The Role of Parents in Addressing the Influence of Free Fire Game on Children's Morality in Dapu-Bata Sabang Community

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Abstract

The swift advancement of digital technology has transformed children's daily lives and introduced new challenges in their moral education. This study sought to examine the effect of the Free Fire game on children's morality at Dapu-Bata, Sabang, as well as parents' strategies and obstacles in dealing with this problem. It used a descriptive qualitative method for data collection through observation, interviews, and documentation from parents, Free Fire-playing children, community leaders, and teachers. The results indicated that the duration of playing Free Fire influences children's morality concerning emotional control, religious practice, study motivation, and communication with family members. There is an apparent decline in prayer frequency and motivation to study accompanied by reduced communication with parents. Out of all strategies employed to combat these effects on morality due to gaming, enhancing religious education together with building communication between parent and child plus providing alternative activities for children was found most effective among others. Difficulties faced by parents were peer pressure from friends accompanied by unrestricted internet access for kids who are addicted to games due to low digital literacy skills among them; however, this study recommends integrating Islamic educational values into parenting strategies based on empirical evidence for upholding moral education in the digital era.

Keywords: Free Fire; Children's Morality; Parental Role; Islamic Education; Digital Era.

Introduction

Morality is the bedrock of human life and is reflected in actions, choices, and relationships from childhood to adulthood. In Islamic teachings, morality is central and constitutes worship and practice. The life of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) provides a moral framework for Muslims to live in peace with God, other humans, nature, and themselves. However, the rapid pace of technological development and the increasing digital culture have changed everyday life and the way children react to stimuli and entertainment. This change is not only seen in big cities but also in small towns that have internet access. As digital devices become a part of children's lives more than before, moral education faces challenges that are different from the past. The fast-paced digital transformation has led children to use smartphones and online media more than ever before, often replacing face-to-face communication and traditional family interactions. According to Timotheou et al. (2022), digital technologies affect how children learn and other aspects of their development by providing new opportunities but at the same time creating risks. One of the biggest trends in this situation is playing online games a lot, especially Free Fire, a battle royale game that has become very popular among kids and teenagers because it is easy to get and very exciting with its competitive elements. It has been seen that many children in

Dapu-Bata Sabang play Free Fire for hours on end often ignoring their responsibilities at school or even their religious obligations. This finding supports previous studies by Hermawan and Kudus (2021) as well as Hanifah (2025) that excessive gaming can reduce enthusiasm for studying and attention to religious duties. Changes in children's habits are not only about how they spend their time but also involve changes in behavior patterns when interacting with others which are influenced by long hours spent playing games.Some studies state that parents have found many behavioral changes in their children after they have played Free Fire for a long time. The studies of Sajidah (2023) and Harahap & Ramadan (2021) describe cases of irritability, aggression, and disobedience to instructions, as well as declining academic achievements. Since the game is played with combat themes, intense competition, and unregulated interactions with other players, these elements can affect emotional reactions and interpersonal

behavior of children. The study of Hanifa & Hidayat (2022) proves that increased intensity of playing games also reduces social skills. This indicates that long hours of play can reduce children's ability to interact meaningfully with their environment. Harahap & Ramadan (2021) also mentioned that excessive playing affects mental and physical health and does not only bring risks related to behavior. In a phenomenological study, Husni (2025) revealed that for most children Free Fire is not just a game but an avenue for friendship and social identity which complicates the process of reducing the playing period. Even though these virtual social relations seem beneficial, they will not allow the child to develop real social skills. Sajidah (2023) said children who often play online games become more individualistic and less aware of their environment which indicates a broader developmental impact.

From an Islamic point of view, violent games or those that distract children from worship are dangerous, according to Suryantika et al. (2024). In Dapu-Bata Sabang, parents reported negative changes in their children's behavior after prolonged exposure to Free Fire manifested in the form of decreased motivation to pray, disobedience, emotional instability, and poor academic performance. Tian et al. (2019) state that gaming addiction in adolescents is caused by various factors such as sensation-seeking motives, peer pressure, and more importantly lack of parental supervision. Their study results emphasize the role of parental awareness in moderating digital consumption behavior. Hermawan & Kudus (2021) also stress the need for effective parenting strategies in terms of guidance as well as monitoring children's activities in cyberspace continuously. However, many parents cannot carry out this responsibility due to work pressure, low technological literacy skills, or lack of understanding about the dangers of digital gaming so that these factors weaken parental capacity to intervene early in directing children's digital habits.

The challenges above make moral education increasingly important. Moral education is not limited to social behavior but also includes the basic values of life that form the basis of a child's view of life. In Islam, it is expected to be able to create a balance of life values by instilling a sense of responsibility, humility, respect, and devotion. However, modern families often struggle to instill these values consistently. Inadequate religious knowledge, limited quality time with children, and inconsistent parental modeling are some of the factors that contribute to the moral decline among the youth. The presence of digital distractions like online games Free Fire has made it even more difficult. Since online gaming can take away attention from spiritual and moral development, families and schools need to play a more coordinated role in guiding children. Parents should not only communicate moral expectations but also model behaviors that align with Islamic values and help their children develop disciplined digital habits. How families respond to this challenge reflects larger cultural and social forces in the community. This study attempts to describe parental efforts in Dapu-Bata Sabang in directing their children toward good moral development under the influence of Free Fire.

The research examines several main issues: the level of parental awareness and participation in moral education, parents' religious knowledge as a basis for moral education, the role of Free Fire in children's behavior and value formation, parents' efforts to reduce its negative effects, and the factors that enable or block success in this effort. These issues are then utilized to formulate research objectives, namely: to describe how parental roles are implemented in real life, to find out the level of parent's religious literacy, to analyze changes in children's behavior due to Free Fire, to identify parental strategies in reducing bad impacts from Free Fire, and contextual conditions that influence the overall effectiveness of moral education in the digital age. The scientific relevance of this research can be seen from the theoretical and practical aspects. Theoretically, this research develops studies on Islamic education by highlighting issues of contemporary digital challenges that intersect with traditional moral education. Practically, it provides awareness to parents regarding the danger of Free Fire and their role in deciding whether or not their children should play this game. At the community level, this research raises awareness about the social impact of online games on children and encourages community participation in character building for children. At the educational institution level, this research provides input for evaluating and developing character-building programs. Local governments can also benefit from this research by using its findings as a basis for child protection policies as well as programs for teenagers that guide them toward healthy digital behavior. Given all these aspects of relevance, this study is expected to contribute to creating a conducive environment for moral education among children in Dapu-Bata Sabang and its surroundings.

Background Theory

Moral Education in Islam
The term *akhlaq* originates from the Arabic word *khuluqun*, which refers to character, temperament, conduct, and disposition. Linguistically, it is closely tied to the words *khalkun* (creation), *Khaliq* (the Creator), and *makhluk* (created beings), reflecting the integrated relationship between human behavior and the divine order. Conceptually, *akhlaq* refers to traits embedded within an individual's inner self that manifest as habitual actions. These traits shape personal identity and guide daily behavior. In Islam, moral education encompasses every dimension of life—one's relationship with Allah SWT, interactions with fellow humans, and engagement with the natural world. For Muslims, the highest model of moral excellence is the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), whose noble character serves as an enduring standard of behavior. The Qur'an and Hadith provide the primary foundation

for Islamic moral instruction, offering clear guidance on distinguishing right from wrong. The Prophet Muhammad himself emphasized that perfecting moral character was a central mission of his prophethood. The Qur'anic command in Surah At-Tahrim, verse 6, instructs believers to safeguard themselves and their families from wrongdoing, underscoring the responsibility of parents to guide their children toward virtuous behavior. Moral education therefore extends beyond verbal instruction; it involves shaping a harmonious life grounded in responsibility, mutual respect, and adherence to Islamic principles.

The Family's Role in Character Formation from an Islamic Perspective

The family serves as the earliest and most influential environment for a child's character development. Putri (2021) asserts that within Islamic thought, the family holds a fundamental role in shaping children's moral and spiritual growth. It is within the home that children first encounter religious teachings, social norms, emotional support, and behavioral role models that form the foundation for their future character. Islam assigns great responsibility to parents in educating their children, a responsibility emphasized in Surah At-Tahrim, verse 6. Parental duties therefore go beyond meeting physical needs, extending to the nurturing of spiritual, emotional, and ethical development. Character formation within the family includes several essential components: introducing belief in Allah SWT through daily worship, fostering noble behavior such as honesty and patience, teaching social awareness and empathy, and building emotional resilience and self-confidence. Parents act as primary role models whose actions profoundly influence the child's understanding of moral conduct. When families cultivate an environment that supports religious practice, ethical discipline, and emotional stability, they establish a strong foundation that prepares children to make wise and responsible choices as they grow.

The Role of Parents in Child Education in the Digital Era

The digital age introduces challenges that require parents to adapt their roles to new technological realities. Wahdini (2024) explains that modern parents must possess digital literacy to guide children effectively, as digital media, the internet, and smartphones have become deeply embedded in children's daily lives. In this context, parents function not only as caregivers but also as supervisors, educators, and role models in digital behavior. Their responsibilities include monitoring online activities, teaching children about ethical digital conduct, ensuring safe and beneficial use of technology, and modeling responsible online habits. Balancing freedom and structure is a major challenge, as unrestricted access can expose children to risks such as gaming addiction, harmful content, cyberbullying, and influences that conflict with Islamic values. Fadlan, Hidayati, and Abadi (2025) highlight the importance of a problem-solving approach to parenting in the digital era. This method involves collaborative discussions between parents and children to identify issues, analyze causes, consider solutions, and evaluate outcomes. Such an approach strengthens communication, trust, and the child's ability to think critically. By applying this strategy, parents help children build digital self-regulation while reinforcing religious and educational responsibilities.

Online Games and Their Impact on Children's Morality

Online games, particularly Free Fire, have created new moral challenges for children in the digital age. Hermawan and Kudus (2021) note that competitive gameplay and exposure to simulated violence may influence children's behavior, potentially increasing aggressive tendencies and reducing academic motivation. As a highly popular battle royale game, Free Fire encourages prolonged playing periods, often at the expense of study time, social interaction, and religious practice. Huda, Khuza'i, and Kamil (2024) found that excessive engagement with Free Fire negatively affects children's prayer habits. Many children postpone or skip prayers due to their focus on gaming, reflecting a decline in spiritual discipline. The study also indicates a reduced interest in religious activities such as Qur'an recitation and mosque participation, demonstrating how online gaming can disrupt spiritual development when unsupervised. Suryantika et al. (2024) further argue that online games may threaten a child's faith when they encourage neglect of worship, excessive attachment to worldly pleasure, exposure to inappropriate values, or uncontrolled interaction with other players. Their findings underscore the need for strong Islamic educational principles—instilling monotheism, encouraging habitual worship, and monitoring children's behavior—to counteract negative influences from online environments.

Parental Strategies for Addressing Online Gaming Challenges

Parents hold a critical role in mitigating the negative effects of online gaming on children's moral development. Hermawan and Kudus (2021) propose several practical strategies, including active monitoring of gameplay duration and content, educating children about digital risks, setting clear rules regarding gaming routines, offering constructive alternative activities, and maintaining open communication to build trust and understanding. Fadlan et al. (2025) emphasize that a collaborative problem-solving approach can help children feel involved rather than controlled. This method strengthens emotional regulation, decision-making skills, and moral awareness. When parents and children work together to establish boundaries and evaluate solutions, children are more likely to internalize healthy digital habits. Suryantika et al. (2024) emphasize the importance of integrating Islamic educational principles into digital parenting. These include nurturing strong faith, encouraging consistent worship practices, providing constructive moral guidance, supervising interactions, and maintaining nurturing communication. Consistent application of these principles helps children build a resilient moral framework and differentiate between beneficial and harmful digital influences.

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Methodology

Research Type and Approach

This study employs a field research design with a descriptive qualitative approach. Qualitative research aims to understand phenomena experienced by research subjects—such as behavior, perceptions, motivations, and actions—through a holistic lens and by presenting findings in narrative form. The descriptive approach is used to provide a systematic and accurate portrayal of the characteristics, conditions, and realities found in the field. In this research, a qualitative descriptive approach allows the researcher to examine in detail the efforts made by parents in nurturing their children's moral development in response to the influence of the online game *Free Fire* in Dapu-Bata, Sabang. This includes exploring how the game affects children's moral behavior, the strategies applied by parents to address these influences, and the challenges encountered in carrying out moral education in the digital era.

Research Location and Duration

The study was conducted in Dapu-Bata, located in Cot Ba'u Village, Sukajaya District, Sabang City. The location was selected based on several considerations:
1. Dapu-Bata has a significant population of school-aged children.
2. Preliminary observations revealed that many children in this area actively play *Free Fire*.
3. The community displays diverse educational and economic backgrounds, providing varied research data.
4. The area is accessible to the researcher, facilitating effective data collection.

Dapu-Bata covers approximately 45,000 m² (4.5 hectares) and is bordered by Ie Meulee to the north, Pasiran to the south, the Yos Sudarso TNI-AL Field to the west, and Tanoh Buju to the east. The research was conducted over a period of three months—from the preparation stage to data collection, analysis, and final reporting.

Research Subjects

Research subjects were selected using purposive sampling, in which participants are chosen based on specific criteria relevant to the study. Four categories of subjects were included:
1. Parents of children aged 10–17 who actively play *Free Fire*, totaling 10–15 families. Criteria included: children having played *Free Fire* for at least three months, high playing intensity (minimum two hours per day), and parental willingness to participate in interviews.
2. Children aged 10–17 who actively play *Free Fire*, totaling 10–15 individuals whose parents were participants in the study. Children needed to be active players, willing to be interviewed, and have parental consent.
3. Religious and community leaders, such as the Imam of the *meunasah*, the *keuchik* (neighborhood head), and Qur'an teachers, totaling 3–5 individuals selected based on their involvement in guiding children's moral development.
4. Teachers or homeroom representatives of child participants, totaling 2–3 individuals, to provide information regarding students' behavioral changes and academic performance.

The inclusion of multiple participant categories strengthens data triangulation and supports the validity and reliability of the study's findings.

Data Collection Techniques

Data in this study were collected through three primary techniques, namely observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was carried out through direct engagement at the research site using a passive participatory approach, in which the researcher was present during activities but did not interfere with them. Through this method, the researcher observed how children engaged with the *Free Fire* game, including where they played, how long they played, and how they interacted with fellow players. The observation also focused on children's everyday behavior in the community, particularly their participation in religious activities at the *meunasah*, their interactions with peers and adults, and the general patterns of communication and discipline seen in parent–child relationships. Environmental conditions that could influence children's behavior—such as the availability of internet cafés, community spaces, and organized local programs—were also examined.

All observation findings were documented in field notes and later analyzed alongside interview and documentation data. Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format to allow flexibility in exploring participants' experiences more deeply. Different interview guides were developed for each category of informants. Interviews with parents explored family background, digital literacy, knowledge of *Free Fire*, patterns of children's gameplay, and changes observed in children's behavior, spirituality, academic performance, and social interaction. Discussions also covered financial implications related to in-game purchases, parental moral guidance strategies, challenges in supervising children, the parents' own religious understanding, and their expectations regarding solutions to gaming-related issues. Interviews with children focused on their gaming habits, duration of play, reasons for engaging with *Free Fire*, and the impact of gameplay on their religious practices, study habits, and emotional responses when restricted from playing. Children were also asked about in-game spending, parental rules, and their awareness of

potential gaming impacts. Religious and community leaders were interviewed to understand their views on the prevalence of gaming among children, its influence on moral behavior and religious participation, and the efforts undertaken by the community to guide children's character development.

They also provided insights into challenges encountered in moral education and offered religious or social recommendations. Teachers were asked about behavioral changes observed at school, students' academic performance and motivation, institutional strategies for addressing gaming issues, and collaborative efforts between schools and parents. Interviews were held at locations convenient for participants, lasted between 30 and 60 minutes, and were recorded with permission while supplementary notes were taken throughout the process. Documentation served as an additional data source that supported and validated findings from observation and interviews. The researcher collected photographs of children's gaming activities while ensuring privacy, as well as images of alternative constructive activities such as religious events, sports, and extracurricular programs. Relevant administrative documents were also gathered, including demographic data and organizational structures of Dapu-Bata, school achievement records of participating children before and after their involvement with *Free Fire*, and schedules of religious activities along with attendance information. A range of academic materials—such as journal articles, books, and previous research—were also consulted. The documentation helped enrich the data set by providing visual, contextual, and historical evidence that complemented and strengthened interpretations derived from other methods.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis in this study followed the Miles and Huberman model, which consists of three interconnected stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing with verification. The first stage, data reduction, involved selecting, organizing, and simplifying the raw data into meaningful categories that aligned with the research focus. This process included transcribing interview recordings, reviewing field notes and documentation, identifying information relevant to the research questions, and categorizing the data into themes such as the influence of *Free Fire* on children, parental guidance efforts, and challenges faced by families. Throughout the research period, data reduction was carried out continuously to ensure that emerging findings remained focused, manageable, and analytically coherent.

The second stage, data display, referred to the organized presentation of information in a form that allowed the researcher to interpret patterns and relationships more effectively. Data were arranged through structured narrative descriptions supported by tables summarizing quantitative aspects such as playing duration and demographic characteristics. Visual aids such as diagrams were used to illustrate connections among emerging categories, while relevant excerpts from interviews were incorporated to strengthen the clarity and credibility of interpretations. The systematic organization of data allowed the researcher to understand the broader picture as well as specific details, facilitating the identification of significant themes.

The final stage, conclusion drawing and verification, involved synthesizing the analyzed data to identify recurring patterns, themes, and relationships. Conclusions were initially tentative and refined through repeated checks against the raw data. Verification was conducted through several strategies, including cross-checking the consistency of information across sources, comparing findings with existing theories and previous research, and using triangulation to validate the accuracy of interpretations. Member checking was also employed by confirming interpretations with informants to ensure that the researcher's understanding reflected their actual perspectives. Only conclusions supported by strong, consistent, and verifiable evidence were included in the final results of the study.

Data Validity Techniques

To ensure the credibility and accuracy of the data obtained in this study, several validation techniques were applied. The first technique used was triangulation, which consisted of three forms: source triangulation, method triangulation, and time triangulation. Source triangulation was carried out by comparing information collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, as well as validating responses across different participants. Method triangulation was implemented by examining whether findings remained consistent when gathered through various techniques such as interviews, observation, and supporting documents. Meanwhile, time triangulation involved repeating observations or interviews at different times to determine whether the data remained stable and reliable.

In addition to triangulation, prolonged engagement was also employed, allowing the researcher to spend sufficient time in the field. This made it possible to build trust with participants, gain a deeper understanding of the social and cultural environment, and detect inconsistencies or biased responses. Persistent observation was another technique applied, in which the researcher continuously observed relevant behaviors, interactions, and environmental conditions to identify key factors connected to the research focus. Finally, member checking was conducted by returning the interpreted data to the informants to confirm whether the interpretations accurately reflected their intended meanings. This step helped prevent misinterpretation and reinforced the authenticity and credibility of the research findings.

Results and Discussion

Overview of the Research Location

The research took place in Dapu-Bata, a neighborhood located in Cot Ba'u Village, Sukajaya District, Sabang City, Aceh Province. The total land area of the neighborhood is approximately 45,000 m² (4.5 hectares). Geographically, the area is bordered by Ie Meulee to the north, Pasiran to the south, the Yos Sudarso TNI-AL Field to the west, and Tanoh Buju to the east. Based on community administrative records, Dapu-Bata consists of 450 residents residing in 120 households. A significant portion of the population comprises school-aged children, indicating a demographically youthful community.

Table 1. Composition of Residents in Dapu-Bata

Category	Number	Percentage
Total Population	450 individuals	100%
Number of Households	120 families	-
School-Age Children (7–17 years)	160 children	35%
Adults (18–60 years)	250 individuals	56%
Elderly (>60 years)	40 individuals	9%

Employment distribution varies, with almost one-third of households involved in trade, followed by government employees, military/police, and fishermen. These variations indicate diverse socioeconomic backgrounds that potentially influence children's digital access and parental monitoring capacity.

Table 2. Employment Distribution of Households

Occupation Type	Number of Households	Percentage
Civil Servants	25	21%
Military/Police	18	15%
Traders	35	29%
Fishermen	22	18%
Laborers	15	13%
Other	5	4%
Total	120	100%

The community is entirely Muslim and uses the same meunasah for praying and reading the Qur'an. Almost all children go to school. There are three internet cafés close by, within 500 meters, that will enable children to play online games on their smartphones.

Profile of Research Informants

A total of 35 participants contributed to the study, comprising parents, children, religious/community leaders, and teachers.

Table 3. Informant Distribution

Category	Number	Notes
Parents	12	6 fathers, 6 mothers
Free Fire-playing Children	12	Ages 10–17
Religious/Community Leaders	4	Imam, Keuchik, Qur'an teachers
Teachers	3	From different schools
Total	35	-

Additional profiling of participating children shows high gameplay duration and long-term game exposure, confirming a consistent pattern of active gaming behavior.

Table 4. Child Participant Characteristics

No.	Initial	Age	Gender	Education Level	Daily Playing Duration	Length of Playing Free Fire
1	Rizki	14	Male	Grade 8 (Junior High School)	3–4 hours	1 year
2	Fahmi	16	Male	Grade 10 (Senior High School)	6–7 hours	2 years
3	Andi	13	Male	Grade 7 (Junior High School)	4–5 hours	8 months
4	Dedi	15	Male	Grade 9 (Junior High School)	5–6 hours	1.5 years
5	Rudi	12	Male	Grade 6 (Elementary School)	3–4 hours	6 months
6	Zaki	14	Male	Grade 8 (Junior High School)	4–5 hours	1 year
7	Farhan	17	Male	Grade 11 (Senior High School)	5–6 hours	2.5 years

8	Siti	15	Female	Grade 9 (Junior High School)	2–3 hours	10 months
9	Rina	14	Female	Grade 8 (Junior High School)	3–4 hours	7 months
10	Ayu	11	Female	Grade 5 (Elementary School)	2–3 hours	6 months
11	Dina	16	Female	Grade 10 (Senior High School)	4–5 hours	1.5 years
12	Budi	10	Male	Grade 4 (Elementary School)	2–3 hours	6 months

The Free Fire Phenomenon in Dapu-Bata

The results show that Free Fire has turned into an accepted and prevalent game among kids. Imam Meunasah, Ustadz Mahmud (45), said, "Most of the boys here are into Free Fire, even a few girls play it. They meet up in the afternoon or at night either at the internet cafe or one of their friends' houses to play together sometimes they skip prayer times." Gameplay patterns suggest regular and long hours of playing.

Table 5. Time Patterns of Free Fire Gameplay

Playing Time	Number of Children	Percentage
After school (14:00–17:00)	10	83%
Evening (19:00–23:00)	12	100%
Midnight (23:00–02:00)	5	42%
Weekends/holidays (all day)	9	75%

Some children spend money on in-game purchases ("top-ups"), reflecting increasing digital consumer behavior.

Table 6. Top-Up Spending

Spending Category	Number of Children	Percentage
Never top-up	3	25%
Rp 10.000–50.000/week	5	42%
Rp 50.000–100.000/week	3	25%
> Rp 100.000/week	1	8%
Total	12	100%

Effects of Free Fire on Children's Moral and Behavioral Development

Parents reported changes in emotional regulation, communication styles, and social habits.

Table 7. Behavioral Changes

Change Type	Number of Children	Percentage
Increased aggression	10	83%
Use of harsh language	9	75%
Withdrawn behavior	8	67%
Disobedience	11	92%
Low social awareness	7	58%
Emotional instability	9	75%

A father once commented that since his son began playing Free Fire, he had become very agitated, especially when losing. His son had broken his phone! He also mentioned how much worse the boy's language had gotten. People have lost their faith.

Table 8. Impact on Religious Practices

Aspect	Before FF	After FF
Timely daily prayer	10 (83%)	2 (17%)
Congregational prayer	9 (75%)	3 (25%)
Qur'an recitation	11 (92%)	4 (33%)
Religious participation	10 (83%)	3 (25%)

Academic performance also deteriorated:

Table 9. Academic Performance Changes

Category	Number	%
Significant decline (>10 points)	7	58%
Moderate decline (5–10 points)	4	33%
No change	1	8%

Daily learning habits were also disrupted.

Table 10. Learning Activity Impact

Learning Aspect	Number of Children	Percentage
Lack of motivation to study	10 children	83%
Failure to complete homework	9 children	75%
Feeling sleepy in class	8 children	67%
Inability to focus during lessons	11 children	92%
Decline in learning motivation	10 children	83%

Family relationships experienced strain.

Table 11. Impact on Family Dynamics

Relationship Aspect	Number of Children	Percentage
Reduced communication with parents	9 children	75%
Increased conflict with parents	10 children	83%
Worsened relationship with siblings	7 children	58%
Rarely eats meals with family	8 children	67%
Prefers to isolate themselves	9 children	75%

Parents' religious knowledge varied:

Table 12. Parental Religious Knowledge

Level of Knowledge	Number of Parents	Percentage	Indicators
High	3 parents	25%	Understands Qur'an, Hadith, fiqh, and moral teachings
Moderate	6 parents	50%	Understands basic religious practices and moral values
Low	3 parents	25%	Knowledge limited to basic rituals
Total	12 parents	100%	-

Parental Responses and Strategies

Parents implemented diverse strategies ranging from supervising device use, establishing schedules, providing alternative activities, and religious reinforcement.

Table 13. Parental Strategies

Type of Effort	Number of Parents	Percentage	Effectiveness
Giving advice and reprimands	12 parents	100%	Low
Limiting gaming time	10 parents	83%	Moderate
Monitoring children's activities	8 parents	67%	Moderate
Providing alternative activities	5 parents	42%	High
Using rewards and punishments	7 parents	58%	Moderate
Taking or hiding the child's phone	6 parents	50%	Low
Strengthening religious education	9 parents	75%	High
Intensifying communication with the child	6 parents	50%	High
Collaborating with teachers	4 parents	33%	Moderate

A mother shared: "Rather than forbidding the game, I talk with my child about its impacts. I developed a schedule and offered alternative activities like sports. Alhamdulillah, he is slowly improving." Religious interventions were particularly influential.

Table 14. Religious-Based Interventions

Type of Effort	Number of Parents	Observed Outcomes
Encouraging children to perform congregational prayer	9 parents	67% of children began praying more regularly
Reciting the Qur'an together at home	6 parents	50% of children became more consistent
Listening to religious lectures together	5 parents	60% of children showed improved understanding
Involving children in youth religious study groups	3 parents	100% of children showed strong enthusiasm
Providing rewards for consistent worship practices	7 parents	71% of children became more motivated

Challenges in Moral Guidance

Parents encountered multiple obstacles, including limited time, lack of technological understanding, peer influence, and children's gaming dependency.

Table 15. Challenges Faced by Parents

Type of Challenge	Number of Parents	Percentage	Difficulty Level
Demanding work schedules	10 parents	83%	High
Limited technological knowledge	8 parents	67%	High
Peer influence	11 parents	92%	Very High
Child already experiencing addiction	9 parents	75%	Very High
Limited support from spouse	4 parents	33%	Moderate
Uncooperative child behavior	10 parents	83%	High
Easy access to the internet	12 parents	100%	Very High

One mother stated: "My biggest obstacle is time. I work from morning until evening, so I cannot supervise my child constantly. I also do not understand technology well enough to control device settings."

Discussion

The Influence of Free Fire on Children's Morality from an Islamic Perspective

The results show that Free Fire has a significantly negative effect on the moral behavior of children in Dapu-Bata. Most respondents, or 83 percent, are easily annoyed, and 92 percent are more difficult to guide. These results are in line with Hermawan and Kudus (2021), who state that games with violent scenes can be a medium for children's behavior to deviate. The most worrying aspect is in the worship aspect, where only 17 percent of children still perform their prayers on time after being addicted to the game, a very sharp decline from 83 percent before. This is also supported by Huda et al. (2024), who found that there was a decrease in prayer discipline among children who were exposed to Free Fire.

Suryantika et al. (2024) further note that online games may threaten a child's spiritual foundation by fostering negligence in worship and encouraging thought patterns that contradict Islamic values. In this respect, Islamic moral theory provides an essential perspective on how digital entertainment may affect the character of children. Dewana and Jenuri (2024) and Dzulfahmi and Hamidah (2025) mention responsibility, empathy, and honesty—values that can be lost when children adopt aggressive or impulsive attitudes from games. Islamic perspectives on gaming go beyond entertainment; they urge consideration of the messages within games, assisting parents in distinguishing Islamic content from non-Islamic content.

Effectiveness of Parental Efforts and Evidence-Based Interventions

The best results came from strategies involving religious reinforcement, structured alternative activities, and routine communication. The less effective strategies were verbal reminders without follow-up and device confiscation; these usually worsened the situation by increasing conflict. This is in line with the findings of Fadlan et al. (2025), who emphasized the need for parents and children to work together in finding solutions to problems related to digital behavior. Broader studies also support this trend. Several systematic reviews have found that media education and time management interventions bring about positive changes in behavior and help achieve a balance in the use of digital media among children and adolescents (Vondráčková & Gabrhelík, 2016; Bonnaire et al., 2019). School-based media literacy programs have proven effective in curbing excessive screen use (Walther et al., 2014; Bickham et al., 2018).

Parental knowledge about game mechanics and digital supervision is equally important (Li et al., 2019; Tock et al., 2025), with structured parental guidance being an effective preventive measure for gaming problems (Krossbakken et al., 2018). Recent studies also indicate the potential for constructive game-based interventions for supporting behavioral development (Lee et al., 2024)—indicating that digital tools can be productively used when integrated with proper guidance. In Islamic scholarship, Shamsuddin (2025) reviews fiqh issues related to digital transactions, demonstrating the need for religious understanding when navigating children's online activities. Dzulfahmi and Hamidah (2025) further add that Islamic assessment of virtual property and spending within games should consider ethical, spiritual, and behavioral dimensions.

The Role of Parents' Religious Knowledge in Moral Development

Parents with stronger religious literacy—25 percent of those involved—tended to experience greater success in guiding their children's moral behavior. In contrast, limited religious knowledge often coincided with greater challenges in managing children's digital habits. This reinforces the importance of Islamic childrearing principles outlined by Suryantika et al. (2024), which include

instilling monotheism, maintaining daily worship routines, modeling good conduct, and supervising children with wisdom and consistency.

Putri (2021) underscores that the family is the first institution responsible for shaping a child's moral compass. Parents who possess adequate religious understanding are better equipped to embed Islamic teachings within everyday routines, including managing digital exposure. Rather than relying on prohibition alone, they provide explanations grounded in Islamic values, helping children develop internal restraint. This finding correlates with Li et al. (2019), who highlight the effectiveness of validated parent-centered programs in preventing gaming disorders. When religious awareness is combined with digital literacy, parents possess a more balanced framework for nurturing moral character in the digital age.

Challenges and Comprehensive Strategies in the Digital Era
The most prominent challenges faced by parents included peer influence (92 percent), unrestricted internet access (100 percent), and demanding work schedules (83 percent). Hermawan and Kudus (2021) point out that parental roles today require active monitoring, clear rules, and consistent dialogue. Wahdini (2024) adds that parents must learn to balance freedom and boundaries while helping children navigate digital environments responsibly. These challenges highlight the importance of digital literacy among parents and the need for consistent enforcement of agreed-upon rules.

Systematic evidence suggests that effective interventions are those that involve multiple stakeholders—parents, schools, and the community—working together to support healthy digital habits (Tock et al., 2025). Vondráčková and Gabrhelík (2016) also emphasize the importance of multi-level preventive strategies that include education, self-regulation skills, and context-based support. In an Islamic context, these strategies can be further strengthened through spiritual development, deeper engagement in worship, and creating a social environment that upholds Islamic values. A combined approach—rooted in both empirical evidence and Islamic teachings—offers a stronger foundation for addressing the moral challenges posed by online gaming. Such integration supports not only behavioral change but also the development of meaningful self-control, spiritual awareness, and positive social engagement among children.

Conclusion

Conclusion
The study reveals several key findings regarding the influence of Free Fire on children's moral development in Dapu-Bata and the ways parents respond to these challenges. The impact of the game is evident across behavioral, spiritual, academic, and social spheres. First, the game significantly affects children's moral behavior. A large proportion of children displayed increased irritability, defiance, and unstable emotions. Many also adopted harsh language and withdrew from communication. Religious observance declined sharply: punctual daily prayers, participation in congregational worship, and Qur'an study all decreased. Academic performance also deteriorated, with most children experiencing lower grades, reduced motivation, and difficulty concentrating. Social and family relationships weakened as communication declined and conflicts increased. These findings point to a broad erosion of character, spirituality, and social awareness. Second, parents have attempted various strategies to guide their children, with differing degrees of success. The most effective measures were those that strengthened religious routines, offered meaningful alternative activities, and encouraged open communication. Moderately effective strategies included time limits, supervision, and collaboration with teachers. Less effective approaches involved giving advice without follow-through or confiscating devices, which often escalated conflict. Parental religious knowledge played an important role: parents with stronger religious literacy were more successful in guiding their children's moral behavior.

Third, parents encountered substantial challenges. The strongest pressure came from peer influence, children's growing dependence on the game, and widespread access to the internet. Work obligations and limited technological skills further limited parents' ability to supervise their children. Some parents also struggled with inconsistent support from their spouses or with financial limitations that hindered the ability to provide alternatives. Fourth, the study highlights the need for a combined approach that integrates Islamic principles with evidence-based strategies. Islamic teachings emphasize responsibility, empathy, discipline, and sincerity—values that can counteract the tendencies reinforced by online gaming. Meanwhile, research shows that interventions focusing on media education, structured routines, parental involvement, and school–family collaboration can reduce excessive gaming. A holistic approach—blending spiritual guidance, digital literacy, and community involvement—offers the most promising path for supporting children in a digital age.

Recommendations

Parents hold the most direct influence on children's behavior, making their role central in addressing the effects of online gaming. They are encouraged to strengthen both religious and digital literacy to ensure that guidance is rooted in spiritual understanding as well as informed supervision. Consistency in parenting—through dialogue, example-setting, and clear rules for device use—remains essential. Strengthening children's spiritual routines by praying together, reciting the Qur'an as a family, and involving them in youth study circles can help rebuild moral discipline. Parents are also advised to provide appealing alternative activities, such as sports, arts, or community programs, to divert children from excessive gaming. Maintaining consistent communication and quality time fosters trust and openness, while parental-control tools can assist in regulating screen time and filtering inappropriate content. Collaboration with spouses, teachers, and extended family will further strengthen the support system needed to guide children effectively.

Religious and community leaders also play an important part in shaping a supportive environment. They can enhance child-centered programs at the meunasah by employing interactive methods that resonate with children's experiences in the digital age. Training sessions for parents on digital-age parenting, online risks, and Islamic guidance related to technology use will help families adapt more effectively. Community leaders are encouraged to facilitate constructive activities that offer healthy alternatives for children while building networks where families can exchange experiences and strategies. Cooperation with internet café owners is also important to ensure responsible access and limit minors' gaming hours.

Schools contribute significantly to promoting healthy digital behavior. They can integrate digital literacy and media ethics into the curriculum, grounded in Islamic values, to help students understand responsible technology use. School-based initiatives—such as counseling, peer education, and extracurricular activities—can support students who struggle with gaming habits. Strengthening communication between schools and parents through regular updates and collaborative programs will help monitor children's development more effectively. Schools should also establish early detection systems to identify signs of excessive gaming and offer accessible counseling services that provide both psychological and spiritual support.

Government intervention is crucial in creating a safer digital ecosystem. Stricter regulations are needed to control online game content, particularly games containing violence or gambling features. Regulations governing internet cafés—such as age restrictions and parental consent requirements—can help reduce unsupervised access. Public awareness campaigns through mainstream and digital media can educate communities about the risks of excessive gaming and promote responsible digital habits. Providing community facilities such as parks, youth centers, and sports areas will give children constructive alternatives to online gaming. Additionally, allocating research funding for studies on online gaming and child development will help produce evidence-based interventions aligned with Islamic values.

Finally, future researchers are encouraged to expand the scope of this study through large-scale quantitative research that measures the relationship between gaming intensity and moral decline more precisely. Developing and testing Islamic-based intervention models would offer practical frameworks for addressing gaming addiction. Exploring protective factors—such as resilience, spiritual intelligence, and social support—can deepen understanding of what shields children from negative influences. Research focusing more directly on children's own perspectives may uncover motivations and personal interpretations that enrich current knowledge. Comparative studies across different regions or countries can also identify best practices that may be adapted to various cultural and religious contexts.

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