Islamic Values and Digital Media Ethics in Santri-Family Communication in the Digital Era

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Abstract

This study explores how parents of Islamic boarding school students (*santri*) communicate and instill ethical values in their children's digital media use. Utilizing a qualitative narrative approach with 22 parent informants from PPQ Nahwa Nur, the research uncovers various parental communication patterns, Islamic values, challenges, and strategies in navigating digital parenting. The findings show a blend of restrictive and active mediation, rooted in Islamic teachings and dialogic approaches. Challenges include peer influence, digital addiction, and parental digital illiteracy. This study contributes to understanding family communication in religious boarding school contexts and suggests pathways for Islamic-based digital literacy programs.

Keywords: Digital Literacy, Digital Parenting, Islamic Values, Media Ethics, Santri Family Communication.

1. Introduction

The development of information and communication technology in the digital era has brought about major changes in family life, including in the practice of communication between family members. The internet and social media are now an inseparable part of the lives of teenagers, including students studying at Islamic boarding schools (*santri)*. On the one hand, digital media opens up access to knowledge, entertainment, and wider social networks. However, on the other hand, the use of digital media

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without wise control can pose risks such as exposure to negative content, the spread of hoaxes, cyberbullying, fraud, health problems, and gadget addiction (Bastian et al., 2024; Fitri, 2022; A. N. Handayani & Luqman, n.d.; F. Handayani & Maharani, 2022; N. Handayani, 2022; Jalal et al., 2022; Junida, 2019; Mardliyah, 2023; Oktavia, 2023; Pratikno & Sumantri, 2020; Wahyuningtyas et al., 2022; Wulandari & Hermiati, 2019; Zain et al., 2022). However, internet and social media users continue to experience significant increases every year. This is as released by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII), which announced that the number of Indonesian internet users in 2024 will reach 221,563,479 people from a total population of 278,696,200 Indonesians in 2023. Internet users among teenagers are also significant compared to other age groups. The majority of people surfing the internet are Gen Z (born 1997-2012) at 34.40%. Then, the millennial generation (born 1981-1996) is 30.62% (APJII, 2024). It can be said that the majority of users are teenagers. The majority of students who live in Islamic boarding schools are also in their teens. Students use cell phones to communicate with their parents who live separately from them.

In the context of *santri* (students studying at Islamic boarding schools), family, communication between parents and children regarding media use is very important. *Santri* have limited time to interact directly with their parents. Therefore, the intensity and quality of communication regarding the ethics of using digital media are determinants in the process of internalizing values that are in accordance with family norms and religious teachings. Previous research has shown that parental involvement in accompanying children in using media can reduce negative risks and strengthen moral and spiritual values (Fajria et al., 2025; Harahap et al., 2024; 'Izza, 2024; Mandala et al., 2024).

Existing research has focused more on communication between parents and adolescents in general, not specifically on Islamic boarding school students. Studies on Islamic boarding school students and media have focused more on how to utilize existing media for preaching, long-distance communication between Islamic boarding school students and parents, the interpretation of codes by Islamic boarding school students in the media, and others (Azzahra et al., 2024; Hidayatullah & Prasetyawan, 2019; Nurhadi et al., 2022; Susylowati & Wisudawanto, 2020).

However, the practice of family communication in the context of Islamic boarding schools has not been studied in depth, especially from the perspective of the parents' narratives. How do parents manage communication with their children who are studying religious education in Islamic boarding schools? What values do they instill in the use of

media? What challenges do they face in accompanying teenagers who live in this digital era? These questions are relevant to raise, considering the large role of the family as the smallest social unit in educating and guiding children amidst the rapid digital transformation.

Narrative data from parents of students at *Pondok Pesanteren Penghafal Quran (PPQ) Nahwa Nur* in Bogor shows that most parents are aware of the importance of supervision and guidance of children's use of digital media. However, there is variation in the approaches used, ranging from direct advice, time restrictions to role models in media behavior. In addition, Islamic values such as honesty, discipline, and manners in interacting are often the basis for guiding children, although not all parents explicitly use verses of the Qur'an or stories of the Prophet as the basis for media education.

This phenomenon shows the dynamics of communication between santri families in navigating media ethics in the digital era. On the one hand, there is awareness and effort to instill moral and religious values. On the other hand, there are challenges in terms of limited control, differences in digital generations, and resistance from teenagers who are starting to form their own identities. This is in line with the concept of "digital parenting," which emphasizes the importance of collaboration, understanding, and open communication between parents, as well as content supervision, time restrictions, and digital ethics education, which can help children develop quality children (Fajria et al., 2025).

This study is important in filling the research gap on family communication in the context of Islamic boarding schools facing the digital era. By capturing the narratives of parents of students, this article aims to understand more deeply how communication practices, values are instilled, as well as challenges and strategies used in guiding children to use media ethically and in accordance with Islamic law. Furthermore, this study has practical implications for the development of family and religion-based digital literacy programs, as well as theoretical contributions in expanding the perspective of family communication in the religious-traditional context that is typical in Indonesia.

Based on the background above, the formulation of the problem in this study is as follows: (1) What is the form of communication between parents of students and their teenagers regarding the use of digital media?; (2) What values are instilled by parents in guiding children to use media ethically and religiously?; (3) What are the challenges faced by parents in directing children to use media in accordance with Islamic values?; and (4) What strategies or approaches do parents use in instilling media ethics in teenagers? The objectives of this study are to: (1) Describe the form of

communication built between parents of students and their teenagers in the context of using digital media; (2) Identify Islamic values that are considered important by parents in accompanying children in using media; (3) Analyze the challenges faced by parents in guiding children to use media ethically and in accordance with Islamic law; (4) Explore the strategies or approaches used by parents to instill ethics in using media in everyday life.

2. Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a narrative study design. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore the subjective experiences, values, and perspectives of parents of students towards communication and ethical media practices within the family.

The study was conducted at *Pondok Pesanteren Penghafal Quran (PPQ) Nahwa Nur* in Bogor, West Java, an Islamic-based educational institution that implements a boarding school education system. Students come from various regions in Jakarta, Bogor, Tangerang, and Bekasi (Jabodetabek), some even from outside Jabodetabek, and the majority of parents come from the lower middle class with diverse educational and professional backgrounds.

The informants in this study were 22 parents or guardians of students who were studying at *Pondok PPQ Nahwa Nur*. The selection of participants was done purposively, namely, parents who were willing to provide narratives and reflections related to their communication with their children, especially in terms of the use of digital media. The composition of the participants consisted of fathers and mothers, with an age range of 30 to 60 years. From these criteria, there were 11 male informants (fathers) and 11 female informants (mothers). This also aims to see the differences in communication patterns between fathers and mothers with students, especially regarding digital media.

Data were collected through a narrative-based qualitative survey using an online form (Google Form-gform), which was then reconfirmed if there were answers that needed to be questioned again by calling the parents of the students. The further depth interviewed was conducted by phone. This was done because the parents of the students who filled out the form mostly lived outside Bogor, so it was not possible to conduct one-on-one interviews directly. The instrument was developed in the form of open-ended questions that allowed parents to tell: (1) The form of their communication with their children regarding the use of social media; (2) The values instilled in the use of digital media; (3) The rules or approaches

applied at home; (4) Challenges in guiding children to use media ethically and religiously; and (5) Resolution strategies when children are exposed to negative content or spread inappropriate information.

Data were analyzed using a thematic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006) in Ahmed et al., 2025; Rozali, 2022). The analysis steps include: (1) Familiarization: Reading all participant narratives thoroughly and repeatedly to understand the context and content of the data; (2) Initial Coding: Marking important parts of the narrative that contain key meanings related to communication, values, rules, challenges, and strategies; (3) Theme Search: Grouping initial codes into main themes that represent key research findings; (4) Theme Review: Examining the relationship between themes and their suitability to the established conceptual framework; and (5) Naming Themes and Writing Reports: Compiling the results of thematic analysis into an academic narrative that describes the dynamics of communication between students' families in using digital media.

3. Results and Discussion

Research with informants of parents of students of PPQ Nahwa Nur Islamic Boarding School who live in various regions in Jabodetabek. The informants consisted of 22 parents of students of PPQ Nahwa Nur (11 men or fathers and 11 women or mothers); the last education was dominated by high school, with an age range of 38-59 years. The names of the informants will be written with initials in this study, namely A1-A11 (A: Father) and I1-I11 (I: Mother). The interview instrument contained nine narrative questions about communication practices, Islamic values, challenges, and media strategies. After being transcribed, it was analyzed using manual thematic coding assisted by keyword frequency to extract dominant patterns.

3.1. Forms of Parent-Teen Communication about Digital Media

Based on the data, the communication patterns carried out by parents to their children about digital media can be classified as in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Forms of Parent-Teen Communication

Communication Patterns	Illustration Quotes
Direct reminders (reminding) – advising, reprimanding, emphasizing "use your cellphone wisely"	"Reminding not to hold your cellphone for too long" (I1)

Communication Patterns	Illustration Quotes
Monitoring – monitor content & duration, confiscate devices if necessary	"If it happens again, the phone will be confiscated" (A8)
Two-way dialogue – discussing, listening to children's opinions, joint *tabayyun*	*"We invite them to dialogue… even though the challenges are quite tough" (A9)*
Exemplary behaviour – parents provide examples of good media use	*"Exemplified by daily habits" (I4)*

The table shows the communication patterns carried out by parents of students with their children. One response can contain several communication patterns. It can be seen that parents advise and direct their children as best they can to be able to use gadgets as best they can. Parents also try to model good things to their children without having to use gadgets continuously. It can be concluded that parents combine restrictive mediation (rules & restrictions) with active mediation (dialogue) to foster adolescent digital literacy. These results are in line with research by Valkenburg et al. (1999) and Nathanson (1999) (in (Purboningsih et al., 2024) Which divides the most frequently adopted taxonomy by describing three types of parental mediation strategies in communicating with children about media, namely: (1) active mediation, which consists of talking about media content perhaps when the child is involved with (watching, reading, listening to) the media; (2) restrictive mediation, which involves setting rules that limit media use, including restrictions on time spent, location of use or content, without having to discuss the meaning or impact of the content; (3) shared use, which consists of parents being present while the child is engaged with media (such as during co-viewing) and sharing the experience with the child but without commenting on the media content or its effects.

3.2. Islamic Values That Are Instilled

There are many Islamic values that can be instilled by parents of students. Table 2 below groups the Islamic values that are carried out by informants to their children.

Table 2. Islamic Values That Are Instilled

Category Values	Examples of Parental Speech
Tawhid & awareness of Allah's supervision	"Allah is All-Seeing of every post" (I10)

Category Values	Examples of Parental Speech
Honesty and anti-hoax	"Must be honest, avoid inaccurate information" (A7)
Digital etiquette/morals, and politeness	"Use words of wisdom, avoid backbiting" (A2)
Time management and worship priorities	"Turn off your cellphone during the call to prayer, if it is prayer time" (I5)
Sorting *halal-haram* content	"Do not watch vulgar or violent content" (A4)

It can be concluded that parents of students try their best to always remind their children to use cellphones as well as possible in accordance with Islamic manners and values. These values are consistent with Islamic parenting literature that emphasizes the instillation of *amanah, hifẓ al-lisan*, and *ḥusn al-khuluq* in an online context. In line with several studies that state that Islamic values should be integrated with children so that children are able to act in accordance with good norms, in accordance with the guidelines of the Qur'an (Fitriyah & Maksum, 2024; Kusuma et al., 2024; Mustaqimah & Rizik, 2024).

3.3. Challenges for Parents in the Digital Era

The various impacts, both positive and negative, caused by the media have made parents more aware of this. The results of interviews with informants identified several challenges, including:

Table 3. Challenges for Parents in the Digital Era

Challenge Theme	Explanation
Access and addiction to games/social media	Children become "forgetful of time", especially with Mobile Legends games and other short videos. Children seem to have their own world, so they are indifferent to their surroundings (I6)
fluence of friends and environment	Peer norms reduce the effectiveness of parental prohibitions (A5)
Limited supervision time	Parents work; "cannot supervise 24 hours" (I1)
Inconsistency of rules	Parents admit that it is difficult to "*keukeuh* (persistent) " when children argue (A7)

Parents in the digital era face serious challenges in educating children because of the many social media platforms that can be easily accessed by children and adolescents. This is related to character education for children and the development of digital technology. Digital technology is currently a hot topic because it is related to the increasingly rampant problems of national character, where character education has lost its function in shaping humans to have good character (Khodijah et al., 2021). Furthermore, in the current digital era, parents continue to be responsible for meeting the needs of their children, both in educating and being the first role models for children. So that families have an important role in monitoring children's growth, especially in today's era, parents must be able to choose the right information. Parents must pay special attention to their children. Therefore, parents must get the right information for their children's education that can be applied in the family (Yuliana et al., 2022). In addition, what is also a problem is the limited digital literacy of parents in applying religious values.

3.4. Strategies in Instilling Media Ethics by Parents

Parents do various things to prevent their children from getting caught up in negative things from using technology, including the internet. The results of the study show several strategies that parents use with their children, namely:

1. Time and content-based regulation; namely, by limiting the use of mobile phones, turning off mobile phones and other gadgets when the call to prayer sounds or when praying and studying, the content consumed must be educational and in accordance with Islamic teachings. There are rules and agreements with children, namely using mobile phones according to need, and if excessive (more than 2 hours), the mobile phone will be confiscated by parents.

2. Dialogic and *tabayyun* approaches, namely by inviting children to discuss, checking the truth of the news before sharing it, so that children are accustomed to cross-checking first, so as not to spread hoax news. This strategy is quite effective in increasing critical digital literacy. According to Rullah et al. (2025), it is very important to increase digital literacy among young people with effective communication strategies to be able to overcome digital differences and make it easier for young people to engage with digital tools for self-development. Digital literacy is essential for young people to navigate the digital landscape, which gives them the ability to distinguish between entertainment content and educational content (Rullah et al., 2025).

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3. Integration of the evidence and stories of the prophet; more than half of the informants said that by using verses of the Qur'an (for example Al-Ḥujurāt 49:6 about news verification, where the truth of the news must be ensured) or *sirah* as a moral reference to provide understanding and education to children. In line with the findings on the effectiveness of religious framing in parental mediation, parents can have discussions with children to present an understanding of *muraqabah* or mindful (Miranti, 2017; Kasuba et al., 2020). *Muraqabah* is a concept in Islam that refers to deep self-awareness that a person is always supervised by Allah SWT in every action and deed. If children are accustomed to receiving an understanding related to *muraqabah*, they will also be able to easily map their desires based on the rules of Allah SWT. 4. Role model and reinforcement of alternative activities; where parents must try to be role models and be able to "keep children busy" with memorizing the Qur'an, sports, mosque activities and others when students are on holiday at home. The goal is to reduce children's screen time. Research evidence shows that the combination of modeling and joint activities reduces adolescent screen time. Research in Chile shows that the higher the screen time, the higher the level of physical inactivity in children (Hermoso et al., 2020), in Iqlima et al., 2024). Research by Sandercock on children aged 10-16 years also showed a negative relationship between high screen time and children's physical activity (Iqlima et al., 2024). This means that children's screen time must be limited, and children are given physical activities that have many benefits for their health. Children and adolescents who use screen time <2 hours/day are significantly more active than children and adolescents with screen time >2 hours/day (Iqlima et al., 2024).

The results and data of the study show that informants already understand the impact of gadgets on children and try to minimize the use of gadgets. Gadgets should be used for things that are useful and in accordance with Islamic values.

4. Conclusion

This study describes a real portrait of communication between families of students in assisting their children in using media in the digital era, based on the narratives of 22 parents of students in the PPQ Nahwa Nur in Bogor. The results show that family communication is still dominated by instructional patterns with a high obedience orientation, but

more open dialogical practices are starting to emerge, especially in families that adopt an active mediation approach based on Islamic values.

Most parents apply technical rules in the use of media, such as time restrictions and prohibitions on certain types of content. However, the effectiveness of this approach increases when combined with the development of moral and religious values, such as honesty, manners, and the awareness that Allah is All-Seeing. These values are often explained through stories of the Prophet, references to the Qur'an, or life experiences that are linked to online reality.

The main challenges faced by parents are peer influence, dependence on online games, and the digital generation gap between parents and children. In addition, time constraints and physical distance (because children live in dormitories) also limit the intensity of communication. In this context, parents rely on a combination of strategies: technical restrictions, religious advice, clarification of information, and (although limited) joint activities in media.

Theoretically, these findings enrich the theory of family communication patterns (FCP) by adding the dimension of Islamic religious values, and expand the theory of parental mediation by proposing a new category: value-guided active mediation—active mediation driven by Sharia values.

Recommendations from the study are: (1) For families and parents of students, parents need to improve their digital dialogue skills with their children, not only by prohibiting them, but also by opening up space for critical discussions about content, trends, and ethics of media use. The use of verses from the Qur'an and exemplary stories of the Prophet can continue to be used as a medium for reflecting values, but must be contextually linked to children's media experiences. It is recommended that there be a mutual agreement in formulating rules for media use so that children feel involved, not just ordered. (2) For Islamic boarding schools, it is necessary to develop a digital literacy module based on Islamic values that can be given to students and parents periodically. Islamic boarding schools can collaborate with parents through a religion-based digital parenting program to increase the mediation capacity of parents. The application for reporting student development should also cover aspects of media use, not just academic and memorization aspects. Meanwhile, (2) For researchers and academics: Further studies need to be conducted using mixed methods or longitudinally to monitor changes in students' media behavior and the effectiveness of various communication strategies. Comparative research between regions and types of Islamic boarding

schools is also important to see how the socio-cultural context influences digital communication strategies in the families of students.

Thus, efforts to instill media ethics in students are not only the responsibility of the family or Islamic boarding school alone, but require collaboration and an integrated approach, based on values, and adapted to the reality of today's digital generation.

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