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# Religious Parenting Practices and Moral Socialization in Muslim Families: A Case Study of Sungai Duren Village

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## Abstract

Religious socialization in rural Muslim families remains insufficiently examined, particularly regarding how Islamic values are sustained amid economic constraints and the growing presence of digital entertainment in children's everyday lives. This study investigates religious parenting practices and moral socialization in Muslim households in Sungai Duren Village, Jambi Luar Kota District, Muaro Jambi Regency. Employing a qualitative case-study design, data were generated through semi-structured in-depth interviews, naturalistic observations, and document analysis during six months of fieldwork with 18 purposively selected informants, including parents, local religious educators, and community figures. The data were analysed thematically, drawing on Religious Socialization Theory alongside Social Learning and Ecological Systems perspectives. The findings show that children's moral-religious formation is sustained through interconnected practices of worship discipline, parental modelling, and the continuity of learning across home, TPQ, and mosque activities. However, these processes are shaped by structural and everyday constraints, including limited parental religious literacy, economic pressures, and children's smartphone use that disrupts routine discipline and weakens parental mediation. Community religious institutions play a reinforcing role by stabilising practices and providing moral guidance when household resources are limited. By demonstrating how religious socialization operates as an ecologically coordinated process across family and community settings, this study contributes to broader discussions on Islamic parenting and moral education in contemporary rural contexts.

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## Introduction

Religious socialization in Muslim families is often discussed as a normative ideal, yet its everyday mechanisms are frequently shaped by structural constraints that make value transmission uneven. In many households, the continuity of worship routines, moral guidance, and relational warmth is negotiated alongside time scarcity, economic demands, and the growing availability of screen-based entertainment. Research on early childhood and family routines indicates that digital exposure can disrupt attention, reduce responsiveness to parental guidance, and reshape daily habits in ways that complicate moral learning at home (Aziz, 2024; Çalhan & Göksu, 2024; Kerai et al., 2022; Rey-Guerra et al., 2022; Swider-Cios et al., 2023).

Existing scholarship has demonstrated that faith transmission is strongly associated with parental communication patterns, emotional closeness, and the consistency of shared worship practices. Studies in the psychology of religion and family studies emphasize that parental guidance embedded in daily interaction is a key pathway through which children develop religious identity and moral discipline (Goodman & Dyer, 2020; Martinez et al., 2025; Spiegler et al., 2025). Systematic reviews also indicate that religious commitment can shape parenting practices, but the strength and form of this influence varies across settings and depends on how religious guidance is enacted in daily routines (Rich et al., 2024). However, much of this literature prioritizes outcomes or correlational patterns, while leaving the micro-level mechanisms of everyday moral socialization under-specified.

Broader syntheses of religious and spiritual development also suggest that mechanisms of faith transmission are sensitive to developmental stage and institutional ecology, strengthening the need for context-specific evidence on how everyday routines are sustained or disrupted (Hardy & Taylor, 2024; Holmes et al., 2025).

In parallel, a growing body of work highlights how digital media and digitally mediated religious content reshape the way younger generations interpret moral values and religious authority. Research on digital religion and religious residue suggests that childhood religious experiences interact with media environments, producing enduring patterns of meaning-making even when formal authority is contested or reconfigured (Beider, 2023; Campbell & Tsuria, 2021; Liu et al., 2025; Zaid et al., 2022). At the level of parenting, scholarship in the digital age shows that parental mediation is not merely a matter of restriction, but involves continual negotiation of attention, routines, and authority under changing media ecologies (Gür & Türel, 2022; Nurfadilah et al., 2025). Yet empirical accounts remain uneven in explaining how these dynamics operate in rural Muslim households where parental time is constrained and mediation may be intermittent.

Within rural contexts, the absence is not simply a lack of studies in particular locations, but an analytic gap in how economic pressures and digital saturation jointly shape the mechanisms of religious parenting. Research on rural family-based Islamic education indicates that constraints in time, resources, and institutional access can alter the continuity of home-based learning (Fakhruddin & Awang, 2020; Syamsuni Hr et al., 2025). Recent Indonesian evidence also suggests that smartphones may function as both moral risk and moral resource, depending on mediation capacity and community reinforcement, but these findings require more context-specific explanation of how routines are maintained or eroded in daily life (Larson, 2024).

To address this gap, this study positions Sungai Duren Village as an information-rich case through which the mechanisms of moral socialization can be examined as an ecologically distributed process across home, TPQ, and mosque-based life. Rather than treating community institutions as mere background, the study foregrounds their role as reinforcing settings that may stabilize routines when parental time and religious literacy are limited. This emphasis aligns with Ecological Systems Theory, which conceptualizes child development as shaped by linked systems and mesosystemic connections between family, educational institutions, and community life (Sato, 1998; Siraj-Blatchford, 2020). It also resonates with Social Learning Theory in which children acquire practices through observation, imitation, and reinforcement, making parental consistency and community norms salient for moral learning (Bandura, 1977).

The study integrates Religious Socialization Theory, Social Learning Theory, and Ecological Systems Theory to sharpen the explanatory frame in three ways. First, it specifies

religious parenting as a set of mechanisms, including habituation of worship discipline, parental modelling, and ongoing mediation of children's digital engagement. Second, it treats the continuity of learning across home, TPQ, and community worship as a mesosystemic process that can compensate for variability in household resources. Third, it examines how constraints in parental religious literacy can limit the translation of piety into explanatory guidance, thereby shaping the quality of moral socialization beyond routine compliance.

Based on fieldwork in Sungai Duren Village, this study aims to analyze religious parenting practices and moral socialization in Muslim families by focusing on three interrelated aspects: the forms of religious and moral education enacted in daily routines, the mechanisms through which Islamic values are internalized through interaction and communication patterns, and the challenges faced by parents in maintaining these practices amid economic pressure and digital penetration. Empirically, the study contributes a contextually grounded account of how rural Muslim families negotiate everyday moral socialization under contemporary pressures. Theoretically, it contributes by clarifying the mechanisms and boundary conditions of religious socialization within an ecologically linked rural setting, thereby strengthening the study of Islamic family education and informing community-based support strategies for parents and local religious institutions.

## Methods

### Research Design and Setting

This study adopts a qualitative case-study design with a descriptive–interpretive orientation to examine how religious parenting practices operate as everyday mechanisms of moral socialization under economic pressure and digital distraction. The research questions focus on (1) the forms of religious–moral education enacted in daily routines, (2) the mechanisms through which Islamic values are internalized through interaction and communication, and (3) the constraints and enabling conditions that shape the sustainability of these practices. A qualitative case study is methodologically appropriate for these aims because it enables an in-depth, context-sensitive analysis of practices, meanings, and negotiations as they unfold in natural settings, rather than reducing them to generalized variables (Creswell & Poth, 2025; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Yin, 2018).

The term descriptive in this study does not refer to surface description alone. It signals an empirical commitment to grounding claims in observed routines and participants' accounts, while the interpretive component supports analytical explanation of mechanisms and boundary conditions. Specifically, the case-study approach allows the analysis to trace how habituation (e.g., prayer punctuality), parental modelling, and parental mediation of children's digital engagement are produced and maintained across repeated interactions, and how these mechanisms are reinforced or weakened by linked settings across home, TPQ, and mosque-based activities. This design therefore supports an analytical exploration of value negotiation and religious socialization processes, not merely a descriptive catalogue of practices.

The study is situated within a constructivist-interpretive paradigm, which is appropriate because the focal phenomena involve meaning-making and relational dynamics in family life. In this view, religious discipline, moral guidance, and digital boundaries are not treated as fixed attributes but as socially constructed through interaction, negotiation, and local norms. This epistemological stance aligns with the

study's theoretical integration of Religious Socialization Theory, Social Learning Theory, and Ecological Systems Theory, which collectively foreground interactional processes, modelling and reinforcement, and mesosystemic linkages as explanatory lenses (Bandura, 1977).

Sungai Duren Village was selected through a theory-informed purposive case selection strategy. The site represents an information-rich setting for examining the study's conceptual gap because it combines (1) a salient religious ecology (active TPQ and mosque-based routines that potentially reinforce family practices), (2) socioeconomic time scarcity shaped by agricultural and small-trade livelihoods, and (3) increasing access to smartphones and digital entertainment that can disrupt worship routines and weaken parental mediation. These intersecting conditions make the field not merely an empirical backdrop, but a theoretically problematic context in which the mechanisms and boundary conditions of rural Muslim moral socialization can be examined.

Fieldwork was conducted over six months to enable repeated engagement with families and community settings, support rapport-building, and capture routine practices across different times of day and religious activity cycles. Data generation included semi-structured in-depth interviews, naturalistic observations in household and community religious spaces, and the review of relevant documentation (e.g., TPQ learning materials and records of community activities). The extended duration strengthened the credibility of the analysis by allowing the study to compare accounts with observed practice and to identify consistent patterns as well as points of tension in everyday value transmission.

### **Participants and Sampling Strategy**

Participants comprised 18 informants drawn from three analytically necessary actor groups: (1) parents, (2) local religious educators (including TPQ teachers), and (3) community figures. These groups were selected because the research focus treats moral socialization as a set of mechanisms that unfold across linked settings, rather than as a purely domestic practice. Parents are positioned to explain and demonstrate household routines, parental modelling, and day-to-day decisions about mediation and discipline. Religious educators provide insight into how religious learning is structured outside the home, how continuity is expected after TPQ, and where gaps emerge when parental time or literacy is limited. Community figures offer a lens on communal norms, peer influences, and mosque-based expectations that reinforce or sanction children's participation. Analytically, the themes were constructed by comparing convergence and divergence across these social positions. Convergent accounts were treated as evidence of cross-setting reinforcement (e.g., consistent descriptions of prayer punctuality routines across home and mosque contexts), while divergences were analysed as boundary conditions or points of tension (e.g., educators' expectations of continuity after TPQ contrasted with parents' reports of time scarcity). This comparative logic clarifies which practices are household-specific and which are sustained through mesosystemic reinforcement across home, TPQ, and community worship.

A purposive, theory-informed sampling strategy was used to ensure coverage of the mechanisms and boundary conditions specified in the introduction. Initial recruitment sought participants with direct involvement in children's religious and moral education across the three actor groups. Subsequent recruitment used a maximum-variation logic to illuminate boundary conditions for routine maintenance and parental mediation, particularly variation in family roles, work patterns (time scarcity), and the perceived intensity of children's gadget use. The inclusion criteria were: (1) Muslim and domiciled in

Sungai Duren Village, (2) direct experience in religious parenting or in guiding children's religious learning in community settings, (3) willingness and ability to articulate experiences in an interview, and (4) provision of informed consent. Participants who did not meet these criteria or declined participation were not included.

Data adequacy was assessed through an iterative sampling-and-analysis process and documented reflexively during fieldwork to reduce the risk of post hoc justification. Throughout data generation, the researcher maintained (1) a sampling rationale memo that recorded why additional participants were sought (by actor group and by emerging analytic needs) and (2) a saturation log that tracked whether new mechanism-relevant codes continued to emerge across interviews and observation episodes. After each data collection episode, preliminary coding and analytic memoing were conducted to identify (a) new practices, (b) new explanations of how and why routines were sustained or disrupted, and (c) new boundary conditions related to economic time scarcity, parental religious literacy, and children's digital exposure.

Saturation was evaluated at the level of major themes, and monitored both within and across participant groups. During the later phase of fieldwork, codes for worship habituation and parental modelling stabilized first, indicated by repeated accounts and observations that no longer introduced new sub-themes or alternative explanations. Subsequent interviews primarily provided confirmatory instances and cross-setting illustrations (home-TPQ-mosque/community) rather than novel mechanism claims. The themes related to digital distraction and parental mediation, as well as economic constraints, continued to receive minor elaborations for longer, but towards the final phase of fieldwork these additions no longer extended the thematic structure and instead refined boundary conditions (e.g., when mediation became intermittent due to work demands). Recruitment was concluded when additional data across actor groups and settings did not introduce new mechanism-relevant themes and mainly repeated existing patterns or offered marginal contextual detail. This decision rule aligns with an iterative qualitative logic in which sampling and analysis inform each other to strengthen explanatory clarity (Miles et al., 2020; Yin, 2018). To support transparency regarding participant characteristics, a demographic profile of nine illustrative informants referenced in the Results section is provided below.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Illustrative Informants (n = 9)

<b>Informant code</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Family/community role</b>	<b>Duration of residence</b>
SK	38	Female	Trader	Mother, guides children's prayer	20 years
ZN	42	Female	Housewife	Active mosque community member	Since birth
AS	35	Male	Laborer	Father, supervises children's worship	10 years
UH	45	Male	Islamic teacher	Religious figure, father	18 years
IS	40	Male	Entrepreneur	Father, worship role model	15 years
SF	36	Female	Housewife	Mother, creates prayer habits	Since birth
US	33	Female	TPQ teacher	Qur'an teacher	12 years
IL	39	Male	Farmer	Learning role model at home	>20 years
LN	41	Female	Small trader	Mother with limited religious literacy	17 years

### Data Collection Techniques

Research data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, naturalistic observations, and documentation analysis. The interview guide was developed based on the focus of the research and organized to capture daily practices, communication patterns, and perceived challenges. It was then validated through expert judgment and tested on a limited basis to ensure clarity of language, relevance of questions, and suitability of the research context. Observations were conducted directly in family settings and religious activity spaces to capture religious parenting practices in natural conditions. The observation protocol was informed by ethnographic sensibilities that prioritise routine, interaction, and context (Siraj-Blatchford, 2020). Documentation, including religious education materials and records of community activities, was used to reinforce triangulation across sources and techniques. The entire data collection process followed international research ethics procedures, including providing informed consent and ensuring the confidentiality of participants' identities through anonymization, in line with field ethics guidance in modern qualitative methodologies (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2018). In qualitative research, the researcher served as the main instrument directly involved in data collection, analysis, and interpretation. The researcher conducted interviews, carried out observations, and actively reviewed documentation while in the field. To maintain research integrity, the researcher compiled a positionality statement reflecting personal background, relationships with participants, and potential biases that might arise. Reflexivity was maintained through daily reflections, alongside strategies such as maintaining professional distance, avoiding excessive influence on participants, and discussing interpretations with research colleagues to ensure conclusions were grounded in empirical data.

### Data Analysis Procedures

The analysis was designed to move beyond a descriptive inventory of practices toward an explanation of mechanisms and boundary conditions for rural Muslim moral socialization under economic pressure and digital distraction. Analytically, the study used an iterative, abductive logic in which empirical patterns, emerging interpretations, and the theoretical framework informed each other across multiple cycles of analysis. Theoretical concepts were therefore treated as sensitizing lenses from the outset, not as a post hoc interpretive layer applied only in the Discussion.

All interview recordings were transcribed and anonymized, and observational fieldnotes and documents were organised into a single corpus. Analysis began during fieldwork through analytic memoing after each interview or observation episode. These memos recorded provisional mechanism explanations, points of tension, and questions for subsequent data generation, thereby linking sampling decisions to emerging analysis.

Coding was conducted through a hybrid strategy that combined theory-guided and inductive procedures. First, a preliminary codebook was seeded with sensitizing concepts derived from the study's theoretical integration, including worship habituation, parental modelling, parental mediation of children's digital engagement, and cross-setting reinforcement across home, TPQ, and mosque or community life (Bandura, 1977). Second, inductive coding captured locally specific practices, terms, and constraints that were not anticipated in the initial codebook, such as particular routine breakdown points, locally salient sanctions or reinforcements, and situated expressions of limited religious literacy. This approach allowed theory to guide attention while remaining open to context-generated categories.

Analytic decisions were made explicitly through successive rounds of code refinement. After first-cycle coding, codes were reviewed for conceptual overlap, empirical indistinguishability, and analytic relevance to the research focus on mechanisms. Codes that were highly similar in meaning and consistently co-occurred in the same episodes were merged into higher-order analytic categories, while codes with limited evidentiary support or that did not illuminate a mechanism of socialization were either subsumed under broader categories or set aside. For example, discrete routine actions (e.g., reminders at azan, invitations to ablution, and prompting congregational prayer) were consolidated under worship habituation when they functioned as repeated disciplinary practices linked to moral formation. Likewise, reports of children returning from TPQ and shifting immediately to smartphone use were treated as a boundary condition within parental mediation, rather than as a separate theme, when the accounts primarily explained why continuity of learning weakened.

Theme development relied on constant comparison within the case, across actor groups and settings. Data from parents, TPQ educators, and community figures were compared to identify convergence that signalled cross-setting reinforcement and divergence that indicated boundary conditions or points of negotiation. Analytic matrices were used to map mechanisms (habituation, modelling, mediation, reinforcement) against settings (home, TPQ, mosque or community) and actor positions, allowing the analysis to distinguish household-specific practices from mesosystemic processes that stabilised routines across linked institutions. Attention was also given to deviant or disconfirming cases to avoid forcing thematic uniformity; where accounts challenged dominant patterns, the explanatory logic was refined rather than the case treated as noise.

Theoretical interpretation was integrated during analysis through analytic memos that asked mechanism-focused questions of the data. Ecological Systems Theory guided interpretation of how linked settings (home, TPQ, mosque or community) reinforced or weakened routines through mesosystemic connections and norm expectations (Sato, 1998). Social Learning Theory informed the interpretation of modelling and reinforcement processes, especially where children's imitation was described as contingent on parental consistency and peer participation (Bandura, 1977). Religious Socialization Theory oriented the analysis to how value transmission was negotiated through routine, relational authority, and explanatory capacity. Abductively, when inductive patterns did not fit initial expectations, the codebook and thematic structure were revised to reflect the mechanism and boundary condition implied by the data.

### **Trustworthiness**

To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, the researcher applied triangulation across sources and methods, conducted member checking by validating findings with key informants, and maintained an audit trail through systematic documentation of the research process. Ethical considerations were prioritized by obtaining informed consent from all participants and ensuring the anonymity and confidentiality of their identities. The research adhered to ethical research principles involving families and children, particularly in addressing the sensitive context of polygamous parenting and early childhood welfare.

Trustworthiness was treated as an operational component of the research process rather than a checklist of compliance. Credibility was strengthened through triangulation across methods and sources, specifically by comparing interview accounts with observations of worship routines and TPQ-related practices, and by checking whether themes held across actor groups. Member checking was conducted during the latter phase

of analysis by sharing short interpretive summaries of preliminary themes with selected participants and inviting feedback on accuracy, missing elements, or alternative explanations; this process focused on key interpretive claims about routine maintenance, points of breakdown, and the role of community reinforcement. Transferability was supported through thick description that documents the sociocultural and institutional elements most relevant to the analysis, including livelihood patterns and time scarcity, the organisation of TPQ and mosque-based routines, locally salient norms and peer participation, and household practices of digital access and supervision. These elements allow readers to assess whether the identified mechanisms are plausible in comparable rural Muslim settings.

Dependability was strengthened through an audit trail that documented the evolution of the codebook, major analytic decisions (merging, prioritising, or setting aside categories), and the development of analytic matrices and memos across the study period. Peer debriefing with qualitative researchers was used to review coding logic, theme coherence, and the fit between evidence and interpretation. Confirmability was pursued through reflexive journaling and memoing that recorded the researcher's assumptions and interpretive choices, and by maintaining a transparent link between claims, illustrative excerpts, and observational notes so that interpretations remained grounded in the empirical corpus (Miles et al., 2020; Yin, 2018).

## Result

This section presents empirical findings from interviews, observations, and documentation generated during six months of fieldwork in Sungai Duren Village. Participant characteristics for the nine illustrative informants cited in the narrative are provided in the Methods section (Table 1). Quotations are presented to represent recurrent patterns and variations across parents, TPQ educators, and community figures.

## Study Context

Sungai Duren Village is located in Jambi Luar Kota District, Muaro Jambi Regency. The village covers approximately 840 hectares, including about 248 hectares of village forest. According to the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) of Muaro Jambi Regency (2023), the population is around 4,442 people living in 1,191 households (Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Muaro Jambi, 2023). Livelihoods are dominated by agriculture and small trade, and daily life is closely tied to village-level religious routines, including congregational prayers, Qur'anic learning in TPQ, and mosque-based activities.

## Worship Discipline in Daily Routines

A consistent pattern emerging from both parental and community accounts concerns the role of prayer punctuality and congregational worship as a routine framework for cultivating children's daily discipline. Parents described prayer time as a recurring temporal marker that structures children's everyday activities and provides opportunities to reinforce behavioural expectations. In practice, parents reported regularly reminding children when the call to prayer (*azan*) is heard, encouraging them to pause ongoing activities and prepare for worship. These reminders function not merely as instructions to perform religious obligations but also as a mechanism through which children gradually internalize routine discipline within the household. As SK explained:

"I get used to children praying on time. If it is *azan*, I immediately remind you. From there they learned discipline." (SK, Interview, 2025)

Beyond the household setting, communal worship at the mosque was also described as reinforcing children's adherence to prayer routines. Several informants noted that the presence of peers during congregational prayer—particularly during the Maghrib prayer—creates a collective expectation that encourages children's participation. In crowded prayer settings, children appear more inclined to follow the behaviour of others, suggesting that communal environments can strengthen routine compliance through shared social cues. ZN highlighted how such collective participation shapes children's responsiveness to religious expectations:

"If the Maghrib is crowded at the mosque, almost all the children will follow. So it is not good if you do not pray." (ZN, Interview, 2025)

However, the implementation of prayer discipline was not experienced uniformly across households. Several parents indicated that maintaining prayer routines becomes more challenging when children are already engaged with smartphones or digital entertainment. In such situations, invitations to pray are often met with resistance or delay, requiring repeated reminders or reprimands before children respond. This difficulty reflects the growing presence of digital distractions within children's daily lives, which can interrupt established religious routines and complicate parental efforts to maintain consistent discipline. AS described this situation as a common challenge encountered in everyday parenting:

"If the child already holds a cellphone, it is difficult to be invited to pray. They have to be reprimanded first before they want to." (AS, Interview, 2025)

Taken together, these accounts indicate that prayer discipline in Sungai Duren is sustained through a combination of household reminders and communal participation. At the same time, the findings also reveal that such routines remain sensitive to competing activities within the domestic environment, particularly the increasing accessibility of smartphones among children.

### **Parental Modelling in Everyday Religious Guidance**

Another prominent pattern in the data concerns the role of parental modelling in shaping children's everyday religious learning. Across interviews, parents consistently emphasized that children acquire religious practices primarily through observation and imitation rather than through verbal instruction alone. Religious guidance within the household therefore tends to be enacted through visible practice, where parents' behaviour provides a concrete reference for children's understanding of expected conduct. As UH explained, children's willingness to perform prayer is closely linked to whether parents themselves demonstrate the practice in everyday life:

"If you want your child to pray, yes, the parents must pray first. They see firsthand how we take care of it." (UH, Interview, 2025)

In several accounts, modelling was described not only as an example but also as a form of embodied guidance in which parents actively involve children in the preparatory stages of worship. Rather than relying solely on verbal reminders, parents reported physically accompanying children during prayer preparation, thereby transforming religious instruction into a shared routine activity. IS illustrated this approach by describing how children are guided directly to the ablution area once the call to prayer begins:

"I didn't just tell them, but I showed them. If it is azan, I take the child directly to the ablution place. So they see and follow." (IS, Interview, 2025)

Beyond prayer practices, parents also reported incorporating small religious routines into daily family life as a way of gradually familiarizing children with religious discipline.

These routines included beginning activities with short prayers and engaging in brief Qur'anic recitation before bedtime. Such practices were described as simple but consistent strategies for embedding religious habits into the everyday rhythm of the household. As SF explained:

"I get used to children starting everything with prayer. At night before going to bed, we read the Qur'an even for a short time." (SF, Interview, 2025)

While parental modelling appears to function as a central mechanism in children's religious learning, the data also reveal variation in how confidently parents provide explanations when children raise questions about religious practices. Several parents acknowledged experiencing uncertainty when responding to more complex or detailed religious inquiries, suggesting differences in perceived religious literacy among caregivers. LN expressed this hesitation as follows:

"If children ask about religion in depth, I often get confused about the answer." (LN, Interview, 2025)

Taken together, these accounts indicate that religious guidance in Sungai Duren households relies heavily on modelling and routine participation in religious practices. At the same time, the findings suggest that while behavioural imitation is widely supported through parental example, explanatory engagement with children's questions may vary depending on parents' confidence and knowledge in religious matters.

### **Continuity of Learning Across Home, TPQ, and Mosque-Based Activities**

A prominent pattern emerging from the data concerns the expectation that children's religious learning unfolds across interconnected social settings, particularly the home, *Taman Pendidikan Al-Qur'an* (TPQ), and mosque-based religious activities. Informants consistently described these environments as mutually reinforcing spaces where religious knowledge and practice are introduced, strengthened, and enacted in complementary ways. Within this arrangement, TPQ functions as a structured learning environment where children acquire foundational skills such as Qur'anic recitation and memorization, while the household provides opportunities for reinforcement through repeated practice and parental supervision.

TPQ educators emphasized the importance of parental involvement in sustaining learning continuity beyond the classroom setting. According to US, children's progress in Qur'anic learning often depends on whether parents actively encourage repetition and follow-up activities at home. This collaboration between educators and parents was described as a key factor in strengthening children's retention and engagement with religious learning:

"Children usually study at TPQ, but we always ask parents to continue their memorization and reading at home. If parents take the lead, the results are much better." (US, Interview, 2025)

Parents similarly described continuity as more effective when household routines align with the broader religious practices of the community. In such situations, mosque participation becomes a natural extension of the routines already established at home. IS noted that when prayer discipline is consistently practiced within the family, participation in congregational prayer at the mosque reinforces rather than introduces religious obligations:

"If we have taught prayer at home, later in the mosque we just have to follow it. So children get used to it because their environment is also the same." (IS, Interview, 2025)

Several informants also described children's religious learning as occurring through a layered sequence across different social contexts. In this sequence, religious instruction introduced at home is deepened through structured teaching at TPQ and subsequently enacted through collective worship practices in the mosque environment. UH characterized this process as an interconnected learning pathway that enables children to develop familiarity with religious practices through repetition across settings:

"If it is taught at home, in TPQ it is deepened, in mosques it is practiced. So connect everyone. That's what makes children understand quickly." (UH, Interview, 2025)

Despite these reinforcing dynamics, informants also identified moments when the continuity of learning weakened. In particular, several parents and educators noted that the period after children return home from TPQ can become a point where repetition and reinforcement are interrupted. Competing activities—especially smartphone use—were frequently cited as reducing opportunities for children to review memorization or continue Qur'anic practice at home. AS described this challenge as one of the most difficult aspects of maintaining consistent learning routines:

"Sometimes children come home from TPQ and are busy playing cellphones, so the memorization is not repeated. That's the hardest thing we can control." (AS, Interview, 2025)

Overall, these findings indicate that children's religious learning in Sungai Duren is sustained through a network of interconnected settings in which households, TPQ institutions, and mosque activities collectively support value transmission. At the same time, the continuity of this process remains dependent on everyday household conditions, including parents' capacity to supervise learning and manage competing forms of children's leisure activities.

### **Children's Smartphone Use and Disrupted Routines**

Across interviews, smartphone access emerged as a recurring factor that disrupts both worship routines and the continuity of children's religious learning. Parents frequently described how digital entertainment competes with established household practices, particularly those related to prayer discipline and Qur'anic recitation. In several accounts, children were reported to delay responding to prayer reminders, prioritize playing games, or show reduced engagement in routine religious activities. SF, for instance, described a noticeable shift in children's preferences toward digital games, which in turn affects their responsiveness to religious learning activities:

"Children now enjoy games more. If they say they are reciting, sometimes they procrastinate." (SF, Interview, 2025)

Parents also associated this disruption with broader structural conditions within the household, particularly the limited capacity for continuous supervision due to work-related obligations. Several informants noted that smartphones are sometimes given to children as a practical solution when parents are occupied with work or household responsibilities. However, this arrangement can inadvertently increase children's access to digital entertainment and reduce opportunities for parental mediation. SK explained this situation as a practical challenge encountered in daily family life:

"Sometimes I am busy working, so they hold old cellphones. It's also difficult to limit because I'm not always at home." (SK, Interview, 2025)

In response to these challenges, parents reported adopting various strategies to manage children's smartphone use, including verbal reprimands, attempts to restrict screen time, and reminders to prioritise prayer or Qur'anic recitation. Nevertheless, many

informants acknowledged that maintaining these strategies consistently can be difficult when parental supervision is intermittent due to daily work schedules. As a result, smartphone use can interrupt established religious routines and complicate efforts to sustain children's engagement in religious practices within the household.

Taken together, these findings indicate that digital technology has become an influential element in children's everyday environments, shaping how religious routines are negotiated within family life. While parents continue to emphasize the importance of worship discipline and learning continuity, the increasing availability of smartphones introduces new challenges for maintaining consistent parental mediation and routine-based religious guidance.

### **Reinforcing and Constraining Conditions for Religious Parenting**

The data indicate that religious parenting practices in Sungai Duren are shaped by a combination of reinforcing and constraining conditions embedded within the broader social and economic environment of the village. Informants consistently described how everyday religious routines are supported by community-based structures while simultaneously being challenged by household-level constraints related to time, resources, and parental capacity. These conditions collectively shape how families sustain children's moral and religious socialization in daily life.

Reinforcing conditions were primarily associated with the strong presence of communal religious practices within the village. Informants emphasized that mosque participation, routine TPQ attendance, and the involvement of children's peer networks create a supportive environment that encourages engagement in religious activities. Within this context, religious participation is not only an individual household practice but also a shared social expectation embedded in the local community culture. ZN described this collective orientation toward religious upbringing as a common characteristic of village life:

"Here, parents are very concerned about their children's religion. Almost everyone takes their children to the mosque and to TPQ." (ZN, Interview, 2025)

Peer participation was also identified as an important factor that strengthens children's motivation to engage in religious activities. When children observe their friends attending mosque-based activities or participating in TPQ learning, they are more likely to follow similar practices. SF explained how peer visibility contributes to the normalization of religious participation among children:

"Children get used to participating in activities because they see their friends too." (SF, Interview, 2025)

Alongside these reinforcing dynamics, informants also identified several constraining conditions that complicate the consistent implementation of religious parenting practices. Economic limitations and time scarcity were frequently cited as factors that reduce parents' capacity to supervise children's learning or provide sustained follow-up at home. In some households, financial considerations were described as affecting decisions related to children's religious education, particularly when parents must balance educational expenses with other household needs. SK described how such economic constraints can influence the continuity of children's religious learning:

"Sometimes children's religious education is constrained by costs. If it's difficult, you just want to take it to TPQ, sometimes you think about the cost." (SK, Interview, 2025)

In addition to economic limitations, parents also reported challenges related to their own confidence in providing religious explanations when children ask more detailed

questions about religious practices. Some parents expressed uncertainty in responding to these inquiries, suggesting differences in perceived religious literacy within households. As indicated in LN's account, this uncertainty may affect parents' ability to provide deeper explanatory guidance when children seek clarification about religious teachings.

Educators similarly highlighted the difficulty of sustaining continuity in children's religious learning when household routines are disrupted by competing activities, particularly smartphone use. When digital entertainment becomes a dominant leisure activity, opportunities for repetition and reinforcement of TPQ learning at home may decline. Taken together, these findings indicate that religious parenting in Sungai Duren operates within a dynamic environment in which supportive community structures coexist with household-level constraints that shape how consistently religious routines and guidance can be maintained.

Table 2 summarises the principal themes identified in the analysis and presents illustrative excerpts drawn from the interview corpus. The table highlights recurring empirical patterns that characterize religious parenting practices and children's moral socialization in Sungai Duren. These themes capture how routine worship practices, parental modelling, institutional learning environments, and everyday household conditions interact in shaping children's religious learning. The excerpts included below serve as representative examples of the patterns described across multiple informants.

Table 2. Key Themes and Illustrative Interview Excerpts on Religious Parenting and Moral Socialization

Theme	Core Empirical Pattern	Illustrative Excerpt
Worship discipline in daily routines	Prayer punctuality and participation in congregational worship function as recurring routine structures that regulate children's daily religious practice.	"If it is azan, I immediately remind you." (SK)
Community presence and peer influence	Mosque attendance during peak prayer times (e.g., Maghrib) creates shared social expectations that encourage children's participation.	"Almost all the children will follow." (ZN)
Parental modelling in practice	Children's religious learning is largely shaped through observing parents' worship practices and everyday religious behaviour.	"The parents must pray first." (UH)
Embodied guidance	Parents actively demonstrate prayer preparation and involve children directly in the practice.	"I take the child directly to the ablution place." (IS)
Home-based micro-routines	Short household routines, such as daily prayers and brief Qur'anic recitation, embed religious habits in everyday family life.	"At night... we read the Qur'an even for a short time." (SF)
Continuity across home-TPQ-mosque	Religious learning introduced in TPQ is expected to be reinforced at home and practiced through mosque-based participation.	"We always ask parents to continue... at home." (US)
Smartphone-related disruption	Children's smartphone use is frequently reported to delay prayer and weaken the continuity of learning at home.	"It is difficult to be invited to pray." (AS)
Work-related supervision constraints	Parents' work demands limit the consistency of supervision over children's digital device use.	"I'm not always at home." (SK)

Theme	Core Empirical Pattern	Illustrative Excerpt
Economic constraints	Financial limitations are perceived as affecting the stability and continuity of children's religious education.	"Religious education is constrained by costs." (SK)
Limited parental confidence	Some parents report uncertainty when responding to children's more complex religious questions.	"I often get confused about the answer." (LN)

## Discussion

The Sungai Duren case demonstrates that moral–religious socialization is not a fixed set of practices that simply “exists” within families but rather a negotiated accomplishment embedded in everyday interactions. The empirical patterns presented in the Results indicate that worship routines, parental modelling, and cross-setting continuity are sustained through ongoing coordination within daily family life. However, these mechanisms are also vulnerable to disruption when time scarcity and smartphone use intensify. Rather than treating religious upbringing as a stable cultural inheritance, the case highlights how religious authority, routine discipline, and value transmission are continuously produced, strained, and occasionally repaired within a rural Muslim ecology.

Prayer discipline in Sungai Duren functions as a practical infrastructure for organizing children's daily time. Parents' repeated reminders at the call to prayer and their encouragement for children to participate in congregational worship indicate that religious practices serve to anchor household rhythms and interrupt competing activities. In this sense, the moral dimension of discipline is often carried by routine itself: children are habituated to pause, redirect attention, and comply with a collectively recognized temporal cue. Worship discipline therefore operates less as a singular act of devotion and more as an ongoing strategy of temporal governance within family life (Zammit & Taylor, 2024).

At the same time, field accounts reveal that this governance is uneven and occasionally contested. Parents reported that inviting children to pray becomes significantly more difficult when children are already absorbed in smartphone use, often requiring repeated prompts or reprimands. This difficulty should not be interpreted merely as a lack of motivation among children; rather, it reflects a broader competition between the authority of religious time structures and alternative attention economies available within the home. Research on children's digital media environments shows that increased smartphone access can disrupt established household routines and requires active parental mediation to regulate children's attention and behavior (Chen et al., 2025; Hwang et al., 2017). From an ecological perspective, routine discipline depends heavily on the stability of the family microsystem, where parental supervision and relational interaction shape children's behavioural regulation. Studies on family digital environments indicate that when parental monitoring becomes intermittent, children's screen engagement can intensify and weaken routine structures within the household (Meng et al., 2025). When parental availability becomes limited and children's activities become individualized through digital screens, worship discipline can shift from a shared household practice to a repeated enforcement mechanism. The Sungai Duren case therefore complicates the assumption that worship routines operate as self-sustaining mechanisms of moral formation. Instead, their effectiveness appears contingent upon shared household rhythms and collective participation, becoming fragile when daily life becomes temporally fragmented.

Another notable empirical pattern concerns the centrality of modelling in religious formation. Parents frequently described children learning religious behaviour primarily through observation, including watching prayer preparation, Qur'anic recitation, and the sequencing of daily religious activities. While Social Learning Theory highlights the importance of modelling and reinforcement, the case adds an important qualification: modelling becomes persuasive when it is perceived as credible and embodied rather than merely articulated as instruction (Bandura, 1977). Parents consistently emphasized the importance of "showing" rather than "telling," suggesting that moral authority in family socialization is grounded in the perceived coherence between parental expectations and parental behaviour. When parents consistently enact the practices they expect from children, religious authority is experienced as legitimate and trustworthy.

Nevertheless, the data also reveal limits to modelling-based transmission. Several parents expressed uncertainty when children posed more complex religious questions, indicating that routine compliance does not automatically translate into interpretive understanding. Recent studies on family religious socialization indicate that although parental modelling and ritual participation play an important role in transmitting religious values, children's deeper internalization often requires dialogic engagement in which parents explain meanings, respond to questions, and support children's moral reasoning (Ratna Komalasari et al., 2022). From this perspective, religious learning within families is not only behavioural but also interpretive, as children gradually construct personal understanding through interaction and explanation. This observation is significant for Religious Socialization Theory, which emphasizes that value internalization depends not only on repeated practices but also on the capacity of caregivers to frame religious practices as meaningful and developmentally appropriate (Utari et al., 2023). The Sungai Duren case therefore suggests the need to distinguish between two forms of socialization: practice-based socialization, which stabilizes habit and behavioural compliance, and explanation-based socialization, which supports interpretive understanding and reflective commitment. In this context, the former appears more robust than the latter, particularly where parental religious literacy is limited. Importantly, this should not be interpreted as a deficit narrative but rather as an analytical observation that different modes of socialization may cultivate different forms of moral attachment.

This practice-first dynamic also complicates a common tendency in faith transmission scholarship to privilege explicit communication and family discussion as the primary mechanisms of intergenerational continuity. In Sungai Duren, relational credibility and the visibility of routine practices appear to carry a substantial portion of the transmission process, while explanatory guidance remains uneven and dependent on parental confidence. Consequently, strong religious commitment may coexist with limited explanatory capacity, and the depth of moral internalization may depend on whether children experience religion solely as shared discipline or also as an interpretable system of meanings and reasons (Goodman & Dyer, 2020; Rich et al., 2024).

Religious learning in Sungai Duren is also expected to extend across multiple institutional settings, particularly the home, TPQ, and mosque activities. Educators commonly encourage parents to reinforce memorization and Qur'anic reading at home, and some parents described mosque participation as a natural continuation of household religious routines when schedules align. These patterns support ecological perspectives that emphasize the role of mesosystemic linkages in reinforcing value transmission (Sato, 1998). However, the case also reveals that such continuity does not automatically emerge

as institutional synergy. Instead, it requires deliberate coordination, time availability, and shared expectations between family and community settings.

The point at which continuity weakens is particularly revealing. Several parents reported that children often return from TPQ and quickly transition to smartphone activities, thereby reducing opportunities for repetition and reinforcement at home. This pattern illustrates a coupling–decoupling dynamic between institutional and household learning environments. When home routines and community expectations remain aligned, children experience consistent behavioural cues across settings. Conversely, when these environments become decoupled, transitional moments—particularly after TPQ sessions—become vulnerable points where learning may become compartmentalized. While previous research frequently recommends family–institution collaboration as a general strategy, the Sungai Duren case identifies the specific moments where such collaboration tends to break down in everyday practice: not primarily at the level of parental intention, but at the level of after-TPQ time management, parental supervision capacity, and children’s competing leisure structures (Munawir et al., 2024). This finding refines descriptions of rural Islamic education as a coherent ecosystem by demonstrating that continuity across settings is practically fragile and temporally specific.

The role of digital technology further complicates these dynamics. Parents typically framed smartphone use not as an ideological threat but as a disruption to attention, responsiveness, and routine discipline. Children were described as delaying prayer, prioritizing games, and showing reduced responsiveness to invitations to recite the Qur’an or participate in worship. In this context, digital technology functions as an alternative regime of attention that competes with both parental prompts and communal worship cues. This observation aligns with research suggesting that parental mediation in digital environments involves continuous negotiation of routines and authority rather than simple restriction (Nichols & Selim, 2022; Scott, 2022).

The Sungai Duren case adds an important structural dimension to this discussion. Some parents reported giving children older smartphones when they were busy with work and acknowledged difficulty limiting access due to limited supervision at home. This indicates that digital disruption is not merely behavioural but structurally produced. When caregiving time is scarce and supervision becomes intermittent, digital entertainment can reorganize daily routines and attention patterns. In global debates on digital religion, technology is often discussed as a competing source of religious meaning and authority (Decosimo, 2018). In Sungai Duren, however, the competition is typically indirect. Entertainment content—not explicitly religious media—emerges as the rival authority because it captures attention and reshapes the temporal sequence of daily life. Consequently, digital authority in rural family contexts may operate through habit formation and attentional capture rather than through doctrinal persuasion.

Structural constraints also shape the broader ecology of religious parenting. Economic pressure and time scarcity are not merely background conditions but actively shape the forms of moral socialization that families can sustain (Ruggiero et al., 2024). Parents engaged in agricultural labour and small trade frequently reported limited time for direct accompaniment at home, while financial limitations sometimes affected educational continuity. These pressures appear to redistribute moral labour across institutions. In practice, families increasingly rely on TPQ and mosque-based routines to maintain religious continuity when parental time and pedagogical confidence are limited.

Community institutions therefore function as a form of compensatory infrastructure that stabilizes religious practice when household resources are uneven (Krauss et al., 2013).

Nevertheless, the case also indicates that external reinforcement cannot fully replace household mediation, particularly in relation to digital access. When supervision becomes weak, the home environment becomes a site where religious expectations, work demands, and children's entertainment preferences intersect. This dynamic suggests that challenges in rural Islamic parenting should not be interpreted as a lack of religious commitment but rather as a mismatch between moral expectations and the material-temporal realities of caregiving.

Across these themes, the Sungai Duren case contributes to existing scholarship by identifying specific conditions under which established mechanisms of religious transmission become fragile or shift in form. First, it demonstrates that modelling can sustain compliance and habitual practice even when explanatory guidance is limited, suggesting that credibility may precede articulation in early moral formation (Goodman & Dyer, 2020). Second, it shows that continuity between home, TPQ, and mosque settings is not automatically synergistic but instead constitutes a fragile linkage with identifiable breakdown points, particularly during transitional periods after institutional activities end (Fakhruddin & Awang, 2020). Third, it reframes digital disruption as a contestation of attention and routine governance rather than simply a behavioural problem of children, extending debates on digital religion by emphasizing the role of entertainment-based attentional capture (Campbell & Tsuria, 2021).

The primary contribution of this case therefore lies not in demonstrating that worship routines, parental modelling, and community reinforcement matter—an insight already well established in the literature—but in specifying how these mechanisms operate as an ecologically distributed process under contemporary pressures. The findings distinguish between practice-led socialization that builds behavioural habit and explanation-led socialization that supports interpretive understanding, illustrating how limited parental religious literacy may constrain the latter even when commitment remains strong. They also reveal that continuity across home, TPQ, and mosque environments functions as a fragile linkage with identifiable breakdown points, particularly during periods of reduced supervision. Finally, the study reframes digital disruption as a structural contestation of attention and authority that intensifies when mediation becomes intermittent under work demands. These mechanisms may have implications not only for religious continuity but also for broader dimensions of well-being associated with religious commitment (Khumalo et al., 2023).

Practically, these insights suggest that interventions should focus on coordination rather than solely encouraging parents to be more consistent. Community-based parenting support could strengthen parents' confidence in providing explanatory guidance to children, develop feasible micro-routines for reinforcing learning after TPQ sessions, and foster shared expectations between TPQ educators and families regarding realistic forms of home reinforcement (Abubakar et al., 2015). Digital guidance may also benefit from shifting beyond simple prohibition toward workable mediation strategies adapted to rural time constraints, such as negotiated screen-time windows structured around prayer schedules and shared family routines.

Finally, the case invites a more explicit conceptualization of rural Muslim moral socialization as operating through two interconnected channels: practice-led socialization that stabilizes routine compliance through visible modelling and repeated temporal cues,

and explanation-led socialization that supports interpretive understanding through dialogue and reasoning. In Sungai Duren, the first channel appears more resilient under conditions of time scarcity, while the second becomes uneven where parental religious literacy and pedagogical confidence are limited. This framework generates several propositions for future research. Practice-led socialization may persist even when household supervision is intermittent, but it may increasingly rely on enforcement rather than shared meaning. Continuity between home and TPQ settings is likely most vulnerable during transitional moments when institutional structure ends and leisure activities begin. Digital disruption may be strongest where attentional capture coincides with limited mediation capacity, regardless of whether the content is explicitly religious. These propositions suggest that routine governance, rather than doctrinal persuasion, may be the key mechanism shaping contemporary moral socialization in digitally saturated rural environments.

These conclusions should be interpreted in light of the study's limitations. As a single-site qualitative case study, the findings are contextually grounded and do not claim universal generalizability. Self-reported practices may also be influenced by social desirability bias, and the study does not provide longitudinal evidence regarding how religious values evolve as children grow older. Future research could employ longitudinal designs to examine how practice-led and explanation-led socialization interact across developmental stages. Comparative studies across rural Muslim communities in different regions would also help clarify which dynamics are context-specific and which are more generalizable. In addition, digital ethnography and evaluative studies of TPQ–family partnership initiatives could further illuminate how authority, routine discipline, and digital mediation are negotiated in increasingly technology-saturated rural contexts.

## Conclusion

This study shows that children's moral and religious formation in Sungai Duren is best understood not as a stable inheritance transmitted within the family but as an ecologically coordinated process sustained through routine practice, relational credibility, and institutional linkages. Parental modelling, prayer discipline, and participation in TPQ and mosque activities operate as interconnected mechanisms that structure children's temporal routines and moral expectations across home and community settings. Interpreted through Ecological Systems Theory, Social Learning Theory, and Religious Socialization Theory, the findings suggest that religious socialization in rural Muslim contexts functions through two coupled channels. Practice-led socialization stabilizes behavioural compliance through visible example and repeated temporal cues, while explanation-led socialization supports interpretive understanding through dialogue and reasoning. In Sungai Duren, the former appears more resilient under conditions of time scarcity and fragmented supervision, whereas the latter becomes uneven where parental religious literacy and pedagogical confidence are limited. By specifying these dynamics, the study extends existing scholarship by showing that the durability of religious transmission depends not only on commitment but also on the ecological coordination of routines, attention, and authority across family and community environments.

The findings identify boundary conditions that shape when these mechanisms remain stable and when they become fragile. Continuity between home, TPQ, and mosque settings emerges not as an automatic synergy but as a linkage that requires everyday coordination, particularly at transitional moments when institutional routines end and household supervision must reassert structure. Digital entertainment further complicates

this ecology by introducing an alternative regime of attention that competes with parental prompts and communal worship cues, especially when mediation becomes intermittent under work-related constraints. These insights reframe contemporary challenges in rural Islamic parenting as problems of ecological coordination rather than individual parental inconsistency. Future research should therefore examine how practice-led and explanation-led socialization interact across developmental stages, how institutional–family linkages operate in diverse rural Muslim contexts, and how digital environments reshape the governance of routine and authority within family religious life.

### **Declarations**

#### **Author Contribution Statement**

Pitra Puspita Sari: Conceptualization and Writing original draft. Lailis Saadah: Methodology. Fitri Ine Robi'ah: Formal Analysis and Supervision. Solikhah: Validation and Resources. Dina Ervina: Investigation, Mohd Iqbal Haqim Mohd Nor: Writing -Review & Editing.

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The datasets generated and/or analyzed during this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

#### **Declaration of Interests Statement**

The author declares that there are no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

#### **Additional Information**

No additional information is available for this paper at this time.

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