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Designing a Parent Training Model to Prevent Cyber Space Risks in Students

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ABSTRACT

Objective: A principal challenge associated with technological advancement pertains to the cultural and societal detriments that ensue as a consequence. The advent of the Internet and social networking platforms, coupled with an increase in individual liberties, has enabled swift access to a plethora of diverse and frequently unethical content available online. Given that the family unit serves as the cornerstone of all other social institutions and that individuals' mental health is largely cultivated within this context, the implementation of parental training programs is pivotal in regulating children's engagement with this digital environment. The objective of this research is to devise a parental education framework aimed at mitigating the adverse effects of virtual spaces on students.

Methods: Employing a thematic analysis approach, semi-structured interviews were utilized as the primary means of data collection. Through the application of grounded theory methodology, the data acquired from interviews with eleven experts and professionals within the domains of family dynamics and education were systematically coded and examined through three distinct phases: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding.

Results: The findings elucidated six principal categories within a paradigm model that encompasses comprehensive management, analysis, design, preparation, implementation, and evaluation. The results indicate that parental education, guidance and counseling support, the promotion of safe conduct within family units, the encouragement of enhanced family communication, the provision of supportive resources, the augmentation of parental awareness, the fostering of parental collaboration with educational institutions, and the encouragement and facilitation of parental cooperation with schools are all essential elements.

Conclusions: The instruction of technological competencies and the establishment of mutual agreements concerning the safe and responsible utilization of virtual environments may function as efficacious strategies for preventing the detrimental impacts of virtual spaces on students.

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Introduction

In the contemporary era characterized by the swift expansion of virtual realms, the significance and impact of these realms on our quotidian existence are concurrently on the rise. With the evolution of technology and communication, children and adolescents are now engaging actively in cyberspace, benefitting from unobstructed access to internet tools and services. This proactive engagement in cyberspace, while offering enhanced opportunities and resources for learning and social interaction, may also entail risks and detriments that are particularly pronounced for children and adolescents.

In this context, parents assume a pivotal role as the primary protectors and mentors of children and adolescents, safeguarding them against the challenges and perils inherent in cyberspace. The awareness of parents regarding the hazards associated with cyberspace, coupled with the requisite skills to avert and address these risks, can significantly contribute to the preservation of the mental and physical well-being of children and adolescents, thereby fostering a safer and healthier cyberspace for their benefit.

In this regard, the formulation of an educational model for parents aimed at preventing students from inflicting harm upon cyberspace is of paramount importance. This model should facilitate parents' familiarity with concerns pertaining to the Internet and virtual environments, enable them to acquire the necessary competencies in this domain, and instruct them in effective strategies to manage and mitigate associated challenges. The curriculum of this model should encompass topics such as online security, privacy, time management, the promotion of positive behaviors in cyberspace, and the cultivation of healthy and constructive interactions with the Internet. In this article, we shall devise a training model for parents designed to avert students from causing detriment to cyberspace, which can empower parents to perform a more efficacious role in overseeing and guiding their children and adolescents within cyberspace, thereby shielding them from the inherent dangers of this domain.

Experts specializing in the field of pathology assert that technological advancements significantly influence societal values and norms, attributing the emergence of novel injuries to the roots of social, cultural, and psychological afflictions; hence, it is imperative to devise strategies for controlling, preventing, and mitigating the damages associated with cyberspace. Cultural criminology places a distinct emphasis on the habituation to violence among adolescents as

influenced by virtual realms and the Internet. Grounded in the principles of cultural criminology, sustained exposure to violent conduct exerts a detrimental effect on the character and perspectives of adolescents. The violent content presented in various programs incites aggressive behavior among viewers and undermines moral and social values in children. This phenomenon typically transpires through the mechanisms of imitation and modeling of violent behavior by children and adolescents, alongside the desensitization to such acts. This implies that, on one hand, the consumption of violent material in cyberspace, akin to other media, over time and through repetition, encourages users, particularly the younger generation, to assimilate and replicate the behaviors exhibited by the protagonists, resulting in a deleterious educational experience; on the other hand, the incessant exposure to violent imagery progressively normalizes such behavior among youthful audiences, facilitating the acceptance and integration of violence into real-life scenarios ([Abedi Tehrani & Afshari, 2013](#)).

The methodology of cultural criminology in this instance aligns with the principles of social learning theory. This theory posits that individuals are not inherently predisposed to engage in violent behavior; rather, such aggression is acquired through observation; in essence, children assimilate violent conduct by witnessing the actions of others. Consequently, cultural criminologists assert that films, online imagery, and video games that portray violence pose significant risks to children. They contend that mass media, encompassing digital platforms, bear responsibility for the proliferation of violence within society, as there persists an inherent risk that children, influenced negatively by video games and violent online visuals, may inflict psychological or physical harm upon their peers in educational settings or other environments. Furthermore, exposure to media violence provides children with the rationale to vindicate their deviant conduct from ethical and cultural perspectives. Conversely, the delinquency exhibited by children and adolescents in cyberspace can be elucidated through the "carnival life" theory articulated by cultural criminology. This theory is also subject to analysis. Thus, from this perspective, individuals experience "carnival life" by engaging in virtual realms as a "second life," shrouded in anonymous identities, as the limitless virtual domain, with its myriad attractions, enables certain individuals to escape the discomforts of their actual existence, to derive enjoyment or a sense of superiority, and, most critically, to compensate for the deficiencies present in their real lives, thereby immersing themselves in a sphere that resembles a "Carnival," devoid of any

form of logic and formal oversight ([Aghaei, 2017](#)). Additionally, it is observed that specialists cognizant of such works strategically target adolescents in their promotional efforts in order to propagate their values to other societies. Presently, emergent social media platforms have succeeded in challenging the narratives of state-controlled media ([Maimanatabad et al., 2020](#)); the detrimental consequences of certain Western media include the endorsement of crude ideals and factions, the dissemination of stereotypical concepts, the promotion of undesirable sexual behaviors, and the fostering of unbalanced cognitive processes ([Faridi & Jafari, 2020](#)).

The family constitutes the paramount social unit and ranks among the most significant primary groups, characterized by informal, emotional, and face-to-face interactions. It can be regarded as a singular foundation upon which all other social institutions are built, wherein the psychological well-being of individuals is cultivated; furthermore, it plays a crucial role in the mental health and overall wellness of its members. Conversely, it is imperative that family members receive ongoing education, and parents are no exception, as effective parenting necessitates training. Additionally, the continuous implementation of family education courses within educational institutions, aimed at disseminating new knowledge and empowering parents, can serve to mitigate the emergence of emotional and social disparities in children, while instructing parents on how to effectively manage such circumstances, thereby rendering invaluable assistance in enhancing mental and family health ([Shahmohammadi & Tahoo, 2014](#)).

Moreover, the assessment of educational programs for the purpose of obtaining feedback and instituting necessary modifications and reforms remains an essential component of family education. The education of parents, with the objective of rectifying, enhancing, and transforming parental attitudes towards child behavior, must be regarded as a fundamental necessity for adults, encompassing the acquisition of knowledge regarding the principles of child-rearing and the methodologies for achieving optimal learning outcomes.

According to Hornby, the organization of group training sessions for parents to furnish guidance and information is exceedingly beneficial. He posits that for educational endeavors to be successful, parents must acquire competencies such as technical skills (adequate and current knowledge), human skills (the capacity for effective communication), and perceptive skills (accurate comprehension of issues and challenges). The establishment of parent education classes represents a deliberate initiative aimed at aligning the educational methodologies of parents and

educators, ultimately leading to behavioral modification. Group education for parents constitutes a form of collective learning that encompasses a broad spectrum and enables parents to enhance their knowledge and understanding of child-rearing practices in a constructive manner. Notably, this educational approach possesses a predominantly preventative dimension, as it averts the development of emotional and social discrepancies and is instrumental in promoting the child's mental well-being.

Based on global internet statistics from 2018, Iran boasted 57 million and seven hundred thousand internet users. Although precise statistics regarding the quantity and extent of internet usage among Iranian children and adolescents are lacking, international studies suggest that the prevalence of internet use among children and adolescents tends to increase with age. With the proliferation of virtual environments and the advocacy of virtual existence as a "second life," the impact of cultural criminologists on the experiences of children and adolescents has become apparent. Conversely, the repercussions of violence within cyberspace content are particularly accentuated concerning adolescents and children. Such content incites aggressive conduct within these individuals and undermines their moral and social values. This phenomenon typically transpires through the imitation of violent actions by children and teenagers, culminating in the gradual normalization and acceptance of violence within their tangible lives. Furthermore, cyberspace, characterized as a "carnival life," affords individuals the opportunity to immerse themselves in a realm devoid of rationality and formal regulation, which some individuals seek as a means to alleviate distressing emotions and compensate for the deficiencies in their lives. This revised text has been structured with the intent of condensing the content while minimizing superfluous repetitions and expressions ([Malakooti & Mohseni, 2023](#)).

Parental education enhances the psycho-social competencies of the family unit and bolsters the family's capacity to effectively navigate conflicts and life challenges. Family education equips parents with the necessary tools to surmount the tensions and issues that afflict both individuals and society, which is among its resultant benefits. This initiative ultimately aims to improve the mental well-being of students ([Karimi, 2013](#)).

The objective of family education is to facilitate a complex process whereby family members (children and parents) acquire the requisite knowledge and skills to competently understand and fulfill their responsibilities within the family dynamic. Hersi and Blanchard assert that the primary

aim of family education courses is the rectification, enhancement, and transformation of the knowledge, insight, and behavior of parents, interpreting the concept of change as a metamorphosis that transpires within the existing circumstances ([HeavyRunner & DeCelles, 2002](#)). Virtual space constitutes an environment composed of computer networks, communication media, and users who engage in the exchange of data and information. This realm has effectively diminished spatial barriers and fostered independence from geographical constraints, which represents the most discernible distinction between the tangible world and virtual space. Generally, virtual space is an expansive, original, and unblemished domain that presents new possibilities, freedoms, opportunities, anxieties, detriments, and limitations for its inhabitants ([Shahmohammadi & Tahoo, 2014](#)).

Virtual space serves as a medium in which all content and interactions are organized to deliver services to users through appropriate structures (websites or social networks). In essence, all services, content, communications, software and hardware tools, formats, and so forth encompass the entirety of the virtual space ([Mahmoudi et al., 2023](#)). Cybernetic space damage constitutes a form of digital impairment that is predicated upon virtual temporality, encompassing both global and local dimensions, characterized by its pluralistic, multi-faceted, rapid, ubiquitous, fluid, and atypical nature. It manifests as a process of compaction, condensation, and reduction; consequently, the realm of virtual damages is boundless and trends towards infinity, disseminating swiftly throughout virtual environments. Digital impairment is inherently non-linear in nature, rendering it exceedingly challenging to regulate, as the likelihood of accurately analyzing and forecasting its distribution and propagation patterns remains elusive ([Shahmohammadi & Tahoo, 2014](#)).

The imperative to develop a model for parental training aimed at preventing cyberspace harm to students is not solely rooted in the researcher's extensive experience in the domain of social harm mitigation in this locale, but it is also aligned with the researcher's expertise in educational management studies, coupled with a pronounced interest in training focused on the prevention of cyberspace harm. Moreover, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, which precipitated the closure of educational institutions and disrupted the operations of various educational organizations, has necessitated the widespread adoption of the Internet for all services, including training, education, and examinations, consequently heightening the vulnerability of students to

cyberspace threats; thus, this research endeavors to assess parental training in the context of preventing cyberspace harm to students and to propose a model for such training during the pandemic and in the subsequent post-pandemic period.

With the rapid advancement of technology and the widespread availability of the Internet, students are increasingly exposed to various risks associated with cyberspace, including access to inappropriate content and harmful online interactions ([Chou & Peng, 2007](#); [Livingstone & Helsper, 2008](#)). As children and adolescents become more immersed in digital environments, parents often lack the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively guide and protect their children from the dangers of cyberspace ([Baltezarevic & Baltezarevic, 2021](#); [Fleming & Rickwood, 2004](#); [Podesta & Goyle, 2005](#)). Despite the significant influence that families have on children's mental health and development, there is a gap in parental education programs specifically designed to address the challenges posed by the digital world.

The current lack of structured guidance for parents on managing their children's online activities exacerbates the risks associated with virtual spaces. Without proper interventions, students may face emotional, psychological, and social harm, which can adversely affect their well-being and academic performance. Therefore, there is an urgent need for a comprehensive parent training model that equips parents with the tools and knowledge to mitigate cyberspace risks and promote safe and responsible internet use. This research seeks to address this gap by designing a parent training framework focused on preventing cyberspace risks among students. By involving experts in family dynamics and education, the study aims to create a structured approach that enhances parental awareness, strengthens communication within families, and fosters cooperation between parents and educational institutions.

Material and Methods

This research is executed with a practical purpose and employs qualitative methods for data collection. Furthermore, in terms of the analytical approach, this study is categorized within the realm of qualitative research. In qualitative research, data is amassed from a diverse array of sources. Qualitative data transcends mere organized packages and categorized information acquired from the environment; it encompasses direct statements from individuals regarding their

experiences, perspectives, and knowledge, as conveyed through documents, observations, materials, visits, and interviews.

The population for the qualitative aspect of the research comprises existing educational documents, as well as family education professors, experts from parents' associations, and trainers, alongside specialists in the domain of virtual space within the province. The research community for the interview segment consisted of prominent figures and specialists in family education and upbringing, higher education, the theological field, as well as experts in the area of virtual space, all holding doctoral degrees, with eleven individuals serving as the research sample until theoretical saturation was achieved. The interviews were conducted based on criteria that included possessing a doctoral degree in the field of educational sciences, family and adolescent counseling, as well as being an expert and author of works in family education, virtual space and its associated detriments, media, and adolescents within the aforementioned field. The interviews adopted a semi-structured format, characterized by depth and open-ended questions. The adequacy of the sample size was determined through the theoretical saturation method ([Glaser & Strauss, 2017](#)). In this research, a systematic approach employing thematic analysis was utilized, incorporating three techniques of open, axial, and selective coding ([Vollstedt & Rezat, 2019](#)), which are delineated as follows:

A- Open coding: Open coding is an analytical procedure through which concepts are discerned, along with their attributes and dimensions, within the data (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Information segmentation was established, and following a systematic review of the interviews, the principal categories, sub-categories, and sub-sub-categories were elucidated.

B- Axial coding: Axial coding constitutes the process of associating categories with sub-categories and correlating categories at the level of attributes and dimensions. This form of coding is designated as axial because the coding is centered around the axis of a category ([Strauss, 1997](#)).

C- Selective coding: Following the processes of open and axial coding, the research findings culminate in the theory that selective coding represents the process of integrating and refining categories ([Strauss, 1997](#)). In this research, subsequent to achieving saturation and the recurrence of concepts, selective coding was performed on the interviews, with the resultant findings presented in the concluding section in the form of discussion and conclusions.

Furthermore, the criterion of acceptability, as delineated in the evaluation of research predicated on thematic analysis, was employed in lieu of the conventional criteria of validity and reliability. Acceptability pertains to the degree to which the findings of the research are deemed trustworthy and credible in accurately representing the experiences of the participants, the researcher, and the audience concerning the phenomenon under investigation. A total of ten indicators of acceptability criteria have been introduced, five of which were utilized in this research to enhance scientific rigor, validity, and reliability. The audit strategies employed include: researcher sensitivity, methodological consistency, sample proportionality, replication of findings, and the incorporation of informant feedback ([Corbin & Strauss, 1990](#)).

Table 1. Demographic information of the interviewees

ID	Career	Age	Gender	Experience (year)	Education level
1	Expert in the field of education and training, university teacher	66	Male	32	Ph.D.
2	Family education teacher and family expert	62	Male	30	Ph.D.
3	University professor, expert in the field of education	59	Male	33	Ph.D.
4	Family education lecturer, <i>Mofid</i> University professor, family and adolescent counselor, author and researcher in the counseling field	42	Female	21	Ph.D.
5	Lecturer of family education in the field of virtual space	56	Male	19	Ph.D.
6	University professor and expert in cyber space and FATA police	48	Male	23	Ph.D.
7	An expert in the field of Parents and Teachers Association and family education lecturer	49	Female	18	Ph.D.
8	Family education teacher and expert and professor of the field. family and youth counselor,	51	Male	26	Ph.D.
9	Seminary and university professor with a focus on educational sciences	53	Male	23	Ph.D.
10	Family education lecturer, university professor	57	Male	25	Ph.D.
11	Family education lecturer, university professor	65	Male	39	Ph.D.

Results

In order to answer the research question, "What is the model of parent education for preventing students' cyberspace injuries", the open and central coding of each part of the contextual model are given in table 2.

Among the identified factors, a selective coding paradigm was carried out and based on that, the linear relationship between the secondary code and the central code of the research was determined. Figure (1) shows the coding paradigm and, in other words, the qualitative research process model.

Table 2. Open, axial and selective codes

Table 2. Open, axial and selective codes		
Open code	Axial code	Selective code
Long term planning	Planning	Major management
resource allocation		
Operational courses to achieve goals		
perspective		
Timing of actions		
Determining duties		
Retraining experts, teachers		
organize	Organizing	
Organizational control	Control	
Monitoring the achievement of educational goals	Monitoring and Supervising	
Supervision of teachers' expertise		
Supervising the performance of managers		
Supervising the activity of experts of parents and teachers' association		
Monitoring compliance with laws		
Parental characteristics	Information about Parents	Analysis
Principles of teaching parents		
How to measure needs	Information about parents' learning needs)needs assessment(
Knowledge of virtual space		
Types of cyberspace damage		
Strategies to deal with cyberspace damage		
Technological and up-to-date skills regarding cyberspace		
Professional features	Information about teachers	
Scientific features		
Communication features		
experience		
Restrictions on the place of execution	Information about limitations and resources	
Limitation to the promulgated and executive laws		
Limitation towards the teacher		
Parental time limit		
Restrictions on the headings to be communicated		
Limited budget and sufficient credit		
Limitations in facilities		
Poor management		
Lack of proper planning		
General objectives		Subject
Sub-goals	Educational planning	
Long-term planning and at the top management level		
Short term and lower level planning		
Support planning in case the main plan fails		
Face-to-face training space	Environment	
Virtual learning space		
Mixed learning space		
Textbook	Selection of media and educational materials	
Non-textbooks		
Educational virtual content		
Useful sites and channels		
Counselors and psychologists		
Individual teaching method	Choosing a teaching method	
Group teaching method		

Teaching method with children		
Practical or functional teaching method		
Role playing teaching method		
lesson plan	Headline design	
Provision of required media and educational materials	Provision of required media and educational materials	Provision
Deciding on a group or individual activity	Deciding on a group or individual activity	
Evaluation	evaluation	
Implementation of training and support of the training program	Implementation of training and support of the training program	Implementation
Fix technical problems	Fix technical problems	
Evaluation of participants' performance	Evaluation of participants' performance	
Implementation of multiple tests to ensure the achievement of educational standards and check progress	Implementation of multiple tests to ensure the achievement of educational standards and check progress	Evaluation
Final evaluation to measure the output	Final evaluation to measure the output	

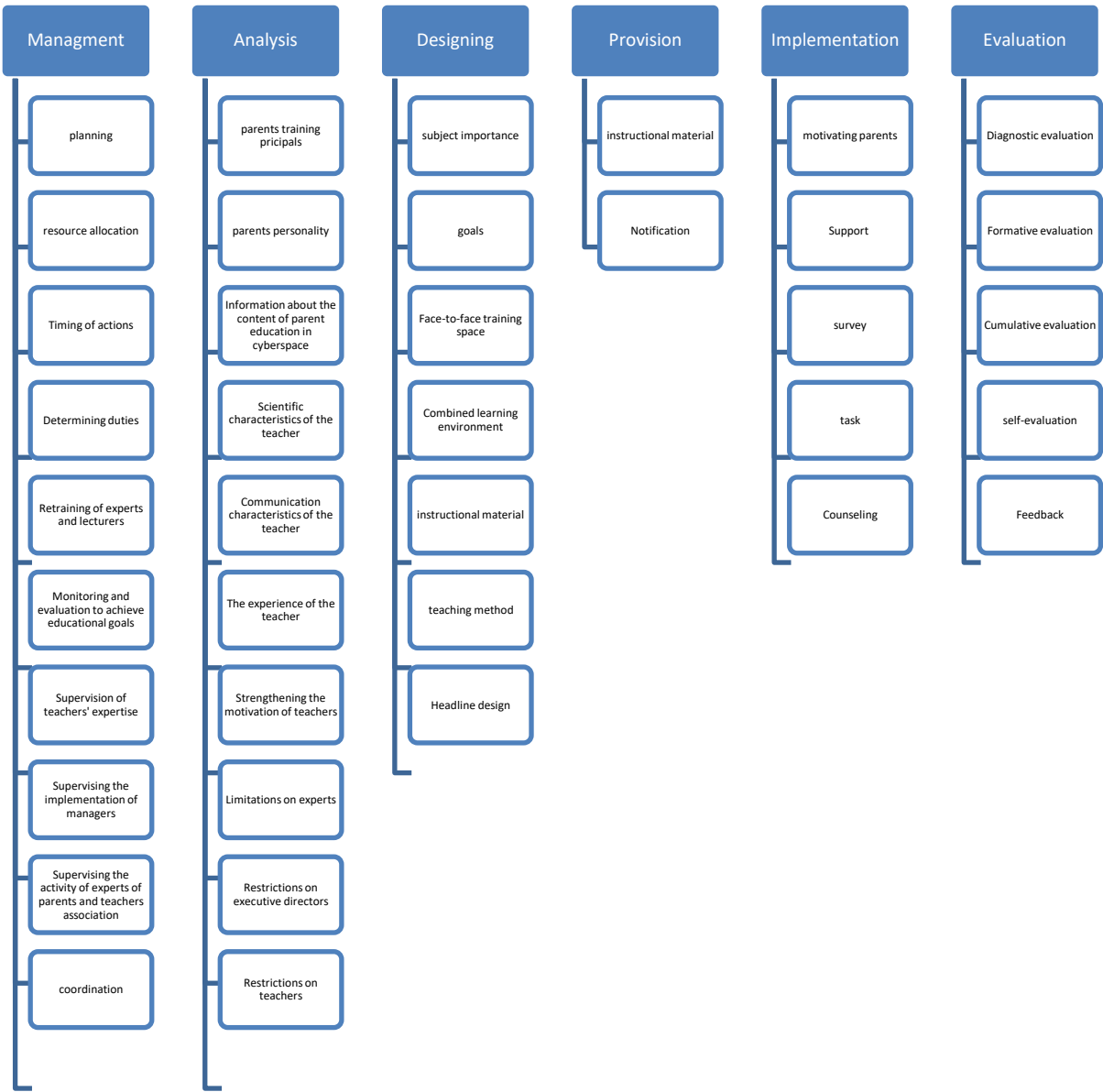


Figure 1. Qualitative research process model

Discussion

In the contemporary era, the virtual realm has significantly solidified its role as a vital component of individuals' lives, particularly for students. Nevertheless, this domain is also confronted with

numerous challenges and threats. A variety of detrimental factors, including abuse, digital hazards, and psychological as well as social calamities, have proliferated within this environment. While cyberspace avails students of numerous opportunities for educational advancement and communication, it is concomitantly fraught with risks and adverse consequences. Dangers such as cyber psychological crises, sexual exploitation, online social research, and other perils may impede students' capacity for learning and character development. Consequently, it is deemed imperative to devise strategies aimed at safeguarding students within this digital landscape.

Parental guidance is crucial due to the significant role they occupy in mitigating the harms and dangers associated with cyberspace for their offspring. The utilization of cyberspace by students for the acquisition of educational resources and lessons represents one of the numerous advantages and opportunities afforded by this medium. Parents should endeavor to enhance their understanding of cyberspace, recognize the inherent risks it presents, and provide their children with the requisite training in accordance with these hazards. Furthermore, safeguarding one's privacy and that of others, refraining from engaging with strangers in the digital arena, avoiding the dissemination of personal and identifying information to unknown entities, not accessing dubious links, abstaining from placing trust in individuals whose identities have not been duly verified, and steering clear of online dating, are all subjects that parents have been instructed upon, with essential cautions imparted to them in this regard.

Parents are advised to establish time constraints for the utilization of mobile phones and tablets to ensure active engagement in cyberspace and to strive to accompany their children and adolescents during the use of smart devices. This companionship and synchronization with children during their digital interactions, as well as monitoring their activities, is paramount in diminishing the threats and harms associated with cyberspace and in preventing addiction to this virtual environment, thereby fulfilling an essential responsibility of parents.

Raising awareness among students regarding the perils associated with the misuse of cyberspace: Should our students possess a comprehensive understanding of the threats and detrimental effects of cyberspace, recognize the concept of "privacy," and be equipped with competencies such as decision-making, problem-solving, and the ability to assertively decline, they will be safeguarded against numerous hazards prevalent in the digital realm. To execute a needs assessment pertaining

to parents' educational requirements in the domain of cyberspace and technological proficiencies, one may consider the following methodologies:

1. Questionnaires and surveys: The formulation of questionnaires and surveys designed to accrue both quantitative and qualitative data from parents regarding their requirements in the context of virtual environments and technological expertise. Such questionnaires may encompass inquiries related to experiences, needs, requisite skills, and encountered challenges.
2. Interviews and discussions: Engaging in dialogues and interviews with individual parents or groups thereof to glean insightful information concerning their experiences and requirements in this particular area.
3. Content analysis: Conducting an examination of existing literature through the analysis of articles, reports, and research pertinent to the educational needs of parents in the realm of virtual environments and technological competencies.
4. Thought and collaborative groups: Organizing think tanks and collaborative sessions with the participation of parents to deliberate and exchange perspectives regarding the needs, challenges, and potential solutions to mitigate the risks associated with cyberspace and enhance technological skills.
5. Expert consultation: Offering expert consultation to parents by specialists in the field of virtual education and technological skills, thereby addressing their needs and challenges effectively.

Utilizing the insights derived from the needs assessment, one can propose programs and solutions that will assist parents in successfully navigating the challenges posed by cyberspace while advancing their technological proficiencies. Below, we delineate several proposed solutions for this endeavor:

1. Instruction in technological skills for parents: Conducting workshops and training courses aimed at familiarizing parents with essential technological skills, including internet navigation, email usage, social media engagement, information management, and online security measures.
2. Provision of guidance and counseling: Delivering guidance and counseling services to parents concerning security and privacy issues within cyberspace, effective time management concerning technology usage, and appropriate content for children.

3. Support in addressing challenges: Offering support and guidance to parents in confronting potential issues such as cyberbullying, identity theft, cyber extortion, and the inappropriate use of cyberspace by children.
4. Promotion of safe behaviors within the family: Educating and advocating for safe practices in cyberspace through the utilization of educational materials, videos, and informational resources directed towards parents.
5. Encouragement of enhanced family communication: Urging parents to engage in more proactive communication with their children through offline familial activities while imposing limits on the duration spent in virtual environments.
6. Provision of auxiliary resources: Supplying supplementary tools and software designed to monitor and regulate cyberspace activities within the family, ensuring a controlled environment for children.
7. Heightening parental awareness: Delivering current information and educational articles regarding the methodologies of child-rearing in the digital age and its implications for familial relationships.
8. Promote parent-school collaboration: Encourage and support parent-school collaboration to teach technology skills and create common agreements on safe and responsible use of cyberspace.
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Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the ethics committee of Islamic Azad University. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

All authors contributed to the study conception and design, material preparation, data collection, and analysis. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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