Intellectual Discourse

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Contents

Book Reviews

Transliteration Table: Consonants

Arabic	Roman		Arabic	Roman
ب	b		ط	ṭ
ت	t		ظ	ẓ
ث	th		ع	ʿ
ج	j		غ	gh
ح	ḥ		ف	f
خ	kh		ق	q
د	d		ك	k
ذ	dh		ل	l
ر	r		م	m
ز	z		ن	n
س	s		ه	h
ش	sh		و	w
ص	ṣ		ء	ʾ
ض	ḍ		ي	y

Transliteration Table: Vowels and Diphthongs

Arabic	Roman		Arabic	Roman
◌َ	a		◌ًا، ◌ًى	an
◌ُ	u		◌ٌو	un
◌ِ	i		◌ٍي	in
◌َا، ◌َٰ، ◌َى	ā		◌َوْ	aw
◌ُو	ū		◌َيْ	ay
◌ِي	ī		◌ُوّ	uww, ū (in final position)
			◌ِيّ	iyy, ī (in final position)

Parental Perceptions of Islamic YouTube Animation: The Case of 'Abdul Bari' in Pakistan.

Saima Waheed[*]
Mohd Khairie Ahmad[**]
Zafar Iqbal Bhatti[***]

Abstract: This study examines how Pakistani parents perceive Islamic YouTube animated series *Abdul Bari* and its influence on their children's religious learning. This study integrates Uses and Gratifications Theory, Parental Mediation Theory, and Mediatisation of Religion. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, data were gathered from 25 Muslim parents of children aged 5–12 through in-depth interviews. The findings show that parents value *Abdul Bari* for promoting Islamic virtues while viewing it as a safer option compared to secular online content. At the same time, they express unease over YouTube's commercialised and algorithmic nature. The study contributes to media and communication research by revealing how religious parenting practices intersect with digital media cultures, demonstrating that faith-based education is being redefined within online spaces. It offers new insights into how families negotiate religious identity and technological influence in the context of contemporary Muslim societies.

Keywords: Islam, Muslim, social media, edutainment, socialisation

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*Post-Doctoral Researcher, School of Multimedia Technology and Communication, Universiti Utara Malaysia. Email: saima.saqlain@uum.edu.my. Corresponding author.
**Associate Professor, School of Multimedia Technology and Communication, Universiti Utara Malaysia. Email: khairie@uum.edu.my
*** Professor and Head of School of English at Minhaj University Lahore, Pakistan. Email: ravianz902@gmail.com

Abstrak: Kajian ini meneliti bagaimana ibu bapa Pakistan melihat siri animasi Islam YouTube *Abdul Bari* dan pengaruhnya terhadap pembelajaran agama anak-anak mereka. Kajian ini menggabungkan Teori Kegunaan dan Kepuasan (Uses and Gratifications Theory), Teori Mediasi Ibu Bapa (Parental Mediation Theory), dan Pendigitalan Agama (Mediatisation of Religion). Dengan menggunakan pendekatan fenomenologi kualitatif, data dikumpulkan daripada 25 orang ibu bapa Muslim yang mempunyai anak berumur antara 5 hingga 12 tahun melalui temu bual mendalam. Dapatan menunjukkan bahawa ibu bapa menghargai *Abdul Bari* kerana memupuk nilai-nilai Islam serta menganggapnya sebagai pilihan yang lebih selamat berbanding kandungan sekular dalam talian. Pada masa yang sama, mereka menyatakan kebimbangan terhadap sifat komersial dan algoritma YouTube. Kajian ini menyumbang kepada bidang penyelidikan media dan komunikasi dengan mendedahkan bagaimana amalan keibubapaan berteraskan agama berinteraksi dengan budaya media digital, menunjukkan bahawa pendidikan berasaskan keagamaan sedang didefinisikan semula dalam ruang dalam talian. Ia juga memberikan pandangan baharu tentang bagaimana keluarga merundingkan identiti keagamaan dan pengaruh teknologi dalam konteks masyarakat Muslim kontemporari.

Kata kunci: Islam, Muslim, media sosial, didik-hibur, sosialisasi

Introduction

Social media plays a multifaceted role in modern society, serving as a powerful platform for communication, information sharing, education, marketing, entertainment, and social mobilisation (Andok, 2024). It enables instant connection between individuals, communities, and organisations across the globe. Fostering relationships and building networks through messaging, video calls, and interactive content (Katili, 2024; Bajwa et al., 2022). These developments reflect how digital connectivity has redefined the very nature of social interaction shifting communication from physical spaces to virtual communities where ideas, values, and identities are constantly negotiated. In educational contexts, social media supports learning by providing access to diverse resources, expert knowledge, and peer-to-peer interaction (Arif et al., 2025; Akhyar et al., 2025). However, this growing integration of social platforms into daily life also blurs the boundaries between learning and leisure. The way users, particularly young audiences, engage with digital content reveals that education today is not confined to classrooms but increasingly shaped by online experiences, including entertainment media and animated narratives.

In Pakistan's rapidly expanding digital landscape, YouTube has emerged as a primary platform for children's entertainment and informal education (Vogelman-Natan, 2025; Shamim, 2024). Its vast library of accessible and algorithm-driven content attracts young audiences and parents alike, positioning it as a key medium for value-based storytelling. Among the numerous channels, *Abdul Bari* stands out as a popular Islamic animated series that blends humour, relatable narratives, and vibrant visuals with Qur'anic and prophetic teachings (Annisah, 2025; Naila & Rohimi, 2024). Through this combination, the series makes moral and religious concepts both engaging and relevant to contemporary children, reflecting how digital media increasingly functions as a space for faith-based learning within Pakistani households.

The research focus is the views of the parents concerning the Islamic values and moral imperatives discussed in the Abdul, animated series. It examines parental modes of control over the children in connecting with the programme, and points to mediation practices through which viewing experiences and religious training in the family are moulded.

This research is an addition in studies of communication and media because it clarifies the intersection of religious learning, conversational practices in families, and digital technology in everyday media activities. The article broadens the existing discussion on the media audiences, mediation of parents, and mediatisation of religion in non-western, Muslim-dominated contexts by investigating the choice, meaning, and inclusion of faith-based messages in the everyday lives of children. Furthermore, the research shows how the interactive and algorithmic environment of YouTube transforms the role of parents, which develops new ways of teaching morality and spirituality that integrate entertainment and schooling. In this connection, the results provide new insights into how the digital space would put family communication, religious authority and cultural identity back together.

Research Questions

Guided by these aims, the study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: How do Pakistani parents perceive the religious and moral content presented in the *Abdul Bari* animated series?

RQ2: In what ways does YouTube's platform structure influence parents' trust, accessibility, and control over their children's viewing experiences?

RQ3: What parental mediation strategies do parents employ when their children watch *Abdul Bari* on YouTube?

RQ4: How do parents evaluate the programme's impact on their children's Islamic knowledge, moral behaviour, and interest in faith-based learning?

RQ5: What concerns or challenges do parents have regarding the use of YouTube for delivering Islamic animation to children?

Literature Review

Religious media refer to the radio, film, print, television, and online media, which is used to spread faith-based information, teach moral virtues, and practice spirituality (De Sousa et al., 2021). As technology continuously evolves, religious performance has left the institutional forms of religiosity and moved to individualised electronic platforms like YouTube, podcasts, social media networks; such platforms do not only inform but also determine moral perspectives and cultural identities (Zhang, 2025). This shift explains why it is imperative to develop an understanding of how families perceive and trust online content about religion in ordinary life situations.

Islamic animation, to be more specific, has become one of the most common methods of conveying religious and moral values to people through the use of interesting plots and pictorial images (Huda & Anwar, 2024). These are various productions that condense Quranic and prophetic teachings to children by transforming abstract morals into stories that children can relate to (Al Mushaiqri & Sulistio, 2024; Yudaningsih, 2025). However, most of the current studies devote more attention to the content quality and teaching methods instead of paying attention to the audience perceptions.

YouTube is one of the leading informal learning sources of Pakistani children, and the *Abdul Bari* series became one of the culturally

appropriate options of Islamic video games instead of the secular entertainment. This kind of series is more used by parents to reinforce moral and religious values at home (Lu et al., 2022; Konca et al., 2024; Shen et al., 2025). The given work builds on the existing research by examining the way Pakistani parents perceive, interpret and control the involvement of their children in utilising *Abdul Bari*, which provides insight in the contribution of digital Islamic media involvement in moral growth and parental supplication.

The necessity to explore Islamic animation and its impact on children learning and moral growth is therefore important in understanding parental attitude. In the case of *Abdul Bari*, the opinion of parents is influenced by their religious beliefs, the level of education, their faith in manufacturers, and the hopes in the spiritual development of their children. Such views, in its turn, guide the mediation techniques like discussion, co-viewing, and content restrictions (Alareifi, 2024; Kanu et al., 2024).

The combination of such mediation actions and the messages relayed by animation has an influential effect on children in the internalising and interpretation of Islamic teachings. Although the popularity of the *Abdul Bari* and other similar productions are rising, the Pakistani academic literature on the topic of these productions in terms of socialising children to be like Allah and moral transformation is still lacking. Religious media for children occupies a unique space in Pakistan. While it offers an alternative to secular or Westernised entertainment and reinforces Islamic values. YouTube's algorithm-driven system also exposes children to unrelated or inconsistent religious content (Eide, 2020).

While previous research has largely examined how religious media influence adult audiences, limited attention has been paid to their impact on children, particularly from parents' perspectives. Studies such as De Sousa et al. (2021), Zhang (2025), and Feriana et al. (2025) highlight how faith-based media strengthen adults' spiritual identity, moral reflection, and community bonds. However, these works overlook how young viewers engage with religious content and how parents' guide that process. This study fills that gap by exploring Pakistani parents' perceptions of the Islamic YouTube series *Abdul Bari* and its role in shaping children's moral and spiritual learning, offering insights into its

authenticity, educational value, and cultural relevance in contemporary Muslim households.

Table 1: Summary of Research Gaps

Research Dimension	Existing Insights	Identified Gap
Islamic Animation as Edutainment	*Nussa* and similar series show educational and moral efficacy	No empirical studies on *Abdul Bari* as a Pakistani phenomenon
YouTube as Delivery Medium	Known advantages and risks of algorithm-based platforms	Lack of research on Pakistani parents' trust and navigation of YouTube content
Parental Mediation in Religious Context	Mixed parental attitudes toward cartoons in Pakistan	Insufficient understanding of mediation specifically for Islamic animation
Semiotic and Cultural Representation	Semiotic analyses of *Burka Avenger* highlight value-laden storytelling	No content analysis done on *Abdul Bari*
Digital Community Reception	Ethnographic themes in Indonesian Islamic animation	Need for similar analysis of Pakistani audiences around *Abdul Bari*
Animators' Cultural Framing in Pakistan	Scholars emphasise localised heritage in animation content	*Abdul Bari* unaddressed in this cultural identity discourse

This study integrates Uses and Gratifications Theory (U&G), Parental Mediation Theory (PMT), and Mediatisation of Religion (MOR) to examine how Pakistani parents engage with the Islamic animated series *Abdul Bari* and guide their children's media consumption.

U&G assumes that audiences are active participants in the communication process, selecting media content based on personal goals such as information-seeking, entertainment, social interaction, or personal identity formation. In the context of *Abdul Bari*, U&G helps explain why parents in Pakistan choose or encourage their children to watch this Islamic animated series (Aksoy & Allahverdi, 2025). Parents often use the programme as an informational and educational tool to teach Islamic morals in an engaging, age-appropriate format. It also addresses the entertainment requirements of children that show humour, songs and characters that they can relate to; it facilitates socialisation

through the strengthening of shared religious value in families (Bhatti et al., 2025; Waheed et al., 2022).

PMT is a theory which looks at the regulation policies that parents employ to govern and influence video-consumption of children. The premise on which this theory was developed is attributed to the fact that parental involvement has the potential to change the way children decode and are impacted by the media messages (Mekonen et al., 2024). It mentions three primary forms of mediation style: active people can mediate by talking and explaining about the Islamic messages that they see in the episodes; restrictive style, parents can prohibit the watching time or skip some episodes, that they regard as less educational and important; and co-viewing style, the parents can watch the television shows with their kids and provide a chance of shared interpretation and conversation. In *Abdul Bari*, the parental mediation is important to make sure that the moral and religious messages presented in content are comprehended, put into their contexts, and be aligned with the values family members share.

MOR represents the attribute in which the religious beliefs, practices and messages get modified in accordance with the modern media forms. The premise behind this idea is that the media do not merely carry religious material but reworks it in forms that suit the logic of the mediums (Kołodziejska et al., 2023). *Abdul Bari* is an example of mediatisation based on the study context that involves adapting the teachings of the Islamic faith into motion pictures that have an appeal on children today. Being available on YouTube, the programme can reach an audience that far outweighs the traditional religious education, due to the algorithms of this platform that increase the visibility (Stepniak, 2023). By using digital storytelling, the series mixes the ideals of Islam with pop culture, making it more palatable and digestible to the youth viewers by making moral and spiritual lessons more tolerable (Trihastutie, 2024).

The amalgamation of U&G Theory, PMT, and MOR provides a unified lens for examining how digital media, family communication, and faith-based learning intersect. U&G Theory explains parents' active selection of *Abdul Bari* to meet children's moral, educational, and entertainment needs. PMT highlights the communicative strategies discussion, co-viewing, and restriction used to guide children's

understanding. MOR situates these family practices within the broader transformation of faith through digital media, where religion adapts to media logic and visual storytelling. Together, these frameworks reveal how parents and children co-construct religious meaning in mediated settings, merging moral education with entertainment, digital faith communication, and religious socialisation.
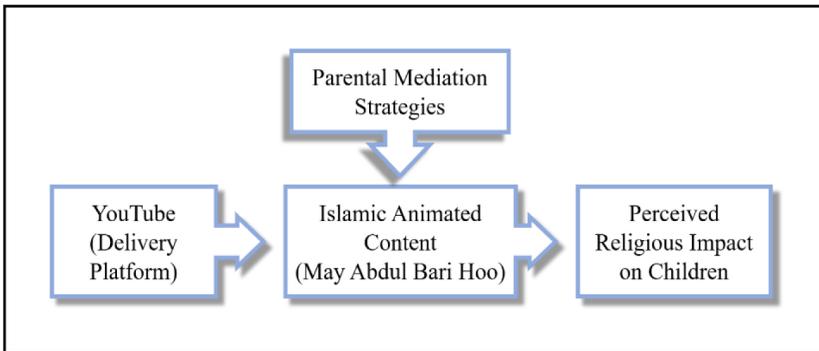
Figure 1: Research Framework

Research Methodology

Research Design: This study adopts a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of Pakistani parents regarding the *"Abdul Bari"* animated series on YouTube. This research seeks to uncover the meanings parents attach to the series and its perceived role in shaping their children's religious and moral understanding. The emphasis is on obtaining rich, descriptive accounts rather than quantifying responses, which aligns with the interpretivist paradigm that underpins this study (Rogo, 2024).

Population and Sampling: The target population comprised Muslim parents residing in Pakistan who had children between the ages of 5 and 12 years and who allowed or encourage their children to watch the *"Abdul Bari"* series on YouTube (Ahmad & Wilkins, 2024). A purposive sampling strategy was used to identify participants who met these specific inclusion criteria. The study aimed to interview between 20 and 25 parents, with the final sample size determined by the point of thematic saturation, where no new significant insights emerged from additional interviews (Naeem et al., 2023).

Table 2: Demographic Profiles of Participants

Participant ID	Gender	Age	Education Level	Number of Children	Age of Child Watching	Viewing Frequency of "Abdul Bari"
P1	Female	32	Bachelor's	2	7	Daily
P2	Male	38	Master's	3	9	3–4 times a week
P3	Female	29	Intermediate	1	6	Weekly
P4	Female	35	Bachelor's	2	10	Daily
P5	Male	40	Master's	2	8	2–3 times a week
P6	Female	30	Bachelor's	3	5	Weekly
P7	Female	28	Bachelor's	1	6	Daily
P8	Male	37	Bachelor's	2	11	Weekly
P9	Female	33	Master's	2	7	2–3 times a week
P10	Female	31	Intermediate	1	5	Daily
P11	Male	39	Bachelor's	3	10	Weekly
P12	Female	34	Master's	2	8	3–4 times a week
P13	Male	36	Intermediate	2	7	Weekly
P14	Female	27	Bachelor's	1	5	Daily
P15	Female	29	Bachelor's	2	6	2–3 times a week
P16	Male	41	Master's	3	9	Weekly
P17	Female	33	Bachelor's	1	7	Daily
P18	Female	35	Intermediate	2	8	Weekly
P19	Male	38	Bachelor's	2	10	2–3 times a week
P20	Female	30	Master's	1	6	Daily
P21	Female	32	Bachelor's	2	5	Daily
P22	Male	37	Intermediate	3	11	Weekly
P23	Female	34	Master's	1	9	3–4 times a week
P24	Female	28	Bachelor's	2	6	2–3 times a week
P25	Male	39	Master's	2	8	Weekly

Data Collection Method: Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which offered flexibility in exploring participant experiences while ensuring coverage of core themes. An interview guide was developed to include open-ended questions related to participants.

Interviews were conducted either face-to-face or via online platforms such as Zoom or WhatsApp, depending on participant convenience and geographic location (Grodal et al., 2021). Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes and was audio-recorded with participant consent.

Data Analysis: Interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed using thematic analysis. This involved familiarisation with the data, generation of initial codes, identification of themes, review and refinement of themes, and final theme definition. The thematic approach allowed the researcher to capture both explicit and implicit meanings within the parents' narratives (Braun & Clarke, 2023).

Ethical Considerations: The study adhered to strict ethical protocols. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before the interviews, and they were assured of the voluntary nature of their participation and their right to withdraw at any stage. Participants' identities were kept confidential by using pseudonyms in transcripts and publications (Ibrahim et al., 2024). Data will be stored securely and accessible only to the researcher.

Ensuring Trustworthiness: To ensure the credibility and reliability of the findings, member checking was conducted by sharing interview summaries with participants for verification. Peer debriefing was used to discuss emerging themes with fellow researchers. Triangulation was achieved by comparing parents' accounts with selected episode observations from the series (Adler, 2022). An audit trail was maintained to document research decisions throughout the process.

Table 3: Coding Process Linking Codes, Themes and Theories

Initial Code	Category	Emerging Theme	Relevant Theory
Moral reinforcement	Faith-based learning	Perceptions of Religious and Moral Content	U&G
Educational motivation	Information and education	Perceptions of Religious and Moral Content	U&G
Platform convenience and concern	Accessibility vs. risk	Role of YouTube in Accessibility and Trust	MOR
Active guidance	Co-viewing and discussion	Parental Mediation Strategies	PMT

Initial Code	Category	Emerging Theme	Relevant Theory
Restrictive control	Time and content limitation	Parental Mediation Strategies	PMT
Behavioural change	Moral and social development	Perceived Impact on Children's Behaviour	U&G
Algorithmic risk	Monitoring and concern	Concerns and Challenges	MOR + PMT

Findings and Analysis

This segment presents the findings of interviews conducted with 25 Muslim parents in Pakistan whose children (aged 5–12) watch the "*Abdul Bari*" animated series on YouTube. Through thematic analysis, five major themes emerged. Each theme is supported with direct participant quotes and sample dialogues from the series in both Urdu (Roman) and English translation.

Perceptions of Religious and Moral Content

Parents consistently viewed *Abdul Bari* as a meaningful religious and moral guide for their children, blending Islamic teachings with relatable storytelling. They considered the series not merely entertainment but an extension of their own efforts to install values. Episodes convey principles such as truthfulness, kindness, respect, gratitude, and responsibility through brief, memorable dialogues that children often repeat in daily life.

> For instance, P4 recalled her son correcting a friend by saying, "…Allah loves those who speak the truth," while P17 noted her child reminding a cousin, "Return what is not yours," directly quoting *Abdul Bari*. Parents appreciated how the show emphasised empathy and helping others. P9 described her daughter assisting her grandmother after watching *Abdul Bari* help an elderly man carry heavy bags, and P15 observed her son echoing the series' message of brotherhood by helping a classmate.

> Respect for elders was also strongly reinforced. P20 mentioned her daughter greeting grandparents more warmly, and P6 highlighted her son's habit of saying, "Peace should be greeted first," mirroring *Abdul Bari*. The series connects

religious practices to everyday manners: P14's daughter reminded her to say *Bismillah* before meals, while P1's son began arranging his shoes neatly, citing, "Cleanliness is part of faith."

Environmental awareness and care for animals were additional themes. P19 noted her child preventing harm to a cat, reflecting *Abdul Bari*'s lesson, "Be kind to animals, and Allah will be kind to you," and P12 recalled her daughter avoiding river pollution after an episode. Humour and songs enhanced retention of lessons; P2's child enjoyed a cleaning song, while P24 remembered a humorous warning about lying, which also reinforced the moral. Other examples included refusing to waste food, comforting peers in sorrow, and sharing with neighbours, all inspired by *Abdul Bari*'s guidance. As P7 concluded, "It doesn't feel like preaching; it feels like a friend teaching them in a fun way and they remember every word."

Role of YouTube in Accessibility and Trust

Parents highlighted YouTube as the primary medium that makes *Abdul Bari* easily accessible, affordable, and consistently available for their children. For many, the platform's free nature and on-demand viewing make it a preferred choice over television or DVDs.

P3 explained, "On cable, we had to watch at a fixed time, but on YouTube, we can watch whenever we want." Similarly, P8 appreciated the lack of geographical restrictions: "I work in Dubai, my kids are in Lahore, and we watch the same episodes on YouTube."

Several parents noted the convenience of replays and playlists for repeated learning. P1 said, "If a child likes an episode, you can replay it again and again with just one click." P14 added that her daughter memorised moral songs because "She listens to the same song using the rewind feature."

Trust in the content was another key theme. Many parents felt safe letting children watch *Abdul Bari* on YouTube because it aligns with Islamic values. P12 remarked, "Not everything on YouTube is safe, but *Abdul Bari* gives peace of mind." P21 echoed this, saying, "Even if I leave my phone with them, I know nothing inappropriate will appear."

YouTube's algorithm also plays a role in building viewing habits. P19 said, "Search once, and YouTube automatically suggests more." This recommendation feature helps parents who may not have time to manually select content every day. Offline availability through YouTube downloads was mentioned by P5: "If the internet is slow, download it first and show it later." P16 added that this feature is particularly useful during travel: "When there's no internet on the train or in the village, kids watch downloaded episodes." As P7 summarised, "Having *Abdul Bari* on YouTube is like having a library inside your home."

Parental Mediation Strategies

Parents described various ways they guide and monitor their children's viewing of *Abdul Bari* on YouTube, aiming to maximise its moral lessons while controlling exposure. Strategies ranged from active co-viewing to discussion and reinforcement, to restrictive control over screen time and access.

Many parents said they prefer watching the episodes together so they can immediately explain lessons. P4 noted and P17 shared, "Whenever prayer is mentioned, I say: see, *Abdul Bari* also prays on time."

Some parents use post-viewing discussions to link the show's message with real-life situations. P9 explained, "If there's an episode on sharing, the next day I ask after school: what did you share today?" P15 added, "When *Abdul Bari* helps his mother, I tell my child to help me in the kitchen."

Others apply restrictive mediation to balance moral education with screen limits. P2 said, "Only one or two episodes daily, otherwise other videos start showing up." P19 uses YouTube Kids to filter unwanted content: "I keep a lock on the YouTube Kids app."

A few parents incorporate reward-based mediation, allowing the series as a motivational tool. P20 shared, "If homework is done on time, then they get to watch *Abdul Bari*." P24 said, "If they behave well, I play their favourite moral story."

Co-viewing also becomes a way to correct misunderstandings. P6 explained, "Sometimes children misunderstand, so I pause the video and explain what it really meant." In some

cases, parents even extend the lesson into activities. P12 described, "After the Eid episode, we distributed food to the poor together." As P21 summarised, "Just playing the video isn't enough; explaining alongside is essential."

Perceived Impact on Children's Behaviour

Most parents reported noticeable positive behavioural changes in their children after watching *Abdul Bari*. They described improvements in manners, prayer habits, truthfulness, and willingness to help others. Many linked these changes directly to repeated exposure to the show's moral dialogues.

> P1 shared, "Speaking the truth is our identity." My daughter always mentioned I am speaking truth like *Abdul Bari*. P14 observed that her son started reminding family members about prayer: "It's prayer time, let's pray," like *Abdul Bari*.

> Some parents saw changes in sharing and empathy. P9 said, "Now he shares his lunch at school because in one episode *Abdul Bari* shared his lunch." P12 noticed her daughter showing kindness: "After the Eid episode, she put her old clothes in a box saying these are for the poor."

> Parents also linked behavioural improvement to the show's repeated emphasis on obedience and respect. P4 explained, "When *Abdul Bari* obeys his mother, my son listens to me the same way. P15 added, "Now he greets elders with 'Peace be upon you, just like in the series." Some parents highlighted reduced exposure to undesirable media habits. P2 said, "Earlier he was obsessed with games and random cartoons, now he mostly watches this moral series."

> However, a few parents noted that changes require consistent reinforcement. P19 cautioned, "Just watching isn't enough, you have to remind them again." P6 agreed, "Until I give him daily examples from the episode, the behaviour doesn't stay consistent." As P21 put it, "Now we have a little *Abdul Bari* in the house."

Concerns and Challenges

While most parents appreciated *Abdul Bari* for its moral and religious content, some expressed concerns regarding children's viewing habits,

comprehension, and reliance on digital platforms. A common worry was increased screen time.

> P3 noted that her son sometimes insisted, "I will only watch *Abdul Bari*," while P16 added that even after one episode, children often requested more, requiring parents to enforce limits. P11 observed that children occasionally interrupted homework to watch, mimicking *Abdul Bari*'s encouragement to "learn a little more."

> Younger children sometimes interpreted lessons too literally. P6 shared that after the episode "Lying is bad," her son corrected his sister over minor matters. P20 mentioned that the lesson "Anger comes from the devil" led her child to label parental discipline as devil-like. Similarly, P14's daughter compared her parent's patience to *Abdul Bari*'s, reflecting a direct but sometimes rigid application of lessons.

> Some parents expressed concerns about YouTube itself. The platform's recommendations occasionally introduced unrelated or inappropriate content. P5 said the next suggested video might be a cartoon they did not want their child to watch, and P19 highlighted the difficulty of controlling YouTube, preferring to supervise viewing closely. P8 recounted occasions when she left the room only to find her child viewing unrelated videos.

> Language and comprehension were other challenges. While the series is in Urdu, some Islamic terms and moral concepts were difficult for younger children to understand. P10 noted her son asking the meaning of "*Amanat*" (trust), and P21's daughter inquired about *zakat* after hearing an episode.

Discussions

Perceive the religious and moral content of the "Abdul Bari" animated series

The findings show that Pakistani parents overwhelmingly perceive *Abdul Bari* as a highly positive and authentic source of religious and moral education for their children (Akhyar et al., 2025). Parents consistently emphasised that the series extends their own efforts of moral upbringing by embedding Islamic teachings within relatable stories, humour, and memorable dialogues (Katili, 2024). This perception is best explained

through U&G, which highlights the ways audiences actively use media to meet specific needs in this case, information and education, socialisation, and moral development.

Parents mostly valued *Abdul Bari* for its educational gratification, appreciating how it conveys Islamic values honesty, respect, kindness, and gratitude through simple, relatable stories that translate abstract morals into practical lessons (Alareifi, 2024). Seen as an extension of informal religious education rather than entertainment, the series enables parents to act as active audiences within the U&G framework, intentionally selecting content that reinforces both moral learning and family values. Its depiction of everyday moral choices positions it as a tool of mediated moral socialisation, bridging digital media and traditional faith-based instruction. This raises deeper questions: How does consistent exposure to such content shape children's internalisation of Islamic values? Why do parents place such trust in mediated forms of moral guidance, and to what extent might *Abdul Bari* complement or gradually replace direct parental teaching?

Second, parents experienced socialisation gratification as the programme reinforced shared religious values within the family. Children were seen emulating *Abdul Bari*'s modelled behaviours saying *Bismillah* before meals, showing kindness to animals, and respecting elders while encouraging others to do the same. Parents thus viewed the series as a tool for moral socialisation that strengthened family bonds and collective religious identity. As Aksoy and Allahverdi (2025) note, religious media promotes "value internalisation through modelled repetition," enabling children to translate moral lessons into everyday practice. Within the U&G framework, this fulfils relational needs by allowing families to reaffirm shared beliefs and integrate Islamic values into daily life, transforming media viewing into lived faith.

Lastly, religious narratives and moral development was also an important source of satisfaction. Parents pointed to the ways in which children emulated the actions and echoed the speech of *Abdul Bari* in real life situations. This congruent experience as a result of the regular exposure to good examples of morality allowed children to assimilate Islamic morals by themselves, in a fun and active way. In that regard, the series serves a greater purpose than being a form of entertainment;

it turns into a means of moral education based on religious plots (Bhatti et al., 2025).

Parents' trust and control over the program's accessibility and viewing experience

The results suggest that the platform architecture of YouTube is indeed the key determinant of how the parents view and trust *Abdul Bari* in providing both religious and moral teaching to their children (Andok, 2024). The most suitable framework to interpret this dynamic is the MOR, which focuses on the adaptation of religious content to the digital format, its manipulation by technologically driven logics and locations in the beyond-religious spaces.

First, parents highlighted how the adaptation of Islamic messages into YouTube's audiovisual format made religious learning more engaging and accessible for children. The programme's integration of storytelling, humour, songs, and visual appeal exemplifies how traditional moral teachings are re-packaged into a digital-friendly form (Katili, 2024). This transformation reflects the mediatisation process, where Islamic narratives are not merely transmitted but reshaped to fit the logics of online media consumption.

Second, YouTube's algorithmic infrastructure strongly influenced visibility and continuity of religious exposure. Parents noted that once children accessed the official channel, the recommendation system ensured repeated exposure to related episodes, reducing the need for constant parental oversight (Yudaningsih, 2025). Alternatively, the commonly feared consequences of algorithm-based media did not apply to the parents in this example, with the algorithm seen as aide on the circulation of safe morally upright content. The playlist and auto-suggestion features of the platform, therefore, regulated the consumption and continuation of religious messages in children's daily activities.

Third, YouTube's on-demand accessibility extended Islamic education beyond traditional settings, allowing parents to integrate faith-based learning seamlessly into daily routines through replay able and downloadable episodes. This flexibility transformed religious instruction into an adaptable, family-centred practice. As De Sousa et al. (2021) note, digital religious media democratises access by removing spatial and temporal barriers, enabling audiences to engage

with content "at their own pace and context." From a U&G perspective, this accessibility fulfils instrumental and convenience gratifications, as parents choose platforms that suit their educational and temporal needs. It also reconfigures traditional authority, empowering parents rather than religious institutions to mediate their children's exposure to Islamic teachings. Thus, YouTube functions as a modern agent of religious socialisation, extending moral learning across diverse households and contexts.

Parental mediation strategies

Parents apply a mix of mediation strategies when their children watch *Abdul Bari* on YouTube, a practice that can be understood through PMT. This framework highlights three key approaches active mediation, restrictive mediation, and co-viewing all of which were evident in parental practices. Active mediation appeared most dominant. Many parents paused episodes or elaborated on key dialogues to ensure that children absorbed the intended Islamic teachings. For example, when episodes emphasised truthfulness or prayer, parents reinforced these values by reminding children of their religious obligations (Lu et al., 2022). Some extended the lesson beyond the screen by asking follow-up questions such as whether children helped at home or behaved honestly at school. This illustrates the explanatory function of active mediation, where parents not only interpret media content but also integrate its moral lessons into everyday life.

Restrictive mediation was also widely employed. Parents set limits on the number of episodes watched or restricted viewing to specific days. Some of them used technical resources, including YouTube Kids to block distracted or inappropriate content. Notably, the fact that *Abdul Bari* was a trusted site was not a barrier condition, but rather the risk of the platform in general and overexposure to the content (Konca et al., 2024). This signifies the cocooning aspect of barring-mediation as a trait that functions to reconcile moral teaching with bracketing the monitor.

The act of co-viewing was used as a sort of supplement to the learning experience in religion. The act of watching together led the parents to detangle misunderstandings that existed between them and their families, institute talks about Islamic practices and consolidate nuclear relationships.

Impact on children's faith-based learning

The U&G Theory allow one to consider parents perception of *Abdul Bari* in terms of the programme utility to meet the needs of their children. The three most important advantages were named by parents: they fostered the moral development, increased the levels of Islamic awareness, and made a child interested in religious education (Bhatti et al., 2025). These are about the uses of the programme, as well as about the gratifications that parents and children would get out of it.

The most popular evident gratification was a moral development parents noted that children could learn such values as honesty, kindness, and respect through the show stories. Some reported that their children began to act more truthfully in challenging situations, citing *Abdul* Bari as a role model. Similarly, improvements in manners, obedience, and respect for elders were considered outcomes of repeated exposure to the program's ethical lessons.

The second benefit emphasised was the strengthening of Islamic knowledge and daily practices. Parents noticed that children were not only learning religious concepts but also applying them in routine life. Examples included reminding others about prayer, using Islamic greetings more often, and expressing enthusiasm for visiting the mosque. Parents valued how the programme translated religious principles into simple practices that children could easily remember and apply (Pamuji et al., 2024).

The third significant satisfaction was the motivational boost on faith-based learning. Parents valued the fact that the Islamic faith was popularised through the series because they taught lessons through tales, melodies and the widespread culture. One of the mothers observed that the Islamic teachings became approachable and relatable because of the use of regular things like Eid, visit to mosques and greetings. Such conversations include the saying of *Salamu Alaikum*! The mentioned quotes were also examples of how the programme linked faith and lived experiences (Al″Mushaiqri & Sulistio, 2024).

Parents concern on the use of animation for Islamic learning content

Parents claimed that they valued *Abdul Bari* as a source of Islamic education but objected to delivering it via YouTube (Naseef et al., 2024).

Mediatisation of Religion and Parental Mediation Theory frameworks are only the best ways of explaining these concerns.

Considering the perspective of mediatisation, the perceptions of YouTube by parents indicated the complicated negotiation between religious and media agendas. They were happy that the platform made Islamic education easy and easy to watch, but they were equally aware of how the YouTube format, engineered by algorithms, commercials, and popular culture, is altering the role of children and religion to be introduced to one another. Instead of being exposed to Islamic values in a traditional setting of mosques or being taught by the parent, children of nowadays learn through a media environment filled with commercial interests and attention-seeking logic.

This change implies that digital platforms not only provide religious contents but actually transform the religious content meaning and communication procedures. The worries by parents that their interests are distracted by some of the recommendations or secular advertisements can be seen as a clue to the fact that spiritual education is being repackaged in the logical structure of media consumption. Therefore, their duality about YouTube shows a more general cultural change - when the transmission of teachings in religions is mediated more by technology, and religious power is subjected to the influence of algorithmic power.

People were concerned by the recommendation system generated by algorithms that may cause children, who watch religious videos, to get into music, dancing, or even cartoons that are not aligned with the Islamic doctrine (Jeffery, 2025). They also were concerned the advertisements and commercialisation of the platform would make sacred messages irrelevant as they are placed between secular noise.

Screen dependency was another popular problem. Children had to undergo a series of screenings most of the time, and they would repeat *Abdul Bari* as a way of receiving even longer screenings. This was causing more fear among the parents that this was deepening an on-demand media consumption habit that was completely opposite to instilling discipline and a balanced approach towards the media. In addition, other subscribers had the opinion that the instructive tone of certain episodes was not as enticing, which questions the sustainability

of religious learning on a platform that is closer to entertainment than to introspection.

The ways that parents had applied in reacting to these risks was compliant with PTM. The restrictive mediation that was mostly applied were, imposing time limits, controlling devices, and in some cases, downloading of episodes such that they could be viewed offline instead of using YouTube. Some of them went to an extent to suggest that an ad free application should be developed to offer people a safer access. Pro-active mediation could also be observed when parents clarified difficult terminology (e.g., *amanat* or *zakat*) and when they put the lessons into context when children misunderstood them, e.g. their saying ugly words about their siblings. The co-watching was applied as the supplement to the practice that enabled the family talk about the essentials of prayer, honesty, and kindness and proper description of interpretation (Eirich et al., 2022).

The results of this research prove and expand the preexisting assumptions of mediated religion and digital parenting because they show how Pakistani parents combine faith-based media with family communication and moral education. In line with the findings of research on the effectiveness of animation-based digital learning media in facilitating understanding of Islamic education by children, this paper content asserts the appreciation of *Abdul Bari* by parents as an engaging tool in ensuring children understand Islamic values. Likewise, the results are consistent with Astuti et al. (2022), who stress that digital caregiving allows Muslim families to nurture spiritual principles using the technology means. The findings support the U&G Theory, which suggests that parents are obviously making deliberate decisions on the types of Islamic content not to be entertained by, but to satisfy community learning and spiritual expectations.

PMT is also supported in the study by the observation that parents use active guidance, restriction, and co-viewing to make sure that the experiences of children on the Internet were moral. In comparison to the Western situations, where Clark (2012) and Livingstone and Blum-Ross (2020) discover that digital parenting is commonly defined in terms of managing screen time, risk regulation, and negotiation of technology usage, Pakistani parents also conceptualise digital mediation as an issue of moral duty that is connected to preserving faith. Spectacularly per

the MOR school of thinking, YouTube is a revolutionary but at the same time a religiously enabling tool, that at the same time reconceptualises the teachings of Islam in the digital realm. Contrary to the ideas of secularisation promoted by certain Western research, this paper demonstrates that digital media can enhance religious socialisation and provide spiritual education in Muslim preponderant settings, which provides a culturally unique example of religiousness in digital raising.

Conclusion

Results demonstrate the remarkable parent values of the programme as an authoritative Islamic knowledge and morality system of children, and in the context of the active negotiation of the use of the digital space. According to U&G terms, parents saw the series to serve several purposes including provision of an accessible religious education, augmentation of the moral progress, and enthusing children in their faith-centred education. The stories of the characters which people could recognise, humour, and catchy dialogues not only brought amusement but also helped to reinforce the general endeavours of families in contributing to moral upbringing as children could transfer the values of Islam to practice.

Meanwhile simultaneously, the platform structure of YouTube contributed a lot to the formation of parental trust and control. The mediatisation process led to repackaging of Islamic teachings into captivating audio-visual materials and the protrusion of religious teaching to family lifestyles on an everyday basis. However, the parental anxieties about the dangers of secular exposure via algorithms, advertising, and the consumption of screens also coincide with the parental anxieties about the rubrics of commercialisation in the digital logic. Altogether, *Abdul Bari* reveals the way digital religious media can act as the instrument of the Islamic socialisation as well as the location of the negotiation between the religious, family and technological dimensions. It is successful not only because of what it reproduces in its content but because of how the parents negotiate its role in the larger digital landscape that comprises children learning environments. This paper drives the religious media studies forward by integrating U&G theory, MOR, and PMT by demonstrating that parental involvement into *Abdul Bari* positively contributes to the moral education and family-level socialisation and exposure to platform risks. It points to the role

of the accessibility, suggestion and commercial purpose of YouTube in informal religious education and to a hybrid mediation relating regulation and collaborative learning.

This study provides valuable insights into parents' perceptions of *Abdul Bari* on YouTube but has several limitations. As it focused solely on parents, children's perspectives were excluded. Future research should include children through interviews or focus groups to understand how they perceive and apply religious and moral lessons. Secondly, the sample was limited to Pakistani Muslim parents, restricting generalisability. Comparative studies across diverse Muslim societies could reveal cultural influences on parental mediation and trust in digital religious media. Additionally, the study relied on qualitative data, providing rich insights but not measuring behavioural or attitudinal changes in children. Mixed-method approaches, such as surveys or experiments, could offer more systematic evidence of media impact. Future studies should also address technological and policy concerns, including the risks of algorithm-driven recommendations and commercialisation.

Academic Contributions: This study enriches communication research by combining U&G, PMT, and MOR to explain the intersection of media, family, and faith. It extends U&G Theory by showing that parents' media choices are driven by collective moral and religious aims rather than personal enjoyment. PMT is expanded through evidence that Pakistani parents use mediation not just for control but as a form of religious instruction. The findings also refine MOR perspective by showing that YouTube supports, rather than weakens, faith transmission demonstrating how digital media can sustain religious learning in family life.

Practical Implications: Practically, the study provides guidance for parents, educators, and media producers. Parents can use co-viewing and guided discussion to strengthen children's moral understanding while managing screen time. Educators may adopt Islamic animated programs like *Abdul Bari* to make value-based education more engaging. For content creators, the findings encourage the production of faith-oriented, culturally sensitive digital media that combine learning with entertainment.

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Reference:
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Chapter in a Book
In-text:
Alias (2009)

Reference:
Alias, A. (2009). Human nature. In N. M. Noor (Ed.), *Human nature from an Islamic perspective: A guide to teaching and learning* (pp.79-117). Kuala Lumpur: IIUM Press.

Journal Article
In-text:
Chapra (2002)

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Chapra, M. U. (2002). Islam and the international debt problem. *Journal of Islamic Studies, 10*, 214-232.

The Qur'ān
In-text:
(i) direct quotation, write as 30:36
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Reference:
The glorious Qur'ān. Translation and commentary by A. Yusuf Ali (1977). US: American Trust Publications.

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(i) Al-Bukhārī, 88:204 (where 88 is the book number, 204 is the ḥadīth number)
(ii) Ibn Hanbal, vol. 1, p. 1

Reference:
(i) Al-Bukhārī, M. (1981). *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr.
(ii) Ibn Ḥanbal, A. (1982). *Musnad Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal*. Istanbul: Cagri Yayinlari.

The Bible
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