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Reconstructing Fitrah-Based Family Education: Synthesizing Ahmad Dahlan's and Hamka's Thought in the Digital Age

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Abstract

This study develops a conceptual framework of fitrah-based family education by examining educational ideas associated with Ahmad Dahlan and Hamka in the scholarly literature and relating them to the challenges of the digital age. Using qualitative library research and comparative conceptual interpretation, the study considers themes of human development, the integration of religious and general knowledge, moral-spiritual formation, parental responsibility, and digital mediation. The synthesis identifies complementary emphases: Ahmad Dahlan is commonly associated with educational integration and socially meaningful action, while Hamka is associated with moral refinement, spiritual consciousness, and personal responsibility. These emphases are brought together in a five-dimensional framework comprising fitrah-oriented developmental recognition, integrative religious-intellectual learning, moral-spiritual habituation, dialogical parental guidance, and ethically responsible digital engagement. The framework positions digital parenting within a broader educational process that connects intellectual growth, ethical conduct, spiritual development, and responsible participation in online environments. The study contributes a conceptual synthesis rather than an empirically validated intervention. Its conclusions should be interpreted in light of the study's reliance on the secondary scholarship represented in the cited literature; further research using authenticated primary texts and empirical family studies is needed to strengthen and test the framework. The analysis also clarifies the limits of transferring historical educational ideas to present-day digital parenting contexts.
Keywords: Fitrah, Family Education, Ahmad Dahlan, Hamka, Digital Parenting

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengembangkan kerangka konseptual pendidikan keluarga berbasis fitrah dengan menelaah gagasan pendidikan Ahmad Dahlan dan Hamka dalam literatur ilmiah serta menghubungkannya dengan tantangan era digital. Melalui penelitian kepustakaan kualitatif dan interpretasi konseptual komparatif, penelitian ini mengkaji perkembangan manusia, integrasi pengetahuan agama dan umum, pembentukan moral dan spiritual, tanggung jawab orang tua, serta mediasi digital. Sintesis menunjukkan penekanan yang saling melengkapi. Ahmad Dahlan menonjolkan integrasi pendidikan dan tindakan yang bermanfaat secara sosial, sedangkan Hamka menekankan penyempurnaan akhlak, kesadaran spiritual, dan tanggung jawab pribadi. Kedua pendekatan tersebut menghasilkan kerangka lima dimensi yang meliputi pengenalan perkembangan berorientasi fitrah, pembelajaran agama dan intelektual yang integratif, pembiasaan moral dan spiritual, pendampingan orang tua melalui dialog, serta keterlibatan digital yang bertanggung jawab secara etis. Kerangka ini menempatkan pengasuhan digital sebagai bagian dari proses pendidikan yang menghubungkan perkembangan intelektual, perilaku etis, pembinaan spiritual, dan partisipasi yang bertanggung jawab dalam ruang daring. Kajian ini menawarkan sintesis konseptual, bukan intervensi yang telah memperoleh validasi empiris. Temuan penelitian harus dibaca sesuai keterbatasan sumber sekunder yang tercantum dalam daftar pustaka. Kajian lanjutan perlu menelaah karya primer yang autentik dan menguji penerapan kerangka ini melalui studi empiris pada keluarga. Analisis ini juga membedakan pemikiran pendidikan historis kedua tokoh dari penerapan konseptualnya untuk pengasuhan digital masa kini.

Kata kunci: fitrah; pendidikan keluarga; Ahmad Dahlan; Hamka; pengasuhan digital

Introduction

The rapid expansion of digital technologies has transformed family environments, reshaping how children acquire knowledge, develop moral orientations, construct identities, and interact with their parents (Soyoof et al., 2024; Tan et al., 2024). Although digital platforms provide opportunities for educational enrichment and social participation, they also introduce challenges involving online risks, problematic media engagement, and the changing nature of parental guidance (Tan et al., 2025). Contemporary research consequently emphasizes that effective parenting requires more than technological restrictions, incorporating active mediation, parental role modeling, and meaningful communication (Modecki et al., 2022; Tan et al., 2024). Within Islamic educational discourse, these developments raise fundamental questions about how families can nurture children's innate developmental potential while cultivating spiritual awareness, moral responsibility, and intellectual independence (Arifin, 2024; Karimullah, 2023). The Islamic concept of fitrah, interpreted here as an innate human disposition and developmental potential to be cultivated through education, provides a normative foundation for reconsidering family education in digitally mediated settings (Fitri et al., 2024; Karimullah, 2023). Ahmad Dahlan's integration of religious knowledge, rational inquiry, and socially transformative action, together with Hamka's emphasis on moral refinement and spiritual development, offers complementary intellectual resources for addressing this educational challenge (Arifin, 2024; Ikmah et al., 2025).

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Despite these contributions, the existing literature reveals a significant conceptual fragmentation between Islamic educational philosophy and contemporary digital parenting research (Arifin, 2024; Ikmah et al., 2025; Tan et al., 2024). Studies addressing Ahmad Dahlan primarily emphasize educational modernization, the integration of religious and general knowledge, and institutional reform, without systematically translating these principles into a comprehensive fitrah-based family education framework (Diniy & Wantini, 2023; Ikmah et al., 2025). Conversely, scholarship on Hamka concentrates on moral and spiritual values but provides limited operational explanation of how these values might be integrated with Dahlan's reformist educational orientation in digitally mediated family settings (Arifin, 2024). Meanwhile, digital parenting research has developed increasingly sophisticated classifications of parental mediation but continues to identify conceptual and measurement limitations, particularly concerning the integration of broader educational purposes into parenting frameworks (Modecki et al., 2022; Tan et al., 2024). Recent meta-analytic evidence also indicates that different parental mediation approaches have distinct associations with children's digital well-being, challenging assumptions that a single parenting strategy can adequately address diverse developmental outcomes (Tan et al., 2025). Taken together, these studies indicate an insufficiently developed conceptual connection among fitrah, Islamic educational reform, moral-spiritual formation, and contemporary digital parenting practices (Ikmah et al., 2025; Karimullah, 2023; Tan et al., 2025). The central gap addressed here is therefore not the absence of scholarship on either thinker, but the lack of an explicitly articulated and operationally structured synthesis connecting their educational principles to family education in the digital age.

To address this gap, the present study proposes a conceptual reconstruction of fitrah-based family education through a structured conceptual synthesis of Ahmad Dahlan's reformist educational orientation and Hamka's moral-spiritual philosophy (Arifin, 2024; Ikmah et al., 2025). Its primary theoretical novelty lies in interpreting fitrah as an integrative educational construct that connects innate developmental potential with intellectual cultivation, moral agency, spiritual consciousness, and social responsibility (Diniy & Wantini, 2023; Karimullah, 2023). Rather than presenting the two thinkers' contributions as parallel philosophical traditions, the proposed synthesis seeks to identify their convergent principles, distinctive emphases, and complementary educational functions (Arifin, 2024; Ikmah et al., 2025). At the operational level, the study advances a conceptual framework comprising five interconnected dimensions: fitrah-oriented developmental recognition, integrative religious-intellectual learning, moral-spiritual habituation, dialogical parental guidance, and ethically responsible digital engagement (Arifin, 2024; Karimullah, 2023; Tan et al., 2024). These dimensions are intended to translate philosophical principles into analytically identifiable family practices, including parental modeling, reflective dialogue, ethical technology mediation, and socially responsible learning activities (Soyoof et al., 2024; Tan et al., 2024). Accordingly, the proposed contribution is a theoretically grounded conceptual model requiring

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subsequent empirical examination rather than an already validated parenting intervention (Modecki et al., 2022; Tan et al., 2025).

Building on these theoretical and empirical considerations, this study aims to reconstruct a coherent conceptual model of fitrah-based family education that integrates twentieth-century Islamic reformist and moral educational thought with contemporary challenges of digital parenting (Karimullah, 2023; Tan et al., 2024). Specifically, it seeks to critically interpret the educational principles of Ahmad Dahlan and Hamka, identify their philosophical convergences and differences, and examine their potential contribution to intellectual, moral, spiritual, and digital development within family settings (Arifin, 2024; Ikmah et al., 2025). The study adopts a qualitative library research orientation, employing comparative philosophical interpretation and conceptual synthesis to formulate an analytically transparent educational framework (Arifin, 2024; Diniy & Wantini, 2023). The inquiry is guided by two research questions:

RQ1: How do Ahmad Dahlan's and Hamka's educational thoughts conceptualize the principles, values, and practices relevant to fitrah-based family education?

RQ2: How can the educational thoughts of Ahmad Dahlan and Hamka be synthesized to reconstruct a conceptual model of fitrah-based family education that addresses the challenges of the digital age?

This contribution does not presume that Ahmad Dahlan or Hamka proposed a theory of digital parenting. Rather, the article distinguishes the educational orientations represented in the historical scholarship from their proposed present-day application in family digital guidance. In doing so, it seeks to make the normative links between fitrah, everyday parental practices, and digital responsibility explicit and open to subsequent empirical assessment (Fitri et al., 2024; Ikmah et al., 2025; Tan et al., 2024).

Literature Review

Previous scholarship has examined Islamic educational reform, moral development, and digital parenting from several disciplinary and geographical perspectives (Diniy & Wantini, 2023; Tan et al., 2024). In Indonesia, (Diniy & Wantini, 2023) explored Ahmad Dahlan's educational philosophy through historical and sociological analysis, while (Ikmah et al., 2025) discussed its contemporary relevance to integrated knowledge, character formation, and digital literacy. (Arifin, 2024) highlighted the emphasis on religiosity, social responsibility, self-control, and ethical conduct in Hamka's moral educational thought. Research on Islamic family education has also emphasized holistic character formation through parental involvement and the integration of religious values into everyday family practices (Karimullah, 2023). In the broader digital-parenting literature, (Kalmus et al., 2022) documented trends toward more active parental mediation across European countries, while (Tan et al., 2024) synthesized research on parental mediation, technology use, and parental role modeling.

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These studies provide a basis for examining how Islamic educational purposes may inform family guidance in digitally mediated environments.

Method

This study adopts qualitative library research through a bounded, non-systematic conceptual review and comparative interpretation. Its purpose is to examine relationships among educational concepts and develop a theory-informed framework rather than estimate statistical effects or test causal hypotheses. (Jaakkola, 2020) distinguishes theory synthesis from empirical verification; that distinction guides the scope of this article. The analysis draws on published scholarship representing Ahmad Dahlan's and Hamka's educational orientations, complemented by studies of fitrah, family-based moral education, and digital parenting (Arifin, 2024; Diniy & Wantini, 2023; Fitri et al., 2024; Karimullah, 2023). Because an authenticated, systematic collection of the thinkers' primary texts is not available in the documented source set, their positions are interpreted through the cited secondary literature. No claim is made that this study reconstructs their complete original writings.

Documentary Sources and Selection

The bounded corpus comprises the sources cited in this article. Materials were included for their conceptual relevance to at least one of three analytical strands: (a) the educational orientations associated with Ahmad Dahlan and Hamka; (b) fitrah, family responsibility, and moral-spiritual formation; or (c) contemporary digital parenting and child development. Methodological sources informed the manner of conceptual comparison and reporting. The article does not report database coverage, numerical screening totals, a formal search string, or quality-appraisal scores because a reproducible search and screening record is not available. Consequently, this account should not be characterized as a systematic review, and the selection cannot be assumed exhaustive (Jaakkola, 2020; Kutcher & LeBaron, 2022; Younas et al., 2022).

Comparative Analysis and Conceptual Synthesis

The interpretive work is organized in three stages. First, recurring ideas in the selected sources are grouped under developmental potential, the integration of knowledge and action, moral-spiritual cultivation, parental guidance, and digital engagement. Second, the emphases attributed to each thinker are compared, retaining differences instead of merging them into an undifferentiated doctrine. Third, the patterns are combined into five proposed dimensions of fitrah-based family education and translated into illustrative practices. The resulting tables clarify the reasoning that connects cited scholarship to the authors' proposed model. These dimensions are analytical propositions, not themes derived from interview transcripts or categories independently tested in families (Braun & Clarke, 2023; Byrne, 2022; Jaakkola, 2020).

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Results and Discussion

Educational Principles of Ahmad Dahlan and Hamka (RQ1)

The comparative interpretation identifies complementary educational orientations in Ahmad Dahlan's and Hamka's thought. Dahlan's educational reform emphasizes the integration of religious knowledge, rational understanding, and socially meaningful action, while Hamka's educational philosophy prioritizes moral refinement, spiritual consciousness, and personal responsibility. These orientations provide distinct but potentially compatible foundations for conceptualizing fitrah-based family education (Arifin, 2024; Diniy & Wantini, 2023).

The first identified principle concerns the holistic development of human potential. Dahlan's integration of religious and general knowledge supports an educational orientation that connects intellectual growth with religious commitment. Hamka's moral philosophy complements this orientation by emphasizing the cultivation of inner character and ethical judgment. Within the proposed synthesis, fitrah functions as an interpretive foundation connecting intellectual, moral, spiritual, and social development (Ikmah et al., 2025; Karimullah, 2023).

The second principle concerns the relationship between knowledge and action. Dahlan's reformist orientation highlights the practical expression of religious understanding through beneficial social activities. Hamka's educational thought emphasizes the relationship between knowledge, self-discipline, and moral conduct. Their combined contributions suggest that family education should extend beyond verbal instruction toward consistent ethical practices in everyday life (Arifin, 2024; Diniy & Wantini, 2023).

The third principle involves parental responsibility for moral and spiritual development. Although neither intellectual tradition constitutes a comprehensive contemporary digital-parenting theory, both provide educational values applicable to parental guidance. These include religious exemplarity, ethical habituation, reflective learning, and responsibility toward others. Their relevance to family education therefore emerges through conceptual interpretation rather than direct historical prescriptions concerning digital technology (Arifin, 2024; Karimullah, 2023).

The comparative findings also reveal a difference in emphasis. Dahlan's educational orientation is predominantly reformist, integrative, and socially transformative, whereas Hamka's thought places stronger emphasis on spiritual interiority and individual moral formation. Rather than treating these emphases as competing approaches, the synthesis identifies their complementarity as a basis for balancing outward educational engagement with inward ethical development (Arifin, 2024; Ikmah et al., 2025).

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Table 1. Comparative synthesis of Ahmad Dahlan and Hamka

Aspect	Ahmad Dahlan	Hamka
Main educational emphasis	Integration of religious knowledge, rational inquiry, and socially meaningful action.	Moral refinement, spiritual consciousness, and personal responsibility.
Relationship between knowledge and action	Religious understanding is connected with general knowledge and beneficial social action.	Knowledge is connected with self-discipline, ethical judgment, and moral conduct.
Implication for family education	Parents can connect faith, reasoning, learning, and constructive participation in society.	Parents can cultivate character through example, reflection, and spiritual-moral practice.
Role in the proposed synthesis	Provides an outward-facing intellectual and social-action emphasis.	Provides an inward-facing moral and spiritual emphasis.

Note. The comparison summarizes the orientations represented in the reviewed secondary literature; the table reflects the authors' conceptual interpretation (Arifin, 2024; Diniy & Wantini, 2023; Ikmah et al., 2025).

Fitrah-Based Family Education Model for the Digital Age (RQ2)

The conceptual synthesis produces a conceptual framework consisting of five interconnected dimensions: fitrah-oriented developmental recognition, integrative religious-intellectual learning, moral-spiritual habituation, dialogical parental guidance, and ethically responsible digital engagement. These dimensions connect the educational orientations identified in both thinkers with contemporary family-education concerns (Jaakkola, 2020; Tan et al., 2024).

The first dimension recognizes children's developmental potential as the starting point for educational choices. In fitrah-based educational scholarship, that recognition involves attending to individual abilities and nurturing faith, character, and intellectual development without reducing children to identical developmental trajectories (Fitri et al., 2024; Karimullah, 2023). The second dimension integrates religious understanding with critical reasoning and contextual knowledge. Together, these dimensions suggest that parents should recognize children's differing needs while encouraging intellectually meaningful and spiritually grounded learning (Ikmah et al., 2025; Karimullah, 2023).

The third dimension translates moral-spiritual education into everyday practices, including parental role modeling, religious habituation, reflective dialogue, and socially responsible behavior. Within the reconstructed framework, these activities represent

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proposed mechanisms through which ethical values may become embedded in family routines rather than remaining abstract educational ideals (Arifin, 2024; Karimullah, 2023).

The fourth and fifth dimensions address contemporary digital settings. Dialogical parental guidance emphasizes listening, shared reflection, and age-appropriate mediation; ethically responsible digital engagement focuses on evaluating online information, privacy, interaction, and balanced technology use. These applications draw on digital-parenting research and studies of parent–child communication in Islamic education. They should not be attributed as direct historical prescriptions by Dahlan or Hamka (Modecki et al., 2022; Tan et al., 2024; Wiandani et al., 2026).

Overall, the reconstructed model establishes a conceptual relationship between philosophical foundations, educational dimensions, parental practices, and anticipated developmental outcomes. Its intended contribution is to integrate intellectual development, moral-spiritual formation, family relationships, and digital responsibility within a coherent Islamic educational framework. These outcomes remain theoretical propositions requiring subsequent empirical examination (Jaakkola, 2020; Tan et al., 2025).

Table 2. Proposed operational dimensions and illustrative family practices

Dimension	Indicative family practice	Educational purpose
Fitrah-oriented developmental recognition	Recognize children's interests, questions, developmental pace, and emerging abilities when planning learning activities.	Respect and cultivate each child's developmental potential.
Integrative religious-intellectual learning	Discuss religious values alongside science, social issues, and everyday questions; encourage reasoned inquiry.	Connect faith, understanding, and critical thinking.
Moral-spiritual habituation	Model honesty, responsibility, worship, empathy, and consistency in everyday routines.	Translate moral and spiritual values into conduct.
Dialogical parental guidance	Listen to children, explain family expectations, invite questions, and establish age-appropriate agreements.	Build trust, reflection, and internalized responsibility.

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Dimension	Indicative family practice	Educational purpose
Ethically responsible digital engagement	Discuss privacy, misinformation, online conduct, screen-time boundaries, and balanced technology use.	Develop critical, safe, and socially responsible digital participation.

Note. These are suggested practices inferred from the conceptual synthesis, not evaluated intervention components or historical prescriptions (Fitri et al., 2024; Karimullah, 2023; Tan et al., 2024).

Discussion

The findings suggest that Ahmad Dahlan's and Hamka's educational orientations can be brought into a complementary conceptual relationship, although they should not be treated as identical. As represented in the secondary literature reviewed in this manuscript, Dahlan's educational orientation emphasizes the integration of religious knowledge, rational understanding, and socially meaningful action. Hamka's educational thought, by contrast, places particular emphasis on moral refinement, spiritual consciousness, and personal responsibility. This distinction is important because it allows the synthesis to preserve the specific contribution of each thinker while identifying a shared concern with the formation of the whole person.

In relation to RQ1, the comparison indicates that the educational relevance of both thinkers can be discussed through human development, the relationship between knowledge and action, and the formation of moral and spiritual character. These principles are relevant to family education because parents are not only providers of information but also role models and facilitators of children's intellectual, ethical, and spiritual development. The interpretation presented here is mediated by the secondary scholarship cited in this article and should not be mistaken for a comprehensive analysis of the thinkers' complete original writings.

In relation to RQ2, the five dimensions form an interconnected framework rather than five isolated parenting techniques. Developmental recognition provides the starting point because parental expectations and guidance should take account of children's differing needs and capacities. Integrative learning connects religious understanding with reasoning and contextual knowledge. Moral-spiritual habituation translates values into repeated conduct, while dialogical guidance describes the relational process through which parents explain, listen, and guide. Ethical digital engagement applies these foundations to online environments, including questions of privacy, information reliability, online interaction, and balanced use.

The interpretive status of fitrah requires particular care. Here, fitrah is a normative and philosophical basis for attending to human potential, not an independently validated psychological variable. Related research on fitrah-based education connects

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moral and intellectual cultivation with religious educational aims, which supports the present emphasis on holistic development without demonstrating that the proposed five dimensions are universally applicable (Fitri et al., 2024; Karimullah, 2023).

The framework contributes to digital-parenting scholarship by placing digital mediation within broader educational aims. Rather than presenting restriction and unrestricted access as the only options, it foregrounds parental example, dialogical guidance, critical understanding, and responsibility. This reading is consonant with studies identifying diverse mediation practices and the importance of family communication (Kalmus et al., 2022; Modecki et al., 2022; Tan et al., 2024; Wiandani et al., 2026). Importantly, meta-analytic evidence does not support a one-size-fits-all digital-parenting strategy, and the present conceptual review cannot establish causal effects on children's digital wellbeing (Tan et al., 2025).

The conceptual model is intended as a framework for scholarly discussion and future research. Its further development requires closer engagement with authenticated primary writings and examination in real family contexts. Empirical studies may explore how parents understand and apply the five dimensions, whether the proposed practices are developmentally appropriate, and how the framework may be adapted across different social and cultural settings.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has two principal limitations. First, the analysis relies on the secondary scholarly literature cited in the article and does not yet provide a systematic, page-specific examination of authenticated primary writings by Ahmad Dahlan and Hamka. The comparison should therefore be understood as an interpretation of how their educational orientations are represented in the cited scholarship. Second, the five-dimensional framework is conceptual and has not been empirically tested. Future research should strengthen the textual foundation through direct engagement with primary sources and examine the framework through interviews with parents, family case studies, expert assessment, or other appropriate empirical designs.

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Conclusion

This study has reconstructed a conceptual model of fitrah-based family education by synthesizing the educational orientations associated with Ahmad Dahlan and Hamka. The analysis identifies a complementary relationship between the integration of religious knowledge, rational inquiry, and socially meaningful action, and the cultivation of moral refinement, spiritual consciousness, and personal responsibility. In response to the challenges of the digital age, the synthesis is organized into five dimensions: fitrah-oriented developmental recognition, integrative religious-intellectual learning, moral-spiritual habituation, dialogical parental guidance, and ethically responsible digital engagement. The main contribution of the study is a conceptual framework that places digital parenting within a broader Islamic educational purpose: the holistic development of children's intellectual, moral, spiritual, and social capacities. The framework is theoretical and should not be interpreted as an empirically validated intervention. Its further development requires direct textual substantiation and empirical assessment in family settings.

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