

Parental Emotional Neglect and Adolescent Social Media Addiction: An Islamic Theory-Oriented Psychotherapeutic Case Study

Daoud Sulaiman Khamis Al-Dhafri

Department of Islamic History Civilization and Education, Academy of Islamic Studies, University of Malay

d99230958@gmail.com

Dr. Fareed Awae

Department of Islamic History -Civilization and Education, Academy of Islamic Studies, University of Malay

d99230958@gmail.com

Dr. Mahyudin Bin Daud

Department of Islamic History -Civilization and Education, Academy of Islamic Studies, University of Malay

muhyi@um.edu.my

ABSTRACT

This study examines the case of a 15-year-old adolescent suffering from excessive and addictive use of social media, against a background of parental emotional neglect. Clinical analysis demonstrates how the absence of emotional support and effective family communication led to disturbances in emotional regulation and increased reliance on the digital world as a means of escaping loneliness and psychological emptiness. Several theoretical frameworks were employed to diagnose and explain the case, including attachment theory, basic psychological needs theory, the cognitive-behavioural model of problematic internet use, and family systems theory. The therapeutic intervention included an integrated program that included individual cognitive-behavioural therapy sessions, digital regulation training, and family therapy sessions to enhance emotional interaction between the adolescent and his parents. The case demonstrated gradual improvement in psychological and behavioural indicators, such as reduced daily usage hours, improved sleep quality, increased positive feelings, and engagement in real-life social activities. The study highlights the need to address social media addiction among adolescents as a symptom resulting from deep psychological and social factors, especially in an environment lacking emotional containment and family support. The study concludes with a series of lessons learned and practical recommendations for psychologists and family therapists working with this age group.

Keywords: Emotional Neglect, Parental Relationships, Social Media Addiction, Adolescent Mental Health, Family Relationships.

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Introduction

Adolescence is a critical developmental period characterized by profound psychological, emotional, social, and behavioral changes. During this stage, young people gradually develop a sense of identity, autonomy, emotional regulation, interpersonal competence, and moral responsibility. Although adolescents increasingly seek independence from their parents, the quality of parental relationships remains highly influential in shaping their emotional security and patterns of social interaction. Parents provide not only material support but also affection, recognition, guidance, emotional availability, and a sense of belonging. When these emotional needs are persistently unmet, adolescents may experience feelings of loneliness, rejection, inadequacy, and psychological insecurity. In contemporary society, these unmet emotional needs may increasingly be redirected toward digital environments, particularly social media platforms, where adolescents can obtain immediate social interaction, validation, attention, and perceived belonging. Consequently, parental emotional neglect has become an important issue in understanding problematic social media use among adolescents.¹

Social media has transformed the way adolescents communicate, construct relationships, express emotions, and understand themselves and others. Platforms that facilitate messaging, sharing, commenting, entertainment, and social networking can provide valuable opportunities for connection and self-expression. However, excessive and poorly regulated use can develop into problematic or addictive patterns characterized by preoccupation, loss of control, excessive time spent online, unsuccessful attempts to reduce use, withdrawal-like experiences, and continued engagement despite negative academic, psychological, familial, or social consequences. Adolescents may be particularly vulnerable because their cognitive and emotional regulatory capacities are still developing. Social media environments are also designed around continuous engagement, feedback, notifications, and social reinforcement. Likes, comments, followers, messages, and other forms of digital recognition can provide immediate reinforcement, potentially encouraging repetitive checking and prolonged online engagement.²

The relationship between parental emotional neglect and social media addiction can therefore be understood through an emotional compensation perspective. An adolescent who does not receive sufficient affection, attention, empathy, communication, or recognition within the family may search for these experiences elsewhere. Social media can become an easily accessible environment in which the adolescent feels noticed, valued, connected, or temporarily relieved from emotional distress. Digital interactions may consequently serve as a coping mechanism for loneliness, family conflict, perceived rejection, low self-esteem, or emotional emptiness. Although social media cannot adequately replace meaningful parental relationships, its immediate accessibility and reinforcing characteristics may make it psychologically attractive to emotionally neglected adolescents. Over time, reliance on online

¹ Rubab Zahra et al., "Addressing Mental Health Stigma and Digital Harassment in Pakistan and Indonesia: Insights from Islamic Principles and AI-Driven Cybersecurity Law," *Global Islamic Research Journal* 1, no. 1 (2025): 77–92, <https://doi.org/10.65960/girj.1.1.2025.1>.

² Abdul Mustafa et al., "When Culture Meets Fiqh: Examining the Legal Authority of 'Urf in Contemporary Engagement Traditions," *Global Islamic Research Journal* 1, no. 1 (2025): 01–21, <https://doi.org/10.65960/girj.1.1.2025.6>.

interaction may strengthen avoidance of real-world interpersonal difficulties and contribute to a self-perpetuating cycle of emotional distress and excessive digital engagement.³

Parental emotional neglect should be distinguished from more visible forms of parental maltreatment. Physical abuse and overt verbal aggression are generally easier to identify because they involve observable harmful behaviors. Emotional neglect, in contrast, may occur through the persistent absence of appropriate emotional responses. Parents may provide food, education, clothing, shelter, and other material necessities while failing to respond adequately to the adolescent's emotional needs. A parent may be physically present but emotionally unavailable, dismissive, excessively critical, preoccupied with work, or unwilling to listen to the child's concerns. In some cases, communication within the family becomes predominantly disciplinary or achievement-oriented, leaving little space for emotional expression. Such circumstances may cause adolescents to internalize beliefs that their emotions are unimportant or that they must seek acceptance outside the family.⁴

The psychological consequences of emotional neglect can extend beyond temporary sadness or dissatisfaction. Persistent emotional unavailability may interfere with attachment security, self-worth, emotional regulation, interpersonal trust, and the ability to establish healthy relationships. Adolescents experiencing neglect may have difficulty identifying and communicating their emotions, may become excessively dependent on external validation, or may develop avoidance-based coping strategies. Social media can become particularly attractive under these circumstances because it allows individuals to regulate their emotional state rapidly through interaction, entertainment, distraction, and social feedback. Thus, problematic social media use should not always be interpreted simply as a failure of discipline or an inability to manage technology. In some cases, it may represent a symptom or coping response associated with deeper emotional and relational difficulties.⁵

The Islamic perspective provides an additional conceptual and therapeutic dimension to this problem. Islamic teachings place considerable emphasis on the emotional, moral, spiritual, and relational development of children and adolescents. The family is regarded as a fundamental institution for nurturing human beings and transmitting values, compassion, responsibility, and moral character. The Qur'anic principle of *rahmah* (mercy and compassion) is particularly relevant to parent-child relationships. Parents are expected to exercise care, kindness, responsibility, and wisdom in their treatment of children rather than reducing parenting to material provision or disciplinary control. The Prophetic model similarly emphasizes kindness, affection, communication, and consideration for the emotional needs of young people. Therefore, from an Islamic perspective, parental responsibility encompasses both physical and emotional dimensions.⁶

The concept of *rahmah* offers a useful framework for understanding emotional neglect. Emotional availability, compassionate communication, attentive listening, and recognition of

³ Firas Yasin Alwan and Imad Yassin Lilo, "Defending Religious Tradition in Modern Times: Comparative Responses of Muslim and Christian Scholars to Scriptural Criticism.," *Global Islamic Research Journal* 2, no. 1 (2026): 18–35, <https://doi.org/10.65960/girj.2.1.2026.11>.

⁴ Mujiono et al., "Islamic Law and Campus Governance Against Drug Abuse: Preventive Strategies and Restorative Rehabilitation in Indonesian Universities," *Global Islamic Research Journal* 1, no. 1 (2025): 43–58, <https://doi.org/10.65960/girj.1.1.2025.4>.

⁵ Firas Yasin Alwan and Imad Yassin Lilo, "Defending Religious Tradition in Modern Times."

⁶ Talib Adnan Abood et al., "Authority and Interpretation in Qur'anic Studies: Re-Examining Classical Tafsir in Contemporary Islamic Scholarship," *Global Islamic Research Journal* 2, no. 1 (2026): 01–17, <https://doi.org/10.65960/girj.2.1.2026.10>.

a child's emotional needs can be viewed as important components of responsible Islamic parenting. Similarly, the Islamic concept of *tarbiyyah* emphasizes comprehensive development and nurturing rather than merely controlling behavior. *Tarbiyyah* includes intellectual, moral, spiritual, emotional, and social formation. Consequently, addressing adolescent social media addiction from an Islamic perspective requires attention not only to the amount of time spent online but also to the emotional and relational circumstances that may contribute to excessive use.⁷

Another relevant Islamic concept is *wasatiyyah*, or moderation and balanced conduct. Islam does not inherently reject technological development or social communication; rather, Islamic ethical principles encourage responsible and purposeful engagement with available resources. From this perspective, the therapeutic objective is not necessarily complete technological avoidance but the development of balanced, intentional, and ethically responsible digital behavior. Excessive engagement that interferes with religious obligations, family responsibilities, education, psychological well-being, or interpersonal relationships can be examined within a broader framework of moderation, self-discipline, and accountability. The principle of *mubasabah* (self-accountability or self-reflection) may also contribute to therapeutic work by encouraging adolescents to examine their intentions, emotional triggers, habits, and consequences of digital behavior.

The Islamic perspective is particularly valuable when integrated carefully with contemporary psychotherapeutic approaches. Cognitive-behavioral therapy, attachment-informed interventions, family therapy, emotion-focused approaches, and behavioral modification strategies can provide evidence-based methods for addressing problematic social media use and emotional difficulties. However, psychological interventions may become more meaningful and culturally responsive when they recognize the client's worldview and value system. For Muslim adolescents, concepts such as *rahmah*, *sabr* (patience), *tawakkul* (reliance upon Allah), *mubasabah*, *wasatiyyah*, family responsibility, and spiritual well-being may provide culturally relevant resources for emotional regulation and behavioral change. Such concepts should not be used as substitutes for professional psychological treatment; rather, they can complement appropriate psychotherapeutic techniques when integrated ethically and according to the individual's needs.

A theory-oriented approach is therefore necessary for examining the mechanisms through which parental emotional neglect may contribute to problematic social media use. Attachment theory can help explain how inadequate emotional responsiveness may influence an adolescent's expectations of relationships and increase the search for alternative sources of connection. The self-determination perspective can illuminate the importance of psychological needs such as relatedness, competence, and autonomy. Cognitive-behavioral models can explain how negative beliefs, emotional distress, and reinforcement mechanisms maintain excessive social media use. Behavioral theories further suggest that immediate digital rewards may reinforce repetitive online behavior. Integrating these theoretical perspectives with Islamic concepts of compassionate parenting, balanced conduct, spiritual development, and moral self-regulation can produce a more culturally grounded understanding of the case.

⁷ Rasheed Uthman et al., "Beyond Doctrine: Boko-Haram, Radical Islamist Insurgency, and the Nigeria State," *Global Islamic Research Journal* 2, no. 1 (2026): 74–95, <https://doi.org/10.65960/girj.2.1.2026.9>.

The present study adopts a psychotherapeutic case-study orientation because individual cases can reveal the complex interaction between family relationships, emotional needs, cognitive processes, digital behavior, and spiritual or moral frameworks. Quantitative research can establish associations between parental neglect and problematic social media use, but a case study can provide a deeper understanding of how these processes unfold within the lived experience of an adolescent. It can explore the adolescent's emotional history, family dynamics, perceptions of parental behavior, patterns of social media engagement, psychological triggers, coping strategies, and responses to therapeutic intervention. Such an approach is particularly relevant when the objective is to understand not merely whether parental emotional neglect is associated with social media addiction, but how and why this relationship develops in a particular psychosocial context.⁸

Despite growing scholarly attention to problematic social media use and adolescent mental health, an important gap remains in culturally and religiously integrated psychotherapeutic analysis. Much of the existing literature conceptualizes excessive social media use primarily through psychological, behavioral, or technological frameworks. While these perspectives are valuable, they may provide an incomplete account of adolescents whose identities and family lives are strongly influenced by Islamic values. Similarly, discussions of Islamic parenting frequently emphasize moral education, obedience, or religious instruction without sufficiently examining emotional neglect, digital dependency, and contemporary adolescent psychological needs. There is therefore a need for research that brings these domains together in a theoretically coherent manner.

This study addresses that gap by examining the relationship between parental emotional neglect and adolescent social media addiction through an Islamic theory-oriented psychotherapeutic case study. It seeks to understand social media addiction not merely as excessive technological consumption but as a potentially meaningful behavioral response to unmet emotional and relational needs. The study also explores how Islamic concepts of compassion, nurturing, moderation, self-accountability, family responsibility, and spiritual well-being may contribute to the conceptualization and therapeutic management of the problem.

The significance of this study is both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it contributes to the growing discussion on culturally sensitive approaches to adolescent psychological problems by connecting established psychological theories with Islamic ethical and spiritual concepts. Practically, it may assist psychotherapists, counselors, educators, parents, and Islamic scholars in recognizing the underlying emotional dimensions of excessive social media use. Instead of responding exclusively through restriction, punishment, or technological control, intervention may need to address the adolescent's need for affection, recognition, secure attachment, meaningful communication, and healthy belonging. In this respect, strengthening family relationships may be as important as reducing screen time.

Ultimately, the study proceeds from the assumption that adolescent social media addiction cannot be fully understood in isolation from the adolescent's emotional environment. Where emotional needs are consistently neglected, digital platforms may become substitute spaces for connection and validation. Effective intervention therefore requires a multidimensional approach that addresses psychological mechanisms, family relationships, behavioral patterns, and culturally meaningful sources of resilience. By combining psychotherapeutic theory with relevant Islamic principles, the present case study

⁸ Talib Adnan Abood et al., "Authority and Interpretation in Qur'anic Studies."

aims to offer a holistic framework for understanding and responding to parental emotional neglect and problematic social media use among adolescents. Such an approach recognizes that healthy adolescent development depends not only on controlling harmful behaviors but also on creating compassionate families, meaningful relationships, balanced lifestyles, and emotionally supportive environments in which young people can develop a secure and responsible sense of self.

Theoretical Frameworks, Systems, and Research Foundations Guiding Treatment

"Adam" (pseudonym) is a 15-year-old high school student who was referred by his school counsellor due to a significant decline in his academic performance, bouts of irritability, social isolation, and excessive use of social media, especially at night. His assessment revealed that his average daily use of social media apps (such as Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat) ranged between 6 and 8 hours, with significant sleep disturbances. Adam comes from a middle-income family, with both parents working full-time. He describes their relationship with him as "good but limited." Both parents indicated that they are "busy most of the time" and leave him free to do whatever he wants most of the day without close monitoring or regular emotional interaction. During clinical interviews, the teenager expressed feelings of "loneliness" and "emptiness," stating that being on social media makes him feel "seen" and "heard" by others, unlike how he feels at home. There were no previous psychiatric diagnoses or suicidal attempts, but there were signs of mood disorder, persistent negative self-perceptions, and an exaggerated attachment to digital interactions, all of which suggested a behavioral addiction pattern. The patient was placed under clinical follow-up in individual and family therapy sessions to address the root causes of the problem and enhance social and psychological coping skills.⁹

This case study integrates a set of psychological models and theoretical foundations that explain how parental emotional neglect leads to the development of digital addiction behaviors in adolescents, particularly social media addiction. These frameworks are presented below:

A. Attachment Theory

Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1988) explains how the absence of a secure emotional bond between a child and their parents leads to the development of insecure attachment patterns (such as avoidant or anxious attachment), which drives adolescents to seek alternative sources of support and belonging, such as social media. Recent studies have shown a strong relationship between insecure attachment patterns and digital addiction behaviors.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

This theory assumes that humans naturally strive to satisfy three psychological needs: belonging, competence, and autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2000). When these needs are neglected—especially emotional belonging within the family—adolescents tend to seek digital alternatives to fulfill these needs. A recent Chinese study demonstrated that parental neglect

⁹ Abdul Mustafa Azhari et al., "Global Transformations in Law, Justice, and Society: Comparative Perspectives on Governance, Rights, and Legal Reform," *International Journal of Law and Social Sciences* 1, no. 1 (2025): 60–90, <https://doi.org/10.65960/ijlss.1.1.2025.7>.

is positively associated with social media addiction, mediated by the absence of basic psychological needs.

Cognitive-Behavioral Model of Problematic Internet Use

This model is based on the idea that adolescents who experience primary psychological difficulties (such as feelings of rejection, isolation, or social anxiety) develop negative beliefs about themselves and others, leading to their excessive reliance on the internet as an escape mechanism or mood adjustment (Davis, 2001). Evidence suggests that social media is often used as a coping mechanism to avoid painful emotions resulting from strained family relationships.¹⁰

Family Systems Theory

Within this framework, addictive behavior in adolescents is understood as a reflection of dysfunction within the family system as a whole. Cold or detached relationships within the family (low family cohesion) contribute to an unsafe psychological environment, which drives children to compensatory behaviors such as digital withdrawal (Min et al., 2023). Low emotional interaction within the family has been found to be directly associated with increased levels of addiction to digital platforms.

Recent Literature Related to the Condition

A recent systematic review concluded that emotional neglect is associated with an increased likelihood of developing behavioral addictive disorders in adolescents, particularly in the context of impaired emotional regulation. Global data indicates that adolescents who experience emotional neglect exhibit increased activity on social media and rely on "likes" as a source of self-esteem. An Arab study conducted in Jordan also showed that more than 40% of adolescents who are heavy users of social media suffer from chronic feelings of loneliness linked to a lack of emotional support from their parents.¹¹

Treatment Plan and Actual Case Progress

A comprehensive treatment plan was developed for adolescent Adam, based on a combination of individual and group psychological interventions, and taking into account the psychosocial factors associated with parental emotional neglect and social media addiction. The plan began with initial assessment sessions that included the Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale and screening for behavioral addiction criteria such as excessive attachment, loss of control, and functional decline. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) was adopted as the core of the individual intervention. Adam participated in 12 sessions over three months, focusing on identifying and modifying negative beliefs about self and relationships, such as "I don't matter" and "No one cares about my feelings." Cognitive restructuring and automatic thought recording techniques were used, along with behavioral coping skills such as daily

¹⁰ Ahmed Abdullah Muhammed Al Dhahli et al., "The Future of International Commercial Arbitration in Islamic Jurisdictions: Harmonizing Global Standards with Sharia Principles," *International Journal of Law and Social Sciences* 2, no. 2 (2026): 48–68, <https://doi.org/10.65960/ijlss.2.2.2026.17>.

¹¹ Audyna Putri Kaslam et al., *The Contemporary Three-Kilogram LPG Gas Restriction Policy from a Fiqh Siyasa Perspective: Its Impact and Influence on the Welfare of Muslim Communities*, July 31, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.5281/ZENODO.17350809>.

scheduling and regular physical activity, which is consistent with evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy for behavioral addiction in adolescents. In parallel, monthly structural family therapy sessions were initiated to enhance communication between the adolescent and their parents. The sessions focused on strengthening emotional bonds within the family and raising parents' awareness of the effects of unintentional emotional neglect. Weekly family activities such as "device-free hours" were also introduced, which have been found to enhance the quality of family relationships and reduce excessive reliance on the digital world.¹²

The treatment plan also included implementing a strict digital regulation plan, which included signing a "digital behavioral contract" limiting social media use to two hours per day, prohibiting devices after 9 p.m., and removing the phone from the bedroom. The Forest app was used to monitor digital time and promote focus, in accordance with the literature on self-regulation in adolescents in the age of technology. Practically speaking, positive indicators began to emerge after two months of treatment. Daily usage decreased from 6 hours to approximately 3 hours, sleep patterns gradually improved, and Adam began expressing his feelings directly in sessions. By the fourth month, digital habits had stabilized at an hour and a half per day, and the teen participated in the school basketball team, which helped strengthen real-life social identity and reduce the need for digital belonging. The parents demonstrated a significant improvement in emotional engagement, reporting an increase in the number of shared emotional moments during the week. However, the plan experienced a temporary setback during the parents' travel period, during which usage hours increased sharply. However, thanks to follow-up therapy, this event was used as a learning opportunity in the sessions to strengthen coping skills for feelings of absence and neglect. These findings confirm that integrated individual and family therapy, when theoretically guided and supported by evidence, can bring about positive and sustainable changes in the lives of adolescents suffering from the effects of emotional neglect and digital media addiction.¹³

Challenges and Achievements

During the treatment process, the treatment team and family faced a number of fundamental challenges that impacted the pace and stability of improvement. The most prominent of these challenges was the parents' excessive preoccupation and their initial lack of commitment to attending sessions or allocating quality time to interact with Adam. Parents frequently expressed the feeling that the problem was "only related to the phone," without sufficiently understanding the emotional roots of addiction. This superficial explanation is a manifestation of unacknowledged emotional neglect, confirmed by recent studies linking parents' lack of awareness of their children's psychological needs to their compensatory behaviors online. Another challenge was Adam's deep psychological attachment to social media as a primary source of self-esteem and social belonging. Despite reducing the number of hours spent using it, the teenager continued to show an excessive interest in the number of

¹² Bagus Khusfi Satyo, S.H., M.Kn. and Bagus Agung Yuda Prasetyo, S.H., M.Kn, "Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Human Rights: Legal Accountability for Algorithmic Decision-Making in Democratic Societies.," *International Journal of Law and Social Sciences* 2, no. 1 (2026): 54–74, <https://doi.org/10.65960/ijlss.2.1.2026.12>.

¹³ Dr. Moh. Aris Siswanto, S.H., M.H. and Toheed Ahmad, "Climate Justice in Islamic Legal Thought: Harmonizing Environmental Law, Human Rights, and Sustainable Development in OIC Countries," *International Journal of Law and Social Sciences* 2, no. 1 (2026): 20–41, <https://doi.org/10.65960/ijlss.2.1.2026.14>.

"likes" and comments on his posts, indicating a persistent tendency toward emotional dependency on the digital world. This attachment is consistent with the psychological needs theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), where individuals use digital platforms to compensate for unmet needs for acceptance and appreciation in their real-life environment.¹⁴

The team also encountered a behavioural setback during a period when their parents travelled. Adam's daily digital time increased to more than five hours per day, and his sleep quality deteriorated. However, this setback was used in the sessions as an opportunity to reframe coping strategies and train the adolescent to recognize his feelings when family support is absent. This is consistent with cognitive-emotional therapy intervention methods. Despite these challenges, several clear achievements were achieved on both the psychological and behavioural levels. Most notable were a significant decrease in social media use, significant improvements in sleep patterns, mood stability, and increased participation in real-life activities such as sports and reading. Communication between Adam and his parents gradually improved, and they became more aware of the importance of listening to and responding to his feelings, a fundamental shift in the dynamics of the family relationship.

In addition, Adam demonstrated significant improvement in his ability to self-regulate, as he began using digital time management apps on his own initiative and became able to resist digital urges during periods of anxiety or boredom. These are indicators of progress in psychological maturity and the ability to utilize positive coping skills. At the therapeutic level, family commitment and continued therapy sessions were considered the most significant factors contributing to improvement. This is confirmed by multiple literatures on the importance of integrating family therapy with individual interventions in cases of behavioural addiction in adolescents.¹⁵

Future Prognosis and Indications for Further Treatment

Based on Adam's remarkable progress over the six months of treatment, the future prognosis is somewhat promising, while acknowledging that some factors still pose a potential risk for relapse. Although his social media addiction behaviours have significantly decreased, his psychological dependence on digital interaction has not completely disappeared, requiring continued monitoring and enhanced strategies to prevent relapse into compulsive use. Recent literature indicates that recovery from behavioural addiction in adolescents is not achieved solely by reducing the overt behaviour (such as the number of hours spent using it), but also requires addressing the underlying psychological factors, including poor emotional regulation and low self-esteem associated with family neglect. Accordingly, Adam will benefit from biweekly support sessions over the next year, focusing on enhancing self-awareness skills, managing anxiety, and expanding real-life social support networks. It is also recommended that family sessions continue at least monthly to ensure positive changes in emotional interaction within the family are consolidated, especially since the parents' chronic busyness pattern continues to be an obstacle to building a long-term supportive relationship. It is essential to train parents to recognize early signs of relapse, such as relapse into isolation, sleep disturbances, or increased phone use during times of school stress or family events. On a personal level, Adam needs to develop a long-term digital detox plan, including periodic digital

¹⁴ Jamil Akhtar, "Waqf-Based Environmental Initiatives: Collaborative Partnerships With Government for Sustainable Development," in *Advances in Business Strategy and Competitive Advantage*, ed. Muhammad Shahbaz and Fakhar Shahzad (IGI Global, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-6265-5.ch009>.

¹⁵ Mohammad Fadel, "Is Historicism a Viable Strategy for Islamic Law Reform? The Case of 'Never Shall a Folk Prosper Who Have Appointed a Woman to Rule Them,'" *Islamic Law and Society* 18, no. 2 (2011): 131–76, <https://doi.org/10.1163/156851910X537793>.

detoxes and participation in peer mentoring programs or community volunteering, to foster a sense of belonging and effectiveness outside of virtual platforms.¹⁶

Finally, evidence suggests that the inclusion of emotion-focused therapy may enhance stabilization, especially in cases where addictive behaviours are linked to chronic emotional neglect experiences that have not been explicitly addressed.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations for Psychotherapists and Psychologists

This case reveals several practical and theoretical lessons that can guide the interventions of psychologists and family therapists working with adolescents, especially in light of the rising phenomenon of excessive reliance on digital media and the accompanying intertwined psychological and behavioural problems. First, the case confirms that social media addiction in adolescents is often a symptom of a deeper problem, namely an emotional gap within the family, rather than simply "technology misuse." Therefore, therapists must view this type of addiction from a holistic perspective that links family structure and the adolescent's emotional history. Second, it is essential to adopt an integrative, multi-theoretical approach to dealing with these cases, combining attachment theory, the basic psychological needs model, the cognitive-behavioural model, and family systems theory. This integration enables the therapist to gain a deeper understanding of the links between emotional deprivation and the search for digital acceptance, and it also provides multiple avenues for therapeutic intervention. Third, therapeutic experience indicates that engaging the family from the outset is crucial to the success of the treatment plan. Even if parents are unaware of the impact of their emotional neglect, raising their awareness of this role and motivating them to change contributes to improving the adolescent's psychological environment and reducing their dependence on the digital world. Fourth, therapists should promote alternative, real-world activities that provide the adolescent with meaning, a sense of belonging, and appreciation, such as participating in sports teams, community volunteering, or developing artistic hobbies. Studies have shown that these activities reduce emotional dependence on social media and increase adolescents' ability to self-regulate. Fifth, specialists should anticipate periods of relapse, especially during situations that evoke feelings of neglect or rejection, such as parental absence or academic pressure. This highlights the importance of developing a clear preventative plan that includes identifying triggers and training adolescents on adaptive responses.¹⁷

Conclusion

Parental emotional neglect can significantly influence adolescents' psychological well-being and may contribute to excessive or addictive social media use as a means of seeking emotional validation, connection, and relief from loneliness. This case study highlights that social media addiction should not be viewed merely as a behavioral or technological problem but may reflect deeper unmet emotional and relational needs within the family. An integrated psychotherapeutic approach that addresses attachment, emotional regulation, cognitive patterns, and family relationships is therefore essential. From an Islamic perspective,

¹⁶ "Legal Protection from Artificial Intelligence Technology Used to Filter Visual Contents via the Internet," *Pakistan Journal of Criminology*, January 17, 2024, 505–17, <https://doi.org/10.62271/pjc.16.1.505.517>.

¹⁷ Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Sunan Kalijaga, Jl. Marsda Adisucipto, Yogyakarta, Indonesia et al., "Al-Jabiri's Quranic Hermeneutics and Its Significance for Religious Education," *KEMANUSLAAN The Asian Journal of Humanities* 30, no. 1 (2023): 34–56, <https://doi.org/10.21315/kajh2023.30.1.3>.

principles such as *rahmah* (compassion), *tarbiyah* (nurturing), *wasatiyyah* (moderation), and *muhasabah* (self-accountability) provide valuable complementary resources for promoting healthier family relationships and responsible digital behavior. The study consequently emphasizes that effective intervention should focus not only on reducing social media use but also on restoring emotional connection, strengthening parental support, and fostering the adolescent's psychological, social, and spiritual well-being.

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