

The Concept of Child Education in Islam According to Abdullah Nashih Ulwan and its Relevance to Family Education in the Digital Era

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Abstract

This study critically examines Abdullah Nashih Ulwan's conception of Islamic child education and its contemporary relevance to family education in the digital era. Employing a qualitative library research design, this study draws primarily on Ulwan's *Tarbiyatul Aulad fi al-Islam* and relevant scholarly literature on Islamic education, character formation, family pedagogy, and digital childhood. The data were analyzed through content analysis involving conceptual reduction, thematic classification, interpretive synthesis, and conclusion formulation. The findings reveal that Ulwan's framework offers a holistic and integrative model of child education encompassing seven interrelated domains: faith, moral, physical, intellectual, psychological, social, and sexual education. These domains collectively aim to cultivate children as spiritually grounded, ethically responsible, intellectually capable, emotionally stable, socially competent, physically healthy, and morally self-protective individuals. In the context of digital transformation, Ulwan's thought remains highly relevant in addressing key challenges of family education, including excessive gadget use, exposure to inappropriate digital content, weakened parent-child communication, diminished parental role modeling, and declining value control. The study further demonstrates that Ulwan's educational methods—role modeling, habituation, advice, attention, supervision, and corrective discipline—can be adapted as an Islamic pedagogical framework for digital parenting. This study contributes to the discourse on Islamic family education by positioning Ulwan's classical educational thought as a normative, pedagogical, and practical foundation for strengthening children's character formation in contemporary digital environments.

Keywords: Child education, Abdullah Nashih Ulwan, Islamic education, family education, digital era.

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Introduction

Child education is one of the most fundamental aspects in the development of Islamic civilization. Children are not only viewed as biological trusts from parents, but also as spiritual trusts that must be guided, directed, and developed in accordance with Islamic values. In Islamic perspective, children are born with a pure fitrah (innate nature), and therefore families have a great responsibility to preserve, nurture, and guide this nature so that it develops into a personality characterized by faith, piety, and noble morals. Therefore, child education in Islam cannot be separated from the role of the family as the first and primary educational environment.

The family is the first school for children. Before children encounter formal schooling, teachers, peers, and the broader society, they first learn from their parents and family environment. Within the family, children gain their earliest experiences of affection, communication, religious values, morality, discipline, responsibility, and social relationships. Family education becomes the main foundation in shaping a child's character because values instilled from an early age significantly influence personality development in later life. Harahap and Siregar (2020) emphasize that Islamic education is essentially an effort to develop all human potential so that the purpose of human life as servants of Allah and vicegerents on earth can be achieved properly.

In the Islamic educational tradition, one of the scholars who paid great attention to child education is Abdullah Nashih Ulwan. His thoughts are widely referenced in Islamic education studies, particularly through his work *Tarbiyatul Aulad fi al-Islam*. The book presents a comprehensive concept of child education, covering responsibilities in faith, moral, physical, intellectual, psychological, social, and sexual education. Ulwan argues that child education should not be conducted partially, but must address all dimensions of human development. Faith education serves as the foundation, moral education guides behavior, physical education strengthens the body, intellectual education develops reason, psychological education builds emotional stability, social education develops societal interaction skills, and sexual education guides children in understanding dignity in accordance with Islamic law (Ulwan, 2013).

The concept of child education according to Abdullah Nashih Ulwan is important to re-examine in the context of the digital era. The development of information technology has transformed family life patterns, the way children learn, parent-child communication, and the sources of information accessed by children. Children in the digital era do not only learn from parents and teachers but also from the internet, social media, digital videos, online games, and various technological platforms. Easy access to information provides positive opportunities for knowledge development, but also presents serious risks if not accompanied by supervision and value-based education.

The digital era has introduced new challenges in family education. Children can easily access content that is not appropriate for their age and psychological development. Excessive use of gadgets may reduce social interaction, decrease learning discipline, weaken direct communication skills, and even affect moral development. Amaliati (2021) explains that children's strong attachment to gadgets reflects major changes in contemporary educational patterns, so Islamic education must serve as a preventive guide to ensure children do not easily imitate negative behaviors from the digital environment. This condition shows that family education must adapt to modern developments without losing the fundamental principles of Islamic education.

In this context, Abdullah Nashih Ulwan's ideas are highly relevant. Ulwan emphasizes modeling, habituation, advice, attention, supervision, and educational punishment as methods of child education. These methods remain essential in the digital era because children cannot only be provided with technological facilities, but must also be accompanied, guided, and

directed to use technology responsibly. Parents must serve as role models in technology use, habituate children to positive activities, provide wise advice, supervise digital content access, and set educational boundaries when children misuse technology.

This study is also relevant to contemporary Islamic education, which emphasizes integrated religious character formation. Siregar et al. (2025) state that integrated Islamic education should combine cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects through learning processes, worship habituation, role modeling, and continuous religious culture. This strengthens the importance of family education as a space for character formation that integrates faith, knowledge, and morals in children's daily lives. In other words, family education in the digital era must remain grounded in Islamic values so that children are not only technologically literate but also spiritually and morally mature.

In addition, early religious education plays an important role in shaping children's character. Rahman et al. (2023) explain that religious education should be introduced and instilled from an early age as an effort to build children's religious attitudes. This view aligns with Abdullah Nashih Ulwan's thought, which places faith education as the core foundation of child personality development. In the digital era, faith education becomes even more important because children are exposed to diverse information, values, and lifestyles that are not always consistent with Islamic teachings.

Based on the explanation above, this study is important to examine the concept of child education in Islam according to Abdullah Nashih Ulwan and its relevance to family education in the digital era. This study is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of Islamic education and provide practical guidance for Muslim families in educating children in facing modern technological challenges.

Literature Review

2.1. Child Education in Islam

Child education in Islam is a process of human development from an early age aimed at forming individuals who are faithful, pious, knowledgeable, and possess noble character. Islamic child education is not only oriented toward intellectual development, but also includes the formation of faith (iman), morality (akhlak), worship practices, personality, and social responsibility. Islam views children as a trust (amanah) that must be nurtured with love, responsibility, and sincerity.

In Islam, child education begins within the family. Parents hold a central position as the first educators because children obtain their earliest experiences from the family environment. Every word, behavior, habit, and communication pattern of parents becomes a model that children tend to imitate. Therefore, Islamic child education emphasizes the importance of parental role modeling in everyday life. Parents are not only required to instruct goodness but also to demonstrate it through real behavior.

Islamic child education is also oriented toward the development of human fitrah (innate nature). Children are born with an inherent potential to accept truth, goodness, and religious values. This potential must be guided through proper education so that it does not deviate due to negative environmental influences. Proper education preserves a child's fitrah, whereas negligence in education may lead to moral and spiritual disorientation. Therefore, Islam places great emphasis on parenting patterns, worship habituation, moral development, and the child's social environment.

Harahap and Siregar (2020) explain that Islamic education is an effort to develop both the physical and spiritual potential of human beings, including intellect, emotions, will, and spiritual capacity. This perspective shows that Islamic child education is comprehensive.

Children should not only be given knowledge, but must also be guided in their emotions, will, and behavior so that they align with Islamic values.

Islamic child education also contains a dimension of responsibility. Parents are responsible for guiding children in recognizing Allah, loving the Prophet, reading the Qur'an, performing worship, respecting others, maintaining self-discipline, and avoiding immoral behavior. This responsibility cannot be fully delegated to schools. Schools may support the educational process, but the family remains the primary center for shaping a child's character.

2.2. Brief Biography of Abdullah Nashih Ulwan and His Work *Tarbiyatul Aulad fi al-Islam*

Abdullah Nashih Ulwan is one of the prominent Islamic education scholars widely known for his ideas on child education. His thoughts are frequently referenced in Islamic education studies because they provide a systematic explanation of parental and educator responsibilities in shaping children's character. His monumental work *Tarbiyatul Aulad fi al-Islam* is an important reference in understanding the concept of child education in Islam.

In this work, Ulwan explains that child education must be comprehensive. Education should not focus solely on intelligence or academic achievement, but must also include faith, morality, physical health, intellectual development, psychological stability, social competence, and proper sexual education in accordance with Islamic norms. This perspective shows that Ulwan adopts a holistic educational approach. Children are viewed as complete human beings with physical, spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and social dimensions.

Amaliati (2021) states that Abdullah Nashih Ulwan's thought in *Tarbiyatul Aulad fi al-Islam* consists of seven main educational domains: faith education, moral education, physical education, intellectual education, psychological education, social education, and sexual education. These seven aspects must be continuously developed through early habituation. This indicates that child education according to Ulwan is not a short-term process, but a long-term endeavor that requires consistency from parents and educators.

Purnama (2018) also emphasizes that Abdullah Nashih Ulwan's thought contributes significantly to the development of early childhood education in Islam, although his ideas cannot be separated from the social context and Islamic movements in which they emerged. Therefore, the study of Ulwan's thought must be conducted critically and contextually so that it can be adapted to contemporary challenges in child education.

2.3. Educational Responsibilities of Children According to Abdullah Nashih Ulwan

Abdullah Nashih Ulwan divides the responsibilities of child education into several main aspects. First is faith education. Faith education is the primary foundation in shaping a child's personality. Children need to be introduced to Allah, taught to love the Prophet Muhammad, accustomed to reading the Qur'an, and gradually guided to understand Islamic teachings. Faith education becomes the basis for moral development because good character emerges from correct belief.

Faith education in the digital era is increasingly important because children are exposed to various sources of information and values that are not always in accordance with Islamic teachings. Children can easily access different worldviews through the internet and social media. If their faith foundation is weak, they are more likely to be influenced by values that contradict religious principles. Therefore, parents must strengthen faith education through worship habituation, religious dialogue, storytelling about the prophets, and instilling awareness that Allah always observes human actions, including behavior in the digital space.

Second is moral education. Ulwan emphasizes that children must be trained in noble character from an early age. A child's morality does not develop spontaneously but is formed through role modeling, habituation, advice, and a supportive environment. Moral education includes honesty, trustworthiness, politeness, responsibility, compassion, and the ability to distinguish right from wrong. In the digital context, moral education also relates to digital

etiquette, such as not speaking rudely on social media, not spreading false information, avoiding negative content, respecting others' privacy, and using the internet for beneficial purposes.

Third is physical education. Ulwan views physical well-being as an important responsibility in child education. Children should be taught to maintain a healthy lifestyle, eat nutritious food, practice cleanliness, exercise regularly, and avoid harmful behaviors. In the digital era, physical education becomes crucial because excessive gadget use can reduce children's physical activity. Parents need to regulate screen time so that children still have opportunities for physical movement, outdoor play, sports, and direct social interaction.

Fourth is intellectual education. Intellectual education aims to develop children's thinking abilities, stimulate curiosity, and guide them in seeking knowledge. Ulwan emphasizes the importance of knowledge as part of Islamic education. In the digital era, children have broad access to information, but not all online content is accurate or beneficial. Therefore, intellectual education must focus on digital literacy skills, information evaluation, critical thinking, and the ability to use technology as a learning tool.

Fifth is psychological education. Children need to be guided to develop strong personalities, self-confidence, patience, courage, and emotional control. Psychological education is essential within the family because parenting patterns significantly influence children's mental health. In the digital era, children may experience psychological pressure due to social comparison, negative comments, online gaming, and social media popularity demands. Therefore, parents need to build warm communication, listen to children's feelings, and provide emotional support.

Sixth is social education. Children must be trained to interact with others, respect people, help others, cooperate, and take responsibility in society. Social education should not be diminished by technological dominance. Children who spend too much time interacting with screens may experience a decline in face-to-face communication skills. Therefore, families must encourage children to interact healthily with family members, neighbors, peers, and the wider community.

Seventh is sexual education. Ulwan positions sexual education as an important part of child development, but it must be delivered gradually according to the child's age and developmental stage. In Islamic education, sexual education does not promote sexual freedom, but rather teaches children about self-respect, modesty, aurah boundaries, etiquette in social interaction, and the responsibility to protect oneself. In the digital era, sexual education becomes increasingly important because children may be exposed to pornographic content or inappropriate sexual information. Parents must provide correct guidance, maintain open communication, and supervise children's digital access.

2.4. Educational Methods According to Abdullah Nashih Ulwan

In addition to explaining the responsibilities of child education, Abdullah Nashih Ulwan also emphasizes the importance of educational methods in shaping children's character. The first method is role modeling (*uswah hasanah*). Role modeling is considered the most important method because children learn extensively through observation and imitation. Parents who expect their children to be disciplined, honest, polite, and religious must first demonstrate these behaviors in their own actions. In the digital era, role modeling can be reflected in parents' wise use of technology, avoiding social media addiction, refraining from inappropriate speech in digital spaces, and utilizing technology for beneficial purposes.

The second method is habituation. Children require repetition of positive behaviors so that values become established habits. Habituation can be implemented through practices such as congregational prayer, reading the Qur'an, praying before activities, speaking politely, helping with household tasks, and limiting gadget usage. Kamil et al. (2024) state that habituation strategies in Islamic education can strengthen students' character, particularly in

discipline, responsibility, empathy, and tolerance. This perspective aligns with Ulwan's view that character formation requires consistent and continuous processes.

The third method is advice (*nasihah*). Advice is a way for parents to explain values, rules, and consequences to children. However, it must be delivered in a gentle, wise manner appropriate to the child's developmental stage. In the digital era, parents need to provide advice regarding the dangers of inappropriate online content, the importance of privacy protection, the risks of cyberbullying, and proper etiquette in social media communication. Effective advice is not merely prohibition, but also includes explanation of why certain behaviors should be adopted or avoided.

The fourth method is attention and supervision. Ulwan emphasizes that parents must pay close attention to their children's overall development. Attention does not mean strict control, but rather supportive guidance with affection. In the digital context, attention and supervision involve parents being aware of the applications used by children, screen time duration, types of accessed content, children's digital interactions, and behavioral changes resulting from technology use. Digital supervision must be implemented proportionally so that children feel guided rather than monitored excessively.

The fifth method is educational punishment. Ulwan does not position punishment as the primary method, but rather as a last resort after advice, habituation, and supervision have failed. Punishment must be educational in nature, not harmful, not degrading the child's dignity, and must aim at behavioral correction. In family education in the digital era, punishment may include temporary restriction of gadget use, reduced access to digital entertainment, or assigning responsible tasks so that children understand consequences. Punishment must never involve verbal or physical violence, as it may harm the child's psychological well-being.

2.5. Family Education in the Digital Era

The digital era is a period in which information technology has become an inseparable part of human life. Children grow up in an environment filled with gadgets, the internet, social media, digital videos, online games, and learning applications. Technology provides easy access to information and learning resources; however, it also presents significant challenges for family education. Therefore, families need to develop educational strategies that are aligned with digital realities.

The first challenge is the decreasing direct communication between parents and children. Many families live in the same house but are individually occupied with gadgets. This condition can weaken emotional closeness between parents and children. Yet, value-based education requires intensive communication. Children need to be listened to, engaged in dialogue, and given space to share their digital experiences.

The second challenge is exposure to negative content. The internet provides vast amounts of information, but not all of it is appropriate for children. Children may be exposed to violence, pornography, hate speech, consumerist lifestyles, and immoral behavior. Without parental supervision, children may adopt digital content as a source of values that replaces the role of the family. Therefore, digital supervision becomes an essential component of family education.

The third challenge is gadget addiction. Children who spend excessive time using gadgets may experience decreased concentration, reduced interest in learning, sleep disturbances, and limited physical activity. Family education must establish rules regarding gadget use, such as time limits, permitted content types, gadget-free periods, and healthier alternative activities. These rules must be agreed upon and consistently applied by all family members.

The fourth challenge is the crisis of role modeling. Children often imitate their parents' behavior in using technology. If parents prohibit children from using gadgets excessively but continuously use them themselves, educational messages become ineffective. Therefore, family education in the digital era requires digital role modeling. Parents must demonstrate how to use technology productively, politely, and responsibly.

The fifth challenge is the weakening of value control. In the past, children's primary sources of values were the family, school, and surrounding environment. In the digital era, children are exposed to a much broader range of value sources. They may learn from social media influencers, online games, entertainment content, and digital communities. Therefore, parents must strengthen children's foundational values so they can filter digital influences. Faith, morality, responsibility, and modesty must function as moral filters in technology use.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach using a library research method. The qualitative approach was selected because this study aims to understand and interpret the concept of child education in Islam according to Abdullah Nashih Ulwan and its relevance to family education in the digital era. Library research was applied since the main object of this study includes scholarly thoughts, Islamic educational concepts, and literature related to family education in the context of technological development.

The data sources consist of primary and secondary sources. The primary source of this study is the work of Abdullah Nashih Ulwan, particularly *Tarbiyatul Aulad fi al-Islam* or its Indonesian translation *Pendidikan Anak dalam Islam*. This source is used to identify the main concepts of child education according to Ulwan, including educational responsibilities, educational methods, and the objectives of character formation. Secondary sources include scientific articles, Islamic education books, educational journals on family education, character education studies, and literature on children in the digital era.

Several secondary references are drawn from academic works by scholars of Universitas Pembangunan Panca Budi, such as Harahap and Siregar (2020) on Islamic educational values in the story of Luqman al-Hakim, Siregar et al. (2025) on the design of an integrative Islamic education curriculum for developing religious character, Rahman et al. (2023) on early childhood religious education in family care, and Harahap et al. (2023) on *tazkiyatun nafs* in the formation of noble character. These references are used to strengthen the discussion on Islamic education, family education, character building, and the relevance of Islamic values in the context of child education.

Data collection techniques were conducted through documentation. The researcher searched, read, recorded, classified, and analyzed relevant literature related to the research focus. The literature includes books, journal articles, research reports, and academic documents discussing child education according to Abdullah Nashih Ulwan, Islamic education concepts, family education, and challenges of the digital era. Data were collected by recording key concepts, important quotations, and theoretical arguments from each source.

Data analysis was conducted using content analysis. Content analysis was used to identify themes, meanings, and conceptual relationships within the reviewed literature. The analysis stages include data reduction, data classification, data interpretation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was carried out by selecting information relevant to Ulwan's concept of child education. Classification was conducted by grouping concepts into themes such as faith education, moral education, physical education, intellectual education, psychological education, social education, sexual education, and educational methods. Interpretation involved linking these concepts with the realities of family education in the digital era. Finally, conclusions were drawn based on the relevance between Ulwan's thoughts and contemporary family education needs.

Results

The results of this study indicate that Abdullah Nashih Ulwan's concept of child education in Islam is holistic, integrative, and oriented toward the comprehensive formation of a child's personality. Child education is not merely understood as the transfer of religious knowledge, but as a total developmental process covering faith, morality, physical health, intellect, psychological stability, social competence, and sexual ethics. This finding confirms that Islamic child education must address all dimensions of human development to produce individuals who are faithful, morally upright, intellectually capable, emotionally stable, and socially responsible (Ulwan, 2013). This view is consistent with Amaliati (2021), who explains that *Tarbiyatul Aulad fi al-Islam* contains seven core domains of education.

Faith education is identified as the fundamental basis of child development. Children must be introduced to Allah, taught to love the Prophet Muhammad, accustomed to reciting the Qur'an, and gradually guided in understanding Islamic teachings. In the digital era, faith education becomes increasingly important because children are exposed to diverse values and ideologies through online platforms. A strong foundation of faith enables children to filter digital information and understand moral accountability in all actions, including online behavior (Ulwan, 2013; Rahman et al., 2023).

Moral education plays a crucial role in shaping children's behavior. Ulwan emphasizes that morality is formed through role modeling, habituation, advice, and a supportive environment. In the digital context, moral education extends to digital ethics, including appropriate communication on social media, avoidance of misinformation, respect for privacy, and responsible internet use. This supports Harahap et al. (2023), who emphasize moral purification and ethical development in Islamic education.

Physical education remains relevant in the digital age due to increased gadget usage among children. Excessive screen time reduces physical activity, sleep quality, and social interaction. Therefore, families must regulate gadget usage and encourage physical activities to maintain children's health balance.

Intellectual education aligns with digital literacy development. Children must be guided not only to access information but also to evaluate its validity, think critically, and use technology productively. Families play a key role in shaping children's cognitive development and digital responsibility (Siregar et al., 2025).

Psychological and social education are essential in addressing emotional challenges caused by digital exposure, such as social comparison, cyber pressure, and reduced face-to-face interaction. Parents must build warm communication and encourage real social interaction within the family and community.

Sexual education is also critical in protecting children from inappropriate digital content. Ulwan emphasizes that sexual education must be delivered according to age and Islamic values, focusing on dignity, boundaries, and self-protection.

The findings show that Abdullah Nashih Ulwan's educational thought remains highly relevant to family education in the digital era because it positions the family as the primary institution for shaping children's character. Families function as the first educational environment where children learn values, behavior, and social interaction. In the digital era, this role becomes even more critical due to the influence of external digital environments (Ulwan, 2013; Amaliati, 2021).

Family education cannot rely solely on prohibition-based approaches. Instead, Ulwan's framework emphasizes modeling, habituation, advice, supervision, and educational discipline. These methods provide a balanced approach between control and guidance, ensuring children develop self-awareness in using technology.

Faith and moral education serve as moral filters in the digital environment. Children must understand that online behavior carries moral consequences similar to real-life actions.

Intellectual education should evolve into Islamic digital literacy, enabling children to evaluate information critically and responsibly (Ependi, 2021).

Psychological and social education help maintain children's emotional well-being and interpersonal skills, which are often weakened by excessive digital engagement. Physical and sexual education ensure holistic protection of children's health and dignity in both physical and digital environments.

Overall, Ulwan's educational framework provides three levels of relevance: normative relevance (Islamic value foundation), pedagogical relevance (educational methods), and practical relevance (implementation in digital parenting strategies) (Purnama, 2018).

Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that the concept of child education in Islam according to Abdullah Nashih Ulwan is a holistic and integrative educational framework, as it encompasses faith education, moral education, physical education, intellectual education, psychological education, social education, and sexual education. These seven dimensions form an integrated system aimed at developing the child's personality in a comprehensive manner. Faith education serves as the spiritual foundation, moral education guides behavior, physical education maintains bodily health, intellectual education develops cognitive abilities, psychological education builds emotional stability, social education fosters social competence, and sexual education safeguards the child's dignity and personal safety.

Abdullah Nashih Ulwan's educational thought shows strong relevance to family education in the digital era. Contemporary challenges such as excessive gadget use, exposure to negative content, reduced direct communication, a crisis of role modeling, and weakening value control can be addressed through strengthening Islamic value-based family education. Ulwan's educational methods—role modeling, habituation, advice, attention, supervision, and educational punishment—can be applied proportionally in digital parenting practices. Parents are expected to serve as role models in technology use, habituate children to positive activities, provide guidance on digital etiquette, supervise gadget usage, and establish educational consequences when children misuse technology.

Thus, family education in the digital era should be directed toward shaping children who are not only technologically literate but also faithful, morally upright, healthy, critically thinking, emotionally stable, socially competent, and capable of maintaining personal dignity. This study contributes theoretically to the development of Islamic education and practically to Muslim families in guiding children to face technological advancements. Abdullah Nashih Ulwan's thought remains highly relevant as it provides foundational values, educational methods, and developmental directions that align with contemporary family needs.

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