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Reconstructing Islamic Exemplary and Spiritual Parenting: A Thematic Analysis of Try Sutrisno's Educational Philosophy

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Abstract

The rapid development of digital technology has transformed family parenting practices, while increasing material orientation and dependence on technology have challenged the family's role as the primary setting for children's character and spiritual development. This study aims to reconstruct an Islamic parenting model grounded in exemplary conduct and spirituality through a thematic analysis of the parenting philosophy of General (Ret.) Try Sutrisno. The study employed a qualitative library research design. Primary data consisted of twelve empirical parenting narratives documented in family life, while secondary data were drawn from recent peer-reviewed journal articles, Islamic educational literature, child development theories, and contemporary parenting studies. Data were analyzed using thematic Qur'anic interpretation (*tafsir maudhu'i*), content analysis, and comparative interpretation informed by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, Bandura's Social Learning Theory, Character Education, and *Tarbiyat al-Awlad*. The findings identify four interconnected pillars of Try Sutrisno's parenting philosophy: exemplary behavior, Islamic spirituality, character habituation, and moral integrity. These values are transmitted primarily through lived practices and everyday parental example rather than through verbal instruction alone. The reconstructed model demonstrates the potential integration of Islamic theological foundations with contemporary developmental perspectives in conceptualizing family-based parenting. This study contributes to Islamic parenting scholarship by offering an integrative framework that positions exemplary conduct and spirituality as

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central mechanisms of character formation. The findings also imply that strengthening consistent parental modeling, spiritual habituation, and moral practices may provide a relevant foundation for family-based character education in the digital era.

Keywords: Character Education; Exemplary Conduct; Family-Based Education; Islamic Parenting; Spirituality

INTRODUCTION

The family is the primary educational environment that plays a role in shaping a child's identity, character, and moral orientation. Before entering school and society, children gain early experiences with values, norms, and beliefs through interactions within the family. Various studies have shown that the quality of family care influences a child's social-emotional development, self-regulation skills, religiosity, and character formation. Through the teaching of moral values, positive behavioral habits, role modeling, and effective communication, the family plays a significant role in shaping a child's character (Zulfah, 2024). From an Islamic educational perspective, the family is seen as an institution that has the primary responsibility for instilling the values of faith, morals, and personality as emphasized in QS. At-Tahrim verse 6 regarding the obligation to protect oneself and one's family through education based on religious values (Elitaliya et al., 2025).

The development of digital technology, globalization, and social change have brought new challenges to parenting practices. Parents are faced not only with increasing use of gadgets and social media by their children, but also with a decline in the intensity of family communication and a shift in educational orientation from character building to academic and material achievement (Ichsan, 2019). Various studies show that the use of digital media without parental supervision can affect social-emotional development, emotional regulation skills, and the quality of relationships between children and their families (Ichsan, 2026; Ichsan et al., 2026; Nabi & Wolfers, 2022). This condition shows the need for a parenting model that is able to integrate technological developments with strengthening moral and spiritual values.

Various modern parenting approaches, such as authoritative parenting, positive parenting, mindful parenting, and attachment parenting, have contributed to children's psychological development through open communication, emotional closeness, and

constructive discipline (Baumrind, 2023). However, most of these approaches still stem from a Western psychological perspective and therefore fail to fully integrate the spiritual dimension as a foundation for character development. Yet, in the context of Muslim societies, spirituality is an essential element that shapes a child's life orientation, morality, and social responsibility. Research on Islamic parenting also shows that parenting based on Islamic values contributes positively to children's religiosity, self-control, empathy, and prosocial behavior (Madyawati et al., 2023).

On the other hand, research on Islamic parenting is still dominated by normative studies based on the Quran, Hadith, or the thoughts of classical Islamic educational figures. Studies that translate the parenting practices of national figures into conceptual models of Islamic parenting remain relatively limited. This creates an academic space (research gap) to develop parenting models grounded in empirical experience while maintaining a strong normative foundation.

One interesting figure to study is General (Ret.) Try Sutrisno. Various narratives about his family life demonstrate that children's education is built through role models, simplicity, discipline, responsibility, and spirituality, not through the privileges of position or luxury facilities (Arifin, 2024). These values are internalized through daily life experiences, thus forming children's character naturally and sustainably.

This approach aligns with the concept of good example in Islamic education, which places role models as the most effective educational method, as explained in QS. Al-Ahzab verse 21. Theoretically, this concept is also supported by Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which explains that children learn through the process of observing and imitating the behavior of figures with whom they have emotional closeness, especially parents (Bandura, 1977). Therefore, parental behavior is the primary medium in the process of internalizing values and forming a child's character (Munawaroh et al., 2024).

Beyond role models, Try Sutrisno's parenting philosophy places Islamic spirituality as the foundation of family education. Spirituality is not only manifested in religious practices, but also through the internalization of the values of monotheism, trustworthiness, gratitude, simplicity, responsibility, and social concern in daily life. This approach demonstrates that character formation is inseparable from the formation of a spiritual identity, which forms the basis of individual behavior in society.

Based on the above description, this study has a novelty in its attempt to reconstruct the parenting philosophy of General TNI (Ret.) Try Sutrisno into a conceptual model of Islamic parenting based on exemplary behavior and spirituality through a thematic interpretation approach (tafsir maudhu'i). Unlike previous studies that were descriptive in nature, this study integrates empirical parenting experiences with theories of child development, character education, and Islamic education to produce a more comprehensive and contextual parenting model. This study aims to develop an Islamic parenting model that can serve as a reference for families, educators, and policymakers in strengthening character education amidst the challenges of the digital era.

METHODS

The researchers in this study used a qualitative approach with library research to reconstruct a parenting model based on Islamic role models and spirituality through an analysis of the parenting philosophy of General (Ret.) Try Sutrisno. This approach was chosen because it focuses on the interpretation of values, interpretations, and conceptualization based on various scientific sources, rather than on quantitatively examining the relationships between variables (Creswell & Poth, 2024).

The research data sources consist of primary and secondary data. The primary data is the book *Filosofi Parenting Try Sutrisno: Rahasia Pola Asuh Sang Jenderal agar Anak dan Orang Tua Bahagia* (Try Sutrisno's Parenting Philosophy: The General's Secret of Parenting for Happy Children and Parents), which contains twelve parenting stories as a representation of family education practices based on Islamic role models and spirituality. The secondary data were obtained from reputable national and international journal articles from 2020–2025, Islamic education literature, child development theories, character education theories, and normative sources such as the Qur'an and Hadith relevant to the research theme

Data collection was carried out through documentation studies, namely examining, identifying, classifying, and reviewing various scientific documents related to Islamic parenting, character education, family resilience, child development, and Islamic spirituality (Hayman & Smith, 2020). The data was then analyzed using content analysis to identify the main themes that emerged in the twelve parenting stories, such as exemplary behavior (uswah hasanah), spirituality, discipline, responsibility, simplicity, and social concern (Krippendorff, 2022).

Furthermore, the research applies the maudhu'i interpretation approach (thematic interpretation) to link empirical findings with relevant verses of the Qur'an and hadith so that parenting values have a normative basis from an Islamic perspective (Mustaqim, 2022). The results of the analysis were then compared with various theories, including Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, Bandura's Social Learning Theory, Lickona's Character Education theory, and Abdullah Nashih Ulwan's Tarbiyat al-Awlad concept to produce a conceptual synthesis regarding the Islamic parenting model (Yang & Oh, 2024).

The final stage was carried out through conceptual reconstruction, namely reorganizing various parenting values into an Islamic parenting model that includes the dimensions of exemplary behavior, spirituality, character internalization through empirical experience, and character formation. To ensure data validity, the study applied source triangulation and theory triangulation by comparing the analysis results with various scientific references to obtain a comprehensive interpretation and conceptual validity (Denzin, 2009).

RESULTS

Reconstruction of the Role Model-Based Parenting Model

The analysis of twelve parenting stories in the family of General (Ret.) Try Sutrisno shows that exemplary behavior (uswah hasanah) is the main foundation in the family education process. Values such as discipline, simplicity, responsibility, hard work, religiosity, and social concern are not taught through advice alone, but are internalized through concrete behavior carried out consistently in daily life. Children gain direct learning experiences through interactions with their parents, so that the instilled values develop into habits and character (Arifin, 2024).

These findings indicate that the success of character education does not depend on a family's social status or economic capacity, but rather on parents' consistency in providing role models as part of their culture. In Try Sutrisno's family, children are accustomed to living simply, respecting the process, being responsible for their duties, and not exploiting their parents' position as a form of privilege. These practices demonstrate that role models are the primary mechanism for internalizing values through experiential learning (Mahmudah et al., 2026). From an Islamic educational perspective, this finding aligns with the concept of good example, as affirmed in Surah Al-Ahzab, verse 21, which places the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as the best role model for humanity. Exemplary behavior is an effective

educational method because it enables moral values to be transformed through concrete behavior, not simply through the delivery of information.

Theoretically, the results of this study also support Bandura's Social Learning Theory. This theory explains that children learn behavior through observation and imitation of emotionally close figures, particularly parents (Bandura, 1977). Therefore, parental behavior is the primary medium for character formation before children are influenced by the school environment or society.

Based on the analysis, this study reconstructs a role-modeling-based parenting model into four main, interconnected dimensions: moral role-modeling (*akhlaqul karimah*), spiritual role-modeling (*hablum minallah*), social role-modeling (*hablum minannas*), and leadership role-modeling (*al-qiyadah*). The moral role-modeling dimension focuses on consistent integrity and honesty as ethical standards directly observed by children, while spiritual role-modeling places monotheism and transcendental obedience as the anchors of family values. Social role-modeling, on the other hand, articulates empathy and concern in social relations, which are then enhanced by leadership role-modeling through the instilling of discipline, principled firmness, and moral accountability (Sulastri et al., 2026). The dialectical interconnection between these four dimensions functions as a unified ecosystem of habits that holistically constructs children's personalities, producing a generation that is not only religious and imbued with integrity, but also independent, responsible, and highly prosocial.

This systemic interconnectedness emphasizes that role models (uswah hasanah) are not merely technical pedagogical instruments or complementary instructional strategies, but rather the epistemological and ontological foundation for building an Islamic parenting system. In the digital era, rife with information disruption, social media algorithms, and the vulnerability of value polarization, parenting approaches based solely on restrictive control have proven inadequate for protecting children (Naseem et al., 2025). This conceptual model demonstrates that the presence of parents as a living curriculum provides an internal ethical compass and strengthens self-regulation. Thus, internalizing these four dimensions of role models serves as the most adaptive psychological and spiritual protection mechanism, enabling children to develop digital citizenship skills while maintaining character integrity amidst the complexities of modern family life..

Islamic Spirituality as the Foundation of Parenting

The research results show that Islamic spirituality is the primary foundation of the parenting philosophy of General (Ret.) Try Sutrisno. Spirituality is not defined simply as the performance of ritual worship, but as a value system that shapes how children think, behave, and act within their families. Values such as monotheism, trustworthiness, gratitude, simplicity, responsibility, and social concern are internalized through parental practice and example, thus becoming part of the child's character (Arifin, 2024).

These findings demonstrate that spiritual education is built through a process of habituation that occurs consistently in daily life. Children are not only taught to practice their religious duties but are also guided to understand the meaning of hard work, honesty, contentment, and respect for others as implementations of Islamic teachings. In various parenting stories, parents serve as primary role models in embodying these values, enabling spirituality to develop as a way of life, not merely as religious knowledge (Arifin, 2024).

These findings are in line with the Islamic education perspective which places the family as the first environment in instilling children's faith and morals. The Qur'an emphasizes the responsibility of parents to guide their family towards a devout life as stated by Allah SWT. in QS. At-Tahrim verse 6. This concept is reinforced by Abdullah Nashih Ulwan who states that *tarbiyah al-ruhiyyah* is the main pillar of children's education through instilling monotheism, habituation to worship, and exemplary morals from an early age (Parina et al., 2021).

In Try Sutrisno's family, spirituality is reflected in a simple lifestyle, an appreciation for the process, and an understanding that position and wealth are a trust that must be accounted for before God. Children are accustomed to building an identity based on integrity and personal effort, not on their parents' social standing. These values demonstrate that spirituality serves as a moral orientation that shapes behavior and perspectives on life.

The results of this study are also supported by various studies on Islamic parenting, which show that parental religiosity influences the quality of family communication, emotional closeness, self-control, and the development of children's prosocial character (Madyawati et al., 2023). Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory explains that the family, as a microsystem, is the most influential environment in shaping a child's belief system and behavior through ongoing interactions. Therefore, spirituality practiced

consistently within the family will develop into a relatively stable personality foundation throughout adulthood (Bronfenbrenner, 1981).

Amidst the challenges of the digital era, marked by increasing individualism, materialism, and the rapid flow of information, spiritual education plays a strategic role as a foundation for character development and self-regulation skills. The values of trustworthiness, gratitude, responsibility, and social awareness equip children to use technology wisely without losing their moral and Islamic orientation (Rahman, 2025).

Based on the results of the analysis, this study reconstructs Islamic spirituality as the foundation of parenting into four main dimensions, namely (1) the theological dimension through the instilling of monotheism, (2) the dimension of worship through the habit of practicing Islamic teachings, (3) the moral dimension through role models and internalization of moral values, and (4) the dimension of social responsibility through the formation of concern for others. These four dimensions form a parenting model that places spirituality as the core of character formation so as to produce individuals who are religious, have integrity, and have social responsibility.

The Relevance of Try Sutrisno's Parenting Model to the Challenges of the Digital Era

The research findings show that the parenting philosophy of General TNI (Ret.) Try Sutrisno has strong relevance in addressing the challenges of parenting in the digital era. Digital transformation has changed family interaction patterns and presented various issues, such as increased dependence on devices by children, decreased intensity of family communication, and exposure to information that is not always aligned with children's moral development (Sipahelut et al., 2026). These conditions demand a parenting model that is not only adaptive to technological developments but also able to strengthen character as a foundation for using technology responsibly.

Research findings indicate that Try Sutrisno's parenting style relies not on authoritarian control, but rather on role models, habituation, empirical experience, and spiritual reinforcement. Children are taught to live simply, respect the process, be responsible, and not rely on their parents' social status. These values are becoming increasingly relevant amidst a digital culture that tends to encourage instant, consumerist lifestyles and a low sense of self-reliance.

The results of this study are in line with various studies that show that the use of digital media without parental supervision has the potential to reduce children's self-

regulation skills, the quality of social interactions, and their social-emotional development (Nabi & Wolfers, 2022). Therefore, parenting in the digital era is not enough to be done by limiting the use of technology, but must be directed at character formation so that children have the ability to self-regulate in using technology wisely.

Theoretically, this finding supports Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which explains that children learn behavior through observing figures who have emotional closeness, especially parents (Bandura, 1977). In the context of the digital era, parental role models in healthy digital media use are more effective than simply issuing rules. Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory emphasizes that the family, as a microsystem, remains the most influential environment in shaping a child's character, despite social changes resulting from technological developments (Yang & Oh, 2024).

This study also found that empirical experiences implemented in Try Sutrisno's family, such as children's involvement in family activities, the habituation of responsibility, and appreciation for the process, contributed to the development of empathy, discipline, and social awareness. These findings align with research on Islamic parenting, which confirms that role models, family communication, and the internalization of religious values play a crucial role in shaping children's prosocial character (Layyinah et al., 2025). From an Islamic educational perspective, technology is seen as a means that must be utilized for the benefit while remaining based on the values of monotheism and morals.

Based on the analysis, this study reconstructs four key parenting strategies in the digital era: digital role modeling, strengthening family communication, internalizing character values, and strengthening spirituality. These four strategies demonstrate that the relevance of Try Sutrisno's parenting model lies not in its historical context, but rather in its universal values that can strengthen family resilience, shape character, and guide children in facing technological developments without losing their moral and spiritual identity.

DISCUSSION

Synthesis of Islamic Parenting Conceptual Model

The reconstruction of the parenting philosophy of General TNI (Ret.) Try Sutrisno offers a new paradigm in the discourse of Islamic parenting, transforming the biographical narrative of the military-statesman figure into a structured theoretical model. This conceptual

model combines moral exemplars, transcendental spirituality, empirical experience, and character building into a coherent family pedagogical system. The presence of this framework does not merely record the domestic historiography of public figures, but also addresses the lack of a parenting model based on local wisdom that can operationally articulate Islamic values amidst the disruption of contemporary societal values.

Exemplary conduct (*uswah hasanah*) stands as the primary epistemological pillar of this parenting model, placing parental integrity as the primary visual curriculum for children. The consistency between verbal narratives and concrete actions demonstrates that moral transmission is far more effective through examples than monologues. When parents practice honesty, simplicity, and dedication in the private sphere, children absorb these values intuitively (Khumairah et al., 2023).

The next foundation is rooted in Islamic spirituality, which places the dimension of monotheism as the anchor of intrinsic morality. Divine values such as trustworthiness, gratitude, contentment, and a sense of responsibility to the Creator are not taught merely as cognitive doctrines, but rather instilled through down-to-earth daily rituals. The internalization of these divine values serves as an internal ethical compass that fosters self-awareness, so that the drive for noble behavior is born from deep theological conviction, not merely from external social control (Fitriah et al., 2026).

The empirical dimension and character habituation serve as a bridge connecting moral awareness with concrete action. Children are not positioned as passive objects, but are directly involved in the dynamics of household responsibilities, training in discipline, hard work ethic, and social sensitivity towards others. Through the repetition of positive actions in a structured and measured manner, praiseworthy behavioral responses mutate into permanent character traits (affective dispositions), reflecting the classic adage of character education that repeated habits are the primary foundation of a mature personality (Khoir, 2026).

Theoretically, Try Sutrisno's synthesis of parenting models finds solid ground with modern Western developmental psychology. This idea reflects the principles of Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory regarding observational learning, imitation processes, and vicarious learning (Bandura, 1977). Furthermore, its relevance is reinforced by Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which positions the family as the most

dynamic and determinant microsystem in shaping a child's psychological developmental trajectory before interacting with the broader macroenvironment (Bronfenbrenner, 1981).

Drawing from the treasury of classical Islamic thought, this parenting construct is firmly rooted in the principles of *tarbiyah bil hal* (learning and developing) and *tarbiyah al-awlad* (learning and developing). This approach echoes Abdullah Nashih Ulwan's classic treatise on child education, *Tarbiyatul Awlad fi al-Islam*, which comprehensively prioritizes the methods of role modelling (*at-tarbiyah bil qudwah*), habituation (*at-tarbiyah bil 'adah*), advice (*at-tarbiyah bil mau'izhah*), and supervision (*at-tarbiyah bil mulahazhah*) (Parina et al., 2021). This integration demonstrates that Try Sutrisno's family parenting practices successfully contextualize the normative doctrine of Islamic jurisprudence on child education within the socio-cultural realities of contemporary Indonesia.

This Conceptual Model of Islamic Parenting Based on Exemplarity and Spirituality encapsulates five strategic pillars: the foundation of monotheism, parental role modelling, empirical experience, character formation, and the formation of a resilient, religious, independent, and accountable personality. In the era of artificial intelligence and fluid digital spaces, this model provides a crucial self-regulation barrier for children in filtering the flow of external information. Thus, this research's academic contribution successfully transforms the domestic biography of a national figure into an applicable Islamic pedagogical blueprint, maintaining the continuity of spiritual traditions amidst the rapid pace of modernity.

CONCLUSION

This study constructs an Islamic parenting model based on exemplary behavior and spirituality, adapted from the parenting practices of national leadership figures, to address the character crisis in the digital era. The study's findings confirm that successful parenting is rooted in consistent moral role models (*uswah hasanah*), internalization of monotheistic values, and empirical habituation, going beyond merely fulfilling material needs or academic achievement. Theoretically, the integration of this empirical experience with Social Learning Theory, Ecological Systems Theory, and Islamic pedagogy demonstrates that strengthening spiritual foundations and character is far more effective in fostering self-regulation, digital citizenship, and family resilience than restrictive technological control approaches. Thus, this conceptual model offers a significant alternative framework, both to enrich the theoretical

discourse of contemporary Islamic parenting and as a practical guide for family education amidst the dynamics of digital disruption.

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