



ICONICS

Proceedings of International Conference on Islamic Counseling Studies

Volume 2, 18-19 September 2025

<https://proceedings.uinsa.ac.id/index.php/ICONICS>

Phenomenology of Muslim Families Facing Digital Challenges in Children's Moral Development

Prima Maulana Ihsan, Muh. Nur Rochim Maksum

Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Indonesia

primaihsan9@gmail.com; mnr127@ums.ac.id

Corresponding Autor: Prima Maulana Ihsan

Article History: Received: 2025, 08, 20; Revised: 2025, 09, 20; Accepted: 2025, 10, 30.

Abstract: This study aimed to explore the experiences of Muslim families in facing digital challenges and their impact on children's moral development. The advancement of digital technology has provided significant benefits in education, communication, and entertainment; however, it has also posed risks such as reduced parental control, exposure to inappropriate content, and the weakening of moral guidance. This research employed a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design. The participants consisted of six Muslim parents with children aged between 8 and 15 years in Al-Abidin Karanganyar. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and supported by observations, then analyzed thematically to identify patterns of experiences and parenting strategies. The findings revealed that parents experienced dilemmas in utilizing technology as an educational tool while also needing to anticipate its negative impacts. The main strategies implemented included limiting the duration of gadget use, providing close supervision, maintaining open communication between parents and children, and strengthening religious values within the family environment. The most common challenges faced were limited digital literacy among parents and the strong influence of peer groups on children's behavior. This study concludes that the digital challenges faced by Muslim families are multidimensional, encompassing technical, social, and moral aspects. Therefore, collaboration among families, schools, and communities is essential to strengthen digital literacy that aligns with Islamic values. Such efforts will enable children to grow as technologically literate individuals with strong moral character.

Keywords: Muslim Families, Phenomenology, Digital Challenges, Moral Development, Digital Literacy

INTRODUCTION

The rapid pace of digitalization has transformed the dynamics of Muslim family life, where the use of social media, gadgets, and Islamic applications has flourished, yet simultaneously presents dilemmas in child-rearing (Arifurrohman, Crismono, & Ilyas, 2025). Amidst the current of technology, Muslim families strive to instill Islamic moral values such as *akhlak*, *adab*, and *tabayyun* values that are often challenged by the permissive culture of the digital sphere (Bukhari, Bastiar, & Anwar, 2024). This phenomenon is crucial, as children's morality constitutes the fundamental foundation of Islamic education, now tested in a fast-paced modern context. Accordingly, this phenomenological study seeks to answer the question: "How do Muslim families understand and address digital challenges in nurturing children's morality?"

Several studies have explored aspects of law and policy, such as how the principle of *hadhanah* (childcare) in Islam transforms in the digital era and highlights the need for Islamic digital literacy in semi-urban communities (Sulhani Ani et al., 2024). Likewise, bibliometric analyses reveal that research on parenting from an Islamic perspective remains limited, particularly in integrating spirituality with modern technology (Arifurrohman et al., 2025). However, there is still little empirical inquiry that captures the subjective experiences of Muslim parents in this context. This study emerges to bridge that gap through a phenomenological approach.

The primary objective of this research is to explore the meanings and strategies employed by Muslim families in addressing digital challenges to their children's moral development. The focus on morality is highly significant, as it shapes the Islamic character that becomes the cornerstone of both spiritual and social existence for the next generation (Siregar, Zuhri, & Naldo, 2024). As a qualitative inquiry, this study not only examines parenting practices but also investigates the construction of Islamic values that serve as the foundation for controlling technology use.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to contemporary moral education within Muslim societies. The findings are expected to assist educators, parents, religious institutions, and policymakers in designing digital literacy programs that integrate Islamic values (Yulianti & Nafi', 2025). Furthermore, this study contributes to the global discourse on digital parenting, particularly within Muslim communities characterized by unique cultural and religious contexts (Arifurrohman et al., 2025).

Methodologically, this study employs a phenomenological design to examine the lived experiences of Muslim families—how they interpret, frame, and assign meaning to digital challenges in their daily lives through the lens of religious values (Sulhani Ani et al., 2024). This approach is particularly relevant for capturing in-depth narratives, fragmented experiences, and the essence of findings often overlooked in quantitative methods.

The findings highlight several key issues: value conflicts between digital culture and Islamic norms; adaptation strategies such as active mediation, value-based dialogue, and screen-time regulation; as well as an understanding of digital technology as a “double-edged sword” that can either educate or erode morality depending on spiritual orientation and educational intent (Bukhari et al., 2024). Nonetheless, critical questions remain: to what extent are these practices effective in the long term, and how can they be replicated in broader contexts?

By addressing these critical questions, this paper proposes a value-based Islamic digital parenting model that is responsive to contemporary challenges and contextually grounded enriching theoretical discourse on family, religion, and technology, while also offering a practical adaptive framework for Muslim families in the digital era.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design to explore the subjective experiences of Muslim parents in facing digital challenges and children's moral development. The phenomenological approach was chosen as it is suitable for understanding the meaning of lived experiences from the participants' perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research was conducted in Karanganyar, Central Java, due to its strong Muslim community characteristics and relatively high intensity of digital technology usage.

The research population consisted of Muslim families with children of elementary to junior high school age in Al-Abidin Karanganyar. A purposive sampling technique was applied to select participants based on specific criteria, namely Muslim parents who actively accompany their

children in the use of digital devices at home. A total of six parents from middle-class Muslim families participated in this study. This approach was chosen because it allows for in-depth exploration of data without being constrained by large sample sizes, as is consistent with qualitative research (Palinkas et al., 2015).

The primary instrument of this research was the researcher, supported by a semi-structured interview guide. In-depth interviews were conducted with each participant for 45–60 minutes, either face-to-face or online through communication applications. The interview questions focused on families' experiences in digital use, its impact on children's morality, and strategies employed by parents in guiding their children. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and then transcribed verbatim for analysis.

The research procedure was carried out in three stages: (1) preparation, including participant selection, interview guide development, and pilot testing; (2) implementation, involving data collection through in-depth interviews conducted over three months (February–April 2025); and (3) analysis, in which transcribed data were processed using thematic analysis techniques. This approach enabled the researcher to identify patterns of meaning that emerged from participants' narratives (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

To ensure data trustworthiness, this study applied source triangulation and member checking. Triangulation was conducted by comparing interview results across participants, while member checking was performed by asking participants to confirm the summarized interview transcripts. Validity was further strengthened with field notes and researcher reflexivity as the primary instrument in qualitative inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Data analysis was carried out through open, axial, and selective coding. The collected data were then categorized into main themes, such as forms of digital challenges, their impact on children's morality, Islamic parenting strategies, and the meaning of digitalization for Muslim families. This iterative process continued until conclusions were reached that authentically represented participants lived experiences (Nowell et al., 2017).

This study has several limitations. First, the number of participants was limited, so the findings cannot be generalized to all Muslim families. Second, the data relied heavily on participants' honesty in sharing their experiences. Nevertheless, these limitations do not diminish the study's strength in providing an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Interviews with six Muslim parents revealed diverse experiences in addressing digital challenges affecting their children's moral development. Three major themes emerged: (1) supervision and control of technology use; (2) moral dilemmas arising from digital exposure; and (3) family strategies for instilling Islamic values.

Parent 1 (Zahra Annisa, 36th, mother of an 8-year-old daughter, 2nd grade elementary)

Her daughter has been familiar with YouTube since first grade, enjoying cartoons and toy videos. The biggest challenge was her daughter's curiosity, as inappropriate content occasionally appeared. The strategy employed was to limit screen time to a maximum of two hours daily while always accompanying her when watching. She applied Islamic values by teaching *adab* before watching, such as reciting prayers and reminding her child that Allah is always watching. She hopes

technology can be used for learning rather than mere entertainment, while maintaining her child's *akhlaq*.

Parent 2 (Susanto, 40th, father of a 14-year-old daughter, 2nd grade junior high)

His daughter already owns a smartphone and frequently uses Instagram and TikTok. He admitted difficulty controlling her independent use of social media, where peer language was sometimes inappropriate. His strategy was to build open communication through casual conversations, give religious advice, and hold regular family Islamic study sessions. He emphasized the Islamic principle of guarding speech, reminding his daughter that every word is accountable before Allah. He hopes she develops self-control in social media use and can distinguish right from wrong.

Parent 3 (Rachmawati, 33th, mother of a 10-year-old son, 5th grade elementary)

Her son enjoyed playing online games and once imitated harsh language from them. The main challenge was preventing gaming addiction and inappropriate speech. She prohibited certain games, replaced them with Islamic educational apps, and encouraged participation in online Qur'an recitation contests. She instilled the value that time is an *amanah* (trust), and thus should not be wasted on gaming. She hopes her son will make wiser choices in entertainment while maintaining Islamic character.

Parent 4 (Austin Widyaka, 42th, father of a 12-year-old son, 1st grade junior high)

His son used the internet for studying but was also drawn to entertainment videos. The main challenge was his curiosity, which could lead to inappropriate exposure without supervision. His strategy was to install parental control applications on his son's devices, while balancing trust with monitoring. He emphasized the value of *ihسان*, teaching that even when parents do not see, Allah is always watching. He hopes his son grows as both digitally competent and spiritually strong.

Parent 5 (Khofifah, 39th, mother of a 15-year-old daughter, 1st grade senior high)

Her daughter was very active on social media and occasionally used impolite language in comments, influenced by peers. The greatest challenge was the strong impact of peer groups in digital spaces. Her strategy was to engage her daughter in mosque youth activities and limit online use at night. She instilled the importance of *akhlaq* as the hallmark of a good Muslim, not merely technological competence. She hopes her daughter can carry Islamic values into the digital world and serve as a role model among peers.

Parent 6 (Sholeh Pambudi, 45th, father of a 17-year-old son, 3rd grade senior high)

His son was already independent and even helped him find information online. The main challenge was preventing his son from adopting foreign cultural values contradicting Islam. His strategy was to lead by example, believing that disciplined parents will inspire disciplined children. He consistently reminded his son about the principle of *amar ma'ruf nabi munkar*, including in digital behavior. He hopes his son becomes a knowledgeable Muslim with good character who uses technology for the benefit of the *ummah*.

Discussion

The interviews revealed that most parents face challenges in accompanying their children in the digital era, particularly regarding gadget use. Parents reported that children are more interested in using gadgets for playing games or watching videos rather than studying. This finding is consistent with Dheasari and Fajriyah (2022), who found that digital media often appears more attractive to children compared to conventional academic activities.

In addition, parents emphasized the importance of religious education in guiding children to avoid the negative impacts of digitalization. They reported efforts to instill moral values through intensive communication and habituation within the family. Yusnita, Hasanah, and Prasetyo (2023) affirmed that integrating Islamic education with digital literacy can shape children's Islamic character in the modern era.

Some parents also applied direct supervision methods to limit their children's access to harmful content. This aligns with Soraya (2022), who highlighted that digital parenting practices based on religious values can protect children from exposure to morally damaging content. However, several parents still experienced limitations in understanding digital control features. Kusumalestari, Lestari, and Aisyah (2023) explained that parents' low level of digital literacy is one of the barriers to effectively accompanying children in cyberspace.

Parents also expressed that support from schools is vital in building healthy digital habits. According to Setiawan and Rahman (2021), collaboration between parents and schools through digital literacy programs can enhance children's awareness of wise internet use.

From these findings, it can be concluded that the parental role remains a dominant factor in safeguarding children's morality in the digital era, despite increasingly complex technological challenges. This study supports the notion that Islamic value-based parenting combined with improving parents' digital literacy serves as a strategic solution to address technological developments (Kurniawati & Hidayat, 2020).

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the experiences of Muslim families in addressing digital challenges are closely related to efforts to safeguard children's moral development. Parents play a crucial role as both companions and regulators of digital technology use, although limited digital literacy remains a significant barrier. These findings underscore the importance of recognizing that children's moral education in the digital era cannot rely solely on formal schooling but instead requires synergy between religious education, family supervision, and adequate digital literacy.

From a scholarly perspective, this study contributes by providing a phenomenological viewpoint on the dynamics of Muslim families in the digital era—a perspective that has not been extensively explored in previous research. Therefore, this study is relevant not only for parents and educators but also for policymakers in designing digital literacy programs rooted in Islamic values. Ultimately, the findings highlight the importance of active family involvement in nurturing a generation that is not only technologically literate but also morally grounded.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

Prima Maulana Ihsan: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing – Original Draft, Writing – Review & Editing. Muh. Nur Rochim Maksum: All authors contributed to the study according to their respective roles. Both authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

FUNDING

No funding support was received.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no potential conflicts of interest, either financial or personal, that could have influenced the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author extends sincere gratitude to the parents who willingly participated in this study and shared their valuable experiences regarding digital challenges and moral development within Muslim families. Special thanks are also conveyed to the academic supervisor for providing guidance, critical feedback, and continuous support throughout the research process and the preparation of this article.

The author also wishes to express sincere gratitude to Risma Khusnul Qotimah, who provided substantial comments, assisted in the interview transcription process, and supported the preparation of references in accordance with the APA 6th edition style. Gratitude is further expressed to Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta for providing the facilities that enabled the smooth conduct of this research.

Finally, heartfelt appreciation is addressed to all parties who contributed, directly or indirectly, to the completion of this study.

REFERENCES

- Arifurrohman, A., Crismono, P. C., & Ilyas, M. (2025). Parenting trends in the digital era: A bibliometric analysis from an Islamic perspective in Muslim-majority societies. *AT-TURAS: Jurnal Studi Keislaman*. Advance online publication.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 11(4), 589–597. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806>
- Bukhari, B., Bastiar, B., & Anwar, A. (2024). Challenges of parenting in the digital era: A review from the perspective of Islamic family law. *Al-Qadha : Jurnal Hukum Islam dan Perundang-Undangan*, 11(2), 357–370. <https://doi.org/10.32505/qadha.v11i2.9549>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Dheasari, N., & Fajriyah, N. (2022). Dampak penggunaan media digital terhadap perkembangan anak usia sekolah dasar. *Jurnal Pendidikan Dasar Nusantara*, 7(2), 101–115.
- Hidayah, N. (2024). Evaluasi etika kerja konselor dalam implementasi layanan bimbingan di sekolah. *Jurnal Bimbingan Konseling Indonesia*, 9(1), 12–21. <https://doi.org/10.21009/jbki.091.02>
- Kurniawati, D., & Hidayat, R. (2020). Parenting Islami dan penguatan karakter anak di era digital. *Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter*, 10(1), 88–99.
- Kusumalestari, A., Lestari, R., & Aisyah, N. (2023). Literasi digital orang tua dalam pengasuhan anak di era digital. *Jurnal Obsesi: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 7(1), 235–247.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage.

- Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847>
- Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, 42(5), 533–544. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y>
- Setiawan, R., & Rahman, A. (2021). Kolaborasi sekolah dan orang tua dalam literasi digital anak. *Jurnal Teknologi Pendidikan*, 23(3), 145–160.
- Siregar, H. K., Zuhri, A., & Naldo, J. (2024). Exploring Qur’anic parenting: A religious approach to enhancing children’s psychological and moral well-being. *Jurnal EDUCATIO: Jurnal Pendidikan Indonesia*, 779–787. <https://doi.org/10.29210/1202424599>
- Soraya, I. (2022). Digital parenting berbasis nilai agama: Strategi orang tua menghadapi era teknologi. *Jurnal Psikologi Islami*, 9(2), 77–92.
- Sulhani Ani, P. A., M. Azik, Sopyah, N., & Badriyah. (2024). The transformation of hadhanah in the digital era: Islamic parenting strategies with technology. *NALAR FIQH: Jurnal Hukum Islam*, 15(2). <https://doi.org/10.30631/nf.v15i2.1687>
- Yulianti, E., & Nafi’, A. (2025). The role of digital parenting as a model for parental guidance in the moral development of Indonesian children. *National Conference on Educational Science and Counselling (NCESCO)*.
- Yusnita, A., Hasanah, N., & Prasetyo, A. (2023). Integrasi pendidikan agama Islam dan literasi digital pada keluarga muslim. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 12(2), 201–215.

