

COMMUNICATING ISLAMIC VALUES THROUGH MALAY ETHNOPARENTING PRACTICES ON BENGKALIS ISLAND

Khazri Osman¹, Salwa Jefri^{1*}, Prayugo², Jarir², Khairul Azhar Meerangani³, Dayang Sakini¹

¹Universiti Al-Quran Al-Sultan Abdullah Ahmad Shah Pahang

²IAIN Datuk Laksemana Bengkalis, Indonesia

³Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Malaysia

*Corresponding author

Abstract

This study examines how Islamic values are communicated through Malay ethnoparenting practices on Bengkalis Island, Riau Province, Indonesia. Malay ethnoparenting is understood as a culturally embedded form of child-rearing shaped by Islam, adat, oral tradition, family relationships, and local wisdom. Using a qualitative interpretive approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with twelve purposively selected informants, including parents, elders, Qur'anic teachers, religious figures, customary figures, cultural figures, and community figures. The data were analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns in parenting practices, religious and moral meanings, and forms of communication. Four interconnected forms of communication were identified: oral-affective, relational, symbolic, and communal. Oral-affective communication involved mendodoi, doa, selawat, advice, petuah, and storytelling; relational communication was expressed through affectionate forms of address, kinship terms, respect for elders, and intergenerational involvement; symbolic communication operated through pantang larang, customary prohibitions, and indirect reminders; while communal communication was reflected in Maghrib Mengaji, Qur'anic learning, shared religious routines, and the involvement of extended family and community actors. The study conceptualizes these patterns as family-based Islamic value communication and contributes to discussions on cultural parenting, Malay local wisdom, and Muslim family communication by illustrating how religious and moral meanings are expressed through ordinary, repeated, and culturally meaningful parenting practices.

Keywords: Islamic values, Malay ethnoparenting, family communication, local wisdom, religious socialization

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*Corresponding Author:

Salwa Jefri, Universiti Al-Quran Al-Sultan Abdullah Ahmad Shah

Pahang, Malaysia

Email: sitalwajefri@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Parenting involves more than meeting children's immediate needs. Within families, children also encounter expectations concerning conduct, relationships, religious practice, and social responsibility. In Islamic educational thought, child formation has long been associated with knowledge, *adab*, moral discipline, and spiritual development (Al-Attas, 1991). Parenting is also culturally situated. Harkness and Super (1996) argue that parental beliefs and practices develop within culturally organised systems of meaning concerning children, development, and appropriate behaviour. From this perspective, parenting cannot be separated from the cultural environment in which children are raised. This is particularly relevant to Malay Muslim settings, where family relationships, religious practices, *adat*, and local forms of moral instruction may intersect. At the same time, culturally inherited practices

should not automatically be regarded as Islamic simply because they occur within Muslim communities; their meanings may be religious, practical, social, cultural, or a combination of these, depending on how they are understood and practised.

Recent work on Malay parenting provides a useful basis for examining this relationship. Suratman and Arif (2020), in their study of Sambas Malay society, use the concept of *ethnoparenting* to describe culturally embedded child-rearing practices and show that practices such as *tunjuk ajar* and *pantang larang* remain part of the cultural environment of early childhood education. Their analysis also indicates that these practices are negotiated amid broader social and cultural change. Bengkalis Island provides a related setting within the wider Riau Malay cultural context. Research in Riau has also examined the relationship between Islamic education and the preservation of Malay cultural practices. Susilasari et al. (2024), for example, discuss the preservation of Malay cultural heritage within Islamic educational contexts, although their study does not address parenting directly. In the present study, *ethnoparenting* is used more specifically to refer to parenting practices that informants associate with inherited Malay cultural meanings, family relationships, religious understandings, and local social expectations. It is not intended to imply a single or uniform form of Malay parenting, particularly because the twelve informants in this study cannot represent all Malay families.

Communication is central to the present analysis because many of the practices described by participants occur through ordinary interaction rather than formal teaching. These include *mendodoi*, *doa*, *selawat*, oral advice, *petuah*, affectionate forms of address, *pantang larang*, and *Maghrib Mengaji*. Some involve spoken or sung language, others depend on family relationships or customary reminders, while others take place through participation in shared religious routines. Rather than assuming in advance that each practice transmits a particular Islamic value, the study examines how informants themselves relate these practices to meanings associated with *adab*, affection, respect, responsibility, religious observance, and appropriate conduct. This emphasis is supported by Hidayat et al. (2025), who show that Malay oral traditions such as *pantun*, *gurindam*, religious *syair*, customary sayings, and *tunjuk ajar* can carry Islamic educational meanings. However, their study focuses primarily on oral tradition and Islamic educational values rather than on the broader combination of family relationships, customary guidance, and parenting practices examined here.

The remaining gap is therefore not a general absence of research on Malay parenting, Islamic education, or local wisdom, but limited attention to how these strands come together in everyday parenting communication. These strands are examined in full in the Literature Review, which situates Malay *ethnoparenting* on Bengkalis Island in relation to Islamic education, local wisdom, and family communication. The present study's contribution is contextual and analytical rather than generalising or outcome-based.

Accordingly, the study addresses the following research questions: **RQ1.** What Malay *ethnoparenting* practices do informants identify as being associated with the communication of Islamic values on Bengkalis Island? **RQ2.** How are Islamic and moral meanings expressed through everyday forms of parenting communication? **RQ3.** What roles do family and community actors play in these processes of value communication?

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section discusses the conceptual and empirical foundations of the study. It is organised into five

related areas: Islamic value transmission in the family, Malay ethnoparenting and local wisdom, the relationship between Islam and Malay custom, family communication through oral tradition, and the research gap. Together, these areas provide a framework for examining how religious and moral meanings are communicated through culturally embedded parenting practices on Bengkalis Island.

Islamic Value Transmission in the Family

In Islamic thought, the family constitutes an important context for the formation of knowledge, manners, morality, and spiritual awareness. Education extends beyond the acquisition of information to include the cultivation of *adab*, moral discipline, and appropriate conduct in relation to Allah, other human beings, and society. Al-Attas (1991) emphasises the centrality of *adab* in Islamic education, while Al-Ghazali (1998) highlights moral and spiritual formation as important dimensions of human development. These classical perspectives provide a normative foundation for understanding Islamic education as a process involving both intellectual and ethical formation.

Within family life, religious and moral guidance may be communicated through everyday relationships, routines, instruction, modelling, and emotional engagement. Recent research on Muslim families supports this broader understanding of religious socialisation. Maksudin et al. (2025), for example, identify parental involvement, repeated religious routines, modelling, and emotional engagement as important features of Islamic religious parenting among Muslim families in Yogyakarta. Similarly, Zeitouni and Patterson (2025) show that parental cultural socialisation is associated with dimensions of Muslim identity among Muslim youth in the United States. Although these studies differ in cultural setting and research focus, both highlight the family as an important relational context in which cultural and religious meanings are communicated.

Religious parenting should therefore not be understood solely as direct verbal instruction. Within everyday family interaction, religious and moral meanings may also be expressed through advice, correction, modelling, affectionate relationships, and participation in religious routines. This perspective is particularly relevant to the present study because it allows attention to be directed towards the communicative processes through which informants describe Islamic and moral meanings as being expressed in family life. Importantly, the study does not assume that these practices necessarily produce particular developmental or religious outcomes among children; rather, it examines how adult informants understand and describe the values associated with them.

Malay Ethnoparenting and Local Wisdom

Ethnoparenting refers to child-rearing practices shaped by the cultural values, beliefs, customs, religious understandings, and inherited knowledge of a particular community. Cultural approaches to parenting emphasise that parental beliefs and practices are situated within culturally organised systems of meaning concerning children, development, and appropriate behaviour (Harkness & Super, 1996). From an anthropological perspective, culture also provides systems of meaning through which behaviour, identity, and social relationships are interpreted (Geertz, 1973). Parenting practices can therefore be understood in relation to the cultural and social environments in which families live.

Local knowledge and inherited cultural practices may also contribute to the organisation of family and community life. Koentjaraningrat (2009) associates cultural practices with the social organisation, values, and habitual patterns of particular communities. More specifically, Suratman and Arif (2020) show that Malay *ethnoparenting* in Sambas is embedded in inherited cultural practices and social relationships, including forms of guidance such as *tunjuk ajar* and *pantang larang*. Their analysis

further suggests that these practices are not static but continue to be negotiated in relation to social and cultural change.

In Malay settings, child-rearing may therefore involve an interaction between family relationships, customary practices, religious understandings, and everyday moral guidance. Recent research indicates that Islamic values in child education are integrated with family practices, religious routines, moral guidance, and culturally embedded approaches to parenting in Malay contexts (Pater et al., 2025). Taken together, these studies provide a basis for understanding Malay *ethnoparenting* as a culturally situated process through which children may encounter social, moral, and religious expectations. However, the concept should not be taken to imply that all Malay families practise parenting in the same way or that every inherited cultural practice necessarily carries an Islamic meaning.

Islam, Malay Custom, and Local Wisdom in Bengkalis

The relationship between Islam and Malay custom is an important dimension of Malay social and moral life. Malay cultural thought is often associated with the principle of *Adat bersendi Syarak, Syarak bersendi Kitabullah*, which expresses an ideal relationship between customary practice and Islamic moral guidance. Effendy (2006), through *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu*, illustrates how Malay moral teaching is closely connected to advice, manners, social responsibility, religious consciousness, and communal harmony. Such perspectives are useful for understanding how *adat* may provide culturally familiar forms through which moral and religious meanings are expressed.

However, the relationship between Islam and local culture should not be treated as automatic or uniform. Not every inherited practice necessarily constitutes Islamic teaching, and customary practices may acquire different religious, practical, social, or moral meanings depending on how they are interpreted. This distinction is particularly important in the present study because the analysis does not assume that Malay *adat* is inherently Islamic. Instead, it examines how participants themselves interpret selected practices in relation to religious and moral expectations. Research among Sambas Muslim families similarly shows that cultural and religious influences intersect in everyday child-rearing without being reducible to one another (Suratman & Nurjannah, 2021).

Within the broader Riau Malay context, Islamic education and local cultural practices have also been discussed as interconnected domains. Susilasari et al. (2024), for example, examine the preservation of Malay cultural heritage within Islamic educational settings, while Pater et al. (2025) discuss the integration of Islamic values with child education, family practice, religious routines, and culturally embedded forms of parenting in Malay contexts. These studies do not provide direct evidence about parenting on Bengkalis Island, but they offer contextual support for examining how Islamic and cultural meanings may intersect in Malay educational and family settings. The present study extends this discussion by focusing specifically on the meanings attributed to parenting practices by informants on Bengkalis Island.

Family Communication and Oral Tradition

Family communication provides one of the principal contexts through which moral, cultural, and religious meanings are expressed in everyday life. In the present study, communication is understood broadly to include not only direct verbal instruction but also affective, relational, symbolic, and communal forms of interaction. Parents, elders, and other family or community members may communicate expectations through advice, prayers, stories, customary expressions, correction,

modelling, affectionate interaction, and participation in religious routines.

Oral tradition is particularly relevant in Malay cultural settings because culturally familiar forms of expression may carry educational and religious meanings. Hidayat et al. (2025) show that Malay oral traditions, including advisory *pantun*, *gurindam*, religious *syair*, customary sayings, and *tunjuk ajar*, can function as channels for Islamic educational values. Their findings indicate that oral traditions communicate moral and religious meanings through culturally recognisable forms rather than through formal instruction alone. Roziah et al. (2025) similarly demonstrate that prohibitions represented in traditional Malay poetry may contain Islamic educational meanings related to faith, worship, and moral conduct.

Comparable evidence from another Indonesian cultural setting is provided by Rustina et al. (2026), who found that oral traditions narrated within Kaili families could transmit moral and religious teachings and connect local cultural values with Islamic religious education. Although the Kaili context differs from Bengkalis and should not be treated as directly equivalent to Malay parenting, the study reinforces the broader point that family-based oral practices may serve as culturally embedded channels of moral and religious communication.

Within the present study, this literature provides a basis for examining practices such as *mendodoi*, *petuah*, prayer, customary reminders, and other forms of everyday speech as communicative practices. However, their religious meaning is not assumed in advance. The analysis instead focuses on how informants themselves describe the moral, practical, cultural, or Islamic meanings attached to particular practices.

Research Gap

Existing studies have examined culturally organised parenting, Malay *ethnoparenting*, Islamic educational values in oral traditions, and the interaction between cultural and religious influences in Muslim family life (Harkness & Super, 1996; Suratman & Arif, 2020; Hidayat et al., 2025; Suratman & Nurjannah, 2021). Recent research has also highlighted the importance of religious routines, modelling, and parental involvement in Muslim family-based religious education (Maksudin et al., 2025). However, limited attention has been given to how these dimensions come together as communicative processes within Malay *ethnoparenting*, particularly through oral practices, kinship relations, customary prohibitions, and shared religious routines.

The present study addresses this gap by examining Malay *ethnoparenting* on Bengkalis Island as a family- and community-based communicative process. It analyses how oral-affective, relational, symbolic, and communal practices are described as channels through which moral and religious meanings are expressed. In doing so, the study develops a context-specific conceptualisation of family-based Islamic value communication without assuming that all Malay customary practices are inherently Islamic or that such practices necessarily produce particular outcomes among children.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Setting

A qualitative interpretive approach was adopted to explore how Malay Muslim informants on Bengkalis Island described the communication of Islamic values within culturally embedded parenting practices. Attention was given to participants' accounts of family relationships, religious routines, oral traditions, customary practices, and everyday forms of child guidance. The analysis focused on how informants

understood the meanings and functions of these practices within family and community life, rather than on estimating their prevalence or measuring behavioural outcomes. The study was conducted among Malay Muslim communities on Bengkalis Island, Riau Province, Indonesia. Bengkalis was selected because the study specifically sought to examine Malay *ethnoparenting* within the cultural and social context of Bengkalis Island. Data were collected in Bengkalis Island between January and March 2025.

Participants and Sampling

Twelve informants were selected purposively based on their experience or knowledge of Malay parenting practices on Bengkalis Island. Purposive sampling was used because the study required participants who could provide relevant accounts of family practices, Islamic values, local customs, oral traditions, and community-based child-rearing (Palinkas et al., 2015). The informants included parents and guardians, elders, Qur'anic teachers, religious figures, customary figures, cultural figures, and community figures. Parents and guardians contributed accounts based on their direct involvement in raising children, while elders and grandmothers provided intergenerational perspectives. Qur'anic teachers and religious figures contributed views on children's religious learning, whereas customary, cultural, and community figures provided perspectives on *adat*, local practices, and communal involvement in children's upbringing. Participants were eligible for inclusion if they were adults, were familiar with the Malay Muslim community on Bengkalis Island, and had direct experience or knowledge related to parenting, religious education, customary practices, or community-based child guidance. Each informant was assigned a code from I1 to I12 to protect identity and to organise the interview data. These codes are used throughout the article when presenting interview evidence. Data collection continued until no substantially new themes or meanings emerged from later interviews; recurring patterns were already evident by the tenth to twelfth interviews, which was taken as an indication that data saturation had been reached for the purposes of this context-specific analysis (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Table 1: Profile of Research Informants

Informant Code	Informant Category	Focus of Information	Primary Focus Area Discussed
I1	Parent / guardian	General Malay parenting practices	Malay parenting and religious values
I2	Mother / grandmother / practitioner of <i>mendodoi</i>	Meaning and practice of <i>mendodoi</i> in the family	<i>Mendodoi</i> as oral communication
I3	Parent / religious figure	Use of doa, selawat, and religious expressions in child-rearing	Doa and selawat in parenting
I4	Parent / elder	Forms of advice commonly given to children	Oral advice and <i>petuah</i>
I5	Parent / elder	Affectionate forms of address used for children	Affectionate communication and family bonding

I6	Parent / guardian	Ways of correcting and advising young children	Gentle correction and affective communication
I7	Elder / customary figure	Customary prohibitions used in educating children	<i>Pantang larang</i> as moral guidance
I8	Customary figure / parent	Underlying meanings of customary prohibitions	Educational purpose of <i>pantang larang</i>
I9	Qur'anic teacher / religious figure	Practice of <i>Maghrib Mengaji</i> in family and community	Qur'anic learning and religious routine
I10	Community figure / elder	Parties involved in children's religious education	Communal role in religious education
I11	Cultural figure / elder	Relationship between Malay custom and Islam in parenting	Malay Muslim identity in parenting
I12	Religious / community figure	Meaning of <i>ethnoparenting</i> as family-based religious communication	<i>Ethnoparenting</i> as Islamic value communication

Note. The “Primary Focus Area Discussed” column indicates the topic each informant was principally asked to elaborate on during the interview; it does not represent a fixed one-to-one assignment of informants to final themes. The four themes reported in the Findings and Discussion section were developed inductively from the coded material across the full dataset, as shown in Table 2, and each theme draws on multiple informants, as summarised in Table 3.

Data Collection

Data were collected through individual semi-structured interviews with the twelve informants. The interviews followed a common guide while allowing participants to elaborate on practices, experiences, and meanings that they considered relevant to Malay parenting on Bengkalis Island. This format was useful for discussing culturally specific practices that could not always be captured through fixed questions alone (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

The interview guide covered several areas: Malay parenting and religious values; *mendodoi*; the use of *doa* and *selawat* in child-rearing; oral advice and *petuah*; affectionate forms of address; ways of correcting children; *pantang larang* and the meanings associated with these prohibitions; *Maghrib Mengaji*; the involvement of family and community members in children's religious education; and participants' views on the relationship between Malay *adat* and Islam. These topics provided a flexible structure for the interviews rather than functioning as predetermined analytical categories, allowing participants to elaborate on practices and meanings based on their own experiences and knowledge.

The interviews were conducted online in Bahasa Indonesia and lasted approximately 30–45 minutes. Participants could use local Malay expressions when these more accurately conveyed the meaning of a practice, saying, or experience. Culturally specific terms such as *mendodoi*, *petuah*, *pantang larang*, and *Maghrib Mengaji* were retained during transcription and analysis where appropriate.

With participants' permission, all interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed for analysis. The transcripts were checked against the recordings to ensure that the written material corresponded with the participants' accounts. Where interview excerpts are presented in English in this article, they were translated from Bahasa Indonesia with attention to preserving the intended meaning

and culturally specific expressions of the original accounts.

Informed Consent and Confidentiality

Before the interviews, participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the interview procedure, the voluntary nature of participation, and the intended academic use of the data. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before the interviews, together with permission for audio recording. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the study. Participants were identified using the codes I1–I12, and names or other identifying details were not included in the reporting of findings. Interview recordings, transcripts, and analytical materials were stored securely and were accessible only to the research team.

Data Analysis and Coding

The interview transcripts were analysed thematically, following the six phases outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarisation with the data, initial coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and reporting the findings. The transcripts were first read repeatedly to gain familiarity with the participants' accounts and to identify material relevant to parenting practices, religious expressions, family relationships, customary meanings, and community involvement.

Initial codes were assigned to segments of the transcripts that captured recurring practices or meanings. These included, among others, religious expressions during *mendodoi*, *doa* and *selawat*, gentle advice, affectionate forms of address, respect for elders, meanings associated with *pantang larang*, Qur'anic learning after Maghrib, and the involvement of family and community members in children's religious education. Related codes were then compared and grouped according to similarities in how values were communicated.

The coding process led to four broader themes: oral-affective communication, relational communication, symbolic communication, and communal communication. Oral-affective communication brought together accounts involving *mendodoi*, prayer, religious expressions, advice, and gentle correction. Relational communication covered kinship terms, affectionate forms of address, respect for elders, and intergenerational involvement. Symbolic communication centred on *pantang larang*, indirect warnings, and the meanings participants attached to customary prohibitions. Communal communication encompassed *Maghrib Mengaji*, Qur'anic learning, and the involvement of extended family and community actors in children's religious education. The themes were reviewed against the coded material before their final definitions were used in reporting the findings.

To make the analytical process more transparent, Table 2 provides selected examples of how interview extracts were coded and subsequently grouped into categories and final themes.

Raw Interview Extract	Initial Code	Category	Final Theme
"...I would hold or rock the child gently while <i>mendodoi</i> . In the lullaby, I sometimes included <i>selawat</i> , <i>zikir</i> , and prayers..." (I2)	Religious expressions incorporated into <i>mendodoi</i>	Oral and affective religious caregiving	Oral-affective communication
"...I usually recite <i>selawat</i> and prayers. Sometimes I recite <i>zikir</i> softly while gently patting the child..." (I3)	Religious recitation within bedtime caregiving	Repeated religious expressions in daily routines	Oral-affective communication

“...our elders also used <i>petuah</i> , proverbs, or stories rather than immediately becoming angry...” (I4)	Moral advice through <i>petuah</i> and stories	Culturally embedded oral guidance	Oral-affective communication
“Older people are addressed as <i>Abang, Kakak, Pak Long, Mak Cik</i> ... this is how children learn <i>adab</i> and how to respect their elders.” (I1)	Kinship address associated with respect	Relational guidance and <i>adab</i>	Relational communication
“Sometimes I call them ‘sayang’ or ‘anak solehah’... there is also a mother’s hope behind it...” (I5)	Affectionate and religiously meaningful forms of address	Affection and parental aspiration	Relational communication
“...not to continue playing outside when Maghrib is approaching... we should return home, clean ourselves, prepare for prayer...” (I7)	Maghrib-related customary prohibition	Customary behavioural and religious guidance	Symbolic communication
“Being told not to waste rice teaches children to appreciate food. Some <i>pantang larang</i> are related to cleanliness, safety, and proper manners.” (I8)	Meanings attached to customary prohibitions	Moral and practical meanings of <i>pantang larang</i>	Symbolic communication
“After Maghrib... we would read the Qur’an... recite <i>zikir</i> , or learn basic religious knowledge.” (I9)	Post-Maghrib Qur’anic learning	Shared religious routine	Communal communication
“Grandparents also help... Qur’anic teachers and religious teachers at the <i>surau</i> also play a role...” (I10)	Extended-family and community involvement	Shared responsibility for religious guidance	Communal communication
“Children do not learn religion only from books or classes. They observe how their parents speak... and how the community lives together.” (I11)	Religious learning through observation and participation	Family and community religious socialisation	Communal communication

Note. The table presents selected examples of the coding process rather than the complete analytical dataset. The themes were developed from recurring patterns across the interview material and were reviewed against the relevant transcript excerpts during analysis.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was supported through repeated engagement with the interview transcripts and systematic checking of interpretations against the original interview material. During coding and theme development, relevant passages were revisited to ensure that the developing themes remained grounded in participants’ accounts. The inclusion of informants with different family, religious, customary, cultural, and community roles also provided a range of perspectives on the parenting practices under examination.

Analytical transparency was strengthened by retaining interview excerpts for the reporting of

findings and documenting the progression from raw interview extracts to initial codes, categories, and final themes, as illustrated in Table 2. These procedures provide an audit trail linking the reported themes to the interview material. Given the purposive sample of twelve informants, the findings are presented as context-specific interpretations of Malay *ethnoparenting* on Bengkalis Island rather than as representative of all Malay Muslim families.

Attention was also given during analysis to the possibility of variation or disconfirming accounts among informants. Across the twelve informants, no substantial contradictions emerged in how oral-affective, relational, symbolic, and communal practices were understood in relation to Islamic and moral values: informants drawn from different family, religious, customary, and community roles converged on broadly similar interpretations of the practices they discussed. This convergence is treated here as an indication of shared cultural understanding within this purposive sample, rather than as evidence that no variation exists among Malay Muslim families on Bengkalis Island more broadly.

Reflexivity was also considered during data collection and analysis. Data collection was undertaken by members of the research team based at IAIN Datuk Laksemana Bengkalis, who share the same cultural and religious background as the informants and are familiar with the Malay Muslim community on Bengkalis Island. This insider positioning facilitated rapport and encouraged informants to speak openly about practices they considered culturally sensitive, but it also meant that shared assumptions about *adat* and religious practice had to be made explicit during analysis rather than taken for granted. To manage this, initial codes and emerging themes were discussed among members of the research team, including co-authors based at Malaysian institutions who were less familiar with Bengkalis-specific customs, so that interpretations remained grounded in participants' own accounts rather than in the research team's prior assumptions.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were observed throughout the research process. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent, including permission for audio recording, was obtained before the interviews. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, interview procedures, and intended academic use of the data. Confidentiality was maintained through the use of participant codes (I1–I12), the removal of identifying information from reported findings, and secure handling of interview recordings, transcripts, and analytical materials.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Oral-Affective Communication: *Mendodoi*, *Doa*, *Selawat*, and Advice

Oral-affective communication emerged through everyday interactions in which affection, spoken language, religious expressions, and moral guidance were intertwined. Participants referred to practices such as *mendodoi*, *doa*, *selawat*, *zikir*, *petuah*, storytelling, and gentle correction as part of ordinary caregiving rather than formal religious instruction.

I2 illustrated this pattern through *mendodoi*:

“When my child was still a baby and had difficulty sleeping, I would hold or rock the child gently while *mendodoi*. In the lullaby, I sometimes included *selawat*, *zikir*, and prayers. I would also express hopes such as, ‘Be a good and pious child, and listen to your parents.’ Even though the child was still young and might not understand, we felt that what we said was also a prayer for the child.” (I2)

This account shows how physical closeness, affection, parental aspiration, and religious

expressions could occur within the same caregiving practice. Similar meanings were described in bedtime routines involving prayer and Qur'anic recitation, as well as in the use of gentle advice, *petuah*, stories, affectionate address, and non-verbal correction. Participants therefore emphasised not only what was communicated to children but also how guidance was delivered.

This pattern is consistent with Hidayat et al. (2025), who identify Malay oral traditions as channels for Islamic educational values. Comparable evidence is reported by Rustina et al. (2026), whose study of Kaili families shows that culturally familiar oral traditions convey moral and religious teachings. Although the cultural contexts differ, both studies support the broader interpretation that oral practices within family life may acquire educational and religious meanings. From a cultural parenting perspective, such practices may also be understood as part of culturally organised caregiving routines and beliefs (Harkness & Super, 1996).

Relational Communication: Affectionate Address, Kinship, and Respect

Relational communication emerged through kinship terminology, affectionate forms of address, expectations of respect, and the involvement of extended family members in children's upbringing. In this theme, moral and religious meanings were communicated not only through explicit advice but also through the organisation of everyday family relationships.

I1 linked forms of address with expectations concerning respect and *adab*:

"In our family, children are taught from an early age how to address people according to their position in the family. Older people are addressed as *Abang*, *Kakak*, *Pak Long*, *Mak Cik*, and so on. Even through these forms of address, children learn respect. If older people are speaking, we teach them not to interrupt. When giving something, they should use the right hand, and when speaking, they should be polite." (I1)

This account shows that kinship terms functioned not simply as linguistic labels but as part of a relational order through which expectations regarding politeness, gestures, and respect were communicated. Similar meanings appeared in affectionate naming, including birth-order terms and expressions such as *sayang* and *anak solehah*, which participants associated with emotional closeness and parental moral or religious aspirations.

The relational dimension also extended beyond the parent-child relationship. I10 described religious upbringing as involving grandparents, relatives, and religious teachers:

"Children's religious education is not only the responsibility of the parents. Grandparents also help a great deal. Uncles and aunties may also correct them if they see the children doing something inappropriate. Qur'anic teachers and religious teachers at the *surau* also play a role. Parents provide the foundation at home, and the extended family and community help strengthen what has already been taught." (I10)

These accounts indicate that relational communication operated through both language and social organisation. This interpretation is consistent with Harkness and Super's (1996) cultural parenting perspective, which situates parenting within culturally organised relationships and expectations, and with Suratman and Arif's (2020) analysis of Malay ethnoparenting as embedded in inherited cultural and social practices. The Bengkalis findings extend this perspective by showing how kinship terminology, affectionate address, respect for elders, and intergenerational involvement were described as communicative contexts for moral and religious meaning.

A broader comparison can be made with Zeitouni and Patterson (2025), who found that parental

cultural socialisation was associated with dimensions of Muslim identity among Muslim youth in the United States. Although the present study does not examine identity formation or developmental outcomes, both studies highlight the family as a relational setting in which cultural and religious meanings are communicated.

Symbolic Communication: *Pantang Larang* and Moral Guidance

A more indirect form of communication emerged in participants' accounts of *pantang larang*. Informants described selected customary prohibitions as carrying practical, moral, and religious meanings related to discipline, prayer time, safety, cleanliness, appreciation of food, and appropriate conduct. In this theme, *pantang larang* functioned not merely as inherited prohibitions but as culturally familiar forms of guidance through which behavioural expectations were communicated.

I7 referred specifically to the prohibition against children remaining outside as Maghrib approached:

"Since childhood, our elders have always reminded us not to continue playing outside when Maghrib is approaching. They would tell us to return home before dark. When I was young, I simply followed the instruction because the elders said it was not proper for children to remain outside at Maghrib. When I became older, I understood that there were several reasons behind it. At that time, we should return home, clean ourselves, prepare for prayer, and from a safety perspective it is also better for children to be at home. I now teach my children the same thing, but I also try to explain why they need to come home." (I7)

I7's account shows that the meaning of the prohibition was understood retrospectively in relation to prayer preparation, household routine, and safety. The practice was therefore described not only as a rule to be followed but as a form of guidance whose underlying rationale became clearer with age.

I8 offered a broader interpretation of the educational meanings associated with *pantang larang*: "For me, the old *pantang larang* were not simply intended to frighten children. There was usually a meaning behind them. For example, not playing outside at Maghrib teaches discipline and reminds children about prayer time. Being told not to waste rice teaches children to appreciate food. Some *pantang larang* are related to cleanliness, safety, and proper manners. Young children may not understand if we give them a very long explanation, so elders used short and simple prohibitions. When we become older, we begin to understand the values they were actually trying to teach." (I8)

For I8, *pantang larang* functioned as a concise communicative device through which practical and moral expectations could be introduced in ways that were readily understood by children. The informant associated such prohibitions with discipline, gratitude, cleanliness, safety, and manners rather than with fear alone.

These accounts are consistent with Suratman and Arif's (2020) discussion of *pantang larang* as part of Malay ethnoparenting, where customary prohibitions form part of culturally inherited approaches to child guidance. Roziah et al. (2025) further show that prohibitions represented in traditional Malay poetry carry Islamic educational meanings related to faith, worship, and moral conduct. A related pattern is also reported by Suratman and Nurjannah (2021), who show that cultural and religious influences are intertwined in the care and upbringing of children within Sambas Muslim families. Although the Bengkalis context is distinct, the present findings similarly indicate that selected customary prohibitions may be interpreted by family members as carrying moral, practical, or religious

meanings.

At the same time, the findings do not justify treating all *pantang larang* as Islamic teachings or as inherently educational. The evidence supports the narrower conclusion that the informants interpreted **selected** prohibitions in ways that were compatible with expectations concerning discipline, prayer, safety, cleanliness, gratitude, and appropriate conduct. Maintaining this distinction is important because it avoids equating Malay customary practice automatically with Islamic doctrine.

An alternative reading of these accounts would treat *pantang larang* primarily as social or practical conventions for child safety and household order, with any religious association added only in retrospect by older informants. This reading cannot be ruled out from the present data, since I7 and I8 both described understanding the religious rationale only as they grew older. However, because informants themselves, rather than the researchers, drew the connection between specific prohibitions, such as returning home before Maghrib and observing mealtime norms, and religious obligations such as prayer and gratitude, the analysis retains the informants' own religious framing while acknowledging that a purely practical or safety-based interpretation remains plausible for some of the practices discussed.

Within the present dataset, symbolic communication therefore refers to the use of culturally recognisable prohibitions and indirect reminders through which participants described expectations regarding behaviour. The theme shows how the meaning of *pantang larang* was located not simply in the prohibition itself but in the moral, practical, and religious interpretations attached to it by the informants.

Communal Communication: Maghrib Mengaji and Religious Socialisation

The fourth theme concerns the communal settings in which participants described religious guidance as taking place. Their accounts extended beyond direct parental instruction to include grandparents, other relatives, Qur'anic teachers, *surau*, mosques, and shared religious routines. Religious socialisation was therefore portrayed as occurring across interconnected family and community settings.

I9 provided a clear example through the practice of *Maghrib Mengaji*:

"After Maghrib, it used to be time for *mengaji*. After prayer, we would read the Qur'an. When I was young, I learned at the Qur'anic teacher's house and sometimes at the *surau*. With my own children, I try to continue the same practice, although sometimes we do it at home. After Maghrib, we read the Qur'an, recite *zikir*, or learn basic religious knowledge. During that time, we also try to reduce television and mobile phone use. The children therefore know that when Maghrib comes, the atmosphere in the home changes; there is a time for prayer, Qur'anic learning, and religious study." (I9)

I9's account situates religious learning within a recurring family routine. The post-Maghrib period was described as a recognisable time for prayer, Qur'anic recitation, *zikir*, and basic religious learning, showing how religious guidance could be embedded within the temporal organisation of everyday family life.

The involvement of other adults further broadened this process. I10 described grandparents, relatives, Qur'anic teachers, and religious teachers as contributing to children's religious education:

"For me, children's religious education is not only the responsibility of the parents. Grandparents also help a great deal. Sometimes the grandmother reminds the grandchildren to pray,

while the grandfather takes them to the mosque. Uncles and aunties may also correct them if they see the children doing something inappropriate. Qur'anic teachers and religious teachers at the *surau* also play a role because they teach the Qur'an and basic religious knowledge. Children actually learn from many people. Parents provide the foundation at home, and the extended family and community help strengthen what has already been taught." (I10)

This account indicates that religious guidance was not understood as the exclusive responsibility of the nuclear family. Rather, parents were described as providing the foundation, while extended family members and religious educators reinforced particular practices and expectations.

I11 connected this wider social environment to the relationship between Malay *adat* and Islam: "For me, Malay *adat* and Islam are closely connected in the way children are raised. For example, we teach children to respect elders, speak properly, help one another, go to the *surau*, and maintain relationships with relatives. These are customary practices in our families, but at the same time their values are also consistent with Islamic teachings. Children do not learn religion only from books or classes. They observe how their parents speak, how we treat elders, how relatives correct one another, and how the community lives together. In this sense, *adat* can become a means of communicating Islamic values as long as it does not conflict with religion." (I11)

Two features of I11's account are important. First, religious learning was described as occurring through observation and participation in everyday family and community life. Second, *adat* and Islam were not presented as identical; rather, selected customary practices were considered meaningful when their values were understood as consistent with Islamic teachings.

These findings are consistent with recent research on Muslim religious parenting. Maksudin et al. (2025) show that parental involvement, repeated religious routines, modelling, and emotional engagement are central to home-based religious education among Muslim families in Yogyakarta. Although the present study does not examine parenting typologies or children's spiritual outcomes, the Bengkalis accounts similarly position the household as an important setting in which religious guidance is embedded in repeated routines and everyday interaction. Practices such as *Maghrib Mengaji*, Qur'anic recitation, reminders to pray, and the involvement of extended family members illustrate how religious socialisation was described as occurring through both routine and relationship.

A comparable pattern is also evident in Rustina et al. (2026), who found that oral traditions narrated within families in Kaili communities could convey moral and religious teachings and connect local cultural values with Islamic religious education. The cultural context and forms of transmission differ from those examined in Bengkalis, but both studies point to the importance of family and community settings in sustaining religious and moral meanings.

Communal communication therefore refers not simply to the number of people involved in child-rearing, but to the distribution of religious guidance across relationships, routines, and social spaces. In participants' accounts, the home, extended family, Qur'anic learning settings, mosque, and *surau* functioned as complementary contexts through which religious practices and expectations were reinforced.

Malay Ethnoparenting as Family-Based Islamic Value Communication

The four themes converge around a broader pattern in which participants located the communication of Islamic and moral values within everyday parenting practices, family relationships, customary forms of guidance, and shared religious routines. Although oral-affective, relational, symbolic, and communal

communication were identified as separate analytical themes, participants' accounts frequently showed that these forms overlapped in practice. Religious expressions could occur within affectionate caregiving, customary guidance could intersect with religious routines, and family relationships could provide the social context in which both moral and religious expectations were communicated.

I12 brought these dimensions together in a single account:

“When I look at the way we raise children, religious values are actually present in everyday life. When the child is a baby, we *mendodoi* while reciting *selawat* and prayers. As the child grows older, we give advice, teach *adab*, and correct the child gently. There are also *pantang larang*, such as returning home at Maghrib, followed by prayer and Qur’anic learning. For me, religious education does not necessarily take place only through sermons or formal learning. Children learn a great deal from their parents’ example, everyday habits in the home, the way we speak with affection, and the customs practised within the family.” (I12)

I12’s account illustrates that the practices identified in this study were not experienced as isolated techniques. Their significance lay in the way participants connected repeated interaction, caregiving, family relationships, customary expectations, and religious routines. This interpretation is consistent with Harkness and Super’s (1996) cultural parenting perspective, which conceptualises parenting as culturally organised through locally meaningful beliefs, practices, relationships, and settings. More recent cross-cultural research similarly emphasises that parenting goals and practices are embedded within broader cultural values and social expectations (Gibbons et al., 2024).

Within Malay contexts, this interpretation also extends existing research on ethnoparenting. Suratman and Arif (2020) demonstrate that Malay child-rearing incorporates culturally inherited practices such as *tunjuk ajar* and *pantang larang*, while Hidayat et al. (2025) show that Malay oral traditions may serve as channels for Islamic educational values. The Bengkalis findings bring these strands together from a communication perspective. Participants described values as being expressed through spoken and sung forms, affectionate and kinship-based address, customary prohibitions, observation, repeated routines, and participation in family and community religious activities.

The findings also resonate with recent research on Muslim family religious socialisation. Maksudin et al. (2025) identify parental involvement, repeated religious routines, modelling, and emotional engagement as important features of home-based Islamic religious education. In a different sociocultural context, Zeitouni and Patterson (2025) likewise show the significance of parental cultural socialisation in relation to Muslim identity among young people in the United States. The present study does not examine children’s identity development or measure religious outcomes. Nevertheless, these studies reinforce the broader importance of the family as a setting in which religious and cultural meanings are communicated through recurring interaction and socialisation.

On this basis, family-based Islamic value communication is proposed as a cross-theme analytical synthesis of the four empirical themes identified in the study. The concept refers to the ways in which the informants described Islamic and moral meanings as being communicated through interconnected family practices, relationships, customary forms of guidance, and shared religious routines. Its emphasis is therefore on the communicative processes through which values are expressed within everyday family life rather than on any single parenting practice.

The concept does not imply that all Malay customary practices are inherently Islamic, nor that *adat* and Islam are interchangeable. Rather, it reflects participants’ interpretations of selected cultural

practices whose meanings they understood as compatible with values such as *adab*, affection, respect, responsibility, religious observance, and appropriate conduct. The same caution applies to developmental outcomes: the present study examined adult informants' accounts of parenting practices and did not assess whether these practices produced particular religious, moral, or behavioural outcomes in children.

Accordingly, family-based Islamic value communication should be regarded as a context-specific analytical synthesis rather than a universal model of Malay Muslim parenting. The purposive sample of twelve informants represents particular perspectives from Bengkalis Island, and the four communicative dimensions may overlap differently in other families or Malay communities. Nevertheless, the concept provides a useful basis for examining how cultural parenting, family communication, and religious meanings intersect within everyday Muslim family life.

Table 3. Summary of Islamic Value Communication Themes Identified in the Study

Table 3 summarises the four themes identified from the interview data and links them with the parenting practices, communicative forms, values or meanings described by the informants, and the principal informants contributing to each theme. The table is intended as a descriptive synthesis of the findings rather than as a universal model of Malay *ethnparenting*.

Theme Identified in the Study	Parenting Practices	Form of Communication	Values and Meanings Associated with the Practice	Main Informants
Oral-affective communication	<i>Mendodoi</i> , <i>doa</i> , <i>selawat</i> , <i>zikir</i> , oral advice, <i>petuah</i> , storytelling, gentle correction	Spoken, sung, repeated, and emotionally intimate communication	Affection, prayer, moral guidance, <i>adab</i> , respect for parents, and religious aspiration	I2, I3, I4, I6
Relational communication	Kinship terms, affectionate forms of address, respect for elders, gentle correction, extended-family involvement	Communication through family relationships, emotional closeness, kinship roles, and everyday interaction	Respect, <i>adab</i> , affection, responsibility, family belonging, and intergenerational involvement	I1, I5, I6, I10
Symbolic communication	<i>Pantang larang</i> , customary prohibitions, indirect reminders	Communication through prohibitions, culturally familiar warnings, and meanings attached to customary practices	Discipline, appreciation of food, cleanliness, safety, respect for prayer time, and appropriate conduct	I7, I8
Communal communication	<i>Maghrib Mengaji</i> , Qur'anic learning,	Communication through shared	Qur'anic learning, religious routine,	I9, I10, I11

	family participation, involvement of Qur'anic teachers and community members	religious routines, participation, observation, and community involvement	worship discipline, family and community involvement, and shared religious guidance	
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As shown in Table 3, the four themes represent distinct but interconnected forms of communication within the parenting practices described by the informants. Oral-affective communication is reflected in prayer, religious expressions, advice, and affectionate speech; relational communication is embedded in kinship roles, forms of address, respect for elders, and intergenerational involvement; symbolic communication operates through selected *pantang larang* and customary reminders; while communal communication is expressed through Qur'anic learning, shared religious routines, and the involvement of family and community members. These themes are not mutually exclusive, as particular parenting practices may involve more than one communicative form. Their convergence provides the empirical basis for the study's conceptualization of family-based Islamic value communication.

Practical Implications

The findings suggest that religious and moral guidance in Malay Muslim families may be embedded in ordinary caregiving rather than confined to formal instruction. Practices such as *mendodoi*, prayer, gentle advice, affectionate forms of address, and shared Qur'anic routines illustrate how everyday interaction can provide culturally familiar contexts for communicating values associated with *adab*, respect, responsibility, and religious observance. These practices should not be standardised across families, but may be recognised as culturally meaningful resources for religious and moral education.

The findings also highlight the importance of explaining the meanings attached to customary practices. Participants' accounts of *pantang larang* suggest that such practices may be more meaningful when children understand the practical, moral, or religious reasoning associated with them. Parents, grandparents, religious educators, and community figures may therefore contribute not only to preserving customary practices but also to interpreting them in ways that remain understandable and religiously appropriate.

Finally, the communal dimension of the findings indicates that religious guidance may be supported through continuity across the home, extended family, Qur'anic learning settings, and community religious spaces. Participants described parents, relatives, Qur'anic teachers, and religious figures as contributing in complementary ways to children's religious learning.

Scholarly Implications

The study contributes to research on cultural parenting, ethnoparenting, and Muslim religious socialisation by foregrounding communication as an analytical dimension. Previous studies have shown that parenting is culturally organised (Harkness & Super, 1996), that Malay ethnoparenting is embedded in inherited cultural and social practices (Suratman & Arif, 2020), and that Malay oral traditions communicate Islamic educational values (Hidayat et al., 2025). The present study brings these strands together through the four communicative dimensions of oral-affective, relational, symbolic, and communal communication. Unlike Suratman and Arif (2020), who examine ethnoparenting primarily

as a site of habitus and cultural contestation, and Hidayat et al. (2025), who focus on oral tradition as a vehicle for Islamic educational values, the present study treats communication itself as the unit of analysis, showing empirically, through verbatim accounts and a documented coding process (Table 2), how oral-affective, relational, symbolic, and communal forms operate as distinct but interacting channels rather than as a single undifferentiated cultural inheritance.

The concept of family-based Islamic value communication is proposed as a context-specific analytical synthesis rather than a general theory of Muslim parenting. Its contribution lies in highlighting the communicative processes through which culturally embedded parenting practices acquire religious and moral meaning. This perspective also complements recent research on Islamic religious parenting that emphasises parental involvement, routines, modelling, and emotional engagement (Maksudin et al., 2025).

Future research could compare these communicative dimensions across different Malay communities and examine how children themselves interpret the practices through which adults intend to communicate religious and moral values.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how Islamic values are communicated through Malay *ethnoparenting* practices on Bengkalis Island. Based on the accounts of twelve purposively selected informants, four interconnected forms of communication were identified: oral-affective, relational, symbolic, and communal communication. Oral-affective communication was reflected in practices such as *mendodoi*, prayer, religious expressions, advice, and gentle correction; relational communication operated through kinship roles, affectionate forms of address, respect for elders, and extended-family involvement; symbolic communication was evident in selected *pantang larang* and customary reminders; and communal communication involved Qur'anic learning, shared religious routines, and participation by family and community members.

The study contributes to the literature by conceptualising these interconnected patterns as **family-based Islamic value communication**. This concept highlights how participants described religious and moral meanings as being communicated not only through explicit religious instruction but also through everyday speech, caregiving, relationships, customary guidance, observation, and participation in shared religious practices. Importantly, the concept does not equate Malay *adat* with Islam or assume that all customary parenting practices are inherently religious. Rather, it captures how informants interpreted selected culturally embedded practices as compatible with values associated with *adab*, affection, respect, responsibility, religious observance, and appropriate conduct.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The study involved twelve purposively selected informants from Bengkalis Island and was designed to provide a context-specific qualitative account rather than statistically generalisable findings. The analysis was also based on adult informants' accounts and did not examine children's perspectives or measure the effects of these practices on children's religious, moral, or behavioural development. Future research could therefore examine how children themselves interpret these communicative practices, compare *ethnoparenting* across different Malay communities, and investigate how culturally embedded forms of religious communication are maintained, adapted, or contested across generations. Such research would further clarify the relationship between cultural parenting, family communication, and religious socialisation in

contemporary Malay Muslim communities.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

Khazri Osman: Conceptualisation, methodology, supervision.

Salwa Jefri: Writing - review and editing.

Prayugo: Data collection, formal analysis, writing - original draft.

Jarir: Data collection, formal analysis.

Khairul Azhar Meerangani: Supervision.

Dayang Sakini: Supervision.

AVAILABILITY OF DATA AND MATERIALS

The data supporting this study's findings are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

ETHICS STATEMENT

Ethical approval was not sought for this study because no institutional ethics review board applies to non-clinical, minimal-risk qualitative interview research of this kind at the researchers' host institutions. The study was nevertheless conducted in accordance with standard ethical principles for social science research involving human participants. Voluntary informed consent, including consent for audio recording, was obtained from all twelve informants before the interviews. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study, the interview procedure, and the intended academic use of the data, and were free to withdraw at any time without consequence. Confidentiality was maintained through the use of participant codes (I1–I12); no names or other identifying details are reported. Interview recordings, transcripts, and analytical materials were stored securely and were accessible only to the research team.

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