



## **Early Childhood Islamic Education in the Digital Era: Learning Opportunities and Challenges of Modeling in the Suralaga Nation Children's Kindergarten, East Lombok**

<sup>1</sup>Masni Lidiyasari, <sup>2</sup>Ahmad Hulaimi

<sup>1</sup>[masnilidiyasari86@gmail.com](mailto:masnilidiyasari86@gmail.com), <sup>2</sup>[hulaimi.halim@gmail.com](mailto:hulaimi.halim@gmail.com)

<sup>12</sup>Intitiut Agama Islam Hamzanwadi Pancor Lombok Timur

### Abstract

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Digital transformation in early childhood education presents both opportunities and challenges for the development of Islamic education. This research aims to analyze the use of digital technology in early childhood Islamic education learning, the challenges of role modeling, and the role of teachers and parents in forming children's Islamic character. The research used a qualitative approach with a case study design at Anak Bangsa Kindergarten, Suralaga District, East Lombok Regency. Data was obtained through observation, interviews and documentation, then analyzed interactively. The research results show that digital media through video, images, audio and audiovisual can enrich the learning of Islamic values, but do not automatically result in the internalization of values. Exposure to gadgets, digital distractions, and limited interaction with role models cause a gap between Islamic knowledge and daily behavior. Teachers and parents play an important role through example, habituation, mentoring, and school-family collaboration. This research offers the concept of moral anchor as a mechanism that connects digital experiences with example, habituation, internalization of values, and formation of Islamic character. Thus, digitalization of PIAUD needs to be directed not only at the use of technology, but also at strengthening pedagogical relations and human example.

## INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has changed the education ecosystem, including Early Childhood Islamic Education (PIAUD). Digital devices, learning platforms, educational videos, interactive applications, and various internet-based learning resources are expanding the way children obtain information and experience the learning process. Early childhood children now grow up in an environment that combines conventional learning spaces with digital spaces, so that educational experiences no longer take place only through teachers, parents and the surrounding environment. These changes show that digitalization of education is not just the addition of technological devices in learning, but also changes in knowledge sources, interaction patterns, pedagogical practices, and relationships between children, teachers and families. Therefore, the use of technology needs to be placed within a clear pedagogical framework, supported by the competence of educators, and adapted to children's developmental needs.<sup>1</sup> Digital transformation also needs to pay attention to children's best interests, safety, welfare, inclusion, and the quality of the learning experience.<sup>2</sup>

In early childhood education, digital technology has pedagogical opportunities because the characteristics of visual media, audio, animation, digital stories, educational games and videos enable learning material to be presented concretely and multimodally. In Islamic education, technology can be used to introduce daily prayers, short surahs, stories of the Prophet, hijaiyah letters, worship practices, and moral values through more varied and interesting media. However, the effectiveness of technology use is not only determined by the quality of the media, but also by how technology is integrated with pedagogical interactions. Undheim emphasized that technology in early childhood education has pedagogical value when used jointly between children and teachers, so that technology remains part of the social interaction process and does not stand as a separate medium from educators.<sup>3</sup> Thus, technology should function as a means of supporting learning, not as a substitute for pedagogical relationships.

This problem becomes more complex when technology is used in Islamic education which is not only oriented towards mastering religious knowledge, but also towards the formation of morals, manners, habits and behavior. Children

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<sup>1</sup> UNESCO, *Global Education Monitoring Report 2023: Technology in Education-A Tool on Whose Terms?* (Paris: UNESCO, 2023).

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF, *Digital Education Strategy 2025–2030: Beyond Digital as Usual—An Equity-Driven, Human-Centered Digital and AI Strategy for Learning* (New York: UNICEF, 2026).

<sup>3</sup> Mantilla and Edwards, "Digital Technology Use by and with Young Children: A Systematic Review for the Statement on Young Children and Digital Technologies," *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood* 2 (2019): 182–95, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/1836939119832744>.

can know prayers, recognize the procedures for worship, or memorize moral messages through digital media, but this knowledge does not automatically become behavior. In this context, the important issue is no longer just how children obtain Islamic information, but rather how this information undergoes an internalization process so that it becomes habits and character. Undirected use of digital devices can also present problems in the form of exposure to content that is not developmentally appropriate for children, excessive use, reduced direct interaction, and dependence on screen-based stimulation.<sup>4</sup> UNESCO also emphasizes that technology does not automatically lead to better learning; its benefits depend greatly on the intended use, educational context, and teacher readiness.<sup>5</sup>

In Islamic education, the process of internalizing values is closely related to example. The concept of *uswah hasanah* places role models as an important part in the process of forming behavior. QS. al-Ahzab verse 21 made Rasulullah saw. as an example for believers. This principle shows that education does not only take place through the transmission of knowledge and advice, but also through children's experiences in observing and interacting with figures who demonstrate these values in real life. The values of honesty, discipline, politeness, compassion, responsibility, prayer and worship practices are not enough to be conveyed verbally, but require examples, habituation and direct experience. In a digital context, the principle of example becomes increasingly important because children are faced with a variety of information and behavioral models originating from the digital space and their social environment.

The need for role models can be explained through Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory. Bandura explained that humans learn through observing other people's behavior through the process of observational learning. This learning involves attention to the model, retention of information, ability to reproduce behavior, and motivation to perform it.<sup>6</sup> In early childhood education, teachers and parents therefore not only act as transmitters of information, but also as role models whose behavior is observed and potentially imitated by children. This perspective has a meeting point with the concept of *uswah hasanah* in Islamic Education. Both place the experience of seeing, observing, and interacting with real figures as an important part in forming behavior. The difference is, *uswah hasanah* provides a normative-Islamic basis regarding the importance of

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<sup>4</sup> M. Undheim, "Children and Teachers Engaging Together with Digital Technology in Early Childhood Education and Care Institutions: A Literature Review," *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal* 3 (2022): 472–89, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2021.1971730>.

<sup>5</sup> Akturk & Akman, "What Happens beyond the Screen? Uncovering Digital Technology Perception, Usage, and Parental Mediation among 3–6-Year-Old Turkish Children," *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 10 (2024): 3191–3210, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-024-02888-x>.

<sup>6</sup> UNESCO, *Global Education Monitoring Report 2023: Technology in Education-A Tool on Whose Terms?*

example, while Bandura's theory helps explain psychosocial mechanisms through the process of observing and modeling behavior.

From this point the main research problem arises. Digital technology indeed allows Islamic values to be transmitted more visually, quickly and attractively. Children can watch prayer procedures, listen to prayers, follow the Prophet's stories, or learn morals through videos and interactive media. However, these digital experiences do not by themselves guarantee that known values will be translated into behavior. Digital media can provide symbolic models, but children still need interaction with real figures to connect information with everyday social experiences. Thus, there is a possibility that a gap will emerge between knowing—knowing Islamic values—and doing—putting these values into practice in daily behavior. This is where the example of teachers and parents acquires an important position as a link between digital experience and real-life practice.

This problem was seen in initial observations at Anak Bangsa Kindergarten, Belet Hamlet, Bagik Payung Village, Suralaga District, East Lombok Regency. Children have received various Islamic materials through digital media, especially in video form, such as prayers and other religious materials. Children are also able to recognize and repeat some of the information obtained through this media. However, the ability to recognize or repeat Islamic information does not always go hand in hand with its application in daily interactions and behavior. Teachers still need to provide direct direction, habituation and examples so that the values obtained through digital media can be translated into attitudes and behavior. These initial findings show that the problem of Islamic education in the digital era does not stop at access to religious information, but lies in the process of transforming information into habits and character.

This condition is interesting because Anak Bangsa Kindergarten is located in a community environment that has a strong socio-religious life, but at the same time children and families are increasingly faced with the penetration of digital technology. Schools are a meeting space between religious values, family educational practices, children's habits, social interactions, and the influence of digital media. Therefore, the Anak Bangsa Kindergarten context is not understood simply as a research location, but as a social space where the process of digitalization and Islamic character formation take place simultaneously. This research thus not only questions how far technology is used in learning, but how technology is placed in the overall process of Islamic education and how teachers and parents maintain role models amidst changes in children's learning environments.

A number of previous studies have shown that digital technology can enrich the learning experiences of early childhood when used according to pedagogical objectives and accompanied by teacher assistance.<sup>7</sup> Other research emphasizes the important role of parents in directing technology use, selecting content, setting limits, and accompanying children's digital experiences.<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, studies on character education and early childhood Islamic education emphasize habituation, example, social interaction and the educational environment as important elements in character formation.<sup>9</sup> However, studies that specifically reconcile the use of digital technology in Islamic education learning with the issue of role modeling as a mechanism for internalizing values in early childhood still need to be developed. In other words, technology and modeling are often discussed as two separate issues, even though in educational practice both take place in the same space and influence each other.

Based on this gap, this research introduces the concept of moral anchor or moral anchor as an analytical term to explain the role of teachers and parents in connecting digital experiences with children's real behavior. Moral anchors are not intended to replace the concept of *uswah hasanah*, but to explain contextually how role models function when children acquire more and more information and behavioral models through digital spaces. If *uswah hasanah* provides a normative basis regarding the importance of role models in Islamic education, moral anchors are used to read the function of teachers and parents as reference points that help children connect information, habits, social interactions and value practices in everyday life. Thus, technology is not placed as the center of education, but as an instrument that needs to be contextualized through pedagogical relations and human example.<sup>10</sup>

On the basis of these arguments, this research aims to analyze the use of digital technology in early childhood Islamic education learning at the Suralaga Children's Kindergarten, identify exemplary challenges that arise in the digital environment, and analyze the role of teachers and parents in connecting digital experiences with the formation of children's Islamic character.<sup>11</sup> This research is expected to provide empirical and conceptual contributions to the development of Early Childhood Islamic Education in the digital era by showing that the success of digitalization is not simply measured by the use of technology or children's ability to access Islamic information, but also from the ability of the

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<sup>7</sup> Albert Bandura, *Social Learning Theory* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1977).

<sup>8</sup> Bandura, "Social Cognitive Theory of Mass Communication," *Media Psychology* 3 (2001): 265–99, [https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532785XMEP0303\\_03](https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532785XMEP0303_03).

<sup>9</sup> Abuddin Nata, *Islamic Education* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2010) p, 42.

<sup>10</sup> Bandura, "Social Cognitive Theory of Mass Communication."

<sup>11</sup> Mantilla and Edwards, "Digital Technology Use by and with Young Children: A Systematic Review for the Statement on Young Children and Digital Technologies."

educational environment to transform this information into experience, habits and behavior. Within this framework, teachers and parents remain important actors who ensure that digital transformation in education runs in line with the aim of forming children's Islamic character.

## **METHOD**

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to understand the practice of Early Childhood Islamic Education in the context of the use of digital technology and teacher example. The research was carried out at Anak Bangsa Kindergarten, Belet Hamlet, Bagik Payung Village, Suralaga District, East Lombok Regency. Informants were selected purposively, including school principals, teachers and parents, while children were placed as subjects of observation in daily learning and habituation activities. Data was collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observations are directed at the learning process, use of digital media, interaction between teachers and children, habits of worship, and exemplary practices. Interviews were conducted to explore the experiences, understanding and strategies of school principals, teachers and parents in integrating Islamic education with digital technology. Documentation includes teaching modules, learning media, digital materials, photos of activities, and religious habituation documents.

Data were analyzed using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña interactive model which includes data condensation, data presentation, and drawing and verifying conclusions.[1] Analysis was carried out simultaneously during the data collection process by comparing and interpreting data from observations, interviews and documentation to identify patterns in the use of digital technology, exemplary practices and the process of forming children's Islamic character. Data validity is maintained through source triangulation, technical triangulation, and member checking.[2] Source triangulation was carried out by comparing information from school principals, teachers and parents, while technical triangulation was carried out by matching the results of interviews, observations and documentation. Member checking is carried out by confirming important information and interpretations with informants to ensure the suitability of the data with the intended experience. These procedures are used to increase the credibility and trustworthiness of research findings.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Digital Media as a Learning Opportunity**

The results of the research show that digital media has become a supporting instrument in the Early Childhood Islamic Education (PIAUD) process at the Suralaga Children's Kindergarten, East Lombok. Teachers use digital media to convey various Islamic materials, such as daily prayers, short suras, stories of

the prophet, Islamic songs, introduction to hijaiyah letters, and moral values. The media used includes videos, images, audio and audiovisual materials that are adapted to the learning characteristics of early childhood. This use provides opportunities for teachers to present Islamic material in a more concrete and varied form.<sup>12</sup> Material that was previously predominantly conveyed verbally can be strengthened through image visualization, animation, songs and videos so that children gain learning experience through visual and auditory stimulation. In this context, digital media not only functions as a means of conveying information, but also as a stimulus that helps children recognize, remember and follow the Islamic material introduced by the teacher.

The Head of Anak Bangsa Kindergarten explained that the use of digital media is directed at supporting the learning process, while teachers still play the main role in directing children's learning experiences. These findings can be seen in learning practices when teachers do not just play videos or audio, but provide explanations, ask questions, invite children to repeat material, and relate it to everyday experiences. For example, when presenting material about eating etiquette, the teacher does not stop at presenting audiovisual material, but continues it through direct explanation and practice. This pattern shows that the use of digital technology in Anak Bangsa Kindergarten is complementary, namely strengthening the learning process without replacing pedagogical interaction between teachers and children. This position is in line with the views of NAEYC and the Fred Rogers Center which emphasize that technology and interactive media in early childhood education need to be used appropriately, planned, and in accordance with learning objectives and do not replace direct interaction with educators.

Apart from being a medium for presenting material, digital technology also provides space for repetition of learning experiences. Based on interviews with teachers, children can listen to the same prayers, Islamic songs, or religious material again so that the recognition and memory process can be carried out repeatedly.<sup>13</sup> This repetition becomes relevant in early childhood learning because children's understanding develops through gradual and repeated experiences. Thus, the use of digital media in PIAUD learning at Anak Bangsa Kindergarten can be seen through four main functions, namely as a visual source to introduce Islamic concepts, an audio source to introduce prayers, songs and religious readings, a stimulus to encourage imitation or practice, and a repetition medium to strengthen mastery of the material. These findings show

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<sup>12</sup> Thomas Lickona, *Educating for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility* (New York: Bantam Books, 1991).

<sup>13</sup> John W. Creswell and Cheryl N. Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches, 4th Ed* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications., 2018).

that digital technology has pedagogical value when it is placed in a clear learning design and remains under teacher assistance. In other words, the opportunity for digitalization in PIAUD does not lie in technology as a substitute for educators, but in its ability to enrich learning experiences which are then interpreted, directed and practiced through direct interaction between teachers and children.

### **Forms and Indications of the Exemplary Crisis in Early Childhood in the Digital Era**

Even though digital media provides opportunities in learning Early Childhood Islamic Education (PIAUD), the research results show that there are problems at the value application stage. Children can obtain, recognize and repeat Islamic information through digital media, but mastery of this information is not always followed by its application in daily behavior. This condition shows that there is a gap between the child's ability to know values (knowing) and the ability to actualize them in action (doing).<sup>14</sup> Thus, the problem found does not lie in the inability of digital media to convey Islamic knowledge, but in the limitations of the process of transforming this knowledge into habits and behavior.

In this research, the term "exemplary crisis" is not interpreted as the loss of role models in children's lives. This term is used to describe the tension between the moral messages received by children, the Islamic knowledge they obtain, and the real behavior observed in their social environment. Digital media can present various representations of religious behavior, such as praying, saying hello, respecting other people, and maintaining cleanliness. However, this audiovisual representation is still different from the experience of direct interaction with figures who are actually present in the child's life. Therefore, the existence of Islamic content does not in itself guarantee the internalization of values. Children need an environment that allows these values to be observed, repeated, familiarized and reinforced through the behavior of the adults around them.

These findings can be explained through Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory which places observation, imitation and modeling as important mechanisms in behavioral learning. Children learn not only through verbal instructions, but also through observing the behavior of other people who become models in their environment.<sup>15</sup> In the context of PIAUD, this process means that Islamic material obtained by children through digital media needs to be strengthened through concrete social experiences. When children see

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<sup>14</sup> Akturk & Akman, "What Happens beyond the Screen? Uncovering Digital Technology Perception, Usage, and Parental Mediation among 3–6-Year-Old Turkish Children."

<sup>15</sup> Interview with the Principal of the Anak Bangsa Suralaga Kindergarten School, East Lombok on August 24 2026 in East Lombok.

examples of behavior in videos, then find similar behavior in teachers or parents and are given the opportunity to practice it, the learning process acquires continuity between information, observation, imitation, and habituation. On the other hand, if messages received through digital media do not receive reinforcement in the behavior of adults in the child's environment, there is a possibility that a gap will emerge between what the child knows and what is done in everyday life.

In the perspective of Islamic education, the need for role models has a strong normative basis through the concept of *uswah hasanah*. The Qur'an describes the Prophet as a role model for people who hope for Allah and the afterlife as emphasized in QS al-Ahzab [33]: 21. This concept shows that Islamic education does not only take place through imparting knowledge and advice, but also through examples of behavior that can be observed directly. In the context of early childhood, the exemplary dimension becomes increasingly important because habit formation takes place through concrete experience, repetition, and interaction with the immediate environment.

In the school environment, teachers are one of the figures most often observed by children. Teachers' habits of greeting, praying, speaking politely, maintaining cleanliness, respecting others, and showing patience can become concrete learning experiences. Teachers thus not only function as transmitters of Islamic material, but also as models of behavior that enable children to connect knowledge with practice.<sup>16</sup> The same thing applies in the family environment. Children not only learn from their parents' advice, but also from the behavior they see and the habits they experience every day. Therefore, the success of Islamic education at school is related to the continuity of exemplary behavior at home. Values introduced in school will be more easily reinforced when the family environment presents consistent practices.

Another problem found in the digital environment is distraction. Devices can function as a learning medium, but at the same time they can be a source of entertainment and distraction for children. Therefore, the issue of digital media use is not solely related to the presence of the device, but also to the type of content, purpose of use, duration and quality of adult assistance. In this context, the challenge of modeling cannot be separated from the ability of teachers and parents to direct children's digital experiences so that they remain connected to the educational process and the formation of behavior.

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<sup>16</sup> National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children's Media at Saint Vincent College, *Technology and Interactive Media as Tools in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8* (Washington, DC: NAEYC, 2012).

Based on these findings, indications of an exemplary crisis in this research can be seen in three main forms.<sup>17</sup> First, there is a gap between the Islamic knowledge acquired by children and its application in daily behavior. Second, the emergence of distractions in the use of digital media which can divert children's attention from learning objectives. Third, there is tension between the moral messages received through digital media and the real behavioral models that children find in their social environment. These three indications show that the challenge of PIAUD in the digital era is not just providing appropriate Islamic content for children, but ensuring continuity between content, interaction, habituation and role modeling.

### **Teacher and School Strategies in Overcoming the Exemplary Crisis**

The research results show that teachers at Anak Bangsa Kindergarten do not place digital technology as a substitute for role modeling, but rather as a learning medium that needs to be combined with direct interaction. In practice, after children receive material through video, audio, or audiovisual media, the teacher provides explanations, asks questions, invites children to repeat the material, and connects it with everyday experiences. This pattern shows that technology is placed as part of the learning process, while the process of interpreting values continues through interactions between teachers and children. Based on research findings, there are several strategies used by teachers and schools to respond to exemplary challenges amidst the use of digital media.

The first strategy is placing the teacher as a role model in the learning process. Teachers not only convey material about morals and Islamic values, but also demonstrate behavior that is in accordance with the values taught. When teachers get used to greetings, praying, speaking politely, maintaining cleanliness, respecting friends, and showing patience, children get the opportunity to directly observe how these values are manifested in behavior. This pattern is relevant to Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory which places observation and modeling as an important part of the behavioral learning process.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the teacher's example becomes part of the pedagogical process that connects Islamic material with children's real experiences.

The second strategy is transforming Islamic knowledge into behavior through habituation. Material introduced through digital media does not stop at children's ability to see, hear or memorize information, but continues with practice in real situations. For example, material about prayer is directed at the

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<sup>17</sup> Interview with Mrs. Titin, Kindergarten Teacher for Children of the Nation Suralaga, East Lombok on August 27 2026 in East Lombok

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Mrs. Sinta, Kindergarten Teacher for Children of the Nation Suralaga, East Lombok on August 27 2026 in East Lombok

practice of praying in daily activities, while material about adab is related to behavior when eating, playing, talking and interacting with friends. Through habituation, children get the opportunity to move from the stage of recognizing values to experiencing values. Thus, technology functions as a learning stimulus, while practice and repetition become an important part of the habit formation process.

The third strategy is supporting and selecting digital content. The use of digital media in early childhood requires teacher involvement in determining material that is appropriate to age, developmental needs and learning goals. Technology is not used solely because it provides a lot of material, but is chosen based on its relevance to the ongoing learning process. UNESCO's view of educational technology also emphasizes the importance of placing technology based on context, educational goals and student needs.<sup>19</sup> In the context of Anak Bangsa Kindergarten, this principle can be seen from the use of digital media as a support for material that has been designed by the teacher, not as a stand-alone learning resource.

The fourth strategy is strengthening continuity between schools and families. The formation of children's Islamic character takes place in more than one educational environment. What teachers introduce at school can be strengthened through habituation and parental example at home. Therefore, parental involvement is important so that children gain relatively continuous value experiences between the school and family environments. This continuity is especially needed in the use of digital media, because children can interact with technology not only at school but also at home. Parental assistance in selecting content, directing use, and providing examples of behavior is part of the child's educational environment.

The fifth strategy is placing technology in educational relationships that center on human interaction. Digital media can provide information, images, sounds and examples of behavior, but teachers and parents still play a role in translating this information into meaningful experiences for children. Therefore, the response to the use of technology is not directed at rejecting technology as a whole, but at regulating its use through assistance, content selection, appropriate restrictions, and strengthening social interactions. In this pattern, technology functions to enrich the learning experience, while teachers and parents provide direction, context and reinforcement of the values learned.

These five strategies show a pattern of relationships between digital technology, example, habituation, and children's social environment. Digital

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<sup>19</sup> Indonesian Ministry of Religion, *Al-Qur'an and Translation* (Bandung: PT Syigma Examedia Arkanleema, 2010).

media provides information and stimulus; the teacher provides explanations and models behavior; the habit of turning values into actions; while the family reinforces these experiences outside of school. Thus, the challenge of role models in the digital era is not primarily responded to by reducing the use of technology, but by ensuring that children's digital experiences remain connected to role models and daily life practices. This pattern also shows that the presence of technology in PIAUD needs to be placed as a supporting instrument in an educational ecosystem that still relies on human interaction and example.

### **Exemplary as a Moral Anchor in Early Childhood Islamic Education**

Research findings show that example has a more fundamental function than simply being a learning method. Role modeling acts as a link between the Islamic knowledge that children gain through digital media and concrete experiences in everyday life. In this research, this function is conceptualized as a moral anchor. The concept of moral anchor is the result of conceptualization built from field findings through dialogue between Albert Bandura's social learning theory and the concept of *uswah hasanah* in Islamic education. Thus, moral anchor is not a term directly developed by Bandura or UNESCO, but rather an analytical concept in this research to explain the position of teachers and parents in directing the Islamic information received by children towards experience, practice and behavior formation.

In Bandura's perspective, the learning process takes place through observing the model's behavior, which can then be followed through a process of imitation and observational learning.[1] In early childhood education, the existence of models is important because children are faced with various forms of behavior that can be observed, both through direct interaction and through the media. Meanwhile, Islamic education provides a normative basis through the concept of *uswah hasanah*, namely good example as one of the principles for forming behavior and personality. This concept is emphasized, among other things, in QS. al-Ahzab [33]: 21 which places the Prophet as *uswah hasanah* for believers. These two perspectives can be brought together in the context of early childhood Islamic education: Bandura explains learning mechanisms through observing models, while *uswah hasanah* provides a value orientation regarding behavior that is worthy of emulation. Children, thus, not only need information about good behavior, but also need real figures who demonstrate and practice this behavior.

In this context, teachers and parents occupy an important position as moral anchors. They function to ensure that Islamic information obtained by children through digital media does not stop at the level of introduction or knowledge, but can be translated into real action. In other words, the moral anchor connects "what the child sees" with "what the child does". When children see a video about

prayer, for example, the teacher does not stop at showing the material, but directs the child to say it and practice it in relevant situations. Likewise, when children receive information about eating etiquette, cleanliness, greetings, or respecting other people, teachers and parents provide examples through daily behavior while guiding children to practice it. Through this process, digital information gains social context and direct experience so that it can move from the introduction stage to practice, habituation and value internalization.

The findings of this research also show that digitalization of education does not need to be placed dichotomously vis-à-vis exemplary. The main problem is not choosing between technology and teachers, but rather how technology is placed in a pedagogical ecosystem that remains centered on children's needs and development. UNESCO emphasizes that the use of technology in education needs to consider the context, learning objectives and needs of students. In early childhood education, this principle becomes increasingly relevant because the learning process does not only take place through receiving information, but also through concrete experience, social interaction, habituation, and relationships with adults.<sup>20</sup> Digital media therefore functions as a supporting tool that provides information, visualization, sound and learning stimuli, while teachers and parents provide explanations, examples, direction and reinforcement of the behavior being learned.

Based on these findings, the conceptual contribution of this research lies in placing example as a moral anchor in early childhood Islamic education in the digital era. This concept explains the functional relationship between four main elements, namely digital media as a source of information and stimulus, teachers and parents as role models, habituation as a process of strengthening behavior, and internalization as a process of forming values in everyday life. This relationship can be formulated as follows: digital media provides information and stimulus → teachers and parents provide role models and direction → children practice through habituation → Islamic values are strengthened and have the potential to be internalized in behavior. Thus, example is not placed as an additional element in digital learning

### **Digitalization as Expanding the Learning Experience of Early Childhood Islamic Education**

This research shows that the use of digital media in learning at Anak Bangsa Kindergarten provides space for teachers to present Islamic material through more diverse learning experiences. Material regarding prayer, hijaiyah letters, stories of the prophet, etiquette, morals and worship practices can be conveyed through videos, pictures, songs, animations or other forms of

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<sup>20</sup> UNESCO, *Global Education Monitoring Report 2023: Technology in Education-A Tool on Whose Terms?*

audiovisual media. The presence of this media allows children to obtain Islamic information not only through the teacher's verbal explanations, but also through visual, auditory and demonstrative experiences. In this context, digitalization does not just add learning tools, but expands the forms and sources of learning experiences that teachers can use to introduce Islamic values to children.

This expansion of the learning experience can be seen in the ability of digital media to present material that was previously relatively abstract into a form that is more concrete and easy for children to observe. Concepts of honesty, love, respect for parents, cleanliness, and worship procedures, for example, can be introduced through stories, moving pictures, songs, or visual simulations. Digital media thus functions as a stimulus that helps children recognize a concept before the concept is reinforced through direct experience. In early childhood education, these characteristics are relevant because the child's learning process takes place through experience which involves observation, repetition, activity and interaction with the environment.

These findings are in line with Undheim's study which shows that the use of digital technology in early childhood education is not solely related to the presence of devices, but to how technology is integrated into learning activities, games, creative activities, and pedagogical interactions between children and teachers.<sup>21</sup> Thus, the pedagogical value of technology lies not in the device itself, but rather in the way teachers use it as part of the learning design. In the context of Anak Bangsa Kindergarten, digital media becomes more meaningful when its use is followed by teacher explanations, questions to children, repetition of material, and links between media content and situations that children encounter in everyday life.

However, it is necessary to distinguish between expanding access to Islamic information and internalizing Islamic values. Children can watch videos about prayer, listen to songs about prayer, or watch animations about morals, but these experiences do not by themselves make the values displayed become part of the child's behavior. Digital media at this stage mainly provides information and stimulus, while the process of forming behavior requires direct experience, social interaction, habituation and reinforcement from the educational environment.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, digitalization cannot be understood as a process that automatically transforms Islamic knowledge into religious practice.

This limit shows the importance of the position of teachers and parents as mediators in the use of digital media. The teacher's role is not only to operate the device or select material, but also to provide explanations, relate the

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<sup>21</sup> Bandura, "Social Cognitive Theory of Mass Communication."

<sup>22</sup> RI, *Al-Qur'an Dan Terjemahan*.

information to the child's experience, demonstrate learned behavior, and provide opportunities for the child to practice it. Likewise, parents play a role in strengthening this experience in the family environment through mentoring, habituation and example. With this mechanism, digital media does not stand alone as a learning resource, but becomes part of a pedagogical series that connects information with experience and action.

This view is in line with the Global Education Monitoring Report 2023 which places technology as a means of supporting education, not as a substitute for human relations in the learning process. In early childhood education, this principle becomes increasingly important because children's learning experiences are closely related to direct interactions, emotional relationships, observations of adult behavior, and involvement in daily activities. Therefore, the use of technology needs to be placed within an educational framework that maintains human interaction as an important element in the learning process.

### **The Paradox of Digitalization: Access to Islamic Values and the Limits of Moral Experience**

Research findings show that there is a paradox in early childhood Islamic education in the digital era. On the one hand, digitalization expands children's access to Islamic information and materials in diverse, fast, visual and interesting forms. Children can learn about prayers, hijaiyah letters, stories of the prophet, etiquette, morals and worship practices through various forms of digital media. On the other hand, expanding access does not in itself expand children's moral experiences. Islamic information obtained through the media still requires social context and direct experience so that it can be linked to daily behavior. Thus, the paradox of digitalization lies in the gap between the easier it is for children to obtain information about Islamic values and the need for children to experience, observe and practice these values in real social relations.

This issue is important in early childhood Islamic education because the aim of education does not stop at mastering religious knowledge. Islamic education is also related to the formation of attitudes, manners, morals, habits and behavior that reflect Islamic values. Children can know that telling the truth is a good act, but this knowledge does not necessarily form the habit of telling the truth. Likewise, children can learn how to pray, pray, respect parents, or maintain cleanliness through digital media, but internalization of values requires opportunities to observe behavior, practice it, receive reinforcement, and repeat it in everyday life. Therefore, expanding access to Islamic information needs to be differentiated from the process of internalizing Islamic values.

These findings can be explained through Albert Bandura's \*Social Learning Theory\*. Bandura explained that the learning process can take place through observing other people's behavior and the consequences that accompany this

behavior. In the observational learning process, attention, information retention, behavior reproduction, and motivation play a role in determining whether the observed behavior is then reproduced by the individual.<sup>23</sup> This perspective shows that the existence of models has an important position in the formation of behavior because children not only learn from information conveyed verbally, but also from concrete behavior that can be observed in their social environment.

In the context of Islamic education, this mechanism can be combined with the principle of *uswah hasanah*. Islamic values become more concrete for children when they are present through the behavior of figures in their immediate environment. Children not only learn that telling the truth is good behavior through teacher explanations, but also through the experience of observing teachers being honest in everyday interactions. Likewise, children not only know the importance of respecting others, but gain experience of this value through the way teachers talk, treat children, resolve problems, and show mutual respect. In the family environment, a similar process takes place through parental behavior which is observed and followed by children. In this way, exemplification provides a concrete form of the values that children previously obtained as information.

The limitations of moral experience in digital contexts does not mean that digital media has no pedagogical value. On the other hand, digital media can be an initial stimulus that introduces children to a value, clarifies concepts through visualization, and provides opportunities to repeat material. The problem lies in the limits of the media's function. Media can show representations of good behavior, but children's moral experiences still take place in real social relations. Children need to have the opportunity to practice these values, get responses from the environment, and repeat them in various situations. Therefore, the effectiveness of using digital media in early childhood Islamic education is very dependent on how teachers and parents connect digital experiences with children's social experiences.

These findings are in line with Akturk and Akman's research on the use of digital technology in children aged 3–6 years which places perceptions and practices of parental mediation as an important part of children's digital experiences.<sup>24</sup> These findings show that children's use of technology cannot be separated from the social environment that accompanies and directs their use. In the context of this research, this principle is extended to Islamic education: adult assistance is not only needed to regulate the use of technology, but also to

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<sup>23</sup> Undheim, "Children and Teachers Engaging Together with Digital Technology in Early Childhood Education and Care Institutions: A Literature Review."

<sup>24</sup> UNESCO, *Global Education Monitoring Report 2023: Technology in Education-A Tool on Whose Terms?*

provide a moral context for Islamic information that children obtain through digital media.

Thus, the main problem in the digitalization paradox does not lie in the existence of digital technology, but in the relationship between technology, social experience, and the process of forming behavior. When Islamic information is obtained through the media without explanation, example, practice and habituation, the learning experience has the potential to stop at the level of introduction or consumption of information. On the other hand, when digital information is connected to direct interactions with teachers and parents, children get the opportunity to observe, practice, repeat and gain reinforcement for the values they learn. In this pattern, digital media functions as a source of information and stimulus, while the social environment becomes the main space for experience and behavior formation.

This paradox ultimately shows that the wider a child's access to Islamic information, the more important the role of the educational environment in providing context for that information. Digitalization expands what children can see and know, but moral experience determines how that knowledge is linked to action. Therefore, the challenge of early childhood Islamic education in the digital era is not just ensuring that children receive adequate Islamic content, but ensuring that there is continuity between information, example, practice, habituation and internalization of values. It is at this point that the position of teachers and parents becomes important as a link between children's digital experiences and the formation of Islamic behavior in everyday life.

### **From Digital Experience to Internalization of Values: Modeling and Habituation in Early Childhood Islamic Education**

Research findings at the Anak Bangsa Suralaga Kindergarten in East Lombok show that digitalization has broadened the Islamic education learning experience of early childhood. Digital media allows teachers to present material regarding prayer, hijaiyah letters, stories of the prophet, adab, morals, and worship practices through videos, pictures, songs, animations, and various audiovisual forms. The presence of this media provides a more varied learning experience and helps children recognize Islamic information through observation, listening and repetition. In this context, digital technology functions as a means of enriching learning experiences and expanding children's access to sources of Islamic knowledge.

However, research findings also show that digital experiences do not by themselves result in the internalization of Islamic values. Children can recognize prayers, memorize short verses, follow religious songs, or understand stories about morals through digital media, but the ability to recognize and repeat this information cannot yet be equated with the ability to apply it in everyday life.

The difference between knowing and doing is important in Islamic education for early childhood because the goal of education is not only related to the mastery of religious knowledge, but also the formation of manners, morals, habits and behavior. Therefore, digital experiences need to be followed by social experiences that allow children to practice the values they already know.

This condition shows that there is a distance between Islamic information and moral experience. Digital media can show how a value is explained or exemplified, but children still need real figures who can be observed and followed in everyday life. In the Social Learning Theory perspective, Bandura explains that behavioral learning takes place through observing models. This process involves attention, information storage, behavioral reproduction, and motivation. Thus, the existence of models in a child's environment has an important position because behavior is not only learned through what is said, but also through what is seen and experienced directly.

In Islamic education, this mechanism is related to the concept of *uswah hasanah*. Islamic values become more concrete when displayed through behavior that children can observe. Children not only learn that telling the truth is good behavior through teacher explanations, but also through the experience of seeing honesty practiced by adults. Likewise, the values of respecting others, maintaining cleanliness, greeting, sharing, and being polite will be more easily connected to children's lives when these values are present in the behavior of teachers and parents. Thus, *uswah hasanah* provides a normative basis for the importance of example in the process of forming children's behavior.

On this basis, teachers and parents in this research are not only positioned as users or supervisors of technology, but as figures who provide direction to children's digital experiences. The teacher explains the content of the media, relates it to the child's experience, provides examples of behavior, and invites the child to practice it. Parents can then reinforce these experiences in the family environment. When children watch a video about greetings, for example, learning does not stop at the child's ability to repeat greetings, but continues with practicing greetings when entering the classroom and when meeting family members at home. This pattern shows that the value obtained through digital media acquires meaning when connected to direct experience.

It is in this context that this research develops the concept of moral anchor. Moral anchor is an analytical concept formulated based on research findings through dialogue between Bandura's social learning theory and the *uswah hasanah* concept. This concept is used to explain the function of teachers and parents as a link between the information or Islamic values obtained by children through digital media and the real experiences experienced by children. Teachers and parents become "anchors" who ensure that digital information does not stop

as knowledge, but is directed towards practice and habituation. Thus, moral anchor is not positioned as a theory that comes directly from Bandura, but rather as a research concept to explain the mechanism of transformation of digital experiences into moral experiences.

This transformation takes place through a gradual process. Digital media provides information and stimulus; teachers and parents provide explanations and role models; children get the opportunity to practice values; the practice is carried out repeatedly through habituation; and consistent repetition provides room for values to become increasingly embedded in behavior. This pattern shows that the internalization of Islamic values does not take place instantly after children receive information, but requires continuity between knowledge, example, practice and habituation. In this context, habituation functions as a mechanism that connects what children know with what children do.

Habituation is important because character is not formed only through conveying moral messages. When children repeatedly say hello, pray before studying, share with friends, maintain cleanliness, tell the truth, respect teachers, and help others, these values take concrete form in the child's experience. Information previously obtained through digital media then undergoes transformation into actions carried out in real situations. Thus, habituation is not just repetition of activities, but is a pedagogical process that provides opportunities for children to connect Islamic knowledge with behavior.

Continuity between school and family is an important part of this process. Teachers can build habits through learning activities at school, while parents strengthen them through daily life at home. Children who learn to say greetings at school, for example, need a family environment that also provides space to practice greetings. Likewise, the values of honesty, cleanliness, sharing and respect for others will more easily become habits if children gain consistent experiences in the school and family environment. Thus, the internalization of values is not only the result of children's interactions with digital media, but is the result of the continuity of experience built by the educational environment.

These findings also show that digital technology and role models do not need to be positioned as two opposing elements. Technology has a function in expanding access, providing stimulus, visualizing material, and enriching the learning experience. On the other hand, teachers and parents provide context, meaning, example, affection and reinforcement. UNESCO emphasizes that technology in education needs to be placed according to learning objectives and students' needs and is not understood as a substitute for human relations in

education.<sup>25</sup> This view strengthens research findings that the meaningfulness of technology in early childhood Islamic education is very dependent on how technology is integrated with pedagogical relations and children's social experiences.

Thus, the process of early childhood Islamic education in the digital era can be understood as a transformation process from digital experience to moral experience. This transformation does not take place linearly only through the use of technology, but through the relationship between four main elements: digital media, example, habituation, and internalization of values. Digital media introduces and expands Islamic information; exemplary provides concrete examples; habituation provides opportunities to do and repeat; while internalization is a process when values become increasingly connected to children's behavior in everyday life.

Based on these findings, this research offers an understanding that the main issue of early childhood Islamic education in the digital era is not just how to increase the use of technology, but how to ensure that digital experiences have continuity with children's moral experiences. The more diverse sources of Islamic information that children can access, the more important it is for teachers and parents to act as role models who provide direction to this information. In this position, the moral anchor becomes a link between the digital world and the child's life world, while habituation becomes a mechanism that allows values to move from knowledge to behavior.

In the end, digitalization in early childhood Islamic education does not have to be interpreted as a shift from human-based education to technology-based education. Digitalization is more accurately understood as an expansion of learning experiences that still requires humans as meaning givers and role models. Technology can expand what children see, hear and know, but modeling helps children understand how these values are realized, while habituation provides the opportunity to live them out in everyday life. Thus, digital experiences become educationally meaningful when they are connected with example and habituation, so that Islamic knowledge has the opportunity to develop into values that are internalized and manifested in children's behavior.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This research shows that the digitalization of Early Childhood Islamic Education (PIAUD) in the Suralaga Children's Kindergarten in East Lombok presents both opportunities and challenges. Digital media through videos, images, audio and audiovisuals are used to introduce prayers, short surahs,

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<sup>25</sup> Akturk & Akman, "What Happens beyond the Screen? Uncovering Digital Technology Perception, Usage, and Parental Mediation among 3–6-Year-Old Turkish Children."

stories of the prophet, Islamic songs, hijaiyah and moral values in a more visual, concrete, interesting and repetitive manner. However, technology does not replace the role of the teacher because its pedagogical value depends on integration with children's explanations, dialogue, practice and direct experiences. The main challenge does not lie in the loss of role models, but in the gap between the Islamic information that children receive, the moral messages displayed on digital media, and their application in everyday behavior. Children can know and repeat Islamic information, but this knowledge does not automatically become character. Therefore, *uswah hasanah* remains an important element in PIAUD, especially through the example of teachers and parents which can be observed, imitated and strengthened through habituation.

This research found that responses to exemplary challenges were carried out through the integration of digital media, exemplification, habituation, and school-family collaboration. Teachers play the role of translating digital information into concrete actions through practice and repetition, while parents reinforce this process in the family environment. Conceptually, this research offers the concept of moral anchor, namely the position of teachers and parents as links that ensure children's digital experiences do not stop at knowledge, but develop into moral experiences, habits and behavior. This concept brings together the principles of modeling in social learning theory with *uswah hasanah* in Islamic education. Thus, the pattern found can be formulated as digital media → Islamic information/values → interpretation and strengthening of teachers → example of teachers and parents → habituation → internalization of values → Islamic character. These findings confirm that the success of PIAUD digitalization is not determined by the intensity of technology use, but by its ability to be integrated with moral modeling, pedagogical relationships, habituation, and real experience so that digital learning can develop into \*moral learning.

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