



## THE ROLE OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHERS AND PARENTS IN CULTIVATING STUDENTS' SPIRITUALITY IN THE MODERN ERA

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### Abstract

This study aims to analyse the roles of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers and parents in fostering students' spiritual attitudes at MI Miftahul Huda Bonangrejo, Bonang, Demak, in the digital era. The background of this research stems from the phenomenon of declining religious interest among students and the significant influence of technology and globalisation on the religious behaviour of elementary school-aged children. Employing a qualitative approach with a case study design, this study involved 12 participants, consisting of the school principal, two PAI teachers, and nine parents. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation, and then analysed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model. The results indicate that PAI teachers play strategic roles as educators of religious values, spiritual guides, moral role models, drivers of the school's religious culture, and mentors of Islamic-based digital literacy. Meanwhile, parents serve as primary educators through exemplary worship practices, habituation of religious activities, warm religious communication, supervision of technology use, and the creation of a religious family atmosphere. The synergy between PAI teachers and parents has been shown to strengthen students' religious discipline, social morality, and spiritual awareness. This study concludes that collaboration between schools and families is a crucial foundation for developing students' spirituality amidst the challenges of the digital era. However, this study is limited to a single educational institution within a specific geographic context, so the findings reflect the characteristics of MI Miftahul Huda Bonangrejo, Demak, and may not fully represent other schools with different social and cultural settings.

**Keywords:** Islamic Religious Education Teachers, Parental Role, Spiritual Attitude, Digital Era, Elementary School, Indonesia

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## INTRODUCTION

## مقدمة

The rapid development of information and communication technology in the modern era has transformed various aspects of human life, including education. Digital transformation has reshaped interaction patterns, learning processes, and students' ways of thinking, thereby influencing the formation of spiritual values that traditionally serve as the foundation of character education. Within this context, spiritual values face increasing challenges as global culture and digital information flows often overshadow the religious principles historically embedded in Islamic education.

Spiritual attitude in Islamic education refers to the internalisation of religious beliefs manifested through consistent worship practices, moral behaviour, and social responsibility. Its development is influenced by both formal educational environments and family contexts. This

study adopts a socio-educational perspective that positions spiritual development as the result of collaborative guidance between schools and families, where teachers function as institutional educators and parents act as primary moral agents. Such collaboration becomes increasingly important in the digital era, where students are exposed to diverse values that may either support or contradict religious teachings.

MI Miftahul Huda Bonangrejo, Bonang, Demak, represents an Islamic primary educational institution encountering these dynamics. Fifth- and sixth-grade students, who are in the transitional stage toward early adolescence, experience critical moral, emotional, and spiritual growth that requires structured guidance.

This study is conceptually grounded in developmental psychology. Erik Erikson's theory places children aged 10–12 in the industry versus inferiority stage, during which they develop competence and self-confidence through achievement and social recognition. Meanwhile, Jean Piaget categorises this age group within the concrete operational stage, characterised by emerging logical thinking that remains strongly influenced by environmental factors and lived experiences. These frameworks highlight that students' spiritual formation depends heavily on supportive social environments, particularly the coordinated roles of teachers and parents.

Empirical observations indicate a gradual decline in students' engagement with religious activities. Many students show greater interest in gadgets, social media, and digital entertainment than in practices such as Qur'an recitation, congregational prayer, or religious study. Although digital technology offers opportunities for innovative religious learning, insufficient supervision may expose students to content that weakens spiritual commitment. Nurhabibah, S., Sari, H. P., and Fatimah, S. (2025) argue that uncontrolled digital exposure can divert students' attention from religious learning and hinder spiritual character formation. Similarly, Zulfandi (2024) notes that globalisation contributes to shifting norms and diminishing attachment to religious and local cultural values, even among elementary school children.

From a policy perspective, spiritual development aligns with Indonesia's national education mandate. Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System emphasises the cultivation of faithful, pious, and morally upright individuals. The Character Education Strengthening Program (Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter) further identifies religiosity as a core dimension of student character. Therefore, fostering spirituality is not merely complementary but constitutes a central responsibility of both educational institutions and families.

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers hold strategic roles as educators, mentors, and moral exemplars responsible for transmitting religious values within the school environment. However, relying solely on teachers is insufficient for sustaining students' spiritual growth. Parents, as children's first educators, shape daily religious habits and value systems within the home. A lack of alignment between school and family practices may create inconsistencies in students' spiritual experiences, whereas strong collaboration can reinforce the internalisation of religious values.

Previous studies have acknowledged the individual contributions of teachers and parents to religious character formation. Wijaya (2018) emphasised the significant role of teachers in shaping students' religious attitudes at school, while Yaasin, Hakim, and Gusmaneli (2024) demonstrated that parental involvement in religious activities positively influences children's spiritual development. However, existing research tends to examine these roles separately and provides limited insight into how structured collaboration between Islamic Religious Education teachers and parents operates in responding to the pressures of digitalisation and globalisation,

particularly within Islamic primary schools. Moreover, empirical studies exploring collaborative strategies at the elementary level remain scarce, despite this stage being foundational for long-term character formation.

This gap highlights the need for a more integrative analysis that conceptualises spiritual development as a shared responsibility between schools and families within digitally mediated learning environments. Addressing this need, the present study investigates how Islamic Religious Education teachers and parents collaborate to foster students' spirituality at MI Miftahul Huda Bonangrejo, Bonang, Demak.

This study employs a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews and observations of classroom practices and family parenting patterns. Thematic analysis is used to identify recurring strategies, relational dynamics, and forms of collaboration that support spiritual development. Theoretically, this research seeks to enrich the discourse on Islamic education by offering a collaborative framework for understanding students' spiritual formation in contemporary contexts. Practically, the findings are expected to provide guidance for schools, teachers, and parents in designing adaptive and sustainable strategies for spiritual development amid the ongoing challenges of the digital era. Consequently, this study contributes both academic insight and practical direction for strengthening the quality of Islamic religious education.

## METHOD

## منهج

This research employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design to obtain an in-depth understanding of the roles of parents and Islamic Religious Education teachers in fostering students' spirituality. A case study design was selected because it enables researchers to explore complex social phenomena and effectively address "how" and "why" questions (Yin, 2018). The study was conducted at MI Miftahul Huda Bonangrejo, Demak.

The participants consisted of 12 informants, including one Akidah Akhlak teacher, one madrasah principal, six parents, and four fifth- and sixth-grade students. All participants were Muslim, reflecting the religious context of the madrasah. The teacher held a bachelor's degree in Islamic Religious Education and had more than five years of teaching experience. The parents varied in educational background, ranging from senior high school diplomas to undergraduate degrees, and were primarily engaged in occupations such as small-scale entrepreneurship, farming, and private-sector employment. These diverse educational and professional backgrounds provided varied perspectives on children's spiritual development within the family environment.

Primary data were collected through 12 in-depth interviews, each lasting approximately 45–60 minutes. Several follow-up conversations of shorter duration (around 20–30 minutes) were conducted when clarification was needed. Participant observation was carried out during religious learning activities and daily school routines, while audio recordings were used to ensure data accuracy (Sujarweni, 2020; Moleong, 2014). Secondary data were obtained from madrasah documents, including the curriculum, student archives, and institutional profiles.

Data collection techniques included observation (Sukmadinata, 2012), in-depth interviews guided by semi-structured protocols (Sutopo, 2006; Sugiyono, 2010), documentation (Sarmini et al., 2023; Moleong, 2018), and a literature review to support analytical interpretation. Data validity was ensured through triangulation of sources and methods (Cholily et al., 2024; Moleong, 2014) and by applying four trustworthiness criteria proposed by Sugiyono (2010) and Mahmud (2011): credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which involves data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles et al., 1992; Miles & Huberman, 2009; Thalib, 2022; Sugiyono, 2017; Septiani & Wijaya, 2025). Through this methodological framework, the study was designed to generate a comprehensive understanding of how collaboration between parents and Islamic Religious Education teachers supports the development of students' spirituality in the modern era.

## RESULT | نتائج

### **The Role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Fostering Students' Spiritual Attitudes at MI Miftahul Huda, Bonang Demak**

This study shows that Islamic Religious Education teachers play a very strategic role in fostering students' spiritual attitudes at MI Miftahul Huda Bonangrejo, Bonang, Demak. Based on observations, interviews, and documentation, it appears that Islamic Religious Education teachers function not only as instructors but also as spiritual guides, moral role models, builders of the school's religious culture, and mentors as students navigate digital challenges. These roles create a systematic and relevant development pattern that meets the needs of elementary school students in the modern era

In instructional practice, teachers design learning experiences that connect religious concepts with students' daily lives. They teach Aqidah-Akhlak, Fiqh, and Al-Qur'an Hadith not merely at the cognitive level but also encourage the internalisation of values such as honesty, trustworthiness, reliance on God, and respect for parents. One student expressed the impact of this approach:

“When we pray Dhuha together at school, I feel calmer and more focused in class. The teacher also explains why we pray, so it's not just something we are told to do.” (Student, Grade VI).

The role model dimension also appears to be a key element. Based on field findings, students view Islamic Religious Education teachers as authoritative moral figures, disciplined in worship, and polite in interactions. This role model has a strong influence on students because elementary school-aged children are in the phase of imitating and internalising values through observing adult behaviour. This finding supports the view of Wibowo, Y. R., Hidayat, N., & Salfadilah, F. (2024) that students' religious character will not develop optimally without role models who consistently practice religious teachings. Musyarofah (2025) also emphasised that teacher behavioural models are the most effective medium in forming religious character because students gain direct experience through daily interactions. An Akidah Akhlak teacher explained:

“Students observe what we do more than what we say. If teachers demonstrate patience, pray on time, and speak respectfully, students tend to imitate these behaviours naturally.” (PAI Teacher)

Furthermore, Islamic Religious Education teachers play a key role in driving religious culture within the madrasah environment. This culture emerges through routine activities such as Quranic recitation, congregational Dhuha and Dhuhur prayers, prayers before and after class, and commemoration of Islamic holidays. All of these activities provide students with a platform to repeatedly practice spiritual values, thereby forming lasting habits. Research by Nurjanah

(2024) shows that extracurricular and co-curricular religious activities have a significant impact on strengthening students' spirituality by providing emotional and social religious experiences. Similarly, Abdurrahman (2021) asserts that a school's religious culture creates an environment that facilitates the internalisation of values more effectively than a purely cognitive approach.

Research findings also indicate that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers play a crucial role in assisting students in navigating the impact of digital technology. Teachers provide guidance on digital ethics, Islamic-based media literacy, and how to respond to increasingly accessible negative content. This approach is crucial, considering that most students already use devices and are exposed to social media. A study by Safiqo, T., & Ghofur, A. (2025) shows that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers must transform into moral guides and digital literacy facilitators to prevent students from becoming trapped in a consumerist lifestyle, violent content, or values that conflict with religious teachings. Wibowo, Y. R., Hidayat, N., & Salfadilah, F. (2024) also emphasise that fostering religious character in the digital era requires an adaptive approach that focuses not only on religious rituals but also on developing critical thinking and moral awareness.

Theoretically, the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers found in this study is in line with the concept of spiritual intelligence (Spiritual Quotient) developed by Zohar, D. (2012). Spiritual intelligence describes an individual's ability to understand the deepest meaning of life, act based on values, and develop moral awareness. When teachers relate religious teachings to students' real experiences, they are actually building a cognitive-spiritual structure that will influence students' behaviour in the long term. Jaeni, D. (2019) emphasised that spiritual intelligence is the foundation for the formation of a characterful personality, because internalised spiritual values enable students to act ethically even without supervision.

From an Islamic pedagogical perspective, the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers identified in this study aligns with the concepts of ta'lim, tarbiyah, and ta'dib. Teachers not only teach religious knowledge (ta'lim), but also foster personality and moral development (tarbiyah), and foster proper etiquette (ta'dib). The finding that teachers act as role models, guides, and promoters of religious culture indicates that spiritual development at MI Miftahul Huda is holistic and encompasses all aspects of student self-development. Empirically, this study found that spiritual development carried out by Islamic Religious Education teachers at MI Miftahul Huda occurs through four main strategies. First, internalisation of values through intracurricular learning, where religious teachings are delivered through a dialogical, reflective, and experiential approach. Second, moral role modelling is the most effective means because students learn largely through direct observation. Third, familiarisation with religious activities, which form patterns of worship and Islamic ethics through shared routines. Fourth, digital mentoring, where teachers provide ethical guidance in the use of technology so that students can critically select information based on Islamic values.

In the field, it was found that students showed improvements in their worship habits, active participation in religious activities, politeness in interactions, and the ability to reflect Islamic values in their daily lives. These changes indicate that the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers is effective. However, the study also found obstacles, such as a lack of parental supervision at home, limited face-to-face time, and the influx of negative influences from the digital world. These obstacles demonstrate that spiritual development cannot rely solely on Islamic Religious Education teachers but requires strong synergy between schools, families, and the community. Within this synergy, Islamic Religious Education teachers appear to strive to establish communication with parents, both through formal and informal meetings. The goal is

to ensure that the values developed at school align with parenting patterns at home. This is in line with the analysis of Feby, A.F., Rambe, M., & Rambe, M.S. (2025), which emphasises that the success of students' spiritual development is highly dependent on the consistency of religious education between schools and families.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that Islamic Religious Education teachers make a significant contribution to students' spiritual development, particularly through the integration of values into teaching, behavioural modelling, the development of religious culture, and digital mentoring. This role is becoming increasingly important in the modern era, characterised by the rapid flow of information and social change. By combining pedagogical, psychological, and spiritual approaches, Islamic Religious Education teachers at MI Miftahul Huda can provide religious development that is not merely ritualistic but also shapes students' moral and spiritual awareness

**Table 1. The Role of Islamic Education Teachers in Fostering Students' Spiritual Attitudes**

Research Result	Information
<b>Internalising Values Through Intracurricular Learning</b>	Teachers connect material on faith and morals, Islamic jurisprudence, and the Qur'an and Hadith to students' real-life practices. Students are encouraged to understand the meaning of honesty, trustworthiness, trust in God, and good manners.
<b>Moral Role Modelling (Uswah Hasanah)</b>	Teachers demonstrate religious behaviour, courtesy, and discipline in worship, thus becoming role models for students to emulate.
<b>Forming a Religious Culture in Madrasas</b>	Tadarus (Islamic recitation), congregational Dhuha and Duhur prayers, daily prayers, and PHBI (Islamic Religious Education) activities consistently shape students' religious habits.
<b>Assisting Students in Facing Digital Challenges</b>	Teachers provide education on digital ethics, Islamic media literacy and encourage students to choose positive content to avoid the negative influences of technology.
<b>Holistic Guidance Based on Ta'lim, Tarbiyah, and Ta'dib</b>	Spiritual development includes teaching religious knowledge, instilling morals, cultivating good manners, and reflecting on meaning to shape students' holistic personalities.

Based on the five main research findings, it can be concluded that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers play a crucial role in fostering students' spiritual attitudes at MI Miftahul Huda Bonangrejo Bonang, Demak, through a series of integrated and holistic strategies. Teachers not only act as instructors of religious values through the intracurricular process, but also serve as consistent moral role models, promoters of the madrasah's religious culture, and mentors who guide students in facing the challenges of the digital era. Furthermore, the spiritual development carried out by teachers encompasses the dimensions of ta'lim (Islamic study), tarbiyah (Islamic education), and ta'dib (Islamic guidance), so that spiritual values are not only understood cognitively but are truly internalised and practised by students in their daily lives. The combination of teaching values, exemplary behaviour, religious habits, and digital mentoring makes the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers highly effective in shaping students' spiritual character in a comprehensive, relevant, and adaptive manner to current developments.

### **The Role of Parents in Fostering Students' Spiritual Attitudes in the Family**

Summarising various research findings, the role of parents in fostering children's spiritual attitudes in the family environment can be understood as a series of interrelated functions: role

modelling, habituation, communication of values, environmental supervision (including digital media), and warm emotional support. The family serves as the "primary space" where children learn to know God, understand the meaning of worship, and absorb moral values, which are then reflected in their daily spiritual attitudes.

Many parents emphasised the importance of modelling behaviour at home. One parent stated:

"We try to pray together at Maghrib and limit our child's gadget use afterward. It's not always easy because of work, but we believe children follow what they see at home." (Parent of Grade V Student)

Numerous studies confirm that the family is the earliest agent of religious socialisation and the most decisive factor in a child's spiritual development. Abdurrahman, M. (2021) demonstrated that parents play the role of primary educators in Islamic education at home, through guidance, supervision, and providing examples of worship so that religious values are not only understood cognitively but also lived out in daily practice. This finding aligns with Umroh's (2022) study, which emphasised that a child's spiritual intelligence is strongly influenced by parenting styles and the quality of religious interactions within the family. Parents who are aware of their role as primary caregivers can transform simple activities such as listening to Islamic songs, praying together, or contemplating God's creation into means of internalising spiritual values.

From the perspective of spiritual intelligence (Spiritual Quotient/SQ), Zohar, D. (2012) explains that spiritual intelligence is the ability to place life within a broad framework of meaning, deeply interpret events, and act based on the highest values. When parents consistently link daily activities with the values of monotheism, gratitude, patience, and trust—for example, explaining that learning outcomes, sustenance, and health are gifts from Allah—then they are actually helping their children build a framework of spiritual meaning for the reality of life. Dahlani (2019) adds that SQ is the foundation for the formation of a characterful personality, because children who understand the meaning of their actions will be better able to survive morally when faced with temptations and environmental pressures.

The most obvious role of parents is seen in the role model (uswah). Children learn a great deal through imitation; what they see every day at home will shape how they pray, speak, and even respond to problems. Findings by Hotimah and Yanto (2019) indicate that early childhood spiritual intelligence increases significantly when parents make a habit of being role models in worship (praying on time, reading the Quran, reciting prayers), being patient, and being mindful of their language in front of their children. Umroh (2022) also emphasised that parents who consistently demonstrate religious and empathetic behaviour—rather than simply giving orders—are more successful in fostering children's love for God and good values. This aligns with the classical Islamic educational principle that ta'dib (habituating good manners) is more effective if preceded by role modelling, rather than mere verbal instruction.

In addition to role models, habituation of spiritual values at home is an important pillar. In many Muslim families, habituation is carried out through routines such as praying together before meals, reciting prayers before bed, praying in congregation, reciting the Quran, and giving alms. Putri, A., Arisha, D., Salsabilah, A., Salimah, R., & Pradana, S. (2025). In a study on the role of the family in children's moral and spiritual development, it was shown that simple rituals repeated consistently at home become an effective "spiritual laboratory" for instilling an attitude of reverence for Allah, empathy, discipline, and gratitude. Similar results were also reported by

research by Mardliyah, S., Yulianingsih, W., & Putri, L. S. R. (2020), which found that active parental involvement in family religious activities correlated with increased spiritual awareness and prosocial behaviour in children.

In the digital era, supervision has become an increasingly significant parental responsibility. Another parent explained:

“We don’t just forbid certain apps; we talk about why some content is not good and remind our child to use technology in ways that Allah would approve of.” (Parent of Grade VI Student)

In many studies, the concept of spiritual parenting has emerged as a framework that explains how parents integrate the dimensions of love, meaning, and divine values into parenting. Putri, F. D.'s (2021) study on spiritual parenting of early childhood shows that parents who implement spiritual parenting tend to use a dialogical approach, full of emotional warmth, and link children's experiences to divine values, rather than simply forcing children to perform rituals. This approach makes it easier for children to understand why they need to pray, be honest, and do good to others, so that spiritual attitudes do not stop at mechanical behaviour but develop into inner awareness.

The dimensions of communication and emotional relationships are also crucial. According to Umroh (2022), parents act as motivators and providers of affection that foster a child's sense of inner security; this sense of security is a prerequisite for children to have open dialogue about their fears, doubts, or existential questions regarding God, death, and the meaning of life. Putri et al. (2025) found that warm communication patterns, accompanied by simple yet meaningful explanations, help children connect everyday experiences—such as illness, failure, or success—with the concepts of destiny, prayer, and endeavour. Thus, parents not only teach children "what to do," but also "why" and "for whom" they do what.

In the digital era, parents' role extends to values-based media monitoring and literacy. According to findings by Kusumarini, Ulfah, and M. (2020), uncontrolled exposure to gadgets and the internet can weaken children's involvement in religious activities, increase consumption of violent content, and shift priorities from worship to entertainment. Therefore, many researchers emphasise the importance of parental mediation, which involves not only prohibitions but also critical guidance regarding the digital content consumed by children. Putri et al. (2025) emphasised that parents who combine supervision with dialogue, for example, by inviting children to discuss moral values in films, games, or social media, are more effective in developing a critical and selective spiritual attitude towards global culture.

Parents also play a crucial role in managing the family's social and emotional environment. Umroh (2022) highlighted that family harmony (minimal conflict, open communication, and shared worship activities) significantly contributes to the growth of children's spiritual intelligence. Conversely, families filled with conflict and poor communication tend to hinder spiritual development, as children absorb more tension than inner peace. This aligns with classic findings in developmental psychology, which assert that emotional stability within the family facilitates more mature moral and religious development.

However, various studies have also revealed obstacles to the implementation of this role. Pratiwi, D. (2015), noted that busy work schedules, low religious literacy among some parents, and the perception that religious education is "enough at school" often lead to minimal spiritual care at home. Meanwhile, Umroh (2022) highlighted that not all parents understand the importance of starting spiritual development from an early age (the golden age), so spiritual

strengthening is only carried out when children reach school age or adolescence, even though the basic patterns of spiritual attitudes have already been formed. From the perspective of role strengthening, many researchers recommend closer synergy between families and educational institutions. A study by Muthi, I. (2025) showed that students' spiritual intelligence increases when the values taught by Islamic Religious Education teachers at school are reinforced by parenting patterns and habits at home; a lack of synchrony between the two actually leads to value confusion in children. This means, in my opinion, that the role of parents in the family environment is not a standalone position, but part of a faith education ecosystem that must be aligned with the school and the surrounding religious community.

Overall, this discussion shows that the role of parents in fostering students' spiritual attitudes within the family environment includes: (1) being role models of worship and morals; (2) establishing meaningful worship routines and religious habits; (3) developing warm and reflective communication about Islamic values; (4) monitoring and guiding children's media use and social interactions; and (5) creating a harmonious and supportive family atmosphere. When these five dimensions operate relatively consistently, various studies show an increase in spiritual awareness, religious discipline, social empathy, and children's ability to interpret life events from a faith perspective. Conversely, if this role is weak or left entirely to schools, the formation of spiritual attitudes tends to be shallow and ritualistic, and is more easily displaced by the influence of popular culture and digital currents.

**Table 2: The Role of Parents in Fostering Students' Spiritual Attitudes in the Family Environment**

Findings	Information
<b>Parental Exemplary Behaviour (Uswah Hasanah)</b>	Children learn spiritual values through observing their parents' behavior, such as praying on time, reciting the Quran, guarding their tongues, and being patient. Modelling has proven to be the most effective method of development at an early age and in elementary school.
<b>Instilling Religious Values &amp; Rituals</b>	Parents establish family worship routines such as praying together, reciting the Quran, praying in congregation, and giving alms. Repeated routines foster a stable internalisation of spiritual values.
<b>Religious Communication &amp; Warm Emotional Relationships</b>	Parents explain religious values in a gentle, dialogue-based, and age-appropriate manner, enabling children to understand the meaning of worship and religious teachings more reflectively.
<b>Digital Guidance &amp; Environmental Monitoring</b>	Parents monitor gadget use, guide positive media consumption, and guide children in evaluating digital content based on Islamic values.
<b>Creating a Harmonious &amp; Religious Family Environment</b>	A peaceful family atmosphere, minimal conflict, and rich in shared worship activities provides a fertile ground for children's spiritual development.

Based on the research findings described in the table, it is shown that fostering children's spiritual attitudes within the family environment occurs through five main dimensions: role modelling, habituating worship, warm religious communication, digital support, and creating a harmonious family atmosphere. Previous studies support the consistent implementation of these five dimensions, resulting in significant improvements in children's spiritual awareness, religious discipline, social empathy, and the ability to interpret life events based on faith. Therefore, the role of parents has been proven to be a key foundation for developing children's spirituality

before any educational intervention from schools or the community.

## DISCUSSION

## مناقشة

This study demonstrates that the role of parents constitutes a primary foundation in shaping students' spiritual attitudes, particularly during elementary school when children are in a developmental phase characterised by imitation and the construction of meaning systems. Field findings reveal that children's spiritual development emerges through five key dimensions: role modelling, habituation of worship, religious communication, digital supervision, and the creation of a harmonious family atmosphere. Among these, role modelling appears as the most influential factor, as children internalise behavioural standards by observing their parents. When parents perform prayers punctually, recite the Quran, maintain respectful speech, and demonstrate patience, these practices become lived representations of religious values. This finding aligns with Sari (2019), who argues that parental exemplarity directly contributes to the growth of children's spiritual intelligence, and with Syahid and Kamaruddin (2020), who emphasise parents' position as primary educators in family-based Islamic education.

Beyond role modelling, the consistent practice of religious rituals at home—such as congregational prayer, bedtime supplications, and Quran recitation—creates repetitive spiritual experiences that gradually form habits. Darmansyah et al. (2025) describe these routines as a “spiritual laboratory” in which values are internalised through everyday practice, while Andayani and Raharja (2024) confirm that parental involvement in worship enhances children's spiritual awareness and prosocial behaviour. Furthermore, religious communication strengthens reflective understanding. Parents who discuss concepts such as gratitude, patience, destiny, and prayer enable children to engage with religion not merely as ritual obligation but as meaningful guidance. Warm and dialogical communication has been shown to foster spiritual intelligence by providing a secure space for inquiry (Umroh, 2022; Wulandani, 2022).

However, the findings also reveal a structural tension between the ideal expectations of spiritual parenting and the socio-economic realities faced by many families. While Islamic educational discourse often emphasises intensive parental guidance, not all parents possess equal temporal, educational, or economic resources to enact these ideals consistently. Several parents reported long working hours and unstable incomes, conditions that limit opportunities for shared worship, sustained dialogue, or close supervision of children's digital activities. In such contexts, spiritual guidance risks becoming fragmented, as practical survival needs frequently take precedence over pedagogical aspirations.

This tension illustrates that spiritual education within families is not solely a matter of religious commitment but is also shaped by broader structural conditions. Families from more stable economic backgrounds tend to have greater flexibility to organise religious routines and monitor technology use, whereas economically constrained households may rely more heavily on schools to fulfil aspects of spiritual formation. Consequently, the responsibility for nurturing spirituality shifts from being a purely familial obligation toward a shared institutional task.

The digital era further intensifies this structural challenge. Although parents are expected to supervise children's media consumption, effective supervision often requires digital literacy and sustained attention—resources unevenly distributed across households. Field findings indicate that excessive and uncontrolled gadget use correlates with declining interest in religious activities, supporting Sa'adah, Arif, and Alfarisi (2025), who found that negative digital exposure can redirect children's focus away from religious engagement. Supervision combined with

dialogical guidance appears more effective in cultivating critical spiritual awareness (Hendrawan, 2009), yet implementing such strategies may be difficult for parents with limited technological familiarity.

Additionally, the creation of a harmonious family atmosphere emerges as a crucial precondition for spiritual growth. Homes characterised by persistent conflict tend to inhibit children's religious sensitivity, whereas emotionally supportive environments encourage the development of spiritual awareness (Umroh, 2022). Nevertheless, economic pressure can indirectly generate household stress, suggesting that emotional climate is often intertwined with structural stability rather than purely interpersonal dynamics.

Overall, this study indicates that parental roles operate holistically through modelling behaviour, establishing routines, mediating values, supervising digital exposure, and cultivating emotional security. At the same time, the analysis underscores that these roles are enacted within structural constraints that shape the extent to which spiritual ideals can be realised. Recognising this tension invites a broader understanding of spiritual education—one that moves beyond normative expectations of parents toward acknowledging the need for stronger school–family partnerships and institutional support. Such an approach enables the foundation of children's spirituality to remain resilient despite the social and economic pressures of the modern environment.

## CONCLUSION

## خاتمة

Based on the overall findings, it can be concluded that fostering students' spiritual attitudes at MI Miftahul Huda Bonangrejo, Bonang, Demak, in the digital era can be achieved more effectively through strong synergy between Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at school and parents within the family environment. PAI teachers play strategic roles as educators of values, spiritual mentors, moral exemplars, promoters of the madrasah's religious culture, and facilitators of digital literacy who guide students in understanding, internalising, and practising Islamic teachings reflectively in their daily lives. Concurrently, parents function as primary educators by nurturing spirituality through exemplary worship, the habituation of religious practices, warm religious communication, supervision and guidance of digital media use, and the cultivation of a harmonious and supportive family atmosphere.

The collaboration between these two educational spheres, supported by both field findings and relevant literature, contributes to measurable improvements in students' spiritual awareness, religious discipline, social morality, and their capacity to interpret life experiences from a faith-based perspective. Therefore, the roles of Islamic Religious Education teachers and parents are not merely complementary but collectively form a comprehensive spiritual education ecosystem that must be continuously strengthened amid the pressures of modernisation, globalisation, and the increasingly pervasive flow of digital information.

Theoretically, this study offers an original contribution to the literature on religious education and children's spirituality by proposing an integrative perspective that positions spiritual development as a collaborative and context-sensitive process rather than an outcome of isolated educational efforts. These findings expand the understanding that children's spirituality in the digital era cannot be constructed solely through ritual practices, but must be supported by an integrated educational ecosystem connecting schools, families, and technology. This perspective shifts the discourse from a predominantly ritualistic orientation toward a systemic framework that recognises the interaction between institutional guidance, familial

socialisation, and digital environments in shaping students' spiritual identities.

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