



When Parents Practice What They Preach: A Theory of Digital Adab Credibility in Muslim Families

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Abstract

Digital parenting increasingly involves a paradox in which parents regulate children's digital conduct while remaining highly visible digital users whose behavior may contradict the standards they prescribe. Existing research explains parental mediation, behavioral modeling, and technoference but insufficiently theorizes how children evaluate the moral credibility and legitimacy of parental digital rule-givers. This conceptual paper develops Digital Adab Credibility Theory (DACT), a middle-range theory explaining how parental digital word-deed alignment shapes children's normative responses to morally framed digital rules in Muslim families. Integrating parental mediation, social learning, behavioral integrity, and moral hypocrisy perspectives, DACT specifies two asymmetric pathways of credibility construction and erosion. Perceived word-deed congruence generates digital adab credibility, strengthening rule legitimacy and normative acceptance, whereas salient incongruence may activate hypocrisy attribution, erode credibility, delegitimize parental rules, and stimulate resistance. By theorizing rule-giver credibility as a legitimacy-generating mechanism, DACT extends digital parenting and behavioral integrity research into intergenerational moral socialization and establishes a testable research agenda on credibility dynamics, developmental boundaries, moralization, and culturally embedded digital parenting.

Keywords

digital adab credibility; digital parenting; behavioral integrity; moral hypocrisy; parental word-deed congruence; rule legitimacy

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1. Introduction

Digital technologies have become deeply embedded in children's everyday lives, transforming how they communicate, learn, entertain themselves, and participate in social relationships. This transformation has intensified parental concerns about problematic social media use, excessive smartphone engagement, sleep disruption, and other digitally mediated risks. Parents increasingly respond by establishing screen-time restrictions, regulating digital content, and articulating expectations concerning appropriate online conduct. Digital parenting scholarship has accordingly examined parental mediation, monitoring, restrictive practices, and family media rules as mechanisms for shaping children's digital behavior (Coyne *et al.*, 2017; Livingstone & Helsper, 2008; Valkenburg *et al.*, 2013). Yet contemporary family life creates a fundamental paradox: adults who regulate children's digital behavior are themselves intensive and highly visible digital users. Children therefore encounter parental digital expectations not merely as verbal prescriptions but alongside continuous observations of how parents actually engage with digital technologies.

This paradox becomes consequential when parental prescriptions diverge from parental digital conduct. Parents may ask children to put smartphones away during family interactions while repeatedly checking notifications, condemn excessive social media use while remaining persistently absorbed in online platforms, or emphasize digital restraint while allowing devices to interrupt parent-child interactions. Research on parental phubbing and technoference shows that parental smartphone use can disrupt family interactions and is associated with problematic digital behaviors and adverse developmental outcomes (Geng *et al.*, 2021; Komanchuk *et al.*, 2023; Niu *et al.*, 2020). Studies have also distinguished the roles of parental rules, parental role models, and the broader family media climate in adolescents' problematic social media use (Geurts *et al.*, 2022). Nevertheless, these studies primarily identify behavioral and relational consequences. They offer a less developed explanation of how children interpret contradictions between what parents prescribe and what parents visibly practice.

The explanatory problem is especially salient in Muslim families, where parental digital expectations may be embedded within broader moral understandings of *adab*, *akhlaq*, responsibility, moderation, and parental exemplarity. Digital rules can therefore extend beyond instrumental concerns about screen time and become claims about morally appropriate conduct. Emerging Islamic education scholarship emphasizes digital parenting as a means of instilling religious values and supporting children's moral formation (Astuti *et al.*, 2022), while Muslim family education research continues to position parents as central actors in religious and character development (Abubakar *et al.*, 2023; Bahri *et al.*, 2024; Mahmud *et al.*, 2024). Recent studies also address the integration of digital media into Islamic educational environments (Ramadani *et al.*, 2025). Yet this literature predominantly emphasizes value transmission, supervision, and educational competence. A more relational theoretical question remains unresolved: what makes children regard parental digital moral guidance as credible enough to deserve acceptance?

Digital parenting research provides only a partial answer. Parental mediation theory explains how parents use restrictive and active strategies to manage children's media experiences (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008; Valkenburg *et al.*, 2013). More recent scholarship demonstrates that parental capital, digital skills, risk perceptions, and digital parenting readiness shape mediation strategies (Helsper *et al.*, 2025; Zhao *et al.*, 2023). However, evidence concerning the effectiveness of parental mediation in reducing problematic media use remains mixed (Fam *et al.*, 2023; Vossen *et al.*, 2024). This inconsistency suggests that identifying what parents do may be insufficient for explaining how children respond. Existing approaches emphasize mediation strategy, context, and implementation but devote less attention to whether children regard the parent articulating digital rules as a morally credible rule-giver.

Social learning offers another partial explanation because children learn by observing salient models and modeled behavior (Bandura, 2001). Yet imitation is theoretically distinct from

legitimacy. Observing intensive parental smartphone use may influence children's digital practices, but social learning does not fully explain why the same observation may cause children to question a parent's demand for digital restraint. Similarly, technofence research demonstrates that parental device use can undermine interaction quality and children's psychosocial outcomes (Komanchuk *et al.*, 2023; Morris *et al.*, 2022; Ochoa *et al.*, 2021). What remains undertheorized is the interpretive mechanism through which observed parental conduct becomes evidence for evaluating parental moral authority.

We argue that this unresolved issue constitutes a word–deed credibility problem. Behavioral integrity theory conceptualizes perceived alignment between an actor's words and deeds as a consequential basis for evaluating that actor (Simons, 2002). Research further demonstrates that word–deed alignment shapes responses through perceptions of credibility and integrity (Simons *et al.*, 2015). Conversely, moral hypocrisy research suggests that saying one thing while doing another can generate negative moral attribution when actors appear to claim standards their own conduct fails to embody (Batson *et al.*, 1999; Effron *et al.*, 2018). These perspectives reveal a mechanism insufficiently theorized in digital parenting: children may evaluate parental digital rules by comparing parents' moral prescriptions with their observable digital conduct.

However, directly transplanting behavioral integrity into the family domain is theoretically insufficient. Parent–child relationships combine intimacy, developmental dependence, asymmetric authority, and continuous moral socialization. In Muslim families, moreover, digital prescriptions may be morally anchored in *adab*. The theoretical problem is therefore not simply whether parents are consistent role models, but how perceived digital word–deed congruence becomes moral credibility and how such credibility legitimizes parental digital rules. Existing digital parenting, social learning, and Islamic education perspectives do not specify this credibility–legitimacy mechanism. This gap is consistent with the theoretical opportunity identified in the curated reference corpus underpinning this paper.

To address this gap, we develop Digital Adab Credibility Theory (DACT), a middle-range theory of parental moral credibility in digitally mediated Muslim family life. DACT proposes that children compare parental digital prescriptions with enacted parental digital behavior. Perceived congruence generates digital *adab* credibility; the child's perception that parental digital moral guidance is authentic, normatively trustworthy, and behaviorally embodied. Such credibility enhances the perceived moral legitimacy of parental digital rules and facilitates their normative acceptance. Conversely, salient incongruence may activate hypocrisy attribution, erode digital *adab* credibility, delegitimize parental rules, and stimulate resistance. DACT thus theorizes two asymmetric pathways of credibility construction and credibility erosion.

This paper makes three contributions. First, it redirects digital parenting theory from mediation practices toward rule-giver legitimacy, explaining why similar digital rules may generate different levels of child acceptance. Second, it extends behavioral integrity into intergenerational moral socialization by theorizing digital *adab* credibility as the mechanism connecting word–deed congruence with moral legitimacy. Third, it integrates moral hypocrisy and Islamic digital parenting to explain how parental inconsistency becomes a delegitimizing attribution rather than merely an undesirable behavioral model. Accordingly, this paper develops DACT as a bounded explanation of how parental digital word–deed congruence constructs—and incongruence erodes—the moral credibility through which digital rules acquire normative force in Muslim families. Its central claim is that parental digital rules influence children not simply because parents possess authority, but because children evaluate whether parental digital deeds credibly embody parental digital words.

2. Theoretical Foundations and Explanatory Limits

2.1 Parental Mediation and Digital Parenting

Parental mediation provides the dominant theoretical lens for explaining how parents influence children's engagement with digital media. Early work distinguished parental practices intended to restrict access, actively discuss media content, or otherwise structure children's media experiences (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008). Subsequent research extended this perspective by conceptualizing parental mediation through children's perceptions of autonomy-supportive and controlling practices (Valkenburg *et al.*, 2013). Within the broader digital parenting literature, parents are therefore typically theorized as regulatory actors who select mediation strategies to manage digital opportunities and risks (Coyne *et al.*, 2017). This perspective has generated substantial insight into how parental restrictions, active guidance, and Internet-specific parenting practices relate to children's digital behavior (Fam *et al.*, 2023; Koning *et al.*, 2018).

More recent studies have expanded the antecedents and contexts of parental mediation. Zhao *et al.* (2023), for example, show that parental capital and digital parenting readiness contribute to differences in digital mediation practices. Parental digital skills, risk perceptions, and prior risk experiences also shape how parents mediate children's online risks (Helsper *et al.*, 2025). At the family level, rules, parental role models, and the broader home climate have been examined as distinct correlates of problematic social media use (Geurts *et al.*, 2022). These developments shift digital parenting research beyond simple restriction toward a more contextual understanding of parents' regulatory resources and strategies.

Nevertheless, parental mediation retains an important explanatory limitation. Its principal theoretical object is the regulatory practice: what parents do, which mediation strategy they adopt, and under what conditions that strategy influences child outcomes. Yet systematic reviews indicate that relationships between parental mediation and problematic media use are not uniformly consistent (Fam *et al.*, 2023; Vossen *et al.*, 2024). We suggest that part of this explanatory incompleteness arises because mediation scholarship insufficiently theorizes the child's evaluation of the regulator. A rule can be clearly communicated and consistently monitored while still being regarded by the child as normatively unconvincing. Thus, mediation theory explains the architecture of parental intervention more effectively than the moral legitimacy through which children come to accept parental digital rules.

2.2 Social Learning and Parental Digital Modeling

Social learning offers a second foundation for understanding parental digital influence. Social cognitive theory emphasizes that individuals acquire behavioral patterns partly through observing salient models and the consequences associated with modeled conduct (Bandura, 2001). Within families, parents constitute highly visible and recurrent behavioral models. Children's digital practices may consequently be influenced not only by explicit parental instructions but also by everyday observations of parental smartphone use, social media engagement, and device-related routines. This logic is compatible with findings that parental role modeling and broader family media climates are associated with adolescents' problematic social media use (Geurts *et al.*, 2022).

The expanding literature on parental phubbing and technoference further reinforces the theoretical importance of observable parental digital conduct. Perceived parental phubbing has been associated with problematic smartphone and social media use through relational and self-regulatory pathways (Geng *et al.*, 2021; Niu *et al.*, 2020; Xie *et al.*, 2019). Reviews of parental technoference similarly document consequences for parent–child relationships and developmental outcomes (Dixon *et al.*, 2023; Komanchuk *et al.*, 2023). Parental device use therefore constitutes more than an individual media habit; it forms part of the social environment through which children encounter and interpret digital behavior.

However, modeling cannot fully explain the phenomenon addressed in this paper. Social learning primarily directs theoretical attention toward whether observed behavior is learned, reproduced, or inhibited. The central problem of Digital Adab Credibility Theory (DACT) is different. A child who observes a parent violating a self-proclaimed digital standard may not merely imitate the behavior. The child may reinterpret the parent's moral standing to articulate that standard. In other words, behavioral modeling and rule-giver evaluation are analytically distinct processes. Existing social learning explanations insufficiently specify how observation becomes a comparative judgment between prescribed and enacted conduct, or how such comparison changes the legitimacy attributed to parental rules. Treating parental inconsistency merely as “poor role modeling” therefore obscures the interpretive mechanism at the center of the phenomenon.

2.3 Behavioral Integrity and Word–Deed Congruence

Behavioral integrity provides a more direct theoretical foundation for explaining comparative judgments between prescriptions and conduct. Simons (2002) defines behavioral integrity around the perceived alignment between an actor's words and deeds. Crucially, behavioral integrity concerns perceived alignment, rather than an objective audit of consistency. Observers interpret whether another actor appears to enact the values and commitments that actor espouses. Meta-analytic evidence indicates that perceived word–deed alignment has consequential effects on follower attitudes and behavior (Simons *et al.*, 2015). Behavioral integrity therefore offers an explanatory bridge between observable conduct and judgments concerning the credibility of an actor's expressed expectations.

This logic is highly relevant to digital parenting. Parents simultaneously occupy the roles of digital users and digital rule-givers. Their conduct supplies children with recurring behavioral evidence against which parental prescriptions can be evaluated. When a parent advocates digital restraint and visibly practices restraint, words and deeds provide mutually reinforcing normative signals. When parental behavior repeatedly contradicts the articulated standard, the child encounters competing signals. From a behavioral integrity perspective, the theoretical issue is not simply exposure to undesirable parental behavior but perceived misalignment between an espoused digital norm and its enactment.

Yet behavioral integrity was developed predominantly to explain organizational relationships and leader–follower responses (Simons, 2002; Simons *et al.*, 2015). Its direct application to parent–child moral socialization would overlook distinctive characteristics of family relationships. Parents possess structurally embedded authority, maintain emotionally intimate relationships with children, and participate continuously in children's moral development. Moreover, digital expectations in Muslim families may be connected to *adab*, *akhlaq*, moderation, and moral responsibility, making word–deed alignment potentially relevant to judgments of normative authenticity rather than merely managerial reliability. DACT therefore draws on behavioral integrity but shifts the explanatory outcome from generalized follower responses to the credibility and legitimacy of a morally framed digital rule-giver.

2.4 Moral Hypocrisy and Credibility Attribution

Moral hypocrisy research helps explain the negative pathway from inconsistency to credibility erosion. Importantly, inconsistency does not automatically constitute hypocrisy. Effron *et al.* (2018) argue that observers' condemnation of saying one thing and doing another depends on how inconsistency is interpreted. Hypocrisy involves an attribution that an actor claims or signals a moral standard without adequately embodying the demands attached to that claim. Earlier research similarly demonstrates that moral self-presentation can coexist with conduct inconsistent with professed moral standards (Batson *et al.*, 1999, 2002). Thus, hypocrisy is theoretically more than behavioral discrepancy; it is an interpretive moral attribution.

This distinction is central to DACT. Children may tolerate occasional parental digital inconsistency caused by work obligations, emergencies, or situational constraints. Such

inconsistency need not destroy parental credibility. Credibility erosion becomes theoretically more likely when children perceive that parents moralize a digital rule, repeatedly violate it, and appear to exempt themselves from the standard imposed on children. Under these conditions, perceived digital incongruence may be recoded as hypocrisy. Hypocrisy attribution then provides the missing mechanism through which observed inconsistency changes the child's evaluation of the parent as a legitimate moral rule-giver.

However, moral hypocrisy theory does not itself explain how credibility judgments become acceptance or resistance toward family digital rules. Its explanatory emphasis is largely on moral evaluation, condemnation, self-presentation, and inconsistency (Batson *et al.*, 1999; Effron *et al.*, 2018; Graham *et al.*, 2015). DACT extends this logic by theorizing hypocrisy attribution as an antecedent of digital adab credibility erosion and, subsequently, rule delegitimation. The relevant outcome is therefore not merely whether children judge parents negatively, but whether the parent's digital moral claims lose normative force.

2.5 Comparative Analysis and Theory Integration Opportunity

Taken separately, the four perspectives explain different fragments of parental digital influence. Their explanatory limits reveal the integrative gap identified in the curated corpus supporting this paper.

Table 1. Theory Comparison Matrix

Theoretical Perspective	Primary Explanatory Object	Core Mechanism	Explanatory Strength	Limitation for DACT
Parental mediation	Parental digital regulation	Restriction, active mediation, monitoring	Explains mediation practices and strategies	Underexplains why the rule-giver is perceived as morally legitimate
Social learning	Behavioral acquisition	Observation and modeling	Explains parental behavior as a digital model	Does not distinguish imitation from rule legitimacy
Behavioral integrity	Perceived word–deed alignment	Congruence judgment	Explains how conduct validates expressed claims	Developed mainly for organizational relationships
Moral hypocrisy	Moral evaluation of inconsistency	Hypocrisy attribution	Explains when inconsistency becomes morally condemnable	Does not explain digital rule acceptance or delegitimation

Source: Developed by the authors.

Table 1 demonstrates that no single theoretical perspective sufficiently explains how parental digital rules become normatively persuasive. While parental mediation, social learning, behavioral integrity, and moral hypocrisy each clarify important aspects of digital parenting, they remain theoretically fragmented. Their complementary strengths and limitations justify integrating these perspectives into Digital Adab Credibility Theory, where credibility functions as the missing explanatory mechanism linking parental conduct with children's evaluations of rule legitimacy.

The theory integration opportunity lies not in placing these perspectives side by side, but in constructing a new causal sequence from their unresolved interfaces. Parental mediation identifies the digital rule; social learning establishes the observability of parental conduct; behavioral integrity explains the comparison between parental words and deeds; and moral hypocrisy explains when perceived incongruence becomes a negative moral attribution. DACT integrates these fragments around a previously undertheorized mechanism: digital adab credibility. The proposed theory thus explains how children move from observing parental conduct to evaluating word–deed congruence, attributing credibility or hypocrisy, judging the moral legitimacy of digital rules, and ultimately accepting or resisting those rules.

This mechanism represents the theoretical foundation for the construct development and causal architecture elaborated in the following sections.

To clarify the proposed theoretical integration, the following conceptual diagram illustrates how previously disconnected explanatory perspectives converge into a unified mechanism that underpins Digital Adab Credibility Theory and its subsequent theoretical development.

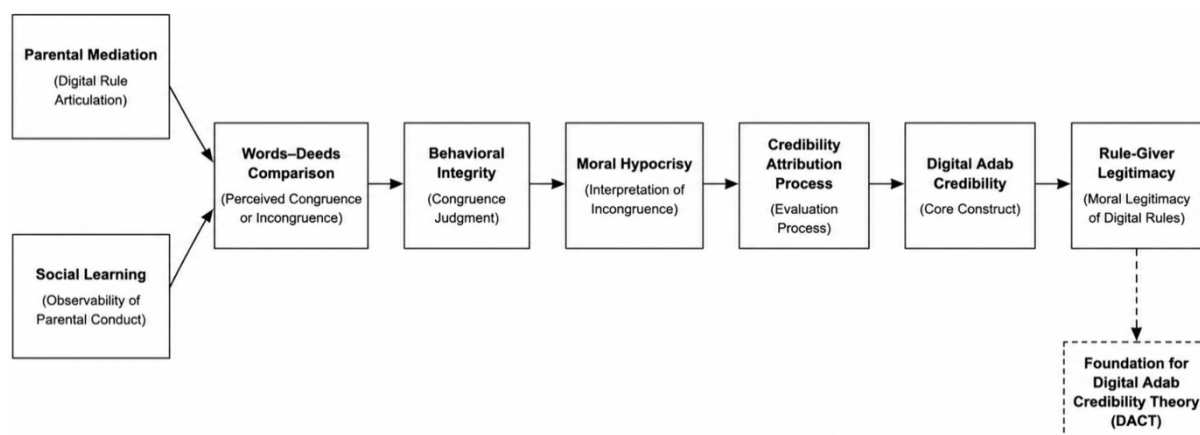


Figure 1. Theoretical Integration Logic Underlying Digital Adab Credibility Theory

Source: Developed by the authors.

Figure 1 demonstrates that Digital Adab Credibility Theory is not derived from a single theoretical perspective but from the integration of complementary explanatory mechanisms. Rather than combining theories descriptively, the framework connects parental mediation, social learning, behavioral integrity, and moral hypocrisy into a sequential logic that explains how parental digital conduct becomes the basis for credibility attribution and the legitimacy of digital moral guidance.

3. Domain Specification and Core Constructs

3.1 Domain of Digital Adab Credibility Theory

Digital Adab Credibility Theory (DACT) is a middle-range theory explaining children's evaluations of parental moral credibility in digitally mediated Muslim family life. Its domain comprises family contexts in which parents communicate normatively framed expectations concerning children's digital conduct, including moderation, responsible device use, attentiveness during family interactions, morally appropriate content, and the prioritization of religious, educational, or familial obligations. Islamic family and education scholarship positions parents as central actors in children's moral formation and increasingly recognizes digital technology as part of this educational environment (Abubakar *et al.*, 2023; Astuti *et al.*, 2022; Mahmud *et al.*, 2024; Ramadani *et al.*, 2025). DACT specifically addresses digital expectations associated with *adab*, *akhlaq*, responsibility, or appropriate conduct.

The theory's unit of explanation is the child's perception of the parent as a digital moral rule-giver. DACT does not primarily explain parental intentions, objectively measured screen use, or digital parenting styles. Instead, it examines how children interpret the relationship between parental prescriptions and observable parental conduct. Consistent with behavioral integrity theory, perceived rather than objectively verified word–deed alignment drives evaluative responses (Simons, 2002; Simons *et al.*, 2015). DACT is therefore most applicable to children and adolescents capable of comparing parental prescriptions with behavior and attributing meaning to perceived discrepancies.

DACT is further bounded by the normative character of digital rules. It does not primarily explain technical requirements, such as device charging or software installation, unless these are framed as matters of responsibility or moral conduct. Its explanatory power should be strongest when digital prescriptions contain explicit or implicit moral claims because such claims create expectations that the rule-giver will also embody the advocated standard. DACT

thus explains the construction and erosion of parental moral credibility when children compare morally framed digital prescriptions with observable parental digital conduct.

3.2 Parental Digital Word–Deed Congruence

Parental digital word–deed congruence refers to the child's perceived alignment between parental digital expectations and observable parental digital behavior. Adapting behavioral integrity theory (Simons, 2002), the construct specifies both the parental actor and digital domain. Congruence is high when parents appear to practice standards comparable to those they advocate and low when their conduct repeatedly contradicts their prescriptions.

Congruence is perceptual rather than objectively determined. A parent may consider work-related smartphone use justified, while the child's interpretation of the apparent discrepancy remains theoretically consequential. Moreover, congruence concerns correspondence between words and deeds rather than the desirability of digital behavior. It is also distinct from parental modeling. Modeling concerns behavioral information supplied by an observed actor (Bandura, 2001); word–deed congruence requires children to compare an articulated standard with observed conduct.

3.3 Digital Adab Credibility

The central construct of DACT is digital adab credibility, defined as the child's perception that a parent's digital moral guidance is authentic, normatively trustworthy, and behaviorally embodied. It captures credibility attributed specifically to parents as digital moral guides and emerges when parental conduct provides evidence that parents are meaningfully committed to the standards communicated to children.

Digital adab credibility is distinct from general trust and behavioral integrity. Trust concerns positive expectations that enable willingness to accept vulnerability (Mayer *et al.*, 1995), whereas children may generally trust parents while questioning their credibility concerning digital restraint. Behavioral integrity concerns perceived word–deed alignment (Simons, 2002). DACT positions alignment as an antecedent of credibility. Digital adab credibility instead captures the moral inference produced from perceived alignment: parental guidance appears authentic because the claimed standard is behaviorally embodied.

3.4 Hypocrisy Attribution

Hypocrisy attribution refers to the child's inference that a parent claims a digital moral standard while exempting themselves from its normative demands. It is distinct from inconsistency because word–deed discrepancies become hypocrisy through interpretation of an actor's moral claims and conduct (Batson *et al.*, 1999; Effron *et al.*, 2018). DACT therefore distinguishes incongruence as perceived discrepancy from hypocrisy attribution as inferred moral meaning.

This distinction accommodates legitimate situational explanations. Children may interpret parental smartphone use as necessary for employment, emergencies, or family responsibilities. Hypocrisy becomes more plausible when parents repeatedly violate strongly moralized standards without credible justification or appear to impose restrictions from which they exempt themselves. Hypocrisy attribution therefore serves as the interpretive gateway between digital incongruence and credibility erosion.

3.5 Perceived Moral Legitimacy of Parental Digital Rules

Perceived moral legitimacy of parental digital rules is the child's judgment that a parental digital rule deserves recognition as a normatively valid expectation. It differs from compliance generated through surveillance, punishment, or dependence. Parental authority may produce behavioral conformity without normative agreement (Baumrind, 1971; DiClemente *et al.*, 2001). DACT instead examines whether children perceive a rule as morally defensible and its parental advocate as credibly entitled to articulate it.

Moral legitimacy is positioned downstream from digital adab credibility. Similar digital rules may receive different evaluations depending on whether the parent visibly embodies the underlying standard. DACT thus separates rule content from rule-giver credibility. Credibility does not necessarily improve the substantive quality of a rule; it shapes the normative force children attribute to that rule.

3.6 Digital Rule Acceptance and Resistance

Digital rule acceptance refers to children's normative recognition of parental digital rules as valid expectations worthy of behavioral consideration. It differs from surface compliance, which may disappear when parental monitoring is absent. Acceptance indicates that a rule has acquired internal normative force. Conversely, digital rule resistance encompasses contestation, strategic compliance, concealment, circumvention, or rejection when a rule is perceived as normatively unconvincing. This distinction moves DACT beyond problematic media use as the dominant outcome in digital parenting research (Fam *et al.*, 2023; Geurts *et al.*, 2022; Vossen *et al.*, 2024). The theory instead explains children's normative responses to parental digital moral regulation, positioning rule acceptance and resistance as outcomes of credibility and legitimacy processes.

Table 2. Construct Definitions and Theoretical Distinctiveness

Core construct	Definition in DACT	Adjacent construct	Theoretical distinction
Parental digital word–deed congruence	Perceived alignment between parental digital prescriptions and observable conduct	Parental modeling	Requires comparison between words and deeds
Digital adab credibility	Perceived authenticity, normative trustworthiness, and behavioral embodiment of parental digital moral guidance	Trust; behavioral integrity	Domain-specific moral credibility produced from perceived alignment
Hypocrisy attribution	Inference that parents claim a digital moral standard while exempting themselves	Inconsistency	Represents moral interpretation rather than discrepancy alone
Perceived moral legitimacy	Judgment that a parental digital rule deserves normative recognition	Parental authority	Concerns validity rather than structural power
Digital rule acceptance	Normative recognition of a digital rule as worthy of behavioral consideration	Compliance	Extends beyond surveillance-dependent conformity
Digital rule resistance	Contestation, concealment, circumvention, or rejection of a digital rule	Noncompliance	Captures responses linked to perceived rule delegitimation

Source: Developed by the authors.

Table 2 establishes the conceptual boundaries of Digital Adab Credibility Theory by distinguishing each construct from adjacent concepts frequently discussed in digital parenting and behavioral integrity research. This differentiation reduces conceptual redundancy, clarifies the unique theoretical role of each construct, and demonstrates that digital adab credibility represents a distinct explanatory mechanism rather than a reformulation of trust, parental modeling, or authority.

4. Building Digital Adab Credibility Theory

Digital Adab Credibility Theory (DACT) conceptualizes children's responses to parental digital regulation as an interpretive process through which parental conduct becomes evidence for evaluating the moral credibility of the rule-giver. Rather than treating parental

rules, mediation, or modeling as sufficient explanations, DACT proposes a causal sequence of comparison, attribution, credibility formation, legitimacy judgment, and normative response. The theory distinguishes a credibility-building pathway generated by perceived word–deed congruence from a credibility-eroding pathway activated when salient incongruence is interpreted as hypocrisy.

4.1 From Observed Congruence to Digital Adab Credibility

Parents communicate digital expectations through rules, advice, correction, and moral language. Yet children also observe parents as recurrent digital actors. Social cognitive theory establishes that observable models provide behavioral information (Bandura, 2001), whereas behavioral integrity research demonstrates that observers evaluate actors through perceived alignment between words and deeds (Simons, 2002). DACT integrates these insights but shifts attention from imitation to credibility attribution. Children compare parental digital prescriptions with enacted parental conduct and use the perceived correspondence as evidence of whether parents genuinely embody the standards they advocate.

When parents articulate digital restraint, attentiveness, or responsible use and visibly practice comparable conduct, their behavior confirms the expressed standard. Congruence therefore signals that parental prescriptions reflect commitments to which parents also perceive themselves as subject. This mechanism is particularly consequential when digital guidance is connected to *adab*, responsibility, moderation, or appropriate interpersonal conduct. Islamic family education positions parents as central actors in moral and character formation (Abubakar *et al.*, 2023; Bahri *et al.*, 2024; Mahmud *et al.*, 2024). In such contexts, congruent conduct can signal that a digital moral principle is behaviorally embodied rather than merely rhetorically imposed.

DACT does not assume perfect parental consistency. Behavioral integrity concerns perceived patterns of alignment rather than objective correspondence in every action (Simons, 2002; Simons *et al.*, 2015). Children may therefore tolerate occasional deviation while retaining a generalized perception that parental digital conduct corresponds with parental guidance. The theoretically relevant outcome of this comparison is digital adab credibility.

Proposition 1 (P1).

Children's perceived parental digital word–deed congruence is positively associated with parental digital adab credibility.

4.2 From Digital Incongruence to Hypocrisy Attribution

The negative pathway begins by distinguishing incongruence from hypocrisy. Parents may violate digital expectations because of employment, emergencies, or other situational demands. Moral hypocrisy research indicates that saying one thing while doing another becomes morally consequential through observers' interpretation of the inconsistency (Batson *et al.*, 1999; Effron *et al.*, 2018). Accordingly, DACT conceptualizes hypocrisy attribution as an inferred moral meaning rather than an automatic consequence of discrepancy.

Two conditions make this attribution particularly likely: moralization intensity and perceived self-exemption. Moralization intensity reflects the extent to which parents frame a digital expectation as a matter of proper conduct rather than pragmatic preference. Strong moral claims increase expectations that the rule-giver will embody the articulated standard. Consequently, visible violations become more diagnostic of parental moral credibility.

Perceived self-exemption occurs when children infer that parents impose a normative standard while treating themselves as exempt from its demands. A situationally justified deviation may preserve the perceived universality of a rule. Repeated discretionary smartphone use by a parent who strongly condemns equivalent behavior in a child, however, creates an asymmetric normative standard. Under such conditions, discrepancy can be

interpreted as hypocrisy rather than ordinary inconsistency. Repetition and visibility strengthen the evidentiary basis for this attribution, particularly because parental digital conduct is repeatedly observable within family interactions (Geng *et al.*, 2021; Komanchuk *et al.*, 2023; Niu *et al.*, 2020).

Proposition 2 (P2).

Perceived parental digital word–deed incongruence is more likely to generate hypocrisy attribution when parental digital prescriptions are highly moralized and perceived parental self-exemption is salient.

4.3 Digital Adab Credibility as a Mechanism of Moral Legitimacy

The central theoretical contribution of DACT concerns the transition from credibility to legitimacy. Parental mediation scholarship explains regulatory strategies and their relationships with children's digital outcomes (Fam *et al.*, 2023; Livingstone & Helsper, 2008; Vossen *et al.*, 2024), but parental authority does not necessarily imply children's normative recognition of a rule. Parents may possess structural power to establish and enforce digital restrictions while children regard those restrictions as morally unconvincing.

DACT proposes digital adab credibility as the mechanism linking parental conduct with the perceived moral legitimacy of digital rules. Behavioral integrity research indicates that word–deed alignment informs observers' evaluations of actors and their expressed commitments (Simons, 2002; Simons *et al.*, 2015). Extending this logic, DACT argues that children who perceive parents as embodying their digital prescriptions are more likely to interpret those prescriptions as authentic expressions of genuinely held moral standards.

This mechanism distinguishes congruence, credibility, and legitimacy. Congruence represents the perceived correspondence between parental words and deeds. Digital adab credibility is the resulting evaluation of the parent as an authentic and behaviorally grounded digital moral guide. Moral legitimacy is the subsequent judgment that a particular parental rule deserves normative recognition. Thus, similar rules can acquire different levels of legitimacy depending on the credibility of the parent articulating them.

Proposition 3 (P3).

Parental digital adab credibility is positively associated with children's perceived moral legitimacy of parental digital rules.

Proposition 4 (P4).

Parental digital adab credibility mediates the positive relationship between perceived parental digital word–deed congruence and the perceived moral legitimacy of parental digital rules.

4.4 Hypocrisy Attribution and Credibility Erosion

If congruence supplies credibility evidence, hypocrisy attribution generates counter-credibility evidence. Hypocrisy implies that an actor's relationship to a professed moral standard is perceived as inauthentic or self-exempting (Batson *et al.*, 1999, 2002; Effron *et al.*, 2018). Within DACT, such attribution undermines children's perception that parental digital guidance is behaviorally embodied.

This erosion is domain-specific. Children may retain affection and general trust toward parents while questioning their credibility concerning digital restraint. Digital adab credibility therefore differs from generalized interpersonal trust (Mayer *et al.*, 1995). The relevant evaluation concerns the parent's standing as a digital moral rule-giver. Repeated moral prescriptions may even intensify credibility erosion when parental conduct repeatedly contradicts those prescriptions because additional communication increases the salience of the word–deed gap.

Reduced credibility subsequently exposes parental rules to delegitimation. Children may reinterpret rules as asymmetric exercises of authority rather than applications of shared moral standards. This provides an explanation of digital rule resistance that differs from

weak monitoring or deficient control. Resistance can emerge despite explicit rules and strong enforcement because children reject the normative validity of the rule. Such resistance may appear as contestation, strategic compliance, concealment, or circumvention.

Proposition 5 (P5).

Children's hypocrisy attribution toward parental digital conduct is negatively associated with parental digital adab credibility.

Proposition 6 (P6).

Hypocrisy attribution indirectly increases children's digital rule resistance through sequential reductions in digital adab credibility and perceived moral legitimacy.

4.5 From Moral Legitimacy to Digital Rule Acceptance

DACT distinguishes normative acceptance from behavioral compliance. Parental authority and monitoring can constrain children's behavior (Baumrind, 1971; DiClemente *et al.*, 2001), but compliance under surveillance does not demonstrate that a child recognizes the rule as valid. Children may outwardly comply while concealing digital practices or abandoning restrictions when monitoring disappears. This distinction is particularly relevant in personalized digital environments where parental observation is structurally incomplete.

Perceived moral legitimacy provides the immediate mechanism through which parental credibility translates into digital rule acceptance. When children regard a rule as normatively valid, behavioral consideration of that rule becomes less exclusively dependent on external control. DACT therefore redirects the dependent outcome from problematic digital use toward children's normative responses to digital moral regulation, consistent with the theoretical architecture established in the research program.

The legitimacy–acceptance relationship should be strengthened by adab-based moral reasoning. Active mediation scholarship emphasizes communication concerning media experiences (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008; Valkenburg *et al.*, 2013), while Islamic digital parenting research highlights value-oriented guidance (Astuti *et al.*, 2022). DACT distinguishes moral reasoning from unilateral moralization. Adab-based reasoning connects a digital expectation to interpretable principles such as responsibility, moderation, or respect. Unilateral prohibition invokes authority without clarifying the normative logic of the rule. Credibility establishes the parent's standing as a moral guide; coherent moral reasoning enables children to connect that standing to the specific digital expectation.

Proposition 7 (P7).

Children's perceived moral legitimacy of parental digital rules is positively associated with digital rule acceptance.

Proposition 8 (P8).

The positive relationship between perceived moral legitimacy and digital rule acceptance is stronger when parental digital rules are communicated through adab-based moral reasoning rather than unilateral prohibition.

4.6 Boundary Conditions of DACT

DACT's explanatory mechanism is bounded by four conditions. First, child developmental stage affects the capacity to compare prescriptions with behavior and infer moral meaning from inconsistency. The theory should be more explanatory among children capable of differentiated social and moral attribution. Second, visibility of parental digital conduct determines whether behavioral evidence is available. Word–deed congruence cannot meaningfully shape credibility when children rarely observe parental digital practices.

Third, parent–child relational closeness influences the salience of parents as moral reference figures. Children's attentiveness to parental cues and the developmental importance of parent–child relationships suggest that credibility signals should carry greater weight when relational ties remain salient (Fuligni & Eccles, 1993; Xie & Xie, 2020). Fourth, moralization intensity determines the normative stakes of inconsistency. Stronger moral claims create

stronger expectations of behavioral embodiment and increase the attributional consequences of visible self-exemption.

These conditions specify when the credibility–legitimacy mechanism should be strongest. DACT therefore predicts particularly consequential credibility dynamics when developmentally capable children repeatedly observe parental digital conduct, remain attentive to parents as moral reference figures, and encounter explicitly moralized digital expectations.

Table 3. Proposition Summary and Theoretical Logic

Proposition & Relationship	Core mechanism	Theoretical support
P1 Congruence → digital adab credibility	Behavioral evidence of embodied standards	Simons (2002); Simons <i>et al.</i> (2015)
P2 Incongruence → hypocrisy attribution	Moralization and self-exemption	Batson <i>et al.</i> (1999); Effron <i>et al.</i> (2018)
P3 Credibility → moral legitimacy	Credible embodiment validates moral claims	Simons (2002); Simons <i>et al.</i> (2015)
P4 Congruence → credibility → legitimacy	Credibility mediation	Simons (2002)
P5 Hypocrisy → credibility erosion	Counter-credibility attribution	Batson <i>et al.</i> (2002); Effron <i>et al.</i> (2018)
P6 Hypocrisy → erosion → delegitimation → resistance	Sequential credibility erosion	Effron <i>et al.</i> (2018)
P7 Moral legitimacy → rule acceptance	Normative recognition	Baumrind (1971); DiClemente <i>et al.</i> (2001)
P8 Legitimacy × adab-based reasoning → acceptance	Interpretable normative rationale	Livingstone & Helsper (2008); Astuti <i>et al.</i> (2022)

Source: Developed by the authors.

Table 3 synthesizes the theoretical architecture of DACT by mapping each proposition to its underlying mechanism and supporting literature. Rather than presenting isolated hypotheses, the propositions collectively describe a coherent causal sequence explaining how perceived parental word–deed alignment constructs credibility and legitimacy, whereas perceived hypocrisy erodes both, ultimately shaping children's normative acceptance or resistance toward parental digital rules.

5. Digital Adab Credibility Theory

5.1 The Integrative Explanatory Model

Digital Adab Credibility Theory (DACT) explains how parental moral influence over children's digital conduct is constructed and eroded through children's interpretations of parental words and deeds. Its central premise is that parental authority alone does not determine whether digital rules acquire normative force. Instead, children evaluate whether parents behaviorally embody the digital standards they articulate. DACT therefore shifts the explanatory focus from parental mediation as a regulatory practice to parental credibility as a legitimacy-generating mechanism. This theoretical shift responds directly to the unresolved mechanism identified across behavioral integrity, digital parenting, parental modeling, and hypocrisy research in the curated reference corpus.

DACT proposes two asymmetric explanatory pathways. The credibility construction pathway begins when children perceive alignment between parental digital prescriptions and observable parental conduct. Consistent with behavioral integrity theory, perceived word–deed alignment provides information about whether an actor genuinely embodies expressed

commitments (Simons, 2002; Simons *et al.*, 2015). In the family digital domain, this comparison generates digital adab credibility when children perceive parental moral guidance as authentic, normatively trustworthy, and behaviorally embodied. Credibility subsequently legitimizes parental digital rules, increasing the likelihood that children recognize those rules as normatively valid rather than merely externally imposed.

The credibility erosion pathway follows a different interpretive logic. Digital incongruence does not automatically undermine parental influence because children may attribute discrepancies to legitimate situational demands. However, when highly moralized prescriptions coexist with salient parental self-exemption, children may interpret the inconsistency as hypocrisy. Moral hypocrisy research demonstrates that observers distinguish mere inconsistency from morally consequential word–deed contradictions (Batson *et al.*, 1999, 2002; Effron *et al.*, 2018). DACT extends this insight by positioning hypocrisy attribution as a mechanism of domain-specific credibility erosion. Reduced digital adab credibility weakens the moral legitimacy of parental rules and increases the likelihood of contestation, strategic compliance, concealment, or circumvention.

The two pathways are asymmetric because credibility construction and erosion need not operate as simple opposites. Congruent conduct gradually supplies evidence that parental guidance is behaviorally embodied, whereas highly salient hypocrisy may disproportionately damage accumulated credibility. This possibility is consistent with the broader behavioral integrity argument that observers rely on enacted conduct when evaluating expressed commitments (Simons, 2002). DACT therefore treats digital adab credibility as an evaluative resource that can be accumulated through recurrent congruence yet destabilized when parental moral claims make visible self-exemption especially diagnostic.

In morally framed family digital contexts, children's acceptance of parental digital rules depends partly on perceived alignment between parental digital prescriptions and enacted parental conduct. Perceived word–deed congruence generates digital adab credibility, which enhances the moral legitimacy and normative acceptance of parental digital rules. Conversely, salient incongruence may generate hypocrisy attribution when moralization and parental self-exemption are pronounced, thereby eroding digital adab credibility, delegitimizing parental rules, and increasing digital rule resistance.

The proposed theory is synthesized into an integrative conceptual model that illustrates the complete explanatory mechanism, showing how credibility is constructed and eroded through children's interpretations of parental digital conduct.

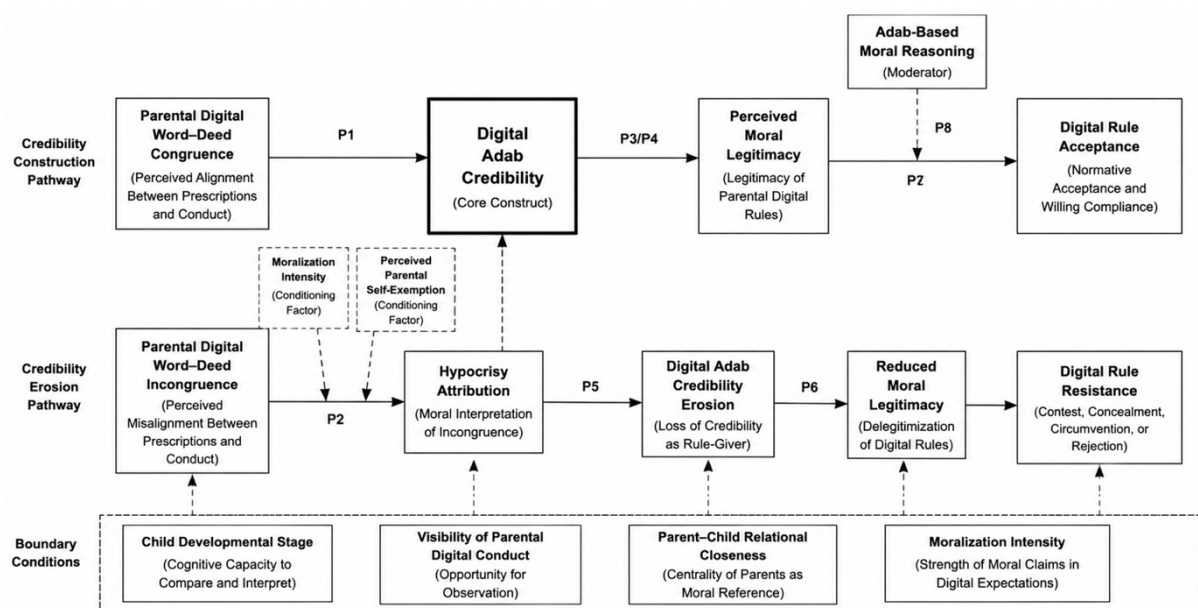


Figure 2. Digital Adab Credibility Theory: Credibility Construction and Erosion Pathways

Source: Developed by the authors.

Figure 2 presents the complete explanatory architecture of Digital Adab Credibility Theory. The model demonstrates two asymmetric pathways through which children's evaluations of parental digital conduct shape the legitimacy of parental digital rules. While perceived congruence constructs credibility and facilitates rule acceptance, perceived incongruence may activate hypocrisy attribution, erode credibility, and increase resistance. Boundary conditions define the contexts in which these mechanisms are expected to operate most strongly.

5.2 Theoretical Contributions

DACT first contributes to digital parenting theory by introducing rule-giver legitimacy as an explanatory problem. Parental mediation scholarship has generated extensive knowledge concerning restrictive mediation, active mediation, digital parenting resources, and family media climates (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008; Valkenburg *et al.*, 2013; Zhao *et al.*, 2023). Yet systematic evidence concerning mediation and problematic media use remains heterogeneous (Fam *et al.*, 2023; Vossen *et al.*, 2024). DACT does not attempt to replace mediation theory. Instead, it identifies a theoretically prior interpretive question: why should children regard a parent's digital prescription as normatively compelling? By separating the presence of a rule from the legitimacy attributed to its rule-giver, DACT explains why substantively similar mediation practices may generate different child responses.

Second, DACT extends behavioral integrity beyond organizational leader–follower relationships into intergenerational moral socialization. Behavioral integrity explains the consequences of perceived word–deed alignment (Simons, 2002; Simons *et al.*, 2015), but it does not specify how alignment operates when the actor simultaneously holds structural authority, relational intimacy, and moral responsibility. DACT theorizes digital adab credibility as the intervening evaluative mechanism through which word–deed congruence becomes relevant to the legitimacy of parental moral prescriptions. The theoretical extension is therefore not a simple transfer of behavioral integrity into parenting. It specifies a distinct outcome (moral rule legitimacy) and a domain-specific credibility construct.

Third, DACT extends moral hypocrisy research by connecting hypocrisy attribution to rule delegitimation. Existing hypocrisy scholarship primarily explains moral evaluation, condemnation, and inconsistency between professed standards and enacted behavior (Batson *et al.*, 1999; Effron *et al.*, 2018; Graham *et al.*, 2015). DACT argues that hypocrisy attribution can alter the normative status of rules articulated by the perceived hypocrite. In parent–child digital relationships, children may not simply evaluate inconsistent parents negatively; they may reinterpret parental rules as normatively empty or asymmetrically imposed. Hypocrisy thus becomes an explanatory mechanism connecting parental conduct to rule resistance.

Finally, DACT contributes to Islamic digital education by reconceptualizing adab as a credibility-dependent relational process of moral formation. Existing Islamic digital parenting research emphasizes value inculcation, parental supervision, technological competence, and character education (Abubakar *et al.*, 2023; Astuti *et al.*, 2022; Mahmud *et al.*, 2024). DACT adds that moral values do not acquire influence solely because parents communicate them. Children's observations of whether parents embody digitally relevant standards can shape the credibility through which adab-based guidance acquires normative force. The theory therefore shifts from *adab as transmitted content* toward *adab credibility as relationally evaluated moral embodiment*.

5.3 Family, Educational, and Policy Implications

DACT suggests that digital parenting interventions should not be reduced to providing parents with additional rules or monitoring techniques. Parents' observable digital conduct functions as evidence through which children interpret the authenticity of digital guidance. The implication is more theoretically specific than the conventional recommendation that parents should “be good role models.” Parents operate as credibility-bearing moral rule-

givers, and visible word–deed discrepancies may alter the normative status of the rules they communicate.

Islamic schools, family education programs, and mosque-based parenting initiatives could consequently frame digital parenting competence as involving both mediation capability and digital moral congruence. Existing research recognizes the importance of parental digital readiness and skills (Helsper *et al.*, 2025; Zhao *et al.*, 2023). DACT suggests extending such initiatives to include parental awareness of how children interpret self-exemption, moralized digital language, and recurrent discrepancies between family rules and parental practices. This does not imply unrealistic demands for perfect consistency. Rather, the theory suggests that transparent situational explanations and coherent moral reasoning may prevent ordinary deviations from being interpreted as hypocrisy.

5.4 Future Research and Empirical Testing

DACT generates a research agenda centered on testing its causal and boundary assumptions. Initial studies should develop and validate measures of parental digital word–deed congruence, digital adab credibility, hypocrisy attribution, and perceived moral legitimacy from children's perspectives. This child-centered measurement strategy is essential because DACT concerns perceived alignment rather than parents' self-assessed consistency. Experimental designs could manipulate parental congruence and self-exemption scenarios to examine whether hypocrisy attribution changes credibility and rule legitimacy. Longitudinal studies could determine whether credibility develops incrementally and whether salient hypocrisy produces disproportionate or persistent erosion.

Future research should also examine DACT's cultural and relational boundaries. Comparisons across Muslim family contexts could assess whether different interpretations of *adab*, parental hierarchy, and digital norms alter the credibility–legitimacy mechanism. Mother–father credibility asymmetries may be theoretically important where parents differ in digital practices or moral socialization roles. Finally, comparative studies of adab-framed, health-framed, and purely instrumental digital rules could establish whether word–deed congruence becomes especially consequential when parental prescriptions are explicitly moralized.

Table 4. Future Research and Empirical Testing Agenda

Research direction	Core question	Suggested method	Theory extension
Construct validation	Can digital adab credibility be distinguished from trust and behavioral integrity?	Scale development; CFA; discriminant validity	Construct precision
Congruence experiments	Does word–deed congruence causally increase credibility?	Vignette or scenario experiment	Causal mechanism
Credibility erosion	Is hypocrisy more damaging than ordinary inconsistency?	Longitudinal or experimental design	Asymmetric pathways
Child developmental stage	When do children begin making credibility-based digital judgments?	Multi-age comparative study	Developmental boundary
Muslim family contexts	Does the mechanism vary across cultural interpretations of adab?	Cross-cultural comparative research	Cultural boundary
Parental asymmetry	Do mother and father digital credibility operate differently?	Dyadic or family-level design	Actor differentiation
Rule framing	Do adab-framed rules amplify congruence effects?	Multi-condition experiment	Moralization mechanism

Source: Developed by the authors.

Table 4 outlines a cumulative research agenda for empirically developing Digital Adab Credibility Theory across diverse methodological approaches and cultural settings. The proposed directions move beyond simple proposition testing by identifying opportunities for construct validation, causal verification, developmental refinement, and contextual extension, thereby positioning DACT as a progressively testable and expandable middle-range theory rather than a static conceptual framework.

DACT is thus positioned as a testable middle-range theory rather than a comprehensive theory of Muslim digital parenting. Its explanatory contribution is deliberately bounded: it explains how children's perceptions of parental digital word–deed alignment construct or erode the moral credibility through which parental digital rules gain normative force. This focus preserves theoretical parsimony while opening an empirical program connecting digital parenting, behavioral integrity, moral hypocrisy, and Islamic moral socialization.

6. Conclusion

The increasing integration of digital technologies into family life creates a central paradox for digital parenting: parents regulate children's digital conduct while remaining visible digital users whose behavior can be compared with the standards they prescribe. Existing digital parenting research has substantially explained mediation strategies, parental modeling, and the consequences of parental device use, yet it insufficiently explains why children perceive some parental digital rules as morally legitimate and others as hypocritical or normatively unconvincing. This problem is particularly salient in Muslim families, where digital expectations may be morally framed through *adab*, responsibility, moderation, and parental exemplarity. This paper therefore sought to explain how parental digital word–deed alignment constructs or erodes the moral credibility through which digital rules acquire normative force.

To address this gap, this paper develops Digital Adab Credibility Theory (DACT) as a middle-range theory of parental moral credibility in digitally mediated Muslim family life. Its novelty lies in moving beyond parental role modeling by theorizing rule-giver credibility as a mechanism of rule legitimacy. DACT proposes two asymmetric pathways. Perceived parental digital word–deed congruence generates digital adab credibility, which strengthens the moral legitimacy and normative acceptance of parental digital rules. Conversely, salient incongruence may activate hypocrisy attribution, particularly when parental prescriptions are strongly moralized and parents appear to exempt themselves from the standards imposed on children. Such attribution erodes credibility, delegitimizes digital rules, and increases resistance.

The proposed theory extends current knowledge by connecting parental conduct, credibility attribution, rule legitimacy, and children's normative responses within a unified explanatory architecture. DACT redirects digital parenting theory from asking only how parents regulate children's digital behavior toward explaining why children recognize parental digital prescriptions as normatively valid. It also extends behavioral integrity into intergenerational moral socialization and positions hypocrisy attribution as a mechanism of rule delegitimation. For Islamic digital education, DACT reconceptualizes *adab* not merely as moral content transmitted from parents to children, but as guidance whose normative influence partly depends on whether children perceive the rule-giver as behaviorally embodying the standards being communicated.

Beyond its theoretical contributions, DACT suggests that effective digital parenting cannot be reduced to stronger restrictions, monitoring, or additional parental knowledge. Parents' observable digital conduct provides credibility evidence through which children interpret the authenticity of digital moral guidance. Family education programs, Islamic schools, and community-based parenting initiatives may therefore benefit from addressing digital word–deed congruence, perceived parental self-exemption, and coherent moral reasoning alongside conventional mediation competencies. Nevertheless, DACT remains a conceptual and domain-bounded theory. Its constructs and propositions require empirical validation,

and its focus on morally framed Muslim family contexts limits direct generalization to purely technical digital rules or other normative settings. Future studies should test the distinction between ordinary inconsistency and hypocrisy, examine the temporal dynamics of credibility construction and erosion, identify developmental thresholds for word–deed comparison, and compare adab-framed rules with alternative moral and instrumental digital framings.

DACT advances a simple but theoretically consequential claim: parental moral authority in digital family life is not secured solely by parental status or the articulation of rules. It is continually interpreted through the relationship between what parents ask children to practice and what children observe parents embody. By positioning digital adab credibility as the mechanism connecting parental word–deed alignment with rule legitimacy and normative acceptance, this paper offers a new explanation of how digital moral authority is constructed, sustained, and eroded. When parental digital deeds become evidence about parental digital words, credibility determines whether moral guidance acquires normative force or loses it.

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