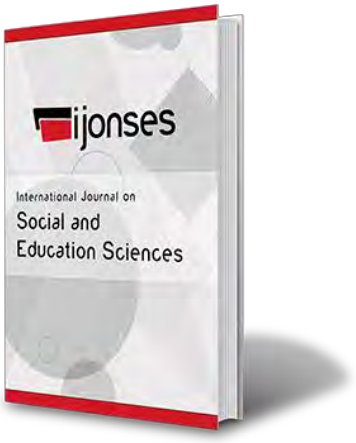

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Abstract

This study was conducted to examine the views of parents on digital parenting competencies and experiences. Phenomenology was chosen as a research design. The study group consisted of 13 parents, selected according to criterion sampling. A semi-structured interview form was used as a data collection tool. Content analysis was used in the analysis of the data. Parents stated that they are most uncomfortable while their children are watching videos and surfing social media. Most parents set a period to reduce the time their children spend with digital technologies. We found that the majority of parents do not accompany their children while using digital technologies, and some children do not want their parents to accompany them. Moreover, majority of parents felt inadequate to protect their children against digital risks, and followed different ways to ensure the safety of their children in digital environments.

Introduction

Advancing technology has increased digital technologies and environments. Digital environments have become environments to conduct daily routines. With this, digital technologies have become an inseparable part of life, with the functions of acquiring information, shopping, communication, education, and entertainment. Especially for the new generation born in the age of technology, digital technologies have become indispensable. This new generation has placed technology at the center of their lives in meeting their basic needs (ECA, 2018).

The prevalence of digital technologies and the ease of access to technology increase the internet usage rates of children day by day, diversify the services they access on the internet, and reduce the age of meeting with the internet (Livingstone et al., 2011; OECD, 2011) . Considering smartphone ownership, it is thought that the age to start using the internet is between 4-11 years (Mascheroni & Ólafsson, 2016). According to the results of the "Children's Use of New Media and Cyberbullying Research" conducted by the Radio and Television Super Council of Turkey, 98.4% of secondary school students have a classical or smart television at home, 90.7% can connect to the internet with their smart devices, and 63.3% have a mobile phone. Considering the frequency of internet use of secondary school students, 48.6% use the internet every day, 17.8% almost every day of the week, 23.8% a few days a week, and 4.9% a few days a month. A 59.6% of the students stated that they are alone when connected to the internet (Radio and Television Super Council of Turkey, 2018). The Turkish Statistical Institute reports that, internet usage for children in the 6-15 age group is 82.7%. It is also stated that 90.1% of children use internet almost every day, 8.5% at least once a week, and 1.4% less than once a week. The rate of children who declared that they use the internet regularly was found to be 98.6% (TÜİK, 2021). Considering these data, the

extent of the point reached with the increasing use of mobile devices and mobile coverage over the past years is quite thought provoking.

At the time of the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, generation Z devoted more time to messaging services compared with generation Y and X. In particular, the highest increase in media usage during the pandemic was experienced in the Z generation (Watson, 2020). Generation Z includes individuals born in 2000 and later. Gardner and Davis (2013), who call the Z generation "Digital Native", state that this generation cannot think of the world without digital technologies. Prensky (2001) defines digital natives as a generation that spends their entire lives around the games and tools of the digital age such as computers, mobile phones, video games, video cameras, and digital music players, and emphasizes that these became an integral part of their lives.

Considering the opportunities of the internet and digital technologies, it is possible to say that its use is an important necessity. Although digital environments and technologies associated with these environments have many benefits for their users, there are also serious risks associated with their use (Cohen-Almagor, 2018; Picazo-Vela et al., 2012). Digital technologies and environments that are used unattended, especially by children, bring with them many risks. Therefore, it is insufficient to consider digital technologies only in the context of the opportunities they offer (Valcke et al., 2011). With the decline in the age of starting to use the internet, children participate in online environments at an early age but cannot adapt (Symantec, 2014). Children who have not developed the necessary literacy and e-maturity are considered to be one of the most vulnerable groups to the risks they can easily face (Prensky, 2009; Valcke et al., 2010). Children are in a very vulnerable position in the digital world and are open to all kinds of manipulation.

The Internet and digital technologies expand borders by removing physical barriers between people. However, this expansion has created an unsupervised communication environment for children. Studies have reported that the Internet has adverse effects on children and teenagers, and that they may be exposed to negativities (Livingstone & Helsper, 2010; Sharples et al., 2009).

In today's society, the most basic risks that may be encountered in digital environments for the new generation before or during adolescence could be expressed in terms of inappropriate use of technology, lack of confidentiality and privacy, abundant sharing of personal information, inadequacy and inexperience in digital literacy, and socially inappropriate use (O'Keeffe et al., 2011; Picazo-Vela et al., 2012). Additionally, cyberbullying, digital game addictions, pornography and internet advertisements are among the other important risks. Everyone who steps into the virtual world needs protection against these risks (Haseski, 2020). In this context, monitoring the internet use of children at risk and preventing and reducing their problematic internet use have become an important necessity (Gómez et al., 2017). Parents are crucial in reducing and preventing the liabilities that children may face in online environments (Rosen et al., 2008). Parents are among the primary stakeholders in turning the risks of the internet into opportunities and ensuring safe internet use by children (Yaman, 2018). With the increasing use of technology, ensuring the well-being of children in digital environments and protecting them from the risks they may encounter while taking advantage of the opportunities provided by digital environments has been added to the job descriptions of parents (Appel et al., 2014; Clark, 2011).

In the current century, families need to use digital technologies effectively and to raise their children according to the needs of the digital age. However, providing children with access to digital technologies is not enough for them to be raised in according to the needs of the age. The role of the parent has important responsibilities such as preparing the child for the outside world, gaining basic skills, supporting the healthy development of social and psychological aspects, guiding the child, and providing the child with behaviors and attitudes that can protect him/her against dangers. Though beneficial for children, it has become the primary duty of today's parents to protect their children from the harms and negative situations of digital technologies and to raise them as citizens who can communicate effectively in digital environments, shop safely, receive education, comply with ethical rules, and are aware of their rights and responsibilities.

Raising individuals suitable for the digital age imposes important responsibilities on parents. In order to raise socially, emotionally and psychologically healthy individuals, parents need to be aware of the risks that their children may face on digital platforms, have the competencies to protect them against these risks, and ensure that they can benefit from the opportunities offered by digital platforms (Hark Söylemez, 2021). As media and communication technologies develop, official control and follow-up of these technologies becomes more difficult, and individual activities of parents become more important (Sonia Livingstone & Bober, 2006; Oswell, 2008). At this point, there is a need for digital parents who are aware of the risks of digital environments, to protect children against the risks of digital technologies, and at the same time enable them to take advantage of the opportunities offered by digital technologies.

The term “digital parenting” is widely used but has multiple meanings. It can refer to how parents are becoming more involved in controlling their children's use of digital media, as well as how parents themselves incorporate technology into their daily routines and parenting styles, leading to new forms of parenting (Mascheroni et al., 2018). Essentially, digital parenting involves parents' efforts to understand, support, and regulate their children's activities in digital environments (Benedetto & Ingrassia, 2021). This encompasses a range of behaviors such as monitoring their children's technology use, setting and enforcing rules, educating them on digital skills, navigating online education, and taking advantage of online opportunities (Odgers, 2019).

Literature related to digital parenting includes studies such as; parents' use of digital media (Anderson, 2016; Sonia Livingstone et al., 2018; Mascheroni & Ólafsson, 2016; Wong et al., 2015), digital parenting types and stages (Dhahir, 2018; Supartiwi et al., 2020; Yusuf et al., 2020), parent child interactions (De Ayala López et al., 2020), parent type (Lou et al., 2010; Valcke et al., 2010), digital parenting attitudes and awareness (Kuzu Jafari, 2021; Yazıcı & Özcan, 2021), and digital parenting roles and effects (Levine & Stekel, 2016; Martínez-Domínguez & Mora-Rivera, 2020; Rodríguez-de-Dios et al., 2018), ways for parents to learn about their children's online activities (Page Jeffery, 2021), and parental mediation on internet usage (Symons et al., 2017).

Within the scope of “The European Strategy for a Better Internet for Children” (O’Neill, 2018) and “Parenting for a Digital Future”, The London School of Economics and Political Science has been providing awareness and information training for parents, conducting field studies and helping with digital parenting (LSE, 2018). Awareness studies should be carried out on how, in what way, and with what roles parents should position digital

parenting in their parenting responsibilities (Fletcher & Blair, 2016; Kennedy, 2011; Lauricella et al., 2015). Huang et al. (2018) state that it is important to shed light on the digital parenting roles of parents in the contexts that affect the purposes and means of children's internet access and use, and that there are not enough scientific studies on digital parenting patterns, causes, and effects.

We aimed to investigate the digital parenting competencies of families using their opinions and experiences in this study. Since digital parenting is a new concept, we believe that this study will contribute to the literature. Considering that education starts in the family, studies that attempt to assess the competencies related to digital parenting are thought to be have importance. The Radio and Television Super Council of Turkey (2018) states that 59.6% of secondary school students are alone while connecting to the internet, and 25% of children do not share situations that make them uncomfortable with others. These results emphasize the safe and correct use of technology and stresses conducting research on parents who have children in the related age range.

Answers to the following questions are sought within the study:

1. Which of the activities that children are performing using digital technologies makes parents feel uncomfortable?
2. What are the practices of parents to reduce the time their children spend with digital technologies?
3. What are the views of parents on the risky situations that children may encounter in digital environments?
4. Which of the activities that children are performing using digital technologies do parents accompany?
5. What are the views of parents on their competencies to protect their children against digital risks?
6. What are the measures taken by parents to ensure the safety of their children in digital environments?
7. What are the views of parents on the concept of digital parenting?

Method

Research Pattern

A qualitative research method was used in this study. The qualitative research method question, interpret and understand the form of the problem in its natural environment (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). We employed a phenomenology design, which is a pattern under qualitative research methods. In phenomenology studies, the participants' feelings, perceptions, and thoughts and how they structured them in their minds are investigated (van Manen, 2007). In line with the stated purpose, open-ended questions can be asked to the participants via qualitative data collection tools, and their experiences about the researched phenomenon can be described and their common experiences can be understood (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This design was chosen to uncover and interpret parents' digital parenting competencies and their views on the concept of digital parenting.

Phenomenology studies exhibit a confined scope for sample selection. Participants must have had contact with people who have experienced or had experience with the phenomenon studied (Rolfe, 2006). It is stated in the literature that the number of participants can be in the range of 5 to 25 (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Neuman, 2013; Patton, 2014; Rubin & Babbie, 2016). As the number of participants increases, it becomes difficult to

analyze the data and understand the experiences related to the phenomenon (McNabb, 2015).

Study Group

In qualitative research, non-probability (purposive) sampling technique is more desired since it is aimed to intensively examine the people or situations that are the subject of the research rather than generalizing the research results to the universe (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The criterion sampling method, is used to determine the study group in the study. In phenomenological studies, the sample selected by the criterion-based method is very useful in terms of representing individuals who have experience with the phenomenon under study (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). For the selection of the parents in the study group, the active use of digital technologies by the parents and their children and the children's attendance to secondary school were determined as criteria. Parents participating in the study were coded from E1 to E13. Table 1 details the information about the study group.

Table 1. Information about the Study Group

Gender	Age	Education Level	Occupation	Digital technologies that their children have
Female	38	High school graduate	Homemaker	Mobile phone, tablet, computer
Male	49	Doctorate	Academician	Mobile phone, tablet, computer
Male	47	Doctorate	Engineer	Mobile phone, tablet, computer
Female	34	Associate degree	Private sector employee	Tablet
Female	40	Undergraduate	Nurse	Tablet, computer
Male	38	Undergraduate	Coach	Tablet, computer, smart watch
Male	47	Undergraduate	Doctor	Mobile phone, tablet, computer
Female	38	Undergraduate	Teacher	Mobile phone, tablet, computer
Male	48	High school graduate	Private sector employee	Mobile phone, computer
Male	37	Undergraduate	Public worker	Mobile phone, tablet
Female	45	Undergraduate	Teacher	Mobile phone, tablet, computer
Female	40	Graduate	Health officer	Tablet, computer
Male	44	Doctorate	Teacher	Mobile phone, computer

Table 1 shows that, all children have their own technological devices, and the children of 11 parents have at least 2 technological devices of their own.

Data Collection Tool and Data Collection

Initially, we prepared a semi-structured interview form in line with the data obtained from the literature scan. By considering the opinions of three experts who hold PhDs in the field of educational sciences and are currently employed at a university, the interview form was re-examined in terms of clarity, suitability, and adequacy of the questions, and necessary corrections were made. To determine the clarity of the questions, two parents, who were

not included in the research were asked questions in line with the pilot application. We revised the questions following the pilot application, and the interview form reached its final stage.

Interviews were conducted with 13 parents who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. Interviews were conducted face to face or online, depending on the parents' preferences. An approximate of 45-60 minute interviews was held with the participants to capture their detailed views on digital parenting.

Analysis of Data

To analyze the data obtained, content analysis was used. Content analysis is an analysis technique developed to summarize all kinds of content by counting and coding various aspects of the content (White & Marsh, 2006). The main purpose of content analysis is to reach codes, themes, and categories that can explain the relationships between concepts based on the data. (Marshall et al., 2021).

Qualitative content analysis is based on the subjective interpretation of text data through the identification of themes and patterns and the systematic classification of coding (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The text is divided into categories and examined progressively and systematically and undergoes good control (Mayring, 2021). Miles and Huberman (1994) stated that creating charts and graphs for data presentation will provide convenience in making data visible and conceptualizing.

In order to check the consistency of the results obtained after the analysis of the qualitative data, it is stated that the coding can be reviewed by the same coder 10-14 days later (Flick, 2014). In this context, analysis were repeated 10 days later to ensure coding reliability. The reliability coefficient between the two codings was calculated using Miles & Huberman's (1994) formula (consensus / consensus + disagreement), and the coding consistency was found to be 93%.

To ensure validity in the study, the characteristics of the study group and the data obtained were explained in detail. In addition, the research questions were supported by direct quotations from the interview texts where necessary (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Johnson & Christensen, 2019). Some of the data obtained from the research participants were given as they are to ensure credibility.

The names of the participating parents were coded as "P+Number" so that direct quotations from the students participating in the study do not reveal their identity within the framework of research ethics.

Findings

Which of the activities that children are performing using digital technologies makes parents feel uncomfortable?

Parents were asked “Which of the activities that your children are performing using digital technologies makes you uncomfortable?” and the findings are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Activities That Make Parents Uncomfortable

Theme	Code	f
Uncomforting activities	Watching videos	12
	Browsing social media	10
	Playing games	8
	Following social media celebrities	5
	Communicating with strangers	2

According to Table 2, it is seen that activities that make parents uncomfortable are grouped under 5 different codes. It was found that parents were mostly disturbed when their children watched videos (f=12). Furthermore, parents stated that they are uncomfortable with their children browsing social media (f=10), playing games (f=8), following social media celebrities (f=5), and communicating with strangers (f=2). Parents P1, P3, and P5 expressed their thoughts as follows:

> P1: "It bothers me a lot when my child watches videos and spends time on social media, he/she may encounter inappropriate content at any time."

> P3: "I do not want him/her to play games, he/she wants to play more and more every day, I am worried because I think that computer games will affect his/her school success. In addition, sitting in front of the computer for a long time is dangerous for his/her physical health."

> P5: "I don't want him/her to follow celebrities on Instagram, he/she constantly emulates them, he/she wants to dress like them and live like them"

What are the practices of parents to reduce the time their children spend with digital technologies?

The practices of parents to reduce the time their children spend with digital technologies were examined and the findings are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Practices of Parents to Reduce the Time Their Children Spend With Digital Technologies

Theme	Code	f
Practices to reduce the time spent with digital technologies	Setting the time period in which children can use digital technologies	7
	Conditioning the fulfillment of responsibilities	5
	Restricting access to digital technologies	4
	Diverting to different activities that will keep them away from digital technologies	4
	No practices	4

According to Table 3, it is seen that practices of parents to reduce the time their children spend with digital

technologies are grouped under 5 different codes. It was found that the most preferred practice to reduce the time children spend with digital technologies is to determine the time interval in which children can use digital technologies (f=7). Furthermore, some parents stated they don't impose any practices (f=4) to reduce the time their children spend with digital technologies. Parents P5, P9 and P10 expressed their thoughts as follows:

> P5: "We have set time intervals to use devices such as phones and tablets, so that we can at least prevent him/her from going and playing games whenever he/she wants. We completely prohibit the use of these technologies when he/she does not comply with the rule we have established."

> P9: "He/she has certain responsibilities, we allow him/her to use them when he/she fulfills them, we try to send him/her to different activities, courses that will allow him/her to spend his/her time more efficiently. We are sending him/her to piano class. He/she goes swimming.

> P10: "Imposing restrictions makes my child so irritable that our relationships suffer so much. We no longer make any restrictions."

What are the risky situations that children may encounter in digital environments?

Parents were asked about the risky situations that their children may encounter in digital environments and the findings are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Risky Situations That Children May Encounter in Digital Environments

Theme	Code	f
Risky situations	Exposure to inappropriate images and content (including violence, horror, profanity, etc.)	11
	Exposure to internet fraud	8
	Exposure to abuse	7
	Exposure to cyberbullying	7
	Sharing personal information with others	6

According to Table 4, it is seen that the risky situations that children may encounter in digital environments views on the safety of digital environments are grouped under 5 different codes. According to parents, exposure to inappropriate images and content (including violence, fear, profanity, etc.) is the leading risk that children may encounter in digital environments (f=11). Furthermore, exposure to internet fraud (f=8), exposure to abuse (f=7), exposure to cyberbullying (f=7) and sharing personal information with others (f=6) are also described as risky situations that children may encounter in digital environments. Parents P1 and P8 expressed their thoughts as follows:

> P1: "I think the biggest risk they can face is content that is not suitable for their age, especially some videos are not suitable for their age at all, there may be very inappropriate images and content."

P8: “There are many risks in digital media, violent videos, videos with sexual content… They may also encounter fraudsters, be used by malicious people, and their personal information may be stolen. Bullying is now occurring in virtual environments.”

Which of the activities that children are performing using digital technologies do parents accompany?

The activities that parents accompany their children while their children are using digital technologies were examined and the findings are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Activities That Parents Accompany Their Children While Their Children Are Using Digital Technologies

Theme	Code	f
Accompanied activities	No activities are accompanied	6
	Watching videos	4
	Doing homework	3
	Playing games	2
	Doing educational activities	2
	Children do not want to be accompanied	2

According to Table 5, it is seen that activities that parents accompany their children, while their children are using digital technologies are grouped under 6 different codes. It was found that the majority of parents did not accompany their children while their children are using digital technologies (f=6). Furthermore, it is stated that parents accompany their children while they are watching videos (f=4), doing homework (f=4), playing games (f=2) and doing educational activities (f=2). Another important issue is that some children do not want their parents to accompany them. (f=2). Parents P4, P7 and P12 expressed their thoughts as follows:

P4: “I can be at home in a very limited time frame. So, I don't have time to accompany.”

P7: “Sometimes we watch videos together, we laugh, we have fun. Sometimes I accompany to his/her games.”

P12: “I accompany him/her in the parts where he/she has difficulty while doing his/her homework, we do it together. Apart from that, my child doesn't want me to accompany him/her anyway.”

What are the views of parents on their competencies to protect their children against digital risks?

Views of parents on their ability to protect their children against digital risks were examined and the findings are presented in Table 6. According to Table 6, it is seen that views of parents on their ability to protect their children against digital risks are grouped under 2 themes and 6 different codes. The majority of parents feel inadequate to protect their children against digital risks (f=10), while some of them feel adequate (f=3).

Table 6. Views of Parents on Their Ability to Protect Their Children Against Digital Risks

Theme	Code	f
Feels inadequate*	Limiting the child's use of digital technologies	6
	Using digital technologies better than children	4
	Keeping children away from gaming sites	3
	Using parental control applications	2
	Keeping track of what children are doing in virtual environments	2
	Controlling the people with whom children communicate in virtual environments	2
Feels adequate		3

* Frequency for this theme is (f=10).

Parents stated the issues that they feel inadequate as limiting the child's use of digital technologies (f=6), using digital technologies better than children (f=4), keeping children away from gaming sites (f=3), using parental control applications (f=2), keeping track of what children are doing in virtual environments (f=2), and controlling the people with whom children communicate in virtual environments (f=2). Parents P1, P6, P9 and P13 expressed their thoughts as follows:

> P1: “Virtual environments are so dangerous that I think the effective way to protect the children against the risks of these environments is to limit their use, otherwise it is not possible to protect the children when they are in virtual environments, but unfortunately, we cannot set this limit. We have problems when we try to set a limit.”

> P6: “We can't prevent him/her from playing games, we don't know who he/she communicates with or sees in virtual environments. We don't know what he/she is doing. I wish I could use technology well enough to control my child.”

> P9: “There are some applications that you can monitor and control your children, but I don't know how to use them exactly. I want to make him/her use technologies a little less, but I can't do that either.”

> P13: “I think it can protect my child against digital risks. There has never been a situation where I felt helpless and inadequate.”

What are the measures taken by parents to ensure the safety of their children in digital environments?

The measures taken by the parents to ensure the safety of their children in digital environments were examined and the findings are presented in Table 7. According to Table 7, it is seen that measures taken by parents to ensure the safety of their children in digital environments are grouped under 11 different codes. Parents usually check their children's social media accounts (f=8) and their internet history (f=8) to ensure their children's safety in digital environments.

Table 7. Measures Taken by Parents to Ensure the Safety of Their Children in Digital Environments

Theme	Code	f
	Checking social media accounts	8
	Checking internet history	8
	Talking about the risks that can be encountered in digital environments	6
	Talking about effective use of digital technologies	6
	Using services for safe internet	6
Taken measures	Blocking access to digital technologies (prohibiting, etc.)	4
	Adjusting internet privacy settings	3
	Barging into room and checking	3
	Checking applications installed on digital tools	2
	Limiting time spent with digital technologies	2
	Accompanying children while using digital technologies	1

Furthermore, it is observed that parents talk to their children about the risks that may be encountered in digital environments (f=6), the effective use of digital technologies (f=6) and using services for safe internet (f=6). Some parents stated that they block access to digital technologies (banning etc.) (f=4), adjust internet privacy settings (f=3), and barge into their children's room and check them (f=3). Some parents stated that they check the applications installed in digital tools (f=2), limit the time spent with digital technologies (f=2) and accompany their children when using digital technologies (f=1). Parents P2, P5, P9 and P10 expressed their thoughts as follows:

> P2: “I especially try to control their social media accounts and their internet history. But I notice that he/she has been deleting his/her internet history lately. For this reason, I find it more appropriate to talk to him/her about the risks that may be experienced in the environment, rather than controlling it.”

> P5:” It is not possible to protect them by controlling, moreover, when they realize that they are controlled, their attitudes begin to change, we are now using secure internet services. We occasionally talk about the negativities that he/she may encounter in virtual environments; we explain what he/she should pay attention to, and I or his/her father accompany him from time to time.”

> P9: “My methods might be a little different, sometimes I'm trying to sneak into his/her room and check it out, but he/she gets furious.”

> P10: “Whenever I have the opportunity, I check their internet history, social media accounts, I also check the applications they have installed on their phone and computer.”

What are the views of parents on the concept of digital parenting?

Views of parents on the concept of digital parenting are examined and the findings are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Views of Parents on the Concept of Digital Parenting

Theme	Code	f
Views on the concept of digital parenting	Parents who can protect their children against the negative effects of technology	9
	Parents who can correctly guide their children on the use of digital media	8
	Parents who can make their children benefit from the opportunities of technology	7
	Parents who have sufficient knowledge of the use of digital technologies	6
	Parents who can take advantage of the opportunities offered by digital technologies	5
	Parents who are aware of the risks in digital environments	3
	Parents who behave according to the needs of the age	2

According to Table 8, it is seen that views of parents on the concept of digital parenting are grouped under 7 different codes. The majority of the parents stated that they did not witness to a negative event that their children experienced in digital environments (f=9). However, some parents answered the question as “yes" (f=4). Parents P4, P8, P11 and P12 expressed their thoughts as follows:

> P4: “In my opinion, the digital parent is primarily the parent who can protect their children from the negative effects of technology. It takes lots of research to achieve this. In addition, they should be able to guide their child in these environments. After all, there are many possibilities offered by technology, which should not be ignored.”

> P8: “The parent, who uses technology well, should have knowledge about using technological devices and ensure that their child benefits from the opportunities of technology.”

> P11: “It is the parent who can protect their child in the virtual environment, it is the parent who can guide their child.”

> P12: “It may be parents who know how to take the advantage of technology. It is the parent who ensures that their child can benefit from the opportunities provided by technology. It is the parent who can act according to whatever the time requires.”

Discussion and Conclusion

We conducted this study to examine the views of parents on digital parenting competencies and experiences. Parents stated that they feel most uncomfortable when their children are watching videos. They also stated that they feel uncomfortable when their children are surfing on social media, playing games, following social media celebrities, and communicating with people they do not know. Similarly, Wong et al. (2015) stated that parents are worried about their children's use of digital tools.

Many activities that can be done in digital environments can have negative effects on children if not paid attention to. For children without sufficient self-control mechanisms, precautions should be taken when they are watching

videos on the internet, surfing social media, following social media celebrities, playing digital games, emulating celebrities, and communicating with strangers. Risks such as violence, aggression, prolonged exposure to the screen, and game addictions in digital games are considered as factors that worry parents (Willett, 2017). There are also studies that show that digital games normalize the negative elements they contain, such as violence, racism, sexuality, and gender, and load wrong coding on children's subconscious (Evren, 2017; Yiğit Açıkgöz & Yalman, 2018). In addition, on digital platforms, individuals can communicate with people they have not met before in order to access information on their special interests (Ito et al., 2008). These situations can pose great risks for children. It is possible to say that such difficult-to-control situations are potentially harmful for vulnerable individuals and risky groups such as secondary school children.

Parents who have concerns and are worried about digital tools, impose limitations on their children's use of such tools (Sorbring, 2014). Similarly, in this study, parents stated that in order to reduce the time their children spend with digital technologies, they set the time period in which their children could use digital technologies, stipulate fulfilling some responsibilities, limit their access to digital technologies, and divert to different activities that will keep them away from digital technologies. Correspondingly, in the study by Anderson (2016), it is stated that parents monitor their children in countless ways. In addition to tracking behavior, parents also exhibit blocking or limiting behavior. In the study by Wong et al. (2015), it was stated that parents are mostly restrictive in internet supervision.

Strategies commonly applied in this regard (setting rules, imposing restrictions) lead to both positive (explanation, discussion) and negative (disagreement, criticizing) results (Austin, 1990). Bringing restrictions can make children combative. As a matter of fact, parents stated that their children became combative after the restrictions were made. As a caring parent, it is the parents' job to keep their children safe. In addition, it was also found that some parents do not have any practices to reduce the time their children spend with digital technologies. It is possible to say that children need their parents' limitations and evaluations regardless of their technological competence.

According to the parents in this study, the leading risk that children may encounter in digital environments is exposure to inappropriate images and content such as violence, fear, and profanity. In addition, exposure to internet fraud, exposure to abuse, exposure to cyberbullying, and sharing personal information with others are considered risky situations that children may encounter in digital environments. Parents are concerned about their children being exposed to threats/bullying in virtual environments (Liu et al., 2012). Cyberbullying is characterized as an aggressive behaviour practiced via numerous online tools and platforms (Horner et al., 2015; Kowalski et al., 2014). The concept of cyberbullying manifests itself with factors such as sending e-mail with a confidential identity, leaving a call from an unknown number, making calls, spreading defamatory and threatening texts, voices, and images; swearing, threaten, and insulting on online platforms (Tosun & Akcay, 2022). The prevalence of cyberbullying may be attributed to the lack of social cues present in virtual contexts as a result of the absence of face-to-face interaction. (Mesch, 2018; Mishna et al., 2012). There are many studies in the literature that states children can be disturbed by other users, be vulnerable to attacks by malicious people, and become victims of cyberbullying (Jones et al., 2013; Khurana et al., 2015; Padır et al., 2021).

Another great danger in digital environments is the capture of shared personal information and content by malicious people. It is seen that this kind of danger is mostly experienced in the case of contacting foreign people (Tuncer & Dikmen, 2016). It should be made clear to them that children should never tell their real name or where they live, what school they attend or where they play. The same rule should apply to other personal, family and confidential information. It should be stated that when they encounter a situation that bothers them, they should definitely share the situation with an adult they can trust.

This study shows that the majority of parents do not accompany their children while using digital technologies, and some children do not want their parents to accompany them. In addition, according to the findings of the study, it is possible to say that the majority of parents do not find digital technologies safe, they are aware of the risks that may be encountered, but still, the majority of them do not accompany their children when using digital technologies. However, accompanying and directing children during the use of digital technologies will reduce the risks that may arise from these technologies. Children in general may have more information about computers than their parents. Parents on the other hand have more experience in life. Parents' knowledge and experience should be combined with children's knowledge of computers and the Internet. In this way, children can be helped more in the conscious use of the computer. Children always need parents' experiences and evaluations.

This study reveals that parents who accompany their children are doing this while their children are watching videos, playing games, doing homework, and doing educational activities. This situation creates a dialog between children and parents and strengthens their communication (Martins et al., 2017; Nikken & Jansz, 2006). By spending quality time with children in digital environments, children should be prevented from being alone in this uncontrolled and unlimited environment. Spending time with children in digital environments and accompanying them in their activities is essential to protect them against possible risks.

This study shows that the majority of parents felt inadequate to protect their children against digital risks. One of the issues that parents feel inadequate is limiting their child's use of digital technologies. By preventing children from using digital technologies, it does not seems possible to protect them from the negative effects of technology. However, when children are properly guided, possible negative effects can be minimized. The family should act with this awareness and avoid a completely restrictive approach.

Parents feel inadequate because they cannot use digital technologies as well as their children. The fact that children can use digital technologies better than their families causes families to feel inadequate. Lou et al., (2010) found in their study that 31% of parents had low level internet literacy skills, 39% had medium level and 30% had high level internet literacy skills. Sonck et al., (2011) stated in their study that half of the children aged 9-16 have more information about the use of digital technologies than their parents.

Parents may face different challenges with the opportunities offered by digital technologies. According to the EU Kids Online 2020 report (Smahel et al., 2020), the vast majority of children often help their parents when they find something difficult on the internet. Sharples et al. (2009) found in their research that only 13% of parents state that they know technology better than their children. To support their children in the correct use of

technology, they should have knowledge about technological developments and effective use of technology.

Research shows that parents lack information, worry, and feel inadequate about taking precautions to ensure their children's safe, effective and conscious use of digital technologies (Huang et al., 2009; Lou et al., 2010). Manouselis et al. (2009) reported that the parents are concerned about the internet risks their children face, but they do not know what precautions to take. Similarly, Kenley (2011) states that families have little knowledge about internet risks such as cyberbullying, and they do not know what to do against these risks.

Parents are in a constant struggle to prevent the negative effects of technology on their children, and they strive to increase the advantages and limit the disadvantages of today's rich media tools. This study shows that, in order to ensure their children's safety in digital environments, parents usually check their children's social media accounts, internet history, installed applications on digital tools, and configure security settings. According to the UK results of the EU Kids Online Project, monitoring strategies are adopted by more than half of British parents. 54% of parents ban or filter websites and 46% monitor websites visited by their children (Livingstone et al., 2011). Racz et al. (2017) states that when their children are not at home, parents communicate with their children via mobile phones and text messages and ask their children questions such as "where are you, who are you with". It was also found that parents are friends with their children on social media and check their children's sharing.

Increasing children's internet literacy levels is one of the effective methods that will reduce the risk of negative behavior or encountering negative behaviors in online environments (Chang et al., 2015). As a result, it is recommended that parents should engage in regular communication with their children. (Mesch, 2018). If children are informed on the risks and threats that they may face while using online environments, they can protect themselves from these risks and dangers in a way that they are minimally affected. It is revealed in this study that, parents talk to their children about the risks that may be encountered in digital environments and the effective use of digital technologies. According to the results of EU Kids Online II Turkey (2010), 82% of parents talk to their children about what they do online, 58% of parents accompany their children when they are online, and 52% of them talk about issues that might disturb their children. According to the UK results of the EU Kids Online Project (Livingstone et al., 2011), safe mediator parenting strategies that explain why websites are good or bad (73%), offer advice on how to use the internet safely (71%), and help to children what to do when faced with a difficult situation (73%) are common (Livingstone et al., 2011). It is thought that family attitudes and strong family support are important in eliminating or minimizing digital risks for children.

The ways parents protect their children against risks in digital environments differ. Parenting types, according to approaches to their children's technology use are classified as authoritarian, democratic, permissive, and negligent (Valcke et al., 2010). Authoritarian parents are those who prefer not to let their children use digital tools. The rules are set by the parents, are fixed and cannot be bent. Democratic parents work with their children to decide the rules for using digital technologies, and they all abide by the rules that are chosen. Permissive parents may bend the rules they set with their children. Negligent parents do not restrict their children in digital environments (Yaman et al., 2020). Within this study, it was found that some parents prevent their children from accessing digital technologies (such as banning) and some limit the time their children spend with digital technologies.

This study shows that parents apply restrictive strategies such as the restriction of access to digital technologies or setting time limits to ensure the safety of their children. Setting rules and monitoring their children in digital environments are effective ways for parents to protect their children against digital risks (Tynes, 2007). Rode (2009) revealed that parents ensure computer security by imposing restrictions, monitoring their children's computer use, or programs that block web pages. It is possible to say that restrictive strategies can be effective on children going to secondary school. According to studies, restricting tactics work better on younger age groups and have the opposite effect on youngsters who are approaching adolescence. (Ho et al., 2017). "Parenting for a Digital Future" report (Livingstone et al., 2018), parents generally use enabling and restrictive strategies, and these strategies vary by age group. It has been pointed out that often "restrictive strategies" along with "use with the child strategies" are dominant in the younger age group (under 5 years old). It is claimed that activities such as encouraging active speaking and spreading awareness about online use as well as establishing some rules are used with children aged 5 to 12. This study also states that some parents suddenly enter to their children's room and tries to check them. However, more open and transparent communication should be established instead. Instead of secretly controlling children, cooperation and maintaining an open dialogu should be embraced. Children should be encouraged to share their online experiences without hesitation, whether they are good or bad.

The concept of digital parenting was used for the first time in the literature by Rode (2009). Rode (2009) argues that digital parenting plays a key role for children's safety in digital environments. Huang et al. (2018) conceptualized the concept of digital parenting as providing protection, monitoring social media use, finding information and resources, and establishing relationships. Parents who participated in the study, expressed their views on digital parenting as, the parent who can protect their children against the negative effects of technology, the parent who can direct their children to the use of digital media, the parent who can make their children benefit from the opportunities of technology, the parent who has sufficient knowledge of the use of digital technologies, the parent who can benefit from the opportunities offered by digital technologies, parents who are aware of the risks and parents who act according to the needs of the age. Therefore, it is possible to say that parents are aware of the concept of digital parenting. This awareness is very important for raising children according to the requirements of the age. Because, in order for children to be protected from the risks of the digital world in the most effective way, the first person they contact should be their parents, who have basic parenting skills and are aware of their digital responsibilities.

Recommendations

In the current study, it was found that the most preferred method for reducing children's screen time with digital technologies was to set specific time intervals for their use. It was also observed that parents restrict access to digital technologies, assign responsibilities to their children, and direct them to different activities to reduce their screen time. Additionally, parents are advised to create daily or weekly activity plans with their children to regulate their digital technology usage. Moreover, it is suggested that parents can help their children become more aware and self-regulating by installing applications that provide feedback on their daily use of digital technologies. The study found that the majority of parents do not accompany their children when they use digital technologies. However, it is recommended that parents spend quality time with their children regularly in digital environments,

enjoy the activities they do together, and maintain their relationships. Furthermore, to ensure their children's safety in digital environments, parents are advised to take the following measures:

- They should be able to communicate with their children in digital environments and be with their children in these environments.
- Instead of taking completely prohibitive and restrictive measures for children, conscious use of digital technologies by children should be ensured.
- Applications downloaded by children to their mobile devices should be monitored and monitored at regular intervals.
- Children should be allowed to access the internet in a common area at home under the supervision of their parents.
- Care should be taken to use parental control and protection system software on all devices where children access the internet.
- When exposed to any cyberbullying, it should be openly discussed with children that this situation should be shared with a trusted adult immediately.

Moreover;

- This study was carried out on parents with children who go to secondary school, studies can be conducted with different age groups.
- This study was conducted by adopting a qualitative research method. The results obtained by adopting the quantitative research method can be evaluated.
- Children's reactions to the restrictions imposed by their parents on information technologies and applications can be investigated.

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