Parenting in the Digital World:

Challenges and Advantages in Contemporary Africa, with Special Focus on North Africa

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1. *Introduction:*

In our contemporary world, we live in a media revolution that brings the whole world together. Despite the differences in beliefs and traditions, all societies are now in front of a new era of digitizing in almost every aspect of our life, which opened a new world for us. The more we try to discover and delve deeper into it, the more we get lost.

This situation posed significant challenges for societies, especially African societies because they are not the producers of this digitation. At the same time, they are not isolated from its dissemination and effects. It is no longer easy to find a solution to this dilemma that is growing day after day, attracting to it all age groups, and robbing the minds of the old before the young. Thus, members of society become more active in the virtual space than in the real one.

Digitation has become an unavoidable part of everyday life, affecting how interactions within society are carried out, how individuals act, how institutions and organizations function, how services are delivered, and how information spreads. (Karim Merhej, 2021). Accordingly, digitalization has transformed our world as never seen before and opened the horizon for tremendous worries and attractive opportunities.

Digital tools have become an irrevocable aspect of people's daily lives. In addition, information and communication technologies (ICT) have also become a part of children's lives and affected their development. There is also an increase in the use of social media and their access rate through mobile technologies (Gür & Türel, 2022).

However, the debate about its impact has grown louder: Is it an advantage to humankind, offering unlimited opportunities for communication and commerce, learning, and free expression? On the other hand, is it a threat to our way of life, undermining the social fabric, even the political order, and threatening our well-being? (UNICEF, 2017)

In the context of family, parenting, and children, any observer finds that children today use these technology tools such as mobile phones, electronic tablets, social networking platforms, and other internet applications with high efficiency and deal with the screen very quickly. However, the

same observer may find that the same children lack many other skills that were part of the children of the previous generations, and today children's physical, personal, moral, and social development may suffer due to excessive exposure to digital technology (Cino et al, 2022).

Therefore, we must address the issue in a way that enables us to diagnose and understand its challenges, advantages, and efforts to make it an opportunity for future generations to preserve its fundamental values and exploit it for the betterment of our families and humanity at large.

In this paper, the author tries to answer three questions:

– What are the main parenting challenges in contemporary Africa?

– What are parents' advantages and challenges concerning technology as a parenting facilitator?

– What policies and programs can support parents and children in bridging the digital gap between them?

2. What are the main parenting challenges in contemporary Africa?

Before talking about the parenting challenges in contemporary Africa, we may need first to realize that Africa is part of the world on the one hand, and it has its situation, cultures, traditions, and status in the scale of development on the other hand. Therefore, we have to recognize two essential aspects of that:

The first is that the world became one village. We, Africans, cannot isolate ourselves from the world, and the developments that occur in the world will affect us in one way or another. Especially in the era of technological development, social media, and the spread of information technology.

Second, Africa has its context, with its own cultures, values, customs, and lifestyles. It also has problems related to the level of economic and social development, the structure of political and social systems, the level of education, and the spread of technology.

In this regard, there are two types of parenting challenges; traditional and those related to the digital era.

2.1. The Traditional Challenges to Parenting in Africa:

Tackling the challenges of digital parenting should not lead us to ignore the fundamental challenges we face in African countries, which may not be the same in other parts of the world. Moreover, the challenges facing parenting in African countries may differ from one country to another, as well as from urban places to rural ones.

We mean, by traditional parenting challenges, the challenges parents may face regardless of the digitation or not. For instant, poverty, malnutrition, changes in educational systems, poor access to quality education, child labor, conflict and war, HIV/AIDS, and access to quality health care. In addition, there is the lack of food, absence of school materials, fees and teachers, lack of medical care, lack of clean drinking water, lack of clothes, lack of money/business, lack of teachers, orphanhood, lack of good houses, risks for teenage girls, sickness of parents, shortage in youth clubs. Moreover, there is a high rate of marital problems. Due to both lack of financial and emotional support, parents often break up, affecting their children's well-being. Drunkenness is another challenge; men especially drink excessively and therefore do not fulfil their responsibilities as fathers. When fathers are drunk, they become aggressive toward their children.

Families living in poverty face increasing and unrelenting pressures and barriers in everyday living that can prevent personal and family growth and functioning. Among the very pressing issues are inadequate housing, poor community infrastructure, dangerous neighborhoods, limited options for purchasing food and other goods, substance abuse, absence of health insurance, poor educational resources and opportunities, longer commuting distances, and limited opportunities for reliable childcare (De Haan, 2017, Beasley et al, 2022, Tchombe, 2018).

Although the 21st century has brought unique and universal parenting challenges, it is crucial to understand the specific challenges encountered by families raising children living in poverty. According to the findings of some studies, 89.87% of parents indicated that poverty was the highest challenge faced by children. This was followed by a high rate of illiteracy 86.08%, family conflicts 79.75%, malnutrition 74.68%, disease affliction 67.09%, natural hazards/ disasters 62.03%, negative cultural beliefs 59.49%, loss of parent/ parents 53.16%, community conflicts, and insecurity/wars 27.85% (Tchombe, 2018, Beasley et al, 2022)

2.2. Parenting Challenges in Africa in the Digital Era:

In today's digital era, parenting faces new challenges. Information technology innovations afford parents and children many valuable applications. However, many parents fear new digital technologies could potentially harm their children because digital technologies have taken up increasing amounts of children's and adolescents' time and have crept into ever more areas of life (Modecki et al, 2022)

Thus, this growing dominance of digitation in our daily life has stirred a public debate on the role of digitation in children's lives. The debate focuses on the anxieties related to how information technology transforms childhood. The discussion usually focuses on the dominance of screen-based media in children's lives and the resulting problems, such as social isolation or obesity. Therefore, children's cognitive, emotional, moral, and social development are threatened.

Accordingly, digital safety has become a global challenge. With the spread of new digital technologies (smartphones, tablets, notebooks) and the development of internet connectivity, the advantages of this progress co-exist with the challenges and threats posed by digitation. Considering the challenges associated with the penetration of human life by the Internet, educationists and experts often notice dangerous situations mediated by the Internet.

In this regard, they mentioned that excessive technology usage, informally called Digital Addiction, is rising, whether for legitimate reasons or due to a problematic experience. Adolescents' excessive technology use is claimed to affect their health, education, and family relationships (Tomczyk & Potyrała, 2021).

Moreover, the other challenge parenting face is the gap between parents and their children. Expressing her concern, one of the mothers said, "My child, unfortunately, likes to play on electronic devices very often. He leaves his homework to play, which makes me unsatisfied and, of course, affects his school performance". She confirmed her failure to catch up with her kid. She said: "I tried to stop him but to no avail: he becomes agitated and makes me do certain things and punish him. He becomes stubborn and disregards his school work". The behavior of her child with digital technology made her confused. She said: "This left me confused and unable to do anything (Difi, 2019, 66).

We should not forget that social media influencers become models that are more important for our children and youth than parents, scholars, community leaders, religious and political leaders, educationists, and teachers (Ezzat, 2020)

Therefore, protection against the risks of modern technology is one of the challenges. Technology affects the lives of family members, both young and old. Some studies have highlighted this critical aspect as young people are exposed to the harmful aspects of digitation, while parents may be preoccupied or unaware of its risks to children (Difi, 2019, 51)

3. What are the advantages and challenges parents face with regard to technology as a facilitator of parenting?

3.1. Advantages:

Digital technology offers a variety of opportunities for parents. Many parents state that communication with their children is crucial for securing a mobile phone for children at young ages. Parents can talk with their children, coordinate activities, and remain close through texting, voice, and video calls.

Digital technology offers parents new resources to gather information (e.g., search tools, discussion forums, apps, web pages) and social support resources through communication tools and media. These connections can help validate parents' concerns, help boost their confidence in the parenting role, and identify resources.

They can also strengthen social capital in parents' social networks - bonds forged in relationships by trust and reciprocal help - while also expanding the size (number of members) of networks granting parents more access to the flow of information and people from whom to seek help. Social media offers terrific opportunities for children to share their creativity and play experiences and communicate with each other worldwide. (Mur'ib & Boulkaria, 2019; Walker, 2021).

The digital environment has also provided creative ways in education and entertainment, and digitation has become imperative for parenting. If we are not connected to the digital world, we will be denied new opportunities to learn, communicate and develop skills. Every child needs to have digital parity, as digital access and digital literacy provide benefits in a knowledge-based society, improving children's lives and potential for future livelihoods.

Unless access is provided to all on an equal footing, the existence of the digital world will deepen injustices, reinforcing disadvantages from generation to generation. (UNICEF, 2017, Bekhouche, 2019, 54)

3.2. Challenges:

The main challenges parents face with regard to technology as a parenting facilitator are the challenges to the family value system, the children's social, cognitive, and physical development, the children, the rights and privacy of children, and the consumerism trends

A. Challenges to the value system:

Parenting is the basic foundation of every stable society. Each generation longs for the time to confidently boast of bringing up a stable generation. Parenting is about socialization. The content of socialization concerns what society considers proper and what it denounces wrong. African people treasure communal ordering within their societies. Their parenting systems are geared towards protecting and enhancing the values that uphold oneness in the community. In contemporary Africa, parenting has become a complicated field. Parenting which used to be

communal in African societies has been compounded by many factors, especially those that concern a society spiraling towards self. The pursuits for modernity let the family system lose its traditional sources of strength. The "modern" family and society that is the craving of many Africans is characterized by aping, mimicry, and resulting in hybridity. To use Said's words, the hybrid African is a distorted being who is "same but not the same" (Kiambi, 2022).

Moreover, this family structure and values system is facing more challenges in the digital era. Social media outlets managed to penetrate the cultural borders, and promote unusual cultural norms and models, thus abolishing the possibilities of acculturation as a voluntary openness of different cultures, through the mechanisms of mutual interaction, in favor of the culture and values of the dominant.

Digital communication technologies and the transmission of Western lifestyles and behaviors resulted in cultural dependence due to the technological inequality between the two sides. Accordingly, the value system within our African families is exposed to significant distortions due to the impact, spread, and wide use of means of communication and modern technologies, which negatively affect socialization due to the number of values coming through the outlets of multiple means of communication. (Mur'ib & Boulkaria, 2019, 137-139).

Since family is one of the most important institutions of social upbringing, the value system of this institution is subject to change, alteration, and distortion, sometimes, due to the incoming values, through the media and communication. This creates confusion in the family in performing its educational function, which is reflected negatively on the level of representation of society's values. It may lead to a contradiction in values, and a double judgment on behavior and attitudes, which puts the family in a state of fluctuation, retreat, ambiguity, and lack of clarity of vision in the performance of its upbringing functions.

Social upbringing is going through a real crisis, left behind by conditions of social and economic change and openness to global cultures, with the acceleration of technical progress in the field of information and communication. (Mur'ib & Boulkaria, 2019, 140-143)

B. Challenges to the social, cognitive, and physical development of the children:

Regarding children's development, specialists warn that a child's digital life will become a source of harm. Therefore, we need to pay attention to the children, and parents must understand the risks behind these opportunities. The absence of supervision and the excessive use of technologies make their social, cognitive, and physical development unhealthy, reduce the chances of interaction with others, and delay the development of their interactive skills. (Bekhouche, 2019, 54)

According to studies, there are four main risks of using digital screens monitored by parents: isolation, lack of outdoor activities, hyperactivity, and addiction. Children's preoccupation with the Internet and social networks reduces direct interaction with others face to face and limits the chances of establishing friendships in the real world, which significantly impacts their abilities to read human emotion, delay satisfying needs, and co-exist with the material world. Moreover, the excessive use of digital apps may lead to poor social skills, loss of parental warmth and connection, limited opportunities to explore the real outside world, exposure to psychological harm, and poor moral judgment (Bekhouche, 2019, 55-56)

Digitation is compromising child development and changing the nature of human interaction. That this transformation has provoked little reaction from most parents and teachers is disconcerting. Rather than seek a healthy balance, many parents have embraced the growing incursions of digital

technology without considering their adverse impact. Digital technology affects children's health and social skills and "re-formatting" their thinking in ways we do not fully understand (Ritacca, 2019).

Excessive technology usage, informally called Digital Addiction, is on the rise, whether for legitimate reasons or due to a problematic experience. Children's excessive technology use is claimed to impact their health, education, and family relationship. Moreover, Stanford and MIT psychiatrists have discovered that excessive Internet use significantly shifts our children's personalities and mental health. The digital age child is susceptible to Internet addiction, Internet use disorder, and a constant state of anxiety labeled "reward anticipation". Some studies indicated that children aged 10-11 who used social networks for more than two hours a day were sad than their peers, had disturbed sleep and feeding, and had negative thoughts about their body image. In addition, the results of medical and neurological studies found that the excessive use of technologies not only affects the cognitive, emotional, and social development of children but also destroys their bodies and brains, as it concluded that there are shared physical and neurological effects on children's strength and physical activities. (Ritacca, 2019; Bekhouche, 2019, 56)

There is a relationship between Internet addiction and anxiety, depression, boredom, and withdrawal in children and adolescents. The effects of addiction to digital technologies such as the Internet, computers, and mobile phones have similar symptoms to addiction to gambling and drugs, such as tremors, nausea, anxiety, and poor self-control. Among the most critical risks of the digital environment, insomnia, obesity, low self-esteem, addiction, and overeating are often ignored by parents and children. In contrast, only the risks of bullying and sexual abuse are focused on and reported. The unconscious and undirected use of digital technologies causes many adverse psychological, nervous, physical, emotional, and social effects. (Bekhouche, 2019, 57-58).

Concerning habits, the spread of harmful and destructive values and habits is apparent. Studies show that children and youth are affected by lethargy, laziness, lack of respect for time, etc. moreover, watching satellite channels makes them usually lazy, dependent on others, and fail to carry out the work assigned to them (Mur'ib & Boulkaria, 2019, 140-143)

C. Challenges to the fundamental rights of the children:

During its thirteenth session, the International Committee on the Rights of the Child devoted a discussion in 1996 to the child and the media and dealt with it through primary axes: the effective participation of the child in the media and the protection of the child from the negative influences of the media. (Mur'ib & Boulkaria, 2019, 133)

The right of the child to benefit from communication and digital communication has become a recognized imperative in many societies. Primarily, that digital technology has a positive aspect characterized by the expansion of the child's perceptions and the increase of his cognitive and linguistic outcomes, but at the same time, it constitutes a source of danger to the children.

False or malicious information and violent or pornographic materials risk harm to children. Data breaches relating to personal or private information (such as children's photos or identities) may be used to exploit children, with severe consequences. Moreover, violence and bullying in cyberspace have also become global problems (Mur'ib & Boulkaria, 2019, 133).

Moreover, parenting might be more challenging since parents have to deal with issues, such as poverty and more limited knowledge about parenting via books and media, affecting their parenting behavior and, therefore, the development of their children.

Therefore, in order to face the challenges to those children's fundamental rights, some researchers suggest the following;

- Social agencies should work to increase the family's awareness of the child's rights towards the use of means of communication and access to information and participation.
- The need to raise the family's awareness about the means of modern education and how to deal with modern technology.
- Work should be done to increase the child's awareness through educational and informative programs on how to safely use modern communication through programs for families, schools, and media bulletins.
- Building a value system that focuses on a social philosophy around the type of child that we want to create and shape by the nature of the local culture on the one hand and the requirements of the age on the other hand.
- Building a local and regional media system capable of accommodating children and protecting them at the same time by rooting positive cultural values in the media produced for children (Mur'ib & Boulkaria, 2019, 143-144)

4. What policies and programs can support parents and children in bridging the digital gap between them?

The traditional, as well as the contemporary challenges facing parenting, as mentioned above, may lead to asking; what are the possible policies and programs that may help in bridging the gap between parents and their children?

In addition to the traditional challenges parenting is facing in our African countries, there is little done concerning digital challenges. In this context, and with a particular focus on North African countries, there are not enough efforts to bridge the gap and provide solutions for parenting in the face of digital challenges.

4.1. General Overview of Parenting Programs in North African Countries:

Let us look into the critical study conducted by Doha Family Institute on parenting challenges in the Arab world. We can find that in North African Arab countries, most challenges are traditional. According to that survey, nine (9) aspects of parenting programs were studied (Difi, 2022). Especially the types of parenting programs in the region, their areas, and their characteristics.

A. Types of parenting programs:

The mentioned survey identified four different types of programs in North Africa Countries;

First, family-centered parenting programs emphasize issues such as; risk factors in the family, methods of social upbringing, domestic violence, and alternative methods to resolve family conflicts, family relations, family disputes, family empowerment, and divorce. Moreover, they also address the issue of integration of women who are employees, reproductive health, family planning, gender and time between pregnancies, etc.

Second, individual-centered programs focus mainly on childhood, specifically on preventing violence, school performance, abandonment, child rights, and employment chances for the young.

Third, community-centered programs focus on awareness, partnerships, and raising awareness of mothers without family support, low-income families, social safety networks, and divorce.

Fourth, program-centered focus involves inclusiveness of children from different age groups, content inclusiveness of child-focused themes, financial assistance, reach to broader segments, program orientation, and developing programs for unique segments (Difi, 2022, p. 12).

B. Areas of Parenting Programs

Regarding the areas covered by parenting programs, the survey found that they cover three main areas. They are education, training, and support.

First, education: parental education focused on knowledge education; enhancing awareness of the characteristics of childhood; parental care in social, religious, medical, and social areas; education of mothers, children, and fathers; education of women; raising awareness of the dangers facing the family, the rights of the child, and family planning.

Second, training: focused on methods of dealing with children; health; parental integration; parental care mechanisms and methods; parental care for young children; involvement of children; socialization; service standards; and reproductive health.

Third, support: parental support focused on psychological support, family relations, care, services and technical support, family stability, social welfare, unaccompanied children, community support, and assistance for families with special needs (Difi, 2022, 44).

C. The Characteristics of Programs:

According to the same survey, the programs varied in their characteristics.

They vary in their type from parental education to training and support, cover three areas; individual, child, and family, and they target Parents, child, and mother.

On the other hand, the programs focused on many areas, such as children's problems and how to deal with negative behaviors, especially in the context of modern technologies. They also dealt with strengthening the family, finding solutions to family problems, and promoting dialogue. Programs also focused on child development, family violence, early childhood, positive parenting, breastfeeding, and gender-based violence.

As for their objectives: The programs included various objectives: Identifying behavioral problems in children; learning methods to deal with them, identifying the difficulties experienced by the family in raising children; finding scientific solutions to these problems; forming a family free of problems, and a cheerful family; and developing parenting skills and know-how to deal with children. Thus, their outputs focused on families successfully dealing with children, strong families that can face challenges and conflicts, and cohesive and problem-solving families.

The programs were managed by professionals and specialists (social workers and trainers) and implemented in schools, NGO offices, and local community organizations. They provided a range of services and skills, such as; dialogue skills, confidence, persuasion, forming bonds with children, awareness-promotion services, skills, and behavioral modification.

The survey mentioned the program's strengths, which included creative thinking, family roles, how to address their problems and children's problems, learning about dealing with children and their development, and focusing on family issues. However, the programs have some weaknesses, such as long hours in the sessions, inappropriate timing, conflict with work hours, lack of resources, and poor transport links. In addition, there was no scientific evidence made available relating to

the evaluation of the programs; when such evidence existed for some programs, it was rare and inaccessible (Difi, 2022, 46)

Accordingly, the survey concluded that the gaps in the North African countries included the absence of a uniform methodology for dealing with children's issues. There is a need for further research and studies on the reality of poor or low-income households supported by women, the failure to use communication and negotiation techniques to encourage discussion and dialogue on the topics covered by the program, and the failure to conduct follow-up evaluation for the programs (Difi, 2022, 47)

4.2. Necessary efforts to bridge the digital gap:

We can not talk about bridging the digital gap between parents and their children without considering the institution of the family and the training programs needed to resolve this problem. Moreover, pieces of training have to be culturally adapted and institutionalized

A. Strengthening the Family institution and Role:

Family is the basic unit of society and plays a vital role as an agency of primary care, and the well-being of children is closely linked to that of their parents. Whatever the structure, in most cases, families provide the best environment for meeting the needs of children. (Tchombe, 2018).

In the African context, especially, parenting was something everyone looked forward to. Right from childhood, African people were raised and socialized towards this great expectation. Moreover, parenting was not just a couple's assignment but communal, and all societal structures were aligned in such a way that there was parenting everywhere. However, given the realities of our changing times, many factors have highly curtailed the promise of an enjoyable and easy time in parenting. Parenting in the African context has been challenged by many quarters. Many parents are grappling with the question of the errant and extremely independent sort of children. Part of the problem has been Africa's alignment with globalizing forces (Kiambi, 2022).

Moreover, the family's value system, especially in the cities, is subject to significant changes due to the influence, spread, and wide use of modern means of communication and technologies. The changing of the value system negatively affects socialization due to the number of values that come through the outlets of multiple means of communication.

B. Parenting Training Programs:

One of the critical solutions for preserving the family institution and role, protecting children, and empowering parenting are through parenting training programs. Training programs are very effective means of providing information and building skills for parents. However, those programs should be culturally adapted not to deepen alienation, and the training should be institutionalized.

B.1. Culturally Adapted Programs:

Since parenting can be challenging for all parents, regardless of their culture, parenting training is designed and implemented worldwide. One of the main goals of such training programs is to reduce the prevalence of behavioral problems in children, to reduce child abuse and neglect, and to increase the well-being of parents and children. Parenting training can also be beneficial for changing parental attitudes and improving positive parenting skills.

Global research initiatives examining effective parenting behavior have clearly illustrated the substantial advantage of employing balanced, authoritative parenting styles characterized by parental responsiveness, sensitivity, warmth, and communication (Beasley et al, 2022)

However, to help parents with the difficulties they might face when raising their children, most parenting pieces of training are designed and implemented worldwide, especially in Western countries. Therefore, since parenting training with cultural adaptations is shown to be more effective, there is a need to adapt these parenting pieces of training to the cultural context of African countries (De Haan, 2017).

It is important to design culturally appropriate measuring instruments to ensure that they will fit in the cultural context of the target cultural group. The programs must focus on understanding a certain community's local problems. Moreover, taking into account cultural differences is key for developing and implementing parenting training worldwide (Mejia et al., 2012; De Haan, 2017).

Parental and community support, since they are based on the beliefs and value systems of the people, enormously strengthens local capacities to enable those in need to have support. Through cultural indigenous knowledge systems like folklore, indigenous games/play songs, interwoven curriculum, and rites of passage, children are socialized into responsible behaviors and are adequately prepared for adulthood. (Tchombe, 2018)

For example, in his study of some communities in Malawi, Van Mourik and his colleagues confirmed that it is essential to provide tools for adjusting parenting training to the cultural context of such a community or specific culture. This is important since parenting training that considers cultural differences is more effective through local facilitators and culturally appropriate measuring instruments (Van Mourik et al, 2012).

B.2. Institutions and Organizations' Role:

The challenges parenting faces in this digital era are over individuals' and families' abilities. Therefore, there is a need to institutionalize support for families in parenting.

Government institutions, common initiative groups, religious institutions and organizations, non-governmental organizations, peer groups, education and research institutions, social welfare services, and mass media outlets should all involve in supporting parenting (Tchombe, 2018).

The governments should appoint officials and qualified bodies to produce indicators to evaluate and monitor the protection, respect, and promotion of children's rights all over the country in the application of the CRC reporting and monitoring processes.

NGO's work is essential as society is undergoing substantial changes because of continuously increased urbanization, widening social inequalities, and lack of public debate on issues such as violence within families and empowerment of young people's voices. NGO's work should also be highly valued through a well-worked merit system. Incentives should be given to successful initiatives.

Political parties also have to play their role in putting on the governmental agenda issues related to children's rights and ensuring funding of initiatives to protect youth who represent the country's future. (Boussena & Tiliouine, 2015)

Universities, research centers, and research networks should play their role in studying the various challenges to parenting, as well as providing theoretical and empirical inputs to decision-making bodies to foster policies to preserve the family institution and the well-being of our children.

There is a growing gap between the evidence provided by the scientific literature and what is needed to create evidence-based guidelines about children's digital technology use and how parents should respond. Digital-parenting behaviors are complex and multifaceted, including, for example, the monitoring of children's technology use, rule provision, implementation, education and promotion of digital skills, navigation of online education, and the exploitation of online opportunities (Modecki et al, 2022)

4.3. Examples from some Algerian Programs to Support Parenting:

As an Algerian, we found that the efforts to support parenting in Algeria are of three types; government initiatives, NGO activities, and individual efforts.

A. The Government Initiatives:

In Algeria, there are more than 400 institutions and centers, which form an institutional network. The Ministry of National Solidarity, Family, and Women's Issues manages this network and provides various programs, services, and support to women, children, and parents (APS, 2017).

The National Commission for the Protection and Promotion of Childhood is also one of the government agencies that take care of childhood and parenting. This commission adopts the United Nations Charters for child rights and women empowerment. It organizes workshops, training including family protection for the child, education and its challenges, health care and proper nutrition, social and judicial protection for children, bodies, institutions, and civil society involved in the field of childhood and parenting, and the impact of information and communication technologies on children, etc. (National Agency for the Protection of Children, 2019). However, the focus on digital parenting is quite partial and needs more development.

B. NGOs & Individual Efforts: Family Counseling Project

As for civil societies, non-government agencies, and associations, we can give an excellent example of what civil society can help in this matter.

Here come the efforts of Professor Atika Nabti (Nabti, 2022). Professor Nabti initiated the "family counseling Project" primarily by presenting lectures on family issues and offering courses that cover marital rehabilitation, managing marital relations, and childhood and adolescence problems. Then she started coordinating with the Algerian scholars' association through its centers and branches throughout the country.

After she noticed the difficulty of women joining training courses, she enlarged her efforts to online training and created the Family Counseling Academy website on June 2019.

Now, the online academy, with a team of female guides trained in the field of family counseling, is giving consultation and training to more than 12000 women.

The project is under "Family Guidance" and aims to support the family in performing its original role in proper socialization. the project directs its work into six (6) domains to achieve its objectives;

1. Training of those who are about to get married in a way that enables them to establish a family on sound psychological, social, material, and legal foundations.

2. Accompanying the family through its stages, before and after formation.

3. Creating developmental programs for the family to develop communication skills among its members.

4. Accompanying families with special needs due to divorce, death, a child with special needs, delinquent children, the presence of the elderly, or those with chronic diseases.

5. Accompanying the family according to society's cultural traditions and balanced Islamic culture.

6. Training specialists in the fields mentioned above to deal with various family problems and accompany the family in solving its problems and performing its tasks in socialization.

Moreover, the family counseling project is working on establishing an institute specialized in training family counselors, affiliated with the Ministry of Health, Family and Population. This institute aims to train family counselors in the following areas; treatment of marital problems, reconciliation between spouses, accompanying the family in which separation occurs due to death or divorce, accompanying families with children with special needs, accompanying the family that has an older adult or those with chronic diseases, and accompanying family health issues.

The project conducts periodic training and summer camps for counselors; training for families; workshops for children of different ages, youth camps; workshops for women to prepare them for motherhood; leadership workshops for young people; workshops for children through the stages of life starting from the nursery; preparing children for schooling; providing a legal culture for parents; and teaching healthy habits and psychological balance of the children in all stages.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations:

To conclude, it is important to say that the digital era poses unprecedented challenges in the face of parenting as much as it opens our horizons to new advantages that may help facilitate children's upbringing and support parenting.

However, little is done in response to these challenges in our African countries, mainly North African countries. In addition to the traditional challenges of parenting, we are facing the challenges of digitation without enough programs to support parents and preserve our families and children.

Recommendations:

There is a real need to:

1. develop culturally adapted programs in order to benefit from world experience, and at the same time avoid the challenge of the ready-made and designed programs that focus more on individualism, over-liberal culture, and consumerism, which may put our value system in danger.

2. Enhance the traditional family system of parenting by integrating new means of supporting family and upbringing through institutions and the establishment of permanent not occasional policies and programs.

3. Collaboration of government agencies, NGOs, and individuals as well as the academia to develop sound solutions that take into consideration both; the global and local contexts.

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