Parental Role Modeling in the Digital Age: Navigating Challenges and Promoting Positive Influence on the child

نمذجة دور الوالدين في العصر الرقمي للتغلب على التحديات
وتعزيز التأثير الإيجابي على الطفل

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Abstract (English):

The study aims to explore the challenges parents face in dealing with digital technology and its impact on their children. It focuses on how parents can serve as positive role models for their children's. It addresses key items regarding strategies for parental guidance, and the role of digital citizenship. The study identifies effective approaches, including open communication, setting clear boundaries, and serving as positive role models. It emphasizes the importance of both internal and external communication, and providing a secure online environment. Overall, the study underscores the significance of parental involvement in fostering positive digital behaviors among digitods.

Keywords: Parental Role; Digital Age; Digitod, Child; Digital Parenting.

ملخص باللغة العربية

تهدف الدراسة إلى استكشاف التحديات التي يواجهها الوالدين في العالم الرقمي وتأثيرها على الأطفال. تتناول الدراسة مجموعة من العناصر الأساسية حول استراتيجيات الابوة الرقمية، خصائص الأطفال في العالم الرقمي، المخاطر المحتملة للعالم الرقمي على الطفل وطرق واستراتيجيات الابوة الرقمية للتعامل مع الأطفال، تقترح الدراسة افي الأخير مجموعة من الحلول الفعالة للتعامل مع الديجيتود كفتح قنوات التواصل، ورسم حدود واضحة للطفل، وتبني دور إيجابي اي التربية بالقدوة ورفع الوعي بمخاطر العالم الرقمي، كما أكدت الدراسة على المواطنة الرقمية كحل نموذجي للأبوة الرقمية.

كلمات مفتاحية: دور الوالدين؛ العصر الرقمي؛ الديجيتود؛ الطفل؛ الأبوة الرقمية.

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1- Introduction

In today's fast-paced digital era, cutting-edge technology is deeply woven into the fabric of our daily routines. Moreover, this new age has redefined communication norms and social interactions. Social media platforms have become an integral tool for engagement and connection among people, promoting the exchange of ideas and information. As face-to-face communication takes a backseat in favor of texting, voice calls, and video conferences, the digital landscape presents both

opportunities and pitfalls. Immense potential for global networking, knowledge exchange, and innovative thinking coexists with the cumbersome task of navigating digital hazards and adopting responsible online behavior. Unquestionably, the digital age has transformed children's lives, redefining how they communicate, learn, and connect with their surroundings. Devices like smartphones, tablets, and computers provide youngsters with an abundant supply of information access points, entertainment options, and social interactions from just about anywhere.

Research reveals that technology's impact on children cuts both ways — offering positive experiences while posing potential dangers. Positively speaking, these advancements provide unparalleled educational prospects - equipping children with useful resources that enhance interactive learning experiences while nurturing essential skills in information gathering and digital literacy. Additionally, global connectivity fosters cross-cultural understanding by allowing children to interact with peers from diverse locations and backgrounds. (Livingstone & Smith, 2014)

Despite the numerous advantages of children's digital interactions, potential hazards such as exposure to unsuitable materials, cyberbullying, privacy issues, and the effects of excessive screen time on their physical and emotional well-being cannot be ignored. To tackle these obstacles, it is crucial for parents to actively participate and guide their children through the digital world. By educating them on responsible online conduct, setting suitable limits, and promoting open dialogue, parents can greatly impact their children's digital lives. Staying updated with current trends, actively monitoring their activities, and balancing screen time with other pursuits are essential actions parents should take. for this parenting has become more complex and challenging due to the pervasive presence of technology in children's lives. The rapid advancement of digital devices and online platforms has transformed the way children learn, play, and interact with the world. In this context, the role of parental guidance and role modeling becomes even more crucial in shaping a child's development and ensuring their well-being in the digital realm. As the primary influencers in their children's lives, parents must acknowledge their actions regarding technology usage. Kids mimic their parents' behavior—how they use devices, interact online, and handle technology in day-to-day life.

In addition, helping kids steer through the potential risks of the digital world requires constant parental guidance. It is important for parents to have open discussions with their kids about topics like online safety, privacy measures, and critical thinking when consume

ng digital content. Through a nurturing and non-judgmental atmosphere at home, parents can empower their children to make well-informed decisions while building resilience against online threats.

The main question posed by this study is: What is the role of parental modeling in the digital age for navigating challenges and promoting positive ?

It emerges from a range of sub-questions:

- What is parental accompaniment in the digital world ?

- What are the characteristics of children in the digital world?

- What are the potential risks of the digital world for a child?

- What are the methods and strategies of parental accompaniment to deal with children in the digital world?

1-1- Highlights:

The study aims to explore the challenges that parents face in dealing with digital technology and its impact on their children, and how parents can be positive role models and have a positive impact on their children's behavior and development. Some of the study's objectives include:

- determine best practices that parents can adopt to enhance their positive influence on their children, such as setting clear boundaries for technology use and promoting effective communication and engagement with their children.

- Provide valuable insights and practical resources for parents and professionals in education and child development, with the goal of empowering parents to guide their children effectively in the digital age.

2- Digitods :

Many studies have proposed different terms to emphasize children's fluency in using digital technologies. In the year 2000, Bill Gates coined the term "Generation I" to capture the essence of a new breed of children who have grown up with the internet as an integral part of their lives. These digital natives were born in the post-1990s era, embracing the internet from their earliest years (Holloway, Green, & Stevenson, 2015). For instance, a private phone company named those who were born after the year 2007 as Digitods (Fidan & Olur, 2023).   When referring to "digitods" as children who use the internet, it seems to be a playful term blending "digital" and "toddlers"." It suggests young children who are growing up in a digital era and are exposed to various digital technologies and online platforms. as children who use the internet, it seems to be a playful term blending "digital" and "toddlers" or "children." It suggests young children who are growing up in a digital era and are exposed to various digital technologies and online platforms. Similarly, Prensky defines children who were born into a digital environment and can use digital devices with ease as 'digital natives'. Digital natives are believed to possess numerous skills and traits such as multitasking, cognitive flexibility, and expectance of instant gratification. Despite these attributions, children's use of digital tools and the Internet are not free of problematic issues. (Yaman, Yurdakul, Akbulut , & Dönmez, 2022).

The internet has become an integral part of children's lives in the modern age, offering a range of risks and benefits. Among the key benefits, the internet provides children with access to vast sources of knowledge and educational resources. Children can explore the world around them, enhance their research and learning skills, and broaden their horizons.

However, there are risks that parents, caregivers, and society need to be aware of. These include exposure to age-inappropriate content, such as violence or pornography. Children may also face the risks of cyberbullying and online extortion, where they can be exploited and harmed on the internet. Additionally, there can be a threat to privacy and the theft of children's personal information online. (Livingstone & Haddon, 2009)

Staksrud and colleagues classify online opportunities and risks in three categories: content, contact and conduct, as outlined in Table 1 (Livingstone, Haddon, Ólafsson, & Görzig, 2010)

Table 1. An overview of online risks and opportunities

Type of risk	The child is the:	Opportunities	Risks
Content	Recipient	● receiving advice on personal or health issues	● commercial advertising masquerading as news, or embedded marketing
Contact	Participant	● contacting others who share similar interests	● tracking or harvesting of personal information (online privacy); personal data misuse.
Conduct	Actor	● generating content and expressing identities/ideas.	● bullying or harassing others

Source:(Burns & Gottschalk, 2019)

To protect children, parents and caregivers should prioritize guiding and directing them in using the internet safely and responsibly. Parents play a crucial role in protecting their children in the digital age. It is their responsibility to establish a safe online environment and provide guidance to their children. This includes monitoring their children's internet usage, educating them about potential risks, and setting appropriate boundaries for online activities. Research shows that parental involvement and communication are essential in promoting online safety for children. (Livingstone & Helsper , 2008). Here are a studies that discuss the role of parents in protecting children from internet risks, Livingstone, S., et al (Livingstone, Haddon, Ólafsson, & Görzig, 2010) examine the risks and safety aspects of the internet from the perspective of European children. It explores the role of parents in mitigating risks and promoting online safety for their children. In this day and age, it's essential for parents to develop digital parenting skills that not only safeguard their children from online dangers but also empower them to harness the vast opportunities the internet provides.

3- The Digitod Parent

Parents in the digital age face new challenges related to communication technologies and widespread internet access. The rapid advancement of technology and the pervasive presence of digital devices have altered the parenting landscape. Recent studies have shed light on the experiences of parents navigating the digital realm. In today's digital age, parents of Digitods are often seasoned internet users who feel at ease with their kids using child-friendly touchscreen devices like Findahl. As technology is deeply intertwined in their daily lives, it helps simplify daily tasks, enhance communication with loved ones, and support them through the challenging years of raising toddlers and preschoolers.

Despite the widespread adoption of touchscreen technology among young children, some parents and caregivers are anxious about the apparent shifts they're witnessing. Their worries stem from fears of potential criticism and negative judgments regarding their parenting choices over their little one's use of these devices. Amidst conflicting expert opinions on screen time for young kids, parents and caregivers find themselves navigating the online world of parenting blogs, forums, and magazines that spark debates on the subject. Parents face the dilemma of wanting to equip their children with digital skills critical for their future while worrying about the perils of excessive exposure to digital media. Consequently, tablets become sophisticated tools that may either unlock tremendous growth in a child's intellect or push them into unfavorable territory if not used judiciously.

With over 80,000 educational apps available in the Apple App Store alone, selecting worthwhile apps can be a daunting task for parents. Nonetheless, recent research reveals that Australian children aged three to five who use touchscreen devices usually have access to an average of 5.23 apps specifically designed for them. With scarce evidence or substantiated discussions available on the topic, parents are left to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of touchscreens for their young kids independently. However, one immediate positive aspect is the ability for toddlers and preschoolers to video chat with far-flung family members – a key social benefit resulting from globalization, flexible work arrangements, and varying family situations. These evident advantages challenge previous screen-related guidelines and render them obsolete in the ever-evolving digital landscape. (Holloway, Green, & Stevenson, 2015)

4- Traditional and Digital Parenting Styles

A study by Baumrind is often (Baumrind, 1966) cited as a foundational work in the field of parenting styles. Baumrind proposed a typology of parenting styles based on two dimensions: demandingness (control) and responsiveness (warmth). Authoritative parenting, characterized by high levels of demandingness and responsiveness, has consistently been associated with positive outcomes for children, including better academic performance, social competence, and psychological well-being. On the other hand, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful parenting styles have been linked to various negative outcomes, such as low self-esteem, behavioral problems, and difficulties in interpersonal relationships. It is important to note that cultural and contextual factors may influence the manifestation and effectiveness of different parenting styles.

With the increasing prevalence of technology and online platforms, understanding effective digital parenting styles has become crucial. it is style refers to the approaches and strategies parents use to guide and

protect their children in the digital age, it styles encompass a range of approaches in managing children's online activities and ensuring their digital well-being. A study by Nikken and Jansz (Nikken & Jansz, 2014) examined the concept of digital parenting styles and identified four distinct styles: restrictive, active, technical, and laissez-faire. Restrictive digital parenting involves strict rules and limitations on children's digital access. Active digital parenting focuses on active involvement, guidance, and open communication regarding online activities. Technical digital parenting relies on using parental control tools and filtering software to regulate children's online experiences. Laissez-faire digital parenting, on the other hand, involves minimal intervention and allows children greater autonomy in their digital lives. The study found that an active digital parenting style, characterized by open communication and guidance, was associated with positive outcomes such as increased digital literacy and responsible online behavior. However, further research is needed to explore the long-term effects of different digital parenting styles on children's digital well-being.

While the following chart does not present any specific order or preferred type of parenting style, it can be helpful for parents and caregivers to position themselves.

Table 1. Traditional and Digital Parenting Styles

	Traditional parenting style	Digital parenting style
Authoritarian parents	Parents make high demands of their children yet provide very little feedback or nurturance.	Parents may provide the latest technology and apps for their child with strict rules to follow, but not provide later support or guidance.
Authoritative parents	Parents make high demands of their children but are very responsive and nurturing.	Parents will have high expectations and explain (as best as they can) online safety and screen limits, but they will allow their child to surf the net and use technology.
Permissive parents	Parents are very responsive but not very demanding of their children.	Parents will encourage their child in internet and technology use as the child wants and will advise their child to check-in if they want.
Helicopter parents	Parents hover over their children to protect them from any dangers.	Parents will have extensive rules and perhaps parental control software and close monitoring to protect their child from online dangers.
Lawnmower/ snow-plough parents	Parents clear any potential obstacles in their child's way.	Parents will be very involved in trying to remove any online discomfort, rather than focusing on resilience building.

Source: (Milovidov, JD, 2020)

The conventional parenting styles applied to children's interactions with modern communication methods haven't yielded persuasive findings. Instead of employing these wide-ranging styles, a better approach is to outline specific media-related practices, which can help uncover the relationship between parental actions and child outcomes like time spent online. Consequently, researchers have been working tirelessly to pinpoint key aspects of parental warmth and control that directly impact children's behavior on the internet or new media (Table 2). These refined internet parenting strategies are more closely associated with kids' actual digital technology usage – for instance, lower parental supervision correlates with increased online time for school-aged children. (Benedetto & Ingrassia, 2021).

Table 2. Dimensions of the internet parenting style

Style dimensions	Item (examples)
Parental control	Supervision: *"I'm around when my child surfs on the Internet"*
	Stopping internet usage: "I stop my child when he/she visits a less suitable website"
	Internet usage rules: "I limit the time my child is allowed in the Internet (e.g., only 1 h a day)"
Parental warmth	Communication: "I talk with my child about the dangers related to the Internet (costs, addiction to games, computer viruses, privacy violation, etc.)"
	Support: "I show my child "child friendly" websites (library, songs, crafts, school, etc.)"

Source : (Benedetto & Ingrassia, 2021)

5- Digital parenting strategies

Digital parenting involves implementing strategies to guide and protect children in their use of technology. Here are some strategies for digital parenting:

5-1- **Open communication:** Establish an open and ongoing dialogue with your children about technology. Encourage them to share their online experiences, concerns, and questions. This will help build trust and allow you to address any potential issues or risks effectively. (Livingstone & Helsper, 2010)

5-2- **Set clear rules and boundaries:** Establish clear guidelines for technology use, including screen time limits, appropriate content, and online behavior. Ensure your children understand and follow these rules consistently. Consider using parental control software or settings to help enforce these boundaries. (Hill, et al., 2016)

5-3- **Educate about online safety:** Teach your children about online safety, such as the importance of protecting personal information, recognizing and avoiding online threats, and reporting any suspicious or inappropriate behavior. Help them develop critical thinking skills to evaluate information found online. (National Cyber Security Alliance, s.d.)

5-4- **Lead by example:** Be a positive role model for your children in your own technology use. Demonstrate responsible digital behavior, such as practicing healthy screen time habits, being mindful of your online interactions, and respecting others' privacy. (Rideout, 2015)

5-5- **Foster digital literacy:** Teach your children digital literacy skills to navigate technology effectively. This includes teaching them about reliable sources of information, understanding digital footprints, and promoting responsible social media use. (Buckingham, 2008)

5-6- **Monitor and supervise**: Regularly monitor your children's online activities, including the websites they visit, social media accounts, and the apps they use. Use age-appropriate monitoring tools and keep devices in shared spaces to supervise their online behavior. (Palfrey, 2008)

5-7- **Encourage balanced activities:** Encourage your children to engage in a variety of activities beyond screens, such as physical exercise, hobbies, reading, and face-to-face social interactions. Help them find a healthy balance between online and offline activities. (Hill, et al., 2016)

5-8- **Stay informed and updated:** Keep yourself informed about the latest trends and technologies to better understand the digital landscape your children are navigating. Stay updated on privacy settings, popular apps, and emerging online risks to address them proactively. (Sonia Livingstone, 2017)

5-9- **Critical thinking:** Critical thinking is the ability to analyze and reflect upon what to do (before acting) and it is an invaluable skill for parents and children alike. Parents can use this deeper reflection to decide whether their family needs that new device, game, app, robot or technology. Once parents decide affirmatively to purchase a new technology or device, they can think of ways to use it safely and responsibly, seeking ways to maximize privacy and data protection settings, and defining when and for how long digital technologies may be used. (Milovidov, JD, 2020)

5-10- **Digital Citizenship Education:** is important because it equips individuals, including children, with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to navigate the digital world responsibly, safely, and ethically. Here are some reasons why Digital Citizenship Education is valuable:

5-10-1- **Responsible Digital Behavior:** Digital Citizenship Education promotes responsible and ethical use of technology. It teaches children about respecting others' privacy, avoiding plagiarism, practicing good digital etiquette, and being mindful of their online reputation. This helps children develop integrity and empathy in their online interactions.

5-10-2- **Positive Digital Footprint:** Digital Citizenship Education emphasizes the importance of creating a positive digital footprint. Children learn to showcase their talents, skills, and achievements online in a responsible and constructive manner, while also understanding the potential consequences of their online actions. (Ribble, 2015) (UNESCO, 2011)

That digital parenting is an ongoing process that requires adapting strategies as technology evolves. By staying involved and engaged in your children's digital lives, you can promote their safety, well-being, and responsible technology use.

6- Conclusion:

The study emphasizes that parents play a crucial role in guiding their children's digital behaviors and addressing the challenges they face by adopting effective strategies such as open communication, setting clear

boundaries. And being positive digital role models, parents can promote responsible digital behavior among their children. Furthermore, the article underscores the significance of creating a safe and secure digital environment for children, this includes raising parents' awareness of digital risks and providing guidance on how to navigate them. It also emphasizes the role of digital citizenship education in equipping digitods with the necessary skills and knowledge to engage with technology in a responsible and ethical manner. As the study notes that parental accompaniment and positive role modeling are key factors in promoting positive influence and ensuring the well-being of children in the digital age by actively engaging with their children's digital lives, fostering open communication and help shape their children's digital behaviors and guide them towards responsible and beneficial use of technology.

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