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Digital Parenting: A Review

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Abstract

Digital parenting has emerged as a crucial aspect of modern parenting, given the pervasive role of digital technology in children's lives. This review article explores the concept of digital parenting, its significance in ensuring children's safe and productive engagement with technology, the sources of digital parenting knowledge, challenges faced by parents, and strategies to enhance digital literacy within families. The article also highlights the role of health professionals, especially nurses, in promoting awareness and guiding parents toward safe digital practices.

Introduction

The rapid penetration of smartphones, tablets, computers, and social media has reshaped childhood experiences worldwide. Children are increasingly exposed to the digital world from a young age, making parental involvement in digital media use critical. **Digital parenting** refers to the set of practices, knowledge, skills, and strategies that parents adopt to guide, regulate, and support their children's engagement with technology and online platforms (Livingstone & Blum-Ross, 2020). It includes monitoring screen-time, setting boundaries, discussing online risks, ensuring privacy, encouraging responsible use, and modeling healthy digital behavior.

Digital parenting is not limited to restricting children's use of devices but also involves empowering them with the digital literacy needed to become safe, responsible, and informed users. Effective digital parenting thus helps maximize the educational, social, and recreational opportunities that the internet and technology provide while minimizing the risks such as cyberbullying, online predators, exposure to inappropriate content, and screen-time addiction (Chaudron et al., 2018).

Concept and Sources of Digital Parenting

Digital parenting is a **multidimensional concept** that combines elements of child development, communication, technology use, and safety. It operates at three main levels:

1. **Restrictive Mediation** – Parents set rules or limits on time spent online, types of websites visited, or apps used.
2. **Active Mediation** – Parents engage in discussions with children about their online experiences, explaining benefits and dangers.
3. **Co-use/Participatory Mediation** – Parents share online activities with children (e.g., playing games together, co-viewing videos) to build trust and understanding.

Sources of digital parenting knowledge include:

- **Formal sources:** schools, community awareness programs, workshops, and guidelines issued by organizations such as the World Health Organization or national ministries of health and education.
- **Informal sources:** social media, peer groups, online forums, and interactions with other parents.
- **Professional guidance:** healthcare providers, counselors, and nurses who offer structured teaching on safe digital practices (Radovic et al., 2017).
- **Self-learning sources:** online tutorials, parental control applications, blogs, and digital parenting apps.

How Digital Parenting Works

Digital parenting works through a combination of **rules, monitoring, guidance, and role-modeling**. Parents employ strategies such as installing parental controls, checking browsing histories, encouraging safe sharing of personal information, and establishing “tech-free” family times. More importantly, **open communication** forms the core of effective digital parenting. When parents actively listen and discuss online experiences with their children, trust is built, which reduces secrecy and increases children’s willingness to seek help if they face online risks (Nikken & Schols, 2015).

The effectiveness of digital parenting also depends on **parents’ own digital literacy**. Parents who stay updated about new apps, games, and online platforms are better positioned to guide children. Conversely, a lack of technical knowledge may limit parents’ ability to supervise effectively, leading to over-restriction or under-supervision (Yadav et al., 2019).

Need for Digital Parenting

Research indicates that children spend a significant portion of their daily lives online, with studies showing increasing screen-time exposure even among preschool-aged children (World Health Organization, 2019). Unsupervised access to the internet can negatively impact children’s physical

health, psychological well-being, and academic performance. At the same time, responsible digital use can foster creativity, learning, and social connections. Thus, digital parenting has become a necessity to safeguard children while maximizing benefits of the digital age.

Strategies of Digital Parenting

Parents employ multiple approaches to digital parenting, including setting screen-time rules, monitoring online activities, and using parental control software. Active mediation—where parents discuss online risks, privacy, and digital etiquette with their children—has been found more effective than restrictive methods alone (Chaudron et al., 2018). Collaborative strategies, such as co-viewing and joint online activities, enhance trust and encourage children to share their online experiences. Moreover, digital literacy programs targeting parents help strengthen their ability to manage children's online behavior.

Challenges in Digital Parenting

Despite awareness, parents often face difficulties in keeping up with evolving technologies, changing applications, and hidden online risks. Many lack the digital literacy skills required to effectively monitor their children's online engagement (Yadav et al., 2019). Socioeconomic differences further widen the digital parenting gap, as families from disadvantaged backgrounds may lack access to reliable digital resources or training. Additionally, excessive parental control may hinder children's autonomy, creating conflict and resistance. Hence, a balanced approach is required.

Role of Nurses and Health Professionals

Nurses and health educators can play a vital role in empowering parents with the knowledge and skills needed for effective digital parenting. Nurse-led interventions, community-based teaching sessions, and workshops can improve parental understanding of screen-time recommendations, online safety, and mental health implications of excessive digital use (Radovic et al., 2017). Integrating digital parenting education into community health programs can create greater awareness and equip families to handle digital challenges more effectively.

Conclusion

Digital parenting is an evolving necessity in the era of digital dependence. Parents must adopt proactive strategies to guide children's technology use while promoting healthy habits and safeguarding against risks. Healthcare professionals, particularly nurses, have an important role in strengthening parental knowledge and providing structured interventions. Future research should explore long-term behavioral outcomes of digital parenting programs and the integration of such interventions in community and school health settings.

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