



The Role of WhatsApp Interaction in Internalizing Birrul Walidain Values in Students: A Qualitative Approach at Al-Amin Islamic Boarding School, Pabuwaran

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Article Info

Article history:

Received Des 15, 2025

Revised Jan 20, 2026

Accepted Mar 27, 2026

Online First Jun 20, 2026

Keywords:

WhatsApp Interaction
Birrul Walidain
Digital Communication
Santri
Islamic Boarding School

ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This study aims to analyze the role of WhatsApp interaction in the process of internalizing birrul walidain values among santri at Al-Amin Islamic Boarding School Pabuwaran, particularly in conditions of limited face-to-face communication with parents.

Methodology: This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Informants were selected purposively, consisting of female santri and parents. Data sources include primary and secondary data. Data analysis techniques involve data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing with triangulation for validity.

Main Findings: The findings show that WhatsApp interaction significantly supports the internalization of birrul walidain values through routine and open communication. The effects include cognitive (understanding parental advice), affective (emotional closeness and empathy), and conative (obedience and respectful behavior). Digital communication also enables the implementation of religious values despite physical distance.

Novelty/Originality of this study: This study integrates digital communication and Islamic values by examining WhatsApp as a medium for internalizing birrul walidain among santri. It offers a contextual perspective within Islamic boarding schools and highlights how religious character formation can occur through digital interaction, contributing to the development of Islamic communication studies in the digital era.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has significantly transformed patterns of communication in society, including within family relationships. Communication that was previously conducted face-to-face has now shifted to internet-based digital media [1], [2]. One of the most widely used applications is WhatsApp as a means of interpersonal communication. Through WhatsApp, individuals can exchange messages, make voice calls, and conduct video calls conveniently. This shift also affects how santri interact with their parents. In an

Islamic context, such communication is closely related to the implementation of the value of *birrul walidain* [3], [4].

Santri who pursue education in Islamic boarding schools generally experience limited direct interaction with their parents. Geographic distance and boarding school regulations make face-to-face communication restricted. As a result, communication is mostly carried out through digital media such as WhatsApp. This condition has the potential to affect the quality of the emotional relationship between santri and their parents. Not all digital communication can replace the depth of direct interaction [5], [6]. This raises questions about how the value of *birrul walidain* can still be practiced within these limitations.

Various previous studies have examined long-distance communication between parents and children. Some studies highlight the effectiveness of WhatsApp in maintaining family relationships. Other research discusses patterns of interpersonal communication in the digital era. In addition, there are studies on the importance of *birrul walidain* from an Islamic perspective. However, most of these studies still focus separately on communication aspects or religious values [7], [8]. There are still limited studies that integrate both within the context of santri life.

The research gap is evident in the limited studies linking digital interaction with the internalization of religious values. In particular, few studies have examined how WhatsApp contributes to shaping *birrul walidain* behavior. The context of santri as individuals living in Islamic boarding schools has also not been extensively explored [9], [10]. In fact, santri have distinct communication characteristics compared to children in general. The limitation of direct interaction becomes an important factor that needs to be analyzed. Therefore, more specific and contextual research is required.

This study is important to understand the dynamics of digital communication within santri families. Such understanding can contribute to the development of Islamic communication studies [11], [12]. In addition, this research is relevant in addressing the challenges of digitalization on religious values. By identifying the role of WhatsApp, it can be understood how communication remains effective. This also helps parents and santri maintain harmonious relationships [13], [14]. Furthermore, this study contributes to sustaining the value of *birrul walidain* in the digital era.

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on analyzing the role of WhatsApp interaction in the internalization of *birrul walidain* values among santri. This study does not merely view communication as a process of message exchange but also as a medium for value formation. A qualitative approach is used to explore the experiences and meanings perceived by santri [15], [16]. In addition, this research takes a specific context at Pesantren Al-Amin Pabuwaran. This provides a more contextual and in-depth perspective. The objective of this study is to analyze how WhatsApp interaction plays a role in the process of internalizing *birrul walidain* values among santri.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of WhatsApp interaction in the internalization of *birrul walidain* values among santri [17]. This approach is chosen because it allows the exploration of informants' experiences, meanings, and subjective interpretations related to digital communication practices with parents. The research was conducted at Al-Amin Islamic Boarding School Pabuwaran for approximately three months. The focus is on santri who have limited direct interaction with their parents due to distance. Thus, this study seeks to portray social reality in a contextual manner. The findings are presented in a descriptive narrative form.

The subjects of this study are female santri of Pondok Pesantren Al-Amin Pabuwaran who meet specific criteria. These include santri who come from outside the region and have limited opportunities to return home. Informants were selected purposively to obtain data relevant to the research focus. In addition to santri, parents were also included as supporting informants [18]. The object of this study is communication interaction through WhatsApp in relation to the internalization of *birrul walidain* values. This object was chosen based on the increasing use of digital media in family communication. This enables a deeper analysis of the relationship between communication and religious values.

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly through interviews and observations of informants. Secondary data were collected from literature, scientific journals, and relevant documentation. The combination of these data sources strengthens the validity of the research findings [19]. The collected data focus on santri's communication experiences with their parents via WhatsApp. In addition, the data include forms of *birrul walidain* implementation in digital communication. Therefore, the data obtained are comprehensive.

Data collection techniques include observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted directly by examining santri activities in communicating with their parents. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to obtain in-depth information. Documentation was used to support data in the form of photos or activity records [20]. These three techniques were applied through triangulation to

enhance data validity. The data collection process was carried out systematically and repeatedly. This aims to ensure that the data are valid and reliable.

Data analysis was conducted interactively throughout the data collection process [21]. The stages of analysis include data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involves selecting and focusing on relevant information. Data display is presented in descriptive narrative form to facilitate understanding. Conclusions are drawn based on patterns and findings that emerge from the data. This process continues until data saturation is achieved. Thus, the analysis results reflect the actual conditions in the field.

Table 1. Research Design

Component	Description
Approach	Descriptive Qualitative
Location	Al-Amin Islamic Boarding School, Pabuwaran
Subjects	Female students (outside the area, rarely go home) parents
Object	WhatsApp interaction & internalization of <i>birrul walidain</i>
Collection Techniques	Observation, semi-structured interviews, documentation
Data analysis	Data reduction, data presentation, drawing conclusions

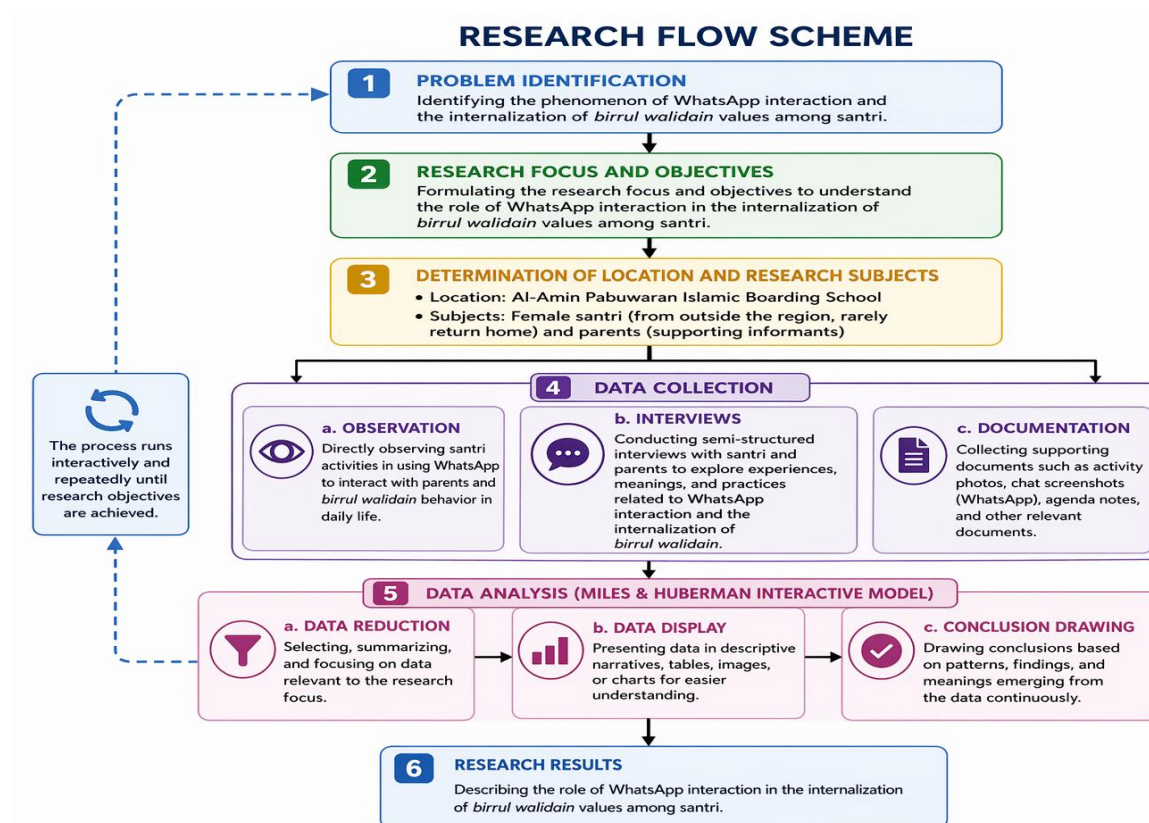


Figure 1. Research flow diagram

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that communication interactions via WhatsApp play a significant role in the internalization of the value of *birrul walidain* among students at the Al-Amin Islamic Boarding School in Pabuwaran. Based on interview and observation data, regular communication between students and their parents is a key factor in shaping filial attitudes and behavior. High communication intensity encourages emotional closeness despite distance. Furthermore, openness in communication is an important indicator in strengthening interpersonal relationships. Students tend to more easily convey their feelings, problems, and needs to their parents via WhatsApp [22]. This demonstrates that digital media is not only a communication tool, but also a means of value formation.

3.1. WhatsApp Interaction Patterns between Students and Parents

The research results show that the communication patterns formed are routine and flexible. Most students communicate via chat, phone, and video calls. Communication usually occurs at specific times, such as in the evening. The frequency of communication varies, from daily to several times a week. WhatsApp was chosen based on ease of access and comprehensive features. Furthermore, WhatsApp is considered capable of bridging the barriers of long-distance communication. Thus, digital interaction can maintain the continuity of family relationships.

3.2. The Effect of Digital Communication on Internalization of Values

Based on research findings, the effects of digital communication are divided into three aspects: cognitive, affective, and conative. The cognitive effect is evident in students' understanding of their parents' advice and expectations [23]. The affective effect is demonstrated through the emergence of empathy, emotional closeness, and concern for their parents. Meanwhile, the conative effect is evident in the concrete actions taken by students. These three effects are interconnected and form the process of internalizing the values of *birrul walidain*. Intense and open communication is the main trigger for these effects. This aligns with the finding that digital interaction can influence students' attitudes and behavior.

Table 2. Effect of WhatsApp Interaction on Internalization of Values

Effect Aspect	Form of Findings
Cognitive	Understanding advice, expectations, and values from parents
Affective	Empathy, emotional closeness, and a sense of caring emerge.
Conative	Real behavior such as obeying, respecting, and helping parents

3.3. Implementation of *Birrul Walidain* via WhatsApp

The research results show that the value of *birrul walidain* can still be implemented through digital communication. Students demonstrate devotion through the use of polite and courteous language when communicating [24]. Furthermore, students strive to obey all parental advice and instructions. Some students also demonstrate efforts to help their parents, even from a distance. Another example is regularly praying for their parents during religious activities. These behaviors demonstrate that the value of *birrul walidain* is not only physical but can also be manifested in non-physical ways. Thus, WhatsApp is a medium that supports the practice of religious values.

Table 3. Forms of Internalization of *Birrul Walidain*

Forms of Behavior	Description
Honoring parents	Speak polite words, use smooth language
Obey orders	Follow parents' advice and expectations
Helping parents	Trying to be economically independent or helping from afar
Praying for parents	Pray in daily worship

3.4. Implementation of *Birrul Walidain* via WhatsApp

WhatsApp features like chat, voice calls, and video calls play a crucial role in maintaining quality communication. Video calls allow students and parents to maintain visual closeness. Photo sharing and voice messages also help convey information more clearly [25]. Several students stated that these features were very helpful in understanding their parents' situations. Furthermore, WhatsApp facilitates communication that is not bound by time and space. This increases the effectiveness of communication within families. Thus, technology plays a role as a mediator in emotional relationships.

3.5. Implementation of *Birrul Walidain* via WhatsApp

Despite its many benefits, there are several barriers to communicating via WhatsApp. These include limited internet connection and time differences. Furthermore, not all messages are understood properly due to limited non-verbal communication [26]. Some students also reported misunderstandings during text communication. However, these barriers are not a major obstacle to implementing *birrul walidain*. Students continue to strive to maintain consistent communication. Thus, these barriers can be overcome through communication adaptations.

Findings of this study indicate that WhatsApp interaction plays an important role in strengthening the internalization of *birrul walidain* values among students at Al-Amin Islamic Boarding School. Regular communication enables students to maintain emotional closeness with their parents despite geographical separation. Interview results indicate that students use chat, voice calls, and video calls to exchange advice, prayers, and daily experiences. Continuous communication encourages openness and mutual understanding

between parents and students. Digital communication therefore functions not only as a communication platform but also as a medium for reinforcing Islamic family values.

Results further demonstrate that the internalization of *birrul walidain* values occurs through cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions. Students develop a better understanding of parental expectations through repeated communication conducted via WhatsApp. Emotional attachment becomes stronger because students frequently receive encouragement, reminders, and expressions of affection from their parents. Frequent interactions motivate students to demonstrate respectful behavior, obedience, and responsibility toward their parents. Consistent WhatsApp communication therefore contributes to transforming religious values into everyday behavioral practices among students.

Previous studies have reported that WhatsApp is an effective medium for maintaining long-distance family communication and strengthening interpersonal relationships. Existing research has primarily emphasized communication effectiveness, emotional bonding, and information exchange within digital environments. Limited attention has been given to examining how digital interaction contributes to the internalization of Islamic values, particularly *birrul walidain*, among students living in Islamic boarding schools. Findings from this study demonstrate that WhatsApp interaction extends beyond information sharing by facilitating religious character development through continuous communication with parents. Evidence obtained from this research therefore complements previous literature by integrating digital communication with the internalization of Islamic values in the *pesantren* context.

Novelty of this research lies in integrating digital communication technology with the process of religious value formation among Islamic boarding school students. WhatsApp is positioned not only as a communication tool but also as a medium for strengthening *birrul walidain* values in everyday life. Focus on students living in an Islamic boarding school provides contextual evidence that has rarely been explored in previous studies. Qualitative exploration of students' experiences also offers a deeper understanding of how religious values continue to develop despite limited face-to-face interaction with parents. Contributions from this study therefore expand the discussion of digital communication within the field of Islamic character education.

Implications of this study are relevant for Islamic boarding schools, parents, and researchers concerned with digital communication and Islamic education. Boarding school administrators can encourage structured digital communication to strengthen students' moral and religious development. Parents are expected to maintain regular and meaningful interaction because communication quality significantly influences students' emotional attachment and behavioral development. Findings also enrich theoretical discussions regarding the integration of communication technology and Islamic educational values. Future educational programs may utilize these findings as a reference for promoting positive digital communication practices that support character formation.

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of this study. Data were collected from only one Islamic boarding school, limiting the generalizability of the results to different educational settings. Research participants consisted only of female students and their parents, preventing broader representation of the student population. Qualitative data also rely heavily on participants' subjective experiences and perceptions, which may influence the interpretation of the findings. Future studies are recommended to involve multiple boarding schools, include more diverse participants, and apply mixed-method approaches to obtain more comprehensive evidence regarding the relationship between WhatsApp interaction and the internalization of *birrul walidain* values.

4. CONCLUSION

Findings of this study demonstrate that WhatsApp interaction plays a significant role in supporting the internalization of *birrul walidain* values among students at Al-Amin Islamic Boarding School through consistent, open, and meaningful communication with their parents, thereby achieving the research objective proposed in the introduction. Digital communication facilitates the development of cognitive understanding, emotional attachment, and behavioral commitment, enabling students to practice respect, obedience, and responsibility toward their parents despite the limitations of face-to-face interaction. Results further confirm that WhatsApp functions not only as a communication platform but also as an effective medium for strengthening religious character formation within the context of Islamic boarding school education. These findings contribute to the growing body of knowledge on digital Islamic communication by providing contextual evidence that communication technology can positively support the transmission and internalization of religious values in the digital era. Practical application of this research may assist Islamic boarding schools, parents, and educators in designing communication strategies that integrate digital media with character education to foster stronger family relationships and religious development among students. Future studies are recommended to involve broader research settings, include more diverse participant characteristics, and employ mixed-method or quantitative approaches to validate and extend the findings across different educational and cultural contexts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author sincerely thanks the supervising lecturers for their valuable assistance, thoughtful feedback, and guidance throughout the research process.

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