

Digital Parenting: Perceptions on Digital Risks

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Abstract

Today, child rearing has become more complicated since the recent changes caused by digital technologies in daily lives of families. Digital media brings both new learning opportunities and risks for its consumers simultaneously. Especially, children and adolescents are susceptible for the digital risks. Parents are expected to have a mediating role for their children in adapting digital life. The purpose of the study was to investigate parents' perceptions related to digital risks and on what aspects of digital media (risks or opportunities) they wanted to be trained. Seventy-nine parents (38 mothers and 41 fathers) of children aged 10 to 18 responded to survey on digital risks.

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Parents' perceptions related to the risks involved in the digital media were investigated by forced-choice and open-ended questions and the responses analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The results revealed that, parents had knowledge on digital risks and taking precautions against those risks. Besides, according to the findings from content analysis, parents utilized several parenting strategies and they needed to be educated on both risks and opportunities of digital media for their children.

Keywords: Digital parenting; Digital risks; Parental mediation; Parenting strategies; Parental education.

Dijital Ebeveynlik: Dijital Risklere Dair Algılar

Öz

Dijital teknolojiadaki ilerlemeler günlük hayatı doğrudan etkilemekte ve özellikle bu teknolojilerin çocuklar ve gençler tarafından kullanımı, ebeveynlerin temel sorumluluğu olan çocuk yetiştirme işini karmaşıklaştırmaktadır. Dijital medya kullanıcılarına, öğrenme fırsatlarını sunarken bir yandan da dijital riskleri beraberinde getirmektedir. Ebeveynler ise çocuklarını öğrenme fırsatlarından yararlanma ve onları dijital risklerden koruma arasında kalmaktadırlar. Bu çalışmanın amacı, ebeveynlerin dijital risklere ve bu risklere yönelik tedbir almak konusunda kendilerini ne kadar yeterli gördüklerine dair algılarının ve dijital medyanın çocukları tarafından kullanımına aracılık ederken hangi boyutlarda daha fazla bilgi sahibi olmak istediklerinin incelenmesidir. Bu amaçla, 38 anne ve 41 babadan oluşan, çocuklarının yaşları 10 ila 18 arasında değişen 79 ebeveyne, kapalı ve açık uçlu sorulardan oluşan bir anket uygulanmıştır. Bu sorulardan elde edilen bulgular ise nicel ve nitel olarak analiz edilmiştir. Çalışmanın sonuçları, ebeveynlerin riskler hakkında bilgili olduklarını, önlemler konusunda da kendilerini bilgi sahibi olarak değerlendirdiklerini gösterirken, yapılan içerik analizi ebeveynlerin dijital ebeveynlik stratejilerini ve dijital medyanın riskleri ve olanaklarına dair hangi noktalarda daha fazla bilgi sahibi olmak istediklerini ortaya koymuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dijital ebeveynlik; Dijital riskler; Ebeveyn aracılığı; Ebeveynlik stratejileri; Ebeveyn eğitimi.

Introduction

Parenting is a full time job and a functional status in life cycle. It is a belief system including attitudes, perceptions, expectations, knowledge, values and action-orientation toward caring and socialization of children (Bornstein, 2001; Darling and Steinberg, 1993). Therefore, parents actively meet biological, physical, psychological and social needs of children as caregiving practices. Today, child-rearing practices have been more complicated since digital media are commonplace and pervasive in daily life including modern household. Parents are now in a dilemmatic position, on one side they encourage their children's use of digital media for educational and social purposes. On the other side, they try to minimize the risks and control possible negative effects of digital media use on them (Livingstone and Helsper, 2008). The parenting behaviors and strategies utilized in attempting to mediate and reduce the negative effects of the media on children are called "parental mediation" (Clark, 2011). These strategies not only include restrictive decisions, communication and interpretive strategies are also involved in parent-child interaction (Nathanson, 1999).

There are different kinds of risks associated with using digital media; children and adolescents are the most vulnerable group to those risks. Hasebrink, Livingstone and Haddon (2008) categorized three kinds of online risks: content, contact and conduct risks. First, in content risks, children are exposed to unwelcome or inappropriate content. Second, contact risks include risky communications in which children and/or peers are involved. Lastly, in conduct risks, children are the active actors in contributing risky content or contact. Children's exposure to online risks has been growing in a rapid fashion. For instance, compared to the data in EU Kids Online Turkey 2010 report (Kaşıkçı, Çağiltay, Karakuş, Kurşun and Ogan, 2014) the risks faced by children aged between 9-16 over the Internet have been increased in the data of 2015 (Aslan, 2016). In the recent report, the most significant online risks were, feeling frustrated when not being online, ignoring friends, family and school work due to spending long hours online, searching new friends over the internet; browsing the internet without any purpose or aim.

In addition to online risks, excessive use of digital media may be associated with several health problems (headache, fatigue etc.), psychosocial issues such as depression, social isolation and self-esteem concerns (Mitchell and Savill-Smith, 2005). Loneliness was increased due to excessive use of

Internet and the relations established online could not be healthy substitutes for real life contacts (Yao and Zhong, 2014). Additionally, game addiction, attention deficits, and violence vulnerability have been reported (Anderson and Bushman, 2001; Bartholow and Anderson, 2002; Çetin and Ceyhan, 2014; Ferguson, 2007, 2013; Gentile, Lynch, Linder and Walsh, 2004). In terms of addiction, for some, digital media devices and online activities could be means for to engage in addictive behaviours (Griffiths, 2000), whereas across cultures, people also reported addiction to digital media and Internet itself (Cheng and Li, 2014). For 10-12 years of children, excessive screen use of 4 hours per day or more was strongly related to negative well-being symptoms which were little interest in doing things, little appetite, loneliness, crying easily or wanting to cry, having difficulties falling asleep or staying asleep, feeling sad or blue or feeling for the future seemed hopeless (Yang, Helgason, Sigfusdottir and Kristjansson, 2013). On the other hand, children with social, psychological vulnerabilities such as depression and/or aggression were prone to increased online risks (Ybarra, Mitchell, Finkelhor and Wolak, 2007).

There may be a disparity between perceptions of parents and children's on the negative effects of risky situations. For instance, parents were concerned about well being of children after they were exposed to inappropriate content, children could think that they had effective coping strategies such as perceiving the content such as "cool", "fun" or noting to think about (Staksrud and Livingstone, 2009). Children reported that risks do not necessarily result in harm and specifically cyber bullying made them upset compared to other risks online (Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig and Ólafsson, 2011). In Turkey, children, usually aged between 9-17, were the primary participants of widespread surveys (Aslan, 2016). He studies relying on the perceptions of parents on risks and their coping strategies in case of risks are limited.

Parents' screen time and parental attitudes were strongly associated with children's screen time (Lauricella, Wartella and Rideout, 2015). Parents utilized active, restrictive and co-using strategies for technological devices (Clark, 2011; Nathanson, 2002). Parental education for awareness is one of the preventive and/or interventional solutions to keep children safe from and help them to generate coping strategies for the risks in digital media (Staksrud and Livingstone, 2009; Tomczyk and Wasieński, 2017). In case of Turkish families, before examining solutions, the knowledge and perceptions of parents on the digital media risks including content, contact and conduct risks and

health concerns should be understood in more detail. Accordingly, this research aimed to describe how parents perceive the risks for their children of using digital media and on what aspects they think, they need to learn more. The specific research questions of the study were as followed:

1. On which digital risks did the parents perceive themselves knowledgeable?
2. Did they perceive themselves knowledgeable on taking precautions against digital risks faced by their children?
3. How did they evaluate themselves on their needs to learn more on digital risks in a prospective parental training program?

Method

In this research, a mixed method, based on quantitative and qualitative approaches simultaneously, was used. The survey model was utilized as quantitative method. The survey model is a research approach that aims to describe a case, in the form that was used to be in the past or it still is, in order to have a general judgment over the universe by means of survey arrangements on a group of examples of samples taken from all or a part of the universe (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006; Karasar, 2007). It reaches generalizations through the statistical analysis of the quantitative data obtained by means of questionnaires. When a general picture of the case is taken, a very special section of it is chosen and special case studies are initiated, respectively (Çepni, 2007).

As for the qualitative part of the study, the data obtained by open-ended question was handled by use of content analysis. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) have emphasized that analyzing content is a research technique consisted of editing, classification and comparison of texts and extracting theoretical results from texts. In this study, participants' responses to the open-ended question were analyzed based on inductive content analysis. Inductive content analysis is used in cases where there are no previous studies dealing with the phenomenon, and therefore the coded categories are derived directly from the text data (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005; Elo and Kyngäs, 2008).

Participants

By use of convenient sampling method, 79 parents, whose children aged 10 to 18 ($\bar{X}=13.53$) and attended to middle and high schools in İstanbul in 2016-2017 academic year, were reached and they agreed to participate in the study. Thirty-eight of the parents were mothers, and forty-one were

fathers. The average age of parents' was 41.8. The education of parents varied from primary education to postgraduate levels (Table 1). The parents' evaluations on their own competence in using digital media ranged between the categories of no efficiency at all and very efficient (Table 2). At the same time, most parents indicated that they used digital media almost everyday (Table 3).

Table 1. Frequencies and Percentages of Parents' Education Levels

| Education | f | % |
|-----------------------------|----------|----------|
| Primary School | 20 | 25.3 |
| Middle (Junior High) School | 10 | 12.7 |
| High School | 24 | 30.4 |
| Undergraduate | 7 | 8.9 |
| Graduate | 13 | 16.5 |
| Postgraduate | 5 | 6.3 |
| Total | 79 | 100.0 |

Table 2. Frequencies and Percentages of Parents' Evaluations on Own Digital Media Competencies

| Digital Media Competencies | f | % |
|-----------------------------------|----------|----------|
| Very Good | 16 | 20.5 |
| Good | 28 | 35.9 |
| Moderate | 24 | 34.6 |
| Weak | 7 | 6.4 |
| Insufficient | 2 | 2.6 |
| Total | 78 | 100.0 |

Table 3. Frequencies and Percentages of Parents' Digital Media Use

| Digital Media Use | f | % |
|-----------------------------|----------|----------|
| Almost never | 1 | 1.3 |
| Several times a week | 12 | 15.4 |
| Everyday or almost everyday | 54 | 69.2 |
| Almost every moment | 11 | 14.1 |
| Total | 78 | 100.0 |

Data Collection Tool

A questionnaire was generated to determine the knowledge of parents on the risks of digital media. The first part of the questionnaire was consisted of nine questions to collect demographic information including gender, age,

education level and strategies for digital media use. In the second part, ten items on the digital risks were listed. Parents were asked to report their degree of knowledge on digital risks on a scale with 3 choices (1.I have no knowledge at all, 2.I have very little knowledge, 3.I have enough knowledge) and they also asked to report whether they know how to take precautions in the face of these risks by choosing between two options (1.Yes, I know, 2.No, I don't know). As for the qualitative data, in the third part of the questionnaire, an open-ended question, investigating if parents were about to attend a training program on digital risks, what they would like to learn in detail, was added to collect information on their expectations on being more knowledgeable as parents.

In order to ensure the validity of the data collection tool, expert opinions were obtained from two researchers working in the Department of Educational Sciences of Istanbul University. Besides, in order to check the clarity of the questionnaire form, a pilot data collected from 10 parents and their opinions were taken into consideration in the final version of the tool.

Data Analysis

Formerly, the quantitative data obtained from the first two parts of questionnaire was analyzed by SPSS 20.0. The quantitative data was descriptively analyzed and frequencies, percentages, and arithmetic means were evaluated. Following that, the data obtained from the open-ended question was content analyzed by means of Nvivo 7 software program. The three authors of the study conducted the coding of the qualitative data simultaneously. Following that, the authors came together and compared the codes revealed by each of them and discussed the inconsistencies and disagreements by turning back the original data. All the authors agreed the final codes and categories. In qualitative analyses trustworthiness is tested by asking for the expert opinion for the meaningfulness of the final reports (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2011). For establishing trustworthiness of the findings, the opinions of two other researchers, working in the Department of Educational Sciences of İstanbul University were asked for the meaningfulness of the final version of the codes and the inconsistencies were discussed in a meeting including both reviewers and three authors. In the final part, a secondary quantitative analysis conducted based on themes revealed from the qualitative analysis. Both quantitative and qualitative categories were re-analyzed by using chi-square test.

Results

Preliminary Descriptive Analysis of the Data

Given the parents' views on the risks associated with digital media, they generally stated that they had enough information.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Parents' Knowledge on the Risks of Digital Media

| Items | I have no knowledge at all | | I have very little knowledge | | I have enough knowledge | |
|---|----------------------------|------|------------------------------|------|-------------------------|------|
| | f | % | f | % | f | % |
| 1. I know the risk that my child may share personal information (address, identity, credit card etc.) with other persons. | 1 | 1.3 | 4 | 5.1 | 72 | 91.1 |
| 2. I'm knowledgeable on the possible harmful content that my child may face in surfing internet. | 4 | 5.1 | 14 | 17.7 | 59 | 74.7 |
| 3. I know the risk that my child may be the perpetrator or the victim of a crime committed by use of digital media. | 14 | 17.7 | 27 | 30.0 | 38 | 48.1 |
| 4. I know the risk that my child may be exposed to cyber bullying. | 7 | 8.9 | 19 | 24.1 | 51 | 64.6 |
| 5. I'm knowledgeable on the risks if my child shares his/her location while using digital devices. | 4 | 5.1 | 16 | 20.3 | 57 | 72.2 |
| 6. I know that my child's use of technological devices frequently and hours long may cause technology addiction. | 0 | 0 | 6 | 7.6 | 70 | 88.6 |
| 7. I know the possibility that malicious persons may abuse my child while using digital media. | 1 | 1.3 | 11 | 13.9 | 64 | 81.0 |
| 8. I know the possibility that my child may be kidnapped by strangers that she/he meet in the Internet. | 2 | 2.5 | 7 | 8.9 | 56 | 70.9 |
| 9. I'm knowledgeable on the risks if my child shares her/his own photos and videos on social media accounts such as Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram etc. while using digital devices. | 3 | 3.8 | 15 | 19.0 | 55 | 69.6 |
| 10. I know that my child's use of technological devices frequently and hours long may cause health problems. | 1 | 1.3 | 13 | 16.5 | 60 | 75.9 |

Specifically, the parents reported that they were most knowledgeable on the risk of sharing personal information (91.1%), which was followed by the risk of addiction (88.6%). In the meanwhile, they were less knowledgeable on the risks that their children's possibility to be the perpetrator or the victim of a crime committed by use of digital media (48.1%) and on the risk of children's exposure to cyber bullying, respectively (64.6%, Table 4).

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Parents' Knowledge on How to Take Precautions Against the Digital Media Risks

| Items | I know how to take precautions in the face of these risks | | | |
|---|---|------|------------------|------|
| | Yes, I know | | No, I don't know | |
| | f | % | f | % |
| 1. I know the risk that my child may share personal information (address, identity, credit card etc.) with other persons. | 59 | 85.5 | 10 | 14.5 |
| 2. I'm knowledgeable on the possible harmful content that my child may face in surfing internet. | 55 | 78.6 | 15 | 21.4 |
| 3. I know the risk that my child may be the perpetrator or the victim of a crime committed by use of digital media. | 36 | 51.4 | 34 | 48.6 |
| 4. I know the risk that my child may be exposed to cyber bullying. | 47 | 67.1 | 23 | 32.9 |
| 5. I'm knowledgeable on the risks if my child shares his/her location while using digital devices. | 55 | 78.6 | 15 | 21.4 |
| 6. I know that my child's use of technological devices frequently and hours long may cause technology addiction. | 55 | 75.3 | 18 | 24.7 |
| 7. I know the possibility that malicious persons may abuse my child while using digital media. | 56 | 77.8 | 16 | 22.2 |
| 8. I know the possibility that my child may be kidnapped by strangers that she/he meet in the Internet. | 66 | 85.7 | 11 | 14.3 |
| 9. I'm knowledgeable on the risks if my child shares her/his own photos and videos on social media accounts such as Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram etc. while using digital devices. | 53 | 73.6 | 19 | 26.4 |
| 10. I know that my child's use of technological devices frequently and hours long may cause health problems. | 56 | 74.7 | 19 | 25.3 |

When considering parents views on how to take precautions against the risks related to digital media, the parents reported that they knew mostly to take precautions against the risk of kidnapping that may be committed by the strangers that their children meet on the internet (85.7%). And following that they were knowledgeable on the precautions against the risk of sharing personal information with others on the internet (85.5%). Parallel to their reports on knowledge of risks (Table 4), parents stated that they were least knowledgeable on the precautions against risks that their children's possibility to be the perpetrator or the victim of a crime committed by use of digital media (51.4%) and against the risk of children's exposure to cyber bullying, respectively (67.1%, Table 5).

Content Analysis of the Data

The qualitative data was collected from responses of parents to an open-ended question added at the end of the questionnaire. In that question, in order to understand the future expectations of parents for being more knowledgeable on the digital risks, the parents were asked to write down what they would like to learn in detail if they attend a training program on digital risks. Content analysis of the qualitative data revealed two main categories in the responses of parents. Specifically, in two main categories, parents reported need for more information on digital risks and they also reported parenting strategies on digital media use of their children, respectively (Table 6).

Table 6. Distribution of Parents' Responses into Main Qualitative Categories

| Categories | f | % |
|------------------------------------|----|-------|
| Need for more information on risks | 30 | 38 |
| Digital parenting strategies | 41 | 51.9 |
| Both | 8 | 10.1 |
| Total | 79 | 100.0 |

As it is shown in Table 6, 38% of the participants explicitly wanted to learn more on risks of digital media and their responses categorized under the "more information is needed" category. The 53.2% of the responses were categorized under seven digital parenting strategies. In the content analysis, under these two main categories a number of sub-categories defined. Therefore, the main categories and sub-categories of responses were exemplified in Table 7 and following that each category was defined in detail.

Table 7. Categories Revealed in Content Analysis

| Categories | Sub-categories | Example | f | % |
|------------------------------|---|---|----|------|
| More information is needed | “Educate me” | I would like to learn the programs that may support his courses. | 26 | 32.9 |
| | “Not me, educate my child” | I want him to learn how to use the programs correctly and the benefits and harms of social media sites. | 12 | 15.2 |
| Digital parenting strategies | “persuading the child” | I want to restrict the sites that the child is not allowed and to explain this to him in a proper manner. | 6 | 7.6 |
| | “controlling the child” | I think parents should learn to use computers or smart phones as skillfully as their children. I want to learn how to control my child. | 6 | 7.6 |
| | “protecting the child” | I want to learn how I can save my child from the threats that may be caused by harmful sites in the Internet. | 13 | 16.5 |
| | “monitoring the child” | I would like to learn how to check the sites that he visited. I would like to crack the password of his smart phone. | 2 | 2.5 |
| | “keeping away the child from digital media” | How I can keep my child away from the computer. | 7 | 8.9 |
| | “supporting child to use” | How I must teach my child to attend the proper applications. | 7 | 8.9 |
| | “limiting the use of digital media” | We can't act without technological devices; it is impossible to give them up!!! But I wonder how to behave in terms of restriction. | 8 | 10.1 |

“More Information is Needed” Category

The descriptive analysis of responses of parents demonstrated that they were knowledgeable on every specific risk that listed on the questionnaire and their knowledge levels ranged between 91.1% and 48.1%. As for the open-

ended answers, under the first main category, parents wanted to learn more by attending a parent-training program on digital media risks or they wanted their children to be educated by the professionals on the risks and/or the ways to minimize those risks.

Accordingly, twenty-three of parents (29.1%) wanted themselves to be trained and 14 of parents (17.7%) desired that the professionals educate their children not the parents. Their expectations in relation to content of training varied and sub-categories revealed were shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Sub-Categories Revealed Under the Main Category of “More Information is Needed”

| Category | Sub-categories | f | % |
|----------------------------|---|-----|-----|
| Educate me | On general issues | | |
| | - Costs and/or benefits | 7 | 8.9 |
| | - Reaching to accurate information | 2 | 2.5 |
| | On specific issues | | |
| | - Child/adolescent development | 5 | 6.3 |
| | - Privacy for personal information in digital media | 1 | 1.3 |
| | - Digital citizenship | 1 | 1.3 |
| | - Technology addiction | | |
| | a) Protecting from | 3 | 3.8 |
| | b) Saving/rescuing from | 3 | 3.8 |
| - Health issues | 4 | 5.1 | |
| “Not me, educate my child” | Deeper knowledge in general | 3 | 3.8 |
| | - Better personal use | 2 | 2.5 |
| | - Setting a personal limit of use | | |
| | Deeper knowledge on costs and benefits | 7 | 8.9 |

The answers from the parents who wanted to be trained were categorized under two themes. Accordingly, a group of the parents preferred to learn on more *general issues* such as the *benefits and costs of digital media* (8.9%), and *how to reach accurate information* by use of digital media (2.5%).

Besides the previous category, some of the parents wanted to learn more *on specific issues* including *child and adolescent development* (6.3%), *privacy for personal information in digital media* (1.3%), *digital citizenship* (1.3%),

addiction (7.6%) and *health concerns* (5.1%). In the descriptive analysis, most of the parents reported that they knew enough on risks of *addiction* (88.6%), *violation of privacy* (91.1%) and *health problems* (75.9%), these risks were also mostly cited in the open-ended answers that the parents wanted to learn in more detail. Some were concerned about the future risks and wanted to learn how to keep safe their children, yet some of the parents desired to take action to solve actual problems. For instance a mother defined her situation in relation to addiction as follows:

“My son is a technology addict. I have tried many ways, including psychologist, to fix this problem. But, I couldn’t get a result. To coerce an adolescent boy is not a real solution. My question is ‘Despite all the efforts of a parent how she should behave to remedy for this addiction?’” (Mother, 47 years old)

As for the second group of answers under the theme of *“more information is needed”*, parents said that the professionals should educate their children on effective digital media use, including the subcategories named as *deeper knowledge in general* and *knowledge on the costs and benefits of digital media use*. Under the category of *‘deeper knowledge in general’* parents expected their children learn *‘how to use better’* (3.8%) and *‘how to limit own use’* (2.5%). That is, parents whose responses categorized under this theme instead of learning themselves seemed to prefer their children to take action and solve a possible problem in relation to digital media use. For instance, a 43 years old father declared that he wanted his child *“to learn how to use the programs accurately and learn the advantages and disadvantages of social sharing sites”*.

Digital Parenting Strategies Category

The second main theme revealed in the content analysis was on the parenting practices in relation to digital media. The reported practices of 49 parents ranged between seven different positions in digital parenting. In this parenting strategies category, the parents were also agreed to be educated yet in their responses they stressed their need for parenting decisions and how the training may be helpful in terms of their parenting styles. Specifically, a group of parents revealed that they wanted to *directly control their children and digital media use of them* (7.6%), *if possible keep them away from these media* (8.9%), or at least *limit the use of digital devices* (10.1%) and *monitor the children without their knowledge* (2.5%). Additionally, some parents accepted

their limited control over their children and so they wanted to learn ways to *persuade the children to limit their own use* (7.6%) and another group of parents wanted to *protect children from digital harm* (16.5%). Lastly, some of the parents focusing on the benefits of effective digital media use reported that they wanted to *learn more on how to support effective use and to help their children to learn effectively* (8.9%).

Controlling (7.6%) their children's digital media use was one of the parenting practices reported by the respondents. In this category, parents said that they wanted to learn ways to directly control the actions of their children and those parents legitimized their practice by referring to digital risks and they positioned themselves as the authority who knows or should know better than their children. For instance a parent said, "*parents should use digital devices as better as their children and control their actions*" (44 years old, father). In this category parents also referred to digital filtering programs and in order to effectively control the digital actions of their kids they wanted to learn more about those programs. For example a mother noted that "*How I can ban the website my kid will follow (which will make him upset). How can we make him follow only the websites that we give permission for?*" (37 years old) and another one asked for "*best parental control program for technological devices (tablet, telephone, computer)*" (39 years old, mother).

In a stricter position on the spectrum of parenting strategies, parents (8.9%) declared that they wanted to learn how to *keep their children away from digital media*. In this strategy, parents seem ambivalent since their children excessively use digital media or at least parents think that the children use excessively. Therefore, the parents are in a hurry to take action by learning ways to stop digital media use of their children at all. For instance, a parent asked "*How we can keep him away from technological devices?*" (40 years old, mother), and another one said that he wanted to keep her son away from the computer (43 years old, father). Parents' desire to keep their children away from digital devices may have a historical ground. That is, after a period of time that children spent too much time on digital devices, parents might have become stricter in their precautions. For instance a mother (38 years old) legitimized her position by saying "*I wanted to tell him there is another world outside. Because my child's whole world is the telephone at his hand. I couldn't find any solution.*"

Another strategy of parents revealed in the analysis is limiting the use

of digital media. Specifically, a group of parents (10.1%) reported that they want to learn how to *limit the time of use effectively* or what is the correct duration that the children should be allowed. A parent reporting that “*I certainly try to apply time limit and sometimes I meet problems. I want to be more knowledgeable on this.*” (mother, 34 years old).

A similar but less overt practice compared to controlling was *monitoring the children without their knowledge* (2.5%). The parents wanted to learn technological means to utilize for this purpose. As an extreme example a parent declared that he wanted “*to learn way to crack my child’s phone’s password*” (53 years old, father). Another parent legitimized monitoring the digital actions of his child without his knowledge as a way to know about his adolescent boy without humiliating him and he said he wanted to “*ban the harmful content*” (45 years old, father).

Another group of parents (7.6%), from a more realist and possibly more experienced position, revealed that they prefer to ‘*persuade their children*’ on the way they prefer them to use. For instance a respondent asked, “*How properly can I explain the harm caused by cyberspace and lead him to take self-precautions?*” (32 years old, mother). In this category parents seem knowledgeable on their limited authority and they try to negotiate with their kids.

Protecting children from the digital risks was the largest category (16.5%) declared by the respondents. Under this category, parents focused on the general or specific risks in digital media and wanted to learn how to protect their children. For instance, a mother (45 years old) said she would like to learn “*How can I protect my child against the risks brought to her when she uses Internet and social media?*” and another parent asked, “*How can we save the kids from the traps of technology?*” (40 years old, mother).

The last parenting strategy reported by the respondents was *supporting effective use of digital media of children and helping them in learning digital media*. Specifically, 10.1% of parents focused on the positive effects of digital media and declared that they wanted to learn how to support and improve digital media use of their children.

Secondary Descriptive Analysis of Data

In the secondary analysis, the main themes revealed in content analysis utilized as categorical variables and the relations between those categories and former quantitative variables were analyzed by means of chi-square tests.

Specifically, according to results of the chi-square test conducted between parents gender and the themes revealed in answers given to open-ended questions demonstrated that parents' willingness to get more information and their digital parenting strategies were not dependent on their gender ($p>0.05$, see Table 9). It seemed that both mothers and fathers wanted to get more information on risks and they reported their digital parenting strategies in close proportions.

Table 9. Results of the Chi-Square Test on the Categories of Parents' Desire to Get More Information and Digital Parenting Strategies According to the Gender

| | Need for more information | | Digital parenting strategies | | Both | | Total | |
|---------|---------------------------|------|------------------------------|------|------|------|-------|-------|
| | f | % | f | % | f | % | f | % |
| Mothers | 14 | 36.8 | 20 | 52.6 | 4 | 10.6 | 38 | 100.0 |
| Fathers | 16 | 39.0 | 21 | 51.2 | 4 | 9.8 | 41 | 100.0 |

$p=0.978$, $\chi^2=0.44$, $df=2$

Similarly, parents' desire to be educated more or to get their children educated didn't depend on their gender ($p>0.05$, see Table 10). That is, parents expectations related to the target group of a training program were free of their gender. Both mothers and fathers who were expecting to be educated or their children to be educated were represented in similar proportions.

Table 10. Chi-square Test Results on Parents' Getting Education According to Their Gender

| | Educate me | | Not me, educate my child | | Total | |
|---------|------------|------|--------------------------|------|-------|-------|
| | f | % | f | % | f | % |
| Mothers | 15 | 83.3 | 3 | 16.7 | 18 | 100.0 |
| Fathers | 11 | 55.0 | 9 | 45.0 | 20 | 100.0 |

$p=0.061$, $\chi^2=3.52$, $df=1$

Additionally, the relation between parents' requests to receive more information and their competence in using digital media was investigated and it was revealed that their need for more information on digital risks didn't

depend on their competence in using digital media ($p>0.05$, see Table 11).

Table 11. Chi-square Test Results on Parents' Desire to be Educated or Their Children to be Educated According to Their Competences to Use Digital Media

| | Educate me | | Not me, educate my child | | Total | |
|--------------|------------|------|--------------------------|-------|-------|-----|
| | f | % | f | % | f | % |
| Very Good | 7 | 70.0 | 3 | 30.0 | 10 | 100 |
| Good | 9 | 75.0 | 3 | 25.0 | 12 | 100 |
| Moderate | 9 | 69.2 | 4 | 30.8 | 13 | 100 |
| Weak | 0 | 0.0 | 2 | 100.0 | 2 | 100 |
| Insufficient | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |

$p=0.211$, $\chi^2=4.51$, $df=3$

Parents evaluated their digital media competencies as moderate and higher. Yet their desire to be educated or their children to be educated didn't differ according to their perceptions on their own competence levels.

Discussion

Parents, as the primary caregivers, have a fundamental effect on the digital lives of their children. In this study, their perceptions related to the risks involved in the digital media were investigated by forced-choice and open-ended questions. The results demonstrated a detailed picture of their evaluations and strategies.

First, parents reported that they were knowledgeable on the risks ranging between privacy violations to technology addiction with percentages around and mostly above fifty (48.1% to 91.1%). Previously in the literature, it was revealed that parents' primary concerns were children's exposure to sexually explicit images and accidental pornography exposure and sexual content in online entertainment (Berson and Berson, 2005), and accordingly parents' primary aims were to protect their children from harmful content (Davies, 2012). Apart from that in the current study, the most known risks were the risk of sharing personal information and technology addiction, whereas the least known risks were children's possibility to be the perpetrator or the victim of a crime committed by use of digital media and the risk of children's exposure to cyber bullying, respectively. According to the risk classification made by Hasebrink, Livingstone and Haddon (2008) for online risks, it can be concluded that parents were more knowledgeable on content and contact risks and how to take precautions against those risks, yet they were less knowledgeable

on conduct risks such as cyber bullying. Additionally, although parents' evaluations on their capability to take precautions were higher than fifty percent (51.4% to 85.7%) for all digital risks listed in the study, parents reported that they were least knowledgeable on taking precautions against conduct risks. Similarly, in a previous study, parents' of children aged between 8-18 scored lower on the concerns such as children's exposure to cyber bullying or possibility to become a cyber bully and the parents were less action-oriented toward those risks (Davies, 2012). A survey of 9-16 year olds reported that 27% had (ever) been involved in cyber bullying either as being a cyber bully (9%), or as being a victim (12%) and 6% had been cyber bully and victim simultaneously (Serin, 2012). Given the prevalence of cyber bullying among school-aged children (Arıcak et al., 2008; Hinduja and Patchin, 2012; Kocatürk, 2014), parents may be overlooking the susceptibility of their children to conduct risks. However, when their evaluations are asked, children reported that the most upsetting situation was cyber bullying compared to the content risks such as exposure to sexually explicit content (Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig and Ólafsson, 2011). Yet, parents declared their lack of comfort with media as the reason for their inefficiency to protect their children from cyber bullying (Campbell, 2005), parents' knowledge and immediacy seem to have important impact on children digital media safety. For instance, when parents were immediate and children think that they could tell them in case of being cyber bullied were less likely to be a cyber bully or cyber victim (Serin, 2012).

In the same light, secondly, parents' perceptions on digital risks were uncovered by use of content analysis and two main concerns of parents were highlighted. Specifically, parents' desire to learn more on digital risks -for themselves and for their children- and their parenting strategies in the face of digital media were observed.

As for the first main category pinpointed in content analysis, parents' responses were related to their evaluations on need of more information on digital risks. Besides their answers to survey questions, which demonstrated that at least half of the parents were knowledgeable on every specific digital risk, in their open-ended answers parents declared need of more information to learn on different aspects of digital life. The significant finding related to the "more education needed" category was the disparity in parents' opinions on the target participants of a future training program. That is, the first group of parents was enthusiastic to learn on general issues such as costs and/or

benefits of digital media, the ways to reach the accurate information in digital media, besides they also wanted to learn more on specific issues such as child and adolescent development, digital citizenship, privacy concerns, technology addiction and health issues in detail for themselves as parents. However, the other group of parents was less willing to be educated, yet they desired their children to be educated on digital media risks and opportunities. That is, parents, whose responses fell in this category, instead of learning themselves seemed to prefer their children to take action and solve a possible problem in relation to digital media use. This tendency of parents may be due to their lesser technology competence compared to their own children's competences on digital media. Or they might be speculating that this is a responsibility of an adolescent to keep herself safe from digital risks and get benefits of it simultaneously. The secondary statistical analysis run after the content analysis showed that parents' opinions related to the target group of a future training program were free of their gender and competence (very good, good, moderate or, weak) evaluations.

Yet, the data collected in the current study is limited to understand the underlying motivations of parents, but a future study may shed light to background dynamics in parents' reasons for that decision. However, in the related literature, it was reminded that children may not be knowledgeable as parents or teachers think as or as it has been emphasized in the discourse of "digital natives". Especially new generations may be more vulnerable to utilize the "ostrich tactic", which is known as underestimating the possibility of risk and not seeking for help when needed (Helsper, 2008). Therefore, even it is important to educate the children, it is also very crucial to educate the parents on those risks and how they can guide and mentor their children in using digital media.

The second category revealed in content analysis was related to parents' digital parenting strategies. Specifically, parents reported that they had been utilizing seven different parenting practices in regulating their children's digital media use and they wanted to learn more in direction of those practices in a prospected parental training program. Based on the literature on parental mediation for TV, different parenting strategies were identified in the face of digital media including rule-making and setting restrictions, positive (e.g., explaining, discussing) and negative (e.g., disagreeing, criticizing) mediation, and social co-viewing (Austin, 1990). Similarly, in terms of digital parenting

for Internet use, five different parental mediation types were defined based on mediation types revealed in the studies on TV viewing and video gaming (Nikken and Jansz, 2006). The five parental mediation types included, active mediation of Internet (sharing and discussing online activities), safety mediation of Internet (advising and guiding on managing risks), setting restrictions in use (rules and bans), using technical restrictions (use of filters, parental controls) and monitoring the children (checking the computer/social media/phones after use) (Livingstone and Helsper, 2008). Previously, in EU Kids Online Project, Turkey was in the category of “protected by restrictions” countries (also Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Spain and the UK) that had relatively low levels of risk and harm and also had more restricted and limited digital activities. Turkish parents highly utilized “restrictive mediation practices take children away from higher risk”, while “they may miss out on many of the online opportunities” (Helsper et al., 2013). When compared to the previous classifications on digital parenting strategies of parents, the findings of the study provided a unique perspective on the preferences of Turkish parents who had children aged between 10 and 18.

Recent parental mediation research needed to gain a deeper understanding of parents’ perceptions on their sense of control on and their sense of missing the necessary digital literacy skills in regulating digital practices of their children (Zaman and Nouwen, 2016). In the current study, the digital parenting practices may be defined according to parents’ evaluations about their controlling power over the parent-child relations and to what degree their expectations are realist in relation to digital media use in children’s daily lives. Specifically, from a realist point of view parents admitted the indispensable nature of digital media in daily lives of children and decided to regulate their practices accordingly, such as protecting children from harm, limiting duration/content of use, and supporting effective use and helping them in case of trouble. However, some parents reported a less realistic position and try to keep the children away from digital devices as much as possible. This is a dilemma for parents, while saving their children from digital risks; parents unintentionally limit their opportunities to learn. Totally keeping children safe, especially from the content risks, may be an illusion. Instead, fostering digital resilience in children by help of parents seems a more reasonable solution (d’Haenens, Vandonink and Donoso, 2013).

Besides, in terms of parent-child relations, digital parenting strategies such as keeping children away, controlling and limiting the use, protecting against risks and monitoring after use emphasized the power of parents in making decisions for the sake of their children. By doing so these parents primarily focused on reducing the risk for their children and they were also less concerned about the opportunities missed depending on the restrictions. Although, the literature on the effectiveness of technical restrictive techniques was inconclusive (Dürager and Livingstone, 2012; Livingstone and Smith, 2014), these groups of parents were highly willing to learn from the experts including the technical parental control.

Whereas, in parenting practices such as persuading children to limit or control their own use, the decision-making power was shared between two parties on an equal basis. Therefore, persuading as a parenting strategy could be defined as a more mediating position. Specifically, as the parents of adolescents, the participants admitted that they had limited authority on their children. In the literature it was argued that parents of older children prefer to negotiate on rules and set less restrictions for older kids (Chaudron et al., 2015). In our sample, parents disclaimed that it was useless to set rules, but they needed to learn ways to persuade their children to agree with their parents.

In contrast the other parenting strategies that focused on the risks in digital media, some parents primarily focused on supporting effective use of digital media of children and helping them in learning digital media. They also wanted to learn ways to do so in a prospective parent training program. Parents' confidence in regulating their children's digital media activities was related to their perceived expertise in using digital media themselves (Livingstone, Mascheroni, Dreier, Chaudron and Lagae, 2015). In the current study, parents' open-ended responses were not overtly referring to parents' expertise or competence. Yet, the role of parents' own expertise on focusing to support and help their children in learning digital media should be revisited in a future study.

This study aiming to understand parents' perceptions related to digital risks faced by their children in digital media, provided a detailed view of parents who had children between the ages of 10 and 18. The data on risks associated to digital life was collected by a number quantitative survey questions. However, the qualitative data was solely relied on one question focusing on

parents' future expectations for learning digital media risks. To overcome this limitation, parents' current evaluations on parent-child interaction might have been questioned. Besides, parents' answers were relying on their expressive language competence in writing. Thus, some parents might be disadvantaged to express oneself in written format. In the future, focus group or individual interviews would be better choices for comprehensively examining parents' practices on their children's digital media use. Additionally, in a prospective research the focus may be scrutinizing parents' parenting strategies in relation to the perceptions of their children.

Parenting is a contributing factor in vulnerability to online and offline risks and based on a comprehensive review of literature the supporting and communicative quality of parent-child relationship has a significant role in regulating digital practices of children (Livingstone and Smith, 2014). Turkish parents reported that they were less involved in monitoring their children while using Internet; instead they evaluated that time period as a chance for personal time (Kırık, 2014). The results of the study demonstrated that parental education should be the primary concern for policy makers. An effective parental training program would raise the awareness of parents against risks and help parents to establish parenting styles that facilitate learning opportunities and control for the risks at the same time.

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