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Intellectual Discourse

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Transliteration Table: Consonants

Arabic	Roman		Arabic	Roman
ب	b		ط	ṭ
ت	t		ظ	ẓ
ث	th		ع	‘
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	’
ض	ḍ		ي	y

Transliteration Table: Vowels and Diphthongs

Arabic	Roman		Arabic	Roman
اَ	a		اَ، آ، عَ	an
اُ	u		وْ	un
إِ	i		يْ	in
آ، اَ، اِ، عَ	ā		وْ	aw
وْ	ū		يْ	ay
يْ	ī		وْ	uww, ū (in final position)
			يْ	iiy, ī (in final position)

Source: ROTAS Transliteration Kit: <http://rotas.iium.edu.my>

Designing and Evaluating a Culturally Grounded Digital Parenting Initiative in Malaysia

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Nazariah Shar'ie Janon**

Mohd Helmi Yusoh***

Norsaremah Salleh****

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Wan Norshira Wan Mohd Ghazali*****

Abstract: The widespread adoption of digital technologies in Malaysia, with internet penetration reaching 97.4% in 2023, has profoundly redefined childhood experiences. While digital parenting principles are globally

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recognised, their application in Malaysia is shaped by socio-cultural diversity, religious beliefs, and economic inequalities, and existing parenting resources often lack sustained, culturally competent guidance. This study employed a mixed-methods design, combining a nationwide market validation survey of Malaysian parents ($n = 240$) with focus group discussions involving participants from diverse backgrounds, to examine challenges, preferences, and expectations in digital parenting. Findings reveal that parents struggle with screen time regulation, online risk management, and awareness of harmful content, issues further compounded by disparities in digital literacy. Parents expressed strong demand for short-form, visually engaging, and interactive content, alongside features such as expert-led Q&A, age-specific content filtering, and peer-sharing narratives, while also emphasising the importance of moral and faith-based guidance embedded in Islamic and cultural values. Evaluation of the Platform Keibubapaan Digital (Platform KID) prototype highlighted the need for greater interactivity, community engagement, and personalisation. By synthesising global best practices with local cultural contexts, the study informs the development of Platform KID as a model for empowering Malaysian parents with the skills, confidence, and ethical frameworks to raise digitally resilient children, with implications that extend beyond Malaysia to other Muslim-majority and multicultural societies.

Keywords: Cultural, Digital parenting, Digital literacy, Malaysia, Parental mediation

Abstrak: Capaian internet di Malaysia yang mencapai 97.4% pada tahun 2023 telah membawa implikasi besar terhadap pengalaman kanak-kanak dan mewujudkan cabaran baharu kepada ibu bapa. Walaupun prinsip keibubapaan digital telah dibincangkan secara meluas di peringkat global, pelaksanaannya di Malaysia dipengaruhi oleh kepelbagaian sosio-budaya, kepercayaan agama, serta ketidaksamarataan ekonomi. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan kaedah campuran yang merangkumi tinjauan pengesahan pasaran ($n = 240$) dan perbincangan kumpulan fokus bagi meneliti cabaran, keutamaan, dan jangkaan ibu bapa berkaitan keibubapaan digital. Dapatan menunjukkan isu utama yang dihadapi ialah pengawalan masa skrin, pengurusan risiko dalam talian, dan kesedaran terhadap kandungan berbahaya, yang diperburuk oleh jurang literasi digital. Ibu bapa menekankan keperluan kandungan yang ringkas, menarik, dan interaktif, dengan ciri-ciri seperti soal jawab bersama pakar, penapisan kandungan mengikut umur, serta perkongsian pengalaman sesama ibu bapa. Keperluan kepada panduan berasaskan nilai moral, Islam, dan budaya juga diangkat sebagai elemen penting. Penilaian prototaip Platform Keibubapaan Digital (Platform KID) menegaskan keperluan interaktiviti, penglibatan komuniti, dan personalisasi. Kajian ini menyumbang kepada pembangunan

model intervensi digital yang menggabungkan amalan terbaik global dengan keunikan konteks Malaysia, serta berpotensi diaplikasikan dalam masyarakat Muslim dan majmuk lain.

Kata kunci: Budaya, Keibubapaan digital, Literasi digital, Malaysia, Mediasi

Introduction

The overall use of digital technologies in daily life has significantly altered the essence of parenting in the 21st century. Children in Malaysia, where internet penetration was 97.4 percent in 2023 (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission [MCMC], 2023), are getting exposed to digital devices at younger and younger ages, sometimes even before they enter formal education. Although digital media offers children with unparalleled opportunities to learn, create, and connect with others, it also poses threats of cyberbullying, exposure to inappropriate content, online grooming, and overuse of screens (UNICEF Malaysia, 2020). These trends have made digital parenting, which refers to the methods, techniques, and habits that parents use to monitor and safeguard their children in the digital world, a hot topic of popular and academic concern.

Global studies on digital parenting have explored a variety of parenting styles, including restrictive mediation, co-use, and active mediation (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008; Clark, 2013). Nevertheless, a lot of this research is based on Western experiences, and there is a lack of empirical evidence that can be applied to the situation of parents in Southeast Asia. Malaysia has a unique combination of socio-economic status, cultural norms, and religious values that influence digital parenting, which is not the same as models created in Euro-American contexts (Mohamed, Wok, Wan Ghazali, & Mohd Nasir, 2022). In this case, parents must deal not only with the issues of technological literacy and safety but also with the moral and spiritual aspects of online life of their children.

Although these issues are urgent, there are not many large-scale, research-based interventions that are developed to address the needs of Malaysian parents. Current resources are disjointed, frequently provided in the form of ad hoc awareness campaigns, and seldom combine evidence-based methods with culturally competent information (Osman

& Muda, 2022). Besides, research indicates that parents need assistance in both technical skills, like learning how to use privacy settings and identify harmful content, and moral education, especially when it comes to aligning online activities with family and religious values (Mohd Yusof & Hashim, 2018). This two-fold demand highlights the necessity of interventions that extend beyond generic digital safety messages to offer customised, context-sensitive advice.

Platform KID background

Platform Keibubapaan Digital (Platform KID) is a Malaysian digital initiative designed to provide parents with culturally relevant, research-driven resources to navigate the complexities of raising children in the digital age. The platform is designed as an educational platform and a community center, aiming to solve the twofold problem of leveraging the power of technology in the development of children and minimising the risk of its use, including too much screen time, exposure to dangerous content, and safety risks online.

Platform KID is based on empirical evidence collected in the form of nationwide surveys and focus group discussions with Malaysian parents, which was developed as a research project sponsored by the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation (MOSTI). These studies have indicated that there is a high demand of parenting resources that are not only practical and interactive but also woven in local moral and cultural values especially Islamic values. The platform thus incorporates professional advice, age-appropriate content suggestions, and peer-sharing capabilities to make its content relevant and applicable in various parenting situations.

The distinctive feature of Platform KID is the combination of short videos, infographics, interactive quizzes, and live Q&A sessions with professionals with the help of a bilingual interface to address the needs of the multicultural population of Malaysia. The platform allows parents to learn together by providing both expert-curated and community-generated content, which creates a supportive learning experience in which parents can exchange experiences, seek professional guidance, and learn to become effective digital parents.

The platform is available online at <https://platformkid.my/>, which guarantees nationwide coverage and gives parents access to resources on

demand. Being in its developmental stage, Platform KID is constantly improved based on the feedback of the users, and its functionality is planned to be expanded, its interactivity improved, and partnerships with educators, child development specialists, and religious leaders formed in order to make it sustainable and effective.

This study provides the main findings of the market validation process of the Platform KID project, which illustrates how empirical evidence may be used to inform the development of a user-centred, culturally responsive digital parenting platform. Placing these findings in the wider context of digital parenting and media literacy, the study adds both to the academic knowledge and to the practical implications of the Malaysian context. The discussion does not only cover local parenting issues but also provides implications on how to design similar interventions in other Muslim-majority and culturally diverse societies.

Literature Review

The explosion of digital technologies in the last 20 years has radically changed the character of childhood and, accordingly, the role of parents. As children are now exposed to digital devices at an early age, parenting is becoming a complex experience in a digital ecosystem, which provides more opportunities than ever before to learn and develop, but also poses an unprecedented number of risks (Livingstone & Blum-Ross, 2020). Digital parenting refers to the strategies, practices, and skills that parents use to direct, support, and protect their children in their use of digital media (Clark, 2013). Such approaches can involve restrictive mediation (imposing limits on device use), active mediation (discussing online content), co-use (having shared digital experiences), and, to a growing extent, enabling mediation (empowering children to be able to critically navigate digital spaces) (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008; Blum-Ross & Livingstone, 2016).

Digital parenting is not only important in individual households but it has also become a major social concern. The online activities of children overlap with more general issues in society related to cyber safety, data privacy, digital well-being, and media literacy. Digital parenting research has therefore shifted out of the niche and into a major field of interdisciplinary inquiry that relies on education, communication studies, psychology, and public policy.

Digital Parenting in the Malaysian Context

Although the main principles of digital parenting, including the establishment of boundaries, open communication, and a responsible example of using technology, are universal, their implementation is bound to be influenced by the local socio-cultural and economic factors. The digital environment is especially dynamic in Malaysia. The early and frequent exposure of children to digital technologies has been enabled by high internet penetration rates that currently stand at 97.4 percent as of 2023 (MCMC, 2023), and the prevalence of affordable mobile devices. However, the same pace of technological adoption has not been accompanied by a similar increase in the digital literacy and mediation of parents. According to Osman and Muda (2022), a significant number of parents are unable to keep up with the changing risks and opportunities that the digital world offers, which results in the lack of effective digital parenting measures.

The Malaysian parents have to negotiate a unique digital environment that is informed by a multifaceted interaction of cultural, religious, geographical, and socio-economic influences. To begin with, the cultural diversity in the country, which includes the Malay, Chinese, Indian, and the indigenous communities, generates different parenting norms and values. These variations affect the way in which parents understand acceptable digital behaviour with some communities focusing more on academic use of technology and others focusing on creative or entertainment-based use.

Second, the values of religion are very important especially to Muslim families who form the majority in Malaysia. Digital parenting among these families is not only about safety and productivity but also about moral and spiritual aspects. Parents usually assess media content in terms of Islamic ethics, making sure that it does not contradict the values of modesty, respect, and avoidance of harmful or inappropriate content (Mohamed, Wan Ghazali, & Mohd Nasir, 2024). Such moral framing can influence the choice of allowable apps, games, and online interactions in a manner that is not sufficiently covered by global models.

Third, the urban-rural divide is a major factor that affects the digital parenting experience. Although most urban families have access to high-speed internet and exposure to more digital literacy programs, most rural households experience unreliable connectivity and less educational

intervention (Mohd Yusof & Hashim, 2018). The opportunities that children have to be digitally educated, the risks they are exposed to, and the ability of parents to respond to them are all influenced by these disparities.

Lastly, socio-economic factors are decisive. The income of the family determines what kind of devices children can use, how much parental control is possible, and whether it is possible to invest in paid educational services or parental control applications. Higher-income families can afford more sophisticated monitoring tools, whereas lower-income families can be more dependent on shared devices and informal supervision methods.

Collectively, these contextual issues imply that digital parenting in Malaysia cannot be addressed by merely copying global models. Rather, it demands culturally sensitive and context-specific approaches that consider the realities of the local communities. This kind of approach acknowledges that effective digital parenting in Malaysia does not only entail training parents in technical skills, but also in the cultural, moral, and economic aspects that define how families will interact with digital technologies.

Challenges Driving the Need for Digital Parenting Support

Research in Malaysia continues to indicate a series of urgent issues, which parents encounter in the digital age. Among the most important ones is the existence of knowledge gaps. Most parents do not have the knowledge and expertise to set up privacy settings, identify dangerous online materials, or control the digital footprint of their children (UNICEF Malaysia, 2020). In the absence of such competencies, parents can end up exposing their children to privacy violations, unsuitable content, and unsafe online relationships. The rate of technological change tends to exacerbate these gaps, as it may be hard even to tech-savvy parents to keep abreast of new risks and safety precautions.

The second challenge that keeps occurring is the challenge of balancing risks and opportunities. On the one hand, parents recognise the educational and creative opportunities of digital tools, including interactive learning platforms and creative design applications; on the other hand, they are extremely worried about excessive use, gaming or social media addiction, cyberbullying, and access to violent or

sexualised content (Rahim et al., 2015). This duality tends to put parents in a continuous negotiation position, where they have to balance the positive aspects of digital interaction with the potential harms, without a clear indication of how to find the optimal balance.

The digital environment adds another dimension of complexity in the form of moral and value-based considerations to Muslim households. In addition to technical precautions, parents must face moral dilemmas associated with modesty, proper language, and norms of interaction, which are based on the Islamic ethics (Mohamed et al., 2024). Such issues need interventions that do not stop at filtering and monitoring, but also involve faith-based guidance and resources to assist parents in instilling values in online environments.

Adding to these problems are the parental differences in digital literacy. The degree of parents' familiarity with the technology, which usually depends on age, education level, and exposure to technology at work, influences the parenting strategies applied to mediate the online behaviour of their children (Ktoridou et al., 2012). More digitally literate parents tend to use enabling mediation strategies, which develop resilience and critical thinking in children, and less literate ones might resort to restrictive measures or, on the other hand, lack of control (Warren and Ward, 2020).

The combination of these challenges shows the insufficiency of occasional awareness campaigns or generic, globally focused recommendations to Malaysian families. Unless they are provided with specific, culturally sensitive interventions, parents may fall back on either being overprotective and restricting children to unhealthy use of technology or being permissive and exposing children to online dangers. This highlights the necessity of well-organized, context-based support structures like Platform KID, which can provide parents with the knowledge, skills, and culturally appropriate guidance they need to parent their children in the digital world in Malaysia.

The Imperative for Digital Parenting Education and Support

The best practices in digital parenting that are emerging globally are more education-based interventions that equip parents with skills and confidence to support their children in their digital interactions, instead of only resorting to restrictive measures (Livingstone et al., 2015). This

strategy acknowledges that digital resilience cannot be controlled in the long term; it needs engagement, communication, and role modelling. Digital parenting education is based on three interconnected aspects.

1. Technical competence that entails providing parents with the ability to handle devices, configure privacy settings, use parental control tools, and navigate the features of platforms their children use. In the absence of this basic skill, parents might not be able to effectively keep track of the usage or react to online dangers in time.
2. Critical literacy means to assess the digital information critically, identify bias, identify harmful content, and learn about the persuasive strategies used in media and online communication. This literacy is needed in the era of fake news, algorithm-based feeds, and invisible advertising to ensure that parents can teach their children to be discerning and not to be manipulated.
3. The value integration makes sure that digital parenting is not conducted in a moral vacuum. Incorporating cultural, ethical, and religious values into digital advice assists parents to make online behaviours consistent with the wider family values and societal norms. This is particularly important in multicultural and religiously diverse societies such as Malaysia where digital parenting is bound to overlap with moral and spiritual education.

Such holistic and sustained support initiatives are lacking in the Malaysian context. Although schools might conduct simple cyber safety programmes and ad-hoc awareness campaigns, they tend to be one-off activities, generic in content and child-centred. Parents seldom have an exclusive, research-based platform that provides ongoing, culturally appropriate advice that is responsive to their needs and situations. This lack of continual, locally based resources is a serious gap in national digital literacy initiatives. Addressing this gap is the core mission of the Platform Keibubapaan Digital (Platform KID) project. Integrating technical training, critical literacy skills, and ethical education into a single, convenient platform, Platform KID will empower Malaysian parents with the skills and confidence they need to raise children who are resilient to the digital world, ethically sound, and ready to navigate the digital world, which is becoming more and more complex.

Research Questions

The literature highlights that while digital parenting resources are increasingly available, there remains a significant gap in resources that are culturally contextualised for Malaysian parents, integrate moral and faith-based guidance, and offer practical, age-appropriate digital tools. Previous studies emphasise the need for content that is not only educational but also accessible in formats parents can easily integrate into their daily routines. Furthermore, limited empirical work has examined the intersection between digital parenting practices, cultural values, and platform design in Malaysia.

In response to these gaps, this study adopts the integrated conceptual framework outlined earlier—combining Parental Mediation Theory, the Digital Literacy Framework, and Cultural Adaptation Principles—to address the following research questions:

1. RQ1: What challenges do Malaysian parents face in managing their children's digital engagement?
2. RQ2: What are parents' preferred content formats and platform features for digital parenting support?
3. RQ3: How do cultural and religious values shape parents' expectations for digital parenting resources?
4. RQ4: How do parents evaluate and provide feedback on the current Platform KID prototype?

Conceptual Framework

The design and implementation of the Platform Keibubapaan Digital (Platform KID) project is informed by an integrated conceptual framework that synthesises Parental Mediation Theory, Digital Literacy Frameworks, and Cultural Adaptation Principles. This synthesis addresses the identified gaps in the literature review, especially the lack of culturally informed digital parenting support in Malaysia.

The Parental Mediation Theory, which has long been a part of media and communication research, can be used to understand the way parents control the interaction of children with digital technologies. This theory has three primary approaches, which are restrictive mediation, active mediation, and co-use, which have varying levels of

parental involvement (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008). Newer research adds the concept of enabling mediation, which goes beyond control to empower children to have the skills and confidence to explore the online world on their own (Clark, 2013). The enabling mediation is especially applicable in the Malaysian context, as it corresponds to the two-fold goal of promoting digital competencies in children and strengthening moral and religious values.

Although mediation theory describes the process of parental guidance of children, it does not exhaust the competencies needed to effectively guide children. In this case, Digital Literacy Framework addresses a gaping hole. Digital literacy is a wide range of capabilities, including operational skills (e.g., using devices, setting privacy options) as well as information evaluation (e.g., judging credibility, identifying misinformation) and content production. Digital literacy in the case of parents also entails the ability to demonstrate safe online behaviour, risk management, and promote responsible digital engagement (Ala-Mutka et al., 2008). Since the level of digital skills among Malaysian parents is uneven, with the level of digital skills often depending on socio-economic and educational backgrounds, any digital parenting program should be available to both digitally skilled and digitally inexperienced users (Mohd Yusof & Hashim, 2018).

Nevertheless, parental mediation and digital literacy models are usually based on the Western experience and do not necessarily describe the Malaysian family reality. Here Cultural Adaptation Principles come in handy. Based on the study by Resnicow et al. (1999), cultural adaptation guarantees that the interventions are consistent with the beliefs, values, and practices of the target community. In the case of Malaysia, it means incorporating Islamic morals, including *adab* (proper conduct), moderation, and respect, into the contextualisation of online safety and digital citizenship and applying locally relevant languages, examples, and stories. Cultural adaptation also acknowledges the existence of a multi-ethnic society in Malaysia where various parenting practices exist, which affect the rules and communication patterns in the homes.

Combining the three approaches, the Platform KID conceptual framework views parents not as the gatekeepers of technology but rather as the facilitators of the overall digital growth of their children. The

framework recognises that strategic mediation, robust digital literacy skills, and culturally relevant guidance are needed to achieve effective digital parenting in Malaysia. The research design of the current study is based on this integrated approach, which guarantees that data collection will capture both technical and value-based aspects of digital parenting.

At the operational level, this conceptual framework informed the design of the market validation survey and focus group protocols, so that they focused on the mediation strategies, digital skills, and cultural expectations of parents. The second part describes how these insights were obtained through the methodology, which was then applied to the design of the features and content strategy of Platform KID.

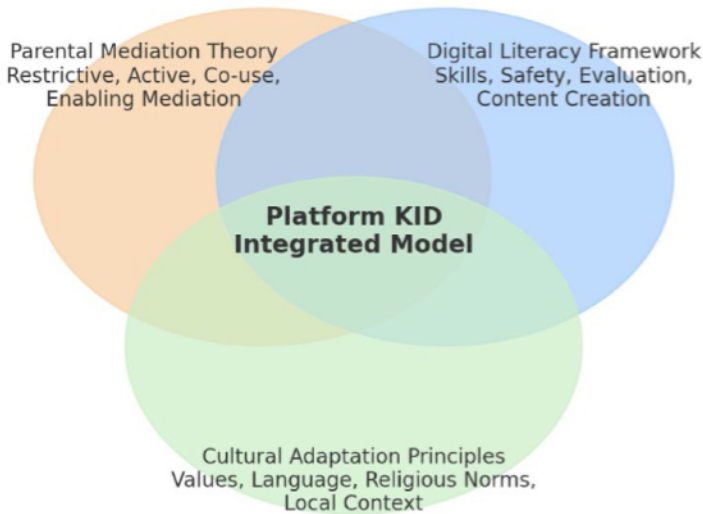


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

Methodology

This study employed a **mixed methods design** to capture both the breadth and depth of Malaysian parents' digital parenting practices, challenges, and needs. The quantitative component consisted of a nationwide online survey to identify general trends, while the qualitative component involved Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to provide deeper contextual insights. This dual approach ensured that findings were statistically robust while also capturing the cultural, behavioural, and emotional nuances underpinning digital parenting in Malaysia.

Quantitative Data Collection

A structured online survey was developed in Malay and English to maximise accessibility and participation. The instrument covered five domains:

1. Demographic Profile – respondent background, family composition, and socio-economic status.
2. Parenting Challenges in the Digital Age – difficulties in managing children's technology use, online safety, and screen time.
3. Digital Literacy and Practices – self-assessed skills and use of digital tools for parenting.
4. Platform Expectations and Preferences – preferred features, content formats, and engagement mechanisms.
5. Adoption and Willingness to Pay – readiness to use and invest in a digital parenting platform.

The survey comprised Likert-scale, multiple-choice, and open-ended questions, allowing both structured responses and qualitative elaborations. Distribution took place over four weeks via Facebook parenting groups, WhatsApp communities, parenting blogs, and personal networks, ensuring reach across diverse parental demographics.

The research focused on the Malaysian parents and guardians who had at least one child below the age of 18. The purposive and network sampling enabled the collection of 240 valid responses, which provided a margin of error of +/- 6.33 percent at a 95 percent confidence level in estimating the parent population of 10 million in Malaysia. This sample size is in line with suggestions on social research in exploratory and market validation settings, where sample sizes of 200-400 are deemed adequate to identify key trends in medium-sized populations (Mukti, 2025).

Qualitative Data Collection

The qualitative component comprised two semi-structured FGDs conducted virtually via Google Meet, each lasting approximately 60 minutes. Discussions followed a guided protocol covering:

- Challenges in managing children's digital use.
- Expectations for a dedicated parenting platform.

- Openness to Adoption and potential barriers.
- Cultural and Social Influences on parenting approaches.
- Prototype Feedback on Platform KID's initial interface and features.

Each session included five participants, ensuring diverse representation in terms of gender, ethnicity, location, socio-economic status, and parenting stage (pre-school, primary, and secondary/teenage children).

Participants were purposively selected to mirror Malaysia's demographic diversity, with an emphasis on including urban and rural parents, multiple ethnic groups, and varied digital literacy levels. In total, the FGDs involved 7 mothers and 3 fathers, ranging from low-income (<RM3,000) to high-income (>RM10,000) households, and educational backgrounds from secondary school to postgraduate degrees.

Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse quantitative data to determine the frequency pattern, percentage distribution, and mean scores of digital parenting challenges, benefits, and preferences. The qualitative data collected through open-ended questions in the survey and FGDs were transcribed, coded and analysed thematically. The conceptual framework of the study, which included parental mediation strategies, digital literacy competencies, and cultural adaptation needs, was used to code categories to guarantee consistency between theory and analysis.

Results

This section presents findings from the market validation survey (n = 240) and focus group discussions (FGDs) with ten parents from diverse socio-economic, cultural, and geographic backgrounds. The survey results provide statistical evidence of key trends, while the FGDs offer richer, contextualised perspectives that deepen our understanding of those trends. Both datasets are synthesised for each thematic finding.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 240 respondents who participated in the nationwide survey. Most participants were Malay (80%), followed by Bumiputera (11.7%), Chinese (3.3%), Indian

(2.9%), and others (2.1%). This distribution reflects the sample, not the national population.

Table 1. Ethnic Composition of Respondents (n = 240)

Ethnicity	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Malay	192	80.0
Bumiputera	28	11.7
Chinese	8	3.3
Indian	7	2.9
Others	5	2.1

This unbalance can be explained by the distribution mode and target audience matching. Malay respondents were overrepresented since the platform is culturally and linguistically oriented to the Malay-majority parenting community, in particular, Malay Muslim parents. Recruitment was based on social media groups in Malay language, WhatsApp networks, and parenting forums where non-Malays are less likely to participate. Such a situation is typical of culturally targeted research because access and participation are frequently linked to language, cultural networks, and topicality (Althubaiti, 2022).

RQ1: What challenges do Malaysian parents face in managing their children's digital engagement?

Survey results (Table 2) show that most parents face substantial challenges in managing their children's digital engagement. The most common difficulty reported was setting and enforcing screen time limits (78.2%), followed by managing online risks such as cyberbullying and inappropriate content (70%), and lack of awareness of harmful online content (61.6%).

Table 2: Challenges of Digital Parenting

Challenge	% of parents reporting
Difficulty setting and enforcing screen time limits	78.2%
Managing online risks (cyberbullying, inappropriate content)	70.0%
Lack of awareness of harmful online content	61.6%

FGD participants confirmed these concerns, noting that they often resort to inconsistent manual restrictions such as physically removing devices or monitoring over the shoulder. A recurring theme was the

tension between wanting to protect children and feeling under-equipped to do so: “Sometimes I just trust that the cartoons they watch are safe, but I’m not always sure what’s in them.” The FGDs also revealed that parents’ own screen use habits were a barrier to modelling healthy behaviour, echoing the survey’s broader findings about role modelling difficulties.

RQ2: What are parents’ preferred content formats and platform features for digital parenting support?

Survey respondents overwhelmingly preferred short-form, visually engaging content over lengthy written resources. Videos or tutorials (81%) topped the list, followed by infographics (74%) and interactive quizzes (71.9%).

Table 3: Parents’ preferred content formats and platform features

Content Format	% of Parents Preferring
Short-form videos/tutorials	81.0%
Infographics	74.0%
Interactive quizzes	71.9%

FGD discussions reinforced this finding. Parents explained that concise, focused content is easier to fit into their daily routines and more memorable. Several participants expressed that they are unlikely to engage with lengthy articles unless the content is urgent or highly relevant: “I don’t have time to read long articles; give me a short video and I’ll remember it better.” The FGDs also suggested that interactive elements—like quizzes—can increase engagement by making learning about digital parenting feel more practical and less like a lecture.

RQ3: How do cultural and religious values shape parents’ expectations for digital parenting resources?

A striking 83.2% of survey respondents wanted moral and faith-based guidance integrated into digital parenting resources, indicating a strong preference for content rooted in Islamic values and Eastern cultural principles.

Table 4: Parents’ cultural and religious expectations

Preference	% of Parents Preferring
Moral/faith-based guidance in resources	83.2%

FGD participants elaborated on this, explaining that while technical advice on online safety is essential, it should be framed within moral boundaries and cultural expectations. Parents saw this as critical to ensuring children not only behave safely online but also develop good character: “I want my children to be safe online, but also to know what is right and wrong according to our faith.” Participants further stressed that cultural and religious framing makes advice more relatable and trustworthy, increasing the likelihood of adoption.

RQ4: How do parents evaluate and provide feedback on the current Platform KID prototype?

Survey respondents highlighted age-specific content filtering (82.4%), expert-led Q&A sessions (81.4%), and peer-sharing stories (75.4%) as the most desired features for a digital parenting platform.

Table 5: Parents’ desired features for a digital parenting platform.

Feature	% of Parents Preferring
Age-specific content filtering	82.4%
Expert-led Q&A sessions	81.4%
Peer-sharing stories	75.4%

FGDs revealed why these features matter. Parents wanted tailored advice that considers a child’s developmental stage, particularly as digital risks and opportunities vary with age. They valued expert-led Q&A for authoritative guidance, but also saw peer-sharing as an equally important source of relatable, real-world strategies: “Sometimes another parent’s story teaches you more than an article.” Participants also noted that combining expert advice with peer experiences could help balance professional credibility with practical applicability.

Feedback on the current Platform KID prototype was consistent across FGDs: it was seen as too static and lacking interactive elements. While the content was viewed as relevant, the presentation did not encourage regular engagement.

Feedback from focus group participants highlighted the need for the Platform KID prototype to evolve from a static, information-based design to a more interactive and participatory platform. Participants recommended embedding short-form multimedia content such as videos and infographics to enhance engagement, while also incorporating

discussion forums and live expert sessions to foster ongoing learning and community interaction. They further proposed gamification features—such as badges, progress tracking, and interactive challenges—to encourage continuous user participation. Collectively, these suggestions underscore that effective digital parenting platforms should not only deliver reliable content but also cultivate a sense of community and sustained user engagement through interactivity and personalised user experience.

One participant summarised the sentiment: “It looks okay, but it feels like a brochure. It needs to feel alive—videos, chats, reminders—something that makes you want to come back.” Survey data supported these views indirectly, as parents’ strong preference for dynamic and interactive formats pointed to the need for a more engaging platform design.

In summary, the findings reveal that Malaysian parents share common challenges in digital parenting, particularly in managing screen time and online safety, and demonstrate strong preferences for practical, faith-informed, and interactive resources. The results confirm that effective digital parenting support must integrate cultural and moral values, provide accessible multimedia content, and prioritise interactivity and community engagement. These insights directly inform the enhancement of Platform KID, ensuring it aligns with parents’ needs and expectations in the Malaysian context.

Discussion

This research was aimed at filling a definite gap in the availability of culturally relevant and practically applicable digital parenting resources in Malaysia. Although there are international digital parenting campaigns, they are usually targeted at western populations, and little consideration is given to the moral, religious, and socio-cultural backgrounds that influence parenting practices in Muslim-majority nations. The results of this study highlight the fact that successful digital parenting support in Malaysia cannot be culturally neutral; instead, it should incorporate local values, be mindful of language preferences, and adapt to the lived realities of Malaysian families.

The statistics showed that Malaysian parents continue to struggle with controlling the use of technology by their children, especially

in terms of establishing screen time boundaries, controlling online risks, and keeping up with the knowledge of harmful content. These concerns reflect those found internationally, though they are heightened in settings where parental digital literacy is not uniform, and where parental mediation is frequently reactive as opposed to proactive. The focus group discussions reaffirmed that parents want to protect their children, but they usually lack the tools, strategies and confidence to do so effectively. The most common were the dependencies on ad-hoc measures, including the removal of devices, which only offer temporary solutions and do not instil long-term digital resilience in children. This is an indication of a serious gap in the development of enabling mediation skills, skills that can enable children to explore online environments safely and autonomously.

The popularity of short-form videos, infographics, and interactive quizzes has significant consequences in terms of platform development. Parents tend to consume content that is short, visually engaging, and can be consumed in tight schedules. This observation emphasises the necessity of Platform KID to follow the design philosophy of brevity, clarity, and interactivity. Notably, interactive learning tools, including quizzes, polls, or gamified challenges, can make the process of digital literacy education practical and interesting, which enhances the possibility of long-term platform usage.

The most important lesson that can be learned during this study is that there is a staggering need to morally and faith-based frame the content of digital parenting. It is not just a preference but a statement of how Malaysian parents see the point of parenting itself, to shape not only the safety of their children but also their moral character. The implication of this to Platform KID is that Islamic values and culturally familiar moral narratives must not be an optional overlay but a foundational organising principle of content creation. This integration will increase trust in the platform, user loyalty, and make Platform KID a unique alternative to generic, globally produced parenting resources.

The preferences for certain platform functions, such as age-specific content filtering, Q&A with experts, and sharing stories with peers, indicate a more general change in parental preferences toward digital parenting tools. They are demanding platforms that go beyond the fixed information repositories to dynamic interactive communities

where professional expertise and peer knowledge co-exist. In the case of Platform KID, this translates into the incorporation of two-way communication mechanisms, the creation of communities of practice among parents, and the provision of expert advice in an accessible and relatable manner. Such a hybrid form of professional and peer support may become a hallmark of digital parenting interventions in Malaysia.

The need to implement a more participatory design is supported by the feedback on the current prototype, which was characterised as too static. To become more than a one-time visit resource, Platform KID needs to develop long-term engagement by providing such features as live sessions, active discussion forums, personalised recommendations, and gamification. Such improvements not only match the preferences expressed by parents, but also with the known studies that interactivity is the most important factor in maintaining user engagement in digital platforms.

Collectively, the results are highly relevant to the future of digital parenting in Malaysia. On the one hand, they emphasise the necessity of interventions that should be not only technically proficient but also culturally based. Second, they refer to a paradigm of digital parenting support that combines the authority of expert knowledge with the authenticity of peer experience. Third, they emphasise that the success of platforms will be determined by the capacity of delivering timely, concise, and interactive content, which aligns with the consumption patterns of modern parents. Lastly, they propose that digital parenting in Malaysia needs to shift to proactive skill-building rather than reactive monitoring, so that both parents and children have the skills to cope with an increasingly complex digital world.

In meeting these needs, Platform KID can establish a precedent of culturally contextualised, technologically engaging, and pedagogically sound digital parenting programmes not just in Malaysia, but the Muslim world at large.

Conclusion

This paper reaffirms that efficient digital parenting support is not a luxury anymore, but a necessary element of child upbringing in the digital age when children are exposed to digital media at a very young age and online threats are constantly changing. The results indicate that

Malaysian parents are keen to obtain practical, interactive and culturally based guidance, but these are limited in the local environment. Platform KID is in a good position to bridge this gap by providing short-form, visually appealing, and interactive content; integrating age-specific content filtering, expert-led Q&A, and peer-sharing capabilities; and contextualising all materials in moral and faith-based principles. The second step will involve the improvement of the platform based on user-centred design, the expansion of outreach to various parent communities, and the establishment of collaborations with teachers, child development experts, and religious authorities. By so doing, Platform KID can become a parenting ally that families can trust and a national example of how to empower parents to raise digitally resilient children.

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Chapter in a Book

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Alias (2009)

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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

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Chapra (2002)

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The Qur'ān

In-text:

(i) direct quotation, write as 30:36

(ii) indirect quotation, write as Qur'ān, 30:36

Reference:

The glorious Qur'ān. Translation and commentary by A. Yusuf Ali (1977). US: American Trust Publications.

Ḥadīth

In-text:

(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.

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