Digital-Era Parenting: Communication Patterns and Socio-Emotional Development of Early Childhood Generation Alpha

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Abstract

This study examines parental communication patterns in the development of socio-emotional skills among early childhood Generation Alpha in the digital era. Through a qualitative, phenomenological-critical approach involving 12 parents in Meulaboh, this research reveals three dominant communication patterns. The findings indicate: an integrative digital mediation combining active guidance with Islamic values; communication dissonance between ideal values and actual parental practices in digital contexts; and strategic technology appropriation for emotional-spiritual socialisation. The empirical findings were dialogically analysed with Qur'anic principles, particularly Q.S. Luqman regarding communication wisdom, Q.S. Al-Isra' concerning speech ethics, and Q.S. Al-Baqarah on moderation principles. This study contributes to the development of a value-based digital parenting model relevant to Indonesian Muslim families. Practical implications include the development of Islamic digital literacy programs that can assist parents in balancing technology use with children's holistic character development.

Introduction

The contemporary digital revolution has fundamentally reconfigured the landscape of childhood development, creating what researchers term a "digitally saturated environment" where technology permeates every facet of daily life. For Generation Alpha, children who were born from approximately 2010 onward (Höfrová & Small, 2024), digital devices are not merely tools but intrinsic components of their developmental ecosystem, shaping their cognitive patterns, social interactions, and emotional experiences from the earliest stages of life (McCrindle & Fell, 2020).

The profound implications of this digital immersion are particularly significant in Indonesia, where technology adoption has accelerated dramatically in recent years. Trinika's (2015) research indicates a substantial increase in device usage among children, rising from 38% to 72%. Data from APJII (2025) reveals that 79.73% of Generation Alpha regularly access digital devices, with 71.3% owning their own personal gadgets (Maimunah, 2021). Regarding daily usage duration for non-academic purposes, the largest proportion (36.5%) falls within 1-2 hours per day, followed by 2-5 hours (34.8%), and over 5 hours (25.4%) (Maimunah, 2021).

Internet-connected devices undeniably offer considerable benefits, including ease of information access, platforms for building social networks, and simplified communication. Furthermore, advancing digital technology facilitates distance learning, access to educational media and tutorials through diverse applications, supports entrepreneurial growth, and fosters creativity (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2016).

However, excessive digital exposure also carries risks, potentially leading to addiction (Ratulangi, 2021) and impacting child development (Munisa, 2020), including socio-emotional skill development (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2016). Socio-emotional skills in early childhood encompass two interrelated dimensions. The social dimension refers to a child's ability to build and maintain positive relationships with others, including capacities for cooperation, sharing, listening, and responding appropriately in social interactions (Putri, 2021). The emotional dimension involves the ability to recognise, understand, manage, and express emotions healthily, as well as to develop empathy for others (Nurmalita, 2015).

The significance of these skills extends beyond academic achievement, encompassing what Islamic educational philosophy conceptualises as *tarbiyah al-mutakamilah*, holistic education that nurtures the intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and social dimensions of a person. The Qur'an explicitly emphasises this responsibility in Surah At-Tahrim verse 6: "O you who have believed, protect yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones." This verse establishes parental obligation (*mas'uliyyah al-walidayn*) to create a nurturing environment that safeguards a child's comprehensive well-being. This divine instruction finds practical elaboration in the educational methodology of Luqman al-Hakim, whose advice to his son in Surah Luqman, verses 13-19, exemplifies the integration of spiritual values with emotional intelligence and social responsibility (Karomah & Rahmat, 2022).

The parental role becomes increasingly vital in guiding Generation Alpha to adapt effectively to rapid change without compromising core developmental needs. As the first generation to grow up alongside pervasive digital technology, if their upbringing is not balanced with character development from an early age, it may foster individualism and poor socio-emotional growth (Gunawan et al., 2024). Within this theological framework, parental communication serves as the primary vehicle for transmitting not only practical knowledge but also moral wisdom and emotional regulation, making it essential to investigate how this communication evolves within digitally mediated family interactions (Muhajir, 2021).

This study is grounded in the integration of three main theoretical frameworks. First, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory provides a lens for understanding how digital technology as a chronosystem influences the family microsystem. Second, Koerner and Fitzpatrick's (2002) Family Communication Patterns Theory helps analyse conversational and conformity orientations in parent-child communication dynamics. Third, Livingstone and Helsper's (2008) Parental Mediation Theory forms the basis for understanding practical parental strategies in managing children's technology use.

The theoretical foundation for understanding this complex interaction can be seen in Bronfenbrenner's (2005) Ecological Systems Theory, which positions the family as the primary microsystem most directly influencing child development. However, contemporary childhood unfolds within a chronosystem dominated by digital media, transforming family relationships in ways unprecedented for previous generations. While existing research extensively discusses screen time's impact on children's cognitive development, studies like Livingstone & Helsper (2008) have mapped various parental mediation strategies, such as restrictive, active, and co-use approaches,

used to guide, mentor, and manage children's relationships with digital media. The goal is to maximise media benefits while minimising risks like exposure to harmful content, cyberbullying, or overuse. Nevertheless, a conceptual gap remains in understanding how overall family communication patterns translate into specific forms of digital mediation that support children's socio-emotional development.

The foundational work by McLeod and Chaffee on Family Communication Patterns Theory, later solidified by Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002), provides a robust conceptual framework for understanding how families establish communication patterns through two dimensions: conversation orientation and conformity orientation. However, the application of this theory within modern communication contexts remains relatively limited. Specifically, the intersection between family communication patterns and digital mediation, such as conversations via messaging apps, social media interactions, or parental digital monitoring, has not been deeply explored, despite the potential of digital communication dynamics to alter how families build discussions, establish values, or manage disagreements (Agustina, 2024).

This limitation becomes more significant when the theory is situated within a religious cultural context, such as West Aceh, the site of this study, where family communication practices are often shaped by theological values, moral norms, and religion-based social rules (Susanto, 2019). To date, research that simultaneously integrates family communication patterns, digital mediation influence, and religious values remains scarce.

This research gap is particularly evident from an Islamic perspective, where the integration of spiritual values with contemporary digital challenges remains marginalised in mainstream literature. As noted by Kamila et al. (2025), most studies on digital parenting emerge from Western secular frameworks, overlooking the rich ethical resources within Islamic tradition that could inform more culturally responsive approaches to technology mediation. This theoretical void is especially problematic in majority-Muslim regions like West Aceh, where rapid technology adoption has outpaced the development of religiously informed perspectives, creating psychological tension for religious parents navigating between traditional values and technological imperatives (Andika, 2022).

Despite abundant research on digital parenting, studies integrating all three perspectives remain limited. Research in Indonesia by Zahrotunnisa (2023) indicates that Muslim parents develop unique mediation strategies, yet an in-depth analysis of how Islamic values influence digital communication patterns is lacking. Furthermore, studies on digital parenting in Indonesia have predominantly focused on school-age children and adolescents. At the same time, early childhood, a crucial stage for establishing the foundation of socio-emotional abilities, has received less research attention. Early childhood is precisely the period when behavioural foundations, emotional regulation, empathy, and interaction patterns begin to form. Neglecting this stage results in a lost understanding of how digital parenting influences child development from its inception (Munisa, 2020).

This study aims to address several key gaps in prior research. Existing studies tend to separate family communication pattern theory from digital mediation approaches, even though both are interrelated in modern family life. Therefore, this study seeks to construct an integrative analytical framework that combines both approaches into a coherent understanding. This framework will examine how family communication patterns, such as levels of conversation and conformity, relate to parental digital mediation practices, including regulating device use, accompanying children, and guiding digital interactions. This synthesis is then situated within an ecological perspective,

recognising digital technology as a dominant and influential environment in contemporary childhood.

Furthermore, the entire analysis will be framed within Islamic principles concerning child development and communication ethics. This ensures the resulting understanding is not only theoretically relevant but also aligned with the religious values of the Muslim community in West Aceh. By examining how Muslim parents navigate digital challenges while upholding religious values, this study will contribute to a more nuanced, culturally sensitive understanding of proactive parenting in the digital age.

This study moves beyond the "deficit model," which typically views digital technology solely as a threat or something to be restricted. Instead, it proposes that, through intentional, mindful, and value-based communication (grounded in family ethics, moral values, or Islamic principles), the digital environment can be harnessed to support child development. Thus, technology is not seen merely as a source of problems; with appropriate communication strategies, parents can utilise technology for good while mitigating potential risks or harms associated with digital use.

The novelty of this research lies in its multidimensional approach, bridging theoretical domains typically studied in isolation while systematically centring an Islamic worldview as an essential interpretive framework. This marks a significant departure from conventional studies that marginalise religious perspectives or treat them as peripheral variables rather than a central analytical lens. Moreover, this study addresses what Dini (2022) identifies in the Indonesian parenting literature: while abundant practical advice circulates, much of it lacks empirical grounding and theoretical rigour. Consequently, this research aims to critically examine parental communication patterns in shaping the socio-emotional skills of Generation Alpha's early childhood in the digital era.

The ultimate goal is to develop an integrative, communicative parenting model that is empirically robust, theoretically sound, and rooted in Islamic ethical principles. This study is therefore expected to contribute to academic knowledge while providing practical guidance for Muslim families across diverse global contexts.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach with a critical-phenomenological design to explore parental communication patterns in shaping the socio-emotional skills of Generation Alpha children in the digital era. The phenomenological approach was chosen because it allows researchers to grasp the essence and deeper meaning of parents' firsthand experiences in communicating with their children amidst digital challenges (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Meanwhile, the critical lens uncovers the ethical and ideological dimensions underpinning these communication practices within broader social and cultural structures.

Participants are residents of Meulaboh city, selected through purposive sampling based on the criteria that they are parents of early childhood children (aged 4–6 years) from Generation Alpha who actively use digital devices in daily family life. Inclusion criteria include: (1) having a child aged 4–6 years exposed to digital devices for at least one hour per day, (2) willingness to participate fully in the study, and (3) ability to articulate their digital parenting experiences. The research was conducted in the participants' natural settings to ensure data authenticity.

Research data were collected from two primary sources. Primary data were obtained through participant observation of communicative interactions within families and in-depth, semi-structured interviews (Yin, 2018). Secondary data were gathered through a review of relevant

academic literature, including accredited international and national journals on family communication, child development, and digital parenting psychology. This literature study serves as triangulation material to enrich the analysis of primary data.

A distinctive feature of the analysis is its dialogical approach, which applies theoretical triangulation by engaging field findings in dialogue with Qur'anic principles on family communication. Specifically, the study refers to Q.S. Luqman [31]:13–19 on wisdom-based values in parent-child communication, Q.S. Al-Isra' [17]:23 regarding speech ethics, and Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]:233 on the principle of moderation in parenting. This comparative reflective process enables the researcher to develop a holistic understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

Findings

This study identified three primary patterns of parental communication that shape the socio-emotional development of Generation Alpha children in the digital era. These findings not only reveal the strategies parents employ in navigating digital challenges but also highlight how children's responses—observed through behaviours, expressions, and interaction patterns—provide valuable insight into their socio-emotional outcomes.

Dominant Communication Patterns

1. Integrative Mediation: Uniting Active Guidance with Family Values

The first identified pattern is an integrative mediation approach that simultaneously combines active and restrictive strategies, enriched with religious values.

a. Value-Based Active Mediation: Parents do not merely accompany their children during digital device use but actively provide explanations grounded in religious values. Participant 4 (Mother of a 5-year-old boy) explained, "When my child watches YouTube, I always sit beside him and watch along. Afterwards, I invite him to summarise the story he watched and extract lessons aligned with Islamic values." This approach demonstrates a transformation from simple co-viewing to value-based co-learning. Parents not only monitor content but also build a moral framework through reflective dialogue.

b. Meaningful Restriction: Restrictions on gadget use aren't enforced by the authority but are accompanied by philosophical explanations. Participant 8, a father of a six-year-old girl, explained, "I limit gadget use to a maximum of one hour per day by explaining that this trains patience and self-control, similar to a 'technological fast.' This approach helps the child comprehend the underlying principles, rather than simply obeying a rule."

This integrative mediation pattern reflects the educational methodology of Luqman al-Hakim, which combines rational reasoning (cause-and-effect explanations), spiritual counsel (linking to religious values), and behavioural modelling (consistency between words and actions). As expressed by Participant 4: "I always accompany my child when he watches YouTube content, explaining which behaviours are good or not according to Islamic teachings, occasionally relating them to relevant prophetic stories. But I am also firm in setting rules, such as no phones during meals and a maximum of one hour per day." This aligns with the active mediation category by Livingstone & Helsper (2008) but is enriched by the religious values that guide responses to digital content. This finding is consistent with research by Hatiah & Muslimah (2024), which found that Muslim parents in Indonesia often blend conventional approaches with religious values.

During observations, children exposed to integrative mediation appeared more able to verbalise their feelings about digital content, demonstrating early forms of emotional literacy. Their willingness to engage in dialogue—summarising stories, asking value-related questions, or negotiating screen-time boundaries—suggests an emerging socio-emotional competence shaped by these discussions.

2. Communication Dissonance in Digital Spaces

A surprising finding emerged in the form of a gap between the communication values parents espouse and their actual practices in digital spaces.

a. **Dissonance at the Value Level:** 10 out of 12 participants expressed a commitment to democratic communication, yet observations revealed authoritarian tendencies when confronting problematic content. Participant 7 (Father of a 6-year-old girl) admitted, "I want to be a good listener, but when my child imitates inappropriate words or gestures, I instinctively scold her. I know this contradicts the principle of 'qawlan karima' (honourable speech)."

b. **Dissonance at the Emotional Level:** Digital technology triggers intense emotional responses that override ideal communication principles. Participant 10 (Mother of a 5-year-old boy) explained, "After a full day of work, seeing my child absorbed in a game and forgetting the time makes me immediately angry, even though I should remind him with gentle words."

c. **Dissonance at the Consistency Level:** Parents are often inconsistent between the prohibitions they set for their children and their own behaviour. Participant 11 (Mother of a 6-year-old girl) revealed, "I forbid my child from using her phone during meals, but I sometimes still reply to chats myself. My child then protests, 'How come you can, Mom?'"

Children's reactions—such as confusion, withdrawal, or argumentative responses—reveal how dissonant communication may negatively affect their socio-emotional development. Observations show that children exposed to inconsistent or emotionally charged communication exhibit signs of frustration, reduced willingness to share feelings, or attempts to challenge perceived unfairness. These behavioural cues indicate their sensitivity to communication mismatches and highlight the need to consider their perspectives in evaluating socio-emotional outcomes.

3. Technology Appropriation for Value Socialisation

Parents are beginning to demonstrate the ability to leverage technology as a tool for socialising socio-emotional values. Participant 9 (Mother of 4-year-old twins) shared her experience: "When selecting content for our children, we often use an application containing stories of prophetic exemplars and daily life narratives embedded with Islamic values. Through this app, children not only learn about the stories of the prophets but are also guided to recognise the prophets' emotions in facing life's trials and learn about emotional regulation. Afterwards, we discuss how to apply these values, for instance, when they quarrel over a toy with their sibling." This approach indicates a shift from a defensive to a constructive pattern in utilising technology, as identified in Clark's (2019) research on the evolution of digital parenting strategies.

Qur'anic Perspective

1. Integrative Mediation in the Light of Q.S. Luqman

The integrative mediation pattern finds strong conceptual grounding in Q.S. Luqman [31]:13-19. These verses illustrate how Luqman balances conceptual communication (rational explanation of monotheism) with socio-emotional communication (advice on humility and patience). As reflected in parental practice, this approach is effective not only in building understanding but also in instilling values. Participant 3 exemplified this: "I often use endearing terms like 'my dear child,' 'my love,' 'my darling' when addressing my child, even when admonishing him about the dangers of spending too much time with gadgets." This method mirrors, albeit indirectly, Luqman's use of the affectionate address 'ya bunayya' (O my dear son). This approach aligns with the concept of "tarbiyah mutakamilah" (holistic education) discussed by the philosopher Al-Ghazali (Suryadarma & Haq, 2015).

2. Addressing Dissonance with Q.S. Al-Isra.

The finding on communication dissonance is addressed in Q.S. Al-Isra' [17]:23, which emphasises the importance of 'qaulan karima' (honourable speech). Some parents reported finding solutions by adopting this principle. Participant 5 shared: "Now I am trying to implement a 'pause before reacting' by reciting the ta'awwudz ('A'uudzu billaahi minasy-syaithoonir rojiim' - I seek refuge in Allah from the accursed Satan) when I get angry seeing my child having a tantrum over a game or phone. This helps me calm down before speaking." This practice demonstrates how Qur'anic principles can function as a self-regulation mechanism in digital communication, as elaborated in contemporary studies on Islamic psychology (Ibn Khaldun in Mursalin, 2024).

3. Technology Appropriation and the Principle of Moderation in Q.S. Al-Baqarah

The strategic use of technology aligns with the principle 'laa tukallifullahu nafsan illa wus'aha' (Allah does not burden a soul beyond its capacity) found in Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]:233. Parents no longer view technology as an enemy to be completely avoided, but as a tool to be utilised wisely. Participant 11 explained, "In this era, we cannot completely shield our children from technology. Instead, we select age-appropriate applications and always supervise them during gadget use." This embodies the Islamic principle of not imposing hardship. This moderate approach allows for the utilisation of technology without sacrificing family values, consistent with the Islamic concept of "wasatiyyah" (moderation) widely discussed in contemporary contexts (Zin, 2013).

These findings indicate that the effectiveness of parental communication in the digital era depends not only on technical mediation strategies but, more importantly, on the ability to integrate spiritual values into daily communication practices. Successful communication patterns are those that transform digital challenges into lessons in values through a balanced approach of active guidance, critical reflection, and creative appropriation.

This research opens the door to developing a more integrated model of Muslim family communication in the digital age, one that is responsive to technological developments while remaining rooted in Islamic values. Further research is needed to test the effectiveness of this model in more diverse socio-cultural contexts and to examine its long-term impact on children's character development.

Discussion

This study reveals the complex dynamics of parental communication in shaping the socio-emotional skills of Generation Alpha children in the digital era. The findings not only provide a practical picture of the digital mediation strategies employed by parents but also offer an integrative perspective bridging family communication theory with Islamic spiritual values. The following is an in-depth discussion of the key findings.

Integrative Mediation: Bridging Western Theory and Eastern Values

The finding on integrative mediation, which combines active and restrictive approaches, significantly strengthens and broadens the conceptual framework of parental mediation developed by Livingstone et al. (2017). While previous studies tended to categorise mediation strategies into discrete domains—namely, active mediation, restrictive mediation, and co-use—this research demonstrates that Muslim families in West Aceh apply these strategies simultaneously and in complementary ways. This pattern indicates that digital parenting practices in this context are not merely reactive responses to technological challenges but instead represent a deliberate, value-oriented framework in which parents embed digital engagement within broader moral and religious commitments.

As illustrated by Participant 4, the practice of supervising a child while watching YouTube, followed by explanation and reflection grounded in Islamic teachings, demonstrates how active mediation is enriched with a spiritual and ethical dimension. This integration transforms co-viewing from a passive monitoring activity into a collaborative moral learning process. Such practices corroborate findings by Hatiah & Muslimah (2024), who observed that Indonesian Muslim parents commonly blend conventional mediation strategies with religious values; however, the present study advances this understanding by showing that the integrative approach is not only effective in filtering inappropriate content but also instrumental in constructing a moral evaluative framework that guides children's broader orientation toward technology.

Moreover, this phenomenon aligns with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory (2005), which positions the family as the central microsystem shaping a child's developmental trajectory. The findings of this study illustrate how religious values function as a *cultural filter* through which parents interpret and regulate children's digital experiences. In this sense, digital mediation is not merely a set of technical strategies but is embedded within a culturally and spiritually informed communicative ecology. As demonstrated in the field data, the integration of moral explanations, affective communication, and consistent rule-setting collectively fosters children's development of socio-emotional competencies, such as emotional literacy, empathy, self-regulation, and reflective reasoning.

Communication Dissonance: Between Idealism and Digital Reality

This study successfully identifies the root causes of communication dissonance, demonstrating that it arises not only from a mismatch between religious values and technological realities but, more critically, from the difficulty parents face in consistently applying Islamic communication principles when confronted with emotionally charged digital situations. As illustrated by Participant 7, although parents recognise the importance of dignified communication, the emotional stress triggered by exposure to inappropriate digital content often causes them to momentarily abandon the principle of *qaulan kariman* (honourable speech).

These findings reinforce Koerner and Fitzpatrick's (2002) framework on the complexity of family communication by introducing the digital environment as a new and potent catalyst for dissonance. The study's contribution lies in demonstrating that dissonance occurs not only at the level of stated values but also manifests in concrete, everyday communication practices. Emotional intensity triggered by children's digital activities—such as imitation of inappropriate language, prolonged gaming, or refusal to disengage from screens—can override parents' attempts to maintain ideal communication behaviours.

Importantly, the strategies parents report using to manage this tension provide insight into culturally grounded mechanisms of emotional regulation. The use of a "pause before reacting" technique, specifically through reciting *ta'awwudz*, serves as a practical tool for reducing anger and restoring composure before addressing the child. This practice not only aligns with Qur'anic guidance but also resonates with the principles of emotional regulation discussed in Islamic psychology, particularly within the framework of Ibn Khaldun's thought (Mursalin, 2024). As participants described, this technique enables parents to regain self-control and deliver corrective communication in accordance with Islamic ethical standards.

Overall, this finding deepens the theoretical understanding of communication dissonance by situating it within the unique intersection of digital stressors and Islamic value commitments. It underscores the need for models of digital parenting that recognise emotional regulation as a central component of value-based communication and highlights the potential of Islamic principles to serve as effective tools for navigating the complexities of modern family communication.

Technology Appropriation: From Threat to Educational Medium

The finding on technology appropriation for value socialisation reflects an important paradigm shift in how Muslim parents navigate digital environments. Rather than perceiving technology solely as a potential threat to children's moral and socio-emotional development, parents demonstrate a notable degree of agency in transforming digital media into an educational resource. This shift illustrates parents' capacity to strategically utilise digital applications—particularly those featuring prophetic stories and value-based narratives—as tools for intergenerational transmission of Islamic ethical principles. The experience shared by Participant 9 provides a clear example of this process, showing how digital content can catalyse guided moral discussion within the family setting.

In line with Solihutaufa (2025), technology in this context is reframed not as an opposing force to Islamic upbringing but as a medium through which Islamic values can be meaningfully practised and reinforced. What this study adds, however, is a critical nuance: the effectiveness of value-oriented technology use is highly contingent upon parents' interpretive competencies. It is not the digital content alone that drives value internalisation but the parents' ability to mediate, contextualise, and expand upon that content so that it becomes material for deeper moral reflection. Thus, successful technology appropriation depends on a reflexive and dialogical parenting approach, in which digital media serves as the starting point for broader conversations about emotion, ethics, and lived religious values.

Integration of the Qur'anic Perspective: Towards a Holistic Communication Model

The uniqueness of this study lies in its successful integration of the Qur'anic perspective into the analysis of empirical findings. The dialogical approach between field findings and Qur'anic values not only enriches the analysis but also offers a holistic conceptual framework for

understanding parental communication in the digital age. The communication principles in Q.S. Luqman, speech ethics in Q.S. Al-Isra', and moderation in Q.S. Al-Baqarah prove relevant as guidance in facing digital challenges.

This finding supports Zin's (2013) research on the relevance of the *wasatiyyah* (moderation) concept in digital parenting, and it provides an additional contribution by demonstrating its practical implementation. The integration of Qur'anic values in digital communication yields not only effective strategies but also meaningful, transformative communication, where technology serves as a medium for building character rather than merely a source of entertainment.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The findings of this study have profound implications for developing a model of parental communication in the digital age. Contextually, an effective communication model must be adapted to the characteristics of Generation Alpha as digital natives while considering the rapidly evolving digital environment. A value-based approach is crucial for integrating Islamic principles into every digital interaction, so that technology functions not only as an entertainment tool but also as a medium for character education. The reflective aspect of this model encourages parents to consistently evaluate the alignment between their values and daily digital parenting practices. At the same time, the collaborative approach enables children to be partners in the learning process, thereby fostering autonomy and responsible technology use.

These implications are relevant not only for developing parenting programs in Indonesia but also provide a valuable contribution to the global literature on digital parenting from specific cultural and religious perspectives, particularly in the context of Muslim societies facing technological modernisation.

Several limitations of this study must be acknowledged. First, it is limited to Muslim families in an urban area; therefore, the findings may not fully represent families in rural regions. Second, the study focuses on parents, so the children's perspective on parental communication has not been explored in depth.

For future research, it is suggested to: (1) expand the geographical scope and involve families from diverse socio-economic backgrounds; (2) develop longitudinal studies to examine the long-term impact of communication patterns on child development; (3) research the effectiveness of value-based digital literacy programs in improving parenting quality.

Conclusion

This study shows that the socio-emotional development of Generation Alpha is strongly influenced by intentional, integrative, and grounded in value-based parental communication. Three dominant communication patterns emerged: (1) an integrative mediation approach that combines active guidance with religious value cultivation, (2) constructive technology appropriation for moral and emotional learning, and (3) communication dissonance that can be mitigated through Islamic communication ethics such as *qaulan karīman* and emotional self-regulation.

The integration of Bronfenbrenner's ecological perspective, Family Communication Patterns Theory, and Qur'anic principles provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how Muslim families negotiate digital environments and transform them into meaningful spaces for character formation. This synthesis highlights that effective digital parenting depends not only on managing technology but on embedding spiritual and ethical values in everyday interactions.

Practically, the study offers a framework for developing communication-based digital parenting interventions tailored to Muslim families. The findings emphasise the need for parenting programs that balance technological literacy with the cultivation of Islamic values, promote dialogic and reflective communication, and equip parents with strategies for emotional regulation in digital contexts. Such programs could include value-based digital literacy modules, Qur'an-informed family communication guides, and digital character education resources for early childhood education settings.

Overall, the study concludes that successful parenting in the digital era relies on parents' capacity to create a safe, balanced, and spiritually informed digital ecosystem—one that nurtures emotional resilience, ethical awareness, and holistic character development in young children.

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