

## Prioritizing Parenting Competencies in the Digital Era

Luca. Ferraro<sup>1</sup>\*, Liang. Chen<sup>2</sup>, Florian. Bauer<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Cognitive Psychology, Sapienza University of Rome, Rome, Italy

<sup>2</sup> Department of Educational Psychology, Fudan University, Shanghai, China

<sup>3</sup> Department of Educational Psychology, University of Graz, Graz, Austria

\* Corresponding author email address: luca.ferraro@uniroma1.it

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This study aimed to identify, categorize, and prioritize the essential competencies required for effective and responsible parenting in the digital era.

**Methods and Materials:** This research employed a sequential mixed-method design consisting of a qualitative and a quantitative phase. The qualitative phase involved an integrative literature review of studies published between 2015 and 2025, focusing on digital parenting frameworks, emotional regulation, online safety, and educational mediation. Data were analyzed through thematic content analysis using NVivo 14, resulting in eight primary competency categories. The quantitative phase involved a ranking survey completed by 205 Italian parents, who evaluated the importance of the identified competencies using a five-point Likert scale. Descriptive and ranking analyses were conducted with SPSS version 26, generating mean scores and standard deviations to determine the relative priority of each category.

**Findings:** The results revealed that Online Safety and Risk Management ( $M = 4.72$ ,  $SD = 0.38$ ) was the most highly valued competency, followed by Emotional and Psychological Support ( $M = 4.65$ ,  $SD = 0.42$ ) and Communication and Relationship Building ( $M = 4.53$ ,  $SD = 0.47$ ). These findings emphasize parents' primary concerns with protecting children from digital risks, supporting emotional resilience, and maintaining healthy communication. Digital Literacy and Technical Competence ( $M = 4.44$ ) and Ethical and Moral Guidance ( $M = 4.36$ ) occupied mid-level positions, reflecting their continued relevance. The lowest-ranked but still significant competencies were Educational Mediation ( $M = 4.25$ ), Time Management ( $M = 4.11$ ), and Socio-Cultural Engagement ( $M = 3.94$ ), suggesting varying perceptions of their immediate necessity.

**Conclusion:** The study concludes that digital-era parenting is multidimensional, encompassing safety, emotional, technical, ethical, and cultural competencies. Strengthening these integrated skills is essential for fostering children's balanced development and responsible media engagement in contemporary digital environments.

**Keywords:** Digital parenting; parenting competence; digital literacy; emotional regulation

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## 1. Introduction

The rapid digitalization of society has profoundly transformed the landscape of parenting, demanding that parents acquire new competencies to guide their children effectively in online environments. The emergence of social media, artificial intelligence-driven platforms, and ubiquitous mobile technologies has expanded both opportunities and challenges for families, reshaping child development, communication patterns, and educational practices (Sari et al., 2025; Widiastuti & Yuliati, 2025). Parenting in the digital era now involves not only traditional roles such as nurturing and discipline but also the acquisition of digital literacy, risk awareness, and emotional guidance tailored to technology-mediated contexts (Okela et al., 2025). As digital tools increasingly permeate everyday life, the parental role has evolved into that of a digital mentor and gatekeeper, balancing exposure, safety, and learning (Jamwal & Ram, 2025).

Digital technologies have altered the psychology of child development by influencing cognitive processing, attention span, and socioemotional learning (Aprido et al., 2025). In this context, the family becomes the primary environment for cultivating both digital competence and ethical responsibility. Parents act as facilitators who mediate interactions between children and technology, shaping how young users engage with media content and develop behavioral norms (Herak, 2025). According to (Halalae, 2025), the psychological well-being of adolescents is closely linked to parenting styles and digital engagement practices, emphasizing the importance of emotionally responsive and technologically informed parenting. Moreover, the digital environment exposes children to unprecedented risks such as cyberbullying, online addiction, misinformation, and privacy breaches, necessitating preventive measures rooted in parental digital literacy (Gritsai, 2025).

The integration of technology in family and educational settings has also blurred the boundaries between learning and entertainment, creating what (Febriyanti et al., 2025) describes as a “hybrid developmental ecosystem.” Within this ecosystem, parents are expected to foster critical thinking, media discernment, and ethical participation in digital spaces. The process of parenting, therefore, has extended beyond supervision to include instruction on how to interact safely, responsibly, and constructively with digital media (Darwin et al., 2025). In Indonesia and other developing contexts, studies show that digital parenting interventions have improved children’s reading motivation

and online learning outcomes by enhancing parental engagement in digital literacy initiatives (Dakhi et al., 2025). This demonstrates that effective digital parenting does not merely restrict technology use but instead optimizes it for cognitive and social growth (Aprido et al., 2025).

Despite its benefits, the digital transition also introduces complex emotional and social challenges. Parents often face dilemmas in managing children’s exposure to social media, online games, and virtual communication. (Windasari & Dheasari, 2024) emphasizes the dual role of parents and educators in developing early digital literacy, highlighting that coordinated involvement is crucial for positive media habits. Furthermore, cultural adaptation plays a significant role in determining how families interpret and respond to digitalization. For instance, (Syukur et al., 2024) found that global variations in parenting approaches reflect distinct socio-cultural beliefs about digital engagement and well-being, suggesting that effective digital parenting must be context-sensitive and culturally grounded.

Digital literacy represents one of the most crucial competencies for modern parents, serving as the foundation for digital resilience and informed mediation. (P. & Irwansyah, 2024) proposed that empowering children as resilient digital citizens requires active parental guidance in navigating complex online spaces. Such empowerment involves cultivating critical awareness, ethical reasoning, and the ability to evaluate online information—a skill set closely associated with parental modeling (Listrianti et al., 2024). In this vein, parental readiness plays a determining role in how effectively families adapt to technological change. (Widiastuti & Yuliati, 2025) highlighted that parents’ preparedness to rear children in digital contexts involves not only technical proficiency but also emotional intelligence and adaptive problem-solving.

The rise of digital media has also underscored the moral dimension of parenting. According to (Li, 2024), holistic child development depends on the integration of family education with values that nurture empathy, respect, and self-regulation. In contrast, (Gatcho et al., 2024) emphasizes that early literacy in the digital age demands guidance that balances creativity with critical thinking. When parents neglect digital ethics and content moderation, children may become vulnerable to misinformation or online exploitation. Therefore, parents must evolve into informed digital citizens capable of fostering critical awareness and self-regulation among their children (Asnawan et al., 2024). These findings align with (Arninda et al., 2024), who argues that the development of human resources in the digital era should

prioritize the cultivation of “smart users,” i.e., individuals who can use technology meaningfully and ethically.

Parenting is increasingly intertwined with the development of digital literacy ecosystems. (Choi & Choi, 2024) found that parental media literacy significantly influences children’s dependency on smart devices, underscoring the link between parental competence and children’s behavioral outcomes. Similarly, (Lu & Han, 2023) demonstrated that family-based digital practices—such as co-viewing, collaborative learning, and parental mediation—enhance digital learning experiences in early childhood. (Laxmi & Kalpana, 2023) notes that unsupervised technology use can lead to negative behavioral patterns, such as diminished attention and empathy, further reinforcing the need for structured parental involvement. As families adopt technology for both learning and recreation, the quality of parental mediation becomes central to children’s holistic development.

Parental digital competence, however, cannot be separated from broader educational and social frameworks. (Kusumalestari et al., 2023) identified a correlation between parenting styles and digital literacy levels among adolescents, suggesting that supportive and authoritative parenting contributes positively to adolescents’ online behavior. Similarly, (Hakim & Nusantara, 2023) emphasizes strengthening digital literacy as a mechanism for sustaining learning continuity during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This indicates that digital literacy not only enhances parenting capacity but also reinforces family resilience in times of disruption. Furthermore, (Okela et al., 2025) highlighted that parental social media literacy directly affects children’s digital media addiction patterns, demonstrating the causal role of parental awareness in preventing maladaptive online behaviors.

The integration of ethical, emotional, and technical competencies is essential for the development of comprehensive digital parenting frameworks. (Jamwal & Ram, 2025) outlined a set of global standards for assessing parental digital competence, emphasizing adaptability, empathy, and critical engagement as core indicators. Likewise, (Herak, 2025) posited that character education in the digital era should focus on reinforcing moral reasoning amid technological complexity. (Gritsai, 2025) adds that media education within families can shape educational values, ensuring that technology use aligns with broader pedagogical objectives. These perspectives collectively affirm that digital parenting extends beyond monitoring to

encompass value transmission, emotional support, and participatory learning.

Another key consideration is the socio-religious dimension of digital parenting. In the context of Islamic education, (Aprido et al., 2025) and (Asnawan et al., 2024) argue that parenting in the digital age must integrate spiritual guidance with technological literacy to safeguard children’s moral integrity. This approach frames technology as both a pedagogical tool and a moral test, requiring parents to balance openness with ethical vigilance. Such integration not only strengthens family cohesion but also reinforces the spiritual and moral framework guiding children’s digital experiences. Similarly, (Febriyanti et al., 2025) underscores the foundational role of parental example in character formation, indicating that digital ethics must be modeled consistently within the household.

Empirical studies further emphasize the need for targeted parental education programs that cultivate critical digital skills. (Listrianti et al., 2024) demonstrated that digital literacy workshops for families can significantly improve understanding of online safety and information credibility. Likewise, (Darwin et al., 2025) found that digital parenting initiatives targeting pre-teens enhanced children’s emotional regulation and academic motivation. In another study, (Windasari & Dheasari, 2024) revealed that parents’ involvement in children’s digital literacy training led to better media balance and reduced screen dependency. These interventions highlight the growing recognition of parents as central actors in digital education ecosystems.

Cultural variation remains a key moderating factor in how digital parenting practices are understood and applied. (Syukur et al., 2024) argues that while global principles of digital parenting—such as protection, communication, and guidance—are universally valued, their implementation is shaped by local traditions, socioeconomic conditions, and educational norms. For instance, collectivist societies may emphasize cooperative mediation and family-based learning, whereas individualist contexts prioritize autonomy and privacy. (Okela et al., 2025) supports this by noting cross-national differences in parental social media literacy, which affect children’s digital well-being differently across cultural boundaries. Consequently, any model of digital parenting competence must account for cultural, economic, and institutional variations.

In this evolving landscape, research underscores the necessity of developing systematic frameworks for assessing and prioritizing parenting competencies in the digital era. (Jamwal & Ram, 2025) proposed a structured typology of

digital parenting standards that includes technological proficiency, emotional intelligence, and ethical awareness as key pillars. Similarly, (Halalae, 2025) and (Herak, 2025) emphasize that maintaining adolescents' mental health amid technological saturation requires a multidimensional parenting approach that combines guidance, empathy, and self-regulation. (Widiastuti & Yuliati, 2025) and (Sari et al., 2025) highlight that parental readiness and digital literacy are essential preconditions for effective child-rearing in technology-driven environments, reinforcing the need to map and rank these competencies according to their perceived importance.

Given the expanding role of parents in managing their children's digital exposure, emotional development, and moral reasoning, there is an urgent need to identify which competencies are most valued and most effective in promoting balanced digital upbringing. Therefore, the aim of this study is to identify, categorize, and prioritize the essential parenting competencies required for effective and responsible child-rearing in the digital era.

## 2. Methods and Materials

### 2.1. Study Design and Participants

This research employed a mixed-methods sequential design, consisting of two complementary phases: a qualitative exploratory phase followed by a quantitative ranking phase. The purpose of this approach was to identify, categorize, and prioritize key parenting competencies relevant to the digital era.

In the first phase, a qualitative content analysis was conducted through an extensive systematic literature review. The process aimed to extract conceptual dimensions and components of digital parenting competencies from prior empirical and theoretical studies. No human participants were involved in this phase; instead, peer-reviewed journal articles, policy documents, and scientific reports published between 2015 and 2025 were systematically reviewed. Data collection continued until theoretical saturation was achieved—that is, when new sources yielded no additional themes or categories.

In the second phase, a quantitative ranking survey was conducted to prioritize the competencies identified from the qualitative phase. The target population consisted of parents residing in Italy who were actively engaged in parenting children between the ages of 6 and 18. A total of 205 participants were recruited using purposive sampling to ensure diversity in gender, age, education level, and digital

literacy. All participants voluntarily completed the structured questionnaire after providing informed consent, and their anonymity and confidentiality were fully protected.

### 2.2. Measures

During the qualitative phase, data were collected through an iterative literature search across international academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, and SpringerLink. Keywords such as digital parenting, parental digital competence, media mediation, online safety, and parenting in the digital age were used in combination. Inclusion criteria required that the studies be peer-reviewed, available in English, and focused on parenting competencies or practices within the context of digital technologies. The collected literature was imported into NVivo 14 software for coding and analysis.

In the quantitative phase, data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed based on the thematic results of the qualitative analysis. The instrument consisted of two sections: (1) demographic information and (2) a set of identified parenting competency items rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("least important") to 5 ("most important"). The survey was administered electronically through an online platform to ensure accessibility and efficient data management.

### 2.3. Data Analysis

Qualitative data from the literature review were analyzed using thematic content analysis in NVivo 14. The process involved open coding, category clustering, and theme refinement through iterative comparison. Codes and categories were continuously validated by cross-checking the emerging framework with existing theoretical models of digital parenting. Themes were finalized when conceptual redundancy occurred, indicating theoretical saturation.

For the quantitative phase, the statistical analysis was performed using SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, and frequency) were computed to summarize participant characteristics and item ratings. To determine the relative priority of the identified parenting competencies, ranking analysis and mean score comparisons were conducted. Reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, and data normality was verified prior to inferential analysis.

### 3. Findings and Results

The second phase of this research aimed to quantitatively prioritize the parenting competencies identified during the qualitative phase. A total of 205 Italian parents participated in this ranking survey, conducted electronically via a structured questionnaire. Each participant rated the importance of the eight identified parenting competency

categories on a five-point Likert scale (1 = least important to 5 = most important). The data were analyzed using SPSS version 26, employing descriptive and ranking analyses. The mean scores were used to determine the relative importance of each competency area, providing empirical insight into which domains parents considered most crucial in the digital age.

**Table 1**

*Thematic Framework of Parenting Competencies in the Digital Era (NVivo 14 Analysis)*

Main Category (Theme)	Subcategories	Concepts (Open Codes)
1. Digital Literacy and Technical Competence	1.1 Understanding digital devices 1.2 Online communication tools 1.3 Managing digital access	Basic navigation skills; App installation; Device troubleshooting; Updating systems Email and messaging literacy; Safe use of social media; Understanding video platforms Password management; Screen time control; Device sharing rules
2. Online Safety and Risk Management	2.1 Cybersecurity awareness 2.2 Child online protection 2.3 Crisis management	Recognizing phishing; Privacy protection; Avoiding malware Age-appropriate content filtering; Monitoring apps; Communication about online risks Reporting cyberbullying; Responding to online threats; Seeking professional help
3. Emotional and Psychological Support	3.1 Emotional regulation in children 3.2 Parental emotional modeling 3.3 Family digital resilience	Encouraging emotional expression; Managing screen frustration; Digital empathy Calm digital behavior; Reflective responses; Emotion coaching Collective coping; Shared problem-solving; Maintaining emotional balance
4. Communication and Relationship Building	4.1 Online–offline dialogue balance 4.2 Active listening and feedback	Encouraging family discussions; Joint technology use; Offline bonding time Empathic responses; Constructive dialogue; Conflict resolution
5. Ethical and Moral Guidance	5.1 Digital citizenship values 5.2 Media responsibility 5.3 Modeling ethical use	Respect for others online; Avoiding plagiarism; Digital etiquette Evaluating information; Avoiding misinformation; Promoting fairness Demonstrating respect online; Transparency; Accountability
6. Educational Mediation and Digital Learning Support	6.1 Supporting online learning 6.2 Promoting digital creativity 6.3 Informal learning engagement	Guiding homework platforms; Monitoring progress; Providing feedback Encouraging digital projects; Using educational apps; Storytelling with media Sharing documentaries; Exploring new technologies; Learning together
7. Time Management and Self-Regulation	7.1 Screen time balance 7.2 Modeling self-control	Setting limits; Scheduling digital-free time; Prioritizing routines Avoiding overuse; Mindful device handling; Demonstrating focus
8. Socio-Cultural and Community Engagement	8.1 Parental peer networking 8.2 Collaboration with schools 8.3 Cultural adaptation in parenting	Sharing strategies; Participating in online parent groups; Mutual support Digital education partnerships; Parent–teacher communication; Joint awareness programs Adapting global content; Preserving local values; Bilingual digital literacy

The analysis of the literature revealed that digital literacy and technical competence form the foundational dimension of parenting in the digital era. Parents today are expected to navigate digital devices confidently, manage online communication tools, and regulate children's access to technology. Mastery of these skills enables parents to understand the platforms their children use, set appropriate boundaries, and effectively troubleshoot problems that arise.

Competent digital parents not only guide their children in using apps, media, and learning technologies safely but also model responsible engagement with devices. The ability to install, update, and maintain digital tools—combined with awareness of their educational potential—positions parents as facilitators of safe and constructive technology use within the family.

Another key dimension that emerged from the qualitative analysis is online safety and risk management, which underscores parents' critical role in protecting children from digital threats. With the prevalence of cyberbullying, misinformation, and online predation, parents need to be well-versed in recognizing risks, enforcing privacy measures, and applying digital safety strategies. The reviewed literature emphasized that effective parenting in this domain requires open communication with children about online behavior, proactive monitoring of digital environments, and timely responses to potential harms. Parents who demonstrate awareness of cybersecurity principles—such as password protection and recognizing fraudulent content—empower children to navigate virtual spaces safely while maintaining trust within the family dynamic.

The theme of emotional and psychological support highlights the importance of nurturing children's emotional well-being in technology-rich contexts. As children increasingly express and process emotions through digital interactions, parents must model emotional regulation, empathy, and constructive dialogue. The reviewed studies indicate that emotional awareness in parents helps mitigate the negative effects of digital overstimulation, such as frustration and emotional fatigue. By fostering digital empathy and resilience, parents contribute to the development of emotionally balanced children who can engage with technology mindfully. Emotional presence—rather than strict control—emerges as a more effective strategy for maintaining healthy family relationships in the digital landscape.

A further significant area concerns communication and relationship building, which captures how technology reshapes interpersonal connections within families. Parents are encouraged to strike a balance between online and offline communication, ensuring that digital interactions do not replace face-to-face relationships. Active listening, shared media activities, and family discussions about online experiences strengthen relational trust and transparency. The literature consistently suggests that open communication between parents and children reduces secrecy around internet use and promotes a cooperative approach to digital engagement. Meaningful conversations, both on and off screen, serve as a protective factor against digital conflict and isolation.

The fifth theme, ethical and moral guidance, emerged as a cornerstone of responsible digital parenting. As children encounter diverse moral dilemmas in virtual spaces—such

as plagiarism, cyberbullying, and online disrespect—parents play a crucial role in transmitting digital citizenship values. The literature shows that ethical parenting involves more than imposing restrictions; it requires demonstrating fairness, respect, and accountability in digital interactions. Parents who model integrity online and encourage critical thinking about digital content help cultivate children's moral reasoning and civic responsibility. The development of ethical awareness in families ultimately contributes to a healthier and more respectful digital culture.

In parallel, the theme of educational mediation and digital learning support reflects the transformative role of parents as co-educators in digital learning environments. As schools increasingly integrate technology into teaching, parents are expected to facilitate online learning, guide academic activities, and provide motivation. The reviewed sources reveal that effective digital parents support both formal and informal learning by encouraging creativity, exploring educational applications, and fostering curiosity. They help children transform digital tools from sources of entertainment into vehicles for intellectual growth. By engaging in shared learning experiences and promoting digital literacy, parents strengthen their children's academic and cognitive competencies.

The theme of time management and self-regulation addresses the challenge of maintaining balance in digital engagement. Excessive screen time and impulsive media consumption are common issues in families today, and parents serve as crucial role models for self-control. The literature emphasizes the need for establishing structured routines that include digital-free times and promoting mindful device use. Parents who demonstrate self-discipline and balance between online and offline activities set clear behavioral examples for their children. Encouraging digital mindfulness not only prevents dependency and distraction but also fosters the development of autonomy and responsibility in children's media habits.

Finally, the theme of socio-cultural and community engagement reflects the broader social dimension of parenting in the digital era. Parents are increasingly engaging in online communities, exchanging experiences, and collaborating with schools to enhance digital literacy and awareness. The studies reviewed point to the importance of collective participation, where parents contribute to the creation of a digitally responsible community. Culturally sensitive parenting also involves adapting digital practices to align with local values while embracing global perspectives. Through collaboration with educators, community

programs, and peer networks, parents help shape a supportive socio-digital ecosystem that promotes shared responsibility for children's online well-being and growth.

The second phase of this research aimed to quantitatively prioritize the parenting competencies identified during the qualitative phase. A total of 205 Italian parents participated in this ranking survey, conducted electronically via a structured questionnaire. Each participant rated the

importance of the eight identified parenting competency categories on a five-point Likert scale (1 = least important to 5 = most important). The data were analyzed using SPSS version 26, employing descriptive and ranking analyses. The mean scores were used to determine the relative importance of each competency area, providing empirical insight into which domains parents considered most crucial in the digital age.

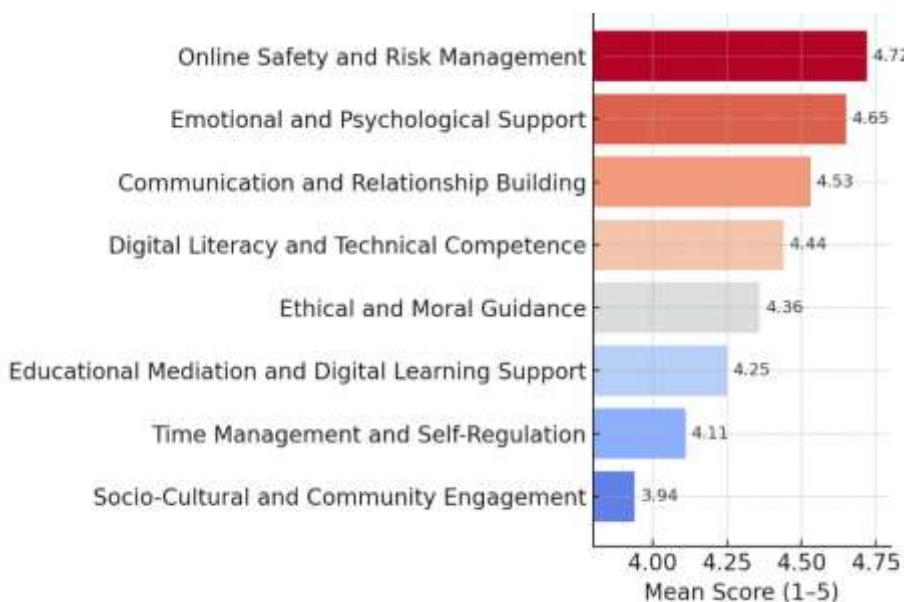
**Table 2**

*Ranking of Parenting Competencies in the Digital Era (N = 205)*

Rank	Parenting Competency Category	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Importance Level
1	Online Safety and Risk Management	4.72	0.38	Very High
2	Emotional and Psychological Support	4.65	0.42	Very High
3	Communication and Relationship Building	4.53	0.47	High
4	Digital Literacy and Technical Competence	4.44	0.51	High
5	Ethical and Moral Guidance	4.36	0.54	High
6	Educational Mediation and Digital Learning Support	4.25	0.49	Moderate-High
7	Time Management and Self-Regulation	4.11	0.57	Moderate-High
8	Socio-Cultural and Community Engagement	3.94	0.61	Moderate

**Figure 1**

*Mean Ranking of Parenting Competency Categories in the Digital Era*



The ranking analysis demonstrated that Online Safety and Risk Management ( $M = 4.72$ ,  $SD = 0.38$ ) emerged as the highest-priority competency among Italian parents, underscoring their heightened concern over cyber risks, digital privacy, and online threats to children. This was closely followed by Emotional and Psychological Support ( $M = 4.65$ ,  $SD = 0.42$ ), highlighting parents' recognition of

the psychological implications of digital exposure on children's emotional well-being.

Communication and Relationship Building ( $M = 4.53$ ) ranked third, reflecting parents' emphasis on maintaining open dialogues and fostering healthy online-offline interactions. Digital Literacy and Technical Competence ( $M = 4.44$ ) and Ethical and Moral Guidance ( $M = 4.36$ ) were positioned mid-range, indicating their perceived importance

in empowering parents to act as competent digital role models.

Lower-ranked competencies included Educational Mediation and Digital Learning Support ( $M = 4.25$ ) and Time Management and Self-Regulation ( $M = 4.11$ ), suggesting that while relevant, they were viewed as secondary to immediate online safety and emotional needs. The least prioritized, Socio-Cultural and Community Engagement ( $M = 3.94$ ), still held a moderately high mean, indicating that parents acknowledged the value of collective and culturally grounded approaches but placed relatively less emphasis on community-level engagement. Overall, the results revealed a consistently high valuation across all eight competencies, signifying parents' broad recognition of the multifaceted demands of digital-age parenting.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The results of the present study provide a comprehensive understanding of the competencies parents consider most essential in navigating child-rearing within the digital era. Based on the mixed-method design integrating literature review and ranking analysis, eight major domains of digital parenting competencies were identified and prioritized. The findings revealed that *Online Safety and Risk Management* was the highest-ranked competency, followed by *Emotional and Psychological Support* and *Communication and Relationship Building*. These three categories reflect parents' growing awareness of the psychological, emotional, and ethical implications of technology use for children. The lower-ranked competencies—such as *Time Management and Self-Regulation* and *Socio-Cultural and Community Engagement*—while still recognized as important, were perceived as secondary compared to the immediate concerns of online security and emotional regulation. This prioritization pattern demonstrates the shift from purely technical digital skills to multidimensional competencies involving emotional literacy, communication, and ethical responsibility (Sari et al., 2025; Widiastuti & Yuliati, 2025).

The prominence of *Online Safety and Risk Management* as the top-ranked competency aligns with the global discourse emphasizing the increasing risks of children's exposure to the digital environment. Parents today face challenges such as cyberbullying, online grooming, exposure to inappropriate content, and privacy breaches (Okela et al., 2025). These threats have made digital safety education a fundamental element of modern parenting. As (Jamwal & Ram, 2025) observed, frameworks for digital

parenting must prioritize technological competence that empowers parents to safeguard children's online activities through awareness, mediation, and monitoring. Similarly, (Gritsai, 2025) stressed that the family remains the first line of defense in the formation of safe digital habits, underscoring the pedagogical role of parents in risk prevention. The high mean score for safety competencies in this study therefore reflects not only fear-based parental reactions but a conscious strategy to manage digital exposure through preventive education, critical supervision, and open communication about online risks.

Closely following safety, *Emotional and Psychological Support* emerged as the second most valued competency. This finding supports previous evidence that emotional awareness and empathy are key factors in healthy digital parenting. According to (Halalae, 2025), digital-age parenting must address the psychosocial pressures and cognitive overload associated with constant media exposure among adolescents. Emotional availability helps children manage stress, anxiety, and dependency caused by excessive digital engagement. Likewise, (Herak, 2025) highlighted that character education in the digital era should be intertwined with emotional literacy, promoting patience, empathy, and resilience. The result also resonates with (Darwin et al., 2025), who found that emotional responsiveness in digital parenting directly enhances children's psychological well-being and academic motivation. Thus, parents' ability to emotionally connect and guide children through digital dilemmas has become a crucial determinant of family harmony and child adjustment in online contexts.

The high ranking of *Communication and Relationship Building* indicates that effective digital parenting extends beyond control and restriction to relational engagement. Parents increasingly recognize the value of open dialogue and co-learning with children about technology use. As (Sari et al., 2025) emphasized, parenting strategies in the technological era must be rooted in communication that encourages joint exploration, shared responsibility, and trust. Similarly, (Windasari & Dheasari, 2024) asserted that effective parent-child communication enables early digital literacy development, preventing screen dependency and misuse. These findings collectively demonstrate that communication serves as both a protective and developmental mechanism—bridging generational gaps while promoting mutual understanding of technology's risks and benefits.

The prioritization of *Digital Literacy and Technical Competence* in the fourth position underscores the enduring relevance of parents' technological proficiency. Even though emotional and relational competencies ranked slightly higher, the ability to understand, operate, and evaluate digital tools remains indispensable. (Dakhi et al., 2025) and (Aprido et al., 2025) both affirmed that parents' technical literacy enhances children's digital learning and reading motivation, particularly in early education contexts. Moreover, (Choi & Choi, 2024) found that parents with high digital media literacy are better equipped to prevent overdependence on smart devices in young children. In line with (Lu & Han, 2023), this study reinforces that home-based digital practices—such as co-viewing and guided exploration—depend largely on parents' mastery of technology. Hence, technical literacy functions as a foundation upon which emotional, ethical, and educational competencies can build.

The mid-range ranking of *Ethical and Moral Guidance* reflects the ongoing tension between moral education and technological adaptation. Parents recognize that guiding children toward responsible online behavior requires moral consistency and digital ethics. (Herak, 2025) emphasized that digital-era character education must equip parents to cultivate values such as respect, honesty, and responsibility in virtual settings. Likewise, (P. & Irvansyah, 2024) highlighted the importance of raising resilient digital citizens who demonstrate ethical judgment and civic awareness online. (Arninda et al., 2024) introduced the notion of the “smart user,” illustrating that ethical competence involves not just abstaining from harmful behaviors but using technology constructively for learning and collaboration. Consequently, while ethics may not be parents' top concern in ranking, it remains an indispensable dimension in ensuring that digital literacy is value-driven and socially responsible.

The lower-ranked competencies—*Educational Mediation and Digital Learning Support, Time Management and Self-Regulation*, and *Socio-Cultural and Community Engagement*—offer further insight into the structural challenges of digital parenting. Although parents acknowledge the educational potential of technology, many remain uncertain about how to integrate digital tools effectively into children's learning routines. (Gatcho et al., 2024) and (Li, 2024) both underlined the need for family-based support systems that connect formal education with informal digital learning. Yet, as this study's results suggest, parental prioritization tends to focus on safety and emotional

well-being rather than instructional mediation. This could stem from limited parental confidence in using educational technologies or uncertainty about pedagogical alignment (Listrianti et al., 2024). Similarly, time regulation—while essential for digital balance—may appear less urgent compared to immediate online risks. (Laxmi & Kalpana, 2023) found that inconsistent time management contributes to children's digital dependency, but parents often perceive such regulation as a secondary challenge.

Cultural and community engagement were rated lowest but still moderately high, reflecting an emerging but underdeveloped dimension of digital parenting. (Syukur et al., 2024) argued that effective parenting frameworks must integrate cultural values and community participation to address contextual realities. In collectivist societies, for example, shared parental practices and local values influence how families perceive digital risks and opportunities. Similarly, (Okela et al., 2025) demonstrated that variations in parental social media literacy across countries shape children's susceptibility to online addiction, suggesting that social context remains a critical but often neglected factor. (Kusumalestari et al., 2023) further supported this by linking parental style and social environment to adolescents' digital literacy development. The relatively lower ranking of this dimension in the present study indicates a need for more inclusive digital parenting models that account for cultural diversity and community collaboration.

Taken together, the results demonstrate that parenting in the digital era is a multifaceted construct encompassing technical, emotional, ethical, and social dimensions. The high prioritization of safety and emotional competencies reflects parents' immediate concerns about digital harm and well-being, while the moderate emphasis on ethics, learning, and social engagement suggests areas where further awareness and training are needed. These findings align with (Jamwal & Ram, 2025), who proposed a multidimensional framework for assessing parental digital competence combining emotional regulation, ethical reflection, and media literacy. The pattern observed in this study also corroborates (Asnawan et al., 2024) and (Aprido et al., 2025), who advocate for integrative digital parenting grounded in both technological knowledge and moral education, especially in contexts influenced by Islamic educational philosophy.

Furthermore, the results resonate with global calls for the professionalization of digital parenting education. (Hakim & Nusantara, 2023) demonstrated that structured digital literacy interventions for parents significantly improved

their capacity to support children's online learning during the pandemic. In similar fashion, (Widiastuti & Yuliati, 2025) argued that parental readiness—measured through adaptability, problem-solving, and emotional awareness—is a key predictor of effective digital child-rearing. The high mean scores across all eight competencies in the current study confirm that parents view digital competence as an integrated skill set rather than a fragmented collection of abilities. In line with (Gritsai, 2025) and (Herak, 2025), this suggests that modern parenting education should combine cognitive (knowledge), affective (emotional), and behavioral (practical) components to cultivate holistic digital maturity.

Another significant contribution of this study is the evidence supporting the need for cross-cultural adaptability in digital parenting frameworks. (Syukur et al., 2024) emphasized that while universal standards for digital parenting exist, their successful implementation depends on contextual variables such as national policy, media infrastructure, and parental education. The Italian context of this study, characterized by high internet penetration and strong family values, may have influenced the observed emphasis on emotional and safety-related competencies. The findings thus echo (Okela et al., 2025) and (Arninda et al., 2024), suggesting that effective parenting strategies require culturally sensitive adaptation rather than uniform application. This highlights the necessity of designing localized digital parenting interventions that reflect regional values, family dynamics, and educational systems.

From a theoretical standpoint, these results advance the conceptual understanding of digital parenting by integrating psychosocial and pedagogical perspectives. (Halalae, 2025) emphasized the bidirectional relationship between parenting style and adolescent mental health in digital settings, a relationship mirrored in the current study's focus on emotional support. The hierarchical structure of competencies observed here suggests that parental awareness progresses from immediate protection (safety) to higher-order developmental guidance (ethics and community). This aligns with (Li, 2024), who proposed that holistic family education integrates moral, emotional, and intellectual dimensions. Therefore, the model developed in this study contributes to both theoretical refinement and practical application by prioritizing competencies based on empirical evidence and parental perceptions.

In essence, the findings reinforce that digital parenting is not a single skill but a dynamic integration of cognitive, emotional, and ethical capacities developed through

continuous learning. The progression from safety to empathy and from literacy to ethics represents the evolving trajectory of modern parenting roles in the digital era. As (Jamwal & Ram, 2025) concluded, effective digital parenting frameworks must merge technological proficiency with humanistic values to prepare families for sustainable digital citizenship. The results of this study empirically validate this proposition and provide a practical foundation for the development of competency-based parenting education programs.

## 5. Suggestions and Limitations

Although this study offers important insights, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the research relied on a purposive sample of 205 Italian parents, which may limit the generalizability of the results to broader cultural or socio-economic contexts. Parental perceptions of competency importance could vary significantly in regions with different technological infrastructures or family dynamics. Second, while the qualitative phase achieved theoretical saturation through literature analysis, it did not incorporate expert interviews or focus groups, which could have enriched the interpretation of emergent themes. Third, the cross-sectional nature of the quantitative phase prevents causal inference; longitudinal data might reveal how parental competencies evolve over time. Additionally, self-reported data may be influenced by social desirability bias, as participants might overestimate their digital awareness or underreport challenges. Finally, despite integrating emotional, ethical, and cultural dimensions, the study did not examine how these competencies interact dynamically, leaving room for future modeling studies.

Future research should extend this investigation to diverse cultural and socio-economic settings to test the adaptability of the competency framework. Cross-national comparative studies could reveal variations in parental priorities based on cultural values, technological access, and educational policies. Moreover, longitudinal designs should be employed to track how digital parenting competencies develop as children mature and as technology evolves. It would also be beneficial to include qualitative interviews with parents, educators, and children to gain deeper insights into family digital dynamics. Future studies might integrate psychometric validation of the identified competencies to establish standardized assessment tools for parental digital literacy and mediation. Finally, experimental or intervention-based research could evaluate the effectiveness

of training programs designed to enhance parental competencies across digital, emotional, and ethical domains.

Practically, the results highlight the need for structured parental education programs that combine digital literacy with emotional and ethical training. Schools, community centers, and policy institutions should collaborate to design family-centered curricula that promote safe, empathetic, and responsible digital engagement. Digital parenting workshops could focus on real-life applications such as setting privacy controls, discussing online risks with children, and modeling respectful communication. Policymakers should support initiatives that integrate media education into family welfare programs and strengthen institutional partnerships between schools and parents. Technology developers, likewise, should incorporate parent-friendly features and educational prompts in digital platforms. Ultimately, effective parenting in the digital era requires not only awareness and skill but also community support systems that empower parents as ethical digital role models.

### Authors' Contributions

All authors have contributed significantly to the research process and the development of the manuscript.

### Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

### Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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### Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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## Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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