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Parenting and Children's Moral Values in the Gadget Era: A Rural Ethnographic Study

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Abstract

The development of digital technology has influenced parenting patterns and the process of children's moral value internalisation. The increasing use of gadgets presents challenges for parents in maintaining children's moral development. This study aims to analyse parenting dynamics in instilling moral values among children amid gadget use in Talang Donok Village. A qualitative approach with ethnographic methods was employed to explore parenting practices, social interactions, and community experiences. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews with parents, children, community and religious leaders, and documentation of social and religious activities. The findings show that the family remains the primary agent in moral internalisation through advice, habituation, role modelling, and supervision of gadget use. The social environment and community religious activities also contribute to strengthening children's character. However, excessive gadget use tends to reduce children's participation in social and religious activities. Therefore, the active role of families and communities is essential in guiding the use of digital technology to support children's moral development.

Keywords: Digital era, Family parenting, Moral values

Introduction

The development of digital technology in the era of globalisation has brought significant changes to various aspects of human life, including communication patterns, social interactions, and the process of educating children. Digital devices such as smartphones, tablets, and various internet-based applications have become part of everyday life for modern society. Digital technology is no longer only used by adults, but has also become part of children's lives from an early age. Children who are born and raised in an environment saturated with digital technology are often referred to as the digital native generation, a generation that has interacted with technological devices and digital media since the beginning of their lives (Apriliyanti 2023; Saputra 2025).

Advances in digital technology have brought many conveniences to human life, including in the field of education. Through digital technology, children can access various sources of information quickly and easily. Various educational applications, learning videos, and other digital platforms can help improve the learning process for children in a more interactive and engaging way (Manik, 2022; Salsabila et al., 2022). However, the use of digital technology also presents new challenges, particularly in relation to its impact on children's social, emotional and moral development. Excessive

use of gadgets can affect children's behaviour patterns, reduce direct social interaction, and increase the risk of exposure to content that is not appropriate for their age (Muchtar, 2017).

The increasing use of gadgets among children has become a growing concern for educators, parents, and researchers in the fields of education and developmental psychology. A number of studies have shown that excessive screen time is associated with declines in social interaction skills, learning concentration, and self-control. In addition, uncontrolled gadget use may influence the formation of children's character, particularly when children are more exposed to entertainment content than to activities that support their moral and social development (Chasanah, Naila, Yuli Kurniawati, 2023).

However, most of these studies tend to focus on identifying the negative impacts of gadget use in a general and outcome-oriented manner, without sufficiently explaining the underlying processes through which these behavioural changes occur. In particular, there is still limited understanding of how children's moral values are shaped and internalised within daily family interactions in the context of digital exposure. Furthermore, existing research rarely examines how parenting practices mediate the relationship between gadget use and moral development, especially in socio-cultural settings such as rural communities. This indicates a significant gap in the literature that calls for more in-depth and contextually grounded analysis.

From an Islamic educational perspective, character building is one of the main objectives of the educational process. Character is not only understood as good behaviour in daily life, but also as a manifestation of the values of faith and devotion to Allah SWT. Moral education aims to shape individuals who have noble character, are able to distinguish between good and bad, and are able to apply moral values in social life (Khoiri & Putri, 2024; Febriana & In, 2025). Therefore, moral education plays a very important role in shaping children's personalities from an early age.

The process of shaping children's character does not only take place through formal education at school, but also through the family and community environment. The family is the first and primary educational environment for children. It is within the family that children first learn about life values, social norms, and behaviours that are considered good and right in society. Parents play a very important role in providing guidance, setting an example, and supervising their children's development (Andriyani, 2018; Siregar, 2021; Awhinarto, 2020; Hardiyana, Andri, Wilda Fadlilati Afiani, 2022). Through interactions within the family, children learn to understand various moral values that later become part of their character.

In the digital age, parenting patterns have undergone various changes. Parents no longer only play a role in providing moral education directly, but must also be able to guide the use of digital technology so that it does not have a negative impact on children's development. Parenting in the digital age requires parents to have the ability to manage their children's use of digital media, including setting limits on gadget use, selecting appropriate content, and providing guidance when children use digital devices (Andriyani, 2018; Nikken, P., & Oprea, 2021; Karbalaei, et.al, 2023).

Research on parenting patterns in the digital age shows that parental involvement in children's digital media use greatly influences children's behaviour and development. Parents who actively supervise, monitor, and communicate with their children about technology use tend to be able to reduce the negative effects of gadget use. (Nikken, P., & Oprea, 2021; Livingstone, S., & Blum-Ross, 2021; Apriliyanti, 2023). A lack of parental involvement in children's digital activities can increase the risk of unhealthy technology use and potentially hinder the process of character building in children.

In Islamic education studies, character building is not only carried out through the theoretical teaching of moral values, but also through the process of habituation, role modelling, and social interaction in everyday life. Children learn about moral values through direct experiences in the family and community environment. Therefore, parents' behaviour in daily life has a huge influence on the formation of children's character (Rizal & Zuhri, 2006; Setiawan, 2014; Andriyani, 2018; Siregar, 2021; Zalsabella P et al., 2023). Parental role modelling is one of the important factors in the process of internalising moral values in children.

Research in the field of Islamic education shows that the process of internalising moral values requires a holistic and sustainable approach. Moral education does not only focus on cognitive aspects, but also includes affective and behavioural aspects in everyday life (Faridi, 2011; Rafsanjani & Razaq, 2019; Rafsanjani & Rozaq, 2019; Ahmadi et al., 2020). This process involves various strategies such as habit formation of good behaviour, giving advice, supervision, and setting a good example from parents and the surrounding environment.

In addition to the family, the social environment also plays an important role in shaping a child's character. Children learn not only from their parents, but also from their interactions with peers, teachers, and the community around them. A positive social environment can help reinforce the moral values taught in the family. Conversely, an unfavourable social environment can have a negative influence on a child's behaviour (Munif, 2017; Tirtoni, 2020; Awhinarto, 2020). The development of digital technology has influenced social interaction patterns in society. Children who spend more time with gadgets tend to have fewer opportunities to interact directly with their surroundings. This can reduce social experiences that are important for children's moral and emotional development. Direct social interaction plays an important role in helping children understand values such as empathy, cooperation, responsibility, and respect for others.

In the context of Islamic education, character building requires the involvement of various parties, including families, schools, and communities. Character education cannot be effective if it is carried out by only one party. Therefore, synergy between various educational environments is needed so that the process of shaping children's characters can take place optimally. Previous research also shows that moral education strategies need to be adapted to the times in order to remain relevant to the social conditions of society.

In addition, the character formation of children is also influenced by the social and cultural conditions of the community in which they grow and develop. Each community has different cultural values that can influence parenting patterns and the process of educating children. In rural communities, closer social relationships between community members often provide space for children to learn the values of togetherness, mutual cooperation, and mutual respect in everyday life.

Talang Donok Village is a rural area with unique social characteristics in terms of child-rearing. The relatively simple lifestyle and close social relationships among residents have a distinct influence on the process of shaping children's character. Children in this village learn not only from their family environment but also from their interactions with the surrounding community. Social values such as togetherness, caring, and mutual assistance are still an important part of community life.

However, the development of digital technology has also reached rural areas, including Talang Donok Village. Children in the village have become accustomed to using gadgets in their daily lives, both for entertainment and learning purposes. This situation has created a new dynamic in child-rearing patterns, where parents must be able to balance the use of digital technology with efforts to instil moral values in their children's lives.

Several studies in the field of Islamic education show that the use of digital technology does not always have a negative impact on children's development, as long as it is used wisely and with adequate supervision from parents. Digital technology can even be used as a medium to strengthen moral and religious education if used in the right way (Radesky, J. S., & Christakis, 2023). However, without adequate guidance, the use of gadgets has the potential to reduce children's social interaction and hinder their character development.

Based on this description, it can be understood that the use of gadgets by children is an inevitable phenomenon in modern life. Digital technology has become part of children's lives, both in urban and rural areas. Therefore, it is important to understand how parents manage the use of gadgets in their children's lives and how the process of internalising moral values can continue amid technological developments.

The rapid expansion of digital technology has increasingly penetrated rural communities, including Talang Donok Village, where children are now actively engaged with gadgets in their daily lives. This shift has created new challenges for parents in maintaining the process of moral value internalisation, particularly as traditional patterns of social interaction and community-based learning begin to change. Although previous studies have widely discussed the impact of digital technology on children's behaviour, limited research has specifically examined how parenting practices in rural settings adapt to these changes, especially through an in-depth ethnographic perspective that captures everyday social realities.

In response to this gap, this study aims to examine the dynamics of parenting in the process of internalising moral values in children in the era of gadget use in Talang Donok Village. This study employs an ethnographic approach to gain a deeper understanding of parenting practices as they are embedded in the daily lives of the community. The novelty of this research lies in its contextual and ethnographic analysis, which reveals how families negotiate between traditional moral values and the growing influence of digital culture in shaping children's character. By doing so, this study contributes to the development of Islamic education discourse, particularly in understanding the transformation of moral education within rural digital contexts.

Through this study, it is hoped that a deeper understanding can be gained of how parents in Talang Donok Village deal with the challenges of gadget use among children while instilling moral values in family life. The results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of Islamic education studies, particularly in understanding the dynamics of parenting in the digital age. In addition, this study is also expected to serve as a reference for parents, educators, and the community in formulating more effective strategies to guide children to use technology wisely without neglecting moral values in their daily lives.

Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with ethnographic methods to gain an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of family parenting and the process of internalising moral values in children in the context of gadget use in society. The ethnographic approach was chosen because it allows researchers to examine social and cultural phenomena through direct involvement in the daily lives of the community (Dourish, 2019). Through this approach, researchers can observe parenting practices, social interactions, and the meaning that communities attach to gadget use in shaping children's moral values. This study used a qualitative approach with a focused ethnographic design to examine the dynamics of parenting and the process of internalizing moral values among children in the context of gadget use. The study was conducted in Talang Donok Village, Bang Haji District, Central Bengkulu Regency. The study involved 15 informants selected using a purposive sampling

technique based on relevance to the research focus. The informants included 6 parents, 5 children aged 6–12, 2 community leaders, and 2 religious leaders. Children were selected based on their active involvement in gadget use, while parents were selected based on their role as primary caregivers. Community and religious leaders were involved to provide a broader perspective on social and moral values within the community. Because this study involved children, ethical aspects of the research were taken seriously. Researchers obtained informed consent from parents or guardians, as well as verbal assent from the children before data collection. All informants were given an explanation of the research objectives and guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity.

The researcher acted as a participant observer, directly engaging in the community's daily lives to observe parenting practices and natural social interactions. Intensive participant observation focused on children's gadget use at home, interactions with parents, and involvement in social and religious activities. In addition, the researcher engaged in informal interactions to capture social meanings that did not always emerge in formal interviews. Data collection techniques included participant observation, semi structured in-depth interviews, and documentation. Interviews were conducted flexibly to allow informants to more openly express their experiences and perspectives regarding parenting practices and the use of digital technology. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis. The analysis process began with a comprehensive understanding of the data, followed by open coding to identify initial categories from observations and interview transcripts. These codes were then grouped into main themes related to parenting dynamics, gadget use, and the internalization of moral values. This process was repeated through comparisons across data to gain a deeper understanding. To ensure the credibility and validity of the data, this study employed source and method triangulation techniques by comparing data from observations, interviews, and documentation. In addition, member checking was carried out by confirming the findings with informants, as well as adequate researcher involvement in the field to understand the social context in more depth and minimize research bias.

Results

Family Parenting Dynamics in Managing Gadget Use

The results of the study indicate that gadget use among children in Talang Donok Village cannot be separated from the dynamics of parenting within the family. Parents generally recognise that gadgets have two distinct sides: they can be a medium that helps children obtain information and entertainment, but at the same time, they also have the potential to have a negative impact on children's behavioural development. Therefore, some parents try to control gadget use by setting time limits and supervising their children's activities when using these devices. This phenomenon is in line with research findings on the use of digital media in children, which show that the role of parents is crucial in determining how technology is utilised in children's daily lives (Livingstone, S., & Blum-Ross, 2021). In other words, the use of technology in the family does not only depend on the availability of devices, but also on how parents interpret and manage technology in their parenting practices.

Based on interviews with several parents, it was found that children generally use gadgets when they are at home after school. Parents give their children gadgets as a means of entertainment, especially when they are working or doing household chores. One parent said: "My child usually plays with his mobile phone after school. Sometimes I give it to them so they don't leave the house or disturb the work at home, but I still remind them not to use it for too long."

The quote shows that giving gadgets to children is often related to practical needs in daily family activities. Parents utilise gadgets as a means to distract children when they are unable to fully

accompany them during their activities. This phenomenon indicates a shift in traditional parenting practices towards a more adaptive approach to the development of digital technology. Several studies also show that in many modern families, gadgets are often used as 'digital babysitters' or tools to keep children at home when parents are busy with certain activities (Radesky, J. S., & Christakis, 2023). Thus, the use of gadgets does not solely reflect a lack of parental attention, but is also a practical strategy for managing children's activities amid the demands of daily life.

In rural communities such as Talang Donok Village, the role of parents is not limited to providing direct moral education but also involves managing children's daily activities within the household. Parents' busy schedules, whether in agriculture or other forms of work, often limit their ability to consistently supervise their children. Under these circumstances, gadgets frequently become an alternative for children to fill their free time. This situation illustrates that parenting practices are closely shaped by the social and economic context of the family. Previous studies have shown that parents' work conditions and level of busyness significantly influence their strategies in regulating children's use of digital media (Nikken, P., & Oprea, 2021). However, some parents also realise that uncontrolled use of gadgets can affect their children's behaviour. Therefore, some parents try to implement certain rules regarding gadget use, such as limiting usage time or prohibiting children from using gadgets at certain times, for example during study time or prayer time. One informant stated: "If my child has been playing with their mobile phone for too long, I usually tell them to stop. I tell them that their eyes will hurt or that they will forget to study".

This practice shows that parents are making an effort to control their children's use of technology by setting limits and supervising them. This form of supervision is not always done formally, but often takes the form of advice, warnings, or direct instructions to children. In family communication studies, this practice is known as parental mediation, which is a strategy used by parents to guide their children's media use through restrictions, discussions, or guidance when children use technology (Nikken, P., & Oprea, 2021).

In addition to limiting gadget usage time, some parents also try to direct their children to engage in other more beneficial activities, such as studying, helping with household chores, or participating in religious activities in the community. These efforts show that parents are trying to balance their children's use of technology with social and educational activities. From an Islamic educational perspective, this practice can be understood as part of the effort to internalise moral values through daily habits. Children are not only guided to avoid the negative impacts of technology, but are also encouraged to engage in activities that reinforce moral and religious values.

In some cases, parents also explain to their children the negative effects of excessive gadget use. These explanations usually relate to eye health, learning concentration disorders, and changes in children's behaviour. Through these explanations, parents hope that their children will understand the reasons behind the restrictions on gadget use imposed in the family. Explanations such as these show that the parenting process is not only about control, but also involves communication between parents and children about the use of technology. However, not all parents have the same strategy for managing their children's gadget use. Differences in education levels, experience, and understanding of digital technology also influence the way parents supervise their children's digital activities. Some parents admit that they do not always fully understand the applications or content accessed by their children through gadgets. This shows that there are limitations in the digital literacy of some parents in this community. Previous studies have also shown that low digital literacy among parents is often a challenge in supervising their children's use of technology (Capone, Luca, Marta Rocchi, 2023).

This condition shows that parenting dynamics in the digital age are not only influenced by parents' awareness of the importance of supervising their children, but also by their ability to

understand the technological developments used by their children (Artawijaya & Saptiari, 2023). Therefore, parenting in the digital age requires a continuous adaptation process on the part of parents in order to adjust to social changes (Karbalaei, Ali, Pazooki Ali, Abedi Renani, 2023; Buchari Agustini, 2018).

Apart from family factors, the social environment also has an influence on children's gadget usage habits. Children are often attracted to using gadgets because they see their friends doing the same thing. In this context, gadgets not only function as entertainment tools, but also as part of the digital culture that is developing in children's lives. This digital culture shapes the way children interact, learn, and spend their free time in their daily lives (Dourish, 2019).

From an ethnographic perspective, the dynamics of parenting found in this study can be understood as part of cultural practices that have developed in the daily lives of the Talang Donok village community. The ethnographic approach does not only view children's gadget use as an individual phenomenon, but also as a social practice that is formed through interactions between families, social environments, and technological changes that affect people's lives. Clifford Geertz refers to this approach as 'thick description', which is an effort to understand the meaning of a social practice by looking at the cultural context behind it (Ananda & Albina, 2025).

Through field observations and interviews with informants, it appears that children's use of gadgets does not occur separately from the cultural context of the local community. The practice of parents giving gadgets to their children is often related to the lifestyle of rural communities, which have a certain work rhythm, such as agricultural activities or household chores that take up the parents' time. In such situations, gadgets become part of the family's practical strategy for managing children's activities at home. From an ethnographic point of view, this practice can be understood as a form of cultural adaptation to technological change. The community does not completely reject the presence of digital technology, but tries to adapt it to the values and customs that have long developed in their lives. Parents still try to maintain traditional parenting values such as giving advice, limiting children's behaviour, and instilling values of politeness, even though at the same time they also allow children to use gadgets within certain limits. The ethnographic approach also emphasises the importance of understanding the meaning that communities attach to social practices. In this study, gadgets are not always seen as a threat to children's education, but are often understood as tools that can help children fill their free time or obtain entertainment. However, parents still have concerns about the possible negative effects of excessive gadget use.

Through social interactions within the family and community, moral values continue to be transmitted to children even though the digital environment increasingly influences daily life. Parents still emphasise the importance of learning, respecting elders, and participating in religious activities in the community. This shows that the process of internalising moral values is not completely replaced by technology, but continues through social practices in family life. In the context of educational ethnography, these findings show that parenting in the digital age is the result of a negotiation process between traditional values and the influence of modernity. Parents in Talang Donok Village do not fully adopt the digital parenting patterns that are developing in urban communities, but have developed their own methods that are appropriate to their social and cultural conditions. Thus, the ethnographic study in this research provides a deeper understanding of how local communities interpret and respond to the development of digital technology in family life. This approach helps explain that the dynamics of parenting are not merely a matter of gadget use, but are also related to cultural adaptation processes, changes in social interaction patterns, and community efforts to maintain moral values amid rapid technological developments.

From a socio-cultural perspective, the parenting strategies found in this study also reflect the

community's efforts to adapt to the changing times. The presence of digital technology does not completely change traditional parenting patterns, but rather encourages families to develop new ways of educating their children. Thus, the use of gadgets is not always seen as a threat to moral education, but rather as a challenge that must be managed through appropriate parenting strategies. This phenomenon shows that local communities have the ability to adapt to social changes caused by the development of digital technology.

The findings of this study indicate that the success of instilling moral values in children in the digital age is greatly influenced by parental involvement in their children's lives. The more active parents are in providing guidance, supervision, and role models in everyday life, the greater the opportunity for children to develop behaviour that is in line with the moral values taught in the family. Thus, family upbringing remains a key factor in shaping children's character, even amid the rapid development of digital technology.

Internalisation of Moral Values through Family, Religious Education, and Local Traditions

The process of internalising moral values in children in Talang Donok Village takes place through three main environments, namely the family, religious educational institutions, and the social and cultural traditions of the community. The family plays a role as the first space in instilling moral values through advice, habitual worship, and daily interactions between parents and children. In addition to the family, religious education activities such as recitation of the Qur'an at the mosque also have an important contribution in shaping children's character. Through these activities, children learn about manners, religious values, and Islamic practices in a broader social environment.

However, this study found a declining trend in children's participation in religious study groups due to the increasing use of gadgets. Some children prefer to spend time with digital devices rather than participating in religious activities at the mosque. This finding reflects a shift in patterns of religious socialisation, where traditional face-to-face interactions in community-based religious settings are gradually being replaced by more individualised and screen-based activities. Previous studies on religious socialisation have emphasised the importance of direct interaction, habituation, and communal engagement in shaping children's moral and religious values. In contrast, studies on screen time suggest that excessive exposure to digital media tends to reduce children's involvement in social and structured activities, including religious learning. This is particularly significant in rural contexts, where community-based religious activities have traditionally functioned as key spaces for moral education and social integration. Therefore, the decline in children's participation in religious study groups observed in this study indicates not only a behavioural change but also a potential transformation in the mechanisms of moral value internalisation. Without adequate guidance and balance, increased gadget use may weaken the role of communal religious institutions in shaping children's character, thereby requiring new adaptive strategies from both families and communities.

In addition, local culture and traditions, which have long been a medium for transmitting moral values, are also undergoing change. Children are no longer actively involved in social activities such as mutual assistance, feasts, or traditional customs, which previously served as spaces for learning values of politeness and social solidarity. This phenomenon indicates a shift in the pattern of socialisation of values from the social space of the community to the more individualistic digital space.

This study also found a shift in children's moral values related to the increasing intensity of gadget use. This shift is particularly evident in three main dimensions, namely manners, discipline, and social interaction. In terms of manners, some parents and community leaders have observed a decline in children's respect for their elders. Children often do not respond to their parents' calls because they are too focused on their gadgets, or they imitate communication styles from digital

content that are not in line with the norms of politeness in the local culture.

In terms of discipline, excessive use of gadgets affects children's learning routines and responsibilities. Children find it more difficult to manage their time between playing, studying, and performing religious duties. Some teachers also report that children who frequently use gadgets tend to have lower concentration levels than children who use gadgets in moderation. Meanwhile, in terms of social interaction, there is a tendency for children to become less involved in social activities in the community. Children spend more time at home with their gadgets than playing with their peers or participating in community activities. This condition has the potential to reduce children's empathy, cooperation, and social communication skills in real life.

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that gadget use presents a dilemma in the process of parenting and moral education of children. On the one hand, digital technology offers various benefits in terms of access to information and entertainment. However, on the other hand, uncontrolled use has the potential to disrupt the process of internalising moral values that have been built through family interaction, religious education, and community culture.

Based on the results of interviews and observations conducted with informants, it was found that the internalisation of children's moral values in the era of gadget use is influenced by several important factors, namely family upbringing, social environment, and children's involvement in religious activities. These three aspects play a role in shaping children's attitudes and behaviour amid the development of digital technology.

Table 1. Summary of Thematic Findings on Children's Moral Value Internalisation

Main Theme	Sub-theme	Empirical Findings
Family Upbringing	Parental control of gadget use	Parents limit usage time and provide direct warnings when children overuse gadgets
	Moral guidance (nasihat)	Parents routinely remind children about appropriate behaviour
	Role modelling	Children imitate parents' behaviour in using gadgets
Social Environment	Peer interaction	Children tend to follow peers' habits in gadget use
	Community social control	Adults in the neighbourhood occasionally reprimand inappropriate behaviour
	Social activities	Decreasing participation in traditional play and communal activities
Religious Activities	Participation in religious learning	Some children regularly attend Qur'anic learning sessions
	Decline in engagement	Increased gadget use reduces attendance in religious activities
	Moral reinforcement	Religious activities strengthen discipline and respectful behaviour

To facilitate understanding of the relationship between these factors, the findings of this study can be illustrated visually as shown in Figure 1.



Fig.1 Value Internalisation Model

This figure shows that the use of gadgets in children's lives does not stand alone but is contextualised within family upbringing, social environment, and religious activities. These three aspects contribute to the internalisation of moral values in children, such as politeness, discipline, and social interaction skills.

The Role of Community and Social Environment in Children's Moral Development

Apart from the family, the community and social environment also play a significant role in the process of children's moral development. In the context of rural communities such as Talang Donok Village, social interaction among residents still takes place intensively through various social and religious activities. This condition provides space for children to learn moral values not only from their families, but also from the surrounding community. In the perspective of educational sociology, the social environment is one of the agents of socialisation that plays a role in shaping individual behaviour and value systems from an early age (Tobroni et al., 2021). Through interaction with the community, children gain social experiences that help them understand the norms, rules, and values that apply in communal life.

One form of social environment contribution to children's moral development is through religious activities organised at the community level. Children are often involved in activities such as recitation, learning to read the Qur'an, and other religious activities carried out in mosques or prayer rooms. These activities not only serve as a means of religious learning, but also as a space for character building and discipline. In Islamic education studies, community-based religious activities play an important role in strengthening moral values because children learn directly through worship practices and social interactions with religious leaders and peers (Febriana et al., 2022).

In addition to religious activities, daily social interactions between residents also influence the formation of children's behaviour. Children who grow up in a community that upholds the values of togetherness, mutual respect, and social awareness tend to internalise these values more easily in their lives. For example, when children are accustomed to seeing practices of mutual cooperation, neighbours helping each other, or respect for elders, they indirectly learn about the importance of social solidarity and ethics in interactions. This process is in line with the concept of social learning, which states that children learn behaviour through observation of their social environment (Saputra, 2025).

The peer environment is also a factor that significantly influences the formation of children's character. Peers often become a reference group for children in determining behaviour that is considered acceptable in their social group. Therefore, a positive peer environment can help

reinforce the moral values taught by the family. Conversely, an unfavourable social environment has the potential to influence children's behaviour in a less positive direction. Research on child development shows that the influence of peers becomes stronger as children get older, especially when they begin to interact more actively outside the family environment.

In rural communities, social supervision from the community also plays an indirect role in shaping children's behaviour. Adults in the neighbourhood usually do not hesitate to reprimand children if they behave in a manner that is considered rude or violates prevailing norms. This form of social supervision reflects the collective responsibility of the community in maintaining the behaviour of the younger generation. From a sociological perspective, this mechanism is known as informal social control, which is the community's effort to maintain norms and values through daily social interactions without involving formal legal rules (Tobroni et al., 2021).

In addition, the development of digital technology has also begun to influence children's social interaction patterns in the community. Children not only interact directly with their peers, but also through digital media such as online games or social media. This situation requires the community and families to be more active in providing guidance so that children are able to maintain ethics and moral values in the digital space. Studies on digital literacy show that adult guidance is crucial for children to use technology wisely and avoid exposure to content or behaviour that conflicts with social and moral values (Indarwan, 2022).

Thus, the moral development of children is essentially a shared responsibility between families and communities. Families serve as the primary educational environment that instils basic values in children, while communities function as social spaces that reinforce and practise these values in everyday life. Synergy between families and communities is an important factor in creating an environment conducive to children's moral development, especially amid the challenges of social change caused by the development of digital technology.

Conclusion

This study shows that the use of gadgets has become an integral part of children's daily lives, meaning that parents need to continually adapt their parenting practices to the realities of digital culture. These findings confirm that families remain the primary agents in the internalisation of moral values through strategies such as guidance, habit formation, parental role modelling, and supervision of children's digital activities. More importantly, this study theoretically highlights that the internalisation of moral values in the digital age should not be understood merely as a one-way transmission of norms from parents to children, but rather as a dynamic and negotiated process shaped by the interaction between religious values, local culture, and children's engagement with digital media in daily life. These findings contribute to the discourse on Islamic education by demonstrating that moral formation in rural communities is increasingly influenced by the intersection of traditional socialisation patterns and emerging digital practices.

This study also reveals that children's moral development is fostered not only through family interactions, but also through social relationships and community-based religious activities, which continue to serve as vital platforms for moral and character education. Therefore, practical efforts to strengthen children's moral values in the digital age must not rely solely on parents restricting their use of gadgets. Instead, parents, schools, and community religious institutions need to collaboratively create balanced digital parenting strategies, including supervised digital engagement, the integration of religious content into children's digital activities, and the revitalisation of community-based religious programmes that appeal to children.

However, this study is limited by its focus on a single rural community and a relatively short period of field observation, which may not fully capture the diversity of parenting experiences and digital practices across various socio-cultural contexts. Therefore, future research is recommended to involve a broader research setting and longer-term ethnographic engagement in order to gain a deeper understanding of the internalisation of moral values within an ever-evolving digital environment.

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