



## **Family Dysfunction: The Reproduction of Online-Based Violence against Children**

Erina Pane<sup>1</sup>, Mukri<sup>1</sup>, Alamsyah<sup>1</sup>, Adam Muhammad Yanis<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Intan Lampung, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Universitas Lampung, Indonesia

Email: erinapane@radenintan.ac.id

### **Abstract**

Violence against children reproduced through online platforms has been increasing every year. All forms of online violence pose serious risks to children's well-being and safety, with long-term psychological consequences. Families are expected to function as a source of security, providing protection from dangers and threats in the external environment, both physically and emotionally. Consistent emotional support enables children to express their feelings safely and to be heard. This study employs a qualitative-explanatory approach using in-depth interviews with children who have experienced online-based violence and exhibit varying degrees of family dysfunction. Research findings reveal that children who do not receive emotional support and guidance from their families tend to be drawn to and join online communities. These virtual spaces often become substitutes for family intimacy, where children share personal issues and seek emotional validation. However, these interactions also expose them to various forms of sexual exploitation, intimidation, manipulation, and online fraud. From a structural-functional perspective, the family plays a crucial role in maintaining balance and stability within its members' lives. When dysfunction occurs, these protective functions collapse, increasing children's vulnerability to digital exploitation. The study highlights the urgent need to reinvigorate family-based emotional resilience programs and integrate parental digital literacy education into child protection policies to mitigate online violence and restore the family's protective role.

**Keywords:** Child, family dysfunction, online-based violence

### **Abstrak**

*Kekerasan terhadap anak yang direproduksi melalui platform daring terus mengalami peningkatan setiap tahun. Semua bentuk kekerasan daring menimbulkan risiko serius terhadap kesejahteraan dan keselamatan anak, dengan dampak psikologis jangka panjang. Keluarga diharapkan berfungsi sebagai sumber rasa aman dengan memberikan perlindungan dari berbagai bahaya dan ancaman di lingkungan eksternal, baik secara fisik maupun emosional. Dukungan emosional yang konsisten memungkinkan anak untuk mengekspresikan perasaannya secara aman serta merasa didengar. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif-eksplanatoris melalui wawancara mendalam dengan anak-anak yang pernah mengalami kekerasan berbasis daring dan menunjukkan tingkat disfungsi keluarga yang beragam. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa anak-anak yang tidak memperoleh dukungan emosional dan bimbingan dari keluarga cenderung tertarik dan bergabung dengan komunitas daring. Ruang-ruang virtual tersebut kerap menjadi pengganti keintiman keluarga, tempat anak-anak berbagi persoalan pribadi dan mencari validasi emosional. Namun demikian, interaksi tersebut juga membuat mereka terekspos pada berbagai bentuk eksploitasi seksual, intimidasi, manipulasi, serta penipuan daring. Dari perspektif struktural-fungsional, keluarga memegang peran penting dalam menjaga keseimbangan dan stabilitas kehidupan para anggotanya. Ketika terjadi disfungsi, fungsi-fungsi protektif tersebut runtuh, sehingga meningkatkan kerentanan anak terhadap eksploitasi digital. Penelitian ini menegaskan urgensi untuk merevitalisasi program ketahanan emosional berbasis keluarga serta mengintegrasikan pendidikan literasi digital bagi orang tua ke dalam kebijakan perlindungan anak guna menekan kekerasan daring dan memulihkan peran protektif keluarga.*

**Kata kunci:** *Anak, disfungsi keluarga, kekerasan berbasis daring*

### **Introduction**

Each year, violence against children increases within the digital space. In the current digital era, the growing access of children to online technology has brought significant benefits in terms of education, entertainment, and connectivity.<sup>1</sup> However, on the other hand, the presence of children in online spaces also poses serious risks, particularly concerning their safety and protection.<sup>2</sup> One increasingly alarming threat is the rise of online-based violence against children.<sup>3</sup> This phenomenon includes various forms of sexual abuse, exploitation, intimidation, and

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<sup>1</sup> Li Ling et al., "The Use of Internet of Things Devices in Early Childhood Education: A Systematic Review," *Education and Information Technologies* 27, no. 5 (2022), p. 6333–52.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander P. Martin et al., "From Entertainment to Extortion: Tunisian Children's Online Experiences," *Child Abuse & Neglect* 145 (2023), p. 106405.

<sup>3</sup> Carvalho and Maria João Leote De, *Social Media in Juvenile Delinquency Practices: Uses and Unlawful Acts Recorded in Youth Justice in Portugal.*, ed. Translated by Adriana Barreiros (Comunicação e Sociedade, 2022).

fraud committed through digital platforms such as social media, websites, and messaging applications.

Online sexual abuse can occur in many forms, ranging from inappropriate sexual communication to the distribution of pornographic content to children.<sup>4</sup> Online exploitation often takes the form of child trafficking, in which children are sexually exploited through the sale or distribution of sexual materials involving them. Online intimidation or cyberbullying,<sup>5</sup> involves actions intended to humiliate, insult, or harm children through online platforms, such as text messages, social media comments, or degrading image posts.<sup>6</sup> All these forms of online violence pose serious risks to children's well-being and safety and may cause long-term psychological effects. This reality demonstrates that the use of the internet by children is like a double-edged sword: while it provides opportunities for social interaction and learning, it also opens the door for perpetrators to target children in ways that are difficult for parents and traditional supervisors to monitor. Parents hold an important role within the family for children. The family, in essence, should serve as a safe place for children.<sup>7</sup>

Research findings show that children from dysfunctional families have a higher risk of becoming victims of online violence. They tend to seek emotional connection and self-validation through online interactions, which in turn increases their exposure to situations of violence and exploitation.<sup>8</sup> Children who experience a lack of emotional support within the family tend to seek compensation in the digital world, which further heightens their risk of becoming victims of online violence.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> M. Rousseau et al., "Prevalence and Factors Associated with Active Cybersexuality among Teenagers between 15 and 17 Years Old: A Cross Sectional Study in Normandy, France," *Archives de Pédiatrie* 30, no. 5 (2023), p. 260–65.

<sup>5</sup> Willone Lim, Bee Theng Lau, and Fakir M Amirul Islam, "Cyberbullying Awareness Intervention in Digital and Non-Digital Environment for Youth: Current Knowledge," *Education and Information Technologies* 28, no. 6 (2023), p. 6869–6925; Laura Grunin, Gary Yu, and Sally S. Cohen, "The Relationship Between Youth Cyberbullying Behaviors and Their Perceptions of Parental Emotional Support," *International Journal of Bullying Prevention* 3, no. 3 (2021), p. 227–39.

<sup>6</sup> Esther Calvete, Liria Fernández-González, and Izaskun Orue, "A Growth Mindset and Self-Affirmation Intervention to Reduce Violent and Risky Online Behaviors: The Moderating Role of Previous Victimization," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 38, no. 7–8 (2023), p. 5875–5901; Abidin Nurdin et al., "Mappatammaq Mangaji in Mandar, West Sulawesi: Childrearing Patterns Based on the Qur'an in the Anthropological Perspective of Islamic Law," *El-USrah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga* 7, no. 2 (2024), p. 501.

<sup>7</sup> Mursyid Djawas et al., "The Legal Position of Children of Incest (A Study of Madhhab Scholars and Compilation of Islamic Law)," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 6, no. 1 (2022), p. 139.

<sup>8</sup> Zhiyuan Yu et al., "Network Analysis of Adverse and Positive Childhood Experiences in a National Sample of University Students," *Social Science & Medicine* 372 (2025), p. 117792; Citra Dewi Keumala, Rizanizarli Rizanizarli, and Syarifuddin Hasyim, "Testimonium De Auditu in The Case Rape of Childrens," *Syariah: Jurnal Hukum Dan Pemikiran* 22, no. 2 (2022), p. 151–61.

<sup>9</sup> Seonyeong Kim, Yoonsun Han, and Julie Ma, "Profiles of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Psychosocial Adjustment in South Korea: Comparison between Probation and Non-Probation Youth," *Child Abuse & Neglect* 146 (2023), p. 106453.

Even during the pandemic, research on family dysfunction, combined with social isolation and increased exposure to online content, created new risk situations that amplified children's vulnerability to sexual and online-based violence. Family dysfunction (such as lack of parental supervision, weakened protective functions, and increased exposure of children to online content) contributes to the growing risk of online-based violence against children. These studies emphasize that violence against children does not occur in a vacuum; rather, it is exacerbated by situational factors such as the loss of family support and the weakening of social control.<sup>10</sup>

Several previous studies have attempted to reveal the impacts and risks of internet use for children. Another finding of this research is that the high intensity of children's internet surfing is caused by the loss of the family's role, particularly that of parents, as companions to their children. This study aims to observe the shifting function of the family toward children. It employs a qualitative-explanatory method with in-depth interview techniques. Initial interviews were conducted with ten children who personally disclosed their family problems and had experienced online-based violence. The selection of informants was carried out after observation and engagement during the period of 2022 to 2023. From these observations, three informants were found willing to be interviewed in depth, accompanied by their parents or guardians, in accordance with the research topic.

### **Family Function within the Structural-Functional Perspective of Society**

The family, as a structure within society, consists of core family members, namely parents, children, and siblings. The nuclear family structure performs its social functions and fulfills the physical and mental needs of its members by providing basic necessities such as protection, affection, and guidance. Through these roles, the family becomes the primary social institution responsible for shaping individual behavior and ensuring the continuity of social order within the broader community.<sup>11</sup>

The structural-functional concept views society as a system composed of interrelated parts. One part cannot function without its connection to the others. The family is regarded as an independent system within the larger societal system. As a system, the family maintains its balance by adapting to the demands and changes that

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<sup>10</sup> Limor Golan, "'Secrets From the Children's Room': New Understandings of Inappropriate and Abusive Sexual Behavior Among Siblings after the COVID-19 Crisis in Israel," *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse* 24, no. 5 (2023), p. 3037–48; Katrin Chauviré-Geib et al., "The Increase in Online Child Sexual Solicitation and Abuse: Indicator 16.2.3 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Documents a Hidden and Growing Pandemic. Population-Based Surveys Fail to Capture the Full Picture," *Child Abuse & Neglect* 164 (2025), p. 107452; David Finkelhor et al., "When Is Online Sexual Solicitation of a Minor Considered Sexual Abuse? Recommendations for Victim Prevalence Surveys," *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse* 25, no. 5 (2024), p. 4117–29.

<sup>11</sup> Mursyid Djawas et al., "The Alimony Obligation of a Civil Servant and Non-Civil Servant Father towards Children Post-Divorce (The Study on Aceh Syar'iyah Court Decision Study of 2019)," *El-Usrah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga* 6, no. 1 (2023), p. 91.

occur within society.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the structural-functional concept rests upon the ideas of system, social structure, function, and equilibrium.<sup>13</sup>

All problems in a social system culminate in four functional imperatives: adaptation, goal attainment, integration, and latent pattern maintenance or tension management (AGIL scheme). Ini kenal sebagai skema AGIL.<sup>14</sup> Every action of a system in maintaining its balance must address these four functional dimensions. In the context of family life, these functions manifest through the family's ability to adapt to social change, achieve common goals, maintain harmonious relationships among members, and preserve shared values that sustain emotional stability and social cohesion.<sup>15</sup>

The functions of the family itself can be divided into three dimensions: family intimacy, family adaptability, and family communication. Family intimacy refers to the closeness of relationships among family members. Family adaptability refers to the family's ability to alter its power structure, role distribution, or internal rules in order to respond to external pressures or developments occurring within the marriage. Family communication refers to interactions among family members, which are essential for developing intimacy and adaptability.<sup>16</sup>

These dimensions provides a framework for analyzing the roles and responsibilities within a family unit. Examining the specific functions a family serves allows us to understand how these dimensions influence various aspects of family life. There are five main functions of the family:<sup>17</sup>

- 1) Affective function emphasizes teaching mutual love, support, and respect among family members, while preparing them to build relationships with others outside the family and assisting in the psychosocial development of each member.
- 2) Socialization function refers to the developmental process in which family members engage in social interaction to form behavioral norms in line with

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<sup>12</sup> Ikhwanuddin Harahap, Fatahuddin Aziz Siregar, and Erie Hariyanto, "Understanding The Rise of Childfree Marriage: Avoiding Toxic Family, Being Happy and Well Without Children Despite Contradiction With Maqashid Al-Sharia," *Al-Istinbath: Jurnal Hukum Islam* 10, no. 1 (2025), p. 303–29.

<sup>13</sup> James Georgas, "Family and Culture," *In Encyclopedia of Applied Psychology, Elsvier* 2 (2024).

<sup>14</sup> A. Javier Treviño, "Parsons's Action-System Requisite Model and Weber's Elective Affinity," *Journal of Classical Sociology* 5, no. 3 (2005), p. 319–48.

<sup>15</sup> Sri Astuti A. Samad et al., "Islamic Educational Approaches To Stunting Prevention And Child Protection," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 10, no. 2 (2024), p. 163–74.

<sup>16</sup> Mursyid Djawas and Riska Fajrina, "Efektifitas Lembaga Perlindungan Anak Terlantar: Studi Pada Panti Asuhan Suci Hati Di Meulaboh, Kabupaten Aceh Barat," *SAMARAH: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 3, no. 2 (2019), p. 295; Muslim Zainuddin et al., "Protection of Women and Children in the Perspective of Legal Pluralism: A Study in Aceh and West Nusa Tenggara," *Samarah* 8, no. 3 (2024), p. 1948–73.

<sup>17</sup> Marilyn M. Friedman, *Family Nursing: Research, Theory & Practice* (Appleton & Lange, 1998).

the stages of child development. Through this process, parents transmit the values they uphold to other members of the family, ensuring the continuity of the family line, the stability of society, and the sustainability of future generations.

- 3) Reproductive function concerns the continuation of the family lineage, the preservation of social continuity, and the existence of future generations within a broader societal framework.
- 4) Economic function relates to the fulfillment of basic family needs such as food, clothing, and shelter, as well as efforts to optimize family potential through education, training, and other developmental activities.
- 5) Health care and maintenance function focuses on maintaining the health and physical fitness of family members to ensure that they remain productive and capable of contributing to family and community life.

While these functions highlight the essential roles of a family, governmental policies further expand on these concepts, outlining additional functions that emphasize the broader societal impact of the family unit.<sup>18</sup> The Indonesian government has formulated eight family functions as stipulated in Article 7 of Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia No. 87 of 2014, which include the following:

- 1) Religious function refers to the family as the primary place where a child learns, instills, nurtures, and develops religious values, enabling the child to become a devout individual with good character and strong faith and piety toward God Almighty.
- 2) Socio-cultural function emphasizes the family's role in providing opportunities for all its members to develop and preserve the nation's diverse social and cultural heritage within a unified whole.
- 3) Love and affection function concerns the family's role in establishing a strong foundation for relationships between husband and wife, parents and children, siblings, and intergenerational kinship bonds, making the family the primary environment in which a life filled with emotional and spiritual affection can flourish.
- 4) Protective function highlights the family's role as a place of refuge that nurtures a sense of safety, peace, and warmth for every family member.
- 5) Reproductive function relates to the family's role in planning and continuing lineage, which is an inherent aspect of human nature and contributes to the universal welfare of humankind.
- 6) Socialization and educational function, in which the family provides guidance and direction to its members in educating their offspring so that they can adapt to life in the future.

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<sup>18</sup> Erie Hariyanto and Moh. Hamzah, "Bibliometric Analysis of the Development of Islamic Economic Dispute Resolution Research in Indonesia," *Juris: Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah* 21, no. 2 (2022).

- 7) Economic function refers to the family's role as a key element supporting family independence and resilience.
- 8) Environmental development function reflects the family's responsibility to equip each of its members with the ability to position themselves harmoniously, proportionately, and sustainably in accordance with environmental norms and the carrying capacity of nature, which is constantly changing in a dynamic manner.

Understanding these governmental perspectives on family functions allows us to delve deeper into the various factors that influence the effectiveness and dynamics of these functions. There are several factors that can affect the effectiveness of family functions, including:<sup>19</sup>

- 1) Family structure (a complete family with both father and mother as parents, a family with only one parent, a family without parents).
- 2) Social and economic status of the family (the income of the parents and other family members, the prominence of the parents in society, the parents' positions in government, etc.).
- 3) Relationships among family members (between husband/father and wife/mother, parents and children, between siblings).
- 4) Stages in family life (newlyweds, young families with small children, families with teenage children, independent children, retirement, etc.).
- 5) Life events (getting married, giving birth, getting a job, being laid off, etc.).

The family plays an essential role in providing for the basic needs of its members, including protection, affection, and guidance. The family is regarded as an institution that offers a stable and secure environment for its members to grow and develop physically, emotionally, and socially.<sup>20</sup> The family is considered the primary setting in which individuals first experience social interaction and learn the norms and values that shape their behavior and personality. However, the advent of digital technology<sup>21</sup> has altered these family dynamics and may disrupt these fundamental functions.

In this context, the family's inability to perform its fundamental functions as mandated by Islamic values exacerbates children's vulnerability to various forms of digital violence, ranging from cyber-bullying, online sexual exploitation, to emotional manipulation via social media.<sup>22</sup> Strengthening the family's functions is not only a modern social necessity, but also a religious value command that places

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<sup>19</sup> Liangtie Dai and Lingna Wang, "Review of Family Functioning," *Open Journal of Social Sciences* 03, no. 12 (2015), p. 134–41.

<sup>20</sup> Fatma Ganiyeva, "The Role of the Family as a Social Institution in the Formation of Society in Modern Times," *Vakanivis - Uluslararası Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 2022.

<sup>21</sup> Lyndsay Jerusha Mackay et al., "Impacts of Parental Technoference on Parent-Child Relationships and Child Health and Developmental Outcomes: A Scoping Review Protocol," *Systematic Reviews* 11, no. 1 (2022), p. 45.

<sup>22</sup> Tove Lafton et al., "Children's Vulnerability to Digital Technology within the Family: A Scoping Review," *Societies* 13, no. 1 (2022), p. 11.

the family as the primary institution in children's protection and moral development in the era of digital globalization.<sup>23</sup>

The shift in family roles related to the development of digital technology can disrupt these essential functions. For example, excessive use of digital technology<sup>24</sup> by family members, especially children, may result in a lack of direct interaction among family members, thus affecting the quality of relationships and the formation of strong family bonds. This can reduce the sense of protection and affection provided by the family, thereby increasing children's vulnerability to online violence.

Furthermore, the guiding role usually carried out by parents in supervising and directing children's activities can also be disrupted by the influence of digital technology. Parents may find it challenging to effectively monitor their children's online activities,<sup>25</sup> making them more susceptible to various forms of violence and exploitation that may occur in cyberspace. The shift in family roles due to the development of digital technology can affect the quality of protection, affection, and guidance provided to children. This can increase children's vulnerability to online violence, and there is a need to address the negative impacts of these changes through a holistic and family-based approach.

The shift in family roles resulting from the development of digital technology can affect the quality of protection, affection, and guidance provided to children. This can increase children's vulnerability to online violence and highlights the need to address the negative impacts of these changes through a holistic and family-based approach. Findings from the Strengthening Families Program demonstrate that family-based interventions that enhance family communication, organization, and parental supervision significantly improve family resilience and reduce various child development problems. In the context of the digital era, strong family functions become increasingly important to protect children from the risks of online violence arising from family dysfunction.<sup>26</sup>

When linked to the ecological systems theory,<sup>27</sup> this framework is used to analyze problems within the social environment and emphasizes the social aspects

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<sup>23</sup> Dahlia Dahlia, Sutrisno Sutrisno, and Alimatul Qibtiyah, "Early Childhood Sex Education Media as a Preventive Step for Sexual Violence," *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 9, no. 3 (2021), p. 607.

<sup>24</sup> Ola Erstad et al., "How Digital Technologies Become Embedded in Family Life across Generations: Scoping the Agenda for Researching 'Platformised Relationality,'" *Families, Relationships and Societies* 13, no. 2 (2024), p. 164–80.

<sup>25</sup> Kathryn L. Modecki et al., "What Is Digital Parenting? A Systematic Review of Past Measurement and Blueprint for the Future," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 17, no. 6 (2022), p. 1673–91.

<sup>26</sup> Karol L. Kumpfer et al., "Effectiveness Outcomes of Four Age Versions of the Strengthening Families Program in Statewide Field Sites.," *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice* 14, no. 3 (2010), p. 211–29.

<sup>27</sup> and Jennifer Zorotovich Williams, TimMarie C, Ann Wilder, *Ecological Systems Theory as Applied to Family Caregivers of Older Adults during the COVID-19 Pandemic* (Sustainable Communities Review, 2009); Urie Bronfenbrenner, *Ecological Models of Human Development in International Encyclopedia of Education*, ed. 2 (Elsevier 3, 1994).

of problem-solving. It is based on the belief that individuals continuously interact with their surrounding environment, and such interactions may have either positive or negative impacts on themselves and their families. When an individual or a family interacts with a supportive environment, their functioning as individuals or as a family is expected to improve. The ecological model proposed by Bronfenbrenner consists of layered systems known as the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem.<sup>28</sup>

The microsystem environment refers to the closest environment of an individual, which includes the family, school, peers, and neighbors. The broader environment is called the mesosystem, which represents the relationships among elements within the microsystem environment, such as the relationship between the family and the school, or the relationship between the family and the mosque/place of worship. The exosystem is an even broader environment that indirectly plays an active role and has an indirect effect, for example, the extended family environment or the parents' workplace environment. Finally, the macrosystem is the outermost environment, which includes social and cultural structures and values that influence all family members and society in general, such as ethnic culture, national culture, and Eastern or Western cultural values.<sup>29</sup>

The broader environment, including the family, school, community, and social, economic, and cultural factors, interacts to shape individual behavior and development. This theory provides a more comprehensive understanding of environmental influences on human development, including in the context of online child abuse. The theory asserts that individual behavior is influenced by interactions between the individual and their environment, including the family, school, and community. The increased use of digital technology within families can alter the dynamics of these interactions and create opportunities for violence against children to emerge.<sup>30</sup>

In the context of online child abuse, this theory can be applied to understand how changes in the family environment, particularly related to the use of digital technology, can affect the level of violence. The increasing use of digital technology within families can change the dynamics of interactions among family members. For example, the use of personal gadgets by family members, such as children, may lead to isolation and a lack of healthy interpersonal communication. In addition, the presence of digital technology at home can provide opportunities for perpetrators of violence to access children more easily through text messages, social media, or messaging applications.

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<sup>28</sup> Williams, TimMarie C, Ann Wilder, *Ecological Systems Theory as Applied to Family Caregivers of Older Adults during the COVID-19 Pandemic*.

<sup>29</sup> Herien Puspitawati, "Gender Dan Keluarga: Konsep Dan Realita Di Indonesia," *PT IPB Press* 4 (2012).

<sup>30</sup> La Gurusi et al., "Islamic Legal Perspective on Data of Child Victims of Sexual Violence: A Case Study of the Indonesia's Court," *De Jure: Jurnal Hukum Dan Syar'iah* 16, no. 2 (2024), p. 456–79.

With the existence of digital technology such as smartphones, tablets, and computers, the family's role in providing protection for children has become more complex. Children are vulnerable to risks of online violence such as cyberbullying, exposure to inappropriate content, and online fraud. When the family's role in monitoring children's online activities is ineffective or limited, children become more vulnerable to various forms of online violence. The use of digital technology can disrupt affection and interpersonal interaction among family members. Children who are overly attached to digital screens may experience a lack of attention and direct interaction with their parents and other family members. This can reduce the quality of family relationships and affect children's emotional and social development.

The guiding role of parents in supervising and accompanying children in the use of digital technology is also important. With proper guidance, children can learn to use digital technology in a positive and safe manner. However, if parents fail to provide adequate guidance, children may become vulnerable to the risks of online violence and unsafe behaviors in the digital world.<sup>31</sup>

Parental guidance and emotional presence are key protective factors against children's digital risks, while excessive screen use tends to weaken family bonds and increase exposure to online threats.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, it is essential for families to actively manage the use of digital technology within the household by maintaining effective supervision, providing emotional protection, and fostering healthy communication.

### **Patterns of Family Dysfunction Affecting Online-Based Child Violence**

National data since 2022 show that there were 16,106 reported cases of online-based violence against children recorded through the Online Information System for the Protection of Women and Children<sup>33</sup> (*Sistem Informasi Online Perlindungan Perempuan dan Anak/SIMFONI PPA*).<sup>34</sup> From January to November 2023, there were 15,120 reported cases of violence against children through SIMFONI PPA.<sup>35</sup> SIMFONI PPA is an information system developed by the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection to record and report cases of violence against women and children. In the first quarter of 2024, cases of Online Gender-Based Violence (*Kekerasan Berbasis Gender Online /KBGO*) in Indonesia increased fourfold compared to the previous year.<sup>36</sup> Online-based violence refers to

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<sup>31</sup> Robi'atul Adawiyah et al., "Sexual Violence Against Children: Prevention Efforts in Jambi," *Al-Risalah: Forum Kajian Hukum Dan Sosial Kemasyarakatan* 25, no. 2 (2025), p. 74–88.

<sup>32</sup> Lafton et al., "Children's Vulnerability to Digital Technology within the Family: A Scoping Review."

<sup>33</sup> Fajri M Kasim et al., "The Protection of Women and Children Post-Divorce in Sharia Courts in Aceh: A Sociological Perspective," *AHKAM: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* 22, no. 2 (2022).

<sup>34</sup> <https://paudpedia.kemdikbud.go.id/ton> Accessed 19 October 2024

<sup>35</sup> <https://paudpedia.kemdikbud.go.id/berita/15120-kasus-kekerasan-perempuan-dan-anak-terjadi-tahun-2023-> Accessed on August 28, 2024

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.kemenpppa.go.id/page/view/> Accessed on July 12, 2024

all types of violence that occur on the internet, through social media, online games, or mobile phones. Several forms of online violence that may occur among children and adolescents include sexual violence, sexual exploitation, emotional abuse, sexting, online misrepresentation, and cyberbullying.<sup>37</sup>

The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with three (3) informants. The first informant (Informant A) stated:

“Both of my parents work in private companies and usually return home late in the evening. After work, they usually rest. We only meet in the morning before I leave for school. After school, I usually do my homework, sometimes with friends. We often look for answers to the assignments on the internet. After finishing my homework, I often look for friends through Facebook. I have many friends there, and some of them are like me. Their parents are not at home. I can freely talk and share my feelings, but eventually, one of my online friends started mocking and insulting me with inappropriate words.”<sup>38</sup>

Based on the interview results, several key points can be identified: there is limited time for interaction with parents, a restricted relationship between the child and parents, and negative experiences in online interactions.

The informant’s parents work in private companies and return home late in the evening, which limits the time they have to interact. This causes a restricted relationship between the informant and their parents. The available time for interaction is only in the morning before the informant leaves for school. This shows that family interaction time is limited and concentrated at certain times of the day. The informant often seeks friends through Facebook. These interactions provide opportunities for the informant to connect with peers online. The informant looks for online friends because many share similar experiences, their parents are not present at home. This indicates that the informant feels lonely and seeks emotional support and opportunities to confide through online communication. Although finding online friends may provide social support, the informant also experiences negative experiences, such as being mocked and insulted by online friends.

The limited time parents have to interact with their children can lead to emotional distance. Parents who are busy with work or other activities may not realize how important quality time with their children is. This can cause children to feel unnoticed and deprioritized, which in turn widens the gap in communication and intimacy within the family.

The second informant (Informant B) stated:

“I live with my grandmother because my mother and father are separated. My grandmother is old and cannot talk like my friends at school. My mother now works as a migrant worker (TKI) in Malaysia, and my father works out of town, and they rarely visit me. What they often do is send monthly money and school fees through my grandmother’s account. I don’t have any friends to talk to. For

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<sup>37</sup> <https://www-devonsep-org-uk.translate.goog/child-abuse/online> tahun 2024

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Informant A

example, I want to tell someone when I'm sad because I got punished for not doing my homework, or when I'm happy because the girl I like at school smiled at me. So every day after school, I go online. There, I have friends I can talk to, even until late at night. But some of my online friends don't like my stories and often insult me."<sup>39</sup>

Based on the interview results, several keywords can be identified: an unstable family condition, limited interaction with family members, and negative experiences in online interactions.

It was found that the informant lives with his grandmother because his parents are separated. The mother works as an Indonesian migrant worker in Malaysia, while the father works out of town. Both parents rarely meet with the informant. This situation reflects instability within the family environment. The lack of social interaction with family members (the grandmother and parents) causes the informant to feel lonely and lacking in emotional support from them. As a result, the internet becomes a place where the informant can find friends to talk to, even late at night. Although the internet provides opportunities for social interaction, the informant also experiences negative experiences such as being the target of insults from some online friends. This shows that while the internet provides access to the outside world, it also carries certain risks in the form of cyberbullying or online humiliation.

A limited relationship with parents is often characterized by shallow communication and minimal emotional involvement. This can be the result of long-standing interaction patterns or family dynamics that do not support openness. Such limited relationships reduce opportunities for family members to build strong bonds and mutual understanding.

The third informant (Informant C) stated:

"I was sexually harassed by someone, but I cannot say who the person was. My parents don't know because I never told them. They would definitely get angry. I really wanted to tell someone I could trust, but there was no one. A friend once invited me to find friends on the internet. That's how I met an online friend I thought I could trust. I told them everything that had happened to me, and eventually, we exchanged addresses. We met once, but later I was threatened that if I didn't give a certain amount of money, my story would be revealed to my school friends and my family."<sup>40</sup>

Based on the interview results, several key points can be identified: a lack of emotional support from the family, dependency on online friends, and negative experiences in online interactions.

There was a traumatic experience that the informant did not report, in which they experienced sexual harassment but were unable or unwilling to identify the perpetrator to their parents due to fear of their anger. This reflects the informant's

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<sup>39</sup> Interview with Informant B

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Informant C

level of fear and lack of trust in their parents' ability to handle the matter wisely. The informant felt lonely and had no one to talk to about the traumatic experience. The absence of emotional support worsened the informant's feelings of isolation and despair. As a result, online friends became the main source of emotional support in dealing with the traumatic experience. The informant felt comfortable and trusted this online friend to share their story and experiences. However, the initially supportive relationship turned into a threat when the informant was blackmailed. Threatened that their story would be spread unless they paid money. This reflects the risks of unsafe online interactions that can lead to extortion or coercion

A lack of emotional support from the family often causes individuals to feel lonely and isolated. Emotional support is crucial for a person's mental health and well-being. Without it, individuals may struggle to manage stress, anxiety, and other emotional problems. It can also lead to feelings of low self-esteem and lack of confidence.<sup>41</sup>

The analysis of the interview shows interrelated patterns between the lack of emotional support from the family and dependency on online friends. Dependency on online friends indicates that individuals seek emotional connection and support outside their family circle. Although online friends may provide meaningful support, these relationships are often unstable and can become problematic when online interactions turn negative. Such dependency also indicates unmet emotional needs within real-life family relationships. The limited time and interaction with parents, combined with unstable family conditions, further worsen already weak family relationships. Negative online experiences add additional emotional burdens to these individuals. Overall, the situation reflects an urgent need to improve the quality of family relationships and to create a more stable and supportive environment for family members, particularly for children.

### **The Role of Religion in Balancing Family Dysfunction**

One of the fundamental functions of the family is the affective function. The affective function of the family plays a crucial role in the emotional, social, and psychological development of its members. This function encompasses important aspects of family dynamics, including mutual love, support, and respect among family members. It also prepares family members to build relationships with people outside the family and to support their psychosocial development. The family's affective function involves teaching love, providing emotional support, and fostering appreciation for each member.<sup>42</sup> This is essential for healthy emotional and psychosocial growth. When the family fails to fulfill its affective function, members

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<sup>41</sup> Nur Faizah, "The Spiritualization of Domestic Violence in the Digital Era: Examining the Cathartic Role of Religious Institutions in Empowering Victims," *De Jure: Jurnal Hukum Dan Syar'iah* 15, no. 2 (2023), p. 251–67.

<sup>42</sup> Ibnu Elmi AS Pelu et al., "Polygamy Law Reform Through the Development of the Aceh Qanun: A New Approach to Protecting the Rights of Women and Children in Indonesia," *El-Mashlahah* 14, no. 1 (2024), p. 149–68.

may feel unloved and emotionally unsupported. Without adequate emotional support, individuals tend to struggle in developing self-esteem and confidence. This also hinders their ability to form healthy and fulfilling relationships outside the family. The lack of emotional support can lead to stress, anxiety, and depression. Children and adolescents may seek support from friends or online environments, which are not always positive and may further aggravate their emotional condition.<sup>43</sup>

Frequent and high-quality interaction among family members is a key component of the affective family function. This includes spending time together in activities that strengthen emotional bonds. Limited interaction time between parents and children reduces opportunities to build strong emotional connections. When parents are too busy, children may feel neglected and undervalued. This hampers the learning process of how to give and receive love and support. Children who experience limited interaction time with their parents tend to feel less close and may develop behavioral or emotional problems. The lack of interaction also reduces opportunities for parents to teach family values and social skills to their children.

Close and affectionate relationships among family members form the foundation of the affective function. This includes open communication, trust, and mutual respect. Limited relationships with parents indicate barriers to communication and openness. Without close relationships, children may feel uncomfortable talking about their problems or feelings, which hinders their emotional and psychosocial development. Such limited relationships can lead to feelings of alienation and loneliness. Children may struggle to form healthy relationships outside the family because they lack positive examples of relationships within the home.

Family stability is a crucial factor in the affective function, providing a sense of security and continuous support for family members. Families that are unstable whether it is emotionally, financially, or structurally tends to create an environment full of uncertainty and stress. This reduces the family's ability to provide consistent emotional support and build strong bonds. Children growing up in unstable families often face serious emotional and psychosocial problems. They may feel unsafe and unloved, which can affect their ability to interact positively with others outside the family.

The affective function of the family is fundamental in shaping the emotional and psychosocial well-being of its members. When this function does not operate effectively, due to a lack of emotional support, limited interaction time, restricted relationships with parents, or unstable family conditions, the impact can be highly detrimental. Individuals within such families may struggle to develop healthy relationships both within and outside the family and may face various mental health issues. Therefore, it is crucial for families to focus on strengthening the affective

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<sup>43</sup> Muhammad Iqbal Juliansyahzen, "The Contemporary Maqāsid Sharia Perspective on Sexual Violence Provisions in the Indonesian Law Number 12 Year 2022.," *Al-Manahij: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam* 16, no. 2 (2022).

function by ensuring good communication, spending quality time together, and creating a stable and supportive environment..

Family functioning is significantly influenced by various factors such as family structure, social and economic status, relationships among family members, stages of family life, and life events. Each of these factors presents unique challenges and dynamics that can affect the overall well-being and functioning of the family. The following is an analysis of these factors and the importance of effective management to create a supportive and stable environment for all family members.

A family structure consisting of both parents tends to provide more stable emotional and financial support. This allows for a better distribution of responsibilities in raising children and meeting family needs. Children from complete families generally have more comprehensive role models, which help them in developing values and social skills.

Single-parent families often face additional challenges, including heavier financial and emotional burdens. Single parents may have to work harder to meet the family's needs, which can reduce the time and energy available for interaction and emotional support with their children. As a result, children may feel they are not receiving enough attention, which can negatively affect their psychosocial development.

Children who grow up without parents (for instance, living with relatives or in foster care) often experience emotional instability and a lack of consistent support. Alternative caregiving environments need to provide stability and adequate support to ensure healthy development. Adequate income allows families to meet basic needs such as food, housing, education, and healthcare. Families with better economic status usually have greater access to resources that support child development, such as quality education and healthcare services.<sup>44</sup>

A harmonious relationship between husband and wife creates a stable and loving environment for children. Frequent conflicts between parents can cause stress and emotional insecurity in children. A strong and open relationship between parents and children fosters healthy emotional and social development. Active parental involvement in a child's life enhances emotional well-being and academic achievement. Positive relationships among siblings help build social skills and provide emotional support. Frequent sibling conflicts may increase stress within the family, but they can also teach conflict-resolution skills if managed properly.

Religion plays an important role in many families, providing moral, spiritual, and ethical guidance that influences various aspects of daily life.<sup>45</sup> Religion offers a moral and ethical framework that helps family members distinguish between right

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<sup>44</sup> Husnul Isa Harahap, "Testing the Views of Children of Terrorists: A Comparative Analysis with Children from Low-Income Families," *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 8, no. 3 (2020), p. 619–32.

<sup>45</sup> Yulianti Muthmainnah et al., "Zakat Initiatives for Supporting Victims of Violence against Women and Children in Indonesia," *Ijtihad : Jurnal Wacana Hukum Islam Dan Kemanusiaan* 24, no. 2 (2024), p. 331–57.

and wrong. Religious values often teach kindness, honesty, integrity, and respect. Children raised in a religious environment tend to internalize these values, shaping their behavior and decision-making. The moral guidance derived from religion helps create harmony and reduce conflict within families by establishing clear behavioral standards.

Religion also provides emotional and spiritual support, especially when facing difficulties and life challenges. Religious practices such as prayer, meditation, and collective worship can help reduce stress and bring a sense of peace. The presence of religion within the family can enhance mental health and emotional well-being by giving meaning and purpose to life. Family members often find comfort in their faith during difficult times, which can strengthen family bonds.

Religion helps shape both individual and family identity, providing a sense of connection to broader traditions, history, and community. Shared religious activities such as the celebration of religious holidays, rituals, and ceremonies like weddings or baptisms strengthen the sense of togetherness. Family members who share the same religious beliefs tend to have stronger bonds and a greater sense of solidarity. Participation in religious communities provides a wide social support network, which can be beneficial in various aspects of life.

Religion also functions as an educational medium, where parents teach their children about religious teachings, rituals, and traditions.<sup>46</sup> This includes moral and ethical education based on religious principles. Children raised with religious education tend to have a deeper understanding of family values and social responsibilities. Religious education helps transmit cultural values and traditions from one generation to the next, preserving the family's heritage.

Religion often organizes the family's daily activities and routines, such as daily prayers, weekly worship, or religious celebrations. These activities help create structure and order in family life. Participation in regular religious activities strengthens discipline and responsibility among family members. It also provides opportunities for family members to gather regularly, strengthening emotional bonds and communication. Religious teachings often contain principles of peace, forgiveness, and reconciliation. These values can help families prevent and resolve conflicts in a constructive manner. When religious values are internalized, family members are more likely to resolve conflicts peacefully and with compassion. This reduces tension and enhances harmony within the household.

The function of religion within the family is highly diverse and provides various benefits that support family well-being and harmony. From providing moral and ethical guidance, emotional and spiritual support, to shaping identity and community, religion plays a central role in family life. It is important for families to

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<sup>46</sup> Sri Astuti A. Samad et al., "Teacher's Spiritual Competence and Its Implication in Islamic Religious Education Learning in Pidie, Aceh," *Ulumuna* 27, no. 2 (2023), p. 624–48.

recognize and utilize the positive aspects of religion to create a supportive, stable, and harmonious environment for all members.<sup>47</sup>

Religion, therefore, not only strengthens moral foundations and emotional stability within the family but also provides a normative framework for justice and protection that aligns with Islamic principles and national child protection law.<sup>48</sup> The family is considered the first institution responsible for ensuring the welfare, dignity, and safety of children. These principles correspond to the state's obligation under Law No. 35 of 2014 on Child Protection, which mandates that parents, society, and the government must jointly safeguard children from all forms of violence, including those committed through digital media.<sup>49</sup>

Children who experience inequality or neglect within the family may seek recognition or support in the online world, which can increase their risk of becoming victims of violence. When families fail to fulfill their affective and protective functions, the legal system must act as an external safeguard to prevent the reproduction of online-based violence against children. Strengthening the coordination between child protection institutions, law enforcement bodies, and digital platforms is essential to ensure that cases of cyber-exploitation and online abuse are effectively investigated and prosecuted within the juvenile justice framework.

Children may seek acknowledgment or emotional support online as a response to the inequality or neglect they experience at home. Religious and moral education should be integrated with digital-literacy-based parenting programs, so that families can serve not only as the moral foundation but also as the preventive front line in protecting children in cyberspace. The synergy between family function, religious values, and law enforcement creates a holistic approach to child protection, ensuring that justice and compassion operate together to uphold children's rights and human dignity in the digital era.<sup>50</sup>

## Conclusion

This study demonstrates that family dysfunction, reflected in the absence of emotional support, limited communication, and unstable family structures, significantly contributes to children's vulnerability to online-based violence. When

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<sup>47</sup> Mohammad Kosim, Faqihul Muqoddam, and Faidol Mubarak, "Al-'Unfu Fi Al-Tarbiyah Min Mandzûr Al-Tashrî' Al-Indûnîsî Wa Al-Sharî'ah Al-Islâmiyah," *AL-IHKAM: Jurnal Hukum & Pranata Sosial* 17, no. 2 (2022), p. 578–610.

<sup>48</sup> Usep Saepullah and Eva Nur Hopipah, "Domestic Violence in The Perspective of Civil and Islamic Criminal Law," *Al-Adalah* 20, no. 2 (2023), p. 427.

<sup>49</sup> Muzakkir Muzakkir, "Dawn of Justice: Evaluating the Alignment of Women and Children in Aceh's Qanun Jinayat," *Al-Ahkam* 32, no. 2 (2022), p. 131–52; Nizla Rohaya et al., "Unraveling the Legal Labyrinth: An In-Depth Review of Domestic Violence Regulation in Indonesia," *Nurani: Jurnal Kajian Syari'ah Dan Masyarakat* 24, no. 1 (2024), p. 77–90.

<sup>50</sup> Siti Nurjanah et al., "Mitigating the Digital Age Impact: Collaborative Strategies of State and Religious Institutions for Family Harmony in Indonesia," *El-Ussrah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga* 7, no. 2 (2024), p. 713.

parental guidance and affection weaken, children tend to seek emotional validation and social connection in digital spaces where interactions can easily develop into manipulation, harassment, or exploitation. Religion plays a central role in rebalancing these dysfunctions by strengthening moral consciousness, emotional stability, and family solidarity. Integrating religious values with digital-literacy-based parenting reinforces the family's role as the first institution of protection, affection, and education. Furthermore, the alignment of these religious and familial functions with the principles of child protection law in Indonesia affirms that justice and compassion must coexist in safeguarding children from online exploitation. Therefore, strengthening family communication, promoting faith-based digital parenting, and enhancing coordination among law enforcement institutions, child protection agencies, and digital platforms are essential steps toward restoring the family's role as a safe, nurturing, and value-based environment in the digital era.

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## Interviews

Interview with Informant A

Interview with Informant B

Interview with Informant C