Cyberspace and Religious Education in Family: Challenges and Solutions

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Abstract

The present article on cyber threats and vulnerabilities in religious education for families and its prevention strategies has been crafted through a combination of rigorous field research and careful analysis of relevant religious texts. This descriptive analytical research aims to investigate the challenges that cyberspace presents to religious education within families, and to propose solutions that can help ensure the safety of families in this context. The vast virtual environment of cyberspace has impacted almost all families and users in some way or another. The analysis derived from this research indicates that cyberspace has multiple impacts on the family and religious education of children. Cyberspace not only affects spousal relationships but also undermines children's religious upbringing, destabilizes families, weakens religious beliefs, and impacts religious mindsets and behaviors. To address these challenges, several solutions have been proposed, including religious education, strengthening moral values, teaching from the Quran, providing monotheistic education, and introducing positive role models to children. Implementing these measures helps safeguard children in cyberspace and enhances their religious education.

Keywords: family, religious education, cyberspace, challenge, solution

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Introduction

In today's world, cyberspace has become an integral part of family life. It is rare to find a family that does not use this space in some capacity, whether it be for communication, networking, browsing websites, engaging with blogs, or joining groups. The vast expansion of communication tools, networks, and online platforms has preoccupied almost everyone on the planet. While cyberspace facilitates human relations and various scientific and social activities, it also presents significant risks and challenges for users, particularly children. It is crucial for researchers to consider these risks and make serious efforts to identify and mitigate them. They must also caution families about the dangers and find ways to prevent the younger generation from falling victim to potential threats. This research aims to address concerns about the influence of cyberspace on family dynamics, particularly in regards to religious education. There is concrete evidence that some family members, particularly vulnerable children, are exposed to significant risks. As such, the necessity of researching and addressing this issue is clear and requires no further argument.

The primary focus of this research is to explore the challenges that cyberspace presents to religious education within families and to identify potential solutions to address these challenges. The sub-questions that arise from the main research question are as follows:

1) What intellectual and ideological challenges does cyberspace present for religious education within families?

2) What are effective methods to prevent or address these challenges?

3) What are the practical and behavioral risks associated with the use of cyberspace by families and how do these risks impact the religious education of family members?

4) What are effective strategies to prevent cyberspace from becoming a source of danger for families?

The purpose of this article is to provide a descriptive and analytical study of the challenges and threats that cyberspace poses to religious education within families. Additionally, the article aims to identify effective ways to prevent and overcome these challenges. This article will present introductory points followed by an analysis of the threats and risks posed by

cyberspace to religious education within families. Existing literature and research on the topic will be relied upon to identify effective methods to address these challenges.

The background of cyberspace and its impact on families has been extensively studied and discussed in various books, articles, and academic conferences, symposiums, and meetings. A comprehensive search was conducted to find an article on the same topic in various online databases and libraries, but none was found. This suggests that there is a gap in the literature when it comes to the intersection of cyberspace and religious education within families. Several relevant works have been published on the topic of cyberspace and its impact on religious education within families, including:

1) "Challenges and solutions of Islamic education in cyberspace";

2) "Investigating the relationship between negative effects of cyberspace and religious education within families";

3) "The effect of cyberspace on religiosity and family values: a case study in Isfahan."

General Concepts

1. Cyberspace

Cyberspace refers to the complex virtual environment that results from the interaction of people, software, and services on the internet, using various technology devices and networks. Unlike physical environments, cyberspace has no tangible existence. The capacities of cyberspace, where human interactions occur over computer networks through email, games, or simulations, have impacted all facets of family life. The Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran has stated: "Cyberspace has become a vital source of power in today's word, dominating human life across the globe. There are individuals who conduct all their work solely through cyberspace" (Khamenei, March 24, 2020). The advantages and disadvantages of cyberspace should be thoroughly studied and identified.

2. Family

The family is the smallest social unit, formed by the union of at least two individuals, a man and a woman, whose coexistence is based on a

religious and legal marriage. Over time, the family may expand as children are born and additional members are added to the household.

3. Religious Education

The term "religious education" is comprised of two words—"education" and "religious"—which will be further clarified as we delve into their meanings. The meaning of "religion" can be approached in two general ways. Firstly, from the perspective of the religion itself, it can be considered as a system that functions independently of man, comprising of creed, cult, method, sharia, belief, and faith (Azerbaijani 1999, 8; Dehkhoda, entry "religion"; Azarnoush 2002, entry "religion"). Scholars of religion argue that religion refers to the belief in the essence of man, the world, and the related regulations that apply to human life (Ṭabāṭabāʾī 2000, 27). Religion can be defined as a set of beliefs, morals, and practical rules revealed by God to guide mankind (Javadi Amoli 2001, 26). It is also considered a system of true beliefs and practices that have an effect on man's attainment of perfection and true happiness (Mesbah Yazdi 1998, 111).

The second approach to defining religion is that it refers to adherence to sharia, as well as religiousness and religiosity—human traits that describe one as being devout and pious. Religion, from this perspective, is closely tied to man's overt behaviors. It is believed that one's adherence to religion and sharia should be evident through their behavior and countenance (Azerbaijani 1999, 8). Religious education is an effort to instill religious values and practices in children and family members, with the goal of ensuring their material and spiritual well-being and happiness.

4. Pathology

Pathology is the study of the nature and causes of diseases, disorders, anomalies, disharmony, and imbalances. More broadly and metaphorically speaking, it encompasses various aspects of life, including the family and the relationships of its members, which may be exposed to various mental and behavioral disorders (Seddigh Sarvestani 2009, 10). The term "pathology" was primarily concerned with examining tissues, organs, bodily fluids, and conducting autopsies in order to diagnose and study diseases. Later, the sociologist Durkheim used the term in a sociological context, referring to deviant behaviors that are deemed immoral

or unacceptable by societies (Crumby 1997, 354). The concept of pathology applies the medical metaphor of pathology to describe and explain problems caused by cyberspace that may affect the religious education of families. The concept of pathology seeks to identify and highlight the negative effects of cyberspace on the religious commitment of family members in Muslim families.

5. Solution

The term "solution" refers to the method or approach that helps a person achieve their desired goal. In everyday language, "method" refers to a way of doing something or the quality of being well planned and organized. It has been defined as a systematic approach to achieving a goal (Hosseini Nasab and Ali Aghdam 1996, 489). Method can be defined as a well-organized procedure for studying facts and concepts (Shoarinejad 1996, 242). It is also seen as the mode of operation or the means by which one can achieve a particular objective (Farahani 1999, 369). In this article, the term "solution" refers to the methods of addressing the risks and challenges of cyberspace that may impact the religious education of families. These challenges are often unknown, and efforts are made to identify and inform families about them in order to mitigate their negative effects.

Components of Religious Education

Religious education comprises several components that must first be possessed by the educator in order to guide the learner towards intellectual and spiritual perfection. These components can then be transferred to the learner and reinforced within them. Religious education is based on the existential structure of both the educator and the learner. It comprises several key components, including religious thinking, religious faith, religious orientation, and religious practice.

1. Religious Thinking

Religious thinking is a crucial component of religious education within families, as it forms the basis for guiding children towards correct and strong beliefs. The importance of religious thinking lies in its ability to provide motivation, purpose, and strength to

the learner, enabling them to strive towards the final goal with resilience. This is because an understanding of the religious knowledge and profound perspectives of the school of Ahl al-Bayt (the Prophet's Household) is essential to achieving the lofty goals of Islamic education. Religious thinking, which encompasses the belief in the origin and resurrection of human life, may face obstacles, some of which originate from cyberspace. Thus, managing cyberspace is essential in order to mitigate its negative impacts on religious education (Khamenei, July 13, 2020).

2. Religious Orientation

The emotional dimension and tendencies of humans are crucial aspects of their existence, as they are the root cause of many of their actions. In order for these tendencies, which are inclinations towards particular characteristics or types of behavior, to be manifested in the external world, they must go through several stages: receiving, reacting, valuing, regulating values, and instantiation of values within the human personality (Vakilian 2016, 21-37). Once these stages are completed, a tendency towards something arises and the person becomes interested in it. The formation of values within a person's personality can have a significant impact on their behavior, as human behavior is influenced by their beliefs and the value system that they have accepted intellectually and emotionally (Safavi 1997, 60-63). The love of God is a fundamental aspect of religious education and should be at the center of pedagogical activities in the process of educational efforts made by parents within the family setting.

3. Religious Faith

Religious faith is a significant component of religious education that emerges in the learner after the formation of religious thinking and orientation. It is only after this stage that the heart can be confirmed and linked to the beloved. According to the Quran (57:19), faith involves belief in God, the Day of Judgment, prophets, angels, and the Quran. Religious faith can be likened to a tree in the heart of a learner, serving as the source of all moral virtues. In its perfect form, religious faith requires belief not only in God's existence but also in prophethood and resurrection (Mesbah Yazdi, 2005, 1: 130). The cultivation and reinforcement

of religious faith should take place within the family environment, as childhood is the most appropriate time for children to learn. If parents fulfill their duty, they can utilize effective methods to cultivate the spirit of faith and obedience in their children.

4. Religious Behavior

Religious behavior, also known as "righteous deed" or good deed, is repeatedly mentioned in the verses of the Quran. The Quran provides various examples of righteous behavior and calls upon everyone to engage in such actions. In fact, there is a logical order between thinking, tendency, faith, and action, where religious thinking and tendency lead to religious belief, and in turn, result in righteous action. Righteous action is considered to be the product of faith in God (Mesbah Yazdi, 2005, 1:156). Therefore, those who have strong faith are more likely to perform righteous deeds.

Cyberspace-Induced Challenges for Religious Education

The challenges posed by cyberspace for the religious education of families have various dimensions that cannot all be covered in one article. To make it easier to understand, these challenges are initially divided into two categories: intellectual challenges and practical challenges. Each category is accompanied by a brief conceptual explanation and examples. The main objective of this article is to discuss the challenges and risks associated with cyberspace in the context of religious education for families, particularly children. As such, the focus will be on the negative aspects of cyberspace and its potential impact on religious education. The positive aspects of cyberspace are beyond the scope of this discussion and will not be addressed.

A. Intellectual and Religious Challenges for Family Members

This type of threat is often targeted towards the intellectual and religious thinking of families, and if it persists, it can have a detrimental impact on the faith of family members. This is mainly due to the fact that the virtual space contains a diverse range of anti-religious and secular as well as indecent and offensive content. Exposure to such content through reading, studying, or viewing can leave a lasting impact on the learner's mind and

belief, causing them to waver in their faith. In the following section, some of the threats and challenges of the virtual space that are targeted towards the thoughts and beliefs of families and children will be discussed.

1. Weakening the Religious Faith of Family Members

Religious faith is a matter of degree and is not always initially very strong. However, over time, it can gradually grow stronger and more steadfast as one continues to reflect on divine signs and engage in religious behaviors. The Quran (8: 29) states that faith and action are interconnected and interdependent, with each having an impact on the other. The Quran teaches that piety enables the learner to develop the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, good and bad. As a result, a person with a strong faith will be more resilient and less susceptible to potential threats and dangers. According to a hadith transmitted from Imam al-Bāqir (a), "The believer is stronger than a mountain" (Kulaynī 1413 AH, 2: 241). This means that even when faced with problems and dangers that threaten his religious beliefs, a believer remains resolute and unwavering in their thoughts and beliefs. Similarly, another hadith states that "A believer is like a firm mountain that cannot be moved by strong winds" (Māzandarānī 1963, 9: 181). This means that a believer is steadfast and unshakeable in their faith, much like a mountain that remains firm even in the face of strong winds.

The impact of virtual space on human thought is a phenomenon that many individuals can observe within their personal and familial lives. Parents may observe, both within themselves and their children, that continuous use of various social networks, websites, and online platforms can lead to a sense of doubt and indifference towards certain beliefs and values that they hold dear. For instance, in matters of faith, such as the existence and life of Imam al-Mahdi (a), the final Shia Imam, and the infallibility of the Imams (a), numerous questions are raised in virtual space, many of which are intended to sow seeds of doubt and weaken the faith of Muslims in the eventual reappearance of Imam al-Mahdi (a). Research studies have indicated a direct correlation between

cyberspace and religious, moral, and social issues. In other words, cyberspace is a contributing factor to significant problems within families, and the prevalence of these problems is increasing with each passing day.

2. Formation of Wrong Beliefs in Children

This decline in religious thought and practice among family members, influenced by cyberspace, can result in the minds of family members, especially children, becoming filled with false beliefs. This is because the human mind, particularly during childhood and adolescence, is dynamic, creative, and constantly evolving, constantly renewing and developing. It is natural for a child's mind to become preoccupied with the abundant and diverse intellectual and practical content in cyberspace, which can gradually shape their mindset. Relatedly, Imam ʿAlī (a) says: "Certainly, the heart of a young man is like uncultivated land. It accepts whatever is strewn on it" (Nahj al-Balāgha, Letter 31).

These words by Imam ʿAlī express the reality that children possess a remarkable capacity for learning during the early stages of their lives, as they have a high level of cognitive ability and can absorb whatever is presented to them. Contemporary scientists have also acknowledged this phenomenon and proposed an upward trend for learning in children and teenagers up to the age of fifteen. In fact, the acquisition of comprehensive knowledge is increasing due to various environmental factors (Seif 2009, 75).

The younger generation's use of virtual space and the internet often results in exposure to false ideas, rather than accurate religious and Islamic principles. This is because such users tend to search for movies, clips, and networks that contain jokes, dramas, and thrilling sounds and images, which may have negative consequences. Field research has demonstrated that a significant number of websites and networks in cyberspace broadcast inappropriate and explicit content, such as erotic movies, pornography, and sexual dating, which promote sexual promiscuity and even homosexuality. Images, romantic stories, and similar content are readily accessible in the virtual space (Mojarradi 2012, 200).

3. Conflict of Values within Family Relationships

Conflict refers to an active disagreement between individuals

who hold opposing opinions or principles (Dehkhoda 1994), and it is a common occurrence in various family and social contexts. Conflict may take on physical, social, or cultural forms within the family environment or broader community. This article focuses on conflict within the family environment, particularly between spouses and between parents and children. Conflict typically arises when two ideas or things are incompatible with each other, as family members who are compatible with one another generally do not experience conflict.

The conflict of values within a family, particularly between husband and wife, arises when the values promoted in the virtual space clash with religious values. On one hand, religious commitment emphasizes the importance of upholding the honor and dignity of the wife. However, Western culture promotes absolute freedom for women and often discourages such religious commitments. This conflict between the two sets of values emerges initially in the spouses' thoughts and subsequently manifests in their actions. The conflict within each spouse's mind gives rise to a mental and psychological challenge for them, often stemming from a lack of analysis and a limited perception of this conflict (cf. Mojarradi, 2012, 70). The conflict between a child and their parents often arises from the influence of cyberspace, as the new generation is heavily exposed to an anti-religious culture facilitated by the widespread availability of mass communication tools such as the Internet and satellites. Children often resist their elders' attempts to enforce religious and moral values upon them, leading to a clash of ideologies and behaviors between parents and children. This conflict arises from the divergent perspectives and actions of each party.

4. Development of Anti-Religious Thoughts in Children

One of the significant challenges posed by the virtual space in the realm of religious education within families is the rise of anti-religious sentiments among family members, particularly children and teenagers. In reality, the influence of the virtual space gradually seeps into the family dynamics and the individual's mindset, potentially leading them to eventually adopt its effects. The transformation that takes place within their minds and hearts becomes an inevitable outcome of this process. Prophet

Muhammad (s) said, "When a believer commits a sin, a black dot appears in his heart. But if he gives it up, seek forgiveness, and repent, his heart will be purified. However, if he persists in committing the sin, the blackness will increase until it overcomes his entire heart." (Qurṭubī 1364 Sh, 19: 227).

The potentially harmful influence of cyberspace is a growing concern, particularly as children and young people spend more and more time online. In the absence of a strong religious grounding, they may be particularly vulnerable to the influence of foreign cultures and values encountered online, potentially eroding their previously held beliefs. Furthermore, exposure to anti-religious ideas in cyberspace may lead to the adoption of misguided beliefs and behaviors, potentially leading individuals down the wrong path. Moreover, young people are particularly susceptible to the influence of anti-religious and secular ideas in cyberspace, often more so than their parents. The virtual realm has a powerful allure for the younger generation, and its influence can alter their mindset and introduce them to ideas that run counter to their religious beliefs. Consequently, the political, moral, and religious perspectives of young users may take on a non-religious orientation and potentially conflict with Islamic values (cf. Mostaghimi 2011, 123).

5. Weakening the Islamic Identity of Family Members

Muslim individuals have a distinct Islamic **identity** that is rooted in the teachings of Islam and the Quran. This identity sets them apart from those who do not adhere to these religious beliefs and practices (Mansourinejad 2006, 15). Islamic identity is formed through a cohesive set of authentic religious beliefs, Islamic values, and a specific orientation towards oneself, God, others, and the world. These elements work together in an organized manner to shape the unique Islamic identity of the individual. This identity has the potential to be nurtured and developed, gradually evolving towards its ultimate perfection. The family serves as the core foundation where a child is raised and where their Islamic identity takes shape. This is where the child's identity is ideally forged and fortified through the nurturing guidance of parents. In addition, there are factors that can undermine the strength of the Islamic identity within the

family, particularly in the current context where cyberspace plays a significant role. Given that both family members and internet users interact with it on a daily basis, they may encounter anti-Islamic propaganda that challenges their ability to critically analyze and make accurate judgments about it (Bell 2011, 101).

Solutions

To mitigate the adverse impact of the virtual space on the religious upbringing of the family, it is essential to explore solutions aimed at safeguarding the family environment against the risks and threats posed by the Internet and social networks.

1. An Instrumental View of Cyberspace

Various individuals hold diverse perspectives regarding cyberspace and its appropriate usage, particularly within families. Some adopt a goal-oriented approach towards cyberspace, considering extensive online browsing as the utmost priority, to the extent that a life devoid of social media is deemed insignificant. However, this viewpoint is flawed, as it entails relying solely on the virtual space to shape one's beliefs and values (cf. Burton 2003, 28). Cyberspace offers a plethora of religious programs and trustworthy Islamic resources. Moreover, it provides a platform where esteemed scholars and religious authorities address user inquiries. However, it is unfortunate that only a limited number of individuals take advantage of these valuable and educational programs. This is due to the prevailing tendency among some to prioritize entertainment through forums, drama series, and content containing inappropriate material in the virtual realm. The accurate understanding of cyberspace is that it should always be regarded as a tool or instrument, rather than a purpose in life. Embracing this mindset, cyberspace will naturally serve its intended purposes and be utilized for scientific, religious, and research endeavors. Within the family setting, it is essential to adopt an instrumental perspective towards cyberspace. Parents, as the primary caretakers of the household, should embody this outlook and subsequently impart it to their children. Undoubtedly, it can be challenging for parents to instill an instrumental attitude towards cyberspace and the internet in their children. It necessitates a familiarity with educational and training methods to effectively cultivate the appropriate mindset within their young minds.

2. Strengthening Islamic Faith in Family

Traditionally, due to the prevalence of Islamic culture in society, Muslim families typically hold religious beliefs, and the children raised within these families are likewise influenced by these beliefs through the religious teachings imparted within the family environment. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that these beliefs may not always be inherently robust and enduring, as they can be susceptible to the negative influences emanating from cyberspace. Hence, it becomes imperative to actively strengthen and nurture these beliefs, given that contemporary cultural challenges and numerous undermining factors persistently target the religious mindset of the younger generation.

One of the most logical and rational objectives of vaccination is to foster individual and herd immunity against infectious diseases. Similarly, the goal of countering the threat posed by the virtual space to the religious upbringing of families is to strengthen the religious beliefs of its members. In this context, strengthening religious beliefs can be seen as a form of vaccination against the potential dangers and negative influences of the virtual realm. Hence, a true believer with strong religious convictions is less susceptible to the influence of the virtual space and similar factors. Faith, being the most potent internal force, acts as a protective shield, rendering believers immune to the detrimental effects of the virtual realm (Karamollahi 2011, 234).

Parents bear a significant responsibility in shaping the religious upbringing of their children. They possess the ability to address this matter by employing effective educational methods tailored to their children's needs. There are two key considerations to be noted here. Firstly, if parents aspire to take direct responsibility for the religious education of their children, it is crucial for them to possess a strong belief in the principles of faith. As the famous philosophical saying goes, "someone who does not possess something cannot impart it to others" (Motahhari 1979). Secondly, if parents entrust their children's religious education to school teachers, it is important for them to seek out educators who are dedicated to religion and the Quran, while also being knowledgeable about the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt (a), the Prophet's Household.

3. Promoting Familiarity with the Quran in the Family

Another effective approach to preserving and nurturing religion and its teachings within the family is to adhere to the Qur'an and cultivate a strong connection with it. The environment of a Muslim family should be marked by the regular recitation and adherence to the Quran, which is the divine Word of Allah, as emphasized by the saying of the Prophet (s): "When calamities surround you like the darkness of night, seek refuge in the Quran" (Kulaynī 1407 AH, 2: 599). This is because, as the Prophet (s) stated, "The Quran is a guide against misguidance and a source of clarity amidst darkness" (Kulaynī 1407 AH, 2: 601).

Once again, it is the duty of parents to imbue the family atmosphere with the beautiful fragrance of Quran recitation and to assist their children in becoming accustomed to reciting its verses.

By turning to the Quran, the religious and spiritual education of children and family members is reinforced, and the religious challenges engendered by cyberspace are mitigated. This is because when children devote their attention to the Quran, practicing its recitation and perfecting their pronunciation, they naturally reduce their reliance on mobile phones and the internet, thereby minimizing exposure to potential religious issues arising from cyberspace. Certainly, parents should strive to motivate their children to embrace the teachings of the Quran through proper methods, rather than resorting to coercion, as such an approach would likely yield counterproductive results. It is preferable for parents to embody and exhibit Quranic qualities themselves as a model for their children. They can employ accessible and practical approaches to guide their children towards the Quran. For instance, when watching Quranic programs on TV or online, consider searching for Islamic and ethical channels and encourage your children to do the same. Consistently practicing this behavior can help reinforce Quranic culture and religious education within the family environment, gradually minimizing the negative impact of cyberspace.

4. Strengthening the Spirit of Obedience in Family

Worship is a powerful remedy for the afflictions of the heart. It helps safeguard the worshipper against religious and behavioral difficulties, and those who possess a strong spirit of worship and

devotion will serve as guardians of their Islamic and religious identity. The Quran states that in a person's life, there are only two paths to choose from: serving God or following the devil (Quran 36: 60-61). A family that fosters a religious atmosphere is shielded in a way that protects its members from harm, even when using virtual spaces. Such a family views virtual space as a tool and utilizes it to pursue positive objectives and obtain useful information. Establishing an appropriate environment for worship and education within the family is a primary responsibility of parents. Parents are responsible for creating such an atmosphere through appropriate means, as emphasized by Imam ʿAlī (a) in his educational letter to Imam al-Ḥasan al-Mūjtaba (a). The Imam (a) first established a conducive environment for his children's education and then provided them with educational guidance (see *Nahj al-Balāgha*, letter 31).

The potency of worship and prayer in the family setting, coupled with the significance of religious education for children, is highlighted by God's command to Prophet Abraham (a): "And bid your family to prayer and be steadfast in maintaining it" (Quran 20: 132). This verse not only emphasizes the importance of prayer but also underscores the need for steadfastness and diligence in performing it within the family environment. Haste during prayer is incompatible with the spirit of worship and devotion. Genuine worship with a willing and sincere heart has both worldly and eternal benefits.

Additionally, irrational behavior towards children can lead to negative reactions and stubbornness. Imam ʿAlī (a) warns against excessive reprimanding, as it can ignite the fire of stubbornness (Ḥarrānī 1376 Sh, 84).

By utilizing appropriate methods to instill a sense of servitude in children, they become less susceptible to the dangers and negative effects of the world around them.

5. Introducing Quranic Role Models to Family

One of the most effective methods of religious education and learning is for parents to serve as role models for their children. Parents are instrumental in introducing Quranic and desirable models to their family members and children, which can help them use cyberspace in a safe manner while mitigating its

negative effects. The Quran highlights the importance of presenting role models to learners (Quran 33: 21), which consistently introduces a model to the learner, influencing and motivating them through the desirable behavior of the model (Hosseinkhani 2003, 11). The importance of leading by example is emphasized in hadiths, where teachers are advised to educate their students not only through their words but also through their own good deeds (Majlisī 1403 AH, 68: 309).

There are numerous individuals and families in society who can serve as exemplary models of behavior in the virtual space for the younger generation. Ayatollah Khamenei and his family, who demonstrate caution and moderation in their use of cyberspace, are ideal role models for Muslim children, teenagers, young people, and families. For instance, the Supreme Leader encourages everyone to exercise prudence and moderation when using cyberspace (Khamenei, September 2, 2020). The importance of reading books as a significant aspect of family expenses was emphasized, with an emphasis on the need to prioritize book purchases, by the Supreme Leader (Khamenei, June 25, 2001). According to the Supreme Leader, cultivating a habit of reading books is a crucial step towards safeguarding families from the negative effects of cyberspace. He has mentioned that in his family, each member reads a book at night and falls asleep while doing so (Khamenei, June 25, 2001).

B. Practical and Behavioral Challenges

Practical challenges pose a significant obstacle to religious education as they pertain to the behavior of family members who may become excessively engaged in cyberspace and social networks. These challenges impact both the spouses and children of the family and must be addressed separately.

a. Problems Related to the Spouses

In today's world, spouses' excessive use of virtual space within the family environment has given rise to numerous problems that can strain marital relations and, in some cases, even cause the family to fall apart. Below are some examples of such problems:

1. Decline in the Quality of Family Relationships

Affection is the foundation of family life and marital relationships, and it plays an indispensable role in the success of the family. In today's world, the arbitrary and capricious use of virtual space and its various programs has significantly threatened and weakened the affection that is a key factor responsible for the strength of the joint life of a husband and wife. Ayatollah Khamenei has consistently emphasized the importance of strengthening family affection, describing it as the cornerstone of marital relationships. Ayatollah Khamenei advises young couples to prioritize love for each other after solemnizing the marriage contract. He stresses the importance of avoiding actions that could damage this love and of being mindful of behaviors that could lead to feelings of sadness or disgust towards each other (Khamenei December 15, 1992). Family love requires care and the removal of obstacles, as neglecting it can lead to weakness and even abandonment. The virtual space has become one of the most significant and powerful factors contributing to the decline of love and intimate relationships between husbands and wives, leading to numerous complications in their marital lives today. This problem has a detrimental effect on family relationships, as spouses may opt to spend time apart from each other and engage in leisure activities on social networks, which can also be influenced by negative role models from Western culture. Field research findings also confirm the negative impact of excessive use of virtual space on marital relationships (Haj-Mohammadi 2017, 209).

2. Overcoming Suspicions of Marital Infidelity

Optimism, trust, and mutual respect are all rooted in love, and when this chemistry of life exists within the family, marital life is relatively problem-free. Otherwise, the real friendship between husband and wife may gradually deteriorate and be marred by suspicion in their relationship. One of the problems that arises from excessive use of virtual space is the emergence of suspicion between husbands and wives. This is due to concealment in the use of this space, phone encryption, adult photos, as well as naked and vulgar video clips, which can create suspicion between them. In many cases among acquaintances and relatives, it has been observed that after marriage and engagement ceremonies, the bride

and groom become suspicious of each other due to one party seeing photos or communicating with a third party in virtual space. Such suspicions can grow to such an extent that the couple ends up separating from each other. In addition to objective observations, field studies conducted on the impact of cyberspace on family and marital relationships have confirmed a direct relationship between the use of this space and the emergence of suspicion between spouses (see Mousavi and Mousavi 2013, 31-51).

3. Mistrust in Marital Relationships

Trust is the cornerstone of any relationship, particularly in a marriage, and it is crucial to the success of the family. Without mutual trust, no progress can be achieved, and no relationship can survive. Ayatollah Khamenei emphasizes that trust can only be attained through love, honesty, and sincere actions. When a man or woman feels that their spouse is dishonest or insincere in their love, a sense of mistrust can arise between them. Therefore, the Supreme Leader advises couples to prevent mistrust from arising in their relationship (Khamenei, February 8, 2000). The role of cyberspace in creating mistrust between spouses is evident, as suspicion can gradually arise as a result of viewing inappropriate photos and listening to vulgar audio clips on each other's phones. The absence of trust in married life can result in the loss of numerous qualities that are essential to the family, such as love, intimacy, affection, secrecy, sacrifice, and more. This creates a breeding ground for negative traits to emerge in the family environment, ultimately destroying the atmosphere of interaction and compatibility (Alavi 2015, 21)

Mistrust between husband and wife can have unfortunate consequences. If the trust between them is damaged, a general sense of fear and unease towards each other can take its place. Their opinions of one another may change, and a sense of doubt can make the prospect of married life seem gloomier. In an environment dominated by mistrust, individuals can experience high levels of anxiety and a severe lack of self-confidence and self-belief. Mistrust can have both external and internal factors, with one of the most significant being the virtual space today. Instead of trusting each other, spouses may trust what they see and read in cyberspace, which can erode the values of the family and lead to pessimistic attitudes towards each other (Ahmadi 2013, 26).

4. Marital Conflict

Marital **conflict** is more than just a difference of opinion. It is a series of events that have been poorly handled, causing significant damage to the marriage relationship. Issues within the marriage can fester to the point where stubbornness, pride, anger, hurt, and bitterness prevent effective communication between spouses.

The final damage to marital relationships in the family caused by excessive use of virtual space, which is examined in this article, is the conflict that can arise between husbands and wives. If the couple does not make controlled use of cyberspace, their relationship can gradually deteriorate, leading to conflict due to suspicion, mistrust, and reduced marital emotions. This conflict can become more intense with the use of cyberspace. Field research findings have indicated that virtual space is a significant factor in the occurrence of conflicts within families. Unrestricted relationships can be established in virtual space, leading to the formation of an extramarital relationship between a non-mahram man and woman. If this situation persists, it can lead to a decrease in the love between husband and wife, marital commitment, and faithfulness of spouses to each other. Eventually, behavior such as quarreling, disrespect, blaming, stubbornness, and the like can emerge between spouses. If this situation is not controlled, it can seriously affect the family and eventually lead to its dissolution (see Ahmadi 2013, 112).

Solutions

There are several solutions to address the problems caused by excessive virtual space use and the damages inflicted on the husband-wife relationships within the family environment. Undoubtedly, the effectiveness of the solutions depends on the willingness of the spouses themselves as two mature, intelligent, and strong-willed individuals to make efforts to avoid the dangers and problems and protect their family environment and marital relationships from the negative effects of excessive virtual space use. Without their active participation, any solution presented may not be effective.

1. Cyberspace Management

Effective management of cyberspace is necessary both at the

national level and at the family level to prevent damages and threats. At the macro level, it is the responsibility of government officials, especially those in charge of telecommunications and related institutions, to manage cyberspace and mitigate its negative effects. In Iran, the Supreme Council of Cyberspace, formed by Ayatollah Khamenei, is responsible for addressing this issue. According to the Supreme Leader, the goal for the creation of the Council is to bring officials together, encourage them to think, and concentrate their wills, decisions, and actions to tackle this significant phenomenon (Khamenei, September 7, 2016). Effective management of cyberspace at the national level is crucial in reducing its harm to users. In this regard, the Supreme Leader specified guidelines for the establishment of a National Cyberspace Center, which would be responsible for comprehensive and up-to-date monitoring of cyberspace at both domestic and global levels. The Center would also make decisions on how the country should deal with this issue in terms of developing hardware, software, and content within the framework of the Supreme Council's approvals, as well as supervising the accurate implementation of decisions at all levels (Khamenei, March 7, 2019).

At the family level, and even for individual use, it is the responsibility of the head of the family, especially the parents, to establish a regular and specific program for the family and their children to use cyberspace. This planning should apply to all family members, especially children, and their opinions should be taken into account to increase the effectiveness of the program. Successful families that effectively manage cyberspace and prevent its negative effects on the religious education of the family are not uncommon. According to many educational experts, parents must control the virtual space in the family environment, or serious harm may be done to its members (see Khiḍr Sārī 1426 AH, 236).

2. Making Purposeful Use of Cyberspace

While the virtual space provides us with various facilities and means, it must be used properly to help the family achieve its material and spiritual objectives. Therefore, it is essential to manage cyberspace properly and efficiently, and it is equally

important to use it purposefully to achieve our predetermined goals. The virtual space has the capacity to help us achieve our material and spiritual objectives, and we should use it in a way that serves this purpose. Cyberspace provides various religious and Islamic programs that effectively guide families seeking spirituality, from answering their religious questions to dealing with profound scientific and ideological topics on websites, weblogs, forums, and more. Today, websites of the offices of religious authorities can answer questions on various legal and juridical matters quickly and easily, enabling those interested in religious teachings and spiritual wayfaring to achieve their goals (see National Studies Institute 2013, 14).

As a dynamic and rich source, cyberspace can assist users in their scholarly research on religious and Islamic topics, making the information they need readily available. By acquiring the necessary technical skills, families can guide their members towards research and useful activities through virtual space, making their use of cyberspace purposeful. In this case, not only can the family avoid possible problems, but the talents and potentials of both children and parents can also be ultimately perfected. Modern research confirms that users who utilize cyberspace have their talents grow and blossom (Pishgahifard 2013, 33). In summary, purposeful use of cyberspace can enable family users to make good use of it, while averting potential dangers and harms.

3. Being Forthright and Honest

Family problems caused by cyberspace, such as suspicions and conflicts between husbands and wives, often arise from individuals hiding things from each other. This can include using special codes and passwords on mobile phones to keep secrets from their spouse and others. As soon as spouses see things such as problematic photos, clips, or unknown numbers on each other's phones, suspicion can arise and cause conflicts between them. This is a common experience that can be observed in the lives of many people, including friends and relatives. Such spousal challenges can lead to serious problems and even separation if they are not addressed properly. To prevent and overcome such problems, it is essential to avoid being secretive about one's

activities or withholding information about one's relationships in the virtual space. If necessary, individuals should be open and honest with their family about their activities in cyberspace. Love, honesty, loyalty, and confidentiality are crucial aspects of a healthy marital relationship, and secretive and suspicious behavior should be avoided (see Seminary of Qom Website). Love and honesty are two fundamental factors in married life that, if strengthened, can protect children from many problems, including those mentioned above. These two characteristics are greatly emphasized in religious texts and the family environment, as confirmed by the normative conduct of the Infallibles (s).

4. Consulting Spouses about Using Cyberspace

Counseling is a fundamental aspect of social and family interactions, providing individuals with knowledge and tools to prevent potential future problems. Although the family environment ideally provides an atmosphere of peace and compassion, conflicts and arguments can still arise due to the family's existence in the material world and their susceptibility to the outward glamour of the world. If any signs of disagreement between husband and wife appear, it is important to seek a solution to make peace (ṣulḥ) between them, as God has ordered in the Quran. The Quran offers counseling, fair arbitration, and impartial examination of the issue as solutions to reconcile the spouses (Quran 4: 35). Seeking advice from elders can help prevent disputes between spouses. However, if signs of disagreement do arise, relatives can help end the dispute by offering their advice.

Consulting with each other regarding the use of cyberspace is crucial for spouses, as setting and agreeing on specific times to use this space during the day and night can improve their knowledge and access to acceptable entertainment while preventing potential problems. This can also help them develop new skills and acquire information. Consulting with others on family affairs can prevent spouses from being arrogant, selfish, and neglectful towards the rights of their spouse. Their behavior and conduct will be characterized by agreement, harmony, and respect for each other. Quranic verses that contain the word "counseling" (Quran 2: 233) urge spouses to consult experts and

elders when conflicts arise. If an unintentional error or mistake occurs after consulting with others on family affairs, God says: "They are not to blame" (Quran 2: 233), as things are done with the consent of both spouses. By utilizing various applications and programs in the virtual space, perhaps with the use of a mobile phone, spouses can achieve success in their married life, raise their children, and reduce financial costs.

B. Challenges Facing Children

The most significant impact of the virtual space on religious education in the family is related to children, who are exposed to various intellectual and behavioral threats and dangers due to their young age. Research conducted on the negative effects of communication tools such as mobile phones, satellites, and the Internet on beliefs and worship has shown a significant relationship between the use of these tools and the weakening of belief and indifference towards worship and daily prayers (Zandavanian, et al. 2013, 210).

1. Indifference towards Religious Values

The virtual space has a negative impact on the religious education of children in the family environment, leading to their indifference, laziness, and lack of interest in religious and Islamic values. This behavior can be seen in most families, with children showing an unwillingness to perform prayers on time, lethargic performance of prayers, and lacking motivation to engage in supplications, participate in religious ceremonies, and visit pilgrimage places and holy sites. Recent research indicates that the younger generation, influenced by Western culture through the virtual space, pays little attention to religious values and old social traditions. A field research study comparing two groups of young people, one a subject group of users and the other a control group of non-users, found that the non-user group had higher adherence to religious and Islamic values (Karamollahi 2011, 336). This research highlights the negative impact of the virtual space on children's religious practices and religiosity, leading them to become indifferent towards religious and moral values.

2. Formation of Negative Attitudes and Negative Tendencies in Children

Children, including kids, teenagers, and young people, are at risk of developing negative tendencies due to their use of the virtual space. Imam ʿAlī (a) asserts that children learn from what is instilled in them or what they observe (Nahj al-Balāgha, letter 31). If children continue to engage with anti-religious literature or watch offensive movies and clips, it can strongly influence their behavior and mentality, causing them to gradually develop negative tendencies. Experts in education suggest that the virtual space has a more significant impact on users compared to other forms of mass communication. This is because it affects users in various intellectual, visual, auditory, and behavioral dimensions, occupying their minds and hearts (Mahdizadegan 2015, 53). Consequently, continued use of the virtual space, browsing social networks, and websites can lead to the development of negative tendencies in young users, causing them to deviate from the right path.

3. Influence of Negative Role Models on Children

Introducing role models to children and teenagers is an effective method of education and upbringing, as the role model is visible and present to them. Children and young people can assimilate and adapt their behavior to the model presented to them, satisfying their acquisitive sense. However, any type of model can be found in the virtual space, and young users tend to choose inappropriate and non-religious models if their parents do not monitor their online activities. Such models may appear more attractive to them, especially as virtual space programs are designed to appeal to the young generation. Consequently, many young people are attracted to negative role models in the virtual space. These role models can leave a lasting impact on the actions of users, particularly the young generation that has limited knowledge of religious and Islamic teachings and is strongly influenced by emotions and carnal desires associated with negative role models in the virtual space (Hamidian 2009, 83).

Accepting negative models introduced to children by the virtual space can have serious consequences, and the damage caused by assimilating these models is not easily treated. Children and teenagers may be resistant to giving up their accepted models,

making it challenging for families to protect them from harm. If a solution is not worked out to protect children from such damage, it will be difficult to save them from the challenges created by the virtual space. Field research involving young people, especially girls, affected by the virtual space, has shown how much irreparable damage they have suffered due to negative role models (Koohi 2008, 224).

4. Hatred towards Parents

The term inter-generational gap is widely used in today's society, particularly in the area of education, to describe the cultural duality between the old and new generation. It refers to the difference in values and attitudes between one generation and another, especially between young people and their parents. This difference is not just limited to physical age but includes distinctions in values and norms, which ultimately leads to estrangement between youth and adults. The virtual space is one of the significant factors responsible for this gap and the estrangement of children within the family setting. If this trend continues, it could lead to children harboring resentment towards their parents, as evidenced by new field research. A study conducted in Dezful city of Iran, surveying and distributing questionnaires among 18-24 year-olds and their parents, found that the generational gap is directly related to the widespread use of mass communication tools, including the virtual space (Mazaheri and Monajjezipour 2016).

Many children in families today express hatred and disgust towards their parents, although they have provided them with opportunities and amenities. Such children are often under the influence of the prevailing social situation and the virtual space, which causes them to disregard their parents' rights and treat them with disrespect and humiliation. This indifference towards parents can lead to the development of negative behaviors such as indulging in lust, pornography, and unconsidered friendships (Gustavas 2014). According to this research, the virtual space is one of the main factors responsible for the intergenerational gap between parents and children in the family environment. This gap can lead to arguments and friction between fathers, mothers, and children in some families. Adolescents and young children may

not prioritize traditional and religious values and may seek freedom from religious commitments.

5. Children's Aggressive Behavior in Family

The prevalence of aggressive behavior among children is a growing concern, exacerbated by the increasing amount of time they spend online. This trend has only accelerated in recent years, leading to a rise in cyber risks such as online bullying, exposure to inappropriate content, and digital addiction. While efforts to increase awareness and implement protective measures are underway, they are not sufficient. The issue of child protection in cyberspace is urgent and requires immediate attention with more targeted responses than what we have seen so far.

Exposure to aggression, profanity, insults, sarcasm, and rude words is prevalent in the virtual space, and field research on middle school students shows a significant relationship between aggressive behavior in the family and exposure to inappropriate content such as violent movies and online bullying (Haj-Khodadadi et al., 2014). Children are often attracted to computer games, war series, and exciting clips featuring fighting and killing, and they tend to use these types of networks frequently. Without parental supervision, children can develop a habit of violence and conflict, and their behavior may become increasingly violent. For example, children coming home late at night, avoiding their parents, and associating with bad friends may be a result of their excessive use of the virtual space (Mojarradi 2012).

6. Lack of Cooperation between Parents and Children

In many families today, teenage and young children do not cooperate with their parents in managing family affairs and exhibit lazy and lethargic behavior. They often disobey their parents and reject their suggestions, even for simple tasks such as simple house errands. They show little interest in school and prefer to associate with people of problematic character. At home, they spend most of their time talking on the phone or sleeping and may behave harshly and violently with their siblings. The primary cause of such behavior is the negative influence of the virtual space, where children are attracted to harmful content, including inappropriate movies and clips that

disregard religious and Islamic values related to family and parents. Field research conducted among middle school students found that when playing online games becomes a daily habit, it can lead to harmful effects such as aggressive behavior, foul language, and laziness (Haj-Khodadadi 2014).

Solutions

In this section of the article, we will briefly discuss protective measures that can be taken to ensure the safety of the family environment, especially children, against the threats and risks posed by the virtual space.

1. Parents' True Love for Their Children

The family environment is the foundation of love and friendship between parents and children, where children's emotional and moral character is shaped. A strong and genuine bond between parents and children has a profound impact on their material and spiritual well-being. While parents naturally love their children, this relationship can weaken due to various factors. Therefore, it is essential to strengthen and cultivate love among family members, as emphasized by Ayatollah Khamenei. The key to solving family problems lies in the real love and affection between family members. According to the Supreme Leader, both the husband and wife should love and respect each other (Khamenei, December 15, 1992). Love in the family should grow with each passing day, and parents have the responsibility to promote it to gain the trust of their children.

Establishing a genuine and strong bond of love between parents and children is a proactive solution to ensure children's safety and well-being. When children feel that their biological parents are their true supporters, they are more likely to trust them in their lives. This kind of love fosters mutual respect, trust, and affection between parents and children, enabling them to develop healthy relationships. Children will then respect their parents, listen to their instructions, and incorporate them into their daily lives. As a result, their inclination towards the virtual space will decrease, and they will be under the complete guidance of their families. Experience has shown that many children who were previously aggressive and opposed to their parents changed their behavior

with the love and kindness of their parents and turned towards the path of Islam and Islamic ethics (Professors of the Comprehensive Plan of Family Education, 2006, 23).

2. The Bond between Parents and Children

The strong bond and close relationship between parents and children go beyond mere affection and have practical implications, particularly in family decision-making and planning. When children participate in family affairs and parents consult with them, they develop trust and a deeper sense of attachment to their families. This mutual trust between father and child reduces the risks associated with cyberspace and solves many problems. With real love and intimacy between family members, as well as participation in family activities, recreational trips both inside and outside the city, and efforts to create a suitable educational and spiritual environment, children's inclination towards the virtual space gradually decreases. Unemployment, lack of facilities, and an intergenerational gap in the family are among the main factors that drive children towards cyberspace. Initially, they may enter social networks for entertainment, but it can quickly become a permanent habit and source of amusement. Healthy relationships between parents and children can alleviate the problems of unemployment and feelings of isolation that affect many families today, and eventually eliminate them altogether (Zandi and Rezaei, 2015).

Establishing a deep bond between parents and children is a solution to many of the problems that families face today. Educational experts suggest that face-to-face conversations between parents and children play a fundamental role in creating an emotional and intimate connection between them. Dialogue is a model that forms the emotional atmosphere governing the interpersonal relationships of the family and deepens the bond between family members. Listening and sympathizing, which are crucial aspects of conversation, lead to mutual understanding and reciprocity (Pourhossein 2017, 198). Ultimately, creating a strong bond of love between parents and children is the way forward in family matters. It renders harmful factors ineffective since the harmony and agreement of family members pave the way for productive family activities and prevent unplanned and hazardous access to the virtual space.

3. Effective Parental Care

One of the crucial responsibilities of parents in the family environment is to take care of their children and monitor their behavior. As mentioned in a famous hadith from Prophet Muhammad (s), parents should take care of their children, just as

a shepherd takes care of his herd (Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj 1412 AH, 3:1459; Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī 1420 AH, 3: 130). Just as a shepherd never neglects his duty to protect and look after his flock for a moment, parents should also be vigilant in taking care of their children. Taking care of children is an educational method mentioned in the Quran (4: 1). When a child feels that there is someone who monitors their behavior, they are less likely to deviate and commit any wrongdoing. Therefore, care and supervision, as emphasized by the Quran and traditions, is an essential educational method. Imam ʿAlī (a), an exemplary and compassionate teacher of all people, warns against sinning in private places. This is because "the witness is the judge" (Nahj al-Balāgha, saying 324). Today's witness is the arbiter and teacher of the Day of Resurrection.

Effective and proper care of children cannot be achieved through ill-behavior, violence, or foul language. Inappropriate behavior towards children can result in negative reactions and stubbornness, which defeats the purpose of caregiving. Therefore, parents should take care of their children in a kind, friendly, and tolerant manner, which is more helpful and constructive. According to Imam ʿAlī (a), "Humans are the servants of good treatment" (Āmidī 1994, hadith no. 163). In fact, one reason for the growth of love is kindness or good treatment because humans. The human heart is designed to love those who do good and despise those who do evil. Rational and loving parents tend to have obedient children who get along with them. Consequently, a suitable environment is created in the family, and the negative effects of cyberspace are prevented. Effective care of children with affection and love is one of the essential ways to prevent and treat cultural and social harm that may be inflicted on them. Some educational experts suggest that if parents provide their child with a phone for virtual learning, they must ensure that it is healthy and that the child does not have access to VPN or inappropriate social networks. Additionally, the family should establish a limited time frame for internet use and not allow unlimited access, such as seventy or one hundred gigabytes of internet per month (see Young Journalists Club).

4. Strengthening Moral Values in Children

The fundamental solution to protect children from the threats of

cyberspace and negative cultural and social factors is to raise them with a strong belief in moral values. This will instill in them the need to apply these virtues in their lives and avoid vices in their actions, ensuring their intellectual and practical well-being. With such positivity, the young generation can guide society and the family towards moral values. Parents have a significant responsibility to ensure that their children can safely access the internet and its valuable resources. They must be aware of the risks associated with children using online services, including exposure to inappropriate material such as pornography and other obscenities. In the event that children are caught using inappropriate things, they should be treated and protected. Allowing children to make appropriate use of the virtual space is also a parental duty to control their behavior and help them use this space correctly (see Bangston, et al. 2013, 495).

Promoting moral values among today's young generation is a challenging task, requiring an understanding of the child's nature and awareness of appropriate educational methods. This enables the selection of the most suitable approach to educate children both mentally and spiritually. When done correctly, parents and children are freed from the worry and fear of cyberspace risks. The root of religious values lies in the nature and essence of young Muslims, as emphasized in the Quran: "But Allah has endeared the Faith to you, and has made it beautiful in your hearts" (Quran 49: 7).

The greatest blessing that God has bestowed upon His servants is to beautify their hearts with the light of faith and moral virtues. This blessing requires protection and nurturing to grow and become effective.

5. Monotheistic Education of Children

Religious and monotheistic education of children is the fundamental solution against the threats of cyberspace and other sources that endanger them. This education should start in the family environment and continue through school and university. Ayatollah Khamenei emphasizes the importance of monotheistic education to ensure the mental and spiritual well-being of the young generation. According to him, a person with a monotheistic belief moves forward based on their beliefs and stands steadfast in the face of deviations in various aspects of life (Khamenei, April 27, 2004). Ayatollah Khamenei's emphasis on deep-rooted religious beliefs and his description of a believer as a persevering and unwavering individual encountering events and changes indicates that education

should focus on deepening religious and monotheistic thought in trainees. It is easier to deepen belief during childhood and adolescence than during teenage and adulthood.

The most effective way to prevent cyberspace from becoming a source of danger within the family environment is by providing children with a monotheistic upbringing that emphasizes Islamic and moral values. This can make them strong and resistant against the negative influences of Western culture and the virtual space. Monotheistic belief makes one dependent on God, in which case the heart will be free from any slippage or wavering. A true believer always remembers God and understands the essential relationship between creatures and God. The Quran commands mankind to remember God often in their lives: "And remember God often" (Quran 3: 41). Remembering God creates a permanent bond with the Creator and provides immunity from mishaps (see Mūʿin 2008, 100). Parents should instill in their children a deep and firm belief in monotheism and the principles of Islam so that they do not waver in the face of harmful factors such as cyberspace. When parents are familiar with Islam and educational methods, they can start the religious and monotheistic upbringing of their children in the family environment and continue it during their education in school and university.

6. Introducing Worthy Role Models to Children

One of the most effective educational methods is to introduce a role model to the trainee. This encourages them to assimilate and follow their way of life. To counteract the negative role models presented in the virtual space, it is essential to introduce appropriate religious role models to children. This not only satisfies their instinct for a role model but also completes the educational process. Model-based education, accompanied by objective and concrete examples presented to the learner, can have a better impact on their character. God Almighty introduces the person of the Prophet Muhammad (s) as a good example for everyone to follow (Quran 33: 21) so that they can emulate his behavior in their own lives. It is important for children to first identify and then assimilate the chosen role model, so that their development is in harmony with both the material and spiritual aspects of the model.

Appropriate role models can be identified from the Quran and Hadith and introduced to the children, just as the Quran has done this and introduced pious people such as Prophet Yūsuf (a) to the young generation by mentioning his life story (Sūra Yūsuf). It is also possible to introduce models from the present era to the children, as there is no shortage of examples of good role models in the Islamic society today. As an example,

the great religious authorities, especially Ayatollah Khamenei, who are suitable models for families, fathers, mothers, and children, can be introduced to them. For example, the leader's and his family's normative conduct in terms of reading books and studying religious texts is the best model to protect the family against the harms of cyberspace (Khamenei, May 16, 1995). If the young generation is introduced to the practical lifestyle of people like Commander Soleimani, it will be very effective. What is important is that the normative conduct of these nobles in relation to the virtual space and what they used this space for should be explained to the learners (see Manẓūma Soleimani 2021). Further, the introduction of these role models, their way of life, and their activities in the virtual space will definitely have a profound constructive impact on the children's lives, as it will protect them from social and cultural evils such as those coming from the virtual space.

Conclusion

This study sheds light on significant points related to the religious education of the family and the challenges posed by cyberspace. It is crucial for families to foster the components of religious education through awareness and the use of effective educational methods. In modern times, cyberspace has become an integral part of everyday life, making it difficult to escape its effects. The only option is to control it and purposefully use the information and knowledge available in this space. One of the most significant impacts of cyberspace is the undermining of the family's religiosity, morality, and traditional values passed down through generations. Weakening the religious beliefs of parents and children is the most fundamental harm inflicted through cyberspace, affecting the young generation both emotionally and behaviorally. The most effective way to prevent or mitigate the risks of cyberspace is through religious education and teaching children faith. Effective management, affection, intimacy, consultation, and introduction of good role models are useful ways to avert the dangers of the virtual space, protecting the family against the risks posed by cyberspace.

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