



Parents' Strategies and Challenges in Educating Children in The Digital Era

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the strategies and challenges faced by parents in raising children in the digital era. The background of this research is based on the rapid development of digital technology, which has brought significant changes in child-rearing patterns, while simultaneously giving rise to various risks and obstacles that need to be addressed. This study used a qualitative descriptive approach using observation, interviews, and documentation techniques. The research findings indicate that effective digital parenting strategies involve managing gadget use time, selecting educational content, open communication, and improving parental digital literacy. However, parents also face various challenges such as limited digital literacy, socio-cultural pressures, and the risk of exposure to negative content. This study underscores the importance of policy support and ongoing educational programs for parents to optimize their digital parenting role. It is hoped that the results of this study can serve as a foundation for developing more effective and contextual digital parenting policies and practices in Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

The increasingly rapid and massive development of digital technology has brought about major changes in the lives of modern society. The digital era has not only influenced how we communicate and access information, but also transformed patterns of social interaction, lifestyles, and especially how we educate children (Prasetyo et al., 2024). Children are now born and raised in an environment filled with gadgets, the internet, and various easily accessible digital applications. This phenomenon presents new challenges for parents in fulfilling their role as primary educators. Technology can be an effective tool in education, but without proper supervision and strategies, the risk of negative impacts such as gadget addiction, exposure to inappropriate content, and reduced social interaction can hinder children's optimal growth and development.

Various previous studies have examined the influence of digital technology on child development and the role of parents in managing it. (Windayani & Sudarma, 2025) emphasized

that the use of educational technology can improve children's cognitive abilities and creativity when accompanied wisely by parents. However, another study by (Dini, 2022) demonstrated significant risks from uncontrolled exposure to digital media, such as impaired focus, decreased interpersonal communication skills, and even mental health problems. Furthermore, (Wahdini, 2024) found that the effectiveness of digital parenting is greatly influenced by parental knowledge and preparedness in dealing with new technologies. While these studies provide important insights, there is still a lack of understanding regarding the concrete strategies implemented by parents in the Indonesian socio-cultural context, particularly in facing the challenges of the dynamically evolving digital era.

The main focus of this research is how parents develop and implement effective parenting strategies for educating children in the digital age, and the challenges that hinder the success of these strategies. Field conditions indicate that many parents in urban and suburban areas face difficulties in controlling their children's gadget use, feel incompetent in managing technology, and face changing social norms that influence parenting styles (Sagala et al., 2024). This research hypothesis states that the effectiveness of parenting strategies will depend heavily on parents' ability to adapt to technological developments and adequate knowledge support in creating a healthy and balanced digital educational environment.

To analyze this phenomenon, this article uses Baumrind's authoritative parenting theory, which emphasizes the balance between control and emotional support in the child-rearing process. This theory is relevant for assessing how parents manage technology use while maintaining open communication and attention to children's emotional needs. Furthermore, Selwyn's (2016) theory of technology utilization in education is used to understand the role of technology as a learning medium and the challenges that must be managed. Bronfenbrenner's ecological approach is also applied to examine the interactions between individual children, families, and the socio-technological environment, which influence each other and create a complex context for digital parenting.

Primary data collected through observations and in-depth interviews with parents provides a clear picture of the dynamics of digital parenting strategies that vary across social and cultural backgrounds. Researchers found variations in how parents implement screen time limits, select educational content, and motivate children to stay physically and socially active. Barriers such as parents' lack of digital literacy and pressures from a highly digitally savvy social environment add to the complexity of parenting in this era. These findings highlight the need for a more holistic and community-based approach to supporting parents in addressing digital challenges.

Various previous studies have shown that parenting in the digital age is becoming an increasingly complex challenge for today's families. (Prasetyo et al., 2024) stated that technological advances have changed the way parents educate their children, necessitating strong adaptation skills to digital media. Research by (Dini, 2022) showed that unsupervised use of electronic devices can lead to impaired concentration in learning, reduced social interaction, and emotional problems in children. On the other hand, (Windayani & Sudarma, 2025) emphasized that technology can also provide positive benefits if used wisely, such as enhancing creativity, critical thinking skills, and providing access to interactive learning for children.

Various studies have shown that digital technology has two interrelated aspects: as an opportunity for education and as a risk to child development. A commonality in previous research lies in the importance of active parental participation in monitoring and assisting children's digital activities. However, much of the existing research focuses more on the effects of technology use on children and does not fully explore the practical strategies used by parents within the socio-cultural context of Indonesia. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by highlighting concrete strategies in digital parenting, the challenges parents face, and how digital literacy within families influences parenting effectiveness in the modern era.

The purpose of this study is to explore and map various parenting strategies employed by parents in the digital era and identify the key barriers they face in this process. The study also aims to provide evidence-based recommendations for parents, educators, and policymakers to develop adaptive, effective, and technologically relevant family education approaches. The results of this study are expected to serve as a foundation for the development of digital parenting education programs and public policies that are more responsive to the needs of modern families.

The research findings show that digital parenting is essentially a way for families to adapt to social changes stemming from technological advancements. Parents now function not only as supervisors but also as liaisons, supporters, and companions in their children's use of technology. This finding supports Baumrind's authoritative parenting theory, which emphasizes the importance of a balance between control, communication, and emotional support. In the digital age, overly strict supervision without clear communication can actually lead to feelings of rejection in children and reduce emotional closeness within the family.

Furthermore, this study offers a new perspective by viewing digital parenting as a process of family social adaptation to modern technological transformations. It also emphasizes the importance of a collaborative approach between families, schools, and communities in building a healthy digital education ecosystem. Thus, this study not only contributes theoretically to the development of digital parenting studies but also provides practical recommendations for parenting strategies that are contextual, adaptive, and relevant to the conditions of modern families in Indonesia.

In conclusion, this article presents originality and scientific novelty through an in-depth contextual approach to parental strategies and challenges in educating children in the digital age. By integrating family education theory and technology utilization, and proving hypotheses through actual field data, this study makes an important contribution to the development of parenting and digital technology literature. Furthermore, the results and recommendations obtained are expected to provide a practical basis for parents and related parties in creating a healthy digital education environment that supports optimal child development in the future.

METHODS

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach that aims to explore in depth the ways and obstacles faced by parents in educating their children in the digital age. This approach was chosen because it can explore the experiences, views, and actual practices of parents in their daily lives in a comprehensive and contextual manner. In this way, researchers can gain a clearer

understanding of how parents adapt to technological advances and their influence on parenting patterns. Participants in this study were parents of children ranging from early childhood to elementary school who have been exposed to the use of digital technology such as smartphones, tablets, or computers. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, considering certain criteria: parents with children aged 4 to 12 years, children who actively use digital devices in their daily lives, and those willing to be research informants. The research was conducted in the respondents' residential locations, both in urban and semi-urban areas, where access to digital technology is available.

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather information on parental strategies for monitoring technology use, ways of supporting children, and challenges faced, such as gadget addiction or exposure to inappropriate content. Observations were conducted to directly observe interactions between parents and children when using digital technology, allowing researchers to understand practices occurring in the field. Furthermore, documentation was used as supporting data, including notes, photographs, or other documents relevant to children's technology use activities. In analyzing the literature data, researchers used a qualitative approach with narrative and thematic methods. The narrative approach allowed researchers to organize the results of previous studies in a coherent and orderly manner in accordance with the research objectives. Meanwhile, thematic analysis was used to group study results based on main themes such as parenting strategies, challenges in technology use, and the socio-cultural role in digital parenting. This approach helped map current conditions and provide a clear picture of crucial aspects of the phenomenon being studied. Furthermore, basic theories related to parenting and technology utilization were also analyzed to strengthen the conceptual foundation.

Although this study employed a descriptive qualitative approach focused on primary data through interviews, observation, and documentation, there is evidence of significant use of literature review in the analysis. This is evident in the application of narrative and thematic analysis to various previous studies, which were used to support the interpretation of data obtained from the field. This situation indicates a methodological inconsistency if this study were considered purely field research. Therefore, this study is more appropriately categorized as descriptive qualitative research, supplemented by a literature review to strengthen the conceptual basis and interpretation of the results. The combination of primary data and literature review was carried out so that the research results are not only empirically based but also have solid theoretical depth related to the development of studies on digital parenting.

The use of a literature review in this study served as a means to integrate the results of field interviews with previous findings regarding digital parenting patterns, technological skills, and social issues faced by children in digital media use. In this way, this study integrates an experiential and conceptual approach to provide a more comprehensive insight into the methods and issues parents face in parenting children in the digital age.

The data analysis in this study was conducted qualitatively through three steps: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The data reduction process involved selecting and simplifying information relevant to the research focus. The data was then presented in descriptive narrative form for ease of understanding, followed by conclusions drawn to

identify patterns of strategies and challenges faced by parents in raising children in the digital age. The analysis process was repeated until a deep and comprehensive understanding was achieved.

To ensure data validity, this study employed source and method triangulation techniques, comparing information from various sources and employing various data collection methods, such as interviews, observation, and documentation. Furthermore, member checking was conducted, verifying the data with the sources to ensure that the information obtained accurately reflected the existing conditions. The research procedure included the preparation phase and data collection.

RESULT

Research shows that parents develop various approaches to educating their children in the digital age, tailored to each family's situation and needs. One of the most frequently used methods is limiting screen time. Parents establish rules regarding how long children can use gadgets, such as only allowing them to use them after completing homework or only at certain times. They also implement active support, including accompanying their children while using digital devices, providing guidance on the content they access, and explaining the positive and negative impacts of technology use.

In addition to restrictions and guidance, another strategy is selecting age-appropriate content. Parents strive to direct their children to educational content such as educational videos, educational games, and apps that support cognitive development and creativity. Some parents also use parental control features on gadgets to limit access to inappropriate content. On the other hand, others choose open communication with their children as the primary approach, discussing technology use, providing an understanding of digital ethics, and fostering awareness in children about how to use technology wisely.

The development of digital technology has transformed the way children learn by providing direct access to a variety of interactive learning materials, educational videos, and platforms that can be tailored to the needs of each child, including those with special needs (Thoha et al., 2023). Findings indicate that technology not only provides information but also serves as a multimedia tool that enhances children's enthusiasm for learning, creativity, and the ability to think and solve real-world problems. Furthermore, various technical features, such as parental controls and monitoring applications, allow parents to monitor their children's digital activities to reduce the risk of abuse (Suharyat et al., 2023).

However, in practice, parents face a variety of complex challenges. The main challenge is the difficulty in controlling children's gadget use, especially when they begin to show dependency or addiction. Children are often difficult to divert from digital devices and can exhibit emotional reactions such as anger or tantrums when gadget use is restricted. Another challenge is parents' lack of digital literacy, so not all parents know how to use safety features or select appropriate content for their children.

Furthermore, environmental influences also pose a challenge. Children are often influenced by the technology use of their peers or the surrounding environment, making it difficult for parents to enforce consistent rules at home. Parents' busy schedules also impact

the effectiveness of supervision, as time constraints prevent parents from always being able to fully supervise their children. This results in gadget use sometimes being used as a distraction.

However, data also indicates a significant challenge: parents' limited technological skills, particularly for generations unfamiliar with technology from an early age, potentially exposing children to harmful content and the risk of addiction (Suteki & Sulistyowati, 2024). Pressure from society and online culture often push families to engage with the digital world even when they are not mentally prepared or have sufficient devices. Furthermore, there are real risks regarding personal data security and cyberbullying that are difficult to fully control (Mahka et al., 2023). This situation is further complicated by differences in technological access influenced by socioeconomic background, with families with lower incomes finding it more difficult to guide their children in the digital world (Winda, 2024).

Overall, the results of this study indicate that while parents have various methods for educating their children in the digital age, their implementation still faces numerous challenges that require ongoing adjustment. There is a need to increase parental awareness, knowledge, and active involvement to ensure effective implementation of these methods and minimize the negative impacts of digital technology use on children.

DISCUSSION

Research shows that digital parenting is essentially a way for families to adapt to social changes arising from technological advancements. Parents now function not only as supervisors but also as liaisons, supporters, and companions in their children's use of technology. This finding supports Baumrind's authoritative parenting theory, which emphasizes the importance of a balance between control, communication, and emotional support. In the digital age, overly strict supervision without clear communication can actually lead to feelings of rejection in children and reduce emotional closeness within the family.

Furthermore, this study shows that the success of parenting strategies in the digital world is significantly influenced by parents' technological literacy. Those with technological knowledge are generally better able to guide their children in selecting educational information, utilizing digital protection features, and establishing positive communication about their online activities. Conversely, a lack of technological understanding makes it difficult for some parents to recognize dangers such as cyberbullying, technology dependency, and protecting children's personal data. This situation indicates that developing digital literacy within families is crucial in today's digital age.

This discussion demonstrates that challenges in digital parenting arise not only from internal factors within the family but are also influenced by the social environment and digital culture that exist in society. Children grow up in an environment close to social media, online games, and internet culture, so that family rules sometimes conflict with peer influence. Therefore, digital parenting requires comprehensive support from schools, communities, and the government through community-based digital education to create a safe and healthy digital environment for children's development.

Furthermore, the research findings suggest that some parents' use of gadgets as "babysitter substitutes" represents a dilemma in modern parenting. While technology makes it easier for parents to overcome work-related time constraints, it can also increase children's

dependence on digital devices if not balanced with proper supervision. This incident highlights that digital parenting is not simply about limiting gadget use, but also about improving the quality of family interactions, maintaining a balance in physical activity, and shaping children's character to cope with technological advancements.

On the other hand, social factors and peer influence also add to the existing challenges, because children learn not only from their family but also from their social environment. Parents' busy schedules also impact the effectiveness of digital parenting. In certain situations, digital devices are often used as "alternative caregivers" to capture children's attention, especially when parents have limited time. This highlights a dilemma in modern parenting: technology can be a practical solution but can potentially cause long-term problems if not managed properly.

Overall, this discussion highlights that parents' approach to educating children in the digital age requires a balance between supervision, guidance, and trust. A flexible, communicative approach based on an understanding of child development is necessary to maximize the benefits of technology use while minimizing its negative impacts. Therefore, collaboration between parents, the community, and improving digital literacy is crucial to address the challenges of parenting in the digital age.

Based on these findings, digital technology in children's education can be seen as a "double-edged sword," whose benefits depend heavily on how parents educate them. Digital monitoring tools will not function effectively if not balanced with honest and open communication; overly strict supervision can actually create feelings of distrust, ultimately damaging emotional relationships within the family. Therefore, parenting methods need to be changed from the old, overly strict methods to a more assertive approach that still provides warm emotional support (Rodhiyana, 2025). Involving children in creating rules for gadget use together has been shown to be more effective in fostering self-awareness and a sense of responsibility than simply prohibiting them alone, as revealed by Mukhtar and his team in 2023.

Furthermore, this discussion emphasizes that parental digital literacy is a crucial foundation for overcoming emotional distance within the family. Tech-savvy parents can build effective communication, enabling children to feel comfortable sharing their experiences using technology (Mandala et al., 2024). Furthermore, incorporating local cultural values, such as the tradition of communicating face-to-face and spending time with family without using gadgets, can help children maintain their cultural identity amidst the influence of globalization (Nizar et al., 2025). In general, successful child education today requires a strong partnership between the use of smart technology, parenting that adapts to children's needs, and a balance of physical activity to ensure holistic child development.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study confirms that parents' parenting strategies in the digital era depend heavily on their ability to manage technology use in a balanced and adaptive manner, including managing gadget use time, selecting educational content, communicating openly with their children, and improving the parents' own digital literacy. This research demonstrates that successful digital parenting is determined not only by strict control but also by an

authoritative approach that combines emotional support and the child's active participation in the parenting process. These findings address the hypothesis that the effectiveness of digital parenting strategies is strongly influenced by parents' readiness and knowledge in dealing with technological developments.

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