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Research

# Teacher Mediated Technology for Islamic Character Formation in Primary Education

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**Abstract**

Digital technology is increasingly integrated into primary education, yet its contribution to Islamic character formation depends on its responsiveness to children's developmental, ethical, and contextual needs. This study explored teachers' perspectives on child-responsive technology for Islamic character education in primary schools and Islamic primary schools in Enrekang Regency, South Sulawesi. A qualitative multisite case study was conducted with 24 teachers from eight schools selected through purposive maximum-variation sampling. Data were collected through semi structured interviews, non-participant classroom observations, and document analysis, and were examined using reflexive thematic analysis and cross-case comparison. The findings revealed four major themes. First, 87.5% of participants emphasised developmental and moral appropriateness as essential criteria for technology selection. Second, 79.2% identified teacher-led moral mediation as necessary to connect digital content with Islamic values and students' daily behaviour. Third, 75.0% highlighted the need for contextual adaptation, particularly in schools with limited connectivity and digital infrastructure. Fourth, 70.8% stressed that digital engagement did not automatically produce sustained moral behaviour without repetition, teacher modelling, school routines, and parental involvement. The study concludes that child-responsive technology should be understood as part of an integrated moral and pedagogical architecture rather than as an independent instructional solution.

**Keywords**: Child Responsive Technology; Islamic Character Education; Moral Architecture; Primary Education; Teacher Perspectives

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## INTRODUCTION

The current digital transformation, the use of digital platforms, devices, and learning resources in primary education across countries, is changing the way children access information, interact, and participate in learning (Madon et al., 2023; Timotheou et al., 2023). This development offers advantages and personalization of learning, but also raises global concerns about security, privacy, content exposure, inequity in access, and the appropriateness of technology for children's developmental stages (Christakis & Hale, 2025; Regan & Jesse, 2019). In this context, teachers are the primary intermediaries assessing the appropriateness, safety, and pedagogical relevance of technology before it is implemented in children's learning (OECD, 2023). This global phenomenon demonstrates a shift from providing technology to using technology that is responsive to children's needs, rights, and development (UNICEF, 2021).

In the local context of eastern Indonesia, the use of educational technology in Enrekang Regency, South Sulawesi, takes place amidst mountainous geography and uneven digital infrastructure availability (Anita & Astuti, 2022). A number of elementary schools still face limitations in internet connectivity, digital devices, and technical support, which impact the implementation of technology-based learning (Mirata et al., 2022). Despite this, teachers and students have responded positively to the use of technology as a learning resource and medium (Osakwe et al., 2017). This situation requires the application of technology that is contextual, adaptive, and appropriate to the developmental needs of elementary school students in Enrekang Regency (Anita & Astuti, 2022).

Although the use of technology in elementary education is growing, previous research has focused more on digital teacher competency, technology integration in learning, media development, and student academic achievement (Makawawa et al., 2021). Studies on the integration of technology and character education have also been conducted, but generally focus on digital curriculum policies or educational practices in school contexts outside Enrekang Regency (Farhanillah et al., 2025; Oktaviona & Mariasa, 2025). These studies have not specifically explained how elementary school teachers in Enrekang assess the appropriateness of technology based on children's developmental needs, digital safety, Islamic values, and character-building goals. This gap highlights the need for primary research exploring teachers' perspectives as a basis for technology use that is responsive to children and aligned with Islamic character education.

This research is based on the framework of "Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge* (TPACK), "Developmentally Appropriate Practice" (DAP), and "Maqasid al-Shariah". The TPACK framework explains that teachers' perspectives and decisions in using technology are formed through the integration of technological knowledge, pedagogy, and learning materials (Petko et al., 2025; Priyanda et al., 2025). The DAP principle emphasizes that learning technology must be selected based on the child's developmental stage, individual characteristics, and social and cultural context (Hashim, 2025; Yang et al., 2025). Meanwhile, Maqasid al-Shariah provides an ethical basis for the use of technology to support the protection of religion, soul, mind, and development of children and lead to the welfare and formation of Islamic character (Oktaviona & Mariasa, 2025). The synthesis of these three frameworks was used to analyze how elementary school teachers in Enrekang Regency assess pedagogical

suitability, safety, developmental responsibility, and moral technology content in Islamic character education.

To address these issues, this study employed a qualitative approach with an interpretive case study design, allowing for an in-depth exploration of teachers' perspectives, experiences, and considerations in selecting and using technology for Islamic character education (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis to ensure understanding was not solely based on teacher statements but also on technology use practices in the elementary school environment. The data were then analyzed thematically to identify patterns regarding developmental appropriateness, digital safety, pedagogical mediation, and Islamic value orientations in technology use (Maulana et al., 2026). This approach is expected to yield a contextual, empirical understanding of the characteristics of child responsive technology and the factors that support and hinder its implementation in Islamic character education in Enrekang Regency.

Based on the description, this study aims to analyze the perspectives of elementary school teachers in Enrekang Regency regarding the use of technology that is responsive to children's needs in Islamic character education. The analysis focuses on teachers' understanding, technology selection criteria, pedagogical mediation practices, benefits, risks, and obstacles to its implementation in learning. This study is expected to provide an empirical contribution to the development of the concept of "child-responsive technology" that integrates child developmental suitability, teacher pedagogical competence, digital security, and the values of "Maqasid al-Shariah". The research findings are also expected to be the basis for schools and stakeholder policies in formulating the use of technology that is not only instructionally effective, but also supports the formation of morals, spiritual awareness, and moral responsibility of elementary school students.

## RESEARCH METHOD

### *Research Design*

This study used a qualitative approach with a multi-site interpretive case study design to deeply understand teachers' perspectives on child-responsive technology in Islamic character education in several elementary schools and Islamic elementary schools in Enrekang Regency (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The research case was geographically limited to Enrekang Regency, institutionally limited to the elementary school/Islamic elementary school level, and substantively limited to the selection, utilization, and interpretation of technology in the formation of students' Islamic character. The case study design was chosen because it allowed researchers to analyze teachers' views in real-life learning contexts and identify similarities and variations in practices across schools (Yin, 2018). The unit of analysis was teachers' perspectives and experiences, encompassing their understanding of child-responsive technology, digital media selection criteria, pedagogical mediation, digital security, developmental uniformity, and Islamic values orientation. The implementation and reporting of the study followed the principles of transparency in qualitative research, particularly in explaining the characteristics of the researchers, participant selection, research context, data collection, analysis, and interpretation of findings (Tisdell et al., 2025).

### *Research Target/Subject*

The study involved 24 teachers from eight primary schools and Islamic primary schools in Enrekang Regency, South Sulawesi. The participants were selected using purposive sampling with a maximum-variation strategy to capture diverse perspectives based on school type, geographical location, teaching role, professional experience, and the intensity of technology use in classroom instruction. The participant group consisted of 12 classroom

teachers, eight Islamic Religious Education teachers, and four curriculum or educational technology coordinators who also maintained direct teaching responsibilities.

**Table 1.** Distribution of Research Participants

| School Code | School Type | Geographical Context | Classroom Teachers | Islamic Education Teachers | Curriculum/Technology Coordinators | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S1 | Primary School | Urban | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| S2 | Islamic Primary School | Urban | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| S3 | Primary School | Rural | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| S4 | Islamic Primary School | Rural | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| S5 | Primary School | Rural | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| S6 | Islamic Primary School | Mountainous | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| S7 | Primary School | Mountainous | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| S8 | Islamic Primary School | Mountainous | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| **Total** | **Eight schools** | - | **12** | **8** | **4** | **24** |

Participants were required to be active teachers at the primary education level, have at least three years of teaching experience, possess experience in using digital media or educational technology, and have participated in Islamic character education activities during the previous academic year. Teachers with exclusively administrative responsibilities and no direct involvement in classroom instruction were excluded. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained after the participants received information regarding the research objectives, procedures, confidentiality measures, and their right to withdraw from the study.

**Table 2.** Participant Selection Criteria

| Selection Aspect | Criteria |
|---|---|
| Professional status | Active teacher at a primary school or Islamic primary school |
| Teaching experience | At least three years of teaching experience |
| Technology experience | Experience using digital media or educational technology in classroom instruction |
| Character education involvement | Involvement in Islamic character education during the previous academic year |
| Instructional responsibility | Direct involvement in planning, implementing, or evaluating classroom instruction |
| Willingness to participate | Voluntary participation in interviews, observations, and related research procedures |
| Exclusion criterion | Administrative personnel or school staff without direct classroom teaching responsibilities |

### *Instruments, and Data Collection Techniques*

The researcher served as the primary instrument, supported by a semi-structured interview guide, an observation protocol, and a document-analysis checklist (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). The instruments were developed based on TPACK, Developmentally Appropriate Practice, and *Maqasid al-Shariah* to examine technological, pedagogical, developmental, and Islamic moral dimensions (Mishra & Koehler, 2006; NAEYC, 2020; Auda, 2008).

Data were collected through individual interviews, non-participant classroom observations, and document analysis. Interviews explored teachers' understanding,

experiences, selection criteria, perceived benefits, risks, and challenges in using child-responsive technology. Observations examined actual technology use, teacher mediation, student engagement, digital safety, and Islamic value integration. Lesson plans, digital materials, school policies, and character-assessment documents were analysed to support data triangulation (Bowen, 2009; Patton, 2015).

**Table 3.** Research Instruments and Data Collection Focus

| Instrument | Technique | Main Focus |
|---|---|---|
| Interview guide | Semi-structured interviews | Teachers' perspectives, experiences, benefits, risks, and challenges |
| Observation protocol | Non-participant observation | Technology use, teacher mediation, child responsiveness, and Islamic values |
| Document checklist | Document analysis | Lesson plans, digital materials, school policies, and character assessment |

The instruments were reviewed by experts in educational technology, primary education, and Islamic education before data collection. Methodological triangulation was applied to strengthen the credibility and consistency of the findings (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

### *Research Procedure*

The research procedure consisted of four stages. First, the researchers obtained institutional permission, selected participating schools and teachers, and obtained informed consent from all participants. Second, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant classroom observations, and document analysis. Third, interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, while observation notes and documents were systematically organized for analysis. Finally, data were compared across sources to identify consistent patterns, variations, and contextual meanings related to child-responsive technology and Islamic character education (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018).

Ethical principles were maintained throughout the study by ensuring voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, and participants' right to withdraw. Data collection continued until sufficient information was obtained and no substantial new themes emerged (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022).

### *Data Analysis Technique*

Data were analyzed using reflective thematic analysis through six stages: data introduction, initial coding, theme construction, theme review, theme definition, and report creation (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were coded using a combined deductive-inductive approach. Deductive codes were derived from TPACK, Developmentally Appropriate Practices, and Maqasid al-Shariah, while inductive codes emerged from participant experiences and classroom practices.

Cross-case analysis was then conducted to identify similarities and differences across different school types and geographic contexts (Yin, 2018). The credibility of the analysis was strengthened through data triangulation, member checking, peer review, and maintaining an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nowell et al., 2017).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of data from 24 teachers across eight primary schools generated four major themes. The findings showed that 21 participants (87.5%) emphasised developmental and moral appropriateness, 19 participants (79.2%) highlighted teacher-led moral mediation, 18 participants (75.0%) stressed contextual adaptation, and 17 participants (70.8%) identified continuous behavioural reinforcement as essential to Islamic character formation.

Twenty-one of the 24 participants (87.5%) stated that child-responsive technology should be age-appropriate, emotionally safe, visually accessible, and consistent with Islamic values. Eighteen

teachers (75.0%) specifically mentioned the importance of limiting screen exposure, while 20 teachers (83.3%) considered Islamic ethical content a primary criterion when selecting digital media. Classroom observations in seven of the eight schools showed that students were more engaged when digital stories were brief, familiar, and followed by teacher-guided reflection.

Nineteen participants (79.2%) stated that digital media could not independently develop Islamic character. Eighteen teachers (75.0%) used reflective questions after digital activities, 16 teachers (66.7%) connected digital content with students' daily experiences, and 15 teachers (62.5%) incorporated teacher modelling into technology-supported lessons. Observations in six schools indicated that students demonstrated greater moral engagement when teachers paused digital content, asked interpretative questions, and related the message to classroom behaviour.

Eighteen participants (75.0%) reported that the implementation of technology was strongly influenced by school infrastructure and geographical conditions. Teachers in all three mountainous schools relied primarily on downloaded videos, offline presentations, shared devices, and printed screenshots. By contrast, teachers in the two urban schools used internet-based platforms, interactive presentations, and educational applications more frequently. Seventeen teachers (70.8%) adapted digital content into role-playing, group storytelling, worksheets, and classroom discussion when internet access was limited.

Seventeen participants (70.8%) distinguished between students' ability to recognise Islamic values and their capacity to practise them consistently. Twenty teachers (83.3%) reported that digital media improved students' attention and moral vocabulary, but only 14 teachers (58.3%) observed consistent behavioural changes after technology-supported instruction. Nineteen participants (79.2%) stated that sustained character development required repetition, teacher modelling, school routines, and parental involvement. Document analysis revealed that six of the eight schools assessed moral understanding, whereas only three schools systematically documented students' behavioural development.

**Table 4.** Summary of the Main Findings

| Theme | Frequency | Percentage | Supporting Evidence |
|---|---|---|---|
| Developmental and moral appropriateness | 21 of 24 | 87.5% | Age suitability, emotional safety, screen control, and Islamic content |
| Teacher-led moral mediation | 19 of 24 | 79.2% | Reflective questions, modelling, discussion, and contextual explanation |
| Contextual adaptation | 18 of 24 | 75.0% | Offline materials, shared devices, printed visuals, and low-technology activities |
| Continuous behavioural reinforcement | 17 of 24 | 70.8% | Repetition, school routines, parental involvement, and behavioural assessment |

Overall, the findings indicate that teachers did not define child-responsive technology solely in terms of technical accessibility or student enjoyment. Its educational value was determined by the integration of developmental suitability, Islamic ethical content, teacher mediation, contextual adaptability, and sustained behavioural reinforcement.

The finding that 87.5% of participants prioritised developmental and moral appropriateness indicates that child-responsive technology cannot be evaluated solely through usability or student engagement. Technology must also correspond to children's developmental characteristics, emotional safety, cultural context, and educational needs, consistent with the principles of Developmentally Appropriate Practice (NAEYC, 2020). This finding also supports the TPACK framework, which positions effective technology integration as an interaction between technological features, pedagogical decisions, and learning content rather than the use of digital tools in isolation (Mishra & Koehler, 2006).

Teacher-led moral mediation, emphasised by 79.2% of participants, confirms that digital media function primarily as instructional resources rather than independent agents of character formation. This result is consistent with Azman et al. (2025), who found that the effectiveness of digital Islamic education depends on teachers' ability to select appropriate tools and employ purposeful pedagogical strategies. It also supports previous findings that

teachers play a central role in connecting digital content with Islamic values and students' everyday experiences (Gianistika et al., 2025).

The need for contextual adaptation, identified by 75.0% of participants, demonstrates that child responsiveness is influenced by infrastructure, geographical conditions, and teachers' adaptive capacity. Similar challenges involving limited devices, unstable internet connectivity, and insufficient professional training have been reported in technology-supported Islamic education at the primary level (Haris, 2026). Furthermore, the distinction between moral understanding and sustained behaviour shows that digital engagement alone is insufficient; Islamic character formation requires teacher modelling, repeated practice, school routines, and family reinforcement. This interpretation is consistent with Social Cognitive Theory, which explains behaviour as the result of reciprocal interactions among personal understanding, observed models, actions, and social environments (Bandura, 1986).

Overall, this study extends previous research by showing that effective technology for Islamic character education requires five integrated elements: developmental appropriateness, Islamic ethical relevance, teacher mediation, contextual adaptability, and continuous behavioural reinforcement. The findings therefore shift the discussion from technology as a digital product toward technology as part of a broader moral and pedagogical architecture.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that child-responsive technology contributes to Islamic character education when its use is developmentally appropriate, ethically aligned with Islamic values, pedagogically mediated by teachers, and adapted to local school conditions. Technology alone does not ensure moral internalisation; sustained character formation requires reflective guidance, teacher modelling, school routines, behavioural assessment, and parental involvement. These findings position technology as part of an integrated moral and pedagogical architecture rather than as an independent instructional solution.

## DECLARATION OF AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used ChatGPT, developed by OpenAI, to support language refinement, improve manuscript structure, and enhance the clarity of academic expression. The tool was not used to collect, generate, analyse, or interpret the empirical data. All AI assisted outputs were critically reviewed, verified, and revised by the authors to ensure their accuracy, relevance, and consistency with the actual research findings and cited sources.

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## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing – review and editing.
Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; Investigation.
Author 3: Data curation; Investigation; Methodology.
Author 4: Formal analysis; Visualization; Writing original draft.

All authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript and agreed to be accountable for the integrity and accuracy of the work.

## DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could be construed as influencing the work reported in this paper.

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