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## Islamic Counseling Interventions for Managing Parent–Teen Conflict Related to Social Media Use and Online Friendships

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### ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of social media has intensified parent–teen conflict in many Muslim families, particularly concerning online friendships, privacy, and moral risks. While existing digital parenting frameworks address behavioral concerns, they often overlook the cultural and religious dimensions that shape family dynamics in Islamic contexts. This study aims to explore how Islamic counseling principles can be integrated to manage and reduce parent–teen conflict related to social media use. Using a qualitative phenomenological design, data were collected from ten Muslim parent–teen dyads through semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis, followed by thematic analysis. The findings indicate that conflict is driven by contrasting interpretations of digital autonomy, moral expectations, and online peer interactions. Adolescents view social media as an essential space for identity exploration, while parents perceive it as a potential moral threat. Islamic counseling was found to facilitate conflict resolution by providing a shared moral language, improving emotional communication, and fostering trust-based negotiation. The study concludes that integrating Islamic values—such as *adab*, *amanah*, and *shura*—with evidence-based counseling practices offers a culturally grounded framework for improving family harmony and guiding digital behavior. These insights have significant implications for counselors, educators, and policymakers in Muslim communities. Specifically, this framework can guide the development of faith-integrated counseling programs, inform digital literacy curricula in Islamic schools, and shape family policy initiatives that respect religious values while addressing contemporary digital challenges.

**Keywords:** Islamic counseling; parent–teen conflict; social media; digital parenting

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Article received on 20-07-2025 — Final revised on 29-08-2025 — Approved on 20-12-2025

### INTRODUCTION

The article should be minimal of 20 pages, single-spaced, Book Antiqua 12-point font, including references. Use indentation for the first paragraph and do not add spacing between paragraphs. Subsequent paragraphs should have a first-line indentation of 1.00 cm. The introduction contains the background of the problem globally, specific issues, literature facts, previous research and research gap, theories or approaches to be used for analysis, as well as the objectives and benefits of the research conducted.

The COVID-19 pandemic further intensified digital dependency and parental concerns about children's online autonomy, while unresolved digital tensions have

contributed to emotional distance, miscommunication, and intergenerational misunderstanding (Nabity-Grover et al., 2020; Wiederhold, 2020; Odgers & Jensen, 2020; Wiederhold, 2021). Research in educational counseling has shown that during adolescence, students face heightened vulnerability to behavioral deviations—ranging from emotional instability to engagement in risky activities—highlighting the need for comprehensive guidance and support systems (Milaturokhah & Nugraha, 2023). These global digital challenges increasingly require culturally responsive approaches, especially in communities where moral and religious values shape family expectations.

Several factors contribute to the escalation of parent–teen conflict over social media and online friendships. These include differences in digital literacy between generations, inconsistent parental monitoring strategies, peer pressure, and adolescents’ developmental need for autonomy (Smahel et al., 2020; Berryman & Knoll, 2021). Studies also indicate that algorithm-driven content exposure, online disinhibition, and parasocial relationships intensify adolescents’ emotional reliance on digital interactions (Marengo et al., 2021; Valkenburg et al., 2022). Moreover, parental anxiety regarding online risks—such as cyberbullying, privacy violations, or inappropriate friendships—often leads to controlling behaviors, which further heighten family tension (Shin & Li, 2021; Odgers, 2020). These multi-layered factors contribute to communication breakdowns and relational strain within households navigating digital culture.

The interplay of these influences produces significant psychological and relational consequences for both teenagers and parents. Excessive online engagement and conflicts around digital autonomy have been associated with increased emotional distress, family dissatisfaction, and decreased parent–child cohesion (Boursier et al., 2020; Coyne et al., 2021; Valkenburg & Piotrowski, 2021). Adolescents experiencing high digital tension often report loneliness, irritability, and reduced academic focus (Keles et al., 2020; König et al., 2021). For parents, constant worry over online peer networks contributes to stress, fear, and difficulty maintaining authoritative yet warm parenting styles (Shin & Li, 2021; Berryman & Knoll, 2021). Without proper intervention, these tensions may escalate into long-term relational fractures and unhealthy emotional regulation patterns (Valkenburg et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2021).

Parent–teen conflict around social media and online friendships represents a critical area within digital psychology and family counseling, especially because online relationships now shape adolescents’ identity formation, belonging needs, and self-expression. Social media facilitates varied forms of communication—visual, textual, synchronous, and asynchronous—that significantly impact adolescents’ social worlds (Marengo et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2021). At the same time, Islamic counseling emphasizes maintaining family harmony (*silaturahmi*), emotional balance (*tawazun*), and ethical interpersonal conduct (*akhlaq*), offering an integrative framework for addressing tech-related family tensions (Alorfi, 2022; Hamzah et al., 2023). Thus, the interaction between faith-based counseling principles and digital behavior regulation becomes essential to

understanding how Muslim families can manage conflict while supporting adolescents' healthy online engagement.

Although existing studies have explored digital addiction, family communication, and adolescent online behavior, research specifically integrating Islamic counseling interventions for parent-teen conflict related to online friendships remains limited. Most prior work focuses on psychological models, digital literacy approaches, or general mental-health strategies, with minimal consideration of Islamic value-based counseling tailored to contemporary social media issues (Alorfi, 2022; Hamzah et al., 2023; Smahel et al., 2020). This study introduces a novel framework that combines Qur'anic-based relational ethics, counseling techniques from Islamic psychology, and empirical insights into adolescent digital behavior. Such integration offers a culturally grounded intervention model for Muslim families a dimension rarely covered in ScienceDirect-indexed literature.

The urgency of this research arises from the rising frequency of family disputes tied to online relationships, especially in Muslim-majority societies undergoing rapid digital transformation. The increasing complexity of digital ecosystems, lack of culturally appropriate counseling models, and parents' insufficient understanding of adolescents' online social needs heighten conflict risks (Keles et al., 2020; Odgers & Jensen, 2020; Shin & Li, 2021). Moreover, unresolved digital conflicts may negatively influence youth well-being, moral development, and social integration—pressing concerns for policymakers and educational stakeholders (Boursier et al., 2020; Valkenburg et al., 2022). Therefore, culturally sensitive, religion-aligned interventions are urgently required to maintain family harmony and support adolescents in navigating the digital world.

This research aims to develop an Islamic counseling intervention model that effectively manages parent-teen conflict regarding social media use and online friendships. Specifically, the study seeks to (1) identify dominant sources of conflict within Muslim families related to digital interactions, (2) integrate Islamic counseling principles with evidence-based digital behavior guidance, and (3) propose an intervention framework that enhances communication, emotional regulation, and mutual understanding between parents and adolescents.

The findings are expected to contribute theoretical and practical insights into Islamic counseling, digital parenting, and family psychology. For scholars, this study enriches the literature by offering a culturally grounded model for addressing contemporary digital challenges. For practitioners, the proposed intervention may guide counselors, teachers, and religious educators in assisting families with evidence-based and spiritually oriented strategies. For parents and adolescents, the research provides tools to reduce relational conflict, strengthen communication, and promote healthy digital habits grounded in Islamic values.

## **METHODS**

### **1. Research Type**

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore how parent–teen conflict emerges and is managed in the context of social media use and online friendships within Muslim families. The phenomenological approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to understand participants’ lived experiences, emotional responses, and meaning-making processes related to digital interactions and family dynamics. The focus of this research was not only to document behaviors but to capture the subjective interpretations of both parents and adolescents regarding conflict triggers, communication patterns, and the role of Islamic counseling values in resolving disputes. Through this approach, the study aimed to uncover deep insights into relational tensions shaped by digital platforms and culturally grounded strategies used to manage them.

### **2. Population and Sample**

The research population consisted of Muslim parents and teenagers who have experienced conflict regarding social media usage or online friendships. The sampling site included families from Islamic junior high schools and community religious centers in urban areas. A purposive sampling technique was used to select information-rich participants who could provide detailed accounts relevant to the research questions. The final sample included 10 parents and 10 adolescents, forming 10 parent–teen dyads, ensuring representation from different socioeconomic and educational backgrounds. Sampling continued until data saturation was achieved—when no new themes, meanings, or perspectives emerged from the interviews.

### **3. Research Instrument**

In qualitative research, the primary instrument is the researcher, who functions as the planner, interviewer, observer, analyst, and interpreter of the data. To maintain consistency and rigor, several supporting instruments were developed:

- a. Semi-structured interview guidelines containing open-ended questions about conflict experiences, emotional responses, online behaviors, parental concerns, and religious coping practices.
- b. Observation sheets to record nonverbal interactions, communication tone, and relational dynamics during family discussions.
- c. Field notes documenting impressions, contextual factors, and reflective memos.
- d. Document checklist for reviewing relevant digital artifacts such as screenshots, chat samples, or parental monitoring records (shared voluntarily by participants). These instruments enabled systematic and in-depth exploration while preserving participants’ natural expressions.

#### **4. Data Collection Technique**

Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis.

- a. Interviews: Conducted separately with parents and teenagers for 45–60 minutes, allowing them to express feelings and experiences freely.
- b. Observations: Performed during selected family counseling sessions or home visits to capture authentic communication patterns.
- c. Document Review: Included examining voluntarily shared evidence such as digital activity logs, social media screenshots, or parental control app reports. All interviews were audio-recorded (with consent), transcribed verbatim, and checked using participant validation to ensure accuracy. Data collection lasted approximately eight weeks to allow iterative analysis and follow-up clarifications.

#### **5. Research Procedure**

The research procedure consisted of the following steps:

- a. Preparation Stage
  - a. Designing research protocol, ethics documents, and interview guides.
  - b. Seeking approval from school boards and community leaders.
- b. Participant Recruitment
  - a. Contacting potential families through schools and religious organizations.
  - b. Explaining research aims and obtaining informed consent from parents and assent from adolescents.
- c. Data Collection
  - a. Conducting individual interviews with parents and teens.
  - b. Observing family interactions and counseling sessions.
  - c. Gathering supporting documents related to online behavior.
- d. Data Organization
  - a. Transcribing interviews word-for-word.
  - b. Organizing codes, themes, and memos using qualitative analysis software (e.g., NVivo or ATLAS.ti).
- e. Trustworthiness Procedures
  - a. Member checking for accuracy.
  - b. Triangulation of interviews, observations, and documents.
  - c. Maintaining audit trails and reflective memos.
- f. Finalization
  - a. Synthesizing themes, validating findings, and preparing narrative reports.

#### **6. Data Analysis Technique**

This study used Thematic Analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework, adapted to a phenomenological setting:

- a. Familiarization with Data: Reading transcripts repeatedly to immerse in participants' narratives.
- b. Generating Initial Codes: Coding meaningful statements related to conflict triggers, emotional reactions, online behavior, and spiritual coping.
- c. Searching for Themes: Grouping codes into broader themes: e.g., "digital autonomy tensions," "parental fear and moral anxiety," "online friendships as emotional refuge," "Islamic-based reconciliation strategies."
- d. Reviewing Themes: Refining theme coherence through cross-checking with transcripts.
- e. Defining and Naming Themes: Producing clear operational definitions of each emergent theme.
- f. Producing the Report: Integrating direct quotations and analytical interpretation into a cohesive narrative.

To ensure validity and trustworthiness, four criteria were applied:

- a. Credibility (triangulation, member checking),
- b. Transferability (rich, thick descriptions),
- c. Dependability (audit trail, coding consistency),
- d. Confirmability (researcher reflexivity).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Digital Autonomy Tension Between Parents and Teens

#### *Adolescents' Need for Privacy, Autonomy, and Online Identity Exploration*

Adolescents consistently emphasized that their engagement with social media is tied to identity formation, emotional expression, and autonomy. They view online spaces as extensions of their personal world, where they can explore interests and communicate without judgment. Several participants described social media as the only place they can "be themselves."

*"Online I can talk freely. At home I feel judged, but my online friends understand me without criticizing." (T-03) "My parents think everything online is dangerous, but for me it's where I can express my feelings." (T-07)*

Interpretatively, adolescents equate privacy with trust, thus parental monitoring feels like a violation of their emerging adulthood. The digital environment becomes a symbolic space for self-discovery, making restrictions emotionally charged.

#### *Parents' Anxiety About Moral Influence, Online Safety, and Loss of Control*

Parents expressed fear that online interactions expose their children to inappropriate content, harmful friendships, or moral deviation. Many parents felt digital culture conflicts with Islamic values, especially regarding modesty, adab, and emotional boundaries.

*"I don't know who is behind her online friends. I'm afraid they influence her faith or behavior." (P-03) "He spends hours chatting with people I've never met. As a parent, I worry about his akhlak." (P-08)*

Parents perceive social media as an unpredictable and morally unfiltered world. This generates a protective instinct manifesting in stricter rules, monitoring, or interrogations. However, such control contributes to escalating relational tension.

### ***Conflicting Worldviews of "Freedom" versus "Protection"***

Both groups believe their perspective is justified, leading to a cycle where neither feels understood. Adolescents view restrictions as oppression, while parents view online freedom as a danger that must be contained.

*"I only want some space. Not everything I do is a danger." (T-05)*  
*"I'm not trying to limit him, I'm trying to protect him from the unseen world." (P-07)*

Interpretatively, conflict arises at the intersection of developmental needs and parental fears. The emotional intensity stems from both parties believing they are acting out of love or self-preservation.

The results of this study reveal that parent-teen conflict regarding social media use is not merely a behavioral disagreement but a structural clash emerging from different generational worldviews and psychological needs. Adolescents view digital platforms as fundamental spaces for identity formation, emotional expression, and peer affirmation, which aligns with global findings that teenagers utilize social media to construct relational identities and navigate developmental transitions (Valkenburg et al., 2022; Marengo et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2021). In contrast, parents often perceive these platforms primarily as risk-laden environments, prompting protective behaviors that adolescents interpret as intrusive or controlling. Previous studies also highlight that when parents adopt restrictive or surveillance-oriented approaches, adolescents experience reduced trust and heightened frustration (Shin & Li, 2021; Coyne et al., 2021; Keles et al., 2020). Consequently, what may appear as a simple disagreement over screen time or online friends actually reflects divergent interpretations of autonomy, safety, and moral responsibility in the digital age.

Conflict escalation is often rooted in the emotional meaning each party assigns to digital behavior. Adolescents interpret restrictions as signs of distrust or a lack of acknowledgment of their growing maturity, a theme commonly noted in developmental psychology literature where autonomy-supportive environments foster healthier emotional outcomes (Odgers & Jensen, 2020; Valkenburg et al., 2022; O'Reilly et al., 2020). Parents, on the other hand, interpret resistance to rules as disobedience or moral risk, especially within religious households where behavioral expectations are tied to cultural and spiritual norms (Berryman & Knoll, 2021; Keles et al., 2020; Hamzah et al., 2023). The findings of this study reinforce that values-based households, including Muslim families, tend to experience intensified conflicts because digital behavior is viewed not only through a psychological lens but also through a moral and spiritual

framework. This dynamic is consistent with research showing that in collectivistic and faith-oriented communities, parental concerns extend beyond safety to include fears about moral drift, peer influence, and religious identity (Alorfi, 2022; Hamzah et al., 2023; Boursier et al., 2020). Therefore, conflict becomes both a relational struggle and a moral negotiation between independence and ethical guidance.

Another critical factor contributing to conflict is the widening digital literacy gap between generations. Many adolescents demonstrate sophisticated familiarity with platforms, algorithms, and online social cues, whereas parents often feel left behind, uncertain, or overwhelmed by rapidly evolving technologies. Prior studies confirm that when parents lack sufficient digital literacy, they rely more heavily on restrictive or authoritarian strategies rather than collaborative digital mediation (Lee et al., 2021; Shin & Li, 2021; König et al., 2021). This pattern was evident in the present study, where parents' inability to fully understand digital culture intensified their anxiety and led to over-regulation. Adolescents, however, interpreted such control as evidence of ignorance or misjudgment, reinforcing emotional distance. Research additionally shows that the digital literacy gap predicts higher frequencies of online secrecy among adolescents, as they attempt to protect their privacy or avoid parental conflict (Boursier et al., 2020; Marengo et al., 2021; Coyne et al., 2021). The present findings expand on this by demonstrating that secrecy among Muslim adolescents is often reinforced by concerns about moral judgment or fear of disappointing parents due to religious expectations. This insight contributes culturally specific depth to existing literature where secrecy is typically conceptualized in purely behavioral terms.

The emotional climate of the household also plays a crucial role in shaping conflict outcomes. The findings of this study demonstrate that disputes about digital behavior quickly escalate into emotionally charged confrontations involving shouting, withdrawal, or silent treatment. This supports previous research noting that parent-teen digital disputes frequently activate underlying relational tensions, especially when communication patterns are already strained or when families lack structured emotional regulation strategies (Coyne et al., 2021; Keles et al., 2020; O'Reilly et al., 2020). In Muslim families, these tensions are further amplified by the moral weight placed on obedience, respect, and adab in parent-child relationships (Hamzah et al., 2023; Alorfi, 2022; Berryman & Knoll, 2021). When adolescents perceive parental criticism as moral condemnation rather than guidance, they are more likely to emotionally withdraw, leading to cycles of disconnection that mirror global findings on secrecy and relational distancing in digital conflict (Valkenburg et al., 2022; Marengo et al., 2021; Shin & Li, 2021). Therefore, the emotional intensity observed in the present study is consistent with international patterns but uniquely shaped by cultural and religious expectations within the Muslim context.

Parental stress and confusion in navigating modern digital parenting represent another significant source of conflict. This study found that many parents experience guilt, uncertainty, and fear of making wrong decisions regarding their children's online

activities. These feelings are echoed in contemporary research documenting the increasing psychological burden parents face as they balance modern digital norms with traditional expectations of supervision and moral guardianship (Berryman & Knoll, 2021; Coyne et al., 2021; Odgers & Jensen, 2020). For Muslim parents, this burden is further magnified by the desire to reinforce Islamic values in a digital environment that often contradicts their belief systems (Hamzah et al., 2023; Alorfi, 2022; Keles et al., 2020). The results show that such emotional pressure leads parents to adopt inconsistent or reactive strategies—alternating between strict enforcement and permissiveness—an inconsistency known in the literature to heighten adolescent resistance and emotional volatility (Valkenburg et al., 2022; Keles et al., 2020; König et al., 2021). These findings highlight the need for systematic support for parents to navigate the moral and technological complexities of digital parenting.

Finally, misunderstandings between parents and adolescents are reinforced by emotional misalignment. Adolescents often interpret parental monitoring as an attack on their character or independence, whereas parents interpret adolescent openness as vulnerability requiring protection. This dynamic is supported by research showing that misinterpretation of emotional cues is a significant predictor of intergenerational conflict, particularly regarding digital behaviors (O'Reilly et al., 2020; Berryman & Knoll, 2021; Shin & Li, 2021). The present study expands this understanding by showing that within Muslim families, emotional misalignment is also heavily influenced by unspoken expectations regarding religious roles, filial piety, and respect. Adolescents may withdraw to avoid disappointing their parents religiously, while parents may respond with stricter control to compensate for perceived moral risks. Such patterns deepen relational rifts, consistent with global findings linking emotional misalignment to decreased relational cohesion and increased digital risk-taking (Marengo et al., 2021; Coyne et al., 2021; Odgers & Jensen, 2020). Thus, the findings underscore the necessity of addressing emotional interpretation—not just behavior—in understanding digital conflict.

## 2. Emotional Climate of Conflict and Communication Breakdown

### *Escalation of Rules into Emotional Confrontations*

Many families described how simple disagreements about online activities quickly escalated into shouting, crying, silent treatment, or withdrawal. Discussions about time limits or online contacts often became symbolic of deeper unmet needs.

*“It starts with ‘Why so long online?’ and ends with both of us angry.” (P-01)*  
*“I feel attacked whenever they question my friends. It becomes a fight, not a conversation.” (T-02)*

Interpretatively, the content of the conflict is digital, but the emotion is relational. What begins as a rule becomes an emotional negotiation of respect, trust, and independence.

### ***Adolescents' Emotional Withdrawal and Secret Online Behavior***

As conflicts intensify, many adolescents resorted to hiding online accounts, using multiple devices, or deleting messages. Emotional withdrawal is used as protection from constant criticism.

*"After so many fights, I stopped talking about my online life. Easier to keep it hidden."* (T-09) *"She blocks us from seeing her posts. That hurts us as parents."* (P-10)

Interpretatively, secrecy becomes a coping mechanism that ironically increases parental anxiety, fueling a vicious cycle of mistrust.

### ***Parents' Stress, Guilt, and Confusion in Navigating Modern Parenting***

Parents expressed feelings of failure, guilt, and confusion in balancing Islamic values with modern expectations. They struggled to determine how much freedom to grant without compromising guidance.

*"We want to raise them with Islamic values, but times are different now. It's confusing."* (P-04) *"I feel guilty when I shout, but I also feel guilty if I let him be too free."* (P-09)

Interpretatively, parents are caught between fear of losing authority and fear of damaging the relationship, creating emotional instability in the household.

### ***Misinterpretation and Emotional Misalignment Between Generations***

Both parties misinterpret one another's intentions. Adolescents assume control means lack of love; parents assume silence means rebellion.

*"When he's quiet after we argue, I think he hates me."* (P-06)  
*"When they scold me, I feel like they don't love me."* (T-10)

Interpretatively, conflict persists because emotional meaning is not verbalized, leading to sustained misunderstanding.

The findings of this study reveal that Islamic counseling provides a culturally grounded, spiritually meaningful, and relationally sensitive approach to managing parent-teen conflict related to social media use. Islamic counseling is uniquely positioned to address the moral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions of conflict because it integrates Qur'anic principles, ethical teachings, and relational values that resonate deeply within Muslim families. This aligns with recent scholarship emphasizing that faith-based counseling increases client engagement, promotes emotional openness, and reduces resistance compared to secular approaches when the clients possess a strong religious identity (Alorfi, 2022; Hamzah et al., 2023; Rahman et al., 2021). In the context of digital conflict, Islamic counseling reframes disagreements not as failures or moral weaknesses but as opportunities for collaborative spiritual growth. This framework supports research suggesting that adolescents respond more positively to interventions that affirm their identity and values (Valkenburg et al., 2022; Coyne et al., 2021; Keles et al., 2020). Thus, the religious congruence of Islamic counseling enhances its effectiveness in restoring communication and trust.

One of the key contributions of Islamic counseling in this study is the use of core Islamic values such as *adab* (ethical communication), *amanah* (moral responsibility), *shura* (consultative decision-making), and *silaturahmi* (maintaining family ties) as cognitive reframing tools. These values help both parents and adolescents re-interpret conflict within a shared moral and spiritual vocabulary. Prior research has found that value-based reframing increases empathy, reduces blame attribution, and fosters connection between conflicting parties (Hamzah et al., 2023; Alorfi, 2022; Valkenburg et al., 2022). In digital conflict specifically, Islamic values help clarify expectations around online behavior, promoting reflective self-regulation rather than rule-based compliance. This study supports the argument that when conflict is linked to shared religious values, families exhibit greater willingness to negotiate, forgive, and repair relationships. This echoes findings that moral frameworks increase psychological safety and decrease defensiveness, especially during intergenerational disagreements (Odgers & Jensen, 2020; Keles et al., 2020; Berryman & Knoll, 2021). Therefore, Islamic counseling serves as a culturally coherent pathway for transforming emotional tension into mutual understanding.

Another significant finding is that Islamic counseling provides a neutral, low-threat emotional space where adolescents and parents can articulate their feelings more openly. Participants in the study explained that during sessions, they felt they could speak without fear of being misunderstood or judged. This mirrors research showing that counselor-mediated dialogue reduces escalation, clarifies emotional needs, and bridges misinterpretations in parent-teen interactions (Shin & Li, 2021; Coyne et al., 2021; Berryman & Knoll, 2021). What sets Islamic counseling apart, however, is the presence of spiritual recognition in the counseling environment: both parties see the counselor as a moral guide, not merely a psychological mediator. This shared spiritual frame enhances credibility and trust, a phenomenon supported in recent literature where religious counseling increases client openness and cooperation (Hamzah et al., 2023; Alorfi, 2022; Rahman et al., 2021). Consequently, Islamic counseling not only facilitates emotional ventilation but also legitimizes the process of reconciliation as an act of worship or moral duty.

Furthermore, the study found that Islamic counseling promotes emotional regulation through the integration of spiritual practices such as *dua*, *dhikr*, Qur'an recitation, and reflective prayer. These activities function as calming rituals that reduce defensiveness and enhance emotional clarity. Past research shows that spiritual practices improve self-regulation, reduce anger responses, and promote psychological resilience in adolescents and adults alike (Keles et al., 2020; Hamzah et al., 2023; Boursier et al., 2020). When applied to digital conflict, these rituals allow parents and adolescents to reconnect emotionally before attempting to resolve the problem, thereby reducing the risk of escalation. This is consistent with models of emotionally focused therapy and mindfulness-based parenting, which highlight the importance of emotional regulation before cognitive problem-solving (Coyne et al., 2021; König et al., 2021; O'Reilly et al.,

2020). Islamic counseling, therefore, enriches the therapeutic process by grounding emotional regulation in spiritual identity rather than secular techniques alone.

The results also indicate that Islamic counseling enhances relational empathy by encouraging both parties to consider each other's perspectives through the ethical lens of compassion (*rahmah*), patience (*sabr*), and mutual respect (*ihthiram*). Empathy-building has been widely identified as a central mechanism in resolving intergenerational conflicts, and the integration of religious ethics intensifies its impact (Valkenburg et al., 2022; Shin & Li, 2021; Coyne et al., 2021). Parents in this study reported that understanding adolescents' emotional needs helped them adopt more balanced approaches to digital monitoring, while adolescents reported greater appreciation for their parents' protective intentions. This supports research suggesting that conflict decreases when both parties feel emotionally validated (O'Reilly et al., 2020; Berryman & Knoll, 2021; Keles et al., 2020). Islamic counseling formalizes this process by grounding empathy in shared faith, making relational consideration not only a psychological strategy but also a moral obligation.

Moreover, Islamic counseling effectively reduces secrecy and online risk-taking by establishing trust-based negotiation rather than surveillance-based control. The results show that when adolescents feel heard and respected, they are more likely to disclose online activities voluntarily. This supports global evidence that autonomy-supportive mediation reduces hidden behaviors and increases digital transparency (Marengo et al., 2021; Shin & Li, 2021; Coyne et al., 2021). Within the Islamic counseling framework, adolescents perceive boundaries not as punitive restrictions but as acts of *amanah*—ethical responsibility toward oneself and one's family. Such reframing is consistent with findings that moral reasoning enhances self-regulation and reduces the likelihood of digital misconduct (Hamzah et al., 2023; Odgers & Jensen, 2020; Marengo et al., 2021). Therefore, Islamic counseling improves relational trust while indirectly fostering safer digital behaviors.

Additionally, the counseling process encourages parents to shift from authoritarian to dialogic parenting styles. Parents learned to communicate expectations through respectful dialogue (*muhadathah bil-lutf*) rather than through commands or disciplinary escalation. This aligns with contemporary studies showing that dialogic parenting reduces adolescent resistance, increases cooperation, and supports healthier emotional development (Shin & Li, 2021; Coyne et al., 2021; Berryman & Knoll, 2021). In Islamic contexts, dialogic communication mirrors the prophetic model of gentle guidance and consultative reasoning, enhancing parental credibility and emotional influence. Literature also indicates that culturally contextualized communication improves parental confidence and reduces stress (Keles et al., 2020; O'Reilly et al., 2020; Alorfi, 2022). Thus, Islamic counseling contributes not only to conflict resolution but also to long-term improvements in parenting strategies.

A notable observation is that Islamic counseling strengthens family cohesion by promoting shared spiritual activities such as Qur'an reading, weekly halaqah, and

reflective discussions. These practices anchor the family in collective meaning-making and moral unity. Recent studies confirm that shared religious experiences improve family warmth, reduce conflict frequency, and strengthen attachment bonds (Hamzah et al., 2023; Alorfi, 2022; Rahman et al., 2021). In the context of digital conflict, shared spiritual practices help reorient the family relationship away from adversarial patterns toward collaborative problem-solving. Parents and adolescents reported increased emotional closeness after engaging in these rituals, indicating that spiritual connection serves as a relational buffer during digital disputes. This corroborates findings that spirituality functions as a protective factor in family resilience (Keles et al., 2020; König et al., 2021; Boursier et al., 2020).

Finally, the integration of Islamic counseling creates an intervention structure that is both psychologically sound and culturally congruent, addressing the shortcomings of generic digital parenting programs that often fail to incorporate moral and cultural nuances. Recent scholars argue that digital conflicts in faith-oriented or collectivistic communities require culturally tailored frameworks that incorporate ethical norms, communal values, and religious identity (Valkenburg et al., 2022; Shin & Li, 2021; Marengo et al., 2021). The present study provides empirical support for this perspective by demonstrating that Islamic counseling improves communication, increases emotional safety, and enhances trust by aligning interventions with the family's cultural and spiritual expectations. As a result, Islamic counseling emerges as a holistic approach that meets psychological, moral, and relational needs simultaneously.

### 3. Islamic Value–Based Coping and Reconciliation Pathways

#### *Using Islamic Teachings as Cognitive and Emotional Reframing Tools*

Parents and adolescents found that values such as **adab**, **amanah**, **shura** (consultation), and **silaturahmi** helped them reinterpret the conflict through a spiritual lens. Families noted that religious reminders softened tension and encouraged introspection.

*“Our ustadz reminded us that communication is part of adab. It changed how I speak to my daughter.” (P-07) “Learning about amanah made me reflect on who I add as online friends.” (T-10)*

Interpretatively, Islamic teachings function as shared moral vocabulary that bridges generational gaps.

#### *Counseling Sessions as Neutral Safe Spaces for Expression*

Islamic counseling provided structure for both parties to articulate emotions without fear of judgment. The counselor's involvement created a balanced environment where parents and teens could reflect.

*“During counseling I finally heard my son's feelings clearly. At home I never listened that way.” (P-05) “The counselor helped my parents understand that I also have emotional needs.” (T-04)*

Interpretatively, counseling acts as a **third space**—a mediating environment enabling clarity, empathy, and de-escalation.

### ***Rebuilding Bond Through Shared Spiritual Practices***

Families reported significant improvements after engaging in shared religious activities (e.g., Qur'an recitation, dua sessions, weekly religious classes). These practices restored emotional closeness.

*"Reading Qur'an together made us calmer. We fight less now."* (T-06)  
*"Praying together melts the tension. It reminds us we are a team."* (P-03)

Interpretatively, spiritual togetherness strengthens attachment bonds, reducing defensiveness and promoting mutual understanding.

### ***Mutual Trust-Building Through Islamic Communication Patterns***

Both parents and teens described adopting more respectful dialogue, using softer tones, and avoiding offensive language, guided by Islamic ethics.

*"I learned to speak more gently. That made him open up more."* (P-02)  
*"When they stop shouting, it feels safe to talk again."* (T-01)

Interpretatively, when communication aligns with Islamic principles, relational harmony becomes more attainable.

The findings of this study underscore the need for a culturally grounded intervention framework that aligns Islamic values with evidence-based counseling principles to address conflict surrounding social media use in Muslim families. A culturally contextualized model is critical because existing Western digital parenting frameworks often fail to fully account for moral expectations, religious identity, and intergenerational hierarchies embedded in Muslim households. Scholars have emphasized that interventions lacking cultural congruence are less effective, particularly in collectivistic and religious societies where family norms, authority structures, and ethical expectations differ substantially from secular Western models (Valkenburg et al., 2022; Shin & Li, 2021; Marengo et al., 2021). Integrating Islamic counseling into this context addresses these gaps by rooting behavioral expectations within shared moral frameworks, enhancing intervention acceptance and emotional resonance. This finding aligns with recent studies showing that culturally sensitive mental health programs produce stronger engagement and more sustainable behavioral outcomes than generic, culture-neutral approaches (Alorfi, 2022; Hamzah et al., 2023; Rahman et al., 2021).

The development of a culturally grounded intervention must begin with acknowledging the role of religious values in shaping family expectations about online behavior. For Muslim parents, concerns about social media are not only related to safety but to spiritual well-being, moral character, and protection from unethical online influences. Literature has increasingly recognized that moral and spiritual fears—such as exposure to inappropriate content, peer immorality, or weakened religious identity—

significantly influence digital parenting strategies in Muslim-majority communities (Keles et al., 2020; Odgers & Jensen, 2020; Berryman & Knoll, 2021). The present study confirms that parents' fears are anchored in a desire to fulfill their religious duty of protecting their children from harmful influences while upholding Islamic ethics. Such motivations highlight the inadequacy of traditional digital parenting interventions that focus solely on cognitive regulation or risk-reduction without addressing underlying moral anxieties. Aligning intervention strategies with Islamic doctrine increases parental confidence and aligns protective behaviors with spiritual commitments (Hamzah et al., 2023; Alorfi, 2022; Rahman et al., 2021).

A culturally grounded framework also requires redefining digital boundaries through Islamic ethical concepts such as *amanah* (responsibility), *adab* (ethical conduct), and *ihsan* (virtuous behavior). These values provide a moral scaffold through which both parents and adolescents can interpret online interactions responsibly. Research indicates that when digital rules are framed as moral duties rather than authoritarian restrictions, adolescents demonstrate stronger internal motivation and lower resistance (Shin & Li, 2021; Coyne et al., 2021; Valkenburg et al., 2022). The findings of this study confirm that adolescents respond more positively when discussions about behavior are grounded in shared spiritual values rather than punitive enforcement. This suggests that interventions should incorporate Islamic ethical reasoning to explain the purpose of boundaries, helping adolescents view them as voluntary acts of moral integrity rather than imposed limitations. Prior research supports this approach, showing that values-based reasoning increases emotional receptivity and reduces conflict intensity among adolescents (O'Reilly et al., 2020; Boursier et al., 2020; Keles et al., 2020).

Another core component of the culturally grounded model is the application of *shura* (consultative decision-making) as a method for collaborative rule-setting between parents and adolescents. Traditional digital parenting models often emphasize unilateral rule enforcement, but research increasingly shows that consultative approaches improve compliance, strengthen relationships, and reduce secrecy (Marengo et al., 2021; Coyne et al., 2021; König et al., 2021). In Islamic contexts, *shura* carries religious legitimacy and encourages open dialogue, mutual respect, and shared responsibility for decision-making. The findings of this study reveal that when families engage in collaborative discussions about online behavior, adolescents feel more respected and are more inclined to adhere to agreed-upon guidelines. This aligns with empirical literature indicating that autonomy-supportive parenting fosters healthier psychological outcomes and greater transparency in digital behavior (Valkenburg et al., 2022; Shin & Li, 2021; Keles et al., 2020). Therefore, embedding *shura* into the intervention framework enhances both cultural relevance and therapeutic effectiveness.

The framework also emphasizes the importance of a structured communication system that aligns with Islamic principles of gentle speech (*qawlan layyina*), respectful address (*qawlan karima*), and honesty (*sidq*). Research consistently shows that communication style is a major predictor of the intensity and frequency of parent-teen

conflicts, especially in digital contexts where misunderstandings escalate rapidly (Berryman & Knoll, 2021; Coyne et al., 2021; Keles et al., 2020). The present study demonstrates that adopting an Islamic communication framework reduces defensiveness, clarifies emotional messages, and promotes empathy. When communication follows these principles, adolescents report feeling safer to express their emotional experiences, and parents show greater willingness to listen without judgment. Such findings align with international research emphasizing that relational warmth and emotional attunement reduce secrecy, improve negotiation, and enhance trust during digital parenting interactions (Marengo et al., 2021; Odgers & Jensen, 2020; O'Reilly et al., 2020). Embedding Islamic communication ethics thus strengthens family relationships while grounding the intervention in culturally meaningful practices.

Moreover, the intervention framework necessitates incorporating spiritual practices such as shared Qur'an sessions, dua recitation, gratitude reflection, and moral storytelling to reinforce emotional bonding and reduce conflict. Research has identified spirituality as a protective factor that enhances emotional regulation, conflict resolution, and psychological resilience (Keles et al., 2020; Hamzah et al., 2023; König et al., 2021). The findings of this study confirm that shared spiritual rituals strengthen family connection and reduce tension during digital disputes. For adolescents, these practices provide emotional grounding and a greater sense of belonging, while for parents, they reinforce their role as moral and spiritual guides. International studies similarly show that integrating religious practices into therapeutic interventions increases family cohesion, reduces anger responses, and strengthens moral identity, especially among youth facing digital pressures (Boursier et al., 2020; Alorfi, 2022; Rahman et al., 2021). Thus, the inclusion of spiritual components transforms the intervention into a holistic approach addressing emotional, relational, and spiritual needs simultaneously.

An additional key insight is that culturally grounded Islamic counseling helps reshape parental digital strategies from control-based models toward partnership-based approaches. Many parents in the study initially adopted restrictive monitoring, motivated by moral fear and digital uncertainty. However, after participating in counseling, they began to practice trust-building, open negotiation, and collaborative boundary-setting. This shift aligns with research showing that authoritarian digital parenting increases adolescent rebellion and secrecy, whereas collaborative strategies enhance transparency and lower risk-taking (Shin & Li, 2021; Coyne et al., 2021; Valkenburg et al., 2022). Islamic counseling facilitates this shift by providing moral justification for parental flexibility: the Prophet's teachings emphasize wisdom, gentleness, and gradual guidance rather than coercion. Research suggests that interventions grounded in religious values improve parental self-efficacy and reduce emotional stress, especially when dealing with complex digital challenges (Hamzah et al., 2023; Alorfi, 2022; Keles et al., 2020). Therefore, religiously aligned digital parenting strategies are both culturally acceptable and empirically effective.

Finally, the culturally grounded framework enhances its sustainability by aligning with community structures such as mosques, Islamic schools, and youth organizations. These institutions reinforce religious norms, support parental authority, and provide social models for digital ethics. Research underscores the importance of community-based reinforcement in maintaining long-term behavioral change and supporting counseling outcomes (Rahman et al., 2021; König et al., 2021; Hamzah et al., 2023). The findings of this study confirm that families benefit when community leaders validate intervention messages and promote consistent expectations for digital conduct. Community involvement also reduces parental anxiety by providing guidance on religious aspects of digital behavior, complementing psychological strategies with spiritual authority. Thus, integrating community support strengthens the intervention and increases its cultural legitimacy, aligning with global evidence that culturally embedded interventions offer higher long-term impact (Valkenburg et al., 2022; Shin & Li, 2021; Berryman & Knoll, 2021).

Overall, the development of a culturally grounded framework for managing digital conflict in Muslim families requires integrating Islamic values, collaborative communication, spiritual practices, and community reinforcement. This study demonstrates that when counseling is aligned with moral identity and cultural expectations, families experience greater emotional safety, improved communication, and stronger relational bonds. The intervention model derived from the findings serves as a culturally authentic, psychologically effective, and spiritually meaningful approach to addressing the challenges posed by social media use in Muslim households.

In synthesis, this study presents an integrated model wherein Islamic counseling serves as both a relational bridge and a moral anchor in navigating parent-teen digital conflict. The model operates through three interconnected mechanisms: (1) value-based dialogue that transforms adversarial disputes into collaborative problem-solving rooted in shared Islamic principles, (2) trust restoration through spiritually informed emotional regulation and boundary negotiation, and (3) continuous community reinforcement that sustains behavioral change beyond individual counseling sessions. By embedding digital behavior guidance within the ethical framework of *adab*, *amanah*, and *shura*, the intervention transcends superficial behavioral modification to address underlying relational dynamics, moral anxieties, and generational misunderstandings. This holistic integration demonstrates that culturally congruent counseling not only resolves immediate conflicts but also strengthens family cohesion, nurtures adolescent identity development within Islamic values, and equips both parents and teens with sustainable strategies for managing future digital challenges. The framework thus contributes a theoretically robust and practically actionable model for Islamic counseling in the digital age.

## CONCLUSION

This study examined how Islamic counseling can be used to manage parent–teen conflict related to social media use and online friendships within Muslim families. The findings demonstrate that digital tensions are rooted not only in behavioral disagreements but also in deeper relational, emotional, and moral dynamics. Parents tend to experience anxiety about online risks—such as inappropriate content, negative peer influence, and moral decline—while adolescents view social media as a space for identity exploration, emotional support, and autonomy. These contrasting interpretations create a persistent cycle of conflict, secrecy, and emotional withdrawal. The study also found that communication breakdown, digital literacy gaps, and misaligned expectations further intensify relational strain. Islamic counseling emerged as an effective approach for de-escalating these tensions by offering a culturally and spiritually congruent framework for understanding, negotiating, and managing digital behavior.

Theoretically, the study contributes to the fields of Islamic psychology, digital parenting, and family counseling by demonstrating how religious values can serve as powerful mediators in digital-era conflicts. Practically, the research highlights the importance of training counselors, educators, and parents to use Islamic principles in addressing technology-related issues. The intervention framework generated by this study offers a holistic, morally grounded, and developmentally responsive approach that can strengthen parent–teen relationships and encourage healthier digital engagement.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to thank all individuals and institutions who supported this research. Special appreciation is extended to the reviewers for their constructive feedback, and to colleagues and family members for their continuous support throughout this study.

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