

Global perspectives on digital parenting: Challenges and opportunities in improving family well-being

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Abstract. This narrative review examines global perspectives on digital parenting, focusing on the challenges and opportunities in enhancing family well-being through digital technologies. It synthesises study findings from leading international journals, highlighting digital technologies' positive and negative impacts on family dynamics, children's education and mental health. On the positive side, digital technologies can significantly enhance families' educational and communication opportunities. However, digital technologies also have considerable risks, such as increased screen time, lower happiness, exposure to inappropriate content, and challenges in maintaining healthy family dynamics. Parents need help managing their children's digital use due to a lack of digital literacy and effective monitoring tools. Effective strategies identified include improving digital literacy among parents, developing clear family policies on technology use, and encouraging shared use of media technologies. These strategies help balance the benefits and risks of digital technology, thereby promoting overall family well-being.

1 Introduction

Digital parenting has become an increasingly relevant topic in this modern era, where digital technology and the internet have become integral to everyday life. Digital technology should support child development and family well-being. With extensive access to information, innovative educational tools, and communication platforms facilitating interaction between family members, digital technology has great potential to enrich family life [1, 2]. However, reality shows that digital technology also brings significant challenges that parents worldwide must face.

A key issue in digital parenting is how parents can effectively manage their children's use of digital technology. Children today grow up in an environment filled with digital devices such as smartphones, tablets, and computers, which offer unlimited access to information and entertainment [3]. However, without proper guidance, the use of these

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technologies can pose risks to children's development, including screen addiction, sleep disturbances, and exposure to inappropriate content [4].

The factors leading to these problems vary, but some of them include a lack of digital literacy among parents, a lack of effective regulation, and unequal access to technology [5]. Digital literacy, or the ability to use digital technology effectively and safely, is essential for parents to be able to guide their children. Unfortunately, many parents do not have sufficient knowledge or skills to understand the risks and benefits of digital technology [1]. A study by Stoilova et al. [1] shows that parents often need more control or influence over their children's online activities.

Current regulations are often not strong enough to protect children from digital risks. Despite efforts from governments and non-governmental organisations to develop better policies, implementation often needs to be more cohesive and effective [5-8]. For example, some countries have implemented strict online privacy and child safety regulations, while others still need more adequate policies. Research by Symons et al. [5] found that strong regulations and effective parental supervision can reduce the risk of exposure to harmful content and risky behaviour online.

The urgency of this paper lies in the need to identify and address the challenges that families face in the digital age. Therefore, the following Research Questions (RQ) can be formulated.

Research Questions (RQ): What are the opportunities and challenges of digital parenting in improving family welfare?

This paper also aims to provide valuable insights into best practices and innovations in digital parenting that can be applied across different cultural, social and economic contexts [9-14]. In addition, parents, educators, and policymakers can use these findings to develop better strategies for managing digital technologies at home and in school. Ultimately, this will help improve family well-being and support healthy and balanced child development in an increasingly digital world [15, 16].

2 Methods

This narrative review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of global perspectives on digital parenting and the challenges and opportunities in improving family well-being. The narrative review method was chosen for its flexibility in combining multiple sources of information and its ability to provide rich and in-depth analyses of complex topics [17]. The research design used in this narrative review is descriptive and exploratory. A narrative review differs from a systematic review in its more flexible and descriptive approach, which allows for the integrating of multiple perspectives and findings from the relevant literature [17]. This study did not follow a strict protocol like a systematic review but still maintained rigour in the selection and analysis of literature.

Furthermore, the main data sources for this narrative review were reputable international journal articles, books and other relevant academic sources. The literature search was conducted through major academic databases such as PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science and Google Scholar. Only literature from reputable sources was considered to ensure the relevance and accuracy of the data. In this study, the data collection process involved several stages. The first stage was a literature search, which included keywords such as 'digital parenting,' 'family well-being,' 'technology,' 'screen time,' and 'child development.' This keyword search can be seen in Figure 1.

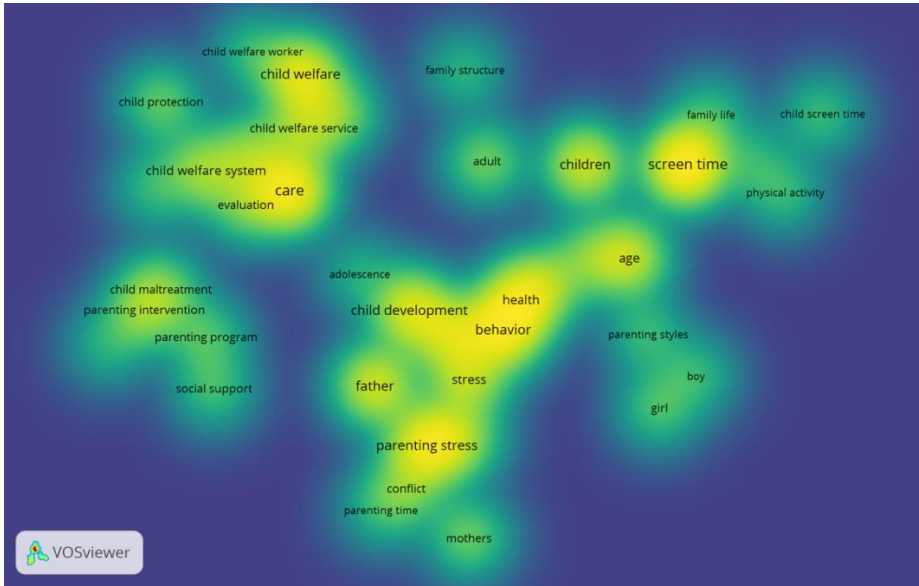


Fig. 1. Keyword search results

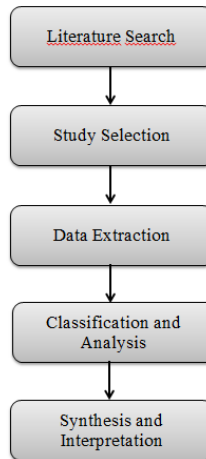


Fig. 2. Research Stages

The collected data were analysed through several stages. Before analysis, the research data was searched using reputable databases, such as PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. Next, the data were selected and extracted by considering the relevance to the topic, methodological quality, and significant contribution to the understanding of digital parenting. The selected and extracted data were then classified based on key themes, such as the impact of digital technology on child development, challenges faced by parents, and effective digital parenting strategies. These data were then synthesised and thematically analysed to identify patterns, trends and gaps in the literature. In addition, the findings were interpreted to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of existing studies and identify practical implications and future research directions. The stages of this research can be seen in Figure 2.

3 Result and Discussion

3.1 The impact of digital technology on family welfare

Research findings show that digital technology significantly impacts family well-being, both positively and negatively. The studies reviewed in this article highlight various aspects of the impact of digital technology, ranging from children's education to family dynamics and mental health.

The use of digital technology in education has been shown to provide significant benefits. Cheung and Slavin [2] found that educational technology can improve children's academic performance by providing additional resources and innovative learning methods. Livingstone et al. [18] also emphasised that access to online educational resources can expand learning opportunities, especially for children in remote areas. Pouwels et al. [4] note that digital technology helps children develop new skills relevant to the digital age, such as programming and digital literacy.

However, there are also challenges associated with using digital technology in education. For example, McDaniel et al. [19] pointed out that parental involvement in using educational apps is crucial to ensure their effectiveness. With proper guidance, children can fully benefit from these technologies. Greenfield [20] added that while educational video games can improve problem-solving skills, there is a risk of addiction if their use is not controlled.

Digital technology also significantly impacts family dynamics. Pouwels [4] found that online communication can strengthen family relationships by facilitating more frequent and meaningful interactions. Anderson and Jiang [21] mentioned that parents who engage in online activities with their children tend to have closer and more harmonious relationships. Connell et al. [22] added that parents' and children's joint use of media technology can increase emotional attachment and provide direct opportunities to teach important values.

However, not all digital technology impacts family dynamics positively. Stoilova [1] emphasises that negative or inappropriate content exposure can damage parent-child relationships. For example, if children are exposed to violent or pornographic content, this can create tension within the family and affect children's behaviour. In addition, Strasburger et al. [23] pointed out that excessive social media use can disrupt in-person interactions within the family, reducing the quality of time spent together and increasing feelings of isolation among family members.

In terms of mental health, the impact of digital technology varies widely. Twenge and Campbell [3] found that children who spend more time in front of screens tend to have lower levels of happiness and are more prone to psychological problems such as depression and anxiety. Their research showed a strong correlation between the duration of screen time and decreased psychological well-being in children and adolescents. Donnelly and Kuss [24] also showed that social media addiction is associated with increased depressive symptoms in adolescents, which negative social comparisons and cyberbullying can cause.

In addition, uncontrolled use of digital technology can cause sleep disturbances in children, affecting their overall mental health [25-32]. Sleep disturbances can lead to concentration problems, irritability and other long-term health issues. O'Keeffe and Clarke-Pearson [33] added that social media can negatively impact children's self-esteem and body image, especially through exposure to unrealistic beauty standards and pressure to gain social validation through 'likes' and comments.

However, if used wisely, digital technology can also support children's mental health. Valkenburg and Peter [34] emphasise that digital technologies can provide resources and support to help children overcome psychological problems and improve their well-being. For example, mental health apps and online counselling platforms can be valuable tools for children who need help but may not have access to traditional mental health services.

3.2 Challenges parents face in digital parenting

Parents worldwide face various challenges in managing their children's use of digital technology. One of the main challenges is the need for digital literacy among parents. Many parents need to gain the knowledge or skills to understand the risks and benefits of digital technology, making it difficult to provide effective guidance to their children [1].

Symons et al. [5] highlighted the lack of effective regulations to protect children from digital risks. While governments and non-governmental organisations have tried to develop better policies, their implementation could be more balanced and effective. For example, while some countries have implemented strict online privacy and child safety regulations, others still need more adequate policies. This creates an unsafe environment for children using the internet and social media.

Unequal access to technology is also a significant challenge in digital parenting. Chaudron et al. [35] point out that access to digital technology is still limited in many areas, especially in remote or developing areas, and needs to be improved. This creates a digital divide, affecting parents' ability to guide their children effectively and children's access to educational resources and information necessary for development.

In addition, Holloway et al. [36] emphasised that parents often need help to monitor their children's online activities effectively. Although various monitoring apps are available, many parents feel they need more control or influence over their children's online activities. This challenge is compounded by the rapid development of technology, making it difficult for many parents to stay updated with the latest trends and risks. Effective monitoring requires a deep understanding of how children use technology and the risks they face.

O'Keeffe and Clarke-Pearson [33] added that balancing screen time and physical activity is another major challenge in digital parenting. Excessive use of digital technology can interfere with children's physical and social activities, thus negatively affecting their physical and mental health. Parents often face a dilemma when setting limits on screen time, especially when the technology is used for important educational or social purposes.

3.3 Effective digital parenting strategies

Despite the many challenges, parents can utilise various strategies to manage their children's use of digital technology more effectively. One key strategy is to improve digital literacy among parents. By understanding the risks and benefits of digital technology, parents can provide more effective guidance to their children [37-41].

Anderson and Jiang [21] recommended monitoring apps to track children's online activities. These apps allow parents to monitor their children's internet usage, set screen time limits, and block inappropriate content. However, parents should use these apps as tools rather than as a substitute for effective communication and guidance. Monitoring apps should be transparent and collaborative so that children understand the importance of safe and responsible use of technology.

Chaudron et al. [35] emphasise the importance of developing a family policy on digital technology. This policy can include rules on screen time, types of content that can be accessed, and guidelines on safe online behaviour. By having clear policies, parents can provide the necessary structure and boundaries to help children use digital technology wisely. These policies can also be the basis for family discussions about technology use and addressing issues that arise.

Holloway et al. [36] also highlighted the importance of encouraging joint use of media technologies between parents and children. Joint use, or shared use of media technology, can increase emotional attachment and allow parents to provide direct guidance in using

technology safely and responsibly. Co-use also allows parents to monitor and understand their children's online activities and share positive experiences of using technology together.

O'Keeffe and Clarke-Pearson [33] recommend setting screen time limits and ensuring children have sufficient time for physical and social activities. Parents can help children balance their technology use with other important developmental activities by setting screen time limits. It is also important to provide engaging alternatives for children to spend their time, such as outdoor activities, sports, and social interactions with peers.

3.4 Practical implications

The findings from this narrative review show that digital technology significantly impacts family well-being, both positively and negatively. While digital technology can greatly benefit education and communication, some risks must be addressed, especially mental health and family dynamics [41, 42].

Parents need help to manage their children's use of digital technology. This includes overcoming a lack of digital literacy, inadequate regulation, and difficulties monitoring their children's online activities. However, various strategies can be used to overcome these challenges, such as improving digital literacy among parents, using monitoring apps, developing family policies on digital technology use, encouraging shared use of media technologies, and setting screen time limits [43-45].

The practical implications of these findings are significant for parents, educators and policymakers. By understanding the challenges and opportunities in digital parenting, they can develop more effective strategies to support family well-being in the digital age. In addition, further research is needed to continue exploring the impact of digital technologies and develop new approaches to help families meet these challenges. The findings also emphasise the importance of collaboration among various stakeholders, including governments, educational institutions and non-governmental organisations, to create a safe and supportive digital environment for children.

4 Conclusion

In conclusion, this narrative review highlights the significant impact of digital technologies on family well-being, revealing both benefits and challenges. While digital technologies can enhance children's education and strengthen family relationships through innovative learning methods and improved communication, they also pose risks to mental health and family dynamics, such as increased screen time leading to reduced happiness and potential exposure of children to harmful content. Parents face various challenges in digital parenting, including the need for digital literacy and effective monitoring strategies. However, by improving digital literacy, developing family policies on technology use, and encouraging shared media use, parents can better manage their children's digital experiences, balancing the advantages of digital technology with the need to protect and promote overall family well-being. Further research is needed to explore these dynamics and develop new strategies to support families in the digital age.

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