowed to intercorrelate, making both models saturated. Specific indirect effects were estimated using 5,000 bootstrap resamples.

Figure 3

Study 1: Parallel Mediation Model



Note. Edge labels show unstandardized b (standardized β in parentheses) and 95% bootstrap CI in brackets based on 5,000 bootstrap simulations. Mediator intercorrelations included in the model but omitted for clarity.

Table 11

Study 1: Full Parameter Estimates — Parallel Mediation

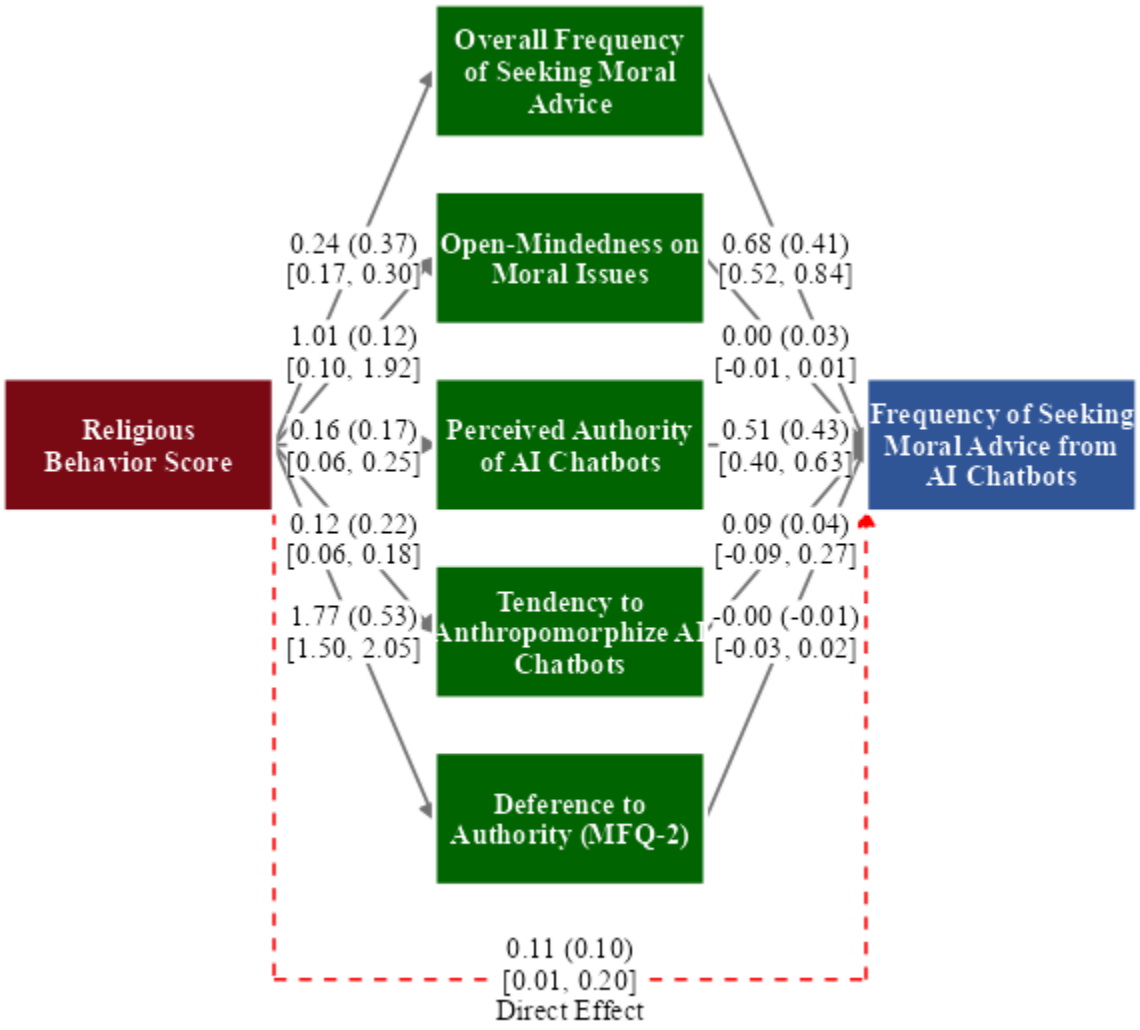
Path	*b*	*β*	SE	95% CI LL	95% CI UL	*p*
Religious Behavior Score → Overall Frequency of Seeking Moral Advice	0.256	0.369	0.035	0.186	0.325	<.001
Religious Behavior Score → Open-Mindedness on Moral Issues	1.141	0.146	0.410	0.342	1.961	0.005
Religious Behavior Score → Perceived Authority of AI Chatbots as Moral Advisors	0.215	0.262	0.043	0.130	0.299	<.001
Overall Frequency of Seeking Moral Advice → AI Moral Frequency	0.882	0.600	0.064	0.756	1.003	<.001
Open-Mindedness on Moral Issues → AI Moral Frequency	-0.002	-0.016	0.005	-0.013	0.009	0.702
Perceived Authority of AI Chatbots as Moral Advisors → AI Moral Frequency	0.310	0.249	0.057	0.197	0.421	<.001
Religious Behavior Score → AI Moral Frequency (direct)	0.026	0.025	0.040	-0.054	0.103	0.528
Overall Frequency of Seeking Moral Advice ~~ Open-Mindedness on Moral Issues	9.059	0.461	1.101	6.833	11.161	<.001
Overall Frequency of Seeking Moral Advice ~~ Perceived Authority of AI Chatbots as Moral Advisors	0.691	0.342	0.117	0.460	0.918	<.001
Open-Mindedness on Moral Issues ~~ Perceived Authority of AI Chatbots as Moral Advisors	4.683	0.194	1.325	2.013	7.274	<.001
Indirect via Overall Frequency of Seeking Moral Advice	0.226	0.221	0.037	0.157	0.302	<.001
Indirect via Open-Mindedness on Moral Issues	-0.002	-0.002	0.007	-0.016	0.010	0.720

Path	*b*	*β*	SE	95% CI LL	95% CI UL	*p*
Indirect via Perceived Authority of AI Chatbots as Moral Advisors	0.067	0.065	0.019	0.034	0.108	<.001
Total indirect effect	0.290	0.284	0.041	0.210	0.373	<.001

Note. Columns: Path = model relationship; b = unstandardized coefficient; β = standardized coefficient; SE = standard error; 95% CI LL/UL = lower and upper bounds of the percentile bootstrap 95% confidence interval; p = p-value. Row types: Predictor → Mediator rows are a paths; Mediator → Outcome rows are b paths; the direct row is the c′ path (predictor → outcome controlling for mediators); rows with ~~ are residual covariances between mediators; Indirect via rows are specific indirect effects (a × b); Total indirect effect is the sum of all specific indirect effects.

Figure 4

Study 2: Parallel Mediation Model



Note. Edge labels show unstandardized b (standardized β in parentheses) and 95% bootstrap CI in brackets based on 5,000 bootstrap simulations. Mediator intercorrelations included in the model but omitted for clarity.

Table 12

Study 2: Full Parameter Estimates — Parallel Mediation

Path	*b*	*β*	SE	95% CI LL	95% CI UL	*p*
Religious Behavior Score → Overall Frequency of Seeking Moral Advice	0.239	0.367	0.034	0.172	0.305	<.001
Religious Behavior Score → Open-Mindedness on Moral Issues	1.008	0.117	0.465	0.100	1.919	0.030
Religious Behavior Score → Perceived Authority of AI Chatbots as Moral Advisors	0.158	0.175	0.048	0.062	0.250	<.001
Religious Behavior Score → Tendency to Anthropomorphize AI Chatbots	0.120	0.223	0.030	0.062	0.177	<.001
Religious Behavior Score → Deference to Authority (MFQ-2)	1.775	0.535	0.143	1.496	2.053	<.001
Overall Frequency of Seeking Moral Advice → AI Moral Frequency	0.679	0.409	0.081	0.520	0.841	<.001
Open-Mindedness on Moral Issues → AI Moral Frequency	0.004	0.032	0.006	-0.007	0.015	0.474
Perceived Authority of AI Chatbots as Moral Advisors → AI Moral Frequency	0.512	0.429	0.060	0.396	0.629	<.001
Tendency to Anthropomorphize AI Chatbots → AI Moral Frequency	0.086	0.043	0.092	-0.093	0.269	0.349
Deference to Authority (MFQ-2) → AI Moral Frequency	-0.004	-0.011	0.014	-0.032	0.025	0.798
Religious Behavior Score → AI Moral Frequency (direct)	0.106	0.098	0.050	0.009	0.205	0.032
Overall Frequency of Seeking Moral Advice ~~ Open-Mindedness on Moral Issues	9.482	0.462	1.130	7.261	11.710	<.001

Path	*b*	*β*	SE	95% CI LL	95% CI UL	*p*
Overall Frequency of Seeking Moral Advice ~~ Perceived Authority of AI Chatbots as Moral Advisors	0.756	0.355	0.121	0.517	0.990	<.001
Overall Frequency of Seeking Moral Advice ~~ Tendency to Anthropomorphize AI Chatbots	0.312	0.249	0.075	0.167	0.461	<.001
Overall Frequency of Seeking Moral Advice ~~ Deference to Authority (MFQ-2)	1.292	0.193	0.368	0.587	2.021	<.001
Open-Mindedness on Moral Issues ~~ Perceived Authority of AI Chatbots as Moral Advisors	9.002	0.298	1.662	5.764	12.282	<.001
Open-Mindedness on Moral Issues ~~ Tendency to Anthropomorphize AI Chatbots	5.064	0.285	1.034	3.122	7.094	<.001
Open-Mindedness on Moral Issues ~~ Deference to Authority (MFQ-2)	12.305	0.129	5.494	1.433	23.014	0.025
Perceived Authority of AI Chatbots as Moral Advisors ~~ Tendency to Anthropomorphize AI Chatbots	1.017	0.552	0.104	0.810	1.216	<.001
Perceived Authority of AI Chatbots as Moral Advisors ~~ Deference to Authority (MFQ-2)	2.058	0.208	0.564	0.932	3.173	<.001
Tendency to Anthropomorphize AI Chatbots ~~ Deference to Authority (MFQ-2)	1.398	0.241	0.345	0.730	2.080	<.001
Indirect via Overall Frequency of Seeking Moral Advice	0.162	0.150	0.031	0.104	0.226	<.001
Indirect via Open-Mindedness on Moral Issues	0.004	0.004	0.006	-0.008	0.018	0.526
Indirect via Perceived Authority of AI Chatbots as Moral Advisors	0.081	0.075	0.026	0.031	0.133	0.002

Path	*b*	*β*	SE	95% CI LL	95% CI UL	*p*
Indirect via Tendency to Anthropomorphize AI Chatbots	0.010	0.010	0.012	-0.011	0.036	0.381
Indirect via Deference to Authority (MFQ-2)	-0.006	-0.006	0.025	-0.055	0.044	0.798
Total indirect effect	0.251	0.232	0.052	0.152	0.354	<.001

Note. Columns: Path = model relationship; b = unstandardized coefficient; β = standardized coefficient; SE = standard error; 95% CI LL/UL = lower and upper bounds of the percentile bootstrap 95% confidence interval; p = p-value. Row types: Predictor → Mediator rows are a paths; Mediator → Outcome rows are b paths; the direct row is the c′ path (predictor → outcome controlling for mediators); rows with ~~ are residual covariances between mediators; Indirect via rows are specific indirect effects (a × b); Total indirect effect is the sum of all specific indirect effects.

Overall, in Study 1, the parallel mediation model explained 54.6% of the variance in frequency of seeking AI moral advice (R^2=0.546). The total indirect effect was b=0.29 (95% CI [0.21, 0.373]), with a residual direct effect of b=0.026 (p=0.528). In Study 2, the model explained 59.3% of the variance (R^2=0.593), with a total indirect effect of b=0.251 (95% CI [0.152, 0.354]) and a direct effect of b=0.106 (p=0.032).

The parallel mediation models revealed a consistent two-pathway pattern across both studies. The indirect effect via disposition to moral consultation from non-AI, non-religious sources (cluster a) was the dominant pathway in both studies, followed by a significant indirect effect via perceived authority of AI chatbots as moral advisors (cluster d). In contrast, the indirect effect via open-mindedness on moral issues (cluster b) was not significant in either

study. In Study 2, neither the indirect effect via tendency to anthropomorphize AI chatbots (cluster e) nor via deference to authority (cluster f) reached significance.

Question 4 — Does Access to Sources of Moral Advice Moderate the Relationship between Religiosity and Seeking Moral Advice from AI Chatbots?

Study 2 uniquely measured participants' access to each source of moral advice, allowing us to test whether the relationship between Religious Behavior Score and AI moral advice seeking is moderated by moral advice source accessibility. We tested two moderators: access to AI chatbots specifically, and overall access to non-AI, non-religious moral advice sources.

Table 13

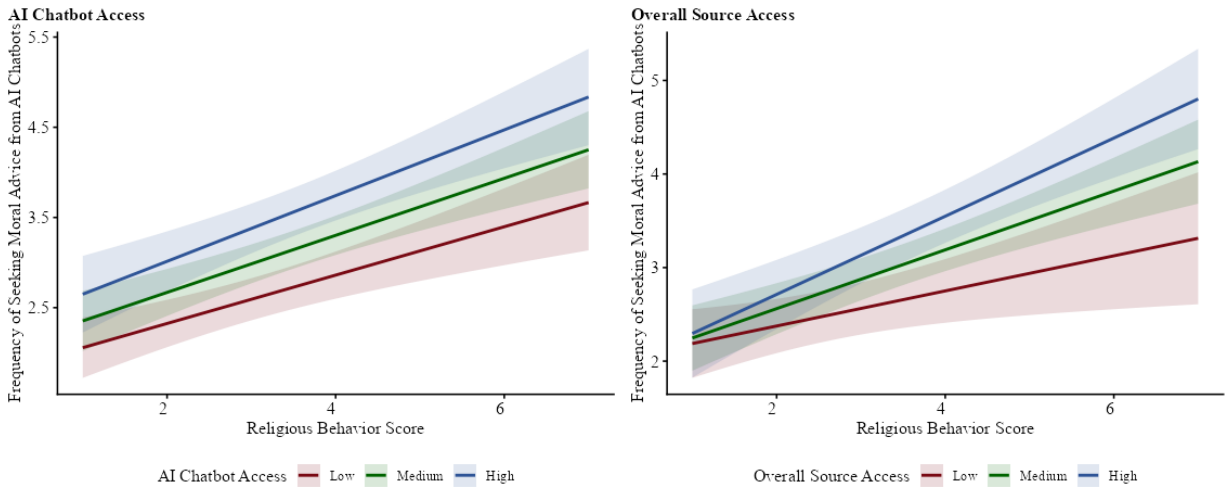
Moderation Analyses: Interaction Effects on Frequency of Seeking Moral Advice from AI Chatbots

Moderator	*b*	*t*	df	*p*
AI Chatbot Access	0.05	1.38	343	0.168
Overall Source Access	0.15	2.46	343	0.014

Note. Study 2 only.

Figure 5

Religious Behavior Score → Frequency of Seeking Moral Advice from AI Chatbots, Moderated by Access



Note. Left panel: moderated by access to AI chatbots. Right panel: moderated by overall access to non-AI, non-religious sources. Lines represent predicted values at low (16th percentile), medium (50th percentile), and high (84th percentile) access levels. Shaded bands indicate 95% confidence intervals. Study 2 only.

Access to AI chatbots did not significantly moderate the Religious Behavior Score → AI moral advice frequency relationship, suggesting that the tendency among religiously engaged individuals to seek moral advice from AI chatbots is not substantially amplified by how accessible they perceive AI to be. However, overall access to non-AI, non-religious moral advice sources did significantly moderate this relationship: among more religiously engaged participants, those with greater access to a wider range of moral advice sources also sought moral guidance from AI chatbots more frequently. This pattern suggests that AI chatbots function as a complementary rather than substitute source of moral guidance. Religiosity is associated with

broader moral consultancy behavior overall, and AI chatbots are one expression of that tendency where access permits. However, this significant moderation effect did not replicate in other relationships between self-reported religiosity or interest in seeking moral advice as presented in Supplementary Material.

General Discussion

Across four datasets, including two pilot studies and two pre-registered studies, religiosity consistently and positively predicted individuals' openness to seeking moral advice from AI chatbots. This relationship held for both self-reported religiosity and self-reported engagement in religious behaviors and remained robust after controlling for demographic covariates including age, education, income, SES, and political orientation. These findings are notable given prior evidence that robot preachers undermines religious commitment (J. C. Jackson et al., 2023), religious institutions view AI in religious context negatively (e.g., Fernández et al., 2025; Leo XIV, 2026), and that people generally resist relying on AI for complex social functions (Rubin et al., 2025; Wenger et al., 2026). Thus, the present effect may be specific to the moral function of AI rather than a general technology adoption (see Waytz & Young, 2019). Instead, the current work may reflect that religiosity, far from insulating individuals from AI's entrance to the moral domain, may systematically facilitate it.

The parallel mediation models identified two robust indirect pathways through which religiosity predicted openness to seeking moral advice from AI chatbots, replicating consistently across both studies. The first and dominant pathway ran through individuals' overall disposition to seek moral advice from diverse non-AI, non-religious sources (cluster a). Religious individuals are more likely to seek moral guidance broadly, from interpersonal relationships, traditional authorities, and digital platforms (see Figure 4~7 in Supplementary Material for

religious sources as well). This general moral consultation disposition extends to AI chatbots. Crucially, this finding implies that religiously engaged individuals do not seek AI moral guidance *instead of* traditional sources but *alongside* them, perhaps because religious traditions have long provided people with a natural context for moral discussion and deliberation with a plurality of sources of moral consultation (Gifford, 2005; Nuffelen, 2020). AI chatbots appear to function as an additional channel within an existing pattern of moral advice seeking behavior, rather than as a substitute for traditional religious resources.

The second consistent pathway ran through perceived authority of AI chatbots as moral advisors (cluster d). Religiosity predicted a stronger tendency to view AI chatbots as legitimate moral authorities, which in turn predicted more frequent AI moral advice seeking. This finding is theoretically informative. Many religious traditions emphasize seeking guidance from recognized authorities, for example, clergy and religious texts, and these results suggest that AI chatbots may slot into a pre-existing cognitive schema for moral authority (Gifford, 2005; Nuffelen, 2020). Rather than posing a challenge to religious frameworks, AI chatbots may be evaluated through the same legitimacy criteria applied to other moral authorities.

Consistent with the centrality of humility, curiosity, and openness to wisdom across many religious traditions (Porter et al., 2016) and with prior research finding a positive association between religiosity and humility (Aghababaei et al., 2016), open-mindedness on moral issues (cluster b) was a significant mediator in individual mediation analyses but did not contribute a unique indirect effect in the parallel mediation model, once overall disposition to seek moral advice from diverse non-AI, non-religious sources (cluster a) was simultaneously controlled. This pattern suggests that the independent association of open-mindedness with AI advice seeking largely reflects shared variance with the general moral consultancy disposition.

Religiously engaged individuals who seek moral advice broadly also tend to be more open to engaging with diverse moral perspectives, but open-mindedness itself does not independently drive the religiosity–AI advice link above and beyond this broader disposition. The same pattern applied to the tendency to anthropomorphize AI chatbots (cluster e) and deference to authority (cluster f) in Study 2: both emerged as significant unique mediators individually but did not contribute independent indirect effects in the parallel model.

The moderation analysis in Study 2 revealed that participants' overall access to moral advice sources, but not AI chatbot-specific sources, moderated the relationship between religious behavior score and frequency of seeking moral advice from AI chatbots, though this moderation did not generalize to self-reported religiosity or interest in seeking moral advice from AI chatbots (see Supplementary Material). Among more behaviorally engaged religious participants, those with broader access to moral advice infrastructure also sought AI moral advice more frequently. This finding reinforces the complementarity interpretation. Namely, the relationship between religiosity and AI moral advice seeking is embedded within a broader pattern of moral consultancy behavior (see Nuffelen, 2020), not specifically driven by AI accessibility.

Implications

The present findings carry implications in several ways. Theoretically, they reframe a seeming paradox: despite institutional religion's resistance to AI encroachment on human moral life (e.g., Fernández et al., 2025; Leo XIV, 2026) and prior evidence that religious believers resist technology entering human-specific domains (J. C. Jackson et al., 2023), religiously engaged individuals are more open to AI moral consultation. This asymmetry appears to reflect how religious life cultivates habits of moral inquiry and consultation that extend, without necessarily endorsing, AI as a moral interlocutor. Practically, the data suggests that AI chatbot

consultation complements rather than displaces traditional religious and interpersonal moral authority, a distinction with direct relevance for how religious communities and institutions respond to AI's growing presence in moral life. Socially, as AI chatbots become more deeply woven into everyday life, their potential to influence individual moral identity and communal religious cohesion deserves serious consideration. This includes questions of responsibility for technology companies in how chatbots are designed, trained, and deployed in contexts where they intersect with moral and spiritual authority, and calls for coordinated attention from faith communities, technology companies, and policymakers alike.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although the present findings offer initial insight into religiosity and AI moral advice seeking, several limitations qualify their interpretation and suggest clear avenues for future research.

First, all datasets were cross-sectional, precluding causal inference. Longitudinal or experimental design are needed to establish whether religious engagement causes changes in AI moral advice seeking, or whether the relationship reflects a shared dispositional orientation.

Second, our U.S.-based Prolific samples limit generalizability. Religiosity–technology relationships may differ across religious traditions, cultural contexts, stages of AI adoption, and different relationships between religious institutions and technology.

Third, measurements were self-reported and may be influenced by social desirability. For example, religiously engaged participants may underreport seeking moral consultation from AI chatbots if they perceive such behavior as inconsistent with religious norms, a bias that would likely attenuate, rather than inflate, the observed effects.

Fourth, the referent of "AI chatbot" may vary across participants. Respondents may have had different AI systems in mind (e.g., ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini), which differ substantially in design, persona, and perceived moral positioning. Future research should assess chatbot-specific behaviors and evaluate whether the pathways identified here generalize across different AI systems.

Finally, the downstream consequences of AI moral advice seeking remain unclear. Although we make no claims that seeking moral advice from AI chatbots would lead to following moral advice from AI chatbots (see Landes et al., 2026), recent experimental evidence suggests that influence may not require explicit compliance. For example, LLM-based AI writing assistance can silently shift users' views on social issues through biased sentence completion (Williams-Ceci et al., 2026). Taken together, these findings highlight an open and urgent question regarding the long-term moral consequences of AI chatbot consultation.

Conclusion

The present findings reframe a seeming paradox: religious individuals, often assumed to be the most resistant to AI intrusion on the sacred domain of morality, may in fact be among its most receptive audiences, not *despite* their religiosity, but *because of* it. The same dispositions that orient believers toward moral consultation appear to extend naturally to AI chatbots as a novel moral conversational partner. As AI systems become more deeply embedded in everyday moral life, understanding who turns to them, and why, is not merely a psychological question, but a question with consequences for religious communities, institutional authority, and the governance of technologies that are quietly becoming participants in how humans decide what is right.

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