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Digital Parenting and Local Wisdom: A Comparative Study of Parenting Model

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to: (1) analyze child-rearing patterns based on local wisdom and digital integration, and (2) compare traditional and digital-based parenting models. The research employed a mixed-method approach using an explanatory sequential design. The study was conducted in four villages located in Ngada and Nagekeo Regencies, East Nusa Tenggara Province, namely Lengkosambi Barat, Sambinasi, Sawu, and Bela. The research subjects consisted of 40 families from the two regencies, categorized into two parenting groups: traditional (local wisdom-based) and digital-based. Data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model and descriptive quantitative analysis. The findings revealed variations in the average scores of local wisdom–based parenting patterns across the four villages. Lengkosambi Barat Village obtained an average score of 3.52, categorized as high, indicating more consistent and stronger parenting practices in utilizing both digital media and local wisdom. Meanwhile, Sambinasi (2.90), Sawu (3.05), and Bela (3.22) were categorized as moderate, suggesting that the integration of local wisdom and digital elements in parenting practices was relatively good, though not yet as optimal as in Lengkosambi Barat Village.

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1. *Introduction*

One of the main factors influencing a child's development is the parenting style applied by parents and the surrounding community. Parenting plays a crucial role in shaping a child's character and cultural values within a society. It is a complex activity that encompasses educating, nurturing, guiding, leading, protecting, and training children so that they can develop optimally in various aspects, including physical, cognitive, social, and emotional domains (Putrihapsari, 2020). Child-rearing practices are unique to each culture and community, creating variations in parenting patterns across different social groups (Handoko, 2021). Appropriate parenting helps children develop the readiness needed to face life within society (Fransiska, 2019).

Parents play an essential role in educating their children, which is closely linked to the parenting style they apply. Parents have a significant influence on their children's lives (Agbaria, 2023). They must strive to adopt effective and appropriate parenting approaches for the millennial generation (Khomaeny, 2022). In the parenting process, parents serve as the primary agents of interaction with their children (Fono, 2023). Therefore, it can be stated that parents are the key factor in the child-rearing process, influencing children's development both in the non-digital and digital eras.

The digital era has brought about numerous changes, including shifts in parenting patterns. The use of electronic devices among young children can potentially disrupt their growth and development. On the other hand, parenting practices in which parents uphold local traditions and introduce local wisdom to their children from an early age can help foster strong character and resilience, enabling children to grow within the norms and expectations of their cultural environment. Parental responsibilities lead to diverse parenting styles in developing children's values (Angelina, et al., 2024; Shaleh, 2023). If this phenomenon is not addressed properly, it may significantly affect children's future development as the nation's golden generation.

Based on questionnaire data collected from 40 respondents across four villages in two districts and regencies, there were variations in the average scores of local wisdom–based parenting patterns among the research sites.

Lengkosambi Barat Village obtained an average score of 3.52, categorized as high, indicating more consistent and stronger parenting practices in utilizing both digital technology and local wisdom. Meanwhile, Sambinasi (2.90), Sawu (3.05), and Bela (3.22) were categorized as moderate, suggesting that the integration of local wisdom and digital elements in parenting practices was fairly good but not yet as optimal as in Lengkosambi Barat Village.

Parenting has become a vital aspect that significantly influences children's development, both in the non-digital and digital eras. In the digital age, technology has become an integral part of children's lives—their daily activities seem inseparable from it. Parents are now faced with a dilemma between providing technological access to support their children's development and limiting its use to prevent negative impacts (Fadlan, 2025). This situation presents a major challenge for parents in the process of child-rearing.

2. *Method*

This study employed a mixed-method approach with an explanatory sequential design, consisting of both quantitative and qualitative components (Ita, et al., 2024) in which the quantitative phase preceded the qualitative phase. The initial survey involved 40 families from four villages, with 10 families selected from each village. Data were collected using a 14-item questionnaire covering children's daily activities, parental management of technology use, children's use of digital devices for learning, perceived benefits of digital media, local cultural practices, and the balance between digital and traditional parenting. Responses were recorded on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, and item-level consistency was examined using corrected item-total correlations. Based on 37 complete cases, the questionnaire demonstrated acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .776$). Because the comparison involved four independent village groups and ordinal questionnaire responses, the Kruskal–Wallis test was used to examine differences across villages at $p < .05$.

The quantitative findings were then used to guide the qualitative phase by identifying contrasting patterns across the four village contexts. These patterns informed the selection of families for qualitative follow-up and determined the aspects requiring further explanation during the interviews. The interviews explored children's daily activities, duration and management of HP or TV or tablet use, parental strategies for directing children's technology use, children's learning through digital media such as educational applications and videos, perceived benefits of technology, and children's activities in contexts with limited or no internet access. Thus, the qualitative phase was conducted to explain the contextual factors underlying the quantitative patterns rather than to repeat the survey findings.

Qualitative data were analyzed thematically by organizing interview responses around recurring patterns related to digital parenting, parental mediation, children's learning activities, local cultural practices, and differences in technology access. The quantitative and qualitative findings were subsequently integrated at the interpretation stage to explain variations in digital integration and parenting practices across the four village contexts. This integration enabled the study to connect the observed quantitative differences with the contextual experiences and parenting practices reported by participating families.

3. *Results*

The study was conducted in two districts, namely Riung District in Ngada Regency and Mauponggo District in Nagekeo Regency. Two villages were selected from each district to represent contrasting internet-access contexts. In Riung District, Lengkosambi Barat represented a village with internet access, while Sambinasi represented a village without internet access. In Mauponggo District, Sawu represented a village with internet access, while Bela represented a village without internet access. The quantitative phase involved 40 families, with 10 families from each village.

3.1. Quantitative Findings

The questionnaire results showed variation in digital integration and local wisdom-based parenting practices across the four villages. The mean questionnaire scores were 3.52 for Lengkosambi Barat, 3.22 for Bela, 3.05 for Sawu, and 2.91 for Sambinasi on a four-point scale. Lengkosambi Barat recorded the highest mean score, indicating a relatively stronger integration of digital technology with local wisdom-based parenting practices. Sambinasi recorded the lowest mean score, indicating comparatively lower levels of digital integration in parenting practices as presented on the following table.

Table 1. Mean Questionnaire Scores across the Four Villages

Village Names	n	Mean Score (1–4)
Lengkosambi Barat	10	3.52
Bela	10	3.22
Sawu	10	3.05
Sambinasi	10	2.91

The descriptive differences were further examined using the Kruskal–Wallis test because the comparison involved four independent village groups and ordinal questionnaire responses. The analysis showed a statistically significant difference in scores across the four villages, $H(3) = 18.013$, $p < .001$. This result indicates that the observed variation in digital integration and local wisdom-based parenting practices was statistically significant rather than uniform across the four village contexts.

3.2. Qualitative Findings

The qualitative findings provided contextual explanations for the quantitative differences. The qualitative findings, obtained through in-depth interviews with parents and community leaders in the four villages, revealed several key insights that reinforce the quantitative results. The analysis identified three main themes: local wisdom–based parenting patterns, challenges of digital integration, and community expectations for future parenting practices.

3.2.1. Local Wisdom–Based Parenting Patterns

Respondents in each village continue to rely on local wisdom as the primary foundation for guiding their children. Interviews with parents and community members indicated that local wisdom remained an important foundation of parenting across the four villages. Parents described the transmission of values such as mutual cooperation, discipline, responsibility, hard work, respect for parents, and participation in traditional activities. Folktales, traditional games, household activities, and community practices were described as important ways of introducing these values to children. The interviews result presented below.

As one parent from Lengkosambi Barat explained,

> "The values taught to children include respecting others, working together at home, and collaborating with friends." (ALI, parent from Lengkosambi Barat Village)

Similarly, a parent from Sambinasi stated that children were encouraged to help their parents in the garden, through which they learned responsibility and togetherness.

> "From a young age, our children are taught to help their parents in the garden. Through this, they learn responsibility and togetherness." (SH, parent from Sambinasi Village)

These findings indicate that local wisdom remains highly relevant as a means of fostering character education in early childhood.

3.2.2. Challenges of Digital Integration in Parenting

At the same time, parents reported challenges in managing children's use of digital technology. Some parents experienced difficulties in controlling children's mobile-phone use because of limited digital literacy or limited parental supervision. Parents also expressed concerns about children preferring digital activities to traditional activities. The result of interviews presented below.

> "Sometimes children prefer playing on their phones rather than joining traditional activities. That's what worries us." (MGK, parent from Sawu Village).

> "In our village, there's no internet network, but children watch downloaded videos and sometimes lose track of time." (YW, parent from Bela Village).

These findings highlight the need for parental guidance to ensure that digital integration remains balanced with the preservation of local values.

3.2.3. Expectations for Future Parenting Patterns

The interviews also revealed parents' expectations for a balanced approach to parenting. Parents wanted children to remain connected to local traditions while acquiring appropriate digital competencies. A parent from Lengkosambi Barat expressed the expectation that children should continue learning traditional dances and songs while also developing computer skills. Another parent from Sambinasi emphasized the need for parenting guidance so that parents could better direct children's use of mobile phones. The result of interviews presented below.

> "We want our children to keep learning traditional dances and songs, but also be able to use computers so they won't fall behind." (BO, parent from Lengkosambi Barat Village).

> "If there were guidance programs for parents, we would be very happy, so we could direct our children properly in using mobile phones." (LL, parent from Sambinasi Village).

These findings emphasize the importance of adopting a hybrid approach to parenting—one that enables children to grow with a strong cultural identity while remaining adaptive to global changes. These findings indicate that parents did not view digital technology and local wisdom as mutually exclusive; rather, they expected the two to be balanced according to children's needs and local circumstances.

4. Discussion

The findings demonstrate that digital integration in local wisdom-based parenting practices varies significantly across the four village contexts. Lengkosambi Barat recorded the highest mean questionnaire score ($M = 3.52$), followed by Bela ($M = 3.22$), Sawu ($M = 3.05$), and Sambinasi ($M = 2.91$). The Kruskal–Wallis test confirmed that the differences among the four villages were statistically significant, $H(3) = 18.013$, $p < .001$. These results

indicate that digital integration in parenting cannot be understood as a uniform process across communities. Rather, it is shaped by the interaction between technological access, parental practices, children's everyday activities, and the sociocultural environment in which parenting takes place.

An important finding is that internet availability alone does not fully explain the variation in digital integration. Although Lengkosambi Barat and Sawu represented villages with internet access, their mean scores were not identical, while Bela, a village without internet access, recorded a higher mean score than Sawu. This pattern suggests that digital integration is influenced by factors beyond physical connectivity. The qualitative findings provide further explanation: parents described differences in how technology was used, how children's use was supervised, and how digital activities were balanced with household, cultural, and community activities. In Bela, for example, the absence of a stable internet connection did not prevent children from accessing digital content because downloaded videos remained available. This finding suggests that the digital environment of children should not be reduced to a simple connected-versus-disconnected distinction. Instead, the quality of parental mediation, available digital resources, and the ways families incorporate technology into everyday life are also important.

This interpretation is consistent with a bioecological understanding of child development. Bronfenbrenner's perspective emphasizes that children's development is embedded within interconnected environmental systems, particularly the immediate settings of family, community, and other social environments. More recent work has extended this perspective to the digital environment through the concept of the ecological techno-subsystem, emphasizing children's interactions with digital technologies within their immediate developmental contexts. A recent longitudinal study of children's digital play similarly used the bioecological model and the ecological techno-subsystem to explain how family, school, community, cultural values, and digital tools interact in shaping children's experiences (Işıkoğlu, et al., 2024). The present findings extend this perspective by showing that digital parenting in rural and culturally diverse communities is embedded simultaneously in technological and cultural environments. The smartphone, television, downloaded video, and other digital resources are therefore not isolated influences; their meaning depends on how parents and communities incorporate them into children's everyday activities.

The findings also provide strong support for understanding parental mediation as a central mechanism of digital parenting. Several parents reported concerns about children spending too much time with mobile phones or preferring digital activities to traditional activities. At the same time, parents recognized the educational potential of digital media, including educational videos and applications. This combination of perceived benefit and concern reflects the dual nature of digital parenting: parents need to provide access to useful digital resources while simultaneously establishing boundaries and guiding children's engagement. Recent empirical research with families of young children has similarly shown that digital parenting and mediation practices strongly influence the nature of children's engagement with digital technologies at home. Parents who combine boundaries with conversation, involvement, and opportunities for children's autonomy may create more balanced forms of digital engagement (Wilson, 2025).

The present findings are also consistent with recent empirical evidence concerning the role of parental mediation in early childhood. A 2024 study involving 433 parents of children aged 3–6 found that several forms of active and restrictive parental mediation were negatively associated with children's tendencies toward problematic digital game use (Çalhan, 2024). Similarly, research published in 2025 found that parental media mediation partially mediated the relationship between digital parental awareness and the parent–child relationship among families with preschool-age children (Bayar, 2025**)**. These findings reinforce the interpretation of the present study that the important issue is not simply whether children use digital devices, but how parents structure, accompany, restrict, explain, and contextualize that use.

The qualitative findings further indicate that parental mediation in these villages should not be understood solely as restriction. Parents described efforts to direct children's use, provide educational content, and balance technology with non-digital activities. This interpretation is supported by a 2024 systematic review and meta-analysis of adult–child co-use of digital media among children aged 0–6 years. The study found a small but statistically significant positive effect of adult–child co-use on children's learning from digital media, suggesting that shared use can provide a developmental benefit when adults actively participate in children's digital experiences (Taylor, 2024; Toran, 2024). Thus, parental mediation may involve restrictive practices, but it can also include active mediation, co-use, explanation, and scaffolding. This distinction is particularly relevant to the present study because parents expressed a desire not simply to prohibit technology but to learn how to guide children in using it appropriately.

The findings concerning local wisdom provide another important dimension of interpretation. Across the four villages, parents continued to emphasize values such as mutual cooperation, responsibility, discipline, hard work, respect for parents, participation in household activities, and engagement in traditional practices. These values were transmitted through everyday activities rather than solely through formal instruction. In this respect, local wisdom functioned as a practical parenting resource through which children learned social and moral behaviors. This finding is consistent with recent Indonesian research showing that local wisdom and ethnopedagogical approaches can support character formation in early childhood by connecting learning with cultural practices and community participation. A 2024 case study in Yogyakarta found that integrating local wisdom into early childhood education strengthened children's awareness of local culture and supported character development, while community involvement strengthened social networks around children's education (Sakti, et al., 2024). A study published in

JPUD in 2024 similarly reported the relevance of Indonesian local wisdom for early childhood character learning and emphasized the importance of aligning character development with children's cultural backgrounds (Nurani, et al., 2024).

The present study adds a parenting dimension to these findings. Rather than treating local wisdom only as educational content, the parents in the four villages used culturally meaningful activities as part of children's everyday upbringing. Helping parents in the garden, participating in traditional activities, learning local dances and songs, and engaging in communal practices provided opportunities for children to acquire values through participation and observation. This is consistent with recent research on ethnoparenting, which conceptualizes child-rearing practices as being deeply influenced by cultural values transmitted across generations. Research on Madurese ethnoparenting, for example, describes local wisdom as a foundation for shaping children's emotional development through culturally embedded parenting practices (Trisetiawati, et al., 2025). Thus, local wisdom in the present study can be interpreted not simply as a cultural heritage to be preserved but as an active developmental context within which children learn how to behave, interact, and participate in family and community life.

An important implication of the findings is that digital technology and local wisdom should not necessarily be positioned as competing forces. The parents' expectations illustrate an orientation toward balance. One parent expressed the desire for children to continue learning traditional dances and songs while also acquiring computer skills so that they would not be left behind. This finding challenges a binary interpretation in which traditional parenting represents the past and digital parenting represents modernization. Instead, the results suggest that families are negotiating between continuity and change. Digital resources can provide access to new forms of learning, while local practices provide culturally meaningful contexts for children's identity and character development. The integration of the two therefore requires parents to determine when technology is useful, when direct interaction is more appropriate, and how digital activities can coexist with culturally grounded experiences.

This balancing process is particularly important during early childhood because the developmental consequences of digital exposure depend not only on the amount of screen use but also on content, context, and social interaction. A recent review of young children's screen-based media emphasizes that digital media can have both positive and negative developmental implications and highlights the importance of parental mediation and developmentally appropriate content (Cios, 2023; Wang, 2024). Likewise, a 2025 systematic review of parenting factors associated with screen use among children aged five years and younger emphasizes that modifiable parenting practices are important in shaping children's digital exposure (Pyne, 2025). These findings support the present study's observation that parents need practical strategies for balancing access to technology with children's other developmental experiences rather than relying exclusively on prohibition.

The findings also contribute to the discussion of digital inequality. The differences between the villages suggest that digital inequality is not simply a matter of whether a community has an internet signal. Families may have different forms of access, different digital skills, different parental strategies, and different opportunities to use digital technology for learning. Recent research in rural China similarly, Shi, et al demonstrates that digital parenting practices vary among rural families and that socioeconomic and family characteristics shape whether parents adopt permissive, guidance-oriented, or supervision-oriented approaches (2025). Although the geographical and cultural contexts differ from those in the present study, the comparison supports the broader argument that technological infrastructure alone cannot explain children's digital experiences. Digital inclusion therefore needs to consider parents' capacity to guide children's technology use, not merely household connectivity.

From the perspective of parental mediation theory, the four villages can consequently be understood as contexts in which parents negotiate three interconnected tasks: enabling beneficial digital opportunities, protecting children from potential risks, and maintaining meaningful offline interactions. The qualitative findings show that parents are already performing these functions, but their strategies are uneven and sometimes constrained by digital literacy and access. Recent research has similarly described parental mediation among very young children as complex, fluid, and multidimensional rather than as a single restrictive practice (Goodall, et al, 2026**)**. This helps explain why the quantitative differences observed in the present study cannot be attributed to internet access alone. Parents' knowledge, confidence, beliefs, and everyday routines influence how available technologies are incorporated into family life.

The findings therefore suggest that support for families in these contexts should move beyond programs that merely promote children's access to digital technology. Parents may require practical guidance on selecting educational content, setting appropriate boundaries, co-using digital media, discussing digital content with children, and maintaining opportunities for play, family participation, and local cultural activities. This implication is particularly relevant because parents in the present study explicitly expressed a need for parenting guidance. Recent research also reports that some parents require support in making digital parenting decisions and that balanced mediation involving dialogue, boundaries, and children's autonomy can support more positive digital engagement (Wilson, et al., 2025).

The integration of the quantitative and qualitative findings leads to a broader interpretation of digital integration in local wisdom-based parenting. Digital integration should not be defined simply as the frequency with which children use digital devices or the availability of internet infrastructure. Rather, it involves the capacity of families to incorporate technology purposefully within existing parenting practices while preserving meaningful

cultural, social, and developmental experiences. In the four villages examined in this study, local wisdom provides a culturally grounded framework for children's everyday learning, whereas digital technology provides additional opportunities and challenges. The quality of integration therefore depends on how parents mediate the relationship between the two.

The contribution of this study lies in bringing these dimensions together within a comparative rural context. Previous research has extensively examined children's digital media use, parental mediation, and the developmental implications of technology, while Indonesian research has also demonstrated the importance of local wisdom in early childhood character development. However, the present study connects these two strands by examining how digital integration is negotiated within parenting practices across communities with contrasting internet-access conditions. The significant quantitative differences among the four villages, together with the qualitative evidence of parental negotiation, demonstrate that digital parenting is context-dependent. The study consequently supports a culturally responsive view of digital parenting in which technological competence and cultural continuity are treated as complementary rather than mutually exclusive goals.

Overall, the findings suggest that effective digital parenting in early childhood requires a balanced and context-sensitive approach. Parents need to be supported not only in controlling children's screen exposure but also in using digital media constructively, maintaining parent–child interaction, and connecting children's digital experiences with culturally meaningful activities. For early childhood education, this implies that parenting programs should recognize the local cultural environment in which families live. For communities with limited connectivity, support should also acknowledge that digital exposure can occur through offline or downloaded content and should therefore address digital literacy and parental mediation rather than focusing exclusively on internet provision. In this sense, strengthening digital parenting requires an ecological approach that recognizes the child, family, technology, culture, and community as interconnected elements of the developmental environment.

5. *Conclusion*

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that parenting practices in the four villages have integrated local wisdom values with the use of digital media, although not yet optimally. Local wisdom remains the foundation for shaping children's character, cultural identity, and social values, while digital technology supports more effective access to information, communication, and child guidance. This integration reinforces the relevance of parenting patterns while responding to the challenges of contemporary developments.

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