

Constraints of digital parenting



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Thursday, 30 Dec 2021 8:45 AM MYT

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, children's lives have become increasingly digital by default. They were pushed into remote education, where they spent nearly all their time online and learned about the world solely through digital screens. This inescapable shift in how children live their daily lives has sparked alarm about the type of society we will get in the near future.

Parents are arguably in the best position to raise children who are digitally resilient. Unfortunately, parents receive the least assistance or consultation when policies, plans, or projects affecting children's digital life are developed. Parents are now compelled to become digital parents by default. They are expected to be adept at guiding their children's Internet use while also delivering the most secure and conducive digital experiences possible.

Simultaneously, as children grow entangled in the perilous web of modern media technologies, parents become an easy target. It's all too easy to point the finger at parents for providing too much or too little screen time. Allowing their children unrestricted access to digital devices and gadgets is viewed as lazy parenting. Yet, today's parents face a slew of circumstances that are markedly different from those encountered by parents in previous generations who did not face the rigours of digital parenting.

Regrettably, parents have few resources for guidance on digital parenting. Digital safety initiatives and digital parenting courses frequently emphasise removing harmful information from the Internet and limiting children's access. This primarily informs parents that the most effective method of digital parenting is to restrict and control. Unfortunately, this rigid vision of the parental role just limits children's digital usage without successfully educating children to become digitally resilient.

As a response, there must be a paradigm shift in our concept of what constitutes digital parenting. Rather than restraining parents should enable. Investing in children's digital skills and proactive

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However, becoming an enabling digital parent is not without its challenges. It is not simply a matter of digital access and utilisation. Rather, it is in relation to a variety of other significant impacts on family life. Numerous changes have occurred over the last several generations – in demography, stratification, job security, family structure, education, and identity politics, to name a few. These are the primary factors that shape parental expectations and contribute to their anxiety. These factors, far more than screen time or social media usage, have a significant impact on how parents perceive, accept, and respond to digital technology. As a result of these significant cultural shifts, parents now find themselves in an unequal position when faced with the issue of digitally parenting their children.

Simultaneously, society has tended to view parents as a homogeneous group, criticising their digital parenting styles without addressing the inherently unequal challenges they face. The Covid-19 pandemic has demonstrated that not all families can afford the technology or connectivity necessary to support home-schooling, that at-risk children are increasingly vulnerable to offline and online abuse, and that children with special educational needs or other needs cannot be reached online by the systems of care that previously supported them offline. Inability to recognise parents' unique experiences results in a failure to provide them with the necessary digital parenting abilities.

As a result, there is an increasing need for digital parenting education. Digital parenting should be viewed as a component of lifelong learning, which incorporates all of an individual's educational endeavours, from preschool to senior citizenship.

Digital parenting education equates to an increasing demand for adult skill development in 21st century societies. Adult education programmes in digital parenting must consider the socio-political context of the issue and foster critical discourse with parents, rather than merely instructing them on the do's and don'ts.

Digital parenting education must prioritise sustainable and inclusive parenting techniques that foster the development of digitally resilient children who mature into digitally competent people.

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