

Children in the Digital World from a Parental Perspective: A Scoping Review

Ebeveyn Bakış Açısıyla Dijital Dünyada Çocuklar: Bir Kapsam Derlemesi

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ÖZ

Bu kapsam derlemesi, ebeveynlerin çocuklarının dijital medya ile kurdukları etkileşimleri nasıl algıladıklarını, bu süreci nasıl yönettiklerini incelemektedir. Derleme, ebeveynlerin dijital okuryazarlık düzeyleri, kullandıkları kontrol stratejileri ve çocukların ekran kullanım alışkanlıkları arasındaki ilişkiye odaklanmaktadır. 2016–2024 yılları arasında yayımlanmış 23 hakemli çalışmanın analiziyle oluşturulan bulgular, çocukların dijital medyayı hem eğlence hem de eğitim amacıyla nasıl kullandıklarını, ebeveynlerin aşırı ekran süresine dair risk algılarını, ebeveyn rollerinin kural koyuculuktan dijital rehberliğe nasıl evrildiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Çocukların ekran süresi, yalnızca dijital araçlara erişimlerine değil, ebeveynlerin farkındalık düzeylerine, denetim ve sınır koyma yaklaşımlarına da bağlı olarak şekillenmektedir. Aşırı, düzensiz ekran kullanımı, aile içi iletişimi, çocukların fiziksel, psikolojik gelişimini ve akademik performanslarını olumsuz etkileyebilmektedir. Ayrıca otoriter ebeveynlik tarzlarının çocuklarda direnç ve ekran başında geçirilen sürede artışa yol açtığı belirtilmektedir. Buna karşılık, destekleyici ve dijital açıdan bilgili ebeveynler çevrimiçi tehditlerle daha etkili şekilde başa çıkabilmektedir. Derleme; kültürel çeşitliliğin, medya türlerine özgü farklılıkların yeterince ele alınmadığını kabul ederek, gelecekte bu boşlukların giderilmesini önermektedir.

ABSTRACT

This scoping review examines how parents perceive, manage their children's interactions with digital media. The review focuses on the relationship between parents' digital literacy levels, control strategies, and children's screen time habits. Based on the analysis of 23 peer-reviewed studies published between 2016–2024, the findings reveal how children use digital media for entertainment and educational purposes, how parents perceive the risks associated with excessive screen time, how parental roles have shifted from rule enforcers to digital guides. Children's screen time is shaped by their access to digital devices, their parents' level of awareness, supervision approaches, and boundary-setting practices. Excessive, unstructured screen use can negatively impact family communication, children's physical, psychological development, and academic performance. Moreover, authoritarian parenting styles are noted to increase children's resistance and the amount of time spent in front of screens. In contrast, supportive and digitally literate parents effectively manage online threats. The review also acknowledges a lack of focus on cultural diversity, differences across digital media types, recommending that future research address these gaps.

1. Introduction

Digital technology in daily life has exposed children to smart devices at increasingly younger ages. This early exposure significantly influences their growth and learning. If used mindfully, technology can contribute positively to children's growth in digital understanding, problem-solving, early literacy, language skills, emotional development, and science-related knowledge (Soyoof et

al., 2023; Haddock et al., 2022). Technology can also support children in forming social connections, enhancing their learning processes, and obtaining important health information, all of which contribute to their long-term growth (Cullen et al., 2024). Despite its benefits, digital engagement also carries potential risks. Overdependence on screens may contribute to behavioral difficulties such as increased irritability and social disengagement, physical

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health concerns like disrupted sleep patterns and eye fatigue, as well as emotional challenges, including heightened anxiety and low mood. Children may also face risks like cyberbullying and increased feelings of social anxiety (Lamsal & Gurung, 2022; Pandey & Vaishnav, 2023). Therefore, ensuring a healthy balance enables children to benefit from technology while minimizing its potential harms. There is growing attention on understanding how technology affects family interactions, with a specific emphasis on parent-child relationships. Factors such as parenting approaches, emotional tone at home, and everyday routines greatly shape a child's growth (Li, 2024; Bush et al., 2020). Monitoring screen time is not enough; we must educate children on navigating the digital world wisely and help them establish effective boundaries. A parent-focused approach can make a substantial difference. Bandura's Social Cognitive framework emphasizes that children develop skills by watching and modelling the behaviors of others within their environment. Therefore, when parents demonstrate a constructive approach to technology, their children are more likely to engage with it in healthy and beneficial ways. Conversely, parents who are overly worried about online risks may become excessively controlling, which can have negative consequences (Fidan & Seferoğlu, 2020; Tomczyk & Potyrała, 2021). Improving parents' digital skills is crucial for guiding their children effectively (Banić & Orehovački, 2024). Parents also act as digital role models. By modeling responsible online behavior and fostering open communication, parents can support their children in feeling secure and self-assured in digital environments (Harris & Jacobs, 2022; Oshodi et al., 2024). Studies indicate that when parents engage in "active mediation" by talking about their children's digital experiences, it can promote higher levels of happiness and reduce social media dependency. In contrast, overly strict or controlling mediation increases screen time and social media use (Rudnova et al., 2023). A parent's digital awareness is strongly tied to their competence in supporting their child's online journey (Pisarenko & Zaichenko, 2021).

Children's increasing engagement with digital devices is raising concerns, yet the phenomenon of digital addiction remains insufficiently explored. Although earlier research primarily focused on internal or psychological factors, newer studies highlight that elements like parental engagement and household income also play a role. For instance, aspects like strict parenting, a lack of digital knowledge, and high academic pressure in low-income

households can contribute to a child's stress related to screens (Akaroğlu, 2022; Keya et al., 2020; Lim & Jeong, 2022; Murtaza & Molnár, 2021; Li et al., 2024). An integrated strategy that promotes children's digital literacy, empowers parents through education, fosters stronger family connections, and encourages active parental engagement is needed (Ding & Li, 2023). This study delves into parental perceptions and regulatory practices around engagement, considering both the function of this engagement (e.g., for educational or leisure purposes) and its impact on digital skill development. By reviewing the latest research, the study aims to emphasize parents' crucial role in addressing modern digital issues, such as online violence and excessive technology use, and provide direction for rethinking family-focused interventions and education policies moving forward.

2. Methodology

In contrast to systematic reviews, scoping reviews typically aim to adopt a more comprehensive perspective rather than narrowly emphasizing a specific aspect of the issue. They are designed to explore research inquiries and draw from various methods and sources (Peters et al., 2021; Sharma & Goyal, 2023). Due to their flexibility, scoping reviews are increasingly valuable tools for shaping policies and informing decision-making (Peters et al., 2021; Samuel, 2023). They are particularly effective for addressing new or complex topics, as they help synthesize diverse pieces of literature and present findings in a clear and accessible manner (Maggio et al., 2020; Sabiston et al., 2022). In this study, we adhered to the PRISMA-ScR guidelines—an extension of the PRISMA framework specifically designed for scoping reviews—to ensure a transparent and structured reporting process (Tricco et al., 2018).

2.1. Research Questions and Objectives

Based on item 3 (Rationale) of the PRISMA-ScR guidelines, this study has chosen to conduct a scoping review for several reasons. Firstly, the topic is highly multidimensional, encompassing various interconnected areas such as the influence of parents on children's digital addiction, the level of digital literacy among parents, different parenting styles, socioeconomic factors, and family management of digital risks. Secondly, this study primarily seeks to chart the current research landscape concerning the link between digital parenting practices and children's digital dependency. This mapping will help identify literature gaps and suggest future research directions. This study is shaped by the following research

questions, which serve as a roadmap for the investigation: 1. How do parents perceive and evaluate their children's digital usage and its potential negative effects? 2. What do parents' roles, attitudes, strategies, and levels of awareness reveal about their management of children's use of digital technology?

Regarding PRISMA-ScR items 4 (Objectives) and 5 (Protocol and Registration), the selection and evaluation of studies were structured using the PICOS model — encompassing participants, intervention types, comparisons, measured outcomes, and study designs — in accordance with the principles outlined by the Centre for Reviews and Dissemination (2009). Here is how each component was defined for this review:

Participants: Studies were selected if they focused on parents of children who regularly use digital devices or have direct experience with their children's digital behaviors.

Intervention: There were no specific requirements for interventions to be reviewed.

Comparison: While descriptive, exploratory, and correlational studies, which may not always have a comparison group, were included, studies that did include comparisons (e.g., between parents with or without experience managing their children's digital use) were also considered where relevant.

Outcomes: The included studies needed to explore the psychosocial effects of digital technology on children and how parents attempt to regulate or manage this usage. Parental awareness and strategies were also key areas of focus.

Study Design: The review excluded systematic reviews, meta-analyses, theses, and case studies, concentrating only on research that utilized quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods.

2.2. Eligibility Criteria and Information Sources

Under item 6 (Eligibility Criteria) of the PRISMA-ScR framework, the eligibility of studies for this review is based on the following:

- I. Sourced from academic journals covered by the Web of Science.
- II. Published in or after the year 2016.
- III. Open access.
- IV. Published in English or Turkish.
- V. Evaluating parents' perceptions of their children's digital addiction and/or technology usage.

After creating an initial pool of articles, we checked the references of the reviewed publications and other scanned articles to identify any additional relevant research for the scoping review. Web of Science was selected as the sole database due to its extensive indexing of high-quality interdisciplinary research and its inclusion of reliable, widely recognized publications in the field.

2.3. Search Strategy and Study Selection

The literature review was conducted using the Web of Science database, utilizing advanced search options and a strategically curated set of keywords. This list of keywords was created based on a comprehensive examination of existing literature and expert feedback. It included relevant synonyms, abbreviations, and alternative spellings to ensure a comprehensive and inclusive search process.

The search strategy, detailed in Table 1, utilized the criteria “#1, 2, 3, 4” and various combinations of sample keywords listed in the table. Boolean operators such as “AND” and “OR” were utilized to enhance and broaden the search process. To ensure a comprehensive scan of the dataset, the “All FIELDS” option was selected, allowing the search to encompass titles, abstracts, and keyword sections. Initially, 876 articles that matched the search criteria were saved to the EndNote library. After removing duplicates, 544 unique articles remained, as illustrated in Figure 1. The research team collaboratively reviewed these articles' titles, abstracts, and keywords using the shared EndNote library. Each article was screened against the study's inclusion criteria, and those deemed irrelevant were eliminated.

Table 1. Search Strategy

#	Key Words and Criteria	Total	#1; 2; 3; 4
1	from 2016 to 2024		
2	Open Access		
3	Article		
4	Language: English		
5	Parents adj1 (Digital addiction* or Digitaladdiction*).tw, kf.	241	103
6	(Digital parenting* or Digitalparenting*) adj1 (Digital addiction* or Digitaladdiction*).tw, kf.	61	33
7	Parents adj1 (Internet addiction* or Internetaddiction*).tw, kf.	1056	525
8	(Digital parenting* or Digitalparenting*) adj1 (Internet addiction* or Internetaddiction*).tw, kf.	40	22
9	(Parental perspectives* or Parentalperspectives*) adj1 (Internet addiction* or Internetaddiction*).tw, kf.	64	28
10	(Parental views* or Parentalviews*) adj1 (Internet addiction* or Internetaddiction*).tw, kf.	28	5
11	(Parental perspectives* or Parentalperspectives*) adj1 (Children's internet usage* or Children'sinternetusage*).tw, kf.	11	6
12	(Parental views* or Parentalviews*) adj1 (Children's internet usage* or Children'sinternetusage*).tw, kf.	8	4
13	(Parental attitude* or Parentalattitude*) adj1 (Digital addiction* or Digitaladdiction*).tw, kf.	21	9
14	(Parental attitude* or Parentalattitude*) adj1 (Digital game addiction* or Digitalgameaddiction*).tw, kf.	10	5
15	(Parental digital mediation* or Parentaldigitalmediation*) adj1 (Digital addiction* or Digitaladdiction*).tw, kf.	64	32
16	(Parental digital mediation* or Parentaldigitalmediation*) adj1 (Internet addiction* or Internetaddiction*).tw, kf.	53	27
17	(Parental attitude* or Parentalattitude*) adj1 (Internet addiction* or Internetaddiction*).tw, kf.	68	23
18	(Parental attitude* or Parentalattitude*) adj1 (Digital parenting* or Digitalparenting*) tw, kf.	49	27
19	(Digital native* or Digitalnative*) adj1 (Digitaladdiction* or Digitaladdiction*).tw, kf.	66	16
20	(Digitalnative* or Digitalnative*) adj1 (Internet addiction* or Internetaddiction*).tw, kf.	41	11

Additionally, the reference sections of the included studies were examined and identified 26 more potentially relevant studies based on their titles. To ensure the reliability of the selection process, an independent researcher was consulted during the final review stage. Of the original 570 articles considered (after duplicates were removed and additional references were added), 495 were excluded for not aligning with the study's research questions. Among the remaining 75 articles, 52 were eliminated due to

several factors, such as not constituting original research (e.g., book chapters or case studies), not involving parents in the sample, or not centering on the parental perspective. Three of the potential 26 studies were excluded from our study because they did not meet the quality criteria regarding the clear articulation of research objectives and questions. Ultimately, based on the eligibility requirements, 23 publications (see Figure 1) were selected for inclusion in the scoping review.

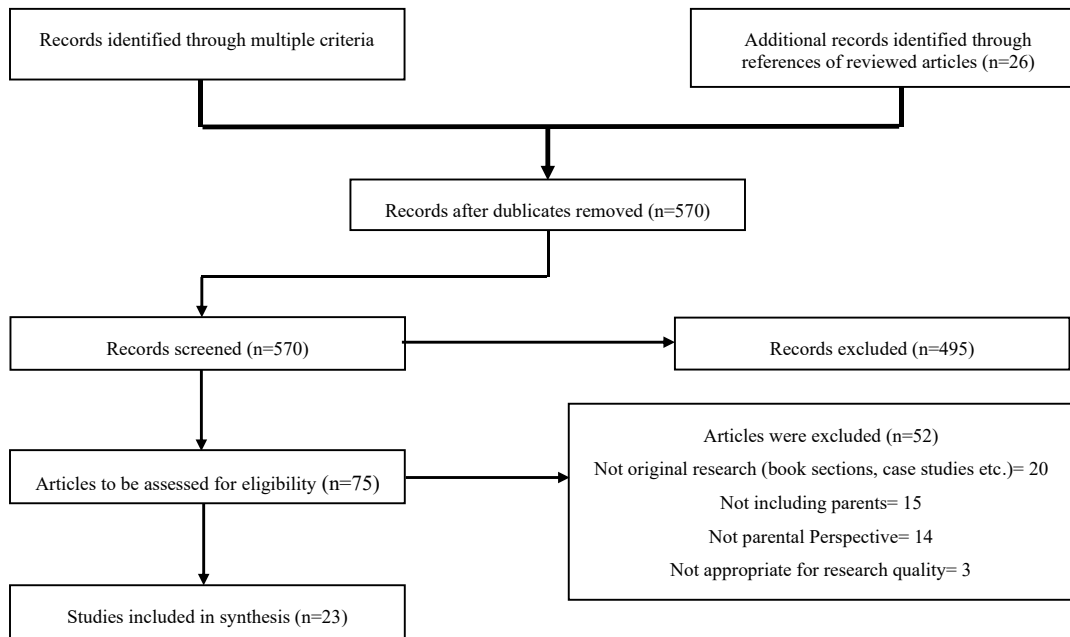


Figure 1: Search and Study Selection Flowchart

2.4. Data Extraction

By items 10 (Data Charting Process) and 11 (Data Items) of the PRISMA-ScR guidelines, all researchers carefully reviewed the selected articles to ensure a consistent and thorough evaluation. Two researchers collaborated to discuss their findings and compile summary tables based on the data. To enhance the accuracy and depth of the analysis, two independent academics from the field of social work reviewed the findings and provided feedback, which was then used to refine the results. Each article was reviewed to obtain the relevant data points listed as author(s), source, year of publication, country, research objectives, sample characteristics, study design, data collection methods, analysis techniques, and main findings. These details are presented in Table 2. The two core researchers conducted the initial article review while the rest of the team cross-checked their work to minimize the risk of errors and bias.

2.5. Methodological Quality Assessment

As outlined in item 12 of the PRISMA-ScR guidelines, researchers applied the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) to conduct a structured assessment of the quality of the studies incorporated into the review (Pluye et al., 2011). The MMAT consists of two general screening questions applicable to all study designs and four specific criteria tailored to qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods research. Each criterion accounts for 25% of the

total score, allowing studies to achieve up to 100% if all criteria are met. Many of the 13 quantitative studies reviewed did not fully meet the MMAT criteria. Common shortcomings included missing information about response rates or inadequate justification regarding sample representativeness, such as a failure to conduct power analyses. In one of the two mixed-methods studies, the qualitative findings lacked a strong connection to the study's context and did not sufficiently address its limitations. Of the qualitative studies, two met all the MMAT criteria, while the others received lower scores, often due to inadequate discussions regarding the researchers' influence during interviews or in the interpretation of results (see Table 2). Due to shortcomings identified during the quality evaluation, three articles were excluded in the final analysis. Despite some methodological limitations in the remaining studies they were considered sufficiently rigorous to respond to the research questions and align with the study's methodological framework.

2.6. Data Analysis and Synthesis

The analysis for this study was carried out using MAXQDA 2022 (version 22.4.1) and was presented following item 14 of the PRISMA-ScR guidelines. In total, 419 codes were produced from the examination of 23 articles. The most frequently recurring codes were "parents' positive perceptions of digital technologies," "ease of access to digital tools," and "parental regulation

of children's screen time," each appearing 28 times. The study employed a code co-occurrence model to visualize the findings and illustrate the relationships between themes, resulting in a data-driven model. Based on this analysis, MAXMAPs were generated to present a conceptual mapping of the key patterns within the data.

3. Results

The findings, limitations, and conclusions of the 23 reviewed studies were analyzed and synthesized into two main themes. Firstly, "Children's Digital Use and Its Implications from Parents' Perspectives," focuses on the concerns and observations parents have regarding their access to and utilization of technology among children. Secondly, "Parents' Digital Awareness and Management Strategies," centers on the levels of digital knowledge parents possess, the control mechanisms they employ, and their parenting styles in managing their children's digital engagement.

3.1. Theme 1- Children's Digital Use and Its Implications from Parents' Perspectives

3.1.1. *Motivations Behind Children's Use of Digital Technologies*

The reviewed studies indicate that children mainly use digital devices for entertainment, such as gaming, watching videos, and streaming. However, many also utilize them for educational purposes, including online learning and completing assignments (Ayar et al., 2023; Durualp et al., 2023; Grané et al., 2023; Hursen et al., 2023; Theopilus et al., 2024). Beyond their use for entertainment and learning, digital technologies have increasingly taken on an important role in shaping children's leisure activities. For example, Chia et al. (2022) highlights that digital media use markedly increases on weekends compared to weekdays, underscoring this trend. While parents often perceive digital use as a means of providing a "digital break" or alleviating boredom, children tend to view it as a "digital feast" (Chia et al., 2022). Some parents express that their children can independently regulate their use of digital technologies and find their time with these tools both enjoyable and meaningful (Mallawaarachchi et al., 2022; Smahelova et al., 2017).

3.1.2. *Digital Lifestyle Patterns Influenced by Parenting Roles*

Research findings indicate that children's digital media behaviors are mainly influenced by their parents, highlighting the essential role of parental involvement in

shaping these habits as part of their daily lives (Chia et al., 2022; Nabi & Wolfers, 2022; Stanley et al., 2017). Some parents, who previously allowed their children to engage with digital games during meals and before they reached an appropriate age, later expressed regret and took responsibility for fostering digital dependency in their children (Ayar et al., 2023; Luo et al., 2023). The findings highlight that the younger aged children are introduced to screens, the longer their screen time tends to be as they grow older (Brauchli et al., 2024; Chia et al., 2022; Luo et al., 2023; Theopilus et al., 2024). Despite being vigilant and attempting to implement best practices in digital literacy, many parents still struggle to manage the time their children spend on screens (Ayar et al., 2023; Chia et al., 2022). Research conducted by Grané et al. (2023), Rao et al. (2022), Theopilus et al. (2024), and Stanley et al. (2017) identifies several factors behind the widespread screen time among children, such as easier access to mobile internet and smart devices, a rich variety of captivating content and games, peer and social pressures, permissive parenting approaches, an increase in available free time, and expanded media use through video conferencing during the pandemic. Parental factors such as higher income, greater education, and lower stress levels are linked to reduced digital media use among children (Brauchli et al., 2024; Chia et al., 2022). Studies Ayar et al., 2023, Keya et al., 2020, and Toran et al. (2016) highlight that when parents—particularly mothers and fathers—have demanding daily schedules or work irregular hours to support the family, their limited availability can lead to digital media becoming a default lifestyle habit for their children.

3.1.3. *Parental Concerns Regarding the Adverse Effects of Digital Media on Children*

3.1.3.1. *Health and Social Challenges Related to Children's Screen Time*

The reviewed studies indicate that digital media use can have various physical effects on children, including fatigue, headaches, physical inactivity, vision problems, and issues with eating (Hernandez et al., 2024; Rao et al., 2022; Theopilus et al., 2024; Throuvala et al., 2021). Parents are also concerned about potential problems their children may face, such as insomnia, depression, addiction, social withdrawal, contact with strangers, academic failure, isolation, and time loss (Altuna et al., 2020; Chia et al., 2022; Durualp et al., 2023; Horita et al., 2022; Hursen et al., 2023; Kimball et al., 2023; Lieberoth & Fiskaali, 2021; Keya et al., 2020). Many parents believe

that the persuasive nature of digital content and advertisements aimed at children increases the likelihood of excessive use. Consequently, they think that reducing screen time could help prevent digital addiction (Ayar et al., 2023; Luo et al., 2023; Mallawaarachchi et al., 2022). Several studies (Ayar et al., 2023; Chia et al., 2022; Grané et al., 2023; Hernandez et al., 2024; Hursen et al., 2023; Theopilus et al., 2024; Throuvala et al., 2021; Toran et al., 2016; Wartberg et al., 2017; Nabi & Wolfers, 2022) report that when children are abruptly taken away from screens, they may display aggressive behavior, crying fits, and even physical violence towards family members. These children are often characterized as anxious, passive, distracted, dependent, antisocial, and lacking in creativity and flexibility. Additional behaviors observed include the use of inappropriate language, procrastination, imitation of characters from online videos, struggles with interpersonal and family communication, and challenges related to body image and self-regulation abilities.

3.1.3.2. Parental Observations on the Cognitive Effects of Screen Exposure

In studies Altuna et al. (2020) and Rao et al. (2022), parents reported being aware that their children were showing signs of poor adaptation, indicating a growing attachment to the virtual world. Studies Ayar et al. (2023), Durualp et al. (2023), Grané et al. (2023), and Hursen et al. (2023) highlight parents' concerns about their children's extended screen time, commonly considered as three or more hours per day at least five days a week. Despite this prolonged exposure, children often do not take breaks or engage in alternative activities, unlike their peers. Instead, they continue using screens and remain unsatisfied even after lengthy periods of use, which causes considerable anxiety for parents. Study Rao et al. (2022) emphasizes the necessity of classifying excessive screen exposure -whether online or offline- as a behavioral addiction. Additionally, studies by Chia et al. (2022) and Throuvala et al. (2021) indicate that parents are concerned about their children's emotional readiness to cope with the risks posed by digital technologies, such as communication difficulties and threats to online privacy.

3.2. Theme 2 - Parents' Digital Awareness and Management Strategies

3.2.1. Parental Digital Literacy and Its Impact on Parenting Practices

Research indicates that many parents are unaware of the potential harms effects of digital gaming and dependency on their children's overall health and daily routines

(Hursen et al., 2023; Kimball et al., 2023; Lieberoth & Fiskaali, 2021; Rao et al., 2022; Smahelova et al., 2017; Toran et al., 2016; Wartberg et al., 2017). Lieberoth and Fiskaali's study (2021) reveals a paradox: the more worried parents are about their children's gaming habits, the more time their children tend to spend playing games. Problematic internet use in children has also been associated with weakened family dynamics, limited oversight from parents, increased parent-child conflicts, and insufficient digital literacy among caregivers (Wartberg et al., 2017; Nabi & Wolfers, 2022). On the other hand, some parents perceive digital media use as advantageous, believing it promotes positive interactions, strengthens family bonds, enhances adaptability, and encourages shared quality time. For instance, many parents see digital engagement as an effective means for children to relax and unwind after a physically or emotionally exhausting day (Kimball et al., 2023; Mallawaarachchi et al., 2022).

3.2.2. Perceived Benefits of Digital Technology Use in Children

Parents' views from various studies highlight the benefits of digital media in broadening their children's knowledge, providing technological opportunities, and supporting leisure activities as well as educational development (Rao et al., 2022; Smahelova et al., 2017; Theopilus et al., 2024; Keya et al., 2020). In most cases, parents tend to take a moderate stance on their children's use of digital media, particularly when it supports peer communication and contributes to the development of technological competencies. However, many parents believe that blended learning approaches are more effective (Hernandez et al., 2024; Mallawaarachchi et al., 2022). They also acknowledge that digital technologies can significantly contribute to children's education, offer entertainment, boost learning motivation, equip them for future challenges, and strengthen their visual memory (Ayar et al., 2023; Grané et al., 2023; Luo et al., 2023; Mallawaarachchi et al., 2022; Smahelova et al., 2017; Toran et al., 2016). Moreover, parents who limit their children's screen exposure often view digital media as a useful tool for sustaining attention or shifting focus when used purposefully (Chia et al., 2022).

3.2.3. Parental Approaches to Digital Media Use Based on Parenting Styles

Studies reveal that certain parents either fail to implement clear guidelines or adopt an overly lenient and uninvolved attitude regarding their children's use of digital devices.

These parents tend to be neither supportive nor interactive, failing to act as protective agents against digital risks. As a result, they often allow their children to learn through trial and error with digital technologies, such as downloading and exploring apps on their own (Chia et al., 2022; Durualp et al., 2023; Hernandez et al., 2024; Konok et al., 2020; Rao et al., 2022; Smahelova et al., 2017; Stanley et al., 2017). In contrast, other studies emphasize that some parents focus on active mediation (Ayar et al., 2023; Smahelova et al., 2017), attempting to oversee their children's digital activities through intervention and preventive strategies (Hernandez et al., 2024). Families that adopt a more cautious approach to technology manage screen time and supervise content to minimize the risk of emotional outbursts or behavioral disruptions (Grané et al., 2023; Hernandez et al., 2024; Mallawaarachchi et al., 2022). The findings also suggest that while nurturing and boundary-establishing parenting styles are linked to lower internet dependency in children, more authoritarian approaches tend to correlate with increased levels of problematic internet use (Horita et al., 2022). Several studies categorize parental control strategies as either internal-active or external-passive. Internal control consists of direct parental responsibility, which includes setting rules, requiring permission for device use, establishing expectations for responsible behavior, and clearly explaining expected conduct. In contrast, external control involves indirect or situational strategies, such as allowing devices to run out of battery or hiding them as a form of punishment (Hernandez et al., 2024; Hursen et al., 2023; Konok et al., 2020; Mallawaarachchi et al., 2022; Smahelova et al., 2017).

3.2.4. Digital Mediation Techniques Adopted by Parents

3.2.4.1. Parental Regulation Approaches and Proposed Solutions

The most frequently mentioned methods of parental monitoring include checking emails, text messages, social media accounts, browsing history, and filtering inappropriate videos periodically (Grané et al., 2023; Hernandez et al., 2024; Theopilus et al., 2024). Some parents try to select the content their children watch and engage them with questions during viewing to maintain their attention and establish a more active control mechanism (Ayar et al., 2023). Parents also emphasize the need for further studies, especially those centered on primary school children, to better understand the diverse impacts of digital technologies such as social media and online gaming. They highlight the importance of

investigating these influences beyond recreational aspects, taking into account how educational use of digital tools may affect students' academic outcomes (Throuvala et al., 2021; Toran et al., 2016). When it comes to intervention strategies, two approaches are commonly recommended: (1) gradually limiting screen time, and (2) replacing problematic behaviors (such as digital addiction) with positive alternatives by guiding children toward more meaningful and enriching pursuits (Hursen et al., 2023; Konok et al., 2020; Toran et al., 2016). Additionally, parents see tools like online safety applications (e.g., Google Family Link, content filtering features) and institutional strategies (e.g., digital bans in schools) as helpful resources for managing their children's screen use (Theopilus et al., 2024; Throuvala et al., 2021).

3.2.4.2. The Necessity of Parental Digital Literacy

Parents highlight the importance of digital literacy in several areas, including understanding the risks of leaving children unsupervised online, learning to use technology alongside their children, explaining technology-related topics, serving as positive role models, and teaching safe and responsible digital practices (Ayar et al., 2023; Smahelova et al., 2017; Stanley et al., 2017). Parental digital skills are vital for educating children about the key risks associated with excessive internet use, gaming addiction, interacting with strangers online (such as issues related to stranger danger and pedophilia), cyberbullying, data misuse, and exposure to inappropriate content (Grané et al., 2023; Hursen et al., 2023; Smahelova et al., 2017; Stanley et al., 2017). Studies indicate that children whose parents view digital media as both an educational and recreational tool tend to receive greater support in developing their digital skills and report higher levels of enjoyment in their digital engagement (Chia et al., 2022; Grané et al., 2023). Additionally, parents suggest that schools should actively monitor children's online content usage, offer training on digital literacy, develop specialized educational materials, and provide professional support by establishing centers focused on addressing digital addiction (Rao et al., 2022; Smahelova et al., 2017; Theopilus et al., 2024; Throuvala et al., 2021; Toran et al., 2016).

4. Discussion

This study highlights the crucial role parents play in guiding their children's healthy use of digital media. It specifically examines parents' awareness of their children's online presence and their understanding of the digital environments their kids navigate. The articles

reviewed identify three primary factors influencing parents' perceptions of their children's screen time: a lack of control over usage, concerns about addiction, and the increasing acceptance of digital media as a typical part of children's leisure activities. Findings indicate that many children now primarily view digital media as their preferred means of relaxation, resulting in longer and less regulated screen time. Parents often feel that managing their children's use of digital devices has become challenging and, in some instances, potentially addictive. Spending excessive time in front of screens is frequently associated with reduced physical activity and lower engagement in daily routines—factors that may negatively affect a child's overall health and well-being (Nguyen et al., 2023; Whiting et al., 2020). Furthermore, studies show that increased screen time during weekends is common across various age groups and is associated with less structured daily routines on those days (Moitra & Madan, 2022; Atturu & Gujju, 2024; Sigmundová & Sigmund, 2021). This finding aligns with the studies by Chia et al. (2022) and Theopilus et al. (2024), which also report increased screen time during weekends. However, while Moitra and Madan (2022) interpret this as a sign of a lack of structure, Chia et al. present it as a modern leisure preference. This contrast reveals a dilemma: Should increased screen use be viewed as a sign of poor regulation or as an adaptation to contemporary leisure culture? These findings raise the question of whether allowing digital media to occupy children's leisure time is a deliberate parenting choice or a form of passive resignation. (defaulting to screens due to parental fatigue) Children whose parents feel confident managing screen time tend to spend less time on screens overall (Milford et al., 2024). Moreover, children's ability to regulate their digital habits has been identified as a crucial element in minimizing the time they spend in front of screens (Fitzpatrick et al., 2022; Leppänen et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2024). Nabi and Wolfers (2022) also support the link between parents' digital habits and the behavioral patterns observed in their children. The influence of parental digital habits on children's screen use is acknowledged in both studies. However, while Nabi and Wolfers (2022) highlight this as a determining factor, Lieberoth and Fiskaali (2021) caution that excessive parental control may have adverse effects. This underscores the importance of striking a balance in parenting—offering guidance without being overly intrusive.

On the other hand, understanding the underlying reasons behind children's screen use is crucial for creating

effective strategies to improve digital media literacy among educators, parents, and children, ultimately helping to reduce potential negative impacts. A significant finding emphasized in various studies is that children often engage in gaming while attending online classes. This behavior highlights two critical issues. First, it underscores the importance of attention management in digital learning; multitasking in this manner can lead to distractions and diminished learning effectiveness. Second, it reflects the lack of parental supervision or digital discipline, indicating that children are increasingly independent and isolated as they navigate digital environments on their own. Ayar et al. (2023) and Durualp et al. (2023) suggest that a decline in parental supervision leads to increased digital autonomy in children; however, they interpret this autonomy as a risk factor. In contrast, Fitzpatrick et al. (2022) associate digital autonomy with self-regulation and healthy usage habits. This difference reflects contrasting views on autonomy—as either a developmental strength or a gateway to problematic use. This multitasking behavior—such as playing games during online classes—has been shown to impair concentration, reduce social interaction, and negatively impact academic performance, as supported by Wang (2022), Dontre (2020), Zhang (2024), and Panagouli et al. (2021). While screen use for educational or social engagement may be linked to more positive outcomes (Ye et al., 2022), excessive screen exposure has been shown to undermine educational effectiveness (Oswald et al., 2020; Walsh et al., 2020), revealing an imbalance between learning and entertainment. Hernandez et al. (2024) and Luo et al. (2023) report that while digital tools can improve motivation and visual memory, they may also become distracting and overly immersive if not properly guided. This duality demonstrates that the effects of screen use are context-dependent and influenced by parental guidance. Findings from the reviewed literature indicate that digital media's simultaneous roles in education and entertainment make it difficult to distinguish between learning and recreational use, which may contribute to prolonged screen exposure. Parental approaches to observing and guiding children's digital engagement have become increasingly crucial. While proactive and restrictive parenting strategies have demonstrated positive effects on reducing screen time, many parents find it challenging to implement these strategies consistently (Sciacca et al., 2021; Martín-Criado et al., 2021; Pons-Salvador et al., 2022). As also noted in our study, Smahelova et al. (2017) and Grané et al. (2023) report that even digitally aware parents struggle to strike a

balance between empathy and structure, which makes it difficult to implement household rules consistently. In contrast, Chia et al. (2022) emphasize that passive parenting leaves children to navigate digital environments through trial and error. These findings suggest that inconsistency may arise from both over-involvement and a lack of engagement. A lack of digital knowledge may explain why some parents struggle to adequately support or monitor their children's media consumption (Macaraan, 2021; Pons-Salvador et al., 2022; Novianti & Garzia, 2020). Furthermore, deficiencies in responsible digital usage can hinder parents from setting limits on their own media consumption, thereby reducing their engagement with their children and potentially adversely affecting the development of emotional bonding and social skills (Komanchuk et al., 2023; Carson & Kuzik, 2021; Karimullah, 2023). As our study also indicates, Kök (2024) and Stanley et al. (2017) demonstrate that limited digital literacy not only leads to insufficient monitoring but also weakens parent-child relationships. These findings suggest that digital literacy should be understood not only as a technical skill but also as a relational competency. Moreover, the evaluation of digital media usage should not be limited to screen time alone but should also encompass the nature of the content and the circumstances surrounding its use. Achieving this balance necessitates collaboration among parents, educators, and technology developers (Oshodi et al., 2024; Jang & Ko, 2023). This aligns with the findings of Rao et al. (2022) and Suwanto et al. (2022), who emphasize that school-based interventions are more effective when aligned with family values and household routines. This underscores the importance of school-family collaboration in digital literacy efforts.

The reviewed studies indicate that parents often possess limited knowledge about digital gaming, with their concerns typically stemming from surface-level or generalized anxieties. Lieberoth and Fiskaali (2021) found that when parents adopt excessively controlling or restrictive approaches, it may backfire—resulting in increased gaming among children and triggering conflicts in the parent-child dynamic. Parenting approaches that are overly controlling or emotionally distant are linked to higher rates of digital gaming addiction and social discomfort among adolescents (Geniş & Ayaz-Alkaya, 2023). This pattern observed in the literature on parenting styles is also supported by the findings of our study, particularly as noted by Hernandez et al. (2024), who emphasize that authoritarian parenting increases resistance

among adolescents. This suggests that in digital supervision, not only the presence of rules but also the emotional tone of communication plays a crucial role. This dynamic underscores the importance of understanding digital addiction not just as an individual problem but as one intricately linked to family dynamics. In addition to individual parental behaviors, sociocultural dynamics can also shape parents' perceptions and practices regarding children's digital media use (Chassiakos et al., 2016; Livingstone & Blum-Ross, 2020). Cultural norms, societal expectations, economic resources, and access to technology may influence how parents interpret their roles and responsibilities in digital parenting (Third et al., 2017). For instance, in societies where digital literacy is low or traditional authoritarian parenting is dominant, stricter and more controlling approaches are more likely to be accepted. In contrast, communities with greater access to digital resources and a culture of open communication with children tend to exhibit more collaborative, supportive, and participatory practices (Livingstone & Blum-Ross, 2020). In different cultures, screen time is perceived as either a natural part of modern life or an educational tool, while in others, digital media use is approached with more caution. These sociocultural contexts shape not only what types of screen use are deemed acceptable but also how competent and supported parents feel in managing digital engagement (Chassiakos et al., 2016; Livingstone & Blum-Ross, 2020). Therefore, when developing policies and programs related to digital parenting, it is essential to consider cultural contexts and promote culturally sensitive and equitable approaches that are meaningful and applicable across diverse social settings. Parents who are more digitally literate are better positioned to guide their children's online activities and safeguard them against risks such as cyberbullying, online predators, and privacy violations (Dzakiah et al., 2024; Helsper et al., 2024; Manikandan et al., 2024). It is equally important to recognize that playing online games can serve as a means for children to unwind and relieve stress after a challenging day at school. Therefore, awareness programs should guide parents in seeing digital technologies not merely as threats but also as opportunities to strengthen family bonds and promote their children's emotional well-being (Syukur et al., 2024; Schmidt, 2024). Active mediation strategies, such as engaging in open discussions with children about online content, are emerging as effective approaches (Banić & Orehovački, 2024). Parenting attitudes supporting children's digital skills development foster a positive outlook toward

technology. Using digital technologies with an educational purpose is thought to encourage balanced usage patterns and lower the likelihood of developing addictive behaviors. Studies investigating school-based digital literacy initiatives (Suwanto et al., 2022; Kailani et al., 2021; Masyhura & Ramadan, 2021) highlight the need for more comprehensive and structured programs within the education system. Therefore, strengthening school–family collaboration is essential to ensure that digital literacy education and monitoring processes are effectively implemented.

5. Conclusion

The availability and widespread use of digital devices has resulted in more screen time for children. This trend negatively affects family dynamics by reducing face-to-face interactions and limiting quality time spent together. Moreover, due to hectic routines, tiredness, or insufficient awareness, many parents find it challenging to properly oversee their children's use of digital media, often missing instances of excessive screen time. Parents who believe that parental control is essential for reducing the negative effects of excessive digital use on family relationships often prioritize developing their children's digital literacy skills. Concerns about online safety further influence perceptions of digital media as harmful, which can strain family dynamics. Conflicts frequently arise between children who enjoy spending time online but are unaware of the associated risks and parents who lack the knowledge and skills to effectively manage digital environments. Moreover, setting screen time limits is mainly seen as a

way for parents to maintain control. However, this can highlight another issue: parents often struggle to manage their children's emotional responses, particularly when those children lack emotional regulation skills. In some situations, parents may give in to their children's anger or frustration when attempting to reduce screen time. On the other hand, parents who use mediation strategies—such as active discussions and joint engagement—tend to implement more effective control methods through screen time restrictions. Two important strategies arise to help repair and enhance family relationships impacted by excessive digital use (Figure 2): (1) parents taking responsibility for their digital behaviors to model positive habits for their children and (2) introducing educational programs that encourage mindful and healthy digital media use for both parents and children. Additionally, parents who recognize the advantages of digital media in various areas, along with its contributions to skill development, emphasize the importance of digital literacy in protecting their children from both anticipated and unanticipated online risks. The current study significantly contributes to social work, psychology, sociology, and family counseling in multiple ways. Specifically, it: (1) emphasizes the need for regulating children's interaction with and engagement in digital technologies through collaboration between parents and schools; (2) highlights the necessity for parents to possess adequate digital literacy to offer effective guidance and support to their children; and (3) underscores the importance of adopting a meditative and democratic parenting style when managing children's interactions with digital environments.

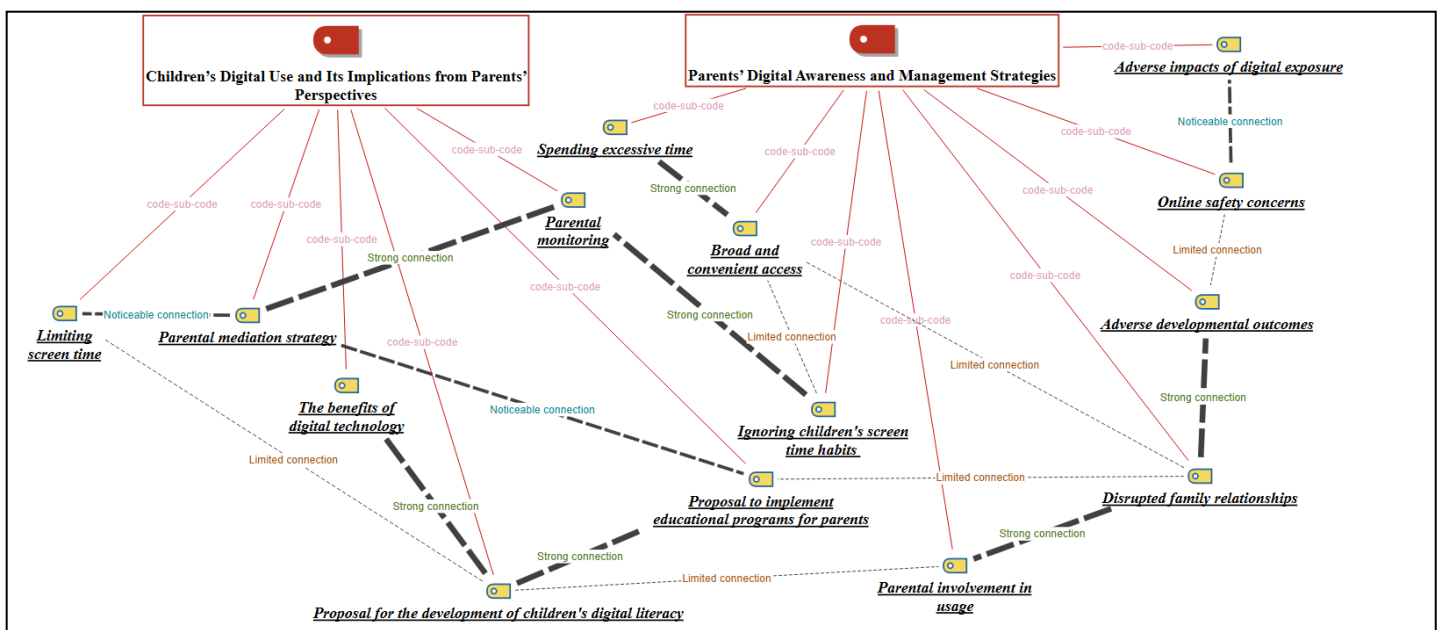


Figure 2: Conceptual Model of Findings

In conclusion, their parents' roles and responsibilities significantly shape children's engagement with digital media. Parental involvement is essential in shaping and guiding children's digital experiences.

5.1. Limitations and Recommendations for Further Studies

This study presents significant strengths by offering a roadmap that explores children's digital engagement from parents' perspectives through a multidimensional evaluation. However, it also has several limitations: (1) Since the research was conducted in different countries, it does not explicitly account for the influence of cultural dynamics on digital use, particularly in the contexts of addiction and education. (2) Although keywords were systematically checked through academic databases, some relevant studies may have been overlooked due to variations in how parental perspectives were articulated. (3) The study did not differentiate between concepts such as digital addiction, general use, or excessive use across the included articles. As a result, the unique implications of different types of digital media were not examined in depth. In light of these limitations, several recommendations can be made for future research: (1) Conducting meta-analyses to identify the types of digital media children use, along with the frequency and purposes of that use, and the associated biopsychosocial outcomes. (2) Exploring how parental perspectives on usage habits of children may shift when integrated with digital literacy training. (3) Undertaking systematic reviews that examine the differential impacts of specific types of digital (e.g., social media, gaming) while considering cultural variations.

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Appendices

Table 2: Descriptive Details and Code Summary of Reviewed Articles

Author, Publication Year, Country	Research Method	Sample Size (parents)	MMAT Score	Concerns and Issues				Benefits		Recommendations			Parental role			
				Physical problems	Social problems	Cognitive problems	Family problems	Education support	Social skills development	Parental Digital literacy	Child digital literacy	Parental role modeling	Parenting attitude	Usage duration control	Educational need	Parent-child relationship
Altuna et al. (2020), Spain	QN*	259	75		+	+					+				+	
Ayar et al. (2023), Türkiye	QL*	93	50		+	+	+		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Brauchli et al. (2024), Switzerland	QN.	462	75				+						+			+
Chia et al. (2022), Singapore	QN	1481	75		+	+	+		+	+		+	+	+	+	
Durualp et al. (2023), Türkiye	QN	388	75		+	+							+			+
Grané et al. (2023), Spain	QN	46	50		+	+		+	+	+	+	+		+	+	+
Hernandez et al. (2024), USA	MM*	248	75	+	+			+						+		+
Horita et al. (2022), Japan	QN	600	50													+
Hursen et al. (2023), Cyprus	MM	273	50		+	+	+			+	+				+	+
Keya et al. (2020), Bangladesh	QL	19	75				+									
Kimball et al. (2023), USA/ UK	QN	1005	50		+						+	+	+			
Konok et al.(2020), Hungary	QN	1270	75								+			+		+
Lieberoth & Fiskaali (2021), Denmark	NR*	67	75		+		+									
Luo et al. (2023), Taiwan	QN	629	75		+			+	+		+					+
Mallawaarachchi et al. (2022), Australia	QL	45	75		+		+	+	+		+	+			+	+
Nabi & Wolfers (2022), USA/Germany	QN	400	50				+									+
Rao et al. (2022), India	QN	800	75	+		+		+		+	+					+
Smahelova et al. (2017), Czechia	QL	14	75				+	+	+	+	+					+
Theopilus et al.	QL	22	75	+	+			+		+					+	+

(2024), Indonesia/ Australia																
Throuvala et al. (2021), UK	QL	9	100	+	+	+				+	+				+	+
Wartberg et al. (2017), Germany	QN	964	50		+		+			+						+
Toran et al. (2016), Türkiye	QL	20	100			+		+	+					+		+
Stanley et al. (2017), USA	QL	168	75						+		+			+	+	+