



## THE COMMODIFICATION OF CHILDREN ON SOCIAL MEDIA: Exploring Child Exploitation through Hadith and Islamic Parenting Ethics

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### ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of child exploitation on social media shows an alarming escalation, especially when children—even infants—are actively involved in the production of digital content to attract public sympathy or financial gain. This study analyzes child exploitation practices through a netnographic approach, focusing on a viral case of an orphanage in Medan that exploited children for live streaming on TikTok to obtain donations. Through stages of investigation, interaction, immersion, and integration, this research evaluates audience responses, digital interaction dynamics, and the psychological impact on children. Findings indicate that this exploitation blurs the boundaries between private and public spaces in children's lives and normalizes the commodification of children in the digital economy. From an Islamic perspective, these actions contradict the ethical principles of parenting taught by the Prophet Muhammad, which emphasize love, protection of dignity, and the spiritual responsibility of parents. Thus, the prophetic values in parenting hadiths can serve as an ethical foundation for building fair, humane, and Islam-compliant digital parenting practices. By integrating netnographic approaches and hadith analysis, this study expands the methodological horizons in Islamic studies, particularly in addressing contemporary social issues such as the commodification of children in the digital era.

### ABSTRAK

Fenomena eksploitasi anak di media sosial menunjukkan peningkatan yang mengkhawatirkan, terutama ketika anak-anak—bahkan bayi—secara aktif terlibat dalam produksi konten digital untuk menarik simpati publik atau keuntungan finansial. Penelitian ini menganalisis praktik eksploitasi anak melalui pendekatan netnografi, dengan fokus pada kasus viral sebuah panti asuhan di Medan yang mengeksploitasi anak-anak untuk siaran langsung di TikTok guna mendapatkan donasi. Melalui tahap-tahap investigasi, interaksi, imersi, dan integrasi, penelitian ini mengevaluasi respons audiens, dinamika interaksi digital, dan dampak psikologis pada anak-anak. Temuan artikel menunjukkan bahwa eksploitasi ini memudahkan batas antara ruang pribadi dan publik dalam kehidupan anak-anak serta menormalisasi komodifikasi anak dalam ekonomi digital. Dari perspektif Islam, tindakan ini bertentangan dengan prinsip etika pengasuhan yang diajarkan oleh Nabi Muhammad, yang menekankan cinta, perlindungan martabat, dan tanggung jawab spiritual orang tua. Oleh karena itu, nilai-nilai kenabian dalam hadis-hadis pengasuhan dapat berfungsi sebagai landasan etika untuk membangun praktik pengasuhan digital yang adil, manusiawi, dan sesuai dengan ajaran Islam. Dengan mengintegrasikan pendekatan netnografi dan analisis hadis, penelitian ini memperluas cakrawala metodologis dalam studi Islam, khususnya dalam menangani isu-isu sosial kontemporer seperti komodifikasi anak-anak di era digital.

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## Introduction

The phenomenon of child exploitation on social media is becoming increasingly apparent and alarming, especially with the emergence of viral cases on platforms such as TikTok.<sup>1</sup> The widespread use of children in social media content today, including by parents who share moments of their children's lives on various platforms, often goes beyond simply documenting daily activities. Children are now frequently featured in content specifically created to attract public attention, ranging from entertainment to product promotions, and even becoming the main figures in accounts managed by adults. This situation is cause for concern because children are unaware of the long-term risks of digital exposure to their privacy and identity.

The exploitation case in Medan highlights this reality, where children in orphanages are used as subjects for live streaming on TikTok to attract donations from viewers. During the live broadcast, underage children were forced to eat porridge in the middle of the night to evoke public sympathy in order to reach donation targets. As reported by the Detik Sumut team in a news article titled "Orphanage Manager in Medan Exploits Children via TikTok, Earns Rp 50 Million/Month."<sup>2</sup> Police have named Zamanueli Zebua, the manager of the Tunas Kasih Olayama Raya Orphanage Foundation, as a suspect after a viral video showed the exploitation. During interrogation, Zamanueli admitted to using the orphanage children for donation content over the past four months, with estimated monthly earnings of Rp 20-50 million.

A similar case occurred again in Medan and was reported by Silvana Febriari in a news article on the Metro TV website,<sup>3</sup> "Orphanage Suspected of Child Exploitation in Medan Raided Again." The Medan City Police Department and the Social Affairs Office once again raided the Karya Putra orphanage in Medan Tuntungan District, which was operating illegally and allegedly employing 15 children, including infants, to live on social media for personal gain. During the raid, the children were rescued, and witnesses, including the orphanage's owner, are currently being questioned. Previously, 25 children who were victims of exploitation from another

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<sup>1</sup> Patroli.indosiar, "Diduga 'ngemis' Online Di Live Medsos, Pengasuh Panti Asuhan Di Medan Ditetapkan Menjadi Tersangka," n.d., <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSjPWEks7/>.

<sup>2</sup> Tim Detiksumut, "Pengelola Panti Di Medan Eksploitasi Anak Via TikTok, Raup Rp 50 Juta/Bulan," detikNews, 2023, <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-6942721/pengelola-panti-di-medan-eksploitasi-anak-via-tiktok-raup-rp-50-juta-bulan>.

<sup>3</sup> Silvana Febriari, "Panti Asuhan Yang Diduga Eksploitasi Anak Di Medan Kembali Digerebek," Metro Tv, 2023, <https://www.metrotvnews.com/play/K5nC4eD9-panti-asuhan-yang-diduga-eksploitasi-anak-di-medan-kembali-digerebek>.



orphanage in Medan were also rescued, highlighting the severity and systematic nature of child exploitation in the digital world.

If this issue is not addressed immediately, this phenomenon can disrupt children's psychological development, causing identity issues, feelings of insecurity, and pressure to maintain a positive image in public. According to Dewi Maharani's article entitled "Child Education from a Psychological and Islamic Education Perspective," a holistic approach encompassing physical, psychological, spiritual, and socio-cultural aspects is essential for balanced child development.<sup>4</sup> The exploitation of children on social media contradicts this principle, as children should be protected and educated in a healthy manner. The rapid growth of social media influences parenting and education while also bringing risks of economic and sexual exploitation. Friska Anggi Siregar, in her article, emphasizes the importance of strengthening regulations and law enforcement to protect children in the digital age. Digital literacy and the active role of families and the state are the main solutions to counteract the negative impact of social media on children.<sup>5</sup>

The psychological impact of child exploitation on social media can cause serious emotional problems. Children who are overly exposed to the digital world are at risk of emotional distress, anxiety, and even depression. In Islam, educating children gently is very important. Nurul Isnaini and A. Sulaeman, in their article, emphasize that education without violence and pressure is highly recommended in Islamic teachings.<sup>6</sup> Children, as weak beings, need attention and affection. A harsh approach or the use of violence in educating children is not only contrary to Islamic values but also has the potential to cause negative effects, both physically and psychologically. Therefore, setting a good example, giving wise advice, and imposing gentle discipline should be the primary foundations of child-rearing, including when facing the challenges of social media use.

From an Islamic perspective, child-rearing is based on the values contained in the Qur'an and Hadith, which emphasize love, protection of children's rights, and the fulfillment of their physical, emotional, and spiritual development needs in a balanced manner. All forms of child

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<sup>4</sup> Dewi Maharani, "Pendidikan Anak Perspektif Psikologi Pendidikan Islam," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 6, no. 1, vol 1(2018): 56-67

<sup>5</sup> Friska Anggi Siregar and Muslem, "Eksplorasi Anak Di Ruang Media; Sebuah Tinjauan Hukum," *Al-Qadha : Jurnal Hukum Islam Dan Perundang-Undangan* 9, no. 1 (2022): 215-30

<sup>6</sup> A.Sulaeman Nurul Isnaini, "Pendidikan Anak Tanpa Kekerasan Dalam Perspektif Islam," *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Prodi Pai Ump Tahun 2019, 2019*, 193-202.



exploitation clearly contradict these principles, as Islam teaches the importance of preserving the dignity, safety, and honor of children as a trust from Allah. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) set an example of parenting that was filled with gentleness, attention, and respect for both the physical and psychological conditions of children. He also explicitly prohibited all forms of violence and exploitation, including in contemporary contexts such as the digital realm. Hadiths on parenting serve as an ethical framework guiding parents in educating and protecting children from the negative influences of social media, which have the potential to disrupt their emotional and psychological balance.

Although the issue of child exploitation in social media has been the subject of various studies, most of these studies still focus on legal, psychological, and child protection aspects within a regulatory or digital literacy framework. Previous studies, as mentioned above, tend to highlight the negative impacts of digital exposure on child development, as well as the importance of strengthening regulations and the role of the state. However, studies that specifically analyze child exploitation on social media through an Islamic ethical perspective, particularly using a hadith and Islamic parenting ethics approach, are still very limited. This is the scientific gap (research gap) that this article aims to bridge. This study offers a more holistic approach by integrating religious normative dimensions, particularly the Prophet's hadith on child protection and the principles of Islamic tarbiyah, as an ethical foundation for critiquing the commodification of children in the digital space. Thus, this study not only contributes to enriching the discourse on child protection in the digital age but also strengthens the relevance of Islamic teachings in addressing contemporary challenges related to media and family.

This article aims to analyze the phenomenon of child exploitation on social media through the perspective of Islamic parenting values derived from parenting hadiths. Specifically, this article shows how the Prophet's teachings can serve as a guide for parents in safeguarding their children's well-being in the digital age. Using a netnographic approach, the author analyzes several TikTok content containing indications of child exploitation during the period from May to June 2024.

This study uses a qualitative method with a netnography approach to examine the phenomenon of child exploitation on social media, particularly in relation to parenting ethics as reflected in the hadiths of the Prophet. Netnography is a method designed to understand digital culture, including patterns of interaction, behavior, and values that develop within online communities. The focus of this study is on the TikTok platform, which has become a popular



medium for people to share various moments, including parents' activities in uploading content about their children. This phenomenon raises important ethical questions: to what extent do parents understand the boundaries of children's privacy in the digital space, and how do netizens react to content that is considered to exploit children for popularity or material gain? To answer these questions, the research refers to the stages of netnography as outlined by Kozinets (2020) in Eriyanto (2021) to explore the cultural meanings and social responses to digital parenting practices that potentially violate the principles of children's rights in Islam.<sup>7</sup>

The research consists of four main stages: investigation, interaction, immersion, and integration. In the investigation stage, researchers identified digital communities and relevant content on TikTok, particularly viral videos featuring orphanage children in Medan during live streams at midnight, which appeared to be intended to elicit public sympathy. Analysis was conducted on various digital elements such as comments, likes, views, hashtags, and post descriptions to map public reactions to potential child exploitation in the content. The interaction stage involved an in-depth reading of public emotions and opinions as reflected in netizens' comments—whether in the form of criticism, support, or narratives of sympathy—to identify dominant response patterns. The immersion stage allowed researchers to delve deeper into the context of the phenomenon by documenting various digital data, including text and visuals, as well as communication dynamics in the comment section. Finally, the integration stage compiles all findings into an analytical narrative about child exploitation practices on social media, assesses their impact on children's psychology, and formulates preventive recommendations based on the values of the hadith in shaping more humane and civilized digital parenting ethics.

## Results

The results of this study illustrate how social media can exploit the lives of young children to reap benefits, especially in making a lot of money and prizes. Social media that is not used wisely causes many negative things that harm these children. The case that the author researched was a case that was crowded on TikTok last year, 2023. An orphanage in Medan shared the condition of orphanage children to get sympathy and gifts by live streaming on TikTok.

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<sup>7</sup> Eriyanto, *Metode Netnografi Pendekatan Kualitatif Dalam Memahami Budaya Pengguna Media Sosial* (Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya, 2021).



The investigation results showed that accounts featuring children from orphanages in live-streaming sessions had a very high number of viewers and significant interaction rates, especially on content involving these children. The researchers found that during live-streaming sessions, the number of viewers reached 7.9k to 8.1k, with the number of likes varying between 398.7k and 482.6k.<sup>8</sup> Various comments appeared, many sympathetic and gave gifts and financial support. However, not a few also criticized the act because of the form of exploitation of children.

After receiving a lot of attention and criticism, the orphanage's management account was blocked by tiktok. This indicates that there is a violation of children's rights in the digital world and using their condition to beg online. This is also a violation of child protection regulations in Indonesia.

In an Islamic perspective, parents have an obligation to educate and protect their children. Building a good character starts from an early age, even in the womb. In the Qur'an and *hadith*, it is also explained that a child grows up with the upbringing of his parents. Parents are responsible for shaping their children's morals, emotionally and intellectually well. So with the case of child exploitation in an orphanage in Medan with the aim of attracting the sympathy of viewers is very inconsistent with Islamic educational ethics.

## Discussion

### Child Exploitation in the Digital Space: Uncovering Parenting Practices and Ethics on Social Media

Children often become the center of attention in social media content because of their natural charm, such as innocence, cuteness, and spontaneous expressions. This appeal encourages many parents and content creators to feature children in their posts to gain wider audience attention. This phenomenon shows how children are being used as kid influencers—children who promote products or services through content that is often packaged in a persuasive and entertaining way, including in live streaming sessions aimed at obtaining digital gifts from viewers. This practice has become an attractive strategy for players in the digital industry because it has proven to be able to drive consumption while generating significant income for families or content managers.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Lia Amalia, "Kaget Banget Tengah Malem Iseng Liat Live Tiktok," 2023, <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSjP7qWms/>.

<sup>9</sup> Jody Imam Rafsanjani, "Legal Protection of Kid Influencers from Child Exploitation," *Jurnal Penelitian Hukum De Jure* 22, no. 1 (2022): 93, <https://doi.org/10.30641/dejure.2022.v22.93-104>.





However, behind the economic potential offered by the profession of kid influencer, there are serious concerns about the exploitation of children. Children involved in digital commercial activities often lack the capacity to understand the implications of their involvement, both psychologically and legally. In many cases, the decision to expose children as part of a monetization strategy is made unilaterally by parents or guardians. This situation aligns with the definition of child economic exploitation under Article 66 of Law No. 35 of 2014, which states that exploitation occurs when a child is used—with or without their consent—to obtain material gain for another party.<sup>10</sup>

The lack of parental understanding of child protection principles is one of the main factors exacerbating this situation in the digital space. According to Fihra Rizqi from UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, now known as United Nations Children's Fund), many parents are unaware of international conventions and national regulations that guarantee children's rights, leading them to unknowingly involve children in work or public appearances without adequate legal protection. This situation is highly vulnerable, as children under the age of consent lack the ability to distinguish between private and public spaces. As a result, they become highly susceptible to various forms of exploitation that may have long-term impacts on their emotional, social, and psychological development. In an increasingly open digital landscape, protecting children's rights has become an urgency that cannot be ignored.<sup>11</sup>

Today's parents often share moments of their children's development, such as their first steps, birthday celebrations, and school activities, in the form of content on social media—a practice known as “sharenting” (sharing parenting). Although initially intended as personal documentation, the distribution of this content to the public sphere has made children the center of attention in the digital representation of families. In this context, many family social media accounts or family vloggers have gained popularity thanks to the involvement of children in their content. The visual and emotional appeal of children's innocent, funny, and natural behavior has proven effective in increasing audience engagement, making children a strategic element in attracting public attention and building follower loyalty.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Rafsanjani.

<sup>11</sup> Fihra Rizqi, “Perlindungan Hukum Terhadap Anak Korban Eksploitasi Di Ruang Digital,” *Das Sollen* 1, no. 2 (2023): 1–25, <https://doi.org/10.11111/dassollen.xxxxxxx>.

<sup>12</sup> Giulia Ranzini, Gemma Newlands, and Christoph Lutz, “Sharenting, Peer Influence, and Privacy Concerns: A Study on the Instagram-Sharing Behaviors of Parents in the United Kingdom,” *Social Media + Society* 6, no. 4 (October 2020): 2056305120978376, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305120978376>; Steven Holiday, Mary S. Norman, and Rebecca L. Densley, “Sharenting and the Extended Self: Self-Representation in Parents' Instagram



Furthermore, some parents see social media as a strategic medium for financial gain. This phenomenon reveals economic motives driving the practice of sharenting, ranging from portraying an ideal family image to exploring business opportunities through endorsements, sponsorships, or product promotions. In some cases, the ambition to turn children into public figures from an early age drives parents to expose their children's private lives without considering their privacy rights and psychological readiness.<sup>13</sup> Infants or children who become social media celebrities lack the capacity to understand or consent to their involvement in the digital space. Therefore, the ethical responsibility lies entirely with the parents, who should consider aspects of child protection and well-being in every decision regarding content publication.<sup>14</sup>

The phenomenon of "sharenting" is becoming increasingly prevalent among parents who consider sharing moments of their children's lives on social media to be normal. However, this practice carries significant potential for exploitation and violations of children's rights, particularly in terms of privacy and safety. When personal information about children—such as their location, daily routines, and habits—is shared openly, the risk of cyberbullying, abuse, and even kidnapping increases significantly.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, sharenting creates a permanent digital footprint that is difficult to erase, which can impact children's self-esteem and future when they grow up and become aware of their exposure.

Stacey B. Steinberg, a US-based children's rights lawyer, as quoted by Fihra Rizqi,<sup>16</sup> emphasizes that sharenting can cause psychological distress for children. When children begin to realize their parents' actions in the digital space, they feel disturbed by the violation of their privacy without their consent. In more serious cases, sharenting transforms into a form of economic exploitation, particularly when content involving children is used as a source of income through advertising,

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Presentations of Their Children," *Popular Communication* 20, no. 1 (January 2, 2022): 1-15, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15405702.2020.1744610>.

<sup>13</sup> Renee Barnes and Anna and Potter, "Sharenting and Parents' Digital Literacy: An Agenda for Future Research," *Communication Research and Practice* 7, no. 1 (January 2, 2021): 6-20, <https://doi.org/10.1080/22041451.2020.1847819>; Anna Sarkadi et al., "Children Want Parents to Ask for Permission before 'Sharenting,'" *Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health* 56, no. 6 (2020): 981-83, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jpc.14945>

<sup>14</sup> Merry Fridha and Rahmat Edi Irawan, "Eksplorasi Anak Melalui Akun Instagram (Analisis Wacana Kritis Praktek Sharenting Oleh Selebgram Ashanty & Rachel Venya)," *Komuniti : Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Teknologi Informasi* 12, no. 1 (2020): 68-80, <https://doi.org/10.23917/komuniti.v12i1.10703>.

<sup>15</sup> Mario Campana, Astrid Van den Bossche, and Bryoney Miller, "#dadtribe: Performing Sharenting Labour to Commercialise Involved Fatherhood," *Journal of Macromarketing* 40, no. 4 (December 1, 2020): 475-91, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0276146720933334>.

<sup>16</sup> Rizqi, "Perlindungan Hukum Terhadap Anak Korban Eksploitasi Di Ruang Digital."





sponsorships, or digital platform monetization features. This practice opens the door to abuse, including serious risks such as the exploitation of children's images and videos for sexual purposes, whether in the form of hidden pornography or illegal digital content trafficking.

The case of child exploitation at an orphanage in Medan in May–June 2023 is a clear illustration of these dangers. The incident attracted public attention after a live video on TikTok showed children at the orphanage being used as a means to obtain digital gifts from viewers, which were then converted into money. The orphanage staff actively displayed the children in emotionally distressing conditions to evoke sympathy and gain personal financial benefits. The case not only went viral on social media but also came under sharp scrutiny from national media, signaling that child exploitation in the digital space is no longer a latent issue but a reality that requires urgent attention and stricter regulations.

After the content went viral on TikTok, a wave of responses from netizens showed a mixture of empathy and anger. Many social media users questioned the ethics of the orphanage caregivers and the motives behind the live-streaming session. Media attention was inevitable; a number of national television stations highlighted the case as a clear indication of child exploitation in the digital ecosystem. This incident revealed that child exploitation on social media is not limited to the family context or family vlogging but can also occur in broader social environments, such as care institutions. According to Ahmad Hafiz Muharram, this practice can even be categorized as a form of online begging that exploits children's vulnerability for financial gain.<sup>17</sup>

In practice, perpetrators exploit children's physical and emotional aspects—such as crying or expressions of sadness—to evoke sympathy and compassion from viewers. Moreover, the difficult economic conditions of children in orphanages are used as the central narrative to strengthen the emotional appeal of the content. This phenomenon reflects a serious violation of children's rights and highlights the urgency of strict regulations and oversight of digital activities involving children. Therefore, a deep understanding and ongoing education are needed for parents, caregivers, and content creators to ensure that children's presence on social media does not lead to exploitation or negative consequences in the future.

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<sup>17</sup> Ahmad Hafiz Muharram Sk and Faisal Riza, "Analisis Yuridis Eksploitasi Anak Melalui Media Sosial Tiktok : Perspektif Undang-Undang Perlindungan Anak," *Jurnal Ilmu Hukum, Humaniora Dan Politik* 4, no. 4 (2024): 802–10, <https://doi.org/10.38035/jihhp.v4i4.2086>.



## Netnographic Analysis of Child Exploitation on Social Media

The investigation stage is a crucial first step in netnography, aiming to identify content patterns, audience characteristics, and the underlying motives behind child exploitation in the case being studied. In this stage, the author selected viral content on TikTok, specifically videos published between May and June 2023, involving children from orphanages in Medan. The investigation results showed that accounts featuring children from orphanages in live-streaming sessions had a very high number of viewers and significant interaction rates, especially on content involving these children. The researchers found that during live-streaming sessions, the number of viewers reached 7.9k to 8.1k, with the number of likes varying between 398.7k and 482.6k.<sup>18</sup> These findings indicate that there is a huge appeal to content featuring children, which likely motivates most viewers to provide financial support after witnessing the children's conditions.

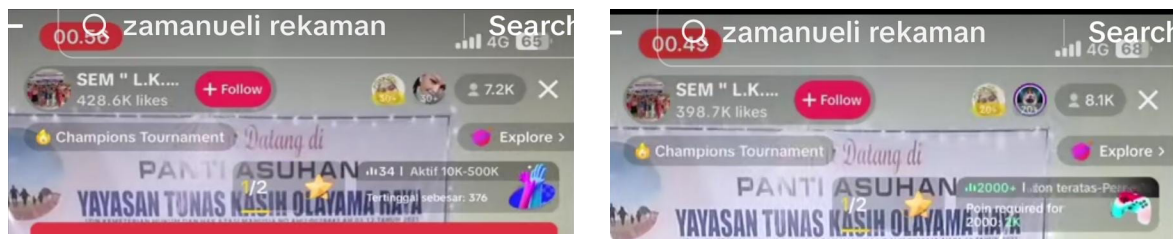


Figure 1.1 Number of viewers and likes during live streaming

Based on the image displayed, it can be observed that every time the orphanage account conducts a live-streaming session, there is a high level of interaction from netizens, both in terms of the number of viewers and the number of likes. The image is a screenshot from a third-party account that recorded the live streaming directly. Currently, the orphanage's Instagram account has been blocked by TikTok, which can be interpreted as a response to indications of violations of the platform's policies regarding child exploitation.

A more in-depth analysis shows a pattern of intensive and scheduled posts, where live streaming is carried out regularly every day, especially at certain times considered strategic, namely midnight after 12 a.m.<sup>19</sup> This pattern indicates a specific strategy by the account manager to maximize audience reach and potential donations through gifts. The live sessions also lasted quite a long time, allowing for the collection of a large number of gifts, which is economically beneficial to the account managers.

<sup>18</sup> Lia Amalia, "Kaget Banget Tengah Malem Iseng Liat Live Tiktok," 2023, <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSjP7qWms/>.

<sup>19</sup> Silalahi Mawar, "Bayi 2 Bulan Dikasih Makan Jam 1 Malam Dan Porsi Banyak," 2023, <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSjPvSTHr/>.



This finding reinforces the argument that the practices observed are not merely incidental or sporadic actions but part of a structured and systematic exploitation scheme. Children, in this context, are used as the center of attention to garner public sympathy and financial gain, a practice that is morally problematic and contrary to the principles of child protection, both in social norms and the law.



Figure 2.1 Comments from netizens on the account of someone recording a livestream

The image shows that the live streaming session by the orphanage account was conducted at an unusual time, namely at midnight. Despite being broadcast late at night, the broadcast still managed to attract significant attention from netizens, as reflected in the high number of viewers and thousands of likes it received. This phenomenon indicates that content involving children remains highly appealing, even outside the typical active hours of social media users, suggesting that digital consumption patterns are contributing to the perpetuation of exploitative practices.

The image is a visual documentation of several parties who recorded the live stream, as the official account of the orphanage has since been blocked by TikTok. This blocking can be interpreted as the platform's intervention in response to indications of child exploitation while also serving as a sign of violations of digital ethics policies that should protect the rights and dignity of children in the online space.

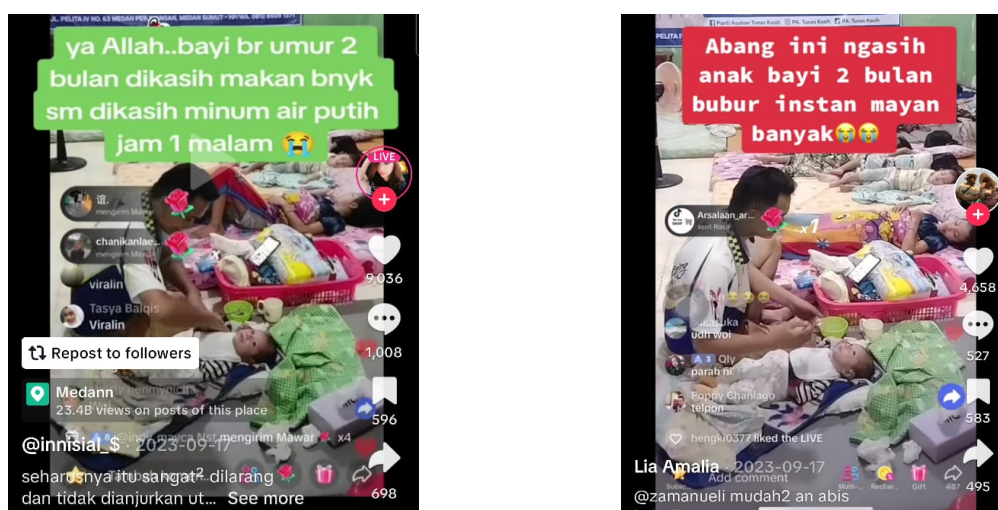




Figure 3.1: Instagram accounts that recorded live-streaming

Researchers documented data from two accounts that reposted the live stream. The account @innisial\_S recorded 9,036 likes, 1,008 comments, 596 bookmarks, and 698 shares.<sup>20</sup> Meanwhile, the account @Lia Amalia received 4,658 likes, 527 comments, 583 bookmarks, and 495 shares.<sup>21</sup> These data indicate the high level of attention and engagement of users towards content sourced from the orphanage's live stream, even after it was reposted by other accounts. These figures indicate that child exploitation content not only has instant appeal but also generates significant virality within the digital ecosystem.

Within the framework of netnography, the interaction stage emphasizes the importance of active engagement—both direct and indirect—with the content, the audience, and the evolving communication patterns on the digital platform. In the context of child exploitation through TikTok by an orphanage in Medan, researchers observed the patterns of live streaming and the interactions that took place in the comments section. This study aims to understand the audience's motivation in responding and the emotional dynamics built by the account manager during the session.

The results of the observation show that the account manager actively builds emotional connections with the audience, especially those who give gifts. Responses were in the form of touching expressions of gratitude, such as “Thank you for your kindness,” and hand gestures forming a heart symbol (love). This pattern appears to be strategically designed to strengthen the affective bond with the audience, encouraging them to continue contributing financially. This emotional communication strategy is part of the commodified practice of *emotional labor* in the digital landscape.

However, the public response was not entirely positive. Comments sections revealed criticism and condemnation of the orphanage management's exploitation of children. Pressure from netizens eventually forced the orphanage to disable comments on a number of posts. This action highlights the dynamics of digital resistance from the public against practices deemed unethical while also emphasizing the importance of ethical oversight in the representation of children on social media.

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<sup>20</sup> Innisial\_S, “Ya Allah Bayi 2 Bulan Di Kasih Makan Banyak Dan Dikasih Minum Air Putih Jam 1 Malam,” 2023, <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSjxfdGGA/>.

<sup>21</sup> Lia Amalia, “Abang Ini Ngasih Anak Bayi 2 Bulan Bubur Instan Mayan Banyak,” 2023, <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMhv21r2L/>.



Figure 4.1 The orphanage caregiver shows a loving reaction with her hands when given a gift by a netizen.

During the live streaming session, the orphanage caregivers consistently formed a “love” symbol with their hands every time they received a gift from netizens. This action was not merely a spontaneous expression but a form of symbolic communication that effectively strengthened the emotional bond between the caregivers and the audience. The gesture encouraged further participation from the audience, creating a cycle of feedback that was beneficial both emotionally and materially. This interaction concretely reflects the “interaction” stage in netnography methodology, where symbolic expressions play a crucial role in building connections and extending digital engagement.

Furthermore, the interaction stage also reveals critical responses from some viewers. Skepticism toward the caregivers’ motives began to emerge through comments questioning the transparency of how funds obtained from TikTok gifts are utilized. Some netizens expressed concerns about the welfare of the children in the orphanage, questioning whether they truly benefit from this massive public exposure. This finding indicates that some of the audience are not merely passive participants but are also developing ethical awareness regarding the potential manipulation inherent in such digital practices.

The interaction between the administrators and the critical audience is a crucial element in understanding the social dynamics of digital communities. Some viewers interpret the live streaming as a form of charity or almsgiving that should be supported, while others question the validity and ethics of fundraising practices that exploit children’s images. These differing perceptions reflect the complexity of content consumption and interpretation in the social media era, where the line between empathy and exploitation is becoming increasingly blurred.



Through the interaction stage in netnography, researchers gained a deeper understanding of the social constructs formed within this community. Direct interactions in the digital space are not only a means of communication but also an arena for negotiating values and meanings that influence public perceptions of child exploitation issues. Thus, this research emphasizes the importance of ethical sensitivity in analyzing digital content, especially when involving vulnerable groups such as children.



Figure 5.1 Several comments posted on someone's account while recording a livestream

Netizens' responses to the TikTok account that recorded and reposted the live-streaming session of the orphanage showed a spectrum of diverse opinions. Some users did not view the broadcast as a form of exploitation, even tending to defend the actions of the orphanage caregivers on the grounds that the activity was considered a legitimate fundraising effort. Conversely, there are many comments expressing deep concern, particularly regarding the condition of the orphans who are intensively involved in the broadcast. These varied reactions reflect differences in perception within the digital community: one side views the practice as a social assistance strategy, while the other side believes that the action has the potential to damage the physical and psychological well-being of the children.

In the immersion stage of the netnography method, researchers delved deeper into the digital community interacting with the content—in this case, the viewers and accounts that archived the live broadcasts. The immersion process involved observing interaction patterns, engagement intensity, and emotional expressions displayed by the audience during and after the live streaming. Researchers found that the number of likes on replay streams ranged from 398,600 to 482,600, indicating high levels of participation and emotional resonance between the content and its audience.





During observations, it was evident that most viewers demonstrated deep empathy toward the children despite having no direct relationship or real-life encounter with them. This emotional connection significantly encouraged giving behavior, such as sending gifts, which ultimately reinforced the cycle of empathy-based exploitation. This practice became problematic when researchers found that children—even infants—were involved in late-night broadcasts, forced to eat large amounts of porridge and water as part of a visual narrative designed to evoke pity.

This situation indicates serious risks to children's physical health and psychological well-being. Immersion in this study revealed that such digital exploitation practices are not only short-term in nature but also have the potential to cause long-term emotional trauma. Therefore, it is crucial to address child exploitation in the context of digital media as a serious issue requiring ethical and regulatory intervention. This study underscores that children's involvement in digital content cannot be justified solely in the name of charity, especially when such practices mask suffering behind an aesthetic of empathy.



Figure 6.1 Caregiver feeding instant porridge to a 2-year-old baby

The results of the immersion stage clearly reveal various explicit strategies used to exploit children, including two-month-old babies, in live-streaming content. In one broadcast, an orphanage caregiver was seen feeding the baby instant porridge in an unreasonable amount, even though medically, babies of that age are not ready to eat solid food. This action appeared to be deliberate to trigger empathy from viewers and encourage them to give gifts as an emotional response to the suffering presented visually. This pattern reveals a manipulative strategy that consciously exploits public emotions as an economic mechanism, highlighting the form of digital exploitation of children on real-time interaction-based platforms.

The *integration* stage in the netnography methodology is a crucial phase for synthesizing all findings from the investigation, interaction, and immersion stages to build a comprehensive



and reflective understanding of the case under study. In the context of the exploitation of children by an orphanage in Medan through TikTok live streaming, this integration process examines not only the systematic patterns of exploitation and the psychosocial impact on children but also the dynamics of audience responses and the ethical and moral considerations that accompany them. Researchers highlight how content depicting children in distressing situations is used as a narrative tool to evoke public sympathy, ultimately creating a sustainable cycle of empathy-based exploitation.

The integration also reveals tensions between moral values and economic orientation. On the one hand, gifts from viewers are perceived as a form of social assistance; on the other hand, this action places children in a position as visual objects for financial gain. Researchers note that orphanage administrators consciously use the aesthetics of children's suffering as a tool to maximize income, a practice that demonstrates how economic interests can blur ethical boundaries and weaken child protection principles. In other words, economic motivations are often framed as benevolence, even though they are fundamentally at odds with children's rights to protection and dignity.

Furthermore, the integration of these findings underscores that the long-term impact of digital exploitation on children extends beyond financial aspects. Intensive exposure to digital audiences in humiliating or degrading situations can damage children's identity development, disrupt emotional stability, and leave deep psychological scars. Therefore, it is important for society to build critical awareness of such content and understand that financial participation through *gifts* does not always result in positive benefits for the children featured.

In today's digital age, parenting practices that exploit children on social media have become a serious concern that parents must avoid. From a developmental psychology perspective, children require a safe, stable, and supportive environment to foster healthy emotional and mental growth, free from exploitative pressures.<sup>22</sup> Excessive exposure to the digital world not only threatens children's privacy but also has the potential to lower their self-esteem and disrupt their mental health. Therefore, parental control over children's involvement in digital platforms is

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<sup>22</sup> Iram Rizvi, Syeda Fariha, and Najma Najam, "Parental Psychological Abuse toward Children and Mental Health Problems in Adolescence," *Pakistan Journal of Medical Sciences* 30, no. 2 (2014): 256-260.



crucial, especially in ensuring that the content shared does not harm their dignity and well-being.<sup>23</sup>

Psychological studies also indicate that excessive media use can hinder young children's social-emotional development, particularly in terms of emotional regulation, direct social interaction, and self-awareness. The lack of real-world interaction due to the dominance of digital screens also contributes to weakening children's ability to develop prosocial behavior.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, the active role of parents is crucial in shaping a healthy digital ecosystem for children in order to prevent emotional and social growth disorders.

From an Islamic perspective, children are a divine trust that must be protected, cared for, and educated with responsibility and love. Islamic law emphasizes the obligation to protect children from all forms of exploitation and to fulfill their rights in a fair and dignified manner. This principle includes the prohibition of using children as instruments for personal gain, whether in the economic or social sphere. In this context, the exploitation of children on social media, especially when motivated by economic gain, constitutes a violation of Islamic moral and legal principles.

Research conducted by the Child Protection Office in Medan Johor revealed that in vulnerable family economic situations, child exploitation often emerges as a survival strategy, such as using children as content to gain financial benefits. This phenomenon not only damages children's physical and emotional development but also contradicts Islamic values and the Child Protection Law, which explicitly prohibits all forms of harmful treatment toward children. Therefore, systemic efforts are needed to strengthen the roles of parents, society, and the state in building a comprehensive and equitable protection system for children in the digital age.<sup>25</sup>

The case of child exploitation in an orphanage in Medan is a concrete example of the violation of children's rights in the digital space. The practice of using children to beg online through TikTok is not only a form of economic exploitation but also a violation of child protection regulations in Indonesia. This finding underscores the urgency of strengthening oversight

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<sup>23</sup> Jihan Fauziah Hayani Wulandari, "Pengaruh Waktu Penggunaan Layar (Screentime) Terhadap Perkembangan Sosial-Emosional Pada Anak Usia Dini: Menelusuri Dampak Era Digital," *Jurnal Ilmiah Wahana Pendidikan* 10, no. 16 (2024): 1-23.

<sup>24</sup> Rui Li, Zong Meng, and Yueqin Hu, "Cultivating Child Prosocial Behavior in Dynamic Family Systems: The Distinct Role of Family Conflict and Parental Monitoring", *International Journal of Behavioral Development* 49, no. 3 (2025), 228-239. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01650254251314772>.

<sup>25</sup> Ibrahim Ihksan Lubis, "Analisis Pandangan Hukum Islam Terhadap Eksploitasi Anak Dalam Menopang Perekonomian Keluarga Di Kota Medan (Studi Kasus Kantor Perlindungan Anak Medan Johor)," *JURNAL INTERPRETASI HUKUM* 4, no. 2 (2023): 177-82.



systems and implementing stricter legal policies to protect children from potential exploitation in the digital space.

One relevant preventive approach to be applied in this context is authoritative parenting, which combines loving care with firm and communicative discipline. With this approach, parents can build healthy relationships with their children, allowing room for self-expression while still setting clear boundaries. This approach also encourages children to understand ethical boundaries in the use of social media and helps them develop critical digital literacy from an early age.<sup>26</sup>

In conclusion, in facing the complexities of parenting in the digital age, it is crucial for parents and the wider community to increase awareness and digital literacy to ensure that children's participation in the online space does not create new vulnerabilities. Child protection in the technological age is not only the responsibility of families but also of social, legal, and cultural systems that must work together to ensure children's right to grow up in a safe, healthy, and dignified environment.

### ***Hadiths on Parenting: The Foundation of Ethics and Compassion in the Digital Age***

Previous netnographic analysis revealed a worrying phenomenon related to the growing exploitation of children on social media, as reflected in the viral case of the exploitation of children in orphanages in Medan through TikTok live streaming. In this case, children were often used as objects of content for financial gain or to increase the popularity of account managers without considering the basic rights of children and the negative impacts that may arise. This phenomenon exposes the dark side of social media, where children, who should be protected, are instead exploited as tools to achieve personal gain. The analysis also shows that children are often used as objects to gain profit without considering the psychological and ethical aspects inherent in the process.

A similar phenomenon can be seen in the debate surrounding the phenomenon of 'kids influencers' as a form of child exploitation. Although this profession is often seen as an opportunity for children to express themselves and showcase their creativity, it has a very high potential for exploitation. Children are often used as tools to produce profitable content or to increase popularity without regard for their rights or the potential psychological impact. Both

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<sup>26</sup> Ria Astuti et al., "Digital Parenting: Utilizing Technology to Instill Islamic Education Values in Young Children," *TADRIS: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 17, no. 2 (2022): 365–78, <https://doi.org/10.19105/tjpi.v17i2.7468>.



exploitation through live streaming and the phenomenon of 'kids influencers' highlight the urgency of protecting children in the digital world, which increasingly requires the active role of society, the government, and parents to safeguard children's well-being.<sup>27</sup>

Violence against children often involves cruel, inhumane acts that reflect a disregard for children's basic rights. Therefore, preventive measures grounded in Islamic legal norms are crucial. From a fiqh perspective, children are viewed as both a gift and a trust that must be safeguarded and nurtured by their parents. Hadiths on child care provide highly relevant moral guidance for protecting children, especially from exploitation in this digital age. These hadiths not only emphasize the importance of maintaining children's physical and emotional well-being but also teach parents and caregivers their responsibilities in fulfilling children's rights. By applying the principles of parenting in the hadith, parents can protect their children in a more wise manner. One of the core values emphasized in the hadith is the importance of love, attention, and gentle treatment of children by their parents, as stated by the Prophet Muhammad SAW:

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ مَرْزُوقٍ، قَالَ: حَدَّثَنَا عُبَيْدُ بْنُ وَاقِدٍ، عَنْ زَرْبٍ، قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ أَنَسَ بْنَ مَالِكٍ يَقُولُ: «جَاءَ شَيْخٌ يُرِيدُ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَأَبْطَأَ الْقَوْمُ عَنْهُ أَنْ يُوسِّعُوا لَهُ فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: لَيْسَ مِنَّا مَنْ لَمْ يَرْحَمْ صَغِيرَنَا وَيُوَفِّرْ كَبِيرَنَا».<sup>28</sup>

*It has been narrated to us by Muhammad bin Marzuq, who said: It has been narrated to us by Ubaid bin Waqid, from Zarbi, who stated that he heard Anas bin Malik said: "An old man came to the Prophet Muhammad SAW, but the people were slow to make room for him. Then, the Prophet Muhammad SAW said: "Those who do not show mercy to children and do not respect the elderly are not of our group."*

In this context, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) taught the importance of treating children fairly, protecting their rights, and providing them with a good education. Parents are not only expected to meet their children's material needs but also to ensure that children grow up in an environment that supports their psychological and spiritual well-being. The values of love taught by the Prophet Muhammad SAW can serve as practical guidelines for parents to avoid actions that could harm their children, both physically and emotionally. This includes instilling empathy, avoiding exploitation in all its forms, and creating an environment filled with love, attention, and respect for children's rights.

<sup>27</sup> Kayus Kayowuan Lewoleba and Khairunisa Syalsabila, "Analisis Peranan Masyarakat Serta Perlindungan Hukum Terhadap Kids Influencer Sebagai Bentuk Lain Dari Eksploitasi Anak," *VISA: Journal of Vision and Ideas* 4, no. 3 (2024): 1509–18, <https://doi.org/10.47467/visa.v4i3.3125>.

<sup>28</sup> Abu 'aisī Muhammad Ibn, 'aisī Al-Tirmidzī, *Al-Jāmi' Al-Kabīr* (Sunan Al Tirmidzī), Vol 3, No Indeks 479, (beirut: Dār Al-Ghārib Al-Islāmī) 1919.



Providing love to children is the primary duty that every parent must fulfill. This form of love is not limited to imparting knowledge and education but also includes attitudes that are warm and protective. Parents must be wise in educating their children, avoiding excessive punishment, and remembering that children are in a very vulnerable stage of growth and development. If necessary, reprimands such as hitting or scolding children for educational purposes can be done but must remain within reasonable limits. Such actions should not cause trauma, injury, or endanger the safety of children.<sup>29</sup> The phenomenon of child exploitation in orphanages in Medan, which involves them in social media content, demonstrates a disregard for this basic principle. Children are being used as objects for material gain, which damages their self-confidence and risks causing long-term psychological effects. This incident reaffirms the importance of love, which not only protects children physically but also prevents them from being exploited in any form.

This love should grow from a deep understanding of the child's perspective. Parents are encouraged to assess their children's attitudes and behaviors based on what they understand and feel, not solely on their own knowledge or perspective. With this understanding, love will be easier to give and apply in the process of raising children. This attitude of love becomes even more crucial, especially in nurturing young children. With an approach that is attentive and understanding, children can grow in an environment that supports the optimal development of their character, emotions, and spirituality.<sup>30</sup>

In building healthy relationships between parents and children, honesty is a fundamental value that cannot be ignored. Honesty serves as the main foundation in creating mutual trust, especially when parents make promises to their children. As the Prophet Muhammad SAW said:

حَدَّثَنَا حَجَّاجٌ، قَالَ: حَدَّثَنَا لَيْثٌ، قَالَ: حَدَّثَنِي عُقَيْلٌ، عَنِ ابْنِ شِهَابٍ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَنَّهُ قَالَ: " مَنْ قَالَ لِبُصَيٍّ: نَعَالَ هَاكَ، ثُمَّ لَمْ يُعْطِهِ فِيهِ كَذَبَهُ <sup>31</sup> .

*"Whoever says to a child, 'I will give you something (as a reward),' and then does not give it, has indeed committed a lie." (Hadith narrated by Ahmad).*

<sup>29</sup> Azizah Hefni, *Tuntunan Mendidik Anak Secara Islami* (Jakarta: Qultum Media, 2018) 17.

<sup>30</sup> Erwin Hafid, *Hadis Parenting Menakar Validitas Hadis Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini* (Jakarta: Orbit Publishing Jakarta, 2017) 277.

<sup>31</sup> Al-Imām Ahmad bin Hanbal, *Musnad Al-Imām Ahmad Bin Hanbal*, Vol 15, No Indeks 520 (Turki: Muassasah Al-Risālah) 9835.





This hadith teaches that parents have an obligation to keep their promises to their children because dishonesty not only violates moral values but also risks damaging children's trust in their parents. Dishonesty, whether in the form of directly breaking promises or through social media, can have a negative impact on children's long-term development. Children who grow up in an environment where promises are often ignored tend to develop a mistaken understanding of human relationships, even considering dishonesty as normal to achieve certain goals. This attitude clearly contradicts Islamic teachings, which emphasize the importance of integrity and moral responsibility as the foundation of life.

This phenomenon further emphasizes that family education plays a major role in shaping a child's character. As the first and foremost educators, parents, especially mothers, play a vital role in the emotional, moral, and intellectual development of children. Mothers are often the most influential figures in a child's growth and education, so they are given priority in parenting, especially in the event of separation within the household. This role is not limited to fulfilling children's physical needs but also includes instilling the values of honesty, responsibility, and compassion, which will shape their future lives.<sup>32</sup>

Therefore, this hadith serves as an important guideline for parents in managing their interactions with children, both in the real world and in the digital realm. By integrating these values of honesty, parents not only help children understand the importance of keeping promises but also set an example of how to live life in accordance with Islamic principles. Especially in the digital age, where children are often exposed to various influences, building trust and ensuring honesty are key to protecting them from exploitation and fostering a strong, positive character.

Honesty in educating children is a very important foundation in shaping their character. In addition, Islam also provides clear guidance on how to be fair and wise when children make mistakes. Punishment in Islam is not only intended to deter, but also to educate with love, so that children can understand their mistakes without feeling humiliated. As the Prophet Muhammad SAW said:

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<sup>32</sup> Achmad Muhajir, "Hadhanah Dalam Islam (Hak Pengasuhan Anak Dalam Sektor Pendidikan Rumah)," *SAP (Susunan Artikel Pendidikan)* 2, no. 2 (2017): 165-173, <https://doi.org/10.30998/sap.v2i2.2089>.



حَدَّثَنَا عُثْمَانُ، وَأَبُو بَكْرٍ ابْنَا أَبِي شَيْبَةَ وَهَذَا لَفْظُ أَبِي بَكْرٍ، عَنْ مُعْتَمِرِ بْنِ سُلَيْمَانَ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ ابْنَ أَبِي حَكَمٍ الْغِفَارِيَّ يَقُولُ: حَدَّثَنِي جَدِّي عَنْ عَمِّ أَبِي زَافِعٍ بْنِ عَمْرِو الْغِفَارِيِّ قَالَ: «كُنْتُ غُلَامًا أَزْمِي نَخْلَ الْأَنْصَارِ، فَأَتَى بِي النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، فَقَالَ: يَا غُلَامُ لِمَ تَزْمِي النَّخْلَ؟ قَالَ: أَكُلُ قَالَ: فَلَا تَزِمِ النَّخْلَ، وَكُلْ مِمَّا يَسْقُطُ فِي أَسْفَلِهَا ثُمَّ مَسَحَ رَأْسَهُ، فَقَالَ: اللَّهُمَّ أَشْبِعْ بَطْنَهُ.»<sup>33</sup>

*'Uthmān and Abū Bakr, both sons of Abū Shaybah, narrated to us, and this is the statement of Abū Bakr, from Mu'tamir b. Sulaymān. He said, "I heard Ibn Abū Ḥakam al-Ghifārī say that his grandmother had told him from his uncle Abū Rāfi' b. 'Amr al-Ghifārī, who said: 'Once, I was a young boy who was throwing stones at the date palms of the Ansar. Then, I was brought before the Prophet, peace be upon him. He said, 'O young boy, why are you throwing stones at the date palm tree?' I replied, 'I was eating.' He said, 'Do not throw stones at the date palm tree; eat what falls beneath it!' Then he stroked my head and prayed, 'O Allah, fill his stomach.'"*

The hadith narrated in *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* conveys a valuable lesson on how to reprimand a child who has done something wrong with love and wisdom. In the story, a young child throws stones at a date palm tree belonging to the Ansar in order to pick its fruit. When the child was brought before the Prophet Muhammad, he did not immediately scold him or punish him physically. Instead, he gently asked, "Why did you throw stones at the date palm tree?" After the child explained that he did it because he wanted to eat, the Prophet offered a better alternative: to pick the fruits that had fallen under the tree instead of throwing stones at someone else's property.

Through this action, the Prophet Muhammad taught the importance of educating through constructive dialogue. He did not merely reprimand but also provided a solution that helped the child understand his mistake without humiliating him. The Prophet even ended his reprimand by stroking the child's head and praying that his stomach would always be full—an action that reflects deep care and affection. This illustrates that the purpose of educating children is not merely to punish but to build a strong moral understanding and foster positive relationships between educators and children.

In the context of modern parenting, this hadith is highly relevant as a reminder to parents that reprimanding children should be done with gentleness and empathy. This approach aligns with the noble duty of parents, who are not only responsible for providing physical needs for their children but also for educating and nurturing them to have good character and noble values. Parents are not only tasked with raising children and setting them free to live

<sup>33</sup> Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, Vol 2, No Indeks 344, (India: Al-Matḥba'ah Al-Anshāriyah), 2622 .



independently, but they have a much greater mission—that is, to shape children of character who are ready to become individuals in line with Islamic principles and worthy of paradise.<sup>34</sup>

In line with this, the concept of education in Islam, as explained by Muallifah in Adnan (2018), emphasizes that parenting includes the ability to shape good morals in children. This parenting style is not only related to the methods applied but also to adapting to the unique character of each child.<sup>35</sup> In this context, the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, who gently reprimanded and offered a solution to a child who threw stones at a date palm tree, serves as a concrete example of ideal Islamic parenting. The Prophet Muhammad SAW demonstrated that education is not merely about controlling a child's behavior but also about respecting their dignity, building strong emotional bonds, and instilling robust moral values from an early age.

Thus, in educating children in the modern era, parents are encouraged to not only focus on fulfilling their children's physical or academic needs but also prioritize the formation of noble character and morals. This will be an important foundation for them in living their lives in this world and the hereafter. In the context of child exploitation on social media, these principles are particularly relevant. Punishment given to children should not take the form of humiliating them in public, either directly or through social media. Instead, parents or caregivers should provide educational guidance, protect children from excessive exposure, and ensure they understand the consequences of their actions. Educational punishment is not merely aimed at stopping wrongdoing but also at imparting moral lessons that build their character, enabling them to grow into wise, responsible, and integrity-driven individuals.

## Conclusion

Child exploitation on social media is an issue that not only touches on digital ethics but also involves fundamental violations of children's rights, particularly in relation to their privacy, psychological integrity, and human dignity. Findings from this study indicate a concerning trend where children—including infants—are involved in the production of digital content designed to gain popularity or financial gain for adults, even by their own parents or caregivers. This phenomenon creates psychological pressure and erodes the boundaries between private and

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<sup>34</sup> Mohammad Adnan, "Pola Asuh Orang Tua Dalam Pembentukan Akhlak Anak Dalam Pendidikan Islam," *CENDEKIA: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 4, no. 1 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.37348/cendekia.v4i1.57>.

<sup>35</sup> Adnan.



public spaces in children's lives, normalizing exploitative practices within a framework that appears acceptable.

From an Islamic perspective, such practices contradict the noble principles taught by the Prophet Muhammad, which emphasize the importance of compassion, respect for the dignity of children, and the moral responsibility of parents in shaping the character and well-being of children in a holistic manner. The Prophet's hadiths on parenting provide a relevant ethical framework for contemporary contexts, including in addressing the challenges of social media. Islam not only emphasizes the fulfillment of children's physical needs but also calls for the protection of their spiritual and psychological rights as free and valuable individuals.

Thus, this study underscores the importance of values-based digital literacy, particularly within Muslim communities, to prevent parents and society from being trapped in the logic of the digital market that treats children as commodities. The application of prophetic values in parenting practices is a strategic key to preventing child exploitation in the digital space and ensuring their growth and development take place in a safe, loving environment consistent with Islamic teachings. These efforts are not only a form of protection for future generations but also a tangible manifestation of commitment to the values of justice, compassion, and humanity in the digital age.

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