Modern parenting: An ethical way to nurture children in digital era

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ABSTRACT

The internet becoming more sophisticated and advancing at a tremendous rate is also a concern for parents. As children are introduced to the online platform, parents worry about their safety and nurture them from potential risks. Parents gradually develop their parenting methods in this era by learning from community websites, blogs, social media, and apps. The information equips them to deal with their children when playing with electronic devices or surfing websites. There are various types of Parenting Styles, from strict about precluding parenting. When parents are strict, they will be using technology that can monitor or track their children's activities by remotely accessing their children's device, camera, recording text messages, and locations. This type of parenting does make their children feel very uncomfortable. On the other hand, not being concerned about their children accessing the internet can be very dangerous as they can access any sites that are not allowed for their age. This article will review previous Digital Parenting experiences and analyze/design a solution around what parents should do when nurturing and guiding their children for a better future in this digital age.

1. Introduction

Parents knowingly use digital media to communicate with other parents and find some advice from other parents through social media [1]. At the same time, children tend to go online from social networks to online multiplayer games that involve communicating with other players [2]. Due to worldwide trends, the number of children (including adolescents) using the internet or digital media keeps rising. Recent reports suggest, South Korea has 93% of 3–9-year-olds being online with an average of 8-9 hours a week, 25% for 3-year-old go online in the US and rising in percentage as the child grows older, and there are 79% of children aged between 5–9-year-olds also go online at home in Australia [3]. In the USA, children are most likely to access reading books (91%), television around (89%), followed by computers (43%), gaming platforms (31%), interacting tablets about 25%, and smartphones around 21% [4].

Other than using the internet as entertainment (watching video clips or playing games), the internet is also helping children at a young age to develop emergent digital literacy (understanding the process of interacting with computers). These new digital literacy capabilities also form a basis for digital technology managers through effective interaction of computers and the internet and help to create creative interpersonal linking [3], [5]. Also, it gives a positive correlation between internet use during early childhood and outperforms at school [3]. Other than that, recent experiments were performed on a group of adults and discovered that seeking information on the internet increased their individual's confidence [2].

With many benefits for children when they are using the internet or interact computers, it also has negative effects when using it excessively. Thus, it makes parents concerned that their child's going online might disrupt social and cognitive development, and perhaps can lead to declining school results or even dropping out of school; increased family tension; abandoned hobbies; and psychological and physical problems [2], [6]. The fact is that 46% of 9-16 years-olds of internet users had experienced online risk at least once. From that percentage, there are 17% 9–10-year-olds, and 69% of 15–16-year-olds [7], which mean that the children are experiencing a risk online quickly as they grow older because of the complexity of the media and communication technologies are becoming more private [8].

When the internet and smart technology become a thing in our life today, interacting with it is easy because of how fast the computation and internet is, and also there is a device that you can bring it anywhere and anytime. Interacting the internet gives us a positive effect and a negative effect depending on how to use it, makes parents about their children accessing the internet, especially on children's cognitive development, online risks, and verbal interaction with their siblings or parents [2], [3], [9]. The outline of this paper follows: Section II presents the effects when people at a young age from what they do the most on the internet and how they handle it and parenting method. Section IV will discuss current parent activities on nurturing their children and analyze the patterns by surveying and suggestions for parents on lecturing them properly. Finally, Section V concludes the research

2. Parental Mediation Method

In recent research, digital media and internet functions and their abilities benefit both parents and their children and keep evolving. Moreover, both of them have their activities on their internet.

There are various parenting methods that we have discovered. There are five different types of strategies: technical mediation, Monitoring, Restrictive, Active Mediation of Internet Safety, and Active Mediation of Internet Use [7]. However, the other references only have three types, which are Restrictive, Active, and Co-Use mediation [4], [9], [10]. It is essential to see the effects of using one of those methods; research has found that some of it can harm children's cognitive and social development [9].

2.1. Technical Mediation

Technical mediation focuses on limiting internet content to prevent the adverse outcomes for children when using technologies that can be used for browsing any media. Technical Mediation includes: 1) using software to prevent spam or junk mail or viruses, 2) A service that can limit children's time spent on the internet, 3) Tracking internet activity, and 4) filtering or blocking types of websites [7]. Parents who use most of Technical Mediation is the first one (prevent spam or virus) around 75% of average from 9–16-year-olds, and the least is limiting time spending on internet [7].

2.2. Monitoring Mediation

Monitoring mediation is more focused on seeing children's social activity (which friends she/he has in social network, reading their messages, and websites they have visited) rather than being restrictive. Although Technical Mediation also includes tracking internet activity, the difference is that tracking internet activity will be dynamically updated. While in monitoring mediation, parents can directly access personal privacy activity, but at times, a parent could become suspicious of their children's act differently than before.

2.3. Restrictive Mediation

This mediation refers to when parents set a media use regulation that will apply to their children such as restricting content or time usage [9]. According to Duerager [7], this method focuses on how to restrict photo upload, video content to share with others, sharing personal information, restrict streaming or downloading media content and restrict instant messages usage.

The survey results showed that this method encounters fewer online risks such as adult content, cyberbullying, or contact with unknown people [7]. Moreover, this mediation is mainly used by parents with lower education, less digital media or internet, and less digital confidence (insecure online content).

Parents use this approach when guiding their teenage children on social media. This restrictive mediation refers to general access regulation, by being how long surfing the internet as an example, and when the child wants to access a specific website must ask their parent. It discovered that these regulations are applied more to older than younger children [3].

2.4. Active Mediation (Internet Safety and Internet Use)

Active mediation is a method where parents are giving instructions about the use of media to their children. For example, active mediation refers to parent's conversations with their children about television. In other words, Active mediation is parents talking about media content while the child is doing something like watching, reading, and listening to any medium. This method includes positive instruction and negative/critical forms of instruction [9].

2.5. Co-Use Mediation

Co-Use means that the parent remains present while the child is engaged with the medium. Parents share the experience without commenting on the content or its effects [9]. Co-viewing happens when parents watch television with their children. While parents may talk to their children about the TV content while watching, it is essential to note that co-viewing takes place regardless of whether active mediation occurs. As a result of this co-viewing, the parent watches TV with their child in a much more passive action. It is essential to distinguish between active mediation and co-viewing since the two concepts reflect unique behavioral forms linked to different effects. This method applies more in the television and gaming category but if the parents have a positive attitude [3].

3. Method

A survey is designed and conducted based on multiple-choice questions. The questions are based on Seattle Public School [1], [2]. This survey is for evaluating current "academic background" parents' activities to their children. The survey questionnaire are including:

- First-time children interact with any medium

- Children personal device and when do the parents allow to have it

- What will children do when using technology?

- How much time their child spent their day on digital media on weekdays and weekends?

- Do any parents restrict media content?

- Parents who are using co-use media, and what media are they using it with their child/children.

- Parents respond on what they did when their children experienced online risk,

4. Results and Discussion

From the survey results, we have received 18 samples. The most responders are father 13/18 and for mother is 5/18. Most respondents are parents aged 30 to 40 years. Respondents have different educational backgrounds. Most parents with a master's background amounted to 66.7% for a doctoral degree has a value of 27.6%, for the rest is the value of a bachelor's degree. Furthermore, most respondents have an internet connection network at home, with respondents getting a score of 50% and only 16.7% who do not have private internet access. Children of the majority of respondents are in high school and early childhood education, and also some are still in junior high school.

Based on the survey, are 50% of children have digital media (computers) in their bedroom, with only three out of 5 mothers disallowing their children to have digital media in the bedroom. Interestingly, four out of eighteen allow their children to have personal digital media at the age of 4-6 years old. Meanwhile, most parents allow them to have personal digital media when they are 7-12 years old by 38.9% (Fig. 1). The ideal age for children to have personal smartphones or any digital media is mid to late teenage because parents might explain the guide fully. Also, children are a little bit more mature and efficiently understand and process information at this age. Fig. 2 presents children's activity on digital media.
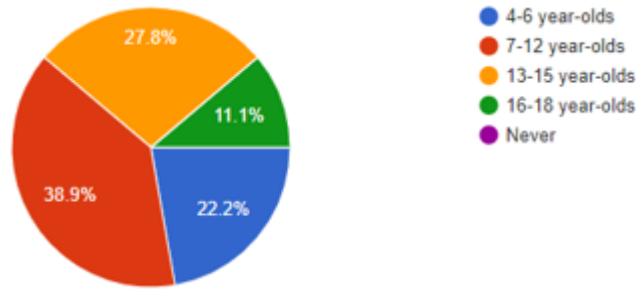
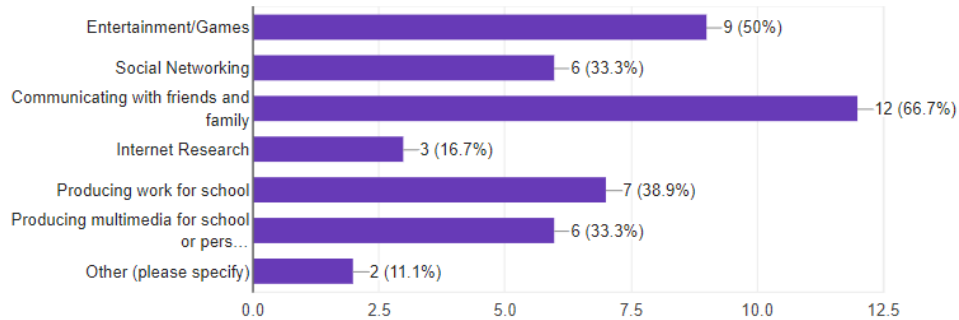**Fig. 1.** Children's age are allowed to have personal digital media

Fig. 2. Children activity on digital media

Most parents allow their children to spend their day on digital media on weekdays (Fig. 3) and weekends few hours or less than that (Fig. 4). Nevertheless, only 4 out of 18 allow them to spend almost a day on the weekend.
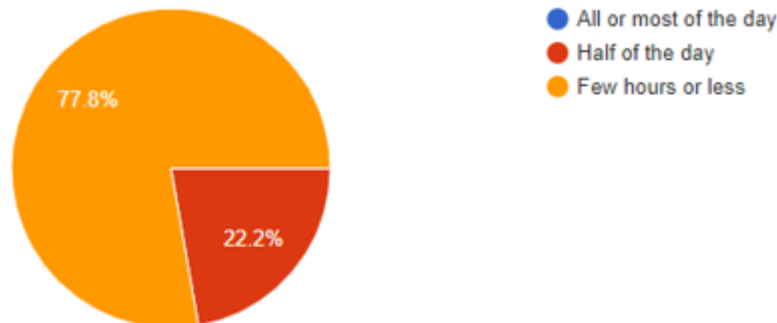

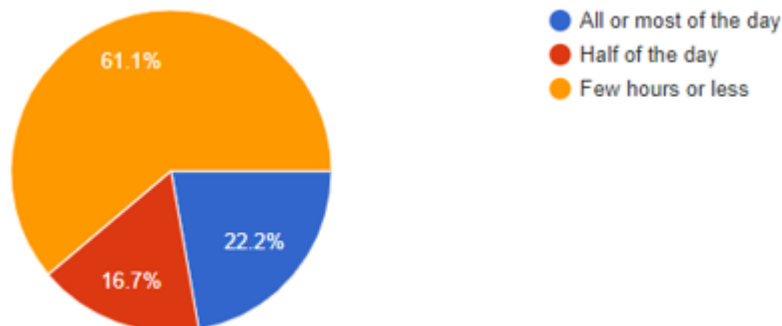**Fig. 3.** Children spend time on weekdays

Fig. 4. Children spend time on weekend

Fig. 5 shows that most parents-children use smartphones rather than television or other media but do not reduce child's interest in using books, which is proven by the balanced use of books and smartphones in the survey results.
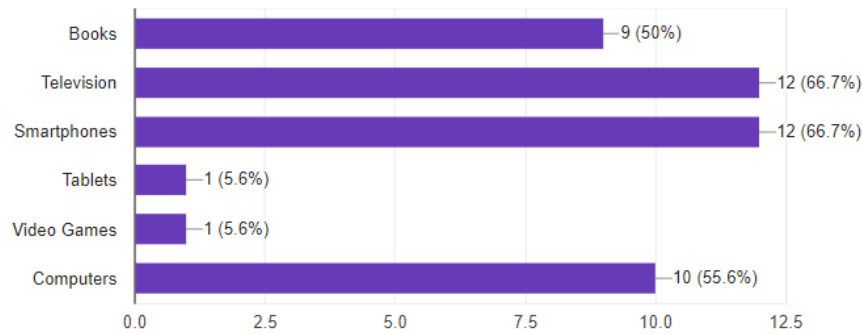
Fig. 5. Parent-child spend their time together

Only 66.7% of parents restrict website content or upload photos (Fig. 6). Website content can be illegal sites or adult content. Uploading photos could be like sending or sharing to an anonymous user.
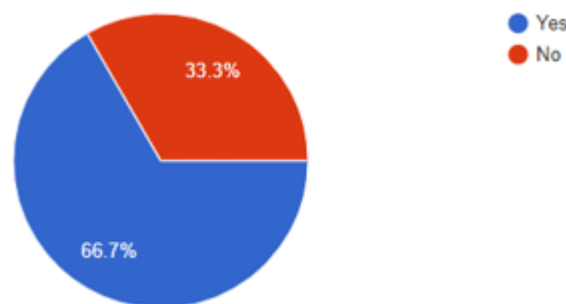

Fig. 6. Parents who are restrict digital contents

Then parents are giving personal digital media in the form of a smartphone to children at the age of 7-12 years of age, and children should often interact with peers rather than smartphones. Accordingly, the ideal age for giving a smartphone is 16-18 years old. At that age, children will easily understand and process information that is positive for themselves or negatively impacts. For the problem of accessing the internet, we should better direct it towards education rather than just accessing games, entertainment, and other entertainment media. Parents must be firm with their children. Being assertive does not mean restraining. Parents must manage smartphone use in children by reducing the interaction of smartphone usage on the days when school portions are reduced. Nevertheless, have to be fair on weekends and give them more time to interact with smartphones, but they have to manage usage and not take it easy.

As for monitoring, the results are positive for parents who monitor their children's social media activities because watching them can give advice or support that should or should be done on social media. However, parents should also use active mediation while monitoring their children, and when the child reaches a late teenage, monitoring is unnecessary.

5. Conclusion

This paper concludes that parenting in this era is very complex because of the emerging digital technology. Restrictive mediation limits children to use of media for their physical and psychological health. On the other hand, less restriction is suitable for late teens. Active mediation is effective until they mature enough to process information. Co-viewing is necessary as it paves the way for the child to get along and close to their parents. Parents must combine all known mediations into one.

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