



The Strategic Role of Islamic Religious Education in Resolving the Moral Crisis: Case Study on Addressing the Rise of Online Gambling Among Adolescents in Teluk Nibung Subdistrict, Tanjungbalai City

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ABSTRACT

Islamic Religious Education, moral crisis, online gambling, digital literacy, adolescent behavior

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The rapid expansion of digital technology and financial access has presented complex social challenges for adolescents in coastal communities, particularly through the subtle proliferation of online gambling. In Teluk Nibung District, Tanjungbalai City, adolescents face digital exposure via malicious pop-up ads, compromised educational websites, and financial lures that even distort their career aspirations toward online gambling operations abroad. This study aims to analyze the strategic role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) as a compassionate, preventive, and curative resolution to mitigate this adolescent moral crisis. Utilizing a qualitative case study design, data were collected through deep interviews, field observations, and documentation involving PAI teachers, religious figures, parents, and local youth in Teluk Nibung. The findings reveal three core PAI strategies: (1) strengthening internal spiritual resilience through the revitalization of tauhid and muraqabah consciousness to counter gambling lures, (2) internalizing akhlak al-karimah and qana'ah to reshape life goals through empathetic role modeling (uswah hasanah), and (3) embedding digital ethics (akhlak digital) into Islamic muamalah learning. This study concludes that resolving adolescent moral crises caused by online gambling requires a collaborative, non-judgmental educational ecosystem integrating formal PAI in schools, youth mentorship in mosques, and supportive family supervision.

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INTRODUCTION

The dynamics of the digital age and the ease of electronic financial transactions present unique challenges to the sociocultural development of communities in various regions, including the coastal areas of Teluk Nibung Subdistrict, Tanjungbalai City. As a region characterized by a vibrant and open economic landscape centered on port and fishing activities, the community of Teluk Nibung enjoys strong social cohesion. However, the rapid proliferation of

smartphones among the coastal youth—who are known for their lively social interactions—has now exposed them to digital or online gambling, which is becoming increasingly widespread and difficult to curb. (Mukti, 2022; Riyanto & Setiawan, 2022). The urgency of addressing online gambling has become increasingly apparent as national economic and financial data has been released, revealing the significant financial impact of this illegal activity.

The latest report from the Financial Transaction Reporting and Analysis Center (PPATK) and the Ministry of Communications and Digital Affairs (Kemkomdigi) notes that the turnover of online gambling funds in Indonesia once reached a staggering Rp359.81 trillion in 2024 and recorded a cumulative turnover of up to Rp286.84 trillion in 2025. The government and national financial authorities have warned that without strict intervention, the national economic losses resulting from capital outflows and the leakage of public funds to these clandestine gambling rings have the potential to erode the national economy by more than Rp1,100 trillion. These statistics are not merely macroeconomic indicators, but a reflection of the erosion of household purchasing power and a challenge to the economic resilience of families. Funds from the productive sector of society—which should be channeled toward education savings, basic needs, or investments in the real sector—are instead being absorbed into the digital gambling ecosystem. This situation can indirectly affect the foundations of social welfare and the future prospects of the younger generation. The penetration of online gambling among adolescents today is massive and occurs through various technical channels. Online gambling ads often infiltrate covertly through mobile app download links, pop-up ads when visiting general websites, and even hacking attacks on the domains of official school and government institution websites, which are then repurposed as gambling pages. This vulnerability is even more concerning as exposure to such digital content begins to erode the values and aspirations of some adolescents.

Lured by the stories of instant financial success showcased on social media, many young people are lulled into dreaming of becoming part of the gambling industry—some even aspire to work as managers or bookmakers in neighboring countries known as hubs for international online gambling operations. This shift in mindset indicates that the impact of digital gambling extends beyond financial aspects; it has also encroached upon the realms of moral crisis, mindset, and life aspirations among the younger generation (Baharuddin & Rahmawati, 2020). In the face of the moral crisis and the challenges of digital disruption, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a highly strategic and relevant role. PAI should not be understood merely as the cognitive teaching of religious theory in the classroom (transfer of knowledge), but must serve as a means of character building, instilling an awareness of tawhid, and purifying the soul (*tazkiyatun nafs*) all of which touch people's daily lives in a respectful and nurturing manner. (Manurung et al., 2026). Most previous studies have primarily examined the phenomenon of online gambling from the perspectives of criminal law and law enforcement actions, leaving a knowledge gap regarding how a

humanistic PAI support strategy grounded in local wisdom can be effectively implemented to resolve moral crises among adolescents (Fatim, 2022). To address this academic gap, this study aims to analyze and describe the strategic role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) as a solution to the moral crisis caused by the rise of online gambling among adolescents in Teluk Nibung Subdistrict, Tanjungbalai City. The novelty of this study lies in mapping a persuasive and integrated PAI intervention model that combines formal religious education in schools, mosque- and prayer room-based religious guidance, and the strengthening of digital ethics rooted in compassion within the family environment. The author argues that PAI can serve as a moral bulwark and a safeguard for the aspirations of the younger generation if it is implemented holistically and sustainably through empathetic collaboration among PAI teachers, religious leaders, and parents.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a field case study design that focuses on socio-religious phenomena in Teluk Nibung Subdistrict, Tanjungbalai City (Creswell, 2012; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The research location was selected through purposive sampling, taking into account the socioeconomic dynamics of the Nibung Bay area—a coastal port region experiencing rapid information technology penetration but facing the challenge of widespread exposure to digital gambling media among adolescents. A qualitative approach was chosen so that the researcher could explore in depth and comprehensively the perceptions, spiritual meanings, and Islamic Religious Education (PAI) intervention strategies implemented in response to this moral crisis without stigmatizing the adolescents.

The subjects and informants in this study were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that the data collected came from individuals with direct involvement and a deep understanding of the study's focus. The research informants included three Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at secondary schools in the Teluk Nibung area who formally guide students, three religious leaders and local mosque youth leaders who support religious activities in the community, four parents or heads of households of adolescents in Teluk Nibung, and five adolescent representatives residing in the area. The diversity of these informants' backgrounds allowed the researcher to obtain a comprehensive and balanced picture from the perspectives of educators, community leaders, families, and the adolescents themselves.

The process of collecting primary and secondary data was carried out using a series of complementary qualitative techniques. Semi-structured, guideline-based in-depth interviews served as the primary instrument for empathetically exploring the initial modes of exposure to online gambling advertisements, the psychological factors behind shifts in adolescents' aspirations, barriers to social control, and the development of relevant Islamic Education (PAI) materials. In addition to interviews, the researchers conducted

passive participatory field observations by directly observing patterns of digital interaction, socializing habits, and the social atmosphere among adolescents at coffee shops and community gathering spots around the Teluk Nibung area. Secondary data was collected through a review of Islamic Education (PAI) teaching modules in schools, the schedules of religious activities for youth at mosques, and national and local news reports regarding efforts to address digital gambling.

All of the qualitative data collected was then analyzed using the interactive technique developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), which consists of three main stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. In the initial stage, raw data from interview transcripts and field notes were sorted, focused, and simplified according to the themes of the role of Islamic Education (PAI) and online gambling regulations. The condensed data were then presented in the form of a flowing descriptive narrative, supported by a matrix of findings. To ensure the validity and reliability of the scientific data (data trustworthiness), the researcher applied data source triangulation by comparing statements among informants, as well as data collection method triangulation by cross-referencing the results of interviews, field observations, and relevant documents.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The Complexity of Digital Onboarding and the Deconstruction of Coastal Youth's Aspirations

The penetration of online gambling media among adolescents in the Teluk Nibung subdistrict no longer operates through conventional means but has instead exploited the vulnerabilities of the digital ecosystem. The investigation revealed that gambling advertisements often aggressively infiltrate devices when adolescents download free mobile apps, access links on entertainment websites, or even when loading the official domains of schools that have been compromised by hacking. The constant presence of these advertisements gradually dulls teenagers' moral sensitivity to the dangers of gambling, leading them to mistakenly perceive digital gambling as a form of skill-based game or ordinary leisure activity.

The impact of this digital infiltration extends to shaping the values and future aspirations of coastal youth. Amid the lively atmosphere of gatherings at coffee shops in the Teluk Nibung harbor area, stories of peers' instant success spread rapidly and trigger a "Fear of Missing Out" (FOMO) effect. The idealistic orientation toward pursuing education or entrepreneurship is gradually being eroded by the desire to amass wealth quickly without putting in the hard work. As expressed by a religious leader in Teluk Nibung:

"Our young people are lured by the promise of instant success when they gather at coffee shops. Some even dream of working as gambling operators abroad. This is a crisis

of aspirations and values that we must gently set straight."

The phenomenon of teenagers being drawn to work in overseas gambling centers serves as a strong indicator of the breakdown of moral norms among adolescents. Cultural barriers and a still-superficial understanding of religion leave adolescents vulnerable to rationalizing that working in the gambling industry is acceptable as long as it generates substantial financial income. This reality underscores that addressing online gambling requires more than merely targeting the cessation of gambling activities; it must also involve restructuring mindsets and restoring the life aspirations of the younger generation.

Reorientation of the Islamic Education Curriculum: Integration of Digital Muamalah Fiqh and Internalization of Muraqabah Awareness

In response to this crisis, Islamic Education (PAI) teachers in schools across the Teluk Nibung subdistrict have begun transforming their classroom teaching models from the rigid delivery of doctrine to an approach centered on critical discussion grounded in digital ethics. Islamic Education (PAI) lessons were enriched with discussions on Contemporary Fiqh Muamalah, which provided a rational and religious analysis of digital gambling schemes, the risks of financial loss, and the pitfalls of online gambling algorithms. PAI lecturers and teachers facilitated interactive dialogues that guided students in understanding that online gambling systems are mathematically designed to trap players in a cycle of continuous loss.

The essence of this learning transformation lies in the reconstruction of faith through the internalization of the awareness of Muraqabah—that is, the instillation of the spiritual conviction that Allah SWT is always watching over all the actions of His servants, without limitation of space or time. The concept of Muraqabah is taught as a mechanism for self-internal control when adolescents interact with their device screens privately, beyond the physical supervision of parents or teachers. A high school Islamic Education teacher in Teluk Nibung emphasized this instructional approach:

"We teach Islamic Education through interactive discussions on Modern Fiqh of Transactions. We reinforce the value of muraqabah the awareness that Allah the Almighty sees every click on their cell phone screens to build a strong foundation of self-awareness."

This reorientation of the Islamic Education (PAI) curriculum has successfully shifted students' understanding of religion from a focus on mere ritual formalities to functional religious ethics. Students are encouraged to realize that the principle of "halalan thayyiban" applies not only to food but also encompasses the permissibility of income sources and the use of digital media. Through this approach, an internal drive to resist the temptation of online gambling develops voluntarily based on adherence to religious beliefs, rather than out of fear of physical punishment or verbal reprimands.

Restructuring Family Parenting Styles and Instilling the Virtue of Qana'ah

On the domestic front, the success of building a moral foundation for adolescents in Teluk Nibung depends heavily on the family's socio-spiritual dynamics. Research has found that repressive actions or excessive anger from parents upon discovering that their children are exposed to online gambling actually encourage adolescents to hide their digital activities. Conversely, parents who adopt an empathetic parenting style with open communication have proven to be more effective in guiding and helping their children recover from digital gambling addiction.

Strengthening Islamic Education (PAI) at home is achieved by instilling the virtue of qana'ah—that is, sincerity, contentment, and gratitude for halal sustenance earned through righteous efforts. Cultivating qana'ah serves as a direct antidote to the impulses of greed and a hedonistic lifestyle, which are the psychological roots of online gambling addiction. Through regular family worship and warm family discussions, parents guide their children to understand the limits of digital transactions and to avoid excessive spending of their allowance.

The exemplary behavior (uswah hasanah) of parents in demonstrating the ethics of earning an honest living has a strong psychological impact on the character development of coastal adolescents. When the family environment consistently embodies the values of simplicity and piety, adolescents have a strong role model for resisting the temptation of instant material gain. This restructuring of parenting makes the home the first safe space for adolescents to discuss the various digital issues they face without fear of being judged.

Community Outreach by Mosques and Synergy Among the Three Pillars of Education

The findings underscore the urgency of the role of religious communities and mosques as alternative spaces for social development for the youth of Teluk Nibung. Religious leaders and local mosque youth leaders have taken the initiative to engage young people by channeling their energy into constructive and enjoyable activities, such as group sports, Islamic arts and culture, and casual, youth-friendly religious discussion forums. This approach has successfully filled the social void that is typically exploited by negative peer groups to influence adolescents.

The successful handling of the moral crisis in Teluk Nibung demonstrates the importance of integrated collaboration between schools, mosques, and families. Schools play a role in providing cognitive and religious education; families reinforce loving supervision; and mosques provide a supportive social environment. These three pillars work in harmony without shifting the responsibility for guidance onto one another.

This three-pronged educational synergy creates a holistic ecosystem of support for coastal adolescents. With strong social support from teachers, parents, and community leaders, the adolescents of Teluk Nibung possess high moral resilience in the face of the onslaught of digital disruption and the

temptations of the gambling industry.

Discussion

The integration of empirical narratives and theoretical analysis in this study underscores that the moral crisis resulting from online gambling addiction is a form of ethical decline that requires comprehensive spiritual reconstruction. From the perspective of Islamic Education Management (MPI), the effectiveness of Islamic Education (PAI) as a tool for resolution relies entirely on the embodiment of the principles of Amanah (responsibility for nurturing future generations) and Itqan (professionalism and precision in approach) (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Manurung et al., 2026). PAI serves to instill an awareness of muraqabah as a system of internal control (self-internal control) that transcends the limitations of human physical supervision. Viewed through the framework of Davis's Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (1989), A person's acceptance or rejection of a digital application is determined by perceived usefulness and perceived risk. When Islamic Education (PAI) successfully instills the understanding that online gambling leads to financial ruin, the loss of life's blessings, and a major sin (maysir), the perceived risk of digital gambling will surge dramatically within adolescents' cognitive structures. Conversely, the perceived usefulness of knowledge, noble character, and lawful sustenance (halalan thayyiban)—instilled through PAI instruction—will encourage adolescents to voluntarily abandon such deviant behavior (Rogers, 2003; Al-Ansi et al., 2021). To provide a structured theoretical overview of the interactions among the variables in this intervention management, the conceptual framework of PAI as a solution to the moral crisis is presented in Figure 1.

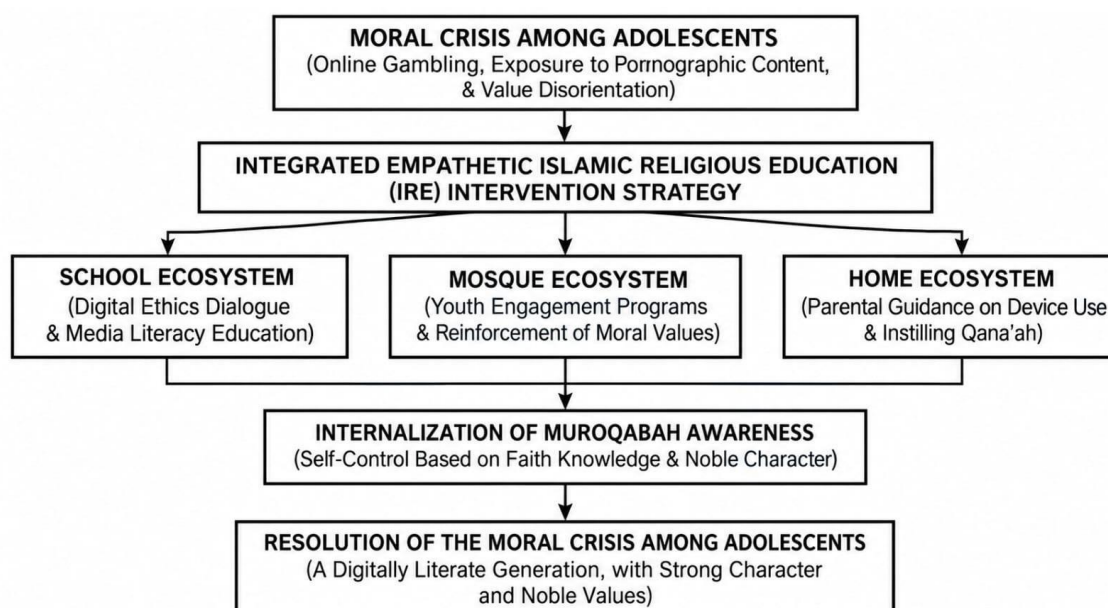


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework Diagram of Islamic Education (PAI) as a Solution to the Moral Crisis of Online Gambling Among Adolescents in Teluk Nibung

Figure 1 underscores that Islamic Education (PAI) cannot operate in isolation within the classroom. Building resilient character in adolescents in the digital age requires support from three social ecosystems simultaneously. Equipping students with digital ethics at school, nurturing young people's interests at the mosque, and the warmth of parental love and exemplary behavior at home form a dual line of defense that safeguards the faith and future aspirations of coastal adolescents.

The findings of this study also contribute to the body of knowledge in Islamic Religious Education by demonstrating that addressing the moral crisis among adolescents in coastal areas such as Teluk Nibung is ineffective when approached with repressive or judgmental methods. The Uswah Hasanah (role modeling) approach and compassionate, educational dialogue have proven far more effective in breaking down the barriers of online gambling addiction and realigning the aspirations of coastal adolescents so that they remain within the bounds of *akhlakul karimah* (Suryadi & Wahyudi, 2023; Nurdin & Yusuf, 2023)..

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of field research in the Teluk Nibung District of Tanjungbalai City, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a highly strategic and humanistic role as a solution to the moral crisis caused by the prevalence of online gambling among teenagers. PAI operates holistically through three pillars: (1) instilling a sense of *muraqabah* to build spiritual self-control in the digital space, (2) cultivating *akhlakul karimah* and the trait of *qana'ah* to realign adolescents' future aspirations away from an obsession with instant wealth, and (3) integrating digital ethics into respectful religious education. The success of addressing this moral crisis in Teluk Nibung is largely determined by the synergy among the three pillars of education—schools, mosques, and families—which prioritize an empathetic parenting approach free from stigma. This study recommends strengthening Islamic-values-based digital literacy and providing platforms for positive creativity for adolescents in the coastal area of Tanjungbalai.

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