

Managing Digital Exposure: Experiences of Parents in Regulating Elementary Learners' Screen Time at Home

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100700718>

Received: 27 July 2026; Accepted: 31 July 2026; Published: 11 August 2026

ABSTRACT

This research study aimed to explore and understand the various strategies employed by the parents in regulating screen time at home for elementary school learners. The study used a qualitative research design employing a phenomenological approach. The study focused on the lived experiences of the ten parents within the province of Davao del Norte, who underwent in-depth interviews. On the experiences of the parents in regulating their elementary children's screen time at home, the findings of the study revealed that too much screen time can negatively impact elementary children's behavior, emotional health, physical fitness, and school performance. It indicates that appropriate regulation of screen time can help students develop better focus, self-control, social skills, and academic success. It also demonstrates the importance of parents in shaping their children's learning habits at home. It emphasizes the development of healthy learning behaviors through consistent discipline, family time, and structure. Developing healthy learning behavior allows for effective teaching and positive learning experiences for elementary students. The cooperation among educators, families, and school leaders is essential to establishing consistent guidelines to support healthy screen time behaviors for elementary school children. Families need to provide appropriate structure for children to establish rules and routines and to spend time together as a family so that children can learn how to balance screen time with their everyday responsibilities. Establishing cooperation and consistency among teachers, parents, and school administrators can create a more effective and balanced teaching and learning experience for children that will support their overall growth and development. The results of this study are important to the parents, teachers, school administrators, stakeholders, and the Department of Education, for them to get a picture of the common challenges, strategies, and emotions in regulating elementary-aged screen time at home. This will help them in making initiatives to support and strengthen the different learning programs intended for the learners who will also benefit from this study.

Keywords- managing digital exposure, regulating screen time at home, qualitative research, phenomenological approach, thematic analysis, elementary learners, Davao del Norte, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

With widespread access to digital devices changing how children access and interact with technology today, managing how much time children spend using digital technologies continues to be a challenging aspect for many families. For elementary school-aged children, daily screen time can now be considered routine; however, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2024), researchers warn that excessive screen time is linked to many concerning behaviors, including lower rates of physical activity, sleep problems, attention problems, and behavioral problems. In addition, children who are exposed to more time on screens tend to have an increase in mental health concerns (Wang et al., 2024). Therefore, parents must have the tools and knowledge they need to effectively limit their children's screen time, which involves choosing appropriate forms of media, limiting the duration of television usage, encouraging participation in athletic and social activities, and discussing the safety of using the internet and thinking critically while using the internet with their children.

In many parts of the world, North American parents are primarily concerned about the influence of technology on their children's emotional and social well-being. While parents from China are also worried about the physical health and school performance of their children. Many parents view technology as a hindrance to their parenting

responsibilities. For example, there are many parents of children aged 5 through 11 years who limit or restrict their children's daily screen time. However, many are concerned with their children being exposed to predators or inappropriate content. As a result, parents experience uncertainty and anxiety surrounding the impact that technology has on their child's social and emotional well-being, health effects, and their ability to set limits on their teenager because of their teenager's ability to circumvent technology control measures. This can create a vicious cycle, where the increased time children spend on screens correlates with their emotional issues, such as anxiety, and in turn encourages them to spend more time on screens as a coping mechanism. Additionally, this issue is made worse by the guilt and inconsistency felt by parents when setting limits on-screen time (Flaherty et al., 2019).

In the Philippines, it is widely held by Filipino parents of elementary students that excessive screen time contributes to vision problems, sleep deprivation tendencies, physical health deterioration & poor academic performance since many students experienced increased screen use during online learning as a result of COVID-19 - related closures. A research study conducted revealed that although parents routinely monitored and attempted limits for their children's screen time, it is challenging to enforce such limits because of children relying on devices for entertainment, along with a lack of a clear-cut parental framework, therefore making enforcing limits even more troublesome. Preschools typically exceed WHO recommendations for screen time usage, compounded by unregulated use of screens in the home, along with parental modelling of high frequency usage of screens (Macabangon & Magulod, 2024).

Davao del Norte's rural communities, which have a low level of organized activities, resulting in parental boundaries being set for children's device use. However, with parents being large users of screens themselves, children continue to resist any attempts to limit their screen time to access entertainment or support their online academic activities. In the case of resource-challenged home settings where family members share one computer or mobile device, it becomes more challenging for parents to monitor usage levels. Most parents are not following WHO guidelines (up to 1 hour for kindergarten and up to 1.5 hours for grades 1 through 5). Due to the lack of outdoor play or other consistent options for children outside of screen time, enforcement of parental boundaries is typically inconsistent (Magsumbol, 2020).

This study differs from previously mentioned works because it focuses only on parents of children in elementary school and their practices for managing their children's screen time, within a local setting. Previous studies examined excessive screen exposure among children and primarily focused on health and behavioral effects, as well as on the negative effects of digital devices and the methods that parents use to regulate this exposure. Very few of the previous studies, if any, provided a detailed account of how parents practically manage screen time rules and regulations in their day-to-day lives and routines. They also provided a more global perspective on the concerns and worries parents have regarding their children's use of technology and the perceptions and difficulties parents have when limiting the amount of time their children use gadgets. They also discussed the amount of time all children spend using screens and how difficult parents find it to monitor the amount of time that their children are using gadgets at home.

This study addressed SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) and SDG 4 (Quality Education) by promoting healthy screen-time management practices among children. Due to the current overuse of technology and digital devices, there is an urgent need for an evaluation of the effects on children's health, education, and development. There is also a significant need for an evaluation of what parents and families are doing to monitor or manage their children's screen time. As well as how they can improve upon their current behaviors, as this will provide understanding and awareness of what constitutes appropriate parenting guidance, specific behaviors, and the appropriate setting of rules to support mindful screen use. Thus, providing parents with the support necessary to minimize the long-term risk of development for children.

In connection, the outcomes of the study will be disseminated on different platforms to ensure a wide range and effective reach of information. The findings will be presented at academic fora such as research conferences, symposia, and educational seminars targeting educators, researchers, and policymakers. The research article will be submitted to scholarly refereed journals focused on education, parenting, and digital media studies. A summation of key highlights will be circulated to local school communities and Parent-Teacher Associations either through newsletters or workshops in order to give useful guidance. To even further extend accessibility,

digital platforms and social media will be used to distribute highlights and infographics to promote awareness and dialogue among a wider audience of parents and caregivers.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach. According to Jain (2023), a qualitative research design aims to obtain the in-depth details of human experiences, perspectives, and behaviors related to the studied phenomena. It focuses on the exploration and understanding of complex phenomena and their meaning, as described by groups or individuals. Since this research design is flexible and detailed, its goal was to produce insights from the authentic experiences of the research participants while ensuring rigorous methodologies. It is also a systematic investigation of exploring and gathering comprehensive insights into social phenomena (McLeod, 2025).

The participants enriched this qualitative study through their shared, genuine, and detailed insights on the interpretation and reflection of their experiences through interviews and other engagement methods. As stated by Dahal et al. (2024), there is flexibility in the number of participants in phenomenological research. It ranges from five to twenty-five participants, with thorough interviews to achieve data saturation and in-depth exploration of lived experiences. Thus, the number of participants in this study was ten. They were 10 selected parents from Davao del Norte province who were religiously employing screen time rules and practices at home despite the difficulties in implementing them. The qualified participants all underwent in-depth interviews to help reveal their insights, the challenges they faced, and the strategies they implemented regarding the digital exposure of their elementary children at home.

The participants were selected equitably and identified through purposive sampling. According to Nikolopoulou (2022), purposive sampling consists of the deliberate selection of individuals based on characteristics that best suit the research questions. This sampling technique was well-suited to this study as it allowed for the purposive selection of parents who actively regulated or negotiated screen use at home. This illuminated how rules were crafted, communicated, and enacted in daily routines. It also supported depth over breadth, enabling the exploration of rich mechanisms, contextual factors, and unintended consequences that a purely random sample might miss.

For this study, the researcher identified and selected the study participants using inclusion and exclusion criteria. To ensure participants were qualified, an initial interview was conducted with potential participants before the orientation. The inclusion criteria were as follows: (a) parents must have permitted their children in Grades 1 to 5 to have a maximum of 1.5 hours of screen time daily, and their Grade 6 children to have a maximum of 2 hours daily, as aligned with DepEd Memorandum CI-2020-00162, (b) parents must have been regulating their children's screen time for at least 2 years, (c) parents must have had at least one specific instance of perceived success in reducing screen time, accompanied by positive outcomes, (d) parents must have been currently residing in any area within Davao del Norte Province, and (e) parents must have had children studying in public or private elementary schools. On the other hand, the following participants were excluded from the study: (a) parents who were not primary caregivers or guardians of elementary-aged children to ensure participants had enough experience in regulating digital exposure, (b) parents who were not primarily responsible for screen-time decisions to maintain focus on experiences directly related to managing screen time at home, and (c) parents who lacked proficiency in the study's language or could not engage in the interview format to avoid misleading information and insights.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows parents' experiences in regulating elementary children's screen time at home, which revealed six essential themes: a.) struggling to balance parenting with screen regulation; b.) shifting between discipline and guidance; c.) experiencing the benefits of screen time regulation; d.) modeling screen management through one's own behavior; e.) enduring the behavioral, physical, and developmental toll; and f.) negotiating the normalized screen-use within home life.

Table I. Essential Themes and Core Ideas on the Experiences of Parents in Regulating Elementary Children's Screen Time at Home

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Struggling to Balance Parenting with Screen Regulation	- finding it difficult to enforce limits and manage resistance - living with inconsistent regulation among family members - juggling parenting responsibilities, work demands, and rule enforcement - managing the child's persistent, wearying desire for more screen time - realizing that passive allowance has only deepened the problem - carrying the emotional burden of constant regulation
Shifting Between Disciplines and Guidance	- establishing rules, schedules, and clear time limits - using discipline, punishment, and logical consequences - creating routines and offering alternative, non-screen activities - explaining and communicating the reasons behind limits - raising educational awareness about the consequences of excessive use - implementing structured daily prerequisites before any screen time
Experiencing the Benefits of Screen Time Regulation	- noticing improved focus and academic engagement after limits are held - enjoying better routines and healthier daily habits - feeling improved communication and warmer parent-child interactions - watching enhanced socialization and peer play emerge - seeing the child develop responsibility and help with household tasks - observing the child's growing self-regulation and time management
Modeling Screen Management Through One's Own Behavior	- limiting personal gadget use to influence the child - demonstrating discipline and prioritizing non-screen activities - seeing oneself explicitly as a role model for screen regulation - balancing work, parenting, and responsible gadget use in full view of the child - showing alternative, non-screen behaviors as a lived example - practicing shared parental accountability in front of the child
Enduring the Behavioral, Physical, and Developmental Toll	observing emotional and behavioral changes unfolding in the child

	• experiencing the child's resistance and open disobedience • noticing daily routines slipping – sleep, eating, studying disrupted • becoming increasingly concerned about physical and developmental effects • observing the child's growing dependence on the gadget
Negotiating the Normalized Screen-use Within Home Life	• allowing screen use for academic and learning needs • witnessing children's screen use emerge through family and environmental influences • permitting gadget use due to pressing household demands • gradually habituating to the daily presence of screens

Struggling to Balance Parenting with Screen Regulation

Today's parents face many challenges related to screens, screen use for children of different ages, and all the factors they must take into account. As smartphones, tablets, and computers have become a part of everyday life, parents must strike a balance between using technology to provide advantages in learning, communicating, and entertaining children, with concerns about the effect that screens will have on the child's behavior, health, education, and socialization. As a parent tries to achieve a balance between being a parent and controlling the amount of time children spend in front of screens each day, there are many ways parents encounter challenges including inconsistencies in creating rules around screen use, monitoring children's digital usage, children resisting any limits on their screen usage, and working to establish a healthy family routine where children can continue to interact and socialize as most of their homes, workplaces and families become increasingly technology based.

The result is strengthened by the study of Radesky et al. (2020), who mentioned that there are many obstacles for many parents managing their child's screen time. Some obstacles include work or school requirements, day-to-day stress, and technology being in the family. As screens become increasingly incorporated into their lives, parents have a harder time consistently sticking to screen time limits, and their children are gravitating towards using screens more. In addition, Nagata et al. (2022) found that the need for digital devices for children to participate in online learning, communicate with other people, and engage in recreational activities has created difficulties for many families to balance the use of screens for educational purposes and to have recreational activities and live a healthy lifestyle.

This is also aligned with the idea of Fadil et al. (2025), who emphasized that modern parents face the ongoing challenge of managing their children's screen use while maintaining meaningful family interactions. Similarly, Tang et al. (2021) found that higher levels of parental stress were associated with less consistent media parenting practices. Parents experiencing daily pressures from work, household responsibilities, and childcare often find it challenging to monitor and enforce screen-time rules. Sinha and Patra (2021) also discussed the challenges faced by working parents in managing their children's screen media use. The demands of employment, household responsibilities, and childcare often limit the time parents can devote to supervising digital activities.

The findings are reflected in the study by Fadil et al. (2025), which highlighted the challenge parents face in balancing children's screen use with meaningful family interactions. As digital technology becomes an integral part of education, entertainment, and communication, parents often struggle to determine appropriate screen-time limits while ensuring that children still benefit from technological advancements. Additionally, Bounouh et al. (2025) emphasized that parental screen use can significantly influence young children's emotional

regulation and digital habits. They often struggle to balance their own technology use with the responsibility of guiding their children's digital behaviors. Parents recognize that excessive family screen exposure can reduce meaningful interactions and affect children's emotional and social well-being.

Shifting Between Disciplines and Guidance

With the increase in technology use by children, it is essential that parents help children develop healthy lifestyles and grow into adults with good, well-balanced lives. Limiting screen time can help children develop better habits, such as getting more sleep, focusing better, being more active physically, and developing social relationships. Limiting the amount of time children are allowed to spend using technology can also support their emotional well-being and reduce the negative consequences that can occur from excess screen time.

The result is supported by the findings of Milford (2026), which explored how parents navigate the often-conflicting messages surrounding children's screen time. They often adjust their parenting strategies based on children's needs, educational requirements, and family circumstances. Rather than relying solely on rigid discipline, parents tend to combine clear boundaries with guidance and open communication to encourage responsible digital habits. Additionally, Tariga (2025) examined the physical and socio-emotional effects of excessive screen time among Grade 5 and 6 pupils. Parents often balance disciplinary strategies with supportive guidance to address their children's developmental needs. In like manner, Singh and Balhara (2021) emphasized the need for a contextually informed approach to managing children's screen time, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The authors argued that increased screen use for education, social interaction, and recreation required parents to move beyond rigid screen-time restrictions and consider the purpose and context of digital media use.

The finding is strengthened by the study of Varsori and Pereira (2019), which critically examined how young people manage screen time within formal educational settings. The authors emphasized that digital technologies have become integral to learning and social interaction, making it difficult to rely solely on restrictive screen-time rules. Instead, they highlighted the importance of guiding children and adolescents toward responsible and purposeful media use while fostering digital literacy and self-regulation skills. In addition, Hawi and Samaha-Rupert (2015) found that parental involvement and the use of appropriate digital monitoring strategies can influence children's media consumption. Rather than relying solely on punitive restrictions, effective e-discipline involves guiding children toward responsible technology use while establishing clear expectations and consistent boundaries.

This is further supported by Pires et al. (2025), who examined the use of screen devices as a disciplinary tool in parenting. The findings suggest that parents may use digital devices to manage children's behavior and maintain household routines, particularly in situations that require immediate compliance or engagement. Rather than depending solely on screen-based discipline, parents may gradually shift toward guidance strategies that include clear rules, effective communication, and alternative activities to support children's emotional and social development. Similarly, Smith et al. (2020) suggested that increased screen use was associated with poorer mental health outcomes, highlighting the need for balanced and context-sensitive approaches to digital media use. Parents often adapt their strategies to address both the benefits and potential risks of digital technology.

Experiencing the Benefits of Screen Time Regulation

Parents highlighted the positive outcomes that children gain from establishing healthy boundaries for digital device use. By managing screen time effectively, families promote children's physical health, emotional well-being, academic performance, and social development while strengthening parent-child relationships. These experiences demonstrate that consistent screen time regulation not only reduces the negative effects of excessive device use but also fosters balanced lifestyles and healthier family interactions.

The result is paralleled by the findings of Dy et al. (2023), which suggest that maintaining appropriate screen time limits can support children's cognitive, social, and physical development while reducing the potential negative effects of prolonged digital exposure. Similarly, Tariga (2025) mentioned that setting appropriate

screen time limits and encouraging balanced daily activities can help improve children's well-being, social interactions, and overall development. The findings highlight that effective screen time regulation allows children to enjoy the advantages of digital technology while reducing its harmful effects and promoting healthier lifestyles.

The finding is strengthened by the study by Alkalash et al. (2023), which shows that active parental involvement and consistent monitoring can help reduce excessive screen exposure while supporting children's physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional development. Informed parenting and effective screen time management enable families to foster healthier digital habits and promote children's overall well-being. It is aligned with Colambo (2022), emphasizing that maintaining appropriate screen time limits can promote healthier behaviors, improve emotional well-being, and support positive learning outcomes among students. Effective screen time regulation allows learners to benefit from digital technology while fostering balanced habits and overall development.

The result is also supported by the findings of Stiglic and Viner (2019), which emphasized that limiting screen exposure can contribute to improved sleep, healthier body weight, better emotional well-being, and enhanced overall quality of life. In like manner, Sarla (2021) mentioned that adopting healthy screen habits and setting appropriate limits can reduce the adverse effects of prolonged digital exposure while enhancing productivity, social interactions, and overall quality of life. Effective screen time regulation enables individuals, particularly children and adolescents, to enjoy the advantages of technology while promoting healthier and more balanced daily routines.

Modeling Screen Management Through One's Own Behavior

Parents stressed how critical it is for them as adults to show their children how to properly use screens to create healthy behaviors. A different parent pointed out that children learn how to use screens based on what their parents do at home, which underscores how much parents influence how children will use screens. Another parent described that teaching children to finish all these chores prior to using any type of electronic devices teaches them that the screen is a reward or something they can do when they are finished with their responsibilities or jobs. These types of comments show that modelling and boundaries from parents are essential tools to help children have good attitudes about responsible screen use.

The result is aligned with the idea of Detnakintra et al. (2020), which emphasized that parents with stronger child interaction and pre-structured parenting styles were correlated with lower amounts of screen time used by children. This is how important parental involvement and modeling appropriate behaviors can be for creating early digital habits for children, and can help them acquire the ability to self-regulate their use of screens. As noted by Arundell et al. (2020), parents can have a large role in terms of their children's screen usage in the family context. Children's screen use patterns may be very similar to those of their parents, thereby indicating that they are likely to use screens in similar ways due to their parents' behavior being an important digital role model for them at home.

When parents spend time with their child using screens and model good media habits, children are more likely to have a positive mindset about technology. This means parents play a critical role in their child's media engagement by setting examples that guide how their child interacts with technology, as children learn how to act from what they see at home (Hutton et al., 2020). It is supported by the findings of Cox et al. (2022), emphasizing that parents play a significant role in shaping their children's screen media habits through their own behaviors and daily practices. Their study revealed that active parental modeling and mentoring, such as demonstrating responsible device use, co-viewing content, and guiding children in digital activities, have direct and lasting positive effects on children's screen-related behaviors.

Further, the result is in accordance with the idea of Iyer et al. (2025), which highlighted that children are more likely to adopt appropriate screen-use patterns when parents consistently model responsible technology use and promote activities that reduce excessive screen exposure. Colambo (2022) emphasized that children are more likely to develop responsible screen habits when adults consistently demonstrate appropriate screen use and actively regulate their own digital behavior. Similarly, Schoeppe et al. (2016) highlighted the strong influence of parental modeling on children's screen time behaviors, showing that children are more likely to mirror the

lifestyle habits they observe at home. The study indicates that when parents actively engage in physical activity and limit their own recreational screen use, children tend to exhibit lower screen time and more balanced activity patterns.

Enduring the Behavioral, Physical, and Developmental Toll

As more people commonly use screens every day, there are an increasing number of concerns about how this will impact a child's behavior or develop them overall as an individual over time. Associations between excessive screen time and low physical activity, poor sleep patterns, trouble paying attention, struggles with social interaction, and challenges with learning. To support children's healthy development and wellness in a technology-based world successfully, parents, educators, and health professionals need to understand the behavioral, physical, and developmental effects of excessive screen usage.

The result is paralleled by the findings of Madigan et al. (2020), as excessive digital device use among young children tends to have negative effects. Parents need to be conscious of the outcome of excessive screen use on their children's development and provide parents with strategies to create a balanced approach for managing screen time. Additionally, Nagata et al. (2022) found that adolescents spending long hours on screens are at risk of experiencing a wide variety of behavioral and physical health issues, such as sleep problems, anxiety, and reduced levels of physical activity. Screen time can interfere with regular daily routines that are an important part of staying physically active and maintaining good emotional health.

Excessive exposure to digital media can have detrimental effects on children's emotional regulation, academic performance, and social growth. Children who use digital devices excessively may struggle with regulating their emotions successfully, have trouble concentrating on school-related tasks, and have fewer opportunities for meaningful social interactions (Gentile et al., 2020). Similarly, Panjeti-Madan and Ranganathan (2023) reported that excessive screen time can affect children's cognitive, language, physical, social, and emotional development, highlighting the broad challenges associated with prolonged digital exposure. In regulating elementary-aged children, parents often observe difficulties such as reduced physical activity, behavioral changes, attention problems, and weakened social interactions linked to excessive screen use.

The result is also aligned with the study of Liu et al. (2022), who found that parents often face the challenge of addressing the negative effects of prolonged screen exposure while promoting healthy growth and development. Excessive screen media use among children and adolescents is associated with a range of physical, cognitive, and emotional or behavioral concerns. In like manner, Muppalla et al. (2023) emphasized that parents often encounter challenges in managing screen use while addressing its negative consequences on their children's daily functioning and growth. Hartshorne et al. (2021) suggested that parents experiencing family pressures may find it more difficult to manage screen use and address its effects on children's behavior, physical activity, and emotional well-being.

Negotiating the Normalized Screen-use Within Home Life

Screens are now a common way for children to learn, connect, and play because of their extensive use in everyday life. With the increase in children's reliance on technology has come a need for many parents to adapt the way they manage screen time to try to create a balance between the good and bad effects of children using screens. As parents adjust to normalized screen use, this adjustment will include changes in how parents write rules, develop regulations, and form attitudes that control their children's exposure to digital devices in a technologically driven society.

Aligned with the essential theme that emerged in the first research question, Lunkenheimer et al. (2023) stated that when parents use self-regulating practices and establish consistent guidelines regarding screen usage, it encourages children to form moderate and appropriate screen habits. Parental adaptation to normalized screen usage requires more than simply monitoring children's screen time; it also requires that parents demonstrate positive digital usage, create routine structure, and promote thoughtful technology usage within the family. In like manner, Arundell et al. (2020) stated that parents are critical to shaping a child's screen time habits. The parent behavior, family routines, and having access to technology all affect children's media use. Parents have

also adapted their parenting practices to help manage the increasing normalization of screen time within families through developing rules, limiting screen time when possible, and guiding educational versus recreational screen time.

This is further supported by Duckert and Barkhuus (2021), who emphasized that screen use has become a normalized part of everyday family life, requiring parents to continuously negotiate when, where, and how digital technologies should be used at home. As parents develop flexible rules and adapt their strategies to fit daily routines and children's changing needs. Their experiences suggest that effective screen-time management is an ongoing process of negotiation that promotes healthier digital habits while maintaining positive family relationships. Additionally, Linder et al. (2020) mentioned that family stress can negatively impact how effectively parents manage children's use of screens and technology at home. The ways that parents adapt to create a sense of normality around screen time for their children are directly related to the emotional and situational challenges that families experience today.

The result is also strengthened by the study of Mukherjee (2021), who highlighted that children's screen use within the home is shaped by ongoing negotiations between parents, children, and other family members across generations. As screen technologies have become embedded in everyday family interactions, requiring flexible and collaborative approaches to regulation. In addition, Jeffery (2021) explained that as screens become a routine part of learning, communication, and recreation, parents are challenged to negotiate appropriate boundaries while supporting their children's social and technological growth. Families adapt their parenting practices to integrate technology without compromising children's well-being and family relationships. The study suggests that thoughtful and flexible parental guidance is essential in fostering healthy digital habits within the modern home environment.

A. Stories of Setbacks and Successes of Parents in Setting and Enforcing Screen Limits

The data analysis revealed five essential themes that show the setbacks and successes of parents in setting and enforcing screen limits for their children at home. These themes include a.) parental enforcement of discipline and family rules; b.) difficulties in applying consistent screen time enforcement; c.) holistic well-being development through reduced screen dependence; d.) positive behavioral growth through consistent screen limit enforcement; and e.) resistance and behavioral challenges in screen time regulation.

Table 2. Essential Themes and Core Ideas on the Stories of Setbacks and Successes of Parents in Setting and Enforcing Screen Limits

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Parental Enforcement of Discipline and Family Rules	• parents required chores and responsibilities before allowing screen time • parents implemented clear rules, punishments, and consequences • parents emphasized communication and explanation while disciplining children • parents taught children emotional control and self-discipline • parents physically limited access to gadgets • parents balanced strictness with guidance and care

Difficulties in Applying Consistent Screen Time Enforcement	• parents struggled because co-parents and family members became lenient • parents found it difficult to monitor children because of work and busy schedules • parents admitted to becoming inconsistent in implementing the rules • parents experienced guilt and emotional stress in disciplining children
Holistic Well-Being Development Through Reduced Screen Dependence	• parents experienced improvement in the academic performance of their children • parents witnessed the emergence of healthier sleeping and eating practices among their children. • parents recognized their children's growing awareness of the harmful effects of excessive screen time • parents observed reduced dependence on gadgets and increased interest in offline activities among children
Positive Behavioral Growth Through Consistent Screen Limit Enforcement	• parents felt their children were becoming more responsible and obedient • parents observed development in initiative and independence in doing household tasks with their children • parents perceived a decline in their children's irritable and aggressive behaviors, accompanied by increased calmness • parents witnessed improvements in their children's social participation and relationships with family and peers
Resistance and Behavioral Challenges in Screen Time Regulation	• parents experienced children's aggressive and resistant behavior • parents encountered challenges in regulating screen use • parents had difficulty in screen regulation due to children's excessive focus on cellphones and delayed compliance with instructions

Parental Enforcement of Discipline and Family Rules

Many children are now using smartphones, tablets, and other digital devices, so parents must create clear rules about when they can use these devices and how long they may use them as they grow up. Developing structured family rules around time limits, creating a screen-free schedule, and supervising their online activity will help develop responsible digital habits and balanced everyday routines for children. In addition to establishing discipline in their homes, families should also work to establish open lines of communication and provide guidance to each other to help promote healthier screen behaviors that help children prosper emotionally, socially, academically, and physically.

The result is aligned with the study of Coyne et al. (2021), who stated that parents who have structured parenting techniques are more likely to instill good digital habits in their child through consistently implemented limit,

routine, and expectation-based rules for using screens. Parents use these techniques to set time, monitor digital activity levels, and help the child find alternate activities to use instead of electronic media. Additionally, Moreno et al. (2020) mentioned that household rules and parental guidance are essential components of how children and teens use technology safely and responsibly. Household rules also help develop responsible online behaviors by creating clear expectations of acceptable behavior, offering monitoring of current behaviors, and allowing for open communication with all family members.

The result is supported by the findings of Ito et al. (2020), which explained that when parents give precise guidance to their children and watch over their digital actions, they can demonstrate that there are ways for kids to develop good habits surrounding their own use of technology. In like manner, D'Angelo and Moreno (2019) highlighted that parental enforcement of screen time rules is often grounded in clear household discipline, such as restricting device use during shared family activities like meals. Their findings suggest that consistent rule-setting, particularly in structured family settings, helps establish boundaries that reduce excessive or inappropriate screen use among adolescents.

The finding is strengthened by the study of Fadil et al. (2025), who emphasize that parental enforcement of discipline and family rules plays a central role in regulating children's screen time by establishing clear expectations about when and where devices can be used. Consistent rule-setting, such as prioritizing family interaction over gadget use, helps reduce excessive screen exposure and encourages healthier routines. Similarly, Eyimaya and Irmak (2020) explained that parental enforcement of discipline and family rules significantly influences children's screen time behavior, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic when device use increased due to home confinement. Parents who set clear limits, monitor usage, and maintain consistent rules are more likely to reduce excessive screen exposure among children.

Difficulties in Applying Consistent Screen Time Enforcement

Parents often find it hard to stick to their plan for managing device time with their children as a result of a technology-driven society that we all live in today, and the distractions of everyday life. Despite parents having set times and limits as well as rules set up for their kids to use their devices, sometimes life happens, which makes it difficult for parents to implement the plan they developed to help their children. Children frequently do not cooperate when parents enforce their screen time rules, and parents experience high levels of stress. Parents are busy, and most importantly, children are increasingly reliant on technology to learn or to be entertained.

The result is paralleled by the findings of Radesky et al. (2020), which stated that many parents find it difficult to consistently enforce screen time rules because they are under daily stress, have to manage their jobs, and children resist having limits imposed on their use of digital devices. At times, parents depend upon digital devices to be a source of entertainment for their children while they work or take care of the many household responsibilities that come with being a parent. Additionally, parental stress and family strain can lead to inconsistent enforcement of children's screen time rules in the home. Parents who are stressed by work, household responsibilities, and emotional issues may not be able to enforce and monitor screen time limits regularly. During times of stress, parents may allow children to use devices beyond the limit to help manage their child's behavior or to create temporary peace in the home (Linder et al., 2020).

This is also aligned with the idea of Gentile et al. (2020), who found that excessive use of media by children can lead to increased emotional and behavioral problems for these children, leading to greater difficulty for parents in regulating the child's use of screens. Those children who spend extended periods of time using various digital devices may exhibit emotional dysregulation, poor attention and behavior, and therefore demonstrate resistance to screen limits when applicable. Additionally, Hawk et al. (2023) found that parents often experience difficulty maintaining consistent screen time rules, especially when using youth-focused restrictions that do not involve the whole family. The study shows that children's impulsivity and social media-related difficulties can intensify resistance, making enforcement of limits more challenging.

The result is supported by the findings of Wong et al. (2020), who found that increased parental device engagement can weaken parent-child interaction, making it harder to monitor and regulate children's screen exposure effectively. As a result, inconsistent enforcement and frequent resistance from children emerge,

especially in households where digital distractions and psychosocial stressors are more prevalent. In addition, Ajayi et al. (2025) highlighted that parents often struggle to maintain consistent screen time rules due to competing demands and the increasing integration of digital devices into daily family routines. Resistance from children is common when screen limits are enforced, especially when boundaries are not clearly structured or consistently applied across caregivers.

Holistic Well-Being Development Through Reduced Screen Dependence

Making sure that kids use their screens less often is essential for improving their education, food habits, and emotional well-being in order to help them develop in all aspects of life. Because of this, limiting the number of hours a child has access to a screen can generate better academic behavior, including the way that they complete schoolwork or study, complete homework, build new educational skills, and help develop healthy habits. In addition, limiting the amount of screen time each day will increase the amount of time they spend doing physical activity or participating in organized activities, which also positively contributes to a child's health.

The result is paralleled by the findings of Li et al. (2025), which provide a supporting example of how excessive use of screens by children can reduce their academic performance in the foundational subject areas of reading and mathematics. By limiting screen time, you can improve your child's quality of sleep and support their healthy physical development as a young child. When children have less screen time, they will also generally get longer and better-quality sleep as well as more physical activity during the day and generally grow at healthy rates (Janssen et al., 2020). Further, Moreno et al. (2020) stated that healthy screen time limits and digital routines create a healthy culture of emotional and mental wellness in youth.

This is also aligned with the idea of Jones et al. (2021), which highlighted that structural behavior methods and support for parents allow their children to develop healthy habits of using media as well as being self-disciplined when using technology. When parents model responsible screen use and set clear rules for their children, this encourages the child to do likewise in their own home. The continuing actions of and disciplinary actions by the parents provide additional strength to screening regulation techniques (Arundell et al., 2020). In connection, Hutton et al. (2020) stated that using an active parental mediation approach to help children create better habits regarding their use of screens has created more positive cognitive development and outcomes for children.

The finding is further supported by Panjeti-Madan and Ranganathan (2023), who emphasized that limiting children's screen time can support improvements in academic performance by enhancing attention, language development, and learning opportunities. Reduced screen exposure promotes better physical health through increased physical activity, healthier sleep patterns, and lower risks of sedentary-related problems. Additionally, Mączyńska et al. (2025) emphasized that limiting young children's screen use can support academic development by promoting better attention, language acquisition, and opportunities for active learning. Reduced screen exposure contributes to improved physical health through healthier sleep patterns, increased physical activity, and lower risks associated with sedentary behavior.

Positive Behavioral Growth Through Consistent Screen Limit Enforcement

Managing how often children can use screens improves their psychological and behavioral development. Children who have limits set on their use of screens and who have had support in developing healthy digital habits typically improve in emotional regulation, communication, and social relationships. Managing children's screen time promotes their participation in physical activities, enhances positive family relationships, improves their academics, and increases their face-to-face relationships with others. A child who has developed the ability to use technology responsibly will continue to do so.

The result is paralleled by the findings of Wartella et al. (2021), which mentioned that the creation of structured family screen time routines helps improve children's behavioral/social outcomes. Children are more likely to develop self-discipline, responsible digital habits, and positive social behaviors when their families have regular routines and established rules about how to use screens. In addition, children with less and more structured screen time experienced better behavior results compared to children who had more unstructured screen time. Children with structured screen time can learn the skills necessary for regulating their emotions and developing socially

appropriate behaviors as they grow up and mature (Xiao et al., 2025). In like manner, Madigan et al. (2020) mentioned that due to regulated screen time, children are able to have improved communication, cognitive, and developmental outcomes.

This is also aligned with the idea of Schmidt-Persson et al. (2024), who reported that lower screen media use among children and adolescents is associated with better mental health outcomes, including improved emotional regulation and reduced behavioral difficulties. When screen time is regulated, children tend to show more positive social engagement and stronger peer and family interactions. Additionally, Guerrero et al. (2019) explained that reduced screen time is associated with fewer behavioral problems in children, largely because better sleep duration acts as a key pathway linking screen use and behavior. When screen exposure is regulated, children tend to experience improved sleep quality and duration, which contributes to better emotional regulation and reduced externalizing behaviors.

Further, the result is in accordance with the idea of Lee et al. (2024), who highlighted that reducing children's screen exposure is consistently associated with improved self-regulation skills, including better emotional control and stronger attention management. When screen use is regulated, children are more likely to exhibit positive behavioral changes, such as reduced impulsivity and improved ability to follow routines. Similarly, Mougharbel and Goldfield (2020) explained that when screen use is reduced or better regulated, children are more likely to experience improvements in mood, attention, and behavioral control. These changes contribute to healthier social functioning and more adaptive behavioral patterns across daily activities.

Resistance and Behavioral Challenges in Screen Time Regulation

Parents often encounter difficulties establishing limits on children's screen usage because of the reluctance of children accustomed to regular screen usage. Children who use screens often as a primary source of entertainment through video games, television shows, or phone calls with family members may experience emotional distress when parents try to establish rules regarding how much they are allowed to use screens by restricting access to devices. With these difficulties presented by their children, many parents have difficulty enforcing rules regarding establishing limit for screen time and remaining connected to their children.

Aligned with the essential theme that emerged in the second research question, Jusienė et al. (2025) explained that children with higher screen exposure are more likely to exhibit resistance and behavioral difficulties during attempts at screen time regulation, particularly when emotional regulation skills are weak. In like manner, Axelsson et al. (2025) found that preschoolers' screen time is closely linked to caregiver perceptions of behavior, particularly when children display resistance during screen time regulation. The study highlights that increased screen exposure is often associated with behavioral challenges such as irritability, emotional outbursts, and noncompliance when screen limits are enforced.

The result is strengthened by the study of Livingstone et al. (2021), which found that digital device conflicts frequently occur as a result of parents placing limits on screen time but failing to use collaborative communication methods when doing so. In addition, Orben et al. (2020) stated that many adolescents regularly utilize digital media in their daily routine. Any stringent guidelines related to the amount of time allowed on an electronic device may be perceived negatively by adolescent youth. Caregiver companionship during screen time serves as a protective factor that buffers potential behavior problems and helps manage resistance during screen time regulation (Wu et al., 2023).

This is further supported by Neville et al. (2021), who found that higher screen exposure can contribute to increased behavioral problems such as aggression, anxiety, and emotional dysregulation, which in turn may lead to further screen use as a coping mechanism. This cycle often creates resistance during screen time regulation, as children with existing behavioral difficulties tend to struggle more with limits and transitions away from screens. Similarly, Guerrero et al. (2019) found that higher screen time in children is associated with increased behavioral problems. The study suggests that insufficient sleep acts as a key mediator, worsening emotional regulation and increasing irritability, which can contribute to resistance during screen time limits. As a result, children who experience more screen exposure and poorer sleep tend to show greater difficulty complying with screen time regulation and transitioning away from devices.

B. Parents' Strategies in Overcoming Challenges in Regulating Elementary Children's Screen Time at Home

The data analysis revealed four essential themes that show how parents manage stress, overcome challenges, and maintain discipline, balance, and healthy screen habits. These highlight the wide-ranging strategies that parents employ to effectively regulate screen time at home. These themes include a.) strengthening family interaction; b.) implementing consistency in parental discipline; c.) promoting communication and support systems; and d.) understanding behavioral and developmental growth of children.

Table 3. Essential Themes and Core Ideas on Parents' Strategies in Overcoming Challenges in Regulating Elementary Children's Screen Time at Home

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Strengthening Family Interaction	• redirecting children's attention through family bonding activities • acting as playmates and companions of their children • using communication and interaction to maintain a connection with children • allowing outdoor activities to lessen children's temptation to use gadgets • introducing educational and creative activities to replace gadget use
Implementing Consistency in Parental Discipline	• staying consistent in disciplining their children despite experiencing emotional pain • remaining calm before addressing children's behavior • becoming emotionally firm and consistent • addressing challenges by reflecting on their role and responsibility as caregivers
Promoting Communication and Support Systems	• using online information and videos to educate children about gadget effects • becoming more aware and cautious due to negative online influences and risks • seeking advice and emotional support from churchmates and fellow parents • aligning home rules with school policies and discipline systems
Understanding Behavioral and Developmental Growth of Children	• gaining confidence after observing positive behavioral changes in children • becoming confident as they observe improved sleeping routines in children • feeling motivated as they observe their children's maturity, discipline, and responsibility • developing motivation to continue screen regulation because of academic and behavioral success

Strengthening Family Interaction

To help parents manage their children's use of electronic devices, there are several key strategies that parents can implement. There are many families whose children excessively use electronic devices, resulting in a significant decrease in communication and interaction between parents and children, making it increasingly

difficult for a parent to monitor their child's electronic device use. As a result, by parents engaging in mutual activities with their child, parents can give their child positive alternatives to defiantly utilizing electronic devices, while also creating strong emotional bonds within the family unit.

The result is aligned with the findings of Domoff et al. (2020), who found that developing strong bonds between parents and children, along with engaging families in meaningful ways, is essential for limiting children's problematic media use. In addition, children who experience a quality and engaged family through open communication and joint activities, as well as emotionally supportive interactions, tend to rely less on screens for entertainment and socialization (Nevski & Siibak, 2020). Further, Tang et al. (2021) mentioned that children's healthy habits related to screen use are positively associated with family connection through family bonding together, having meaningful conversations, and participating in recreational events.

This is further supported by Madigan et al. (2020) which stated that developing routine schedules and predictable patterns in their children's lives assists parents in guiding their children toward productive and healthy activities, while limiting unnecessary screen use. Structured daily routines provide children with self-discipline and improve their ability to follow rules around screen time. Similarly, McArthur et al. (2022) mentioned that establishing regular family routines and engaging children in non-screen activities can promote healthier digital habits. Family routines provided children with an opportunity to create a healthy balance in their daily activities, which helped decrease their reliance on digital devices as sources of entertainment.

The result is strengthened by the study of Radesky et al. (2020), which explained that by swapping out screen-based activities, imaginative play, and playing outside with parents, children will be able to develop a healthy relationship with their surroundings. These activities provide opportunities for children to develop their imagination, enhance their ability to communicate with others, form friendships, and lessen the time they need to be entertained by electronic devices. In like manner, Nwankwo et al. (2019) found that limiting excessive screen time creates more opportunities for meaningful parent-child interactions and strengthens family relationships. Active parental involvement and balanced media use can promote stronger family bonds and healthier social development in children.

Implementing Consistency in Parental Discipline

Parents today face a greater challenge than ever before in managing screen time for their children because of the digital age we live in. Due to the frequent use of technology to entertain, educate, and communicate with their children, parents have an even greater responsibility to come up with rules for screen time use. While developing screen time limits, parents need to introduce guidelines for themselves so they can use their emotional regulation skills to deal with the many emotional responses that arise when children do not follow the rules or develop an emotional attachment to the technology.

Aligned with the essential theme that emerged in the third research question, Ochoa & Reich (2020) stated that the way parents feel about, think about, and believe in technology greatly influences their ability to create and impose limits on their child's screen time. Those parents who are emotionally aware and confident in their ability to manage digital media were also much more likely to have established fair and effective rules when it came to their child's screen time. Moreover, Elias and Sulkin (2021) emphasized that since parental self-control and emotional response are critical for setting consistent screen-time limits for young kids, those parents who were calm, patient, and loving while disciplining their children were the most successful in helping them have less excessive screen exposure than parents who responded harshly or with inconsistent rules.

The finding is strengthened by the study of Høy et al. (2026), who found that remaining calm, setting consistent boundaries, and resisting emotional reactions helped parents enforce screen time rules more effectively despite children's resistance. Similarly, parental emotional regulation and coping skills are important components of children's screen habits and behavior. Parents who can keep a cool head and remain self-controlled during conflicts with each other regarding device usage tend to be more successful at establishing healthy, consistent practices for screen time (Korhonen et al., 2021). It is also aligned with Milford et al. (2024), which emphasized that strengthening parents' confidence and emotional regulation can improve the effective implementation of screen time boundaries and support children's overall well-being.

Further, the result is in accordance with the findings of Przybylski and Weinstein (2019), who found that moderate and balanced screen use, supported by appropriate parental guidance, is associated with better psychological well-being among young children than either excessive use or overly restrictive limits. Parents who exercise emotional self-control and implement screen time rules consistently can create a healthier digital environment without relying on harsh or reactive parenting practices. Additionally, Konok et al. (2024) found that parental emotional coping and self-control, including resisting the immediate use of screens to calm children, support healthier emotional and behavioral regulation. These findings highlight the importance of consistent and mindful screen time practices, as parents' ability to manage their own emotions can foster children's long-term self-control and resilience.

Promoting Communication and Support Systems

Many parents are struggling to find the right balance between the positive and negative ramifications associated with their child being exposed to digital content, such as the internet and video games, for learning and leisure. The increased ability for parents to make educated decisions around how much time their children spend in front of screens will help parents create good digital habits for their children, because they have more knowledge about what can happen to a child's brain if they spend excessive time on screens. The more parents hear supportive comments from family, school staff, and their social support system, the more likely they are to feel confident and be consistent with their rules for their children's screen time.

The result is aligned with the study of Ochoa and Reich (2020), who informed that knowledge about healthy media practices provided parents with the tools necessary to make informed decisions regarding their children's digital activities and to promote responsible technology use at home. Additionally, McArthur et al. (2022) emphasized that developing healthy media habits in children and managing their digital behaviors can be greatly influenced by parental knowledge of recommended media use and access to parenting advice. Additionally, family or emotional support systems, such as other relatives, parent groups, and professionals, provided emotional support and made the parent feel more secure and confident about implementing their screen time guidelines (Korhonen et al., 2021).

The result is paralleled by the findings of Ponti (2023), who emphasized that strong communication and consistent family support systems can foster children's healthy development while reducing the negative effects of excessive screen time. Families engage in shared activities, discuss digital media use, and provide guidance that encourages learning and social connection rather than passive screen consumption. It is aligned with Vezenkov et al. (2026), who suggest that collaborative support and positive family interactions can strengthen children's resilience and promote healthier relationships with digital media. The study emphasized that parents, educators, and healthcare professionals should work together to foster open dialogue, establish healthy digital habits, and provide consistent guidance for children.

Further, the result is in accordance with the findings of Nuvoli et al. (2025), who emphasized that effective management of children's digital screen exposure requires strong communication between parents, healthcare providers, and educators to ensure consistent and evidence-based guidance. Additionally, Gupta et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of coordinated support systems that help families understand digital wellness practices and apply age-appropriate screen time limits in daily life. It is aligned with the study of Wiederhold (2020), which highlighted that strong communication and structured family support systems help reduce the negative effects of excessive screen use during crisis situations.

Understanding Behavioral and Developmental Growth of Children

When parents notice the positive changes in their children due to limiting screen time, they are better able to manage the stress and challenges that come with limiting their child's access to devices. By seeing their children improve in many ways through limiting screen time, parents become more motivated and confident about keeping boundaries on screen use with their kids. This recognition also fosters a closer relationship between the parent and child by helping each other feel accomplished and supported by the family unit.

The finding is strengthened by the study of Lin et al. (2021), which emphasized that parental knowledge and education about how children can adapt psychologically and socially are critical for regulating how much time children spend using screens. Similarly, Kawas et al. (2021) mentioned that by realizing the positive outcomes of using screens for their child, parents were able to develop a better balance of screen time with other meaningful experiences, and subsequently, were able to resolve conflict over gadgets, promote positive growth in their child's behavior, and strengthen their family relationships. In connection, parents who feel confident and knowledgeable about managing their kids can also better oversee children's development towards healthier, more balanced use of media and entertainment (Niklas et al., 2020).

The result is aligned with the findings of Qu et al. (2023), who found that excessive digital exposure can interfere with key developmental processes, particularly in early childhood when self-regulation and social skills are rapidly forming. These findings emphasize the importance of balanced screen use and active parental guidance to support healthier behavioral and developmental growth in children. In addition, Kar et al. (2025) explained that excessive screen exposure can disrupt emotional regulation, attention span, and social skill development, particularly during early childhood. The findings emphasize that informed parental monitoring based on developmental needs can support healthier screen habits and promote balanced cognitive and behavioral growth in children.

This finding is further supported by Jannesar et al. (2023) who explained that understanding children's behavioral and brain development is essential for setting appropriate screen time limits that support healthy growth. It emphasized that parents and caregivers should regulate screen time based on developmental needs to promote balanced behavioral and cognitive growth in children. In addition, Oparcik et al. (2025) noted that understanding children's behavioral and developmental growth is essential for guiding appropriate screen time regulation and preventing negative neurodevelopmental outcomes. The study highlights that excessive screen use is associated with emotional dysregulation, behavioral difficulties, and mental health challenges, particularly during critical stages of childhood development.

Reflections and Lessons Learned by Parents in Managing Children's Screen Use at Home

Table 4 illustrates the six essential themes that represent the reflective insights, professional learning, and pedagogical wisdom gained by the parents from the experiences of regulating their children's screen time at home, how these parents adapted to the challenges, internalized lessons, and thus improved their strategies, practices, and recognized the effective screen-time management. These themes include a.) importance of consistent discipline and regulation, b.) personal growth and responsible parenting, c.) understanding behavioral and emotional changes in children, d.) effective parenting approaches and strategies learned through experience, e.) valuing the importance of family bonding and giving time to children, and f.) desire to sustain and share effective parenting practices.

Table 4. Essential Themes and Core Ideas on the Reflections and Lessons Learned by Parents in Managing Children's Screen Use at Home

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Importance of Consistent Discipline and Regulation	- realizing the need for implementing rules for child development - learning that consistency in rules is important despite children's emotions - reflecting that firm discipline was necessary for children's welfare - realizing that unmanaged screen use negatively affects behavior

Personal Growth and Responsible Parenting	• on becoming more responsible and disciplined adults • realizing that parenting requires self-reflection and accountability • becoming more confident in our role as parents after seeing changes in children • learning that parental behavior influences children's conduct
Understanding Behavioral and Emotional Changes in Children	• growth in children's respect and affection • development of better discipline and gentler behavior • children become more active and productive • children's growth toward independence and self-control
Effective Parenting Approaches and Strategies Learned Through Experience	• calm explanations and affection foster better responses in children • affection and emotional connection improve compliance • realizing the value of redirecting children toward other enjoyable activities • acknowledging the importance of routines and structured limits
Valuing the Importance of Family Bonding and Giving Time to Children	• realizing the importance of giving time and attention to children • learning that active parental engagement cannot be replaced by gadgets • recognizing the importance of guiding children while they are still young • understanding the role of hobbies and interests in reducing screen dependence
Desire to Sustain and Share Effective Parenting Practices	• striving to sustain the strategies that produced positive outcomes • becoming motivated to share their experiences with other parents • aiming to prepare children for a better future through regulation • emphasizing the importance of monitoring and supervision

Importance of Consistent Discipline and Regulation

As gadget usage and activities done online by children continue to increase, parents are beginning to recognize how crucial it is for them to set definite rules for how gadgets can be used, how much time their children spend using them, and how much balance between technology and other activities of the day can be achieved. Many parents are beginning to understand through their first-hand experiences that providing consistent regulation of the amount of time their child spends on screens is beneficial because it prevents them from becoming overexposed to screens and allows them to develop developmentally, socially, and emotionally.

Aligned with the essential theme that emerged in the fourth research question, the importance of consistent parent management of their child's screen time is emphasized by Hayes et al. (2025), which shows that when parents apply stable and defined rules for screen time, children typically use screens less and develop self-regulation. In like manner, when caregivers provide children with predictable responses and regular daily schedules, children will generally develop healthier habits and healthier screen use patterns (Ochoa et al., 2020). In addition,

Rajagopal et al. (2026) highlighted that structured and consistent parenting approaches are effective for managing children's screen use. Consistent guidelines help to reduce confusion and to reinforce expectations from children.

The result is supported by the findings of Fang et al. (2019), which emphasized that higher screen time is associated with negative health outcomes such as overweight and obesity, highlighting the need for firm parental control and monitoring. By consistently enforcing screen limits, parents can promote healthier behavioral habits, improve physical well-being, and support balanced development in children. Similarly, Moreno et al. (2024) emphasized that the family media plan supports families in setting clear, predictable rules that guide children's media use while reducing conflicts and overuse. By maintaining consistent limits and shared expectations, parents can promote self-regulation, strengthen family communication, and reduce the risk of problematic screen behaviors in children.

Furthermore, the result is in accordance with the findings of Choi et al. (2024), which highlighted that higher screen time during the COVID-19 pandemic was linked to poorer sleep patterns, increased psychological distress, and reduced cognitive performance in school-aged children. By maintaining firm and consistent screen rules, parents can protect children's overall well-being and support healthier developmental outcomes across physical, emotional, and cognitive domains. Additionally, Puzio et al. (2022) emphasize that without consistent parental guidance, children are more likely to engage in excessive or low-quality screen activities. When applying firm and predictable rules, parents can promote intentional media use, support better developmental outcomes, and reduce potential negative effects of unregulated screen exposure.

Personal Growth and Responsible Parenting

Many parents strive to establish healthy habits for their kids regarding technology use through experience and challenge in dealing with the challenges of controlling their children's use of screens. Many of these parents see challenges as opportunities to learn, develop their discipline skills, and get to know their children better, which eventually affects how they parent, communicate with their children, and develop and implement rules for technology use in their homes. By developing these skills through parenting experiences, they develop a sense of obligation to support their children in being responsible adults by establishing healthy habits, establishing positive lifestyles, and developing constructive behaviors in a digital world.

The result is aligned with the study of Coyne et al. (2021), who stated that parental awareness of the need for reflective and intentional child-rearing practices has been enhanced as a result of increased digital exposure. Parents are now aware of their obligations as parents to ensure children have access to appropriate content, to provide children with balanced amounts of screen time, and to communicate with their children when discussing the use of technology and the internet. Further, parents realized that they needed to be good role models for their children and became more deliberate about establishing and enforcing consistent rules for technology use, developing healthy digital habits, and balancing family time with learning activities and the use of screens through self-evaluation of their parenting approach and daily technology use (Nevski & Siibak, 2022).

The finding is strengthened by the study of Radesky et al. (2020), which emphasized that by being mindful of their own screen usage and creating boundaries for the use of screens by children, they noted that being able to develop more deliberate usage of screens with their children helped develop healthier habits and more positive family interactions. In addition, Nair (2025) emphasized that effective screen regulation requires parents to model self-control, set clear boundaries, and guide children toward balanced digital habits. Through this process, parents not only support healthier child development but also strengthen their own capacity for responsible and reflective parenting in a technology-driven environment.

This is further supported by the findings of the American Academy of Pediatrics (2021), which emphasized that personal growth and responsible parenting are essential in guiding children toward healthy and balanced media use. It highlights that parents must continuously reflect on their own media habits while actively modeling appropriate screen behaviors and setting consistent boundaries for their children. Similarly, Nudin et al. (2024) emphasized that parents and families play a central role in shaping children's digital behavior by modeling discipline, setting boundaries, and providing consistent guidance in educational and recreational media use.

Understanding Behavioral and Emotional Changes in Children

When parents consider how regulating their children's screen time has affected their behaviors and feelings, they are able to identify many positive changes and are therefore more likely to continue doing this type of parenting. Parents also report having noticed a positive change in their children's ability to communicate, regulate emotions, display appropriate social behaviors, and maintain daily routines because screen usage was regulated. Since parents have observed these positive effects from enforcing appropriate screen time regulations, they are likely to take a more active role in enforcing responsible screen time regulations and supporting their children in their digital activities.

The result is paralleled by the findings of Cerniglia et al. (2021), which noted that by regulating the amount of time that children spend using screens, parents can have a significant positive effect on how well children self-regulate their emotions and behavior. In addition, Attai et al. (2020) emphasized that in order for the house to have a positive feel, having a structured approach from parents to help manage their kids' screen time is an essential part of that process. Furthermore, Dy et al. (2023) observed that limiting children's excessive exposure to screens helps develop better, more positive behaviors and developmental outcomes.

The result is also aligned with the study of Prabhakar et al. (2023), which found that higher screen exposure is associated with increased emotional difficulties and behavioral issues. These findings highlight the need for consistent parental monitoring and structured screen limits to support healthier emotional development and more stable behavioral outcomes in children. Moreover, Dauhan et al. (2025) emphasized that understanding behavioral and emotional changes in children is essential in guiding effective screen regulation because it helps parents recognize how screen exposure influences children's mood, behavior, and social interactions.

Further, the result is in accordance with the findings of Liu et al. (2021), who found that higher early childhood screen time is associated with increased emotional and behavioral problems at age four, highlighting its potential long-term developmental risks. It emphasized the importance of parents consistently monitoring and limiting screen use to support healthier emotional regulation, behavior, and overall child development. In addition, Cartanyà-Hueso et al. (2021) found that higher leisure screen time is associated with increased emotional and behavioral problems among school-aged children. The findings emphasized the need for consistent monitoring and regulation of screen time to support healthier emotional development, improved behavior, and overall child well-being.

Effective Parenting Approaches and Strategies Learned Through Experience

Through their experiences regulating their kids' screen time, many families have developed effective techniques for raising healthy children and fostering positive family connections. Some parents have discovered that establishing rules about usage, balancing screen time with different kinds of activity, and being actively engaged in their children's online activities will help to build positive relationships with their children. Those experiences have aided parents in understanding the need for patience, communication, and consistency in regulating the amount of time their kids spend on screens to encourage positive behaviors and emotional well-being.

The result is aligned with the study of Chen et al. (2020), which highlighted that by drawing on their own parenting experiences and building confidence in managing their children's media consumption, parents can create a successful regimen for managing screen time. Moreover, Mukherjee (2021) explained that developing practical screen-time regulation strategies among parents is largely an ongoing process that occurs through interactions with their children as well as daily family experiences. In like manner, Cao et al. (2024) mentioned that when parents had conversations with their children about both the positive and negative aspects of technology, it helped the children learn to use technology responsibly and increase their level of awareness regarding online safety.

Further, the result is in accordance with the findings of Raj et al. (2020), which suggested that successful parenting strategies are often strengthened through experience, as parents adapt their approaches to their children's needs and family routines. These learned practices help create a balanced home environment that promotes healthy child development while reducing excessive screen use. Additionally, Chong et al. (2023)

found that parents developed effective screen time regulation strategies through their everyday experiences of managing children's media use and responding to behavioral challenges. Parents learned that setting consistent boundaries, establishing routines, modeling healthy screen habits, and encouraging alternative activities were practical approaches for reducing excessive screen exposure.

The finding is also strengthened by the study of Ebrahim et al. (2025), which highlighted that flexible and experience-based parenting approaches help families regulate screen time while supporting children's development and individual preferences. In addition, Permana et al. (2024) emphasized that effective parenting approaches for managing children's screen time are developed through consistent parent-child communication and shared family experiences in the digital era. Parents learned that setting clear expectations, engaging in open discussions about technology use, and strengthening emotional bonds helped children develop healthier screen habits.

Valuing the Importance of Family Bonding and Giving Time to Children

Parents have learned from their experience regulating their children's screen time to promote family connections and spending quality time together. By limiting excessive gadget use, many parents have noticed a decrease in quality time spent with family members and more intentional opportunities for family communication, activity, and emotional connection. These reflections gave parents a deeper appreciation for the way time and attention can strengthen relationships and promote positive behavior while decreasing the amount of support they provide to their children for the use of screens.

The result is strengthened by the findings of Kawas et al. (2021), who stated that parents were able to stay connected to their children's digital world through using guided digital experiences, using quality family time, and developing an emotional connection within the family. Additionally, parents found that by creating traditions and bonding time, families reduced their children's dependence on technology (Barroso et al., 2020). Similarly, Ochoa & Reich (2020) mentioned that parents are aware that good parent-child relationships can be formed when there is an appropriate balance of screen time for both children and parents. If parents spend too much time on their devices, there are fewer opportunities for quality time as a family, meaningful conversations between parents and children, and bonding and emotional attachment within the family.

The result is also aligned with the study of Amidi et al. (2023), which highlighted that engaging children in enjoyable family activities after screen time can strengthen parent-child relationships while reducing reliance on digital media. The study suggests that spending intentional time together through shared play and interactive experiences provides meaningful alternatives to prolonged screen use and encourages healthier routines. Similarly, Tsai (2023) found that positive parent-child interactions and spending quality time together were associated with lower levels of children's screen use. It suggests that active parental involvement and meaningful family engagement provide opportunities for children to participate in non-screen activities, reducing their dependence on digital devices.

The finding is further supported by Milford et al. (2024), who found that parents with greater confidence in their parenting abilities were more likely to engage in positive interactions and actively manage their children's screen use. The review suggests that spending quality time with children and participating in shared family activities can strengthen parent-child relationships while providing meaningful alternatives to screen-based entertainment. Also, Rai et al. (2022) suggested that spending quality time with children and creating opportunities for shared family activities can reduce reliance on screen-based entertainment and encourage healthier behaviors. The findings emphasize that valuing family bonding and active parental involvement play an important role in regulating children's screen time and supporting their overall development.

Desire to Sustain and Share Effective Parenting Practices

Parents who experienced positive results from regulating their children's screen time developed a strong desire to continue and share effective parenting practices with others. They realized that setting clear limits, encouraging family bonding activities, and guiding children toward balanced routines contributed to healthier behavior, improved communication, and stronger relationships at home. Because of these positive outcomes,

parents became more motivated to sustain these practices consistently despite the challenges brought by technology in the digital age. Many also expressed the importance of sharing their experiences, strategies, and lessons learned with fellow parents to help promote responsible gadget use and create a supportive community focused on children's well-being and healthy development.

The finding is aligned with the study of Lammers et al. (2022), who noted that parents became aware of the benefits of setting up a structured way of managing screen time and felt more committed to implementing that type of parenting in their homes regularly. Parents have also developed increased motivation to continue promoting a responsible and balanced approach to technology use within their families and to share their knowledge with others. Furthermore, Thompson and Tschann (2020) emphasized that parents who experienced positive outcomes from strategies such as setting limits, modeling appropriate media use, and creating screen-free routines are more likely to sustain these practices and encourage others to adopt them.

The result is also paralleled by the findings of Neshteruk et al. (2021), which suggested that parents who observe the benefits of their strategies are encouraged to maintain and reinforce effective screen management practices over time. In like manner, Romeu-Fontanillas et al. (2024) highlighted that parents and educators increasingly recognize the importance of sustaining responsible digital screen practices among children and adolescents through consistent guidance and structured routines. Further, Jones et al. (2021) found that when parents observe positive outcomes from these strategies, they become more motivated to sustain and continue applying them in daily family life. These findings also highlight that parents are more likely to share successful practices with others, reinforcing broader adoption of effective approaches to screen time regulation.

Further, the result is in accordance with the findings of Fitzpatrick et al. (2023), who found that parents who successfully met preschool screen time recommendations often used consistent and intentional strategies. It suggests that when parents observe positive outcomes from these approaches, they become more motivated to maintain and refine these practices over time. In addition, Zgambo et al. (2025) suggested that when parents experience positive outcomes from their interventions, they are more likely to continue applying and refining these protective strategies in daily family life. These findings highlight that the desire to sustain and share effective parenting practices is driven by increased confidence in safeguarding children and the perceived benefits of consistent digital regulation.

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