

A Study on Parents Attitude Towards Information Technology (IT) Usage by ChildrenDOI: <https://doi.org/10.3126/skmj.v2i2.62494>Deena Magar¹**Abstract**

This study explores about the parent's attitude towards information technology usage by children. This qualitative study follows explorative research design which is based on narratives of 13 parents from Madhyapur, Thimi- Bhaktapur who were selected through purposive sampling. Narratives from in-depth interview with parents are used as data collection tools in the study. Social constructivism, attachment theory and other literature reviews are used to explore the research questions and strengthen the findings of study. Thematic analysis of parent narratives supports to achieve research objectives. This study shows that, majority of parents have positive attitudes towards their children's usage of information technology in term of education, communication skills rather than risks associated with it. Study found main factors that can mold children's technology usage are parent-child relationship, family educational and economic background, parenting styles, child's age, gender and experience.

Keywords: Information technology, children's information technology usage, parents' attitudes, parenting, technology literacy.

Introduction

Information technological advancements have continued to rapidly expand, radically changing society. 21st century children's lives are changing profoundly through new technologies as they are born in a world where information technology is deeply integrated into the fabric of everyday life. They are considering "digital natives" since they have grown up around computers, iPods, cell phones, and other gadgets of the digital era. Information technology is more than a convenience to them, it's an expectation of their daily lives that they know how to operate the tablet before being able to talk. (Zevenbergen & Logan, 2008). Additionally, information technology advancement and growth has changed children's lives and ways of learning. Today's children are learning an additional definition of literacy (Leu, 2006), sometimes known as "screen literacy". Thus, different technological tools can provide

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meaningful experiences for them and reflect our increasingly virtual world, affecting the way children grow, learn, play and interact.

Information Technology

Information Technology (IT) is a major part of modern society and is already well embedded in everyday life. Information Technology (IT) is a broad term that includes any simple or sophisticated communication device or application like radio, television, cellular phones, computer and network hardware and software, satellite systems and so on used in producing distribution, processing and transforming information (Hanna, 2010).

On other hand, Information Technology has been the bridge between us and the rest of the world. Information technology encompasses not only smartphones and televisions but also daily systems like banking, shopping, transportation, and many more. It's even connected, either directly or indirectly, to construction, entertainment, health, and education. Through limitless and unrestricted access to people and resources, information technology has the ability to "connect the information gap" in terms of opportunities and knowledge growth. All educational levels will likely play a more significant role in bringing didactic outcomes into line with the labor market, revolutionizing education, and promoting "information literacy" as different information technologies become more realistic, accessible, and interactive.

Digital Natives

A new generation has emerged in this digital society, called Digital natives. In 2001, Mark Prensky introduced the concept of digital natives. The first generation to have grown up with this new technology is the digital native. They're used to a wide range of digital toys and tools, which are an essential part of their lives. For them, digital activity is like a mother tongue and they speak the digital language like "native speakers." They represent a technologically advanced generation whose way of thinking is completely distinct from that of earlier generations.

Furthermore, digital natives are capable of using technologies on an instant basis and recognize its significance. Digital natives possess a variety of skills and aptitudes; not all of them are experts, innovators, designers, or developers. They're born digital and are digital consumers which encompasses not only digital gadgets but also skills like writing, reading, and knowledge management. Digital generation possesses remarkable capabilities of informatics, computers, electronics and mobile devices.

Parent's Perceptions on Information Technology

Although more parents today use computers compared to two decades ago, but limited information had been collected on parent's perception regarding use of these technological tools by themselves and their children. They also stated that, elementary school parents

responded the survey with 79% agreement that use of computers in classroom increased their children's motivation. Further, it was shown that the majority of parents placed a high importance on the usage of technology in the classroom and parents thought using computers could improve their children's academic performance (Hsin, 2014).

Similarly, it is found that parents have positive response regarding internet, computers worthwhile for their children to learn but with understandable caution "if used appropriately," or "when used correctly" (Johnson, 2010). Some parents participated in this study expressed their concerns regarding the quality of information available on the web. Nevertheless, it also indicated that parents hold more traditional views than teachers, which also affect the integration of information technology at home. In addition, factor influencing parent's views about information technology is job related. Most of the parents in their study believed that using computers would comfort success for their children in school and in finding a job. Parents allow their children to have information technology to gain skills for getting a better job.

In study of Chinn (2014) state, parent's concerns regarding use of internet information technology at home. Study found that although parents had a positive perception on use of computers at home for educational purposes, they supported use of it within certain limitations. Moreover, parents had a common view on internet, as a new information technology which is easier way to collect information and new window to the world but it should be used correctly with the caution. Overall, researcher agree that parent's involvement is significant in appropriate usage of information technology by children. Whereas, ecological approach by school, parents and other family members should adopt for shaping positive tech-habits in children to prepare them as future of digital world.

The issue and the Objectives

Information technology usage has increased exponentially in modern years and it resulted in diverse transformation of socialization for children. Here, parents may find it gratifying to use technology to work and supplement their children's education, yet this behavior has detrimental effects such as cyberbullying, information technology addiction, social skills deficiencies, strained parent-child bonds, obesity, physical health concerns and behavioral disorders are a few of these (Radesky et al, 2014).

Today's learning is facilitated by information technology and sometimes information technology is inevitable too. Such as during covid-19 it was almost a mandatory for parents to provide information technology to their children because of e-learning. Consequently, parents usually don't realize how information technology fits into their children's life. Parents often wonder, what are the boundaries? As a parent, am I making the correct decisions and acting

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appropriately? Social expectations and standards are hard to encounter while new questions unfold. Hence, the rate at which information technology is being adopted has not kept pace with studies on early childhood education and how children use it.

Thus, this research explores about how parents would pro-act and re-act to maintain the healthy parent-child relationship. Similarly, it also studies about what sort of strategies do parents apply to shape their children's behaviors. Further, research reveals the benefits and drawbacks of information technology for children, as well as on the difficulties parents encounter in regulating their children's usage of it.

The rapid advancement of information technology affects people of all ages, genders, ethnicities, and nationalities. Children are becoming more tech-savvy as a result of this, and the education system is speedily gaining momentum towards introducing information technology in schools (The National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2012). On the other hand, social work practices and interventions are significantly impact as new issues are arising in individual, families and communities with the involvement of information technology in human life.

Therefore, the main focus of the research is to create the necessary analysis on parent's perception on access, practice and challenges of information technology usage by children. So, it might be significant to the practitioners to analyze practice and challenges in using information technology by children. In addition, study can also be useful to policymakers, government and non-government organization for taking necessary steps to design an appropriate curriculum focusing on use of information technology learning at home and school. Further, they can appeal for laws to upgrade to look over the cases to protect children from the misuse of information technology in Nepal.

Parenting and Practice

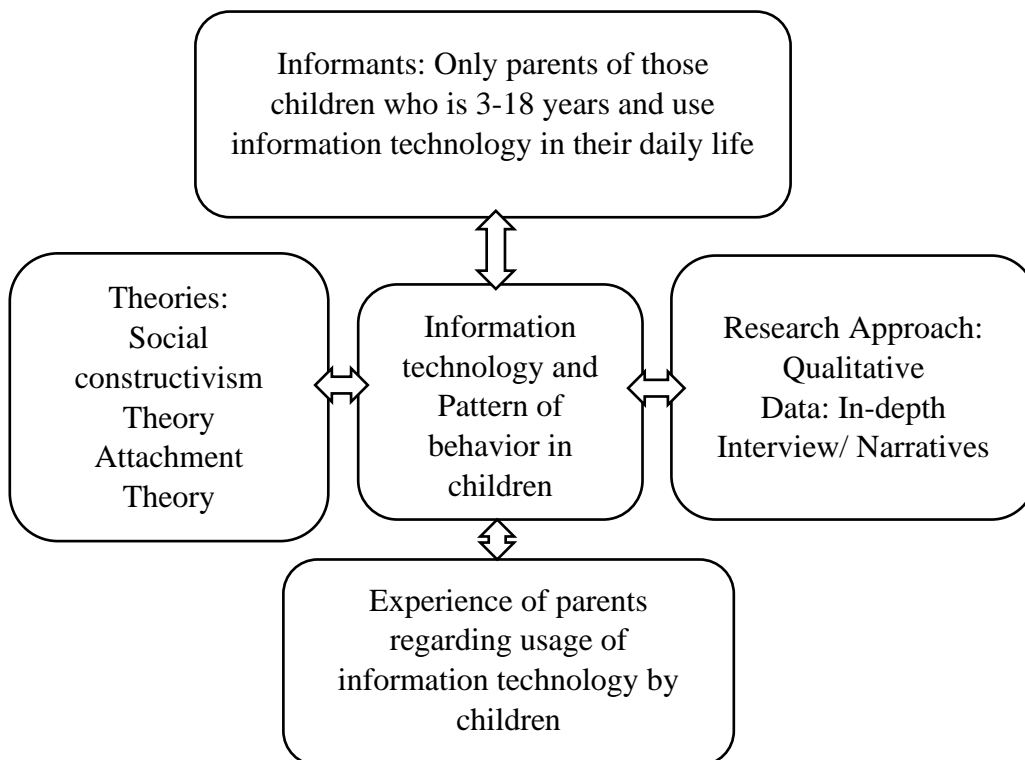
Social Constructivism (Lev Vygotsky, 1968) and Attachment theory (Mary Ainsworth and John Bowlby, 1940) is applied in this study. Here, constructivism discusses about the nature and process of constructing knowledge whereas the attachment theory deals with the need-based treatment in the learning process which focus on emotions development of brain and behavior throughout the life span. Both theories support to have evidence base analyze and interpret to the data of the research.

Social constructivism is a learning theory which holds that knowledge is best gained through a process of social interaction, language use and therefore share with others rather than individual experience. Here, within this theoretical framework, literature on parenting and children use of technology reveals two prominent discourses, which is helpful to place in context of the "Social Construction of Childhood theory." (O' Connor, 2016, p.237). However, study considered parents as learner and were from different academic background, educational

setting and places. Therefore, this theory has supported to discuss more clearly about how parents perceive the knowledge about information technology? What opinion they have about information technology access to children? What planned or unplanned involvement did they apply to support their children while using information technology?

Attachment theory emphasize on interpersonal bond and interactions between people, such as those among a parent-child and among romantic companions. According to Bowlby, a child's attachment is particularly triggered by discomfort, exhaustion, and anything frightening, as well as by the mother appearing or being unreachable. These early connections that infants make with their caregivers have a profound influence that lasts throughout life. Therefore, attachment theory supports the study to know perception of attachment style towards Nepalese parent-child relationship, how children get attached to the information technology, how parents' attachment towards information technology impacts nature of parent-child relationship, to understand about the relationship between conflicting demands of parents and child's pressing needs affect the nature of their attachment have been studied with the help of this attachment theory.

Theoretical Framework



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An exploratory research design was used to perform this qualitative study in Thimi, Bhaktapur. Research was carried out with 13 parents through purposive sampling to emphasis on selecting information rich cases. The parents had a range of educational credentials, including middle school, high school, bachelors, and master's degrees. To generate precise result among both populations, study took both male and female parents and children from 3-18 years age group.

On the other hand, research used primary source of data collection through in-depth interview with 13 parents whose children uses information technology in their day-to-day life for different purpose. Researcher have collected information through interview and recorded the audio tape of conversation and transcribed it for further analysis and review. Additionally, data was analyzed with thematic analysis to view data “as a window into human experience” (Silverman, & Marvasti, 2008). Further, data interpretation was done through narratives. This study used the narratives of informants as their realities and gathered the stories of 13 parents, which helped researcher to know the perception, information technology usage practice at home, challenges faced by parents regarding information technology usage by their children in details. Whereas, for data processing and interpretation, study took support from the theories and other secondary source of data such as journal, articles which strengthen the research outcomes. Thus, an interview checklist was prepared and the narrative analysis of the data come from the interview was used to explore the findings of the study.

Parent’s Perception on Information Technology and Parenting

Research found that parents are familiar to the information technologies like mobiles, television, social media and laptops. Social construction theory helped researcher to understand concept of information technology, its usage, skills and satisfaction differs in accordance with the educational, economic and profession variation. For instance, parents from frail academic and economic background perceive information technology as meant to communicate and use for entertainment purpose. In contract, parents with resilient educational and economic background perceive information technology as means to enhance the higher efficiency and use it for professional work in terms of overall economic development.

Parents' opinions about information technology are typically conflicted, regarding both benefits and drawbacks. While many parents view information technology as essential tools for the future and acknowledge the potential educational value they provide. Contrary to popular belief among children, the devices are primarily utilized as "toys" or as a means of "entertainment" in real life. It shows that their entire educational potential has not been fully realized. Whereas, parents argue that not only the children but the use of gadgets and information technology by a parent also distracts them from proper parenting whose results are eventually can be seen on children. In study working parents says, “working a full-time

job, taking care of basic household duties, and being a parent is time and energy consuming,” which can lead parents to “forego their supervisory responsibilities by letting screen media entertain their children”. Study explores that, parent’s own use of information technology is an important predictor which correlate with child comfortably using information technology same time as parents. (Nikken & Schols, 2015).

On the other hand, study shows that parents express nostalgia for their own childhood socialization, claiming that pattern of socialization have transformed from real time socialization to the virtual socialization. More the information technology get advance more will be the changes in the pattern of socialization and cultural adaptation. Parents prefer children to engage in physical or outdoor activities to develop skills like independence, problem-solving, collaborating or motor development. But in recent year’s pandemic, information technology advancement, urbanization process and working parents’ situations have compel parents to adopt the information technology in self and their children life in terms of education, babysitter and child career development.

However, changing society into techno-base generation has created a new perspective on parents to view information technology usage by their children in numerous aspect contrast to techno-free generation. Parents felt important of their children to interact with the technology-based society in which they are growing up. The benefits and appropriate use of information technology appear to be poorly understood, while concerns are related to time use, obesity, mental and physical health, allied to their perception of children being insufficiently skilled to reach inappropriate content. Hence, parents can no longer deny the presence and use of information technology in their as well as their children life for various purpose developing society with changes and adaptation of new information technology makes difference in human life.

Parent’s Attitude towards Children’s Access to Information Technology and Its Benefits

Information technology access is different in terms of age and parent’s economic background. In this research, children of all informants are provided with information technologies and uses it for different purposes. However, children of the economically sound parents are provided with sophisticated information technology like laptops, tablet, smart phones, etc. On the other hand, parents with economic and financial crisis are found providing a very basic information technology to their children on sharing basis where their children have to use gadget turn by turn. Nevertheless, the parents whose children are smaller are found accessing information technology for the watching cartoons, rhymes, stories, anime, etc. whereas, secondary to higher secondary level children mostly found handling the information technology by themselves for their academic purpose.

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Conversely, parents' state access of the information technology in context of Nepal has increased tremendously. With the emergence of mandatory online studies as a consequence of Covid-19, even the children of pre-primary & primary level are compelled to use the mobile phone, laptop to attend the online schooling. As a result, pandemic is over, so is online studies but children's habit of using information technology remained the same. Further, parents see the purchase and use of information technology as an investment in their child's future. They hope the availability of the newest tools will ensure their children's success in future endeavors of work, education, and income earning potential.

In context of advantages of information technology on children, during distance learning in covid-19 period it has helped children for attending the online education, to perform school assignment, to use search engines for getting the relevant and knowledgeable information. In addition, Parent agree information technology as a vital source of learning and developing cognitive, social, emotional communication skills as well as creativity among children in learning rhymes, educational stuffs, social interaction conversation and platform to show their talents and abilities (Wood et al., 2016). Similarly, technological emergence has helped the working parents as it has become a new babysitter for their children and can communicate through different social media and connect the parent-child dwelling at different places which assist parents to work without worry.

Therefore, study explore that parents have positive attitude towards the information technology on basis of education field whereas, they show negative attitudes towards information technology in terms of impacts on parent-child relationship bonding caused by it. Further, parents express optimistic approach towards holding various responsibilities and represent them as the main gatekeepers for children's usage of information technology in moral and ethical ways with awareness in regards of the consequences of information technology misusages. Thus, parents allow access to the information technology despite their overwhelming concerns because they hope the advantages of such exposure outweigh present fears and it would have a negative impact on their children if they are not allowed to use information technology at all in this advance development generation.

Parent's Experience on Quality Parent-Child Relationship

The use of information technology by either parents or children or by both create an impact on their relationships based on the intensity and usage of it. Research found that, large number of parents use information technology to communicate, learn, and connect to others in ways that support their journeys as parents which improve parents-child relationship, yet they demonstrate diversity in their information technology practices.

On contrary, research shows that, advantages of information technology come along with drawbacks (Livingstone et al., 2011). With the infinite amount of time children spend on cell-phones, computers and numerous types of video games; their attention is absorbed by

these devices and this might be one main reason for causing a decline in face-to-face communication. Sharing and expressing of feelings & thoughts in social media account instead with parents has deduced the emotional attachment between parents and children. Whereas, parents also agree that proper physical presence of parents in caring and socialization process can support them, in providing access, direct and dealing with protection from information technology risk for their children in appropriate manner.

Here, parents' experiences that, children of today's generation are ahead of them due to use of information technology from their early age. For instance, there appears to be a role-reversal in between parents and information technology as most modern conveniences and life skills such as playing, using a map, cooking, social etiquette, are skills that are often passed on from parent to child but now children learn it from information technology. Whereas, since parents are frequently more engrossed in their electronics and become distracted, distracted parenting poses a direct risk to the wellbeing of their children (Ralston, 2015). Therefore, excessive use of information technology devices by both parents and children may lead to a decrease in the many communication processes necessary to create strong bonds between a parent and a child.

Challenges and Parental Role on Children's Information Technology Usage Practices

According to parents in this study, the use of information technology was quite challenging in regards to the disciplining children's behaviors, physicality of the children, anti-social behavior, and children dependency on technology gadget. For instance, children aren't afraid to fight with parents when it comes to taking over gadget. Whereas, some children of informant are found being isolated. Their virtual world has created anti-social environment in the family resulting to non-sharing habit within family. Similarly, it is found that, children have almost left played outdoor physical games. It has resulted into obesity among children which has distorted their physical strength and fitness. In addition, continuous use of mobile, laptop has also resulted the problems in eyesight, sleep disturbance to some of children of my informants.

Additionally, research has found that, children were more dependent on gadget even for the fulfilling the basic activities like eating, sleeping. Study of Wood et al. (2016) strengthen the finding of research, technologies such as screen time appears as a type of babysitter which replace interactive playtime with children. Here, attachment theory (John Bowlby, 1940) support to explore how parents are facing challenges because of absence on attachment between parent-child versus attachment of children towards information technology. Thus, research concluded that, the pattern of children behavior has been changed along with pattern of using information technology. It is therefore found that it's quite challenging for the parents to put the barriers between information technology and children to prevent the physical, social, emotional and mental health issues due to behavioral changes or modification as a result of tech-habits in tech-base society.

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This study discovered that parents' perceptions of information technologies influence parental role. In this case, fathers can be less rigid and more flexible, but moms tend to be more controlling of content and generally more limiting. Similar to this, restrictions are frequently based on day-to-day activities. For example, one may not play during school hours, before bedtime, or until after homework is completed. Parents of younger and older children watched over and monitored their children, taking occasional "tours" of their personal devices. Besides, parents employ active mediation by co-using social media with their children or by explaining to them how to utilize laptops and mobile devices.

Therefore, every family is different and has unique way to deal and play intervention role in their children life to balance information technology usage. The majority of research parents use Neumann's (2015) 5W framework, which includes who, what, where, why, and when to help them be more thoughtful about how their children use information technology. According to parents, the responses to each question help them modify and adopt mindful approach to young children for having healthy screen time and help to positively influence children's behaviors and development.

Conclusion

Persistent progression of information technology strongly influence usage of it on children from all socio-economic background and it has several effects on their contemporary lives. Families and children are increasingly able to use it as an integral part of their daily lives. It helps with day-to-day functioning, acquiring, participate in work, establishing and maintaining social relationships as well as access to a broad range of resources such as financial information, transport, education and health services as evidenced by the stories and experiences shared in the in-depth interviews.

Moreover, Information technologies that promote co-creation of knowledge, self-discovery, and personalized learning possibilities are particularly beneficial in stimulating the creativity and intellectual curiosity of both parents and children. Similarly, children got an opportunity for the online studies during distance learning, build the communication skills, explored the talents and creativity among the children through social media. Whereas, the information technology has been even found to play the role of an artificial baby sitter and it was proved to be an additional benefit for the working parents. Nevertheless, comfort level with information technologies varies according to education, income, age and experiences and families everywhere require access to digital literacy, safety procedures, and privacy, regardless of whether they have access to information technology equipment.

However, studies reveal that a child's excessive use of information technology negatively impacts on their family relationships, academic performance as well as their emotional, psychological, and social development. Since children are currently growing up as

a ‘digital native’ using highly personalized information technology, parents as a ‘digital immigrants’ should strive to ensure their role as provider and protector as a main gatekeeper to be able to implement and benefit from the principles of balanced information technology usage by their children. Nurturing parents-child relationship, positive contribution of different mode of information technology use on children are act of being a ‘good parent’, as explained in social constructive theory by Lev Vygotsky. Therefore, it may be challenging to balance between positive and negative influences of information technology usage by children but ultimately, parents are responsible of raising future generations.

Last but not least, social problems have remained an integral part of the society from the time immemorial whereas, social work intervention also remained a part of human society for providing solution to these problems. Generally, social workers apply scientifically proven procedures and patterns as the basis for their interventions. It is combinations of skills applied by practitioners, their clients, and collateral participants (e.g., family members etc.) with the aim of resolving problems, improve adaptive capabilities, and enhance clients overall psychosocial well-being (Parker et al., 2003). Thus, social worker can use micro, mezzo and macro level practice and policy intervention to brings positive changes in parenting and information technology.

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