

Dehumanization in the Phenomenon of Child Grooming in the Digital Space: Amina Wadud's Hermeneutics of Tawhid Perspective

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Dehumanization; Child Grooming; Hermeneutics of Tawhid; Amina Wadud.	This study examines the phenomenon of child grooming in the digital space through the lens of Amina Wadud's hermeneutics of tawhid an approach not yet explored by previous research, which has tended to focus on gender issues. The objectives of this study are to describe forms of dehumanization, analyze driving factors, and examine the implications of child exploitation in cyberspace. Using a qualitative method based on literature review and cyber observation of institutional data and digital traces, this study found that child grooming is a tangible manifestation of the exploitation of power relations that contradicts the principle of ontological equality in Tawhid. The research results show that dehumanization operates systematically through three dimensions of the digital space: the manipulation of false identity representations, the isolation of emotional interactions, and the failure of algorithmic regulation on platforms. The main driving factors include power relationship asymmetry, high social media usage, and a lack of emotional closeness within the family or a "fatherless" crisis. These practices have destructive consequences, triggering tonic immobility, cognitive manipulation, barriers to reporting, and psychological trauma that undermines children's futures. In conclusion, Wadud's theological framework exposes this crime as a multi-layered structural failure, not merely an individual deviation. This urgently calls for holistic interventions that include early sex education, supportive family communication, law enforcement, and reforms to digital platforms in order to break the chain of dehumanization and protect children's dignity.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Studies on Amina Wadud have so far tended to focus on feminist Qur'anic hermeneutics and various gender issues in society, but no study has yet linked her work to the phenomenon of *child grooming* in the digital space. Wadud asserts that the use of specific

verses to apply general concepts can overlook the ethical principles actually implied by the Qur'an.¹ She also argues that a misreading of the Qur'an can lead to unfair judgments for example, against women and diminish the ethical values contained within it.² As a solution, Wadud suggests a tauhidic hermeneutical approach, which emphasizes critical questions about what the Qur'an says, how the Qur'an says it, who says it, and what the Qur'an has not yet said.³ Thus, Wadud demonstrates that Qur'anic interpretation must not only take into account its historical context and time period but must also be able to apply the Qur'an's messages in a relevant way to different contexts so that it can address various social problems, such as the phenomenon of *child grooming*.

Previous studies of Amina Wadud's thought can thus far be grouped into three trends. *First*, studies examining Amina Wadud's methodology of gender-based interpretation. Examples include those by Unsi,⁴ Saidah,⁵ and Adib.⁶ *Second*, studies offering critiques of Amina Wadud's thought or conducting critical analyses of her ideas. Examples include studies by Asina,⁷ Rama,⁶ Malik, Yaman, and Sunaryanto.⁷ Azizah, Arbain, and Sari.⁸ *Third*, studies that attempt to compare Amina Wadud's thought with that of other figures. For example, research conducted by Fitriyah and Nursikin,⁹ AsSyahibi,¹⁰ Nurullah,¹¹ Ismail,¹² Zulfa.¹³ Based on the above categorization, studies that analyze the hermeneutics of tawhid in the context of power relations regarding the phenomenon of *child grooming* in digital spaces still leave a gap.

This paper aims to fill a gap that has not yet been addressed by previous scholars,

1 Eka Prasetyawati, "Amina Wadud Muhsin's Hermeneutical Thought," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Sufism* 4, no. 1 (2018): 28–49, <https://doi.org/10.53429/spiritualis.v4i1.42>.

2 M Afiqu Adib, "Aminah Wadud's Thought on Power Relations in the Household," *Living Islam: Journal of Islamic Discourses* 7, no. 2 (2024).

3 Nur Azizah, Janu Arbain, Ika Novita Sari, "Gender Thought According to Experts: An Analysis of the Thought of Amina Wadud Muhsin, Asghar Ali Engineer, and Mansour Fakih," *Sanwa: Journal of Gender Studies* 11, no. 1 (2015), 79.

4 Baiq Tuhfatul Unsi, "An Analysis of Amina Wadud's Concept of Women," *Tafâqqub: Journal of Islamic Research and Studies* 10, no. 2 (2022).

5 Nor Saidah, "Angels in the Construction of Qur'anic Exegesis: A Gender Analysis of Amina Wadud Muhsin's Thought in Qur'anic Interpretation," *Journal of Gender Studies* 6, no. 2 (2013).⁶ Adib, "Aminah Wadud's Thoughts on Power Relations Within the Household."

6 Fabi Toriqir Rama, "A Critique of Istihsan Regarding Amina Wadud's Construction of Faraid," *AlHukama': The Indonesian Journal of Islamic Family Law* 8, no. 1 (2018).

7 Sunaryanto, Arif Abdul Malik, Achmad Yaman, "A Critique of Amina Wadud's Discourse on Gender Equality," *EL-Hikmah: Journal of Da'wah and Communication* 20, no. 11 (2024).

8 Azizah, Janu Arbain, Ika Novita Sari, "Gender Thought According to Experts: An Analysis of the Thought of Amina Wadud Muhsin, Asghar Ali Engineer, and Mansour Fakih."

9 Mukh. Nursikin Ida Fitriyah, "The Islamic Feminist Movement (A Comparison of the Thought of Fatima Mernissi and Amina Wadud)," *AFEKSI: Journal of Educational Research and Evaluation* 6, no. 5 (2025).

10 Muhammad Adnan As-Syahibi, "Polygamy as a Form of Gender Injustice Against Women: A Comparative Analysis of the Thought of Yusuf Al-Qaradawi and Amina Wadud," 2025.

11 Aris Nurullah, "A Hermeneutic Study of Women from the Perspective of Authoritative Fiqh: A Review of the Thought of Khaled Aboe El Fadl and Amina Wadud" (n.d.).

12 Nur Jannah Ismail, "Reconstructing the Interpretation of Women: Building a Gender-Just Interpretation (A Critical Study of the Thought of Asghar Ali Engineer, Fatima Mernissi, and Amina Wadud Muhsin on Women in Islam)," *Gender Equality: International Journal of Child and Gender Studies* 1, no. 1 (2015).

13 Imaratuz Zulfa, "A Comparative Study of the Thoughts of M. Quraish Shihab and Amina Wadud on Nusyûz," *Tashwirul Afkar* 41, no. 1 (2022).

specifically regarding “*Dehumanization in the Phenomenon of Child Grooming in the Digital Space from the Perspective of Amina Wadud's Tawhid Hermeneutics*.” More specifically, this paper will discuss three interrelated aspects. *First*, it describes the forms of dehumanization in the phenomenon of *child grooming* in the digital space through the lens of Amina Wadud's hermeneutics of Tawhid. *Second*, this paper will analyze the driving factors behind the emergence of *child grooming* in the digital space. These factors include the anonymous nature of the digital space, information asymmetry, and socio-cultural constructions of children, gender, and authority in the digital space. *Third*, this paper will examine the implications of dehumanization in the phenomenon of *child grooming*, both at the individual level and within the social order. These implications include psychological harm, the erosion of a sense of security, and the weakening of ethical values in digital interpersonal relationships. Thus, this study is expected to offer an ethical-theological framework that can serve as a foundation for the prevention and protection of children in the digital space. It is hoped that this framework can be used to design protective mechanisms that are just and centered on human dignity.

A preliminary argument in this study posits that the phenomenon of *child grooming* in digital spaces is essentially a form of exploitation of power relations that runs counter to the principle of universal equality. Through Amina Wadud's Hermeneutics of Tawhid analytical framework, a *groomer's* manipulative practices toward children can be deconstructed as a fundamental violation of the value of Tawhid, in which the perpetrator positions themselves hierarchically superior to dominate and objectify the vulnerable.¹⁴ Therefore, Wadud's theological framework unequivocally rejects all forms of the deification of one human being over another. This rejection makes her thought highly relevant for exposing cases of manipulative dehumanization in the digital sphere. More than just a critique of dehumanization, this framework offers a strong, coherent, and transformative ethical-paradigmatic foundation. This foundation can serve as a critical basis for resistance against age-based sexual violence (*child grooming*) within the context of contemporary Islamic thought and practice.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The choice of this research title is motivated by the academic urgency to shift the paradigm of cyber exploitation studies from merely a matter of criminology and positive law toward a more fundamental philosophical-theological critique. The crime of *child grooming* essentially represents a manipulation of power relations that reduces a child from a rational subject to a mere object for the perpetrator's gratification; this process of degrading human dignity is a tangible manifestation of sociotechnical dehumanization. On the other hand, Amina Wadud's hermeneutics of tawhid was specifically chosen because this framework is particularly incisive in dismantling all forms of hierarchy and power imbalances, grounded in the principle of the oneness of God, which demands social justice and ontological equality for all humanity. Through the integration of these concepts, this thesis is formulated as a strategic step to demonstrate that the exploitation of children in the digital space is not merely

14 Amina Wadud, **Qur'an and Women: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective** (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 70.

a failure of the technological system, but rather a tragedy resulting from the collapse of the values of Tawhid and humanity; it is thus hoped that this work will offer a solid ethical and spiritual foundation for efforts to protect children's dignity.

Methodologically, this study was designed as a qualitative study based on *library research* combined with *cyber observation* using a descriptive-analytical approach. Given that the study focuses on virtual reality, the data used consists entirely of qualitative secondary data collected through documentary data collection techniques. Specifically, the data corpus analyzed in this study includes transcripts or screen s of online conversations, institutional case reports (such as the 2024 KPAI data release), regulatory documents (such as the Child Protection Act), as well as digital traces containing narratives, story threads, and audio-visual documentation from various social media platforms (such as YouTube, Instagram, and X). All of this textual and digital data was then synthesized and interpreted in depth using Amina Wadud's hermeneutic framework of tauhid to uncover the mechanisms of power imbalances and the processes of dehumanization underlying the practice of *child grooming*.

Given that the design of this study relies on observations of cyberspace and the analysis of secondary documents, the "participants" in this study do not refer to human subjects interviewed directly, but rather to a collection of documented cases and digital artifacts involving *child grooming*. The selection of these data or cases was conducted using *purposive sampling* with a number of strict inclusion criteria. These selection criteria require the data to: (1) explicitly record or describe the process of manipulating minors on digital platforms. (2) contain evidence of interaction records (such as chat transcripts) that clearly demonstrate acts of dehumanization and psychological exploitation. (3) originate from valid reports by official institutions (such as KPAI) or public threads that are substantively verifiable. (4) Contains elements relevant for analysis using ontological justice and equality within Amina Wadud's hermeneutics of tawhid. Through these selection criteria, the collected digital artifacts can be used precisely and representatively to dissect the anatomy of dehumanization, which is the primary focus of this research.

This research process was carried out through a series of systematic stages, beginning with the identification of issues related to children's vulnerability in the digital space, followed by a data collection phase using documentation and *cyber observation* methods. During this data collection phase, the researcher actively tracked, gathered, and recorded various digital traces ranging from screenshots of online conversations and confession threads on social media to an inventory of official institutional reports such as data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) and relevant legislation. Once the entire corpus of secondary data had been collected, the next step was to reduce and categorize the data to filter out information that specifically revealed patterns of dehumanization and psychological manipulation in accordance with the inclusion criteria. Subsequently, the selected data was analyzed descriptively and interpretively using Amina Wadud's monotheistic hermeneutics to uncover how the three dimensions of the digital space representation, interaction, and regulation function as instruments of dehumanization. In the final stage, all the results of the analysis were synthesized to draw comprehensive conclusions regarding the collapse of the victims' ontological equality, while also formulating theoretical implications.

To analyze the collected dataset, this study employs qualitative data analysis

techniques, specifically *content analysis* and *discourse analysis*, which are closely integrated with the philosophical framework. Operationally, the analysis process is conducted through interactive stages that include data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. In the initial stage, the data were reduced to isolate patterns of conversation, social media narratives, and case reports that specifically contained indications of relational manipulation and child exploitation. Subsequently, the presented texts and digital artifacts are analyzed in depth using Amina Wadud's monotheistic hermeneutics. Through this approach, the researcher interprets the implied meanings behind language, the interactional tactics of the actors, and the algorithmic biases of the platforms to identify how power imbalances are produced and how the principle of ontological equality is violated. Through this critical hermeneutic reading technique, the empirical data from cyberspace is not merely described but deconstructed to demonstrate the occurrence of a systematic process of dehumanization that undermines the values of justice and human dignity.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Forms of Dehumanization in the Phenomenon of *Child Grooming* in the Digital Space (From the Perspective of Amina Wadud's Hermeneutics of Tawhid)

From the perspective of Amina Wadud's hermeneutics of tawhid, dehumanization in the phenomenon of *child grooming* in the digital space occurs when the principles of oneness and justice which form the foundation of humanity are systematically violated in three ways.¹⁵ *First*, perpetrators reduce a child's identity to that of an object in the space of representation by constructing false narratives and images that strip the child of agency and dignity as a rational being.¹⁶ *Second*, interpersonal relationships are manipulated in the space of interaction through processes of trust, isolation, and emotional dependence that undermine a child's ability to assess fair and equal relationships.¹⁷ *Third*, the failure of regulatory structures and algorithmic power within the regulatory sphere allows these practices to continue because the system prioritizes user engagement over the protection of vulnerable groups.¹⁸ These three forms reinforce one another and contradict the principle of tawhid, which demands recognition of ontological equality, ethical responsibility, and rejection of power hierarchies that degrade human dignity.

Data from the analysis of online chat logs shows that dehumanization in *child grooming* does not occur suddenly, but rather through stages that align with the three dimensions of the digital space. In the initial stage, 78% of cases showed that perpetrators consistently constructed a false self-representation.¹⁹ This practice aligns with findings that the space of

¹⁵ Auli Robby Finaldy and Imam Sufardi Pranata, "Representation of Madurese Local Wisdom in Mudhar Tamim's Tafsir Qur'anul-Karim Nurul-Huda," *TAFSE: Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 10, no. 2 (2025): 149–164, <https://doi.org/10.22373/tafse.v10i2.32994>.

¹⁶ See the YouTube channel: Zonamahasiswa, "Understanding Child Grooming Through the Case of Aurelie Moeremans," 2026, <https://youtube.com/shorts/n4zjVZnQt60?si=b42nCuK8fDvzKdRX>.

¹⁷ See the YouTube channel Alodokter, "What Are the Dangers of Child Grooming, Anyway?," last modified 2026, <https://youtube.com/shorts/T-DkvvF65k4?si=ZSQ8pfYeCDV1F85W>.

¹⁸ See the YouTube channel Dr.ViviSyarif-Psikiater, "Child Grooming," last modified 2026, <https://youtube.com/shorts/CTLypdDuB2I?si=V-t1tTwXZIt0CqZn>.

¹⁹ See, Kompas TV Medan, "KPAI Data Reveals Facts About Child Grooming," 2026, <https://youtu.be/5UW4mM-j9pc?si=lodr0m00aEz5GF0f>.

representation is used to reduce the identity of the object which can be shaped according to the perpetrator's will thereby violating the principle of ontological equality in monotheistic hermeneutics. Entering the interaction stage, conversation data reveals a pattern of gradual isolation.²⁰ Perpetrators limit the victim's communication with peers and family while simultaneously increasing the intensity of private, affective interactions. Meanwhile, an analysis of platform policies indicates that 65% of conversations identified as *grooming* were only detected after the victim reported them.²¹ This finding underscores that regulatory failures prolong the victim's vulnerability and contradict the principle of *taqwa* an ethical consciousness that demands the protection of the vulnerable. Overall, the data illustrates that dehumanization operates through sociotechnical processes that sever the intrinsic connection between human beings and their dignity.

The relationships among these data indicate that dehumanization in *child grooming* is cumulative and mutually reinforcing across the various dimensions of the digital space. Data regarding the construction of false representations do not stand alone but rather serve as a prerequisite for the effectiveness of relational manipulation during the interaction phase, as the image of safety established earlier lowers the vigilance of the victim and their environment.²² Furthermore, the weakness of algorithmic detection within the regulatory framework allows the two preceding processes to proceed without institutional intervention, thereby entrenching unequal power relations and making them difficult to dismantle.²³ Within the framework of Amina Wadud's tauhid hermeneutics, this pattern of data relations reflects the breakdown of the tauhid order of justice when identities are reduced, relationships are manipulated, and the system allows both to continue; consequently, the principle of oneness which demands respect for the dignity of every human being collapses. Thus, the interconnection of these data points underscores that effective prevention must address all dimensions simultaneously, as interventions that focus on only one aspect will fail to break the chain of dehumanization that operates in an integrated manner.

3.2 Factors Contributing to the Emergence of *Child Grooming* in the Digital Space.

Based on data obtained from a YouTube video, reported *child groomers* are generally older than the victims, indicating a power imbalance that perpetrators exploit to control their victims. During the *grooming* process, victims often experience a *tonic immobility* response a "freezing" state in which children appear passive and offer no physical resistance, even though psychologically they are struggling to adapt. This condition demonstrates that a child's lack of knowledge and helplessness create an opening for exploitation. Therefore, comprehensive sex education starting at an early age is crucial to equipping children with an

20 See the YouTube channel Edcentid, "Beware of Child Grooming: Methods of Child Abuse," <https://youtube.com/shorts/TlxxjSssIn4?si=lm-benVldgf1GR7d>.

21 Kompastvjember, "Beware of Child Grooming: A Guide for Parents and Children from a Psychologist," 2026, <https://youtu.be/ZfGVGjXjDyA?si=irDb0yzcXin4xI3n>.

22 Kompascom, "Vocational High School Principal in South Tangerang Suspected of Child Grooming a Female Student; Now Suspended," last modified 2026, <https://x.com/i/status/2055208708477784248>.

23 Zonamahasiswa, "Understanding Child Grooming Through the Case of Aurelie Moeremans." ⁵¹ Wadud, **The Qur'an and Women: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective**, 42.

understanding of bodily boundaries, consent, and how to report inappropriate behavior.²⁴ Legally, this is reinforced in Law No. 35 of 2014 amending Law No. 23 of 2002 on Child Protection, specifically Article 76E, which prohibits any person from using violence or threats of violence, deception, a series of lies, or persuasion to induce a child to engage in sexual intercourse or indecent acts, with a penalty of imprisonment for a minimum of 5 years and a maximum of 15 years.²⁵

One of the main causes or drivers of *child grooming* is a lack of supervision and emotional closeness between parents and children in understanding the child's social relationships. Perpetrators typically gain access through things that children find enjoyable, such as games, attention, and gifts, so that the child feels comfortable and does not realize the perpetrator's exploitative intentions. This situation is exacerbated when a child becomes withdrawn from their parents or close relatives but is instead more open with the perpetrator, who has successfully built a false sense of trust and closeness.²⁶ To break this cycle, parents need to take a proactive approach by fostering warm, non-judgmental communication so that children do not fear speaking up out of worry that they will be blamed. A non-judgmental attitude from parents is crucial so that children feel safe to open up and share their experiences. Additionally, parents can minimize risks by regulating their children's *cell phone* use, given that digital media often serves as the initial platform through which perpetrators make contact and manipulate their victims.²⁷

Data shows a positive correlation between the duration of social media use and the risk of *child grooming*. As noted in the 2024 KPAI report, 67% of *grooming* cases began via Instagram DMs.²⁸ Furthermore, the number of *child grooming* cases is on the rise. This is evident from the high number of cases involving educators, including even school principals. For example, data from the X platform: @simpl0ney,²⁹ @kompascom,³⁰ @Chrrysantheme.³¹ This clearly indicates that power dynamics play a key role in *child grooming*. The parent-child relationship is crucial for breaking the chain of power dynamics exploited by *groomers*. This is because *groomers* typically use specific tactics to trap victims and prevent them from disclosing the grooming to their loved ones. One case, as reported by , that came

24 BeriSatuChannel, "Analyzing Power Dynamics in Cases of Sexual Violence: Editorial Desk," 2026, <https://youtu.be/w6eovC0n0nU?si=PerxhvPKh6MHELAC>, accessed May 17, 2026, at 4:16 a.m. WIB.

25 Republic of Indonesia, *Law No. 35 of 2014 Amending Law No. 23 of 2002 on Child Protection* (LNRI 2014 No. 297, TLNRI No. 5606, Article 76E).

26 Auli Robby Finaldy, *Berani Hancur: Aktualisasi Sebuah Falsafah Kehidupan* (Gresik: CV. Jendela Sastra Indonesia Press, 2024), <https://share.google/w9KkPrv4isbcuJil3>.

27 Kompastvjember, "Beware of Child Grooming: Guidance for Parents and Children from a Psychologist," 2026, <https://youtu.be/ZfGVGjXjDyA?si=irDb0yzcXin4xI3n>, Accessed May 17, 2026, at 5:27 a.m. WIB.

28 Instagram Lab45.id, No Title, n.d., <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DYEXDFxBvV/?igsh=dTVrcDkw2pjcJJs>, accessed May 17, 2026, at 8:09 p.m. WIB.

29 Simpl0ney_, "No Title," X, last modified 2026, <https://x.com/i/status/2055133962255905085>, Accessed May 17 at 8:24 p.m. WIB.

30 Kompascom, "Vocational High School Principal in South Tangerang Suspected of Child Grooming a Female Student, Now Suspended," last modified 2026, <https://x.com/i/status/2055208708477784248>, Accessed May 17, 2026, at 8:21 p.m. WIB.

31 Chrrysantheme, "No Title," last modified 2026, <https://x.com/i/status/2055165946533392437>. Accessed May 17, 2026, at 8:35 p.m. WIB.

to light on the X platform involved perpetrators targeting children perceived as receiving insufficient attention from their parents specifically, those without a father or *in fatherless households*.³² Therefore, the active presence and emotional communication from parents particularly the father figure are crucial as the first line of defense to prevent children from seeking validation in the wrong places and falling into the traps set *by groomers*.

3.3 The Implications of Dehumanization in the Phenomenon of *Child Grooming* in the Digital Space

Dehumanization in the phenomenon of *child grooming* has various serious implications for children's lives. The following are some of the implications arising from this power dynamic: *First*, children find it difficult to recognize manipulative tactics. Perpetrators typically exploit their position and are often perceived as "caring people." Children who crave attention easily mistake this manipulation for a form of affection. As a result, children's personal boundaries gradually break down without them realizing it.³³ *Second*, the reporting process is hindered. The dehumanization that occurs makes victims feel guilty, afraid, or ashamed. Perpetrators often threaten victims and isolate them socially and mentally. Consequently, many cases are only uncovered after they have been ongoing for a long time.³⁴ *Third*, digital platforms exacerbate inequality. Features such as direct messages, comments, and algorithms on social media give perpetrators private access to children without direct parental oversight. Control over these spaces of interaction allows perpetrators to manipulate the narrative and isolate victims from their safe environments.³⁵ *Fourth*, victims experience psychological trauma such as anxiety, depression, and trust issues. This dehumanization can also impair a child's ability to form healthy relationships in the future.

The process used by *groomers* on social media begins with the perpetrator seeking out a child who is lonely or lacks family attention. The perpetrator builds a connection through comments, direct messages, and virtual gifts to make the child feel valued. The resulting trust is then exploited to steer the conversation toward more personal topics. Private features and platform algorithms make it easy for perpetrators to hide their interactions from parents. This allows perpetrators to control the narrative and maintain control over the victim for an extended period. Without adequate supervision and digital literacy, the exploitation process is difficult to detect.³⁶ The phenomenon of *child grooming* can be extremely psychologically damaging to children because it targets the foundations of their sense of security, trust, and developing selfidentity. Perpetrators engage in dehumanizing behavior by building a false

32 MediaIndonesia, "No Title" (2026), <https://x.com/i/status/2055498476985966710>, Accessed May 17, 2026, at 8:40 p.m. WIB.

33 Edcentid, "Beware of Child Grooming: A Form of Child Abuse," <https://youtube.com/shorts/TlxxjSssIn4?si=lm-benVldgf1GR7d>, Accessed May 18, 2026, at 8:53 a.m. WIB.

34 Zonamahasiswa, "Understanding Child Grooming Through the Case of Aurelie Moeremans," 2026, <https://youtube.com/shorts/n4zjVZnQt60?si=b42nCuK8fDvzKdRX>, Accessed May 18 at 8:54 a.m. WIB.

35 Dr. Vivi Syarif—Psychiatrist, "Child Grooming," last modified 2026, <https://youtube.com/shorts/CTLypdDuB2I?si=V-t1tTwxZI0CqZn>, accessed May 18, 2026, at 8:55 a.m. WIB. ⁶³ Edcentid, "Beware of Child Grooming: A Form of Child Abuse."

36 Ibid.

sense of closeness through attention and praise. Feelings of guilt, shame, and a sense of secrecy are instilled to prevent the victim from reporting the abuse. As a result, the child experiences cognitive dissonance because the person they trusted has become the source of abuse. This condition triggers psychological trauma in the form of anxiety, depression, and lowered self-esteem. Victims also struggle to form healthy relationships in the future.³⁷

The data indicates a strong causal relationship between dehumanizing actions and the increasing negative impact of *child grooming* in the digital space. Empirical evidence from various cases shows that perpetrators systematically exploit disparities in age, experience, and access to information to approach emotionally vulnerable children. This mechanism is facilitated by the structure of social media platforms themselves, where features such as *direct messages*, private comments, and recommendation algorithms allow perpetrators to establish intensive communication without being detected by the child's family. Consequently, the resulting implications are multi-layered: cognitively, children find it difficult to recognize manipulation because they perceive it as affection; socially, they become isolated and are deterred from reporting incidents due to fear or feelings of guilt; and psychologically, they experience trauma in the form of anxiety, depression, lowered self-esteem, and psychological disorders.³⁸ These findings imply that prevention strategies cannot rely solely on legal action or content blocking but must focus on strengthening digital literacy, active parental supervision, and creating an environment where children feel safe to speak up without fear of being blamed.

Discussion

The results of this study show that, from the perspective of Amina Wadud's hermeneutics of tawhid, the phenomenon of *child grooming* in the digital space constitutes a form of systematic dehumanization that undermines children's dignity through three dimensions: the manipulation of false identity representations (occurring in 78% of cases), the isolation of private emotional interactions, and the failure of platform algorithmic regulation to address vulnerable groups. These exploitative practices are driven by dehumanizing actions resulting from age or positional asymmetry (such as by a teacher), high social media engagement (67% of cases began via Instagram DMs), and the fragility of emotional family bonds exacerbated by the *tonic immobility* response (where victims freeze due to confusion). The implications are multi-layered and destructive: children fail to recognize the pattern because they attribute it to affection; the reporting process is hindered by feelings of guilt; and this triggers deep psychological trauma such as anxiety, depression, and impaired ability to build healthy relationships in the future. Therefore, this integrated chain of dehumanization can only be broken through simultaneous and holistic interventions that combine early sex education, proactive and *non-judgmental* communication from parents, as well as law enforcement and improvements to security systems on digital platforms.

37 See YouTube channel: Dr.ViviSyarif-Psychiatrist, "Child Grooming." ⁶⁶

See YouTube channel: Lab45.id, *No Title*.

38 See YouTube channel: Alodokter, "What Are the Dangers of Child Grooming, Anyway?," last modified 2026, <https://youtube.com/shorts/T-DkvvF65k4?si=ZSQ8pfYeCDV1F85W>, Accessed May 18, 2026, at 9:35 AM WIB.

These research findings can be attributed to a fatal combination of children's psychological vulnerabilities (such as a lack of emotional closeness within the family or the phenomenon of *fatherlessness*), dehumanization perpetrated by the offenders, and the weakness of algorithmic safeguards on digital platforms. Comprehensively, these findings illustrate the collapse of the order of justice and ontological equality within the framework of Amina Wadud's hermeneutics of tawhid, where *child grooming* is proven not to be a random criminal incident, but rather a socio-technical process of dehumanization that unfolds cumulatively and systematically. The research results depict a tragic reality in which children's dignity is reduced to that of objects of exploitation through the manipulation of the digital space, leading to deep psychological trauma, while also affirming that this phenomenon constitutes a multidimensional structural failure that demands holistic accountability for protection spanning the realms of family, law, and platform policy.

The deepest implication of this research is that *child grooming* in the digital space represents a crisis of structural dehumanization that undermines the principle of monotheistic justice, in which technology is no longer neutral but is instead used as an instrument to exploit children's emotional vulnerabilities and power imbalances. These findings imply that such crimes are not merely individual deviations but rather the product of collective systemic failures whether in terms of family resilience, platform algorithmic ethics, or institutional safeguards. If left unchecked without holistic, multidimensional intervention, the digital space is projected to evolve into an increasingly sophisticated and invisible predatory ecosystem, ensnaring victims through far more precise psychological manipulation. This situation poses a real threat of a social crisis in the form of a generation suffering from permanent psychological trauma and a loss of self-agency, thereby demanding a global revolution in technology ethics and a reinvigoration of the family's proactive role so that digital systems may once again be guided by human values.

The fundamental implications of these research findings call for a radical overhaul of the child protection framework, which can no longer rely solely on reactive measures but must simultaneously address the structural root causes. At the macro-institutional level, these findings call for state policies that compel technology platforms to bear legal responsibility (*platform accountability*) for algorithms that facilitate unequal power dynamics, rather than merely prioritizing *user engagement*. In the domestic and educational spheres, the implications require the integration of digital literacy and comprehensive sexuality education from an early age, while also demanding a paradigm shift in parenting where parents must transform into a safe, *non-judgmental* space to mitigate children's psychological vulnerabilities. Furthermore, from the perspective of Amina Wadud's hermeneutics of tawhid, this research implies that digital justice is an absolute prerequisite for contemporary religious and social ethics; protecting children's dignity and agency in cyberspace is no longer merely a domestic family matter, but rather a collective ethical obligation to restore human ontological equality, which continues to be eroded by systemic exploitation.

The research findings presented above differ from the majority of previous studies, which generally examined *child grooming* in a fragmented manner through the lens of criminology, the perpetrator's psychopathology, or cyberlaw jurisprudence alone. This study introduces a novel paradigm by examining the issue through the philosophical and

theological lens of Amina Wadud's hermeneutics of tawhid. While conventional studies often position technology merely as a passive medium or "crime scene," this study sharply shifts that discourse by demonstrating that platform architecture is an active agent that contributes to perpetuating dehumanization and power imbalances. This research successfully fills *a research gap* by synthesizing vulnerabilities at the micro level (such as the fragility of parenting resulting from the "fatherless" phenomenon) with failures at the macro level (sociotechnical systems), thereby ensuring that *child grooming* is no longer reduced to an individual criminal deviance but is exposed as a systemic crisis of ontological justice. Thus, this comparison confirms that a multidisciplinary approach that combines a critique of modern technology with religious ethics is capable of providing a far more comprehensive analytical framework than the monodisciplinary approaches found in previous literature.

As a concrete mitigation measure, a comprehensive action plan must be implemented immediately through cross-sectoral collaboration. The government must pressure technology companies to implement proactive detection algorithms and "*childsafely-by-design*" systems, while educational institutions and the domestic sphere must integrate digital literacy curricula, comprehensive sexuality education, and the strengthening of affective parenting to address psychological vulnerabilities such as the "fatherless" phenomenon. To enrich this discourse, future studies are recommended to shift from a structural focus toward a phenomenological approach that deeply examines the processes of psychological and spiritual resilience and recovery among survivors of *grooming*. In addition, future research must also empirically test the effectiveness of digital intervention policies in the field and expand this theological analytical framework into comparative cross-cultural and interfaith studies to formulate a universal, practical, and human dignity-centered ethical framework for cyber protection.

CONCLUSION

The most significant finding of this entire study is the evidence that the phenomenon of *child grooming* in the digital space is not merely a series of individual criminal acts, but rather a systematic sociotechnical process of dehumanization that undermines the principle of ontological equality within the framework of Amina Wadud's hermeneutics of tawhid. This process of exploitation has been shown to operate cumulatively by manipulating three key dimensions: the representation of false identities, the isolation of personal interactions, and the negligence of algorithmic regulation which fatally exploits power imbalances and children's psychological vulnerabilities, particularly due to the absence of a close figure, as seen in the "fatherless" phenomenon. The main conclusion emphasizes that turning a blind eye to these cybercrimes constitutes a clear violation of the values of justice and human dignity; thus, partial interventions are bound to fail, necessitating a truly holistic solution that combines the absolute responsibility of technology platforms, the strengthening of digital literacy, and fundamental improvements in the quality of family upbringing.

From a scholarly perspective, this study makes a significant theoretical contribution by introducing a new interdisciplinary approach namely, integrating the theological/philosophical framework of Amina Wadud's hermeneutics of tawhid with the fields of cybercriminology and digital sociology. This study boldly challenges conventional

assumptions that often view technological platforms merely as neutral mediums, while simultaneously enriching existing literature in psychology and child protection law by introducing an ethical-theological dimension related to ontological equality. By formulating the concept of “sociotechnical dehumanization,” this research not only confirms the occurrence of dehumanization and its psychological impacts (such as *the “fatherless”* phenomenon) in child exploitation but also expands the scientific horizon by demonstrating that the manipulation of digital spaces constitutes a systematic violation of the principles of human unity and dignity. This conceptual contribution ultimately paves the way for the emergence of a new discourse in the ethics of technology (particularly within the framework of Islamic studies) that critically integrates religious morality with the complexities of threats in the digital age.

Notwithstanding the theoretical and practical contributions outlined above, this study is not without a number of objective limitations. Methodologically, this study relies heavily on the analysis of secondary documents such as online chat transcripts, case reports, and digital traces on social media and thus is not yet fully capable of capturing the depth of the survivors’ phenomenological experiences and traumatic realities directly through in-depth interviews. Furthermore, from a theoretical perspective, the scope of the analysis is focused exclusively on Amina Wadud’s hermeneutics of tawhid, an approach that is highly effective in exposing the inequalities of ontological power relations but may not fully encompass other theological perspectives or the technical instruments of positive law. These limitations ultimately create a gap and serve as an academic invitation for future research to complement the discourse on child protection in the digital age, particularly through empirical field research centered on victims (*a victim-centered approach*) and the use of a broader comparative analytical framework.

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