



## CHILDREN IN THE DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM: THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY IN CONSTRUCTING DIGITAL CITIZENS.

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### SUMMARY

The presence of digital media and social networks has contributed profoundly to the adoption, use, and appropriation of technologies by children in this so-called digital age, where those who do not master technologies are considered digitally illiterate. This study aims to analyze the use of digital media by children and the need for emergency adult mediation. We also propose strategies that aim to mitigate the harms and benefits that may interfere with and favor the development and formation of children's personalities. The use of media in childhood without adult mediation places them in a vulnerable position, given their naiveté and immaturity in detecting the harms that arise from it, increases sedentary lifestyles, and causes physical and emotional exhaustion. Adult mediation enables the development of language and enhances the child's repertoire.

**Keywords:** Children, Digital Media, Family Mediation.

### 1. Introduction

The use of digital media by children in contemporary times constitutes a concern of families at this time, as children are involved with technologies to the point of forgetting the need to diversify their childhood experiences; they spend a lot of time with digital artifacts and have less ability to control their use. Children are sculpted with the technologies, many of them without first receiving formal training for their use. appropriation, but because they are in a globalized society, they have just become digital citizens (BUCKINGHAM, 2022).

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For Lemos (2021, p.6) “Technology is social, not because it is used by man, but because it constitutes him” and because he belongs to a society in constant innovation, where man, faced with technology, should not consider itself an isolated entity, separated from its biological unit, as well we can consider technology as a virus that lodges itself in the consciousness of subject and produces a change in their life paradigm (IDEM, 2021).

In this regard, the relationship prevailing in the family context is friendly relationship that children establish with digital media, and in certain cases without the active presence of an adult as a way of protecting their childhood; for this purpose highlights the need for urgent adult mediation.

## 2. The role of the family in the use of Technologies

Children find themselves immersed in a media context that, with each passing day, produces different tastes, and leads us to new forms of consumption and practices daily lives, and to some extent disregard family guidelines. In order to can maintain care from this perspective, the changes caused by society in digital culture, affect family relationships to some extent, destabilize the family's educational principles, as well as the standards of interaction between both, at school and other social institutions. Since certain Sometimes children involved with digital media forget their obligations, and the need for good coexistence within the family (Sarmiento, 2022).

For this purpose, parents and relatives who are guardians of minors are advised to education based on the principles of researchers (Buckingham, 2022; Fantin data, Lapa 2013 ; Rivoltella, 2012) which consists of the logical use of digital media, and the guide on the conscious form of its appropriation by educating with, about and through the media, it is important not to remove, but to educate the best way to use technologies for children.

Therefore, we agree with Buckingham (2007, p. 119) when he states that children being passive victims of the media or active consumers means effectively see them as isolated from the processes of social and cultural change that broad”. Media are artifacts that allow communication in contemporary times used by children as ways of expressing their childhood, with the interactivity.

However, technologies also enable the expansion of repertoire and the enhancement of the development of other languages, which reinforce the importance of considering technologies from Early Childhood Education, emphasized by the presence and participation of the family in children's interaction with the media, because after all, technology is "a great facilitator in our activities and a great field to be studied, since every day it presents new changes and possibilities" (Muller, 2019, p. 36)

It is important to emphasize that globalization and technological development contribute to early access to electronic devices understood as a theme in the academic-scientific community, omnipresent and cultural (Belloni, 2010; 2013). Currently, several studies have been developed in the field of social sciences to reflect the problems of the use of digital media in childhood, its implications and possibilities for a emergency family mediation (BELLONI, 2010; BUCKINGHAM, 2007; GIRARDELLO, FANTIN & PEREIRA, 2021). According to the research, TIC Kids 'Online' Brasil<sup>3</sup> (2023), The age of first access to the Internet by Brazilian children has been advancing in recent years, it is found that 24% of those interviewed reported having started connecting to the network in early childhood, that is, until the six years of life. For comparison purposes, in the 2015 edition, this proportion was of 11%, this tells us that early use of digital media by children is a concern that requires immediate family mediation.

In the past, when we talked about media, we were reminded of the image of a computer and television, but they have evolved to become diversified today and represented by various artifacts such as portable devices, tablets, notebooks , cell phones, video games; And because of their practicality and playfulness, they were incorporated into coexistence of children and even latent children.

For this question, Madigan et al., (2019) together with Muller, mention that when a child spends excessive time in front of screens without moving or engaging in other types of interaction, their daily life becomes deficient in obtaining stimuli from physical activities, social and language skills, such as: running and moving, interaction and communication with others.

This limitation culminates in increased sedentary lifestyle and loss of physical and emotional development, which limits essential growth exchanges (2019). And, when the child becomes a victim of misuse

<sup>3</sup><https://cetic.br/pt/noticia/tic-kids-online-brasil-2023-criancas-estao-se-conectando-a-internet-mais-cedo-no-pais/>. Accessed on 06/20/2024

technology, adult intervention is not always educational, but punitive (RIVOLTELLA, 2017).

For SBP4 , the experiences acquired by children and adolescents through through screens, “as the learning of aggression and intolerance manifested in games and networks, if not better regulated, will impact behavior and lifestyle into adulthood” (2020, p. 2). In this perspective, Buckingham (2022) reaffirms the importance of media education for children, so that they can resist digital influences, thus reducing commitment to acts violent.

“Media literacy actions are increasingly important and parental mediation to teach families, schools, communication companies and technology and also pediatricians regarding ethical, safe, healthy and educational use of the 'internet” proposes the text”. Among the main medical problems that can affect the health of the pediatric population, including: digital dependence and use problematic of interactive media, mental health problems: irritability, anxiety and depression; attention deficit hyperactivity disorder; sleep disorders; eating disorders: overweight/obesity and anorexia/bulimia; sedentary lifestyle and lack of exercise; bullying & 'cyberbullying', body image and self-esteem disorders; risks of sexuality, nudity, sexting, extortion, sexual abuse, virtual rape; increased violence, abuse and fatalities; visual problems, myopia and visual acuity syndrome computer; hearing problems and NIHL, noise-induced hearing loss; (SBP, 2020, p.3; Buckingham, 2022, p.38).

In this way, “the relationships that parents establish with their children children using digital technologies draws our attention, especially when we come across a profile of someone who did not have access and/or adequate instruction to make use of technologies” (Muller, 2019, p. 33).

Similarly, when it comes to the internet, we teach children to stay safe online, protect their privacy, and avoid inappropriate content, or distinguish between fake news and facts. From this perspective, literacy is seen primarily as a matter of self-protection or self-regulation: it's about interconnecting a set of rules of good behavior in a protectionist or

<sup>4</sup> Brazilian Society of Pediatrics (2020) <https://www.sbp.com.br/imprensa/detalhe/nid/sbp-atualiza-recomendacoes-sobre-saude-de-criancas-e-adolescentes-na-era-digital/>

defensive. Children are warned about the dangers that lurk online and learn techniques that will help them identify and avoid them (BUCKINGHAM, 2022).

According to Nobre et al., (2021) apud Muller (2019, p.8) “screen time is directly related to family financial resources, development of parental language and, therefore, explain the greater screen time in children coming from this family space”. Because each family, according to its condition economic, exposes the child to these artifacts, promising and offering 'Smartphone' as a stimulus or merit for children, for academic success, distraction of attention, comfort and other acts that compromise their childhood.

The importance of parents who are responsible and guardians is also highlighted, who pay attention to the tools and artifacts used by children, so as not to compromise their childhoods,<sup>5</sup> acting as mediators of this process with educational actions proposed by Tisseron, based on “self-regulation” that consists of monitoring the interaction between children and technologies, the “alternation” diversify play, “accompaniment” as an opportunity for learning, and appropriation of digital culture (Rivoltella & Tisseron, 2016; apud Girardello et al., 2021 ).

The SBP Guidance Manual also raises concerns about the increasingly common practice of offering children their parents' smartphones or cell phones as a way to distract the baby. Called passive distraction, this practice is a result of consumer pressure for "games" and videos on screens, which is harmful and completely different from active play, a universal and temporal right of all children during their brain development phase (2020, p. 2). This perspective emphasizes "the urgent need for media literacy, as it is understood as a means of managing and protecting children from risk" (BUCKINGHAM, 2007, p. 46).

As Dr. Evelyn Eisenstein explains<sup>6</sup> , nothing replaces human affection. The look, facial expression, all this contact with the family is vital for the child small. An instinctive source of stimulation and care that cannot be exchanged for screens and technologies and are fundamental for the development of language,

<sup>5</sup> When we refer to being and experience according to the various social, ethnic-cultural, geographic, urban, rural configurations, the multiplicities of the subject-time-space, conceptualized (in the plural).

<sup>6</sup> Member of the Working Group, one of the authors of the SBP Orientation Manual.



**cognitive and social skills. Delays in these areas are common in babies who are passively exposed to screens for prolonged periods,” he said (SBP, 2020, p.3).**

**Furthermore, digital media “provide access to unprecedented amounts of information, enabling creative learning, personal expression and communication seemingly unlimited” (Buckingham, 2022, p.34).**

**The presence of the family in mediation between children in the use of technologies, serves guidance in the event of doubt and protection against fake news and episodes that can make their childhoods unviable due to their abusive use of screens. In view of from the above, it is necessary to intensify multidisciplinary intervention and mediation family to control, regulate and monitor screen exposure time, thus, the amount of time children spend using the internet may be responsible for the emergence of addictions, which negatively interfere with the social and psychological functioning of children (Berloffia et al., 2022, apud Muller, 2019, p. 2). For this reason, it is important to emphasize that children use screens in a supervised and appropriate manner, and the use of exposure time. The Brazilian Society of Pediatrics (SBP) contraindicates the use for infants (up to 23 months). It is estimated that the time limit is determined by age group, always with supervision from parents and guardians, being: 2-5 years old, up to one hour per day; 6-10 years old, between one and two hours per day; 11-17 years old, between two and three hours per day. (SBP, 2020).**

#### **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

**Technological advances and electronic equipment are part of our habits contemporaries of the entire population as well as children; however, the exposure to screens at an increasingly early age, lack of adult supervision responsible, ease of access, extended time and overstimulation present in digital media negatively impact the functional, social and psychological development of children. (Muller, 2019, p. 9). It is necessary the “intensification of multidisciplinary intervention and family mediation for control of screen exposure time, thus allowing for an improvement in quality of life of individuals” (Idem, 2019, p.10). It is important to emphasize that the media are present in children's daily lives, raising concerns among families about the use uncontrollable on their part.**

Research by (Tisseron, 2013; Livingstone, 2017; Muller, 2019, Barbero, 1997) emphasize the meaning of mediation as a negotiation, classifying them as restrictive and enabling as weighting. Mediation restrictive refers to the supervision, prohibition and restriction of the activities of children, while enabling mediation occurs when the adult establishes dialogue, encouraging them to use it in a beneficial and safe way.

To mediate the child-technology relationship, relatives need to diversify their family leisure activities, avoiding children's excessive contact with screens, establish and supervise sleeping/resting schedules so that you can avoid sleep disorders, since the use of media without adult mediation is child in a vulnerable condition when faced with digital resources, given their naivety and immaturity, to detect the evils that come from it, increases the sedentary lifestyle, causes physical and emotional exhaustion; and with adult mediation, enables language development and enhances the child's repertoire.

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